



Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

Proposed Solar Farm in the townlands of Ardoghil,
Cornacarta, Doonacurry, Foygh, Kilcommock Glebe,
Ledwithstown, Mullawornia and Tirlickeen, Keenagh and
Ballymahon, County Longford.

Client: Foigha Solar Farm Limited

August 2026

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Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Statement

This Environmental Impact Assessment Screening has been prepared by HW Planning on behalf of Foigha Solar Farm Limited to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is required for a solar farm development in the townlands of Ardoghil, Cornacarta, Doonacurry, Foygh, Kilcommock Glebe, Ledwithstown, Mullawornia and Tirlickeen in County Longford. The original screening statement has been updated having regard to a request for further information by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

This statement should be read in conjunction with other application documents which have been prepared and submitted in support of this planning applicant which include the Planning and Environmental Statement, Appropriate Assessment Screening / Natura Impact Statement, Ecological Impact Assessment Report including Biodiversity Management Plan, Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, Glint & Glare Assessment, Noise Impact Assessment, EMF/EMC Report, Archaeological Impact Assessment and Construction and Environmental Management Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"1. A description of the project, including in particular:

a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole project and, where relevant, of demolition works.

b) a description of the location of the project, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.

2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project.

3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the project on the environment resulting from:

a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant.

b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.

4. The criteria of Annex III shall be taken into account, where relevant, when compiling the information in accordance with points 1 to 3."

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

Project Details

2.1 Description & Characteristics of Proposed Development

The application as submitted to Longford County Council comprised of the following:

A 10 Year Planning Permission for a solar farm and energy storage compound with a total area of circa 130 hectares in Cornacarta, Doonacurry, Foygh, Kilcommock Glebe, Ledwithstown and Tirlickeen (Townlands), Keenagh and Ballymahon, Co. Longford. The proposed development will consist of a solar farm comprising of c. 661,500 sq.m of solar photovoltaic panels on ground mounted frames, associated string inverters mounted to rear of panels and 42 no. single storey electrical transformer stations. The proposed development includes an energy storage compound consisting of 38 no. containerised energy storage modules and associated plant and equipment, 10 no. transformers, 2 no. auxiliary transformers, 1 no. Medium voltage control / switching substation and 1 no. spare parts container. The proposed development will also include underground electrical ducting and cabling within the development site and within the L1139, L1137, L1135, R392 and L1132 public roads, and crossing of the Royal Canal (either by open trench or horizontal directional drill), temporary construction compounds, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks (including clear span bridge over Donacurry River), landscaping, drainage and all ancillary development works and apparatus necessary to facilitate the proposed development. Construction and operational access will be via 5 no. existing entrances from the L1139, L1137, L1135 and L1132 which will be upgraded and 2 no. new entrances from the L11351. The operational lifespan of the solar farm will be 40 years and planning permission is requested for this duration. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared and will be submitted to the Planning Authority with the application.

SOLAR PANELS

The working title for the project is Foigha Solar Farm. The civil works for the panels themselves use a simple, ground-mounted system that avoids undue ground disturbance and works with the existing site topography. The PV panels will sit on angled racks comprised of galvanized steel arranged in portrait or landscape configuration depending on the final system deployed¹. It is envisaged that these will be screw or driven-piled following geotechnical assessment². Across the majority of the site, the panels will be positioned on the rack at a minimum height of 0.8 m above the ground and rise to a maximum height of up to 2.44 m. In focused sections of the site, the minimum point of the panels will be raised to 1.6 m above the ground rising to a maximum height at the back of the panel of 3.4 m, having regard to the findings of the completed flood risk assessment.

¹ Refer to technical drawings for panel and array system options. Final technical specification to be agreed with Longford County Council prior to construction. The final design will be subject to standard micro-siting arising from site survey work.

² The exact nature of the foundations will be determined at detailed design stage. Other alternative foundations arrangements include ballasting systems and piles. Final foundation type will be confirmed with Longford County Council prior to construction.

The PV panels will be orientated to the south in order to capture maximum solar energy. The panels will be positioned at a tilt angle between 15-25 degrees from the horizontal having regard to natural site topographical and orientation conditions to ensure the best solar absorption. The panels will be stationary with no movable parts. Low voltage direct current cabling will connect the panels to the inverter/transformer stations across the site.

INVERTERS / TRANSFORMERS / SWITCHING SUBSTATION

A total of 42 no. transformer stations are incorporated into the layout to convert direct current generated by the PV panels into alternating current which can be subsequently used by the electricity network. These units are manufactured offsite and delivered installation ready. These units are 3.88 m in height and will be installed on a hardcore or concrete slab base. The transformer units are equipped with a weather station, ventilation and a security light.

The proposed development includes c.280 no. string inverter units. These are small units which are mounted at the top underside of the solar panels and positioned at the end of the array rows. These units collect the electricity from the solar panels before onward passage to the transformers.

The design includes 1 no. medium voltage substation within the energy storage compound which will 'step-up' electricity produced by the solar farm for supply to the national grid. This is a modular unit 3 m high and 26 sq.m in area which will be delivered to the site for installation.

UNDERGROUND CABLING

The solar farm comprises of a small number of interconnected agricultural fields. Underground cabling ducts will be laid across the site for the purposes of connecting the solar arrays, inverter / transformers and on-site medium voltage substation. The cabling will be trenched and contained within the footprint of the internal access tracks where possible. All ducting will be banded where necessary and will be laid in compliance with method statements set out in the submitted Construction and Environmental Management Plan.

As per the submitted plans, the solar farm field parcels which do not directly adjoin each other will be connected by means of 33kV underground interconnector cabling in identified public roads (c.1,311 metres of cabling). The laying of this cabling will be subject to road opening licence procedures to be agreed with Longford County Council. The cable route includes a crossing of the Royal Canal either by open trench or horizontal directional drill. A letter of consent has been provided by Waterways Ireland for this crossing, with the final method to be agreed subject to planning consent. Both crossing methods are described and assessed in the application³. The 33kV collector network considers watermain and culvert crossings, as described in the submitted plans, technical details and construction methodology by TLI Group.

ACCESS

A compacted gravel access track up to 3.5 m wide will provide internal access to the solar arrays and associated infrastructure. This will extend to approximately 9,000 linear metres of track across the land parcels. Stripped soil arising from the construction of these access tracks will be sustainably reused across the site as part of landscaping, filling in the verges of access tracks and grass reinstatement in the areas of temporary construction compounds.

It is proposed to access the site via 7 no. entrances 5 no. of which are existing entrances from the L1139, L1137, L1135 and L1132 which will be upgraded to include widening, small elements of

³ Refer to Construction Methodology by TLI Group.

hedgerow removal, and provision of roadside drainage, as described in the submitted plans. The design includes 2 no. new entrances from the L11351. These entrances are located opposite each other to facilitate managed cross movement between two proximate field parcels particularly during the construction phase. This will avoid additional traffic movements on the wider local road network during the construction phase. The design retains 2 no. existing entrances in Parcel 1 and 2, but these will not be used for construction or operational phases of the project for traffic access, with provision made for turning areas within the internal fields at these locations.

OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

A perimeter fence up to 2.2 m in height will be erected to provide security and restrict unauthorised entry to the solar farm. This fence will be stock proof in nature, sympathetic to the agricultural character of the site. The footings for the fence will either be pre-moulded or localised in-situ concrete, to be determined once a contractor is appointed. The installed fencing will incorporate mammal friendly access, with a maximum 100 mm gap retained at the bottom between the fence and the ground, as per the submitted technical plans.

The proposed development will be an unmanned facility; however, it will be monitored 24 hours a day remotely by the Applicant's operation system and the Engineer Procurement and Construction provider. The site will be subject to routine inspections. The CCTV will be orientated towards this infrastructure rather than any third-party lands.

ENERGY STORAGE COMPOUND

The proposed development will be contained within a secure, fenced development compound of approximately 8,900 m² in area, enclosed by a 2.4m high palisade perimeter fence.

The layout includes 38 no. grouped container modules housing electrical and control equipment for energy storage. These units are manufactured offsite and delivered installation ready. These will have a maximum floor area of approximately 22.5 m². The energy storage modules are low lying in nature, and may be sourced in a 'moss green' colour (RAL colour code of 6005 or similar) aiding assimilation in the local landscape⁴. The design includes 1 no. medium voltage substation within the energy storage compound which will 'step-up' electricity produced by the solar farm for supply to the national grid. This is a modular unit 3 m high and 26 sq.m in area which will be delivered to the site for installation. 10 no. transformers and 2 no. auxiliary transformers support the energy storage function on site.

The system as proposed will incorporate battery modules connected to inverters that convert direct current (DC) to alternating current (AC) in turn connecting to grid infrastructure via associated transformers within the compound. Fire protection for the facility will be designed in accordance with required standards. The level of protection is subject to detailed design by the plant's supplier, utilising industry safety standards and certification.

LANDSCAPING & BIODIVERSITY

A total of 317 linear metres of hedgerow will be permanently removed throughout the site to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling⁵. This will be offset by 114 linear metres of new hedgerow planting (Type 2), as well as the bolstering of an additional 18,192 linear

⁴ Final colour will be subject to available electrical infrastructure. Prepared photomontages illustrate in grey.

⁵ The figure for hedgerow removal excludes that required for the future provision of the substation which will be the subject of a future SID application. 180 metres of additional hedgerow will be removed for the construction of the substation.

metres (Type 1) where necessary, to fill any gaps in existing hedgerows. 10,254 square metres of native woodland will be planted throughout the site. Ecology on the site will be further fostered to deliver significant biodiversity gains to the receiving environment through the establishment of focused ecological biodiversity areas and species rich grasslands.

The solar farm will contribute directly to a carbon dioxide emission reduction of 27,952 tonnes per annum or the equivalent of approximately 1.18 million tonnes of CO₂ over the 40 year lifetime of the project.

OTHER WORKS

The solar farm and energy storage compound facility will connect to the transmission network via a 110 kV substation 'loop-in / loop-out' grid connection as detailed below. The grid connection for the solar farm will be the subject of a future planning consenting process. This is referenced within this solar farm and energy storage compound planning application for information purposes only, to ensure that a full, robust assessment can be made of the entire development.

110 kV substation and 'loop-in / loop-out' grid connection

The solar farm will connect to the Lanesboro / Mullingar 110kV overhead line by means of new 110kV substation. This includes an underground cable route of c. 292m. The substation will include a 'loop-in / loop-out' underground 110kV cable grid connection which will connect into the existing Lanesboro / Mullingar 110kV overhead lines via 2 no. new Interface Towers. This connection method will constitute a new node of the transmission network, connecting the proposed substation and associated solar farm generation to the National Grid. Please refer to the TLI Construction Methodology Statement for further detail.

The 110kV substation is based on EirGrid design specifications. The substation will consist of the EirGrid and Independent Power Producers (IPP) control room buildings and high voltage electrical equipment including a 110/33kV Transformer (TRAFO) with associated equipment.

All works will be undertaken to EirGrid / ESB specifications and in full compliance with environmental and other mitigation measures contained in the final Construction and Environmental Management Plan.

Longford County Council Further Information Request

Longford County Council issued a Request for Further Information (RFI) on the 20/02/2025. At the expressed request of the Council's Roads Office, the proposed layout of the solar farm has been amended in a number of small areas. These design changes were detailed on the submitted revised site layout plans, and in summary, comprised the following:

- Relocation of entrance on L1132 to provide for increased sightlines;
- Provision of identified improvement works on the L1135 and L1139 comprising the setting back of existing boundaries at 3 no. locations in support of improved forward visibility. Removed hedgerow to be reinstated behind revised boundaries.
- Consequent minor revision to solar panel layout in the identified areas, providing for a small reduction in overall panels;
- Provision has also been made for temporary construction phase passing bays on the L1132, as identified in the Site Access Report;
- The proposed landscaping figures have been altered as a result of the design revisions. A total of c. 332 linear metres of hedgerow will be permanently removed

throughout the site to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling⁶. This will be offset by 2,621 linear metres of new hedgerow planting (Type 2), as well as the bolstering of an additional 16,613 linear metres where necessary, to fill any gaps in existing hedgerows. To facilitate improved forward visibility on the local road network, c.285 linear metres of hedgerow will be removed and reinstated fully behind the relocated boundary.

An Coimisiún Pleanála Request for Further Information

An Coimisiún Pleanála issued a Request for Further Information dated 27th February 2026 related to 2 no. items, namely:

1. Consideration of firewater requirements and associated management for the energy storage component of the project, reflecting the relatively new nature of such technology in Ireland.
2. The need for additional archaeological investigations.

The completed work packages referenced above have resulted in some small design changes to the layout of the proposed development, as follows:

- Provision of archaeological buffers to 10 no. areas providing for a reduction in panelled area of the proposed solar farm of c.404 sqm. Minor localised relocation of tracks / supporting infrastructure in some cases.
- Alterations to the Energy Storage compound layout for firewater provision and management comprising, localized reorganization of plant⁷, addition of water storage tank and hydrants, compound drainage network, including water attenuation pond, and rainwater discharge soakaway.

The proposed solar farm will have a maximum export capacity (MEC) of 85MW.

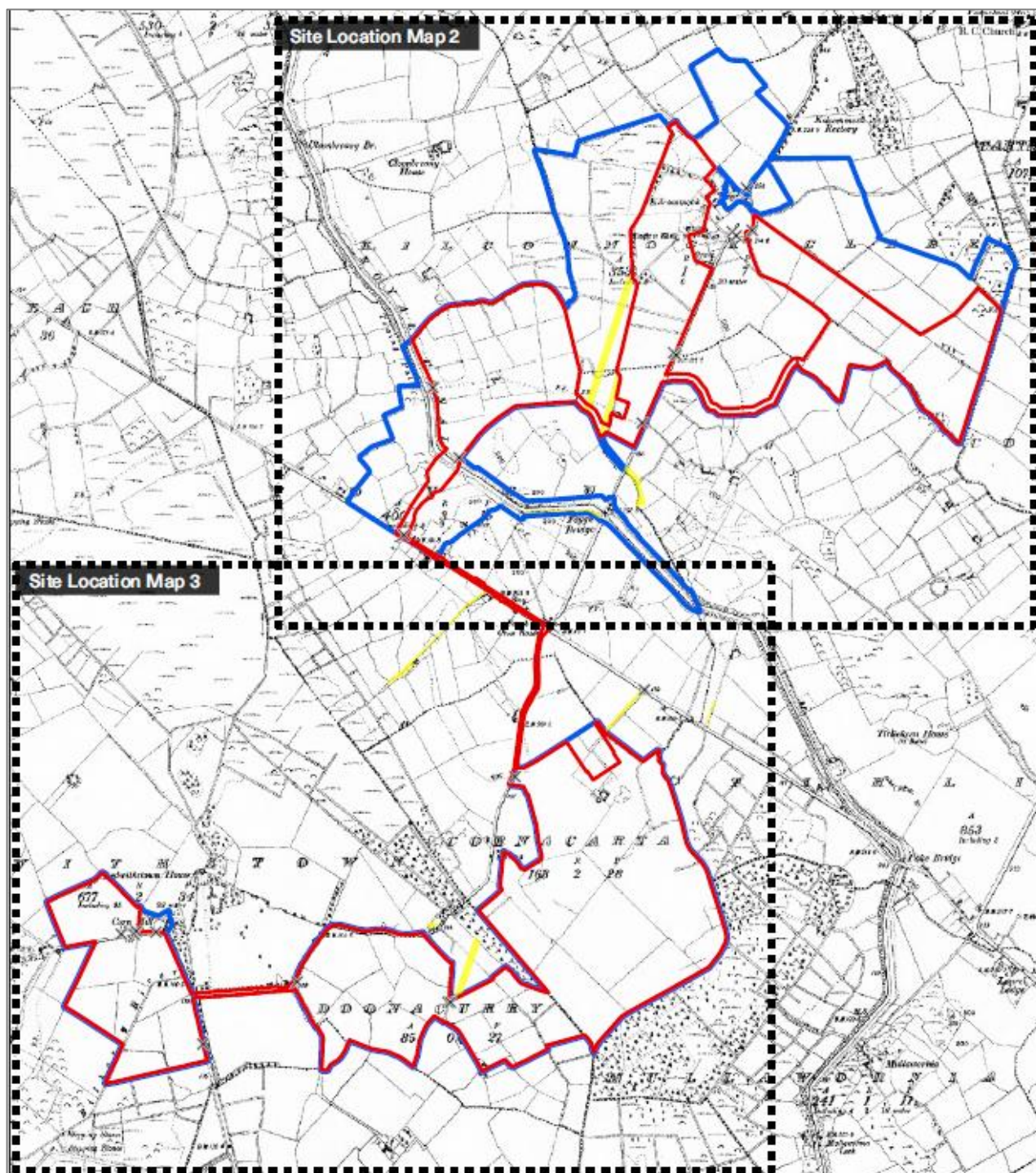
DESCRIPTION OF LOCATION OF SITE

The subject site extends across four townlands covering a site area of 130 hectares, inclusive of underground cabling connections on public roads and private lands. The lands are located circa 2km northeast of Lough Ree. Ballymahon, the nearest urban centre, is c. 4km to the southeast. Longford town is 13km north of the subject site. The application site includes several land parcels located north and south of the R392 regional road, as identified in Figure 1. It is proposed to access the site via 9 no. entrances (including 2 no. new entrances). The proposed development is intersected by the Royal Canal to the north of the R392. The solar farm lands comprise a mix of arable and pasture agricultural farmlands consisting of small to large sized fields contained by mature tree-lined and well-maintained hedgerow boundaries.

The proposed substation and grid connection will be subject to a future SID application to An Bord Pleanála, however they are assessed in this report as part of a 'one-project' approach. The proposed grid connection comprises a 'loop-in / loop-out' underground 110kV cable grid connection which will connect into the existing Lanesboro / Mullingar 110kV overhead line by means of a new 110kV substation.

⁶ An increase of 15 linear metres on that submitted.

⁷ Revised compound layout includes 32 no. energy storage modules, 8 no. transformers, 2 no. auxiliary transformers, 1 no. medium voltage control / switching substation, 2 no. spare parts containers, and 1 no. office container.



2.2 Environmental Sensitivities

2.2.1 Landscape

The Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 provides a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) which aims to assist in achieving sustainable development through the promotion of a unified approach to landscape planning and management. The assessment seeks to improve understanding of Longford's landscape in order to bring about more effective outcomes which consider sensitivity and capacity for change in the decision-making process.

The LCA sets out 7 no. distinct landscape types within Longford. As shown below, the proposed development is largely contained within the 'Open Agricultural' landscape type, with the southern extent of the site entering the 'Peatlands' landscape type. Both the 'Peatlands' and 'Open Agriculture' landscape types are regarded as having a low landscape sensitivity, with exception for areas in the vicinity of the Royal Canal which have a higher landscape sensitivity. The Royal Canal immediately passes the southern boundary of the proposed northern parcels. The study area assessed within the submitted LVIA encompasses the areas of the Royal Canal Corridor within the vicinity of the proposed solar farm.

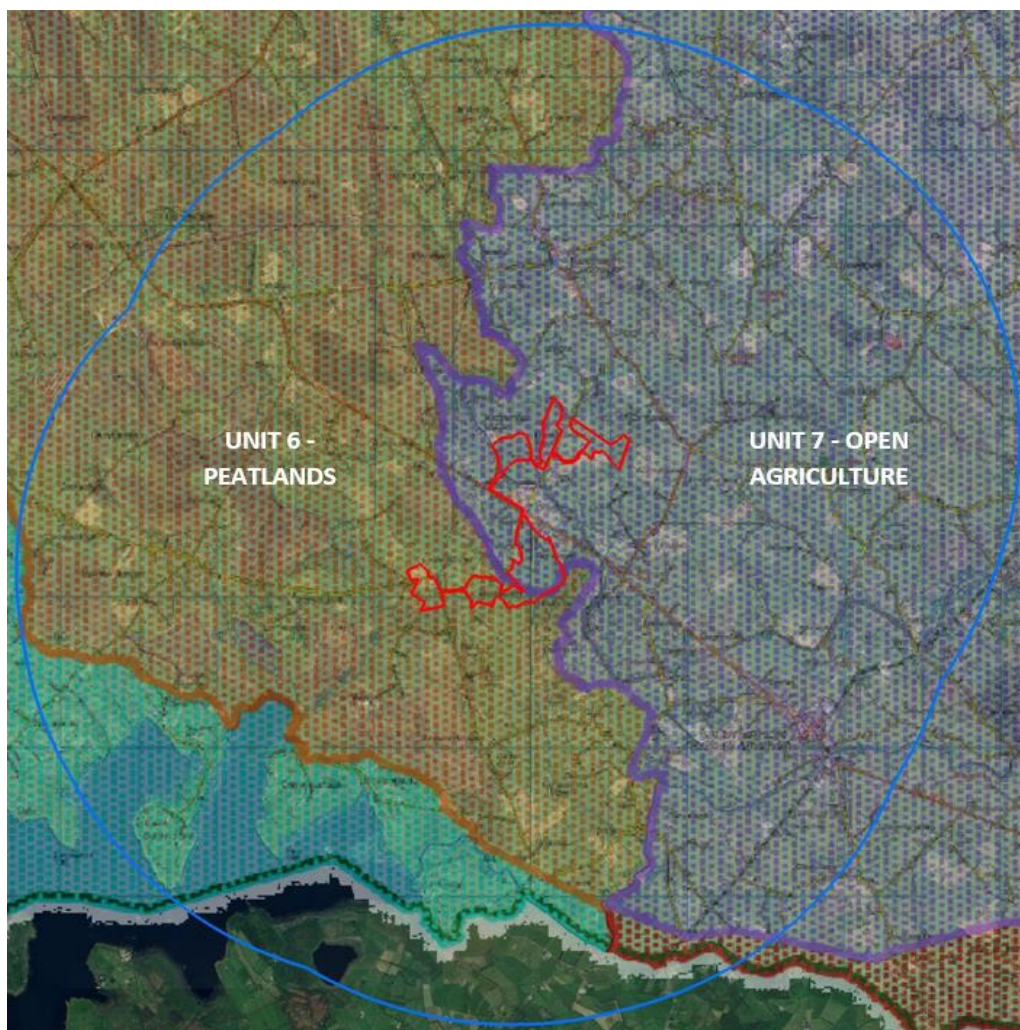


Figure 02: Designated Landscape Character Areas, Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027

The LVIA includes detailed zone of theoretical visibility mapping. While the land-take for the project may be considered large in area, the digital surface model (DSM) ZTV analysis confirms that there is

no potential for views of the proposed development in its entirety within the immediate study area. Indeed, much of the potential visibility within the central study area relates to views of up to 20% of the proposed panel array, with small, isolated areas of higher potential panel visibility located in the immediate surrounds of the site. This includes visibility of the proposal from along the Royal Canal, as only partial views of the proposed development will be available from the segment of the Royal Canal Corridor which abuts the proposed solar farm. The visual impact on the viewpoint taken from the Royal Canal Corridor is reduced to 'Negligible' in the post mitigation scenario.

2.2.2 Amenity

As with any new development, there is the potential for impacts on adjacent residential properties in the local area. To address this potential issue a suite of technical reports in relation to landscape and visual, glint and glare, noise, and EMF/EMC have been prepared. Based on this analysis, the design of the proposed development, inclusive of the proposed 'loop-in / loop-out' grid connection and substation, have been rigorously tested against a number of key assessments and the proposal will protect the amenity of existing residents in the area.

2.2.3 Biodiversity & European Sites

The proposed development site is currently considered to range from local importance (lower to higher level) to international importance as it contains some semi-natural habitat (hedgerows/treelines and a river) and regularly occurring species which are protected under the Wildlife Acts (1976 - 2012), as well as having hydrological connectivity to Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). There will be no permanent impacts on semi-natural habitats and the proposed landscaping plan includes new hedgerow planting and hedgerow enhancement which will serve to enhance overall habitat and species diversity on the site. The development footprint will be primarily confined to the open agricultural grassland fields, which are considered to be of lower local ecological value.

No significant effects on designated sites, habitats, flora or fauna have been identified as a result of the proposed development. This is reflected by the low number of mitigation measures considered necessary for this particular project. Any identified risks are relatively minor in nature and largely related to potential run-off from the construction site which will be proactively managed during the construction phase. Furthermore, the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) in support of the Appropriate Assessment process, objectively concludes that, with the implementation of mitigation measures, no significant effects arising from the development will impact upon any Natura 2000 sites.

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

2.2.4 Traffic Impact

It is proposed to access the solar farm via 5 no. existing entrances from the L1139, L1137, L1135, and L1132 which will be upgraded and 2 no. new entrances from the L11351. Appropriate sightlines are available for all entrances. A swept-path analysis has confirmed that HGVs can safely access and egress the site during the construction phase.

Section 10 of the Site Access Report includes a number of focused mitigation measures to minimize the impact on existing road users arising from the temporary construction phase. These include a temporary manual-controlled stop/go system, advance warning signage and a booking system for site deliveries to avoid potential access conflicts.

2.2.5 Noise

The application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment Report by DK Partnership which has been prepared having regard to

- Environmental Protection Agency NG4: Guidance note for Noise: Licence Applications, Surveys and Assessments in Relation to Scheduled Activities
- BS4142 2014 A1+ 2019 Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound
- ISO 1996-1:2016 Acoustics — Description, measurement and assessment of environmental noise — Part 1: Basic quantities and assessment procedures
- British Standard BS 5228-1:2009+A1:2014 Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites – Noise
- British Standard BS7385: 1993: Evaluation and measurement for vibration in buildings Part 2: Guide to damage levels from ground borne vibration, and;
- British Standard BS5228-2: 2009 + A1: 2014: Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites – Vibration.

The noise generating equipment associated with the solar farm project are the inverters/transformer stations, and the substation. As illustrated on the site layout plans, this plant is located centrally, away from local receptors. This is reflected in the findings of the noise assessment with the modelled noise levels at the facades of neighbouring dwellings well below the recommended EPA/WHO/BS8233 guidelines of 55dB during day time and 45dB at night time.

The construction phase of development due to its nature is temporary and therefore any potential noise impacts will be short term. All construction works will be carried out during the day-time period between the 8.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am to 6.00pm on Saturday. No construction activities will occur outside these hours unless agreed in writing 24 hours prior by Longford County Council. Potential noise impact will be controlled in accordance with all relevant British Standards Codes of practices such as: BS 5228-1: 1997 “Noise Control on Construction and Open Sites -Part 1”; BS 5228:2009 and A1:2014 “Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites”.

2.2.6 Heritage

A detailed Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment of the proposal has been prepared by John Cronin & Associates and is enclosed with this application. The assessment includes a study of the archaeological and historical background of the proposed development site and the surrounding environs. This included information from the Record of Monuments and Places of County Longford, the topographical files within the National Museum and all available cartographic and documentary sources for the area. A number of site and field inspections were also conducted with the aim of identifying any previously unrecorded features of archaeological or historical interest.

As set out in the report, there are no recorded archaeological sites within the proposed development area and the SMR Zone associated with any sites do not encroach on the site, additionally no indications of the presence of previously unrecorded archaeological features within the site were identified from the desk based assessment or from the site inspection and drone survey.

The layout of the proposed solar farm and energy storage compound has been designed having regard to site inspections and analysis undertaken. A strategy of mitigation by avoidance has been

adopted. The Archaeological Impact Assessment carried out found that there are no recorded archaeological sites within the proposed development nor does the associated Zone of Notification of any recorded site cross the proposed development boundary. No traces of any unrecorded archaeological features were noted within the proposed development site during field inspections carried out. The proposed layout of the solar farm provides for focused setbacks and landscaping measures to further mitigate any potential for impacts on Kilcommock Old Church at Kilcommock Glebe that are within 100m of the proposed development.

Programmes of geophysical survey and testing have been completed. A total of 129 test trenches with a combined length of 7,047 meters were excavated, which targeted identified geophysical anomalies and proposed hard standing areas / discretionary additional testing areas. Across the test trenches excavated, areas of archaeological material, or probable archaeological material, were identified in 10 instances. Spreads of pyrolithic material, of the type found in association with Fulachtaí Fia, were identified in three trenches. Possible kilns were identified in three trenches. Two possible hearths and two possible pits were also identified. Six of these features were found based on anomalies identified from the geophysical survey. The design of the solar farm has been revisited having regard to the additional archaeological investigations undertaken. Development buffers have been introduced around the 10 no. archaeological features.

2.2.7 Soil

The national Teagasc Subsoils dataset classifies subsoils based on the Geological Survey of Ireland Quaternary sediment types. The site area comprises of a mix of peat and fine loamy drift with limestones. There are no karst landforms or rock outcrops indicated on the site. Potential impacts on land, soil and geology in the absence of appropriate construction phase measures include the following:

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

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

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

2.2.8 Flood Risk Assessment

The available historical 6-inch maps (pre-1900), and the historic 25-inch map series does not indicate any historical or anecdotal instances of flooding within the boundary of the proposed solar farm development site. The OPW National Indicative Flood Mapping (NIFM) and Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) data sets show an indicative extent of fluvial flooding associated with the Ledwithstown Stream, the Donacurry Stream, and the Kiltaffrey Stream in the vicinity of the proposed solar farm development site for the 1% AEP (1 in 100 year) and 0.1% AEP (1 in 1000 year) fluvial flood events.

As part of a precautionary approach, PV Modules within parts of the proposed solar farm development site that overlap with the delineated fluvial flood extent will use raised PV panels at those locations. The submitted Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment indicates that the proposed solar farm development is not expected to result in an adverse impact to the hydrological regime of

the area or increase flood risk elsewhere and is therefore considered to be appropriate from a flood risk perspective.

2.2.9 Fire Risk

The design, and specifically the energy storage component has been subject to review by a specialist fire risk consultant. It includes firefighting water and firewater storage requirements for the operational facility in compliance with the UK National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System Planning Guidance. The development has been informed by the submitted Battery Safety Management Plan as well as Emergency Response Plan.

2.2.10 Cumulative Impacts

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

In addition to the proposed solar farm, there are a number of similar solar farms and projects permitted in the wider area. A list of these projects have been included in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of relevant planning applications in the area

Ref. Number	Distance from Subject Site	Status	Description
PL24/5	c. 400m	Granted Permission – 27/08/2024	The proposed construction of a holiday lodge site consisting of 9 no. 3 bed lodges, 4 no. 2 bed lodges, a manager's office, plant room and laundry, site entrance, internal road & footpaths, lighting, play area, boundary fence, wastewater treatment system, percolation area & all ancillary site works
ABP-317761	c. 2.5km	Granted Permission – 22/04/2024	Construction of a showroom building and all associated site works. Demolition of showroom to the south-west of the proposed building.
PL23/60195	C. 2.5km	Granted Permission – 26/02/2024	The proposed construction of an industrial/commercial/warehousing unit which was previously granted full planning permission under planning reference number PL04/1253 to the rear of existing car showroom & garage, connection to existing services and all ancillary site works
ABP-314886	c. 6.53km	Granted Permission – 19/10/2022	198 lodges and new facilities and extensions/alterations to buildings and all associated site works.
PL22/225	c. 5.3km	Granted Permission – 10/11/2022	An integrated constructed wetland (ICW) over a total area of 5.58 ha located within the existing LRP ADF site, including formation of wetland cells, associated works and access roads using onsite soils. The development will include landscaping both within the wetland cells and surrounding area. The purpose of the ICW is for the management and treatment of leachate arising from the ADF, which is planned as part of their closure, restoration and aftercare management plan. Any discharge waters following treatment through the ICW will flow to two open water cells for containment. LRP station and the ADF are licenced by the Environmental

			Protection Agency under an Industrial Emissions (IE) licence (Ref. P0610-03). A Natura impact statement (NIS) has been prepared for the purposes of this project.
PL20/303	c. 10km	Granted Permission – 24/03/2021	The filling of lands with clean, inert soil and stone for the purposes of the restoration of a 10.4 hectare quarry to agricultural use; and all associated ancillary facilities at Tennalough, Carrickboy, Co Longford. This development also requires a Waste Facility Permit and an application will be made to Longford County Council for a Waste Facility Permit
ABP-307880	c. 3.64km	Granted Permission – 14/12/2020	Construction of 37 dwelling houses.
ABP-322485	c. 7.8km	Ongoing Case – Decision Due 04/11/2025	22 no. Wind Turbines & 1 no. 110kV Electrical Substation & All Associated Works.
ABP-322204	c. 8.3km	Ongoing Case – Decision Due 05/08/2025	Substitute Consent relating to peat extraction on lands within Derrayadd, Derryaroge, and Bannow Bogs, Co. Longford.
ABP-302597	c.14km	Grant Permission – 19/03/2019	Permission for the development at this site, the existing Cloon to Lanesboro 110 kV Overhead Line which is approximately 65 kilometres long.
501476	c. 1.6km	Ongoing Case – Decision Due 07/10/2026	10 year permission for a solar farm and energy storage compound with a total area of circa 111.1ha. This development is covered by the provisions of the Renewable Energy Directive III (directive(EU) 2023/2024). A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been submitted to the Planning Authority with the application.

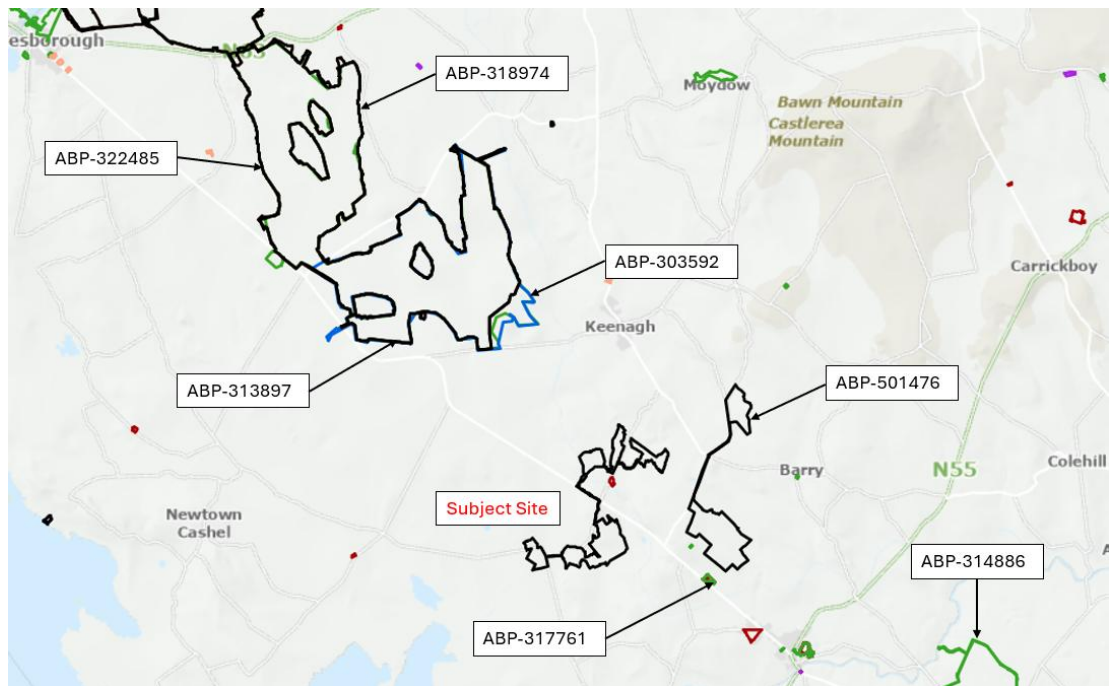


Figure 03: Extract from An Coimisiún Pleanála's Online Planning Enquiry System, as accessed 11th August 2026.

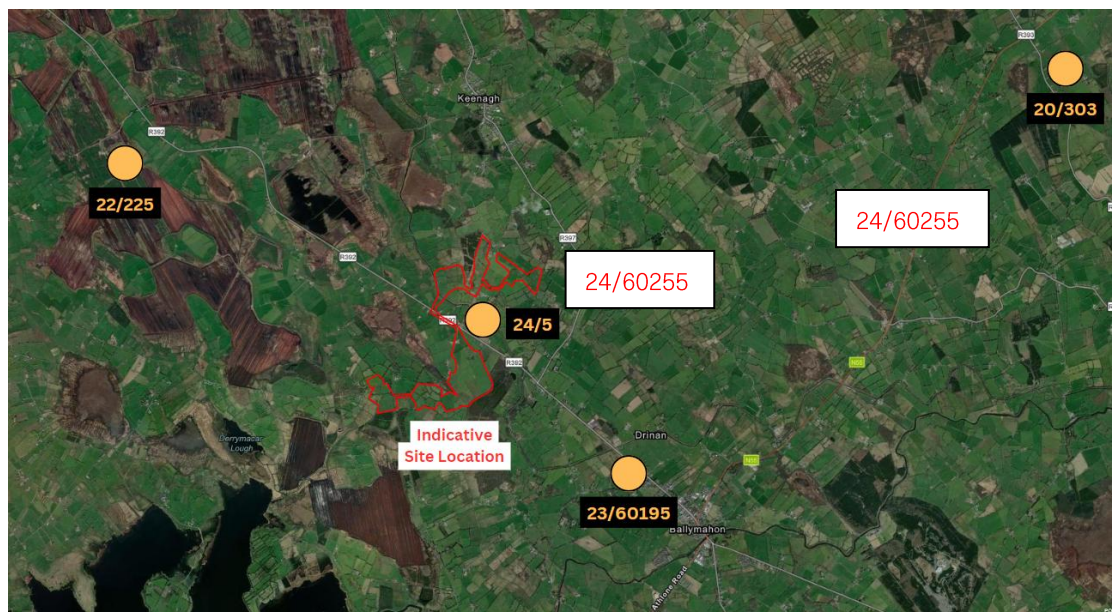


Figure 04: Extract from Longford County Council's Online Planning Enquiry System, as accessed 11th August 2026.

The potential for cumulative and in-combination effects on the designated sites in the zone of influence were fully considered. The assessments carried out as part of the developments in the wider area were consulted.

Taking the above into consideration, along with the proposed environmental management and controls integrated into the project design and for other projects in the area, no potential cumulative or in-combination ecological effects have been identified. There is some potential for positive cumulative effects on local biodiversity associated with complementary landscaping commitments included as part of this development and at the adjoining solar farm site.

2.1 Description of Aspects of the Environment likely to be affected by the project

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

- Construction traffic contributing to traffic congestion and road safety hazards on the local road network.
- Adverse health and amenity impacts arising from noise and air quality pollution during construction phase.
- Disturbance and habitat loss of fauna.
- Potential impact on designated Natura 2000 sites.
- Possible impact on archaeological heritage.
- Potential fire risk.
- Potential landscape impact.
- Possible residential amenity and visual impacts.

These matters have been considered in full as part of the design and assessment of the subject proposal, with a range of positive measures produced in response, including:

- Provision of a detailed Landscape Design Strategy and Landscaping Proposals.
- Preparation of Glint and Glare Report.
- Preparation of a Noise Impact Assessment Report.
- Preparation of an EMC/EMF Report.
- Provision of an AA Screening / Natura Impact Statement, Ecological Impact Assessment Report.
- Preparation of Biodiversity Management Plan.
- Provision of a Site Access Report.
- Preparation of Battery Safety Management Plan as well as Emergency Response Plan.
- Preparation of a Construction and Environmental Management Plan.
- Preparation of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

2.2 Expected Residues/Emissions/Production of Waste

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

production in conjunction with the use of licensed waste disposal facilities and contractors does not cause concern for likely significant impacts on the environment.

At operational stage, there are no significant mitigations measures or methods to be undertaken in order to reduce likely significant impacts on the environment in order to complete the proposed solar farm.

2.3 Use of Natural Resources – Soil/Land/Water/Biodiversity

There will be no significant likely impacts on the environment in relation to natural resources in the area. The main use of natural resources will be land. A temporary use in the landscape, the scale of natural resources used both in construction and operation is not such that would cause concern in terms of significant likely impacts on the environment.

As outlined in the prepared Appropriate Assessment Screening / Natura Impact Statement, there is no likelihood of significant impacts on the nearest European sites.

Assessment of EIA Requirement

3.1 Schedule 5 Criteria

Article 93 and Schedule 5 of the 2001 Planning and Development Regulations sets out the classes of development for which a planning application must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

Part 1 and Part 2 Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 defines the categories and thresholds of developments requiring EIA.

3.1.1 Schedule 5 'Part 1' Projects

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

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

Solar farms, energy storage or substations or underground/overground cable grid connections do not meet the definition of a thermal power station or combustion installation. Therefore, this project type is not applicable.

2(b) A nuclear power station or other nuclear reactor including the dismantling or decommissioning of such a power station or reactor¹ (except a research installation for the production and conversion of fissionable and fertile materials, whose maximum power does not exceed 1 kilowatt continuous thermal load).

Solar farms, energy storage or substations or underground cable grid connections do not meet the definition of a thermal power station or combustion installation. Therefore, this project type is not applicable.

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

The proposed development will connect to the existing Lanesboro / Mullingar 110kV overhead line via a proposed substation and a 'loop-in / loop-out' underground 110kV cable grid connection which will connect into the existing overhead line via 2 no. new Interface Towers. There is no additional length to this overhead line proposed as part of the subject development. Therefore, this project type is not applicable.

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

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

3.1.2 Schedule 5 'Part 2' Projects

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

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

Solar farms, energy storage, substations or underground cable grid connections do not meet the definition of an industrial installation as per the meaning of the 3(a).

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

Solar farms, energy storage, substations or underground cable grid connections do not meet the definition of an industrial installation as per the meaning of the 3(b).

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

Solar farms, energy storage, substations or underground cable grid connections do not meet the definition of a wind farm.

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

Solar farms, energy storage, substations or underground cable grid connections do not meet the definition of an industrial estate.

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

Solar farms, energy storage, substations or underground cable grid connections do not meet the definition of an urban development as per the meaning of 10(b)(iv).

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

The proposed development will include access tracks comprising of permeable hardcore which does not fall within a road definition as per the Roads Acts 1993, as amended.

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

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

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

Projects for the restructuring of rural land holdings, undertaken as part of a wider proposed development, and not as an agricultural activity that must comply with the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations 2011, where the

length of field boundary to be removed is above 4 kilometres, or where re-contouring is above 5 hectares, or where the area of lands to be restructured by removal of field boundaries is above 50 hectares.

At 332 metres, the length of hedgerow to be permanently removed to facilitate the proposed development is significantly below the identified 4-kilometre threshold.

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

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

The above interpretation has been corroborated by means of direct engagement with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine who confirmed their view that small, focused sections of hedgerow removal is not tantamount to substantive field boundary removal which would materially change the structure of a large farm holding. This point is reinforced in itself by the presence of the 4-kilometre field boundary threshold, which greatly exceeds the 322 metres of removal proposed as part of the Foigha Solar Farm.

Based on the foregoing, the proposed development does not meet any mandatory threshold for EIA. The recent statutory instrument does mean that farm due to the removal of 322 m of hedgerow, that part of the project should be subject to EIA Screening and the wider project (i.e. solar farm and grid connection) should be considered in terms of cumulative impacts. This clarification was recently the subject of a Supreme Court Ruling by Mr. Justice Brian Murray in *2024_IESC_28*.

The EIA Screening for this project is completed in Section 4 and for ease of reporting considers the entire development comprising both the removal of hedgerow and the solar farm and grid connection.

Schedule 7 Screening

4.1 Schedule 7 Criteria

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

4.2 Construction Phase

Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold	Impacts during Construction Phase
1. Characteristics of proposed development The characteristics of the proposed development, in particular:	
The size of the proposed development	The site area is c. 130 ha. The construction timeline for the proposed solar farm and supporting energy storage compound is 12 months inclusive of the proposed substation and grid connection. The construction works themselves will be confined to the site and will be informed by a Construction and Environmental Management Plan to mitigate potential impacts. These works will be guided by appropriate construction, environmental and health and safety measures to ensure no impact to existing populations. The 332 linear metres of hedgerow to be permanently removed will be localised within the boundaries of the solar farm site. To facilitate improved forward visibility on the local road network, c.285 linear metres of hedgerow will be removed and reinstated fully behind the relocated boundary. No significant impact likely.
The cumulation with other proposed development	This screening assessment has also considered potential cumulative impacts that could arise from the proposed development. The wider solar farm (including proposed 'loop-in / loop-out' grid connection and substation)

	in combination with other known permitted projects in the area has been considered. A desktop review of other local projects in the vicinity was undertaken using the Longford County Council and An Bord Pleanála planning enquiry systems. There are other permitted projects within 10 km of the subject site and the final contractor developed CEMP will consider these as necessary to manage any interrelated traffic management considerations. No significant impact likely.
The Nature of any demolition works	The proposed development does not include any demolition of buildings or other structures. As per the submitted CEMP, there will be some underground cabling in the public road (including proposed grid connection and substation) which will be subject to road opening licencing and formal consents from Longford County Council. The contractor will submit and have agreed a Construction and Environment Management Plan providing details of all construction methods. Best practice guidance in relation to demolition/clearance/etc will be adhered to. A Decommissioning and Restoration Statement has been prepared and is included with the application. It describes how the applicant proposes to restore the proposed solar farm site to its former agricultural use post-operation. This document provides an overview of the anticipated activities during the decommissioning phase and outlines the measures to address any potential environmental effects as a result of these activities. All identified impacts from the decommissioning phase will be less than the construction phase and the final plan will be agreed with Longford County Council ahead of any decommissioning works. No significant impact likely.
The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity	Energy, including electricity and fuels, will be required during construction phase. Some soil will be stripped for access tracks. Construction will use various raw materials typical of the construction of temporary solar farms which are typically inert in nature. There will be no material impact on water resources arising from the construction phase, and the works themselves include bolstering of new hedgerows, new planting and other measures in support of positive biodiversity development. No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is likely during the construction process. No significant impact likely.
The production of waste	Waste will be generated during the construction phase and these will be typical of development of this nature. The Construction and Environmental Management Plan includes provisions for handling waste in full accordance with statutory legislation and associated guidance.

	Waste produced at decommissioning stage will be less than the construction stage with all components of the development re-used or recycled as much as reasonably practicable. Residual disposal will be to a licenced facility. No significant impacts likely.
Pollution and nuisances	Development of site will increase traffic in the area for the duration of the construction phase. Temporary noise, dust and vibration impacts, as well as any potential for water pollution, will be addressed as part of standard best practice controls. The CEMP details in full the traffic management measures that shall be adhered to during the construction phase to ensure that no considerable impact on traffic arises. Such measures will include the sequencing of deliveries through a booking system, the provision of adequate signage to alert other motorists to the ongoing works, as well as the implementation of a manual Stop / Go traffic management system on nearby local roads for the duration of construction phase. No significant impacts likely.
The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge	No significant risks on the proposed development site are foreseen, subject to compliance with standard environmental controls which are well understood. The proposed development is not subject to the Seveso Directives or COMAH Regulations. No significant impacts likely.
The risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)	Additional noise and dust from temporary construction works may be experienced by residents and other property users in the vicinity. This can be effectively managed, having regard to the nature of the project and measures proposed in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan. The Noise Impact Assessment outlines measures to further control noise at the source during the construction phase. Such measures include ensuring plant and equipment is switched off when idling, adequate maintenance of the same, as well as restricting the dropping and loading of materials to less sensitive hours. The design includes focused water control measures to ensure that run-off of sediment or other pollutants will not enter the watercourse therefore the proposed project will not have any impact on water quality. No significant impacts likely.
2. Location of proposed development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard to:	

The existing land use	The site is currently in agricultural use and the proposed solar farm represents an agricultural diversification project consistent with this land use. The 332 linear metres of hedgerow to be permanently removed will be localised within the boundaries of the solar farm site. This will be offset by 2,621 linear metres of new hedgerow planting (Type 2), as well as the bolstering of an additional 16,613 linear metres where necessary, to fill any gaps in existing hedgerows. To facilitate improved forward visibility on the local road network, c.285 linear metres of hedgerow will be removed and reinstated fully behind the relocated boundary. During the construction phase there will be short-term disruption to the existing land use for both the substation and the solar array, including energy storage components. The solar farm grassed fields will be reseeded post the construction phase. No significant impact likely.
The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area	Based on the surveys undertaken by the project ecologist, the wider project site is considered to be of 'local importance' as it contains some semi-natural habitat such as trees, with the majority of the site comprising improved agricultural grassland (also identified to be local importance). Some of the proposed interconnectors and grid connection route to the substation will be in public roads. The collective project includes focused measures to foster and regenerate biodiversity development across the subject site, which are outlined in the prepared Landscape Mitigation and Biodiversity Management Plans for the subject proposal. This includes a net gain in hedgerow habitat as well as enhancement of riparian zone and hedgerows through the planting of native shrub species along field boundaries, which will improve overall species diversity on the site as they mature. The site is not located within any statutory designated area. A Natura Impact Statement prepared by Ecology Ireland has been prepared in respect of the proximity of designated Natura 2000 sites to the proposed solar farm. This report has actively considered the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests, arising from the construction phase. No significant impact likely.
The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying attention to the following areas: • wetlands, • coastal zones, • mountain and forest areas, • nature reserves and parks, • areas classified or protected under legislation,	A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared to actively consider the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests, arising from the construction phase. The findings of the report have determined that subject to identified mitigation measures no significant adverse impacts arising from the construction of the proposed development (including proposed grid connection and substation) will occur in relation to Natura 2000 sites. The construction phase will not interfere with any of the areas listed opposite. Appropriate buffers have been incorporated into the design to ensure the protection of water courses. The Archaeological Impact Assessment concludes there will be no impact on any heritage assets. The prepared Landscape and Visual Impact

including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC, • areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded, • densely populated areas, • landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance	Assessment (LVIA) confirms that the proposed development is not considered to give rise to any significant residual visual impacts. Best practice standards, environmental guidelines measures will be adhered to during the construction phase in order to avoid potential impacts on natural resources and likely significant impacts are not anticipated. Any interaction with the existing population can be effectively managed, having regard to the nature of the project and measures proposed in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan. On completion of works, noise and dust levels will return to background levels. No significant impact likely.
3. Types and Characteristics of potential impacts The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in:	
The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	There is the potential for a localised impact on traffic volumes and flows along the construction delivery route and in the immediate vicinity of the site. A Site Access Report accompanies this application, and a pre-commencement Construction Traffic Management Plan will be put in place to mitigate any impacts on local traffic flow. Unmitigated, there is the potential for localised disruption due to noise and dust issues etc, but this will be managed in full accordance with best practice environmental standards. The subject site is in a local rural area where the population is not large but protection of the amenity of local residents has been considered in full as a foremost project matter. The land parcels surrounding the solar farm site comprise of working farms and so there is existing agricultural related traffic surrounding the site at present, in addition to local residential dwelling traffic. Impacts on traffic to the surrounding local area will be confined to the construction phase of the proposed development as once operational it is envisioned that only 2 – 4 no. vehicles trips per month will be required to service the solar farm.

	The spatial extent of the solar farm, inclusive of the substation and grid connection, has been assessed from a landscape and visual perspective and will not have any adverse impact on the local environment. No significant impacts likely.
The nature of the impact	Potential for the environment to be impacted during the construction phase by way of traffic disruption, noise and dust issues etc. Any impacts will be localised and temporary in nature and are not deemed to be significant. These will be proactively managed via standard environmental protection measures. No significant impacts likely.
The transboundary nature of the impact	The proposed development, including substation and grid connection, are contained wholly in the county of Longford. It does not have potential for transboundary impacts given its location and the nature of the proposed development. No significant impact likely.
The intensity and complexity of the impact	The intensity and complexity of the construction phase is in keeping with modern construction projects. Construction of solar farms is not a complex activity in the context of other energy or renewable projects. No significant impacts likely.
The probability of the impact	Some level of construction impacts is highly probable, but these will be mitigated by standard best practice techniques identified in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan. No significant impact likely.
The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.	The construction phase of the development is expected to commence within approximately 3 years of any grant of permission and extend for a duration of 12 months. The 332 linear metres of hedgerow to be permanently removed will be localised within the boundaries of the solar farm site and its removal will be of a duration of days and not material in terms of the wider programme. As set out in the submitted Planning and Environmental Statement, this period could change owing to matters outside the control of the applicant. Any impacts will be short-term and restricted by planning conditions in terms of the hours of operation. No permanent impacts are anticipated as a result of the construction phase of the project. No significant impacts likely.
The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed	The potential for construction impacts with other projects have been considered in full. There are other permitted solar farms in proximity to the site. This will be considered, if necessary, as part of the pre-commencement Construction and Environmental Management Plan and the potential for

development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment.	such unforeseen impacts will be mitigated accordingly as part of focused response measures. No significant impacts likely.
The possibility of effectively reducing the impact	There is a strong possibility of reducing potential impacts arising from the construction phase through appropriate project management and the application of identified best practice construction and environmental protection methods. The detailed Construction and Environmental Management Plan and associated documents will function as a proactive toolkit to significantly reduce the potential for adverse impacts. No significant impacts likely.

4.3 Decommissioning Phase

As referenced in a number of sections above, this screening statement has also actively considered the decommissioning phase of the project. The 332 linear metres of hedgerow to be permanently removed will be localised within the boundaries of the solar farm site. This will be offset by 2,621 linear metres of new hedgerow planting (Type 2), as well as the bolstering of an additional 16,613 linear metres where necessary, to fill any gaps in existing hedgerows. To facilitate improved forward visibility on the local road network, c.285 linear metres of hedgerow will be removed and reinstated fully behind the relocated boundary.. The proposed solar farm is considered to be temporary in nature, with an operational lifetime of 40 years. Compared to other power generation technologies, solar farms can be easily and economically decommissioned and removed from the site allowing for its full reinstatement to its original condition.

The potential for environmental impacts is reduced at the decommissioning phase relative to the construction phase. As such, the consideration of potential construction phase environmental effects in this EIA Screening represents a worse-case scenario. Given the nature of the solar farm development and the small amount of infrastructure required, it is considered highly unlikely that any adverse effects would occur as a result of decommissioning works. A site restoration and decommissioning plan has been prepared and is submitted with the application. Decommissioning works will be carried out in accordance with best practice and any legislation applicable at the time of decommissioning.

4.4 Operational Phase

Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold	Impacts during Operational Phase
1. Characteristics of proposed development The characteristics of the proposed development, in particular:	
The size of the proposed development	The subject site is c. 130 hectares in area and is located in a rural area in Co. Longford. The substation has been designed to EirGrid size and specification requirements, and as such, is consistent with other substations in terms of scale. The grid connection to the proposed substation has been assessed as part of this project. Collectively, the size and design of the project will deliver significant positive benefits relative to the 'do-nothing' scenario providing for renewable energy development in an area where solar farms have previously been considered to be acceptable. No significant impact likely.
The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity	The fields under the solar panels will be reseeded for the operational phase with no impact on land or soil resource. An area of agricultural land will be lost under the footprint of the energy storage compound and substation. However, this will be relatively small and will be positively offset by the generation of renewable energy and enhanced biodiversity delivered by means of proposed landscaping works. Once operational the solar farm will be unmanned, with the exception of occasional operational visits. The substation will likely be supported by potable water from a private well. Sanitary facilities will be infrequently used and will discharge to holding tanks. No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is likely during the operational phase. The proposed development includes focused measures to foster biodiversity development across the subject site. There will be a net gain in hedgerow habitat as well as enhancement of riparian zone and hedgerows through the planting of native shrub species along field boundaries, which will improve overall species diversity on the site as they mature.

	A total of c. 332 linear metres of hedgerow will be permanently removed throughout the site to facilitate site entrance, access tracks and underground cabling. This will be offset by 2,621 linear metres of new hedgerow planting (Type 2), as well as the bolstering of an additional 16,613 linear metres where necessary, to fill any gaps in existing hedgerows. To facilitate improved forward visibility on the local road network, c.285 linear metres of hedgerow will be removed and reinstated fully behind the relocated boundary. The bolstering of existing and planting of new hedgerows as biodiversity corridors will provide food sources, nesting sites and allow connectivity throughout the site for different species. The seeding of margins across the site with wildflower mix will be in accordance with the Bride (EU Life Project), increasing biodiversity across the perimeter of the project as opposed to improved and managed grassland margins. The operational energy storage system includes firefighting water storage, which will be sourced independent of local public water supply, with no impacts on the public network. No significant impacts likely.
The production of waste	During the operational phase wastewater related to the substation will be the only waste produced on site. Welfare facilities will be infrequently used, discharging to holding tanks for offsite removal by a licenced contractor. No significant impacts likely.
Pollution and nuisances	During the operational phase the solar farm will generally be unmanned, with the exception of occasional operational visits. Traffic generated on local roads arising from these visits will be minimal and less than current HGV/agri-plant trips generated by agricultural activities on the subject lands. Once operational the substation will emit noise associated with a typical substation of this nature, with the transformer being the main source of noise generation. It has been demonstrated that noise from the proposed solar farm inclusive of the substation will be well within allowable limits. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) produced by Macro Works that accompanies this application concludes that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant residual visual impacts. Early assessment to identify vulnerable viewpoints in relation to the proposed solar farm were carried out which have informed the design of the development. No significant impacts likely.

The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge	No significant risks on the proposed development site are foreseen, subject to compliance with standard environmental controls which are well understood. The proposed development is not subject to the Major Accidents Directive. The energy storage compound will be operated in accordance with the Battery Safety Management Plan and Emergency Response Plan. No significant impacts are likely.
The risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)	The solar panels themselves are passive installations with no risk to human health. The prepared EMF/EMF report confirms there are no health issues associated with the solar farm. The project will be enclosed with security fencing. High voltage equipment will be contained within the substation compound. Security fencing will be erect to prohibit unauthorised access and warning notices will be erected to ensure no safety issues should arise. The location of the substation and noise generating plant in a setback position from the public road and local residences means that any audible noise during the operational phase will be well within allowable limits. The proposed substation and grid connection have been considered across the environmental reporting., with no impacts identified. It is considered that this proposal has the potential to have a long-term beneficial impact on human health as a consequence of facilitating renewable energy development and reducing reliance on fossil fuels which are damaging to the environment and human health. No significant impacts likely.
2. Location of proposed development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard to:	
The existing land use	The solar farm represents an agricultural diversification project on agricultural land which is compatible with the existing land use. A temporary use in the landscape, the solar farm will be consolidated within the existing established field network structure on the subject farmlands. This will be retained and further consolidated by 2,621 linear metres of new hedgerow planting (Type 2), as well as the bolstering of an additional 16,613 linear metres where necessary, to fill any gaps in existing hedgerows.

	The energy storage compound and substation component will result in the permanent loss of some agricultural grass land, but this is very small in the context of the overall project. The underground grid connection cabling will be contained in the public road. Any loss of permanent habitat for the proposed substation will be positively offset by the generation of renewable energy and enhanced biodiversity delivered by means of proposed landscaping measures. Sheep grazing can be continued on the solar farmlands. No significant impact likely.
The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area	Based on the surveys undertaken by the project ecologist, the wider project site is currently considered to be of 'local importance' as it contains some semi-natural habitat such as trees, with the majority of the site comprising improved agricultural grassland (also identified to be local importance). Some of the proposed interconnectors and the grid connection route to the proposed substation will be in public roads. The collective project includes focused measures to foster and regenerate biodiversity development across the subject site, which are outlined in the prepared Landscape Mitigation and Biodiversity Management Plans for the subject proposal. This includes the development of biodiversity corridors and formation of berms to be grown and maintained as species diverse meadows. Significant hedgerow bolstering and new planting is proposed and will function as an integral part of the proposed development. The site is not located within any statutory designated area. A Natura Impact Statement prepared by Ecology Ireland has been prepared in respect of designated Natura 2000 sites. This report has actively considered the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests, arising from the operational phase. No significant impact likely.
The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying attention to the following areas: • wetlands, • coastal zones, • mountain and forest areas, • nature reserves and parks, • areas classified or protected under legislation,	The subject site (including proposed grid connection and substation) are not located within or in the immediate vicinity of any statutory designated area. However, a Natura Impact Statement has been prepared to actively consider the potential for adverse impacts on qualifying interests, arising from the construction phase. The findings of the report have determined that subject to identified mitigation measures no significant adverse impacts arising from the construction of the proposed development will occur in relation to Natura 2000 sites. The proposed development will actually decrease the levels of siltation / run-off from the subject site to watercourses / designated sites when compared with the 'do nothing' scenario.

including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC, • areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded, • densely populated areas, • landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance	The operational phase will not interfere with any of the areas listed opposite. Appropriate buffers have been incorporated into the design to ensure the protection of water courses. The Archaeological Impact Assessment concludes there will be no adverse impact on any heritage assets. Buffer zones have been incorporated into the layout of the solar farm and applied to the extents of all recorded monuments located within or immediately adjacent to the site. The identified heritage features will not be visually impacted by the proposed solar farm and grid connection. The prepared Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) confirms that the proposed development (or substation / grid connection) is not considered to give rise to any significant residual visual impacts. Best practice standards, environmental guidelines measures will be adhered to during the operations / maintenance phase, including adherence with any applied planning conditions during the construction phase in order to avoid potential impacts on natural resources and likely significant impacts are not anticipated. Any interaction with the existing population has been considered proactively as part of project design. No significant impact likely.
3. Characteristics of potential impacts The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in:	
The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The subject lands are c. 130 hectares and are located in a rural area in Co. Longford. The project will be consolidated within the existing agricultural field network, utilising and bolstering the existing pattern of hedgerow boundaries, with parts of the underground interconnector cabling and grid connection in public roads. The spatial extent of any operational impact will be local and potentially visual in nature. A landscape and visual assessment has been prepared for the proposal. This has directly influenced the design. The findings confirm that on balance the development will not give rise to any adverse effects from the selected viewpoint locations.

	Separate noise and glint and glare reports have been commissioned, the findings of which confirm that there will be no significant operational impacts on the population in the local area. No significant impact likely.
The nature of the impact	Expected benefits to physical, micro and macro environments fostering the envisaged growth of renewable energy production and security of supply in Longford and the wider region. The effects will be positive in nature. No significant impact likely.
The transboundary nature of the impact	The proposed development, including substation and proposed grid connection, are contained wholly in the county of Longford. It does not have potential for transboundary impacts given its location and the nature of the proposed development. No significant impact likely.
The intensity and complexity of the impact	A temporary use in the landscape, the proposed development, by its nature will be of low intensity and complexity and the impact of the development will be moderate and will be actively managed. No significant impacts are likely.
The probability of the impact	The operational phase will change the local environment to some degree. Focused measures are in place to avoid, reduce, or mitigate any likely impacts. No significant impact likely.
The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.	Once constructed, the proposed substation/grid connection will be permanent and non-reversible. The solar array component of the solar farm project represents a temporary use in the landscape which is fully reversible. No significant impact likely.
Cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects.	The potential for operational impacts with other permitted local projects have been considered in full, as demonstrated in Table 1. It has been demonstrated that no cumulative impacts will arise as part of the operational development. No significant impact likely.
The possibility of effectively reducing the impact	The proposal is being shaped by a number of proactive design measures to reduce the potential for any impacts. There is a strong possibility of reducing such potential impacts as it relates to the operational development.



It has been objectively concluded that the proposal will provide for long-term beneficial impacts of varying degrees, which includes renewable energy development and biodiversity gain.

No significant impact likely.

Conclusion

5.1 Summary

Part 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 define the categories and thresholds of development that require EIA. The proposed solar farm project, with supporting energy storage compound, and inclusive of the proposed substation and underground grid connection, is not of a type identified in Part 1 of Schedule 5, nor does it meet any prescribed thresholds for mandatory EIA under Part 2.

The recent statutory instrument S.I. 383 of 2023 does mean that the proposed solar farm, by virtue of the permanent loss of 332m of hedgerow, is now potentially a project type that falls broadly within scope for sub-threshold EIA Screening and the wider project (i.e. solar farm, substation and grid connection) should be considered in terms of cumulative impacts. This clarification was recently the subject of a Supreme Court Ruling by Mr. Justice Brian Murray in *2024_IESC_28*.

This EIA Screening considered the entire development comprising both the removal of hedgerow and the solar farm, energy storage compound and grid connection.

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



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