Kildare Meath Grid Upgrade Project

Planning Report

April 2023

EirGrid

Kildare Meath Grid Upgrade Project

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1. Introduction

1.1 Report Context

This report has been prepared to accompany an application for Statutory Approval under Section 182B of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) to An Bord Pleanála (ABP), made by EirGrid plc (EirGrid) in respect of the planned Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade (hereby referred to as the Proposed Development). The Proposed Development includes approximately 53 kilometres of new underground cable between the existing Woodland Substation in Co. Meath and the existing Dunstown Substation in Co. Kildare.

The Proposed Development has been determined by ABP to be Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) following the conclusion of a pre-application consultation process between ABP and EirGrid, in accordance with Section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). This is confirmed in written correspondence from ABP contained at Appendix A of this report. As outlined in Section 2.1 below, the Proposed Development is being progressed by EirGrid as the Transmission System Operator (TSO) in order to strengthen the electricity transmission network in Counties Meath, Kildare and Dublin, to provide capacity to connect new demands for electricity to support economic growth in the area and to assist in meeting the Government target that up to 80% of Ireland's electricity will be generated from renewable sources by 2030.

The structure of this SID Application is set out in Table 1 and is available on the project website at: http://www.eirgridkildaremeath.ie/.

Table 1: Structure of SID Application Documentation

Item No.	Documentation Type	Document Name
1	Statutory Particulars	Cover letter
2		SID Application Form
3		Letters of Consent
		Letter from ABP on Closure of Pre-Application Consultation
4		Site Notice
5		Newspaper Notices
6		Schedule of Prescribed Bodies and Notification Schedule
7		Schedule of Planning Drawings
8	Planning Drawings	Planning Drawings
9	Planning and Environmental Documents	Planning Report (this document)
		Planning and Environmental Considerations Report (PECR) with associated appendices, figures, and supporting documents.
		Appropriate Assessment Screening Report
		Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

1.2 The Applicant

EirGrid, as the state-owned independent electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO) is the Applicant for the Proposed Development.

With the enactment and coming into force of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 ('the 1999 Act'), the liberalisation of the electricity sector commenced. This liberalisation has been driven in large part by European directives – in particular Directives 96/92/EC2, 2003/54/EC3, and 2009/72/EC. The 1999 Act established the Commission of Electricity Regulation (now the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)) as the independent regulator of the electricity industry in Ireland.

The liberalisation of the electricity industry has involved the separating of, or unbundling of, various functions which were once concentrated in the Electricity Supply Board (ESB). The function of TSO has been conveyed to EirGrid plc (EirGrid), whilst the function of Distribution System Operator has been conveyed to ESB Networks Limited (ESBNL). The Transmission System Owner (or the Transmission Asset Owner / TAO) is the ESB.

On 29 June 2006, the CER issued a TSO Licence to EirGrid pursuant to Section 14(1)(e) of the 1999 Act, as inserted by Regulation 32 of the European Communities S.I. No. 445/2000 (Internal Market in Electricity) Regulations, 2000 ('the 2000 Regulations'). Thus, from 1 July 2006, EirGrid has assumed the role of TSO. Regulation 8(1)(a) of S.I. No. 445/2000 provides that EirGrid, as TSO, has the exclusive function:

"*To operate and ensure the maintenance of and, if necessary, develop a safe, secure, reliable, economical, and efficient electricity transmission system, and to explore and develop opportunities for interconnection of its system with other systems, in all cases with a view to ensuring that all reasonable demands for electricity are met having due regard for the environment.*"

EirGrid, as TSO is responsible for a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity now and in the future. It develops, manages and operates Ireland's high voltage electricity grid (also called the "Transmission System"). This brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed, throughout Ireland. The grid powers the distribution network owned by the Transmission System Owner, ESB. This supplies the electricity used every day in homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, and farms. EirGrid also uses the grid to supply power directly to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity.

The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) is the licensed Transmission System Owner for Ireland pursuant to Section 14 of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 (as amended). The role of the ESB is to ensure that the transmission system is constructed in accordance with the requirements set down by EirGrid. The proposed transmission infrastructure will be constructed by the ESB pursuant to its statutory powers. EirGrid, the applicant, does not have a beneficial interest in any lands.

EirGrid also owns SONI Limited (SONI), the System Operator of Northern Ireland. The Single Electricity Market Operator (SEMO) is the market operator of the all-island wholesale electricity trading system. SEMO is a joint venture between EirGrid and SONI.

It is in this capacity as exclusive developer of the Irish transmission grid, and as the 'undertaker' referred to in Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that EirGrid is proposing to develop the Proposed Development.

1.3 Purpose and Structure of this Report

The purpose of this planning report is to present the planning issues associated with the Proposed Development; this is intended to assist the Board in determining whether the Proposed Development is in accordance with principles of proper planning and sustainable development, and accordingly whether statutory Approval should be granted for the Proposed Development.

The structure of this planning report is as follows

- **Section 1**: Introduction;
- **Section 2**: The Proposed Development;
- **Section 3**: Planning and Sectoral Policy Context;
- **Section 4**: Planning Appraisal;
- **Section 5**: Social and Community Engagement; and
- **Section 6**: Conclusion

1.4 Strategic Need for the Project

There are two drivers that underpin the need for this proposed transmission infrastructure development, namely:

1. Increased demand on East coast – An increase in electricity demand as part of natural growth is expected. In addition, there is a demand increase in the order of 1200 MW due to the planned connection of high energy users. This is based on executed and offered connection agreements mostly in the counties Kildare, Meath and Dublin. Part of this demand is expected to start to connect to the system in 2017 and is ramping up to the total demand figure in 2030. The interest is high and it is expected that this trend will continue with further requests for connection.

2. Integration of generation from the South and South West regions - Significant levels of new renewable generation have connected or are in the process of connecting to the transmission and distribution system in the south and south west of Ireland. This is also where the newer and more cost effective existing conventional generation units are located. This results in a scenario whereby a significant portion of the generation sources are located in the south and south west of Ireland away from the main demand centres within the Dublin and Greater Dublin Area, and East region in general. The power produced will hence have to be transported to get to where it is needed (known as demand centres).

These two drivers introduce cross country power flows on the existing transmission system from the West to the East coast. The Proposed Development is needed to ensure compliance with EirGrid's Transmission System Security Planning Standards (TSSPS). To ensure transmission system reliability and security, the performance of the network is compared with the requirements of the Transmission System Security and Planning Standards which are available at www.eirgridgroup.com.

The violations occur for the unplanned loss of any of the existing 400 kV circuits between Moneypoint 400 kV station in the West and Dunstown 400 kV in County Kildare and Woodland 400 kV station in County Meath in the East. The violations relate to two aspects:

- Bringing required power to the East coast; and
- Transferring this power within Counties Dublin, Kildare and Meath once the power reaches the East coast.

The power is currently transported cross-country on the two existing 400 kV lines from the Moneypoint station in County Clare to the Dunstown substation in County Kildare and Woodland substation in County Meath (shown in Plate 2.1). Transporting large amounts of electricity on these 400 kV lines could cause problems that would affect the security of electricity supply throughout Ireland, particularly if one of the lines is lost unexpectedly. To solve this emerging issue, EirGrid needs to strengthen the electricity network between Dunstown and Woodland to avoid capacity and voltage problems. The Proposed Development will help transfer electricity to the east of the country and distribute it within the network in Meath, Kildare and Dublin helping to ensure compliance and emerging issue identified above.

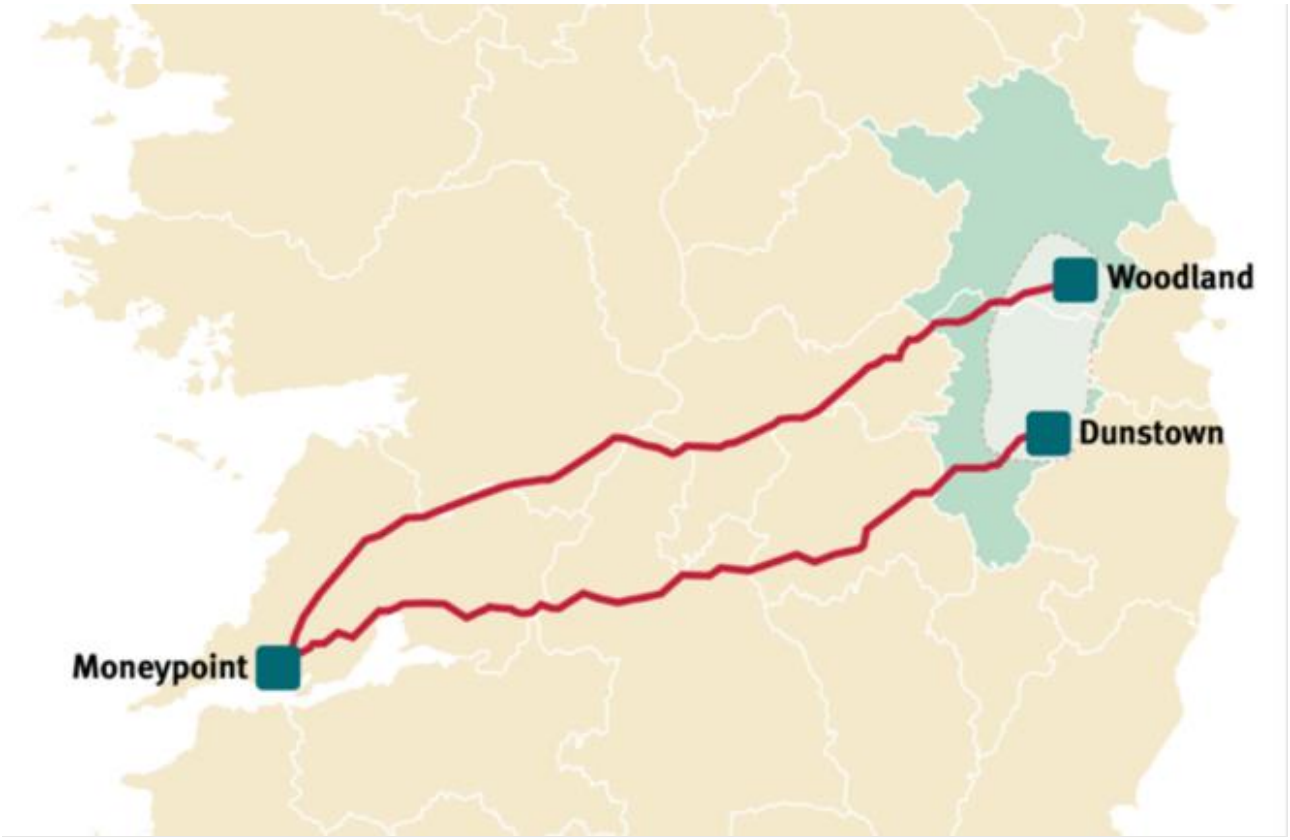

Plate 1 Cross-country 400 kV lines

The Proposed Development will help to meet the Government of Ireland's Climate Action Plan target of up to 80% renewable energy generation by 2030, this includes the transmission of electricity from offshore renewable sources. Significant levels of new renewable generation have connected or are in the process of connecting to the transmission and distribution system in the South and South West of Ireland. This is also where the newer and more cost effective existing conventional generation units are located. This results in that a significant portion of the generation sources are located in the south and south west of Ireland away from the main demand centres. The power produced will hence have to be transported to get to where it is needed. This project will allow more renewable generation to be connected to the electrical grid and to supply this energy to where demand is largest.

EirGrid has identified that the Proposed Development will have the following benefits:

- Community - Deliver community benefit in the areas that facilitate the project infrastructure;
- Competition - Apply downward pressure on the cost of electricity;
- Sustainability - Help facilitate Ireland's transition to a low carbon energy future;
- Security of Supply - Improve electricity supply for Ireland's electricity consumers; and
- Economic - Contribute to the regional economy and support foreign direct investment.

The Proposed Development will create a new circuit in the electricity transmission network and will enhance the network in the area and provide capacity to connect new demand for electricity to support economic growth in the area and to connect new renewable generation to help with meeting national Climate Action Plan targets.

The need for the Proposed Development has been established through a series of reports completed at Steps 1 to 4. The Step 1 - Needs Report (July 2017) and other reports are available on the project website , also see Volume 5 of the PECR. This series of reports identified the need for a new connection between Woodland and Dunstown substations and that an underground cable would be the best technology solution for this need. The Proposed Development is a high voltage (400 kV) underground cable between Woodland and Dunstown substations and the need for the project remains robust.

1.5 Legislative Context

1.5.1 Planning and Development Act 2000, (as amended)

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, forms the basis for the Irish planning system setting out the detail of regional spatial and economic strategies, development plans and local area plans, as well as the basic framework of the development management and consent system.

Section 3(1) of the Act states that:

"*Development in this Act means, except where the context otherwise requires, the carrying out of any works on, in, over or under land or the making of any material change in use of any structures or other land*".

The Act has been amended at various times by various statutory instruments made pursuant to the Act and amending acts, including by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 (the 'SIA'), which streamlined the planning process for major infrastructure projects.

Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, as inserted by Section 4 of the SIA, states that, where a person (the "undertaker") intends to carry out a "*development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission*", an application for approval of the development under section 182B shall be made to An Bord Pleanála.

Under Section 182A (9) 'transmission' in relation to electricity shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999, which states as follows:

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

Section 182A(9) of the Act states that the term '*transmission*' shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999, and for the purposes of section 182A, shall also be construed as meaning "*the transport of electricity by means of –*

(a) a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more, or

(b) an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not"

With regard to the above, the proposed Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade project comprises development for the purposes of electricity transmission as defined in Section 182A (9) of the Act; the Proposed Development will, subject to Approval being granted, form part of the transmission network.

1.5.2 Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)

Article 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended, states that, subject to the provisions of Article 9, the classes of development set out in Column 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations shall be exempted development provided that such development complies with the conditions and limitations specified in column 2 of the said Part 1 opposite the mention of that class in the said column 1.. In this regard, Class 26 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 ordinarily provides for the following works to constitute exempted development:

"*The carrying out by an undertaker authorised to provide an electricity service of development consisting of the laying underground of mains, pipes, cables or other apparatus for the purposes of the undertaking*".

This might be considered to apply to the Proposed Development. However, Article 9(1) of the Regulations places a number of restrictions on the generality of the provisions of Article 6, including that:

"*Development to which article 6 relates shall not be exempted development for the purposes of the Act –*

If the carrying out of such development would –

(viiB) comprise development in relation to which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is the competent authority in relation to appropriate assessment and the development would require an appropriate assessment because it would be likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site"

As separately contained in this application for Approval, the Appropriate Assessment Screening of the Proposed Development indicated the need to proceed to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and for a Natura Impact Statement to be prepared. As such, the Proposed Development does not constitute exempted development and an application for statutory consent is therefore required to be lodged with the relevant competent planning authority.

1.5.2.1 Strategic Infrastructure Development Determination

SID pre-application meetings were held with An Bord Pleanála on 15th September 2022,15th December 2022 and 16th February 2023 where the Proposed Development was presented, and advice from ABP was received. This is set out in the various records of the pre-application meetings available at www.pleanala.ie.

Following the pre-application consultation meetings, ABP determined that the proposed development is Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) within the meaning of Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, and that any application for approval for the proposed development must therefore be made directly to ABP under Section 182A (1) of the Act. As noted above, this is confirmed in the letter (dated 16th March 2023) from ABP included within Appendix A of this report.

1.5.2.2 Consultations with Local Authorities

Meetings were held virtually and in person with officials from Kildare and Meath County Councils. The dates of the meetings and details of the discussions held are summarised in Table 2. The advice of ABP, Kildare County Council and Meath County Council has assisted EirGrid and its consultants in defining the scope, nature, location and extent of the Proposed Development.

Table 2: Pre-planning meetings with local authorities

Local Authority	Meeting date	Detail
Meath County Council	• 16/09/2021; • 30/09/2021; • 31/03/2022; • 16/08/2022; • 28/09/2022; • 02/12/2022; (in person meeting) • 16/01/2023 and • 16/03/2023 (in person meeting)	EirGrid and Meath County Council held a series of meetings to discuss the ground investigations for the Proposed development. Other meetings were held to discuss the proposed route, the impact to roads, road closures, impacts from joint bays, and the impacts to future developments.
Kildare County Council	• 14/04/2022; • 01/06/2022; • 23/06/2022; • 16/09/2022; • 05/10/2022; (in person meeting) • 25/10/2022; (in person meeting) • 11/01/2023; (in person meeting) • 06/02/2023 and • 16/03/2023 (in person meeting).	EirGrid and Kildare County Council held a series of meetings to discuss the ground investigations for the Proposed Development. Other meetings were held to discuss the proposed route, the impact to roads, road closures, impacts from joint bays, the impacts to future developments, and the use of Sallins Bypass Bridges.

In addition to the Local Authority consultations, a series of meetings was held with likely Prescribed Bodies and with Statutory Stakeholders in respect of the Proposed Development. These included:

- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
- as well as other Government departments;
- IDA;
- Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly;
- Chambers of Commerce;
- Irish Farmers' Association;

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland; and
- Irish Rail.
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)

There has also been wider community and stakeholder engagement for Step 4A of the project, details of which can be found in the Engagement Report at: https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Kildare-Meath-Step-4-Engagement-Report_FINAL-14-June-2022.pdf

All such meetings have assisted in defining the Proposed Development throughout the project lifecycle.

2. The Proposed Development

2.1 Overview of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is set out in detail in Chapter 5 of the Planning and Environmental Considerations Report (PECR) accompanying this SID application. In summary, it includes approximately 53 kilometres of new underground cable delivered via a trench along public roads and private lands, connecting the Woodland and Dunstown 400 kV Substations (Approximately 38 km in County Kildare and approximately 15 km in County Meath)., including ancillary communication links and fibre optic cables, as well as access tracks, temporary construction compounds, laydown areas and passing bays as well as all associated above and below ground site development works. Approximately 82% of the underground cable will be located within roads while approximately 18% will be located off-road, to avoid location specific constraints.

There will also be works in the substations to facilitate the connection of the underground cable into the electrical grid.

Works at the Woodland 400 kV Station, in the townland of Woodland, County Meath, will involve installation of additional electrical equipment and apparatus within a substation compound extension, including a 400 kV feeder bay, an associated electrical shunt reactor, and facilitating apparatus, as well as ancillary site development works including site preparation, underground cabling and earthgrid, surface water drainage, as required to facilitate the development.

Works at Dunstown 400 kV Station, in the townland of Dunnstown, County Kildare, will not require an extension of the substation compound. Works will include installation of additional electrical equipment and apparatus will include including a 400 kV feeder bay, an associated electrical shunt reactor, a 400kV extension to the busbar, as required to facilitate the development, and facilitating apparatus, as well as ancillary site development works including site preparation, underground cabling and earthgrid, surface water drainage, as required to facilitate the development.

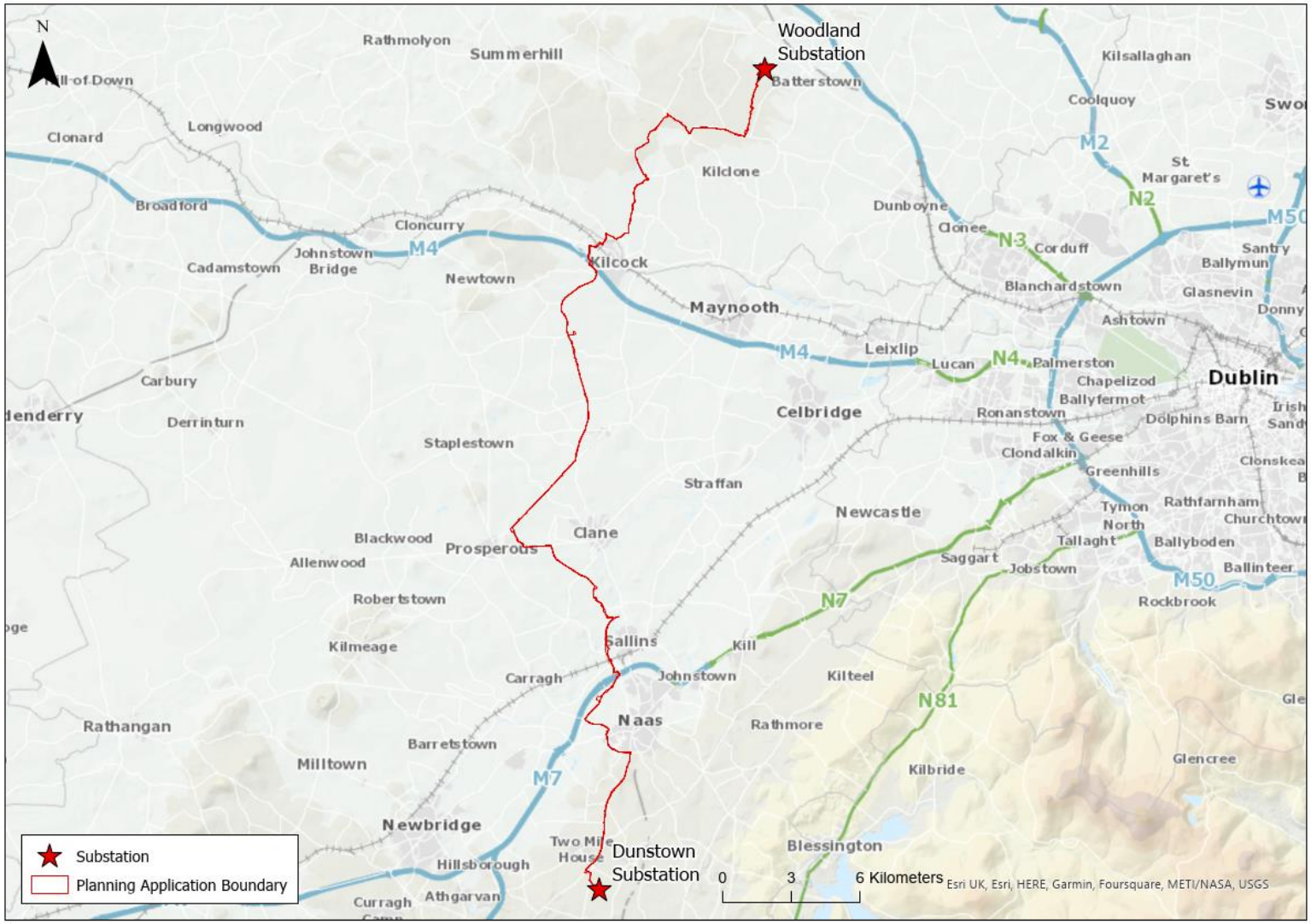

Plate 2 Location of the Proposed Development

2.2 Construction Phase

It is anticipated that the construction phase for the underground cable will last up to approximately 42 months. The construction activities will be phased. The basic elements of the construction phase are:

- **Enabling works:** These are works to allow the construction phase to progress. It will include vegetation[2] clearance, construction of access tracks and the temporary construction areas (e.g. compound areas and haul roads on off-road sections);
- **Phase 1: Installation of passing bays and joint bay structures:** The construction of the passing bays (where required) at the joint bay locations. On completion of the passing bays, it is proposed that the joint bays are installed at the same period of time;
- **Phase 2: Excavation and installation of ducts:** A trench will be dug along the cable route, ducts installed, and the road surfacing or agricultural land will be restored. This will also include physical crossings including motorways, rivers and railways;
- **Phase 3: Installation of cables:** The cables will be installed at joint bay locations within the ducts. The cables will then be jointed (connected) at each joint bay location to allow the installation of a continuous circuit; the circuits will then be tested to ensure they are ready to be commissioned into use; and
- **Substation works**: Construction works are required in the existing Woodland and Dunstown substations to connect the underground cable to the existing electrical grid.
- **Decommissioning**: At this stage, the project will decommission the temporary construction compounds and passing bays and complete any agreed landscaping works.

2.3 Project Development

The Kildare – Meath Grid Upgrade project has been in development for approximately six years, in accordance with EirGrid's six-step Framework for Grid Development, as summarised below in Figure 2.2. The Framework ensures that project development occurs in a consistent and structured manner, with adequate and appropriate opportunities for public and stakeholder participation in project decision-making (See Section 3.4.3 for further details on the Framework for Grid Development).

Figure 1: EirGrid's Six Steps Framework for Grid Development

The Framework approach in summary is that each 'Step' concludes with outcomes (such as decisions, next steps etc.) that build upon each other. Deliverables within the Steps, such as reports, brochures etc., are available on the project website at http://www.eirgridkildaremeath.ie/. Further details of the Steps taken for this project are set out in Section 1.4 of the PECR.

In accordance with EirGrid's Framework, a comprehensive and consistent multi criteria analysis was applied to decision making at various stages of project development, including in considering a variety of alternatives. With regard to the identification of routing options for the Proposed Development, EirGrid have undertaken the various Steps of the Framework, with associated deliverables as follows:

In Step 1, EirGrid identified the need for the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade.

In Step 2: *Options Report*. EirGrid compiled a shortlist of best performing technical options, which went out for public consultation between November 2018 and February 2019. This included a mix of overhead line, underground cable and upvoltage technologies. Four of those options were taken forward to Step 3 in April 2019.

In Step 3: Best Performing Option Report. EirGrid re-confirmed the need for the project and investigated and consulted on the shortlisted technology options to strengthen the electricity network between Dunstown and Woodland. In April 2021, EirGrid identified the 400kV underground cable option as the best performing option to progress for this project.

Step 4A: *Analysis of the Route Options*. EirGrid presented an analysis of the proposed route options in March 2022. The Report describes the process followed to identify and evaluate the proposed route options and identifies what EirGrid, on the basis of information gathered, considers to be the Emerging Best Performing Option for the route of the underground cable.

Step 4B: *Route Options and Evaluation Report*. In June 2022 EirGrid published the Route Options and Evaluation Report which presented a description of the proposed route. This report identified what EirGrid considered to be the Best Performing Option for the route of the underground cable. The report was published and EirGrid considered all feedback arising, which was used to confirm the final route at Step 5 (Planning).

In Step 5 of the Framework process, the Best Performing Option formed the focus for technical and environmental assessment. This culminated in the Proposed Development which is the subject of this application for statutory consent from An Bord Pleanála.

3. Planning and Sectoral Policy Context

3.1 European Policy Context

There are a range of key international and EU level agreements and policy frameworks that have contributed towards shaping Ireland's approach to energy transmission, distribution and storage. These include:

- ***European Green New Deal, 2019*** - Proposes stricter EU emissions reduction targets for 2030 to at least 50% and towards 55% compared with 1990 levels
- ***The Paris Agreement, 2015*** - Agreement to strengthen climate change resilience efforts via increased financing, while curbing greenhouse gas emissions via an agreed 'Paris Agreement rulebook' setting out how countries are held accountable for delivering on their climate action promises.
- ***Recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED II)*** – established a binding target of at least 32% of renewable energy for the EU by 2030
- ***Europe 2030 Climate and Energy Framework*** – established a binding domestic target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030
- ***Energy Roadmap 2050*** – Developed scenarios demonstrating that decarbonising the energy system is technically and economically feasible

A detailed policy summary for all of the above is provided in Appendix B.1.

This demonstrates that there is a clear need for a more efficient energy grid, better able to facilitate the increased future demands placed upon it. The Proposed Development will contribute towards ensuring that Ireland's energy grid is ready and able to meet the challenges of delivering on its climate commitments as well as the various binding renewable energy and emissions reduction targets set at EU and international level.

3.2 National, Regional and Local Planning Policy

It is recognised at national and regional level that international, European, and national climate change commitments mean that power generation, transport and heat, increasingly have to derive power from sustainably produced electricity. Therefore, national and regional policy place a strong emphasis on the need for new energy systems and transmission grids.

3.2.1 National Policy Context

The following are those national-level plans, policies, and strategies relevant to the Proposed Development.

- ***Project Ireland 2040- National Planning Framework (NPF)*** – Sets out key policy principles via National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), which include supporting and strengthening the economy and a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient society (NSO 3, 6 and 8), providing access to quality services (4, 7, and 10) and achieving sustainable growth and better environmental resource management (NSO 1 and 9). It states that Ireland's National Energy Policy is focused on three pillars, sustainability, security of supply, and competitiveness.
- ***The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030*** – represents the national capital investment strategy plan for delivering the NSOs of the NPF, achieved via Strategic Investment Priorities to the year 2030. A core strategic investment priority is a focus on decarbonising energy, in order to, '*create greater links between different energy carriers (such as electricity and hydrogen); infrastructures; and consumption sectors (such as transport and heating).*' (p.123). Doing so requires a coordinated programme of investment in, among other things, '*an expanded and strengthened electricity transmission and distribution network*' (p.123), to support an increase in both renewable and conventional electricity generation.
- ***National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030*** – a ten-year plan mandated by the EU to each of its Member States, in order for the EU to meet its overall greenhouse gas emissions targets. The plan establishes key measures to address the five dimensions of the EU Energy Union: decarbonisation,

energy efficiency, energy security, internal energy markets and research, innovation and competitiveness. The Proposed Development is compliant with the NECP.

- ***Government White Paper – Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 –*** sets out a framework to guide Ireland's energy policy development. The Proposed Development is considered to be an 'enhanced and extended energy infrastructure' development, which will be critical for economic development, regional development and the secure provision of energy and other services for the Irish society and economy.
- ***Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2021 & 2023 –*** Commits to achieving 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero by no later than 2050. States that in order to do so there is a need for transformational policies, measures and actions, including strengthening the grid.

A detailed policy summary for all of the above is provided in Appendix B.2.

The Proposed Development facilitates the delivery of all three pillars of national energy policy outlined in the NPF; sustainability, security of supply, and competitiveness, and aids in moving Ireland towards a low carbon, climate resilient society as outlined in the National Strategic Outcomes.

It also delivers on the NDP Strategic Development Priorities through the delivery of an expanded and strengthened electricity transmission and distribution network. It is compliant with the NECP, and is considered to be an 'enhanced and extended energy infrastructure' development in terms of the Government White Paper, which will be critical for economic development, regional development and the secure provision of energy and other services for the Irish society and economy.

Finally, in terms of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2021 & 2023, the Proposed Development and EirGrid's wider programme of work, outlined in the roadmap 'Shaping Our Electricity Future', facilitates climate action via strengthening of the electricity grid.

3.2.2 Regional Policy Context

In terms of the regional context, the Proposed Development is located in the Eastern and Midlands Region of Ireland and, therefore, the relevant regional policy is the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) 2019-2031 (Hereafter referred to as the RSES). The RSES locates the majority of the project within the Dublin Metropolitan Area. Key points from the RSES are as follows.

- Climate action is one of three key principles underpinning the RSES vision to create a sustainable and competitive region, to be achieved by securing the transition to a low carbon economy. The RSES expresses support for NSO 8: of the NPF, seeking '*Alignment of growth with enabling infrastructure*' to ensure quality infrastructure provision and capacity improvement is provided in tandem with new development.
- The RSES states, in relation to the Dublin Metropolitan Area, that the *'Development of the energy distribution and transmission network in the region will enable distribution of more renewable sources of energy to facilitate future energy demand in strategic development areas*'. The RSES specifically identifies the need for the '*expansion and upgrading of the grid with the aim of increasing the share of variable renewable electricity that the all-island system can accommodate'.*
- The RSES expresses support for EirGrid's Implementation Plan 2017 – 2022 and Transmission Development Plan (TDP) 2016 and any subsequent plans prepared during the lifetime of the RSES, while Objective RPO 10.23 specifically references the Proposed Development, stating "*Support reinforcement of the Greater Dublin Area between Dunnstown and Woodland 400 kV substations to increase the capacity of the often congested and highly loaded Dublin transmission network to enable the transmission system to safely accommodate more diverse power flows and also facilitate future load growth in the area*".

A detailed policy summary for all of the above is provided in Appendix B.3.

The Proposed Development delivers on core objectives of the RSES to facilitate the transmission of renewable energy across Ireland and delivers grid improvements that will both align with and facilitate the economic and population growth envisaged within the RSES. The fact that the Proposed Development is specifically referenced within the RSES also serves to demonstrate the importance of delivering this specific grid infrastructure improvement to the wider region.

3.2.3 Local Policy Context

This section outlines planning policy documents and key policy drivers against which the application for approval will be assessed. A full appraisal of relevant policies and zonings is provided in Appendix B.4. Key plans are as follows:

County Development Plans

- ***Kildare County Development Plan (KCDP) 2023-2029*** - The KCDP recognises the importance of providing a strong electricity transmission network for the environmental, social and economic viability of the county, and states that EirGrid and ESB will generally be supported in delivering energy transmission projects in the county. The KCDP also specifically refers to the Proposed Development, stating, *The Maynooth 220kV and Dunnstown 400kV substations are both electrical substations of regional significance and the Council will seek to support any reinforcement of the Greater Dublin Area between Dunnstown and Woodland 400 kV substations.* (p245).
- **Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (MCDP) –** The MCDP emphasises the importance of reliable service provision and infrastructure for sustainable future growth and asserts that the strengthening of the national grid is important to improve security of supply for the domestic, residential and enterprise market as well as attracting high-end enterprise.

Local Area Plans

- ***Kilcock Local Area Plan (KLAP)*** The Proposed Development is located within the Kilcock Local Area Plan (KLAP) Boundary. There is currently no Kilcock Local Area Plan in force.
- ***Naas Local Area Plan (NLAP) 2021-2027*** - The Proposed Development passes through the functional area of the NLAP. Policy I4 – Energy and Communications sets out a number of objectives in relation to the energy transmission infrastructure, including supporting the statutory providers of national grid infrastructure . It also seeks to ensure the undergrounding of all electricity, telephone and television cables in the town including the town centre and in residential and amenity areas. ***Sallins Local Area Plan (SLAP) 2016-2022*** - The Proposed Development passes through the functional area of the SLAP. The SLAP states that a more sustainable energy sector incorporating power generation and energy efficiency in all sectors is vital for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Requiring a focus on renewable energy generation and improving energy efficiency. It also states, "*The availability of appropriate energy and communications infrastructure is essential for the successful future development of the town*".

The Proposed Development accords with the polices within the respective County Development Plans and Local Area Plans. Both County Development Plans identify the clear need for improved energy grid infrastructure alongside new development, and outline general policies that facilitate grid infrastructure improvements, with the Kildare plan outlining support specifically for the Proposed Development. The respective LAPs also express support for such improvements to the electrical grid. Taking this into account, the Proposed Development accords with local planning policy. Appendix B.4 provides further detail with respect to the specific policies.

Furthermore, the Proposed Development has been assessed against the relevant environmental policies and objectives of the statutory plans of the areas through which it passes. The Proposed Development accords with these policies and objective. Further details of this assessment are set out in Appendix B.7.

3.3 Sectoral Policy

The following section contextualises the Proposed Development in terms of the wider sectoral electricity transmission Infrastructure strategy and plan framework. Key plans and strategies include:

- ***EirGrid's Shaping our Energy Future- A Roadmap to Achieve our Renewable Ambition*** - A roadmap for achieving at least 70% of electricity coming from renewable sources by 2030. The Kildare-Meath 400kV Grid Upgrade Project is important for the roadmap at it forms part of the base case network model analysed for 2030, and is assumed it will be in service within this modelling.
- ***EirGrid's Transmission Development Plan (TDP) 2021-2030*** - sets out the development of the Irish transmission network over a nine-year period to the year 2030. Key drivers of transmission network development include ensuring the security of electricity supply, the competitiveness of the national economy, and the long-term sustainability of electricity supply in the country. The Proposed Development is listed in the TDP as a project progressing through EirGrid's six-stage process.
- ***EirGrid's Grid Implementation Plan 2017-2022- For the Electricity Transmission System in Ireland*** - sets out the manner in which the Irish transmission system is likely to be developed in its lifetime. The plan includes a number of policies aimed at developing transmission projects in a structured and consistent way, balancing complex and/or competing technical, economic and environmental goals and priorities in decision-making, in order to promote sustainable grid development.
- ***Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Important of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure*** - highlights the need and urgency for the new energy infrastructure for the economy, delivery of regional development, creation of jobs and growth and ensure the wellbeing of everyone as well as realising the economic potential of Ireland's own renewable energy resources. The Statement requires energy developers to adhere to international and national standards on health, environment, biodiversity, landscape and safety and address or mitigate any associated impacts in delivering the best engineering solutions.

A detailed policy summary for all of the above is provided in Appendix B.5.

The Proposed Development encapsulates of all of the processes, technical principles and standards within the sectoral policy documents outlined above. It forms part of the baseline for modelling the future energy demand and grid improvements for delivering a more sustainable Irish energy grid network.

3.4 Relevant Planning History

A detailed list of planning applications from both within the boundary of the two substation sites and along the Proposed Development alignment are provided in Appendix B.6.

Planning permissions within the substations mostly consist of alterations and improvements relating to the existing function of the sites as electricity infrastructure. In respect of the underground cable element, the Proposed Development largely passes under lands and public roads not affected by extant planning permissions. It is noted that the Proposed Development passes through the sites of two Strategic Housing Development applications (Planning Refs: 306826 and 314564). However, the Proposed Development will be located within land to be used as public open space, proposed road, and proposed pedestrian/cycle lane as part of the planning applications. It does not impact on any proposed houses or community infrastructure. Thus, it is considered that the Proposed Development will not impact on the ability for these planning applications to be completed if the Proposed Project is approved by An Bord Pleanála.

3.4.1 Planning Applications for UGC

This section makes reference to UGC projects which have been considered and approved by An Bord Pleanála. They share similar methodologies and techniques which will be applied to the Proposed Development.

3.4.1.1 Celtic Interconnector

The onshore portion of the Celtic Interconnector, a proposed 700 MW connection between Ireland and France (ABP 310798-21), bears many similarities to the Proposed Development, in that it requires underground cables for approximately 32km, between Claycastle Beach and the converter station compound at Ballyadam, in Cork (albeit High Voltage Direct Current – HVDC – cable rather than High Voltage Alternating Current – HVAC – cable as proposed in this instance).

The Celtic Interconnector runs along public roads, avoiding urban areas but in some cases includes offroad sections traversing private lands. In granting approval, the Board concluded:

> *…the proposed development, in terms of the principle of development, the likelihood of significant environmental effects and the likelihood of significant adverse effects with regard to European designated sites is acceptable subject to conditions…*

The Celtic Interconnector project followed the same six step process as the Proposed Development and established an understanding of UGC technology requirements and environmental and other issues in the assessment and approval process.

3.4.1.2 East West Interconnector (EWIC)

The East West Interconnector between Ireland and Wales (ABP Ref.PL17.VA0002) was granted SID Approval subject to 17 Conditions by ABP in September 2009. EWIC also bears many similarities to the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade Project insofar as it primarily comprises an underground onshore cable (as with the Celtic Interconnector example above, albeit HVDC versus HVAC cable).

The UGC runs primarily along public roads but passes through the urban settlement of Rush in County Dublin. The UGC route includes some off-road sections between Rush and Woodland in County Meath – the UGC extending over the jurisdiction of two Planning Authorities; In granting approval, the Board concluded that:

> *…the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site, seriously injure the amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity of the proposed development or be prejudicial to public health or safety and would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience. The proposed development would, therefore, not have adverse significant effects on the environment and would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.*

3.4.1.3 Kilpaddoge to Knockanure 220kV Project

The Kilpaddoge to Knockanure 220kV UGC project concerns an approximately 21km long HVAC circuit between two existing 220kV substations in County Kerry. Insofar as this project concerns the civil construction of long lengths of HVAC UGC primarily along the public road, with associated joint bays, passing bays, communications chambers, temporary construction compounds etc., as well as tie-in works and structures within existing substations, it bears many similarities to the Proposed Development.

More specifically, the UGC element of the project involves:

The laying of UGC in a trench of approximately 1.2m in depth and approximately 1.2m in width, primarily along the public road. This includes the built-up area of Moyvane Village, Co. Kerry; and,

The development of numerous joint bays at intervals of approximately 600m – 800m.The joint bays measured approximately 6m by 2.5m by 2.5m in depth and these were surrounded by temporary passing bays, required to realise the joint bay works without requirement for lengthy road closures.

Having regard to the provisions contained in Class 26 and Class 16 of the Planning Regulations 2001 (as amended), Kerry County Council made a Statutory Declaration of Exempted Development in June 2015 in accordance with Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended - (Kerry County Council Reg. Ref. EX371).

The project has now been constructed and energised. All ducts and joint bays are now laid in the public road and the road has been reinstated. Passing bays have been created and are either in operation where jointing of cable lengths in the public road is now ongoing or are in place for when such jointing occurs. Traffic management in the form of sensor-controlled traffic lights are in place at joint bay locations. Effectively, there is no above ground visibility of the UGC project.

3.5 Summary and Conclusions

The Proposed Development has considerable support within national, regional and local level planning policy. There is a clear stated need for an increase in renewable energy generation at all levels alongside supporting the future growth of Kildare and Meath, which support the principle of the Proposed Development.

Recent applications determined by the Board, including the Celtic Interconnector and East West Interconnector, followed the same six step process as the Proposed Development and have established a degree of convention in the determining of applications involving UGC technology both in terms of planning policy requirements, as well as environmental and other issues.

4. Planning Appraisal

4.1 Introduction

This section provides the applicant's appraisal of the Proposed Development in the context of proper planning and sustainable development.

4.2 Need for the Proposed Development

The need for the Proposed Development has been outlined in Section 1.4 of this report and Section 2.1 of the PECR.

The Proposed Development will help meet the growing demand for electricity in the east of the country, due to the increased economic activity in recent years, while also facilitating increasing amounts of renewable electricity generated by windfarms in the west and south of the country and transported for use in the east.

The Climate Action Plan (2023) has a target to increase the proportion of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030. It sets out that additional electricity generation and transmission infrastructure will be a critical enabler to achieve the renewable energy and emissions targets. This project will contribute to the government's objective of a low-carbon energy future.

The Proposed Development is acceptable in principle, being aligned with the delivery of Ireland's and climate action national targets, as well as being in accordance with national, regional and local planning policy to ensure a more secure supply and enable further integration of renewable energy, as laid out in the provisions of the National Planning Framework, National Development Plan, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, as well as the Kildare and Meath County Development Plans.

4.3 Consideration of Alternatives

The Proposed Development has been developed in accordance with EirGrid's six-step Framework for Grid Development. This Framework reflects EirGrid's values and approach to grid development. In accordance with the Framework, a detailed analysis of feedback has been central to the process informing the identification of the Proposed Development.

As set out in detail in Chapter 4 of the PECR, the Proposed Development process has considered a range of alternatives.

During Step 2, following the identification of the Need for the Proposed Development within Step 1, EirGrid compiled a shortlist of best performing technical options, which went out for public consultation between November 2018 and February 2019. This included a mix of overhead line (OHL), underground cable (UGC), and up-voltage technologies. Four of those options were taken forward to Step 3 in April 2019.

Following this, as part of the Step 3 process, EirGrid re-confirmed the need for the project and investigated and consulted on the shortlisted technology options to strengthen the electricity network between the Woodland and Dunstown substations. Two feasible route options for an underground cable were published as part of the assessment of the technology options for the project. These options included:

- Option 1: Up-voltaging existing 220 kV circuits to 400 kV.
- Option 4: Construction of a new 400 kV UGC circuit.

Decisions made in the context of consideration of these alternatives ultimately identified the Best Performing Option (Step 4), and subsequently the Proposed Development now before ABP. Overall, the design and location of the Proposed Development is considered by EirGrid to comprise the best balance between Technical, Environmental, Economic, Socio-Economic and Deliverability criteria, having regard to the nature, extent and strategic need for the overall project. The Steps followed for this project and the relevant reports

are set out in Section 1.4 of the PECR and the relevant reports are included on the project website at http://www.eirgridkildaremeath.ie/ and in Volume 5 of the PECR.

4.4 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has been carried out and a report of its findings accompanies the PECR.

The EIA Screening Report, contains a review of EIA legislation in Ireland in relation to the Proposed Development, including consideration of the provisions of Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), S.I. No. 600/2001 - Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), and S.I. No. 296/2018 – European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018.

The EIA Screening Report concluded that the Proposed Development does not come within the classes of development that European and Irish legislation identify as being likely to have significant effects on the environment, as set out in Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5 of thePlanning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended). Therefore, t is respectfully submitted that an EIA is not required, and it is considered that the Proposed Development does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) to be carried out. However it is noted that ABP is the competent authority for determining whether an EIA is required. Notwithstanding this, the Proposed Development has been considered from an environmental perspective in the PECR.

It should be noted that the EIA screening considerations for this PECR relate to EIA under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) which govern this application to the Board for planning approval. A separate process is being undertaken under the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations 2011 (as amended) in respect to the removal of hedgerows

4.5 Environmental Assessment

The PECR has been prepared by Jacobs Engineering Ireland to accompany the planning application for the Proposed Development.t

The PECR demonstrates that the Proposed Development will not have likely significant impacts on any aspect of the environment in its construction or operational stages.

Further details of the environmental assessment are contained in the PECR.

4.6 Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

A screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the Proposed Development was carried out and accompanies this application. The conclusion of the Screening for Appropriate Assessment is that likely significant effects on the conservation objectives of any European si (River Water Valley/Carton SAC) from the Proposed Development, either alone or in-combination with any other plan or project, could not be excluded and therefore, it is respectfully submitted that an Appropriate Assessment of the Proposed Development is required by ABP as the competent authority of the European Site (River Water Valley/Carton SAC) . Details of specific European Sites considered is set out in the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report submitted as part of this application. The AA screening also concluded that it could be excluded on the basis of objective evidence and in view of

best scientific evidence that there would be no likely significant effect from the Proposed Development, alone or in combination with any other plan or project, on any other European Site.

The Natura Impact Statement (NIS) examined whether, in view of best scientific knowledge and applying the precautionary principle, the Proposed Development either individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, may have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 Site (also known as European Sites).

The NIS details mitigation measures which have been prescribed to ensure the Proposed Development will not result in adverse effects on European site integrity either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. Based on the best available scientific information, The NIS concluded that with the mitigation measures detailed, there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the European site, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects considering the site's conservation objectives.

4.7 Compliance with National, Regional and Local Planning Policy

As outlined in Section 3 of this report, the Proposed Development is compliant with relevant National, Regional, Local and Sectoral Policies and Plans identified in particular related to energy and climate action, as well as land use and planning.

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP 2023) sets out the imperative for transformational policies, measures and actions, and societal change in order to increase the deployment of renewable energy generation, strengthen the grid, and meet the demand and flexibility requirements required to meet the target of halving emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero no later than 2050. Continuing the steady level of development and renewal of the networks is essential to ensure that Ireland's energy system is fit for purpose, safe and secure, and ready to meet increased demand as economic conditions improve.

The key aims for improving the electricity network have been embedded within the national planning policy under the NPF. The NPF supports the development of the electricity network to facilitate planned growth and distribution of renewable energy. The national policies on climate action recognises the importance of harnessing energy potential and delivery of demand from Ireland's natural energy sources such as wind, wave and solar, new energy systems and transmissions grid.

The Proposed Development is supported by the commitments to energy transition, by ensuring that greater renewable energy generation can be facilitated on and across the national grid. The Proposed Development aims to maximise existing transmission infrastructure to improve capacity, security, and performance.

The RSES specifically supports the Proposed Development to help increase the capacity of the Dublin transmission network to enable the transmission system to safely accommodate more diverse power flows and facilitate future load growth in the area.

The Proposed Development also complies with the respective Kildare and Meath County Development Plans and is specifically supported by Kildare County Council.

The findings of the PECR demonstrate that the Proposed Development complies with the environmental planning policies of the relevant statutory planning documents at local level, including the Meath and Kildare County Development Plans, and the Naas and Sallins Local Area Plans. Appendix B.7 sets out in detail how the relevant environmental policies within each of these respective planning policy documents have been met by the Proposed Development.

A Construction and Environmental Management Plan has been prepared as part of this planning application to ensure that all mitigation measures which are necessary to protect the environment are implemented. The potential environmental effects of the Proposed Development in its receiving environment have been considered and this has concluded that there would not be any significant effects on the environment.

4.8 Other Matters

4.8.1 Laying of Underground Cables

The laying of underground cables (UGC) is a standard construction technique undertaken by a range of utility and other services providers. This is addressed in detail in Section 5.3 of the PECR.

On public roads, traffic control measures will be implemented as appropriate, including road diversions, closures and stop / go traffic management. Joint bays (underground chambers) are used to pull various lengths of UGC through pre-installed ducts and to connect ("joint") together those lengths of UGC into a single overall circuit. Off-road passing bays, constructed adjacent to a joint bay, facilitates the through movement of traffic. The road will be fully reinstated following the laying of the UGC and associated infrastructure.

Section 3.4 of this report, in respect of Planning History, also discusses matters of a number of other projects involving upgrading and improving the current EirGrid / ESB Networks including the onshore works for the Celtic Interconnector, the planned link to allow the exchange of electricity between Ireland and France. It confirms the relatively modest extent of development involved in construction, the successful routine implementation of traffic management measures in particular at joint bays, and the standard of road reinstatement undertaken. This approach and standard are consistent to that which will occur with the Proposed Development.

In this latter regard, and of particular note, EirGrid is proposing that the built-up area of Naas and Kilcock is treated with particular sensitivity in terms of road reinstatement, given both the volume of traffic using the roads in the town, ongoing Council initiatives for a high quality of road surfacing in the town, and for social and community benefit that might be summarised as community pride in the town. Principles for such road reinstatement in will be established with Kildare and Meath County Council, and it is proposed that these are best developed in terms of detailed design as part of a post-consent agreement of details, based on the parameters and assessments contained in this application for Approval.

Both EirGrid and the appointed cable laying contractor will have dedicated land and community liaison officers to provide advance notice of works to affected communities and landowners, and to address any queries or concerns arising.

4.8.2 Works at the Substations

At the existing substations, Woodland and Dunstown, the connection of the Proposed Development onto the grid network will require new equipment and apparatus within and/or adjacent to the existing substation.

From a visual and other environmental perspective, this will have the appearance and function of other long-established form and function at the substation. It will be noted that the existing station infrastructure is at some physical and visual remove from sensitive receptors such as dwellings, such that little if any adverse to human beings will arise from the planned development therein. The environmental measures set out in the PECR will mitigate any potential impact of the planned equipment on other sensitive receptors in the area.

4.8.3 Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)

The issue of EMF arising from the proposed electrical infrastructure is addressed in Chapter 7 of the PECR. In summary, to avoid any potential public risk in close proximity to electrical infrastructure, national and international health and regulatory authorities have recommended exposure limits for EMF. It is EirGrid's policy to design and operate the electricity transmission system such that these limits are not exceeded. This will also be the case in respect of the Proposed Development

4.8.4 Interaction with Road, Other Utilities and Services

This project is of strategic importance in supporting EirGrid and Government objectives, however, EirGrid is conscious of parallel critical requirements to ensure that the strategic capacity and safety of the existing services, utilities and roads are maintained.

EirGrid has engaged extensively with all relevant services providers to identify mechanisms to ensure the proposed transmission infrastructure development can proceed complementary to safeguarding the strategic function, safety and continued efficient operation of existing - and indeed future - services, utilities and roads. It is EirGrid's view that these issues can best be addressed through engagement between EirGrid, the relevant service provider and EirGrid would welcome the application of appropriate conditions of approval in this regard.

There is a long history of utilities and services being placed underground in the road network and alongside other services. It does not undermine their strategic importance and normal operation. The impacts, notwithstanding the temporary construction phase, of underground services are not significant, as addressed in the PECR.

4.8.5 Hedgerow Removal

Hedgerows line the roadside along the majority of the Proposed Development route as well as in certain off-road sections. These provide roosting, breeding, foraging and commuting habitat potential for a variety of protected species, and their disturbance and removal can therefore cause ecological impacts. Such protected species likely to be present include small mammals such as badger, bats, Irish stoat, Irish hare and hedgehogs, as well as lizards and breeding birds.

In order to accommodate the construction area for underground cable, there will need to be significant removal of hedgerows along the route, which in turn holds the potential for likely significant effects in terms of habitat loss.

After construction as far as possible, hedgerows will be reinstated to a species-rich condition (i.e., five woody species per 30 m), comprising only native species. All other sites will be returned as close as possible to their pre-existing condition, using the same woody species removed, under the supervision and direction of the Contractor's Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). It will not be possible to reinstate all hedgerows and trees exactly where they stood. This will be because of the construction of permanent features, such as access tracks, joint bays and associated hard standing areas. Off-road cable extents involving breaks to existing hedges (where not beneath a permanent access track) will be replanted only with suitable, shallow-rooting species (e.g. hawthorn – see Chapter 10 of the PECR for further details), following the precedence established by Western Power (2021), now National Grid (GB).

An off-site hedgerow compensation strategy has been developed, in light of the urgent biodiversity action required at European and national level, and the hedgerow/tree policy objectives of Kildare County Council (particularly Policy Objectives BI 026, BI 027, BI 028) and Meath County Council (particularly HER POL 37, HER POL 38, HER POL 40).

The strategy will comprise off-site compensatory planting, outside the Planning Application Boundary, to deliver an overall net gain of habitat area. A minimum of 130% compensatory off-site planting will be delivered by the Developer (ESB), in consultation with EirGrid.

A full assessment of species that are present in the study area, and the potential impacts and mitigation is provided in Chapter 10 of the PECR.

Please see chapter 4.7 of this report regarding the separate process being undertaken under the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Agriculture) Regulations 2011 (as amended) in respect to the removal of hedgerows.

4.8.6 Traffic Management

A full assessment has been made of the roads affected by the Proposed Development and is presented in the accompanying Traffic Management Plan.

One part of road, approximately 4 km in length, will be likely to have a Moderate effect. This section, located along the R156 in County Meath, wiand will result in a proposed Single Lane Closure with HGV Diversion, requiring a large diversion that is signposted from the affected regional road to an alternative regional road. The impacts of this effect will be limited to the construction of the cable trench, which will be a temporary impact – approximately 20-50 m of cable trench can be constructed in one day.

The other sections of affected roads will have no effect or have been assessed to be Minor. Other effects to public transport users or community severance have been assessed to be Not Significant.

EirGrid has and will continue to engage extensively with all relevant services to ensure the impact of any potential disruption is minimised.

5. Social and Community Engagement

5.1 Government and EirGrid Policy on Community Gain since 2012

In 2012, the then Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) published a "Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure". The Policy Statement provided clear direction on incorporating community gain considerations into major energy infrastructure projects. In particular the Policy Statement stated that:

"The Government would like to see enhanced co-operation with local authorities on the potential for delivering landscape, biodiversity and civic amenity benefits as part of Grid 25 and other energy infrastructure development. Delivering long lasting benefits to communities is an important way of achieving public acceptability for infrastructure". The Policy Statement goes on to state "The Government underlines the appropriateness for the State Companies and energy project developers to examine appropriate means of building community gain considerations into their project budgeting and planning. The Government is therefore fully supportive of a community gain approach in the delivery of energy infrastructure".

In the period following the publication of the Policy Statement, EirGrid engaged with the then DCENR, the then Commission for Energy Regulation (CER18), the then Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG19) as well as other key stakeholders focusing on the development of a suitable EirGrid community gain strategy. This strategy resulted in the establishment and implementation of a community gain policy in January 2014.

In 2019, EirGrid updated its Community Gain policy to incorporate considerations for underground cables and the phasing of community fund payments which allowed for a community fund to be activated across three phases of a project. The provisions of proximity payments were also amended.

In 2020, a further review of Community Gain was undertaken in EirGrid to ensure alignment with its new Strategy and wider policy framework, and from that a new Community Benefit Policy was developed.

5.2 An Enhanced Approach to Community Engagement

As part of EirGrid's public engagement strategy to ensure substantial community engagement, local decision making, transparency and equality, a community forum was established and is made up of local community representatives from the area in proximity to the project route.

EirGrid held an information evening in June 2021 about the community forum for this project and the Kildare Meath community forum was established following public nomination process in July. The forum has met on seven other occasions since its establishment. The forum continues to meet regularly to provide feedback, for project updates and to ensure two-way communication is on-going.

The purpose of the forum is to:

- Ensure that stakeholder and community views are understood and properly considered prior to and during project delivery; and
- Input into the design and implementation of the Community Benefit Fund, ensuring maximising the impact of the fund.

The Forum is chaired by a representative of the Irish non-profit organisation, Development Perspectives.

A dedicated community benefit fund for each new grid development is made available by EirGrid to provide direct benefits to communities in the local and wider vicinity of new transmission infrastructure. These funds, which are proportional to the scale of the project, support local good causes, with the aim of creating a 'sustainable energy community'.

The Community Benefit Scheme will commence if the project receives statutory approval. A community fund administrator will be appointed. The fund administrator is an independent entity appointed through a procurement process. The fund administrator will work with the community forum to develop a community benefit strategy and provide advice and guidance on all aspects of the community fund.

This includes:

- Working with EirGrid in identifying organisations and potential projects to ensure maximum impact of the community benefit in the area;
- Identifying partnership and collaboration opportunities;
- Agreeing the criteria and parameters of the fund;
- Accessing proposals for discussion and consideration;
- Inputting key local knowledge around area needs and priorities;
- Provide feedback at key stages in the process; and
- Forum members will actively promote the Community Benefit in their area and encourage organisations to engage.

EirGrid has committed to continue engagement with stakeholders, communities and the community forum throughout the final two steps of the development of the project

6. Conclusion

EirGrid is satisfied that the application is robust and comprehensive, and that its submission follows an extensive and appropriate process of project development, incorporating public, landowner and stakeholder consultation and engagement that informed the consideration of alternatives, and has resulted in the project proposal now before the Board.

EirGrid reiterates that significant consideration has been given to alternative options for the routing of the proposed cable in this area, with the option within the public road being identified as the Best Performing Option against a variety of criteria. This is comprehensively and transparently documented.

In conclusion, it is the considered opinion of Jacobs and Eirgrid that the Proposed Development is in keeping with national strategic objectives and contributes to the proper planning and sustainable development of region and of the areas through which it passes. The following key findings are noted in respect of the Proposed Development:

- It delivers clear national-level benefits, contributing towards a more efficient national energy grid, aiding in the delivery of Ireland's decarbonisation and climate action commitments, in accordance with the agreements as laid out in European Green New Deal, 2019, The Paris Agreement, 2015, the Recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED II), Europe 2030 Climate and Energy Framework and the Energy Roadmap 2050;
- It is considered necessary to ensure a more secure supply of electricity for County Kildare, County Meath and County Dublin and to enable the further integration of renewable energy, in line with the provisions as laid out in the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030, Government White Paper – Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030, Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2021 & 2023
- It is supported in planning policy at national, regional and local level, as laid out in the provisions of the National Planning Framework, the National Development Plan, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, as well as the County Development Plans for Kildare and Meath. It accords with policy relating to the undergrounding of cables and strengthening of the electricity grid, and also in enabling future electricity demand opportunities in County Kildare and County Meath. It is also specifically referenced in the EMRA Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy and Kildare County Development Plan as a project that is to be supported due to the potential for benefits to the region.
- It accords with sectoral policy relating to the strengthening of the electricity grid, including EirGrid's 'Shaping our Electricity Future', Transmission Development Plan 2021-2030, Grid Implementation Plan 2017-2022, and the Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Important of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure
- The environmental assessment undertaken demonstrates that the Proposed Development will not have significant impacts on the environment.
- The Natura Impact Statement undertaken in respect of the Proposed Development either alone or in-combination with any other plan or project, concludes that with mitigation there would be no significant effects on any European sites.

EirGrid will continue to seek to engage with stakeholders, communities and landowners to address and resolve issues that may arise.

EirGrid is satisfied that the Proposed Development is the optimum solution for the delivery of the project and is fully in accordance with good planning practice, and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

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Government of Ireland. National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030

Government of Ireland. Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)

Government of Ireland. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030

Kildare County Council. Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Kildare County Council. Naas Local Area Plan 2021-2027

Kildare County Council. Sallins Local Area Plan 2016-2022

United Nations. The Paris Agreement, 2015

Western Power (2021) Standard Technique CA6A/7. Available online at https://www.nationalgrid.co.uk/downloads-view-reciteme/362962

Appendix A: SID Determination

Appendix B: EU, National and Local Policy

B.1: EU and International Policy

Policy Document	Summary
European Green New Deal, 2019	In December 2019, the European Commission (the Commission) published a Communication on a European Green Deal (EGD), setting out its increased ambition on climate action. It presents an initial roadmap of key policies and measures needed to achieve the ambition of becoming the first climate neutral bloc in the world by 2050 This will require a transformation of the EU's economy, with sectors such as transport, buildings, agriculture, and energy production all having key roles to play. As well as setting out the policy and legislative programme for all key economic sectors to deliver on the EU's climate ambition, the EGD also addresses the EU's overall ambition on climate targets. It proposes increasing the EU's emissions reduction targets for 2030 from 40% to at least 50% and towards 55% compared with 1990 levels. In December 2020, EU leaders agreed to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.
The Paris Agreement, 2015	Superseding the 2005 Kyoto Protocol, the 2015 Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), addresses greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance starting in the year 2020, which aims to keep the global average temperature rise this century to below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. One of the key achievements of COP26 in Glasgow last year (2021), was the adoption of the Glasgow Climate Pact which aims to turn the 2020s into a decade of climate action and support. The Pact includes a package of decisions which consist of a range of agreed items, including strengthened efforts to build climate change resilience, curbing greenhouse gas emissions and providing the finance for both of these. For the first time, nations were also called on to phase down unabated coal power and subsidies for fossil fuels. The package of decisions in the Pact also included the finalisation of the 'Paris Agreement rulebook'. This set of rules lays out how countries are held accountable for delivering on their climate action promises and self-targets under their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
Recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED II)	In 2014, the European Commissions 'A policy framework for climate and energy in the period from 2020 to 2030', established a framework for future European Union (EU) energy and climate policies and promoted a common understanding of how to develop those policies after 2020. The Commission proposed that the EU 2030 target for the share of renewable energy consumed in its Member States should be at least 27%. The European Council endorsed this proposal and advised that Member States should be able to set their own, more ambitious, national targets to deliver their planned contributions to the Union 2030 target and exceed them. Also, in 2014, the European Parliaments publication 'A 2030 framework for climate and energy policies' and 2016 publication 'The renewable energy progress report', went further than 'A policy framework for climate and energy in the period from 2020 to 2030', stressing that, in light of the Paris Agreement and the recent renewable technology cost reductions, it was desirable to be significantly more ambitious.

Policy Document	Summary
	The ambition set out in the Paris Agreement, as well as technological developments including cost reductions for investments in renewable energy, led to new objectives being set in the recast Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001 (known as RED II). RED II established a binding target of at least 32% of renewable energy for the EU by 2030. This target will be reviewed upwards in light of: • substantial cost reductions in the production of renewable energy; and • the EU's international commitments for decarbonisation, or where a significant decrease in energy consumption in the EU justifies such an increase. Member States are required to establish their contribution to the achievement of that target as part of their integrated national energy and climate plans. Also, in RED II, the Commission encouraged investments in new, flexible and clean technologies. The Commission also established an adequate strategy to manage the retirement of technologies which do not contribute to the reduction of emissions or deliver sufficient flexibility, based on transparent criteria and reliable market price signals. This Directive therefore has directly influenced the national policy context specifically relating to energy and renewable energy in Ireland, as outlined further in the National, Regional and County policy subsections of this report.
Europe 2030 Climate and Energy Framework	EU leaders agreed in October 2014 on new climate and energy objectives for 2030 following a proposal put forward by the European Commission. The 2030 framework aims to make the EU's economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable. A centrepiece of the 2030 framework is the binding domestic target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. This will put the EU on the most cost-effective path towards its agreed objective of an 80-95% reduction by 2050. EU leaders also agreed on raising the share of renewable energy to at least 27%. The proposed framework will bring multiple benefits: reduced dependency on imported energy, a lower bill for imported energy, greater innovation, economic growth and job creation, increased competitiveness and better health through reduced air pollution.
Energy Roadmap 2050	The Energy Roadmap 2050 was published by the European Commission in 2011 and explores the transition of the energy system in ways that would be compatible with the greenhouse gas reductions targets set out in the Renewable Energy Directive while also increasing competitiveness and security of supply. To achieve these goals, the Roadmap states that significant investments need to be made in new low-carbon technologies, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and grid infrastructure. Four main routes are identified to achieve a more sustainable, competitive and secure energy system in 2050: • Energy efficiency; • Renewable energy; • Nuclear energy; and

Policy Document	Summary
	• Carbon capture and storage. The Roadmap combined these routes in different ways to create and analyse seven possible scenarios for 2050. The analysis found that decarbonising the energy system is technically and economically feasible. Each of the scenarios assumes in the analysis that increasing the share of renewable energy and using energy more efficiently are crucial, irrespective of the particular energy mix chosen. An important component of this energy mix is grid infrastructure, with the Roadmap stating: "*With electricity trade and renewables' penetration growing under almost any scenario up to 2050, and particularly in the high renewables scenario, adequate infrastructure at distribution, interconnection and long-distance transmission becomes a matter of urgency. By 2020 interconnection capacity needs to expand at least in line with current development plans. An overall increase of interconnection capacity by 40% up to 2020 will be needed, with further integration after this point.*" The extension of current planning methods to a fully integrated network planning for transmission (onshore and offshore), distribution, storage and electricity highways for a potentially longer timeframe will be needed. With more decentralised generation, smart grids, new network users (e.g. electric vehicles) and demand response, there is a greater need for a more integrated view on transmission, distribution and storage. In December 2019, the European Commission (the Commission) published a Communication on a European Green Deal (EGD), setting out its increased ambition on climate action. It presents an initial roadmap of key policies and measures needed to achieve the ambition of becoming the first climate neutral bloc in the world by 2050 This will require a transformation of the EU's economy, with sectors such as transport, buildings, agriculture, and energy production all having key roles to play. As well as setting out the policy and legislative programme for all key economic sectors to deliver on the EU's climate ambition, the EGD also addresses the EU's overall ambition on climate targets. It proposes increasing the EU's emissions reduction targets for 2030 from 40% to at least 50% and towards 55% compared with 1990 levels. In December 2020, EU leaders agreed to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

B.2: Detailed National Policy Appraisal

Policy Document	Summary
Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)	Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (hereafter referred to as the NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to the year 2040 and marks the highest tier of Ireland's spatial plans. The National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), the main policy principles of the NPF, support and strengthen the economy and a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient society (NSO 3, 6 and 8), provide access to quality services (4, 7, and 10) and achieve sustainable growth of settlements and manage environmental resources (NSO 1 and 9). The NPF states that Ireland's National Energy Policy is focused on three pillars:

Policy Document	Summary
	• Sustainability; • Security of Supply; and • Competitiveness. In line with these principles, NSO 8: 'Transition to Sustainable Energy' notes that in creating Ireland's future energy landscape, new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary to enable a more distributed energy generation system which connects established and emerging energy sources to the major sources of demand. NSO 8 aims to "*Reinforce the distribution and transmission network to facilitate planned growth and distribution of a more renewables focused source of energy across the major demand centres*" (p. 147). In addition, it contains, in National Policy Objective 42, the following commitment to transmission network reinforcement: "*to support, within the context of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDP) and its successors, the progressive development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy potential, including domestic and international grid connectivity enhancements*" (p. 104). County Kildare and County Meath are located in the Mid-East Region as set out within the NPF, which states that, "*The Mid-East has experienced high levels of population growth in recent decades, at more than twice the national growth rate. Managing the challenges of future growth is critical to this regional area. A more balanced and sustainable pattern of development, with a greater focus on addressing employment creation, local infrastructure needs and addressing the legacy of rapid growth, must be prioritised".* (p.33) The Proposed Development supports the National Strategic Outcomes and assists in optimizing the performance of existing transmission infrastructure. The Proposed Development will assist in delivering a secure and sustainable electricity system.
The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030	The NDP is the national capital investment strategy plan that is integrated and aligned with the NPF. Its sets out the framework of expenditure commitments to secure the Strategic Investment Priorities to the year 2030 and supports the delivery of the ten NSOs identified in the NPF. One of the core strategic investment priorities identified within the NDP, is a focus on decarbonizing energy, stating: '*We need to plan our energy system as a whole to create greater links between different energy carriers (such as electricity and hydrogen); infrastructures; and consumption sectors (such as transport and heating). The long-term objective is to transition to a net-zero carbon, reliable, secure, flexible and resource-efficient energy services at the least possible cost for society by mid-century.*' (p.123) The NDP states that doing so requires a coordinated programme of investment in, among other things, '*an expanded and strengthened electricity transmission and distribution network*' (p.123), in order to support an increase in both renewable and conventional electricity generation. The NPF provides for the collaboration in the energy sector, driven by the single electricity market. The need for a new interconnector between the electricity grids of Northern Ireland and Ireland has been identified by the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Executive as a project of common interest. Ireland is also working with other countries such as France to explore potential for electricity

Policy Document	Summary
	interconnection and will continue to support relationships with our European neighbours to enhance our international connectivity. The 'Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure' of 2012 recognises the importance of the need for the upgrading and development of the electricity network to meet existing and future energy demands by fully supporting EirGrid's 'Grid 25 Programme' and the investment required. Within the Policy statement the Government "*endorses the major investment underway in the high voltage electricity transmission system under EirGrid's Grid 25 Programme*." It states, "*Grid 25 is the most important investment in Irelands transmission system for several generations and will position our energy system for decades to come*" (p.1).
National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030	The National Energy and Climate Plan (hereafter referred to as the NECP) is a ten-year plan mandated by the EU to each of its member states, in order for the EU to meet its overall greenhouse gas emissions targets. The plan establishes key measures to address the five dimensions of the EU Energy Union: decarbonisation, energy efficiency, energy security, internal energy markets and research, innovation and competitiveness. The NECP takes into account energy and climate policies developed to date, the levels of demographic and economic growth identified in the NPF and includes all of the climate and energy measures set out in the NDP. The Proposed Development is compliant with the NECP.
Government White Paper – Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030	The Government White Paper sets out a framework to guide Ireland's energy policy development. The White Paper acknowledges that an uninterrupted supply of energy is vital to the functioning of Irish society and economy. It establishes the need for the 'development and renewal' of energy networks to meet economic and social goals. The Proposed Development is considered to be an 'enhanced and extended energy infrastructure' development, which will be critical for economic development, regional development and the secure provision of energy and other services for the Irish society and economy.
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2021 & 2023	The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act was published in 2021 and commits to achieving 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero by no later than 2050. Climate Action Plan 2021 aimed to increase the proportion of renewable electricity to up to 80% by 2030. The decarbonisation pathway for the electricity sector is challenging given the rapid growth in demand for power, as well as the need to ensure security of supply through the decarbonisation journey. The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP 2023) is the second annual update to Ireland's Climate Action 2019[1]. This plan is the first to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and following the introduction in 2022 of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The plan was launched on 21 December 2022. The supplementary Annex of Actions will be published early in 2023 (at the time of writing this has not been published). The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030

[1] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/

Policy Document	Summary
	and reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government. The Climate Action Plan 2023 sets out how Ireland can accelerate the actions that are required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development. The Climate Action Plan 2023 Summary Document calls for: • *"Powering Renewables – 75% reduction in emissions by 2030* • *We will facilitate a large-scale deployment of renewables that will be critical to decarbonising the power sector as well as enabling the electrification of other technologies*." The Climate Action Plan 2023 states (Main Text Page 129): "Transformational policies, measures and actions, and societal change are required to increase the deployment of renewable energy generation, **strengthen the grid**, and meet the demand and flexibility requirements required to meet the challenge" (Emphasis added) The Plan identifies the follows measures to meet the challenge (Page 134): • "*Accelerate the delivery of onshore wind, offshore wind, and solar through a competitive framework to reach 80% of electricity demand from renewable energy by 2030;* • *Target 6 GW of onshore wind and up to 5GW of solar by 2025;* • *Target 9 GW onshore wind, 8 GW solar, and at least 5 GW of offshore wind by 2030 (and an additional 2 GW offshore wind for green hydrogen production);* • *Complete a revised version of* ***Shaping our Electricity Future*** *to define the required new construction and reinforcement of the electricity transmission and distribution system across the country required to achieve sectoral ceilings and carbon budgets*" (Emphasis added) EirGrid now has a programme of work, through the development of a roadmap called "Shaping Our Electricity Future"[2] . Driving climate action through the transformation of the electricity system is at the heart of EirGrid's purpose and is also the most impactful positive contribution EirGrid can make to climate change. Central to this is transforming the electricity grid so that it carries clean, renewable energy. Through innovative work over the past 10 years EirGrid have been able to ensure that 75% of instantaneous electricity requirements are being met by renewable sources. EirGrid plans to further deliver network, operations, markets and engagement initiatives to increase this figure to 95% by 2030. This will help deliver the Government target for annual renewable electricity generation of up to 80% by 2030. EirGrid has committed to publicly report on our sustainability performance. EirGrid's are the first public body in Ireland to have their targets validated by the international Science Based Targets initiative. EirGrid's verified targets are: • Reduce absolute scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions by 50%; • Reduce scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions related to dispatch of electricity generation by 35% per megawatt hour within the same timeframe; and

[2] https://www.eirgridgroup.com/the-grid/shaping-our-electricity-f/

Policy Document	Summary
	• Reduce all other absolute scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030, using 2019 as a base year. This document reinforces that the proposed development as a new circuit will play a key role in meeting these targets. An update to the "Shaping Our Electricity Future" is due in Q1 2023 but at the time of writing, it is expected the project will be reconfirmed as playing a key role in the nation's Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Plan 2023 further states (Main Text - Page 137): "*Measures to Deliver Sectoral Emissions Ceilings* *Our 2030 decarbonisation ambition will require all sectors to increase emission mitigation actions if we are to achieve our national and EU targets. For the electricity sector, the following measures will be critical to success:* • *EirGrid will carry out further grid, operational, and market studies, through an updated version of Shaping Our Electricity Future, due Q1 2023, and updated regularly thereafter, to assess additional supply and demand side measures, beyond current plans;* • *Strengthen the electricity system by upgrading the network and building supporting infrastructure at key strategic locations;* • *Enable the use of the public road and potentially the rail networks for routing of new public and private electricity circuits"* These three measures confirm the commitment to the project through the "Shaping Our Electricity Future" document identifies that the electrical network must be strengthened and confirms the approach to the routing principles for the project that public roads should be used for projects such as the proposed development.

B.3: Regional Planning Policy

Policy Document	Summary
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) 2019-2031	The RSES vision is: "*To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all*" This vision is underpinned by three key principles, including "*Climate Action – The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon society recognizing the role of natural capital and ecosystems services in achieving it*". The Strategy sets out 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes, of which one is directly supported by the Proposed Development: Support the Transition to Low Carbon and Clean Energy. The Proposed Development is to facilitate the transmission of renewable energy across Ireland and therefore contributes to the delivery of this vision of a sustainable

Policy Document	Summary
	Region. Further, it supports the National Strategic Outcome 8: Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society which is referenced in the Strategy. The Proposed Development is located within Kildare County Council. The majority of the part of Kildare through which the Proposed Development passes is part of the Dublin Metropolitan Area. There are a number of guiding principles for sustainable development within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, these include 'Alignment of growth with enabling infrastructure' which is specified as "*to promote quality infrastructure provision and capacity improvement, in tandem with new development and aligned with national projects and improvements in water and waste water, sustainable energy, waste management and resource efficiency*". The RSES states, in relation to the Dublin Metropolitan Area, that the *'Development of the energy distribution and transmission network in the region will enable distribution of more renewable sources of energy to facilitate future energy demand in strategic development areas*'. Chapter 7: Environment and Climate of the RSES identifies the needs for the 'expansion and upgrading of the grid with the aim of increasing the share of variable renewable electricity that the all-island system can accommodate'. It goes on to state: The provision of infrastructure should be supported in order to facilitate a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting sites of optimal energy production to the major sources of demand'. Chapter 10 of the RSES addresses provision of services and infrastructure. It states that '*High-quality infrastructure is an important element of a modern society and economy, it provides essential functions and services that support societal, economic and environmental systems at local, regional and national levels'*. Section 10.3 states '*A secure and resilient supply of energy is critical to a well-functioning region, being relied upon for heating, cooling, and to fuel transport, power industry, and generate electricity. With projected increases in population and economic growth, the demand for energy is set to increase in the coming years*'. However, the chapter goes on to state, '*the development of onshore and offshore renewable energy is critically dependent on the development of enable infrastructure including grid facilities to bring the energy ashore and connect to major sources of energy demand'*. Objective RPO 10.23 specifically references the Proposed Development, it provides support for EirGrid's Implementation Plan 2017 – 2022 and Transmission Development Plan (TDP) 2016 and any subsequent plans prepared during the lifetime of the RSES that facilitate the timely delivery of major investment projects subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process, in particular: "*Support reinforcement of the Greater Dublin Area between Dunnstown and Woodland 400 kV substations to increase the capacity of the often congested and highly loaded Dublin transmission network to enable the transmission system to safely accommodate more diverse power flows and also facilitate future load growth in the area*".

Policy Document	Summary
	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.

B.4: Detailed Local Policy Appraisal

Policy Document	Policy Summary
County Development Plans	
Kildare County Development Plan (KCDP) 2023-2029	The Kildare County Development Plan (KCDP) 2023-2029 took effect on 28th January 2023. The plan recognises the importance of providing a strong electricity transmission network for the environmental, social and economic viability of the county, stating, "*The electricity transmission grid infrastructure has a big role to play in meeting the challenges of climate change and energy and in supporting our environment, society, and economy.*" (p244). The KCDP asserts that EirGrid and ESB will generally be supported in delivering energy transmission projects in the county, stating: *The Council will support and facilitate the requirements of the major service providers, such as Eirgrid an ESB, where it is proposed to enhance or upgrade existing facilities or networks or to provide new infrastructure subject to landscape, residential amenity and environmental considerations.* (p245) The Plan goes on to specifically mention the Proposed Development, stating, *The Maynooth 220kV and Dunnstown 400kV substations are both electrical substations of regional significance and the Council will seek to support any reinforcement of the Greater Dublin Area between Dunnstown and Woodland 400 kV substations.* (p245) To that end, the KCDP sets out the overriding policy in relation to energy transmission projects which is, • **EC P19 –** *Support the development, reinforcement, renewal and expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution grid to provide for the future physical and economic development of Kildare Such projects shall be subject to AA screening and where applicable, Stage 2 AA. The developments will have regard for protected species and provide mitigation and monitoring where applicable.* In addition, the KCDP sets out a number of objectives for the delivery of energy grid improvements, as follows: • **EC O64** – *Support and safeguard the efficient and reliable supply of electricity to all homes and businesses in County Kildare.* • *EC O65 – Support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission and distribution network, including the installation of Battery Energy Storage System plants 2 , Synchronous Condenser plants, and*

Policy Document	Policy Summary
	associated dispatchable power plants associated with high energy users, to facilitate planned growth and transmission/distribution of a renewable energy focused generation, at appropriate locations and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, where they are adjacent and/or proximate to the grid network. • ***EC O68*** *– Require that all electricity lines of 38kV and over, comply with all internationally recognised standards with regards to proximity to sensitive receptors including dwellings, nursing homes, hospitals, other inhabited structures and schools/crèches.* • ***EC O69*** *– Support the statutory providers of national grid infrastructure by safeguarding strategic corridors (where strategic route corridors have been identified) from encroachment by other development, that might compromise the provision of energy networks.* • ***EC O70*** *– Facilitate the development of grid reinforcements including grid connections and a trans-boundary network into and through the county and between all adjacent counties. Such projects shall be subject to AA screening and where applicable, Stage 2 AA. The developments will have regard for protected species and provide mitigation and monitoring where applicable.* • ***EC O71*** *– Support and facilitate the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade (also known as Capital Project 966) to enable further renewable energy generation in line with the Governments' target of 80% renewable energy generation by 2030.* • ***EC O72*** *– Require that in all new developments, local services such as electricity shall be located underground. Multiple services shall be accommodated in shared strips underground and access covers shall be shared, where possible.* **Zoning** As per Map V1 2.1 of the KCDP the Proposed Development is located within Rural Housing Policy Zone 1 – 'Areas Under Strong Urban Influence'. Map V1 2.2 identifies this area as the Core Region which includes "*the peri-urban 'hinterlands' in the commuter catchment around Dublin. It contains a strong network of county and market towns that have a good level of local employment, services, and amenities, which serve their resident populations and a wider catchment area*" (p.20). The Proposed Development is located on a Regional Road through the KCDP area and passes through the Multi-Model Transport Corridor and across a Rail Line as per Map V1 2.1 of the KCDP. The Proposed Development passes through the areas subject to Local Area Plans in the following settlements • Kilcock; • Naas; and • Sallins. These are addressed below. **Other relevant policies** The KCDP sets out a series of environmental policies that are relevant to the Proposed Development. The PECR has assessed the potential impacts of the Proposed Development and proposed mitigation measures to avoid or reduce environmental effects. Table B.7.1 below sets out how the relevant environmental policies within the KCDP have been met by the Proposed Development.

Policy Document	Policy Summary
	Proposed Development Response The Proposed Development is compliant with the KCDP as it supports the development, renewal and expansion of the electricity transmission within the County. The Proposed Development is identified within the KCDP as having support from Kildare County Council. The routing of the Proposed Development within the identified land use zonings will not result in any impediment to the achievement of their respective land use zoning objectives. Although there may be short-term disruption during construction, the Proposed Development will not impede on any zoning post construction as ground conditions will be reinstated.
Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027	The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (MCDP) emphasises the importance of reliable service provision and infrastructure for the sustainable future socio- economic growth of the County. It goes on to assert the strengthening of the national grid is important to improve security of supply for the domestic, residential and enterprise market as well as attracting high-end enterprise which often require significant energy capacity and reliability. In terms of strengthening the national transmission network the MCDP states, *"the strengthening of the national grid is important for a number of reasons including improving security of supply for the domestic, residential and enterprise market as well as attracting high-end enterprise which often require significant energy capacity and reliability."* (Section 6.15.4.1) The following policies within the MCDP are relevant to the Proposed Development: • **INF POL 46-** *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.* • ***INF POL 47-*** *To co-operate and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future business and enterprise needs of the County.* • ***INF POL 48-*** *To ensure that energy transmission infrastructure follows best practice with regard to siting, design and least environmental impact in the interest of landscape protection.* • ***INF POL 50-*** *To require that the location of local energy services such as electricity, be undergrounded, where appropriate.* • ***INF POL 51-*** *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.* • *The Following objective of the Council is also relevant:* • ***INF OBJ 50-*** *To seek the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.*

Policy Document	Policy Summary
	Zoning Map 3.3. of the MCCDP identifies the Settlement Hierarchy of the County Council. The Proposed Development is located within the Metropolitan Area specifically within the 'Self-Sustaining Town' identified as Kilcock which are identified as "*towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining*" (p. 85). The Proposed Development is located along an existing road and will not impact on any zonings as per the Land Use Zonings Map of the MCDP 2021-2027. The Proposed Development is also located within a Rural Area under Strong Urban Influence in accordance with Map 9.1 of the MCCDP. **Other relevant policies** The MCDP sets out a series of environmental policies that are relevant to the Proposed Development. The PECR has assessed the potential impacts of the Proposed Development and proposed mitigation measures to avoid or reduce environmental effects. Table B.7.2 below sets out how the relevant environmental policies within the KCDP have been met by the Proposed Development. **Proposed Development Response** The Proposed Development is compliant with the MCDP as it supports the strengthening of the national grid which will help to improve security of supply for the domestic, residential and enterprise market as well as attracting high-end enterprise which often require significant energy capacity and reliability. The routing of the Proposed Development within the identified land use zonings will not result in any impediment to the achievement of their respective land use zoning objectives. Although there may be short-term disruption during construction, the Proposed Development will not impede on any zoning post construction as ground conditions will be reinstated.
Local Area Plans	
Kilcock Local Area Plan (KLAP)	The Proposed Development is located within the Kilcock Local Area Plan (KLAP) Boundary. There is currently no Kilcock Local Area Plan in force.
Naas Local Area Plan (NLAP) 2021-2027	Kildare County Council adopted the Naas Local Area Plan (NLAP) 2021-2027 on 21st October 2021. The Proposed Development passes through the functional area of the NLAP. **Policy I4** – Energy and Communications sets out a number of objectives in relation to the energy transmission infrastructure, including:

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IO 4.1 Support the statutory providers of national grid infrastructure by safeguarding existing infrastructure and strategic corridors from encroachment by development that might compromise the operation, maintenance and provision of energy networks; and
IO 4.3 Seek the undergrounding of all electricity, telephone and television cables in the town including the town centre and in residential and amenity areas.

Zoning

The Proposed Development is mainly located on existing roads and footpaths. However, there are instances where the Proposed Development will cross lands zoned within the NLAP. These zonings are identified in Map 11.1: Land Use Zoning Map of the NLAP and are outlined in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Land Use Zonings within the KLAP 2015-2021
<table>
<tr><th>Land Use Zoning</th><th>Objective</th></tr>
<tr><td>F: Open Space and Amenity (G4, G3)</td><td>To protect and provide for open space, amenity and recreation provision.</td></tr>
<tr><td>L: Leisure and Amenity (C5)</td><td>To provide for leisure and tourism facilities within the town.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Q: Enterprise and Employment (C3)</td><td>To provide for and facilitate the provision of high job-generating uses.</td></tr>
</table>
The Proposed Development is also located along areas identified for new pedestrian /cyclist paths as illustrated in May 5.2 of the NLAP. These paths are identified as:

51: Create path between Broadfield View – R448
63: Pedestrian link between housing estate Jigginstown Green – R445

Map 5.2 also indicates the Proposed Development is located along existing cycle tracks / cycle lanes, an indicative future path connection and a planned greenway located north of Jigginstown Green.

Map 5.3 illustrates that the Proposed Development is located on a Proposed Link 1 for Cycling Infrastructure (to be determined by detailed study): Naas to Sallins Greenway, Map 5.4 identifies the Proposed Development is located along the RD5 Alternative Route for HGVs and Map 7.2 illustrates that the Proposed Development is located within the following Green Infrastructure Corridors:

1: Grand Canal
3: Osberstown
4: Yeomanstown

Other relevant policies

The NLAP sets out a series of environmental policies that are relevant to the proposed development. The PECR has assessed the potential impacts of the Proposed Development and proposed mitigation measures to avoid or reduce environmental effects.

Table B.7.3 below sets out the other relevant policies within the NLAP that have been considered in the PECR.
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<tr><th>Policy Document</th><th>Policy Summary</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Proposed Development Response

The Proposed Development is compliant with the NLAP and its commitment to undergrounding of all electricity cables. The Proposed Development seeks to improve the electricity infrastructure network for the area.

The routing of the Proposed Development within the identified land use zonings will not result in any impediment to the achievement of their respective land use zoning objectives. Although there may be short-term disruption during construction, the Proposed Development will not impede on any zoning post construction as ground conditions will be reinstated.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sallins Local Area Plan (SLAP) 2016-2022</td><td>The Proposed Development passes through the functional area of the SLAP.

The SLAP outlines that "The development of a more sustainable energy sector incorporating power generation and energy efficiency in all sectors is vital if we are to make a substantial contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This may be achieved by focusing on renewable energy generation and improving energy efficiency".

It continues that "The availability of appropriate energy and communications infrastructure is essential for the successful future development of the town".

Zoning

The Proposed Development is located mainly along existing road and pathways. However, there are particular zones identified within Map 1 and 2 of the SLAP that the Proposed Development sits within. These are identified in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Land Use Zonings within the SLAP 2016-2022
<table>
<tr><th>Land Use Zoning</th><th>Objective</th></tr>
<tr><td>I: Agriculture</td><td>To retain and protect agricultural uses.

The purpose of this zone is to ensure the retention of agricultural uses and protect them from urban sprawl and ribbon development. Uses which are directly associated with agriculture or which would not interfere with this use are open for consideration. This includes limited housing for members of landowners' families/persons who can demonstrate a need to live in the agriculture zone (in accordance with Policy RH 4 as set out in the Kildare County Development Plan 2011-2017, or any future policies as part of a subsequent Development Plan)</td></tr>
</table>
Other relevant policies

The NLAP sets out a series of environmental policies that are relevant to the proposed development. The PECR has assessed the potential impacts of the</td></tr>
</table>

Policy Document	Policy Summary
	Proposed Development and proposed mitigation measures to avoid or reduce environmental effects. Table B.7.4 below sets out the other relevant policies within the SLAP that have been considered in the PECR. **Proposed Development Response** The Proposed Development is compliant with the SLAP and its commitment to the development of a more sustainable energy sector. The Proposed Development will ensure that greater renewable energy generation can be facilitated on and across the national grid. The routing of the Proposed Development within the identified land use zonings will not result in any impediment to the achievement of their respective land use zoning objectives. Although there may be short-term disruption during construction, the Proposed Development will not impede on any zoning post construction as ground conditions will be reinstated.

B.5: Sectoral Policy

Policy Document	Summary
EirGrid's Shaping our Electricity Future – A Roadmap to Achieve our Renewable Ambition	In 2021, EirGrid published a Roadmap – Shaping our Electricity Future – to achieving at least 70% of electricity coming from renewable sources by 2030. This aim is seen as an important step on the journey to 80% to get to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Roadmap is the product of a major public and stakeholder consultation regarding how as a nation and society we can reach these ambitious targets, The consultation focused on four distinct network development approaches to achieving this renewable ambition including: • Generation-led; • Developer-led; • Technology-led; and • Demand-led. Based on the modelling undertaken by EirGrid, and its refinement in response to public and stakeholder consultation, EirGrid completed a set of transmission network planning studies. These studies will help determine what potential transmissions network projects will be required by 2030 to deliver their renewable ambition. These studies are illustrated in Figure 5: Map of Ireland and Northern Ireland detailing reinforcements within EirGrid's Shaping our Electricity Future – A Roadmap to Achieve our Renewable Ambition. Importantly, the Roadmap note that prior to commencing the transmission needs identification process, a number of transmission projects were included in EirGrid's network model, including grid reinforcements that are scheduled to complete by 2030. There, the base case network model analysed for 2030 consists of the transmission network as it is today plus these critical projects. The Kildare-Meath 400kV Grid Upgrade Project is one of those new circuits which are assumed in service and included in the base network model.

Policy Document	Summary
EirGrid's Transmission Development Plan 2021-2030	The Transmission Development Plan 2021-2030 (hereafter referred to as the TDP) sets out the development of the Irish transmission network over a nine-year period to the year 2030. The TDP presents projects which are needed for the operation of the transmission network whilst also identifying future needs that may drive future potential projects There is an obligation on EirGrid to provide all customers with a '*safe, secure, reliable, economical, and efficient transmission network to meet all reasonable demands for electricity, in accordance with legal obligations*' (p. 81) which is essential for enabling economic activity and economic growth. Under this context, drivers of transmission network development are summarised as: • Ensuring the security of electricity supply; • Ensuring the competitiveness of the national economy; and • Ensuring the long-term sustainability of electricity supply in the country. The TDP highlights that achieving these strategic objectives, requires investment in the development and maintenance of the electricity transmission network including, but not limited to, securing transmission network supplies and promoting the integration of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and complementary thermal generation. It is also identified that in order to accommodate electricity demand or generation changes to the transmission network due to continuing investment, it will be necessary to modify or strengthen the transmission network to ensure performance and reliability levels are upheld. The Proposed Development is listed in the TDP on p.82as a project which is progressing through EirGrid's six-step process for developing the Grid within the South-East and Dublin. It is noted within the TDP that "*the system needs in the region are dynamic due to potential changes in the connected generation portfolio combined with the connection of new large scale demand customers*". This project, along with others, represent EirGrid's response to this evolving situation
EirGrid's Grid Implementation Plan 2017-2022- For the Electricity Transmission System in Ireland	EirGrid published its 'Implementation Plan - For the Electricity Transmission System in Ireland' in December 2018. This plan sets out the manner in which the Irish transmission system is likely to be developed in its lifetime. This plan was prepared following consultation on EirGrid's 'Ireland's Grid Development Strategy – Your Grid, Your Tomorrow' in 2017, which replaced the 'Grid 25 Strategy' from 2008. This plan identifies those parts of the transmission system that are likely to need development over the five-year period 2017 - 2022, which are primarily as highlighted in the Transmission Development Plan. This Grid Implementation (IP) Plan and TDP were subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) including Appropriate Assessment (AA) in 2017. EU Directive (2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, herein referred to as the 'SEA Directive', established the statutory requirement for SEA as part of the development of certain plans and programmes. The purpose of the SEA is to ensure the Grid Implementation Programme (IP) and accompanying TDP is in line with committed Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs). These objectives were set out in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) prepared for the Grid IP and integrated into the overall approach to grid development. A series of environmental, planning, social and technical policies and objectives also form a core element of the Grid IP and guide sustainable grid development.

Policy Document	Summary
	The Grid Development Strategy is consistent with the Government White Paper on Energy (published June 2020, updated January 20213). It is also set in the context of other Government Policy, in particular the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovations (2017), Action Plan for Jobs (2017), and the Irish Development Authority's (IDA) (2015) strategy, 'Winning: Foreign Direct Investment 2015-2019'. The Implementation Plan contains the following key policies and objectives: • PDP1: To have regard to EirGrid's approach to developing the grid, and any associated guidelines, policies and processes, to ensure the structured, consistent development of all its transmission projects; • PDP2: To promote sustainable grid development by balancing complex and/or competing technical, economic, environmental, social and deliverability goals and priorities in decision-making; • PDO1: To undertake a timely and appropriate managed transition of our transmission projects to the new approach to grid development; and • PCP3: To promote sustainable grid development by balancing complex and/or competing technical, economic and environmental goals and priorities in decision-making. The proposed development has been developed in line with the EirGrid 'Implementation Plan 2017-2022'.
Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Important of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure	In 2012 the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources published a "Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure" (hereafter referred to as 'the Statement'). The Statement highlights the need and urgency for the new energy infrastructure for the economy, delivery of regional development, creation of jobs and growth and ensure the wellbeing of everyone as well as realising the economic potential of Ireland's own renewable energy resources. It states that significant energy infrastructure is required to deliver a world class electricity transmission system I all regions of the country. The Government endorses, supports and promotes the strategy programmes of the energy infrastructure providers. The Statement further states that "*energy infrastructure developers are encouraged to work with the forward planning processes at regional and local level to set a clear context for assessment of individual applications for planning consent to facilitate as wide a degree of consensus as possible as to how (and where) to meet grid development needs*". The requirement of the Proposed Development is identified through the transmission network capacity restrictions on the existing local network which are inhibiting the connection of renewable energy sources. The Statement requires energy developers to adhere to international and national standards on health, environment, biodiversity, landscape and safety and address or mitigate any associated impacts in delivering the best engineering solutions. This process is aligned with EirGrid's six-step Framework for Grid Development. The Proposed Development is supported by the Statement.

B.6: Planning History

B.6.1: Relevant Planning History for Dunstown Substation

Application no.	Authority	Applicant	Proposed Development	Decision	Decision date
11197	Kildare	EirGrid Plc.	For development which will consist of alterations to the existing ESB 400kV station to include: installation of 1 No. new 400kV bunded power transformer and associated 400kV and 220kV switchgear and instrument transformers; oil interceptor and associated site works	Granted	19/09/2011
181578	Kildare	Vodafone Ireland Limited	of an existing 30 metre high telecommunications support structure with antennas, equipment container and associated equipment within a fenced compound. The development forms part of Vodafone Ireland Limited's existing GSM and 3G Broadband telecommunications network (Previous Ref. No. 11/1168)	Granted	15/04/2019
211175	Kildare	EirGrid Plc.	EirGrid Plc. with the consent and approval of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), intend to apply for permission for development on lands to the west of the Dunnstown 400 kV substation within the townland of Dunnstown (Td), Brannockstown, Naas, Co. Kildare. The proposed development will consist of an extension to the western boundary of the existing Dunnstown 400 kV substation to allow connection of series compensation equipment to the Dunnstown-Moneypoint 400 kV circuit. The extension will measure approximately 154m by 138m. Access to the compound will be via the existing substation entrance. The proposed development will comprise the following elements: (1) One 400 kV double circuit end mast (approximately 53m high) to facilitate the diversion of the overhead line into the compound and the decommissioning of existing overhead conductors and surge arrestors; (2) Three 400 kV gantry structures to allow connection of the circuit to the series compensation equipment (approximately 28m high); (3) Three series compensation platforms comprising of capacitor bank, metal oxide varistor, triggered air gap and discharge damping circuit (approximately 11m high to top of equipment on platform); (4) A communication and protection equipment control building (approximately 96.9m^2 and 5.5m high); (5) Associated 400 kV electrical equipment including insulators, instrument transformers, overhead conductors, disconnectors, circuit breakers, surge arrestors, line traps, lightning masts and filter reactors; (6) All ancillary site development works including site preparation works, site clearance and levelling; hardstanding, internal access tracks and temporary construction compound; underground cabling and earthgrid, surface water drainage network including a soakaway; palisade (approximately 2.6m high) fencing and gates; lighting poles and landscaping as required to facilitate the development	Granted	26/07/2022

B.6.2: Relevant Planning History for Woodland Substation

Application no.	Authority	Applicant	Proposed Development	Decision	Decision date
93791	Meath	E.S.B.	To erect a telecommunications mast at existing high voltage transmission station	Granted	10/02/1993
991106	Meath	E.S.B.	erection of palisade fencing in place of existing chainlink fencing to the perimeter of the electrical compound at E.S.B. Woodland 400 K.V. Station	Granted	30/07/1999
DA60134	Meath	E.S.B.	Alterations to the existing 400kv electrical transformer station, consisting of a new transformer, radiator bank, 3 no. surge arrestors, and oil interceptor	Granted	21/08/2006
DA60583	Meath	Electricity Supply Board Telecoms Ltd	development consists of erection of a 42 metre high free standing lattice communications structure, carrying antennae and communication dishes, with associated ground-mounted equipment cabinets within a 2.4m high palisade compound, to share with other licensed operators ate ESB's existing Woodlands 400V substation	Granted	07/02/2007
DA110127	Meath	Eirgrid Plc	Alterations to the existing 400kv electrical transformer station, consisting of a new 400kv/220kv transformer with concrete bund, 400kv transformer bay, 220kv transformer bay, busbar extensions, 1 no. lighting arrester, oil interceptor and associated site works	Granted	12/04/2011
221550	Meath	Eirgrid Plc	The development will consist of: 1. Installation of outdoor Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) electrical apparatus, including an associated extension to the hardstand compound (approximately 4 hectares) to facilitate same. This includes: a. installation of an extension to both sides of the existing 400 kV busbar, with provision of an associated wing coupler at either end of the existing 400 kV busbar. b. additional apparatus and associated works to the two existing busbars to create what is known as sectionalising bays. c. relocation of existing transformer connections from existing busbar to adjacent location on new busbar. d. an associated single-story extension (approximately 80 m2) to the existing control building. 2. The erection of four new lightning masts and relocation of one existing mast (each approximately 45m high). 3. Two bays on opposite sides to the newly extended 400 kV busbars at the southern end of the substation, each bay to incorporate breakers, reactive compensation devices and cable sealing ends. These bays will facilitate the connection of the new 400 kV underground cable links from Dunstown and Belcamp substations respectively. 4. Renewal, alteration and/or removal of associated 400 / 220 kV electrical apparatus and equipment. 5. All ancillary site development works including site preparation works, site clearance and levelling; provision of hardstanding, internal access tracks and temporary construction compound; associated underground cabling and earthgrid; associated extended surface water drainage network including a soakaway; associated palisade fencing and gates (approximately 2.65m high); lighting poles and landscaping as required to facilitate the development. Planning Permission is sought for a period of 10 years	Further Information Submitted	N/A

B.6.3: Planning applications that intersect the red line boundary

Application no.	Authority	Applicant	Proposed Development	Decision	Decision date
191269	Kildare	Laurence Kelly	change of use of existing warehouse building to light industry/workshop use together with new single storey extension containing accessible toilet with external access, modifications to approved site entrance, additional car parking on site, bicycle stands, new waste water treatment system with percolation area and all associated site development works	Granted	02/06/2020
201257	Kildare	Sassabunda Limited	Construction of: (a) 2 No. Bus stop pole and flag on the public footpath on western side and eastern side of John Devoy Road opposite "The Gate" apartments, Elsmore. (b) Bus lay-by with Bus stop shelter and flag off the public footpath on southern side of Naas South Ring Road, opposite "The Walk" Elsmore and on lands adjacent to Enable Ireland,	Granted	08/12/2020

Application no.	Authority	Applicant	Proposed Development	Decision	Decision date
			Kildare Children's Services and all ancillary site development works at Naas West John Devoy Road and Jigginstown Naas South Ring Road		
211454	Kildare	Cairn Homes Properties Limited	development at lands south of the Southern Ring Road at Devoy Link Road Roundabout in the townland of Naas West. The proposed development will consist of the construction of a permanent fourth arm on the Southern Ring Road/Devoy Link Road roundabout to serve future lands to the south of the Southern Ring Road and provision of a temporary construction related car park for a maximum of 100 No. cars for a period of 3 No. years to serve the construction of the Elsmore, and Whitethorne residential developments to the north, permitted under SHD Ref: ABP-305701-19. The proposed development includes an attenuation area and all associated site works. Revised by Significant Further Information which consists of revisions to the red line application boundary and revised site layout. The principle amendments to the scheme entail, realignment of the proposed road, associated temporary car park consisting of 99 car spaces and 10 bike spaces, relocation of the attenuation area, provision of a security barrier and cabin, and associated site works	Granted	17/02/2022

B.6.4: Planning Applications that lie within the boundary of the proposed UGC alignment

Application no.	Authority	Applicant	Proposed Development	Decision	Decision date
306826	An Bord Pleanála	Rycroft Homes Limited	345 no. residential units (69 no. duplex units, 182 no. houses and 94 no. apartments), creche and associated site works Boycetown, Kilcock	Granted	19/07/2020
314564	An Bord Pleanála	Teresa Monaghan	Demolition of buildings, construction of 272 residential units (149 no. houses, 123 no. apartments), creche and associated site works. Boycetown, Kilcock	Pending	N/A

B.7: Accordance with Statutory Planning Policy and Objectives

B.7.1: Accordance with the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Policy No.	Policy/Objective	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
Chapter 6 of the KCDP: Infrastructure Environmental Services			
IN P2	Ensure the protection and enhancement of water quality throughout Kildare in accordance with the EU WFD and facilitate the implementation of the associated programme of measures in the River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 (and subsequent updates).	Chapter 12: Hydrology	There will be no impacts to the WFD status of any waterbody. With mitigation measures there will be no significant impact to the water quality of any watercourse.
IN P5	Ensure the continued incorporation of Flood Risk Management and National Flood Risk Policy (2018) into the spatial planning of Kildare, to meet the requirements of the EU Floods Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive and to promote a climate resilient County.	Chapter 12: Hydrology Appendix 12.1: Flood Risk Assessment	The Proposed Development has included a Flood Risk Management Assessment to assess any potential flood risk throughout the study area of the Proposed Development. The Flood Risk Assessment will ensure the requirements of the EU Floods Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive are considered. There will be no significant impacts to and from the

Policy No.	Policy/Objective	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
			Proposed Development in terms of flooding.
IN 044	Encourage waste prevention, minimisation, re-use, recycling, and recovery as methods for managing waste	Appendix 5.5: Construction Resource Waste Management Plan (CRWMP)	The CRWMP has been prepared to present the approach and application of waste management and mitigation measures for the construction of the Proposed Development. It aims to ensure that adverse effects from the management of waste during the construction phase of the Proposed Development, on the environment and the local communities, are avoided or minimized. The CRWMP uses the Waste Hierarchy (Waste Framework Directive) to design an approach to managing waste throughout the construction of the Proposed Development.
IN P8	Implement the provisions of EU and National legislation on air, noise, and light pollution and other relevant legislative requirements, as appropriate.	Chapter 8: Air Quality and Climate Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration	The provisions of EU and National legislation has been considered within the relevant chapters on air, noise and light pollution. Following the implementation of mitigation, it is not considered that there will be any significant impact to air quality, light and noise as a result of the Proposed Development.
Chapter 11 of the KCDP: Built Cultural Heritage			
AH P1	Recognise the value and opportunity of Kildare's unique heritage resource and to manage, conserve, promote and protect it, for present and future generations.	Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage	Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage has considered the value and opportunity of Kildare's heritage resources. Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage presents the results of the assessment for archaeology, architectural heritage and cultural heritage for the Proposed Development. During construction there is the potential for significant effects; however, following the application of the mitigation measures identified in Section 13.6 no significant effects are anticipated. One impact has been identified during operation on Jigginstown Castle; however, this has not been assessed to be significant.
Chapter 12 of the KCDP: Biodiversity Green Infrastructure			
BI P1	Integrate in the development management process the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and landscape features by applying the mitigation hierarchy to potential adverse impacts on important ecological features (whether designated or not), i.e. avoiding impacts where possible, minimising adverse impacts, and if significant effects are unavoidable by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate. Opportunities for biodiversity net gain are encouraged.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity NIS	The Proposed Development will not have any significant impacts on biodiversity and landscape features, whether designated or not, following adopted mitigation. An NIS has been prepared for the Proposed Development. The NIS considers that with the mitigation measures detailed, there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of

Policy No.	Policy/Objective	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
			the European sites, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects considering the sites' conservation objectives.
BI P4	Ensure that any new development proposal does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory mitigation on plant, animal or bird species which are protected by law	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	Through the implementation of well-established approaches to mitigation, which will be implemented in accordance with best practice guidance, it will be possible to reduce the impacts to at least not significant for the Key Ecological Receptors identified in Chapter 10: Biodiversity.
BI P6	Recognise the important contribution trees and hedgerows make to the county biodiversity resource climate mitigation, resilience and adaptation.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	The importance of trees and hedgerows has been considered within Chapter 10: Biodiversity. Mitigation will be adopted to ensure reinstatement of hedgerows and treelines, unless otherwise agreed with the Client's Representative and the local authority, to a species-rich condition.
BI P7	Recognise and promote inland waters, natural environmental assets and to protect rivers, streams and other watercourses and, wherever possible, maintain them in an open state capable of providing suitable habitats for fauna and flora while discouraging culverting or realignment.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity Chapter 12: Hydrology	The Proposed Development will not culvert or realign rivers, streams and other watercourses. The Proposed Development will ensure the streams, rivers and other watercourses identified within the Study Area of the Proposed Development will remain suitable habitats for fauna and flora.
BI P9	Implement and support measures for the prevention and/or eradication of invasive species within the county and the control of noxious weeds	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	Chapter 10: Biodiversity has identified the potential for invasive species along the route of the Proposed Development. Adequate mitigation will be incorporated to ensure protection of these species including tool-box talks and coordinating off these areas.
Chapter 13 of the KCDP: Landscape, Recreation and Amenity			
LR P1	Protect and enhance the county's landscape, by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the existing local landscape	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	During the construction phase of the Proposed Development there will be adverse effects. However, these will be temporary/short-term in duration, and there will be no material operational stage effects as the Proposed Development is predominantly below ground with the land cover above largely reinstated.
LR P3	Protect, sustain and enhance the established appearance and character of all important views and prospects.	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	During the construction phase of the Proposed Development there will be adverse effects. However, these will be temporary/short-term in duration, and there will be no material operational stage effects

Policy No.	Policy/Objective	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
			as the Proposed Development is predominantly below ground with the land cover above largely reinstated.

B.7.2: Accordance with the Meath County Development Plan

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
Chapter 6 of the MCDP: Infrastructure Strategy			
INF POL 20	To require that a Flood Risk Assessment is carried out for any development proposal, where flood risk may be an issue in accordance with the "Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (DoECLG/OPW, 2009). This assessment shall be appropriate to the scale and nature of risk to and from the potential development and shall consider the impact of climate change	Chapter 12: Hydrology Appendix 12.1 Flood Risk Assessment	The Proposed Development has included a Flood Risk Management Assessment to assess any potential flood risk throughout the study area of the Proposed Development. There will be no significant impacts to and from the Proposed Development in terms of flooding. The Proposed Development is a key part of the Climate Action Plan 2023 and is required to meet the Government's target of up to 80% renewable energy by 2030.
INF POL 31	To protect and develop, in a sustainable manner, the existing groundwater sources and aquifers in the County and to manage development in a manner consistent with the protection of these resources.	Chapter 12: Hydrology	There will be no significant impact to any of the groundwater bodies in the study area. There will be no significant dewatering as the maximum cable trench depth is generally 1.7 m, and it will generally be 1.5m wide.
INF POL 36	To support the implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy and to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.	Chapter 8: Air Quality and Climate	The relevant legislation has been included within the PECR. The National Climate Change Strategy has been considered.
INF POL 70	To encourage the recycling of construction and demolition waste and the reuse of aggregate and other materials in future construction projects.	Appendix 5.5: Construction Resource Waste Management Plan (CRWMP)	The CRWMP has been prepared to present the approach and application of waste management and mitigation measures for the construction of the Proposed Development. It aims to ensure that adverse effects from the management of waste during the construction phase of the Proposed Development, on the environment and the local communities, are avoided or minimized. The CRWMP uses the Waste Hierarchy (Waste Framework Directive) to design an approach to managing waste throughout the construction of the Proposed Development.
INF OBJ 67	To require developers to prepare construction and demolition waste management plans for new construction projects over certain thresholds which shall meet the relevant recycling/recovery targets for such waste in accordance with the national legislation and national and regional waste management policy.	Appendix 5.5: Construction Resource Waste Management Plan (CRWMP)	The CRWMP has been prepared to present the approach and application of waste management and mitigation measures for the construction of the Proposed Development. The CRWMP has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource & Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects (EPA 2021).

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
Chapter 7 of the MCDP: Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy			
HER POL 3	To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, for development in the vicinity of monuments or in areas of archaeological potential. Where there are upstanding remains, a visual impact assessment may be required.	Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage	Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage presents the results of the assessment for archaeology, architectural heritage and cultural heritage for the Proposed Development. During construction there is the potential for significant effects; however, following the application of the mitigation measures identified in Section 13.6 no significant effects are anticipated. One impact has been identified during operation on Jigginstown Castle; however, this has not been assessed to be significant.
HER POL 27	To protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity where appropriate.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	Chapter 10: Biodiversity provides an assessment of its potential biodiversity (ecological) impacts and the mitigation measures that are required in the avoidance of significant adverse effects as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will protect, conserve and enhance the Country's biodiversity where appropriate.
HER POL 28	To integrate in the development management process the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and landscape features wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats (whether designated or not) and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	The Proposed Development will not have any significant impacts on biodiversity and landscape features, whether designated or not, following adopted mitigation. An NIS has been prepared for the Proposed Development. The NIS considers that with the mitigation measures detailed, there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects considering the sites' conservation objectives.
HER POL 31	To ensure that the ecological impact of all development proposals on habitats and species are appropriately assessed by suitably qualified professional(s) in accordance with best practice guidelines – e.g. the preparation of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement (NIS), species surveys etc. (as appropriate).	Chapter 10: Biodiversity NIS	A Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment and PECR. Were prepared as part of the Proposed Development. Following the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Assessment a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), was carried out. Chapter 10: Biodiversity of the PECR has also been prepared which outlines any potential impacts to habitats and species. The Proposed Development will not have any significant impacts on biodiversity and landscape features, whether designated or not, following adopted mitigation. The NIS considers that with the mitigation measures detailed, there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects considering the sites' conservation objectives.
HER POL 35	To ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites and to require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	Chapter 10: Biodiversity of the PECR outlines any potential impacts to areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites. The Proposed Development will not have any significant impacts on these features, whether designated or not, following adopted mitigation.

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
HER OBJ 35	To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory avoidance or mitigation, on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	Chapter 10: Biodiversity of the PECR outlines any potential impacts to plants, animals and bird species protected by law. The Proposed Development will not have any significant impacts on these features following adopted mitigation.
HER POL 37	To encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments in rural areas and prevent loss and fragmentation, where practically possible. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same type of boundary will be required.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	For ecological receptors other than mature trees, residual ecological effects from the Proposed Development will be at local level. Following offsite compensation, there will be a net gain in hedgerow length, however, there will be a residual effect of County significance from the loss of mature trees which will take longer to establish and grow. An off-site hedgerow compensation strategy has been developed and will comprise off-site compensatory planting, outside the Planning Application Boundary, to deliver an overall net gain of habitat area. A minimum of 130% compensatory off-site planting will be delivered. With EirGrid's commitment to monitor mitigation success and embed Nature Inclusive Design into all projects the Proposed Development will ultimately align with Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 policies BI P4, BI P5 and BI P6 in particular and Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 policies HER POL 27, HER POL 28 and HER POL 37 to and including HER POL 42.
HER POL 38	To promote and encourage planting of native hedgerow species in new developments and as part of the Council's own landscaping works.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	For ecological receptors other than mature trees, residual ecological effects from the Proposed Development will be at local level. Following offsite compensation, there will be a net gain in hedgerow length, however, there will be a residual effect of County significance from the loss of mature trees which will take longer to establish and grow. An off-site hedgerow compensation strategy has been developed and will comprise off-site compensatory planting, outside the Planning Application Boundary, to deliver an overall net gain of habitat area. A minimum of 130% compensatory off-site planting will be delivered. With EirGrid's commitment to monitor mitigation success and embed Nature Inclusive Design into all projects the Proposed Development will ultimately align with Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 policies HER POL 27, HER POL 28 and HER POL 37 to and including HER POL 42.
HER POL 39	To recognise the archaeological importance of townland boundaries including hedgerows and promote their protection and retention.	Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage	Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage has identified any potential impacts to hedgerows which are recognised as archaeologically important to townland boundaries.
HER POL 40	To protect and encourage the effective management of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees and to encourage the retention of mature trees and the use of tree surgery rather than felling, where possible, when undertaking, approving or authorising development.	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	For ecological receptors other than mature trees, residual ecological effects from the Proposed Development will be at local level. Following offsite compensation, there will be a net gain in hedgerow length, however, there will be a residual effect of County significance from the loss of mature trees which will take longer to establish and grow. An off-site hedgerow compensation strategy has been developed and will comprise off-site compensatory planting, outside the Planning

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
			Application Boundary, to deliver an overall net gain of habitat area. A minimum of 130% compensatory off-site planting will be delivered. With EirGrid's commitment to monitor mitigation success and embed Nature Inclusive Design into all projects the Proposed Development will ultimately align with the County Development Plans.
HER POL 41	To promote the preservation of individual trees or groups of trees as identified on the Heritage Maps in Volume 2 and to manage these trees in line with arboricultural best practice.	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	There will be no impact to the trees identified on the Heritage Maps in Volume 2.
HER POL 43	To promote best practice in the control of invasive species in the carrying out its functions in association with relevant authorities including TII and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	Chapter 10: Biodiversity has identified the potential for invasive species along the route of the Proposed Development. Adequate mitigation will be incorporated to ensure protection of these species including tool-box talks and coordinating off these areas.
HER POL 44	To require all development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	Chapter 10: Biodiversity has identified the potential for invasive species along the route of the Proposed Development. Adequate mitigation will be incorporated to ensure protection of these species including tool-box talks and coordinating off these areas.
HER POL 51	To preserve and protect for the common good, existing public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility as identified in Appendix 12 and Map 8.61- 8.6.24.	Chapter 6: Population and Human Health	Public rights of way will be protected. Where public rights of way have the potential to be impacted diversions will be put in place to ensure access. These diversions will only be required during construction. Public rights of way will not be impacted during the operation phase of the Proposed Development.
HER POL 52	To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the landscapes of the County in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the Meath Landscape Character Assessment (2007) in Appendix 5, to ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual has identifies that there will be adverse construction stage effects, but these will be temporary/short-term in duration, and there will be no material operational stage effects as the Proposed Development is predominantly below ground with the land cover above largely reinstated. For the reasons outlined within Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual, it is considered that the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant landscape or visual effects
HER POL 53	To discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amount of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	For ecological receptors other than mature trees, residual ecological effects from the Proposed Development will be at local level. Following offsite compensation, there will be a net gain in hedgerow length, however, there will be a residual effect of County significance from the loss of mature trees which will take longer to establish and grow. An off-site hedgerow compensation strategy has been developed and will comprise off-site compensatory planting, outside the Planning

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
			Application Boundary, to deliver an overall net gain of habitat area. A minimum of 130% compensatory off-site planting will be delivered. With EirGrid's commitment to monitor mitigation success and embed Nature Inclusive Design into all projects the Proposed Development will ultimately align with the County Development Plans. No historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments will be affected.
Chapter 9 of the MCDP: Rural Development Strategy			
RUR DEV SO 1	To support the continued vitality and viability of rural areas, environmentally, socially and commercially by promoting sustainable social and economic development.	Chapter 7: Population and Human Health 8: Air Quality and Climate 9: Noise and Vibration 10: Biodiversity 11: Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology 12: Hydrology 13: Cultural Heritage 14: Traffic and Transport 15: Material Assets – Agriculture 16: Material Assets – Non-Agriculture 17: Landscape and Visual	The Proposed Development is mainly underground cabling. Where any potential significant impacts are considered mitigation will be adopted to ensure protection of environmental considerations throughout the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will support the continued vitality and viability of rural areas, environmentally, socially and commercially by promoting sustainable social and economic development.
RUR DEV SO 2	To identify and protect rural resources such as locally and regionally important aquifers and water sources from development which would prejudice their sustainable future usage.	Chapter 12: Hydrology	There will be no significant impact to any of the groundwater bodies in the study area. There will be no impact to the volume or quality of any groundwater bodies.
RUR DEV SO 6	To protect and enhance the visual qualities of rural areas through sensitive design.	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual has identifies that there will be adverse construction stage effects, but these will be temporary/short-term in duration, and there will be no material operational stage effects as the Proposed Development is predominantly below ground with the land cover above largely reinstated. For the reasons outlined within Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual, it is considered that the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant landscape or visual effects
RD POL 20	To require the submission of landscape plans where appropriate to accompany planning applications for rural development prepared by competent professionals and to promote the use of native trees for boundary treatment and shelter belts.	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual has carried out an in depth assessment of any potential impacts on the landscape of the area.

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
RD POL 37	To ensure that future development affecting national primary or secondary roads, shall be assessed in accordance with the guidance given in the document 'Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities'.	Chapter 14: Traffic and Transport	A full assessment has been made of the roads affected by the Proposed Development and is presented in the accompanying Traffic Management Plan. One part of road, approximately 4 km in length, will be likely to have a Moderate effect. This section, located along the R156 in County Meath, will have a significant effect as a result of the proposed Single Lane Closure with HGV Diversion, requiring a large diversion that is signposted from the affected regional road to an alternative regional road. The impacts of this effect will be limited to the construction of the cable trench, which will be a temporary impact – approximately 20-50 m of cable trench can be constructed in one day. The other sections of affected roads will have no effect or have been assessed to be Minor. Other effects to public transport users or community severance have been assessed to be Not Significant. EirGrid has and will continue to engage extensively with all relevant services to ensure the impact of any potential disruption is minimised.
RD POL 44	To ensure that new development meets the highest standards in terms of environmental protection	Chapter 7: Population and Human Health 8: Air Quality and Climate 9: Noise and Vibration 10: Biodiversity 11: Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology 12: Hydrology 13: Cultural Heritage 14: Traffic and Transport 15: Material Assets – Agriculture 16: Material Assets – Non-Agriculture 17: Landscape and Visual	The PECR has assessed the potential impacts to environmental aspects throughout the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development is mainly underground cabling. Where any potential significant impacts are considered mitigation will be adopted to ensure protection of environmental considerations throughout the Proposed Development

B.7.3: Accordance with the Naas Local Area Plan

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
BH 3 – Protected Views	it is the policy of the Council to ensure that the proposed location, siting and design of buildings and structures, protect the special character of protected views	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	The Proposed Development will consist of mainly underground cabling. Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual has assessed any potential impacts on protected views within the Study Area of the Proposed Development. It is considered that there will be adverse construction stage effects, but these will be temporary/short-term in duration, and there will be no material operational stage effects as the Proposed Development is predominantly below ground with the land cover above largely reinstated. For the reasons outlined within Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual, it is considered that the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant landscape or visual effects
BH 4 – Archaeological Heritage	It is the policy of the Council to safeguard the archaeological heritage in Naas and avoid negative impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest.	Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage	Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage has considered the value and opportunity of Naas's heritage resources. Chapter 13: Cultural Heritage presents the results of the assessment for archaeology, architectural heritage and cultural heritage for the Proposed Development. During construction there is the potential for significant effects; however, following the application of the mitigation measures identified in Section 13.6 no significant effects are anticipated. One impact has been identified during operation on Jigginstown Castle; however, this has not been assessed to be significant.
I3 – Flood Risk Management	It is the policy of the Council to manage flood risk in Naas in conjunction with the OPW and in accordance with the requirements of the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) and circular PL02/2014 (August 2014)	Chapter 10: Hydrology Appendix 12.1: Flood Risk Assessment	The Proposed Development has included a Flood Risk Management Assessment to assess any potential flood risk throughout the study area of the Proposed Development. There will be no impact to and from the Proposed development in terms of flooding.
I5 – Pollution and Environmental Services	It is the policy of the Council to protect environmental quality in Naas through the implementation of European, national and regional policy and legislation relating to air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change, light pollution, noise pollution and waste management.	Chapter 8: Air Quality and Climate Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration	The provisions of EU, National and Regional legislation has been considered within the relevant chapters on air, noise and light pollution. Following the implementation of mitigation, it is not considered that there will be any

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
		Appendix 5.5: Construction Resource Waste Management Plan (CRWMP)	significant impact to air quality, light and noise as a result of the Proposed Development.

B.7.4: Accordance with the Sallins Local Area Plan

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
NH 2	To identify, protect, conserve and enhance, wherever possible, wildlife habitats and species of local importance, not otherwise protected by legislation. Such habitats may include woodland, grassland areas and field boundaries (hedges, stone walls, ditches etc). These are mapped on Map 6. Such features form part of a network of habitats and corridors, which allow wildlife to exist and flourish. Once a locally important habitat has been identified it shall be surveyed to establish its significance and a site specific conservation plan prepared to establish development guidelines for the area.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	Chapter 10: Biodiversity provides an assessment of potential biodiversity (ecological) impacts and the mitigation measures that are required in the avoidance of significant adverse effects as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will protect, conserve and enhance the Country's wildlife habitats and species of local importance.
NH 4	To require development to be screened for Appropriate Assessment of its potential impacts on the European Site(s) in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.	Chapter 10: Biodiversity	A Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment was prepared as part of the Proposed Development. Following the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Assessment a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), was carried out. The NIS considers that with the mitigation measures detailed, there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects considering the sites' conservation objectives.
NH 5	To seek the protection of the trees and groups of trees of special amenity value identified in Table 8 and identified on Map5	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	The trees and groups of trees of special amenity value identified in Table 8 and identified on Map5 will not be impacted. This includes the trees along eastern bank of River Liffey at Castlesize. The cable route has been set back to avoid these trees.
GI 1	To ensure old stone walls and/or hedgerows are protected where appropriate for the contribution that they make to green infrastructure	Chapter 17: Landscape and Visual	The Proposed Development will not impact on old stone walls. For ecological receptors other than mature trees, residual ecological effects from the Proposed Development will be at local level. Following offsite compensation,

Policy No.	Policy	PECR	Proposed Scheme Compliance with Policy
			there will be a net gain in hedgerow length, however, there will be a residual effect of County significance from the loss of mature trees which will take longer to establish and grow. An off-site hedgerow compensation strategy has been developed and will comprise off-site compensatory planting, outside the Planning Application Boundary, to deliver an overall net gain of habitat area. A minimum of 130% compensatory off-site planting will be delivered. With EirGrid's commitment to monitor mitigation success and embed Nature Inclusive Design into all projects the Proposed Development will ultimately align with the County Development Plan.