

HERBATA DATA CENTRE, NAAS

EIAR

VOLUME I MAIN TEXT – CHAPTER 3 PROJECT SCOPING AND
CONSULTATION



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3 PROJECT SCOPING AND CONSULTATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the EIAR outlines the preparatory work undertaken to inform both the design of the Project and the scope and processes undertaken in completion of the EIAR.

The design of the Project has been informed through a consultation process undertaken with Kildare County Council (KCC) and other relevant statutory and non-statutory agencies. This process has been vital in the progression of the Project and has both influenced and assisted in the design solutions.

Pre-application engagement has also assisted in informing the EIAR approach and the scope of associated surveys and assessments.

3.2 Pre-Application Engagement

Pre-application engagement can positively inform the design, planning and EIA process. It provides the applicant and the environmental and design team with an opportunity to engage directly with the relevant consenting authority and other statutory bodies, to identify critical issues and likely environmental impacts of the proposal at an early stage, ensuring a robust EIA process.

3.3 Summary of Pre-Application Engagement

Whilst responding to the physical characteristics, environmental considerations and desire to realise the capacity of the subject site, the design of the Project has been subject of an iterative process.

The scale, mass and layout of the Project has been informed by a Site Strategy Masterplan developed with design and technical input from architectural, civil, electrical, and mechanical consultants, taking account of the necessary technical and physical requirements to deliver a functional Data Centre facility.

The project planning and environmental consultants worked in parallel with the design team to ensure the Project is compliant with necessary planning policy and minimises environmental impacts.

A comprehensive review of available desktop data along with information derived from project and site-specific technical surveys, has informed every aspect of the design of the Project.

Notably, this process was undertaken in parallel with and supplemented through, engagement with a number of statutory and non-statutory agencies. Such engagement by the Applicant and the project team has been beneficial in the progression of the project and has both influenced and assisted in the design solutions.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Project is subject of both a full planning application to KCC and a SID application to An Bord Pleanála. Pre-Application was undertaken with both of these bodies as summarised below.

3.3.1 Kildare County Council

The Applicant and the project team liaised with a number of departments of KCC including pre-planning consultation meetings on 23rd November 2022, 16th March 2023 and 24th May 2023.

Pre-Planning meetings were attended by KCC representatives and by representatives from the Applicant, the project architects, engineers, environmental consultants, landscape designers and planners. Additionally a number of meetings were held with individual departments within KCC and the various team disciplines.

Key aspects of the Project were discussed with KCC, including the following:

3.3.1.1 Landscaping and Green Walls

The landscaping proposals for the Project, including the consideration of *green walls* was discussed with KCC Parks Department. Use of an integrated green wall system was discussed and noted to be a more sustainable solution to providing vertical vegetation and screening of structural elements within the Project site, alongside a robust, resilient and deliverable perimeter boundary treatment of structural screening woodland, scrub and hedgerows.

3.3.1.2 Building Setback

The Project comprises of a setback of the building line of approximately 51m from the M7 which bounds the eastern boundary of the subject site. The 51m distance relates to the external plant yard of Data Centre 4 however the building itself is approximately 77m from the site boundary.

The proposed layout of the Data Centre buildings and associated setback distance were discussed with KCC Roads Planning Section as part of the pre-application process.

3.3.1.3 Car Parking Provision and R409 Works

Consultation with KCC Roads Planning Section was also undertaken with respect of the extent of car parking and provision of adequate bicycle parking on site. Furthermore, the nature and extent of the proposed works, including those relating to Vulnerable Road Users (VRU) were discussed with KCC.

The relevant design aspects of the Project are reflective of the consultation engagement; related pre-application consultation with KCC is provided in Correspondence with KCC Roads Department Appendix 4.2 G, Volume II.

3.3.1.4 District Heating

Provision for district heating forms part of the Project with two of the gas turbines associated with Data Centre 5, designed to recover the medium to high grade heat from the turbines. This provision is in line with KCC LAP 2021 - 2027 policy (EC O62) for provision of district heating to *'ensure that all significant development proposals for Data Centres are accompanied by an Energy Analysis that explores the potential for the development of low carbon district heating networks.'*

Pre-application engagement with KCC included discussion on how this requirement would be reflected in the design of the Project and the extent of supporting information which would be necessary to support the same. The proposed design elements and the Feasibility Assessment - District Heating included as Appendix 4.10, Volume II is reflective of this engagement.

3.3.1.5 LVIA Viewpoints

As detailed in Chapter 11 Landscape and Visual of the EIAR the landscape and visual assessment is accompanied by a number of viewpoints, providing photomontage images, representative of the Project.

KCC were consulted on the number and location of viewpoints with feedback taken onboard to inform the imagery presented in the photomontages (Appendix 11.3, Volume II) and associated impact assessment.

3.3.1.6 Noise Monitoring Locations and Assessment Methodology

Prior to completion of noise modelling (as detailed in Chapter 9 of the EIAR), direction was sought from KCC Environmental Health with regards to the proposed methodology of assessment including the gathering of baseline noise data.

KCC Environmental Health advised on the acceptability of the assessment methodology and requested additional locations for noise monitoring to be undertaken. These are detailed and form part of the assessment within the Chapter 9 Noise and Vibration.

3.3.1.7 Sustainable Drainage Systems

Engagement was undertaken with KCC Water Services Department to inform the proposed surface water drainage design and the implementation of an acceptable SUDS strategy (incorporating elements of the proposed landscape masterplan for the subject site).

The implementation of the nature-based SUDS proposals across the site, incorporation of wetland areas and wetland planting, use of blue roofs and limitation of run-off to adjacent watercourses were matters consulted upon and ultimately reflected in the design of the Project.

3.3.1.8 Fire Safety

Engagement was undertaken with KCC Fire officer with regards to issue of fire risk, associated within the Project. A Fire Hazard Analysis Report was prepared in respect of the Project and issued to KCC in September 2023. Following a review of the report and further engagement between KCC and the project design team, an updated Fire Hazard Analysis Report was submitted to KCC in May 2024; the report is provided in Volume III, Appendix 3.1.

The Report sets out the outline fire safety strategy employed in the Project design. Individual buildings shall fully comply with the relevant building regulations and will be subject to the fire safety certificate process.

The Fire Hazard Analysis Report sets out the fire hazards and mitigation measures associated with the generation and storage of electrical energy, specifically with regards the generator turbines and battery units located externally to the rear of each Data Centre building. The fire hazard risk review within the Fire Hazard Analysis Report indicates that risks identified are categorised as *low risk* (requiring monitoring) or *little or no significant risk*.

3.3.2 An Bord Pleanála

With regards to the substation element of the Project (comprising a grid substation and 110kV transmission connection) the project team met with An Bord Pleanála on the 15th March 2023 to discuss the Project in the context of Strategic Infrastructure Development under the Planning and Development Act 2000. On the 5th July 2023 a determination was sought from An Bord Pleanála who subsequently issued a determination confirming that the substation element of the Project, falls within the scope of section 182 of the 2000 Act and as such, an application for approval for the Project must be made directly to An Bord Pleanála. A copy of the An Bord Pleanála Section 182A Determination is included in Volume II, Appendix 1.1.

3.3.3 Additional Pre-Application Engagement

In addition to the above, members of the project team liaised with other statutory bodies where necessary to inform elements of design or the scope of environmental surveys as part of the EIAR, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Uisce Éireann, Eirgrid, ESB and Bord Gáis.