

The Boreen,
Castlelambert,
Athenry,
Co. Galway.
H65X738

24 April 2026
An Coimisiún Pleanála
87 Mount Street Upper
Dublin 2
D02 NP30

Re: Formal Objection to Planning Application Ref. 324113
Cashla Peaker Plant — Open Cycle Gas Turbine, Cashla, Athenry, Co. Galway

A Chára,

I write to formally object to the above-referenced planning application submitted by Bord Gáis Energy to An Coimisiún Pleanála for the construction of an Open Cycle Gas Turbine (OCGT) peaker power plant at Cashla, approximately 3 kilometres from Athenry, County Galway.

This objection is made on a number of grounds, including **environmental destruction, biodiversity loss, procedural concerns, and broader planning policy**. Each ground is set out below.

My home house is just 950 meters from the proposed site. My parents are farmers and we rent land quite near the site. Please see picture 1, the X is the land we rent and the O is the proposed peaker site.

On a number of occasions, as a child, I walked through the field. It is known locally as “the mountain.”

It was a lush, well-established woodland of clear ecological value. The area supported a rich diversity of native flora, providing canopy, understorey and ground-level habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including birds, pollinators, and small mammals. The woodland's layered structure, seasonal variation, and evident biodiversity made it a living natural asset of real significance to the local landscape.

I remember on one occasion some of our cattle broke out of our field and got into “the mountain.” It was such dense, thick vegetation that it took us a full day to get them back out. This was not just a few bushes, this was a rich dense woodland.

Its wholesale destruction — carried out before any planning permission was submitted — represents an irreversible loss that cannot be mitigated by landscaping proposals or compensatory planting schemes attached to a future permission. An Coimisiún Pleanála should treat this loss with the utmost seriousness in its assessment of this application.

The gas line, pylons and the two motorways came through this area and never destroyed the woodland. It was only in pre-empting of this Peaker Plant Planning application that the habitat was cleared.

I am very fortunate to be able to show you video footage of the site before and after it was destroyed. Please see the link to the video below. This was happened to be recorded by chance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10C1YdaQhN4>

This is on my personal YouTube account, please use the video as you see fit and share if you require. Stills from video also in picture 4 + 5 below

<https://www.youtube.com/@aidanjohnkelly3297>

Hopefully the pylon and motorways will be able to orientate you. Please also see pictures 2 and 3 from Google Earth Pro with the years in the top corner.

Ground 1: Pre-Application Destruction of an Established Woodland

My understanding, and that of many local residents and observers, that the site at Cashla was, until recently, a well-established and mature woodland. Prior to the submission of this planning application, the developer cleared this woodland — felling trees and destroying habitats — without the benefit of planning permission for the proposed development and, potentially, without the necessary felling licenses or environmental impact screening required under Irish and EU law.

This course of action raises extremely serious concerns:

- The felling of mature woodland prior to obtaining planning consent represents a form of *fait accompli* that should not be rewarded by the planning authority. Granting permission after the environmental damage has been done would set a deeply troubling precedent.
- The destruction of the woodland has already caused irreversible harm to biodiversity, local wildlife habitats, and the visual and ecological character of the area. No retrospective grant of planning permission can undo this damage.
- Under the Planning and Development Act 2024 and associated regulations, An Coimisiún Pleanála is obliged to consider the environmental baseline condition of a site as it was prior to any unauthorised works. The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) submitted with this application should accurately reflect the pre-clearance ecological character of the site, including the woodland that previously existed there. I request that An Coimisiún Pleanála scrutinise the EIAR closely in this regard and, if necessary, commission an independent ecological assessment.

Ground 2: Biodiversity and Ecological Impact

Woodlands, even those not designated as ancient woodland, represent irreplaceable ecological assets. They provide habitat for birds, bats, invertebrates, and numerous protected species. The loss of this woodland:

- Constitutes a significant and irreversible loss of biodiversity in the area.
- May have destroyed habitats for protected species including bats and nesting birds, in potential contravention of the Wildlife Acts 1976–2012 and the EU Habitats Directive.
- Runs contrary to the objectives of the National Biodiversity Action Plan and the Government's stated commitments on nature restoration.

I request that An Coimisiún Pleanála require independent ecological surveys to be carried out, and that the loss of the pre-existing woodland be treated as a material consideration weighing heavily against the grant of permission.

Ground 3: Visual Amenity and Landscape Character

The woodland that previously occupied this site made a significant contribution to the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape and the character of the local area. Its removal has left the site degraded and exposed. The construction of a large-scale industrial installation — including a 30-metre chimney stack — in place of what was a natural, wooded landscape would cause lasting and unacceptable harm to the visual character of the area and the amenity of local residents.

Ground 4: Previous Refusal and Unresolved Concerns

I note that a similar development proposal at this same site was previously refused planning permission, with concerns over air pollution and public health among the grounds for refusal. Those concerns do not appear to have been adequately addressed in the current application. An Coimisiún Pleanála should have full regard to the history of this site and the reasons for previous refusal.

Ground 5: Appropriateness of Location

This is a greenfield site in close proximity to a residential community. The developer has not demonstrated why this location was selected over existing industrial or energy-related sites that are already serviced for such infrastructure. The imposition of a major industrial energy facility on what was a natural woodland site, in a populated area, is contrary to proper planning and sustainable development.

Conclusion and Request

For the reasons set out above, I strongly urge An Coimisiún Pleanála to:

- Refuse planning permission for the proposed Cashla Peaker Plant.
- Investigate the circumstances of the pre-application woodland clearance and refer the matter to the appropriate authorities if unlawful felling is found to have occurred.
- Commission an independent ecological and landscape assessment that accurately reflects the pre-clearance condition of the site.
- Treat the destruction of the woodland as a significant material consideration in the determination of this application.

If I can be of any further assistance or if you would like to speak to me, please just let me know.

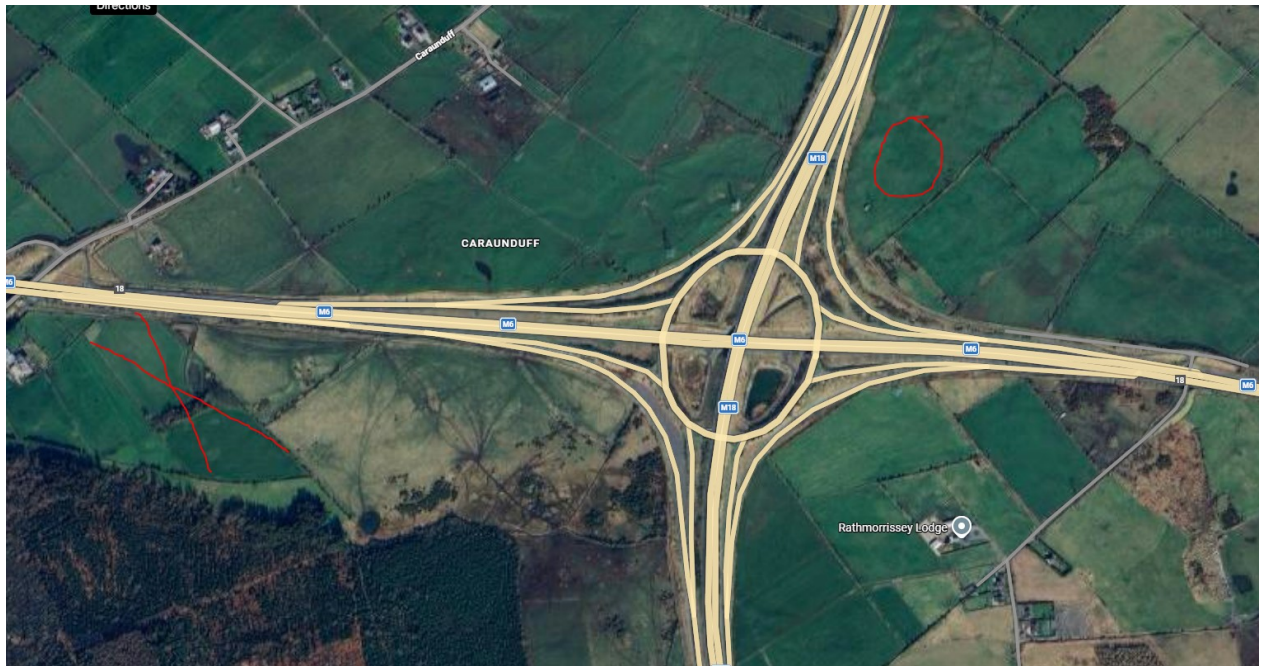
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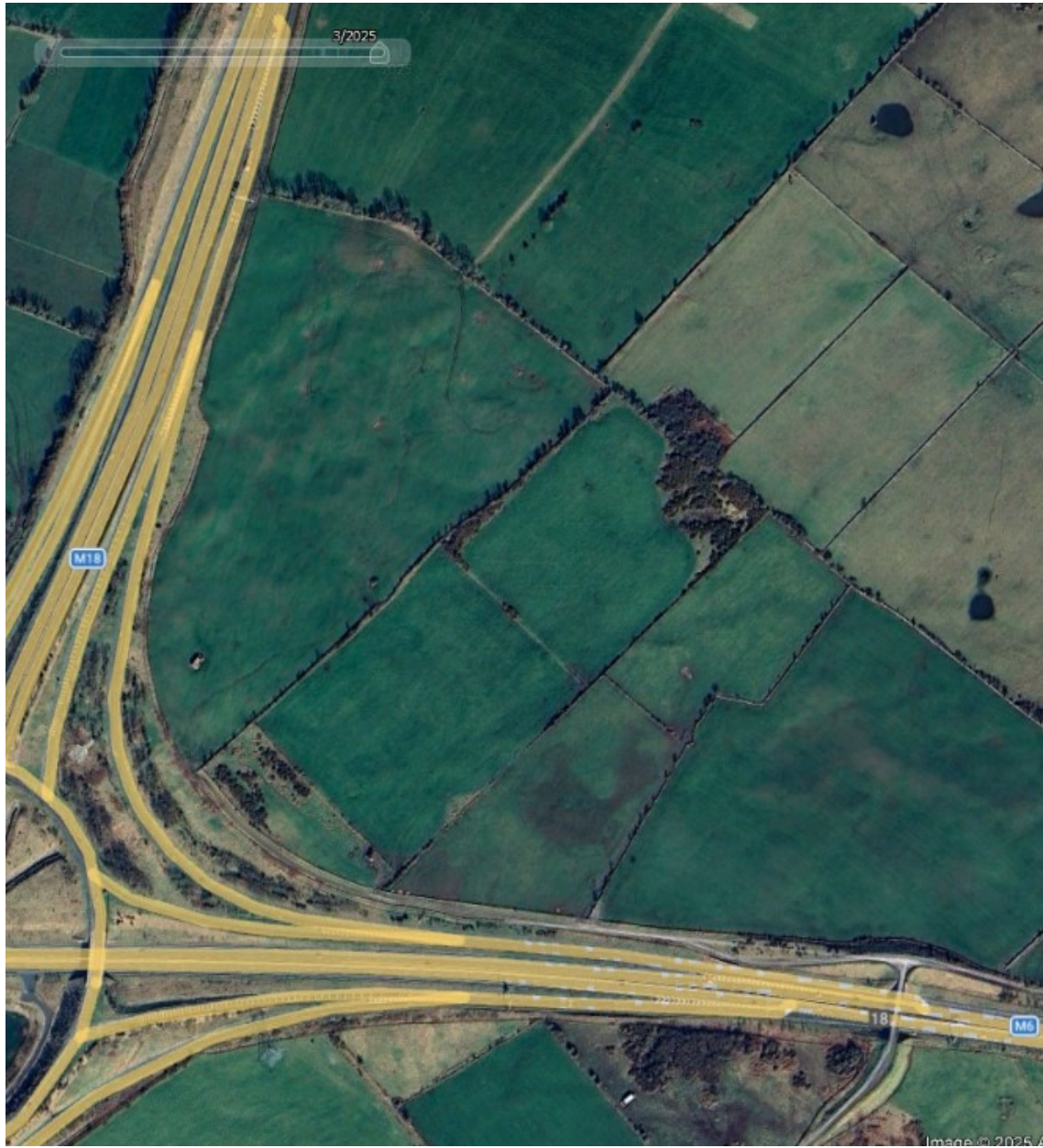
Appendix



Picture 1. Our rented land relative to the proposed site



Picture 2, the woodland before it was destroyed



Picture 3. The woodland after it was cleared for planning



Picture 4, before destruction



Picture 5, After clearing for planning permission