OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Jamie Preston Collins

Pollnagroagh

Athenry

Galway

H65 PN56

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 17 April 2026

Re: Observation to the proposed development of open-cycle gas turbine (OCGT) and generator with ancillary equipment.

Location: Pollnagroagh and Rathmorrissy (Townlands), Athenry, Co. Galway

Applicant: Bord Gáis Energy Limited

Dear Sir/Madam,

My residence is 950m from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

My name is Jamie Preston Collins. I live at Pollnagroagh with my father Damien Collins, a certified organic farmer whose land adjoins the proposed Cashla Peaker Plant site. I am writing this objection in my own name and in my own words.

I farm the land with my father and I will be 5th generation of our family to work it. I use the L3103 road every single day. And the entrance to my family home sits directly adjacent to the proposed new access road for this development. Not nearby. Not down the road. Adjacent.

I want to build my future here. I intend to apply for planning permission to build a home on the Collins family landholding — as is my right under the Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028 as a member of a rural family on their own land. This development, if permitted, places an industrial access road for a 334 MW gas-fired power plant at my front gate for the next 25 years. That is my future. I am asking An Coimisiún Pleanála to take it seriously.

The L3103 is a narrow rural road with low stone walls, narrow grass verges, and no footpath or cycle infrastructure. There is nowhere to go if something goes wrong — no pavement to step onto, no margin to pull into.

The road already carries significant traffic because Coffey Civil Engineering — a large civil engineering company with offices and light industrial buildings — is located directly north of the proposed site, accessed off the L3103 adjacent to the project boundary. Their workers, vehicles, and deliveries are already on this road every day before this development adds a single vehicle. The road also has heavy traffic as its a main feeder road into Athenry town, HGV's from Cashla Quarries, surrounding areas with families on their journey to the multiple schools in Athenry.

High-Intensity Emissions and Diesel Impacts

I am concerned about the potential impact of air pollution from this proposed development. Pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) are known to damage air quality, irritate the lungs, and contribute to long-term harm to both human health and the environment. Although the plant would not operate continuously, it may run at extremely high output when required, leading to short but intense bursts of pollution, particularly during start-up and peak demand periods. The possible use of diesel during these times is especially worrying, as it produces higher levels of harmful emissions, including nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and particulate matter.

These pollutants can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular illness, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with existing health conditions. Fine particulate matter can also travel long distances and accumulate over time, meaning the impacts may extend beyond the immediate area and persist in the long term. In summary, I have reservations regarding the thoroughness of the assessment of these emissions. This issue presents significant implications for public health and environmental protection, especially in relation to EU air quality standards established by Directive 2008/50/EC.

Long-Term Accumulation of Pollutants and Chemical Residues

I am particularly concerned about the risk of pollution to soil and groundwater from this proposed development. The inclusion of diesel storage tanks, hardstanding areas, drainage systems, and other infrastructure increases the likelihood that pollutants could gradually enter the ground over time, potentially up to 2050. Substances such as hydrocarbons from diesel and gas, along with other chemical residues, may build up slowly, particularly where there are repeated small leaks, routine operational losses, or occasional spills, with impacts accumulating over time.

What is especially worrying is that this type of pollution may not be immediately visible but could result in long-term damage to groundwater quality and soil health. This has implications not only for environmental protection but also for local agriculture, which depends on clean soil and water. Overall, there is significant concern that these long-term and cumulative risks have not been fully addressed and could have lasting consequences for the local environment and livelihoods.

Organic Farming

As a local organic farmer, I am very concerned about the potential impact this proposed peaker plant could have on my farm and others in the area. Organic farming is governed by strict European standards and

requires high environmental quality, including keeping soil, crops, and water free from contamination. Airborne pollutants from the plant, particularly those linked to diesel such as nitrogen oxides and fine particulate matter, could settle onto land and crops, posing a risk to organic certification even at low levels.

There are also concerns about contamination through water and soil pathways, including runoff or accidental spills from fuel storage. Organic farming relies on healthy soil, clean water, and a balanced ecosystem, and any disruption to these could undermine the integrity of production. The consequences of losing organic certification would be severe, including loss of premium markets, significant financial impacts, and a re-conversion period of up to two years. Overall, there is serious concern that this development poses a disproportionate and inadequately assessed risk to organic farming and sustainable livelihoods in the area.

Protection of Agricultural Livelihoods

Farmers work diligently within stringent environmental guidelines and uphold rigorous standards of environmental stewardship, fully recognising the importance of these obligations. There is concern that an industrial development of this nature—particularly one involving diesel use and long-term emissions, potentially until 2050—could introduce risks that undermine that work by affecting land quality and increasing environmental pressures. This situation presents significant challenges for farmers, who should not face penalties for problems caused by factors beyond their control. There are concerns that agricultural risks remain overlooked and the development may affect local farming long-term.

Increased Heavy Traffic and Diesel Transport Risks

As someone who lives locally and uses this road, I am concerned about road safety in relation to the proposed entrance on the L3103. This stretch of road is already extremely narrow, with no hard shoulder, making it difficult for two heavy goods vehicles to pass safely and leaving no margin for error. Visibility is also poor due to blind dips and sharp bends, meaning drivers often cannot see oncoming traffic in time. The proposed development would increase traffic levels, including heavy goods vehicles, construction traffic, and fuel deliveries such as diesel tankers, all of which require space and clear sightlines that this road does not provide.

Given that these rural roads are used by residents, farm machinery, and school-related traffic, the addition of significant industrial traffic would increase the risk of accidents and create a more hazardous environment. Overall, there is strong concern that the existing road infrastructure is not suitable for this level of traffic and that the associated safety risks have not been adequately addressed.

Major Accident Hazard and Regulatory Concerns

I am concerned about the potential for major accidents associated with this proposed development. A gas-fired peaker plant, combined with on-site fuel storage, introduces real risks, including fire, explosion, and the release of fuel. According to the requirements of the Seveso III Directive, any development involving hazardous substances must present clear evidence that relevant risks have been appropriately identified, assessed, and minimized. In this instance, it appears that full compliance may not have been achieved. Locally, there is concern regarding whether the probability and impact of serious incidents have been comprehensively evaluated or clearly demonstrated, which raises ongoing questions about the adequacy of risk management and the safety of nearby residents.

Impact on Residential Amenity and Long-Term Visual Change

There are concerns that the proposed development will be clearly visible from surrounding homes, roads, and farmland, resulting in a permanent change to the visual environment. This has the potential to impact

residential amenity, reduce enjoyment of the area, and alter the overall character of the landscape, with a large and visually prominent industrial facility introduced into what is currently a rural setting. Given the long operational lifespan of the development, potentially extending to at least 2050, these impacts would be long-lasting and not easily mitigated. The addition of industrial structures, lighting, and ongoing activity represents a significant and enduring change that requires careful consideration.

Lock-in of Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

There are serious concerns that the proposed development represents new fossil fuel infrastructure with a long operational lifespan, potentially extending to at least 2050, which risks locking in carbon-intensive energy generation at a time when national and EU policy require rapid decarbonisation. Investment in gas-fired infrastructure of this nature may delay or displace the development of renewable energy and energy storage solutions, leading to continued reliance on fossil fuels over the long term. Overall, there is concern that the proposal is not aligned with current climate objectives and may undermine the transition to a low-carbon energy system.

Lack of Clear, Accessible, and Effective Communication

There are concerns that community engagement in relation to this project has been insufficient and ineffective. Many residents did not receive any direct communication or notification about the proposed development, and while some individuals report receiving a flyer or attending an information event, the material provided was highly technical and difficult to understand without specialist knowledge. This limits meaningful public participation, as effective consultation requires information to be accessible, clearly explained, and actively communicated to all affected members of the community. In this case, the complexity and level of technical detail in the documentation creates a barrier to understanding, meaning that many people cannot fully assess the potential impacts of the development.

Complexity of EIAR and Barriers to Public Understanding

There are concerns that, while the development is presented within a single Environmental Impact Assessment Report, the scale, volume, and complexity of the documentation make it extremely difficult for the public to understand the project as a whole. The high level of technical detail, combined with the way the information is structured, creates a significant barrier to meaningful engagement. Although the material is not formally divided into separate reports, the practical effect is similar to fragmentation, as it is not easy to assess the cumulative impacts across all aspects of the development. This raises concerns regarding transparency and accessibility within the planning process.

Lack of Worst-Case Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment bases its findings on expected operating scenarios instead of evaluating the worst-case possibilities. Because the plant's operation will depend on electricity demand, it's unclear how often or how intensely it might run. This uncertainty also applies to diesel usage, which could produce higher emissions than those estimated. Without a thorough assessment of the most severe potential impacts, it is impossible to guarantee that major environmental effects will not happen.

Conclusion

This proposal presents important concerns regarding people, public health, agriculture, and the surrounding environment. Because the documentation is complex and community engagement has been limited, many

individuals have found it challenging to take part in the decision-making process. Communities should not face uncertain or potentially substantial environmental risks. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that planning permission be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

Jamie Collins

Name: Jamie Preston Collins
Date: 17 April 2026