



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ACP-323215-25

Development	Request to alter the terms of the previously permitted 110kV substation, associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works (permitted under case Ref. No. ABP-309491-21)
Location	Srah, Coolcar and Clonin, Rhode, Co. Offaly
Planning Authority	Offaly County Council
Requester	OBM Solar Ltd.
Type of Application	Application under Section 146B of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) to alter previously approved Strategic Infrastructure Development.
Inspector	Niall Haverty
Date of site inspection	20 th October 2025

1.0 Introduction

1.1. On the 13th October 2021, the Board (as it was then) granted permission under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('the Act'), to OBM Solar Ltd. under Ref. No. ABP-309491-21 for the following development in the townlands of Srah, Coolcar and Clonin, in Rhode, Co. Offaly:

- 110kV electrical substation development, including:
 - 1 No. electrical substation compound and access road, palisade fencing and gates (56.6m x 114.8m);
 - 1 No. electrical substation control building (14m x 18m x 6.1m in height);
 - 1 No. Eirgrid switch room building (18m x 25m x 8.55m in height);
 - 4 No. lightning protection monopoles (up to 8.275m high);
 - Associated electrical apparatus, plant and equipment; overhead and underground electrical and communications cabling and ancillary works;
 - Upgrading of existing access road;
 - Site construction compound; and
 - Ancillary works.
- 110kV underground cabling from the proposed substation to Derryiron 110kv substation in Clonin townland, through the townlands of Srah, Coolcor and Clonin, including:
 - 3km of underground 110kV electrical cables and associated communications cables;
 - 6 No. underground joint bays; and
 - Ancillary works.
- Associated works including road carriageway passing places.

1.2. The application for the development included a Planning and Engineering Report, Environmental Report¹, Construction Traffic Management Plan, Preliminary

¹ For the avoidance of doubt, this was not an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

Construction Environmental Management Plan and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). Permission was granted for a period of ten years and subject to conditions.

- 1.3. The subject application to the Commission is for alterations to this permission, under section 146B of the Act.

2.0 Legislative Provisions

- 2.1. Section 146B(1) of the Act provides that, subject to subsections (2) to (8) and to section 146C, upon request of any person who is carrying out or intending to carry out a strategic infrastructure development, the Commission may alter the terms of the development the subject of planning permission, approval or other consent granted.
- 2.2. Under subsection 2(a), as soon as practicable after making such a request, the Commission is required to make a decision as to whether the making of the development would constitute a material alteration to the development concerned.
- 2.3. Under subsection (2)(b), before making its decision under subsection 146B(2), the Commission may invite submissions as it considers appropriate and is required to have regard to any submission made to it on foot of the invitation.
- 2.4. Under subsection (3)(a), if the Commission decide that the making of the alteration would not constitute a material alteration, it is required to alter the planning permission/approval/consent accordingly and to notify the requester and the planning authority of the alteration.
- 2.5. Under subsection (3)(b), if the Commission decide that the making of the alteration would constitute the making of a material alteration, the Commission is required to:
 - Request the information specified in Schedule 7A, unless it or an EIAR has already been provided by the requester (subsection (3)(b)(i)). This information is required to be accompanied by any further relevant information on the characteristics of the alteration and its likely significant effects on the environment including, where relevant, how environmental effects pertaining to EU legislation other than the EIA Directive have been taken into account (subsection (3A)) and can include mitigation measures (subsection (3B)).

- Following receipt of such information, determine whether to make the alteration, make an alteration of the terms of the development which differs from the proposed alteration (subject to it not representing a more significant alteration), or refuse to make the alteration (subsection (3)(b)(ii)).
- 2.6. Under subsection (4), before making a determination under subsection (3)(b)(ii), the Commission is required to determine whether the extent and character of the alteration being requested, or being considered by the Commission, would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- 2.7. Under subsection (5), if the Commission determine that no significant environmental effects will arise, they proceed to make a determination under subsection (3)(b)(ii). If the Commission determines that significant effects will arise, the provisions of section 146C apply. These provisions relate to the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report.
- 2.8. Under subsection (7)(a), in making their determination, the Commission is required to have regard to:
- The criteria for the purposes of determining which classes of development are likely to have significant effects on the environment set out in any regulations made under section 176,
 - The criteria set out in Schedule 7 to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001,
 - The Schedule 7A submitted by the requester,
 - The further relevant information, if any, referred to in subsection (3A) and the description, if any, referred to in subsection (3B) (summarised above),
 - The available results, where relevant, of preliminary verifications or assessments of the effects on the environment carried out pursuant to European Union legislation other than the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, and
 - Whether the development is situated in or would have potential to impact on a European site, or a recognised or protected area of natural heritage,

- 2.9. Under subsection (7)(b), the Commission is required to include in its determination, the main reasons and considerations, with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Schedule 7 to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, on which the determination is based.
- 2.10. Under subsection (8)(a) before making a determination under subsection (3)(b)(ii) or (4) the Commission is required to require the requester to make information about the alteration available for inspection, notify appropriate persons that the information is available and invite submissions or observations from these persons. Further under subsection 8(b) the Commission is required to have regard to these submissions in its determination.

3.0 Planning History

3.1. 'Parent' Permission

- 3.1.1. On the 13th October 2021, the then-Board granted permission under s. 182A of the Act, to OBM Solar Ltd. for the substation and electrical infrastructure development as outlined in Section 1.0 above (Ref. ABP-309491-21). Permission was granted for a 10 year period and subject to 12 No. conditions.
- 3.1.2. Submissions on the 'parent' application were made by Offaly County Council, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Meath County Council. None of these prescribed bodies raised any objection to the proposed development (subject to conditions in the case of Offaly County Council). No third party observations were received.
- 3.1.3. The stated purpose of the substation development was to facilitate the connection of a permitted solar PV and battery storage development to the national grid.

3.2. Solar Farm

- 3.2.1. **Reg. Ref. 20494:** 10 year permission granted in June 2021 for development consisting of the construction of: (i) a solar PV development on a c.132 ha site consisting of solar panels on ground-mounted frames, 27 No. single storey electrical inverter/ transformer units, security fencing, CCTV system with pole mounted cameras, upgrading of existing access, landscaping and all associated ancillary development works; (ii) an enclosed battery energy storage system compound on a

c.0.385 ha located within the solar PV development site consisting of 18 No. battery storage units (each with associated containerised step up transformer), 1 No. containerised control room and 1 No. containerised switch room and all associated ancillary development works; and (iii) a temporary construction compound adjacent to the existing access.

- 3.2.2. **Reg. Ref. 2560082:** Permission granted in November 2025 for amendments to the development permitted under Reg. Ref. 20/494 to: (i) revise the layout of the permitted development including solar array and inverter/transformer units; (ii) increase the height of the permitted solar array from 2.914m to up to 3.3m; (iii) provide for variable spacings between the solar array rows; (iv) provide for varying solar array tilt-angles; (v) alter the design of the electrical inverter/transformer units and reduce the number of electrical inverter/transformer units from 27 No. to 14 No.; (vi) revise the alignment of c. 250m of existing on-site access tracks and construct c. 7,500m of access track; (vii) relocate and redesign the permitted battery energy storage system compound including an increase in the compound footprint from c. 3,850 sq m to c. 10,100 sq m; (viii) alter the design of the battery energy storage system and increase the number of battery energy storage system and ancillary containers from 38 No. to 83 No.; (ix) alter Condition No. 6(b) to provide for the planting of screening vegetation at the end of the construction phase; (x) alter Condition No. 5(a) to provide for the decommissioning of the development no later than 40 years from the date of commissioning; and, (xi) all associated site development, drainage, access and reinstatement works.

4.0 Background to the Proposed Alterations

- 4.1. The background to, and rationale for, the proposed alterations are described by the requester as follows:

“Following the decision of the Commission, the Requester commenced consultations with EirGrid to discuss various technical matters related to the detailed design of the electrical substation and cables. EirGrid subsequently advised the Requester that the layout and design of the permitted electrical substation was no longer in accordance with EirGrid specifications and that the substation could not be constructed as permitted. Additionally, the

Requester was advised that the specification of 110kV electrical cable trenches would require alterations, including the locations of joint bays.”

5.0 Scope of Request

5.1. The requester is seeking to alter the terms of the development, subject of the permission granted under ABP-309491-21, as follows:

- The relocation of the permitted 110kV electrical substation compound and ancillary infrastructure by approximately 26m to the east of its permitted location;
- An increase in the total footprint of the electrical substation compound from c. 6,500 sq m to c. 8,350 sq m;
- The reconfiguration of infrastructure within the substation compound, including the EirGrid control building, Independent Power Producer control building and electrical apparatus;
- A decrease in the gross floor area of the Independent Power Producer control building from 252 sq m to c. 197 sq m and an increase in height from 6.1m to c. 6.75m;
- A decrease in height of the EirGrid control building from 8.55m to c. 8.51m;
- The realignment of the underground electrical cables within the public road corridor and its redesign to provide for a trench depth of c. 1.3m and a width of c. 0.6m;
- A modification in the number of joint bays from 6 no. to ‘up to 6 no.’ and the revised siting of joint bays; and,
- The completion of all associated ancillary site development works.

5.2. With regard to Environmental Impact Assessment, the requester states that their EIA Screening concludes that the proposed alteration, on its own or cumulatively, will have no likely significant effect on the environment. Therefore, they submit that the proposed alteration does not warrant or necessitate the preparation and submission of an EIAR.

- 5.3. With regard to Appropriate Assessment, the requester states that their Addendum NIS concludes that the proposed alteration, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a direct, indirect or cumulative adverse effect on the conservation status or integrity of any European sites, having regard to their conservation objectives.
- 5.4. Having regard to the characteristics of the proposed alteration together with the characteristics of the receiving environment, the conclusions of the EIA Screening, the assessment of the Environmental Report and the findings of the Addendum NIS, the requester contends that the proposed alteration represents an immaterial alteration to the permitted development and will not result in any likely significant adverse effects on the environment.
- 5.5. Submitted in support of the alteration request are the following:
- Planning Statement.
 - EIA Screening Report.
 - Environmental Report.
 - Addendum Natura Impact Statement.
 - Drawings.

6.0 **Public Consultation**

- 6.1. I have considered the provisions of s.146B(2)(b) which provides for, at the Commission's discretion, the invitation of submissions from persons, including the public. I do not consider that it is necessary to invoke the provisions of that section, noting my recommendation that the proposed alterations are material and that submissions were invited under the provision of s.146B(8)(a), as detailed in Section 7.0 below.

7.0 Notice to Requester

7.1. Reason for the Notice

7.1.1. Having reviewed the proposed alterations and the documentation submitted with the application, I submitted a Memo to an Assistant Director of Planning (ADP) on 27th November 2025, setting out my recommendation that the proposed alterations would constitute the marking of a material alteration of the terms of the development concerned. This recommendation was based on the following reasons:

- The proposed alterations include changes to the 'red line' application site boundary for the permitted development. There may be other parties with interests in the lands now affected.
- It is proposed to enlarge the substation compound by c. 28% or 1,850 sq m and to amend drainage proposals.
- The proposed alterations to the substation include new circulation roads/tracks along the site boundary with adjoining lands owned by unrelated third parties.
- The proposed changes to the cable routing along the public road may have implications for the Local Authority, other utility providers or landowners.

7.1.2. The ADP, being authorised to make such a determination by resolution of the Commission under the provisions of s. 111(6) of the Act, agreed with my recommendation. The requester was subsequently notified on 3rd December 2025 that the Commission had decided, in accordance with s.146B(2)(a) of the Act, that the proposed alterations would constitute a material alteration. Under the provisions of s.146B(8) of the Act, the requester was required to deposit a copy of the application with the planning authority for inspection or purchase, to send notice of the request to the specified prescribed bodies, and to publish new newspaper and site notices inviting submissions within a specified period.

7.1.3. With regard to s.146B(3)(b)(i) of the Act, Section 7A information was submitted with the application so it was not necessary to invoke the provisions of that section.

7.2. Requesters Response to Notice

- 7.2.1. A response to the notice was received from the requester on 8th January 2026 and included copies of the site notice and newspaper notifications. It also confirmed that copies of the application had been deposited with the planning authority and issued to the prescribed bodies. The period for the making of submissions was 4 weeks, ending on the 6th February 2026.

7.3. Submissions Received in Response to Notice

- 7.3.1. A total of 3 No. submissions were received and can be summarised as follows:
- **Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII):**
 - TII request that the Commission has regard to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines in the assessment and determination of the application.
 - **Uisce Éireann (UÉ):**
 - The realignment of the underground cables is on a public road which accommodates UÉ infrastructure.
 - UÉ does not permit build over of its assets and requests conditions requiring the applicant to obtain written Confirmation of Feasibility (COF) from UÉ prior to commencement for the crossover and the cable trench route works.
 - All development to be carried out in compliance with UÉ standard details and codes of practice.
 - Where a connection to the public network is sought, the applicant shall enter into a connection agreement prior to commencement.
 - **Westmeath County Council:**
 - Proposed alterations are unlikely to have any additional significant impact on Westmeath's area of responsibility over and above that previously assessed under the parent permission.

7.4. Further Responses

- 7.4.1. The submissions were issued to the requester and Planning Authority for information. Having regard to the content of the submissions received, as detailed above, I consider that a decision can be made without seeking a response from the requester or any other person.

8.0 Assessment

8.1. Consideration of Materiality

- 8.1.1. Under s.146B2(a) of the Act, the Commission is required to make a decision as to whether the making of the alteration would constitute a material alteration to the development concerned.
- 8.1.2. As detailed in Section 7.1 above and my Memo dated 27th November 2025, I consider that the proposed alterations would constitute the making of a material alteration of the terms of the development concerned for the following reasons:
- The proposed alterations include changes to the 'red line' application site boundary for the permitted development. There may be other parties with interests in the lands now affected.
 - It is proposed to enlarge the substation compound by c. 28% or 1,850 sq m and to amend drainage proposals.
 - The proposed alterations to the substation include new circulation roads/tracks along the site boundary with adjoining lands owned by unrelated third parties.
 - The proposed changes to the cable routing along the public road may have implications for the Local Authority, other utility providers or landowners.

8.2. The Potential for Significant Environmental Effects

- 8.2.1. The proposed alterations relate to a permitted 110kV substation and 110kV underground cable grid connection. As detailed in the Inspector's Report for that case (ABP-309491-21), an electrical substation is not a class of development

contained in Parts 1 or 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, and the underground 110kV cable to the Derryiron substation would also not come within either of the overhead powerline classes (the class being overhead powerlines, and the threshold being the voltage/length). As no element of the 'parent' development fell into a class of development contained in Schedule 5, Parts 1 or 2, it did not, therefore, constitute sub-threshold development and neither a mandatory EIA, nor screening for EIA, was required.

8.2.2. The proposed alterations to the design of the permitted substation and underground cable are not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (or Part V of the 1994 Roads Regulations). No mandatory requirement for EIA therefore arises.

8.2.3. Notwithstanding this, section 146B(7)(a) of the Act sets out the matters that the Commission shall have regard to, and that includes consideration of the criteria in Schedule 7 of the Act and information submitted by the requester pursuant to Schedule 7A.

8.2.4. These matters are addressed in Form 3 attached to this report where I conclude that the proposed alterations would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The matter of Appropriate Assessment is considered separately below.

8.3. **Other Matters**

8.3.1. Design and Layout

8.3.2. The proposed alterations to the substation include repositioning it by c. 26m to the east, increasing the size of the hardstanding compound, modifying access tracks and drainage to suit, and the reconfiguration and modification of the size and layout of the elements within the compound, including some relatively minor changes to the height of certain structures. The rationale for the proposed alterations is stated to be due to changes to EirGrid's required specifications that must be met and I note that there is no change to the nature or fundamental purpose of the substation. Having regard to the rural site context and the separation distances from the nearest sensitive receptors, I consider that the proposed changes are generally acceptable in

the context of the permitted development and the associated permitted solar farm development on the surrounding lands.

- 8.3.3. With regard to the grid connection underground cable, it is proposed to reposition this within the public roads and verge as necessary to avoid other underground infrastructure and to meet EirGrid requirements for 110kV underground cables. The number of joint bays is also proposed to be reduced from 6 No. to 'up to No.', with a likely figure of 4 No. bays and a consequent reduction in passing bay provision. These proposed alterations are relatively minor in scale and scope and I consider that they will slightly reduce the extent of construction works within the public road. I consider that matters with regard to proper reinstatement of the road surface and temporary traffic management during road opening works can be agreed with the Planning Authority as part of the CEMP that has to be agreed under the conditions attached to the 'parent' permission.
- 8.3.4. I consider that the matters raised by Uisce Éireann can be addressed in the normal way through compliance with their connection protocols and through the CEMP and standard construction management protocols.
- 8.3.5. Landscape and Visual Impact
- 8.3.6. Updated photomontages and a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment addressing the proposed alterations were submitted with the application. The LVIA notes that the landform of the study area is characterised by flat to low rolling terrain, which is typical of the midlands with the predominant land use in the area being agricultural farmland with medium to large-sized fields often bound by dense, mature, tree-lined hedgerows. There are also large cutaway peat bogs in the area as well as small-scale conifer plantations. A number of large overhead transmission lines also traverse the area, as well as a newly constructed wind farm development.
- 8.3.7. With regard to landscape effects of the proposed alterations, the LVIA states that the substation development will continue to be situated in a heavily contained part of the wider solar farm site with very little open visibility from surrounding receptors and that the alterations to the access of the substation and surrounding access tracks will generate no further effects than those previously assessed. It considers that while there will be a very marginal intensification of development, there is very little

potential for the proposed alterations to generate any further effects than those already assessed.

8.3.8. Similarly, with regard to visual effects, the LVIA notes that the submitted photomontages demonstrate that the proposed alterations are not visible from any of the selected viewpoints and thus the proposed alterations will not generate any further visual effects than those already assessed.

8.3.9. Having reviewed the submitted drawings and photomontages and having inspected the site and surrounding area, I agree with the conclusions of the LVIA. The permitted substation is well-screened by boundary planting and due to its set-back from the public road and the proposed alterations will not be readily discernible from outside of the site. I am satisfied that no unacceptable landscape or visual impacts will arise.

8.3.10. Traffic

8.3.11. The submission from TII requests that the Commission has regard to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines in the assessment and determination of the application.

8.3.12. The substation site is not located on or near any national road or motorway. The closest such road is the M6 Motorway located c. 6km to the north. The proposed grid connection cable route traverses local and regional roads only.

8.3.13. The proposed alterations are stated to give rise to an additional 98 No. HGV movements over the course of the construction phase. Given the distance to the nearest national roads and the low level of additional traffic beyond that previously assessed, I do not consider that any significant impacts on national roads or motorways are likely to occur.

8.3.14. Biodiversity

8.3.15. I do not consider the substation site and grid connection cable route to be particularly sensitive from a biodiversity perspective. Issues relating to biodiversity were assessed under the 'parent' application where it was concluded that the proposed development would not have a significant effect on the biodiversity of the area, subject to implementation of the measures set out in the submitted Biodiversity Management Plan, Environmental Report and CEMP (the majority of which comprise

relatively standard good practice construction methods and approaches). Conditions were attached to ensure compliance with these measures.

- 8.3.16. I do not consider that the proposed alterations give rise to any additional issues regarding biodiversity or that they will result in greater impacts than previously assessed.

8.4. Appropriate Assessment

- 8.4.1. The 'parent' application (ABP-309491-21) was accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and was subject to Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1 and Stage 2). In making its decision, the Board determined that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites, in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives.
- 8.4.2. This application for alterations to the permitted development was accompanied by an 'Addendum to Natura Impact Statement' document, prepared by Ecofact (the NIS for the 'parent' application was prepared by Malone O'Regan).
- 8.4.3. The Addendum document contends that the approach taken in the NIS for the 'parent' application was a very precautionary approach considering the relatively small size of the subject site in relation to the overall Boyne catchment and the very large hydrological separation of over 20km. Given this distance, it contends that any potential effects from the proposed development would be highly unlikely due to the natural attenuation, dilution, and dispersion of any possible contaminants. It states that the implementation of the robust mitigation measures detailed in the NIS can be expected, with a very high degree of certainty, to ensure that there is no credible pathway for pollutants or sedimentation that could affect the designated sites.
- 8.4.4. Having reviewed the drawings and details of the proposed alterations, the relevant sections of the previous Inspector's Report under ABP-309491-21 and having inspected the site, I am satisfied that the proposed alterations do not significantly alter any element of the permitted development that was relevant to the Board's determination on the issue of Appropriate Assessment in the 'parent' application. The proposed alterations, while material for the reasons outlined in Section 8.1 above, do not fundamentally change any aspect of the overall development that could impact on European Sites and do not materially affect any aspect of the

Source-Pathway-Receptor model undertaken in the Appropriate Assessment previously undertaken. The amendments to the permitted development are relatively minor in scale and extent and do not create any new or different hydrological pathways to the downstream European Sites. Therefore, the proposed alterations will have no new or additional impacts on any European Site.

- 8.4.5. I am satisfied that the proposed alterations would not be likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 European Site and that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment for the proposed alterations is not required.

9.0 Conditions of the Permission

- 9.1. I note that s.146B makes no provision for the making of alterations subject to conditions. Notwithstanding this, I am satisfied that the subject alterations, if approved, will be subject to the conditions associated with the parent permission and which will address matters, including construction management (which includes all environmental commitments), protection of archaeological heritage, surface water and implementation of all mitigation measures.

10.0 Recommendation

- 10.1. I recommend that the Commission decide that: (a) the making of the alterations subject of this request do constitute the making of a material alteration of the terms of the development as permitted under ABP-309491-21; and (b) the proposed alterations will not give rise to significant environmental effects or significant effects on the integrity of any European site, for the reasons stated below.

DRAFT ORDER

REQUEST received by An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 25th day of July 2025 from OBM Solar Limited under section 146B of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, to alter the terms of a strategic infrastructure development, granted under ABP-309491-21 for a 110kV substation, associated 110kV underground grid

connection, cabling and associated works at Srah, Coolcar and Clonin, Rhode, County Offaly.

WHEREAS the Commission made a decision to grant the proposed development, subject to conditions, for the above-mentioned development by order dated the 13th day of October 2021.

AND WHEREAS the proposed alteration is described as follows:

- The relocation of the permitted 110kV electrical substation compound and ancillary infrastructure by approximately 26m to the east of its permitted location;
- An increase in the total footprint of the electrical substation compound from c. 6,500 sq m to c. 8,350 sq m;
- The reconfiguration of infrastructure within the substation compound, including the EirGrid control building, Independent Power Producer control building and electrical apparatus;
- A decrease in the gross floor area of the Independent Power Producer control building from 252 sq m to c. 197 sq m and an increase in height from 6.1m to c. 6.75m;
- A decrease in height of the EirGrid control building from 8.55m to c. 8.51m;
- The realignment of the underground electrical cables within the public road corridor and its redesign to provide for a trench depth of c. 1.3m and a width of c. 0.6m;
- A modification in the number of joint bays from 6 no. to 'up to 6 no.' and the revised siting of joint bays; and,
- The completion of all associated ancillary site development works.

AND WHEREAS the Commission decided, in accordance with section 146B(2)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that the proposed alterations would result in a material alteration to the terms of the development, the subject of the approval,

AND WHEREAS having regard to the issues involved, the Commission decided, in accordance with section 146B(8)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as

amended, to invite submissions or observations from the public in relation to the matter,

AND WHEREAS having considered all of the documents on file and the Inspector's report, the Commission considered that the making of the proposed alteration would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment or on any European Site,

NOW THEREFORE in accordance with section 146B(3)(b)(ii)(I) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, the Commission hereby alters the abovementioned decision so that the approved development shall be altered in accordance with the plans and particulars received by An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 25th day of July 2025, for the reasons and considerations set out below.

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In coming to its decision, the Commission had regard to the following:

- (a) The limited nature, scale and extent of the proposed alterations, when considered in the context of the overall development permitted under ABP-309491-21,
- (b) the examination of the environmental impacts, including in relation to European Sites, carried out in the course of that application,
- (c) The absence of any significant new or additional environmental impacts arising as a result of the proposed alterations,
- (d) The documentation and submissions on file, including submissions in response to the public notices, and
- (e) The report of the Inspector.

The Commission was satisfied that the information before it was adequate to undertake a screening for appropriate assessment and a screening for environmental impact assessment in respect of the proposed alteration.

Appropriate Assessment Screening

In conducting a screening exercise for appropriate assessment, the Commission considered the nature, scale and context of the proposed alteration, the documentation and submissions on file, and the assessment of the Inspector in relation to the potential for effects on European Sites. In undertaking the screening exercise, the Commission accepted the analysis and conclusions of the Inspector. The Commission concluded that, by itself and in combination with other development in the vicinity, the proposed alterations would not be likely to have significant effects on any other European Site in view of their conservation objectives. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (and submission of an NIS) is not, therefore, required. In reaching this conclusion, the Commission took no account of mitigation measures intending to avoid or reduce the potentially harmful effects of the development on any European site.

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

Having regard to: -

- (a) The parent permission granted under ABP-309491-21, which the subject alterations seek to amend;
- (b) The limited nature and scale of the proposed alterations;
- (c) The location of the proposed alterations, primarily within the footprint of the permitted development;
- (d) the absence of any significant environmental sensitivity in the vicinity;
- (e) the location of the development outside of any sensitive location specified in section 146B(7)(a)(vi) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended;
- (f) the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

The Commission concluded that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and that an environmental impact assessment report is not required.

Conclusions on Proper Planning and Sustainable Development:

Having regard to:

- the nature and details of the parent permission, ABP-309491-21,
- the character of the alterations, including their limited scale and form,
- the location of the proposed alterations, primarily within the footprint of the existing site,
- the absence of any significant new or additional environmental impacts arising as a result of the proposed alterations, and
- the report of the Commission's inspector, which is adopted,

The Commission concluded that the making of the proposed alteration would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.

Niall Haverty

Senior Planning Inspector

26th March 2026

Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	ACP-323215-25
Proposed Development Summary	Request to alter the terms of the previously permitted 110kV substation, associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works (permitted under case Ref. No. ABP-309491-21)
Development Address	Srah, Coolcar and Clonin, Rhode, Co. Offaly
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a 'Project'	
<input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1.	Proceed to Q3
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994.	No Screening required.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.	N/A
4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted	
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Form 3 - EIA Screening Determination

A. CASE DETAILS		
An Coimisiún Pleanála Case Reference	ACP-323215-25	
Development Summary	Request to alter the terms of the previously permitted 110kV substation, associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works (permitted under case Ref. No. ABP-309491-21)	
	Yes / No / N/A	Comment (if relevant)
1. Was a Screening Determination carried out by the PA?	N/A	
2. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?	Yes	Contained in document entitled 'Environmental Impact Assessment Screening: Schedule 7A Information'
3. Has an AA screening report or NIS been submitted?	Yes	Natura Impact Statement Addendum submitted.
4. Is a IED/ IPC or Waste Licence (or review of licence) required from the EPA? If YES has the EPA commented on the need for an EIAR?	No	
5. Have any other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment which have a significant bearing on the project been carried out pursuant to other relevant Directives – for example SEA	No	

B. EXAMINATION	Yes/ No/ Uncertain	Briefly describe the nature and extent and Mitigation Measures (where relevant) (having regard to the probability, magnitude (including population size affected), complexity, duration, frequency, intensity, and reversibility of impact) Mitigation measures –Where relevant specify features or measures proposed by the applicant to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment? Yes/ No/ Uncertain
1. Characteristics of proposed development (including demolition, construction, operation, or decommissioning)			
1.1 Is the project significantly different in character or scale to the existing surrounding or environment?	Yes	The permitted substation development and associated solar farm have not yet been constructed and the lands are currently in agricultural use or form part of the public road. I consider that the proposed alterations will not be significantly different in character or scale to the permitted development.	No
1.2 Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works cause physical changes to the locality (topography, land use, waterbodies)?	Yes	The permitted substation development and associated solar farm have not yet been constructed and the lands are currently in agricultural use or form part of the public road. I consider that the proposed alterations will not result in any significant physical changes to the locality in terms of land use, topography or waterbodies when compared against the permitted development.	No

<p>1.3 Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy, especially resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Construction of the proposed alterations to the permitted development will utilise relatively minor additional quantities of standard construction materials such as concrete, aggregates, steel etc. This is primarily associated with the increased footprint of the substation compound and access tracks etc. and is not likely to be significant. No additional natural resource use in the operational phase.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>1.4 Will the project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances which would be harmful to human health or the environment?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Construction of the proposed alterations will entail the use of plant and machinery that utilises hydrocarbons, oils, hydraulic fluids etc. The nature and range of machinery and construction activities is likely to be similar to that already permitted. Potential impacts can be effectively avoided with standard good practice construction methodologies. Conditions 3 and 8 of the 'parent' permission require implementation of all mitigation measures contained in the NIS, Biodiversity Management Plan and Environmental Report and in accordance with a CEMP to be agreed with the planning authority. No potential impacts arise in the operational phase.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>1.5 Will the project produce solid waste, release pollutants or any hazardous / toxic / noxious substances?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Construction of the proposed alterations will entail the use of plant and machinery that utilises hydrocarbons, oils, hydraulic fluids etc. Potential impacts can be effectively avoided with standard good practice construction methodologies. Conditions 3 and 8 of the 'parent' permission require implementation of all mitigation measures contained</p>	<p>No</p>

		in the NIS, Biodiversity Management Plan and Environmental Report and in accordance with a CEMP to be agreed with the planning authority. No potential impacts arise in the operational phase.	
1.6 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	Yes	Potential construction phase impacts as detailed above. These can be effectively mitigated through implementation of the CEMP, NIS and Env. Report mitigation measures and the conditions attached to the 'parent' permission.	No
1.7 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	No	The proposed alterations, which relate to reconfiguration of the design and layout of the substation and minor changes to the grid connection are not likely to result in any significant additional noise, vibration or release of light/heat/energy/electromagnetic radiation compared to the permitted development.	No
1.8 Will there be any risks to human health, for example due to water contamination or air pollution?	Yes	Potential construction phase impacts as detailed above. These can be effectively mitigated through implementation of the CEMP, NIS and Env. Report mitigation measures and the conditions attached to the 'parent' permission.	No
1.9 Will there be any risk of major accidents that could affect human health or the environment?	No	The proposed alterations are not likely to result in a risk or major accidents or to be at risk of such major accidents. The site is relatively flat and not likely to be susceptible to stability issues and there is no recorded flood risk in the area. The conditions attached to the 'parent' permission require construction to be undertaken in accordance with a	No

		CEMP and related good practice mitigation measures.	
1.10 Will the project affect the social environment (population, employment)	No	The proposed alterations are not likely to have any material impact on population, employment or other social environmental factors.	No
1.11 Is the project part of a wider large scale change that could result in cumulative effects on the environment?	No	Proposed alterations are associated with a permitted substation development that was subject to EIA screening.	No
2. Location of proposed development			
2.1 Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or have the potential to impact on any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European site (SAC/ SPA/ pSAC/ pSPA) - NHA/ pNHA - Designated Nature Reserve - Designated refuge for flora or fauna - Place, site or feature of ecological interest, the preservation/conservation/ protection of which is an objective of a development plan/ LAP/ draft plan or variation of a plan 	Yes	The site is not located within or immediately adjacent to any European Sites or NHA/pNHA. There are 8 No. European Sites within 15km. The closest NHAs/pNHAs are Grand Canal pNHA, 3km to the south, and Black Castle Bog NHA, 2.8km to the east. The only natural heritage site with potential connectivity is the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232), c. 14km away which is connected via the Yellow (Castlejordan) River which discharges to the River Boyne. As detailed in the AA section of this report, the proposed alterations are not likely to adversely affect the integrity of that site.	No
2.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, for example: for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?	No	I do not consider the substation site and grid connection cable route to be particularly sensitive from a biodiversity perspective and consider that potential impacts can be effectively mitigated through the implementation of the measures associated with	No

		the permitted 'parent' development, including the BMP, the Environmental Report and the Japanese Knotweed Management Plan, the majority of which comprise relatively standard good practice construction methods and approaches..	
2.3 Are there any other features of landscape, historic, archaeological, or cultural importance that could be affected?	No	Site is in a rural area and includes agricultural lands and public roadway. No known features of particular historic, archaeological or cultural importance.	No
2.4 Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, for example: forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?	No	Site is in a rural area and includes agricultural lands and public roadway. No known features of particular historic, archaeological or cultural importance.	No
2.5 Are there any water resources including surface waters, for example: rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or groundwaters which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?	Yes	There are a number of watercourses and drainage ditches in the vicinity of the site which drain toward the Yellow River to the north of the site. The site is not within an area identified as being at risk of flooding and surface water quality can be protected through standard mitigation measures as detailed in the CEMP associated with the permitted development.	No
2.6 Is the location susceptible to subsidence, landslides or erosion?	No	Substation site and surrounding lands are relatively flat agricultural lands and do not appear to be susceptible to subsidence, landslide or erosion. The cable route is within the public roadway and thus is not likely to be susceptible either.	No
2.7 Are there any key transport routes (e.g. National primary Roads) on or around the location which are	No	Proposed alterations will only affect local roads which are not key transport routes. Standard construction	No

susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?		traffic management measures can effectively mitigate any potential impacts.	
2.8 Are there existing sensitive land uses or community facilities (such as hospitals, schools etc) which could be affected by the project?	No	Substation site is in a rural area and grid connection route is within a public road.	No
3. Any other factors that should be considered which could lead to environmental impacts			
3.1 Cumulative Effects: Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulative effects during the construction/ operation phase?	No	Having regard to the limited nature and scale of the proposed alterations, I do not consider that they will give rise to significant cumulative impacts on any environmental factors.	No
3.2 Transboundary Effects: Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No	Project is in County Offaly in the midlands with no potential transboundary effects.	No
3.3 Are there any other relevant considerations?	No		No
C. CONCLUSION			
No real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EIAR Not Required	
Real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	EIAR Required	
D. MAIN REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS			
Having regard to: - (i) The parent permission granted under ABP-309491-21, which the subject alterations seek to amend; (ii) The limited nature and scale of the proposed alterations;			

- (iii) The location of the proposed alterations, primarily within the footprint of the permitted development;
- (iv) the absence of any significant environmental sensitivity in the vicinity;
- (v) the location of the development outside of any sensitive location specified in section 146B(7)(a)(vi) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended;
- (vi) the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

The Commission concluded that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and that an environmental impact assessment report is not required.

Inspector _____

Date _____

Approved (DP/ADP) _____

Date _____