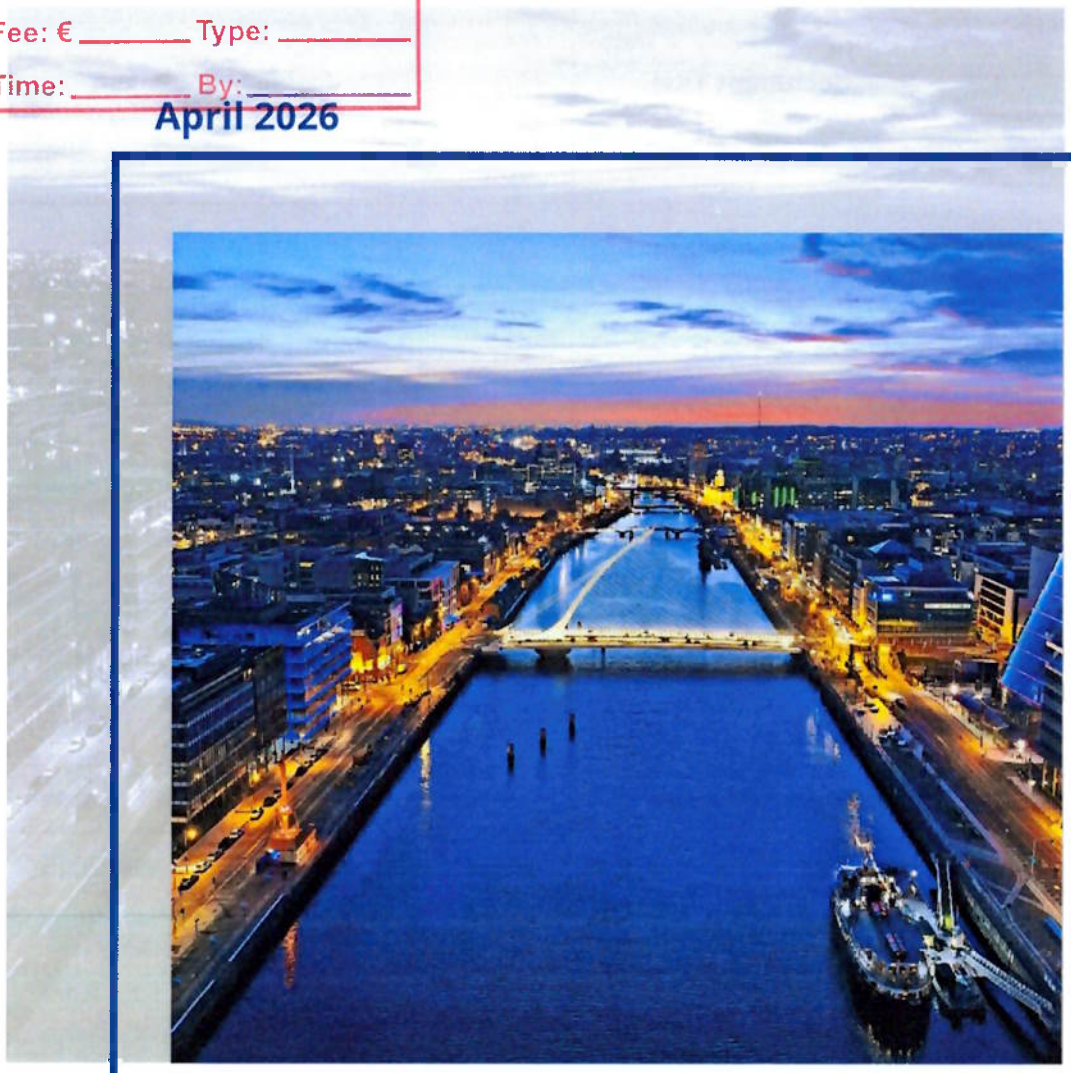
SID Pre-Planning Statement

Alterations to approved Renewable Biogas Plant at Inchera, Little Island, Co. Cork

on behalf of Stream BioEnergy Ireland Limited

April 2026



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1. Introduction

This pre-application request is submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) in accordance with the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) provisions of the Planning and Development Act (PDA) 2000 (as amended). The purpose of the request is to initiate the formal pre-application consultation (PAC) process and to seek the Commission's opinion as to whether the proposed development at the Stream BioEnergy Renewable Biogas Plant at Inchera, Little Island, Cork (the site) constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) within the meaning of the Act and the Seventh Schedule.

By way of context, planning permission is in place for the project under Cork County Council Reg. Ref. 25/5034 and construction is currently well advanced. The permitted development on a 2-hectare site comprises an anaerobic digestion facility designed to process up to 90,000 tonnes per annum of non-hazardous biodegradable waste in order to produce biogas. A biogas upgrading plant will process the biogas to produce biomethane, a renewable gas, for injection into the Gas Networks Ireland network adjacent to the site boundary. The permitted development also includes the production of a biofertiliser product (digestate) that can be applied to land in place of chemical fertilisers and the capture of the biogenic carbon dioxide stream generated during the biogas upgrading process for beneficial use in industrial processes.

The purpose of this pre-application consultation request is to seek a determination from An Coimisiún Pleanála as to whether the proposed increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum in permitted feedstock throughput, assessed on its own merits as a modification to an already permitted development, constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development.

In particular, the applicant seeks confirmation that the proposed development, having regard to its incremental nature and to the fact that a 90,000 tonnes per annum renewable energy facility is already permitted and under construction, does not require a direct SID application to An Coimisiún Pleanála and may instead proceed by way of a standard planning application to the local planning authority, Cork County Council.

The applicant welcomes the opportunity to engage with An Coimisiún Pleanála so as to ensure that the correct statutory process is followed and that any subsequent application is made to the appropriate consent authority in accordance with the legislative requirements.

1.1 Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises an increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum in the permitted intake of non-hazardous, biodegradable, predominantly source-separated domestic and commercial feedstock, from an already permitted capacity of 90,000 tonnes. The proposed uplift represents an increase of approximately 20% relative to the permitted capacity.

The proposed increase does not require any material alteration to the approved site layout, plant infrastructure or technology, and the facility will continue to operate as a renewable biogas and biomethane production plant utilising anaerobic digestion technology.

The proposed increase in throughput will be accommodated within the operational capacity of the already permitted plant infrastructure and does not require the construction of additional digesters, storage tanks or processing buildings. The consented plant can facilitate the 20,000 tonne uplift in throughput, as detailed design development and feedstock modelling have confirmed that the plant being installed has greater operational efficiency and throughput capacity within the parameters of the already permitted design.

1.2 Legislative Provisions

Section 37A of the PDA provides that applications for permission for development specified in the Seventh Schedule shall, where the relevant criteria are met, be made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála rather than to the local planning authority.

The Seventh Schedule identifies specific classes of development which may constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) and which, where applicable thresholds are exceeded, must be determined directly by the Board.

In relation to the energy sector, the Seventh Schedule primarily applies to large-scale national energy infrastructure, including:

- electricity generating stations with an output of 300 megawatts or more;
- electricity transmission infrastructure of 220 kV or greater; and
- major gas infrastructure such as large gas pipelines, gas storage installations and liquefied natural gas terminals.

These provisions typically relate to large-scale national energy infrastructure such as electricity generation plants, transmission networks and major energy import or storage facilities.

The proposed development does not fall within any of the energy infrastructure classes identified in the Seventh Schedule. The development comprises an anaerobic digestion and biomethane production facility, designed to generate renewable gas from biodegradable materials for injection into the existing national gas network.

Accordingly, the proposed development is not captured by the energy infrastructure provisions of the Seventh Schedule.

The only potentially relevant class of development within the Seventh Schedule relates to:

"An installation for the disposal, treatment or recovery of waste with a capacity for an annual intake greater than 100,000 tonnes."

The purpose of this pre-application request is therefore to seek the opinion of An Coimisiún Pleanála as to whether the proposed increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum in throughput constitutes development falling within the meaning of Strategic Infrastructure Development, having regard to the existing permitted baseline.

1.3 Nature of the Development – Renewable Energy Infrastructure

While the facility accepts biodegradable feedstocks, the primary function of the development is the generation of renewable energy through anaerobic digestion and biomethane upgrading.

Anaerobic digestion is a well-established renewable energy technology which converts biodegradable organic material into biogas through a controlled biological process.

In the case of the permitted development at Inchera, biogas produced will be upgraded on site to biomethane and injected directly to the adjacent Gas Networks Ireland network, thereby displacing fossil-derived natural gas and contributing to Ireland's decarbonisation objectives.

In addition to renewable biomethane production, the anaerobic digestion process produces digestate, a nutrient-rich organic fertiliser capable of replacing synthetic fertilisers. The permitted development also enables the capture of biogenic carbon dioxide for reuse in industrial processes. These outputs further support national circular economy and climate objectives by recovering value from biodegradable materials that would otherwise require disposal or lower-value treatment.

While the feedstocks processed by the facility are regulated under the EPA Industrial Emissions Directive licensing regime, this regulatory classification reflects the nature of the materials accepted rather than the primary purpose of the installation. The development is properly characterised as a renewable energy facility producing indigenous renewable gas from organic materials. The acceptance of biodegradable feedstocks is therefore ancillary to the primary energy recovery function of the plant.

From a planning perspective, the functional character of the development is the production of renewable energy rather than the disposal of waste. The biodegradable feedstocks accepted at the facility act as inputs to a biological energy generation process, the outputs of which include renewable biomethane for injection into the national gas network together with digestate suitable for beneficial reuse. The presence of waste-derived feedstocks reflects the circular-economy nature of anaerobic digestion technology rather than defining the primary land-use purpose of the development. Accordingly, the facility is appropriately characterised as renewable energy infrastructure, which is confirmed under the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III, Directive (EU) 2023/2413).

1.4 Existing Permitted Baseline

In assessing whether the proposed development falls within the scope of Strategic Infrastructure Development, regard is had to the existing permitted baseline for the project.

Planning permission has been granted by Cork County Council for the development of an anaerobic digestion and biomethane production facility with a permitted capacity of 90,000 tonnes per annum, and the facility is currently under construction in accordance with that permission. The principle of development at this location, including its environmental

effects, traffic impacts, emissions profile and operational characteristics, has therefore been established through the statutory planning process.

The current proposal comprises an increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum in permitted throughput, representing an uplift of approximately 20% relative to the already approved capacity.

In this context, the relevant question is not simply whether the revised capacity exceeds 100,000 tonnes per annum, but whether the proposed change constitutes the development of a new installation of strategic scale, as opposed to a modification of an already permitted development.

In this regard, the proposed increase falls to be assessed on its own merits as submitted, consistent with established Board practice, while also having regard to the fact that it comprises a modification to an already permitted development with an established baseline capacity.

The proposed increase would not require:

- any expansion of the physical footprint of the development;
- any change to the approved anaerobic digestion and biomethane upgrading technology; or
- any alteration to the fundamental operational characteristics of the facility.

The proposal therefore constitutes a limited modification to an already permitted renewable energy development, the environmental effects of which have been assessed through the planning process and are subject to regulation under the EPA licensing regime.

Accordingly, the proposed increase in throughput should be considered in the context of the permitted baseline development, and not as the creation of a new installation of strategic scale.

2. Site Location

The proposed development site is situated approx. 8km east of Cork City. Little Island is primarily an industrial and commercial area and almost exclusively so at the western end, where the proposed development site is located. It is home to numerous industrial estates, logistics hubs, multinational companies, and pharmaceutical firms, making it a significant employment centre.

The site (Figure 1) is in a heavily industrialised area within the townland of Inchera at the western end of Little Island and comprises an area of circa 2 hectares (ha) (c. 5 acres). It is a roughly rectangular shaped plot with a c. 2m reduction in elevation on the eastern boundary.

Figure 1: Proposed Development Site

The site is brownfield, having previously been occupied by Pfizer, a pharmaceutical company. Pfizer Cork Ltd. ceased operations at the proposed development site in 2010. In 2012, the EPA Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Licence (Reg. No. P0103-02) was transferred from Pfizer to Tapella Ltd., the then owner of the site, and was subsequently surrendered in 2016.

Development of the permitted renewable biogas plant at the site is significantly progressed, with construction works well advanced, having commenced in April 2025, and an estimated completion date of Q3 2027. The facility is licensed by the Environmental Protection Agency under Industrial Emissions Directive Licence Ref. P1018-01.

3. Planning History

Planning permission for the subject site at Inchera, Little Island, Co. Cork has evolved through a series of permissions and amendments establishing the principle of a renewable bioenergy facility at this location, See Attachment 1.

The original permission, granted under Cork County Council Reg. Ref. 15/4926, authorised the construction of a renewable bioenergy plant on a 2-hectare site to generate up to 4 MW of electricity from 90,000 tonnes per annum of non-hazardous biodegradable waste using anaerobic digestion (AD) technology. That permission provided for the full plant layout, including the main processing building, tank farm, CHP units, gas storage, flare, administration building, site infrastructure and ancillary works, and was accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS). The permission also acknowledged that the development would require an Industrial Emissions Directive licence from the EPA.

The duration of this permission was subsequently extended under Reg. Ref. 20/5549, thereby preserving the approved development and confirming the ongoing acceptability of the permitted 90,000 tpa facility. Thereafter, Reg. Ref. 23/5586 amended the previously permitted scheme to reflect a revised and more advanced energy model. In particular, this amendment replaced much of the originally permitted CHP based electricity generation with a Biogas Upgrade Plant, a Gas Grid Entry Unit, and a Carbon Capture and Storage Unit, thereby shifting the project toward the production and export of renewable biomethane to the national gas grid together with the beneficial capture of biogenic carbon dioxide. The amendment also rationalised the tank farm and made associated internal layout changes, all within the permitted site boundary.

Most recently, permission was granted under Reg. Ref. 25/5034 to complete the development of the Renewable Biogas Plant as previously approved and amended. Importantly, the 2025 permission confirms the development as a renewable biogas and biomethane production facility, the primary purpose of which is the generation of renewable gas for injection into the national gas network, thereby directly displacing fossil-derived natural gas. Through the process of anaerobic digestion, biodegradable organic material is converted into biogas which is subsequently upgraded to grid-quality biomethane, a renewable energy carrier capable of contributing to the decarbonisation of Ireland's heat, power and transport sectors. The development therefore forms part of the emerging renewable gas infrastructure required to support Ireland's transition to a low-carbon energy system.

The permitted development also incorporates the capture and liquefaction of biogenic carbon dioxide, enabling its beneficial reuse in industry, and produces digestate suitable for use as a biofertiliser, thereby contributing to circular-economy objectives through the recovery of energy and nutrients from organic materials.

While the facility accepts biodegradable feedstocks regulated under the waste management regime, the development is fundamentally an energy recovery and renewable fuel

production facility, operating within a tightly regulated environmental framework under the EPA Industrial Emissions Directive Licence (Reg. No. P1018-01).

Taken together, the series of permissions granted by Cork County Council establish a clear and consistent planning history for the development of a renewable anaerobic digestion and biomethane production facility at the site, with an approved processing capacity of 90,000 tonnes per annum. The principle of renewable energy generation at this location has therefore been established through the statutory planning process.

4. Planning Policy Context & Assessment

This section outlines the relevant European, national, regional and local planning and policy framework supporting the development of renewable energy infrastructure and the expansion of biomethane production. Across all levels of policy there is strong and consistent support for the development of anaerobic digestion and renewable biomethane infrastructure as part of the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and circular economy.

The permitted development at Inchera, Little Island comprises a renewable biogas plant which converts biodegradable organic material into renewable gas through anaerobic digestion. The proposed development, comprising an increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum in permitted throughput, represents a modest optimisation of the permitted facility and supports the delivery of wider policy objectives relating to renewable energy generation, circular economy principles and climate action.

4.1 European Union Policy

4.1.2 REPowerEU

The REPowerEU Plan, published by the European Commission in May 2022, was introduced in response to the need to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and accelerate the clean energy transition within the European Union. The plan aims to diversify energy sources and significantly increase renewable energy production across Member States.

A central component of REPowerEU is the expansion of biomethane production, with a target to increase EU biomethane output from approximately 3 billion cubic metres annually to 35 billion cubic metres by 2030. The plan specifically recognises the potential of anaerobic digestion facilities to convert biodegradable organic waste streams into renewable gas.

The proposed development supports the objectives of the REPowerEU plan by facilitating the production of renewable biomethane derived from organic materials, contributing to both energy security and emissions reduction.

4.1.3 European Green Deal

The European Green Deal sets out the European Union's strategy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. This strategy requires a fundamental transformation of Europe's energy systems through the increased deployment of renewable energy and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors.

Renewable gases, including biomethane, are recognised as playing an important role in the decarbonisation of the energy system, particularly in sectors where electrification alone may not provide a complete solution.

The proposed development supports the objectives of the European Green Deal through the generation of renewable biomethane which can displace fossil-derived natural gas and contribute to emissions reductions within the energy and agricultural sectors.

4.1.4 Fit for 55

The Fit for 55 legislative package establishes the EU's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 relative to 1990 levels. Achieving this target requires substantial expansion of renewable energy generation and the progressive replacement of fossil fuels with renewable and low-carbon alternatives.

Renewable gases such as biomethane are recognised within this framework as important contributors to the decarbonisation of energy systems, particularly in relation to heating, industry and transport.

The proposed development contributes to these objectives through the production of renewable biomethane and its injection into the national gas network.

4.1.5 Renewable Energy Directive (RED III)

The revised Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) strengthens the EU's renewable energy targets and requires Member States to increase the share of renewable energy to at least 42.5% of final energy consumption by 2030.

The Directive also introduces measures aimed at accelerating the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure and streamlining planning and permitting procedures for renewable energy projects. Importantly, RED III establishes a presumption that renewable energy projects are of overriding public interest, recognising their importance in addressing climate change and strengthening energy security.

The proposed development aligns with these objectives by facilitating the production of renewable biomethane and supporting the expansion of renewable energy infrastructure.

4.2 National Policy

4.2.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF), as revised in 2025, places a strong emphasis on the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society. The Framework recognises the critical role of renewable energy infrastructure in achieving Ireland's legally binding climate targets under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

The NPF also promotes the development of the circular bioeconomy, which involves the conversion of renewable biological resources and waste streams into value-added products such as bioenergy and bio-based materials.

Biomethane production through anaerobic digestion is specifically identified as a key opportunity within this framework, with the National Biomethane Strategy establishing a national target of 5.7 TWh of indigenous biomethane production by 2030.

The proposed development contributes to these objectives by facilitating the production of renewable biomethane and supporting the recovery of energy and nutrients from biodegradable materials.

4.2.2 Climate Action Plans

Ireland's Climate Action Plans, including Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025, establish the national pathway to achieving a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050.

Biomethane is identified as a key component of Ireland's decarbonisation strategy, particularly in relation to the heat and gas sectors. The Climate Action Plans establish a national target of 5.7 TWh of biomethane production annually by 2030, with an interim target of 1 TWh by 2025. Achieving these targets will require the development of a significant number of anaerobic digestion facilities throughout the State.

The permitted development will produce approximately 83 GWh of renewable biomethane annually, representing a meaningful contribution towards Ireland's national biomethane production targets.

4.2.3 National Biomethane Strategy

The National Biomethane Strategy (2024) provides Ireland's roadmap for developing a national biomethane industry capable of meeting the targets established under the Climate Action Plans.

The Strategy recognises biomethane as an important indigenous renewable energy source which can contribute to energy security, emissions reduction and the development of the circular bioeconomy. It identifies the development of anaerobic digestion infrastructure as a key requirement for achieving national biomethane targets.

The proposed development supports the objectives of the National Biomethane Strategy by enabling the production of renewable biomethane from biodegradable materials and contributing to the development of Ireland's renewable gas sector.

4.2.4 Circular Economy and Waste Policy

Ireland's Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy and the National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024–2030 promote the transition from a linear "take-make-dispose" economic model towards a circular economy in which materials are reused, recycled and recovered wherever possible.

Organic waste streams are identified as a priority material within this framework. Anaerobic digestion is recognised as an important technology for managing biodegradable waste streams, enabling the recovery of both renewable energy and nutrient resources.

The proposed development supports these objectives by converting biodegradable organic materials into renewable biomethane, nutrient-rich digestate and recoverable biogenic carbon dioxide, thereby maximising resource recovery and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

4.3 Regional Policy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region identifies renewable energy as a key component of regional economic development and climate action.

The Strategy recognises the potential for renewable gas production, including biomethane, to contribute to the transition towards a carbon-neutral gas network and highlights the role of Gas Networks Ireland in facilitating the integration of renewable gas into the existing gas network.

Regional Policy Objectives support the development of renewable energy infrastructure and encourage investment in indigenous renewable gas projects which contribute to emissions reduction, energy security and economic development.

The proposed development aligns with these objectives by enabling the production and injection of renewable biomethane into the national gas network.

4.4 Local Policy

The Cork County Development Plan 2022–2028 recognises the importance of renewable energy production and infrastructure in supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The Plan supports the development of renewable energy projects and identifies bioenergy and anaerobic digestion as important contributors to Ireland's renewable energy targets. It also recognises that commercial-scale bioenergy facilities are appropriately located on industrially zoned lands or brownfield sites, such as the subject site at Inchera, Little Island.

The proposed development is therefore consistent with the objectives of the Cork County Development Plan in facilitating renewable energy production and supporting the expansion of the bioenergy sector within suitable industrial locations.

4.5 Policy Summary

Taken together, the relevant European, national, regional and local policy frameworks provide strong support for the development and expansion of renewable biomethane infrastructure as part of the transition to a low-carbon and circular economy.

Within this policy context, the permitted development at Inchera, Little Island is properly characterised as renewable energy infrastructure which utilises anaerobic digestion to generate renewable biomethane for injection into the national gas network. The proposed increase in throughput represents a modest optimisation of that already permitted facility and supports the delivery of wider policy objectives relating to renewable energy generation, circular economy principles and climate action.

In this context, the optimisation of already permitted anaerobic digestion facilities represents a practical means of contributing to national biomethane production targets.

5. Environmental and Planning Context

The permitted development at Inchera, Little Island has already been subject to detailed environmental assessment through the statutory planning process, including the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). That assessment considered the likely environmental effects associated with the construction and operation of the renewable biogas and biomethane facility.

The proposed development comprises an increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum in permitted throughput, representing a modest uplift relative to the already permitted capacity. The following sections consider whether this proposed modification would give rise to any materially different planning or environmental effects relative to those previously assessed.

5.1 Land Use

The site of the proposed development is zoned Existing Mixed/General Business/Industrial Uses (MGB) under the Cork County Development Plan 2022–2028. The site is located within an established industrial area at Little Island, which accommodates a wide range of industrial, manufacturing, logistics and commercial activities.

The permitted renewable biogas and biomethane facility is consistent with the established land use character of the area and with the zoning objectives applying to the site. The proposed increase in throughput does not alter the approved land use, site footprint, or overall character of the development. Accordingly, the proposed modification does not give rise to any new land use planning issues.

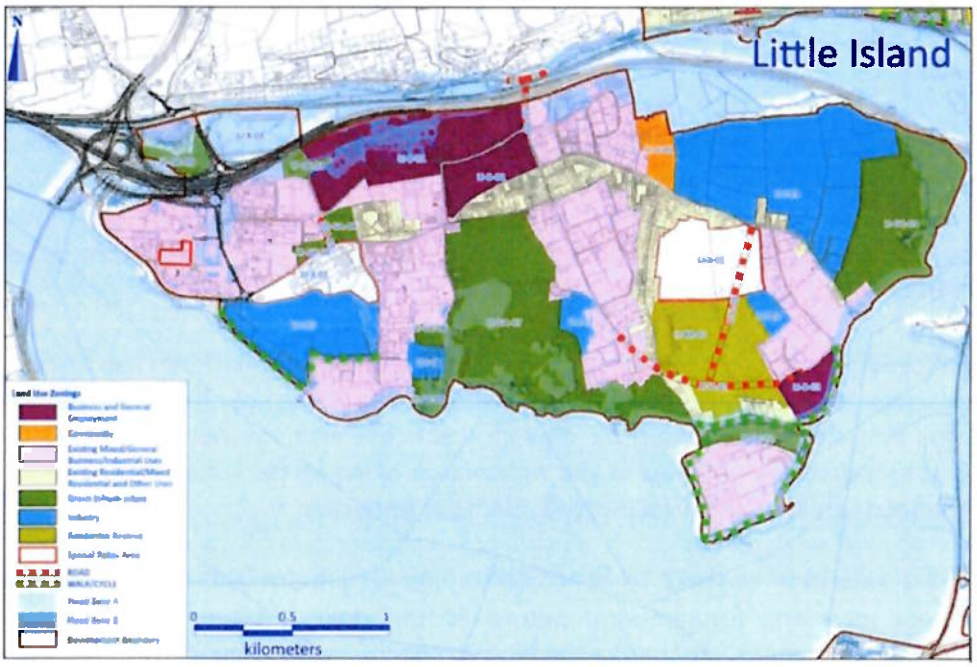

Figure 2 Land Use Zoning

5.2 Traffic

The EIAR prepared for the permitted development assessed the traffic impacts associated with the operation of the facility on the surrounding road network. That assessment concluded that the development would not result in any significant adverse effects on link capacity, junction operation or travel times.

The proposed increase in throughput represents an approximate 20% uplift in operational activity. However, the associated increase in traffic volumes remains modest in absolute terms and does not materially alter the conclusions of the previous assessment. Predicted changes in traffic flows remain below recognised significance thresholds and would not require additional detailed junction modelling.

Accordingly, the proposed increase in throughput would not give rise to any significant adverse traffic or transport effects on the receiving road network.

5.3 Air Quality

The EIAR previously prepared for the permitted development assessed potential effects on air quality arising from both traffic-related emissions and operational emissions from the facility. That assessment concluded that the effects on air quality within the study area would be not significant.

The proposed increase in throughput does not involve any change to the emission sources or operational processes of the facility. The modest increase in operational activity does not materially alter the conclusions of the previous air quality assessment, and no significant adverse effects on ambient air quality are anticipated.

5.4 Climate

The EIAR prepared for the permitted development also assessed the likely climate effects associated with the construction and operation of the facility. That assessment concluded that, when considered in the context of the renewable energy generated and associated emissions savings, the development would give rise to a positive climate effect through the displacement of fossil-derived natural gas.

The facility will produce renewable biomethane for injection into the national gas network, thereby displacing fossil-derived natural gas and contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The anaerobic digestion process also enables the recovery of value from biodegradable materials and the production of digestate suitable for use as a biofertiliser that can replace fossil-fuel derived chemical fertilisers.

The proposed increase in throughput from 90,000 tonnes per annum to 110,000 tonnes per annum does not alter the fundamental nature of the development as a renewable biomethane facility and would not change the overall conclusion that the project delivers a net climate benefit.

6. Strategic Infrastructure Development Considerations

6.1 Context

In considering whether the proposed development may fall within the scope of Strategic Infrastructure Development under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), it is necessary to have regard to the planning context of the permitted facility at Inchera, Little Island, Co. Cork. This permission authorises the development of a biogas/biomethane installation designed to process up to 90,000 tonnes per annum of non-hazardous biodegradable material through anaerobic digestion (AD) technology. The permitted scheme already establishes the approved operational capacity, buildings, odour control systems, emission stacks, and associated infrastructure, and was assessed by the planning authority in accordance with relevant development plan policy and environmental protection requirements, consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.

The current proposal seeks to increase the permitted feedstock throughput by 20,000 tonnes per annum (approximately a 20% increase). This uplift is modest in relative terms and does not necessitate any new principal buildings or materially enlarged processing infrastructure beyond that already authorised. The overall site footprint, plant scale, and primary waste handling, digestion, and gas-upgrading systems remain unchanged.

6.2 Relevant Statutory Thresholds

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, certain categories of development listed in the Seventh Schedule may constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) where specified quantitative thresholds are exceeded. For waste management infrastructure of this type, the relevant threshold relates to installations for the disposal, treatment or recovery of waste with a capacity greater than 100,000 tonnes per annum.

The proposed development comprises an increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum in the permitted throughput of an already permitted anaerobic digestion and biomethane production facility. The principle of development at this location, including its environmental effects, traffic implications, emissions profile and operational characteristics, has been established through the statutory planning process.

The facility has also been granted an Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) licence by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This licensing framework regulates the acceptance and processing of organic feedstocks and ensures that the operation of the installation complies with strict environmental protection standards relating to emissions, monitoring and operational controls.

While the plant is regulated as a waste facility due to the nature of the feedstocks accepted, its primary function is the generation of renewable energy through anaerobic digestion and the upgrading of biogas to biomethane. Anaerobic digestion is widely recognised in European and national policy as a renewable energy technology which simultaneously delivers waste recovery and circular economy benefits. The intake of organic feedstocks therefore acts as an input to a biological energy generation process, rather than defining the principal purpose of the installation.

Importantly, the proposed increase does not involve:

- any expansion of the physical footprint of the development;
- any change to the approved anaerobic digestion and biomethane upgrading technology; or
- any alteration to the fundamental operational characteristics of the facility.

The increase in throughput therefore reflects an optimisation of the operational capacity of the permitted installation, rather than any physical expansion or intensification of the built infrastructure at the site.

Accordingly, the proposal constitutes a modification to an already permitted renewable energy installation, rather than the establishment of a new strategic-scale waste management facility. The proposed development therefore falls to be assessed on its own merits as submitted, while also having regard to the established permitted baseline at the site.

This approach is consistent with recent determinations of An Coimisiún Pleanála, including Case ABP-318276-23, in which the Inspector concluded that the relevant assessment under Section 37A is of the proposed development "as submitted" and on its own merits. In that case, the Inspector concluded that, notwithstanding that the combined capacity of development on the site would exceed 100,000 tonnes per annum, the proposal before the Board, which fell below the threshold, did not constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development. This demonstrates the established principle that the statutory threshold is to be applied to the development proposed, rather than by reference to cumulative or combined capacity.

In that context, while the resultant total intake would exceed 100,000 tonnes per annum, the relevant consideration is whether the proposed development itself, comprising an increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum, constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development. The proposal does not involve the creation of a new installation designed from the outset to exceed the statutory threshold.

The intent of the SID provisions is to capture new infrastructure of strategic national scale, rather than incremental increases to established facilities where the principle of development is settled and where the environmental effects remain within an already assessed envelope. The proposed increase does not alter the character, footprint, technology or fundamental operational nature of the permitted development and is therefore materially distinct from a standalone new facility exceeding 100,000 tonnes per annum.

In addition, the Seventh Schedule must be read alongside Section 37B of the Act, which requires the Commission to consider whether a proposed development is of such scale or strategic importance that it warrants determination at national level. In this instance, the limited uplift in capacity does not elevate the project to one of strategic national significance.

In this regard, the relevant legal question is whether the proposed development, taken on a standalone basis, constitutes an installation with a capacity exceeding 100,000 tonnes per annum. The proposed development, comprising an increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum, does not meet this threshold.

Accordingly, the proposed increase in throughput should be considered as a modification to an established and permitted development, rather than a new SID-class project, and does not necessitate a direct application to An Coimisiún Pleanála.

Without prejudice to the above, even if the proposed development were considered to fall within a class of development specified in the Seventh Schedule, it would not meet the criteria set out under Section 37A(2) of the Act, having regard to its limited scale, localised effects, and the absence of any strategic economic, social or spatial significance.

6.3 Alignment with National Policy Objectives

As outlined in Section 4, national and European policy frameworks recognise anaerobic digestion and biomethane production as important components of renewable energy infrastructure and the transition to a low-carbon and circular economy.

Ireland's National Biomethane Strategy and successive Climate Action Plans identify biomethane as a key element of the State's decarbonisation pathway, with a target of up to 5.7 TWh of indigenous biomethane production by 2030. The achievement of this target will require not only the development of new infrastructure, but also the optimisation and efficient operation of already permitted facilities.

In this context, the proposed development, comprising an increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum in permitted throughput, represents a modest optimisation of an already permitted renewable energy facility. The proposal enables increased production of renewable biomethane without any change to the approved footprint, infrastructure, technology or fundamental operational characteristics of the development.

The proposal is consistent with national climate and energy objectives, including:

- the production of renewable gas capable of displacing fossil-derived natural gas;
- the recovery of energy from biodegradable materials in accordance with the waste hierarchy;
- the production of nutrient-rich digestate suitable for agricultural use; and
- the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through methane capture and fossil fuel substitution.

Notwithstanding this policy support, the scale of the proposed development remains limited. The increase in throughput is incremental in nature and does not, of itself, constitute development of strategic economic or social importance at a national or regional level.

Rather, the proposal represents a localised modification to an already permitted development, the effects of which remain within the scope of those previously assessed through the statutory planning and environmental assessment processes.

Accordingly, while the proposed development aligns with national and regional policy objectives relating to renewable energy and the circular economy, it does not, by virtue of its scale or nature, elevate the project to one of strategic national importance.

6.4 Alignment with Policy Context

The policy framework outlined in Section 4 demonstrates strong and consistent support for the development and expansion of renewable biomethane infrastructure as part of the transition to a low-carbon and circular economy. In that context, the proposed increase in

throughput represents a modest optimisation of an already permitted renewable biogas / biomethane facility and supports the delivery of national climate, energy and circular-economy objectives.

The proposed increase does not alter the approved footprint, technology or fundamental character of the development and does not give rise to any materially new principle of development. This policy context further supports the view that the proposal is appropriately considered as a modification to an already permitted renewable energy facility rather than as a new strategic-scale installation.

The proposed modification therefore falls more appropriately within the scope of the statutory functions of the local planning authority, having regard to the permitted baseline development and the limited nature of the proposed change.

7. Conclusion

For the reasons set out in this report, it is respectfully submitted that:

i. the proposed increase of 20,000 tonnes per annum represents a proportionate and controlled modification to an already permitted anaerobic digestion / biomethane facility;
ii. the proposal does not involve any material change to the approved footprint, technology or fundamental character of the development;
iii. the permitted development is properly characterised as a renewable biogas / biomethane facility, the principal function of which is the production of renewable gas for injection into the national gas network;
iv. the proposal should be considered in the context of the existing permitted baseline and the fact that the facility is already under construction; and
v. the proposed modification supports national and regional policy objectives relating to renewable energy generation, climate action and the circular economy.
vi. There is existing precedent that the statutory threshold is to be applied to the development proposed, rather than by reference to cumulative or combined capacity.

Even where development falls within a class listed in the Seventh Schedule, Section 37A of the Act requires consideration of whether the proposal is of such scale or strategic importance that it warrants determination at national level. In this instance, the proposed modification does not elevate the development to a project of strategic national significance and does not introduce infrastructure of a scale that would warrant determination by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that An Coimisiún Pleanála confirm that the proposed modification does not constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development requiring a direct application to the Commission, and that the appropriate consent pathway for the proposed development is a standard planning application to Cork County Council, unless the Commission determines otherwise under the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Attachment 1: Renewable Biogas Plant Planning History

Table 1 Details of Extant Planning Permission

Planning Ref: 15/4926	**Planning Authority:** Cork County Council
Applicant: Stream BioEnergy Limited	**Granted:** 17-09-2015
Location: Inchera, Little Island, Co. Cork	
Development Description: Construction of a renewable bioenergy plant to generate up to 4mw of electricity from 90,000 tonnes of non-hazardous biodegradable waste per annum utilising anaerobic digestion (AD) technology on a 2.01 hectares site. The proposed plant will comprise the following elements: (i) Demolition of the existing decommissioned waste water treatment plant & associated ancillary buildings and the existing utility building located on the east side of the site (c. 1425 sq. m. footprint); (ii) Main processing building (c. 4500 sq. m. floor area, up to 14.5m high) incorporating feedstock reception and processing areas, digestate treatment areas, dewatering and storage areas, quarantine areas and the odour control system (c.12m high, c.773 sq. m. floor area) and 25m high stack; (iii) Service yard area including 2 no. weighbridges, weighbridge office (c. 4.5m high and c.17 sq. m. floor area), 2 no. car parking spaces, bunded vehicle refuelling area (c. 56 sq. m. floor area) with diesel storage tank (2,500 litres), workshop (c. 7m high and c. 70 sq. m. floor area), 1 no. wheel wash; (iv) Tank Farm (c. 2900 sq. m. footprint) encompassing 4 no. digester tanks (up to 25.5m max. height, c.5000m3), 4 no. grit removal buffer tanks (up to 24m max. height, c.630 m3) 2 no. post-digestion buffer tanks (up to 24m max. height, c.630 m3), and 2 no. pasteurisation tanks (up to 19m max. height, c.217m3), 2 no. post pasteurisation & sludge storage tanks (up to 24m max. height, c.630 m3), 1 no. process water tank (up to 25.5m max. height, c.1280 m3), 1 no. concentrate tank (up to 10m max. height, c.240 m3), 4 no. chemical storage tanks (up to 5m max. height, c. 48.1 m3), total 20 no. tanks in the tank farm, to include a stairwell tower (up to 25m max. height), gantry walkways, 3m high bund wall, 2 no. bund access stairs, and 6 no. tank emergency access ladders; (v) 2 no. enclosed Combined Heat and Power (CHP) 2MW engines (c. 3.6m high and c. 66 sq. m. floor area each), 28m high CHP stack, c. 14m high gas storage dome (1800m3) with 4 no. lightning rod electrodes (c.18m high), 8.2m high biogas flare stack, gas treatment equipment enclosed in a c.1.8m high container (c. 31 sq. m floor area) containing a gas booster & dryer and a c. 2.5m high container (c. 79 sq. m floor area) containing a boiler, 10m high boiler stack, 3 no. bunded electrical transformers (c. 5m high with 1m high bund wall and c.117 sq. m floor area), c.3.0m high sub-station (c. 70 sq. m. floor area) and a motor control centre (MCC) kiosk (c. 2.5m high and c. 50 sq. m. floor area); (vi) 2 storey administration and welfare building including laboratory facilities (c.787 sq. m. floor area, up to 9m high), 31 no. car parking spaces and a 14 no. space bicycle rack, 2.4m high perimeter fencing, 2 no. 7m wide access gates and 2 no. 2m wide pedestrian access gates, 2 no. directional signs (total area of c. 9 sq. m), internal circulation roads, pipe bridge, walkways, concrete foundation slabs and all site works, facilities and services; (vii) Ancillary site development works and services including landscaping, boundary fencing, lighting, etc. Access will be through existing permitted vehicular accesses onto the R623 Regional Road. This application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). This application relates to a development that will require an Industrial Emissions Directive licence from the Environmental Protection Agency.	
Planning Ref: 20/5549	**Planning Authority:** Cork County Council
Applicant: Stream BioEnergy Limited	**Granted:** 11/09/2020
Location: Inchera, Little Island, Co. Cork	
Application to Extend the Appropriate period of Planning Permission Ref. 15/4926 for the construction of a renewable bioenergy plant to generate up to 4mw of electricity from 90,000 tonnes of non-hazardous waste per annum which will be processed using anaerobic digestion on a 2.01-hectare site. **Extension period up to 22/10/2025**	

Planning Ref: 23/5586	Planning Authority: Cork County Council
Applicant: Stream BioEnergy Ireland Limited	**Granted:** 17/11/2023
Location: Inchera, Little Island, Co. Cork	

An amendment to the permission granted under Ref. 15/4926 as extended by Ref. 20/5549 for a renewable bioenergy plant at Inchera, Little Island, Co. Cork

The amendment consists of:

i. Omission of one permitted combined heat and power (CHP) enclosure to reduce CHP capacity from 4 MW to 1 MW.
ii. Replacement of the CHP capacity by installation of a Biogas Upgrade Unit to generate renewable gas from biogas.
iii. Installation of a Gas Grid Entry Unit to facilitate the export of renewable gas to the national gas grid.
iv. Installation of a Carbon Capture and Storage Unit to take the carbon dioxide stream from the biogas with associated tank and filling area to facilitate off-site export for use in industry.
v. Amendments to the permitted Tank Farm to;
   a. reduce the number of tanks from the permitted 16 process tanks to 9 process tanks. All tanks will remain within the max. permitted capacity and height.
   b. reduce the footprint of the tank farm and increase the bund wall height by 1.3m.
vi. Ancillary development works include installation of pipe runs, reorganisation of permitted car parking layout, relocation of a weighbridge, relocation of permitted boiler and stack and biogas holder, all to facilitate the proposed amendments.

The proposed development is wholly within the permitted site boundary and relates to changes confined to the east of the site covering an area of approximately 0.7 ha.

The application relates to development which comprises or is for the purpose of an activity requiring an Industrial Emissions Directive Licence issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, Reg. No. P1018-01.

Planning Ref: 25/5034	Planning Authority: Cork County Council
Applicant: Stream BioEnergy Ireland Limited	**Granted:** 29/08/2025
Location: Inchera, Little Island, Co. Cork	

The proposed development seeks permission to complete a Renewable Biogas Plant previously approved under Planning Permission Ref. 15/4926, later extended under Ref. 20/5549, and amended under Ref. 23/5586.

The proposed development will consist of the construction of:

1) main process building (c.3,762m2 gross floor area (GFA), max 14.5m high) incorporating feedstock reception and processing area, digestate treatment areas, dewatering and storage areas, quarantine areas, an odour control system and associated 25m high stack with signage on the south elevation.

2)Tank farm (c. 3,183m3 footprint, 4m high bund wall) encompassing a total of 6 tanks including four digestor tanks (20.15m max. height, c.3,400m3 capacity) a digestate storage tank (20.15m max. height, c.3,400m3 capacity), a suspension buffer tank (10.5m max.height, c.700m3 capacity (, an containerised desulphurisation plant and associated 2 tanks (14m max height, c120m3 capacity), 2 no. enclosed pump rooms (room no.1 - 53.58m2 GFA and room no.2 – 23.69m2 GFA), and enclosed feedstock pump room (53.58m2 GFA and 3.6m high), 3 sediment settlement tanks (c.5.84(L), c.2.23m (W) & c.3.78(H) on a raised platform at 6m above ground level, stairwells, pumps, gantry walkways, 2 bund access stairs and tank emergency access ladders;

3) A biogas upgrade plant and gas entry unit; 1 no. containerised Combined Heat and Power (CHP) 1.5MW unit with an associated 28m high stack, a carbon dioxide liquefaction plant, a biogas holder (10.56 max. height, c.2,000m3) with 4 no. c.13.12m high lightning rods, a 9.26m gas flare, a containerised boiler with 10m stack, a transformer station, a propane storage tank, an emergency generator, 2 no. weighbridges, weighbridge office (c.17.2m2 GFA and 4.55m high), a fire water tank (c.1,000m3 and 14.12m high), a bunded vehicle refuelling area with a fuel storage tank (2.5m3) and a wheel wash,

4) Administration building (c.393.25m2 GFA) and a workshop (c.70m2 GFA),

5) 31 car parking spaces (including 2 electric vehicle charging points and a universal parking space), 2 motorcycle parking spaces and a covered bicycle rack;

6) Boundary treatment including 2.4m high perimeter fencing (mix of mesh wire fencing and acoustic fencing), access gates on the south western and north eastern boundaries; and

7) all ancillary site development works and services including landscaping, lighting, 2 no. directional signs, service yard area and internal circulation routes, pipe bridge, footpath and all site drainage works.

The application relates to development which comprises or is for the purpose of an activity requiring an Industrial Emissions Directive Licence issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, reg. no. P1018-01.