



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ACP-324114-26

Development	10 year planning permission for a 110kV electrical substation and associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works
Location	Located in the townlands of Killoran, County Tipperary (www.cooleenysubstation.com).
Planning Authority	Tipperary County Council
Applicant	Soleirtricity Lisheen Ltd
Type of Application	Application under the provisions of Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
Prescribed Bodies	None
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	12 th June 2026
Inspector	Ronan O'Connor

Contents

1.0 Introduction	4
2.0 Site Location and Description	4
3.0 Proposed Development	5
4.0 Documentation Submitted with the Planning Application	6
5.0 Submissions and Observations	7
5.1. Local Authority	7
5.2. Prescribed Bodies	8
5.3. Observers	8
6.0 Applicant Response	8
7.0 Planning History	8
8.0 Legislative and Policy Context	9
8.1. National	9
8.2. Regional Planning Policy	11
8.3. Local Planning Policy	11
8.4. Natural Heritage Designations	16
8.5. Environmental Impact Assessment Considerations	16
9.0 Assessment	19
10.0 Appropriate Assessment	31
10.3. Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment	31
11.0 Conclusion	32
12.0 Recommendation	32
13.0 Reasons and Considerations	33
14.0 Conditions	35

Appendix 1 : Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment.....	40
Appendix 2: EIA Screening	56
Appendix 3: EIA Screening Determination.....	58
Appendix 4: Water Framework Directive Stage 1 Screening	67

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. An application has been made by the Soleirtricity Lisheen Ltd under the provisions of Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Proposed Development will consist of a 10 year permission for a 110kV electrical substation and associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works. The Proposed Development will transmit power from a solar farm (permitted under Tipperary County Council Reg. Ref: 21/1128), which will connect into the existing Lisheen 110kV ESB substation.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The Proposed Development will be located on a site that has an area of approximately 2 ha and is situated in the townland of Killoran, North Tipperary, approximately 6.3km northwest of Urlingford and approximately 12.6km southeast of Templemore. The site lies within the former Lisheen Mining Complex. The mine previously operated as a lead, zinc and silver mine between 1999 to 2015. The mine ceased production in 2015. The wider site has since undergone redevelopment as the National Bioeconomy Campus, where there is a focus on developing sustainable and circular economy initiatives.
- 2.2. The wider site comprises several existing industrial and renewable energy activities, including the Lisheen and Bruckana wind farms. The Lisheen wind farm comprises 18 turbines on the former mine site and further turbines on other surrounding lands. The Bruckana wind farm comprises 14 turbines (42MW) and is operated by Bord na Móna.
- 2.3. The existing site on which the substation will stand is largely vacant. There is a presence of some hardstand, artificial surfaces, and bare ground throughout the site, together with recolonised scrub, undergrowth and low-lying vegetation in various locations. The land is generally flat reflecting its former industrial use.
- 2.4. The wider surrounding area is mainly comprised of farming land, areas previously used for peat harvesting, forestry and wind energy installations. Housing in the area

is mainly low-density and predominantly rural, consisting mainly of detached houses on spacious plots, farmhouses, and individual dwellings along country roads.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1.1. The Proposed Development will consist of a 10-year permission for a 110kV electrical substation and associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works.

3.1.2. The proposed 110kV electrical substation in Killoran, on a site of 2ha will consist of:

- 1 no. electrical substation compound and access road, palisade fencing and gates;
- 1 no. electrical substation compound / IPP control building measuring 10.74m x 20.15m and 6.920m in height;
- Station compound extension required at Lisheen 110kV station to facilitate the new Cooleeny 110kV cable bay;
- 1 no. Eirgrid switch room building measuring 18m x 25m and 8.55m in height;
- 1 no. lightning protection monopoles measuring up to 22m in height;
- A main step-up transformer;
- Associated ancillary equipment such as electrical apparatus, plant and equipment;
- Overhead and underground electrical and communications cabling and ancillary works; and,
- All associated ancillary works above and below ground including raising a portion of the site by ca.1m using imported engineering fill;

3.1.3. The 110kV underground cabling is proposed from the proposed 110kV substation to the existing Lisheen 110kV ESB substation, will consist of:

- Ca. 225m of underground 110kV electrical cables and associated communications cables;
- Three 125mm diameter HDPE power cable ducts;

- One 100mm diameter HDPE communications ducts;
- One 125mm diameter earth continuity duct to be installed in an excavated trench, typically 825mm wide by 1,315mm deep;
- 1600sq mm Al cable;
- 240sq mm copper earth continuity cable;
- One fibre cable; and,
- All associated ancillary works above and below ground.

Decommissioning

3.2. As set out in the Environmental Report, the operation of the facility will be for approximately 40 years. After this period, the application documentation sets out that a decision will be made as to whether the Permitted Solar Development (as permitted under Tipperary County Council Reg. Ref: 21/1128) that will be connected to the Proposed Development will be decommissioned or repowered. If the decision is taken to decommission the Permitted Development, then the Proposed Development will also be decommissioned, and the Site will return to agricultural usage. Full details of the decommissioning works are included within the Decommissioning Plan submitted as part of the overall planning application.

4.0 Documentation Submitted with the Planning Application

4.1. The application was accompanied by the following documents:

- Completed Application Form for Permission Approval in respect of a SID;
- Site notice;
- Newspaper notice;
- Letter of consent from the landowner;
- Planning Application Notification Letter to Tipperary County Council;
- Sample Notification Letter sent to the prescribed bodies;
- Planning Application Drawings (see Schedules of Drawings attached to Planning Application Form);

- Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment;
- Environmental Report Vol.1;
- Environmental Report – Appendices Vol.2;
- Decommissioning Plan;
- Water Framework Directive; and,
- Preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan

5.0 Submissions and Observations

5.1. Local Authority

5.1.1. Tipperary County Council made a submission on the 14th April 2026. The submission sets out relevant policies and the planning history of the site and surrounding area.

5.1.2. In summary, the Planning Authority have the following comments on the application:

- Is a concern that the infrastructure proposed occupies a highly visible core area of the campus.
- Potentially more suitable areas to the east side of the existing substation.
- Opportunity also exists to reconfigure the development within the applicant's landholding so that the development is moved closer to the existing substation and its prominence to the existing building opposite is reduced.
- Overall vision for the campus is outlined in the initial Draft Masterplan for the Lisheen National Biodiversity Campus (2023).
- Must be ensured that this development does not compromise or inhibit the future development of adjoining lands.
- Photomontages do not illustrate the impact of the development as it would appear within the campus.
- FI is necessary by way of detailed photomontages.
- Noted that the site is within an area designated for Geological Heritage (Code TY044-Lisheen Mine).

- Southern area of the site are shown to contain areas at risk of pluvial flooding (as per PFRA data produced by the OPW).
- Site is within the drainage catchment of the Lower River Suir SAC.
- The development authorised under ABP-322641-25 (Council Ref 2460936) is a Lower Tier SEVESO facility.
- No concern in relation to landscape impact.
- Not considered to generate significant operational traffic. Construction to be managed so does not impact negatively on operational access to the adjoining Bioscaleup building.
- Condition recommended in relation to Development Contribution.

Internal Departmental Consultees

5.1.3. None noted within the Planning Report.

5.2. **Prescribed Bodies**

5.2.1. None

5.3. **Observers**

5.3.1. None.

6.0 **Applicant Response**

6.1. None.

7.0 **Planning History**

Subject Site

20/019 - modifications to Condition No. 1 of previously granted planning permission
Ref. No. 18/601296 Grant permission - 03/04/2020

18601296 - a biorefinery facility and associated works. Grant permission 13/05/2019

This permission has not been implemented.

Adjoining Lands

The PA submission (Section 2.3) and the applicant's Environmental Report (Section 4.2.1) set out a significant planning history of the wider site. Those of most relevance to the development proposed here include:

PA Ref 211128 - construction of a Solar PV development with a maximum export capacity (MEC) of up to 122MW and associated works – Grant permission 23/02/2022

20825 - Works within the boundary of the existing Lisheen 110 kV Substation, the proposed works will comprise: replacement and improvement works to an existing electrical transformer bund; and associated works – Grant permission 02/12/2020

8.0 Legislative and Policy Context

8.1. National

Climate Action Plan 2024

Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP 2024) and Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP 2025) CAP 2024 (December 2023) sets out a roadmap to deliver on Ireland's climate ambition, of 51% reduction in GHG emissions from 2021-2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. The plan aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022. The Climate Action Plans have outlined precise goals for renewable energy, focusing on solar, onshore wind, and offshore wind generation. The Key Target for Onshore Wind is to achieve 6GW by 2025 and 9GW by 2030. The Climate Change Advisory Council has made a number of recommendations for actions in the electricity sector in particular around the need for laws to ensure access to information from smart meters, private wire connections, phase-out of coal use, storage, demand management, and the need to streamline the planning process for windfarms. Climate Action Plan 2025 builds upon CAP 2024 by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and it should be read in conjunction with Climate Action Plan 2024

As part of its functions, the Board must, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner that is consistent with the most recent approved climate action plan,

most recent approved national long term climate action strategy, national adaptation framework, sectoral plans, furtherance of national climate objective and the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State [section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended)].

National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF sets ten strategic outcomes, including NSO 1 – Compact Growth, NSO 6 – A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills, which includes growth and investment in infrastructure, and NSO 8 – Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society, which includes the provision of new energy systems and transmission grids to support more distributed renewables-focused generation.

Government Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply, Nov. 2021

This policy statement notes that electricity is vital for the proper functioning of society and the economy. The statement lists challenges to ensuring security of electricity supply, including:

- Ensuring adequate electricity generation capacity, storage, grid infrastructure, interconnection and system services are put in place to meet demand – including at periods of peak demand; and
- Developing grid infrastructure and operating the electricity system in a safe and reliable manner.

Page 5 of the policy statement notes the Government has approved *“that 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”*.

Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure

This statement notes the strategic importance of investment in networks and energy infrastructure, with such development expected to take account of all relevant standards.

Flood Risk Management Guidelines

These Guidelines seek to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and avoid new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere and they advocate a sequential approach to risk assessment and a justification test.

8.2. Regional Planning Policy

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES)

The Southern Region RSES supports a safe, secure and reliable system of transmission and distribution of electricity and the successful implementation of the Ireland's Grid Development Strategy (p.g.214).

Relevant objectives include:

- RPO 219 'New Energy Infrastructure': It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.
- RPO 222 'Electricity Infrastructure': It is an objective to support the development of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity and to support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity networks and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this plan under EirGrid's (2017) Grid Development Strategy (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and strengthen all-island energy infrastructure and interconnection capacity.

8.3. Local Planning Policy

Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028

Background

The Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 ('County Development Plan') ('CDP') was made on the 11th July 2022 by the Elected Members of Tipperary

County Council. The Plan is a framework to deliver for communities, through protecting the environment, reducing energy demands, maintaining the viability of towns, villages and rural communities and supporting job creation.

Overview: National Bioeconomy Campus

The CDP identifies Thurles and its environs as a driver of the bioeconomy both for within Tipperary and Ireland (Section 4.3.3). The focus is to support bioenergy and biotechnology. A 445ha site at Thurles and Lisheen has been designated as a strategic national economic and employment centre. The appeal site lies within this area.

The site is one of six designated locations in the EU for leading the next generation of the bioeconomy. The development of the bioeconomy campus at Lisheen is therefore plan-led and will benefit from a masterplan to ensure development is carried out in accordance with the aims and objectives associated with the bioeconomy.

The Development Plan identifies the Lisheen Mine and Lisheen Bog area, centred on the National Bioeconomy Campus, as the first candidate 'Decarbonisation Zone' (DZ) in the county, with co-benefits in terms of tourism and amenity. This DZ designation recognises the importance of the bioeconomy in Tipperary and the potential for synergies with other areas including wind energy and tourism and amenity.

It is an objective of the Development Plan to prepare a masterplan (non-statutory) for the former mining landbank. No definite timeline for the publication of the masterplan has been defined, however.

Chapter 2: Core Strategy

- Strategic Objective SO-1 is to support the just transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally-sustainable and climate-neutral economy.
- Strategic Objective SO-2 is to facilitate and promote the development of Clonmel, Nenagh and Thurles as Key Towns, economic drivers and significant population and service centres for the Southern Region.

Chapter 3: Low-Carbon Society and Climate Action

- Policy 3-1 aims to promote and facilitate renewable energy development, in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy 2016 (and any review thereof), and the Tipperary Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019.

Chapter 10: Renewable Energy and Bioeconomy

- Policy 10-5 is to support and facilitate the co-location of renewable energy development and technologies to ensure the most efficient use of land identified as suitable for renewable energy generation.
- Objective 10-A is to support and facilitate new development that will produce energy from local renewable sources such as hydro, bioenergy, wind, solar, geothermal and landfill gas, including renewable and non-renewable enabling plant, subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria, in co-operation with statutory and other energy providers. The provisions of the Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy (and any review thereof) as set out in Volume 3, will apply to new development.
- Objective 10-D aims to support the emerging bioeconomy sector, including continued support for the National Bioeconomy Campus at Lisheen, Co. Tipperary.

Chapter 11: Environmental and Natural Assets

- **Policy 11-1** is in relation to natural environment and human health.
- **Policy 11-2** is in relation to protection, integrity and conservation of European Sites.
- **Policy 11-4** is in relation to the conservation, protection and enhancement of local biodiversity.
- **Policy 11-7** is in relation to the protection of water quality in accordance with the EU WFD.
- **Policy 11-12** is in relation to the protection of geological heritage.
- **Policy 11-18** is in relation to controlling noise disturbance.
- **Policy 11-19** is in relation to controlling light pollution.

- **Objective 11-A** is in relation to protection and promotion of the environment, biodiversity and our natural systems.
- **Objective 11-G** is in relation to applying sustainable environmental standards.
- **Section 11.8** is in relation to noise and light emissions.

[Please refer to the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 for the full citation of each policy and objective listed above.]

Other Relevant Chapters

- Chapter 12: Sustainable Transport
- Chapter 13: Built Heritage
- Chapter 15: Water and Energy Facilities

Volume 3: Appendix 6 ‘Development Management Standards’

The following development management standard are considered particularly relevant in the assessment of this case:

- Section 2.2 Flood Risk Management
- Section 3.1 Sustainable Building Design
- Section 3.2 Construction Environmental Management Plans
- Section 3.3 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Nature-Based Solutions
- Section 3.5 Lighting
- Section 3.6 Noise
- Section 3.10 Supporting Sustainable Transport
- Section 3.13 Water Section 5.1 Sustainability Statement for Commercial and Employment Development
- Section 5.7 Industrial Development
- Section 6.1 Road Design & Visibility at a Direct Access
- Section 6.2 Traffic and Transport Assessments
- Section 6.3 Road Safety Audits

Tipperary Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 (LACAP)

Tipperary Decarbonising Zone

The Tipperary County Council Climate Action Plan (LACAP) is a standalone plan. It sets out how the Council is reducing energy use and increasing energy efficiency across its own properties, facilities and fleet, and also how the Council is actively influencing, facilitating and advocating for climate action across other sectors and communities in how they achieve their own climate actions and targets. The LACAP comprises 100 actions, along with opportunity areas and actions for the Tipperary 'Decarbonising Zone' (DZ).

The National Bioeconomy Campus at Lisheen

The former mine complex, located at Lisheen, Thurles, is designated as the National Bioeconomy Campus. The National Bioeconomy Campus is supported by the Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024, and it is stated that 'the campus is a critical piece of infrastructure which will enable diversification of business activities in the agri-food and marine sectors in the rural economy, attracting and retaining workers and businesses in the region and in turn driving innovation and investment'.

Figure 6.1 shows the location and extent of the Mid-Tipperary Decarbonising Zone, including the National Bioeconomy Campus, which is where the subject site is located. I note that the Council has identified the need to prepare a masterplan to guide the development of the National Bioeconomy Campus and associated investment priorities.

Action 55 of the LACAP is to prepare a master plan for the National Bioeconomy Campus located at Lisheen, Co. Tipperary in line with the objectives of the County Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

Action 100 is to seek to actively support the development of the bioeconomy in Tipperary, including new and emerging technologies, both in the Decarbonising Zone (National Bioeconomy Campus) and elsewhere in the county in line with the National Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023 – 2025, whilst advocating and exerting influence to ensure bioeconomy related development and activities promote climate action and adaptation co-benefits, and do not contravene relevant environmental protection criteria or cause significant negative environmental effects.

8.4. Natural Heritage Designations

No designated European Sites apply directly to, or adjoin, the subject lands. The nearest European Site is Galmoy Fen (Site Code: 001858), which is roughly 9.4km to the northeast.

The distance and direction from the nearest European sites to the appeal site are listed in Table 8.1 below. These sites are all identified as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Table 8.1: European Sites

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (approx.)	Direction
<i>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</i>			
001858	Galmoy Fen SAC	c9.4km	Northeast
000407	The Loughans SAC	c9.4km	Southeast
000849	Spahill and Clomantagh Hill SAC	c10.5km	East
000831	Cullahill Mountain SAC	c12.8km	Northeast
002137	Lower River Suir SAC	c14km	Southwest

8.5. Environmental Impact Assessment Considerations

- 8.5.1. The requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are outlined in Part X of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Part 10 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. Schedule 5 of the Regulations sets out the various classes and thresholds of development which require mandatory EIA. Part 1 of Schedule 5 lists projects for which mandatory EIA is required on the basis of their type while Part 2 of the same schedule lists projects on the basis of their relevant scale/size threshold that requires EIA.

- 8.5.2. The applicant has addressed the issue of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) within the Section 2 of the Environmental Report ('Environmental Impact Assessment 'EIA' Screening Considerations) and I have had regard to the same. The report concludes that the proposed development does not reflect the criteria for mandatory EIA and that a sub threshold Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is not required in this instance as the proposed development will not have significant impacts on the environment.
- 8.5.3. There are no classes of development within Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations, that are applicable to the proposed development.
- 8.5.4. Section 3(a) and 10 in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) provides that mandatory EIA is required for the following classes of development:
- 3(a). Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water not included in Part 1 of this Schedule with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more.*
- 10. Infrastructure projects:*
(a) Industrial estate development projects, where the area would exceed 15 hectares.
- 8.5.5. The proposed development will comprise an electrical substation that will support electricity distribution, but with no energy generation, and while located in the National Bioeconomy Campus, which could be classed as industrial estate, the application site area is 2ha and therefore below the 15ha threshold. As such, the proposed development does not trigger the requirement for EIA under the above classes.
- 8.5.6. Item (15)(b) of Schedule 5 Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) provides that an EIA is required for: "Any project listed in this part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7."
- 8.5.7. The proposed development is sub-threshold in terms of EIA having regard to Schedule 5, Part 2, of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), in that it is on an industrial estate with a site area less than 15 hectares

and does not involve energy generation. I also note that the uses proposed are in keeping with land uses in the area and that the development would not give rise to significant use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution, nuisance, or a risk of accidents.

8.5.8. The criteria at Schedule 7 to the regulations are relevant to the question as to whether the proposed sub-threshold development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment that could and should be the subject of EIA. Section 299B(1)(b)(ii)(II)(A) of the regulations states that the Commission shall satisfy itself that the applicant has provided the information specified in Schedule 7A. The submitted Environmental Report addresses the information under Schedule 7A.

8.5.9. It is my view that sufficient information has been provided within the documentation to determine whether the development would or would not be likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The various reports submitted with the application address a variety of environmental issues and assess the impact of the proposed development, in addition to cumulative impacts regarding other permitted developments in proximity to the site, and demonstrates that, subject to the various construction and design related mitigation measures recommended, the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the environment. I have had regard to the characteristics of the site, location of the proposed development, and types and characteristics of potential impacts. I have examined the sub criteria having regard to Schedule 7A and all other submissions, and I have considered all information which accompanied the application including inter alia:

- Planning Application Drawings (see Schedules of Drawings attached to Planning Application Form);
- Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment;
- Environmental Report Vol.1;
- Environmental Report – Appendices Vol.2;
- Decommissioning Plan;
- Water Framework Directive; and,
- Preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan

8.5.10. In addition, I have taken into account the SEA of the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028.

8.6. I have completed a screening assessment as set out in Appendix 1 of this report and recommend to the Commission that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and that the preparation and submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) would not therefore be required. The conclusion of this assessment is as follows:

8.7. Having regard to: -

(a) the nature and scale of the proposed development.

(b) The pattern of development in surrounding area.

(c) the location of the development outside of any sensitive location specified in article 299(C)(1)(v) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

(d) The guidance set out in the “Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development”, issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2003).

(e) The criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended); and

(f) The features and measures proposed by the applicant envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise be significant effects on the environment, including measures identified in the Environmental Report (Volumes 1 and 2) and the CEMP.

8.7.1. It is considered that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and that the preparation and submission of an environmental impact assessment report would not therefore be required. I recommend that a screening determination be issued accordingly, confirming that no EIAR is required.

9.0 **Assessment**

9.1. I will address the main planning issues arising from the proposed development under the following headings:

- Principle of Development
- Design and Visual Impact/Landscape Impact

- Amenity
- Movement and access
- Ecology
- Hydrology and Hydrogeology
- Other issues

9.2. Principle of development

- 9.2.1. The Proposed Development will transmit power from the permitted Lisheen Solar PV Farm (Planning Ref: 211128) via the UGC, which will connect into the existing Lisheen 110kV ESB substation located circa 700m west of the Permitted Solar Development.
- 9.2.2. I note that national, regional, and local planning policy all support the provision of electricity infrastructure to support transmission and distribution of this energy via national grid.
- 9.2.3. The Planning Authority raises no objection to the principle of the proposed development (although have raised concerns in relation to the visual aspect of same, and I have discussed same in detail below). As noted by the PA, the site lies within a core area of the wider National Bioeconomy Campus, which is identified to accommodate bioeconomy and related enterprises. The development will serve to improve energy infrastructure on the lands, as identified by the PA submission.
- 9.2.4. I am satisfied that, in principle, the proposal is acceptable, and there is no indication or evidence that that the provision of a substation would hinder, or undermine the policies and objectives as relates to the wider development of the area.
- 9.2.5. I am therefore satisfied that the principle of a 110kV substation and grid connection is in accordance with the overarching planning policy framework, particularly RPO 219 and 222 of the RSES, and Policy 3-1 which aims to promote and facilitate renewable energy development, in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028.

9.3. Design and Visual Impact/Landscape Impact

- 9.3.1. I note that the PA have raised concerns in relation to visual prominence of the proposed development, by virtue of its location within a core area of the campus and

state that there are potentially more suitable areas to the east side of the existing substation. The PA highlight that the applicant has not provided visuals of how the substation will appear within the campus site itself. The PA have requested that FI is sought in relation to same.

9.3.2. In relation to the visual impact of the proposed development, I note that the proposed development will consist of a control room building (Eirgrid Building) which will have a height of 8.55m to ridge, and dimensions of 25m X 18m. In addition, the associated infrastructure will include a lightning mast of 22 m in height, as well as 9 no, post insulators of approximately 8 m in height. I am of the view that the proposed development will read as a moderate addition to the wider developing campus and, visually, it will appear as an extension to the existing buildings and existing electrical infrastructure on the site, noting the existing substation building to the north of the site. The proposed development will primarily comprise structures in concrete, aluminium and steel, reflecting the established materiality and industrial character of the area. While the proposed lightning mast will be visually prominent, and to a lesser extent the post insulator elements, I note that, in the immediate area, there are large wind turbine structures, and given the site context, including these existing wind turbines, and the existing electrical infrastructure and substation, the proposed development will be easily visually absorbed into the wider campus. While no photomontages of the substation as it would appear from views inside the campus are provided, I am satisfied that there is sufficient detail in the application documentation, including the drawings provided with the application, to make an adequate assessment of the potential visual impacts of the proposed development.

9.3.3. In terms of wider landscape and visual impacts, I would note also Section 9 of the Environmental Report (Vol 1) considers Landscape and Visual Impacts of the proposed development. This includes a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA). It is set out therein that there will be no impact on scenic views and there is little potential for visual impacts beyond a 2km radius. The lightning masts will be more visible due to the height of same. A total of 5 viewpoints (VPs) are assessed (VP 1 to 5), and these are reflected in the associated photomontage booklet. At construction stage, no significant landscape or visual effects are predicted. At operational phase, it is set out in the report that the proposed development will represent an extension of existing electrical infrastructure

buildings, located adjacent to the site. Landscape impacts are deemed 'medium-low' at the site, reducing to low and negligible beyond 500m. In terms of visual effects, the effect of the proposed development is considered to be imperceptible from each of the VPs considered. No significant cumulative impacts are expected.

- 9.3.4. In terms of the conclusions therein, I concur with same, noting that the campus sits within an area that is well screened from the wider surrounding landscape and from surrounding visual receptors.

9.4. **Amenity**

- 9.4.1. The submitted Environmental Report considers potential impacts on sensitive receptors in terms of noise and vibration, and potential traffic impacts.

Noise and Vibration

- 9.4.2. In relation to noise, Chapter 8 of the report considers same, and considers both construction and operational phase noise and vibration. Section 8.3.2 considers the nearest Noise Sensitive Receptors, and Table 8.2 and Figure 8.3 set the locations of same. 6 no. receptors of relevance are set out. I note the nearest NSR is a commercial receptor located 45m to the southeast of the site (NSR06 - Irish Bioeconomy Foundation) and the nearest residential receptor is located 440m to the southwest of the site (NSR 02).
- 9.4.3. Table 8-14 sets out that the predicted noise emissions will be within applicable construction noise thresholds. It is noted that, due to the proximity to the site, NSR 06 would experience relatively higher noise impacts, prior to mitigation, and same would represent a worst-case scenario, although I note the noise levels will still be below the relevant limit for same (predicted worst case level, 72dBA, with a limit of 72 dBA). This is a commercial unit and is therefore less sensitive to noise impacts than a residential dwelling. At the nearest residential dwelling, NSR 02, levels were within applicable limits.
- 9.4.4. At operational stage, during daytime there was no predicted change in ambient background noise levels as a result of the operation of the substation, and the potential cumulative noise impacts were considered to be negligible. Night-time noise effects on noise sensitive receptors were concluded be negligible.

- 9.4.5. The report also considers potential cumulative noise impacts as a result of the construction and operational stages of this project, in conjunction with the permitted solar farm development (PA ref 211128) and two other developments. Should all 4 no. developments occur simultaneously, there would be potential exceedance s of noise limits at NSR 01, and NSR 02 (limit is 65 dB LAeq, T, predicted levels are 66 dB LAeq, T). I note that same represents a slight exceedance of the limit, and will be for a short-term duration only, noting also that it is unlikely that all 4 developments will occur simultaneously. Cumulative impacts at operational stage were considered to be negligible at all NSRs, during the daytime period, with locally slight impacts during night-time periods. Levels remain below WHO NHG guidelines.
- 9.4.6. Mitigation measures in relation to noise are set out in Section 8.6 and include, but are not limited to, limitations on hours of construction, use of low noise rated plant, and the use of noise screens. No mitigation measures were considered necessary for the operational phase of the proposed development.
- 9.4.7. The report concludes that noise nuisance is not likely to occur as a result of the proposed development and I am satisfied that this will be the case.

9.5. Movement and access

- 9.5.1. Section 11 'Material Assets – Traffic' of the Environmental Report considers potential construction and operational stage traffic impacts of the proposed development, as well as matters relating to road safety.
- 9.5.2. In relation to site access, it is noted that the site is accessed from the existing entrance off the L5612 local road, and this will be the access at construction and operational phases also. It is noted that this access has been previously upgraded to an industrial standard access and therefore provides appropriate visibility at the entrance point, and sight distances and access arrangements are in accordance with current design standards.
- 9.5.3. Details of construction stage traffic volumes are set out in the report, and the report sets out detailed traffic management measures to minimise impacts on the surrounding road network, including specific haul routes utilised by construction related traffic. The grid connection route will be entirely located on private lands and will therefore have no impact on the surrounding road network. No potential for congestion to occur is highlighted within the submitted assessment. It is noted that a

specific traffic management plan will be agreed with the Council for all large HGVs delivering materials to the site. I am satisfied that this can be ensured by way of condition.

- 9.5.4. During operation, impacts on the road network are limited due to the unmanned nature of the proposed development and its location, being removed from more sensitive residential dwellings and situated within a relatively self-contained campus, in a context of established similar development.
- 9.5.5. Overall, I am satisfied that final construction stage traffic mitigation can be secured by condition relating to a finalised CEMP (including a Traffic Management Plan) to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority. During operation of the proposed development, I am satisfied with submitted details and that no significant negative effects will result to the operation of the transport network.

9.6. Ecology

- 9.6.1. I have set out an AA Screening in Section 10 and Appendix 1 of this report below with specific consideration of potential effects upon designated European sites, which should be read in conjunction with this section of my report. More general considerations of ecology are set out below.
- 9.6.2. The submitted Environment Report addresses Biodiversity in Section 6. The majority of the site comprises of Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3) habitat. Temporary areas of standing water (Other Artificial Lakes and Ponds FL8) were observed on the day of the survey, which were on the wider part of the site, and as detailed in the report, is associated with excavation works associated with the decommissioning of the former mine, which reached a depth where they interacted with the high-water table, leading to seasonal groundwater emergence. Earth Banks (BL2) were present around the perimeter of the recolonising bare ground habitat. Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3) were present in the form of minor roads and the existing 110kV Lisheen substation. Figure 6-2 of the report sets out a Habitat Map.
- 9.6.3. In terms of the potential for notable or protected species on the site, the site itself was not considered suitable for amphibians, although a settlement pond located 350m to the east had the potential to support same. The site has the potential be utilised by badger for commuting purposes.

- 9.6.4. In relation to bats, due to the lack of linear features on the site, the commuting and foraging potential of the site was considered 'negligible', and due to the absence of mature trees and buildings with suitable roosting potential, the roosting potential of the site was assessed as 'none'.
- 9.6.5. In relation to birds, there is only limited suitable habitat for nesting and foraging, although the seasonal standing water were considered to provide temporary resting habitat for birds such as snipe, particularly during wetter periods.
- 9.6.6. In relation to other species, of note is that the Cooleeny Stream, located c40m to the south of the site, has the potential to support freshwater white-clawed crayfish.
- 9.6.7. In relation to assessing potential impacts on the habitats and species identified above, I note the following:
- Snipe (Utilising Recolonising Bare Ground Habitat) – Significant impacts on same ruled out due the ubiquitous nature of this habitat, the low ecological value of same (which will be lost as a result of the proposed development, and due to the bird protection measures to be implemented (see discussion of same below).
 - Snipe (Utlising Other Artificial Lakes and Ponds Habitat) - Significant impacts on same ruled out due the low ecological value of this habitat, and due to the bird protection measures to be implemented, which include site clearance outside of nesting bird season.
 - Birds (Nesting) – Although the site has limited potential for nesting birds, potential impacts on same cannot be ruled out, and mitigation measures in relation to same are set in Section 6.5 of the report.
 - Amphibians – Construction phase mitigation measures are set out in relation to same, in order to ensure no impacts occur during clearance and construction works.
 - Badger – Potential impacts on commuting badger are highlighted, mainly as a result of lighting impacts at construction stage, noting badger are nocturnal. Mitigation in relation to same is set out in Section 6.5 of the report.
 - Bats – No potential impacts on same were considered likely, for reasons as discussed above.

- Invasive Species – An invasive species (Butterfly Bush) was found within the site. Mitigation measures relating to the removal of same are set out in Section 6.5 of the report).
- Other Fauna – There is potential in the wider area for hedgehogs and other nocturnal and terrestrial species to be present. Mitigation in relation to same is set out in Section 6.5 of the report.

9.6.8. Section 6.5 sets out mitigation measures, and includes adherence to relevant best practice guidance as well as measures relating to the following:

- Protection of water quality – Measures to prevent pollutants entering the Cooleeney Stream during construction, noting that it is highly unlikely that potential pollutants would reach said stream as not direct discharges to the stream are proposed, works will be localised, and located approximately 140 m from the stream. There is an existing access road separating the works from the Cooleeney Stream. Furthermore, there is no existing drainage connection in place that connects the site to the Cooleeney Stream.
- Non-Volant Mammals (including Badger) – Management of waste, measures relating to deep excavations; works outside of daylight hours; identification of burrows, holts and setts and appropriate measures relating to same; measures to reduce noise and disturbance impacts (as set out in Chapter 8 Noise and Vibration of the Environmental Report).
- Breeding Birds – Should works be required during the breeding season, a breeding bird survey will be conducted on the site, with appropriate measures taken should nesting sites be found.
- Nocturnal Species – Measures as relates to appropriate lighting.
- Invasive Species -Removal and management plan for butterfly bush, as well as measures to ensure that there is no introduction of invasive species to the site.

9.6.9. No measures are required for the operational stage of the project.

9.6.10. It is concluded within the report that the proposed development will support the protection and enhancement of the environmental quality of the area.

- 9.6.11. In relation to the conclusions of the report, I concur with same. I note that the site is of generally low ecological value, and where potential impacts on biodiversity have been identified i.e. on breeding birds and on commuting badger for example, appropriate mitigation measures have been set out to ensure that there will be no significant residual impacts on these species, or on biodiversity more generally.
- 9.6.12. Overall, I am satisfied that no significant negative effects are anticipated upon biodiversity during either construction or operation of the proposed development.

9.7. Hydrology and Hydrogeology

- 9.7.1. Section 7 of the Environmental Report considers potential effects of the proposed development on the water environment. Therein it is set out that continuous surface water and groundwater monitoring takes place on the site, noting its former use as a mine. It is noted that the Cooleeny Stream is the closest hydrological feature in the vicinity of the site and is located approximately 40m to the south of the site, at its closest point. This stream drains into the River Drish, approximately 4km downstream of the site, which in turn drains in the River Suir, approximately 14km downstream of the River Drish. The River Suir forms part of the Lower River Suir SAC (see discussion in relation to Appropriate Assessment in Appendix 1).
- 9.7.2. In terms of surface water quality, the most recently available data (WFD 2019-2024), the Cooleeny Stream has a quality status of 'moderate' and the risk status is 'at risk'. The River Drish and the River Suir also have a quality status of 'moderate' and a risk status of 'at risk'.
- 9.7.3. The site lies above the Thurles groundwater body (IE_SW_G_158). The Thurles groundwater body is assigned a "Good" status under the WFD 2019-2024 monitoring round. The groundwater body risk is currently considered "not at risk" of meeting its environmental objectives. Groundwater vulnerability across the site is 'moderate', according to GSI data. However, the report notes that remediation works that have occurred on the site, including excavation of soils, especially in the south of the site, and it is concluded that the site-specific groundwater vulnerability is 'extreme' or 'rock at or near surface'.
- 9.7.4. In relation to potential effects of the proposed development, it is set out that the majority of construction activities will take place approximately 150m from the Cooleeny Stream, and there is no existing drainage that connects the site to this

waterbody, and it is separated by an existing access road from the site. It is concluded that impacts on this waterbody during the construction stage are not likely and will not be significant.

- 9.7.5. It is set out within the report that both the northern and southern portions of the site will be subject infill, with the ground levels on the northern portion being raised by approximately 1m, with the result that all of the levels within the boundary of the site will be above the high winter water table. Works for the proposed grid connection will be undertaken once the ground levels have been raised. It is set out that the timing of the works will be of importance, noting that during the winter months, there will potentially be an area of the site adjacent to exposed groundwater. Notwithstanding, it is stated that works will be carried out in accordance with best practice guidance, and mitigation measures will be put in place as part of a site-specific CEMP which will serve to minimise potential risk to groundwater quality.
- 9.7.6. At operational stage it is set out that the majority of surfaces onsite will be permeable and rainwater will continue to percolate to ground. Smaller areas of hardstanding will consist of the substation building and the Eirgrid Switch Room and it is set out that rainwater will run off these surfaces to the permeable hardcore surface and percolate directly to ground.
- 9.7.7. In terms of wastewater, no wastewater discharges will be generated during the operational phase of the proposed development. Welfare facilities on the site will be infrequently used, and foul water from same will be diverted into a holding tank and frequently removed by a suitable licenced waste contractor.
- 9.7.8. Mitigation measures are set out in Section 7.6.1 of the Environmental Report and include, but are not limited to, measures relating to the appropriate storage and management of materials, site management, emergency response procedures and appropriate management of cementitious materials. At operational stage, the development will receive monthly maintenance visits. Decommissioning measures will be as per construction stage measures.
- 9.7.9. The Environmental Report concludes that, subject to the implementation of the stipulated mitigation measures, the proposal will not result in any adverse effect on the hydrological regime of the receiving environment, and I am satisfied that this will be the case.

Flood Risk

- 9.7.10. The submitted Environmental Report considers the issue of flooding. Within same, it set out that, with reference to predictive fluvial and coastal flood mapping, the entire site is within Flood Zone C. While the proposed development is considered highly vulnerable, noting that the site is within Flood Zone C, a Justification Test is therefore not required, as per the Flood Risk Management Guidelines.
- 9.7.11. Notwithstanding, the Environmental Report notes that the southern portion of the site (which is reserved for future development) has previously been excavated to below the high winter water table, and as such localised groundwater flooding is observed during times of seasonally high-water table. It is set out in the report that this southern portion of the site is reserved for future expansion works only. The report sets out that there is no evidence that such groundwater flooding on northern portion of the site has occurred, or will occur, as this sits on a higher elevation. Notwithstanding same, it is set out that finished ground levels will be raised by approximately 1m across the site, which will ensure all the lands within the redline boundary will be significantly above the high winter water table, ensuring that groundwater will not be a risk for the proposed development.
- 9.7.12. In relation to other potential sources of flooding (fluvial, pluvial), I note that the PA have stated that Southern area of the site are shown to contain areas at risk of pluvial flooding and the PA have made reference to PFRAM data produced by the OPW. In relation to this issue, I note that Section 7.4.3 of the Environmental Report considers the issue of Pluvial Flood Risk, and therein it is stated there is no identified risk of same, and that furthermore, the site is underlain by well-draining soils, and therefore the risk of pluvial flooding is ruled out. In relation to the issue of pluvial flooding, I have reviewed the OPW PRFA mapping as contained on Pages 3 to 6 of Appendix II of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 (Volume 3 Appendices of the CDP). These predictive flood maps are at a county scale, and the scale is such that it is not possible to determine if this specific site is within a pluvial flood zone. I have also reviewed all available flood risk mapping on FloodInfo.ie¹, which are at a site specific scale, such that the site can be identified, and I have not identified any mapping that points to a

¹ <https://www.floodinfo.ie/map/floodmaps/#>

pluvial flood risk (or indeed other sources of flood risk) on this specific site, and there are no past flood events on this site, highlighted on the floodinfo.ie website.

9.7.13. Notwithstanding, I am of the view that the raising of ground levels as cited by the applicant, and as discussed above, would be sufficient to ensure that there is no risk from any potential localised areas of rainwater ponding that may collect on the wider application site, resulting from previous excavations on the southern portion of the site, as referred to by the applicant.

9.7.14. In relation to fluvial flooding, there is no identified risk of same, and therefore risks of same are ruled out.

9.7.15. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed development is acceptable in this location and, subject to those measures as set out by the applicant, will not be at risk of flooding, and that the proposal will not increase the current flood risk to surrounding areas.

9.8. Other matters

COMAH establishment

9.8.1. I note that in the submission on this application, the PA have stated that the development permitted under ABP-322641-25 (PA Ref 246036), for an anaerobic digestion plant and associated works, on a site located within the National Bioeconomy Campus is a 'Lower Tier' COMAH establishment. Having reviewed the details of same, I concur that this is the case. In relation to same, I note that this permitted establishment will be subject to the provisions of the Chemicals Act (Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations, S.I. No. 209 of 2015 which will ensure that the level of off-site risk proposed by this establishment will be acceptable.

Archaeology and Geological Heritage

9.8.2. The submission from the PA has referred to the wider Lisheen Mine site, and has stated same contains extensive records of archaeological investigations undertaken as part of mine works. In relation to same, I note that Chapter 12 of the Environmental Report considers potential effects on cultural heritage, including archaeology. Within same, it is set out that the site is not situated within a zone of archaeological interest and that there is no surviving old ground surface within the

site. Previous archaeology within the wider area has been preserved by record and is no longer physically present within the landscape. No significant effects are anticipated. No mitigation in relation to same is required. I am satisfied that the proposed development will have no impact on cultural heritage, including archaeology.

- 9.8.3. I note also that the PA have highlighted that the site is within an area designated for Geological Heritage (Code TY044 – Lisheen Mine). Policy 11-12 of the CDP seeks to protect, support and conserve same. There is no particular aspect of the former mine that would appear to be directly impacted by this proposed development, and the PA have not cited any particular aspect of concern. I am satisfied that the proposal would not materially impact any geological heritage aspects of value associated with the Lisheen mine, noting also that much of the wider campus is designated for development as the National Bioeconomy Campus.

10.0 Appropriate Assessment

- 10.1. This section of the report considers the likely significant effects of the proposal on Natura 2000 European sites with each of the potential significant effects assessed in respect of each of the European sites considered to be at risk and the significance of same. The assessment is based on the submitted Appropriate Assessment Screening.
- 10.2. I note that the Planning Authority have not raised any concerns in relation to the potential impacts on European sites, and no other submission on the application have been received.

10.3. Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

- 10.3.1. Appendix 2 attached to this report sets out a detailed screening for AA and should be read in conjunction with this section of my report.

AA Screening Conclusion

- 10.3.2. 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 European Site: Lower River Suir SAC (002137) or any other European site, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives, and Appropriate Assessment (and submission of a NIS) is not therefore required.

This determination is based on:

- Scientific Information as set out in the applicant's AA Screening Report.
- Standard pollution controls that would be employed regardless of proximity to a European site, and effectiveness of same (at construction, operational and decommissioning phases).
- Distance from European Sites.

10.3.3. No measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on European sites were taken into account in reaching this conclusion.

11.0 Conclusion

11.1. The proposed development comprises a 110kV substation, grid connection and ancillary structures. National, regional and local planning policy all support the provision of infrastructure to support transmission and distribution of energy via national grid. The proposed development would not give rise to excessive traffic generation, traffic hazard or endanger the safety of other road users, either during the construction or operational phase. The proposed development also does not give rise to any significant negative residential amenity, archaeological / heritage, drainage or ecological impacts.

11.1.1. Overall, the proposed development conforms with national, regional and local planning policies.

12.0 Recommendation

12.1. I recommend permission be GRANTED for the reasons and considerations set out below and subject to the following conditions.

13.0 Reasons and Considerations

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

Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development 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 its functions in a manner consistent with 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 Commission 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 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 infrastructure, particularly the NPF First Revision 2025 and NSO 1, NSO 6, and NSO 8.
 - The objectives and targets of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030.

- Regional and local planning policy, including:
 - Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for the Southern Region;
- Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028.
- 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 and observations made in connection with the planning application.
- The report and the recommendation of the Inspector, including the examination, analysis and evaluation undertaken in relation to appropriate assessment.

It is considered that subject to compliance with the conditions set out below the proposed development would accord with European, national, regional and local planning and related policy, it would not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape or ecology, it would not seriously injure the visual or residential amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity, and it would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.1. Appropriate Assessment – Stage 1

The Commission noted that the proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site. In completing the screening for Appropriate Assessment, the Commission accepted and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion in the Inspector's report in respect of the identification of the European sites which could potentially be affected, and the identification and assessment of potential significant effects of the proposed development, either

individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on these European sites in view of the site's Conservation Objectives. The Commission was satisfied that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on the following European Sites: Lower River Suir SAC (002137), in view of the site's Conservation Objectives. This screening determination is based on the following:

- Scientific Information as set out in the applicant's AA Screening Report.
- Standard pollution controls that would be employed regardless of proximity to a European site, and effectiveness of same (at construction, operational and decommissioning phases).
- Distance from European Sites.

14.0 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, or as otherwise stipulated by conditions hereunder, and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars. In default of agreement the matter(s) in dispute shall be referred to An Coimisiún Pleanála for determination. Reason: In the interest of clarity.
2.	The mitigation measures contained in the submitted Environmental Report shall be implemented. Reason: To protect the environment.
3.	Any clearance of vegetation from the development site shall only be carried out in the period between the 1st September and the end of February

	(outside of the main bird breeding season). Reason: To avoid the destruction of nest, nestlings and eggs of breeding birds.
4.	External lighting shall be provided in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to the commencement of development. External lighting shall be of a type that ensures deflection of light downwards and cowled. Reason: In the interest of amenity and public safety.
5.	Drainage arrangements including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the relevant Section of the Council for such works and services Reason: In the interest of public health and surface water management.
6.	Details of the materials, colours and textures of all the external finishes to the proposed overground structures, overhead line end masts and gantries, transformer bays, lightings, telecommunications and fencing/gate boundaries shall be as submitted with the application, unless otherwise agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. In default of agreement the matters in dispute shall be referred to An Coimisiún Pleanála for determination. Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.
7.	The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan, to include a Construction Traffic Management Plan and Construction and Demolition Resource Waste Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the local planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including:

	(a) Location of the site and materials compounds including areas identified for the storage of construction refuse; (b) Location of areas for construction site offices and staff facilities; (c) Details of site security fencing and hoardings; (d) Details of on-site car parking facilities for site workers during the course of construction; (e) Details of the timing and routing of construction traffic to and from the construction site and associated directional signage, to include proposals to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads to the site; (f) Measures to obviate queuing of construction traffic on the adjoining road network; (g) Measures to prevent the spillage or deposit of clay, rubble or other debris on the public road network; (h) Alternative arrangements to be put in place for pedestrians and vehicles in the case of the closure of any public road or footpath during the course of site development works; (i) Details of appropriate mitigation measures for noise, dust and vibration, and monitoring of such levels. Noise abatement measures shall comply with the Local Planning Authority requirements; (j) Containment of all construction-related fuel and oil within specially constructed bunds to ensure that fuel spillages are fully contained. Such bunds shall be roofed to exclude rainwater; (k) Off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste and details of how it is proposed to manage excavated soil; (l) Means to ensure that surface water run-off is controlled such that no silt or other pollutants enter local surface water sewers or drains. (m) A record of daily checks that the works are being undertaken in accordance with the Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be available for inspection by the local planning authority; Reason: In the interest of amenities, public health and safety and environmental protection.
--	---

8.	Site development and building works shall be carried out between the hours of 8.00am and 7.00pm Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 8.00am to 1.00pm on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times shall only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written agreement has been received from the planning authority. Reason: To safeguard the amenity of property in the vicinity.
9.	All service cables associated with the proposed development (such as electrical and telecommunications) shall be located underground. Reason: In the interests of visual and amenity.
10.	Noise during operation of the development shall not give reasonable cause for annoyance to noise sensitive locations in the vicinity. The cumulative noise emissions from the operation of the development shall not exceed the background noise level by more than 5dB(A) during the day, evening and night periods. The development shall be managed to ensure that air emissions and/or odours do not result in significant impairment of local amenities and the environment. Reason: In order to protect adjoining residential amenity.
11.	The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable

	indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Coimisiún Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme. Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.
--	--

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 me, directly or indirectly, following my professional assessment and recommendation set out in my report in an improper or inappropriate way.

Ronan O'Connor
Senior Planning Inspector

3rd July 2026

Appendix 1 : Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Screening for Appropriate Assessment	
Test for likely significant effects	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics	
Brief description of project	10 year planning permission for a 110kV electrical substation and associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	<u>Site Description</u> The Proposed Development will be located on a site that has an area of approximately 2 ha and is situated in the townland of Killoran, North Tipperary, approximately 6.3km northwest of Urlingford and approximately 12.6km southeast of Templemore. The site lies within the former Lisheen Mining Complex. The mine previously operated as a lead, zinc and silver mine between 1999 to 2015. The mine ceased production 2015. The wider site has since undergone redevelopment as the National Bioeconomy Campus, where there is a focus on developing sustainable and circular economy initiatives. The wider site comprises several existing industrial and renewable energy activities, including the Lisheen and Bruckana wind farms. The Lisheen wind farm comprises 18 turbines on the former mine site and further turbines on other surrounding lands. The Bruckana wind farm comprises 14 turbines (42MW) and is operated by Bord na Móna. The existing site on which the substation will stand is largely vacant. There is a presence of some hardstand, artificial surfaces, and bare ground throughout the site, together with recolonised scrub, undergrowth and low-lying vegetation in various locations. The land is generally flat reflecting its former industrial use. The wider surrounding area is mainly comprised of farming land,

	areas previously used for peat harvesting, forestry and wind energy installations. Housing in the area is mainly low-density and predominantly rural, consisting mainly of detached houses on spacious plots, farmhouses, and individual dwellings along country roads. The former mine and its associated lands have been the subject of a restoration plan, approved and supervised by the EPA. In terms of watercourses within the vicinity of the site, the site is situated within the Suir Catchment and the Suir_SC_040 sub catchment. The closest watercourse is the Cooleeny Stream, located c40m to the south of the site at its closest point. This stream drains into the River Drish, approximately 4km downstream of the site, which in turn drains in the River Suir, approximately 14km downstream of the River Drish. The River Suir forms part of the Lower River Suir SAC. In terms of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), and with reference to the most recent data available, the status of the Cooleeny Stream is 'moderate'. The waterbody is considered to be 'at risk' of not achieving a good water quality status. There are no drainage ditches on the site. In terms of habitats on site, the majority of the site comprises of Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3) habitat. Temporary areas of standing water (Other Artificial Lakes and Ponds FL8) were observed on the day of the survey, which were on the wider part of the site, and as detailed in the report, is associated with excavation works associated with the decommissioning of the former mine, which reached a depth where they interacted with the high-water table, leading to seasonal groundwater emergence. Earth Banks (BL2) were present around the perimeter of the recolonising bare ground habitat. Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3) were present in the form of minor roads
--	---

and the existing 110kV Lisheen substation.

Drainage

In terms of surface water drainage, and as set out in the AA Screening Report, the proposed development will comprise limited hardstanding confined to the substation building footprint and access tracks. The majoring of the surfaces onsite will remain permeable surfaces, allowing rainwater to percolate directly to the ground. No specific surface water drainage infrastructure will be required for the proposed development, and surface water will continue to be managed through natural infiltration.

Foul Water

In terms of wastewater, no wastewater discharges will be generated during the operational phase of the proposed development. Welfare facilities on the site will be infrequently used, and foul water from same will be diverted into a holding tank and frequently removed by a suitable licenced waste contractor.

Earthworks

The proposed 110kV substation will be developed on ca. 1ha within the overall ca. 2ha Site. These works will require the importation of engineering fill materials to raise site levels by ca. 1m. The proposed 110kV substation will comprise a concrete foundation for the transformers and electrical equipment, with the rest of the area filled with crushed rock. Any earthworks required for the grid connection will be backfilled using suitable excavated material, with surface levels reinstated to match the surrounding ground profile.

The southern portion of the site, which is subject to seasonal groundwater emergence (see discussion of same in Section 9.7 of this report), is reserved for future expansion works, which

	would require raising the ground levels by c2m, should it come forward for development. <u>Potential Impact Mechanisms</u> Water Quality Impairment As set out in the AA Screening Report, the Clooney Stream is located within c40m of the site at its closest point. This stream is a tributary of the River Drish and discharges into the River Suir 14km downstream of the site. The River Suir forms part of the Lower River Suir SAC. This points to a potential hydrological connection between the Site and the Lower River Suir SAC, with the potential for pollutants to flow from the Site into the river network, which could lead to a deterioration of local water quality and indirectly adversely affect the downstream food supply for designated species. Noise and Disturbance Potential impact on otter, a QI species of the River Suir SAC is highlighted in the AA Screening Report. Invasive Species In relation to invasive species, no high-impact invasive species (including those that are regulated under the European Union (Invasive Alien Species) Regulations 2024 (S.I. No. 374/2024) were recorded within the Site. Therefore, no impacts associated with the spread of invasive species as a result of the Proposed Development will result. Air Quality Impairment Potential impacts are ruled out due to distance to the nearest European Site, which is Galmoy Fen SAC, a distance of c9.4km from the site.
Screening report	Yes. Appropriate Assessment – Stage 1: Screening Report prepared by Malone O'Regan Environmental

Natura Impact Statement	No.
Relevant submissions	The Planning Authority have not raised any specific concerns in relation to AA. There are no other submissions on the application.

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

Section 5 of the AA Screening Report sets out European Sites within 15km of the site. No hydrological connection was determined between this site and any EPA watercourses, nor between the site and the European Sites listed in Table 5-1. Notwithstanding, the AA Report considers *potential* hydrological connections to the Lower River Suir SAC via the Cooleny Stream and *potential* ecological connections, noting that Otter is a QI of the Lower River Suir SAC, and noting the proximity of the Cooley Stream to the site. Notwithstanding, and for reasons set out in the AA Screening Report (and considered in detail below) likely significant effects on the Lower River Suir SAC, and any other European Site, are ruled out. Given same, the AA Screening Report concludes that there are no European Sites within the Zone of Influence of the Site and therefore no site was taken forward for further consideration.

Section 6.1 of the applicant's AA Screening Report considers 'In-Combination' effects and Table 6.1 sets out Planning Applications within the vicinity of the site, each of which was subject to AA Screening, and where required, the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), and in each of the cases it was concluded that the developments, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity or conservation objectives of the Lower River Suir SAC, including its qualifying interests. It was concluded then that the proposed development would not result in any in-combination effects on any European sites.

The AA Screening Report concludes that the proposed development will not, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, adversely affect the integrity or conservation status of any of the qualifying interests of any identified European Site in light of best scientific knowledge. No reasonable scientific doubt exists in relation to this conclusion. Accordingly, the progression to Stage 2 of the Appropriate Assessment process (i.e.,

preparation of a Natura Impact Statement) was not considered necessary.

Inspector's Assessment

The applicant's Screening Report includes a list of Natura 2000 Sites which are within 15km of the appeal site. However, there is no ecological justification for the inclusion of these Sites for further assessment, and I have only included those Sites which would have a potential ecological connection or pathway from the application site in my screening determination below.

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
Lower River Suir SAC (002137)	- Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima) [1330] - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculum fluitans and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation [3260] - Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] - Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] - Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnus incanae, Salix alba) [91E0]	The site is c 40m from the Coolaney stream, at its closest point. This stream flows downstream for roughly 18km before reaching the Lower River Suir SAC. The site is located c14km	The subject site is outside of the SAC boundary. Therefore, there is no potential for direct effects. <u>Hydrological Connections</u> While there is no direct hydrological connection, given the Coolaney Stream is located c40m from the southern portion of the site, and as per the applicant's precautionary approach, a <i>potential</i> pathway for indirect effects exists via surface water pathways. The risks are a deterioration of water quality via from surface	Yes. See discussion below.

	- <i>Taxus baccate</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0] - <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] - <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] - <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] - <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] - <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] - <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] - <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] - <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] Weblink: https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002137 (accessed 3rd July 2026)	from the River Suir SAC, as the crow flies.	runoff containing pollutants (oils, hydrocarbons, etc.) during the construction phases, including during the construction of the grid connection. At operational stage, soiled surface water/stormwater runoff from the site which could eventually discharge to the surface water network, and subsequently to the Lower River Suir SAC (002137). While the applicant has determined that the Lower River Suir SAC falls outside the Zone of Influence of the project (although has considered potential impacts in any case), I am of the view that the Lower River Suir SAC falls within the Zone of Influence of the project (but not within the Zone of Impact – see discussion below) noting this potential hydrological link. <u>Groundwater</u>	
--	--	--	---	--

			The site sits above the Thurles GWB. A relatively small area of the Lower River Suir SAC also sits above this same groundwater body. ² As such there is a potential hydrogeological link to between the site and the Lower River Suir SAC. <u>Ecological Connections</u> Otter is a QI of the Lower River Suir SAC. The site lies within 40m of the Cooleney Stream. Therefore, there exists a potential for disturbance and displacement effects, applying the precautionary approach. As per the discussion below I am satisfied that there are no other potential impact mechanisms associated with the development as proposed.	
Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone <u>or</u> in combination) on				

² <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

European Sites

Potential impact mechanisms from the project

I note the development site is not located in or immediately adjacent to a European site. The closest European sites are as detailed above. As noted above, I have concluded that the only sites within the Zone of Influence of the project are as follows:

- Lower River Suir SAC (002137)

In considering potential impacts I am of the view that the elements of the proposed development that would potentially generate a source of impact are:

Construction Stage/Decommissioning Stage

- The construction of the proposed substation and grid connection would involve *inter alia* excavation of soils with potential for same to enter the surface water network, and subsequently to the Lower River Suir SAC (002137).
- Hydrocarbon and other potential spillages with the potential for same to enter the surface water network, and underlying groundwater, and subsequently to subsequently to the Lower River Suir SAC (002137)
- Noise and Disturbance Impacts (Otter)

Operational Stage

- Soiled surface water/stormwater runoff from the site which could eventually discharge to the surface water network, and subsequently to the Lower River Suir SAC (002137)

Surface Water/Storm Water

At construction stage it is possible that pollutants and sediments could enter the surface water network, and eventually to Lower River Suir SAC (002137), via the surface water network. However, in relation to same, and having regard to the considerations as set out in the applicant's AA Screening Report, such effects are highly unlikely due to the following considerations:

- All works will be confined to the site.
- No in-river works will be undertaken.
- No direct discharges from the proposed development to any watercourse will occur

during the Construction or Operational Phases.

- The majority of construction works will be undertaken c140m from the Cooleeny Stream.
- There is no existing drainage connection in place that connects the site to the Cooleeny Stream.
- There is an existing access road separating the works from the Cooleeny Stream. This would provide both a barrier and filtration of any silt/sediment runoff should it occur.
- 23 additional tributaries enter the watercourse prior to discharging into the Lower River Suir SAC – over a downstream distance of 14km. It is therefore considered highly likely that any potential pollutants will be diluted within the watercourse, or that pollutants, such as sediment, will settle to the bottom of the watercourse.

The AA sets out that all works will be carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines, including appropriate storage of fuels, and of hazardous construction materials, which will take place in designated bunded area.

In relation to same, I concur with the conclusions of the AA screening report, and I am of the view that, at construction stage, it is highly unlikely that contaminants will enter the surface water network, noting in particular the separation of the site from the Cooleeny Stream, and the lack of any identified hydrological link to same. In addition, standard best practice construction measures will reduce even further the possibility of pollutants and sediments entering the surface water network. I would note that these best practice measures are set out in detail in the applicant's Environmental Report (7.6.1 of same) and the applicant's Preliminary CEMP (Table 5.4 of same) which include measures relating to the appropriate storage and management of materials, site management, emergency response procedures and appropriate management of cementitious materials.

In relation to the grid connection, Table 5.4 of the CEMP set out that *inter alia* where drainage ditches are crossed with underground cables, the release of sediment over baseline conditions will be prevented by the use of silt traps, check dams and/or bunds. These will be put in place in advance of construction works and monitored on a regular basis

I am of the view that the measures as set out in the Environmental Report, and the CEMP, can be construed as standard construction measures, that would be put in place regardless

of any identified hydrological connection to a Natura 2000 site, as such I am not of the view that same can be regarded as mitigation measures for the purposes of preventing likely significant impacts on a Natura 2000 site.

Even if these standard construction measures should not be implemented or should they fail to work as intended, and pollutants/waste material enter this drainage network will be subject to dilution and dispersion, rendering any significant impacts on water quality within Lower River Suir SAC unlikely. In this regard, I note the downstream distance to Lower River Suir SAC which is c18km. I would note that the best practice measures that would be adhered to at construction stage are not mitigation measures intended to reduce or avoid any harmful effect on any Natura 2000 site and would be employed by any competent operator, notwithstanding any proximity to any Natura 2000 site.

Operational Stage

The Proposed Development will comprise limited hardstanding, confined to the substation building footprint and access tracks required to EirGrid specification. These elements will represent a small proportion of the overall site area. The majority of the surfaces onsite will remain permeable surfaces, allowing rainwater to percolate directly to the ground. As a result, surface water runoff will be minimal and comparable to existing baseline conditions.

Given the limited extent of impermeable surfaces, no specific surface water drainage infrastructure will be required for the Proposed Development. The development will not require any alteration to the existing on-site drainage regime, and surface water will continue to be managed through natural infiltration. I would note also the nature of the proposed development, a substation, grid connection and associated works, and I am of the view that there is only very limited potential for any surface water runoff from the hard standing area to be contaminated to such a degree as to result in likely significant effects on surface water or ground water quality. Notwithstanding I note that operational stage, the development will receive monthly maintenance visits which will further reduce any likelihood of contaminated runoff from the site at operational stage.

Groundwater

Potential groundwater impacts are not discussed within the applicant's AA Screening report. Notwithstanding, there is sufficient detail in the applicant's documentation, in particular the detailed Environmental Report that accompanies the application, to carry out an

assessment of groundwater impacts on relevant Natura 2000 sites. I note the site lies above the Thurles groundwater body (IE_SW_G_158). With reference to EPA mapping, I note that a relatively small area of the Lower River Suir SAC is also underlain by this groundwater body. The Thurles groundwater body is assigned a “Good” status under the WFD 2019-2024 monitoring round. The groundwater body risk is currently considered “not at risk” of meeting its environmental objectives. Groundwater vulnerability across the site is ‘moderate’, according to GSI data. However, the report notes that remediation works that have occurred on the site, including excavation of soils, especially in the south of the site, and it is concluded that the site-specific groundwater vulnerability is ‘extreme’ or ‘rock at or near surface’. It is set out within the report that both the northern and southern portions of the site will be subject infill, with the ground levels on the northern portion being raised by approximately 1m, with the result that all of the levels within the boundary of the site will be above the high winter water table. Of note it is stated that works will be carried out in accordance with best practice guidance, and mitigation measures will be put in place as part of a site-specific CEMP which will serve to minimise potential risk to groundwater quality. I would note that the measures as set out above, in relation to the protection of surface water quality, are also applicable to the protection of groundwater quality. Specifically in relation to groundwater, I note that Table 5.4 of the CEMP notes that *inter alia* a silt fence will be installed on the southern perimeter of the site to ensure that any potentially contaminated runoff from the northern area of the site won’t enter the groundwater/bedrock aquifer in the southern area of the Site, where extreme groundwater vulnerability conditions are present.

As per the discussion in relation to surface water, at operational stage it is set out that the majority of surfaces onsite will be permeable and rainwater will continue to percolate to ground.

I note also that potentially significant effects on groundwater, at either construction stage, operational stage or decommissioning stage, are ruled out in the Environmental Report. Noting the conclusions of same, noting the best practice measures set out in the Environmental Report and the CEMP, and noting the distance to the Lower River Suir SAC, which is at least 14km, I am satisfied that potentially significant effects on the Lower River Suir SAC, as a result of groundwater quality impairment can be ruled out.

I am satisfied that the measures cited within the Environmental Report, as relates to the

protection of groundwater, can be construed as standard construction measures, that would be put in place regardless of any identified hydrological connection to a Natura 2000 site, as such I am not of the view that same can be regarded as mitigation measures for the purposes of preventing likely significant impacts on a Natura 2000 site.

Even if these standard construction and operational measures should not be implemented or should they fail to work as intended, pollutants/waste material enter the groundwater body this will be subject to dilution and dispersion, rendering any significant impacts on water quality within Lower River Suir SAC unlikely. In this regard, I note the distance to Lower River Suir SAC as cited above. These measures are not mitigation measures intended to reduce or avoid any harmful effect on any Natura 2000 site and would be employed by any competent operator, notwithstanding any proximity to any Natura 2000 site.

Disturbance/Displacement

In relation to noise, a potential impact on otter, a QI species of the River Suir SAC is highlighted with the applicant's AA Screening Report. However, the AA Screening Report considers impacts on same are highly unlikely based on the following considerations:

- All works are confined to the site, which is entirely terrestrial and unsuitable for otter
- No in-river works will be undertaken
- The Lower River Suir is located 14km from the site.
- There is no record for any QI species associated with the Lower River Suir SAC within a 2km grid of the Site within the last 10 years.
- Species such as otter are highly mobile and will therefore move away from disturbances.

I concur with the above and consider that significant effects on otter associated with the Lower River Suir SAC, as a result of noise and disturbance., are not likely.

Decommissioning

Details of decommission are set out in the applicant's Decommissioning Plan. I am satisfied that potential impacts at decommissioning phase will be similar to those at construction stage, and that likely significant impacts on the Lower River Suir SAC, at decommissioning stage, can be ruled out for the same reasons and considerations I have set out above, in

relation to the construction stage.

Conclusion on standalone impacts

Having regard to the discussion above, I conclude that the proposed development would have no likely significant effect 'alone' on any qualifying features of Lower River Suir SAC. Further AA screening in-combination with other plans and projects is required.

Likely significant effects on the European site(s) 'in-combination with other plans and projects'

There is no evidence on file of any plans or projects that are proposed or permitted that could impact in combination with the proposed development and as such no in-combination issues arise.

I conclude, therefore, that the proposed development would have no likely significant effect in combination with other plans and projects on the qualifying features of any European sites. No further assessment is required for the project.

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

Overall Conclusion- Screening Determination

In accordance with Section 177U(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of objective information, I conclude that that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. It is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) [under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000] is not required.

This conclusion is based on:

- Scientific Information as set out in the applicant's AA Screening Report.
- Standard pollution controls that would be employed regardless of proximity to a European site, and effectiveness of same (at construction, operational and decommissioning phases).

- Distance from European Sites.

No measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects on European sites were taken into account in reaching this conclusion.

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2: EIA Screening

14.7. Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	ACP-324114-26
Proposed Development Summary	10 year planning permission for a 110kV electrical substation and associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works.
Development Address	Located in the townlands of Killoran, County Tipperary (www.cooleenysubstation.com).
	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) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)	Schedule 5, Part 2 10. Infrastructure projects: (a) Industrial estate development projects, where the area would exceed 15 hectares.

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)?	
Yes ☒	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No ☐	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: EIA Screening Determination

A. CASE DETAILS		
An Coimisiún Pleanála Case Reference	ACP-324114-26	
Development Summary	Proposed development construction of a new 110 kV substation	
	Yes / No / N/A	Comment (if relevant)
1. Was a Screening Determination carried out by the PA?	N/A	Direct Application, Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).
2. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?	Yes	Chapter 2 of the Environmental Report
3. Has an AA screening report or NIS been submitted?	Yes	AA Screening Report only.
4. Is a IED/ IPC or Waste Licence (or review of licence) required from the EPA? If YES has the EPA commented on the need for an EIAR?	No	Section 1.4.1 of the Environmental Report confirms the site lies outside the extent of lands currently under IPC Licence (Figure 1-3 of same refers).
5. Have any other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment which have a significant bearing on the project been carried out pursuant to other relevant Directives – for example SEA	Yes	SEA undertaken in respect of the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028. An AA Screening Report and Environment Report have been submitted with reference to the Habitats Directive. The Environmental Report contains a Flood Risk Assessment with reference to Floods Directive. An EIA Screening Report (Chapter 2 of the Environmental Report) is submitted and refers to the EIA Directive.

B. EXAMINATION	Yes/ No/ Uncertain	Briefly describe the nature and extent and Mitigation Measures (where relevant) (having regard to the probability, magnitude (including population size affected), complexity, duration, frequency, intensity, and reversibility of impact) Mitigation measures –Where relevant specify features or measures proposed by the applicant to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment? Yes/ No/ Uncertain
This screening examination should be read with, and in light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith			
1. Characteristics of proposed development (including demolition, construction, operation, or decommissioning)			
1.1 Is the project significantly different in character or scale to the existing surrounding or environment?	No	The Proposed Development will consist of a 10 year permission for a 110kV electrical substation and associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated work. There is an existing substation adjacent to the site and there are industrial units in the immediate area with wind turbines in close proximity to the site.	No
1.2 Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works cause physical changes to the locality (topography, land use, waterbodies)?	Yes	The site is situated in a former mine complex now being redeveloped as the National Bioeconomy Campus. The proposed development will necessitate some ground	No

		levelling works, in it is set out that finished ground levels will be raised by approximately 1m across the site, and environmental impacts of same are considered in the accompanying reports, with significant effects on the environment being ruled out. There will be no change or alteration to any waterbodies proximate to the site.	
1.3 Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy, especially resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?	Yes	Construction works will necessitate the use of natural resources for construction materials and the use of energy for machinery. Construction materials will be typical of such development. However, this is not on a significant scale at either national or county level.	No
1.4 Will the project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of substance which would be harmful to human health or the environment?	Yes	Construction activities will require the use of potentially harmful materials, such as fuels and other such substances. Such use will be typical of construction sites. Any impacts would be local and temporary in nature and implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan will satisfactorily mitigate potential impacts. During operation the substation and associated works introduce a potential risk of spills and leaks, however a maintenance programme will be in place and as such risks associated with same are minimised.	No
1.5 Will the project produce solid waste, release pollutants or any hazardous / toxic / noxious substances?	Yes	Construction activities will require the use of potentially harmful materials, such as fuels and other such substances and give rise to	No

		waste for disposal. Such use will be typical of construction sites. Noise and dust emissions during construction are likely. Such construction impacts would be local and temporary in nature and implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan will satisfactorily mitigate potential impacts. Construction waste can be managed via a Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan to obviate potential environmental impacts. Other significant operational impacts are not anticipated.	
1.6 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	Yes	Risk of contamination associated with construction activities which involve the use of fuels. During operation the substation will introduce a potential risk of spills and leaks. However a maintenance programme will be in place and as such risks associated with same are minimised. With the application of mitigation, no contamination will result during either construction or operation.	No
1.7 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes	Potential for construction activity to give rise to noise and vibration emissions. Such emissions will be localised, short term in nature and their impacts may be suitably mitigated by the operation of a Construction and Environmental Management Plan. No significant operational impacts anticipated.	No
1.8 Will there be any risks to human health, for example due to water contamination or air pollution?	No	Construction activity is likely to give rise to noise and dust emissions; however such emissions would not be significant and would not impact human health. These construction impacts would be temporary and localised in	No

		nature, and the application of a Construction and Environmental Management Plan would satisfactorily address potential impacts on human health. Risks to surface water run-off is addressed through mitigation. No significant operational impacts are anticipated.	
1.9 Will there be any risk of major accidents that could affect human health or the environment?	No	No significant risk having regard to the nature and scale of development. Any risk arising from construction will be localised and temporary in nature.	No
1.10 Will the project affect the social environment (population, employment)	No \\Aa	The proposed development is for an unmanned substation, representing an intensification of existing land use, with negligible change to the social environment. While there will be some employment during construction, this will not be significant.	No
1.11 Is the project part of a wider large scale change that could result in cumulative effects on the environment?	No	The proposed development is confined to a substation development and associated grid connection, in an area that has seen some recent change from the former mining complex to the National Biodiversity Campus. The submitted Environmental Reports have considered potential cumulative impacts of other plans and projects, in conjunction with the development proposed here, and significant impacts on the environment resulting from same have been ruled out. Future projects will be subject to further environmental assessments, as appropriate.	No
2. Location of proposed development			

2.1 Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or have the potential to impact on any of the following: - European site (SAC/ SPA/ pSAC/ pSPA) - NHA/ pNHA - Designated Nature Reserve - Designated refuge for flora or fauna - Place, site or feature of ecological interest, the preservation/conservation/ protection of which is an objective of a development plan/ LAP/ draft plan or variation of a plan	No	The site is not located in, or adjoining, any designated site. Potential for effect upon Natura 2000 sites is addressed in the submitted AA Screening Report and Appendix 1 of this report. No likelihood of significant effect is identified and there is no need for mitigation in this regard.	No
2.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, for example: for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?	Yes	An Environmental Report is submitted with the application. The report highlights that construction activities may result in habitat loss, albeit of low ecological value. Such losses may impact on birds, badger, amphibians and other species such as hedgehogs. Mitigation measures are described in the submitted report to address potential effects, and no significant negative effects are anticipated. An invasive species (Butterfly Bush) was found within the site. Mitigation measures relating to the removal of same are set out in Section 6.5 of the report which will ensure no significant environmental effects associated with same.	No
2.3 Are there any other features of landscape, historic, archaeological, or cultural importance that could be affected?	No	The site is not situated within a zone of archaeological interest. The site is a former mining complex. There is no surviving old ground surface within the Site. Previous archelogy within the wider area has been	No

		preserved by record and is no longer physically present within the landscape. Chapter 12 of the Environmental Report considers potential effects on cultural heritage, including archaeology. No significant effects are anticipated. No mitigation in relation to same is required.	
2.4 Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, for example: forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?	No	The Site is located within the substantial former Lisheen Mines facility, which is now redundant. The mine was a source of lead and zinc production. This is no longer the case and production at the mine ceased in 2015. The proposed development will not have an effect on any remaining resources as there is no evidence on file that production will resume in the future, and furthermore, the site has been subject to extensive restoration and aftercare, with the site is now designated a National Bioeconomy Campus, supported by relevant policies of the CDP.	No
2.5 Are there any water resources including surface waters, for example: rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or groundwaters which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?	No	The closest watercourse is the Cooleeney Stream which is located c40m from the site at the closest point. The submitted Environmental Reports have ruled out any potential significant effects on same, noting in particular the lack of an identified hydrological link from the site to same. Within best practice measures in place, significant impacts on both surface water and groundwater are ruled out. The southern portion of the site is subject to seasonable groundwater flooding. No development is proposed on this element of the site. Notwithstanding, mitigation in relation to flood risk is set out in the Environmental	No

		Report and no significant residual risks of flooding remains.	
2.6 Is the location susceptible to subsidence, landslides or erosion?	No	There is no evidence in the submitted documentation that the lands proposed for development are susceptible to lands slides or erosion.	No
2.7 Are there any key transport routes(eg National primary Roads) on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	No effects are anticipated.	No
2.8 Are there existing sensitive land uses or community facilities (such as hospitals, schools etc) which could be affected by the project?	No	While sensitive land uses appear in the wider area, they are sufficiently removed from the site and no effects are anticipated.	No
3. Any other factors that should be considered which could lead to environmental impacts			
3.1 Cumulative Effects: Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulative effects during the construction/ operation phase?	Yes	Development in the wider area is of a scale and nature that would be anticipated under the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 and would not give rise to significant cumulative environmental effects alongside this development.	No
3.2 Transboundary Effects: Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No	No trans boundary considerations arise.	No
3.3 Are there any other relevant considerations?	No		No
C. CONCLUSION			
No real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.		EIAR Not Required	

Real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.		EIAR Required
D. MAIN REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS		
Having regard to: - - the criteria set out in Schedule 7, in particular - the limited nature and scale of the proposed development, - the absence of any significant environmental sensitivity in the vicinity, and the location of the proposed development outside of the designated archaeological protection zone - the location of the development outside of any sensitive location specified in article 109(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) - the results of other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment submitted by the applicant - the features and measures proposed by applicant envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant effects on the environment The Commission concluded that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and that an environmental impact assessment report is not required.		

Inspector _____

Date _____

Approved (DP/ADP) _____

Date _____

Appendix 4: Water Framework Directive Stage 1 Screening

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	ABP-324114-26	Townland, address	Located in the townlands of Killoran, County Tipperary (www.cooleenysubstation.com).
Description of project		10 year planning permission for a 110kV electrical substation and associated 110kV underground grid connection, cabling and associated works.	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,		The Proposed Development will be located on a site that has an area of approximately 2 ha and is situated in the townland of Killoran, North Tipperary, approximately 6.3km northwest of Urlingford and approximately 12.6km southeast of Templemore. The site lies within the former Lisheen Mining Complex. The mine previously operated as a lead, zinc and silver mine between 1999 to 2015. The mine ceased production 2015. The wider site has since undergone redevelopment as the National Bioeconomy Campus, where there is a	

	focus on developing sustainable and circular economy initiatives. The existing site on which the substation will stand is largely vacant. There is a presence of some hardstand, artificial surfaces, and bare ground throughout the site, together with recolonised scrub, undergrowth and low-lying vegetation in various locations. The land is generally flat reflecting its former industrial use. The wider surrounding area is mainly comprised of farming land, areas previously used for peat harvesting, forestry and wind energy installations. Housing in the area is mainly low-density and predominantly rural, consisting mainly of detached houses on spacious plots, farmhouses, and individual dwellings along country roads. The nearest watercourse is the Cooleeny Stream, located c40m to the south of the site. (River Waterbody Code: IE_SE_16D020100; WFD Name: Drish_40). The site above the Thurles groundwater body (IE_SW_G_158). The Thurles groundwater body is assigned a “Good” status under the WFD 2019-2024 monitoring round. The groundwater body risk is currently considered “not at risk” of meeting its environmental objectives. Groundwater vulnerability across the site is ‘moderate’, according to GSI data. However, the report notes that remediation works that have occurred
--	--

	on the site, including excavation of soils, especially in the south of the site, and it is concluded that the site-specific groundwater vulnerability is 'extreme' or 'rock at or near surface'. No designated European Sites apply directly to, or adjoin, the subject lands. The nearest European Site is Galmoy Fen (Site Code: 001858), which is roughly 9.6km to the northeast. The Lower River Suir SAC (002137) is the only site with a potential ecological connection to the appeal site.
Proposed surface water details	The Proposed Development will comprise limited hardstanding, confined to the substation building footprint and access tracks required to EirGrid specification. These elements will represent a small proportion of the overall Site area. The majority of the surfaces onsite will remain permeable surfaces, allowing rainwater to percolate directly to the ground. As a result, surface water runoff will be minimal and comparable to existing baseline conditions. Given the limited extent of impermeable surfaces, no specific surface water drainage infrastructure will be required for the Proposed Development. The development will not require any alteration to the existing on-site drainage regime, and surface water will continue to be managed through natural infiltration

Proposed water supply source & available capacity	Rainwater Harvesting (as per Planning Application Form).
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues	In terms of wastewater, no wastewater discharges will be generated during the operational phase of the proposed development. Welfare facilities on the site will be infrequently used, and foul water from same will be diverted into a holding tank and frequently removed by a suitable licenced waste contractor.
Others?	NA

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)
1. Cooleeny Stream (River Water Body)	This is located c30m to the south of the site at its	IE_SE_16D020100; WFD Name:	Poor	At risk	Extractive Industry	No direct pathway. Remote possibility of surface water

	closest point.	Drish_40					traversing overland to Cooleeny Stream.
2. Thurles GWB (Groundwater Body)	Underlying the site.	IE_EA_G_158	Good	Not at risk	Not identified		Yes, underlying the site.
Step 3: 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/DECOMMISSIONING 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.	Surface	Cooleeny Stream (River Water Body) IE_SE_16D020100; WFD Name: Drish_40	No pathway either existing or new. Remote possibility of surface water traversing overland to Cooleeny Stream.	Runoff, siltation, pH (concrete), hydrocarbon spillages and leaks. Could lead to potential negative effects in terms of water quality.	Standard construction practices and mitigation. See Environmental Report and CEM.	No. During the construction phase, works will be undertaken in accordance with the CEMP.	No. Screened out. Good construction management practices will minimise the risk of pollution from construction activities.
4.	Ground	Thurles GWB (Groundwater Body)	Underlying the site	Runoff, siltation, pH (concrete), hydrocarbon spillages and leaks. Potential risk of contaminants to enter the groundwater. Could lead to potential negative	As above	As above	No. Screened out. As above.

				effects in terms of the hydrological and hydrogeological flow regime and water quality.			
OPERATIONAL PHASE							
1.	Surface	Cooleeny Stream (River Water Body) IE_SE_16D020100; WFD Name: Drish_40	No pathway either existing or new. Remote possibility of surface water traversing overland to Cooleeny Stream.	Surface water runoff impermeable areas may contain potentially contaminating compounds (oil from transformers for example.	Standard maintenance practices as set out in the Environmental Report.	No. During the operational phase, regular maintenance will be undertaken as per the Environmental Report.	No. Screened out. As above.
2.	Ground	Thurles GWB (Groundwater Body)	Underlying the site	Surface water runoff impermeable areas may contain potentially	As above.	As above.	No. Screened out. As above.

				contaminating compounds (oil from transformers for example) and reach underlying GWB via infiltration or directly to ponding groundwater.			
--	--	--	--	---	--	--	--