hw planning

# Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

Proposed Substation and Grid Connection at Aglish and Currahaly (townlands), County Cork

**Client:** Aglish Solar Farm Limited

February 2026

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# Contents

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# Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of Statement

This Environmental Impact Assessment Screening has been prepared by HW Planning on behalf of Aglish Solar Farm Limited. It accompanies a planning application for the development of a proposed substation and associated grid connection cable to connect into the existing overhead line transmission network which crosses through the proposed development site. A full description of the proposed development is contained in Section 2 of this report.

## 1.2 Application Context

The purpose of the proposed development is to transport the electricity generated at the proposed Aglish Solar Farm to the national electricity grid via the existing 110kV overhead lines. The planning application for the solar farm was submitted to Cork County Council on 14th November 2024. A Request for Further Information was issued by the Council on 17th January 2025, and a clarification of Further Information was issued on the 16th June 2025. The Council refused permitted for the solar farm for 1 no. reason related to archaeology on the 23rd July 2025. The application is now the subject of a First Party appeal to An Coimisiún Pleanála, reference ACP-323402-25 refers.

Early in the project development phase, it was identified that the proposed substation and grid connection may constitute 'strategic infrastructure development' having regard to the provisions of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 and established case precedent on such matters. The Act provides that applications for permission/approval for specified private and public strategic infrastructure developments be made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála. The applicant entered into pre-application consultations with An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 28th August 2025. An Coimisiún confirmed their opinion that the proposed development meets the definition of 'strategic infrastructure development' as defined in the legislation by means of a formal notice dated 28th October 2025[1]. The subject application is made pursuant to this determination.

Notwithstanding the necessary dual consent process, a 'one project' approach has been taken in the preparation of the separate applications made to Cork County Council and the subject application to An Coimisiún Pleanála. The various submitted reports considered the full combined development for the purpose of completing a robust assessment. In terms of definition, the use of the term 'proposed development' refers to the subject application before An Coimisiún Pleanála for the substation / grid connection. The use of the term 'solar farm projects' across this report means the project singular comprising the solar panels and support infrastructure, the substation and grid connection elements, and all associated enabling works.

This statement should be read in conjunction with other application documents including the Planning & Environmental Statement, Appropriate Assessment Screening, Ecological Impact Assessment Report, Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment, Site Access Report, and Construction Method Statement.

## 1.3 Background to EIA

The requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has its origins in Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. This Directive has been amended three times and was codified by Directive 2011/92/EU in 2011. Directive 2011/92/EU was then subsequently amended by Directive 2014/52/EU in 2014.

[1] Reference ABP-323569-25

Projects requiring EIA are defined in Article 4 and set out in Annexes I and II of Directive 2014/52/EU. These provisions are in turn transposed into domestic Irish legislation through Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended ("The Regulations").

In determining the requirement for EIA, Schedule 5 differentiates between different types of projects in the context of 'project types':

- Schedule 5 'Part 1' identifies project types which are anticipated to have significant effects on the environment, and which require mandatory EIA.
- Schedule 5 'Part 2' identifies projects which do not necessarily have significant effects but for which different thresholds or other criteria are applied, and if these are met, then EIA is required. In certain cases, projects which are identified in Part 2, but which fall below those thresholds and other criteria, may also require EIA. This is determined by the outcome of a sub-threshold EIA Screening which is undertaken in accordance with Schedule 7.

Having regard to the above, the first step in the EIA process is to undertake a screening exercise to determine whether or not EIA is required for a particular project. This report considers same relative to European best practice guidance on such matters.

Article 4(4) of the Directive 2014/52/EU introduces a new Annex IIA to be used in the case of screening determinations. Annex IIA of Directive 2014/52/EU requires that the following information be provided by a developer in respect of projects listed in Annex II:

> *"1. A description of the project, including in particular:*
>
> > *a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole project and, where relevant, of demolition works.*
> >
> > *b) a description of the location of the project, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.*
>
> *2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project.*
>
> *3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the project on the environment resulting from:*
>
> > *a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant.*
> >
> > *b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.*
>
> *4. The criteria of Annex III shall be taken into account, where relevant, when compiling the information in accordance with points 1 to 3."*

The above referenced Schedule 7 of The Regulations details the criteria the planning authority must consider in determining whether a sub-threshold EIA should be undertaken. This schedule is a direct transposition of Annex III of EU Directive 2011/92/EU. EU Directive 2014/52/EU provides a revised Annex III and its transposition into national legislation is mandatory. Accordingly, the pro-forma included in Section 4 of this report provides a screening statement of the proposed development against the Annex III criteria of 2014/52/EU.


Figure 01: Site Context

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# Project Details

## 2.1 Description & Characteristics of Proposed Development

The electricity produced from the Aglish Solar Farm will be transported into the proposed substation.

The proposed development comprises of:

1. A 110kV Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) electricity substation with single-storey substation building, single-storey Independent Power Producer (IPP) control room building, High Voltage (HV) electrical equipment and associated infrastructure (to include transformer, lightning protection masts, back-up diesel generator, fire/blast wall, telecoms pole, perimeter security fencing, security lighting, water and drainage infrastructure, and temporary construction compound) to connect to and serve a solar farm;

2. Associated loop-in / loop out infrastructure to connect into an existing 110kV overhead transmission line (including underground 110kV cabling [lengths of ca.790 and 880m from proposed substation to interface towers, including HDD crossing of L2204 road], 2 No. new interface towers and decommissioning of ca.75m of existing 110kV overhead line);

3. Construction and operational access from the public road L2204;

4. All ancillary site development, landscaping and earthworks. The development subject to this application forms part of grid connection and access arrangements which will facilitate the connection of the proposed Aglish Solar Farm (Cork County Council Reference 24/6157 / An Coimisiún Pleanála ACP-323402-25) to the national grid.

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report has been prepared in respect of the proposed development. The AA Screening includes consideration of the proposed Aglish Solar Farm which is located in the townlands of Aglish, Currahaly, Farnanes, Farran, Knockavullig, Knocknagoul, Knockshanawee, Loughleigh, Mahallagh, Nettleville Demesne, Rathonoane, Rooves Beg, Rooves More and Shandangan East in County Cork.

The operational lifetime of the solar farms is assumed to be 40 years. However, following the decommissioning of the solar farm, it is envisaged that the substation (and underground cable grid connection) will remain in situ as a valuable functioning and operational part of the electricity transmission network managed by the Transmission Systems Operator, EirGrid.

### 2.1.1 Substation

The substation will be based on EirGrid design specifications. The substation compound will consist of a two-storey AIS substation building, single-storey IPP Control Room building, HV electrical equipment and associated infrastructure including palisade fences and concrete post and rail fences. The installation of HV electrical equipment will include a transformer with associated equipment along with:

- Cable Sealing End (CSE);
- Surge Arrestor (SA);
- Earth Disconnect (DA, DB, DL, DT);
- Current /Voltage Transformer (CT/VT);
- House Transformer (HoT);
- Circuit Breaker (CB);

- Lightning Masts (LM);
- Back-Up Diesel Generator;
- Harmonic filters if required by EirGrid;
- Capacitor Bank if required by EirGrid;
- Fire/Blast Wall;
- Telecoms Pole;
- 110kV underground cable which will connect into the existing Inniscarra Macroom overhead line via 2 no. new Interface Towers

The substation compound has a total area of 11,996m$^2$.

Earthworks will be undertaken so the compound is level, with a finish compound level of 123.2m.

### 2.1.2 Site Access

The site will be accessed for both the construction and operational phases by means of two entrances from the L2204. These entrances will be subject to some upgrades, including removal of existing roadside sod and stone ditch to provide new gate as presented under Cork County Council Reference 24/6157. The entrances will be suitably splayed and have been subject to sight line and autotrack analysis, with the latter including modelling of abnormal load delivery for the transformer. Operational sightlines will be maintained by trimming back hedgerows with all necessary land within ownership.

A 4.5 metre wide compacted access track will extend from the entrance to the substation compound. The track will include a geotextile base and filter membrane and 200 mm of Clause 804 sub-base.

### 2.1.3 Connection to National Grid

In order to connect to the transmission network, it is proposed to connect the 110kV substation into the national grid via a 'loop-in / loop-out' underground 110kV cable grid connection which will connect into the existing 110kV Inniscarra-Macroom overhead transmission line.

Two new steel lattice interface towers of approximately 16 m in height will form part of the existing overhead line and both towers will connect to the proposed 110kV substation via underground 110kV cables. The interface towers are approximately 75 metres apart, therefore the same length of the existing 110kV Inniscarra-Macroom overhead line will need to be decommissioned. The underground cable is comprised of 3 no. power ducts, 2 no. telecom ducts and 1 no. earth continuity duct. The cables to each interface tower are ca.790 and 880m metres in length. The crossing of the L2204 will be by means of Horizontal Directional Drill (HDD).

This connection method will constitute a new node of the transmission network, connecting the proposed substation and associated solar farm generation to the national electricity grid. The construction method for the interface towers and decommissioning of 110kV overhead lines is set out in the Aglish Substation & Grid Connection Construction Methodology prepared by Aglish Solar Farm Limited.

All works will be carried out in accordance with international best practice and full compliance with health and safety requirements.

### 2.1.4 Temporary Construction Compound

As outlined in the submitted site layout plans, it is proposed to provide a temporary construction compound south of the proposed substation, accessed from the entrance from the L2204. The temporary compound will include the following facilities at a minimum:

- Adequate canteen space to allow for all workers during the peak period;
- Office space with lighting, heating and internet facilities;
- Toilets and adequate welfare facilities for construction staff in accordance with the relevant statutory Health & Welfare guidelines;
- Parking space for both light and heavy vehicles;

Designated skips and temporary storage areas.

### 2.1.5 Surface Water Drainage and Water Services

Surface water drainage proposals for the development have been developed to mimic the natural drainage patterns of the site and thereby be in accordance with the best management practices of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) including those set out in the SuDS Manual (C753) published by CIRIA in 2015. Specifically, this includes the following:

- The compound construction is formed with permeable stone thus mimicking a soakaway scenario. ESB compound stone is single sized for the first 150mm for safety purposes. It then changes to a graded 6F2 material.
- The main areas to be drained include the roofs and the compound road. These equate to approximately 663m$^2$. The compound road will be drained via series of road gullies.
- Assuming even the most basic of infiltration rates down through the permeable compound stone, the existing greenfield situation is easily maintained.

The surface water generated in the hardstanding and bunded areas will discharge to the soakaway via a Class 1 Full Retention Oil Separator. The electrical transformer in the substation is oil filled equipment and, as such, is protected with impermeable bunds. Surface water generated in this bund will be pumped out by an oil sensitive pump ensuring that only non-contaminated water enters the site drainage network.

In relation to wastewater, a 5m$^3$ foul holding tank is proposed as part of the operational development. These tanks are normally used in ESB substations. It will be emptied periodically, with the capacity in excess of modelled holding requirements.

It is proposed to provide the required potable water demand of the station with a bored well on site. The potable water demand within the site will be low as the proposed station is to be unmanned. To avoid issues like stagnation in the water supply line and problems resulting from this, there will be a continual water demand of 24 litres per week from automatically flushing WCs within the station.

### 2.1.6 Site Restoration and Landscaping

This will involve the reinstatement of all other excavated materials and associated landscaping works. It will include the replacement of topsoil in disturbed ground areas such as access tracks and the removal of the construction compound and other temporary work areas.

The submitted Landscape Mitigation Plan identifies that c.31 metres of existing hedgerow and 2 no. trees will be removed to facilitate access to the fields that include the proposed substation and grid connection. These removal works are included in the wider solar farm application which provides for removal of a total of 86 no. linear metres of hedgerow and 3 trees, which will be offset by 872 linear metres of new hedgerow planting, as well as the bolstering of an additional 22,296 linear metres, where necessary, to fill any gaps in existing hedgerows.

### 2.1.7 Other Planned Works

*Cork County Council Reference 24/6157 (ACP-323402-25)*

It is intended that the proposed 110kV substation and grid connection will service the Aglish Solar Farm, which is currently the subject of a planning application to Cork County Council. At the time of writing, the solar farm application is undetermined.

The solar farm with a total area of circa 161 hectares. The solar farm will consist of solar panels on ground mounted frames, 23 no. single storey electrical inverter/transformer stations, 6 no. single storey spare parts containers, 3 no. Ring Main Units, 7 no. weather stations, underground electrical ducting and cabling within the development site, private lands and within the L62031, L6203, R619, L6207, L22012 and L2204 public roads to connect solar farm field parcels, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks, 4 no. stream/drain deck crossings, 6 no. horizontal directional drill crossings (under watercourses/drains/public road), temporary construction compounds, landscaping and all associated ancillary development and drainage works. Construction and operational access will be via 7 no. entrances from the L62031, L6203, L22012, L6398 and L2204 local roads. The operational lifespan of the solar farm will be 40 years and planning permission is requested for this duration.

The solar farm will contribute directly to a carbon dioxide emission reduction of 28,657 tonnes per annum or the equivalent of approximately 1,146,298 tonnes of CO2 over the 40 year lifetime of the project.

## 2.2 Planning History

A review of the Cork County Council and An Coimisiún Pleanála Planning Enquiry Systems indicates the only previous planning history on the subject lands relates to the above referenced application for Aglish Solar Farm, Planning Reference 24/6157 refers.

## 2.3 Description of Location of Site

The application site area is 3.36 hectares and comprises of land in two agricultural fields, which are separated by the L2204 Currahaly Road. The nearest settlement, Coachford, is located approximately 4km north of the site. The site is located in the townlands of Aglish and Currahaly. The northern portion of the site is crossed by existing transmission network lines. The wider road network in this area includes the N22 to the south of the site. The surrounding area consists of some dwelling houses and farm buildings that are characteristic of this rural area.

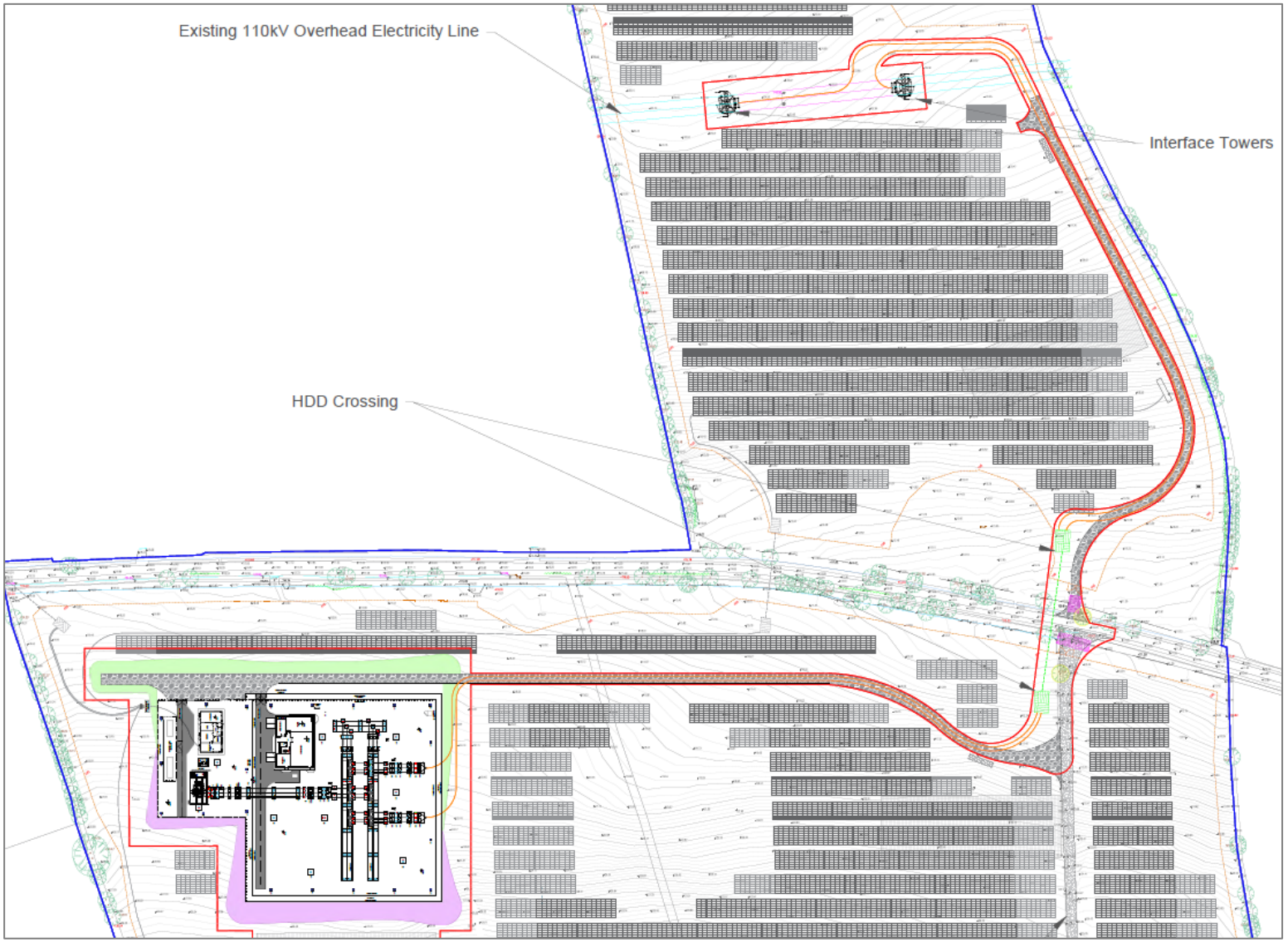


Figure 02: Site Layout Context

### 2.3.1 Landscape

The Cork County Draft Landscape Strategy 2007 has been incorporated into the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028. This separates the county into sixteen specific Landscape Character Types (LCTs). The subject site is contained within the 'Broad Fertile Lowland Valley' LCT which has a 'High' landscape value of 'County' importance. The description of this area regards that it is also under considerable urban pressure, it is further notes that selected areas within this LCT have been identified as being suitable for the development of renewable energy projects.

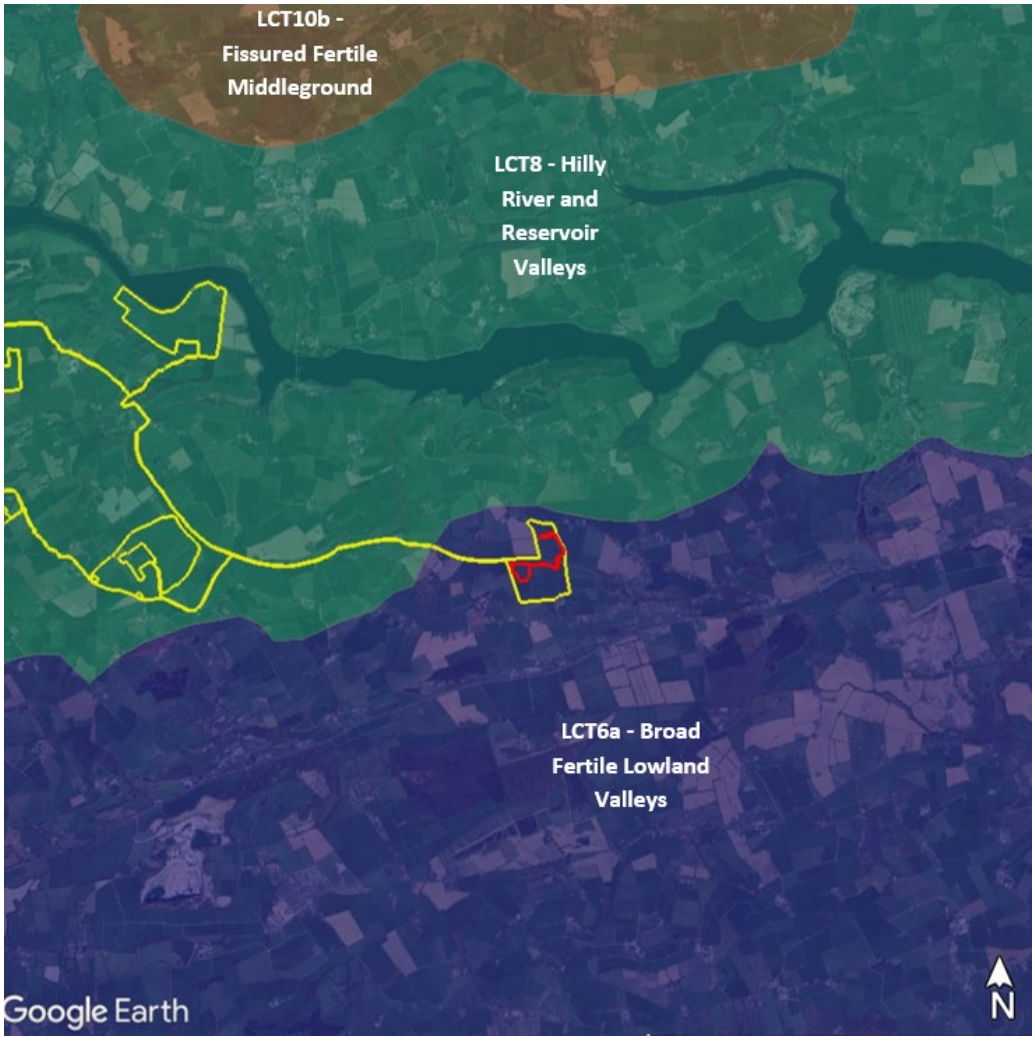


**Figure 03: Excerpt from the Cork County Development Plan (2022-2028) map browser, showing landscape character types in relation to the proposed development. Source: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by MacroWorks.**

### Amenity

As with any new development, there is the potential for impacts on amenity for adjacent residential properties. To address this potential issue a suite of technical reports in relation to landscape and visual, and noise have been prepared. The layout of the proposed substation / grid connection has considered proximity to existing residential properties in full. The proposed substation is set back from residential properties. The nearest third party dwelling to the substation compound area is approximately 350 metres to the south, with the proposed grid connection interface towers approximately 96 metres from the nearest existing residential dwelling to the north. Based on this analysis, the layout and landscaping approach has been developed, and it has been demonstrated that the proposal will protect the amenity of existing residents in the area.

### 2.3.2 Biodiversity & European Sites

Field surveys of the proposed development were carried out to inform the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). The location of the proposed substation / grid connection dominated by improved agricultural grassland habitat (GA1). The site is made up of two no. agricultural fields bounded by

hedgerow (WL1) and separated by L2204 Road. No Annex I habitats or rare, protected or invasive plant species are present within the application site. The habitats present are considered of local importance (lower value).

Any potential effects on ecology as a result of the proposed development are confined to the construction phase, which will be relatively short in duration (approximately 2 years) and will be insignificant due to the minor nature of the earthworks involved combined with the implementation of standard environmental controls as part of the project.

No significant effects on designated sites, habitats, flora or fauna have been identified as a result of the proposed development. Furthermore, the prepared Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report in support of the Appropriate Assessment process, objectively concludes that, with the implementation of mitigation measures, no significant effects arising from the wider proposed solar farm project will impact upon any Natura 2000 sites.

Taking the above into consideration, it is deemed that the proposed development will result in a neutral effect on ecology overall.

The proposed substation / grid connection is a component part of the Aglish Solar Farms. This application includes a focused Biodiversity Management Plan, which has been tailored to reflect local ecological survey work completed, contributing positively to the protection and enhancement of the local ecosystems around the wider solar farm site. These include specific management techniques like planting native wildflowers, creating pollinator habitats, and installing bat and bird boxes to support biodiversity, while also addressing potential impacts on existing habitats and species. The proposals are underpinned by landscape and maintenance management schedules for ongoing monitoring towards the achievement of biodiversity goals commensurate with the provision of a clean form of renewable energy.

### 2.3.3 Traffic Impact

The site will be accessed for both the construction and operational phases by means of two entrances from the L2204. These entrances will be subject to some upgrades, including removal of existing roadside sod and stone ditch to provide new gate as presented under Cork County Council Reference 24/6157. The entrances will be suitably splayed and have been subject to sight line and autotrack analysis, including modelling of abnormal load delivery for the transformer. Operational sightlines will be maintained by trimming back hedgerows with all necessary land within ownership.

A 4.5 metre wide compacted access track will extend from the entrance to the substation compound. The track will include a geotextile base and filter membrane and 200 mm of Clause 804 sub-base.

The substation and solar farm will be unmanned once operational, with trips confined to maintenance staff accessing the site by light goods vans. These movements will be limited to 2-4 trips per month on average. As such, the operational development will give rise to a decrease in both the volume and scale of vehicles accessing the site comparable to existing agri-generated traffic.

The construction phase has the potential to increase traffic congestion and/or public safety hazard, with the significance of impacts likely to be moderate without appropriate mitigation. The submitted Site Access Report confirms that the volume of vehicular movements across the construction phase will vary with an average of c. 10 no. trips per day (equivalent of 1 trip per hour). The subject substation / grid connection element is a subset of the wider solar farm HGV numbers. Section 10 of the Site Access Report includes a number of focused mitigation measures to minimise the impact on existing road users arising from the temporary construction phase. These include a temporary manual-controlled stop/go system, advance warning signage and a booking system for site deliveries to avoid potential access conflicts.

### 2.3.4 Noise

The noise generating plant associated with the substation and solar farm projects are the inverters and 110kV substation transformer, which is the focus of the SID application being made to An Coimisiún Pleanála. As illustrated on the site layout plans, this plant is located in an agricultural field, away from local receptors. This is reflected in the findings of the noise assessment with the modelled noise levels at the facades of neighbouring dwellings well below the recommended EPA/WHO/BS8233 guidelines of 55dB during day time and 45dB at night time.

The noise generated from construction activities and related powered mechanical equipment has the potential to pose adverse noise impacts to existing surrounding sensitive receivers. The construction phase

of development due to its nature is temporary and therefore any potential noise impacts will be short term. Potential noise impact will be controlled by means of day-time working hours and in accordance with all relevant British Standards Codes of practices such as: BS 5228-1: 1997 “Noise Control on Construction and Open Sites -Part 1”; BS 5228:2009 and AI:2014 “Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites”. The submitted Noise Impact Assessment confirms that there will be no adverse impacts in the local environment arising from either the construction or operational phases.

### 2.3.5 Heritage

A detailed Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment of the proposal has been prepared and is enclosed with this application. The proposal has been designed having regard to site inspections and analysis undertaken. A strategy of mitigation by avoidance has been adopted, with no recorded monuments within the defined red-line for the proposed development. There are 51 no. sites of archaeological and/or cultural heritage significance within the study area for the project which mainly consists of Fulacht Fias. There is 1 no. Protected Structure within the study area consisting of Rosemount House. The proposed development will have a direct effect on 3 CH sites, and an indirect effect on 21 CH sites. The indirect effects on 21 CH sites relate largely to the setting of the monuments with respect to the proposed two new steel lattice interface towers that will form part of the existing overhead line.

Archaeological recommendations include a programme of advanced archaeological works prior to construction (a combination of further geophysical survey and testing trenching to be completed under license), archaeological monitoring and strict reporting requirements. The assessed magnitude of effects of after implementation of mitigation measures is no greater than slight in the submitted AIA.

### 2.3.6 Flood Risk

The site is not at risk of fluvial, tidal/coastal, pluvial or groundwater flooding. The development as proposed is not located within or near to areas that are designated Flood Risk A or Flood Risk B in the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028. The development as proposed will not result in an adverse impact to the existing hydrological regime of the area or increase flood risk elsewhere and is therefore considered to be appropriate from a flood risk perspective.

### 2.3.7 Soil

The national Teagasc Subsoils dataset classifies subsoils based on the Geological Survey of Ireland Quaternary sediment types. The site area largely comprises of a mix of sandstone and bedrock at surface. Potential impacts on land, soil and geology in the absence of appropriate construction phase measures include the following:

- Soils have the potential to become polluted by spillages during construction.
- Soils have the potential to be compacted by plant and machinery during construction.

No potential impacts on land, soils, geology, surface water or groundwater during the operational phase of the proposed development are envisaged.

Surface water will continue to be accommodated by the existing original drainage and infiltration pattern on the site via the network of perimeter drains. There is adequate capacity in the existing drainage regime. Any overgrown drains will be cleaned and cleared of excess vegetation and subject to regular inspection and maintenance to aid performance.

### 2.3.8 Cumulative Impacts

This screening assessment has also considered potential cumulative impacts that could arise from the proposed development in combination with other known projects in the area. A desktop review of other local projects in the vicinity was undertaken using the Cork County Council and An Coimisiún Pleanála planning enquiry systems.

Table 1: Summary planning applications in the area

| Ref. Number | Distance from Subject Site | Status | Planning Authority | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ABP-323402 | c. 0m | First Party Appeal Ongoing | An Coimisiún Pleanála | A 10 year permission is sought for a solar farm with a total area of circa 161 hectares and all associated site works. 40 years planning permission is requested. |
| ABP-310214 | c. 1km | Granted Permission – 18/01/2022 | An Coimisiún Pleanála | Development of a small scale quarry for rock extraction. |
| ABP-309891 | c.2.1km | Granted Permission – 23/09/2021 | Cork County Council | Extension of existing quarry excavation area ( 06/13499 and PL04.226347). |
| Reg. Ref. 20/4916 | c. 3.6km | Extension of Duration Granted – 01/07/2020 | Cork County Council | A solar PV panel array consisting of up to 5400sqm of solar panels on ground mounted steel frames, electricity control room, power inverter unit, underground cable ducts, temporary laydown area, boundary security fence, site entrance, CCTV and all associated site works. Extension of Duration of permission granted under Planning Reference 14/06644 and (ABP 04.244539). |
| Reg. Ref. 25/4354 | c. 4.6km | Granted – 10/11/2023 | Cork County Council | Permission to upgrade the existing floodlighting system to playing pitch number one (the old pitch), install a diesel-powered generator to operate the upgraded floodlighting system, upgrading the existing car park lighting and all associated site works. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reg. Ref. 23/4312 | c. 4.6km | Granted – 14/11/2023 | Cork County Council | The demolition of the existing school buildings, the removal of existing pre-fabricated temporary accommodation and the construction of a new split level, part single storey, part two storey and part three storey 1000 pupil secondary school comprising a four classroom special education unit, a single storey multi-purpose hall, general purpose room, general classrooms, specialist classrooms, social areas, library, administration areas, service yards, external stores, covered storage areas for construction studies, toilet and changing facilities and associated ancillary accommodation. The development also includes the provision of new site entrances, car parking area, drop-off areas, new site boundary, new ball courts, playing pitch, landscaped external areas and all associated site works. |

## 2.4 Description of Aspects of the Environment likely to be affected by the project

The most significant possible negative impacts on the environment, without appropriate mitigation measures in place, are likely to be:

- Construction traffic contributing to traffic congestion and road safety hazards on the local road network.
- Adverse health and amenity impacts arising from noise and air quality pollution during construction phase.
- Ecological disturbance and habitat loss of fauna, and potential impact on designated sites.
- Possible residential amenity and visual impacts.

These matters have been considered in full as part of the design and assessment of the subject proposal. The following assessments have been prepared, which include detailed proposals for mitigation and monitoring, where relevant;

- Landscape Design Strategy and Landscaping Proposals.
- Noise Impact Assessment Report.
- Ecological Impact Assessment Report. Appropriate Assessment Screening screens out the potential for impacts on designated Natura 2000 sites.
- Construction Methodology Statement for the Substation and Grid Connection.
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

## 2.5 Expected Residues/Emissions/Production of Waste

It is expected that there will be some normal residues/emissions during the construction stage. Standard dust and noise prevention reduction measures as per the majority of planning applications of all scales will be employed and monitored. As such, pollution and nuisances are not considered likely to have the potential to cause significant impacts on the environment. Construction will be guided by a Construction and Environment Management Plan. There will be some waste produced in the construction of the proposed scheme, but this will be subject to normal controls. This will be disposed of using licensed waste disposal facilities and contractors. The scale of the waste production in conjunction with the use of licensed waste disposal facilities and contractors does not cause concern for likely significant impacts on the environment.

At operational stage, there are no significant mitigations measures or methods proposed other than best practice management of the infrastructure. The only waste to be produced during the operational phase will be wastewater, with a $5m^3$ foul holding tank emptied periodically by a licensed contractor.

## 2.6 Use of Natural Resources – Soil/Land/Water/Biodiversity

There will be no significant likely impacts on the environment in relation to natural resources in the area. The main use of natural resources will be land. The substation and grid connection are permanent uses on land, with the solar array infrastructure for Aglish Solar Farm a temporary use in the landscape. The scale of natural resources used both in construction and operation is not such that it would cause concern in terms of significant likely impacts on the environment.

As outlined in the prepared Appropriate Assessment Screening, there is no likelihood of adverse impacts on the nearest European sites following implementation of proposed mitigation measures.

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# Assessment of EIA Requirement

## 3.1 Schedule 5 Criteria

Article 93 and Schedule 5 of The Regulations set out the classes of development for which a planning application must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

Part 1 and Part 2 Schedule 5 of The Regulations defines the categories and thresholds of developments requiring EIA.

### 3.1.1 Schedule 5 'Part 1' Projects

Solar farms are not a project type in Schedule 5 'Part 1'. The most relevant energy related project types are set out below with corresponding commentary:

> *2(a) A thermal power station or other combustion installation with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more.*

110kV substations or 'loop-in' cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of a thermal power station or combustion installation. Therefore, this project type is not applicable.

> *(20) Construction of overhead electrical power lines with a voltage of 220 kilovolts or more and a length of more than 15 kilometres.*

The proposed development ties into existing 110kV overhead lines via 2 no. new interface towers. The proposed development is not 220kV and therefore this project type is not applicable.

There are no other project types identified in Schedule 5 'Part 1' which relate either directly or indirectly to solar farms, 110kV substations or underground electrical cables. It is clear therefore that the development is not a project type with regard to 'Part 1' and does not therefore require a mandatory EIA.

The subject proposal does not come under any of the stipulated categories contained in Part 1.

### 3.1.2 Schedule 5 'Part 2' Projects

Under Schedule 5 - Part 2 the following project types have been assessed to determine applicability to the proposed development:

> *3(a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water not included in Part 1 of this Schedule with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more.*

110kV substations or 'loop-in' cable grid cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of an industrial installation as per the meaning of 3(a).

> *3(b) Industrial installations for carrying gas, steam and hot water with a potential heat output of 300 megawatts or more, or transmission of electrical energy by overhead cables not included in Part 1 of this Schedule, where the voltage would be 200 kilovolts or more.*

110kV substations or 'loop-in' cable grid cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of an industrial installation as per the meaning of the 3(b).

> *3(i) Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms) with more than 5 turbines or having a total output greater than 5 megawatts.*

110kV substations or 'loop-in' cable grid cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of a wind farm.

> *10(a) Industrial estate development projects, where the area would exceed 15 hectares.*

110kV substations or 'loop-in' cable grid cable grid connections or solar farms do not meet the definition of industrial estates.

*10(b)(iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.*

110kV substations or 'loop-in' cable grid cable grid connections do not meet the definition of an urban development as per the meaning of 10(b)(iv).

*10(b)(dd) All private roads which would exceed 2000 metres in length*

The proposed development will include access tracks comprising of permeable hardcore which does not fall within a road definition as per established planning case law.

The proposed development is not a project type related to any of the above identified 'Part 2' projects and there is therefore no legal requirement to undertake a sub-threshold EIA Screening in respect of these. The legislative basis for this is well established in planning legislation and interpretive case law including (in the specific case of solar farm development) Kavanagh V An Coimisiún Pleanála [2020] IEHC 259, Sweetman V An Coimisiún Pleanála [2020] IEHC 39 and Cummins & Ors v ACP [2025] IEHC 521. It is also a well-established precedent with planning authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála.

### 3.1.3 Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 383 of 2023)

On the 27th July 2023, The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage issued circular EUIPR 01/2023 advising of amendment to Part 2 of Schedule 5, to re-insert the project type, projects for the restructuring of rural land holdings, into the planning code.

*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.*

The proposed solar farm development provides for the removal c.86 linear metres of hedgerow and three mature trees. There are some 872 linear meters of new hedgerow proposed and 22,296 linear meters of bolstered hedgerow. Included within these figures, the substation and grid connection development will require the removal of 31 metres of hedgerow and the removal of two mature trees.

In considering the subject application in combination with the wider solar farm project, it is proposed to remove 86 metres of hedgerow across the entire Aglish Solar Farm and subject substation / grid connection. This is significantly below the identified 4 kilometre threshold.

It is not proposed to re-contour land as part of the solar farm i.e. levelling off hills or infilling of hollows (by removing or shifting earth or rock).

The proposed development does not provide for any removal of field boundaries contributing to restructuring of agricultural land. The project provides for minor sections of localised hedgerow removal in targeted areas to facilitate access track and the entrance as opposed to any substantive removal of field boundaries. The general pattern and integrity of the existing field network system will be retained as part of the solar farm project, which represents a temporary use on these lands.

The above interpretation has been corroborated by means of direct engagement with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine who confirmed their view that small focused sections of hedgerow removal is not tantamount to substantive field boundary removal which would materially change the structure of a large farm holding. This point is reinforced in itself by the presence of the 4 kilometre field boundary threshold, which greatly exceeds the 86 metres of removal proposed as part of the wider solar farm project.

Based on the foregoing, the proposed development does not meet any mandatory threshold for EIA. The recent statutory instrument does mean that due to the removal of hedgerow required for the wider solar farm project, the substation is potentially a project type that falls broadly within the scope for sub-threshold EIA Screening. This is completed in Section 4 of this statement.

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# Schedule 7 Screening

## 4.1 Schedule 7 Criteria

Schedule 7 of The Regulations details the criteria the planning authority must consider in determining whether a sub-threshold EIA should be undertaken. This schedule is a direct transposition of Annex III of EU Directive 2011/92/EU. EU Directive 2014/52/EU provides a revised Annex III and its transposition into national legislation is mandatory. Accordingly, the following provides a screening statement of the proposed development against the Annex III criteria of 2014/52/EU.

## 4.2 Construction Phase

| Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold | Impacts during Construction Phase |
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| **1. Characteristics of proposed development**<br>**The characteristics of the proposed development, in particular:** | |
| The size of the proposed development | The site area of the substation compound and 'loop-in/out' grid connection is approximately 3.36 hectares within agricultural fields. The proposed Aglish Solar Farm has a site area of c.161 ha. The proposed substation and grid connection will be constructed alongside the Aglish Solar Farm with a duration of 24 months.<br><br>The substation / grid connection construction works themselves will be confined to the development site and will be informed by the prepared Construction Method Statement as well as a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the solar farm projects to mitigate potential impacts. These works will be guided by appropriate construction, environmental and health and safety measures to ensure no impact to existing populations.<br><br>A total of c. 86 linear metres of hedgerow will be permanently removed throughout the solar farm and substation sites to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The cumulation with other proposed development | This screening assessment has also considered potential cumulative impacts that could arise from the proposed development and wider solar farm project in combination with other known permitted projects in the area. A desktop review of other local projects in the vicinity was undertaken using Cork County Council's and An Coimisiún Pleanála's planning enquiry systems. There are other permitted projects within 5 km of the subject site and the final contractor developed CEMP will consider these as necessary to manage any interrelated traffic management considerations.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |

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| The Nature of any demolition works | The proposed development does not include any demolition of buildings or other structures. A total of c.86 linear metres of hedgerow will be permanently removed throughout the solar farm and substation /grid connection sites to facilitate the project. This will be offset by 872 new linear metres of hedgerow and 22,296 linear metres of bolstered hedgerow, as required.<br><br>The contractor will submit and have agreed a Construction and Environment Management Plan providing details of all construction methods. Best practice guidance in relation to demolition will be adhered to.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity | Energy, including electricity and fuels, will be required during construction phase. Some soil will be stripped for access tracks. This will be carried out outside of periods of wet weather with appropriate run-off control to be installed and maintained for the duration of the construction phase. Construction will use various raw materials typical of the construction of temporary solar farms which are typically inert in nature.<br><br>There will be no material impact on water resources arising from the construction phase, and the works themselves include bolstering of hedgerows, new planting and other measures in support of positive biodiversity enhancement.<br><br>No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is likely during the construction process.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The production of waste | Waste will be generated during the construction phase and this will be typical of development of this nature. Handling of waste will be in full accordance with statutory legislation and associated guidance. Soil cut for the creation of the substation compound will be reused on site as part of the fill to level the substation. The remaining cut will be used as part of the formation of berms and landscaping.<br><br>In relation to the wider solar farm, waste produced at decommissioning stage will be less than the construction stage with all components of the development re-used or recycled as much as reasonably practicable. Residual disposal will be to a licenced facility.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| Pollution and nuisances | Development of site will increase traffic in the area for the duration of the construction phase. Temporary noise, dust and vibration impacts, as well as any potential for water pollution, will be addressed as part of standard best practice controls. The Site Access Report, CEMP and CMS details in full the traffic management measures that shall be adhered to during the construction phase to ensure that no considerable impact on traffic arises. Such measures will include the sequencing of deliveries through a booking system, the provision of adequate signage to alert other motorists to the ongoing works, as well as the implementation of a manual Stop / Go traffic management system on nearby local roads for the duration of construction phase.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including | No significant risks on the proposed development site are foreseen, subject to strict compliance with standard environmental controls. The |

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| those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge | proposed development is not subject to the Seveso Directives or COMAH Regulations.<br><br>The nature and location of the project means that there is no risk of a major accident or disaster.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution) | Additional noise and dust from temporary construction works may be experienced by residents and other property users in the vicinity. This can be effectively managed, having regard to the nature of the project and measures proposed in the Aglish Substation and Grid Connection Construction Methodology and Construction and Environmental Management Plan for the solar farm. On completion of works, noise and dust levels will return to background levels.<br><br>The design includes focused water control measures to ensure no run-off of sediment or other pollutants. There is no risk to drinking water supplies associated with the local public water supply scheme which is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| **2. Location of proposed development**<br>**The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard to:** | |
| The existing land use | The substation site is currently in agricultural use, as are the wider solar farm lands, and collectively they represent an agricultural diversification project consistent with this land use. The development of the proposed substation and grid connection is necessary to facilitate this.<br><br>During the construction phase there will be short-term disruption to the existing land use for both the substation and the solar array components. The solar farm grassed fields will be reseeded post the construction phase.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area | Based on the ecological surveys, the results of which are presented in the EcIA, the wider project site is currently considered to be of 'local importance' as it contains some semi-natural habitat such as trees, with the site of the substation (c.3.36ha) comprising lower value grassland habitat.<br><br>The collective solar farm projects include focused measures to foster and regenerate biodiversity development across the subject site. This includes the development of biodiversity corridors and creation of riparian enhancement zones. The proposed solar farm development provides for the removal of c.86 linear meters of hedgerow. This will be offset by 1,194 new linear metres of hedgerow and 22,296 linear metres of bolstered hedgerow, as required.<br><br>The site is not located within any statutory designated area. A Natura Impact Statement prepared by Greenleaf Ecology has been prepared in respect of designated Natura 2000 sites. This report has actively considered the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests, arising from the construction phase and proposed mitigation measures.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |

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| The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying attention to the following areas:<br>• wetlands,<br>• coastal zones,<br>• mountain and forest areas,<br>• nature reserves and parks,<br>• areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,<br>• areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded,<br>• densely populated areas,<br>• landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance | The construction phase will not interfere with or result in impacts to any of the following;<br>▪ wetlands,<br>▪ coastal zones,<br>▪ mountain and forest areas,<br>▪ nature reserves and parks,<br>▪ areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,<br>▪ areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded,<br>▪ densely populated areas,<br>▪ landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.<br><br>Appropriate buffers have been incorporated into the design to ensure the protection of water courses.<br><br>An Appropriate Assessment Screening has been prepared to actively consider the potential for significant impacts on qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites in proximity, arising from the construction phase. No significant impacts have been identified arising from the construction of the proposed development in relation to Natura 2000 sites.<br><br>The Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment concludes there will be no adverse impact on any heritage assets during construction and operation of the development.<br><br>The prepared Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) confirms that the proposed development is not considered to give rise to any significant residual visual impacts.<br><br>Best practice standards, environmental guidelines measures will be adhered to during the construction phase in order to avoid potential impacts on natural resources and likely significant impacts are not anticipated.<br><br>The site is not located in proximity to densely populated areas. Any interaction with the existing population can be effectively managed, having regard to the nature of the project and measures proposed in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan. On completion of works, noise and dust levels will return to background levels.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| **3. Types and Characteristics of potential impacts The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in:** | |
| The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) | There is the potential for a localised impact on traffic volumes and flows along the construction delivery route and in the immediate vicinity of the site. A Site Access Study accompanies this application, and a pre-commencement Construction Traffic Management Plan will be put in place to mitigate negative impacts on local traffic flow. Unmitigated, there is the potential for localised disruption due to noise and dust issues etc, but this will be managed in full accordance with best practice environmental standards. The subject site is in a local rural area where the population is not large but protection of the amenity of local residents has been considered in full as a foremost project matter. |

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| | The spatial extent of the substation, grid connection and wider solar farm has been assessed from a landscape and visual perspective and will not have any adverse impact on the local environment.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The nature of the impact | Potential for the environment to be impacted negatively during the construction phase by way of traffic disruption, noise and dust issues etc. Any impacts will be localised and temporary in nature and are not deemed to be significant. These will be proactively managed via standard environmental protection measures.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The transboundary nature of the impact | The proposed substation / grid connection and wider solar farm project is contained wholly in the county of Cork. It does not have potential for transboundary impacts given its location and the nature of the proposed development.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The intensity and complexity of the impact | The intensity and complexity of the construction phase is in keeping with modern construction projects. Construction of substation and solar farms is not a complex activity in the context of other energy or renewable projects.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The probability of the impact | Some level of construction impacts is highly probable, but these will be mitigated by standard best practice techniques identified in the Aglish Substation and Grid Connection Construction Methodology, and Construction and Environmental Management Plans for the wider solar farm project.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact. | The construction phase of the development is expected to commence within approximately 3 years of any grant of permission and extend for a duration of 24 months. As set out in the submitted Planning and Environmental Statement, this period could change owing to matters outside the control of the applicant. Any impacts will be short-term and restricted by planning conditions in terms of the hours of operation. No permanent negative impacts are anticipated as a result of the construction phase of the project.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment. | The potential for construction impacts with other projects have been considered in full. There are other permitted solar farms in proximity to the site. This will be considered, if necessary, as part of the pre-commencement Construction and Environmental Management Plan and the potential for such unforeseen impacts will be mitigated accordingly as part of focused response measures.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The possibility of effectively reducing the impact | There is a strong possibility of reducing potential impacts arising from the construction phase through appropriate project management and the application of identified best practice construction and environmental protection methods. The detailed Aglish Substation and Grid Connection Construction Methodology, Construction and Environmental Management |

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| | Plan for the wider solar farms and associated documents will function as a proactive toolkit to significantly reduce the potential for adverse impacts.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |

## 4.3 Operational Phase

| Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold | Impacts during Operational Phase |
|---|---|
| **1. Characteristics of proposed development**<br>**The characteristics of the proposed development, in particular:** | |
| The size of the proposed development | The site area of the substation compound and 'loop-in/out' grid connection is approximately 3.36 hectares within existing agricultural fields. The proposed Aglish Solar Farm has a site area of c.161ha. The substation options have been designed to EirGrid size and specification requirements, and as such, are consistent with other substations in terms of scale.<br><br>A total of c.86 linear metres of hedgerow and 3 no. trees will be permanently removed throughout the solar farm sites to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling. This will be offset by 872 linear metres of new hedgerow and 22,296 linear metres of bolstered hedgerow, as required.<br><br>Collectively, the size and design of the project will deliver significant positive benefits relative to the 'do-nothing' scenario providing for renewable energy development in an area where solar farms have previously been considered to be acceptable.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity | The land use in the area of the proposed substation will change from agriculture to utility use. This is considered to be a positive evolution of this small land parcel in support of the creation of clean renewable energy.<br><br>The fields under the solar panels will be reseeded for the operational phase with no impact on land or soil resource.<br><br>Once operational the proposed development and wider solar farms will be unmanned, with the exception of occasional operational visits. The substation will be supported by potable water from a bored well on site. Sanitary facilities will be infrequently used and will discharge to holding tanks. No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is likely during the operational phase.<br><br>The proposed development includes focused measures to foster biodiversity development across the subject site including the creation of species diverse wild flower berms appropriately |

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| | managed to attract pollinators, invertebrates and bird species; bolstering of existing and planting of new hedgerows as biodiversity corridors providing food sources, nesting sites and allowing connectivity throughout the site for different species; and the seeding of margins across the site with wildflower mix in accordance with the Bride (EU Life Project), increasing biodiversity across the perimeter of the project as opposed to improved and managed grassland margins. Only native tree and shrub species suited to the locality will be used in the final landscaping plan.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The production of waste | During the operational phase wastewater related to the substation will be the only waste produced on site. Welfare facilities will be infrequently used, discharging to holding tanks for offsite removal by a licenced contractor.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| Pollution and nuisances | During the operational phase the solar farms will generally be unmanned, with the exception of occasional operational visits. Traffic generated on local roads arising from these visits will be minimal and less than current HGV/agri-plant trips generated by agricultural activities on the subject lands.<br><br>Once operational the substation will emit noise associated with a typical substation of this nature, with the transformer being the main source of noise generation. It has been demonstrated that noise from project inclusive of the substation will be well within allowable limits. The functioning surface water network and sanitary system will be subject to routine monitoring and maintenance.<br><br>The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) produced by Macro Works that accompanies this application concludes that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant residual visual impacts.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge | In view of the nature of the operation type no negative impacts are foreseen, subject to strict compliance with standard environmental controls. The proposed development is not subject to the Seveso Directives or COMAH Regulations. The nature and location of the project means that there is no risk of a major accident or disaster.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution) | High voltage equipment will be contained within the substation compound and the design and operation of same is well understood in accordance with ESB Network as well as other international standards. Security fencing will be erected to prohibit unauthorised access and warning notices will be erected to ensure no safety issues should arise.<br><br>The location of the substation and noise generating plant in a setback position from local residences means that any audible noise during the operational phase will be well within allowable limits. |

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| | The solar panels themselves are passive installations with no risk to human health. There are no health issues associated with the proposed development of a substation, grid connection and solar farm. The project will be enclosed with security fencing.<br><br>The design includes focused water control measures to ensure that run-off of sediment or other pollutants will not enter watercourses therefore the proposed project will not have any impact on water quality. In addition, it should be noted that there is no risk to drinking water supplies associated with the local public water supply scheme which is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency.<br><br>It is considered that this proposal has the potential to have a long-term beneficial impact on human health as a consequence of facilitating renewable energy development and reducing reliance on fossil fuels which are damaging to the environment and human health.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| **2. Location of proposed development**<br>**The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard to:** | |
| The existing land use | The proposed substation component will result in the permanent loss of a relatively small area of agricultural land, however this will be positively offset by the generation of renewable energy and enhanced biodiversity delivered by means of proposed landscaping measures.<br><br>The wider solar farms represents an agricultural diversification project on agricultural land which is compatible with the existing land use. A temporary use in the landscape, the solar farms will be consolidated within the existing established field network structure on the subject farmlands. A total of c. 86 linear metres of hedgerow and three trees will be permanently removed throughout the solar farm and substation / grid sites to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling. This will be offset by 872 new linear metres of hedgerow and 22,296 linear metres of bolstered hedgerow, as required.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area | Based on the walkover by the project ecologist, the wider project sites are currently considered to be of lower value local importance. The area of the proposed substation comprises entirely of agricultural fields. The collective projects includes focused measures to foster and regenerate biodiversity development across the subject site, which are outlined in the prepared Landscape Mitigation and Biodiversity Management Plans for the subject proposal. This includes the development of biodiversity corridors and formation of berms which will be seeded and maintained as species diverse meadows.<br><br>A total of c. 86 linear metres of hedgerow and three trees will be permanently removed throughout the solar farm and substation / grid sites to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling. This will be offset by 872 new linear |

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| | metres of hedgerow and 22,296 linear metres of bolstered hedgerow, as required.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying attention to the following areas:<br>• wetlands,<br>• coastal zones,<br>• mountain and forest areas,<br>• nature reserves and parks,<br>• areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,<br>• areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded,<br>• densely populated areas,<br>• landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance | The operation of the substation, grid connection and solar farm will not interfere with or result in impacts to any of the following;<br>▪ wetlands,<br>▪ coastal zones,<br>▪ mountain and forest areas,<br>▪ nature reserves and parks,<br>▪ areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,<br>▪ areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded,<br>▪ densely populated areas,<br>▪ landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance<br><br>The site is not located within any statutory designated area. An Appropriate Assessment Screening has been prepared to consider the potential for significant impacts on qualifying interests, arising from the construction phase. The findings of the report have determined that no significant impacts will occur during the operational phase of the project in relation to Natura 2000 sites.<br><br>The design of the substation has incorporated buffer zones around drains and watercourses in order to protect local water quality and that of downstream designated sites.<br><br>The Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment concludes there will be no adverse impact on any heritage assets. The prepared Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) confirms that the proposed development is not considered to give rise to any significant residual visual impacts.<br><br>Best practice standards, environmental guidelines measures will be adhered to during the operations / maintenance phase, including adherence with any applied planning conditions during the construction phase in order to avoid potential impacts on natural resources and likely significant impacts are not anticipated.<br><br>Any interaction with the existing population has been considered proactively as part of project design, with the substation compound c.370 metres to the nearest existing residential property to the south. The proposed grid connection interface towers have been located c.95 metres from the nearest existing residential dwelling to the north.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| **3. Characteristics of potential impacts**<br>**The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in:** | |

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| The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) | The site area of the substation compound and 'loop-n/out' grid connection is approximately 3.36 hectares within an agricultural field. The proposed Aglish Solar Farm has a site area of c.161ha.<br><br>The project will be consolidated within the existing agricultural field network, utilising and bolstering the existing pattern of hedgerow boundaries. The spatial extent of any operational impact will be local and potentially visual in nature.<br><br>A landscape and visual assessment has been prepared for the proposal. This has directly influenced the design. The findings confirm that on balance the development will not give rise to any adverse effects from the selected viewpoint locations.<br><br>A separate noise report has been commissioned for the solar farm project, the findings of which confirm that there will be no significant operational impacts on the population in the local area.<br><br>A total of c.86 linear metres of hedgerow and three trees will be permanently removed throughout the solar farm and substation / grid sites to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling. This will be offset by 872 new linear metres of hedgerow and 22,296 linear metres of bolstered hedgerow, as required.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The nature of the impact | Expected benefits to physical, micro and macro environments fostering the envisaged growth of renewable energy production and security of supply in Cork and the wider region. The effects will be positive in nature.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The transboundary nature of the impact | The proposed substation, grid connection development and wider solar farms project is contained wholly in the county of Cork. It does not have potential for transboundary impacts given its location and the nature of the proposed development.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The intensity and complexity of the impact | A temporary use in the landscape, the proposed solar farms development, by its nature will be of low intensity and the complexity and impact of the development will be moderate and will be actively managed. The substation is not a complex project to construct and such infrastructure are commonplace in rural areas in support of transmission network.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The probability of the impact | The operational phase will change the local environment to some degree. Focused measures are in place to avoid, reduce, or mitigate any likely negative impacts.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact. | Once constructed, the proposed substation/grid connection will be permanent and non-reversible. The different solar panels components represents a temporary use in the landscape which is fully reversible. |

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| | No significant impact is likely. |
| Cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects. | The potential for operational impacts with other permitted local projects has been considered in full. It has been demonstrated that no cumulative impacts will arise as part of the operational development.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |
| The possibility of effectively reducing the impact | The proposed substation / grid connection is being shaped by a number of proactive design measures to reduce the potential for any negative impacts. There is a strong possibility of reducing such potential impacts as it relates to the operational development.<br><br>It has been objectively concluded that the proposed substation and wider solar farm project will provide for long-term beneficial impacts of varying degrees, which includes renewable energy development and biodiversity gain. The collective project will support the decarbonisation of fossil fuel electricity generation in Ireland. This is a positive environmental and health impact in terms of the removal of mass emissions of carbine dioxide, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxides and dust from the atmosphere.<br><br>No significant impact is likely. |

### 4.4 Decommissioning Phase

As referenced in a number of sections above, this screening statement has also actively considered the decommissioning phase of the wider solar farm which the subject substation / grid connection will support. The solar farm is considered to be temporary in nature, with an operational lifetime of 40 years. In the event that the solar farms are decommissioned at the end of this period, it is envisaged that the substation may remain in situ as valuable functioning infrastructure on the national electricity transmission network subject to appropriate land agreements. As such, and in the event of a grant of planning permission, it is requested that the operational life of the substation not be time limited by means of an imposed planning condition.

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# Conclusion

## 5.1 Summary

Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5 of The Regulations defines the categories and thresholds of development that require EIA. The proposed substation and grid connection, as well as Aglish Solar Farm are not of a type identified in Part 1 of Schedule 5, nor does it meet any prescribed thresholds for mandatory EIA under Part 2. The recent statutory instrument S.I. 383 of 2023 does mean that the solar farm projects are now a project type that potentially falls within scope for sub-threshold EIA Screening due to the removal of hedgerow.

Based on the information provided in accordance with Annex IIA and Annex III of the 2014 Directive, it is considered that a sub-threshold EIA is not required for the proposed development, as adequate measures are in place to avoid, reduce or mitigate likely impacts, such that neither the construction nor operational, nor decommissioning phases of the overall developments will have a significant negative impact on the environment. The application is accompanied by focused technical reports across various disciplines which confirm no significant environmental impacts, findings which are reflected in this EIA Screening.


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Accreditations
ISO 9001:2015
ISO 14001:2015
ISO 45001:2018