

**An Coimisiún Pleanála,
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1,
D01 V902.**

19th June 2026

Re: **Application for pre-planning consultation in accordance with section 182A of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.**

Site Location: **Courtlyough 110kV / 38 kV / MV Distribution Substation, in the townland of Hedgestown, County Dublin.**

Prospective Developer: **Electricity Supply Board (ESB)**

Dear Sir/Madam,

1. Introduction

ESB is the licensed owner of the distribution system, also known as the Distribution Asset Owner or 'DAO'. The DAO business of ESB is carried out through a ring-fenced business unit known as 'ESB Networks'. ESB Networks DAC, a subsidiary of ESB, is the licensed Distribution System Operator or 'DSO'.

The DSO has identified a requirement for the construction of a new 110kV/MV substation at in North Dublin. In accordance with regulatory arrangements approved by the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities ("CRU"), the DSO may procure that ESB (in its capacity as DAO) seek necessary planning permission for development of the distribution system. The ESB Networks business has engaged the ESB Engineering and Major Projects division to prepare this submission on its behalf.

As a preliminary step in this matter, ESB is seeking confirmation from An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) as to whether a proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) in accordance with Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) [hereafter, referred to as the PDA].

To facilitate that determination, please find below a description of the proposed development, accompanied by appropriate drawings.

The statutory fee of €4,500 has been paid by way of credit card accompanying this submission.

2. Required Information

As per the *Guidelines for Applicants* published on the ACP website, please note the following:

- The **prospective applicant** is the *Electricity Supply Board , 27 Fitzwilliam Street Lower, Dublin 2, D02 KT92.*
- The **ESB Contact**, who should receive all correspondence in relation to this submission is – *Amy O’Connell, Planner, ESB Engineering & Major Projects, The Sidings, Grand Canal Quay, D02 E7K8, Ph. 086 1770214 or email amy.oconnell@esb.ie.*
- A **general description** of the nature and scale of the proposed development, including drawings are provided in Section 3 below.
- The **address of the proposed development** and a brief description of the site and surrounding area is provided in Section 3 below.
- A **site location map and site layout map** is attached.
- The **planning authority** in whose functional area the site is situated is **Fingal County Council (FCC).**
- It is considered that the proposed development does not fall within the scope of **Section 182A of the PDA.** A **statement** is included as to why the prospective applicant considers the proposed development should not be regarded as SID, in accordance with the criteria set out in section 182A of the PDA.
- The **attached drawings** which show preliminary details of the proposed development, are as follows:
 - **PE492-D313-003-001-000 SITE LOCATION MAP 1:2500**
 - **PE492-D313-003-002-000 SITE LAYOUT MAP 1:500**

3. The Proposed Development

3.1 Location of Proposed Development

The proposed development involves the installation of a new 110 kV / 38 kV / MV station at a site located south of Balbriggan, County Dublin – Refer to **Figure 1 Site Location Map**

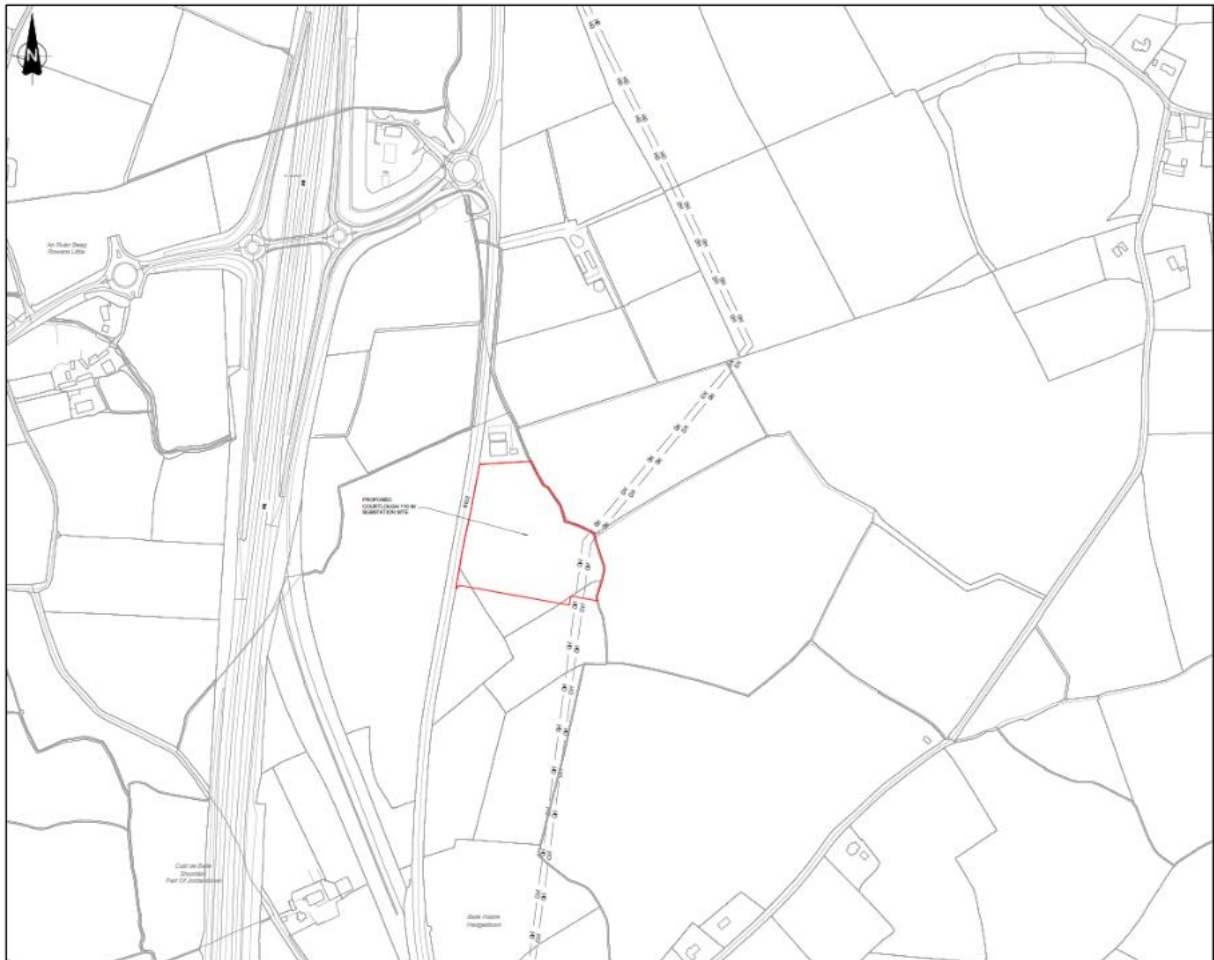


Figure 1 Site Location Map (PE492-D313-003-001-000)



Figure 2 Aerial Image of the site (Source: Google Maps)

The c. 2.73 ha site is located within the functional area of Fingal County Council at Hedgestown, Co. Dublin. It lies approximately 7 km south of Balbriggan and circa 100 m south of the M1 Business Park. Site access is proposed from the R132 road, which provides direct connectivity to the M1 motorway via exit 5. The surrounding area is primarily agricultural in character, with the nearest residential area located approximately 550 m to the south at Hedgestown.

3.2 Description of Proposed Development

The proposed development is at a preliminary design stage, and design elements are likely to change but the general technical requirements for the project which will remain unchanged – Refer to **Figure 3 Site Layout Plan**.

The proposed development constitutes the provision of a new 110 kV / 38 kV / MV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) electrical substation and will include the following elements:

Construction of:

- A new substation compound (c. 5,650 sq.m) with 2.6 m high palisade fence;
- A 110 kV GIS building with 8 x 110 kV bays.
- A 38 kV / MV GIS building with 14 x 38 kV bays and 14 MV bays.
- Two 110 / 38 kV 63 MVA transformers in transformer bays with associated electrical equipment.
- Two 38 kV / MV 15 MVA transformers in transformer bays with associated electrical equipment;
- Three Arc-Suppression Coils with associated electrical equipment;

- [illegible]

The substation will be a distribution substation with the 110 kV circuits feeding the substation, the 110 kV GIS building, 110 kV / 38 kV transformers, 38 kV / MV transformers and the MV

offloading circuits all forming part of the Distribution Network operated by ESB Networks DAC as the Distribution System Operator (DSO).

The substation will be owned by ESB Networks as the Distribution Asset Owner (DAO). It will not be a node on the national electricity transmission grid as operated by EirGrid in its capacity as the transmission system operator (TSO).

3.3 Purpose of the Proposed Development

In their Networks for Net Zero strategy, ESB Networks has committed to delivering a net zero ready electricity distribution network by 2040 to enable Ireland to achieve its legally binding net zero target by 2050. ESNB has published its Ten-Year Distribution Network Development Plan ([DNBP](#)) to provide information on the existing distribution network capacity, assess future capacity to accommodate customer needs and identify areas of the distribution network that requires investment to provide the necessary capacity and security supply across the distribution gird.

As outlined in the [DNBP](#), significant investment is required over the next decade to build the distribution capacity to enable:

- Connection of the renewable generation to our network that will generate the clean electricity.
- Increase in demand associated with significant population growth, new housing developments, economic growth, as well as a significant increase in demand due to electrification of heat, transport and industry.

Forecasted distribution system peak demand for Dublin North area is estimated at between 3.8 – 5.7 % for the period 2025-2030.

Following a network assessment and investment appraisal, ESNB have determined that a new 110 kV / 38 kV / MV distribution substation is required in the North Dublin area to provide network reinforcement and increased capacity to the area surrounding Balbriggan, Skerries, Rush, Lusk and Donabate.

The subject area is currently served by the Glasmore 110 kV substation which supplies the Loughshinny, Glasmore and Balbriggan 38 kV stations.

The Balbriggan, Skerries, Rush, Lusk and Donabate area is experiencing substantial growth driven by new residential, warehousing and logistics, and enterprise and employment developments. An assessment of the existing high-voltage network indicates that the existing substations do not have sufficient long-term capacity to cater for the forecasted load growth.

There are a number of drivers for this new 110 kV / 38 kV / MV station, all of which will contribute to additional capacity and improvements in the security of supply for the area. These include:

- Injection of new MV capacity to offload the existing 110 kV and 38 kV stations improving continuity and security of supply to the Dublin North area by providing additional network capacity, reducing loads at the existing substations and providing increased connectivity between substations.

- Provide additional capacity to facilitate the proposed Dart+ Coastal electrical program which aims to modernise and improve existing rail services in the greater Dublin area. The proposed substation will feed 6 No. 38 kV Dart+ substations at Donabate, Rusk, Lusk, Skerries (South and North) and Ballbriggan.
- The Fingal Council Development Plan (2023-2029) identifies significant development in the area served by the proposed substation including residential, warehousing and logistics, and enterprise and employment developments.
- Provide additional capacity required to accommodate future demand, including forecast industrial and commercial development.
- Provide regional capacity to support the electrification of heat and transport in line with Government policy targets.

Figure 4 Electrical Network in Surrounding Area shows the location of the proposed substation in the context of the surrounding 110 kV and 38 kV distribution network (source: [ESBN DNDP Part 2](#)).

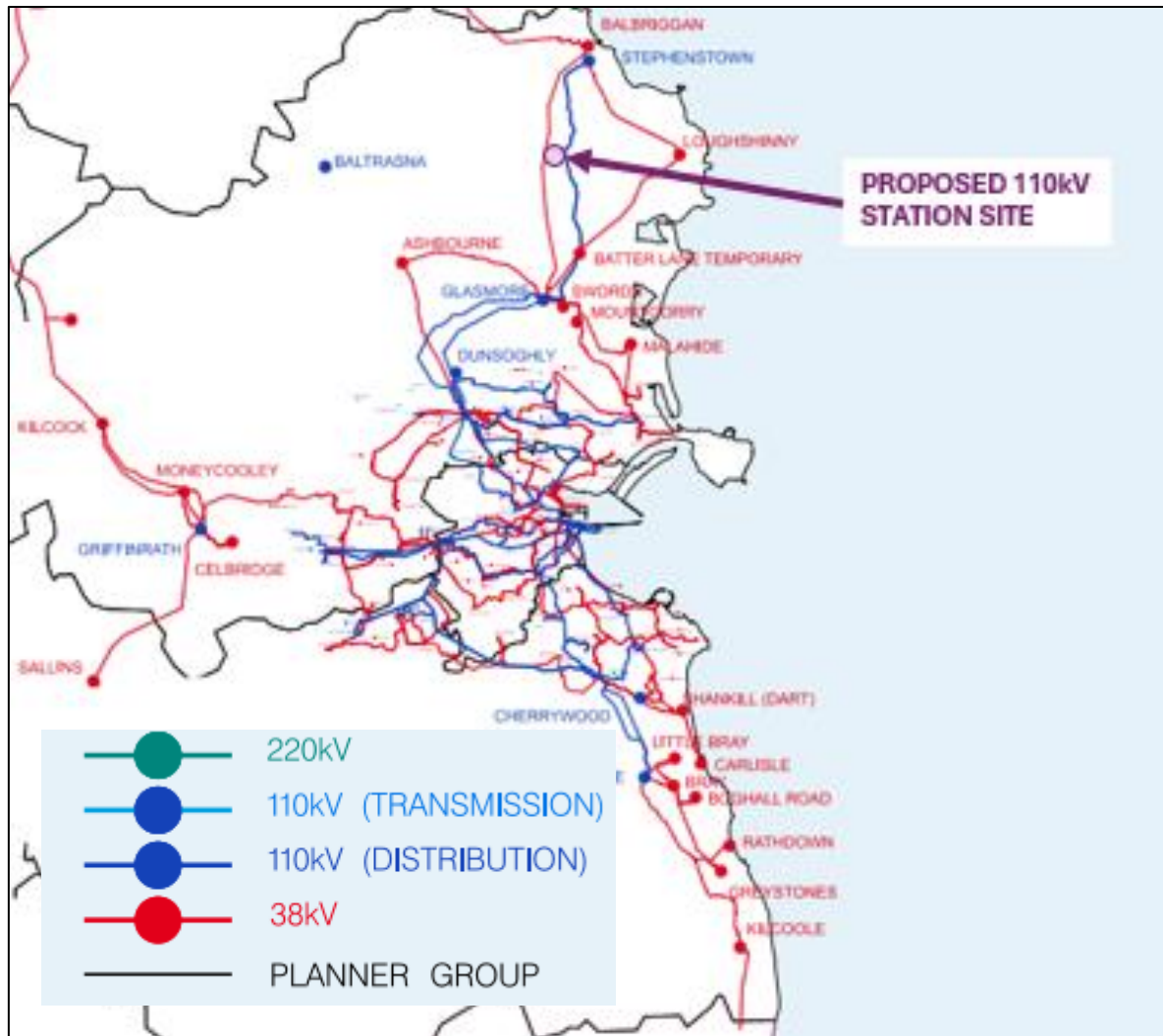


Figure 4 Electrical Network in Surrounding Area

4. Legislative Basis for Determination by ACP

4.1 Legislation

Section 182A (1) of the PDA, as amended provides that where a person, (thereafter referred to as the 'undertaker') intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, (hereafter referred to in this section and section 182B as 'proposed development'), the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of development under section 182B and shall apply to the Commission for such approval accordingly.

Subsection 9 states that 'transmission' in relation to electricity, shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 but, for the purposes of this section, the foregoing expression, in relation to electricity, shall also be construed as meaning the transport of electricity by means of:

- (a) a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more,
- (b) an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not.

Under Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 the following definitions are relevant:

- ‘Transmission’ is defined as: *“The transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, from one substation to another or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the Board may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board”.*
- ‘Distribution’ is defined as: *“The transport of electricity by means of a distribution system, that is to say, a system which consists of electric lines, electric plant, transformers and switch gear and which is used for conveying electricity to final customers”.*
- ‘Electric plant’ is defined as: *“Any plant, apparatus or appliance used for, or for the purposes connected with, the generation, transmission, distribution or supply of electricity other than – (a) An electric line; (b) A meter used for ascertaining the quantity of electricity supplied to any; c) premises, or; d) (c)an electrical appliance under the control of the consumer”.*

4.2 Assessment Against Legislation

4.2.1 Precedent Cases

The nature of the substation proposed in this application similar to one recently determined in An Coimisiún Pleanála Case reference: VC29S.316225 St Vincent's University Hospital Campus (SVUH), Elm Park, Dublin 4. That case was determined not to be Strategic Infrastructure Development on the following basis.

9.0 Assessment

- 9.1. The development comprises of the installation of a substation and associated underground cables at St. Vincent's University Hospital Campus, Elm Park, Dublin 4. Whilst the design is at preliminary stage, the technical requirements will consist of a new substation with an indoor 6 bay 110 KV and 16 bay MV gas insulated switchgear GIS station; two, 220m of 1000Al 110kV underground cables running from the new substation to the Blackrock – Ringsend 110kV circuit on Nutley Lane; and two, 400m, 400LPE MV underground cables running along the internal access road within the Campus connecting the new substation to the existing substations on the Campus. The new substation will be located at the vehicular entrance to the Campus, immediately west of the multi-storey car park. The purpose of the development is to provide the Campus with dual radial supply. The MIC will be increased from 3 to 9 MVA and will serve the increasing electricity demands of the Campus. A determination is sought from the Board as to whether or not the proposal is strategic infrastructure development. The prospective applicant considers that it is not strategic infrastructure development.
- 9.2. In deciding whether or not the proposed 110 kV/MV substation and ancillary works and equipment are or are not strategic infrastructure development, it should be noted that Section 2 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) provides

interpretations except where the context requires otherwise. Strategic infrastructure development means *inter alia* (d) any proposed development referred to in Section 182A(1). Under this Section, an undertaker shall apply to the Board for approval of a development comprising or for the purposes of energy transmission. Section 182A(9) states that 'transmission' shall be construed in accordance with Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 and shall also be construed as meaning *inter alia* the transport of electricity by means of a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110kV or more.

- 9.3. Transmission shall also be construed in accordance with Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 as *"the transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the Board may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board."* The Board refers to the Electricity Supply Board and the Commission refers to the Commission for Electricity Regulation. I concur with the prospective applicant that the proposed development would form part of the distribution rather than the transmission infrastructure.
- 9.4. As stated by the prospective applicant, there is no threshold under Section 182A(9) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) in respect of a substation. This Section explicitly refers to high voltage lines of 110kV or more. EirGrid has provided advice to An Bord Pleanála on previous occasions that "tail fed" developments would not function as part of the national grid despite the voltage of such being 110kV. Conversely, grid connections in proximity to transmission lines that essentially see power in the transmission line being diverted into the substation and back out again, thereby forming a node on the transmission system, have been determined by the Board in the past to constitute strategic infrastructure development. The purpose of the proposed substation is to increase load to the medical customer as an end user. It will not function as part of the national grid or act as a new node on the system.

- 9.5. The Board has also given consideration in previous cases as to whether or not a development in question is of strategic national importance. The long title of the 2006 Act provides for the making directly to An Bord Pleanála of applications for permission for "developments of strategic importance to the State". Section 37A(2) refers to 7 th Schedule development but generally describes strategic infrastructure development as falling within one or more of the following:
- (a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,
 - (b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Planning Framework or in any regional spatial and economic strategy in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate,
 - (c) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.
- 9.6. Having regard to the precedent set by the Board within similar cases as outlined above, I would agree that the current proposal would not be of strategic importance to the State or region, as it will only serve the Campus and is not a critical link for other strategic developments in the area and is not of strategic economic or social importance to the State or Region. The proposed development is not of a scale or of such importance that it would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of the objectives of the NPF and RSES. The proposal will be located within the catchment of a single planning authority (Dublin City Council) and will not have a significant effect on same.
- 9.7. Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development as described, to the stated purpose of the 2006 Act as set out in the long title, and to the general description and scale of strategic infrastructure development set out in section 37A(2), I conclude that the proposed development consisting of a 110kV/MV substation, 110kv underground grid connection to the adjoining Blackrock – Ringsend 110kV, and two, 400m, 400LPE MV underground cables running along the internal access road within the Campus connecting the new substation to the existing substations on the Campus circuit does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The proposed Courtlough substation will be broadly similar in nature and function to that described in the ACP Inspectors report above, which was determined not to constitute SID.

4.2.2 Assessment of this Development

The proposed development comprises a new 110 kV 'loop-In/loop out' electricity substation. The primary purpose and technical design of the substation is to serve the increasing electricity demands of the surrounding area as described in Section 3.3.

Section 182A (9) of the Act sets a threshold of 110 kV for a high voltage electricity transmission line to be considered strategic infrastructure. No threshold is set in respect of a substation.

The proposed substation constitutes 'electrical plant' as defined under section 4.1, as it will be used to distribute electricity. It falls within the definition of 'distribution' as its primary purpose is to convey electricity to final customers.

The new substation and associated underground cables will form part of the existing ESB Networks distribution system. It will not be a node on the national electricity transmission grid as operated by EirGrid in its capacity as the transmission system operator (TSO).

Given this project will connect to the distribution network it is submitted that the proposed development does not meet the definition of electricity transmission under section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999. Therefore, it is considered that it does not fall within section 182A of the PDA and should not be deemed to be strategic infrastructure development.

In recent pre-planning consultations it has been stated to us that ACP are considering that any connection of distribution substations to the transmission network fall within Section 182A. Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 defines transmission as follows:

"the transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the Board may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board."

Given the above definition, it is for ESB and the CRU to specify which lines and associated substations form part of the distribution system.

The Courtlough substation and electrical cables looping it into the distribution system is a line and substation designated by the Electricity Supply Board as being part of the distribution system.

Having regard to this designation by the ESB and in consideration of the wording of the relevant legislation, it is considered that the proposed development should not be considered to fall within the scope of Section 182A.



5. Conclusion

I trust this information will allow ACP to screen the proposed development in accordance with the provisions of section 182A of the PDA. If you have any queries and need an electronic copy of this submission, please contact me on janette.mcdonald@esb.ie or 086 0840492.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AOZ'.

Amy O'Connell
Planner
ESB Engineering and Major Projects

CC: Janette McDonald, ESB, EMP, Networks Planning and Consenting Team Leader
Email: janette.mcdonald@esb.ie

DRAWING ATTACHMENTS

- **PE492-D313-003-001-000 SITE LOCATION MAP 1:2500**
- **PE492-D313-003-002-000 SITE LAYOUT MAP 1:500**