Inspector's Report
ACP-323456-25

Development	Proposed development of a 110kV/20MW distribution station
Location	Fostertown, Caberstown, Trim, Co. Meath
Planning Authority	Meath County Council
Applicant(s)	The Electricity Supply Board
Type of Application	Application for approval under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended.
Prescribed Bodies	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Observers	None.
Date of Site Inspection	08th October 2025.
Inspector	Paul Kelly

Contents

1.0 Introduction

This case concerns an application for strategic infrastructure under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. It is made on foot of pre-application discussions with the Commission under ABP-317654-23 for a proposed development of a 110Kv/20MW distribution station, where the Commission decided that the development would fall within the scope of section 182A of the Act and would be strategic infrastructure.

The project is called the “Fosterstown Distribution Substation” and its objective is to add capacity and improve distribution security of supply for the Trim area, Co. Meath.

2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1 The subject site has an area of approx. 2.75ha and is located in a rural area of County Meath in the townland of Carberstown. It is located on the western side of the R160 (Trim to Longwood) regional road approx. 3.5km south of the centre of Trim. The site presently consists of agricultural grassland and is traversed by the existing Corduff-Mullingar 110kV overhead lines. The proposed development will loop into this transmission line. The site is generally flat, with levels ranging from 60.36 mAOD (Malin Head) to 62.45 mAOD east to west.

2.2 The surrounding area is predominantly characterised by large agricultural fields and grasslands mainly used for grazing with strong field boundaries consisting of mature hedgerows and treelines. There is also a typical pattern of one-off rural housing in the area including ribbon developments, with an established ribbon development of 5 no. dwellings on the R160 directly opposite the subject site. The County Meath Golf Club is located approx. 250m to the south of the subject site (on the same side of the R160) and the South Meath Golf Club is located approx. 200m to the north of the subject site (on the opposing side of the R160).

2.3 The site comprises of a small field fronting onto the R160 and a connecting larger field to the rear (west). Access is proposed through the smaller field which is presently occupied by a limited derelict barn structure (hay shed) and a derelict single storey dwelling. It is proposed to demolish the barn structure. The site of the

proposed substation development is set back approx. 160m from the road edge within the larger field to the west. As a result of this configuration, the proposed substation development benefits from screening afforded by strong intervening field boundaries. On approach from the south on the R160 the site has no visibility owing to mature vegetation, particularly that within the environment of the County Meath Golf Club. On approach from the north (from Trim) the site has limited short range visibility, assimilated within existing mature vegetation and mitigated both by its setback distance and the undulations of intervening topography.

2.4 There are no mapped watercourses or permanent waterbodies within or adjoining the site, which is located within Flood Zone C. There are no natural heritage designations within or adjoining the subject site. There are no recorded archaeological monuments within the subject site.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1 The applicant is seeking permission for the construction of a 110kV/20MW electrical substation. The existing 38kV substation at Trim is overloaded on normal feeding and experiencing security of supply issues. The purpose of the proposed development is to add capacity and improve distribution security of supply to the Trim area, Co. Meath. This will be achieved by reducing demand on the Trim 38kV station, transferring all 20kV feeders to the new station and connecting all major new loads at 20kV to the new station. The Trim 38 kV station will be retained to ensure N-1 capability of the 10kV Trim urban networks and to provide additional security of supply for the area.

3.2 The development will comprise:

- A substation compound (c.4,340 sq.m) with c2.6m high palisade perimeter fencing;
- A seven bay 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) building (c.707 sq.m; c.13m in height);
- Two 110kV Double Circuit Overhead Line End Masts (c. 16m in height) and associated outdoor electrical equipment to facilitate underground cable

connections between the existing transmission circuit and the proposed GIS building;

- Two 110kV transformers in transformer bays (c. 4.6m in height) with associated electrical equipment);
- An internal access road (c. 6m wide); and
- All other associated and ancillary site development works including the provision of site services; fencing; gates; lighting; temporary construction compound and temporary overhead line tower to facilitate line diversion; upgraded access from the R160; drainage; and hedgerow removal.

3.3 The proposed development will be constructed in two broad phases. The first phase will entail civil construction works including site preparation, construction of main building, structures and site finishing works, and it is envisaged these works will take approx. 12 months to complete. The second phase entails the electrical installation works and commissioning, and it is envisaged that these works will take approx. 18 months subject to availability of required outages (of the 110kV overhead line from the transmission system), time of year, weather and availability of specialised equipment.

3.4 The application to the Commission includes:

- Cover Letter prepared by the applicant.
- Completed and signed SID Application Form.
- Copies of Notification Letters.
- Copies of Public Notices.
- Drawings, technical plans and a drawing schedule.
- A Planning and Environmental Considerations Report ("PECR") prepared by ESB Engineering and Major Projects which includes:

    - Appendix A – An Bord Pleanala SID Determination
    - Appendix B – Engineering Services Report ("ESR")
    - Appendix C – Flood Risk Assessment ("FRA")
    - Appendix D – Noise Impact Assessment ("NIA") prepared by Alive Environmental Limited.
    - Appendix E – Traffic and Transport Assessment ("TTA") prepared by ORS
    - Appendix F – Cultural Heritage Appraisal ("CHA") Report prepared by Byrne Mullins & Associates
    - Appendix G – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ("LVIA") prepared by Macro Works Ltd.

- Appendix H – Landscape Mitigation Plan ("LMP").

- Screening for Appropriate Assessment prepared by ESB Engineering and Major Projects
- Outline Construction and Environmental Management Plan ("OCEMP") prepared by ESB Engineering and Major Projects
- LVIA Photomontages
- CDs (electronic version) of all documents and drawings.

There is no information on prior community consultation. The applicant has created a standalone website for the development: www.esbfosterstownsubstation.ie.

4.0 Consultations

4.1 Prescribed Bodies

Details of the application to the Board were circulated to the following prescribed bodies:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities, Water and Energy.
- Meath County Council.
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI).
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII).
- Health & Safety Authority (HSA).
- The Heritage Council.
- An Taisce.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

4.2 Submissions Received

4.2.1 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)

In a report dated 1st September 2025, TII request An Coimisiún Pleanála to have regard to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the DOECLG *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines* in the assessment and determination of the application.

4.2.2. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) – National Monuments.

In a report dated 10th October 2025 the DHLGH notes that the AIA submitted in support of the application identifies that previously unknown sub-surface archaeological features or deposits may potentially be present. On the basis that the AIA was informed by desktop assessment and walkover survey only, the DHLGH advise that a condition should be included in any grant of permission requiring (inter alia) pre-development testing in accordance with sample Conditions C3, C5 and C6 of the OPR Practice Note PN03: Planning Conditions (October 2022).

The DHLGH submission did not include comments on nature conservation.

4.3 **Public Submissions**

None.

4.4 **Planning Authority (Meath County Council ("MCC"))**

The planning authority submitted a Planning Report on the proposed development (dated 06/10/2025) to the Coimisiún on the 9th October 2022.

The report notes the location of the proposed development, the development description, the planning history and applicable policy context of the site. MCC accept that the principle of development is acceptable on the subject site, noting National Strategic Outcome NSO(8) of the National Planning Framework (NPF) in so far as it relates to the need to develop and upgrade the electricity grid to meet increasing demand and support renewable energy. In relation to the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (MCDP), it is acknowledged that the site is located on rural lands where utility structures are permissible and that the proposed development accords with policy objectives INF POL 46, 47 and 50 of the MCDP which support the development of enhanced electricity networks to meet current and future needs.

Internal reports received from the MCC Transportation and Environment Sections state no objection to the proposed development from a roads and traffic safety, flood risk and drainage perspective. The report welcomes the applicant's proposal to retain the existing derelict cottage, which is located within the subject site, and opines that an alternative boundary treatment to the proposed palisade fencing should be sought on the basis that it would be visible to the public and inappropriate in a rural setting.

Otherwise, the report notes the findings of the LVIA, AASR and PECR and states that it is for An Coimisiún Pleanála to satisfy itself that the proposed development will not give rise to significant landscape visual impacts or residential amenity impacts or require the submission of a Stage 2 Natura Impact Statement or Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

The report from MCC sets out a number of recommended conditions in the event that planning permission is granted, this includes a cash deposit to secure reinstatement of public roads. MCC also asks the Coimisiún to consider the Meath County Development Contribution Scheme 2024-2029 and supports the imposition of a community fund condition in accordance with the provisions of Section 182B(6) of the Act to finance an education and awareness program on renewable energy and energy conservation for the community. This is assessed at Section 9.9 (Table D) of this report.

4.4 Applicant's Response

The submissions received were circulated to the applicant and the applicant was invited to respond not later than 4th December 2025. A response was received from the applicant dated 3rd December 2025. The applicant's response notes the submissions received from the prescribed bodies and states that it is happy to accept the archaeological condition recommended by DHLGH. In relation to the report of MCC the applicant states that it has no objection to the 6no. conditions recommended in the MCC report. The applicant does however object to the inclusion of a community fund condition on the basis that such a condition is unnecessary given that the proposed development will improve continuity of electricity supply, will facilitate increased renewables and the ESB runs many campaigns to promote renewable energy and energy conservation as part of its statutory role.

I am satisfied that the matters raised in the submissions are addressed in the application particulars and/or can be addressed by condition. The submissions do not give rise to the need for further information. These matters are all collectively addressed in my assessment at Section 9 of this report.

5.0 Planning History

There is no recent planning history on the subject site (*within the last 27 years*), and a limited rural residential and domestic type planning history within the local environment of the site. The following planning applications are noted in relation to the proposed development:

Table A : Planning History			
App. Ref. No.	**Proposed Development**	**Location**	**Decision & Date**
90/923	Erection of a bungalow and septic tank.	Within the subject site.	Refuse permission. 31/12/1990
98/1221	Replace existing house with a new single storey house and install a biocycle wastewater treatment system with irrigation area including demolition of existing outbuildings.	Within the subject site. *Adjoining the aforementioned site to the south.	Refuse permission. 08/09/1998.
TA20130	Alter and extend dwelling, build a domestic garage, re-site entrance.	Opposing the site on the other side of the R160.	Permission granted subject to 8 no. conditions. 04/06/2002
TA30311	Removal of septic tank and upgrade to proprietary domestic effluent treatment system.	Opposing the site on the other side of the R160.	Permission granted subject to 4 no. conditions. 06/04/2004.
TA50460	Revision to (aforementioned) plan.reg.no. TA30311 involving raising roof level, single and part two-storey extension to side and rear and detached garage to rear.	Opposing the site on the other side of the R160.	Refuse permission. 15/02/2006.
TA191337	Extension to dwelling and conversion of garage.	Opposing the site on the other side of the R160.	Permission granted subject to 12 no. conditions. 18/06/2020.
23/770	Retention permission for existing 7 bay driving range building (101 sq.m) and planning permission for new 7 bay driving range.	Approx. 370m to the southwest.	Permission granted subject to 2 no. conditions. 20/09/2023.
TA60164	Single storey extension to front to include new porch together with modifications to existing elevations.	Approx. 300m south on the opposing side of the R160.	Permission Granted subject to 4 no. conditions. 01/06/2006.
25/60877	Retention of pitched roof over existing domestic garage, domestic tool/garden shed, back porch with archway, disabled ramp access, modifications to elevations and all associated works.	Approx. 300m south on the opposing side of the R160.	New application.

Otherwise, the available planning history associated with the County Meath Golf

Club in relation to the Clubhouse, pro shop and carparking (TA30155, 00/1952 & 92/803); and the South Meath Golf Club in relation to the Clubhouse and entrance (93/485, 93/67 & 97/145), is noted.

6.0 EU, National and Regional Legislation/Policy Context

6.1 EU, national and regional policy documents are relevant in respect of the proposed development and include:

- EU Directive 2009/28/EC and Directive 2018/2001/EU (Renewable Energy).
- National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040.
- Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply (November 2021)
- National Energy Security Framework (April 2022)
- National Energy and Climate Action Plan 2021-2030 ("NECP")
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended.
- Climate Action Plan, 2024 and 2025
- Ireland's Long-term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions 2024
- The National Adaptation Framework; Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland (June 2024)
- Electricity and Gas Sectoral Plan 2025
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030
- Eastern & Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031.

The legislation and policy documents essentially promote, and set targets for, transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society and support the development of associated infrastructure, including the development of the electricity transmission system, to support this transition (e.g., to accommodate more diverse flows), subject to environmental safeguards.

6.2 **Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework ("NPF"), First Revision of the NPF, the National Development Plan ("NDP") and revised NDP.**

6.2.1 Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more resilient and sustainable future. The NPF and the NDP combine to form Project Ireland 2040.

National Planning Framework

6.2.2 The NPF sets out to deliver its spatial strategy through a set of National Strategic Outcomes ("NSO's"), including: 'Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society' which establishes a national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

6.2.3 The first revision of the NPF has been approved by both Houses of the Oireachtas, following the decision of the Government to approve the final revised NPF on 8th April, 2025. The 'First Revision' introduces regional renewable electricity capacity allocations for each of the three Regional Assemblies to be achieved by 2030 which for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Area is an additional 5,260MW or 44% of the National share in 2030. This is the minimum required to meet the 2030 emission reductions in the electricity sector.

6.2.4 The NPF recognises that Ireland's national energy policy is focussed on three pillars: (1) sustainability, (2) security of supply, and (3) competitiveness.

The NPF recognises that in order to meet Regional Renewable Electricity Capacity Allocations and to ensure that the electricity can be both accepted on the national grid and brought to demand users, the development and expansion of the electricity grid at a national and local level is required in a coordinated manner and that it is imperative that the national grid is developed and upgraded to accommodate increasing levels of demand and supply. It is a National Policy Objective of the NPF (*First Revision*) to:

"*Support the development and upgrading of the national electricity grid infrastructure, including supporting the delivery of renewable electricity generating development*." -**NPO71**.

National Development Plan

6.2.5 The NDP 2018-2027 sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the implementation of the National Planning Framework. The Plan recognises that energy supply is vital for the proper functioning of society and the economy and that ensuring the continued security of energy supply is a strategic investment priority at national level requiring investment in grid infrastructure, interconnection and storage. It also recognises that Ireland's energy system requires radical transformation and investment in electricity infrastructure if Ireland is to realise its objective of transitioning by 2050 to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy as detailed in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015, as amended, Climate Action Plan and the National Adaptation Framework.

6.2.6 Launched on 22nd July 2025 the revised national development plan provides for increased investment in priority infrastructure including up to €3.5 billion to support investment in electricity grid infrastructure over 2026-2030 to enable both EirGrid and the ESB to significantly increase capital investment and expand electricity transmission and distribution network infrastructure.

6.3 **Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply (November 2021)**

The Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply sets out a number of updates to national policy in the context of the Programme for Government commitments relevant to the electricity sector and includes explicit Government approval that (inter alia): '*it is appropriate for additional electricity transmission and distribution grid infrastructure, electricity interconnection and electricity storage to be permitted and developed in order to support the growth of renewable energy and to support security of electricity supply'*.

6.4 **National Energy Security Framework (April 2022)**

The National Energy Security Framework provides an overarching and comprehensive response to Ireland's energy security needs in the context of the war in Ukraine. The Framework sets out the government's action in response to increased demand as the country emerged from the Covid-19 public health pandemic, coupled with the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the associated sanctions on Russia, which brought new challenges for the security of energy supplies across Europe. The Framework responds to these challenges across three themes which includes ensuring security of energy supply.

6.5 **National Energy and Climate Action Plan 2021-2030 ("NECP")**

The updated NECP reflects Ireland and the European Union's increased ambition on energy and climate targets at the National and European level in a range of areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and land-use, to enable the EU to meet its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030. In line with the programme for Government it sets out key policies and measures including to: '*Develop, maintain and upgrade the electricity and gas networks to ensure that our energy system remains safe, secure and ready to meet increased demand'*.

6.6 **Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015, as amended.**

6.6.1. The Act commits Ireland to the objective of becoming a carbon-neutral economy by 2050, reducing emissions by 51% by the end of the decade. Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021 amends the principal act such that Section 15(1) requires:

"(*1) A relevant body shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with—*

a) the most recent approved climate action plan,

b) the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,

c) the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,

d) the furtherance of the national climate objective, and

e) the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State".

"Relevant body" means a prescribed body or a public body.

6.7 **Climate Action Plan 2024 ("CAP24") and 2025 ("CAP25")**

6.7.1. Under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015, as amended, Irelands national climate objective requires the State to transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by no later than the end of 2050. This national climate objective meets Irelands obligations under EU and international treaties, including the Paris Agreement (2015), the European Green Deal and the EU's objective to reduce GHG emissions

by at least 51% by 2030 (compared to 2018) and achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

6.7.2 To meet its targets and obligations CAP 24 sets a course for Ireland to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net-zero no later than 2050. In terms of the electricity sector a 75% reduction in emissions based on 2018 levels is required by 2030 and CAP 24 provides that central to achieving this is the strategic increase in the share of renewable electricity to 80% by 2030 including ambitious targets of deploying 9GW of onshore wind, 8GW of solar power and at least 5GW from offshore wind projects.

6.7.3 CAP 2025 was published on 15th April 2025. It re-affirms the previous commitment to increase the share of renewable electricity generation to 50% by 2025 and 80% by 2030.

6.8 **Ireland's Long-term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions 2024**

The National long-term Climate Action Strategy, entitled Ireland's Long-term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions 2024, sets out indicative pathways, beyond 2030, towards achieving carbon neutrality for Ireland by 2050. The Strategy provides a pathway to a whole-of-society transformation and serves as a vital link between shorter-term Climate Action Plans and Carbon Budgets and the longer-term objective of the European Climate Law and Ireland's National Climate Objective.

6.9 **The National Adaptation Framework; Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland (June 2024)**

6.9.1 The most recent approved national adaptation framework, the National Adaptation Framework; Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland June 2024 (NAF) is Ireland's second statutory National Adaptation Framework (NAF) and was published on 5th of June 2024.

6.9.2 The NAF and its successors do not identify specific locations or propose adaptation measures or projects in individual sectors, but sets out the context to ensure local authorities, regions and key sectors can assess the key risks and vulnerabilities of climate change, implement climate resilience actions and ensure climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all local, regional and national policy making.

6.9.3 The NAF identifies 13 (previously 12) priority sectors under 7 lead Departments that are required to prepare sectoral adaptation plans under the Climate Act in accordance with the Sectoral Planning Guidelines for Climate Change Adaptation which were published in 2018 and updated in 2024. The original 12 sectoral Plans prepared in 2019 and a new sectoral Plan for tourism were updated in November 2025. The following Electricity and Gas Sectoral Plan is relevant to the subject proposal.

6.10 **Electricity and Gas Sectoral Plan 2025**

6.10.1 This is the second Sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Pan for the Electricity and Gas Networks Sector and the Plan is designed to build long term resilience against the risks posed by climate change to the electricity and gas networks. The plan focuses on identifying vulnerabilities such as extreme weather and changing temperature patterns and how they could affect the electricity and gas networks. Specific measures to minimise the potential negative effects of climate change are outlined including strengthening sector resilience, avoiding maladaptive outcomes (such as increasing GHG emissions), supporting just resilience and maximising the co-benefits of adaptation actions (e.g use of nature-based solutions). The Plan also seeks to exploit opportunities and the potential benefits arising from climate change adaptation such as increased energy efficiency, the development of new renewable energy sources and innovative approaches to strengthen energy network resilience.

6.11 **National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2023-2030**

6.11.1 The NBAP includes five strategic objectives aimed at addressing existing challenges and new and emerging issues associated with biodiversity loss. Section 59B(1) of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000 (as amended) requires the Board, as a public body, to have regard to the objectives and targets of the NBAP in the performance of its functions, to the extent that they might affect or relate to the functions of the Board. (The impact of a development on biodiversity, including species and habitats, can be assessed at a European, National and Local Level and is taken into account in the Board's decision-making having regard to the Habitats and Birds Directives, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, Water Framework Directive and other relevant legislation, strategy and policy where applicable).

6.12 **Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region ("RSES") 2019-2031.**

6.12.1 The RSES is a strategic plan which identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs). It seeks to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic and climate policies of Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and investment framework for the region. It includes a Spatial Strategy, a Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), an Economic Strategy, a Climate Action Strategy and an Investment Framework.

6.12.2 Chapter 10 'Infrastructure' of the RSES recognises that the sustainable growth of the Region requires the provision of services and infrastructure in a plan led manner to ensure that there is adequate capacity to support future development. In relation to 'Energy' it recognises that a "secure and resilient supply of energy is critical to a well-functioning region" and it supports the "development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity and the development of enhanced electricity networks as well as new transmission infrastructure projects" which may be brought forward in the lifetime of the RSES under EirGrid's (2017) Grid Development Strategy.

It is a Regional Policy Objective (RPO) of the RSES to:

RPO 10.20 - Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Strategy…….

RPO 10.22 - Support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission and distribution network to facilitate planned growth and transmission/ distribution of a renewable energy focused generation across the major demand centres to support an island population of 8 million people……

RPO 10.23 - Support EirGrid's Implementation Plan 2017 – 2022 and Transmission Development Plan (TDP) 2016 and any subsequent plans prepared during the lifetime of the RSES that facilitate the timely delivery of

major investment projects subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process…….

7.0 Local Policy Context

7.1 Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (as varied) ("MCDP")

7.2 The consolidated Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Inc. Variations No.1, 2 and 3) is the operative plan. The Coimisiún may wish to note that Variation No.4 to the MCDP, which was published on 16th May 2025 until 16th June 2025, concerns the Maynooth & Environs LAP and is not therefore salient to this SID application.

7.3 The proposed development site is located 3.6km south of Trim, which is a designated 'self-sustaining' growth town in the core strategy of the MCDP. The population of Trim grew by +11% between 2011 and 2016 from 8,268 to 9,194. It has a core strategy household allocation of 1,333 units under the MDCP and a strong population projection of 11,444 by 2027.

The site is located within the rural area of the Plan with the landuse zoning objective to "*protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture, forestry and rural-related enterprise, biodiversity, the rural landscape and the built and cultural heritage*". The MCDP guidance states that 'utility structures' and 'sustainable energy installations' are permitted uses – Section 11.14.6, Chapter 11, Development Management Standards and Landuse Zoning Objectives.

7.4 **Chapter 6** sets out the Infrastructure Strategy of the Plan and Section 6.15.4 relates to Energy Networks Infrastructure. The Strategy recognises that the two main energy sources serving the Country are electricity and gas. It considers that the importance of existing network upgrades and enhanced capacity is essential to facilitate the future economic and residential development of the County in line with the Core Settlement Strategies. It also recognises that strengthening the national grid is important for a number of reasons, including improving security of supply (capacity and reliability) necessary to attract high-end enterprise.

It is a policy of the MCDP to:

INF POL 46	To support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of

	the County and to facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that may be brought forward during the lifetime of the plan including the delivery and integration, including linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.

INF POL 47	To co-operate and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future business and enterprise needs of the County.

INF POL 48	To ensure that energy transmission infrastructure follows best practice with regard to siting, design and least environmental impact in the interest of landscape protection.

INF POL 50	To seek to avoid the sterilisation of lands proximate to key public transport corridors such as rail, when future energy transmission routes/pipelines are being designed and provided.

INF POL 52	To seek to generally avoid the location of overhead lines in Natura 2000 sites unless it can be proven that they will not affect the integrity of the site in view of its conservation objectives i.e. by carrying out an appropriate assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

7.5 Development Management Standards are set out in Chapter 11 of the MCDP. It is noted that Section 11.8.4. 'Energy Networks' provides that the criteria set out in Section 11.8.1. will be taken into account in the assessment of energy developments, which includes:

DM OBJ 76	In the assessment of individual energy development proposals, the Council will take the following criteria into account: ▪ The proper planning and sustainable development of the area; ▪ The environmental and social impacts of the proposed development; ▪ Traffic impacts including details of haul routes; ▪ Impact of the development on the landscape, (please refer to Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment); ▪ Impact on protected Views and Prospects, (please refer to Appendix 10 Protected Views and Prospects); ▪ Impact on public rights of way and walking routes, (please refer to Appendix 12 Public Rights of Way); ▪ Connection to the National Grid (where applicable); ▪ Mitigation features, where impacts are inevitable; ▪ Protection of designated areas - NHAs, SPAs and SACs, areas of archaeological potential and scenic importance; ▪ Proximity to structures that are listed for protection, national monuments, etc. (Please refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendices 6-9 inclusive for further details); ▪ Cumulative Impact of proposal.

7.6 The proposed upgrades to the national and regional road network, including bypass/relief roads and a proposed M1-N1 link road, are shown on Map 5.2 of the MCDP. The proposed development site is removed from the proposed upgrade works. The proposed development site is outside the Dublin Airport Safety Zones identified on Map 5.4.2 of the MCDP. The 'protected views & prospects' of the MCDP are detailed on Map 8.6 and the proposed development is potentially considered to be within the viewshed of one such view (View ID 78) '*Boyne Valley from Derrindaly Bridge*'.

7.7. The proposed development is accessed from the regional R160 which is a 'strategic corridor' as identified on Map 9.2 of the MCDP. I note the restrictions on access which apply to certain categories of development (namely one-off rural housing) seeking access onto strategic corridors, and that this does not apply to the proposed development. The technical requirements for visibility splays for the subject category of development are not specifically prescribed in the MCDP, but the report from the MCC Transportation Department (included in the parent MCC report) requires visibility splays in accordance with TII document DN-GEO-03060.

8.0 Natural Heritage Designations

8.1 The nearest national and European designated sites are:

Table B: Designated National & European Sites <15km		
Site Code	Name	Location
(Site Code: 002299)	River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	1.3km southwest
(Site Code: 004232)	River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Protection Area (SPA)	1.5km west
(Site Code: 000557)	Rathmoylan Esker proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)	4km southeast
(Site Code: 001357)	Trim proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)	6km northeast
(Site Code: 002103).	Royal Canal proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA)	12km southwest
(Site Code: 001582)	Molerick Bog Natural Heritage Area (NHA)	12.5km southwest
(Site Code: 001324)	Jamestown Bog Natural Heritage Area (NHA)	12.5km north

9. Planning Assessment

9.1 Introduction

Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including all of the submissions received in relation to the application, and inspected the site, I consider that the main issues in the planning assessment relate to the following matters:

- Principle of development and Planning Policy
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Ecology
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
- Access, Roads and Traffic
- Noise Impact Assessment and Residential Amenity
- Flood Risk
- Conditions recommended by the Planning Authority and Other Matters.

Issues arising in respect of EIA are addressed in section 10.0 and Form 1 and Form 2 of this report.

Issues arising in respect of Appropriate Assessment are addressed in section 11.0 and Appendix 3 of this report.

Issues arising in respect of Water Framework Directive are addressed in Section 12.0 and Appendix 4 of this report.

9.2 Principle of Development and Compliance with Policy

9.2.1 As set out above, the proposed development comprises a 110kV/20MW substation which is required to add capacity and improve distribution security of supply for the Trim area, Co. Meath. The upgrade, maintenance and expansion of national grid electricity infrastructure developments are supported ‘in principle’ at all policy levels in order to ensure the continued security of energy supply which is vital for the proper functioning of society and the economy but also to ensure capacity for the radical transformation required if Ireland is to realise its climate targets.

9.2.2. At a national level the NPF recognises that in order to ensure electricity can be both accepted in the national grid and brought to demand users, the development and expansion of the grid at both a national and local level is required and that it is imperative that the national grid is developed and upgraded to accommodate increasing levels of demand and supply. I note National Policy Objective 71 which,

inter alia, seeks to "*support the development and upgrading of the national electricity grid infrastructure*". The continued security of energy supply is a strategic investment priority set out in the NDP and the revised NDP makes provision for increased expenditure of €3.5 billion over 2026-2030 to expand electricity transmission and distribution network infrastructure. Accordingly, support for the proposed development at a national level is confirmed.

9.2.2 At a regional level, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Region, recognises that a "secure and resilient supply of energy is critical to a well-functioning region" and through Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) 10.20, 10.22 & 10.23 it supports the "development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity and the development of enhanced electricity networks as well as new transmission infrastructure projects" which may be brought forward in the lifetime of the RSES under EirGrid's (2017) Grid Development Strategy.

9.2.3 At a local level, the Meath County Development Plan considers that existing network upgrades and enhanced capacity is essential to facilitate the future economic and residential development of the County in line with the Core Settlement Strategies, improve security of supply and attract high-end enterprise. The site is located on rural lands where guidance provided by the MCDP on the rural landuse zoning objective confirms that 'utility structures' are a permitted use. I am satisfied that the proposed development is consistent with the relevant Development Plan Policies INF POL 46 and INF POL 47 which support the development of enhanced electricity supplies and associated networks, and co-operation with statutory energy providers to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future business and enterprise needs of the County. The submission from MCC accepts the principle of development as set out at Section 4.4 of this report.

9.2.4 I am satisfied that the proposal generally complies with the national and regional policy provisions and investment priorities concerning electricity infrastructure and the infrastructure (energy) policy objectives of the Meath County Development Plan as set out in Section 7.0 of this report and discussed above. I note the strategic location of the proposed development so as to loop into the existing 110kV

overhead powerlines which traverse the site. Whilst the purpose of the proposed development is to provide security of distribution supply in the Trim area, I am satisfied that it is also consistent with national climate targets and objectives which are dependent upon strengthened electricity infrastructure, increased capacity and security of supply. In summary, I am satisfied that the principle of development is acceptable at this location subject to consideration of proper planning and sustainable development considerations arising including the criteria to be addressed in the assessment of individual energy development proposals set out in Development Management Objective DM OBJ 76 of the MCDP. This is addressed in the following sections of my report.

9.3. **Landscape & Visual Impact**

9.3.1 A Landscape Character Assessment of County Meath ("LCAM") was prepared as part of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. This LCAM is incorporated as Appendix A.05 to the current MCDP. The LCAM includes four generic areas of distinctive character which are called Landscape Character Types (LCT's) and which in turn are used to categorise twenty geographically specific Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The subject site is located within the Type 2 LCT 'lowland area' which covers the largest portion of Co, Meath and LCA6 'Central Lowlands', which is considered to have a 'High Value', 'moderate sensitivity' and being of 'regional importance'.

9.3.2 In terms of capacity to accommodate change the LCAM considers 'substations' to be generally large and prominent features and provides that their impact on landscape character should be determined by their visual prominence and size as well as their location in sensitive landscapes, archaeologically rich landscapes or areas within scenic views. The capacity assessment for the 'central lowlands' LCA6 appraises that it has medium capacity to accommodate 'overhead cables, substations and communications masts' due to the complexity of the area, which has a variety of land uses and a robust landscape structure. It is otherwise recognised that LCA6 is not as archaeologically rich as other areas, is not sensitive to change and has potential to screen developments although the loss of landscape features such as hedgerows should be minimised. I note that there are no scenic routes, protected structures, NIAH structures or geological sites in the area of the

proposed development with potential to be impacted. I also noted that the proposed development site is removed from the UNESCO World Heritage Site – Brú na Bóinne. There is a single 'protected view & prospect' to the west of the site (View ID78 as designated in the MCDP) which requires consideration.

9.3.3 Whilst the surrounding landscape is not identified as being particularly sensitive in terms of landscape value, the visual impacts of the proposed development on the local community and View ID78 must be considered. As a part of my assessment, I carried out a detailed inspection of the subject site and surrounding area. As outlined in Section 2.0 of my report, the rural landscape at this location is characterised predominantly by agricultural grassland fields enclosed my mature hedgerow and treelines, a typical pattern of one-off rural housing including ribbon development and recreational use consisting of golf courses within the vicinity of the site.

9.3.4. The primary infrastructure of the substation compound consists of a 110kV GIS Building and 2 no. external transformer bays. The GIS building has an overall height of 13m, and the transformer bays have a bund wall to a height of 8.7m. The tallest structures comprise the proposed towers at 16.250m of which there are two permanent and one temporary (associated with temporary overhead line diversion during construction works). For comparison, the existing double wooden pole set to be removed is 15m in height. The substation compound will be enclosed by a 2.6m high palisade fence within a 1.4m hight post & rail fence which will bound the site boundary.

Construction stage

9.3.5 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ("LVIA") (Appendix G) was submitted with the application. The LVIA finds that during the construction stage permanent change to the landscape will be limited to the removal of roadside vegetation to achieve visibility splays (along the R160) and the excavation of trenches to install conductors from the R160 to the substation site. The extent of hedgerow removal is limited to approx. 68m on the northern side of the site entrance and a narrow swathe within the site for the off-road portion of the trench route. The trench will be backfilled and will form the route of the site access road resulting in a permanent localised change. The LVIA finds that these works will not materially affect the study

areas landscape fabric or character. During construction phase the LVIA finds that the main landscape impacts will occur at the site of the proposed 110kV substation as a result of disturbance to the landform and land cover due primarily to excavations for foundations and the erection of temporary fencing, however significant modification or redistribution of subsoil is not anticipated due to the gentle undulations of the site. The LVIA finds that the main construction phase impacts on landscape character will be from construction activities, including the movement of heavy vehicles and the erection of tower cranes which will represent a notable increase in baseline activity for this rural site. The construction activities are however considered to be modest and temporary in duration with few visual receptors affected. On this basis the LVIA assesses the significance of construction stage impacts on the landscape as; 'moderate' within the sites immediate surroundings and quickly reducing to moderate-slight and imperceptible within the wider study area where activities will not be discernible.

Operational stage

9.3.6. At operational stage the LVIA finds that the proposed development once fully constructed will increase the intensity of electrical infrastructure in the immediate surroundings, and as a result of relative height and bulk, has the potential to impact the landscape character with the primary effect being an increased sense of industrialisation within a rural setting. However, the LVIA finds that it will not appear inappropriate or incongruous and will not significantly alter the wider landscape setting which is already marked by various productive lands uses and infrastructure. Specifically, the LVIA finds that operational phase magnitude of landscape impact is medium-low within the immediate vicinity of the site (within 1km) with the overall significance assessed as no greater than moderate-slight. Overall the LVIA finds that the proposed development is thematically linked to the existing development trends within the hinterland landscape of the study area and is likely to be perceived as an evolution of the existing electrical overhead line which passes through the study area, which will not markedly affect the prevailing landscape pattern or character and is appropriately sited in a robust landscape.

Viewpoints

9.3.7 The assessment of visual impacts in the LVIA is primarily considered through the assessment of four viewshed reference points representing various viewing distances, angles and receptor types. VP1 and VP2 are located in the Boyne Valley to the west of the site and VP1 is located at the 'protected view & prospect' in the MCDP (View ID No.78), otherwise the LVIA opines that the integrity and quality of the landscape features are not considered to contribute to any specific scenic value and therefore other views are not considered unique. VP1 and VP2 are assigned 'high-medium' and 'medium' sensitivity by the LVIA respectively which finds that the proposed development will be fully screened by existing vegetation and landform from both locations, and therefore the magnitude of impact will be negligible. VP3 is located on the R160 on approach to the site from Trim to the north. VP4 is located on the R160 in proximity to the site entrance and at a location which represents a number of residential receptors. These VP's are both assigned a 'medium-low' sensitivity by the LVIA which finds that the proposed development will be fully screened from VP3 and that the magnitude of impact will again be negligible. VP4 is located at much closer proximity to the proposed development site. The LVIA finds that from this location the upper portions of one of the towers, the proposed GIS building and a lightning monopole will be visible above and beyond the mature hedgerow in the middle ground, but the remainder of the development would be screened. The LVIA finds that the proposed development with use of muted tones, will have a sub-dominant visual presence and the magnitude of impact is deemed to be low. Overall, the LVIA finds that the significance of visual impacts was slight at VP4 and imperceptible at all other viewshed reference points.

9.3.8. The LVIA concludes that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant landscape and visual impacts.

9.3.9. I am satisfied that the proposed development will not become a prominent feature in the landscape, will have no skyline impact and will be visually screened and contained within existing field boundaries. It is reasonably set back from public roadways and residential properties, and the impacts will not be significant owing to the existing mature hedgerows and treelines, the low-lying nature of the lands and the landscape mitigations proposed. There are no other developments (existing or proposed) with which the proposed development could combine to result in significant cumulative landscape or visual impacts especially when considering

landscape fabric, topography, screening and distance. The conclusions of the LVIA are considered reasonable and qualified, informed by an assessment of viewshed reference points with photomontages, and it is considered unlikely that significant landscape and visual impacts will arise.

9.3.10 I do not share the view of MCC that the palisade fencing will be visible to the public and is inappropriate in a rural area. The palisade fencing is proposed to the substation compound only and is likely necessary for overriding health and safety reasons. Notwithstanding this consideration, it is set back approx. 160m from the public road at its closest point and in this position will be ameliorated satisfactorily within the landscape in a manner consistent with the larger substation structures and the findings of the LVIA. In my view the palisade fence cannot be discreetly selected as an objectionable element of the development in this context. Furthermore, the landscape mitigation plan proposes for a 10m riparian zone on the eastern and northern site boundaries (outside the palisade fencing), retention and augmentation of the hedgerow boundaries at this location and a native woodland of 906 sq.m (*DWG. No. LD.FSTRSTWN-SBST 1.0 refers*) which will serve to screen the palisade fencing. Otherwise, the boundary fencing of the site which will be visible from the public domain consists of a post & rail fence. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the palisade fence will not be visible, and an alternative fence type is not required.

9.4 **Ecology**

9.4.1. Please refer to Sections 10.0, 11.0 and 12.0 of this report and associated Form 1 and 2, and Appendices 3 and 4 which determine that the proposed development presents no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment, that adverse effects on the integrity of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) and SPA (004232) can be excluded and that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration on any waterbody either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives.

9.4.2. This section concerns general biodiversity and in particular the potential for impacts on habitats and species which are not qualifying interests of European Sites. The

site itself does not have any specific natural heritage designations. No protected flora species were identified during walkover surveys.

9.4.3. An Ecological Impact Assessment ("EcIA") was submitted as Section 4.2 of the PECR which included a desktop study using NPWS and NBDC databases, and field surveys. I note that the field survey was undertaken outside of the optimal season for flowering plants, but I accept the view of the EcIA that this was not a significant limitation given the predominant habitat of the site being agricultural grassland which is low in species diversity. I also note that the NPWS and NBDC databases record no protected or rare plant species within the proposed development site.

9.4.4. No protected bird species or species of conservation concern were recorded during the field surveys. The improved agricultural grasslands and wet grassland areas of the site are considered to offer limited foraging habitat for local common passerine species and the EcIA finds that the loss of these grassland habitats will not result in significant effects to birds, particularly given the availability of similar, and often more suitable habitat, in the wider area. It is acknowledged that the construction phase will result in disturbance to nesting and foraging birds using the woody vegetation of the site but given the small scale of such suitable habitat within the site and the availability of suitable habitat in the wider area, disturbance to passerines is not predicted to be significant on local bird populations at any geographical scale. It is acknowledged that the proposed development will result in the loss of some breeding bird habitat in the form of hedgerows and treelines and that clearance works or maintenance works (operational stage) during the breeding season could result in increased risk of mortality and/or injury. Again, given the small scale of such suitable habitat within the site and the availability of suitable habitat in the wider area, vegetation loss is not predicted to be significant on local bird populations at any geographical scale. In respect of injury and mortality it is proposed that removal and maintenance of scrub, hedgerows and treelines will be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March 01st to August 31st inc) with nesting bird surveys carried out with works exclusions zones implemented (around active nests) where this period cannot be avoided.

9.4.5 The proposed development site is assessed as being in an area of moderate suitability for bats, with the nearest mapped bat roost (NBDC) being a Common Pipistrelle roost recorded in 1998 over 1.5km to the east of the proposed

development site. The derelict cottage on site was assessed as having moderate roost potential due to gaps in woodwork and masonry work. An external inspection did not record evidence of roosting bats. An internal inspection was not carried out for health and safety reasons, but the EcIA opines that the internal roof space is unlikely to be suitable for roosting due to its corrugated steel construction and likelihood of extreme fluctuations in temperature. Mature ivy-clad trees in the surrounding hedgerows and treelines were deemed to have low potential for roosting bats. At construction stage the EcIA predicts no direct impacts on roosting bats as the derelict cottage will be retained and no tree with bat roosting potential will be trimmed or felled. There is potential for disturbance associated with construction activity and increased levels of light, however construction will be largely limited to day light hours during the peak bat activity months (April to September) and construction lighting will be positioned to avoid spillage onto the derelict cottage, hedgerows or treelines with luminaries controlled (lack of UV elements, warm light source used (2700 Kelvin or lower) with peak wavelengths higher than 550nm, only luminaries with zero upward light ratio considered). The measures will also apply at operational stage when lighting will be limited to the compound area and will only be used during periodic engineering checks and maintenance visits with security lighting otherwise operated by short-duration motion sensors.

9.4.6. Otherwise, the EcIA finds that the site offers limited foraging habitat for non-volant mammal species such as badger with no evidence of this species recorded during surveys. There is no suitable foraging or breeding habitat for Otter with no signs recorded during the field survey. In terms of other taxa the EcIA finds that the drainage ditch within the site is not suitable for breeding frog given its ephemeral nature and significant flow when wet. The EcIA finds that there is no potential for impacts on mammals or other taxa at construction or operational stage and no mitigation measures are required.

9.4.5 The habitats of the site are assessed as having low ecological value with limited potential to support wildlife given their current use as agricultural grassland. In addition, very limited habitat loss will only occur as a result of the development from structures such as access tracks, cable trenches and compound structures. It is

considered that with the wildlife enhancement measures set out in the LMP habitat loss will not be significant.

9.4.6 I accept that the use of this site by any species is limited given its existing agricultural use. I consider that the site is not environmentally sensitive and has capacity to absorb the proposed development subject to standard and best practice construction and operational measures. I note that limited sections of hedgerow will be removed, primarily to provide access, visibility splays and cabling, but this is not considered to be significant and on the basis of the enhancement measures proposed, including in the LMP, will not have a significant adverse impact on any species.

9.4.7 I consider that adequate detail has been provided on the biodiversity of the site and that it has been prepared by competent persons in accordance with relevant guidelines. Given the location of the site in an area characterised by agricultural grassland and the integral design measures, standard best practice measures and mitigation measures[1] set out in Table 4-1 of the PECR and OCEMP, including the enhancement measures in the LMP, I am satisfied that significant impacts will not arise on biodiversity and that the impacts on the ecology of the site and wider area would be acceptable.

9.5 **Archaeology and Cultural Heritage**

9.5.1 A Cultural Heritage Appraisal Report ("CHAR") was submitted as Appendix F to the application. The CHAR is informed by a 'paper survey' of the documentary, cartographic and aerial photographic sources listed in Section 2.1 and a field inspection in June 2024. A study area of 500m from the proposed development site boundary informed the report. No limitations where identified. It is noted that the information available indicates that no licensed archaeological investigations are recorded within the study area. There is one monument of terrestrial archaeological interest located within the study area which is an enclosure site (SMR No. ME36-042) included on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The RMP zone and SMR Zone of Notification for this monument is approx. 52m outside the proposed development site boundary

[1] I am satisfied that whilst these measures are described as 'mitigation measures' they consist of standard best practice and embedded design measures and are not aimed at avoiding or reducing impacts on European sites.

and the monument is located to the rear (east) of the existing ribbon of residential development which opposes the subject site and beyond the R160. There are no archaeological monuments within the subject site and there are no other archaeological considerations arising. In terms of architectural heritage there are no structures listed on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) or the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) within the subject site or study area.

9.5.2. The CHAR concludes that the proposed development will have a neutral impact with no significance on local history, archaeological heritage and architectural heritage at all project stages (construction, operational/post-construction). Consequently, it is considered that no mitigation measures are required, and no residual or cumulative impacts are predicted. The CHAR otherwise concludes that whilst the site is of low archaeological potential and ground reductions are limited, the possibility of discovering unrecorded subsurface archaeological features or artefacts cannot entirely be ruled out. Accordingly, archaeological monitoring in accordance with OPR Practice Note PN03 (Planning Conditions October 2022) is proposed as a best practice measure. It is noted that the submission from the DHLGH generally supports this position, particularly as advance prospection such as archaeological geophysical survey or test excavations was not carried out. The DHLGH recommends conditions which are based on pre-development testing in line with sample conditions C3, C5 and C6 of the OPR Practice Note PN03.

9.5.3 Subject to implementation of the DHLGH's more rigorous condition (*requiring pre-development archaeological testing, updated archaeological impact statement and mitigation strategy and updated CEMP to include archaeological constraints and mitigation measures*), I am satisfied that suitable measures can be put in place to adequately mitigate potential impacts on any unrecorded subsurface archaeology and that otherwise significant impacts on archaeology or built heritage will not arise.

9.6 **Access, Roads and Traffic**

9.6.1 A Traffic and Transport Assessment ("TTA") was submitted as Appendix E to the application. The methodology is set out in Section 1.2 thereof and follows TII publication PE-PDV-02045 Traffic and Transport Guidelines (May 2014). The stated objective of the TTA is to assess the impact of the proposed development on the

surrounding road network with a focus on three junctions as agreed with Meath County Council:

- Junction 1 (JTC1): 3-arm site access onto the R160,
- Junction 2 (JTC2): 4-arm R160/R156 junction to the southwest of the site, and
- Junction 3 (JTC3): 4-arm R160/R1568/Summerhill Road roundabout to the northeast of the site.

9.6.2 The traffic generation at operational stage will be negligible associated with occasional maintenance visits only. At construction stage traffic generation is estimated at 24no. vehicles arriving and leaving the site based on 30 no. expected workers at the site. The most notable impact will be associated with HGV movements during the first 3-6 months of the construction phase, which is estimated at 10no. two-way movements per day, with 90% of HGV deliveries occurring within 65 working days. It is assumed that 50% of trips will be northbound and 50% southbound.

9.6.3 The relevant TII Guidelines (May 2014) require junction modelling and a TTA where new traffic exceeds 5% of existing flows if congestion already exists, or 10% where no traffic congestion is present. As can be seen from Table 4.8 and 4.9 of the TTA, the projected increase in traffic (at construction stage (Year 2026)) is below the 5% threshold at JTC 2 and JTC 3 with a maximum increase of 1.86% predicted in the am peak at JTC 2. In respect of JTC 1, a maximum increase of 5.59% and 4.95% is predicted (at construction stage) for the am and pm peak respectively. Whilst this is above the 5% TII threshold, JTC 1 refers to the site entrance with the R160 and is measured against virtually non-existent traffic flows. Congestion does not currently exist at this location. Accordingly, the 10% threshold is applicable and the projected increase in traffic is safely below this TII threshold. The TTA concludes that the proposed development does not meet the TII conditions for TTA or junction modelling, however notwithstanding same junction modelling was conducted to evaluate the traffic impact generated by the proposed development across all future design years.

9.6.4 The modelling carried out was based on independent traffic counts in the year 2024 and included consideration of expected cumulative traffic increases from the developments listed in Table 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 & 4.4 of the TTA (using TRICS database).

A capacity assessment was undertaken using PICADY for the base year (2024) and the following design years: 2025 (construction stage), 2026 (construction stage & first operational year), 2031 (5 years after completion) and 2041 (15 years after completion. The results are presented in the form of Ratio to Flow Capacity (RFC) and queue levels, were an RFC below 0.85 implies an approach road is operating satisfactorily and well within capacity, between 0.85 and 1.0 means it is operating within capacity but at less optimal efficiency, and above 1.0 means demand and capacity are equal.

9.6.5 In respect of **JTC 1** junction modelling found that construction traffic from the proposed development would result in non-significant increases in RFC of 5% in the AM and 10% in the PM from non-existent. In future years (up to 2041) no effect on the adjoining R160 road is predicted at operational stage and no congestion or queue formation is predicted with or without the proposed development. In respect of **JTC 2** junction modelling found that during the construction period (2025) the RFC increased on Arm B during the peak PM period to 0.9 or 90%, meaning the approach operates within capacity but at less optimal efficiency. All other arms, even with predicted RTC increases, continued to operate satisfactorily and remained safely within capacity (Analysis 3 of Table 5.2 refers). Looking forward to future design years (2026, 2031 and 2041) when operational traffic is present, it is noted that arm B of JTC 2 has a capacity issue in the year 2041 when demand and capacity are equal, however there is a non-significant increase in RFC of 0.01% and no change in queuing formation in a 'development' versus 'do nothing' scenario for JTC 2. In respect of **JTC 3**, junction modelling found that JTC 3 continues to operate satisfactorily and safely within capacity in all scenarios with no impact on queuing formations.

9.6.6. In the first instance I note that the traffic generated by the proposed development (all stages) did not meet the TII threshold for TTA. The applicant however proceeded to carry out a discretionary TTA, including junction modelling and a capacity analysis. It is noted that the results of the TTA identify that JCT 2 has capacity limitations and forecasts that it will operate above capacity leading to queues and delays (in 2041). I am satisfied that this will be the case in a 'do nothing' or 'no development' scenario even if the proposed development does not proceed, and that it will not be significantly or materially affected by the negligible

traffic associated with the proposed development at operational stage. Importantly it is demonstrated that at construction stage, when maximum traffic movements will be generated by the proposed development, all junctions will operate satisfactorily and safely within capacity limits. Having regard to the fact that the traffic levels associated with the proposed development did not meet the TII threshold for TTA, that the discretionary TTA carried out confirmed the capacity of junctions at construction stage, and that the capacity limitations of JCT 2 in the 2041 future design year scenario will not be significantly impacted by the operational traffic associated with the proposed development, I am satisfied that the public road network serving the site has adequate capacity to safely accommodate the proposed development. I am otherwise satisfied that there are no width or alignment constraints on the R160.

9.6.7. A single access is proposed to serve the development from the R160 and DWG No. PE492-D282-007-001-000 refers. This is an existing field entrance which will be upgraded. The DWG shows visibility splays of 160m x 3m to the required technical standard and located on lands which are within the applicant's control. It is noted that approx. 68m of roadside hedgerow/planting will be removed, and 29m of vegetation cutback, to achieve the visibility splay to the northeast and that these works are located within the site boundary as outlined in red. It is noted that 38m of vegetation will require to be cut back/cleared in order to achieve the visibility splay to the southwest and that these works are located outside the existing fenceline on the road verge and within the parent landholding as outlined in blue. I am satisfied that visibility splays can be provided to standard at the entrance to the proposed development site in accordance with TII document DN-GEO-03060.

9.6.9 Having regard to the conclusions drawn in the preceding sections 9.6.1 to 9.6.7 (inc) I consider that adequate details and information have been submitted, that the proposed development would be acceptable from a roads and traffic safety perspective.

9.7 **Noise Impact & Residential Amenity**

9.7.1 A Noise Impact Assessment ("NIA") is submitted as Appendix D to the application. The relevant noise guidance documents which informed the assessment are set out in Section 3 and include, inter alia, World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidelines

and British Standards BS 8233:2014[2], BS 7445-1:2003[3], BS 4142:2014+A1:2019[4] and BS 5228:2009+A1:2014[5]. The methodology is described at Section 4 and includes baseline noise monitoring using BS 4142:2014 methodology which established typical background sound levels (L_{A90}) for daytime and night-time as follows:

- Daytime – 45dB(A)
- Night-time – 25dB(A)

Construction Noise

9.7.2. Construction hours are 07:00 – 19:00hrs Mondays to Fridays and 08:00-13:00hrs on Saturdays. Typical noise levels for various types of construction plant likely to be used in the construction process and typical combined construction noise levels at varying distances for various phase activities, are presented in Table 5.1 and 5.2 of Section 5. The (construction) noise threshold limits at nearest sensitive receptors (NSRs) used for the purposes of assessment are informed by BS 5228:2009 + A1:2014, which having regard to the typical background sound levels established by monitoring are the lowest Category A limits as follows:

Table C: - Construction Noise Threshold Limits at NSRs (Ref. BS 5228:2009+A1:2014)	
	Noise Threshold Limits (Cat. A)
Night-time (23:00 - 07:00)	45dB(A)
Evening and weekends (19:00 - 23:00 weekdays), (13:00 - 23:00 Saturdays), (07:00 – 13:00 Sundays)	55dB(A)
Daytime (07:00 – 19:00 weekdays), (07:00 – 13:00 Saturdays)	65dB(A)

[2] Guidance on range of ambient noise levels within residential properties
[3] Description and measurement of environmental noise
[4] Rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound
[5] Noise and vibration control on construction and open sites

I note that Appendix E[6] of BS 5228 states that if predicted noise levels exceed the noise threshold limits, then a potential significant effect is indicated.

9.7.3 The typical combined construction noise levels set out in Table 5.2 of the NIA represent a worst-case scenario which assumes that all items of plant are acting continuously and simultaneously. The NIA opines that in reality plant activity will be more sporadic with regular gaps in activity. The NIA finds that the majority of construction activities will take place at the location of the proposed 110kV substation compound, which at a distance of 160-300m from the nearest NSRs, would generate worst-case construction noise levels within the relevant BS 5228 noise threshold limit (65 dB(A)). However, site preparation and paving works associated with the access road from the site entrance will take place within 20-160m from the nearest noise sensitive properties and at the closest point there is potential for worst case construction noise levels in excess of the relevant BS 5228 daytime noise threshold limit. Mitigation is proposed in the form of a noise barrier consisting of hoarding to be erected at the boundary with the R160 which will provide noise attenuation of approx. 10dB(A) at the nearest NSR. The applicant commits to compliance with the BS 5228:2009 noise threshold limits at construction stage. This will be achieved through the CEMP which includes a range of standard best practice measures in addition to the noise barrier including: mode and timing of works and noisiest activities, selection and maintenance of plant, sound reduction measures, use of acoustic barriers or enclosures, monitoring and a complaints procedure. I note that these measures are in accordance with the control of noise measures described in BS 5228.

Operational Noise

9.7.3. At operational stage noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive properties (NSRs) are predicted using CadnaA noise modelling software and ISO9613 prediction technology. The nearest NSRs are the 5 no. dwellings on the R160 opposing the subject site as detailed on Fig. 6.1 of Section 6 of the NIA. A worst-case scenario was predicted with tonal correction of +4dB for the purposes of completing a BS4142 assessment. The results are presented in Table 6.3 and 6.4 of the NIA

[6] Significance of noise effects

which finds that all predicted noise levels with tonal correction are significantly below the existing background sound levels at all NSRs for both the daytime and night-time scenarios. The NIA also finds that predicted daytime and night-time operational noise levels sit below the thresholds set out in the EPA NG4 guidance document and BS 8233, and the WHO Guidelines for good sleeping conditions. In conclusion, the NIA finds that the predicted operational phase noise levels are substantially below the relevant threshold limits presented in all of the relevant noise guidance documents indicating no likelihood of adverse or significant operational noise impact(s) and no requirement for operational phase mitigation measures.

9.7.4. Having regard to the margin by which operational noise levels are predicted to sit below existing background sound levels as presented in Table 6.3 and 6.4 of the NIA, I am satisfied that there is no potential for adverse or significant noise impacts at operational stage. During the construction stage works are not proposed in the evenings, on Sundays or Bank holidays, therefore the consideration of noise impacts can be reduced to during the daytime hours of 07:00-19:00hrs (weekdays) and 08:00-13:00--hrs (Saturdays) against a noise threshold limit of 65 dB(A). I am also satisfied that the construction works associated with the substation development itself, at a distance of >160m from NSR's will not result in adverse or significant noise impacts on NSRs based on the data set out in Table 5.2 and the mitigation proposed, and that the potential for adverse or significant noise impacts at construction stage can be limited to consideration of works proposed within the range of 20-160m from NSRs.

9.7.5 The proposed development works within this range consist of the site access arrangements and landscaping works only. In this regard it is noted that when the noise barrier mitigation measure is factored in the predicted combined worst-case construction noise levels at a distance of 80m (and beyond) from NSRs sit below the daytime noise threshold limit (65 dB(A) and at a distance of 40m the only predicted exceedance is limited to 'site preparation works and 'foundations' which exceed the limit by marginal value of +2dB(A) and +1dB(A) only. Accordingly, in a worst-case scenario predicted construction noise impacts in excess of the noise limit threshold will potentially occur only in relation to the first 20m of the proposed site access road and landscaping works within the range of 20-40m from NSRs.

9.7.6 When the limited nature and duration of these works is considered, together with the probability that noise levels will in reality be less than worst-case scenario predictions, I am satisfied that the proposal to limit construction noise levels to compliance with BS 5228 noise threshold limits (65dB(A) through a noise barrier and the best practice measures set out in the CEMP is both realistic and achievable. This will ensure that construction noise levels do not exceed the (daytime) noise threshold limits set out in BS5228 and therefore a potential significant effect is not indicated.

9.7.7 A condition to manage construction noise through a CEMP and implementation of the proposed mitigation measures and in accordance with BS5228, is recommended. Overall, I am satisfied that significant impacts from noise are unlikely.

9.8 **Flood Risk**

9.81. A Flood Risk Assessment ("FRA") was submitted as Appendix C to the proposed development in accordance with the DEHLG Guidelines '*The Planning System and Flood Risk Management*' (2009). I note that the FRA concludes that the site is not at risk from fluvial flooding, coastal flooding, pluvial flooding or groundwater flooding. I further note that the FRA concludes that the proposed development will not result in a loss of floodplain and will not impact on the current flood regime in the area. Otherwise, the FRA finds that the proposed development is located within Flood Zone C and does not require a justification test (as a highly vulnerable development). Based on the information provided by the applicant, relevant mapping and data from the OPW together with the nature and characteristics of the site and design of the proposed development, I am satisfied that the conclusion of the FRA is reasonable.

9.9 **Conditions recommended by Planning Authority & Other matters.**

9.9.1 I note that the report received from the planning authority sets out a list of recommended conditions in the event that planning permission is granted. These

conditions are set out in Table D below, together with information on their inclusion or exclusion in the recommended schedule of conditions to this report.

Table D: Consideration of Conditions		
Condition No.	Recommended Conditions	Included/Excluded in Schedule of Conditions
1.	The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the Planning Authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars. **Reason: In the interest of clarity.**	Included. Recommended Condition No.1 refers.
2.	Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit/address the following for the written agreement of the Planning Authority in relation to Transportation requirements: (a) The applicant shall provide and maintain unobstructed sightlines of 160 metres to the nearside edge of the road from a setback of 3.0 metres, in accordance with TII document DN-GEO-03060, from the entrance. The nearside road edge shall be visible over the entire sight distance. **Reason: In the interest of traffic safety. (Transportation)**	Included. Recommended Condition No.4 refers.
3.	Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit/address the following for the written agreement of the Planning Authority in relation to Surface Water Management requirements: (a) The applicant shall provide BRE 365 infiltration test results for the site. Details of the winter ground water level shall also be provided. The applicant shall explore suitable SuDS options for treating the surface water run-off from the site and maximise the opportunity for onsite infiltration where possible. (b) The applicant shall submit a revised detail topographical survey highlighting any existing open drain/ditch in the vicinity of the site which shall include including invert levels, top of bank levels, route and existing outfall details. (c) The applicant shall submit a revised landscape plan to cooperate with the proposed riparian zone. (d) The applicant shall provide detail cross sections of the proposed culvert crossing. The applicant shall include detail levels of culvert crown level, invert level, finished road level and separation distances.	(a)Excluded. The submitted SuDS and onsite infiltration drainage measures are satisfactory. (b) Excluded. There is a single drain only within the site. Condition (d) below is considered sufficient. (c) Excluded. Not considered necessary. The riparian zone is included as a ‘buffer’ zone on the landscape plan. (d) Included. Condition 4 refers.

	(e) All surface water design/work shall comply fully with the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) Regional Drainage Policies Volume 2, for New Developments. (f) All surface water design/work shall comply fully with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works Volume 6. **Reason: In the interest of proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure a satisfactory form of development. (Environment – Surface Water)**	(e) & (f) Excluded. The submitted SuDS and onsite infiltration drainage measures are satisfactory.
4.	Lighting shall be designed and installed as per "Meath County Council: Public Lighting Technical Specification & Requirements" document. Prior to the commencement of development on site the applicant shall submit a lighting design in accordance with the above for the written agreement of the Planning Authority. **Reason: In the interests of public safety. (Public Lighting**	An alternative lighting condition is included. Recommended Condition No. 12 refers.
5.	The applicant/developer shall comply with the following Environmental Condition(s): (a) The construction works shall be carried out in accordance with the noise guidance set out by BS 5228-1:2009 Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites and the NRA Guidelines for the treatment of Noise and Vibration in National Roads Schemes. (b) During the construction phase noise levels at noise sensitive locations shall not exceed 70dB(A) between 0700 to 1900 hours Monday to Friday and 0800 to 1400 hours Saturday and 45dB(A) at any other time. Noise exceedance activities must be agreed in writing with Meath County Council prior to the activity taking place. (c) Dust emissions during the construction phase shall not exceed 350mg/m2/day at the site boundaries. (d) In the event it is necessary to import soil and stone or topsoil for any element of the proposed development to Applicant shall ensure a Certificate of Registration or Waste Facility Permit as per the Waste Management (Facility and Registration) Regulations 2007, as amended is secured in advance of the works. Alternatively, soil and stone or topsoil may be imported/ exported from the site under a By Product Notification to the Environmental Protection Agency (Article 27). In accordance with Article 27 of the EC (Waste Directive) Regulations (2011). A log of all By-Product material movements will be recorded and maintained. (e) Burning of waste, including green waste, is prohibited on site. (f) Prior to the commencement of site clearance, the applicant shall notify the Environment Waste Department, Meath County Council regarding a commencement date for same. (g) The production and use of waste derived aggregates shall not be used onsite in the absence of an Article 28 'End of Waste' status issued by the Agency. All waste derived onsite shall be removed to an appropriately licensed facility and there will be NO crushing conducted	(a) Included. Recommended Condition No. 7 refers. (b) Included. Recommended Condition No. 7 refers. (c) – (g) – excluded. Either not considered necessary or concern matters governed under other primary legislation or codes.

	onsite. (h) The Applicant shall provide an updated Construction Environmental Monitoring Plan (CEMP) for the written agreement of the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any site activity. The CEMP shall include but not be limited to operational controls for dust, noise and vibration, waste management, protection of soils and groundwaters, protection of flora and fauna, site housekeeping, emergency response planning, site environmental policy, environmental regulatory requirements and project roles and responsibilities. The CEMP shall also address extreme of weather (drought, wind, precipitation, temperature extremes) and the possible impacts on receptors and mitigation of same. The CEMP shall be treated as a live document. (i) If applicable, an Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Management Plan will be developed upon identification of an invasive species, which will identify mitigation measures to prevent uncontrolled transportation and dispersion of invasive species to and from the Proposed Development Site. (j) During the construction stage arrangements shall be made for the collection, storage and disposal of all foul sewage effluent arising from the construction works and transferred to an authorised facility, if applicable. (k) If applicable, any re-fuelling of plant and machinery shall take place in dedicated areas and the applicant/contractor shall have spill kits available on site. (l) The applicant/contractor shall utilise a silenced generator for the duration of the works, if applicable. (m) A RWMP should be prepared. The RWMP shall include but not be limited to project description, legislation requirements, demolition waste, construction phase waste, categories of construction waste, anticipated hazardous waste, non-construction waste, segregation of waste streams, estimated waste generated, waste hierarchy and adherence to same, roles and responsibilities and communication of WMP, details of recovery and disposal sites, details of waste hauliers, record keeping and documentation, waste audit procedures. (n) During the operational phase of the development noise levels emanating from the proposed site when measured at noise sensitive locations in the vicinity shall not exceed 45dB(A) between the hours of 07.00 and 23.00 and 43dB(A) between the hours of 23.00 and 07.00. The applicant shall undertake a noise survey within 3 months of commissioning of the development to ensure that emissions for the development comply with the noise conditions attached to any grant of planning permission and to identify potential issues requiring mitigation. The applicant shall submit the report to the Planning Authority for review and agreement on any required mitigation measures. (o) The applicant will implement formal environmental complaints register for the construction and operational phases, this	(h) An alternative form of CEMP condition is included at Recommended Condition No.9. (i) Excluded. Not applicable. (j) Excluded. Not applicable. Measures proposed in application and recommended Condition No.1 sufficient. (k) Excluded. Measures proposed in application and recommended Condition No.1, 2 and CEMP sufficient. (l) Excluded. Recommended Noise conditions No. 7 and 8 are sufficient. (m) excluded. Significant waste streams will not arise. Recommended Condition No. 9.a is sufficient. (n) Excluded. Recommended Noise condition No.8 is sufficient.

	register shall include but not be limited to complaints due to glint and glare, noise, dust and environmental nuisances. The Complaints Register shall include details of the complaint and measures taken to address the complaint and prevent repetition of the complaint. This register shall be available for inspection upon request. **Reason: In the interests of environmental protection, the protection of surrounding residential amenities and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. (Environment).**	(o) Excluded. Recommended Condition No.9.a. is sufficient.
6.	Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall lodge with the Planning Authority a cash deposit, to secure the reinstatement of public roads that may be damaged by construction transport coupled with an agreement empowering the Planning Authority to apply such security of part thereof to such reinstatement. The form and amount of the security shall be agreed between the Planning Authority and the developer. **Reason: To ensure the reinstatement of public roads that may be damaged by construction transport.**	Excluded. Having regard to the condition of the regional road network serving the site, I do not consider that risk arises requiring a security or that this condition is proportionate. I am satisfied that Recommended Condition No.6.a & 6.b of the Schedule of Conditions is sufficient.
N/A	The PA has requested An Coimisiún Pleanála to have regard to the Meath County Development Contribution Scheme 2024-2029.	Excluded. There is no provision to include development contributions in Section 182A cases.
N/A	The PA reminds the Commission of Section 182B(6) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) and in this specific case, the PA supports the imposition of a condition to finance an education and awareness program on renewable energy and energy conservation for the community.	Excluded. I do not consider that the proposed development meets the requirements for imposition of such a financial condition under the provisions of the Act having regard to the fact that it consists of a development which of itself constitutes a substantial gain to the community.

9.9.2 I am satisfied having regard to the conclusions of my assessment set out above in Section 9.0 (9.1-9.9 inc) and to the conclusions set out at Section 10, 11 and 12 below in relation to preliminary examination for EIA, screening for AA and screening the need for a WFD assessment, that the proposed development is acceptable having regard to the criteria for assessment listed in DM OBJ76 of the MCDP and would therefore be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

10. Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

10.1 The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (*refer to Form 1 and Form 2 in Appendices of this report*). Having regard to the characteristics and location of the proposed development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. The proposed development, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not required.

11. Appropriate Assessment

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in the AA screening set out at Appendix 3 of this report, I conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) or the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232) or any other European Site, in view of the Conservation Objectives of these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment (and submission of an NIS) is not required.

This determination is based on:

- Scientific information provided in the Screening Report
- The relatively minor scale of the development and lack of impact mechanisms that could significantly affect a European Site
- Distances from (including significant hydrological distances), and weak indirect connections to, the European sites
- No significant ex-situ impacts on River Lamprey, Salmon, Otter or Kingfisher.
- The extremely low likelihood of a possible construction related impact from surface water reaching the European Sites and which would not be significant in terms of site-specific conservation objectives for the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC or SPA and would not undermine the maintenance of favourable conservation condition or delay or undermine the achievement of restoring

favourable conservation status for those qualifying interest features of unfavourable conservation status (Alluvial Forests, River Lamprey and Salmon).

No mitigation measures aimed at avoiding or reducing impacts on European Sites were required to be considered in reaching this conclusion.

12. Screening the need for Water Framework Directive (WFD) Assessment

I conclude on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently can be excluded from further assessment. (Appendix 4 refers).

13. Recommendation

Having regard to the foregoing, I recommend that permission for the proposed development be granted, subject to conditions, for the following reasons and considerations as outlined in the Draft Order below.

DRAFT ORDER

Reasons and Considerations

In performing its functions in relation to the making of its decision, the Coimisiún had regard to:

Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Act 2015, as amended by Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and the requirement to, in so far as practicable, perform it functions in a

manner consistent with the Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025 and the national long term climate action strategy, national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans set out in those Plans and in furtherance of the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

The Coimisiún also had regard to the following in coming to its decision:

- European legislation, including of particular relevance:
    - Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directive) which set the requirements for Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union.
    - Directive 2011/92/EU (The EIA Directive) as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU as implemented by Article 94 and Schedule 6 (paragraphs 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations as amended.
    - Directive 2000/60/EC, the Water Framework Directive and the requirement to exercise its functions in a manner which is consistent with the provisions of the Directive and which achieves or promotes compliance with the requirements of the Directive.

- National and regional planning and related policy, including:
    - National policy with regard to the development of electricity grid infrastructure particularly the NPF First Revision 2025 and National Policy Objective NPO71.
    - Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply (November 2021).
    - National Energy Security Framework (April 2022).
    - National Energy and Climate Action Plan (2021-2030);

- Ireland’s Long-term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions 2024
- The National Adaptation Framework; Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland (June 2024)
- Electricity and Gas Sectoral Plan 2025
- The objectives and targets of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030.

- Regional and Local Planning Policy, including in particular:
  - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region 2019-203;
  - Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027;

- Other relevant national policy and guidance documents.
- The nature, scale and design of the proposed development as set out in the planning application and the pattern of development in the vicinity.
- The likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European Sites.
- The submissions made in connection with the planning application.
- The report and recommendation of the Inspector,

Appropriate Assessment Stage 1 Screening Determination

The Coimisiún considered the Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment and all the other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment screening exercise in relation to the potential effects of the proposed development on designated European Sites. The Coimisiún agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector’s report that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) or the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232)

or any other European Site, in view of the Conservation Objectives of these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment (and submission of an NIS) is not required.

This determination is based on:

- Scientific information provided in the Screening Report
- The relatively minor scale of the development and lack of impact mechanisms that could significantly affect a European Site
- Distances from (including significant hydrological distances), and weak indirect connections to, the European sites
- No significant ex-situ impacts on River Lamprey, Salmon, Otter or Kingfisher.
- The extremely low likelihood of a possible construction related impact from surface water reaching the European Sites, which would not be significant in terms of site-specific conservation objectives for the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC or SPA and would not undermine the maintenance of favourable conservation condition or delay or undermine the achievement of restoring favourable conservation status for those qualifying interest features of unfavourable conservation status (Alluvial Forests, River Lamprey and Salmon).

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would support the achievement of European, national, and regional renewable energy policies and the provisions of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, would not seriously injure the visual or residential amenities of the area or otherwise of property in the vicinity or have an of unacceptable impact on the character of the landscape or on cultural or archaeological heritage, would not have a significant adverse impact on ecology, would be acceptable in terms of traffic impacts and safety and would support the delivery of Ireland's security of energy supply requirements. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

CONDITIONS

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed particulars.

   Reason: In the interest of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. All of the environmental, construction and ecological best practice, mitigation and monitoring measures set out in Table 4-1 of the Planning and Environmental Considerations Report and the Outline Construction and Environmental Management Plan and all other particulars submitted with the application, shall be implemented by the undertaker in conjunction with the timelines set out therein, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the conditions of this permission. Where such measures require details to be agreed with the Planning Authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development.

   Reason: In the interest of clarity and the protection of the environment during the construction and operational phases of the development.

3. Site development and building works shall be carried out during daylight hours only within the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 to 1300 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays or public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

   Reason: In order to safeguard the amenities of property in the vicinity.

4. Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall provide detailed cross sections of the proposed culvert crossing to the Planning Authority for written agreement. The applicant shall include detail levels of culvert crown level, invert level, finished road level and separation distances.

Reason: In the interest of proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure a satisfactory form of development.

5. The applicant shall provide and maintain unobstructed sightlines of 160 metres to the nearside edge of the road from a setback of 3.0 metres, in accordance with TII document DN-GEO-03060, from the entrance. The nearside road edge shall be visible over the entire sight distance.

Reason: In the interest of traffic safety.

6. (a) All road surfaces, culverts, verges and public lands shall be protected during construction and, in the case of any damage occurring, shall be reinstated to the satisfaction of the planning authority.

(b) The site development and construction works shall be carried out in such a manner as to ensure that the adjoining roads are kept clear of debris, soil and other material and cleaning works shall be carried on the adjoining public roads by the developer and at the developer's expense on a daily basis.

Reason: To protect the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.

7. (a) Construction activity shall be managed in accordance with a construction noise and vibration management plan, which shall be agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development. This plan should be subject to periodic review and shall specify the construction practice, including measures for the suppression and mitigation of on-site noise and vibration and shall include the appointment of a site noise liaison officer.

(b) The plan shall be developed having regard to, and all construction activity shall be undertaken in accordance with, best practise guidelines, including BS 5228-1:2009+A1:2014, parts 1 & 2.

(c) The mitigation measures described in the Planning and Environmental Considerations Report and the Construction and Environmental Management Plan shall be implemented in full.

Reason: In order to protect the amenities of the area.

8. During the operational phase of the substation, the noise level arising from the development, as measured at the nearest noise sensitive location shall not exceed:

   (i) An LeqT, value of 55 dB(A) during the period 0800 to 2200 hours from Monday to Saturday inclusive. [The T value shall be one hour]

   (ii) An Leq,15 min value of 45 dB(A) at any other time. [The T value shall be 15 minutes]. The noise at such time shall not contain a tonal component. At no time shall the noise generated on site result in an increase in noise level of more than 10 dB(A) above background levels at the boundary of the site. All sound measurement shall be carried out in accordance with ISO Recommendation 1996:2007: Acoustics - Description and Measurement of Environmental Noise.

   Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall agree with the planning authority a protocol for the monitoring of noise from electrical apparatus within the sites. This protocol shall include provision for the shielding or removal of any such apparatus in the event of the exceedance of agreed noise limits as perceived at identified receptors.

   Reason: To protect the amenities of property in the vicinity of the site.

9. The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development generally in accordance with the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including:

(a) a detailed plan for the construction phase incorporating, inter alia, construction programme, supervisory measures, dust and surface water management measures including construction hours and the management, transport and disposal of construction waste;
(b) a comprehensive programme for the implementation of all monitoring commitments made in the application and supporting documentation during the construction period;
(c) an emergency response plan; and
(d) proposals in relation to public information and communication. A record of daily checks that the works are being undertaken in accordance with the Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be kept for inspection by the planning authority.
(e) The Construction Environment Management Plan shall include the Construction noise and vibration management plan agreed in accordance with the requirements of Condition No.7.
(f) The Construction Environment Management Plan shall include the location of any and all archaeological or cultural heritage constraints in accordance with the requirements of Condition No.10.d hereunder. The CEMP shall clearly describe all identified likely archaeological impacts, both direct and indirect, and all mitigation measures to be employed to protect the archaeological or cultural heritage environment during all phases of site preparation and construction activity.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection, amenities, public health and safety.

10. (a) All mitigation measures in relation to archaeology and cultural heritage as set out in the Archaeological Impact Assessment (Byrne Mullins & Associates; date July 2025) shall be implemented in full, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the conditions of this Order.

(b) A Project Archaeologist shall be appointed to oversee and advise on all aspects of the scheme from design, through inception to completion.

(c) The developer shall engage a suitably qualified archaeologist (licensed under the National Monuments Acts) to carry out pre-development archaeological testing in areas of proposed ground disturbance within the wind farm site and to submit an archaeological impact assessment report for the written agreement of the planning authority, following consultation with the Department, in advance of any site preparation works or groundworks, including site investigation works/topsoil stripping/site clearance and/or construction works.

(i) The report shall include an archaeological impact statement and mitigation strategy. Where archaeological material is shown to be present, avoidance, preservation in-situ, preservation by record (archaeological excavation) and/or monitoring may be required.

(ii) Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the planning authority, following consultation with the Department, shall be complied with by the developer.

(iii) No site preparation and/or construction works shall be carried out on site until the archaeologist's report has been submitted to and approval to proceed is agreed in writing with the planning authority.

(d) The Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) shall include the location of any and all archaeological or cultural heritage constraints relevant to the proposed development as set out in Archaeological Impact Assessment by Byrne Mullins & Associates (dated July 2025) and by any subsequent archaeological investigations associated with the project. The CEMP shall clearly describe all identified likely archaeological impacts, both direct and indirect, and all mitigation measures to be employed to protect the archaeological or cultural heritage environment during all phases of site preparation and construction activity.

(e) The planning authority and this Department shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of all archaeological monitoring and any archaeological investigative work/excavation required, following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-

excavation specialist analysis. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation (either in situ or by record) of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.

11. The landscaping scheme shown on drawing number LD.FSTRSTWN-SBST 1.0 (Landscape Mitigation Plan), shall be carried out within the first planting season following substantial completion of external construction works. All planting shall be adequately protected from damage until established. Any plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, within a period of five years from the completion of the development, shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.

    Reason: In order to screen the development, in the interest of visual amenity.

12. The undertaker shall comply with the following requirements:

    a) Prior to the commencement of development, the precise luminaries to be used at construction and operational stages shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. The luminaries shall be in accordance with the Fauna mitigation measures set out in Section 4.2.1 of Table 4-1 of the Planning and Environmental Considerations report.

    b) No additional artificial lighting shall be installed or operated on site unless authorised by a prior grant of planning permission.

    c) Lighting shall not spill onto the derelict cottage within the site, or onto treelines or hedgerows.

    d) CCTV cameras shall be fixed and angled to face into the site and shall not be directed towards adjoining property or roads.

    e) Cables within the site shall be located underground.

    Reason: In the interest of clarity, of visual and residential amenity.

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.

Paul Kelly
Senior Planning Inspector
8th December 2025

Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	**ACP-323456-25**
Proposed Development Summary	Proposed development of a 110kV/20MW distribution station. See Section 3 of the Inspectors Report.
Development Address	Fostertown, Caberstown, Trim, Co. Meath
	In all cases check box /or leave blank
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means: - The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2. ☐ No, no further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. **EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.**	
☒ 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?	
☐ 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.**	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. **EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required**	
☒ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. **Preliminary examination required. (Form 2)**	The development of a substation is not a specified class of development in Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations. In the interests of completeness, the assessment of the proposed development in relation to the following classes of Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations, is as follows: ▪ **Schedule 5, Part 2, Class 1(a) Rural Restructuring.** This includes: *"Projects for the restructuring of rural landholding, undertaken as part of a wider proposed development, not as an agricultural activity that must comply with the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture)) Regulations 2011, where the length of field boundary to be removed is above 4 kilometres, or where the re-countering is above 5 hectares, or where the area of lands to be restructured by removal of field boundaries is above 50 hectares."* Re-contouring is not proposed as a part of the development. The proposed substation development will involve some minor hedgerow removal (75m) within a site of 2.75ha, but this is significantly below the 4km length threshold, and the 50ha area threshold, and does not in any event involve the amalgamation, enlargement or restructuring of existing fields. Notwithstanding, it is considered that the development comes within the scope of this class on the basis that it involves the removal of field boundary hedgerow but that it is subthreshold. Accordingly, an EIA preliminary Examination is required.

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
No ☒	**Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)**

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	ACP-323456-25
Proposed Development Summary	Proposed development of a 110kV/20MW distribution station. See Section 3 of the Inspectors Report.
Development Address	Fostertown, Caberstown, Trim, Co. Meath
This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
Characteristics of proposed development (In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/ proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).	**Briefly comment on the key characteristics of the development, having regard to the criteria listed.** The element of the project which consists of hedgerow removal is limited to that required for the construction of the site entrance and access road. This will consist of the lesser element of widening existing gaps for access and is mostly necessary for the provision of visibility splays along the roadside boundary. It will not result in the enlargement or amalgamation of fields nor the restructuring of lands. It is quantified as 75m in total. The substantive pattern of hedgerow at the site will be retained and the field pattern will be maintained. Hedgerow which will be lost, will be replaced with 189m of new hedgerow and supplemented with 359m of existing hedgerow which will be augmented.
Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).	**Briefly comment on the location of the development, having regard to the criteria listed** The location of the development is not considered to be environmentally sensitive. It consists of improved agricultural grassland, improved wet grassland, scrub, buildings and artificial surfaces, hedgerows, treelines and drainage ditches, which are abundant in the wider environment. It is not located within or in proximity to any National or European designated sites and the Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Appendix 3) to this report determined that the proposed development (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) would not result in likely significant effects on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) or the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232). The proposed development is located in a rural area, which is not densely populated and where agricultural type activities are the main land use(s). The site is relatively flat and is transversed by an existing 110kV overhead powerline. The location is not visually sensitive and is not subject to any visual amenity or scenic designations. There are no built or cultural heritage sites or features within or adjoining the application site with

	the exception of a single archaeological monument[7] which is listed on the SMR & RMP. The ZON[8] for this monument is 52m outside the boundary of the site and the CHAR[9] predicts no direct effects and no effects of significance. There are no waterbodies within or in close proximity to the site with the exception of field drainage ditches. There is one such ditch within the site which is described as small and shaded with stagnant water and slow flow. An existing culvert crossing this ditch will be replaced. The next nearest other drainage ditch is 143m to the north of the site boundary. There is approx. 1km of drainage ditches before hydrological connection with a stream (Moynasboy stream). No evidence of badger or otter was identified during the field survey with the improved agricultural grassland and wet grassland habitats of the site deemed to offer limited suitable foraging habitat. No other signs of taxa or non-volant mammals or non-native invasive species were identified during surveys. The nearest mapped bat roost to the site is over 1.5km to the east (Common Pipistrelle), external inspection of a derelict cottage on site identified no roosts and the internal roof space was deemed unsuitable for roosting bats due to the corrugated steel roof and extreme fluctuations in temperature. Demolition of this structure is not proposed. Mature ivy clad trees and hedgerows are located outside the footprint of development and are deemed to have low potential for roosting bats.
Types and characteristics of potential impacts (Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	**Having regard to the characteristics of the development and the sensitivity of its location, consider the potential for SIGNIFICANT effects, not just effects.** Having regard to the minor characteristics of the proposed development and to the general absence of constraints and/or sensitivity indicators at the location of the site, and to the conclusions of the AA and WFD screening processes of the Inspectors Report it is considered that the very limited removal of hedgerow has no potential for effects including significant effects on environmental parameters.

Conclusion	
Likelihood of Significant Effects	**Conclusion in respect of EIA**

[7] SMR N: ME036-042 (Enclosure Site)
[8] Zone of Notification
[9] Cultural Heritage Appraisal Report

There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	**EIA is not required.**

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: AA Screening Determination

Test for likely significant effects (ACP-323456-25)

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics **Case File: ACP – 323456-25**	
Brief description of project	Application for approval under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. Proposed development of a 110kV/20MW distribution station. See Section 3 of Inspectors Report.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	The proposed development site is located on a regional road (R160) approx. 3km south of Trim. The site has an area of c. 2.75ha and is predominantly characterised by improved agricultural grassland with hedgerows, treelines and scrub vegetation. The site is relatively flat and is transversed by an existing 110kV overhead powerline. The main landuse(s) within the surrounding area are agricultural, recreational (golf courses) and low density rural residential. Site preparation and construction works will require limited topsoil stripping and limited removal of scrub vegetation and hedgerows (68m). It is proposed to replace a small culvert crossing an existing small drainage ditch within the site to facilitate the proposed access road. The ecologist describes this drainage ditch as small and shaded with limited aquatic vegetation, stagnant water and slow flow. A construction and environmental management plan (CEMP) has been submitted with the application with good practice construction site management measures integrated into the project and its embedded design features. Potable water supply for welfare facilities will be from a bored well. Foul water will be discharged to a foul water holding tank which will be emptied by a licensed contractor. Surface water runoff will either be to ground for filtration or evaporation or to a soakaway via a surface water drainage network with catch pit and retention oil separator. The ecologist has identified what is described as a 'tenuous' hydrological link between the proposed development site and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA. This link originates with the small drainage ditch within the development site and a further drainage ditch 143m to the north. These drainage ditches flow to the east for a distance of 300m and 400m respectively before converging into a single drainage

	ditch which flows for a further 600m before connecting with the Moynasboy stream. The Moynasboy stream then flows for approx. 835m to the Knightsbrook river which flows for a further 4.5km to the River Boyne. Accordingly, the hydrological link to the European sites is approx. 6.3km. The application site was surveyed by an ecologist. No invasive species were found on site and there were no field signs of otter, badger or other taxa or non-volant mammals.
Screening report	Yes. Prepared by ESB Engineering & Major Projects.
Natura Impact Statement	No.
Relevant submissions	**DHLGH** (*10/10/2025*) – did not make any nature conservation comments. **Meath Co.Co** *(06/10/2025)* – noted the conclusions of the applicants AA Screening Report. Opined that it is for An Coimisiún Pleanala to satisfy itself that a Stage 2 Natura Impact Statement is not required. No further nature conservation comment is made.

Additional Information:

N/A.

Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model

It is noted that the applicant's Stage 1 AA Screening Report used NPWS, NBDC and EPA databases, a desktop assessment and a field survey to establish a 'Potential Zone of Influence' for the project following a 'Source-Pathway-Receptor' model. Based on the small scale and nature of the works proposed, the low ecological value of the predominant improved agricultural grassland habitat of the site and the limited potential hydrological impact pathway identified via field drainage ditches and downstream waterbodies, it was considered that the only European sites which fall within the ZOI of the proposed development are the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232).

These sites range from 1.3km to 1.5km from the subject site and there are no other designated European Sites in closer proximity to the subject site, within 12.5km, or with a potential hydrological connection.

I am in agreement with the applicant that the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232) fall within the ZOI of the proposed development based on a potential hydrological connection. I have also carried these sites forward for Stage 1 AA Screening.

European Site (code)	Qualifying interests[1] Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, date)	Distance from proposed development (km)	Ecological connections[2]	Consider further in screening[3] Y/N
River Boyne and	▪ River Lamprey (*Lampetra Fluviatilis)* [1099]	1.3km SW	No direct connection.	Yes.

River Blackwater SAC (002299)	▪ Salmon *(Salmo salar)* [1106] ▪ Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355] ▪ Alkaline fens [7230] ▪ Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*) [91E0]* **** Priority habitat under the Habitats Directive.*** https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002299 - NPWS December 2021		Potential tentative indirect hydrological connection via drainage ditches, Moynasboy stream and Knightsbrook River.	
River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232)	▪ Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) [A229] https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004232 - NPWS July 2024	1.5km W	No direct connection. Potential tentative indirect hydrological connection as above. Potential weak ornithological connection (use of site/drainage ditches by Kingfisher).	Yes.

Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone or in combination) on European Sites

Having regard to the small scale of the development site, the limited nature of construction and site preparation works which primarily involve top soil stripping within improved agricultural grassland of low ecological value, to the minor extent of roadside hedgerow removal required to achieve visibility splays, to the terrestrial buffers from drainage ditches, the separation distances from watercourses/bodies and absence of a flood risk, and to the significant distance of the hydrological link to a European site (6.3km), I consider that the proposed development would not be expected to generate impacts that could affect anything but the immediate area of the development site, thus having a very limited potential zone of influence on any ecological receptors.

Notwithstanding same, I note that the applicants AASR identifies potential impacts that could be generated by construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development including a reduction in water quality, degradation of QI Annex I habitat, degradation of supporting habitat of QI Annex II or SCI species and/or a reduction in prey abundance/quality for Annex II or SCI species as a result of increased levels of sedimentation, suspended solids and/or pollutants in surface water runoff potentially entering the River Boyne and River Blackwater via this hydrological connection. The potential for disturbance or displacement effects as a result of increased levels of noise, vibration, lighting or human activity is also identified.

Sources of impact and likely significant effects are considered further and detailed in the Table below.

AA Screening matrix

Site name Qualifying interests	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Site 1: River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) River Lamprey (*Lampetra Fluviatilis)* [1099], Salmon *(Salmo salar)* [1106], Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355], Alkaline fens [7230], Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*) [91E0]* **** Priority habitat under the Habitats Directive.***	Direct: **None.** No direct impacts and no risk of habitat loss, fragmentation or any other direct impact. Indirect: **None.** All stages: Extremely low risk of surface water run-off from construction reaching sensitive receptors but could enter Moynasboy Stream via drainage ditches. The single drainage ditch within the site is small, with stagnant water/slow flow and with minor culvert replacement works only proposed. Otherwise, discharges to surface waters are not proposed, there are terrestrial buffers from drainage ditches and streams, surface water and pollution control measures are integrated in the embedded design of the project and there is an absence of flood risk. Intervening habitat and 6.3km of hydrological connection to SAC would dilute any unlikely minor emissions which may occur. Construction: It is acknowledged that Otter is a highly mobile species with large territories, but that no sign of Otter was found during field surveys. Ecological information shows that the proposed development site does not contain suitable habitat for Otter. Works will be carried out during daytime working hours and approx. 1km from suitable otter habitat (Moynasboy Stream). Operational: surface water will be attenuated by SUDs system with sediment and hydrocarbon filtration.	**None.** There will be no direct or indirect effects on the two QI habitats of this site. 'Alluvial Forests' are located approx. 40km east of the proposed development site and 'Alkaline Fens' are located upstream and approx. 15km from the proposed development site. There will be no direct or indirect loss of aquatic habitats as a result of the proposed development and therefore there is no potential for direct, indirect or ex-situ effects on the SCI species River Lamprey, Salmon or Otter. Extremely low risk of surface water borne pollutants reaching the SAC. No significant changes in ecological functions due to any (unlikely) minor construction related emissions are predicted. It is considered that there is no likelihood of significant direct, indirect or ex-situ effects on Otter from disturbance/displacement. I am satisfied that this site can be screened out and that there is no ecological justification for further consideration of this site. Conservation Objectives will not be undermined.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): **No.**	

	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? **No.** Other plans and projects examined in the AASR. There are no significant effects occurring, and no likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects.	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Site 2: River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232) Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis) [A229]	Direct: **None** Indirect: **None.** As above for surface water and disturbance. Notwithstanding the finding of the Applicant's AASR that the site does not contain suitable habitat for Kingfisher, I note that the site does contain and connect with drainage ditches as a part of the hydrological connection to the SPA. Drainage ditches are suitable habitat for foraging Kingfisher. However, there will be no loss of drainage ditches as a result of the proposed development site which is otherwise a hydrological distance of 6.3km from this SPA. The proposed development site and drainage ditches are therefore significantly outside the foraging range for this species[10].	**None.** Extremely low risk of surface water borne pollutants reaching the SPA. No significant changes in ecological functions due to any (unlikely) minor construction related emissions are predicted. It is considered that there is no likelihood of significant direct, indirect or ex-situ effects associated with habitat loss or disturbance/displacement on the SCI bird species Kingfisher. I am satisfied that this site can be screened out and that there is no ecological justification for further consideration of this site. Conservation Objectives will not be undermined.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): **No.**	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? **No.** Other plans and projects examined in the AASR. There are no significant effects occurring, and no likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects.	

Further Commentary / discussion

The project includes certain embedded design measures which are relied upon in this screening determination. This includes the following elements:

- The transformers within the substation compound will include a bunded design. Surface water will be drained via new surface water sewers to a soakaway which will be located in the northeast

[10] Typically 1km but can extend 3-5km – RSPB (2109) Kingfisher: Breeding, feeding and territory.

corner of the site. The transformer bunds will incorporate an Entexol SCS001 (or equivalent) oil sensitive bund dewatering system and an Entexol SCS002 (or equivalent) integrated full retention oil separator.
- Drainage from the substation compound generally will be collected in a dedicated drainage network and will also discharge to the soakaway via a catchpit to trap fines or sediment.
- The remainder of the substation development will comprise a permeable surface consisting of 50mm single sized clean compound stone which will attenuate run off before filtration to ground or evaporation.
- The access road will drain to adjoining ground where it will infiltrate or evaporate.
- Discharge of foul water from the welfare facilities to an underground holding tank which will be emptied by a licensed water contractor.

These measures are detailed in drawing No. PE492-D282-016-005-000.

I am satisfied that these measures are standard best practice construction design and operational measures which are standardised for substation developments and are not bespoke to the conditions and environmental constraints of the site, nor are they mitigation measures for the purpose of avoiding or preventing impacts or significant effects on a European Site. Specifically, I note that the proposed electrical transformers are oil filled equipment and that is the reason for the standarised bunded design. I also note that an oil leak from a transformer is an extremely rare occurrence which would result in an electrical fault, notification to the transmission operator and immediate attendance on site by trained operatives. I note that at operational stage the development will not be permanently staffed, and I accept that the foul water holding tank is a proportionate response to the limited welfare needs of the infrequent operational staff visits. I am satisfied that the likelihood of a significant pollution risk as a result does not occur. I am satisfied that the embedded design measures can be relied upon in this screening determination and that no mitigation measures are required to come to these conclusions.

Step 4 Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site

I conclude that the proposed development (alone or in combination with other plans and projects) would not result in likely significant effects on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) or the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232). No further assessment is required for the project.

No mitigation measures are required to come to these conclusions. I consider that the embedded surface water and pollution control design measures described above are not mitigation measures for the purpose of avoiding or preventing impacts to the SAC or SPA.

Screening Determination

Finding of no likely significant effects

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) or the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232) or any other European Site, in view of the Conservation Objectives of these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment (and submission of an NIS) is not required.

This determination is based on:

- Scientific information provided in the Screening Report
- The relatively minor scale of the development and lack of impact mechanisms that could significantly affect a European Site
- Distances from (including significant hydrological distances), and weak indirect connections to, the European sites
- No significant ex-situ impacts on River Lamprey, Salmon, Otter or Kingfisher.
- The extremely low likelihood of a possible construction related impact from surface water reaching the European Sites and which would not be significant in terms of site-specific conservation objectives for the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC or SPA and would not undermine the maintenance of favourable conservation condition or delay or undermine the achievement of restoring favourable conservation status for those qualifying interest features of unfavourable conservation status (Alluvial Forests, River Lamprey and Salmon).

No mitigation measures aimed at avoiding or reducing impacts on European Sites were required to be considered in reaching this conclusion.

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4: WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING

ABP 323456-25

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	**ABP-323456-25**	**Townland, address**	Fosterstown, Carberstown, Trim, Co. Meath .
Description of project		The applicant is seeking permission for the construction of a 110kV/MV electrical substation. The development will comprise: • A substation compound (c.4,340 sq.m) with c2.6m high palisade perimeter fencing; • A seven bay 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) building (c.707 sq.m; c.13m in height); • Two 110kV Double Circuit Overhead Line End Masts (c. 16m in height) and associated outdoor electrical equipment to facilitate underground cable connections between the existing transmission circuit and the proposed GIS building; • Two 110kV transformers in transformer bays (c. 4.6m in height) with associated electrical equipment); • An internal access road (c. 6m wide); and • All other associated and ancillary site development works including the provision of site services; fencing; gates; lighting; temporary construction compound and temporary overhead line tower to facilitate line diversion; upgraded access from the R160; drainage; and hedgerow removal.	

Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,	The predominant land use is agricultural grazing, and the site and wider area is dominated by grassland, hedgerows and treelines. The area is not densely populated and there is a typical sporadic pattern of one-off rural housing. The site is generally flat, with levels ranging from 60.36 mAOD (Malin Head) to 62.45 mAOD east to west. There are no mapped watercourses within the site or immediate environment, no transitional waterbodies and no mapped permanent surface lakes or ponds. The ecologist has identified what is described as a 'tenuous' hydrological link between the proposed development site and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA. This link originates with the small drainage ditch within the development site and a further drainage ditch 143m to the north. These drainage ditches flow to the east for a distance of 300m and 400m respectively before converging into a single drainage ditch which flows for a further 600m before connecting with the Moynasboy stream. The Moynasboy stream then flows for approx. 835m to the Knightsbrook river which flows for a further 4.5km to the River Boyne. Accordingly, the hydrological link to the European sites is approx. 6.3km.
Proposed surface water details	A site drainage plan is proposed which will control sediment during construction and include measures to mimic existing surface water flows post development. Surface water runoff will either be to ground for filtration or evaporation or to a soakaway via a surface water drainage network with catch pit and retention oil separator. Potable water supply for welfare facilities will be from a bored well. Foul water will be discharged to a foul water holding tank which will be emptied by a licensed contractor. The FRA concludes that the site is not at risk from fluvial flooding, coastal flooding, pluvial flooding or groundwater flooding. The FRA concludes that the proposed development will not result in a loss of floodplain and will not impact on the current flood regime in the area. Otherwise, the FRA finds that the proposed development is located within Flood Zone C and does not require a justification test (as a highly vulnerable development).

Proposed water supply source & available capacity	Water supply for welfare facilities is proposed from a bored well.
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues	Wastewater will be contained on site in a sealed foul water holding tank, to be emptied off site by a licensed contractor.
Others?	n/a

Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies and Step 3: S-P-R connection

Identified water body	Distance to (m)	Water body name(s) (code)	WFD Status	Risk of not achieving WFD Objective e.g.at risk, review, not at risk	Identified pressures on that water body	Pathway linkage to water feature (e.g. surface run-off, drainage, groundwater)
WFD River Waterbody – Knightsbrook_020	c. 650m	Knightsbrook_020 IE_EA_07K020400	Moderate	At risk	Sediment, Nutrients, Organic (Ag)	Drainage. Surface run-off.
WFD River Waterbody – Knightsbrook_030	c. 1.7km	IE_EA_07K020500	Poor	At risk	Morphological (Ag, Hymo)	Drainage. Surface run-off.
WFD groundwater body: Trim Protected Area – Article 7 Abstraction for Drinking Water	Site is within this WFD GB	IE_EA_G_002	Good	At risk	Chemical Quality, Diminution for SW, Nutrients (DWTS, unknown, Ag)	Drainage. Hydraulic connection between surface water and groundwater.

Step 4: Detailed description of any component of the development or activity that may cause a risk of not achieving the WFD Objectives having regard to the S-P-R linkage.

CONSTRUCTION PHASE

No.	Component	Water body receptor (EPA Code)	Pathway (existing and new)	Potential for impact/ what is the possible impact	Screening Stage Mitigation Measure*	Residual Risk (yes/no) Detail	**Determination** to proceed to Stage 2. Is there a risk to the water environment? (if 'screened' in or 'uncertain' proceed to Stage 2.**
1.	Accidental pollution by uncontrolled runoff – vegetation removal, site stripping, stockpiling, vehicle movements and earthworks could result in uncontrolled site runoff and increases in sediment loading.	WFD River bodies, Underlying WFD GW body.	Existing. Hydrological connection between drainage ditches and river bodies. Hydraulic connection between surface water and groundwater.	The impact of a high sediment load could impact water quality.	Terrestrial buffers from drainage ditches. Minimal excavations, site preparation works primarily consist of limited topsoil stripping. Embedded design and standard pollution prevention measures Table 4-1 of the PECR and OCEMP.	No. There is a weak hydrological connection to the river bodies via a network of drainage ditches. There is a single drainage ditch within the site which the ecologist categorises as small, stagnant and slow moving. The only works affecting the drainage ditch are replacement of a culvert. It is considered that the risk is negligible and with best practice control measures and	No risk. Screened out.

						embedded no residual risk exists.	
2.	Accidental pollution by spillages – hydrocarbons, paints, chemicals, concrete and cement products.	WFD River bodies, underlying WFD GW body.	Existing. Hydrological connection between drainage ditches and river bodies. Indirect migration through subsoils.	The impact of pollution could impact water quality.	Terrestrial buffers from drainage ditches. Embedded design and standard pollution prevention measures Table 4-1 of the PECR and OCEMP.	No.	No risk. Screened out.
OPERATIONAL PHASE							
1.	Accidental pollution by spillages – hydrocarbons from transformers.	Underlying WFD GW body.	Existing. Indirect migration through subsoils.	The impact of pollution could impact water quality.	Embedded design and standard pollution prevention measures Table 4-1 of the PECR and OCEMP.	No. Transformers are in bunded areas to contain any leaks from failures. An oil leak from a transformer is an extremely rare occurrence which would result in an electrical fault, notification to the transmission operator and immediate attendance on site by trained operatives.	No risk. Screened out.

DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
1-4.	As per 1-2 'construction stage above'	As per 1-2 'construction stage above'	As per 1-2 'construction stage above'	As per 1-2 'construction stage above'	As per 1-2 'construction stage above'	No. As per 1-2 'construction stage above'	No. risk. Screened out. As per 1-2 'construction stage above'

Inspector: _____Date: _____