

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-324202-26

Development	Proposed Development of 110kv Substation and all associated works
Location	Located in the townland of Boyhill, County Galway.
Planning Authority	Galway County Council
Prospective Applicant(s)	Electricity Supply Board (ESB)
Type of Application	Pre-Application Consultation.
Inspector (Reporting)	Ronan O'Connor

1.0 Introduction

ESB is seeking confirmation from An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) as to whether the proposed development of a Proposed Development of 110kv Substation at a site located in the townland of Boyhill, County Galway constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) in accordance with Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

2.0 Site Location and Description

The site is located approximately 2km south of Athenry, Co. Galway. It lies just to the north of the M6, and is bounded to the south by a local road (L7159). It is bounded surrounded by agricultural lands to the north, east and west, with stone wall boundaries defining the field boundaries. There are a number of one-off rural dwellings in the immediate area, and a ribbon of residential development running along the R347, approximately 500m to the west.

3.0 Proposed Development

The proposed development constitutes the provision of a Proposed Development of 110kv Substation at a site located in the townland of Boyhill, Co. Galway. The pre-application request cover letter notes that the proposed development is at a preliminary design stage and design elements of it are likely to change but the general technical requirements for the project will remain unchanged. The following works are proposed, as detailed in the pre-application submission:

The proposed development is for a new 110 / 38 kV & 110 kV / MV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) electrical substation and will include the following elements:

- A new substation compound (c. 8,370 sqm.) with 2.6 m high palisade fence;
- A 110 kV GIS building with 8 x 110 kV bays;
- A 38 kV / MV GIS Building with 12 x 38 kV bays and 16 x MV bays.

- Three 110 / 38 kV 63 MVA transformers in transformer bays with associated electrical equipment.
- Two 110 kV / MV 31.5 MVA transformers in transformer bays with associated electrical equipment;
- Three Arc-Suppression Coils with associated electrical equipment;
- A steel lattice telecommunications mast of c.36m in height,
- Associated and ancillary outdoor electrical equipment and other apparatus, including
- installation of underground cables;
- All associated site development works including provision of access roads, lighting,
- boundary walls with site services including drainage and all other works

It is proposed that the substation will loop into the existing Cashla - Shannonbridge – Somerset 110 kV overhead line which is located approximately 1.25 km south of the proposed substation.

An indicative grid connection route is shown with the documentation. The grid connection will consist of 110kV underground cables installed between the proposed substation and the existing 110 kV overhead line. It is set out that the final grid connection route and methodology will be dependent on a connection agreement with the transmission system operator (TSO), route analysis and planning and environmental assessments. The applicant has noted that the grid connection works will be included in the SID application where they do not fall within the relevant planning exemptions.

The substation will be a combined Transmission and Distribution substation with the 110 kV circuits feeding the substation, the 110 kV GIS building and 110 kV transformers forming part of the 110 kV Transmission Network operated by Eirgrid as the Transmission System Operator (TSO). The 38 kV & MV electrical equipment will be part of the Distribution Network operated by ESB Networks as the Distribution System Operator (DSO).

The cover letter notes that there are a number of drivers for the proposed substation, all of which will contribute to additional capacity and improve security of supply for the area and these include:

- Provide additional capacity required for future load demands and improving security of supply to the greater Athenry area. This has multiple benefits for the wider area in terms of additional capacity for future industrial, commercial and residential connections and improving the local networks ability to deal with both fault (unplanned) and maintenance (planned) outages.
- The proposed substation will resolve the overloading issues at the existing Athenry and Loughrea substations by offloading existing MV loads to the new substation. This will address and improve the Load Indices ranks of the two substations which will contribute to improvement of Load Index ranks which is tracked by CRU targets.
- The Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) identify Athenry as an area of strategic economic potential, in particular the Oranmore – Athenry Strategic Economic Corridor. Future industrial, commercial and enterprise developments will be served by the additional capacity provided by the proposed development including the further development of IDA business parks in both Athenry and Oranmore.
- Large customer connection request for a pharmaceutical manufacturing facility located in Athenry.
- Provide capacity for future electrification of motorway services stations including new EV/HGV charging facilities to comply with EU Alternative Fuels Infrastructure regulations. Athenry is located at a key motorway junction of the M6 and M18.
- Provide capacity in the wider region for the electrification of heat and transport as per Government targets.

4.0 Pre-Application Consultation Meetings

A pre-application consultation meeting was held in relation to the proposal via Microsoft teams on 5th June 2026. Discussion focused on the specifics of the proposed development, including proposals for connection to existing substation.

The prospective applicant also outlined their view that the proposed development does not meet the requirements to constitute SID development. By way of correspondence dated 14th August 2026, the applicant requested that the pre-application process be concluded

5.0 Precedent Decisions

There are a large number of precedent decisions in relation to developments of this nature, there are summarised in the table below:

Table 1: Precedent Pre-Application Decisions Concluded to be SID

ABP Ref.	Development Description	Decision Date	ABP Decision
323974	Proposed development of a 110/20 KV substation and ancillary works	2026	Is SID
323959	Proposed development of a distribution 110kV/38kV/MV substation	2026	Is SID
320535	Proposed development of a new 110kV/38kV/MV substation	2024	Is SID
319699	Proposed development of 110kV ESB supply, 110kV underground cable network and 110kV substation	2024	Is SID
318011	Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), 110kV substation and 110kV Underground Grid Connection to existing Great Island Eirgrid Substation and all associated site works	2023	Is SID
313680	110kV substation and grid connection to serve PV farm	2023	Is SID
313352	110kV substation and grid connection cabling	2022	Is SID
313001	110kV substation and underground grid connection.	2022	Is SID
312860	Proposed development of 110kV electrical substation and its grid connection options to the existing transmission network	2022	Is SID

312700	Proposed 110kV loop-in substation, overhead lines to connect to transmission network and underground grid connection to consented solar farm	2022	Is SID
312532	Proposed development of a 110kV on-site 'Loop-In/Loop Out' substation.	2022	Is SID
312249	Development of a 110kV substation and provision of electrical connection to the national grid	2022	Is SID
311904	Proposed new tail-fed 110kV substation and associated works.	2022	Is SID
311778	Provision of a 110kV GIS substation and associated development.	2022	Is SID
311204	Proposed 110kV substation	2022	Is SID
311176	Proposed construction of two new 110kV substations and 110kV underground cable connecting both substations	2022	Is SID
311403	Proposed development of 110kV infrastructure	2022	Is SID
311032	Proposed new tail fed 110kV substation and 110kV underground cables	2022	Is SID
312226	Construction of a 110kV substation and underground grid connection.	2022	Is SID

6.0 Prospective Applicants Case

In the application documentation, the applicant contends that the proposed development does constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID). Reference is made to the following relevant legislation:

- Section 182A of the PDA, as amended (see details of same in Section 5 below).
- Subsection 9 of same (see details of same in Section 5 below).

In relation to Section 182A (9) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), the applicant highlights that same sets a threshold of 110 kV for a high voltage electricity transmission line to be considered 'strategic infrastructure'. The applicant notes that no threshold is set in respect of a substation.

The applicant sets out that the proposed development comprises of an 'electrical plant' that will be used to 'distribute electricity'. It also falls within the definition of 'distribution' as its primary purpose is to convey electricity to final customers.

It is further set out that, whilst the substation is primarily a DSO substation, it has been specifically designed as a combined transmission and distribution substation (which is not the case for all DSO substations) and therefore the proposed development will form part of the transmission infrastructure. The proposed 110 kV/38kV & 110 kV/MV station will be looped into the existing Cashla -Shannonbridge - Somerset 1 10 kV 110 kV overhead line, thereby creating a new node on the transmission system.

The applicant further states that numerous similar projects involving the creation of a new node on the transmission system, have been determined by the ACP in the past to constitute SID.

7.0 Legislative Provisions

Planning and Development Act 2000, as Amended

Section 2(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('PDA'), defines 'strategic infrastructure' as including, *inter alia*:

"any proposed development referred to in section 182A(1)"

Under subsection 182A(1) of the PDA, where a person (the 'undertaker') intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of the development under section 182B and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly.

Subsection 182A(9) states that:

"'transmission', in relation to electricity, shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 but, for the purposes of this section, the foregoing expression, in relation to electricity, shall also be construed as meaning the transport of electricity by means of—

(a) a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more, or

(b) an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not."

Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as Amended

The following definitions, as set out in section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999, as amended ('ERA'), are noted:

- **'Transmission':**

"the transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, from one substation to another, or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the Board¹ may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board."

- **'Electric Plant':**

"any plant, apparatus or appliance used for, or for the purposes connected with, the generation, transmission, distribution or supply of electricity other than – (a) an electric line, (b) a meter used for ascertaining the quantity of electricity supplied to any premises, or (c) an electricity appliance under the control of a consumer."

- **'Distribution':**

"in relation to electricity, means the transport of electricity by means of a distribution system, that is to say, a system which consists of electric lines, electric plant, transformers and switchgear and which is used for conveying electricity to final customers."

¹ For clarity, references to the 'Board' in this instance relate to the Electricity Supply Board.

8.0 Assessment

Under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) an undertaker shall apply to the Board for approval of a development comprising, or for the purposes of, 'energy transmission'. Section 182A(9) states that 'transmission' shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Energy Regulation Act 1999 (as amended) and shall also be construed as meaning *inter alia* the transport of electricity by means of a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110kV or more.

Section 2(1) of the Energy Regulation Act defines the transmission system as a system which consists wholly or mainly of high voltage lines and electrical plant for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, from one substation to another, or to or from any interconnector or to final customers.

The applicant describes the proposal as a 110 kV/38kV & 110 kV/MV substation which will be looped into the existing Cashla -Shannonbridge - Somerset 110 kV overhead line and will serve network demands as outlined in section 3 above. As such, I am satisfied that the proposal, as described by the applicant, comprises a substation for the purposes of transporting electricity via 110kV high voltage lines, and would therefore fall within the definitions set out above.

While I note that there is no threshold under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in respect of a substation, the proposal will include an associated 110kV transmission line (which as outlined above would be a SID project). The definition of 'transmission' under the 2000 Planning Act incorporates both the electricity regulation definition and the transport of electricity by means of a high voltage line, therefore a development including a substation of at least 110kV comprises 'transmission' under the 2000 Planning Act.

The Planning and Development Act is clear that in addition to the definition under the Electricity Regulation Act, for the purposes of pre-application discussions under Subsection 182A, the transmission of electricity shall also include the transport of electricity by a high voltage line of 110kV or more, which includes the proposed development subject to this pre-application request.

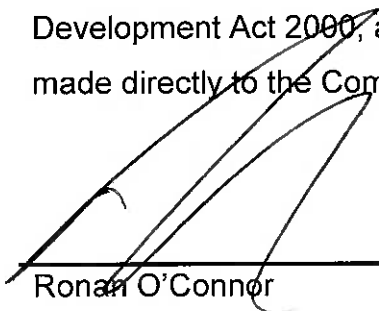
I consider that the proposal meets the definition of electricity transmission under section 2(1) of the ERA and Section 182A of the 2000 Planning Act and therefore would be deemed to be Strategic Infrastructure Development.

I am therefore satisfied that the proposed 110kV substation constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID).

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

1.0 Recommendation

I recommend that ESB be informed that the proposed development comprising the installation of a new 110 kV substation and all associated works in the townland of Boyhill, Co. Galway falls within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should be made directly to the Commission.


A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ronan O'Connor', is written over a horizontal line.

Senior Planning Inspector

2nd September 2026

Appendix A: Prescribed Bodies

The following is a list of prescribed bodies considered relevant by the Commission:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Cork County Council
- National Transport Authority
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- An Taisce
- Fáilte Ireland
- Heritage Council
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Irish Water
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Health Service Executive

Further notifications should also be made, where deemed appropriate.