

# **Planning Report for a Strategic Infrastructure Development**

**In respect of**

**Proposed 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear Substation and  
Associated Dropdown Transmission Lines**

**Prepared by**

**John Spain Associates**

**On behalf of**

**CAP Developments LLC**

**November 2020**



39 Fitzwilliam Place  
Dublin 2  
D02 ND61  
Telephone: (01) 662 5803  
E-mail: [info@johnspainassociates.com](mailto:info@johnspainassociates.com)

---

## **CONTENTS**

<b>1.0 .....</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.0 .....</b>	<b>SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.0 .....</b>	<b>PRE – APPLICATION CONSULTATIONS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.0 .....</b>	<b>RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5.0 .....</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION .. ..</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6.0.....</b>	<b>RELEVANT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7.0.....</b>	<b>LOCAL PLANNING POLICY .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>8.0.....</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT ....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>9.0 .....</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>22</b>

**APPENDIX 1 - EXTRACT OF BOARD ORDER CONFIRMING THAT THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CONSTITUTES STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

- 1.1 On behalf the applicant, CAP Developments LLC, and further to a determination received from An Bord Pleanála confirming the proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) pursuant to Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (hereinafter referred to as 'the Act'), we hereby submit this planning application in respect of the provision of a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation compound, and associated dropdown 110kV transmission lines, along with associated and ancillary works.
- 1.2 The proposed development is to be located on a site within the Drogheda IDA Business and Technology Park, Donore Road, Drogheda, Co. Meath. The proposed development is located to the north of the data storage facility permitted under Reg. Ref.: LB/191735. The site is situated within the townland of Rathmullan. The site of the proposed development has an area of c. 3.1 hectares.
- 1.3 The proposed substation compound is subdivided into two parts. The western part of the compound will accommodate a two storey 110kV GIS substation building (with a gross floor area of c. 1,447 sq.m). The eastern part of the compound will accommodate four transformers and a single storey client control building (with a gross floor area of c. 423 sq.m) and associated underground services. Both parts of the substation compound are enclosed within 2.6-metre-high security fencing.
- 1.4 The proposed dropdown 110kV transmission lines will connect the proposed 110kV GIS substation building to existing 110kV overhead transmission lines traversing the subject site to the west of the proposed substation and will comprise the provision of two dropdown masts (c. 16 metres in height) and associated overhead transmission lines, transitioning to underground transmission lines set within ducts that will subsequently progress into the 110kV GIS Substation building, which will in turn connect to the four transformers.
- 1.5 The development includes access paths, landscaping, security fencing, provision of internal access roads and car parking within the GIS substation compound, provision of a 49kVa electricity connection (c. 544 metres in length, connecting to existing electrical services in the main avenue of the Drogheda IDA Business and Technology Park) for the GIS substation building, a unit substation, lightning masts, services, all associated construction works, and all ancillary works.
- 1.6 An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared by AWN Consulting Limited and other EIA contributors and accompanies this SID planning application submitted to An Bord Pleanála.
- 1.7 This planning application primarily relates to the provision of a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation and associated dropdown 110kV transmission lines to connect the proposed substation to existing 110kV overhead transmission lines which traverse the subject site. This project is designed to support current power demand and future growth within the area inclusive but not limited to the power requirements for the data storage facility located to the south of the proposed substation and within the same overall landholding. The details of the proposed substation and the proposed dropdown 110kV transmission lines are discussed at Section 5.0 of this report and illustrated in the accompanying architectural and engineering drawings prepared by MCA Architects and CSEA Consulting Engineers respectively. The development has been the subject of discussions and agreement with the relevant landowners and planning authority prior to lodgement (see letter of consent submitted herewith).

1.8 The main stakeholders for the development are as follows;

- EirGrid, are responsible for operating and developing the national high voltage electricity grid in Ireland
- ESB Networks, (Asset Owner) are responsible for carrying out maintenance, repairs and where works are not contestable, the construction of the national high voltage electricity grid in Ireland; and
- CAP Developments LLC's role for this project is to act as the Developer / Applicant.

***Development Method***

1.9 The development of the proposed 110kV GIS Substation building, dropdown connection masts, droppers, and underground transmission lines connecting to the proposed Substation will be contestable development. The break-in to the existing 110kV overhead transmission lines will be non-contestable.

1.10 The meaning of this, is that the Developer will be responsible for the design, construction, fit-out and pre-commissioning of the proposed 110kV GIS Substation building and the dropdown connection masts, droppers, and underground transmission lines connecting to the proposed Substation. The retiring of existing transmission lines and final connections from the transmission system to the contestable elements of the development will be undertaken by EirGrid / ESB Networks (ESBN) as non-contestable development.

1.11 Upon completion of the works by the Developer, the proposed 110kV GIS Substation building and the dropdown connection masts, droppers, and underground transmission lines connecting to the proposed Substation will be handed over to EirGrid, whom in conjunction with ESBN will carry out the final commissioning and energisation of the proposed Substation and transmission lines.

1.12 Once energised, the proposed 110kV GIS Substation building and the dropdown connection masts, droppers, and underground transmission lines connecting to the proposed Substation will form part of the ESBN infrastructure, which EirGrid will be responsible for operating.

1.13 The four transformers and single storey client control building and associated underground services, located in the eastern part of the overall substation compound, will be constructed, fitted out, and operated by the Developer.

***Applicant***

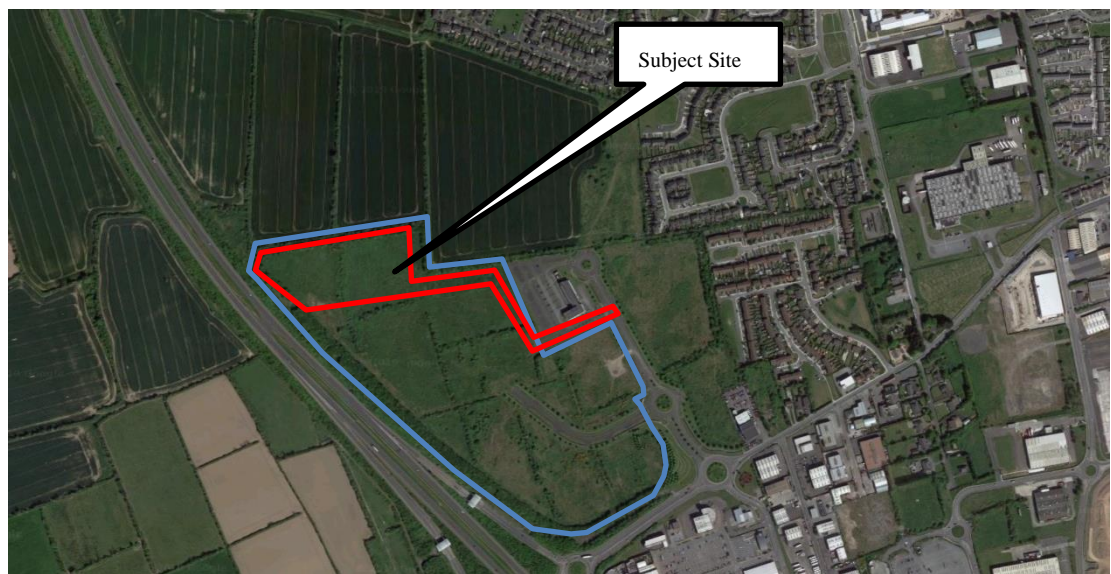
1.14 The Applicant (Developer) for the proposed contestable development is CAP Developments LLC, with a registered address at 251 Little Falls Drive, Wilmington, New Castle County, DE, 19808, USA.

1.15 The main agent acting on behalf of the Applicant is John Spain Associates, with an address at 39 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.

## 2.0 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

### Site Context

- 2.1 The subject site is located at the IDA Business and Technology Park at Donore Road, which lies to the east of the M1 motorway linking Dublin and Belfast, and on the western extremity of the built-up area of Drogheda. The wider landholding comprises of a large primarily green-field site which is served by existing roads infrastructure implemented as part of the setting out of the IDA Business and Technology Park. As outlined in further detail below, the wider landholding is subject to an extant permission for a data storage facility and ancillary development.
- 2.2 The site of the proposed development comprises approximately 3.1 hectares of land which is currently undeveloped but subject to ongoing works associated with the implementation of the permitted data storage facility to the south and the provision of landscaping, security fencing, and infrastructure for the wider landholding as provided for under application Meath County Council (MCC) Reg. Ref.: LB/191735. The application site lands are bound to the south by lands which are also subject to ongoing development works (forming part of the wider landholding that is subject to permission for data storage facility development), to the north by undeveloped lands, to the west by the M1 Motorway, and to the east by an existing estate road within the IDA Business and Technology Park.



**Figure 3.1: Subject site outlined in red with wider land holding outlined in blue**

### Subject Site

- 2.3 The subject site has an area of c. 3.077 hectares and is primarily located within a single landholding, with the exception of the portion of the site which extends onto an existing access road, and a portion of the existing main estate road (to provide a 49kVa electrical supply to the 110kV GIS Substation).
- 2.4 The site slopes from west to east and is bound to the north and west by mature tree planting which was implemented at the time that the IDA Business and Technology Park was originally established at this location in the early 2000s.

### **3.0 PRE – APPLICATION CONSULTATIONS**

- 3.1 The applicant has had 1 no. pre-application consultation meeting with An Bord Pleanála on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 2020, in response to a pre-application consultation request received by An Bord Pleanála on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2020.
- 3.2 The purpose of the consultation meeting was to provide further information to An Bord Pleanála to inform their determination as to whether or not the proposed development might constitute strategic infrastructure.
- 3.3 Consultation has also been undertaken with the planned operator ESB Networks and with EirGrid to ensure the project design meets their requirements.
- 3.4 A request to conclude the pre-application process was submitted to An Bord Pleanála on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2020.

#### **An Bord Pleanála Determination**

- 3.5 An Bord Pleanála have confirmed in a letter dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2020 that the proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure within the meaning of section 182A of the Act.
- 3.6 Therefore, the current application is required to be submitted directly to An Bord Pleanála under section 182A(1) of the Act.
- 3.7 The determination from the Board that the development constitutes a SID was accompanied by an Inspector’s Report, which recommended that the applicant be informed that the proposed development constituted Strategic Infrastructure Development.

### **4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 This section provides details of the planning history of the subject site of the proposed development and adjacent lands at the IDA Drogheda Business and Technology Park.

#### **Application Site**

##### Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: LB/191735 – Permitted Data Storage Facility Development

- 4.2 On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2020, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority for a data storage facility development. The permitted development was described as follows within the public notices:
- *“Alterations to existing road infrastructure within the site and clearance of the site (including removal of existing internal roadways and removal / diversion of services) to make way for the proposed development;*
  - *Construction of a two storey (with mezzanine levels at both storeys) data storage facility building with a maximum overall height of c. 25 metres, containing data halls, associated electrical and AHU Plant Rooms, a loading bay, maintenance and storage space, office administration areas, screened plant and solar panels at roof level, all within a building with a total gross floor area (GFA) of c. 28,573 sq.m;*

- *Emergency generators (26 no.), emission stacks and associated plant are provided in a fenced compound adjacent to the data storage facility, along with a single emergency house supply generator;*
- *A 6 MVA substation and associated 6MVA electricity connection;*
- *A water sprinkler pump room, MV Building, unit substation, water storage tanks, humidifier tanks and diesel tanks and filling area;*
- *Modification of the existing entrance to the subject site (from the estate road to the east), which will function as a secondary entrance providing for emergency and construction access. A new main entrance and access control point to the lands is proposed (also from the estate road to the east) and a single-storey gate house / security building at this entrance with a GFA of c. 29.5 sq.m.;*
- *Construction of internal road network and circulation areas, footpaths, provision of 50 no. car parking spaces and 26 no. cycle parking spaces within a bicycle shelter;*
- *Landscaping and planting (including provision of an additional planted berm to the northern boundary, and alterations to existing landscaping adjacent to the entrance to the Business and Technology Park), boundary treatments, lighting, security fencing, bollards and camera poles, bin store, and all associated site works including underground foul and storm water drainage network, attenuation areas, and utility cables, on an application site area measuring 19.46 hectares.”*

- 4.3 An EIAR was submitted with the application, and the Planning Authority completed Environmental Impact Assessment of the development proposals. The EIAR made reference to the requirement for a separate future planning application for a Substation and transmission line connection to serve the data storage facility development. The Substation and transmission line development were cumulatively assessed within the EIAR and it was noted that any application for a Substation and transmission line connection would be subject to a separate Environmental Impact Assessment process.
- 4.4 The permitted development provided for a first phase of data storage facility development on a portion of a wider landholding at this location. The permitted development also included the development of an internal access road to serve the site of the proposed development subject to the current application to the Board.
- 4.5 The architectural and engineering drawings submitted under Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: LB/191735 provided an illustrative outline of the location of the proposed development. An extract of the architectural site layout plan for the permitted development is provided below.



**Figure 4.1: Extract of MCA Architects Site Layout Plan – Reg. Ref.: LB/191735**

### **Drogheda IDA Business and Technology Park**

#### Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: 99/2466 – Entrance to Business and Technology Park

- 4.6 A final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2000 for development consisting of “a road entrance onto Drogheda to Donore Road for proposed future I.D.A. Business Park which will be subject to a separate planning application & Environmental Impact Statement”.

#### Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: 00/1642 – Parent Permission for Business and Technology Park

- 4.7 On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2000, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority for development comprising “site development works for proposed IDA Drogheda Business Park, inclusive of internal roads & access junction to Donore Road, sewers, water mains, pavements & related landscaping works. An Environmental Impact Statement accompanies this application.”

- 4.8 This is the parent permission for the existing IDA Business and Technology Park. The grant of permission for the Business Park was subject to 35 conditions.

#### Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: 00/4121

- 4.9 On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2000, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority for development comprising “3 no. 4 storey office buildings, 1 single story security control building inclusive of associated hard and soft landscaping, car parking, external signage and associated site development works”.



Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: SA/30292

- 4.10 On the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2003, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority for development comprising “*the erection of a 6.7m high x 2.2m wide double sided powder coated aluminium sign with lettering at the entrance of the IDA Business and Technology Park*”.

Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: SA/20311

- 4.11 On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2003, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority for development comprising the demolition of three existing dwellings.

Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: SA/30020

- 4.12 On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2003, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority for development comprising “*an advanced business and technology unit, with a 2031 sq m. work area, 382 sq m. administration/office area with associated ancillary service and plant spaces. Car parking for 80 cars will be provided, along with a paved service yard and landscaping*”.

Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: SA/40284

- 4.13 On the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2004, a decision to grant permission was issued in respect of a development comprising “*the erection of a 2,203 sqm, two-storey office building with third-storey plantroom, 10.120 m in overall height, with associated access roads, car-parking, hard and soft landscaping, amendments to previously -approved estate road and ancillary infrastructural works on a 0.76 hectare site at the eastern side of IDA Drogheda Business & Technology park*”.
- 4.14 The decision was subject to appeal; however, the appeal was found to be invalid by An Bord Pleanála.

Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: SA/ 40383

- 4.15 On the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2005, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority for development comprising “*the construction of a 2203sq.m two storey office building with third storey plantroom, 10.120m in overall height, with associated access roads, car parking, hard and soft landscaping, amendments to previously approved estate road and ancillary infrastructural works on a 0.72 hectare site to the northern side and adjacent the eastern access road roundabout*”.

Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: SA/50286 – Office Building Adjacent to the Subject Site

- 4.16 On the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2005, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority for development consisting of “*erection of two no. 2164 sq.m, two storey office buildings with third storey plantroom, known as Units D2 and D3, 10.120m in overall height, with associated access roads, car parking, hard and soft landscaping and amendments to the previously approved site for office building, Unit D7 (formerly known as Unit 12D), Reg. Ref.SA/40383 to consist of revised site area, boundaries and car parking layout, associated hard and soft landscaping works, ancillary works and a new east west estate road on an overall site 1.9 hectares*”.

Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: SA/50502 – Car Park Adjacent to the Subject Site

- 4.17 On the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2006, a final grant of permission was issued by the Planning Authority in respect of development comprising “*an additional carpark adjacent to the site of office building, Unit D7 and consequent amendments to the previously approved site for Unit D7 (Reg. Ref. SA/40383 and SA/50286) which will consist of revised site area, boundaries and carparking layout, associated hard and soft landscaping works and ancillary works on an overall site of 1.29 hectares*”.

Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: SA/60236

- 4.18 On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2006, a final grant of permission was issued in respect of development comprising “*5056sqm four storey office building with roof plantroom and associated access road, car parking, hard and soft landscaping and retention of a 21.63sq.m. single storey security hut and associated landscaping and site works on a 1.27 hectare site.*”

## **5.0 DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION**

- 5.1 The proposed development to which the current application relates comprises 110kV GIS substation building, 4 number transformers and Client Control Building within a fenced substation compound; a 49kVa electrical supply to the 110kV GIS substation building; 2 number dropdown 110kV transmission lines connecting to existing 110kV overhead transmission lines traversing the subject site; and all associated and ancillary development. This section of the Planning Report provides a description of the constituent parts of the proposed development.

### **Proposed Substation Compound**

- 5.2 As set out in the public notices, the proposed substation compound is subdivided into two parts. The western part of the compound will accommodate a two storey 110kV GIS substation building, while the eastern part of the compound will accommodate four transformers and a single storey client control building and associated underground services.
- 5.3 Both parts of the substation compound are enclosed within 2.6-metre-high security fencing, with a fence line also separating the two parts of the overall substation compound. The development includes all necessary underground connections within both parts of the overall substation compound.

### **Western Section of Substation Compound Including 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation Building**

- 5.4 The proposed 110kV GIS substation building will be situated within the western part of the overall substation compound. This portion of the overall substation compound will also accommodate car parking (5 no. spaces in total) to serve the 110kV GIS substation building, a unit substation (discussed in further detail below), and areas of hard standing and gravel. Access will be provided via a gateway in the southern fence line to this portion of the substation compound from the permitted roadway to the south.
- 5.5 The proposed two storey 110kV GIS substation building (with a gross floor area of c. 1,447 sq.m) will accommodate a battery room, control room, mess room and staff facilities, workshop, generator room, and cable pit at ground floor level, with a store

room and 110kV GIS room accommodated at first floor level. The overall height of the building is c. 15 metres.

- 5.6 The GIS substation building design is rectilinear, and the building will be finished in metal cladding to match the adjoining permitted data storage facility to the south. The materials and finishes of the proposed GIS substation building are durable and of good quality, comprising metal wall panelling, powder coated galvanised steel louvers / vents to the building facades, with matching galvanised steel doors, rainwater goods, and shutters to match the building cladding.

#### **Eastern Part of Substation Compound Including Transformers and Client Control Building**

- 5.7 Within the eastern part of the overall substation compound, a row of four transformers will be provided, beyond which will be a single storey client control building and associated underground services. The development will include two gated access points to this section of the overall substation compound, both from the permitted roadway to the south.
- 5.8 The proposed single storey client control building (with a gross floor area of c. 432 sq.m) will accommodate four medium voltage substation rooms and a control room. The overall height of the proposed building is c. 6 metres. This building is also rectilinear in its plan, with external materials and finishes selected to match the proposed 110kV GIS substation building.
- 5.9 Four transformers are proposed, to be sited between the 110kV GIS substation building and the client control building. Fire walls will be provided between each of the transformers, with lightning protection masts provided above the fire walls and at both ends of the row of transformers.

#### **Dropdown 110kV Transmission Lines**

- 5.10 The two proposed dropdown 110kV transmissions lines connecting to the existing 110kV overhead transmission line will comprise the provision of two dropdown masts (c. 16 metres in height) and associated overhead transmission lines, transitioning to underground transmission lines set within ducts that will subsequently progress into the 110kV GIS substation building.

#### **Unit Substation and 49kVa Electricity Supply**

- 5.11 The development also includes the provision of a smaller scale unit substation (located within the western part of the overall substation compound) and an associated 49kVa electricity supply, with a connection to be provided to existing underground electricity cables within the main estate road of the Drogheda IDA Business and Technology Park. The length of the proposed 49kVa underground electricity cables from the unit substation to the connection point within the existing estate road is c. 544 metres.

#### **Associated / Ancillary Works**

- 5.12 It is noted that the access road for the proposed substation compound, the main site security fence for the wider landholding, boundary landscaping, berms and associated gabion walls all constitute permitted development under the extant data storage facility permission pertaining to the wider landholding (Meath County Council

Reg. Ref.: LB/191735). These elements therefore do not fall to be considered as part of the current application for electricity transmission infrastructure.

- 5.13 The proposed electricity transmission development includes the provision of additional landscape mounding to the west of the 110kV GIS substation building, connections to services and drainage infrastructure permitted under Reg. Ref.: LB/191735, and connections to the permitted loop road to the south of the proposed substation compound.
- 5.14 An access path for maintenance and inspection of the dropdown 110kV transmission lines and masts will be provided from the loop road permitted under Reg. Ref.: LB/191735, following the perimeter of the proposed substation compound and terminating at the main site security fence for the wider landholding, as permitted under Reg. Ref.: LB/191735.
- 5.15 The development includes all associated construction and ancillary works.

## **6.0 RELEVANT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT**

### **Government Statement on The Role of Data Centres in Ireland’s Enterprise Strategy**

- 6.1 The Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland’s Enterprise Strategy was published by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in June 2018. The Statement notes the role which data centres play in Ireland’s ambition to be a digital economy hot-spot in Europe.
- 6.2 The Statement includes a section dealing with electricity infrastructure (page 8 onward refers). The Statement includes the following statement in relation to the electricity infrastructure requirements of planned and projected data centre development:

*“Currently, a large portion of existing and planned data centres that are due to connect to the electricity system are expected to be in the Dublin area. Based on existing data centres, committed expansion and expected growth, total demand could treble within the next ten years. A consistent and supportive whole of government approach will be brought to the realisation of the transmission and distribution assets required to support the level of data centre ambition that we adopt.”*

- 6.3 The current Strategic Infrastructure Development proposal constitutes the provision of transmission infrastructure required to provide electricity for the development of the area, including the adjoining permitted data storage facility permitted under MCC Reg. Ref.: LB/191735.

### **National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040**

- 6.4 The National Planning Framework was published in February 2018 and contains policies which are supportive of the development of ICT infrastructure, with particular reference made to “*datacentres*”.
- 6.5 National Strategic Outcome 6 of the NPF relates to the creation of “*A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills*”. This strategic outcome is underpinned by a range of objectives relating to job creation and the fostering of enterprise and innovation.

- 6.6 The following objective, relating to ICT infrastructure (including datacentres) is included under National Strategic Outcome 6:

*“Promotion of Ireland as a sustainable international destination for ICT infrastructures such as data centres and associated economic activities.”*

- 6.7 The current application proposes the provision of electricity infrastructure which will serve a permitted data storage facility development along with other potential future development in the vicinity, and is therefore considered to be in accordance with the foregoing policies.

- 6.8 The NPF further states under National Strategic Outcome 6:

*“Ireland is very attractive in terms of international digital connectivity, climatic factors and current and future renewable energy sources for the development of international digital infrastructures, such as data centres. This sector underpins Ireland’s international position as a location for ICT and creates added benefits in relation to establishing a threshold of demand for sustained development of renewable energy sources.”*

- 6.9 As noted above, the proposed development constitutes the development of the grid to serve a permitted data storage facility development and is therefore considered to fully accord with the foregoing strategic outcome.

#### **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly**

- 6.10 The Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) have adopted the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Region.

- 6.11 The RSES recognises the need to facilitate the provision of sufficient electricity to meet increasing demand in the region. Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 10.20 states the following:

*“Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Strategy. Including the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.”*

- 6.12 The proposed development constitutes a transmission project which is required to serve the electricity needs currently permitted and future development in the area in accordance with the foregoing objective.

- 6.13 The strategy goes on to state the following:

*“The Dublin Region is the major load centre on the Irish electricity transmission system. Approximately one third of total demand is located here, similarly the Eastern Region is a major load centre on the Irish transmission system. The main urban demand centres are composed of a mix of residential, commercial and industrial demand, which is expected to grow up to 2025 and beyond. Developing*

*the grid in the Region will enable the transmission system to safely accommodate more diverse power flows from renewable generation and also to facilitate future growth in electricity demand. These developments will strengthen the grid for all electricity users, and in doing so will improve the security and quality of supply. This is particularly important if the Region is to attract high technology industries that depend on a reliable, high quality, electricity supply.”*

- 6.14 The current proposal seeks to provide for the development of the grid via a new substation and connections to existing 110kV overhead transmission lines line which will supply *inter alia* high technology industry in the area, which is dependent on a reliable, high quality electricity supply.
- 6.15 The RSES provides for a series of principles, pursuant to which Local Authority Development Plans will “*facilitate the provision of energy networks in principle*”:
- *“The development is required in order to facilitate the provision or retention of significant economic or social infrastructure.*
  - *The route proposed has been identified with due consideration for social, environmental and cultural impacts and address issues of climate resilience, biodiversity, impact on soils and water quality.*
  - *The design is such that it will achieve least environmental impact.*
  - *Where impacts are inevitable mitigation features have been included.*
  - *Where it can be shown that the proposed development is consistent with international best practice with regard to materials and technologies and that it will ensure a safe, secure, reliable, economic and efficient high-quality network.*
  - *In considering facilities of this nature that traverse a number of counties or that traverse one county in order to serve another, planning authorities should consider the proposal in light of the criteria outlined above. It is important that planning authorities are engaged in early consultation and discussion with the relevant Transmission System Operator.*
  - *Corridors for energy transmission or pipelines should avoid creating sterile lands proximate to key public transport corridors, particularly rail routes, and in built up urban areas.*
  - *Regard for any National or Regional Landscape/ Seascape Character Assessment.”*
- 6.16 In response to the above it is considered that the proposed electricity transmission infrastructure is required to facilitate significant economic infrastructure in the area. It is also considered that the short route for the proposed dropdown transmission line connections has been identified with due consideration for social, environmental and cultural impacts (as set out in detail within the EIAR), given that the connection to the existing overhead lines is contained within the same landholding as the proposed substation.
- 6.17 The design selected has been predicated on the need to minimise environmental impact and includes mitigation measures as set out within the EIAR submitted herewith. The design of the project has been undertaken in accordance with best practice by the project engineers, and the development will not result in the sterilisation of lands proximate to key public transport corridors, particularly rail routes, or built up urban areas.

## 7.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

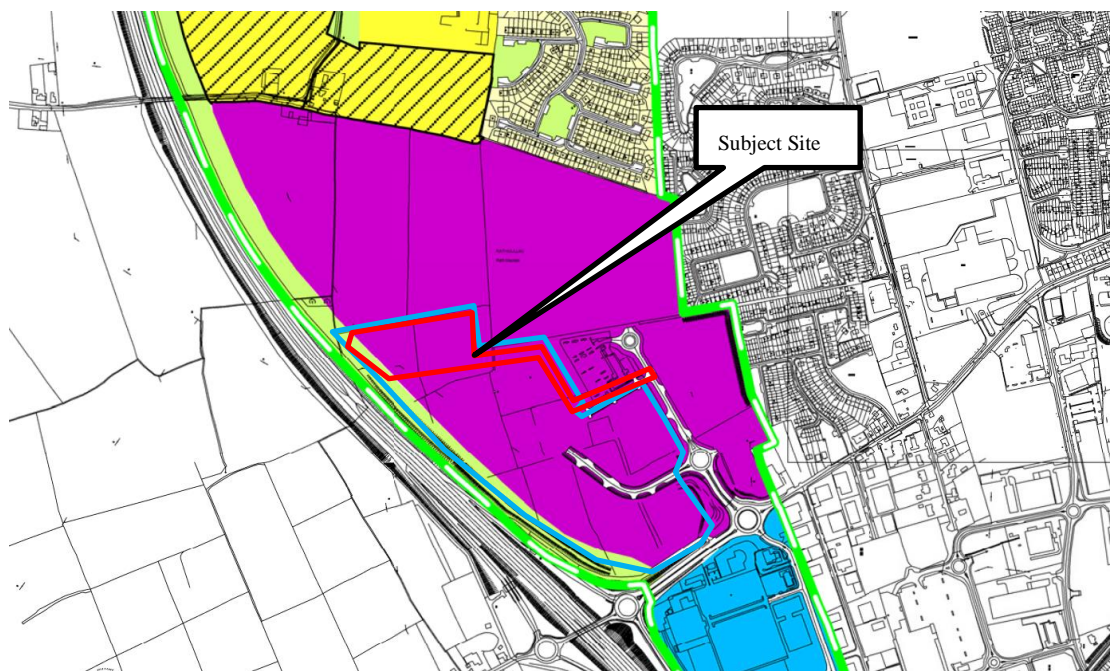
7.1 This proposed development comprises of development within the functional area of Meath County Council.

### **Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019**

7.2 The Meath County Development Plan (as varied) remains in force at the time of writing pending the adoption of a new Development Plan. A Draft of the new Development Plan was published in December 2019 and the Draft Plan is dealt with below.

### **Zoning**

7.3 The application site is primarily subject to the E1 zoning objective (as per the consolidated zoning maps for the Development Plan as varied), with a stated objective to “*facilitate opportunities for high technology and major campus style office based employment within high quality and accessible locations*”. The proposal constitutes electricity transmission infrastructure which will support permitted and future high technology development in the area.



**Figure 2: Extract from Zoning Map of the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (approximate extent of the subject site outlined in red).**

7.4 This zoning provides for the following range of permissible uses:

*“Bio Technology Manufacturing, Call Centres, Childcare Facility, Convenience Outlet, Green / Clean Light Industries, Education (third level), High Technology Manufacturing, Information Communication Technologies, International and National Traded Services, Knowledge Based Economic Development, Offices 100 to 1,000 sq. m., Offices >1,000 sq. m., Medical and Related Uses, Research & Development, Science & Technology Based Enterprise, Telecommunication Structures, Water Services / Public Services.”*

- 7.5 The following uses are open for consideration under this zoning objective:

*“Uses Advertisement and Advertising Structures, Conference/Event Centre, Education, Enterprise / Training Centre, Leisure Facilities, Hotel / Aparthotel, Industry – Light, Industry – General, Restaurant / Café, Petrol Station, Transport Depot/Logistics, Warehousing.”*

- 7.6 Public services are permitted in principle under the E1 zoning objective pertaining to the subject site. The proposed development will comprise public services in the form of electricity infrastructure which will form part of the National Grid.

- 7.7 The Development Plan provides further guidance on the E1 zoning objective as follows:

*“E1 zones facilitate opportunities for high end, high value added businesses and corporate headquarters. This adheres to the concept of 4th Generation Science & Technology Parks. It is envisaged that such locations are suitable for high density employment generating activity with associated commercial development located adjacent to or in close proximity to high frequency public transport corridors. This will apply to suitable lands in Navan, **Drogheda** and Dunboyne. The Maynooth Environs Local Area Plan also contains E1 zones.”* (emphasis added)

- 7.8 The proposed development constitutes infrastructure to support high technology, high value-added uses, which will generate employment at the subject site and the surrounding area, thereby according with the foregoing.

- 7.9 The western extremity of the site is subject to the F1 zoning objective under the current Development Plan, with an objective to *“To provide for and improve open spaces for active and passive recreational amenities.”*

- 7.10 This zoning provides for the following range of permissible uses:

*“Car Park for Recreational Purposes, Craft Centre / Craft Shop, Community Facility / Centre, Cultural Facility, Cycleways / Greenways / Trail Development, Leisure / Recreation / Sports Facilities, Playing Pitches, Water Services / Public Services.”*

- 7.11 The following uses are open for consideration under this zoning objective:

*“Allotments, Bring Banks, Childcare Facility, Place of Public Worship.”*

- 7.12 Public services are permitted in principle under the F1 zoning objective pertaining to the subject site. The proposed development will comprise public services in the form of electricity infrastructure which will form part of the National Grid. It is noted that this area of F1 zoned lands relates to the landscaped embankment alongside the M1 motorway and provides a buffer between this important national route and land uses to the east of the road. While a minor element of the proposed development will be located on lands zoned F1 (as required to facilitate the provision of dropdown connections to serve the proposed development), the majority of the F1 zoned lands between the subject site and the M1 Motorway will be unaffected.

- 7.13 An emergency access track also runs through the F1 zoned strip further to the south alongside the motorway. It had been discussed during pre-application consultations whether there would be any impact on the potential future amenity use of these lands on foot of the proposed development. In this regard, it is respectfully submitted that



the F1 zoned lands at this location would not be suited to any such public / amenity use, as they function solely as a buffer between the motorway and the IDA Business and Technology Park. Furthermore, as noted above, the majority of the width of the strip of F1 zoned land at this location will remain undeveloped following the implementation of the proposed development.

### **Economic Development**

7.14 Chapter 4 of the Development Plan relates to the economic development of the County. This chapter recognises the importance of encouraging business to locate in the County, at locations identified for employment growth (such as the subject site). The subject site is identified at page 58 of the Development Plan as one of the 5 strategic employment sites in the county as identified within the Meath Economic Strategy 2014-2022.

1.1 Section 4.1.2 relates to economic development in Drogheda and East Meath, and the following high level economic development objectives are noted:

*“To develop the Drogheda IDA Business Park (Donore Road) and adjoining lands identified employment uses which is identified as one of the five key strategic sites for employment generation in the Economic Development Strategy for County Meath. There is significant scope in the IDA Business Park for further expansion which will be prioritised by the Council in conjunction with the IDA.*

*To further develop the established key employment hub at Donore Road for ongoing intensification of development having regard to its proximity to the national road network and accessibility from the town centre and residential suburbs. The Donore Road area was recommended as the second employment hub to complement the town centre in the Planning Strategy for the Greater Drogheda Area;*

*To encourage the further development of high value-added employment manufacturing and traded services in the Drogheda Environs;”*

7.15 The proposed substation and associated dropdown transmission line connections will serve the ongoing development of an area of the county which has been specifically targeted for enterprise and employment creation. The area surrounding the proposed substation has been identified as a suitable location for the agglomeration of high technology employment generating uses, with permission recently granted for a data storage facility development on lands to the south of the proposed substation. The proposed development accords with the objectives for the area for economic development as set out within Chapter 4 of the Development Plan.

### **Energy & Communications**

7.16 Chapter 8 of the County Development Plan relates to energy and communications in the county. The Development Plan recognises the need to develop the grid to serve the ongoing development of the county, and states the following at section 8.1.1:

*“Meath County Council recognises the essential requirement for energy production and distribution. The two main energy networks serving County Meath are electricity and gas. With increased residential development in the county and a drive for more industrial, commercial and employment generating uses, it will be important to ensure that the capacity of the energy networks is sufficient to meet these demands.”*

- 7.17 The Plan notes the suitability of the County for the development of the grid and the potential for new generation facilities, should the requirement arise. Section 8.1.2 notes that the main electricity corridors are identified on Map 8.1 of the Development Plan, an extract of which is provided below.



**Figure 7.2: Extract from Map 8.1 of the Meath County Development Plan (Electricity Transmission Infrastructure)**

- 7.18 The extract from Map 8.1 above has been annotated to indicate the approximate location of the proposed substation and the proposed connection points to the existing 110kV overhead transmission lines.
- 7.19 Policy EC POL 11 is as follows:
- “To support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the County.”*
- 7.20 The proposed development constitutes the delivery of enhanced electricity infrastructure to serve a location within the county that has been identified for commercial development and the proposed development is therefore directly supported by this Development Plan policy.
- 7.21 Policy EC POL 13 is as follows:
- “To ensure that energy transmission infrastructure follows best practice with regard to siting and design particularly to ensure the protection of all-important recognised landscapes.”*
- 7.22 The proposed electricity transmission development has been designed in accordance with best practice. The siting of the proposed substation and connections to the existing overhead transmission lines within the landholding have been selected to ameliorate landscape and visual impact. The proposed substation

will be effectively screened by landscaping and berming permitted under the extant permission Reg. Ref.: LB/191735 to mitigate against visual impact. The accompanying EIAIR includes an assessment of the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development.

- 7.23 Policy EC POL 16 is *“To require that the location of local energy services such as electricity, be underground, where appropriate.”* The proposed dropdown transmission line connections to serve the new substation are undergrounded between the proposed dropdown masts and the GIS substation building to ensure the proposed energy services will have minimal visibility in compliance with this policy.
- 7.24 Policy EC POL 17 is *“To seek to avoid the sterilisation of lands proximate to key public transport corridors such as rail, where future energy transmission routes/pipelines are being designed and provided.”* The proposed development is appropriately sited and will not sterilise any such lands.
- 7.25 Policy EC POL 18 is *“To generally avoid the location of overhead lines in Natura 2000 sites unless it can be proven that they will not affect the integrity of the site in view of its conservation objectives i.e. by carrying out an appropriate assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive”.* The development is not located within or proximate to any European / Natura 2000 Site and therefore accords with this objective.
- 7.26 Policy EC POL 25 is *“To facilitate the delivery of a high capacity Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure and broadband network and digital broadcasting throughout the county”.* The proposed development will serve *inter alia* a permitted data storage facility development on lands adjoining the substation and thereby accords with this objective.
- 7.27 Objective EC OBJ 1 is as follows:
- “To ensure that all plans and projects associated with the generation or supply of energy or telecommunication networks will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment Screening and those plans or projects which could, either individually or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site (or sites) undergo a full Appropriate Assessment.”*
- 7.28 The current application to An Bord Pleanála is accompanied by an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared by Moore Group. The AA Screening Report provides the information necessary for the Board as competent authority to carry out screening for Appropriate Assessment. The AA Screening Report concludes that the development will not have any likely significant impact on any European Site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

### **Development Management Standards**

- 7.29 Chapter 11 of the Development Plan relates to Development Management Standards. Section 11.8.1 relates to *“Industrial, office, warehousing and business park development”.* The proposed substation forming part of the development will be located within the context of a data storage facility development site. The data storage facility was previously subject of a separate application under Meath County Council Reg. Ref.: LB/191735.

- 7.30 The Development Plan notes that a high standard of design and finish is required for developments of this nature and that landscape plans will be required as part of applications. The current proposal demonstrates a good-quality architectural design executed by MCA Architects, which will also effectively tie-in to the data storage facility development on the adjoining lands (permitted under Reg. Ref.: LB/191735) and the permitted landscape layout developed by Brady Shipman Martin landscape architects.

#### **Other Relevant Objectives**

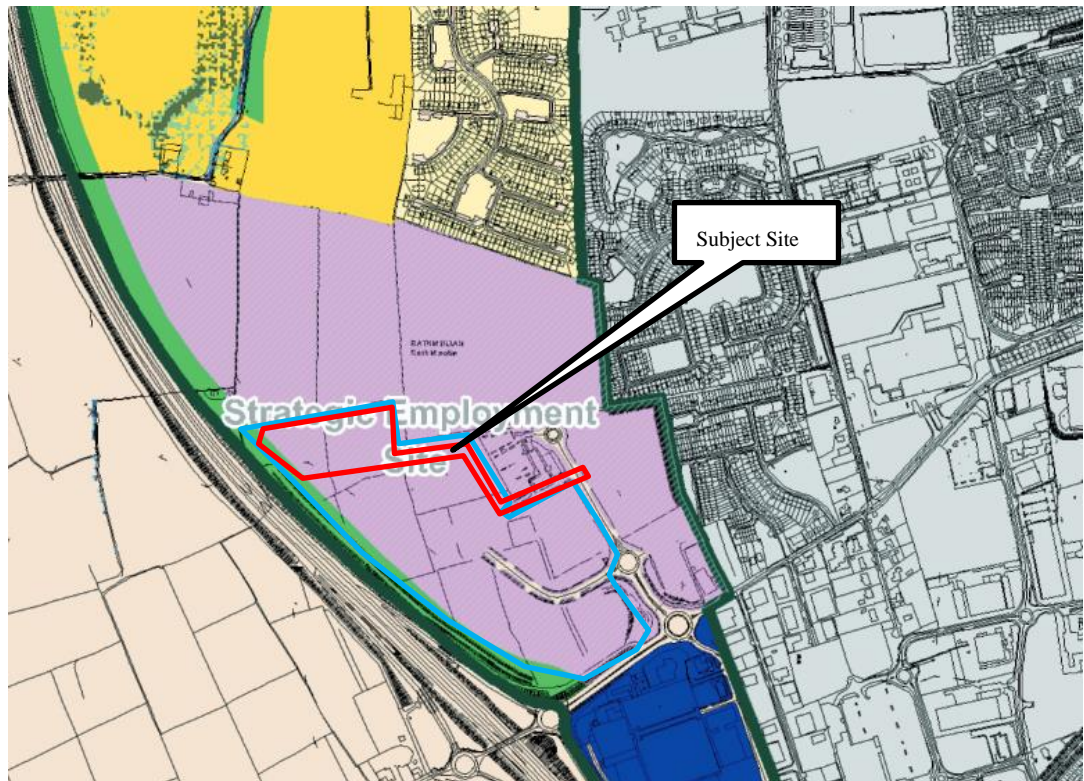
- 7.31 Policy WS POL 14 is to “*implement the policies developed for the Greater Dublin Area by the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study and to ensure that all developments will have regard to the policies as expressed in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study.*” The water services proposals forming part of the proposed development, including the use of SUDs, accord with the provisions of the GDSDS. Please refer to the accompanying Engineering Services Report prepared by CSEA Consulting Engineers for further details.
- 7.32 Objective WS OBJ 8 of the Development Plan is to “*generally require new developments to provide for the separation of foul and surface water drainage networks within the application site.*” The proposed development provides for the separation of foul and surface water drainage networks in accordance with this objective.

#### **Draft Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026**

- 7.33 The Draft Meath County Development Plan for 2020-2026 was published on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2019. Public consultation on the Draft Plan took place until March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and the plan is likely to be adopted by the end of 2020 or during quarter 1 of 2021. Whilst this application will be considered under the current Development Plan, it is considered appropriate to note the key aspects of the Draft County Development Plan as it relates to the subject site.

#### **Zoning**

- 7.34 The large majority of the subject site remains zoned E1 under the Draft Plan. The Development Plan zoning map notes that the subject site is a strategic employment zone for high technology uses.
- 7.35 Utilities are a permitted use under the E1 zoning objective within the Draft Development Plan. The proposed development is therefore consistent with the Draft Plan in this regard.
- 7.36 A small portion of the site at its western extremity also remains zoned F1 under the Draft Development Plan. Utilities are also a permitted land use under this zoning, with the proposed development thereby also complying with the Draft Development Plan in this regard.



**Figure 7.3: Extract from the zoning map for the Southern Environs of Drogheda within the Draft County Development Plan**

#### **Other Relevant Policies and Objectives**

7.37 Chapter 6 of the Draft Development Plan sets out the infrastructure strategy for the county over the lifetime of the Plan, including electricity transmission infrastructure. The following policies and objectives are of relevance to the current development proposal.

7.38 Policy INF POL 46 is as follows:

*“To support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the County and to facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that may be brought forward during the lifetime of the plan including the delivery and integration, including linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.”*

7.39 Policy INF POL 48 is as follows:

*“To ensure that energy transmission infrastructure follows best practice with regard to siting, design and least environmental impact in the interest of landscape protection.”*

7.40 Policy INF POL 51 is as follows:

*“To seek to avoid the sterilisation of lands proximate to key public transport corridors such as rail, when future energy transmission routes/pipelines are being designed and provided.”*

7.41 Policy INF POL 52 is as follows:

*“To seek to generally avoid the location of overhead lines in Natura 2000 sites unless it can be proven that they will not affect the integrity of the site in view of its conservation objectives i.e. by carrying out an appropriate assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.U. Habitats Directive.”*

7.42 Policy INF OBJ 50 is as follows:

*“To ensure that all plans and projects associated with the generation or supply of energy or telecommunication networks will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment Screening and that those plans or projects which could, either individually or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site (or sites) undergo a full Appropriate Assessment.”*

7.43 The foregoing policies and objectives are generally consistent with those pertaining to electricity infrastructure contained in the extant County Development Plan 2013-2019. As set out above, the proposed development accords in full with this policy context by virtue of its siting and design. As noted previously, the proposed development is not located within any Natura 2000 site and the current application is accompanied by an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report to enable the Planning Authority, as the Competent Authority, to carry out screening for Appropriate Assessment in respect of the proposed development.

## **8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**

8.1 An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been prepared / coordinated by AWN Environmental Consultants and is submitted along with this application.

8.2 An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by Moore Group, Consultant Ecologists, and is included as an Appendix of the EIAR.

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

1.1 This planning application relates to the provision of a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation building, associated dropdown 110kV transmission lines, transformers, and a client control building, along with associated and ancillary works.

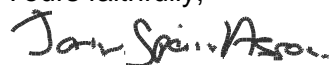
1.2 This project is designed to support current power demand and future growth within the area inclusive but not limited to the power requirements for the permitted data storage facility development within the same landholding (Reg. Ref.: LB/191735).

1.3 The proposal is in accordance with the policies and objectives of national and regional planning policy, the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, and the emerging policy context set out within the Draft Meath County Development Plan 2020-2026.

1.4 It has been demonstrated within this report, as well as within the accompanying drawings, documents, and Environmental Impact Assessment Report that the proposal provides a suitable use of the subject lands. The applicant and design team in preparing the application documentation have considered the issues raised within the pre-application consultations undertaken with An Bord Pleanála and their determination issued prior to the lodgement of this application.

- 1.5 If you require any further information, or clarification on the above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,



---

**John Spain Associates**

## APPENDIX 1: EXTRACT OF BOARD ORDER CONFIRMING THAT THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CONSTITUTES STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Our Case Number: ABP-307437-20  
Your Reference: CAP Developments LLC



John Spain Associates  
39 Fitzwilliam Place  
Dublin 2  
D02 ND61

Date: 2nd November 2020

Re: 110kV GIS Substation, 4 no. transformers and client control building , 49KVA electrical supply to 110kV GIS substation.  
Lands at Drogheda IDA Business and Technology Park, Donore Road, Drogheda, Co. Meath.

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please be advised that following consultations under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, the Board hereby serves notice that it is of the opinion that the proposed development falls within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended. Accordingly, the Board has decided that the proposed development would be strategic infrastructure within the meaning of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. Any application for approval for the proposed development must therefore be made directly to An Bord Pleanála under section 182A(1) of the Act.

Please also be informed that the Board considers that the pre-application consultation process in respect of this proposed development is now closed.

A list of the prescribed bodies considered relevant by the Board is attached herein.

In accordance with section 146(5) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, the Board will make available for inspection and purchase at its offices the documents relating to the decision within 3 working days following its decision. This information is normally made available on the list of decided cases on the website on the Wednesday following the week in which the decision is made.

The attachment contains information in relation to challenges to the validity of a decision of An Bord Pleanála under the provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

Please be also advised that a fee refund in the amount of €3,500 will issue to you in due course as there was only one meeting held on this case.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Board.

Teil  
Glao Áitúil  
Facs  
Láithreán Gréasáin  
Ríomhphost

Tel  
LoCall  
Fax  
Website  
Email

(01) 858 8100  
1890 275 175  
(01) 872 2584  
www.pleanala.ie  
bord@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid MacIbhríde  
Baile Átha Cliath 1  
D01 V902

64 Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 V902



Please quote the above mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,



Kieran Somers  
Executive Officer  
Direct Line: 01-873 7250

VC11

Tel (01) 858 8100  
Glaos Áitiúil LoCall 1890 275 175  
Facs (01) 872 2884  
Láithreán Gréasáin Website [www.pleanala.ie](http://www.pleanala.ie)  
Riomhphost Email [bord@pleanala.ie](mailto:bord@pleanala.ie)

64 Sraid Maoilbhríde 64 Marlborough Street  
Baile Átha Cliath 1 Dublín 1  
D01 V902 D01 V902

**ABP-307437-20**

The following is a schedule of prescribed bodies considered relevant by the Board:

- Meath County Council
- Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Irish Water
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Fáilte Ireland
- An Taisce
- Heritage Council
- Commission of Regulation of Utilities, Water and Energy
- Health Service Executive
- Irish Aviation Authority
- Health & Safety Authority

---