

East Meath - North Dublin Grid Upgrade Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR): Volume 2

Chapter 5 - Population

EirGrid

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5. Population

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the assessment of the likely potential impacts of the Construction and Operational Phases of the East Meath - North Dublin Grid Upgrade (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development) on people and communities. A full description of the Proposed Development is presented in Chapter 4 (Proposed Development Description) in Volume 2 of this Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

This assessment has considered and assessed the potential impacts of how the Proposed Development may affect the way in which people live, work, relate to one another, organise to meet their needs, and generally operate as members of society. In doing so, this assessment considers demographics, community composition, land use, the location of residential, commercial, community receptors and recreational (including tourism) amenities as well as economic activity in general.

Consideration and assessment of potential impacts related to human health are outlined in Chapter 6 (Human Health) in Volume 2 of this EIAR.

5.2 Methodology

The following sections outline the parameters considered in respect to establishing study area(s), in compliance with relevant guidelines, policies and legislation, the data collection and collation undertaken, as well as the appraisal method(s) for the assessment of impacts on people and communities.

This assessment of the likely potential impacts on people and communities as a result of the Construction and / or Operational Phases of the Proposed Development comprises the assessment of potential impacts on the following assessment topics:

- Population:
 - Amenity;
 - Accessibility and Severance;
 - Land Use / Land Take; and
 - Local Economy.

5.2.1 Study Area

The study area(s) for this assessment of the likely potential impacts on people and communities during the Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development has been determined with these assessment topics in mind. Given the different spatial scales that apply to assessment topics, different study areas have been set accordingly:

- For the assessment topic of Amenity, the study area comprises an area of a 300m (metre) buffer from the Planning Application Boundary (as shown in Figure 5.1 in Volume 4 of the EIAR), as this is considered to be the typical distance in which potential impacts associated with air quality, noise and vibration, visual and traffic are likely to occur and potentially combine to have a potential impact on amenity;
- For the assessment topic of Accessibility and Severance, the study area comprises an area of 300m from the Planning Application Boundary, as this is considered to be the typical distance in which potential impacts on accessibility and severance can occur;

- For the assessment topic of Land Use / Land Take, the study area consists of the footprint of the Proposed Development (i.e., within the Planning Application Boundary as shown in Figure 5.1 in Volume 4 of this EIAR); and
- For the assessment topic of Local Economy, the study area comprises the area of County Meath as well as the Local Authority area of Fingal in County Dublin, as these are the areas in which the Proposed Development is to be situated, and therefore, determined to be the extent to which potential impacts on the economy are experienced.

5.2.2 Relevant Guidelines, Policy and Legislation

The assessment has been undertaken with regard to the following relevant guidelines, policies and legislation:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (hereafter referred to as the EPA Guidelines) (EPA 2022);
- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects. Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (European Commission 2017);
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (Government of Ireland 2018);
- Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) LA 112 Population and Human Health (hereafter referred to as the DMRB Guidance) (Highways England 2020);
- EIAR Guidelines for the Consideration of Tourism and Tourism Related Projects (Fáilte Ireland 2023)
- Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Meath County Council (MCC) 2021);
- Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 (Fingal County Council (FCC) 2023);
- Dublin Airport Local Area Plan 2020 (FCC 2020); and
- Number 30 of 2000 - Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

5.2.3 Data Collection and Collation

A desk-based study was undertaken in November 2023, and further checked in January 2024, to access all relevant information to inform the assessment. The following data sources and records were used:

- 2022 Census data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), comprising statistical data and information at county, settlement, and small area (SAPS) geographical levels (CSO 2023a);
- County Meath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 (MCC 2016);
- Dublin Airport Local Area Plan 2020 (FCC 2020);
- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 - 2031 (hereafter referred to as the RSES) (EMRA 2019);
- EirGrid Evidence Based Environmental Study 9: Settlement and land-use (EirGrid 2016);
- EPA Maps (EPA 2024);
- Fingal Development Plan 2023 - 2029 (FCC 2023);
- Fingal Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2020 (FCC 2016);
- GeoDirectory Address Data Information (An Post and Tailte Éireann 2023); and
- Meath County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 (MCC 2021).

5.2.4 Appraisal Method for the Assessment of Impacts

5.2.4.1 Assessment Topics

5.2.4.1.1 Amenity

'Amenity' describes the perceived character or attractiveness of an area in which people live, work, or socialise. Changes in the amenity of an area (as a result of a development or project) can affect how people perceive or recognise their communities or how they go about their daily routine or use community / recreational facilities and / or commercial resources.

Factors that influence the amenity of an area include those that contribute to the 'look and feel' of a particular location or space. As such, potential impacts on air quality, noise and vibration, visual and traffic resulting from the Construction and / or Operational Phases of the Proposed Development are important contributing factors that are most likely to determine whether a considerable or notable change in amenity is likely.

Therefore, the assessment of potential impacts on amenity (as set out in Section 5.4.2.1) essentially comprises an in-combination assessment of the findings of the following accompanying environmental assessments of the Proposed Development within this EIAR:

- Chapter 7 (Air Quality);
- Chapter 9 (Noise and Vibration);
- Chapter 14 (Traffic and Transport); and
- Chapter 18 (Landscape and Visual).

Potential impacts on amenity have been considered during the Construction and / or Operational Phases of the Proposed Development and have been considered and assessed using professional judgement (aided by the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022)), whereby only significant residual impacts (either negative or positive), as reported by these environmental assessments are considered within the assessment of potential impacts on amenity. There is only considered to be the potential for impacts on amenity where two or more of these environmental assessments report significant residual impacts.

5.2.4.1.2 Accessibility and Severance

Accessibility relates to the ability of users to access community facilities, recreational resources, and residential properties. Change in access to facilities can significantly affect users, particularly if these are important facilities (e.g., healthcare facilities), or if there are a lack of alternative facilities available.

During the Construction Phase, where access points to residential, commercial and community receptors are to be crossed by the Proposed Development, temporary measures will be required to facilitate access at all times until construction activities are completed. The assessment considers these access points and the potential for impacts in relation to accessibility and severance, and these are assessed using professional judgement (aided by the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022)).

5.2.4.1.3 Land Use / Land Take

The assessment of potential impacts on land use / land take considers and assesses the implications of the temporary and permanent land take required from residential and commercial receptors and community / recreational facilities during the Construction and / or Operational Phases of the Proposed Development. Temporary land take is typically short-term (see Table 5.3 for a definition of durations) and only required for the duration of the Construction Phase. However, permanent land take is long-term and often is required from the outset of construction activities and throughout the lifetime of the Proposed Development.

Given the nature of the Proposed Development, there are no permanent land take requirements from private residential and commercial properties or public community lands during the Operational Phase. Therefore, all potential impacts that are referred to in Section 5.4.2.3 are considered to be temporary land take requirements that would occur during the Construction Phase only.

Only potential impacts on the land use of private land holdings and public community lands are included in this assessment. All potential impacts on the land use of agricultural businesses (including land holdings) are considered in Chapter 15 (Agronomy and Equine) in Volume 2 of this EIAR.

5.2.4.1.4 Local Economy

The assessment of potential impacts on the local economy as a result of the Proposed Development, outlined in Section 5.4.2.2, is considered to be an assessment of the potential impacts on employment within County Meath and Fingal in County Dublin generally, but also on local businesses in these locations. This assessment is not considered to be an attempt to calculate or measure the economic benefits or otherwise of the Proposed Development, which are determined separately from this EIAR.

5.2.4.2 Determination of Sensitivity, Magnitude and Significance

There is no prescribed method for determining the sensitivity (of receptors), magnitude of change, and / or significance of impacts in respect to the assessment of potential impacts on people and communities. Therefore, professional judgement and past experience on other major infrastructure projects has been used, aided by, and with regard to, the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022) and the DMRB Guidance (Highways England 2020) to establish an appraisal method for the assessment of potential impacts and determine the sensitivity of receptors, magnitude of change, and / or significance of potential impacts.

Table 5.1 presents the sensitivity criteria applied to residential, commercial and community receptors in the study area outlined in Section 5.3.2.

Table 5.1: Sensitivity Criteria for Residential, Commercial and Community Receptors

Sensitivity Category	Description
Very high	Health, social, leisure or commercial facilities that serve a population at a regional or national level. Examples would include regional hospitals, national stadiums and strategic employment sites (>5ha). These are considered very high sensitivity on the basis that disruption of access or loss of the resource would affect a population at a regional or national scale and there would be limited alternative options.
High	Health, social, residential, leisure or commercial facilities that serve the local or regional community, including vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children or people with disabilities. Examples would include local health centres, schools, leisure centres, local shopping centres, housing and employment sites (1-<5ha). These are considered of high sensitivity on the basis that disruption of access or loss of the resource could undermine the ability of the community to support its health, social and cultural wellbeing and/or affect community cohesion.
Medium	Health, social, residential, leisure or commercial facilities that serve a minority in the community and for which many alternatives exist locally. Examples would include individual houses and small businesses (<1ha). It is considered that these properties would be of medium sensitivity, since impacts on them would affect the individuals concerned but not affect any population at community level.
Low	Land allocated for development. It is considered that this land is of low sensitivity since proposed development is yet to be incorporated into the community. This is considered low sensitivity on the basis that whilst the individual developers may be affected, there is opportunity to compensate or alter proposals to accommodate the impact.
Very low	Land such as derelict sites that are not currently serving individuals or communities with any specific service or facility.

The significance of impacts matrix, as set out in Table 5.2 (adapted from the EPA Guidelines) was used, together with professional judgement, to determine the significance of potential impacts associated with the Construction and / or Operational Phases of the Proposed Development.

Table 5.2: EPA Significance Matrix

		Sensitivity				
		Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Magnitude	Very Low	Imperceptible	Not Significant	Slight	Slight	Slight
	Low	Not Significant	Slight	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Medium	Slight	Moderate	Moderate	Significant	Significant
	High	Slight	Moderate	Significant	Very Significant	Profound
	Very High	Slight	Moderate	Significant	Profound	Profound

The duration of impacts was determined using the EPA Guidelines definitions, as outlined in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Duration of Impacts (EPA 2022)

Describing the Duration and Frequency of Effects	
'Duration' is a concept that can have different meanings for different topics – in the absence of specific definitions for different topics the following definitions may be useful.	Momentary Effects Effects lasting from seconds to minutes
	Brief Effects Effects lasting less than a day
	Temporary Effects Effects lasting less than a year
	Short-term Effects Effects lasting one to seven years
	Medium-term Effects Effects lasting seven to fifteen years
	Long-term Effects Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years
	Permanent Effects Effects lasting over sixty years
	Reversible Effects Effects that can be undone, for example through remediation or Restoration
	Frequency of Effects Describe how often the effect will occur (once, rarely, occasionally, frequently, constantly – or hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually)

5.3 Baseline Environment

This Section presents information on the baseline environment in which the Proposed Development is situated, and which is of particular relevance to the assessment of potential impacts on people and communities. The information on the baseline environment provides the basis for the assessment of potential impacts that is outlined in Section 5.4. A brief description of the local community area is provided, as well as the nature and type of community and commercial receptors and any notable features in the proximity of the Proposed Development. The baseline environment in terms of air quality, noise and vibration, traffic and transport and landscape and visual, which inform the amenity and accessibility assessments, are described in Chapter 7 (Air Quality), Chapter 9 (Noise and Vibration), Chapter 14 (Traffic and Transport) and Chapter 18 (Landscape and Visual) in Volume 2 of this EIAR.

5.3.1 Overview

According to the County Meath Development Plan 2021-2027 (MCC 2021), County Meath covers an area of over 230,000 hectares (ha) and is the second largest county in Leinster. It adjoins County Dublin to the south, and this geographical proximity and the strong functional relationship between the two counties, results in

County Meath being a vital supporting partner in the recent growth of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). Furthermore, it also states that the county benefits from a wealth of natural and man-made resources and is supported by a well-developed road and rail infrastructure system which provides access to international transport networks at Dublin Airport and Dublin Port as well as the remainder of the country. The fertile soils provide the basis for a thriving agricultural and food sector, and the natural and built heritage enhances the quality of life for the people of the county and has long enticed visitors to Meath.

According to the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 (FCC 2023), Fingal is 465 square metres (sq. m.) in area, hosts a variety of landscapes, enjoys significant economic advantages and is the fastest growing local authority area in Ireland. Fingal is well served by air, sea and national roads, with key economic sectors in Fingal including tourism, retail and hospitality, information technology and communications, agriculture, public administration and commerce and trade.

As set out in Chapter 4 (Proposed Development Description) in Volume 2 of this EIAR, the proposed cable route of the Proposed Development will be approximately 37.5 kilometres (km) in length and will connect Woodland Substation in the townland of Woodland in County Meath to Belcamp Substation in the townlands of Clonshagh and Belcamp in Fingal, North County Dublin. The route of the Proposed Development will pass through both rural and urban areas along its length.

According to the 2022 Census (CSO 2023a), County Meath has a population of 220,826, comprising 110,838 females and 109,988 males; while Fingal has a population of 330,506, consisting of 167,974 females and 162,532 males. To ascertain the number of people within the study area (i.e. within 300m of the Proposed Development Planning Application Boundary (see Section 5.2.1 for details)) and therefore likely to experience potential impacts during the Construction and / or Operational Phases of the Proposed Development, Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) were used, as presented in Table 5.4. SAPS are the smallest geographical area for which census information is provided by the CSO. As shown in Table 5.4, approximately 13,024 people reside within the SAPS areas that are within 300m of the Proposed Development Planning Application Boundary.

Table 5.4: Population of SAPS Areas within 300m of the Proposed Development Planning Application Boundary

Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) Area	Total Population	No. of Females	No. of Males
167029004	230	123	107
167029015	485	246	239
167025001/03	509	245	264
267158009/02	591	290	301
267066001	298	153	145
167024003	443	213	230
167030019	220	106	114
167024002	330	171	159
167030021	255	122	133
167029001	286	140	146
267158012	484	237	247
267158001	306	152	154
267098001	349	170	179
267001009/02	1256	599	657
267005001	1112	563	549
267132011	263	131	132
267099015	624	333	291
267099021	416	194	222
267099020	383	194	189
167029003	305	150	155
167029022	407	207	200
268121002	220	124	96
268122003	503	257	246
167029021	374	197	177
267132001/03	199	105	94
267132001/02	362	175	187
167029018	336	173	163
267158022	283	135	148
267158024	245	130	115
267158025	458	223	235
268122007	492	255	237
Total:	13,024	6,513	6,511

5.3.2 Residential, Commercial and Community Receptors

The closest settlements to the Proposed Development are Dunboyne, Fosterstown, Swords and Darndale. There are approximately 652 residential receptors within 300m of the Proposed Development Planning Application Boundary, in addition to 11 community receptors and 56 commercial receptors. No tourism receptors are located within 300m of the Proposed Development Planning Application Boundary.

Table 5.5 lists the known commercial receptors that are situated within the 300m study area. These receptors are shown on Figure 5.1 in Volume 4 of this EIAR.

Table 5.5: Known Commercial Receptors Located Within 300m of the Proposed Development Planning Application Boundary

Commercial Receptors	Address / Location
Barstown Commercial Park	Barstown, Dunboyne, Co. Meath. A86 T289
Voltapak Ltd Packaging Machinery	Harlockstown, Dunboyne, Co. Meath, A86 P027
Paul Whelan Motors	Harlockstown, Summerhill Road, Dunboyne, Co. Meath, A86 D267
Swaggers Dog Grooming and Kenneling	Cushinstown, Co. Meath
S Kiernan Sand & Gravel	Colliersland North, Summerhill, Co. Meath
Dunboyne Business Park	Dunboyne Business Park, Unit68, Dunboyne, Co. Meath, A86 YE81
JLK Valet Services	14 The Court, Plunkett Hall, Dunboyne, Co. Meath A86 RF77
Avoca Dunboyne	Pierce, Dunboyne, Co. Meath, A86 PR26
Kilsaran Head Office Construction Company	Cradockstown, Piercestown, Co. Meath, A86 W820
Clifford Barron Auto Solutions	Ballymagillin, Piercetown, Co. Meath, A86 EP82
Gordon Barron Crash Repairs	Piercetown, Dunboyne, A86 EP82
Nuttstown Storage	Nuttstown Farm, Nuttstown, Clonee, Co. Dublin, D15 VY0Y
Autoplanet	Nuttstown, Clonee, Co. Meath
D&D Kitchens Carpentry	Nuttstown Farm, Nuttstown, Kilbride, Co. Meath D15 VF96
Top Oil Kilbride Service Station	Kilbride Road, Priest Town, Kilbride, Co. Meath, D15 EW6T
Park Electrical Services	Belgree Enterprise Park, Belgree, Kilbride, Co. Dublin, D15 CFY5
YPD Golf Ltd.	YPD GOLF LTD, Court, Kilbride, Co. Meath, D15 W4AV
Aura Foods Ltd.	Court, Co. Meath, D15 XF62
Inta Dental Studio	9 Hollystown Demesne, Hollystown, Dublin, D15 V1Y6
RCRT Roofing	Hollystown Demesne, Gallanstown, Co. Dublin
EcoMod Modular Buildings Ltd	Kilnamonagh, The Ward, Co. Dublin, D11 Y925
Sysco Ireland	Killamonan, The Ward, Co. Dublin, D15 KA03
Graeme Colfer Autos	Spricklestown, The Ward, Co. Dublin, D11 Y52H
Metweld Fabrication	Spricklestown, The Ward, Co. Dublin, D11 TA40
Newpark Motor services	Newpark, The Ward, Co. Dublin, D11 XT9V
Eirgo Group	Newpark, The Ward, Co. Dublin, D11 XT9V
Builders Hoists	Newpark, The Ward, Co. Dublin, D11 XT9V
Scaffolding & Formwork Sales Ltd	Newpark, The Ward, Co. Dublin, D11 XT9V
Ratcliffe Gates	Newpark The Ward Co, Dublin, D11 WF99
Keelings Farm Shop	FoodCentral, St. Margaret's, Co. Dublin
BUSTEC	Forrest Great, Swords, Co. Dublin
Parfit Mobility Equipment Supplier	Old Schoolhouse Works, Cloghran, Swords, Co. Dublin
The Coachman's Inn	Cloughran, Airport Road, Dublin
Dublin Plant & Digger Hire	Baskin Ln, Glebe, Swords, Co. Dublin, K67 CX34
Street & Park Equipment Lighting Shop	Stockhole Lane, Cloghran, Swords, Co. Dublin
Ace Vegetable Suppliers	Stockhole Lane, Cloghran, Swords, Co. Dublin, K67 C2P1

Table 5.6 lists the known community receptors that are situated within the 300m study area. These receptors are shown on Figure 5.1 in Volume 4 of this EIAR.

Table 5.6: Known Community Receptors Located Within 300m of the Proposed Development Planning Application Boundary

Community Receptors	Address / Location
Karlswood Equestrian Centre	Blackhall Big, Batterstown, Co. Meath, A86 WV56
Dunboyne Nursing Home	Summerhill Road, Waynestown, Dunboyne, Co. Meath
Dunboyne AFC (Soccer Club)	Summerhill Road, Colliersland North, Dunboyne, Co. Meath, A86 KT68
Thorntons Civic Amenity Centre	Dunboyne Business Park, Dunboyne, Co. Meath
M3 Parkway Train Station	Pace, Co. Meath
Kilbride National School (Scoil Bhríde)	Priest Town, Kilbride, Co. Meath, Ireland
Crown Jesus Ministries Dublin (Religious Organisation)	Belgree Enterprise park, Court, Kilbride, Co. Dublin, D15 CFY5
Tyrrelstown Karate Club Dojo	Court, Hynestown, Co. Dublin
Classic Pilates	Hollystown Park, Yellow Walls, Dublin 15
St. Thomas Church	10 Church View, Hollywood, Dublin 15, D15 XR89
Dublin Ward Cross Indoor Football	Zero, Newpark, The Ward, Dublin, D11 TF72
St. Kevin FC (Wards Cross)	Zero, Newpark, The Ward, Dublin, D11 TF72
New Park Care Centre	New Park, The Ward Dublin, D11 TF72
St. Margaret's Golf & Country Club	Skephubble, St Margaret's, Co. Dublin, K67 K339
Little Moos Moos Playschool	Skephubble Farm, St. Margaret's, Co. Dublin
St. Margaret's GAA Club	Ballystrahan, St. Margaret's, Co. Dublin, K67 EY27
Forest Little Golf Club	Forest Rd, Fosterstown North, Swords, Co. Dublin, K67 K825
Swords Open Golf Course	Naul Road Swords K67 County Dublin
The National Show Centre	The National Show Centre, Stockhole Lane, Cloghran, Dublin, K67 VF43
Trinity Care Anovocare Nursing Home	Stockhole Lane, Cloghran, Swords, Co. Dublin, K67 T8P0
New Ground Football Club	Saint Martin's, Baskin Ln, Cloghran, Swords, Co. Dublin
AUL Sports Complex	Aul Complex, Clonshaugh, Dublin
Shampoodles Dog Day Centre	Clonshagh, Co. Dublin
Craobh Chiaráin GAA Football Club	Belcamp, Co. Dublin
St Michael's House (Nursing Home)	St Michaels House, Belcamp Lane, Priorswood, Dublin

In terms of sensitivity of these receptors, due to the relatively rural nature of much of the study area, there is a likelihood that there are limited alternative facilities available locally for people within these relatively isolated communities. Any potential impacts on availability or access to these facilities may disproportionately affect these communities as a result. On this basis, the sensitivity of the residential, commercial and community receptors in the study area is judged to be 'High'. This is a conservative judgement, guided by the criteria in Table 5.1.

5.3.3 Land Use

A large proportion of the study area is occupied by agricultural fields composed of small to medium sized fields with mature hedgerows. Outside of agricultural land use, the predominant land use is urban, in the form of built-up residential areas and industrial estates in and around Dublin Airport and surrounding Dunboyne. The sections where the proposed cable route will be located within County Dublin present as a typical modified landscape under anthropogenic influence, whilst the sections of the proposed cable route that will be located within County Meath reads as a typical productive rural landscape that is not particularly rare or distinctive at a National or Regional scale.

Table 5.7 outlines the sections of the proposed cable route of the Proposed Development which will be located off-road and in private lands, along with the current land use of the associated land. As can be seen in Table 5.7, the land use of the majority of these off-road sections comprises agricultural lands with crossings

of watercourses and sections of the national road network (i.e. motorways) (refer to Chapter 15 (Agronomy and Equine) in Volume 2 of this EIAR for further detail).

Table 5.7: Current Land Use of Off-Road Sections of the Proposed Development

Approximate Chainage	Location	Current Land Use
0 – 3,625	Between Woodland Substation and R156 Regional Road	Agricultural land predominantly but also a watercourse crossing (Dunboyne Stream)
16,050 – 16,425	Along or adjacent to Local Road	Agricultural land but also watercourse crossing (Pinkeen)
19,150 – 19,350	Between junction of Local Road and Kilbride Road	Agricultural land
21,225 – 22,575	Between Kilbride Road, north of Hollystown, and the R121 Regional Road	Agricultural land
23,275 – 23,575	Along or adjacent to R121 Regional Road	Agricultural land and crossing of M2 Motorway.
28,550 – 29,100	Between Kilreesk Lane and R108 Regional Road	Agricultural land
34,025 – 37,624	Along or adjacent to R108 Regional Road	Agricultural land and crossing of M1 Motorway and Baskin Lane

5.3.4 Local Economy

5.3.4.1 Overview

According to the KPMG Global Economic Outlook (KPMG 2023), Ireland's economy has been performing strongly for a number of years recently and was one of a small number of countries to experience economic growth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the course of 2022, the economy as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 12.2%, while the domestic economy grew by 8.2%. These rates made the Irish economy the fastest growing economy in Europe in 2022. This growth was driven by high levels of investments by multi-nationals and continued growth in exports and higher private consumption.

As with most countries in Europe, Ireland is facing global downturn risks and a major cost of living challenge. Domestically, infrastructure bottlenecks are a further barrier to growth. Despite the economic growth in 2022, many households and businesses may claim that they do not feel the economy growing by 8% to 12%. Inflation has been reducing disposable incomes and increasing pressure on lower income individuals. As 2023 progresses, inflation is expected to fall, potentially to 5%, on the back on falling energy prices.

Global-domestic interdependencies have been key drivers of Ireland's economic fortune over the past two decades. The country's skilled and open labour market, talent pipeline, and easy access to both the European and United Kingdom (UK) market, are all likely to contribute to economic growth over the coming years. Ireland's strong industrial base in key sectors, in particular Life Sciences and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), both owes and lends itself to multi-decade long investments by multi-nationals. The Tech Sector has seen a slowdown in 2023. However, it has remained relatively resilient, with total layoffs to date accounting for around 1% of the sector's workforce in Ireland, compared to around 1.5% to 2% of the sector's global workforce. Foreign direct investment appetite remains strong post-pandemic and post-Brexit, and further investment can be expected in the medium-term, positioning Ireland well to take advantage of wider long-term trends in global economic growth.

This economic outlook, together with the objectives and targets outlined within the Climate Action Plan 2023 (Government of Ireland 2022), the most recent plan at the time the KPMG Global Economic Outlook was published, in respect to harnessing renewable energy and developing cleaner modes of transport, will result in higher demand for electricity in future years. This demand will be required to be met to continue the positive economic outlook for the country.

This demand for electricity is likely to be highest within the GDA, which County Meath and Fingal are considered a part of. This is due to a number of large industrial energy consumers being located within these areas (for example, MSD, Meta Data Centre etc.) making it an attractive location for further similar development. In addition to this, is the large portion of the current population within these areas that are commuters, as well as the forecasted increase in population in the coming years (for example there was an 11.6% and 13.2% increase in the population of Fingal and County Meath respectively between 2016 and 2022 (CSO 2023a). The local businesses in proximity to the Proposed Development are listed in Table 5.5 and are shown on Figure 5.1 in Volume 4 of this EIAR.

5.3.4.2 Employment

The Construction Phase of the Proposed Development is likely to have potential impacts on the employment sector within County Meath and Fingal. Table 5.8 outlines the number of people employed in the construction industry within the Local Authority areas of Fingal and County Meath, as well as nationally in the 2022 Census (CSO 2023a).

Table 5.8: Employment in Construction Industry in Local Authority Areas of Fingal and County Meath

Location	Number Employed	% of Total Construction Workforce in Ireland
Ireland	134,482	100%
Meath	8,350	6.2%
Fingal	8,258	6.1%

5.3.4.3 Local Economy

5.3.4.3.1 County Meath

According to the CSO Business Demography NACE (CSO 2021), which is the most up-to-date information available at the time of writing, there were 14,014 active enterprises in County Meath in 2021. These active enterprises (comprising both indigenous and foreign-owned companies) had a combined number of employees of approximately 58,416, while the total number of persons engaged by them was 66,914. The vast majority of these active enterprises (approximately 13,051) had an employment size of under 10 persons. In contrast, there were 507 active enterprises with 10 to 19 employees, 330 active enterprises with 20 to 49 employees, 108 active enterprises with 50 to 249 employees and only 18 active enterprises with 250 or more employees.

According to the 2022 Census (CSO 2023b), County Meath's labour force participation rate was 64.1%, which is the third highest labour force participation rate in the country, and higher than the national average of 61.2%. There were 8,124 people unemployed in 2022 in County Meath, representing an unemployment rate of 7.4%. This is the fifth lowest in the country and lower than the national average of 8.3%. This is an improvement compared to the 2016 Census (CSO 2016) when County Meath had an unemployment rate of 11.2%, accounting for approximately 10,523 people.

5.3.4.3.2 Fingal

Fingal has experienced significant growth in employment in the past number of years and has major economic assets (including Dublin Airport) and is in close proximity to Dublin City, Dublin Port Tunnel, road and rail infrastructure, and a prime location on the Dublin to Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC). According to the CSO Business Demography NACE (CSO 2021), there were 123,874 active enterprises in County Dublin in 2021 (data specific to Fingal was not available at the time of writing). These active enterprises (comprising both indigenous and foreign-owned companies) had a combined number of employees of approximately 947,794, while the total number of persons engaged by them was 1,007,793. Similar to County Meath, the vast majority of these active enterprises (approximately 113,877) had an employment size of under 10 persons. In contrast, there were 4,657 active enterprises with 10 to 19 employees, 3,018 active enterprises

with 20 to 49 employees, 1,811 with 50 to 249 employees and only 511 active enterprises with 250 or more employees.

According to the 2022 Census (CSO 2023b), Fingal's labour force participation rate was 65.6%, the highest in the state, and higher than the national average of 61.2%. There were 13,050 people unemployed in 2022 in Fingal, which is an unemployment rate of 7.8%, and the seventh lowest in the country. This rate is lower than the national average of 8.3% and represents an improvement compared to the 2016 Census (CSO 2016), when Fingal had an unemployment rate of 10.3%, accounting for approximately 15,415 people.

The economy, as a receptor, is valued as 'High' on the basis that the population within the study area would be supported by the businesses and employment in the region.

5.4 Potential Impacts

This Section outlines the assessment of potential impacts on people and communities as a result of the Construction and / or Operational Phases of the Proposed Development. As mentioned in Section 5.2, the assessment of such potential impacts has been undertaken with respect to the following assessment topics:

- Population:
 - Amenity;
 - Accessibility and Severance;
 - Land Use / Land Take; and
 - Economy.

5.4.1 'Do Nothing' Scenario

In the Do Nothing scenario, the Proposed Development would not be implemented, and therefore, there would be no changes to amenity, accessibility and severance, land use / land take and economy as a result of the Proposed Development. Therefore, there would be a Neutral impact on these assessment topics under the Do Nothing scenario.

5.4.2 Construction Phase

5.4.2.1 Amenity

As outlined in Section 5.2.4.1.1, the findings of the air quality (Chapter 7), noise and vibration (Chapter 9), traffic and transport (Chapter 14), and landscape and visual (Chapter 18) assessments are considered in combination to each other to determine the overall impact on amenity.

Chapter 7 (Air Quality) in Volume 2 of this EIAR considers and assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on air quality, particularly in relation to construction-related dust emissions, construction site plant and machinery emissions, and road traffic emissions. The assessment of these potential impacts within Chapter 7 (Air Quality) concluded that the residual significance of these potential impacts during the Construction Phase will be Not Significant.

Chapter 9 (Noise and Vibration) in Volume 2 of this EIAR considers and assesses the potential impacts of noise and vibration associated with the Proposed Development. The assessment of potential noise and vibration impacts within Chapter 9 (Noise and Vibration) concluded that the residual significance of potential noise impacts from construction activities during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development will be Adverse, Not Significant and Temporary, while the residual significance of potential vibration impacts (in particular, associated with Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) works) will be Adverse, Not Significant and Temporary. During the Construction Phase there will be Adverse, Significant and Temporary residual impacts as a result of some diversion routes (Diversion Route 1.2, 1.14, 1.16 and 1.24), and an Adverse, Moderate to

Significant and Temporary residual impact as a result of some diversion routes (Diversion Route 1.6, 1.18, 1.20, 1.21 and 1.23) required to facilitate the laying of the proposed cable route. There are no appropriate measures to mitigate impacts resulting from diversion routes but it is important to note that these impacts will be temporary in duration.

Chapter 14 (Traffic and Transport) in Volume 2 of this EIAR considers and assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on traffic and transport. The assessment of potential impacts on traffic and transport during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development concluded that the residual significance of such potential impacts will be Not Significant and Temporary.

Chapter 18 (Landscape and Visual) in Volume 2 of this EIAR considers and assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the landscape as well as visual amenity. As outlined in Section 5.2.4.1.1, it is potential impacts on visual amenity that are of interest when determining potential impacts on amenity. The assessment of potential visual impacts, as outlined in Chapter 18 (Landscape and Visual) in Volume 2 of this EIAR, concluded that the residual significance of such impacts during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development will be Negative, Slight to Imperceptible and Short-Term.

As stated in Section 5.2.4.1.1, only significant residual impacts (either negative or positive) as reported by the aforementioned environmental assessments are considered within the assessment of potential impacts on amenity; and there is only considered to be the potential for impacts on amenity where two or more of these environmental assessments report significant residual impacts. As can be seen above, significant residual impacts (negative) are only reported in respect to potential traffic diversions and these impacts will be temporary in duration and will occur along existing road networks, for which noise from traffic is predominant in the baseline. As such, no significant negative impacts are anticipated on amenity during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development. Using professional judgement, aided by the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022), the significance of potential impacts on amenity during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development is considered to be Negative, Slight and Temporary.

5.4.2.2 Accessibility and Severance

Section 4.5 of Chapter 4 (Proposed Development Description) in Volume 2 of this EIAR sets out the proposed Construction Phase activities associated with the installation of the new underground cable and the proposed substation works. Approximately 26km, equating to approximately 70% of the Proposed Development will be located within the road network, constructed on a section-by-section basis, which will facilitate the maintaining of access to all residential, commercial and community receptors throughout the Construction Phase. Duct and Joint Bay installation are the most construction-intensive and invasive elements of cable route installation as digging of a trench is required. For in-road cable laying, this phase will have the largest potential impact on traffic, including the potential need for rolling road closures (to through traffic) and road diversions.

Where access points to residential, commercial and community receptors are crossed by the Proposed Development, temporary measures will be implemented to facilitate access at all times until construction activities are completed. This will be a temporary impact due to the rolling nature of the works (refer to Chapter 4 (Proposed Development Description) in Volume 2 of this EIAR for details on the construction programme). As such, the magnitude of change in terms of accessibility and severance as a result of these construction works is considered to be 'low'.

Therefore, given the 'medium' or 'high' sensitivity assigned to residential, commercial, and community / recreational receptors situated within proximity of the Proposed Development, and the magnitude of change is considered to be 'low', the significance of potential impacts on these receptors in terms of accessibility and severance is considered to be Negative, Moderate and Temporary.

5.4.2.3 Land Use / Land Take

Approximately 70% of the Proposed Development will be located within the road network while approximately 30% will be located off-road in private lands. Table 5.7 presents the sections of the Proposed Development that will be situated off-road, in private lands. All of the off-road sections of the Proposed Development will be situated in agricultural lands, the potential impacts of which are considered and assessed in Chapter 15 (Agronomy and Equine) in Volume 2 of this EIAR.

As such, no impacts on the land use of residential, commercial receptors or community / recreational facilities are expected as a result of land take requirements during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development.

5.4.2.4 Local Economy

5.4.2.4.1 Employment

As mentioned in Section 4.5.4 in Chapter 4 (Proposed Development Description) in Volume 2 of this EIAR, the number of construction workers that will be required during the Construction Phase at Woodland and Belcamp Substations is expected to peak at approximately 20 persons for each of the two substation sites. Crew sizes for the activities of cable trenching, ducting, and resurfacing is estimated at approximately 12 persons per crew with two crews (teams) working simultaneously. Crew sizes for the installation of the proposed underground cables are estimated at approximately six persons per crew. Additionally, it is estimated that there will be approximately up to four traffic management operatives with each crew. The project offices that will be located at the Temporary Construction Compounds are estimated at approximately five staff (engineers, project managers etc.) at seven locations. The Construction Phase is anticipated to take approximately three years and will therefore be short-term.

Overall, the total average estimated number of daily workers at any time will not exceed 215, as outlined in Chapter 4 (Proposed Development Description). In addition, the nature of the Proposed Development (i.e. underground high-voltage cables) will likely require specialist contractors in order to construct, thereby limiting the potential for employment benefits.

When considered against the size of the wider labour force within the study area (i.e. County Meath (third highest labour force in the State) and the local authority area of Fingal (highest labour force in the State)), the magnitude of change in terms of employment levels is considered to be 'very low'. As such, with the 'high' sensitivity assigned to employment, the significance of potential impacts on employment during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development is considered to be Positive, Slight and Short-Term.

5.4.2.4.2 Local Economy

Potential impacts on the amenity of commercial receptors situated in proximity to the Proposed Development during the Construction Phase have been considered and assessed in Section 5.4.2.1 of this Chapter and therefore are not repeated here. Furthermore, issues regarding access and severance to and from commercial receptors during the Construction Phase as a result of construction traffic and / or other related activities resulting from the Proposed Development have been considered and assessed in Section 5.4.2.2, and as such, are also not repeated here. Issues related to land use and land take are also considered and assessed in Section 5.4.2.3 and are not repeated here.

Given the findings of the aforementioned assessments, as well as the nature of the proposed construction methodology for the Proposed Development (i.e. on a rolling basis), there is not expected to be any impact on the ability of any commercial receptors to operate during the Construction Phase. As such, the magnitude of change in terms of the ability of commercial receptors to trade is considered to be 'very low'. Therefore, given the 'high' sensitivity assigned to commercial receptors, the significance of potential impacts on the

ability of commercial receptors to trade during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development is considered to be Negative, Slight and Temporary.

5.4.2.5 Summary of Assessment of Potential Construction Phase Impacts

Table 5.9 provides a summary of the assessment of potential impacts on people and communities during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development.

Table 5.9: Summary of Assessment of Potential Impacts During Construction

Assessment Topic	Sensitivity of Receptors	Magnitude of Change	Nature of Impact	Significance of Impact
Amenity	-	-	Negative	Negative, Slight and Temporary
Accessibility and Severance	High	Low	Negative	Negative, Moderate and Temporary
Land Use / Land Take	High	-	-	No impact
Local Economy	High (Employment)	Very Low	Positive	Positive, Slight and Short-Term
	High (Economy)	Very Low	Negative	Negative, Slight and Temporary

5.4.3 Operational Phase

During the Operational Phase, the proposed underground cable will be buried and sporadic access for maintenance will only be required on agricultural land and along the existing road network, and will therefore have no impact on residential, commercial, community receptors and recreational (including tourism) amenities (please refer to Chapter 15 (Agronomy and Equine) in Volume 2 of this EIAR for the impact assessment for agricultural land). In addition, the proposed works at Woodland and Belcamp Substations will be within the footprint of, or within the immediate vicinity of the existing substations, and maintenance activities will occur in the same manner as currently carried out at these substations. Therefore, the operation of the substations will also have no impact on residential, commercial, community receptors and recreational (including tourism) amenities, above the current baseline. As a result, no potential impacts are expected on amenity, accessibility and severance, land use / land take or the local economy during the Operational Phase.

5.5 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

As no significant negative impacts (Significant or above) are anticipated during the Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development, in respect to any of the assessment topics considered and assessed in Section 5.4, no mitigation or monitoring measures are proposed.

5.6 Residual Impacts

No significant residual negative impacts are anticipated in regard to people and communities as a result of the Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development.

5.7 Conclusion

This Chapter presented the results of the assessment for the likely potential impacts arising from the Proposed Development on people and communities. Following the assessment, it is considered that the Proposed Development will have no significant negative impact on people and communities.

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