



Development

Proposed uprate of the existing 110 kV Overhead Line (OHL) and the replacement (“restringing”) of the existing overhead line circuit conductor with a new higher capacity conductor and all associated site works. NIS has been submitted with this application.

Location

Inchacooly, Ullard (Controversyland), Clonanny, Kilmullen, Derrynafunshion, Ballycarroll (Jamestown Electoral Division), Closeland or Cloneen, Ballybrittas, Emo Park, Cappakeel, Morett, Killone, Garryduff (Kilmurry Electoral Division), Killenny (Kilmurry Electoral Division), Heathlodge, Raheenahoran, Ballydavis, Rathbrennan, Ballyclider, Ballymooney, Summerhill or Aghnaharna, Downs, Borris Little, Kylekiproe, Clonminam, Bracklone, Tullaghan, Clonaddadoran and Kyletalesha, Co. Laois.

Planning Authority Laois County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref. 2560147
Applicant EirGrid PLC
Type of Application Permission
Planning Authority Decision Grant with conditions

Type of Appeal Third Party
Appellant Solus Developments Ltd.
Observers None

Date of Site Inspection 20th January 2026
Inspector Jim Egan

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This appeal is against the decision of Laois County Council to grant permission to EirGrid PLC for part a cross-county project to uprate an existing 110kV Overhead Line (OHL) between the Cushaling 110kV substation southwest of Edenderry, Co. Offaly and the existing Portlaoise 110kV substation in Portlaoise, County Laois. The Cushaling – Portlaoise 110kV OHL is approximately 41.6km long and comprises 17 no. steel lattice tower structures and 193 no. wooden pole structures. The existing circuit is located across the functional areas of Offaly County Council, Kildare County Council and Laois County Council. Approximately 10km of the OHL circuit is located within the functional area of Offaly County Council, approximately 9km is within the functional area of Kildare County Council and approximately 22.6km is located within the functional area of Laois County Council.
- 1.2. For the sections of the OHL within the jurisdictions of Offaly County Council and Kildare County Council, planning permission has been granted and no appeals made to An Coimisiún Pleanála.
- 1.3. The grounds of appeal in this case relate solely to the choice to not underground part of the line within Portlaoise, specifically where the line crosses undeveloped greenfield land located on the southern side of the Southern Circular Road in Portlaoise town. I refer the Commission to appeal cases ABP-318799-24 and ABP-321599-25 which relate to electricity circuits located proximate to the proposed development in the wider vicinity of the Portlaoise 100kV substation, and to the decisions made on similar issues raised by the appellant - Solus Developments Ltd.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The site of the proposed development comprises part of the route of the Cushaling to Portlaoise 110kV Overhead Line (OHL) that traverses Co. Offaly, Co. Kildare and Co. Laois. Structures 1-59 (located in County Offaly and County Kildare) was constructed in 2000 as part of the Cushaling loop while structures 59-210 (mostly contained in County Laois) were originally part of the Allenwood to Portlaoise 110 kV line which was constructed in 1950.

- 2.2. The OHL has a total linear length of approximately 41.6 km, of which c. 22.6 km is located within the jurisdiction of County Laois. The OHL crosses into County Laois from County Kildare in the townland of Inchacooly at a point c. 2.5km north of Monasterevin. The OHL then travels for c. 1.5km in a southwest direction before crossing back into County Kildare for a distance of c. 850m at which point it re-enters County Laois in the townland of Ullard or Controversyland, continuing in a southwest direction towards Portlaoise passing through the townlands of Clonanny, Kilmullen, Derrynafunshion, Ballycarroll, Closeland or Cloneen, Ballybrittas, Emo Park, Cappakeel, Morett, Killone, Garryduff, Killenny, Heathlodge, Raheenahoran, Ballydavis, Rathbrennan, Ballyclider, Ballymooney, Summerhill or Aghnaharna, Downs, Borris Little, Kylekiproe and Clonminam.
- 2.3. The existing Portlaoise 110kV substation is positioned across the boundary between the townlands of Kylekiproe and Clonminam, northeast of the Parkside Shopping Centre. During a site inspection I observed that a number of overhead lines converge into the 110kv Portlaoise substation.
- 2.4. The application also refers to 8 no. proposed temporary construction compounds, of which 5 no. are located in County Laois, namely Compound No. 4 located in the townland of Bracklone to the east of Portarlinton, Compound No. 5 located in the townland of Tullaghan on the edge of Ballybrittas village, Compound No. 6 located in the townland of Morett c. 300m southwest of the rural settlement of New Inn, Compound No. 7 located in the townland of Clonaddadoran c. 3km southwest of Portlaoise, and Compound No. 8 located in the townland of Kyletalesha c. 5.4km north of Portlaoise.
- 2.5. Within County Laois, and outside of the urban area of Portlaoise, the OHL, for the most part, crosses farmland and other rural areas, and is aligned close to rural dwellings where it crosses local and regional roads. The site crosses the River Figile on the County Kildare border, north of Monasterevin, crosses the River Barrow on the County Kildare border, northwest of Monasterevin, crosses the Cork-Dublin railway line east of Killenard, crosses the M7 motorway north of junction 15 (Ballybrittas) and again south of junction 16 (Portlaoise) and crosses the N80 national secondary road east of Portlaoise.

2.6. The OHL approaches Portlaoise from the northeast, running in a southwest direction through farmland to the east side of the town before turning sharply to the west in the townland of Summerhill or Aghnaharna. From there the OHL crosses developed and undeveloped zoned land to terminate at the existing Portlaoise 110 kV substation.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1. Referring to the submitted Site Layout Plan, the structures associated with the OHL located within the functional area of County Laois are numbers 89 to 96, then numbers 100 to 210.

3.2. The proposed development works across the functional area of Co. Laois will comprise:

- The replacement (“restringing”) of the existing overhead line circuit conductor with a new higher capacity conductor including installation of a new fibre communication connection;
- The replacement of 8 no. steel towers and their foundations
- The replacement of steel members at 1 no. tower;
- Full tower painting required at 3 no. locations;
- Shear block remedial works (raise & cap) at 6 no. tower locations;
- The replacement of wooden poles only at 15 no. locations;
- The replacement of wooden poles & crossarm at 5 no. locations;
- The replacement of crossarm only at 14 no. locations;
- The replacement of existing danger notices at various locations, as required;
- The replacement of hardware and fittings, such as insulators, insulator hardware, earthwire hardware and anti-climbing guards at various locations, as required;
- The replacement of suspension clamps, vibration dampers and compression assemblies at all locations, as required;

- All associated temporary site development works to gain access to the existing structures including clearance of vegetation, disassembly and reassembly of gate posts / piers and removal and reinstatement of existing fencing; and
- Other temporary associated and ancillary development works required for the purpose of the uprate of the existing circuit, including temporary items, such as: guard poles, construction compounds (located in the townlands of Bracklone, Tullaghan, Morett, Clonaddadoran and Kyletalesha), clearance or management of vegetation, the installation of silt traps, silt fences, stone tracks, ground protection mats and watercourse crossings.

No additional structures are proposed along the existing circuit. Any replacement structures will be constructed at, or immediately adjacent to, the existing structures they will replace and will be of a generally similar height and appearance. An exception to this is structure 203, which will be relocated approximately 101 m back towards structure 202 due to its existing position on top of a gravel mound and there being potential for subsidence of the gravel in the long term. No alteration to the nature, extent, alignment, character or voltage of the existing electricity infrastructure is proposed. In addition, works to support this uprate also include the Cushaling – Portlaoise 110 kV bay lead-in conductor uprate at the Portlaoise 110 kV station (in Co. Laois).

3.3. The proposed works are envisaged to take place during the Transmission Outage Programme (March-October) for 2026 through to 2029, with energisation likely to be in 2029. This is subject to the availability of outages and the progress of other projects in the region after planning consent.

3.4. The application was accompanied by the following documentation of note:

- Planning and Environmental Considerations Report (PECR) with the following appendices:
 - Appendix A – Construction Methodology
 - Appendix B – Construction Environmental Management Plan
 - Appendix C – SID Determination Letter from An Bord Pleanála
 - Appendix D – Traffic Management Plan

- Appendix E – Confidential Badger Report (available on request only – not submitted to Laois County Council)
- Appendix F – Inventory of Cultural Heritage Assets
- Appendix G – Sensitive Biodiversity Data (available on request only - not submitted to Laois County Council)
- Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report

4.0 Planning Authority Decision

4.1. Decision

By Order dated 1st October 2025, Laois County Council issued a notification of decision to grant planning permission subject to 19 no. conditions. I am generally satisfied that all conditions attached by the planning authority are standard conditions insofar as they relate to the proposed development. Condition 1 relates to the requirement to comply with submitted plans and particulars and all recommendations and mitigation measures set out within NIS and Planning and Environmental Considerations Report), Condition 5 relates to external lighting, Condition 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 relate archaeology, Condition 12 requires the submission of a Traffic Management Plan, Condition 15 relates to railway line safety.

4.2. Planning Authority Reports

4.2.1. Planning Reports

A planner's report, dated 15th May 2025, recommended that by way of further information the applicant be requested to respond to a submission received from Iarnród Éireann and to respond to the issues raised in a third-party observation (that being the initial observation submitted by the third-party appellant.

A second planner's report, dated 26th September 2025, recommended a grant of permission, subject to 19 no. conditions. The decision of the planning authority is reflective of the recommendation set out within the planner's report.

4.2.2. *Other Technical Reports*

MD Engineer: Comment - no works are proposed within the Mountmellick Borris-In-Ossory MD area.

4.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Development Applications Unit: No objection subject to conditions relating to archaeology.
- Irish Rail: A number of observations made with regards construction protocols and a potential obligation to underground the cables.
- Inland Fisheries: A number of recommendations made with regards works in the vicinity of watercourses
- HSA: No observations to make
- An Taisce: No report received
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities: No report received
- Department of Agriculture, Food & The Marine: No report received
- Department of Environment, Climate & Communications: No report received
- EPA: No report received
- HSE: No report received
- Irish Aviation Authority: No report received
- The Heritage Council: No report received
- Uisce Eireann: No report received
- Waterways Ireland: No report received

4.4. **Third Party Observations**

The planning authority received 1 no. third-party observation. The matters raised relate to the contention that part of the OHL should be undergrounded and generally reflect the content of the third-party appeal. Grounds of appeal are discussed in greater detail under Section 7.0 below.

5.0 Planning History

Offaly County Council Ref. 2560087 – refers to a June 2025 grant of permission for the element of the same EirGrid project located within the jurisdiction of Offaly County Council. No appeal received by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

Kildare County Council Ref. 2560302 – refers to an October 2025 grant of permission for the element of the same EirGrid project located within the jurisdiction of Kildare County Council. No appeal received by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

5.1. Appeal Site

Appellant's Land

P.A. ref. 072159 – refers to a 2008 grant of permission for 100 residential units, a crèche and construction of part of the southern circular road. Proposal was to include removal and undergrounding of existing ESB cables. The approved development was not commenced.

5.2. Surrounding Area

Other EirGrid Uprate Projects

P.A. ref. 22764 / ABP-318799-24 – refers to a 2025 decision to grant permission for the upgrading and replacement of an existing 110KV overhead line (OHL) of 21.6km running north from the Portlaoise 110kV substation to close to Portarlington.

P.A. ref. 2460593 / ABP-321599-25 – refers to a 2025 decision to grant permission for the refurbishment of 43 no. electricity transmission towers along a c. 7.3 km section of the Coolnaback – Portlaoise 110 kV overhead line (OHL) and all associated works.

Other Application Types

P.A. ref. 2560385 – refers to a January 2026 notification of decision to grant permission for 92 no. dwellings on land adjoining the Sand Wood housing estate in the southeast corner of Portlaoise. The 110kV overhead line which is subject of the current appeal traverses the site. The OHL is being facilitated within the site layout. rather than being undergrounded.

6.0 Policy Context

6.1. Development Plan

The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030 are the relevant operative plans in this case.

Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

Relevant CDP policies, objectives and standards which are of relevance to this assessment are set out within Chapter 3 Climate Action and Energy and include –

Policy Objective NRE 1: Support the reinforcement of the electricity transmission grid to improve energy supply to the county. Where strategic route corridors have been identified, the Council will support the statutory providers of national grid infrastructure by safeguarding such corridors from encroachment provided these corridors do not have adverse impacts on residential amenity or the environment.

Policy Objective NRE 3: Ensure the provision, where feasible, of electricity cables been located underground, especially in the urban environment, and generally within areas of public open space. Where undergrounding of cables is being pursued, proposals should demonstrate that environmental impacts including the following are minimised:

- Habitat loss as a result of removal of field boundaries and hedgerows (right of way preparation) followed by topsoil stripping (to ensure machinery does not destroy soil structure and drainage properties);
- Short to medium term impacts on the landscape where, for example, hedgerows are encountered;
- Impacts on underground archaeology;
- Impacts on soil structure and drainage; and
- Impacts on surface waters as a result of sedimentation

DM Standard DM NRE 1: Applicants shall ensure that planning applications involving the siting of power lines and other overhead cables fully consider the following:

- i. Impacts on the landscape, national monuments, archaeology and views of special amenity value. Where impacts are inevitable, mitigation measures to minimise such impact must be provided.

- ii. Impacts on Ecology – An ecological Impact assessment shall be submitted to inform the decision-making process;
- iii. Development shall be consistent with best practice, with regard to siting and design.

DM TEL 2 Undergrounding and Concealing of Services: In new housing and in other forms of urban development, all services including E.S.B., telephone and television cables shall be

- Placed underground;
- Service Buildings or structures should be sited as unobtrusively as possible and must be screened;

Care should also be given to the treatment of maintenance boxes, electrical boxes and bin storage on facades so that such items are concealed as unobtrusively as possible.

Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030

The south-western most end of the site is located within the functional area of the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030. The lands within the functional area of the LAP were zoned as part of the making of the CDP, as adopted in 2022. The land owned by the appellant and across which the OHL is located, including the siting of pole set ref. 208, is zoned 'General Business' under the local area plan, the objective of which is '*To provide for and improve commercial activities*'.

Utility structures are 'open for consideration' on 'General Business' zoned land.

Relevant policy and objective within the LAP are as follows:

Policy KI P8: Co-operate with and facilitate the work of national telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas network providers in the improvement, expansion and provision of energy and communication infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development.

Objective KI O11: Facilitate, promote and encourage the expansion and improvement of telecommunications, broadband, electricity and gas networks infrastructure subject to proper planning and sustainable development.

6.2. **Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES)**

The following regional policy objectives are noted within the RSES:

RPO 10.20: Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Strategy. This Includes the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

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

6.3. **National Planning Framework, First Revision, 2025**

The NPF establishes the fundamental national objective of achieving a transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

National Strategic Outcome 8 seeks a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy.

6.4. **The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25)**

The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25) which was approved by Government in recent weeks sets out the roadmap to deliver on Ireland's climate ambition. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings that were agreed by Government. CAP25 builds upon CAP24 by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and should be read in conjunction with Climate Action Plan 2024

It reaffirms the previous commitment to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action & Low Carbon Act 2015 (as amended) (The Climate Act). It makes reference to the draft revised NPF which includes policy support for the development and upgrading of electricity grid infrastructure and the delivery of renewable electricity generation capacity. CAP25 also underlines the important role the planning regime will play in developing Ireland's renewable energy capacity.

6.5. **Climate Action & Low Carbon 2015 (as amended) (The Climate Act)**

The Climate Act commits Ireland to the objective of becoming a carbon-neutral economy by 2050, reducing emissions by 51% by the end of the decade.

Section 15 of the Climate Act sets out that;

- (1) A relevant body shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with—
 - (a) the most recent approved climate action plan,
 - (b) the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,
 - (c) the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,
 - (d) the furtherance of the national climate objective, and
 - (e) the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

An Coimisiún Pleanála is a relevant body for the purposes of the Climate Act. As a result, the obligation of the Commission is to make all decisions in a manner that is consistent with the Climate Act.

6.6. **Energy Security in Ireland to 2030, Energy Security Package, Nov. 2023**

The document confirms that Ireland's future energy will be secured by moving to an electricity-led system maximising our renewable energy potential.

6.7. **Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply, November 2021**

This statement provides that the Programme for Government requires a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and that 80% of electricity consumption will come from renewable sources by 2030. Ensuring energy security is a national priority, as the electricity system decarbonises towards net zero emissions.

The challenges to ensuring security of electricity supply are stated to include:

- 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.

The Policy Statement states that the Government recognises that:

- ensuring security of electricity supply continues to be a national priority as the electricity system decarbonises towards net zero emissions;
- there is a need for very significant investment in additional flexible conventional electricity generation, electricity grid infrastructure, interconnection and storage in order to ensure security of electricity supply.

6.8. **National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023 – 2030 (NBAP)**

Ireland's 4th NBAP sets the biodiversity agenda for the period 2023 – 2030. The NBAP has a list of Objectives which promotes biodiversity as follows;

- Objective 1: Adopt a whole of government, whole of society approach to biodiversity;
- Objective 2: Meet urgent conservation and restoration needs;
- Objective 3: Secure nature's contribution to people;
- Objective 4: Enhance the evidence base for action on biodiversity;
- Objective 5: Strengthen Ireland's contribution to international biodiversity initiatives.

The Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 provides that every public body, as listed in the Act, is obliged to have regard to the objectives and targets in the NBAP.

6.9. Natural Heritage Designations

The site crosses the River Barrow on the border with County Kildare, c. 1.8km northwest of Monasterevin. This part of the river is within the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162), with wooden poleset ref. 96 (cross-arms to be replaced) located on the County Laois side, c. 60m northeast of the SAC designation.

Otherwise, the closest European sites to the OHL corridor are the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004160) and Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC (Site Code: 000412), c. 9km and c. 11km of the southwestern end of the site, respectively, Ballyprior Grassland SAC (Site Code: 002256), c. 10km southeast of the southwestern end of the site, the Pollardstown Fen SAC (Site Code: 000396) and Mouds Bog SAC (Site Code: 002331), c. 9.6km and c. 11km, east of the northern end of the site, respectively.

The proposed development partially crosses the Ridge of Portlaoise pNHA (00087), east of Portlaoise Golf Club, noting that a steel mast structure (ref. 204) and a wooden poleset (ref. 205) are located within the undeveloped part of the pNHA. It is proposed to replace wooden poleset ref. 205.

7.0 The Appeal

A third-party appeal was made by Solus Development Ltd. A summary of the grounds of appeal is set out below.

7.1. Grounds of Appeal

- Concern that the proposal to retain the overhead line across the appellant's land will impact the value and development potential of the zoned and serviced land.
- The OHL is unsightly and a significant limitation on the development potential of the land.
- No justification as EirGrid and the local authority are aware of ducting in place within the surrounding road network to facilitate the undergrounding of the 110kV lines to/from the Portlaoise substation.

- The ducting, constructed in two phases, in 2004 and 2017, was considered necessary to open up zoned land in conjunction with the delivery of the Southern Circular Road south of Portlaoise town.
- The existence of the ducting has been continually dismissed by EirGrid.
- Appellant has positively engaged with EirGrid during the application process and previous applications.
- Appellant has offered to commission a survey, at its own expense, of the ducting. It is understood that the local authority has in principle agreed to this survey, noting that the Southern Circular Road is now taken in charge.
- Line Conflict Process is not an appropriate avenue as it is for new lines only.
- This issue of undergrounding of overhead power lines is a planning matter. The continuance and upgrading of the line is a material contravention of CDP Policy NRE 3, which seeks undergrounding of lines where feasible.
- The Commission is asked not to sideline this matter to a separate process. Where undergrounding was to be agreed under a Line Conflict Process, such development would constitute a material change to the land and as such planning permission, including AA, would be required.
- The Commission is asked to request the applicant to submit survey drawings of the existing underground ducting and a technical report to establish the feasibility of using the ducts.

7.2. **Applicant Response to Third Party Appeal**

The Commission received a response to the third-party appeal on 24th November 2025 on behalf of the applicant. The relevant points of the response can be summarised as follows:

- The appeal relates solely to the appellant's landholding, and its desire to have the overhead power lines removed from the land and placed underground.
- The appeal relates solely to commercial matters rather than any matters of environmental impact and sustainable development.

- Case references ABP-318799-24 and ABP-321599-25 form a clear precedent and should be considered by the Commission in determining this appeal.
- The proposed development seeks to upgrade the existing overhead line circuit to ensure its continued efficient operation as part of the critical electricity infrastructure serving Portlaoise and the wider Eastern & Midland region.
- Undergrounding of existing lines is a matter for ESB Networks' (ESBN) Line Conflict division and not EirGrid.
- It is EirGrid's understanding that ESBN continues to be active in this process with the appellant.
- Appeal process should not be used to accelerate the Line Conflict process.
- Appellant's assertion that the Line Conflict process only applies to new lines is incorrect. The process also applies to existing lines.
- CDP Policy NRE3 seeks undergrounding of powerlines where feasible in the context of 'the provision' of lines, implying 'new infrastructure'. Regardless, the focus on feasibility is deliberate to facilitate the Line Conflict process.
- Undergrounding of cables is not part of the current application. Any future agreements for undergrounding will be subject to the required consent processes.
- The appeal reiterates a commercial concern. EirGrid believes that the circuits were in place at the time the appellant purchased the relevant land.
- With regards visual impact, the existing circuit reads as part of the long-established visual and development context of a major regional electricity transmission node.
- There is no conflict with the CDP provisions.
- The upgrading of the electricity transmission network is a critical element of national, regional and local planning policy for a secure and reliable grid to meet both CAP obligations, to foster economic development and to meet housing demand.
- The provision of a secure and reliable electricity supply is an objective of the CDP, RSES and the NPF.

- The appeal is not based on grounds of proper planning and sustainable development as it does not consider the existing infrastructure as being part of the baseline receiving environment, and the incorporating of existing infrastructure for sustainability, which exists in many urban/suburban areas.

7.3. Planning Authority Response

None received.

8.0 Assessment

Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including the submission received in relation to this third-party appeal, the reports of the local authority, having visited the site, and having regard to the relevant local/regional/national policies and guidance, I consider that the substantive issues in this third-party appeal to be considered are as follows:

- Principle of Proposed Development
- Other Matters

Given that the nature of the appellant's concern pertains to the southwestern most end of the site, I submit in the outset that the focus of my assessment will be based on this area. I will complete my assessment in respect of matters relating to the overall site, where required.

8.1. Principle of Proposed Development

Justification of Proposed Development

- 8.1.1. The principle of the 110kV line which is the subject of this application has been long established, noting that the part of the line located within the jurisdiction of County Laois was originally part of the Allenwood to Portlaoise 110kV line, constructed in 1950, thus c. 75 years in existence. It is one of several such lines in the general area of the southwestern most part of the site where a number of circuits converge at the 110kv Portlaoise substation.

- 8.1.2. The applicant has provided justification on the necessity of the proposed works. With reference to the submitted PECR, the applicant outlines that between June 2022 and November 2023, a Line Conductor Assessment Report (LCAR), a Line Condition Assessment (LCA) and a Line Design Report (LDR) were undertaken by the Electricity Supply Board Networks (ESBN) relating to the circuit. It identified that the conductor on the 1950 section has now reached its end of life and needs to be replaced or there would be a risk of it failing.
- 8.1.3. The submitted PECR further outlines that in September 2024, a Transmission Line Assessment Report (TLAR) was prepared by ESNB, outlining the nature of the works needed on the OHL circuit to uprate it from a lower to a higher capacity conductor in addition to providing a fibre optic connection between Cushaling and Portlaoise 110kV substations. The works required at each structure was also specified varying from minor works (e.g., replacement of fittings) to the replacement of structures. The required uprate works from the TLAR have formed the basis of the proposed development.
- 8.1.4. The PECR notes that the proposed development is part of a suite of similar uprates being progressed in the Mid-East to aid in the delivery of future renewable generation and alleviate some of the constraints on current connected generation. And in addition to improved transmission of renewable generation in the region, the uprate of this circuit will allow increased demand for electricity from economic growth and the electrification of heat and transport to be supplied during times when renewable power generation in the area is not sufficient to meet the demand.
- 8.1.5. I am satisfied that the proposed refurbishment works have been justified by the applicant, consistent with National Strategic Outcome 8 of the NPF, RPO 10.22 of the EMRA RSES, Policy Objective NRE 1 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Objective KI O11 of the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030.

Compliance with statutory plan provisions

Zoning

- 8.1.6. The majority of the OHL crosses rural, un-zoned land. The OHL approaches Portlaoise from the northeast of the town, running in a southwest direction through farmland to the east side of the town before turning sharply to the west in the townland of Summerhill or Aghnaharna. From there the OHL crosses undeveloped zoned land

(‘Strategic (Residential) Reserve’ and ‘General Business’) and two slivers of ‘Open Space & Amenity’ zoned land associated with the course of the Triogue rivers / streams. It then crosses Lismard Business Park which is zoned ‘General Business’ followed by a pocket of ‘Existing Residential’ zoned properties along the west side of the R426. It continues west crossing through undeveloped land zoned ‘General Business’, this being the land owned by the appellant, and which fronts the Southern Circular Road. From there, the OHL crosses the Southern Circular Road and through undeveloped ‘Town Centre’ zoned land, before terminating at the existing Portlaoise 110kV substation.

8.1.7. Within the urban / zoned area, there are 9 no. structures on the OHL (202 through to 210), with the context of each as follows:

- Structure 202 (wooden poleset) located on ‘Strategic (Residential) Reserve’ zoned land, and as outlined under section 5.2 of my report, Laois County Council issued a notification of decision to grant permission in January 2026 (P.A. ref. 2560385 refers) for 92 no. dwellings on this land. The site layout plan associated with P.A. ref. 2560385 shows the necessary clearance provided between dwellings and the OHL. There are no works proposed to structure 202.
- Structure 203 (wooden poleset) currently located on top of a gravel mound on undeveloped land zoned ‘General Business’, to be relocated c. 101m further east to lower lying land also zoned ‘General Business’ and close to the ‘Open Space & Amenity’ zoned land associated with the course of the Triogue river/stream.
- Structure 204 (steel lattice tower) located on undeveloped land zoned ‘General Business’ to the southeast of Lismard Business Park. Structure is to be painted.
- Structure 205 (wooden poleset) located on undeveloped land zoned ‘General Business’ to the southeast of Lismard Business Park. Structure to be replaced.
- Structure 206 (wooden poleset) located within the car park of Lismard Business Park, zoned ‘General Business’. No works proposed.
- Structure 207 (wooden poleset) located within Lismard Business Park, zoned ‘General Business’. No works proposed.

- Structure 208 (wooden poleset) located on undeveloped land zoned 'General Business' on southern side of the Southern Circular Road. Structure to be plumbed.
- Structure 209 (steel lattice tower) located on undeveloped land zoned 'Town Centre' on northern side of the Southern Circular Road. Structure to be painted.
- Structure 210 (steel lattice end mast) located at the Portlaoise 110kV substation site zoned 'Transport & Utilities'. Structure to be painted.

8.1.8. Given the nature and modest scale of the works proposed to the established OHL, I am satisfied that the proposal is consistent with the land use zonings attached to the portion of the site located within the functional area of Portlaoise LAP.

Undergrounding of Electricity Cables

8.1.9. The appellant's sole concern is that the proposal to retain the overhead line across undeveloped zoned land will impact its value and development potential. The appellant argues that the OHL is unsightly and a significant limitation on the development potential of the land, and that the continuance and upgrading of the line is a material contravention of CDP Policy NRE 3.

8.1.10. Further, the appellant argues that there is no justification for not undergrounding the cable as EirGrid and the local authority are aware of ducting in place within the surrounding road network to facilitate the undergrounding of the 110kV lines to/from the Portlaoise substation. The appellant acknowledges the Line Conflict process with ESBN but contends that this process relates to the provision of new power lines rather than those which are existing.

8.1.11. In a response to the third-party appeal, the applicant (EirGrid) outlines that the application seeks permission for the upgrading of an existing OHL and does not seek permission for the undergrounding of cables. EirGrid seeks to reiterate that the undergrounding of existing cables is assessed through the Line Conflict process with the ESBN and, contrary to the opinion of the appellant, that process facilitates existing power lines and not just new lines.

8.1.12. With regards Policy Objective NRE 3, EirGrid argues that it is incorrect to suggest that a proposal, being a critical element of the national grid, consistent with national, regional and local planning policy, materially contravenes a statutory development

plan. EirGrid considers the reference to 'where feasible' within the objective is a deliberate recognition of ESBN's Line Conflict process, which is a first step for any proposal to underground or realign an overhead power line, following which any other consent would be sought. Furthermore, in response to the appellant's statement that the line and associated structures are unsightly, EirGrid contends that line is a long-established feature within the landscape.

- 8.1.13. The proposal seeks to upgrade / uprate an existing overhead power line (OHL), with works comprising the restringing of the line, replacing equipment such as crossarms and, where necessary, replacing support structures on a like-for-like basis. The OHL crosses the north-east corner of the appellant's land, with Structure 208 (wooden pole-set) located on the land. It is proposed to replumb the two poles which make up this pole-set. For all intents and purposes, as a result of the proposed development, the line and structures within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site will remain unchanged, visually. On this basis, I consider that the proposed development will not have a negative impact on the established character or visual amenity of the area.
- 8.1.14. With regards undergrounding, CDP Policy Objective NRE 3 seeks to ensure the provision, where feasible, of electricity cables been located underground, especially in the urban environment, and generally within areas of public open space. In terms of the principle of undergrounding the cable at this location, I note that with respect to a 2007 planning application for 100 houses on the appellant's land (P.A. ref. 072159 refers), the public file includes a letter from the Asset Management Services division of ESBI, date stamped 16/11/2007, which indicates agreement to the undergrounding of the overhead line where the applicant / developer agrees to provide a viable route for undergrounding and bears all costs involved with same including any consultancy costs associated with the planning and design stage and subsequent decommissioning of the existing overhead cable.
- 8.1.15. Whilst the 2007 correspondence suggests a level of understanding, albeit subject to further agreements, to underground the cable which oversails the appellant's land, having regard to the submissions made by the relevant parties in this current appeal case, there is no evidence on file to demonstrate that the undergrounding of part of the existing cable in the vicinity of the appellant's land is feasible nor is there any evidence of an agreement to underground the cable. Again, having regard to the submissions made, I consider that the process of establishing whether or not the

undergrounding of a cable is feasible is a matter for the electricity provider to determine and, in my view, it is not a material consideration under this appeal.

8.1.16. In my view, the feasibility of undergrounding and implications of undergrounding the said cable would become a material planning consideration where the line is to be undergrounded on foot of a resolution under any Line Conflict process or where a planning application is made in respect of the appellant's land. As an example, I note a recent decision under P.A. ref. 2560385 where Laois County Council issued a notification of decision to grant permission on the 13/01/2026 for 92 no. dwellings on land further east of Lismard Business Park, across which the same OHL oversails. There is no undergrounding proposed rather the site plan shows that OHL accommodated within the overall design with suitable setbacks provided to proposed dwellings.

8.1.17. Notwithstanding, in my view, CDP Policy Objective NRE 3 demonstrates the local authority's ambition to underground all electricity cables, an exercise which would improve the development potential of land north and south of the Southern Circular Road. However, as the line is long established along this route, and given the relative minor nature of works proposed, I would not consider it reasonable to set such undergrounding by condition. In the context of overall national, regional and local policy objectives I do not consider that CDP Policy Objective NRE 3 requires the undergrounding of the line, and by association I do not consider that the proposal materially contravenes Policy Objective NRE 3.

8.2. **Other Matters**

Relevance of Conditions

8.2.1. I have reviewed the conditions attached by the planning authority in its decision to grant permission in this case.

8.2.2. Condition 5(a) relates to external lighting with part (b) stating that no floodlighting shall be erected without prior planning permission. Considering the temporary nature of the construction phase, I consider that if the Commission is minded to grant permission the matter of external lighting can be addressed by way of compliance as part of a final CEMP.

- 8.2.3. Condition 13 restricts construction hours but allows a deviation with prior agreement with the planning authority. Construction hours set out under Section 3 of the submitted CEMP are, in my view, sufficiently justified and appropriate and can be implemented without the requirement of a specific condition in respect of construction hours.
- 8.2.4. Condition 15 relates to the observations made by Iarnród Éireann in its submission to the planning authority and requires various consents and agreements with Iarnród Éireann prior to works taking place in the vicinity of the railway line. While part (e) relates to external lighting, which is to be covered under a final CEMP, the requirements of the condition relate to third party consents, outside the remit of planning. However, if minded to grant permission, the Commission might consider it reasonable to note the observation made by Iarnród Éireann.

Development contributions

- 8.2.5. As the proposed development is an upgrade of an existing line it is not subject to development contributions in line with the adopted Scheme, or other contributions or bond requirements.

9.0 AA Screening

9.1. Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination (Stage 1)

Refer to Appendix 1. 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, including a Stage 1 AA screening report that accompanied the application, I conclude that the potential for significant effects on European Site(s), most notably the River Barrow and River Nore SAC with a hydrological connection to the overall site cannot be excluded without further detailed assessment and therefore a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required to be undertaken.

This determination is based on the site's location, and the potential for impacts on the qualifying interests of this SAC in terms of water quality and disturbance of mobile species.

9.2. **Appropriate Assessment Determination (Stage 2)**

Refer to Appendix 2. In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposed development could potentially result in significant effects on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC in view of potential hydrological connectivity and given the conservation objectives of this site and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of S177U was required.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS, including required mitigation and all associated documentation submitted, I consider that adverse effects on the site integrity of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC can be excluded in view of this site's conservation objectives and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

10.0 Water Framework Directive

Section 7.3 of the submitted PECR provides baseline information on hydrogeology in respect of groundwater quality and vulnerability and also on hydrology in respect of flood risk, water supplies and surface water quality in the context of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The PECR considers the proposed development in the context of the WFD and provides the following conclusion:

Implementation of good practice and mitigation measures listed under the CEMP mean that the Proposed Development will not cause a deterioration of the status of any surface or groundwater body under the WFD and will not undermine the attainment by any such body of good status at the waterbody scale. Therefore, no additional WFD assessment has been undertaken.

Refer to Appendix 3. I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, subject to mitigation measures set out in the submitted EIA screening report and submitted NIS, will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently can be excluded from further assessment. I note that the WFD data used by the applicant is based off the 2016-

2021 record. Data for 2019-2024 has since been published. I have used the updated status record.

11.0 EIA Screening

Refer to Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 of this report, which contain EIA Form 1 and EIA Form 3, respectively. Having regard to the nature, size and location of the proposed development and to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations, I have concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The preparation and submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment report (EIA) therefore is not required.

12.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that permission be granted subject to conditions.

13.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to:

- the nature, scale and extent of the proposed development,
- the characteristics of the entirety of the site and of the surrounding area,
- national, regional and local policy support, in particular:
 - National Planning Framework, First Revision, 2025
 - Government Policy Statement on the Security of Electricity Supply (2021),
 - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern & Midland Region 2019-2031,
 - Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027,
 - Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030
- the likelihood for consequences on 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

and given:

- that the Commission has performed its functions in a manner consistent with The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended)

It is considered that the proposed development, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, would not materially contravene the provisions of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, would comply with the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030, would not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape and the visual amenities of the area, would not have significant adverse impacts on the environment, and would not seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity. The proposed development would not have any likely significant effects on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other European Site. Accordingly, the proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

14.0 Conditions

1.	The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application on the 24 th March 2025 as amended by the further plans and particulars submitted on the 7 th August 2025, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars. Reason: In the interest of clarity.
2.	The mitigation measures contained in the submitted Natura Impact Statement (NIS) shall be implemented. Reason: To protect the integrity of European Sites.

3.	<p>The developer shall engage a suitably qualified archaeologist to monitor all site clearance works, topsoil stripping, groundworks, dredging and/or the implementation of agreed preservation in-situ measures associated with the development. Prior to the commencement of such works the archaeologist shall consult with and forward to the Local Authority archaeologist or the NMS as appropriate a method statement for written agreement. The use of appropriate tools and/or machinery to ensure the preservation and recording of any surviving archaeological remains shall be necessary. Should archaeological remains be identified during the course of archaeological monitoring, all works shall cease in the area of archaeological interest pending a decision of the planning authority, in consultation with the National Monuments Service, regarding appropriate mitigation.</p> <p>The developer shall facilitate the archaeologist in recording any remains identified. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the planning authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the developer.</p> <p>Following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-excavation specialist analysis, the planning authority and the National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of the monitoring and any subsequent required archaeological investigative work/excavation required. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the continued preservation either in situ or by record, of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.</p>
4.	<p>A final Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development. The CEMP shall include but not be limited to construction phase controls for dust, noise, vibration, external lighting, waste management, protection of soils, groundwaters, and surface waters, site housekeeping, emergency response planning, site environmental policy, and project roles and responsibilities.</p>

	Reason: In the interest of environmental protection.
5.	A final Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development. Reason: In the interest of traffic safety
6.	The site development and construction works shall be carried out in such a manner as to ensure that the adjoining roads are kept clear of debris, soil and other material. Reason: In the interest of traffic safety and convenience

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.

Jim Egan
Planning Inspector

5th February 2026

Appendix 1 - Screening for AA

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects

1: Description of the project and local site characteristics

Case file: PL-500151-LS

Brief description of project	<p>Proposed uprate of the existing 110 kV Overhead Line (OHL) and the replacement (“restringing”) of the existing overhead line circuit conductor with a new higher capacity conductor and all associated site works.</p> <p>The Cushaling – Portlaoise 110 kV OHL is approximately 41.6 km long and comprises 17 no. steel lattice tower structures and 193 no. wooden pole structures. The existing circuit is located across the functional areas of Offaly County Council, Kildare County Council and Laois County Council.</p> <p>Approximately 10 km of the existing OHL circuit is located within the functional area of Offaly County Council, approximately 9 km is within the functional area of Kildare County Council and <u>approximately 22.6 km is located within the functional area of Laois County Council</u>, with part of this 22.6km section of OHL being the subject of this appeal.</p> <p>A detailed description of the proposed development is provided in Section 2 of the Inspector’s report and detailed specifications of the proposal are provided in the AA screening report/ NIS and other planning documents provided by the applicant, including the Construction Methodology statement.</p>
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	<p>The southwestern most end of the site is located on lands which are within the LAP plan boundary for Portlaoise. The overall site is predominantly in a rural location on predominantly low lying, greenfield lands with gentle undulations. The land-use associated with these lands is predominantly agricultural.</p> <p>The following is noted in terms of relevance to AA screening:</p>

With reference to the submitted Hydrology Features and Soils map sheets 1 -23, the proposed Development oversails the River Figile (between structures 1-2 and again between structures 24-25), River Slate (between structures 50-51), Grand Canal (between structures 54-55), Kilnatoogue Stream (between structures 62-63), Grand Canal again (between structures 77-78), River Figile again (between structures 88-89), River Barrow (between structures 96-97), Dunrally Stream (between structures 155-156), the River Triogue_030 (between structures 194-195) and the River Triogue_020 (between structures 202-203 and again between structures 207-208).

Of the above, the following watercourse crossings are located within the jurisdiction of Laois County Council:

- River Figile between structures 88-89 (structure 88 is in County Kildare and structure 89 is in County Laois).
- River Barrow between structures 96-97 (structure 96 is in County Laois and structure 97 is in County Kildare).
- Dunrally Stream between structures 155-156,
- River Triogue_030 between structures 194-195
- River Triogue_020 between structures 202-203
- River Triogue_020 between structures 207-208.

Of the above poleset references, and with reference to the submitted PECR and Construction Methodology statement, the following is noted:

- Structure 89 (wooden poleset) is located c. 120m southwest of the Figile River (a tributary of the River Barrow).
Proposed works: Plumb existing poles.
- Structure 96 (wooden poleset) is located c. 44m north of the SAC boundary.
Proposed works: Replace cross arms.

Note: within the functional area of Laois County Council, the structures closest to the SAC, which are to be replaced, are structures 104 (wooden poleset), 105 (steel mast) and 106 (wooden poleset), located c. 1.1km, 1.2km and 1.35km south/southwest of the SAC, and all south of the R424.

- Structures 155 and 156 (both comprising a wooden poleset) are located c. 80m and c. 115m from the Dunrally Stream, to northeast and southwest, respectively.

Proposed works: No works.

- Structure 194 (wooden poleset) is located c. 75m northeast of the River Triogue_030.

Proposed works: No works.

- Structure 195 (wooden poleset) is located c. 150m southwest of the River Triogue_030.

Proposed works: No works.

- Structure 202 (wooden poleset) is located c. 175m east of the River Triogue_020.

Proposed works: No works.

- Structure 203 (wooden poleset) is located c. 115m west of the River Triogue_020.

Proposed works: This structure is being relocated c. 101m to the east to within closer proximity to the River Triogue_020.

- Structures 207 and 208 (both comprising a wooden poleset) are located c. 45m and c. 85m from the River Triogue_020, to east and west, respectively.

Proposed works: No works to structure 207. Plumb poles for structure 208

The Figile River, Dunrally Stream, Triogue_020 and Triogue_030 are all waterbodies that flow into the River Barrow and River Nore SAC.

Construction works will require access to each structure, where necessary. Access will be achieved via local roads and existing farm tracks. Where no existing track is present, either a temporary stone track will be provided and / or, where required, the temporary use of ground protection mats. Such locations are shown on Hydrology Features and Soils drawing sheets 1-23 and include temporary track access, where works are proposed, including painting, within Laois County Council, to structures 105 (replace), 110 (replace), 111 (replace), 130

(replace), 147 (replace), 167 (replace), 180 (replace cross arms), 181 (replace), 200 (replace) and 209 (paint), none of which are proximate to watercourses, and the use of ground protection matting to access structures 89 (plumb poles), 90 (replace cross arms) and 203 (to be relocated c. 101m to the east, works to in each instance relating to access across habitat types PB1 (Raised Bog), PB4 (Cutover Bog), HH3 (Wet Heath), GS3 (Dry-humid acid Grassland) and GS4 (Wet Grassland) and also for access to structures 204 and 205 which related to access across habitat type GS2 (Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges).

It is noted that Structures 158 (to be replaced) and 159 (plumb poles) are accessed from the L7815 (at a point c. 1.5km southeast of New Inn) via a farm track which crosses the Dunrally Stream. Also noted is that access to structures 91 to 96 is gained from the west along an existing farm track that generally runs parallel to, and comes within c. 200m of, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC.

The application also refers to 8 no. proposed temporary construction compounds, of which 5 no. are located in County Laois, a follows:

- Compound No. 4 located in the townland of Bracklone to the east of Portarlinton, and c. 550m south of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC.
- Compound No. 5 located in the townland of Tullaghan on the edge of Ballybrittas village, and c. 1km west of the Dunrally Stream.
- Compound No. 6 located in the townland of Morett c. 300m southwest of the rural settlement of New Inn, and c. 1.1km north of the Dunrally Stream
- Compound No. 7 located in the townland of Clonaddadoran c. 3km southwest of Portlaoise, and c. 400m south of the Togher North stream, a tributary of River Triogue.
- Compound No. 8 located in the townland of Kyletalesha c. 5.4km north of Portlaoise, and c. 300m west of Triogue_030.

The following works of relevance to the AA screening are described in the submitted Construction Methodology statement:

Replacement of wooden poleset structures - this involves removing all associated fittings, cutting and removal of the poles, followed by installation of new poles, crossarm and

fittings. This work typically takes one to two days and involves access to the structures with a tracked vehicle/tractor.

Replacement of crossarm, insulator and fittings at wooden poleset structures — Replace crossarm and fittings which involves removal of crossarm and fittings, followed by installation of new crossarm and fittings and plumbing of insulators where required. These include smaller scale items such as brackets, insulators and clamps. This work typically takes one day per structure and involves access to the structures with a tracked vehicle and a mobile elevated work platform (MEWP).

Replacing the conductor, which involves re-stringing by pulling the conductor between the angle masts, with the main element of this work carried out at angle masts, with some work also carried out at strain and semi-strain locations during conductor stringing. A catenary stringing system (CSS) is required at major road crossings, crossings of lines 20 kV or greater (or an outage of lines 20 kV or greater), rivers and rail crossings.

The site crosses the River Barrow on the border with County Kildare c. 1.8km northwest of Monasterevin. The relevant part of the river is within the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162).

Otherwise, the closest European sites to the OHL corridor are the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004160) and Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC (Site Code: 000412), c. 9km and c. 11km of the southwestern end of the site, respectively, Ballyprior Grassland SAC (Site Code: 002256), c. 10km southeast of the southwestern end of the site, the Pollardstown Fen SAC (Site Code: 000396) and Mouds Bog SAC (Site Code: 002331), c. 9.6km and c. 11km, east of the northern end of the site, respectively.

The submitted PECR refers to OPW National Flood Hazard Mapping, noting that from north to south the proposed development crosses the following rivers with flood risk:

- Figile_080 there is a 'High' river flood risk;
- Barrow_090 there is a 'High' river flood risk;

The area of 'High' probability for fluvial risk is within the Study Area, between Figile_080 and Barrow_090, north-west of Monasterevin, just before where the Figile_080 meets the Barrow_090.

	<p>The high probability flood risk between the Barrow and the Figile is land that is within the jurisdiction of County Laois. Structures 89 to 96 on the OHL are located within this flood risk area. All those structures are wooden polesets. None are to be replaced. Works comprise plumbing the poles on structure 89, and replacing cross arms on structures 90, 92 and 96. Access to these structures is also via the flood risk area, noting that access to structures 92 and 96 is via an existing farm track while access to structures 89 and 90 is predominantly through scrub with the proposed use of ground protection mats.</p>
<p>Screening report</p>	<p>Yes (Prepared by WSP)</p> <p>The report identified the following:</p> <p><u>River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)</u> The Proposed Development is hydrologically connected to this European site due to potential works at structures 96-98, potentially resulting in pollution events (via runoff).</p> <p>The Proposed Development could be further hydrologically connected via tributaries of the River Barrow. The Proposed Development oversails the River Figile, Ballygarrett Stream, River Slate, Grand Canal (Barrow Line), and River Triogue between structures 1-2, 24-25, 50-51, 54-55, 77-78, 88-89 and 207-208.</p> <p>Of these groupings, poleset 88-89 (where the line crosses the River Figile) and poleset 207-208 (where the line crosses the Triogue Stream to the southeast of Portlaoise) relate to the part of the development within County Laois.</p> <p>The AA screening report identified no likely significant effects (LSEs) with regards the following potential impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct habitat loss. • Disturbance for Aquatic Species and Whorl Snail • Earthworks associated with replacement of polesets, or strengthening foundations of steel lattice towers. The nearest structures to the SAC are 96 and 97 (44 m and 115 m from the River Barrow respectively). Noting that poleset 96 is located within the administrative area of Laois County Council. Neither of these poles are to be replaced.

Likely significant effects as follows:

- Disturbance for Otter. Within County Laois, works are proposed within 20 m of watercourses at structures 203 (to be relocated to with close proximity to Triogue_020. There is a risk of disturbing an active holt at (or along proposed access to) this structure. This is considered a significant effect. The PECR also refers to a waterbody near structure 162 however there are no works proposed to this poleset.
- Pollution. In the absence of mitigation, and again within County Laois, there is potential for the uncontrolled release of contaminants into open watercourses that feed into the SAC.

The Long Derries, Edenderry SAC (000925)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Mountmellick SAC (002141)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (004160)

There is no hydrological connectivity between the SPA and the Proposed Development.

The SPA and the Proposed Development do not share the same groundwater body.

The Proposed Development is within the maximum foraging distance for hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* during the breeding season (11.4 km) (NPWS, 2015). The Bird Foraging Table (DAFM, 2020) advises that afforestation projects can be screened out in the first instance, only if the project is over 11 km from an SPA designated for hen harrier.

The Proposed Development is therefore considered functionally connected with this SPA. Structures 189-210 are within 11.4 km of the SPA.

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- Functional connectivity

Ballyprior Grassland SAC (002256)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Pollardstown Fen SAC (000396)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC (000412)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Mouds Bog SAC (002331)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

River Nore SPA (004233)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Knockacoller Bog SAC (002333)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Ballynafagh Lake SAC (001387)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Raheenmore Bog SAC (000582)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Lisbigney Bog SAC (000869)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Ballynafagh Bog SAC (000391)

- No hydrological connectivity
- No groundwater connectivity
- No functional connectivity

Natura Impact Statement	Yes
Relevant submissions	None
Additional information	<p>As noted above, the site crosses the River Barrow on the border with County Kildare c. 1.8km northwest of Monasterevin. The relevant part of the river is within the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162).</p> <p>Kildare County Council and Offaly County Council granted permission for the element of the line upgrade located within its jurisdiction. With respect to AA, the planner's report of each planning authority concludes the following:</p> <p><i>Kildare County Council</i></p> <p><i>The site traverses the River Barrow and River Nore SAC NATURA 2000 site. Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) Reports were submitted in support of the application and were reviewed by the Ecologist of Kildare County Council who has concluded that there is likely to be no significant effect on European Sites, their habitats, or species of qualifying interest, if the mitigation measures outlined in the NIS report are implemented in full for the proposed development.</i></p> <p><i>Offaly County Council</i></p> <p><i>It is considered that subject to mitigation measures that the proposed development will have no adverse impact on the integrity of European sites</i></p>

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

Two European sites were identified as being located within a potential zone of influence of the proposed development as detailed in Table 1 below. I note that the applicant included both European sites in its screening consideration.

European Site (code)	Qualifying interests¹ (summary) Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, 27/01/2026)	Distance from proposed development	Ecological connections²	Consider further in screening³ Y/N
Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004160)	Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082] Conservation Objectives September 2022	c. 8.6km	Functional connectivity	Y
River Barrow and River	Estuaries [1130]	The Proposed	Hydrological connectivity	Y

<p>Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162)</p>	<p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</p> <p>Reefs [1170]</p> <p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]</p> <p>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]</p> <p>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]</p> <p>European dry heaths [4030]</p> <p>Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]</p> <p>Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]</p>	<p>Development oversails the River Barrow and River Nore SAC approximately 1.8 km northeast of Monasterevin, Co. Laois at the River Barrow.</p>	<p>Groundwater connectivity</p> <p>Functional connectivity</p>	
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	<p>Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]</p> <p>Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</p> <p>Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]</p> <p>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p>Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</p> <p>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p>Alosa fallax fallax (Twaité Shad) [1103]</p> <p>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]</p> <p>Vandenboschia speciosa (Killarney Fern) [6985]</p> <p>Conservation Objectives June 2025</p>			
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I have attached link to site details which outlines the Conservation Objectives and qualifying interests of the above two listed European sites of relevance in this case, as provided by NPWS.

Ecological surveys (including habitat mapping) undertaken by the applicant are detailed within the submitted application.

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

Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004160)

Given the nature and extent of works sought and the spatial separation distance, in excess of 8 kilometres, and noting in particular that the transmission line is outside the core foraging range for hen harrier, and also considering the scale of identified habitat loss of c. 0.5 m², the proposal does not represent a significant effect to SPA populations of hen harrier. Therefore, there is no likelihood of effects occurring on Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA, either alone or in-combination with other projects.

River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)

There is a direct pathway to this European site, given that the line oversails the SAC at the River Barrow, with works proposed to structures within the flood plan of same and also works to / replacement of structures close to tributary watercourses. In the absence of mitigation, there is potential for the uncontrolled release of contaminants into the Barrow and into other open watercourses that feed into the SAC. The potential for this occurrence is greatest (within County Laois) at structure 203, which is to be relocated to within 20m of an open watercourse (Triogue_020). Other potential impacts are associated with works to structure 204, to be painted only, albeit access to the structure will be via the same route as that to structure 203, which includes the use of an existing track from the south and also use of ground protection mats in between the two structures and in the vicinity of the new location of structure 203. Other potential impacts are associated with the works to structures 89, 90, 92 and 96, all located within the high probability flood risk northwest of where the Figile River discharges to the River Barrow. Whilst note of these structures are to be replaced, access of machinery is required through farm land / scrub within the flood risk area. The submitted Construction Methodology statement outlines that such works his work typically takes one day per structure and involves access to the structures with a tracked vehicle and a mobile elevated work platform (MEWP), compared to three weeks for replacing a steel tower.

There is potential for ex-situ impacts on mobile species such as otter and a weak hydrological pathway between the proposed works and the SAC at construction stage which requires further consideration. There are no direct and/or indirect adverse effects anticipated during the operational phase of the Proposed Development.

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

Screening matrix

Site name	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	Effects
River Barrow and River Nore SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality impacts at construction stage via accidental release of pollutants and groundwater interference • Disturbance to mobile species at construction stage. • There are no direct and/or indirect adverse effects anticipated during the operational phase of the proposed development. 	Negative effect on water quality within the River Barrow and River Nore SAC with an associated degradation of qualifying habitats and population decline of certain qualifying species
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Yes	

	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? N/A	
	Impacts	Effects
Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA (Site Code: 004160)	None	None as there are no feasible hydrological or ecological pathways and no likely loss of habitat or disturbance on the hen harrier.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): No	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? No	

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

Based on the information provided within the applicant's Stage 1 Screening Report, and in reviewing the conservation objectives and supporting documents of the relevant European Sites, I consider that the precautionary approach to apply and accordingly, that the proposed development has the potential to result in significant effects on the conservation objectives of River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162).

This determination is based on the need to apply the precautionary approach and the potential for impacts on the qualifying interests of this SAC in terms of water quality, when considered as a project on its own and in-combination with other projects and plans.

Screening Determination

Finding of likely significant effects

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of objective information provided by the applicant, I conclude that the proposed development could result in significant effects on River Barrow and River Nore SAC in view of its conservation objectives on a number of qualifying interest features of this site.

It is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) [under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000] of the proposed development is required.

Appendix 2 – Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment			
<p>The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to appropriate assessment of a project under part XAB, sections 177V [or S 177AE] of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) are considered fully in this section.</p>			
<p>Taking account of the preceding screening determination, the following is an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the proposed works to a 110kv electricity circuit in view of the relevant conservation objectives of River Barrow and River Nore SAC, based on scientific information provided by the applicant.</p> <p>The information relied upon includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment report prepared by Prepared by WSP • Natura Impact Statement prepared by WSP <p>I am satisfied that the information provided is adequate to allow for Appropriate Assessment. All aspects of the project which could result in significant effects are considered and assessed in the NIS. There are mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce any adverse effects on site integrity included within the applicant's NIS (refer Section 7) as part of the submitted application.</p>			
<p>Submissions/observations</p> <p>The matter of AA was not raised within the appellant's appeal submission or within its submission at application stage.</p>			
<p>European site: River Barrow and River Nore SAC</p>			
Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes (as relevant-summary)	Potential adverse effects	Mitigation measures
<p><i>Following an examination of all QIs of this SAC, the table below provides details of those QI's in which there is any likely feasible pathway/QIs likely to be affected.</i></p>			<p><i>The required mitigation measures are set out within Section 7 of the applicant's NIS.</i></p>
<p>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]</p>	<p>The targets and attributes for the identified QI's can be</p>	<p>Disturbance of resting places, leading to displacement and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECoW pre-works survey

	<p>found at the following link:</p> <p>River Barrow and River Nore SAC National Parks & Wildlife Service</p>	<p>reduction in SAC populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion zones (if resting places present) • NPWS licence if avoidance not possible (if present) • ECoW supervision of works (if present)
<p><u>Habitats</u></p> <p>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-batrachion vegetation [3260]</p> <p>Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plain and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]</p> <p><u>Species</u></p> <p>Desmoulin's whorl snail [1016]</p> <p>Freshwater Pearl Mussel [1029]</p>	<p>The targets and attributes for the identified QI's can be found at the following link:</p> <p>River Barrow and River Nore SAC National Parks & Wildlife Service</p>	<p><u>Water quality perturbations.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct impacts to aquatic species; • Direct impacts to aquatic habitats, due to floral morbidity; • Reduced prey availability for otter; • Declines in salmonid populations would have an indirect impact on • Freshwater Pearl Mussel, due to a reduction in hosts for glochidia. <p><u>Alterations to watercourse morphology.</u></p> <p>Sedimentation of gravelly substrate, leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of spawning habitat for salmon and lamprey • If present, Freshwater Pearl Mussel populations may experience a 	<p>Pollution prevention measure as outlined in Sections 7.3.2 - 7.3.6 of the submitted NIS, and Sections 6.12 and 6.13 of the submitted CEMP, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate fuel storage and designated (bunded) refuelling areas; • Plant nappies; • Regular inspections of plant/machinery; • Emergency pollution response procedures; and • Silt fences/traps where necessary.

White-clawed Crayfish [1092]		reduction in O2 availability.	
Sea Lamprey [1095]			
Brook Lamprey [1096]			
River Lamprey [1099]			
Salmon [1106]			
Otter [1355]			

Assessment

I have undertaken a site visit and examined the documentation received, including the submitted NIS and associated documentation (including CEMP).

The applicant's AA screening concluded that there is potential for effects on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC at construction stage via accidental release of pollutants and temporary disturbance of qualifying interest (QI) species. It therefore concluded that there is potential for likely significant effects on a number of QI's of this SAC including Desmoulin's whorl snail, Freshwater Pearl Mussel, White-clawed Crayfish, Sea Lamprey, Brook Lamprey, River Lamprey, Salmon and Otter, and the habitats: 'Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-batrachion vegetation', 'Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plain and of the montane to alpine levels', 'Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles', and 'Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)'.

The likely effect on water quality at construction stage via accidental release of pollutants which may potentially impact on the site's QI's can be sufficiently addressed by way of incorporating mitigation measures. Further, the potential for disturbance to QI's mobile species at construction stage can be sufficiently addressed by way of incorporating mitigation measures, as referenced in the above table, with these mitigation measures outlined in detail within Section 7 of the NIS.

There are no direct and/or indirect adverse effects anticipated during the operational phase of the Proposed Development.

Mitigation measures and conditions

The stated mitigation measures set out within Section 7 of the applicant's NIS are required and extend beyond best practice construction methods.

Potential for In-combination effects

Of note is that the submitted NIS assesses the entire project (Cushaling 110 kV substation, County Offaly to the existing Portlaoise 110 kV substation in County Laois as a single project.

In this regard I note that under the respective decisions to grant permission, the planning authorities of Kildare County Council and Offaly County Council concluded the following with respect to AA:

Kildare County Council

The site traverses the River Barrow and River Nore SAC NATURA 2000 site. Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) Reports were submitted in support of the application and were reviewed by the Ecologist of Kildare County Council who has concluded that there is likely to be no significant effect on European Sites, their habitats, or species of qualifying interest, if the mitigation measures outlined in the NIS report are implemented in full for the proposed development.

Offaly County Council

It is considered that subject to mitigation measures that the proposed development will have no adverse impact on the integrity of European sites

The applicant has demonstrated that no significant residual effects will remain due to the construction and operation of the proposed OHL that could act in-combination with other plans and projects to generate significant effects on the River Barrow and Nore SAC in view of its conservation objectives. The proposed development is deemed to have no impact pathways within the Zone of influence. In the time since the lodgement of the planning application, I note that in January 2026 Laois County Council issued a notification of decision to grant permission under P.A. ref. 2560385 for 92 no. dwellings on land adjoining the Sand Wood housing estate in the southeast corner of Portlaoise, through which the OHL is aligned, and adjoining Triogue_20. The planning authority screening out AA.

Findings and Conclusions

The applicant determined that the construction and operation of the proposed development alone, or in combination with other plans and projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the River Barrow and Nore SAC in view of its conservation objectives.

Based on the information provided, and subject to the implementation of required mitigation measures, I am satisfied that adverse effects arising from the proposed development can be excluded. No significant in combination effects are predicated.

Reasonable scientific doubt

I am satisfied that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of adverse effects.

Site Integrity

The proposed development will not affect the attainment of the Conservation Objectives of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC subject to the implementation of required mitigation measures. Adverse effects on site integrity can be excluded and no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

Appropriate Assessment Conclusion: Integrity Test

In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposed development could result in significant effects on River Barrow and River Nore SAC in view of

the conservation objectives of this site and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of S177U was required.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS and all associated material submitted, I consider that adverse effects on the site integrity of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC can be excluded in view of its conservation objectives of this site and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

My conclusion is based on the following:

- Detailed assessment of construction and operational impacts arising from the proposed refurbishment works to an existing 110kv electricity circuit.
- Nature and Scale of the works proposed and spatial separation from the qualifying interests of River Barrow and River Nore SAC.
- The proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives for River Barrow and River Nore SAC which seeks to maintain and/or restore favourable conservation condition of QIs in the River Barrow and River Nore SAC including ;- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-batrachion vegetation [3260], Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plain 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, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0], Desmoulin's whorl snail [1016], Freshwater Pearl Mussel [1029], White-clawed Crayfish [1092], Sea Lamprey [1095], Brook Lamprey [1096], River Lamprey [1099], Salmon [1106] and Otter [1355]

Appendix 3 – WFD Stage 1: Screening

WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING

Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality

An Coimisiún Pleanála ref. no.	PL-500151-LS	Townland, address	Inchacooly, Ullard (Controversyland), Clonanny, Kilmullen, Derrynafunshion, Ballycarroll (Jamestown Electoral Division), Closeland or Cloneen, Ballybrittas, Emo Park, Cappakeel, Morett, Killone, Garryduff (Kilmurry Electoral Division), Killenny (Kilmurry Electoral Division), Heathlodge, Raheenahoran, Ballydavis, Rathbrennan, Ballyclider, Ballymooney, Summerhill or Aghnaharna, Downs, Borris Little, Kylekiproe, Clonminam, Bracklone, Tullaghan, Clonaddadoran and Kyletalesha, Co. Laois.
Description of project	Proposed uprate of the existing 110 kV Overhead Line (OHL) and the replacement (“restringing”) of the existing overhead line circuit conductor with a new higher capacity conductor and all associated site works.		
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OHL predominantly crosses rural farmland, with the southwestern end of the OHL crossing developed and undeveloped land in the Portlaoise urban area. • With reference to the submitted Hydrology Features and Soil mapping drawings and submitted Construction Methodology statement, the following is noted with regards where the OHL crosses the water courses within the jurisdiction of Laois County Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Figile_080 between structures 88-89 (structure 88 is in County Kildare and structure 89 is in County Laois). Structure 89 (wooden poleset) is located c. 120m southwest of the Figile River (a tributary of the River Barrow). 		

Proposed works: Existing poles on structure 89 are to be plumbed, with a temporary access with ground protection mats from the west, thus in the opposite direction of the river.

- Barrow_090 between structures 96-97 (structure 96 is in County Laois and structure 97 is in County Kildare). Structure 96 (wooden poleset) is located c. 60m north of the river.

Proposed works: Cross arms on structure 96 are to be replaced. Access to structure 96 is gained from the west along an existing farm track that generally runs parallel to, and comes within c. 200m of, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC.

The high probability flood risk between the Barrow and the Figile is land that is within the jurisdiction of County Laois. Structures 89 to 96 on the OHL are located within this flood risk area. All those structures are wooden polesets. None are to be replaced. Works comprise plumbing the poles on structure 89, and replacing cross arms on structures 90, 92 and 96. Access to these structures is also via the flood risk area, noting that access to structures 92 and 96 is via an existing farm track while access to structures 89 and 90 is predominantly through scrub with the proposed use of ground protection mats.

- Dunrally Stream_010 between structures 155-156. Both structures comprise a wooden poleset, located c. 80m and c. 115m from the Dunrally Stream, to northeast and southwest, respectively.

Proposed works: None.

- River Triogue_030 between structures 194-195. Both structures comprise a wooden poleset, located c. 75m and c. 150m from the River Triogue_030, to the northeast and southwest, respectively.

Proposed works: None.

- River Triogue_020 between structures 202-203. Structure 202 (wooden poleset) is located c. 175m east of the River Triogue_020.

Proposed works: No works to structure 202.

	<p>Structure 203 (wooden poleset) is located c. 115m west of the River Triogue_020. Proposed works: This structure is being relocated c. 101m to the east to within closer proximity to the River Triogue_020. Access via an existing track from the south, and use of ground protection mats in the vicinity of the new mast location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ River Triogue_020 between structures 207-208. Structures 207 and 208 (both comprising a wooden poleset) are located c. 45m and c. 85m from the River Triogue_020, to east and west, respectively. Proposed works: No works to structure 207. Plumb poles for structure 208. Access off the Southern Circular Road. ● Within the functional area of Laois County Council, the structures closest to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which are to be replaced, are structures 104 (wooden poleset), 105 (steel mast) and 106 (wooden poleset), located c. 1.1km, 1.2km and 1.35km south/southwest of the SAC, and all south of the R424, with construction related access to be achieved locally off a local road south of the R424. ● It is noted that Structures 158 (to be replaced) and 159 (plumb poles) are accessed from the L7815 (at a point c. 1.5km southeast of New Inn) via a farm track which crosses the Dunrally Stream_010. Also noted is that access to structures 91 to 96 is gained from the west along an existing farm track that generally runs parallel to, and comes within c. 200m of, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. ● The proposed development site is located within the Barrow Catchment, and across the Barrow_SC_050 and Barrow_SC020 sub-catchments. ● The site is located across the following ground waterbodies, with various levels of groundwater vulnerability (as described under Section 7 (Geology, Soils, Hydrogeology and Hydrology) of the submitted PECR): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cushina ○ Bagenalstown Upper ○ Portlaoise-Mountmellick Gravels
Proposed surface water details	N/a

Proposed water supply source & available capacity	N/a
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues	N/a
Others?	-

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)
River Figile	OHL oversails the waterbody. Structure 89 (wooden poleset) is located c. 120m southwest of the waterbody.	Figile_080 IE_SE_14F010600	The River Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024 awarded the Figile_080 a status of 'Good'	Review	-	Surface water
River Barrow	OHL oversails the waterbody. Structures 89 to 96 (all wooden polesets)	Barrow_090 IE_SE_14B011000	The River Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024 awarded the Barrow_090 a status of 'Poor'	At Risk	Urban Run-Off Hydromorphology Invasive Species	Surface water via tributary waterbodies.

	located within this flood risk area. Structure 96 is located c. 60m north of the waterbody.					
Dunrally Stream	OHL oversails the waterbody. Structures 155 & 156 (both wooden polesets) are located c. 80m and c. 115m from the waterbody, to northeast and southwest, respectively.	Dunrally Stream_010 IE_SE_14D050200	The River Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024 awarded the Dunrally Stream_010 a status of 'Moderate'	Not at Risk	-	Surface water
River Triogue	OHL oversails the waterbody. Structures 194 & 195 (both wooden polesets) are located c. 75m and c. 150m from the waterbody to the northeast and southwest, respectively.	River Triogue_030 IE_SE_14T010300	The River Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024 awarded the River Triogue_030 a status of 'Poor'	At Risk	Urban Run-Off Agriculture Unknown	Surface water
River Triogue	Structures 202 & 203 (both wooden polesets) are located c. 175m and c. 115m from the waterbody to the east and west, respectively.	River Triogue_020 IE_SE_14T010200	The River Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024 awarded the River Triogue_020 a status of 'Poor'	At Risk	Urban Run-Off Urban Wastewater	Surface water

	Structures 207 and 208 (both wooden polesets) are located c. 45m and c. 85m from the waterbody to east and west, respectively.					
Cushina ground waterbody	Structures be replaced within this ground waterbody are structures 100, 104, 105, 106, 110, 111, 128, 130, 133, 136, 141, 142, 147 and 151.	Cushina ground waterbody IE_SE_G_048	The Ground Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024 awarded the River Cushina ground waterbody a status of 'Poor'	Not at Risk	-	Surface water Groundwater
Bagenalstown Upper ground waterbody	Structures be replaced within this ground waterbody are structures 153, 158, 164, 167, 170, 181, 182, 183, 184, 195, 196, 197 and 200.	Bagenalstown Upper ground waterbody IE_SE_G_153	The Ground Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024 awarded the Bagenalstown Upper ground waterbody a status of 'Poor'	Not at Risk	-	Surface water Groundwater
Portlaoise-Mountmellick Gravels ground waterbody	Structures be replaced within this ground waterbody are structure 205.	Portlaoise-Mountmellick Gravels ground waterbody IE_SE_G_170	The Ground Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024 awarded the Portlaoise-Mountmellick Gravels ground waterbody a status of 'Poor'	Not at Risk	-	Surface water Groundwater

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

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.	Construction related contaminants entering surface water.	Figile_080 Barrow_090 Dunrally Stream_010 River Triogue_030 River Triogue_020 Cushina ground waterbody Bagenalstown Upper ground waterbody Portlaoise-Mountmellick Gravels ground waterbody	Existing	Water quality degradation	Mitigation measures listed in the submitted CEMP, NIS and PECR	No	N/A

2.	Construction related contaminants entering ground water and surface water.	Cushina ground waterbody Bagenalstown Upper ground waterbody Portlaoise-Mountmellick Gravels ground waterbody	Existing	Water quality degradation	Mitigation measures listed in the submitted CEMP, NIS and PECR	No	N/A
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Appendix 4 - EIA Pre-Screening (Form 1)

Case Reference	PL-500151-LS
Proposed Development Summary	Proposed uprate of the existing 110 kV Overhead Line (OHL) and the replacement (“restringing”) of the existing overhead line circuit conductor with a new higher capacity conductor and all associated site works. NIS has been submitted with this application.
Development Address	Inchacooly, Ullard (Controversyland), Clonanny, Kilmullen, Derrynafunshion, Ballycarroll (Jamestown Electoral Division), Closeland or Cloneen, Ballybrittas, Emo Park, Cappakeel, Morett, Killone, Garryduff (Kilmurry Electoral Division), Killenny (Kilmurry Electoral Division), Heathlodge, Raheenahoran, Ballydavis, Rathbrennan, Ballyclider, Ballymooney, Summerhill or Aghnaharna, Downs, Borris Little, Kylekiproe, Clonminam, Bracklone, Tullaghan, Clonaddadoran and Kyletalesha, Co. Laois.
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)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a ‘Project’. Proceed to Q2.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 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)?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	

3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?

<input type="checkbox"/> No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.	<p>Schedule 5, Part 2, Class 1(a)</p> <p>Projects for the restructuring of rural land holdings, undertaken as part of a wider proposed development, and not as an agricultural activity that must comply with the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations 2011, where the length of field boundary to be removed is above 4 kilometres, or where re-contouring is above 5 hectares, or where the area of lands to be restructured by removal of field boundaries is above 50 hectares.</p> <p>Submitted EIA Screening Report identifies that the proposal would include the removal of c. 724m of field boundary (hedges, fences, walls, etc.) across counties Offaly, Kildare and Laois.</p> <p>Within the functional area of Laois, removal of vegetation relates to a corridor of 264 m² (88 m x 3 m).</p>

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 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5 – EIA Screening Determination (Form 3)

A. CASE DETAILS		
An Coimisiún Pleanála Case Reference	PL-500151-LS	
Development Summary	Proposed uprate of the existing 110 kV Overhead Line (OHL) and the replacement (“restringing”) of the existing overhead line circuit conductor with a new higher capacity conductor and all associated site works. NIS has been submitted with this application.	
	Yes / No / N/A	Comment (if relevant)
1. Was a Screening Determination carried out by the PA?	Yes	The Planner’s report determined that EIA is not required having regard to nature, size and location of the proposed development.
2. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?	Yes	
3. Has an AA screening report or NIS been submitted?	Yes	A Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report and NIS accompanied this application.
4. Is a IED/ IPC or Waste Licence (or review of licence) required from the EPA? If YES has the EPA commented on the need for an EIAR?	No	
5. Have any other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment which have a significant bearing on the project been carried out pursuant to other relevant Directives – for example SEA		Noted that a SEA and AA (NIS Report) were undertaken in respect of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2030.

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 environment?	No	The proposed development is contained within the line of an already established electricity circuit. The modest scale of the refurbishment works sought are consistent with the established character of the area. No additional structures are proposed along the existing circuit. Any replacement structures will be constructed at, or immediately adjacent to, the existing structures they will replace and will be of a generally similar height and appearance. An exception to this is structure 203, which will be relocated approximately 101 m back towards structure 202 due to its existing position on top of a gravel mound and there being potential for subsidence of the gravel in the long term.	No
1.2 Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works cause	No	The implementation of the proposed mitigation measures set out within the Planning and Environmental Considerations Report (PECR)	No

physical changes to the locality (topography, land use, waterbodies)?		will ensure that there is no physical changes to the locality (topography, land use, waterbodies) and receiving environment. Any likely impact on soils, geology and groundwater will be minimised by applying sound design principles and by following good work practices as set out in the application submitted.	
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?	No	Proposed works relate to the refurbishment of an existing electricity circuit including replacement of structures. Construction materials will be typical for a development of this nature and scale.	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?	No	Construction activities will require the use of potentially harmful materials, such as fuels and other such substances. Use of such materials would be typical for construction sites. Any impacts would be local and temporary in nature. The implementation of standard construction practice measures set out in the submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would satisfactorily mitigate potential impacts. No impacts at operational stage in this regard are anticipated.	No
1.5 Will the project produce solid waste, release pollutants or any hazardous / toxic / noxious substances?	No	Construction activities will require the use of potentially harmful materials, such as fuels and other similar substances and give rise to waste for disposal. The use of these materials would be typical for construction sites. Some noise emissions and vibration during construction is likely. Such construction impacts would be local and temporary in nature, and with the	No

		<p>implementation of the standard measures outlined in the CEMP, the project would satisfactorily mitigate the potential impacts.</p> <p>Significant quantities of waste are not anticipated from the majority of the Proposed Development except for the steel tower/poleset replacements and other small quantities of waste (fixtures and fittings).</p> <p>The CEMP details that waste will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation that a Construction & Demolition (C&D) Waste Management Plan (WMP) will be prepared prior to commencement of development.</p> <p>No operational impacts in this regard are anticipated.</p>	
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?	No	Subject to implementation of measures detailed within the CEMP at construction stage and implementation of mitigation measures provided within the NIS which relate to water quality.	No
1.7 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	No	There is potential for construction activity to give rise to noise and vibration emissions. Such emissions will be localised and short term in nature, and their impacts would be suitably mitigated by the operation of standard measures listed in the CEMP.	No
1.8 Will there be any risks to human health, for example due to water contamination or air pollution?	No	Construction activity may give rise to some dust emissions. Such construction impacts would be temporary and localised in nature	No

		and the application of standard measures within the CEMP satisfactorily address potential risks on human health. 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 is predicted having regard to the nature and scale of the development. Any risk arising from construction works will be localised and temporary in nature.	No
1.10 Will the project affect the social environment (population, employment)	No	<p>The presence of an 110kv electricity circuit is long established on this site and the proposal is to undertake its refurbishment.</p> <p>The overhead line runs primarily through rural land. The site crosses into the urban area of Portlaoise from the southeast, first crossing undeveloped zoned land ('Strategic (Residential) Reserve' and 'General Business') and two slivers of 'Open Space & Amenity' zoned land. It then crosses Lismard Business Park which is zoned 'General Business' followed by a pocket of 'Existing Residential' zoned properties along the west side of the R426. It continues west crossing through undeveloped land zoned 'General Business', fronting the Southern Circular Road. From there, the line crosses the Southern Circular Road and through undeveloped 'Town Centre' zoned land, before continuing west and south to terminate at the existing Portlaoise 110 kV substation, the substation site being zoned 'Transport & Utilities'.</p>	No

		As noted above and in Section 5.0 of the Inspector's Report, the overhead line crosses through land zoned 'Strategic (Residential) Reserve' in the southeast corner of Portlaoise. Laois County Council issued a notification of decision to grant permission in January 2026 for 92 no. dwellings. The site plan shows that the overhead line has been accommodated within the design with suitable setbacks provided between proposed dwellings and the power line.	
1.11 Is the project part of a wider large scale change that could result in cumulative effects on the environment?	No	Whilst the development is part of a cross county project and also whilst there are several OHLs which converge on Portlaoise 110kv substation and within the vicinity of the site, there would be no cumulative effect (including visual and ecological) arising from the proposed development.	No
2. Location of proposed development			
2.1 Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or have the potential to impact on any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European site (SAC/ SPA/ pSAC/ pSPA) • NHA/ pNHA • Designated Nature Reserve • Designated refuge for flora or fauna • Place, site or feature of ecological interest, the preservation/ 	Yes	The site crosses the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162), with wooden poleset ref. 96 (to be retained) located on the County Laois side, c. 60m northeast of the SAC designation. As concluded in the Appropriate Assessment under Appendix 2 of the Inspector's Report, the proposed development would not result in significant impacts to protected, important or sensitive species, subject to implementation of mitigation measures set out in the NIS.	No

<p>conservation/ protection of which is an objective of a development plan/ LAP/ draft plan or variation of a plan</p>		<p>The proposed development partially crosses the Ridge of Portlaoise pNHA (00087), east of Portlaoise Golf Club. Structures 204 and 205 are within the boundary of Ridge of Portlaoise pNHA, and the presence of Annex I habitat corresponds to 'species-rich grasslands' as noted in the pNHA Site Synopsis.</p> <p>The submitted PECR notes that particular attention should be drawn to structure 204, at which Annex I habitat 6510 (lowland hay meadows) was deemed to be present. Structure 205 was not deemed to be directly within this habitat, but is within 10 metres.</p> <p>It is proposed to replace structure 205, so these works may result in adverse impacts without mitigation. It is only proposed to paint structure 204, which requires no earthworks, so impacts from this will be comparatively less severe.</p> <p>Mitigation measures are set out in the submitted CEMP, including the use of ground protection mats.</p> <p>Given the nature and scale of the proposed development, it would not result in significant impacts to any protected / designated sites.</p>	
<p>2.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, for example: for</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The proposed development would not result in significant impacts to protected, important or sensitive species, subject to</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?</p>	<p>implementation of mitigation measures set out in the submitted PECR.</p> <p><u>Birds</u></p> <p>The PECR acknowledges that cutting or destruction of vegetation on uncultivated land or in hedges or ditches during the breeding bird season (1 March to 31 August, inclusive) is restricted in Ireland. Therefore, vegetation clearance will occur outside the breeding bird season.</p> <p>The PECR also outlines that if that is unavoidable, an ECoW will walk all areas requiring vegetation removal and carry out a nest check before access is gained or construction commences.</p> <p>The ECoW will also check areas of pre-thicket plantation woodland 100 m north of structure 164 for nesting hen harrier (noting that it is proposed to replace structure 164, but no works are proposed at structure 163, which is nearer to the area of pre-thicket plantation woodland). I note that structure 164 is located within c. 65m of the L7815, with construction access off same, thus no construction access through the aforementioned woodland.</p> <p><u>Bats</u></p> <p>The submitted PECR outlines that the river edge, open farmland and pasture,</p>	
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	<p>hedgerows, tree lines, scrub, woodland and woodland edge all provide valuable foraging and commuting habitat for several bat species.</p> <p>Surveys identified Potential Roosting Features (PRF) in relative close proximity to various pole structures. Within the administrative area of Laois County Council, those structures are identified as ref. 96, 100 and 118.</p> <p>All PRFs associated with structures 73, 96 and 100 are outside the 15-m buffer that has been applied for the assessment of disturbance on roosting bats. No works are proposed at structure 118. Disturbance impacts on roosting bats are therefore considered negligible. No mitigation is proposed.</p> <p><u>Badgers</u></p> <p>The submitted PECR outlines that badgers are present throughout the Survey Area and That several active setts lead directly beneath the location of proposed access routes.</p> <p>The PECR refers to an Appendix E containing a Confidential Badger Survey Report, available on request. This badger survey report was not submitted to the planning authority and as such a copy of same is not on file. Notwithstanding, I</p>	
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	<p>consider that the PECR includes sufficient information to assess the potential impact on badgers.</p> <p>The PECR that the potential significant effect lies where badger setts, whose tunnels extend under proposed access routes, are at risk of collapse during the passage of heavy vehicles and machinery.</p> <p>The PECR outlines proposed mitigation measures for the purpose of ensuring the protection of badger setts, including buffer zones around identified setts, presence of an ECoW at all times and consultation with the NPWS, where necessary.</p> <p><u>Otters</u></p> <p>The submitted PECR outlines that evidence for the presence of otters was recorded at one location across the entire Survey Area, close to structure ref. 88, located in the administrative area of Kildare County Council. No active holts were noted.</p> <p>The PECR outlines that proposed mitigation comprises a (precautionary) confirmatory survey for otter to be carried out along the banks of watercourses up to 20 m from structures 54 and 203. Structure 54 is within the administrative area of Kildare County Council. Structure 203 is to be replaced, located to the southeast of Portlaoise town,</p>	
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		<p>to be moved from on top of a gravel mound to greenfield land.</p> <p><u>Flora</u> 2,173 m² of woody vegetation (1,489 m² of scrub and 684 m² of willow coppice) would be cleared to facilitate access to certain structures. This equates to a total linear distance of 724 m.</p> <p>As noted EIA Form 1, within the functional area of Laois, the removal of vegetation relates to a corridor of 264 m² (88 m x 3m) of scrub to access structure 144.</p> <p>The PECR outlines the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The majority of structures are within open farm fields (e.g., agricultural grasslands and arable land) and, as such, no vegetation clearance in these areas will be required. ○ Areas where vegetation has grown back since last coppicing and areas of scrub encroaching onto access routes will require a minimal amount of clearance. An area of 2,173 m² of woody vegetation (1,489 m² of scrub and 684 m² of willow coppice) needs to be cleared to facilitate access to certain structures. This equates to a total linear distance of 724 m (across 	
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		<p>the entire project area – counties Offaly, Kildare and Laois.</p> <p>Given the nature and scale of the proposed development, it would not result in significant impacts on any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna.</p>	
<p>2.3 Are there any other features of landscape, historic, archaeological, or cultural importance that could be affected?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>There are no national monuments or world heritage sites within the study area.</p> <p>There proposed development has a number of archaeological features within proximity to the site. Section 8.4 of the PECR identifies the following three records as being potentially impacted by the proposed development (note that the ‘HA’ references are those used on the submitted ‘Cultural Heritage Features’ maps. The RMP refs are included for each one below.</p> <p>HA29 – LA009-021004 (Church) HA30 – LA009-021008 (Graveyard)</p> <p>HA31 – LA014-001 (Enclosure)</p> <p>HA33 – LA013-018001 (Church) HA34 – LA013-018002 (Graveyard) HA35 – LA013-018003 (Enclosure)</p> <p>All potential impacts are associated with gaining access to the structures for repair / replacement. In all cases, existing tracks are to be used. The magnitude of impact has</p>	<p>No</p>

		<p>been assessed in all cases as <i>Slight Adverse</i> as the levels of compaction anticipated would be no greater than that received through the regular agricultural activity that takes place across the track, noting that the scale ranges from Imperceptible, Slight, Moderate, Significant and finally, Profound, as per Cultural Heritage Guidelines for Electricity Transmission Projects, EirGrid 2015.</p> <p>The attachment of a condition on archaeological requirements as put forward by the DHLGH in its submission will sufficiently address this matter.</p> <p>There are a number of protected structures identified within the study area (identified as HA32, HA36 and HA45 on the submitted Cultural Heritage Features map). There are no OHL structures within close proximity to these buildings or their grounds nor do any access tracks come within close proximity to same. The proposal does not include any works that have the potential to affect a protected structure.</p>	
<p>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?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The proposed development is primarily on rural lands and the works sought are to an already established electricity circuit.</p>	<p>No</p>

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 development would not increase risk of flooding to downstream areas. The nature and scale of the works sought would not give rise to significant levels of surface water.	No
2.6 Is the location susceptible to subsidence, landslides or erosion?	No	Poleset 203 is currently located on top of a gravel mound. It is proposed to relocate this structure c. 101m further east, away from the area which could be susceptible to subsidence.	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?	No	The OH crosses the M7 at two locations and also the Cork-Dublin railway line. Concerns expressed by Irish Rail were addressed by way of further information to the planning authority.	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		No
3. Any other factors that should be considered which could lead to environmental impacts			
3.1 Cumulative Effects: Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulative effects during the construction/ operation phase?	No	The subject line is already in-situ. Whilst there are a number of OHLs converging into Portlaoise 110kv substation, no existing or permitted developments (including these OHLs) have been identified in the immediate vicinity that would give rise to significant cumulative environmental effects with the subject project.	No
3.2 Transboundary Effects: Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No	-	No
3.3 Are there any other relevant considerations?	No	-	No

C. CONCLUSION		
No real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	x	EIAR Not Required
Real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.		
D. MAIN REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS		
<i>EG - EIAR <u>not</u> Required</i>		
<p>Having regard to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the nature and extent of the proposed development, which is below the threshold in respect of Class 1(a) of Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended b) the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. c) the results of other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment submitted by the applicant including an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, Natura Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report d) the mitigation measures put forward in the accompanying Planning and Environmental Considerations Report and Construction Environmental Management Plan e) Consideration of Cumulative Effects. <p>In so doing, the Commission concluded that by reason of the nature, scale and location of the project, the development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and that an Environmental Impact Assessment and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report would not, therefore, be required.</p>		

Inspector _____

Date _____

Approved (DP/ADP) _____

Date _____