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Planning and Environmental Report

Rathcoon Solar Farm, Co.
Meath

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Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	Report Structure.....	2
1.3	Project Team.....	3
1.4	The Applicant.....	3
2.	PROJECT BACKGROUND & POLICY	4
2.1	Solar Photovoltaic Energy.....	4
2.1.1	Solar Energy in Ireland 2025.....	5
2.1.2	Solar Energy in County Meath.....	6
2.1.3	Consented Solar PV Development in County Meath.....	7
2.1.4	Best Practice Guidelines for Design of Solar Development	18
2.1.5	Best Practice Planning Guidance Report for Large Scale Solar Energy Development in Ireland.....	18
2.2	Site Location and Context	19
2.2.1	Population and Community.....	20
2.2.2	Natural Features.....	20
2.3	Site Planning History.....	23
2.4	Section 247 Pre-Planning Consultation	30
2.4.1	Meath County Council - Pre-Application Consultation	30
2.4.2	Community Consultation.....	30
2.4.3	Feedback from Consultation.....	31
2.5	Site Design Process.....	32
2.6	EIA Screening.....	33
2.6.1	Legislative Context	33
2.6.2	Methodology and Guidance.....	33
3.	DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	35
	35	
3.1	Design Flexibility.....	35
3.2	Solar PV Panels and Racking System.....	37
3.3	Security Infrastructure.....	39
3.3.1	Perimeter Fencing	39
3.3.2	Closed Circuit Television	39
3.4	Temporary Construction Compound.....	40
3.5	Site Development Works	40
3.5.1	Site Entrance and Access.....	40
3.5.2	Internal Access Tracks.....	40
3.5.3	Landscaping.....	41
3.6	Electrical Substation.....	41
3.6.1	Potable Water Supply	41
3.6.2	Foul Wastewater	41
3.7	Development Timeframe	42
3.7.1	Construction Phase Activities	42
3.8	Construction and Environmental Management Plan	43
3.9	Operational Phase Activities	43
3.10	Decommissioning Phase Activities.....	44
4.	PLANNING APPRAISAL	45
4.1	European Policy.....	45
4.1.1	EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED III).....	45
4.1.2	European Green Deal.....	50
4.1.3	REPower EU	50
4.2	National Policy	50

4.2.1	Programme for Government 2025.....	50
4.2.2	Project Ireland 2040	51
4.2.3	National Planning Framework First Revision (2025).....	51
4.2.4	Climate Action Plan 2025.....	52
4.2.5	National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021 – 2030.....	52
4.2.6	The Climate Change Advisory Council Annual Review 2024.....	53
4.2.7	The Climate Change Advisory Council Annual Review 2025 – Electricity.....	53
4.2.8	Energy in Ireland (December 2024)	53
4.2.9	Ireland's Climate Change Assessment (January 2024)	54
4.3	Regional Policy	55
4.3.1	Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region 2019 - 2031	55
4.4	Local Policy	55
4.4.1	Meath Development Plan 2021 – 2027	55
4.4.2	Meath Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029.....	57
4.5	Planning Appraisal Conclusion	57
5.	ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	58
5.1	EIA Screening	58
5.2	Biodiversity	58
5.2.1	Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement.....	58
5.3	Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)	59
5.4	Noise and Vibration.....	60
5.5	Flood Risk Assessment.....	60
5.6	Landscape and Visual Assessment.....	61
5.7	Glint and Glare.....	62
5.8	Air and Climate	62
5.9	Traffic and Transport.....	65
5.10	Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Assessment.....	66
6.	PLANNING ASSESSMENT	68
6.1	Principle of Development.....	68
6.2	EIA Screening.....	68
6.3	Biodiversity	68
6.4	Noise and Vibration.....	69
6.5	Flood Risk.....	69
6.6	Landscape & Visual Impact.....	70
6.7	Glint & Glare	70
6.8	Air and Climate	70
6.9	Traffic & Transport.....	70
6.10	Cultural Heritage	71
7.	CONCLUSION.....	72
8.	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	73

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1 Project Team Details.....	3
Table 2 Consented Solar PV Development in County Meath 2020-2025	7
Table 3 Planning Applications within 1km of the Subject Site.....	23
Table 4: Proposed Development 33kV Collector Network Route Location Summary.....	39
Table 5 Pre-Application stage requirements.....	46
Table 6 Completeness Check.....	50
Table 7 Determination of Dust Emissions Magnitudes (IAQM).....	62
Table 8 Construction Phase - Determination of Dust Raising Magnitudes.....	63

Table 9 Proposed Development Construction Phase - Determination of Dust Sensitivity	63
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TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Typical example of ground mounted solar PV array.....	4
Figure 2 Ireland Photovoltaic Power Potential (Source: SolarGIS).....	5
Figure 3 Location Context Map.....	19
Figure 4 example of hedgerow habitat within Area 1.....	21
Figure 5 Example of arable crops in Area 2.....	22
Figure 6 Improved grasslands in Area 3.....	23
Figure 7 Site Layout Map - Ornographical View.....	35
Figure 8 Future Rathcoon Solar Farm 100kV Grid Connection UGC & 33kV Collector Network UGC Layout Plan	38
Figure 9 Closest record floods as per floodinfo.ie	61
Figure 10 Location of ATC surveys	65

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Pre-Planning Meeting Minutes
Appendix 2 - Community Engagement Document
Appendix 3 - Ecological Impact Assessment
Appendix 4 - Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan
Appendix 5 - Construction Environmental Management Plan
Appendix 6 - Decommissioning & Restoration Plan
Appendix 7 - EIA Screening Determination Report
Appendix 8 - Landscape and Visual Assessment Report
Appendix 9 - Landscape Mitigation Plan
Appendix 10 - Glint and Glare Assessment
Appendix 11 - Photomontages
Appendix 12 - Noise Impact Assessment
Appendix 13 - Traffic and Transport Assessment
Appendix 14 - Construction Traffic Management Plan
Appendix 15 - Flood Risk Assessment
Appendix 16 - Archaeological, Architectural & Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
Appendix 17 - Outline Construction Methodology

1.

INTRODUCTION

1.1

Introduction

This Planning and Environmental Report (PER) is prepared by MKO on behalf of Circal Oak Solar Ltd. (the applicant) in support of an application for planning permission under Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) for the construction, operation and decommissioning of a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) farm with all associated infrastructure on a site area of 149 ha located in the townlands of Scottstown, Chamberstown, Mullagha, Shalvanstown, Rathcoon and Corballis, Co. Meath. The Proposed Development will have an expected capacity of up to c.130MWp. Planning Permission sought for a period of 10 years with an operational life of 40 years from the date of commissioning.

Solar power is a renewable and sustainable energy source that is particularly viable for the Irish climate. Leveraging solar power, alongside other renewable energies, supports Ireland's ambitious climate goals. These goals include halving carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, as established in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

The Proposed Development as set out in the public notices is as follows:

'We, Circal Oak Solar Limited, intend to apply for permission for development on lands in the townlands of Chamberstown, Scottstown, Shalvanstown, Mullagha, Rathcoon and Corballis, County Meath (the Proposed Development).

The Proposed Development comprises the following -

- *Construction and operation of up to 559,033 sqm of solar PV arrays on ground-mounted metal frames, with a maximum overall height of up to 2.96 metres.*
- *Internal underground trenching, electrical cabling and ducting between the solar PV arrays and electrical inverter / transformer skid units.*
- *Up to 21 no. electrical inverter / transformer skid units.*
- *Construction and operational access to the site by 3 no. site entrances using 2 no. existing field access points 1 no. new access point.*
- *3 no. temporary construction compound and ancillary facilities for the duration of the construction phase of the project.*
- *Provision of single storey substation control building of 217 sqm and associated works.*
- *33kV collector cable network, joint bays and associated works.*
- *Internal access tracks, site landscaping and drainage works, security fencing, CCTV and all associated ancillary site development works.*
- *The decommissioning and reinstatement of the solar farm at the end of its operational life.*

A 10-year planning permission and a 40-year operational life from the date of commissioning of the entire solar farm is being sought.

A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared and accompanies the planning application.

The NIS assesses both the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, as well as integral elements of the wider project infrastructure, comprising the construction and operation of a 110kV substation compound, control building, 110kV transformer, 110kV cabling, joint bays, grid connection and associated works (located in the townlands of Rathcoon, Kilberry, Castletown Kilberry, and Silloge), all of which are essential infrastructure associated with the operation of the Proposed Development and will be the subject of a separate, future SID planning application to the relevant consenting authority.

The development is covered by the provisions of the Renewable Energy Directive III (Directive 2023/2413) [X] YES [] NO.

The planning application is subject to section 34D of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. When a notice issues in accordance with section 34D(b), the provisions of article 26A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2025 shall apply.

1.2

Report Structure

The Proposed Development has been subject to an iterative design process, informed by comprehensive planning and environmental assessments and surveys, including ecological, hydrological, archaeological, glint and glare, and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment. This suite of assessments has ensured that the proposal is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area while mitigating any potential significant environmental impacts.

This PER is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 - Introduction
- Chapter 2 - Project Background & Policy
- Chapter 3 - Description of Development
- Chapter 4 - Planning Appraisal
- Chapter 5 - Environmental Assessment
- Chapter 6 - Planning Assessment
- Conclusion

This PER should be read in conjunction with the additional documents appended to this report, suite of planning drawings, and standalone reports enclosed with this Planning Application, which include:

- Appendix 1 - Pre-Planning Meeting Minutes
- Appendix 2 - Community Engagement Document
- Appendix 3 - Ecological Impact Assessment
- Appendix 4 - Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan
- Appendix 5 - Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Appendix 6 - Decommissioning & Restoration Plan
- Appendix 7 - EIA Screening Determination Report
- Appendix 8 - Landscape and Visual Assessment Report
- Appendix 9 - Landscape Mitigation Plan
- Appendix 10 - Glint and Glare Assessment
- Appendix 11 - Photomontages
- Appendix 12 - Noise Impact Assessment
- Appendix 13 - Traffic and Transport Assessment
- Appendix 14 - Construction Traffic Management Plan
- Appendix 15 - Flood Risk Assessment
- Appendix 16 - Archaeological, Architectural & Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
- Appendix 17 - Outline Construction Methodology
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement, prepared by MKO;
- Planning Drawing Pack, prepared by MKO;
- TLI Drawing Pack, prepared by TLI.

1.3

Project Team

The companies and staff listed in Table 1 were responsible for completion of the PER as well as the supporting reports and drawings for the Proposed Development.

Table 1 Project Team Details

Consultants	Principle Staff Involved	Input
McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan - Planning & Environmental Consultants	- Sean McCarthy - Evelina Sadauskaite - Katie Fleming - India Costello - Damian Brosnan - Patrick Manley - Declan Gorman - Tom Madden - Padraig Desmond - Jack Workman - Killian Devereux - Darragh Buckley - Gabriela Oliveira - Dija Mazonaite	- Project Management; - Scoping and Conditions; - Planning Drawings; - Co-ordination and editing of PER; - Ecology & AA Screening Report; - Construction & Environmental Management Plan; - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; - Glint and Glare; - Acoustic Assessment
Rubicon Heritage Services	- Colm Moloney - Ciarrai O'Sullivan	Cultural Heritage
Langan Engineering	- Tim McHugh - James Langan	- Flood Risk Assessment - Traffic and Transport - Engineering Inputs
TLI Group	- Aaron Kelly - Damien Browne - Cecila Kirwan	- Project Manager - Team Lead - Senior Electrical Engineer

1.4

The Applicant

The applicant, Circal Oak Solar Ltd., is a special purpose vehicle (SPV) wholly owned by Circal Ltd. Circal Ltd. (hereafter referred to as the applicant) is a developer of solar projects in Ireland. The Circal Ltd. team has 20 years of experience in developing renewable energy projects in Ireland and is passionate about delivering solar to achieve 80% renewable electricity by 2030. The Applicant powers greater possibilities with solar - for landowners, communities and our future by facilitating agricultural diversification and committing to long-term community benefit and biodiversity net gain.

The purpose of these low/zero carbon projects, such as that being proposed, is to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Climate Action Plan 2025 and Ireland's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050.

2.

PROJECT BACKGROUND & POLICY

2.1

Solar Photovoltaic Energy

Solar power is radiant energy emitted by the sun and this energy can be harnessed and used as a power source. This is mainly achieved through solar PV cells that convert the sun's radiation into electricity. The solar cells are made out of high purity silicon semiconductor layers. When light shines on the cell, it creates an electric field across the layers causing electricity to flow. The more intense the light is, the greater the flow of electricity. In this context, it is the visible light that drives PV cells; specifically, the level of light and brightness of the day is the key determinant for electricity generation.

Solar PV cells generate direct current (DC) that is then converted to alternating current (AC) to be used by the electricity grid network. Regardless of the PV configuration, inverter hardware is required to change the direct current PV output to useable AC power for the grid. Solar cells are wired together to form a module (a solar panel), and these can then be connected to form an array. Solar PV technology currently comprises two basic types, fixed solar systems and tracking solar systems. The proposed solar farm constitutes a fixed, ground mounted solar PV system. Specifically, the project will remain totally static as there will be no movement of equipment and plant. Figure 1 illustrates a typical example of a ground mounted solar PV array.



Figure 1 Typical example of ground mounted solar PV array

Due to advancements in solar PV technology, direct sunlight is not required for modern solar PV systems as significant production can now be achieved from diffused light during cloudy conditions. Solar irradiation rates in Ireland are similar to those found in the UK where solar PV developments are commonplace, and furthermore, solar irradiance in certain parts of Ireland is in fact 78% of the levels observed in Madrid. In this regard, a significant advantage of Ireland's climate (seasonal variability) is that, when the seasonal intensity of visible light is at its peak, the island benefits from long hours of daylight. Figure 2 provides solar resource mapping demonstrating Ireland's typical photovoltaic power potential. As indicated in Figure 2 the region of County Meath where the Proposed Development is located has an estimated daily PV generation potential of 2.5 - 2.6 kWh/kWp based on long-term averages recorded between 1994 - 2018.

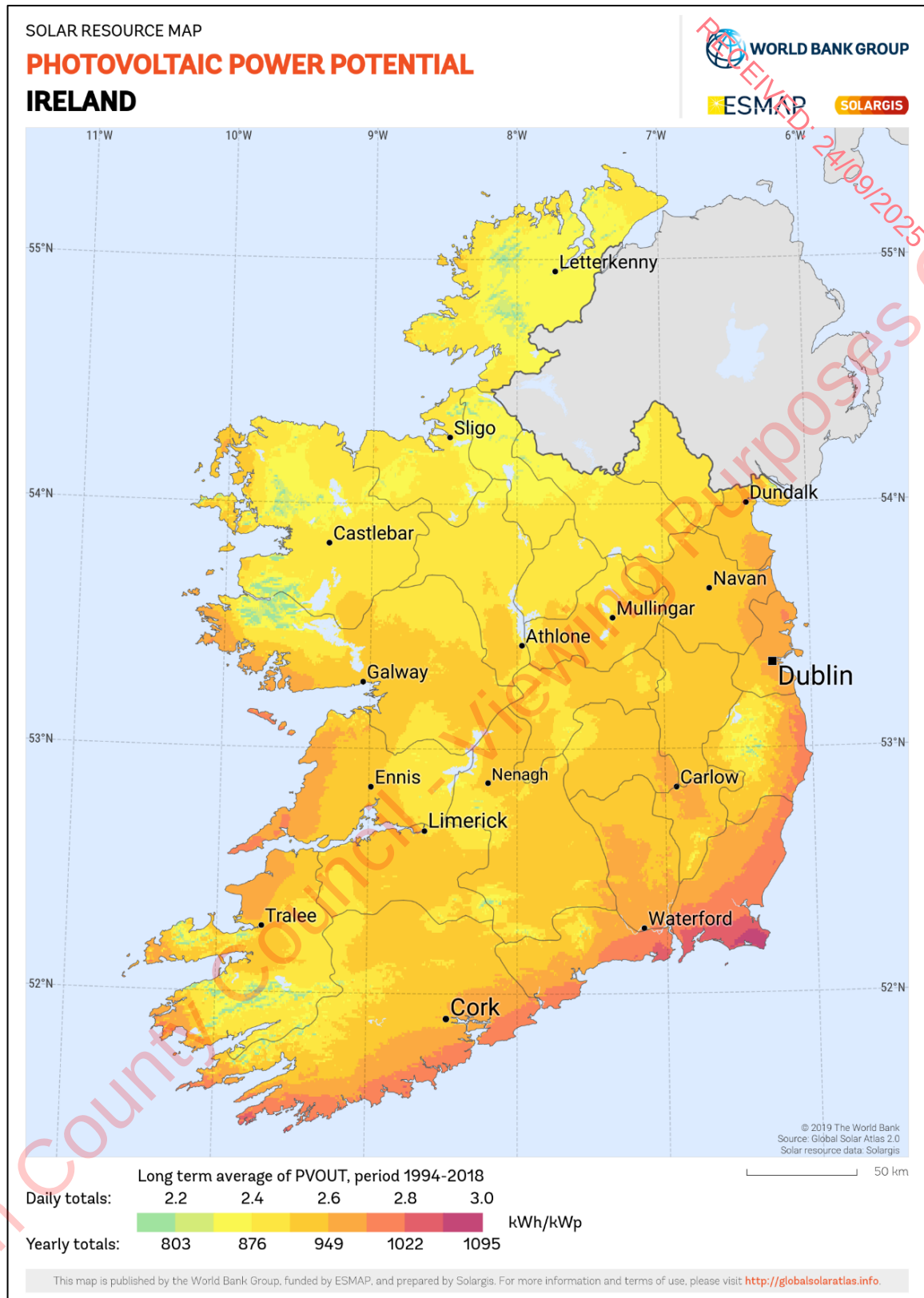


Figure 2 Ireland Photovoltaic Power Potential (Source: SolarGIS)

2.1.1

Solar Energy in Ireland 2025

Over 100 separate solar PV farms have been granted planning permission across the country between 2015 and 2025. Ireland's first grid connected ground-mounted solar farm at Millvale in County Wicklow

became operational in 2022. Similar to many other Northern European countries, Ireland's inherent solar resource is now recognised as important component of the country's renewable energy portfolio, which will provide a significant opportunity for Ireland to accelerate the rollout of renewable energy at an affordable cost and ultimately progress towards its future renewable energy targets.

The amount of renewable energy from solar PV, electricity generation in Ireland increased significantly in 2025..Installed capacity has more than quadrupled from 349 MW in 2023 to 885 MW by mid-2025. 1.7 GW of solar electricity generation is connected across the transmission and distribution network. The rapid increase in solar PV was due to the connection of several utility-scale solar farms to the grid in later 2022 and early 2023. In just one year, electricity generation from these large-scale solar farms exceeded that from all rooftop solar generation. In 2023, just under two-thirds of all solar PV generation in Ireland came from solar farms (SEAI Energy in Ireland 2024 Report).

Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) officially declared a climate emergency in May 2019, acknowledging the severe and urgent threats to Ireland's environment, society, and economy, including increased flooding from rising sea levels, more extreme weather, and impacts on food and water security. The establishment of low carbon economies through increased renewable energy generation has become a time-critical consideration underpinning the current development of the country. As the country begins to realign its focus to the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework and associated climate and renewable energy targets under the Renewable Energy Directive (EU 2009/28/EC) it is considered pertinent to consider Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP 25).

Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2025 ('CAP25') was published on 15th of April 2025. CAP25 is the fourth annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan and builds on the CAP 2024 setting out a roadmap to delivery on Ireland's climate ambition. CAP25 targets to deliver up to 8 GW of solar power by 2030.

2.1.2 Solar Energy in County Meath

The Meath County Council Climate Action Plan (MCAP) (2024 - 2029) is identified as Co. Meath's pathway guidance to create a low carbon and climate resilient County, by delivering and promoting best practice in climate action, at the local level. The focus of the MCAP is to be a climate resilient, biodiverse rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy that supports healthy lifestyles and jobs growth. This MCAP includes a range of climate change mitigation actions aimed at reducing countywide greenhouse gas emissions. It also includes climate adaptation actions aimed at improving the resilience of the county to the impacts of climate change. These actions include those for which Meath County Council (the Council) is fully accountable across its own buildings, operations, services, and functions; and actions for which the Council can influence, co-ordinate, facilitate and advocate for climate action.

This Proposed Development seeks to provide additional infrastructure and development through providing additional renewable energy and infrastructure within County Meath. This PER and planning application address the related concerns that arise from new developments including concerns of flood resilience, waste management and the built environment.

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied (the Plan) further addresses climate change and renewable energy. Chapter 10 of Volume I, Climate Change Strategy. This chapter outlines the approach to climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas mitigation, as required by the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies have been incorporated into the core Policies and Objectives of the County Development Plan to ensure that climate change has been consistently integrated into the policy themes addressed by this plan.

Regarding the provision of renewable energy, the Plan has the objective (INF OBJ 41) to:

"To promote the generation and supply of low carbon and renewable energy alternatives, having regard to the opportunities offered by the settlement hierarchy of the County and the built environment."

The Proposed Development will contribute directly to the transition towards a low-carbon economy by providing a sustainable source of clean energy, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and supporting both national and local climate action targets. Its location has been carefully selected in line with the settlement

hierarchy and the surrounding built and natural environment, ensuring that the proposal maximises renewable energy potential while remaining compatible with local planning objectives.

2.1.3

Consented Solar PV Development in County Meath

Local Authorities across the country have favourably considered solar PV development. Approximately 157 solar PV farms across the country are “planned” as per the SEAI Energy in Ireland 2025 Report. No updated figures have been published since. Table 2 below provides a brief overview of consented solar PV developments within County Meath in the last five years (2020 – 2025), demonstrating that there have been numerous planning applications for large scale ground based solar PV developments in Co. Meath which have been positively considered by the Planning Authority.

Table 2 Consented Solar PV Development in County Meath 2020-2025

Applicant & Site	Pl .Ref	Development Description	Decision
Highfield Solar Ltd. Garballagh and Gaskinstown, Duleek, Co Meath	LB200487	a 10-year permission for the construction of a solar PV Energy development within a total site area of up to 81.3hA, to include solar PV panels ground mounted on steel support structures, electrical transformer/inverter station modules, battery storage modules, storage containers, CCTV cameras, access tracks, fencing and associated electrical cabling, ducting and ancillary infrastructure. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 20 conditions (24/02/2021)
JBM Solar Development Ltd Ballymacarney & Part Of Baytown, The Ward, Co. Meath	AA201085	planning permission to amend a permitted Solar PV Energy Development (Meath County Council Reg. Ref. AA/170600) at this site. The development will consist of alterations to the permitted substation layout including increase in size of the Independent Power Producer building, relocation of access road and EirGrid building, provision of additional lightning masts and associated landscaping and site development works and amendment of Condition No. 10 of the permission (Meath County Council Reg. Ref. AA/170600) to provide for the substation compound and associated infrastructure as a permanent development which is not required to be removed from site after 25 years from the date of commencement. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 15 conditions (15/03/2021)

Friarspark Solar Limited Friarspark 6th Division, Trim, Co. Meath	TA201048	a proposed extension to the planning approved solar farm (ref TA180167). The proposed extension will comprise of photovoltaic panels with a surface area of approx. 28,000 m2 mounted on steel support structures, with associated infrastructure including 5 no. transformer cabins, inverters, temporary construction compound, ducting and electrical cabling, site entrance, boundary security fencing, mounted CCTV cameras, internal access tracks and ancillary works. The solar PV arrays will have a height above ground level of up to 3m and an additional export electrical capacity of up to 4 megawatts. An appropriate period of 10 years (i.e. duration of the planning permission to construct the development) is sought, with an operational life of 30 years after the date of commissioning	MCC Decision to grant 25/09/2020 ACP Decision to grant 24/05/2021
Stamullen Solar Limited Kilbreckstown, Stamullen, Co. Meath	21756	permission for amendments to a previously granted Solar Farm Development (planning permission ref. no. AA160519) for a solar development at Kilbreckstown, Stamullen, Co. Meath. The permitted development consists of: ground mounted fixed solar panel arrays, with a height of 2.5m above ground level one ESB Networks electrical substation three electrical transformers with a height of 2.7m; and access roads and other ancillary equipment required for the development. The amendments are: an increase of export capacity from 4MW to 5MW, a change in the substation dimensions from a maximum height of 4.0m to a height of 4.85m and an increase in the building footprint from 53m2 to 55m2	Decision to grant 27/07/2021 subject to 6 conditions
Gorman Solar Farm Ltd Graigs & Rathcoon, Co. Meath	ka200934	planning permission for a period of 10 years to construct and complete a solar PV development with a total site area of circa 49.5 hectares to include a single storey electrical substation, electrical inverter transformer stations, new internal access tracks, underground cabling, perimeter fencing with CCTV cameras and access gates, site control room, spare parts containers, temporary construction compounds and all ancillary grid infrastructure and associated works. The solar farm would	MCC Decision to grant 11/01/2021 ACP Decision to grant 05/01/2022

		be operational for 35 years. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	
Energia Solar Holdings Ballaghaweary & Greenogue, Kilsallaghan, Co. Meath	211436	a Solar PV Energy Development with a total site area of 34.4ha. to include solar panels mounted on steel support structures, associated cabling and ducting, 7 No. MV Power Stations, 1 No. Client Substation, 1 No Temporary Construction Compound, access tracks, hardstanding area, boundary security fencing and security gates, CCTV, landscaping and ancillary works. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 22 conditions (31/01/2022)
Harmony Solar Meath Limited, Milltown & Moyagher Lower, Cortown, Kells, Co Meath	21396	the development consists of a 10 year permission and 35 year operation for a solar farm on two sites: North Parcel (Milltown Townland) approximately 41.2 hectares; South Parcel (Moyagher Lower Townland) approximately 80.3 hectares for a total site area of approximately 121.5 hectares. The Proposed Development on these two sites comprises; Up to 734,000 sq.m of solar photovoltaic panels on ground mounted steel frames, inverter/transformer stations, underground power and communication cables and ducts, boundary security fencing, new internal access tracks, associated drainage infrastructure, new site entrances to the L6835 public local road (North Parcel) and the L8003 public local road (South Parcel), 1 no vehicle passing area on lands adjoining the L6835 local road, CCTV cameras and all associated site services and works. Provision of control building and associated compound within the South Parcel. As part of a separate Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) planning application, provision of 110KV electrical substation with electrical control building, associated compound with palisade fence and 2 no. overhead line masts, which is to be located within the North Parcel, will be lodged with An Bord Pleanala in due course. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be submitted to the Planning Authority with the Application. Significant Further	MCC Decision to grant 31/08/2021 ACP Decision to grant 28/03/2022

		information/Revised plans submitted on this application	
Tom Bruton Clonmeath, Summerhill, Co Meath	21546	permission for Solar Photovoltaic (PV) development within the townland of Clonmeath, Summerhill, Co Meath. Planning permission is sought for the construction and operation of a solar PV farm consisting of solar arrays on ground mounted steel frames, with a maximum overall height of 3 metres, over an area of 91.9 ha and ancillary equipment including up to 30 no. medium voltage power stations, 1 no. modular Battery Energy Storage Compound (comprising up to 5 no. battery containers) and all other associated site development works and services, including, internal solar PV farm, underground electrical cabling and ducting, 2 no. temporary construction compounds, security fencing, CCTV camera stands, replacement of an existing site entrance with a new gated site entrance via the L2210 local road, provision of new internal access tracks including the upgrading and installation of span bridge structures, site drainage and landscaping, as required to facilitate the development. Planning permission is sought for a period of 10 years with an operational life of 35 years from the date of commissioning. The application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). Significant Further information/Revised plans submitted on this application	MCC Decision to grant 29/09/2021 ACP Decision to grant 24/05/2022
Kilbrew Eco Developments Limited Townlands of Reask and Loughlinstown, Kilbrew, Ashbourne, Co. Meath	212165	an extension to the solar PV farm granted permission under Register Reference AA/170860, ABP 301049-18 comprising the construction of approximately 78,870 no. photovoltaic panels on ground mounted frames on lands to the south and west of the permitted solar PV farm with a total combined site area of 42.88 hectares and associated ancillary development including 10 no. transformer stations, approximately 136 no. string-inverters, 3 no. CCTV security cameras each mounted on a 4 metre high pole, perimeter security fencing (2 metres high), the construction of vehicular bridge over the Kilbrew stream and the construction of hardcore access tracks	MCC Decision to grant 20/12/2022 ACP Decision to grant 07/07/2022

		between the photovoltaic panel arrays and to the permitted solar PV farm. A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of the Proposed Development. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	
Kilrue Solar Park Limited Kilrue, Fleenstown Great, Peacockstown & Harlockstown Townlands, Kilbride, Co. Meath	21837	a 10-year planning permission for the construction of, and a 40-year operation and subsequent decommissioning of a development consisting of a 265.8 hectare solar farm. The proposed solar farm will consist of a series of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, mounted on steel support structures and in some areas of potential archaeological remains on concrete blocks/shoes, together with 58 no. electrical transformation enclosures, a temporary construction compound, underground cabling, inverters, CCTV poles and cameras, deer type security/boundary fencing, landscaping and biodiversity measures and all associated ancillary development works, for the purpose of generating renewable energy electricity. A Natura Impact Statement will be submitted with this application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	MCC Decision to grant 06/10/2021 ACP Decision to Grant 15/08/2022
Solar Farmers Ltd (Part of Energia Group), On lands at Ballybin (E.D. Kilbrew), Ashbourne, Co. Meath	211918	a Solar PV Energy Development with a total site area of 23.58 ha, to include solar panels mounted on steel support structures, associated cabling and ducting, 5 No. MV Power Stations, 1 No. Client Substation, 1 No. Temporary Construction Compound, access tracks, hardstanding area, boundary security fencing and security gates, CCTV, landscaping and ancillary works. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	MCC Decision to grant 17/02/2022 ACP Decision to grant 04/01/2023
Mill Farm Solar Project Ltd Stokesquarter, Painestown, Killary, Ricetown, Castletown K.P., Navan, Co. Meath	221044	the development will consist of permission for a period of 10 years to construct and complete a Solar PV development with a total site area of circa 97.05 hectares, to include solar panels mounted on steel support on steel support structures, associated cabling and ducting, 12 No. Transformers, 1 No. Temporary Construction Compound, 1 No.	Granted subject to 14 conditions (28/03/2023)

		Storage Container, maintenance tracks, perimeter fencing and gates, 61 No. CCTV, 4 No. Weather Stations, 3 No. Bunds associated landscaping and ancillary works, with an operational life of 40 years. The application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	
EEPv3 Limited Oldcastle and Oldtully, Oldcastle, Co. Meath	2360121	the development will consist of the extension of the operational lifespan of a solar farm permitted by Meath County Council under Reg. Ref. KA160625 from 25 No. years as permitted (by reason of condition No. 3 of permission KA160625) to 40 No. years	Decision to grant subject to 3 conditions 03/10/2023
Blue Pine Solar 02 Limited Kilkeelan, Athboy, Co. Meath	2360162	the development will consist of the extension of the operational lifespan of a solar farm permitted by Meath County Council under Ref. KA161206 from 25 No. years from the commencement of development as permitted (by reason of Condition No.5 of permission Reg. Ref. KA161206) to 40 No. years from the commencement of operation.	Decision to grant 17/10/2023 subject to 3 conditions
Energia Solar Holdings Limited, On lands including Culmullin, Woodtown, Arodstown & Summerhill, Co. Meath	212214	for a solar PV Energy Development with a total site area of 206ha, to include solar panels mounted on steel support structures, associated cabling and ducting, 54 No. MV Power Stations, 2 No. Client Substations, 4 No. Temporary Construction Compounds, access tracks, boundary security fencing and security gates, CCTV, landscaping and ancillary works, accessed via two existing accesses along the L62051. The application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS)	MCC Decision to grant 15/06/2022 ACP Decision to grant 14/12/2023
Solar Farmers Ltd (Part of the Energia Group) Lands including Pilltown & Ballymad, Drogheda, Co. Meath	23495	a 10-year planning permission for a Solar PV Energy Development with a total site area of c. 41.3ha, to include solar panels mounted on steel support structures, associated cabling and ducting, 11 No. MV Power Stations, 1 No. Client Substation, 10 No. Battery Storage Containers, 1 No. Temporary Construction Compound, tracks, boundary security fencing and security gates, CCTV, landscaping and ancillary	Granted subject to 14 conditions (21/12/2023)

		works. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been submitted to the Planning Authority with the Application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	
Harmony Solar Milltown Limited The Townlands of Milltown and Cortown., near Kells, Co. Meath	2460134	The development will consist of: A 10-year permission for the development of a solar farm on a site of 35.81 hectares consisting of the following: 211,320 sqm of solar photovoltaic panels on ground mounted steel frames; 6 hardstanding locations for electrical skids; new internal access tracks; underground power and communications cables and ducts ; a new access from the L6835 public road; access gates; landscaping and biodiversity enhancement measures; boundary fencing and all associated ancillary development, site works and services. The solar farm will be operational for 40 years. Installation of underground electrical cabling and associated infrastructure within the public road corridor along the L6835 public road for approximately 10 metres to connect into the permitted underground cabling associated with the permitted 'Milltown Solar Farm (Meath County Council Reg. Ref. 21396 & An Bord Pleanála Case Number: PL17.311460) which is located to the north of the site within the townland of Milltown. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared in respect of the Proposed Development and will be submitted to the planning authority with the application	Decision to grant 06/06/2024 subject to 18 conditions
Tom Bruton Townland of Clonmeath, Summerhill, Co. Meath	2460288	the development will consist of: (i) An extension to the permitted Clonmeath Solar Farm (Pl. Ref: 21/546, ABP Ref. 311760) comprising the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic (PV) farm consisting of solar arrays on ground mounted steel frames with a maximum overall height of 3 metres above ground; (ii) 3 no. medium voltage power stations, underground electrical cabling and ducting, security fencing and CCTV stands; (iii) Provision of new internal access tracks linking with the access track permitted under Pl. Ref: 21/546, ABP Ref. 311760; (iv) Site	Decision to grant 29/07/2024 subject to 19 conditions

		drainage; (v) All ancillary site development works and apparatus. Planning permission is sought for a period of 10 years with an operational life of 35 years from the date of commissioning	
Highfield Solar Limited Downestown, Duleek, Co. Meath	22972	the development will consist of a 10-year permission for the construction of a solar PV energy development within a total site area of approximately 18.92ha, include solar PV panels ground mounted on steel support structures, IPP electrical control building and associated compound, electrical transformer/inverter station modules, battery storage modules, storage containers, CCTV cameras, access tracks, fencing and associated electrical cabling, ducting and ancillary infrastructure. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	MCC Decision to grant 02/05/2023 ACP Decision to grant 16/08/2024
Obton Limited Hawkinstown, Riverstown (ED Ardcath), Scatternagh, Balgeeth, Ardcath, Co. Meath	22552	the development will consist of planning permission for a period of 10 years to construct and complete a Solar PV Energy Development with a total site area of 124.07 hectares, to include: Inverter/Transformer Substations, modules, solar PV ground mounted on support structures, temporary construction compounds, internal access tracks, security fencing, electrical cabling and ducting, CCTV and other ancillary infrastructure, drainage additional landscaping and habitat enhancement as required and associated site development works relating to the access of the site. The solar farm will be operational for 35-years. A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of this planning application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	MCC Decision to refuse 21/02/2023 ACP Decision to grant 02/09/2024
Energia Solar Holding Limited Culmullin, Curraghtown, Cultromer , Gaulstown. Bogganstown,	221508	a Solar PV Energy Development with a total site area of 171.34ha, to include solar panels mounted on steel support structures, associated cabling and ducting, 47 No. MV Power Stations, 3 No. Client Substations, 3 No. Temporary Construction Compounds, tracks, boundary security fencing and security gates, CCTV, landscaping and ancillary works, with a 40 year	MCC Decision to grant subject to 24 conditions 21/07/2023 ACP Decision to grant

Cullendragh, Drumree, Co. Meath		operational period. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) had be submitted to the Planning Authority with the Application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	w/revised conditions 14/11/2024
Highfield Solar Limited, Towlands of Rathdrinagh, Sicily, Thomastown, , Rahill, Drumman & Knockcommon , near the town of Duleek, Co Meath	23576	a ten year permission and 35 year operation life for a solar farm described herein. The total site area for the Proposed Development is 188.9 hectares consisting of the following: solar photovoltaic panels on ground mounted steel frames and associated hard standing, inverter/transformer stations, underground power and communication cables and ducts, boundary security fence, CCTV cameras, upgraded internal access tracks, new internal access tracks, 2 no. new site entrances along the L5608 local road, underground electrical and communications cabling for approximately 700m along the L5608 local road and all associated services and development works including drainage infrastructure, temporary construction compound and landscaping. As part of a separate Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application for consent, consent will be sought for the provision of a 110kV onsite electrical substation and associated works from An Bord Pleanala. This planning application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement. Significant further information/revised plans sbumitted on this application	Granted subject to 21 conditions 14/11/2024
Highfield Solar Limited, Towlands of Rathdrinagh, Sicily, Thomastown, , Rahill, Drumman & Knockcommon , near the town of Duleek, Co Meath	23576	a ten year permission and 35 year operation life for a solar farm described herein. The total site area for the Proposed Development is 188.9 hectares consisting of the following: solar photovoltaic panels on ground mounted steel frames and associated hard standing, inverter/transformer stations, underground power and communication cables and ducts, boundary security fence, CCTV cameras, upgraded internal access tracks, new internal access tracks, 2 no. new site entrances along the L5608 local road, underground electrical and communications cabling for approximately 700m along the L5608	Granted subject to 21 conditions 14/11/2024

		local road and all associated services and development works including drainage infrastructure, temporary construction compound and landscaping. As part of a separate Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application for consent, consent will be sought for the provision of a 110kV onsite electrical substation and associated works from An Bord Pleanala. This planning application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	
GP Joule Ireland Limited Mulhussey, Batterstown,, Longtown, Mullagh & Milltown Townlands, Kilcock, Co. Meath	231144	the development will consist of a 10-year planning permission for the construction of, and a 40-year operation and subsequent decommissioning of, a development consisting of a 205.15-hectare solar farm (red line boundary) and underground grid connection route. The solar farm comprises of three separate land parcels divided by local roads. The proposed solar farm will consist of a series of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, mounted on steel support structures and in some areas on concrete shoes to protect possible underground archaeological features, together with 58 electrical transformation enclosures, underground cabling, 2no. temporary construction compounds and use of existing 1no. hardstanding, the use of existing farm access tracks, existing site entrances, widening of 3no. existing site entrance, inverters, CCTV poles and cameras, deer type security/boundary fencing with some areas of boundary development on concrete shoes to further protect possible underground archaeological features, landscaping and biodiversity measures and all associated ancillary development works, for the purpose of generating renewable energy electricity and transmitting it in the townlands of Mulhussey, Batterstown, Longtown, Mullagh & Milltown, Kilcock, Co. Meath. A Natura Impact Statement will also be submitted to the Planning Authority with this application. Significant further	MCC Decision to grant 13/08/2024 ACP Decision to grant 31/03/2025

		information / revised plans submitted on this applicaiton.	
Soleire Renewables Holdings Limited the townlands of Ballymacoll Little, Boolies, Nuttstown,, Ballintry, Belgree, Rowan and Kinoristown,, Co. Meath	2460742	the Proposed Development will consist of an application for a 10-year planning permission for the construction of, and a 40-year operation and subsequent decommissioning of, a development consisting of a 215 hectare solar farm (red line boundary). The solar farm comprises of two separate land parcels divided by local roads. The proposed solar farm will consist of a series of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, mounted on steel support structures and in some areas on concrete shoes to protect possible underground archaeological features, together with 28 electrical transformation enclosures, underground cabling, 2 no. temporary construction compounds, the use of existing farm access tracks and existing site entrances, inverters, CCTV poles and cameras, deer type security/boundary fencing with some areas of boundary development on concrete shoes to further protect possible underground archaeological features, landscaping and biodiversity measures and all associated ancillary development works, for the purpose of generating renewable energy electricity and transmitting it in the townlands of Ballymacoll Little, Boolies, Nuttstown, Ballintry, Belgree, Rowan and Kinoristown, Co. Meath. A Natura Impact Statement will also be submitted to the Planning Authority with this application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	MCC decision to grant subject to 23 conditions 10/04/2025 Appeal lodged 30/04/2025
Tom Bruton Townlands of Clonymeath and Arodstown, Summerhill, Co. Meath	2460979	the development will consist of: (i) An extension to the permitted Clonymeath Solar Farm (Pl. Ref: 21/546, ABP Ref. 311760, Pl. Ref: 24/60288) comprising the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic (PV) farm consisting of solar arrays on ground mounted steel frames with a maximum overall height of 3 metres above ground; (ii) 11 no. medium voltage power stations, underground electrical cabling and ducting, security fencing and CCTV stands; (iii) Provision of new internal access tracks and upgrading of existing	Granted subject to 24 conditions 09/06/2025

		access tracks, linking with the access track permitted under Planning Reference 21/546, ABP Reference 311760; (iv) Temporary construction compound with temporary site offices and staff facilities; (v) Construction and operational access will be provided via the existing farm entrance off the L2210, to the east of the site; (vi) The removal of the existing hedgerow and boundary wall in the field opposite the existing farm entrance to provide for sufficient sightlines; (vii) The hedgerow will be reinstated set back from the roadside to maintain the necessary sightlines; (viii) Site drainage and; (ix) All ancillary site development works and apparatus. Planning permission is sought for a period of 10 years with an operational life of 35 years from the date of commissioning. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	
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2.1.4

Best Practice Guidelines for Design of Solar Development

The site selection process for the Proposed Development has been fully informed by European, national, regional and local policy constraints as well as site specific sensitivities which influenced the solar layout. The main policy, planning and environmental considerations for the selection of a potential solar farm site include:

- Proximity to the national grid and a feasible connection route;
- Separation distance from the nearest residential dwellings to avoid affecting the amenity of such properties;
- Environmental Sensitivity and Designations:
 - Existing land-use;
 - Subject site size;
 - Subject site ground conditions and topography;
 - Visual effects, including the extent of visibility from public view points;
 - Environmental and Ecological Designations (e.g. Natura 2000 sites);
 - Supporting Infrastructure – e.g. access to the site and the condition of the local road network; and
 - Land availability and consent of landowners to a solar development proposal.

The above considerations were subject to a robust suite of assessments as discussed within this PER and in greater detail within the individual assessments and surveys appended to this report.

2.1.5

Best Practice Planning Guidance Report for Large Scale Solar Energy Development in Ireland

The Best Practice Planning Guidance Report for Large Scale Solar Energy Development in Ireland, published November 2023 was prepared by the Irish Solar Energy Association (SEAI). This document was prepared to assist developers, stakeholders and Local Authorities in site selection, the preparation of

applications for planning consent and considerations relating to construction, associated infrastructure, and operational procedures from a planning and environmental perspective. This document is not statutory guidance but provides Ireland specific best practice guidance for large scale solar energy development such as that being proposed on the subject site.

The Best Practice Planning Guidance Report for Large Scale Solar Energy Development in Ireland sets out key considerations for the design and layout of solar farms. These considerations include access tracks, perimeter fencing, lighting, orientation of panels, design of substations, grid connections, and overhead lines as well as archaeology, cultural heritage, biodiversity, and ecological conditions which need to be regarded during the design process. This document has been utilised as point of reference by the design team while finalising the Proposed Development layout and preparing the enclosures of this application.

2.2 Site Location and Context

The subject site is located in the townlands of Rathcoon, Chamberstown, Scottstown, Shalvanstown, Mullaghroe and Corballis approximately c. 8km northwest of Slane, c. 9km north of Navan and c. 15 km east of Kells, Co. Meath. The subject site is accessed via the Local Roads L-56297 and L-7416 which joins Regional road R163 that in turn joins the National Road N51. The subject site extends to 149 ha and the current land-use comprises agriculture, with land-use in the wider landscape comprising a mix of agriculture, forestry and one-off housing. The lands are not the subject of any zoning designations as per Volume 2 – Written Statement and Maps for Settlements contained within the Meath County Development Plan (MCDP) 2021-2027.

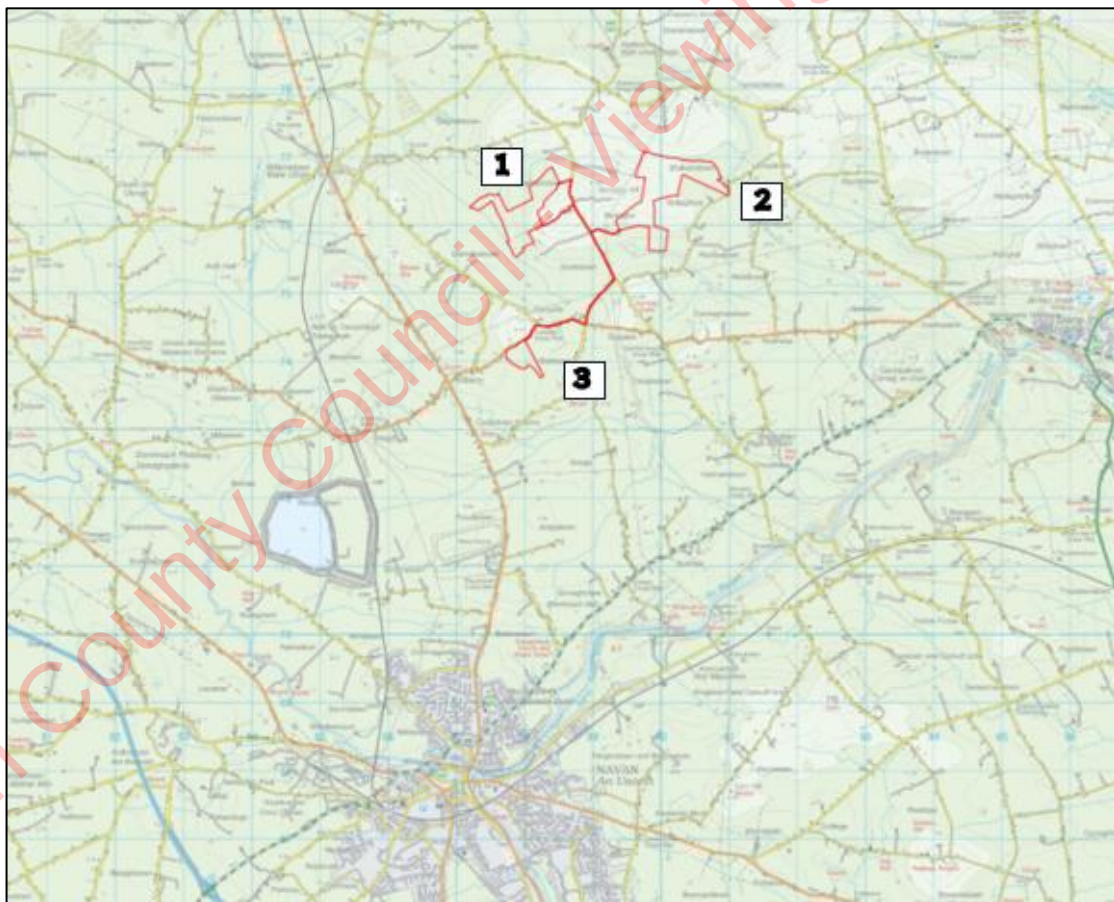


Figure 3 Location Context Map

The subject site is predominantly comprised of improved agricultural grassland. The location and site characteristics present a number of distinct planning advantages. Furthermore, the subject site has been chosen due to its southern aspect, natural contours and the proximity of the site to the national grid infrastructure, enabling effective export of the generated power.

2.2.1 Population and Community

There is limited residential development within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development with the residential settlement pattern primarily focused on Kilberry and Rathkenny village cores, and along the R163 to the south of the subject site. As part of the Glint and Glare assessment prepared for the Proposed Development (Appendix 10), 132 no. residential receptors were identified within the 1km of the proposed solar panels. Residential receptors within 1km of the proposed panels are the most sensitive visual receptors due to close proximity to the subject site. In accordance with the recent 'Best Practice Planning Guidance Report for Large Scale Solar Energy Development in Ireland' (Fehily Timoney and ISEA, 2023), the Proposed Development is located beyond the recommended setback distance from residential receptors, defined as "a minimum separation distance of 22 meters" from receptors; the nearest residential receptor is located 25m east of the nearest solar panel. Given the landscape of the subject site and the distribution of theoretical visibility depicted in the Glint & Glare Assessment, visibility is most likely to occur from receptors nearest to the Proposed Development (e.g. within 1km of the subject site). Therefore, all residential receptors within 1km of the subject site, being the most sensitive visual receptors in close proximity, are discussed in the Glint and Glare Assessment.

2.2.2 Natural Features

The Proposed Development site is spread across three separate land holdings (areas), as indicated in Figure 3 above. The sections below describe the natural features in each of the Areas.

2.2.2.1 Area 1

The subject site is comprised of agricultural fields (including arable crops of oats), treelines and hedgerows. The western extent of this area comprised areas of recently felled woodland. The improved grassland areas were species poor and almost exclusively perennial ryegrass with occasional Yorkshire fog and creeping buttercup. Areas of arable crops presented as intensive monocultures of oats, with very little other vegetation recorded. Areas of recently felled woodland presented as an area where conifer species had been felled, and some scrub species, such as willow and bramble had established, but had again been cut back. The proposed development areas are located within these agricultural fields and felled woodland.

The field networks are bound by a series of hedgerows, treelines, earthbanks and scrub, all of which provide a good framework of well-established and dense vegetative screening around the site boundary. The hedgerows present on site comprise of hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, holly, gorse, bramble, honeysuckle and ivy. Common species contained within the treeline habitat include hawthorn, conifers including sitka spruce, occasional scots pine, ash and birch.

The Chamberstown and Demealestown Order 1 mapped WFD watercourses traverse Area 1 to the north and east, respectively. Additionally, drainage ditches were recorded adjacent to the majority of field boundaries within the Proposed Development site. These contained ditches that were wet and dry at the time of survey. Farm roads within Area 1 were classified as spoil and bare ground and were typically recorded adjacent to linear features such as hedgerows and treelines. Please refer to the EcIA, prepared by MKO (Appendix 3) for further information.

No Third Schedule of the European Communities Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2015) or under the First Schedule of the European Union (Invasive Alien Species) Regulations 2024 (S.I. No 374 of 2024) nor any other invasive species, were recorded within Area A of the study site.

No habitats listed under Annex I, nor significant supporting habitat for species listed under II of the EU Habitats Directive were recorded within or adjacent to Area 1 of the Proposed Development site. Please refer to the Natura Impact Statement, accompanying this Planning Application for further detail.



Figure 4 example of hedgerow habitat within Area 1

2.2.2.2 Area 2

Field boundaries were delineated by hedgerows and treelines which were composed of a combination of hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, holly, gorse, bramble, honeysuckle and ivy. Ground flora within these habitats recorded in Area 2 included ivy, nettle, cleavers, lesser celandine, broad-leaved dock, soft shield fern. Areas of Dry meadows and grassy verges were recorded adjacent to field boundaries. Species contained within these verges included perennial ryegrass, Yorkshire fog, cock's-foot, Marsh foxtail, with dandelion, Creeping buttercup, White clover and Common mouse-ear. Occasional stone wall habitat classified as Stone walls and other stonework was also present within Area 2 and presented as a mosaic with hedgerows forming field boundaries.

The Castlepark mapped Order 1 stream borders the northern extent Area 2, while Mullaghroe and Mullagha Order 1 streams border the south. These were classified as a Lowland depositing stream and an Eroding/upland rivers, respectively. Drainage ditches were also recorded adjacent to several field boundaries within Area 2 of the Proposed Development site. A small area of standing water was also recorded along a field at the western boundary of Area 2. As this was fed by field drains, this is best classified as a drainage ditch. Water vegetation recorded here included Fool's watercress.

No Third Schedule of the European Communities Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2015) or under the First Schedule of the European Union (Invasive Alien Species) Regulations 2024 (S.I. No 374 of 2024) nor any other invasive species, were recorded within Area 2 of the study site. Please refer to the Natura Impact Statement, accompanying this Planning Application for further detail.

No habitats listed under Annex I, nor significant supporting habitat for species listed under II of the EU Habitats Directive were recorded within or adjacent to Area 2 of the Proposed Development site. Please refer to the Natura Impact Statement, accompanying this Planning Application for further detail.



Figure 5 Example of arable crops in Area 2

2.2.2.3 Area 3

Area 3 of the Proposed Development Site consists of a single field of improved agricultural grassland. This portion of the site is species poor and is largely composed of perennial ryegrass, Yorkshire fog, creeping buttercup, and cuckooflower. This area is surrounded by hedgerows dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn with elder, and ash, as well as drainage ditches also being recorded along the field boundary. Ground flora under hedgerows and bordering field boundaries cover included ivy, Yorkshire fog and nettles.

No Third Schedule of the European Communities Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2015) or under the First Schedule of the European Union (Invasive Alien Species) Regulations 2024 (S.I. No 374 of 2024) nor any other invasive species, were recorded within Area 3 of the study area.

No mapped watercourses are located within or adjacent to Area 3 of the Proposed Development site.

No habitats listed under Annex I, nor significant supporting habitat for species listed under II of the EU Habitats Directive were recorded within or adjacent to Area 3 of the Proposed Development site. Please refer to the Natura Impact Statement, accompanying this Planning Application for further detail.



Figure 6 Improved grasslands in Area 3

2.3

Site Planning History

There is no valid planning applications lodged with Meath County Council pertaining to the lands comprising the Proposed Development. For the purposes of providing a comprehensive planning history of the surrounding environs, valid planning applications within a 1km buffer of the site boundary have been tabulated and are set out in Table 3. The relevant applications identified received a grant of planning permission in the last 5 years (2020 – 2025). There are no applications with 10-year permissions within 1km of the subject site. Projects that received consent prior to the 5-year period or 10-year period for 10 year permissions that forms the planning search will have either been constructed or the planning permission will by now have expired and therefore do not require consideration. It was noted that there have been no significant infrastructure projects granted within 1km of the site, this includes quarrying, manufacturing, or large-scale warehousing. The majority of applications within 1km of the site include one off housing, extensions to existing dwellings, agricultural developments and community facility developments (tennis court, playing pitches and Montessori). The identified applications have been listed in Table 4 as per the Meath County Council planning portal (reviewed on the 8th of July 2025).

Table 3 Planning Applications within 1km of the Subject Site

Pl. Ref	Description of Development	Decision
LB200548	retention of single storey extension to side of house & permission for revision of site boundaries from original planning permission ref. no. 73/261	Granted subject to 2 conditions (28/08/2020)
KA161398	the demolition of existing single storey dwelling and the construction of a replacement one and a half storey dwelling, detached domestic garage, entry, septic tank, percolation area, widening of existing laneway and all associated site works.	Refused by MCC 18/05/2017 & Granted subject to 5

	Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	conditions by ACP 30/11/2017
KA191309	construction of a storey and a half style dwelling with detached domestic garage, install a Septic Tank & Percolation area and form new entrance to public road	Granted subject to 17 conditions (22/01/2020)
KA200010	a storey and a half residence, a domestic entrance out on to a public road and a proprietary waste water treatment system and percolation area to EPA standards and all associated ancillary site development works	Granted subject to 14 conditions (22/05/2020)
KA200172	the upgrading of the grain dryer to a larger unit	Granted subject to 10 conditions (08/07/2020)
KA200209	planning permission to construct proposed private residence and detached domestic garage/home office/home gym, install proposed wastewater treatment system and percolation area, construct new entrance onto main road, including all ancillary site works. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 16 conditions (14/10/2020)
KA200271	of 2 no. grain storage sheds and 1 no. agricultural sprayer storage shed, proposed new machinery shed and proposed PV panels to the roof of the proposed and existing buildings. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 14 conditions (17/06/2021)
KA201520	planning is sought for (1) retention for change of use of first floor storage room granted permission under NA70261 to a Montessori School classroom (2) retention of school operating hours and child numbers attending the service (3) Permission is sought to provide a new vehicular access point to the Montessori school from the public road (4) Permission is sought to upgrade the existing wastewater treatment system and percolation area (5) Permission is sought for change of layout of the existing ground floor classroom granted permission under NA70261 and for permission for a single story extension to the existing Montessori School with revised child numbers attending the service	Granted subject to 11 conditions (14/07/2021)
KA201528	a storey and a half residence, proprietary waste water treatment system, domestic garage, new entrance and all associated site development works. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 16 conditions (22/07/2021)
KA201704	the construction of a bungalow, proprietary waste water treatment system, new entrance and all associated site development works	Granted subject to 16 conditions (01/03/2021)

KA201896	the development will consist of change of house design and site boundary relocated from that previously granted under planning ref no KA/190262 together with all associated site development works	Granted subject to 8 conditions (24/03/2021)
KA201977	alterations to previously approved dwelling under KA200010, comprising change in house type from storey and a half to two storey, alterations to site boundaries and proposed dwelling location, proposed domestic garage, including all ancillary site works	Granted subject to 9 conditions (14/04/2021)
LB190852	the construction of a two storey detached dwelling house with single storey annex to the side, detached single storey garage, new vehicular entrance gateway, setting back of existing road side hedgerow as necessary, new access road, new proprietary waste water treatment unit and polishing filter, along with all associated services, service connections, landscape and site development works. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 12 conditions (09/06/2020)
21745	the development consists of retention of a conservatory to the front of the dwelling	Granted subject to 2 conditions (27/07/2021)
21770	the development will consist of two storey dormer type house, proprietary effluent treatment system, soil polishing filter area, new entrance onto public road & all ancillary site works	Granted subject to 18 conditions (07/10/2021)
211129	the development will consist of a proposed single storey extension to the rear of existing bungalow, decommission existing septic tank and replace with a waste water treatment system and percolation area and all ancillaries	Granted subject to 8 conditions (01/11/2021)
211270	the construction of a new detached residential dwelling & detached domestic garage, proprietary wastewater treatment system and percolation area, new site entrance, landscaping and all ancillary site works	Granted subject to 16 conditions (18/11/2021)
211382	development will consist of a two storey extension to the rear of the existing single storey dwelling. The development will also consist of the decommissioning of existing septic tank system, and replacement with new septic tank and percolation area and all associated site works and services	Granted subject to 8 conditions (01/11/2021)
211382	development will consist of a two storey extension to the rear of the existing single storey dwelling. The development will also consist of the decommissioning of existing septic tank system, and replacement with new septic tank and percolation area and all associated site works and services	Granted subject to 8 conditions (01/11/2021)

211689	the retention and completion of the repositioning of the house and revisions to site location and site layout from that previously granted Planning Permission under Register Reference No. KA/201704 inclusive proprietary waste water treatment system and all associated site development works	Granted subject to 3 conditions (02/12/2021)
211879	to construct a part two storey/part single storey dwelling house, domestic garage, new entrance and to install a sewage treatment system and percolation areas together with all associated site development works on site	Granted subject to 17 conditions (11/05/2022)
212011	constructing a 2 storey 4 bedroom dwelling, domestic garage, new entrance & new sewage treatment system with percolation area also the existing hedge to be removed to create a proper site entrance with unobstructed sightlines and all ancillary site works. (Note: the proposed new entrance enters the townlands of Kilberry and Rathcoon).	Granted subject to 17 conditions (21/04/2022)
212101	the construction of dormer style, 195.22 square meters extension to the side of the existing single storey bungalow, minor refurbishment works to the existing house including replacement of front door with box window and minor alterations in the kitchen area. The proposed development will also consist of the construction of a single storey 47.50 square meters double garage and all necessary site and services works	Granted subject to 8 conditions (29/04/2022)
212118	permission to construct a two storey dwelling, detached domestic garage, new vehicular entrance, new site boundaries, install a new waste water treatment system and percolation area and all associated site works and services. Significant Further information/Revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 16 conditions (11/05/2022)
212237	the construction of an extension to existing residence, removal of the existing septic tank and replacement of same with a proprietary waste water treatment system	Granted subject to 6 conditions (08/06/2022)
21773	the construction of a dormer bungalow including a waste water treatment unit and percolation area and a new entrance onto the public road	Granted subject to 16 conditions (27/07/2021)
221037	a new single storey dwelling, associated double garage and carport, opening of a new vehicular entrance to site and septic tank and percolation area together with all associated site development works	Granted subject to 10 conditions (28/02/2023)
22275	(a) 5 new playing pitches of varying sizes including a new all-weather pitch (b) alterations to the existing pitches (c) new car & bus parking (d) new machinery storage shed (e) new lighting to the existing entrance, existing car parking and new car parking areas (f) 4 no. x 10m high floodlights to the proposed all weather	Granted subject to 11 conditions (08/06/2022)

	pitch (g) 6 no. x 16m high floodlights to the main pitch (h) enclosed soft play area (i) new boundary treatment and all associated site works	
22700	retention for (1) amendments and alterations to elevations and floor plans of existing storey and half type dwelling (2) amendments and alterations to elevations and floor plans of existing domestic garage (3) revised site boundary (4) all ancillary site works. All previously granted under reference no LB/190125	Granted subject to 3 conditions (30/08/2022)
22887	the development will consist of (1) Construction of machinery storage shed to southern boundary of site, (2) Completion of all ancillary site works and associated structures together with retention of (a) boundary wall to western boundary of site, (b) revised site layout from that previously granted under planning reference KA190301	Granted subject to 8 conditions (12/10/2022)
221186	demolition of the existing outbuildings attached to the side of the existing single storey dwelling, the construction of a single storey extension to the side of the existing single storey dwelling, alterations and renovations to the existing single storey dwelling, the development will also consist of the decommissioning of existing septic tank system, and replacement with new septic tank and percolation area along with all associated site works and services	Granted subject to 8 conditions (24/01/2023)
2360028	The development will consist of (a) renovations to existing two storey dwelling, (b) construction of a two storey extension to rear of existing dwelling thereby raising the roof ridgeline of existing dwelling, (c) construction of single storey extensions to side of existing dwelling, (d) installation of an effluent treatment system and percolation area and (e) all associated site development works. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 9 conditions (09/11/2023)
2360498	construction of two storey dwelling house, waste water treatment unit and percolation area and new entrance onto the public road	Granted subject to 11 conditions (21/05/2024)
23664	retention for external elevation and floor plan modifications and retention of revised site layout as well as all ancillary site works carried out to dormer style bungalow previously approved planning under File Ref: KA/200209	Granted subject to 6 conditions (26/09/2023)
23761	planning permission to install a 24m multi-user lattice type telecommunications support structure, carrying antenna and dishes enclosed within a 2.4 metre high pallisade fenced compound together with associated ground equipment cabinets and associated site works, including a new access track on lands	Decision to Grant by WCC subject to 10 conditions (18/09/2023) & Granted by ACP (27/06/2024)

23793	the construction of a detached domestic storage shed to the rear of an existing dwelling and for all associated site works and services. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 6 conditions (20/02/2024)
2360396	the development will consist of the construction of a storey and a half dwelling, domestic garage, packaged wastewater treatment system with polishing filter, stables, new entrance along with all ancillary site works. Significant Further Information/Revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 12 conditions (30/04/2024)
2460824	Retention of (1) existing earth lined slurry storage lagoon and all associated ancillaries to southern boundary of existing farmyard, (2) agricultural shed incorporating cubicle accommodation, feed and link passages and loose bedded area	Granted subject to 4 conditions (24/01/2025)
2460894	the development will consist of change of house type from that previously granted under planning ref. no.: 21/770 being; revised two storey dormer type house, proprietary effluent treatment system, soil polishing filter area, detached domestic garage, new entrance onto public road & all ancillary site works	Granted subject to 8 conditions (10/02/2025)
2460933	permission is sought for cut/fill groundworks associated with the laying out and use of land to (a) restore 2 no. tennis court of 18.2x36.5m each, including surround netting stretched between steel posts of approx. 2.7m high, (b) construction a single-storey clubhouse of approx. 106.5sq m including PV solar panels over roof, (c) erection of 7 no. 12m high steel columns, each fitted with 1 no. metal LED floodlights, (d) new car parking area to accommodate 11 no. parking places including bicycle parking area, (d) upgrade existing site entrance from public road, (e) installation of new wastewater treatment system and percolation area, together with all associated site works	Granted subject to 12 conditions (24/02/2025)
2460391	permission is being sought for a change of domestic garage type to that previously granted under planning ref. KA181181 (not yet constructed), the change of use from a domestic garage to a craft studio catering for sewing workshops & classes, a new proprietary wastewater treatment system & percolation area and all ancillary site works. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	Granted subject to 10 conditions (04/03/2025)
2560037	renovation works to existing dwelling, demolition of existing extension to rear, a single storey extension to side, upgrade and relocation of existing entrance, waste water treatment system and all associated site works	Granted subject to 10 conditions (24/04/2025)
2460959	the development will consist of the construction of a two storey dwelling utilising an existing entrance, detached domestic garage, agricultural shed, a domestic wastewater disposal system along	Granted subject to 12 conditions (25/06/2025)

	with all associated site works. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application	
2461122	the development consists of permission to construct a single storey dwelling house, detached garage, new wastewater treatment system and percolation area, new well, new entrance onto public road and all associated site development works	Granted subject to 11 conditions (01/04/2025)
2534	a bungalow, secondary treatment system & soil polishing filter to EPA Standards, water well, domestic entrance and driveway and all ancillary site development works	Decision to grant (14/08/2025) Awaiting Final Grant
2540	the construction of 9 no. dwellings, proprietary waste water treatment systems and percolation areas also Planning Permission for the provision of roads, footpaths and ancillary services to facilitate the development	Decision to grant (27/08/2025) Awaiting Final Grant
2560212	the construction of a new detached residential dwelling, proprietary wastewater treatment system and percolation area, new site entrance from road to enter the site including any necessary pruning of existing hedgerows, landscaping and all ancillary site works	Granted subject to 14 conditions (07/08/2025)
2560387	the development will consist of demolition of existing single storey kitchen extension to the rear of existing dwelling and construct new part two storey / part single storey extension to rear, modifications to existing elevations and internal plan layout. The development also includes de-commissioning existing septic tank and percolation area and install new proprietary waste water treatment system and polishing filter together with all associated site works	Granted subject to 11 conditions (31/07/2025)
2560742	permission is sought to amend the previously approved planning application ref. no. 24/60933 to include (a) Replacement of tennis court no. 1 located on the west side of the site with 3 no. padel courts, each measuring 10x20m, enclosed by 3m high glazed panels topped with 1m high metal mesh panels, all supported by steel posts, (b) revise dimensions to the tennis court no. 2 located on the east side of the site, (c) installation of 4 no. 6m high steel lighting columns to each proposed padel court, each column fitted with 2 no. metal LED floodlights, (d) provision of 2 no. additional car parking spaces, together with all associated site works	Decision to grant (29/08/2025) Awaiting Final Grant

2.4

Section 247 Pre-Planning Consultation

2.4.1

Meath County Council – Pre-Application Consultation

A pre-application consultation meeting under Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) was held via MS Teams with Meath County Council on the 18th of June 2025 in relation to the Proposed Development.

Those in attendance were -

- Michael McKenna, Planner for Meath County Council
- Seán Manley, Circal
- Tony Gallagher, Circal
- James Kelly, Circal
- Sean McCarthy, MKO
- Declan Gorman, MKO
- Evelina Sadauskaite, MKO
- Dija Mazonaite, MKO

The meeting was held following submission of a pre-application meeting request by Evelina Sadauskaite via a planning consultation request form. The items discussed during the pre-planning meeting included:

1. Extensive list of enclosures.
2. Flexibility.
3. Geo-Physical Surveys to be undertaken post-consent but pre-construction.
4. Drawings.
5. Flood Risk Assessment.

Please refer to the minutes attached in Appendix 1 of this PER for further information on the pre-application consultation.

2.4.2

Community Consultation

Circal has undertaken a comprehensive community engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage with the local community and key stakeholders and allow a forum for the community to raise its concerns and expand on any issues it may have with the Proposed Development.

The aim of the engagement programme has been to inform and engage with the local community and stakeholders, to ensure people are aware of the proposed project, have the opportunity to find out more, ask questions and express their views. The key objectives were to:

- Ensure the local community and key stakeholders were informed of the proposals;
- Ensure that accurate information about the project proposals and solar energy generation was shared with the public;
- Reach as many residents as possible by providing information in a range of different formats (face to face discussion, leaflets, public information event, information boards);
- Answer specific queries regarding the proposals, and solar technology in general;
- Provide an opportunity for the local community and stakeholders to provide their views on the proposals;
- Use feedback gathered from the local community to help finalise the layout and design of the proposals where possible to ensure the best fit for all.

The LVIA accompanying this Proposed Development, has identified residential receptors as one of the highest sensitivity visual receptors, therefore these have been comprehensively assessed in the LVIA report and have been subject to a comprehensive and robust Glint and Glare assessment in LVIA Appendix 6.

Please refer to Appendix 2, Community Engagement document, accompanying this PER for further details.

2.4.2.1 Consultation Process

The consultation process consisted of a range of different methodologies. These included:

- In-person community outreach that involved informing local residents via door knocking and leaflet drops. Circal knocked on the doors of 159 local residents W/C 23rd June 25, dropping information leaflets to all homes and speaking directly with 52 residents.
- Advertising a Community Information Event in the local newspaper (Meath Chronicle) to ensure the widest possible reach within the community;
- Directly contacting local representatives including elected members of Kells Municipal District Elected Members, three local TDs, and one local member of the Seanad to provide them with an overview of the proposal, and inviting them to meet prior to the Community Information Event.
- A Community Information Event on 2nd July 2025 in Rathkenny GAA clubhouse, attended by approximately 70 local residents. Details of the feedback and associated commentary is provided within Section 3 of Appendix 2.

2.4.2.2 Leaflet Drop

A four-page leaflet outlining the project proposals and inviting residents to a Community Information Event (CIE) was letter-dropped by Circal to 159 local households. The distribution list was determined by proximity, covering all residences and properties within a 1 km radius of the Subject Site. In addition, copies of the leaflet and personal invitations to the drop-in event were issued to Local Councillors within the Kells Municipal District, a local Senator, and the three TDs representing the Meath-East Dáil Constituency. Each pack also included details on how to contact the development team for further information if required.

2.4.2.3 Briefing for Local Representatives

Circal contacted all members of the Kells Municipal District as well as TD's representing the Meath-East Constituency via email on 24th June 2025. A digital version of the information leaflet was included in the correspondence, as well as an invitation to a private briefing prior to the Community Event opening to the public. The email also outlined some general information on the project, as well as a background on Circal.

2.4.2.4 Public Notice

An advertisement providing details of the CIE was provided to the Meath Chronicle. This public notice advertisement was placed on the 25th of June 2025 edition of the Meath Chronicle to ensure wider local outreach beyond those residents that were contacted directly and/or provided with the information leaflet. The notice included an open invitation to the CIE.

2.4.2.5 Community Information Event

Circal hosted a Community Information Events to directly engage with the local community and to provide information so that feedback on the proposals could be considered. The Community Information Event was held in Rathkenny GAA clubhouse, Rathkenny, Co. Meath on Wednesday 2nd July 2025, between 15.00 and 20.00.

The event comprised included the following:

- Display boards (details of content are included in Appendix C of Appendix 2);

- Information leaflets on the proposals, the landscape and biodiversity enhancements, and community fund benefits; and
- Circal team members and technical experts present to answer any questions from local residents

The display boards included the following information:

- A preliminary site layout plan, including details on biodiversity enhancement and landscaping;
- The proposed grid connection cable route;
- General information relating to the construction and operational components of a solar farm;
- Information outlining how solar farms can be complementary to continuing agricultural use; and
- Information relating to proposed Community Benefit Fund

The Information Event was hosted by three representatives from Circal, and members of the wider project team who have a variety of technical backgrounds and were available throughout the drop-in event to provide information and answer questions, as well as take note of any concerns raised. As previously stated, approximately 70 people attended the Community Information Event.

2.4.3 Feedback from Consultation

Due to the comprehensive nature of the Community Engagement programme, there were many opportunities for the community to provide feedback on the proposed development.

At the Community Information Event, the attendees were predominantly neutral and were interested in learning more about the proposed development and solar technology in general. There were a number of positive responses to the proposed development, particularly in relation to the potential opportunities the Community Benefit Fund and biodiversity enhancement. Some attendees expressed concern about the proposed development taking place in their locality. These views were mainly relating to visual impact, traffic impact during construction, environmental impact, and loss of agricultural land.

The community engagement process provided Circal with the opportunity to inform the local community of the proposals while also obtaining feedback on the issues of greatest importance to them. Following due consideration of this feedback, Circal has reviewed the initial proposals and prepared a final revised design and submission that seeks to address the concerns raised. Please refer to Table 1 of Appendix 2 of this PER for further information on what feedback was received and how it was addressed.

2.5 Site Design Process

The site selection process for the Proposed Development has been fully informed by European, national and regional and local policy constraints at a macro level as well as site specific sensitivities which influenced the solar layout at a micro level. The main policy, planning and environmental considerations for the selection of a potential solar farm site include:

- Proximity to the national electrical grid;
- Separation distance from the nearest residential dwellings to avoid affecting the amenity of such properties;
- Separation distance from heritage amenities;
- Environmental Sensitivity and Designations:
 - Existing land-use, field size, site ground conditions and topography;
 - Negligible risk of site flooding;
 - Visual effects, including the extent of visibility from public viewpoints;
 - Environmental and Ecological Designations (e.g. Natura 2000 sites)
 - Built and Cultural Infrastructure;
- Supporting Infrastructure - e.g., access to the site and the condition of the local road network; and
- Land availability and consent of landowner to a solar development proposal.

These above considerations were subject to a robust suite of assessments as discussed within this PER and in greater detail within the individual assessments and surveys appended to this report.

Based on the above preliminary assessments, an initial layout was established. Detailed site assessments were then progressed to determine the suitability of these lands for the Proposed Development, including ecological, hydrological (including flood risk assessment), archaeological, landscape and visual, and traffic and transport.

2.6 EIA Screening

2.6.1 Legislative Context

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements derived from Council Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directives 97/11/EU, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC) and as codified and replaced by Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment and as amended in turn by Directive 2014/52/EU.

The consolidated European Union Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the EIA Directive), was transposed into Irish planning legislation by the Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended) ('The Act') and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) (the 'Regulations'). The EIA Directive was amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (the 'amended Directive') which has been transposed into Irish law with the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018) on the 1st of January 2019, which were effectively an updating on the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The legislation requires screening to be undertaken to determine whether or not specified public or private developments are likely to have significant effects on the environment and as such require EIA to be carried out prior to a decision on a development consent application being made. The European Commission (2017) have published a Guidance on Screening document (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended 2014/52/EU) which summarises the need for an EIA based on specific measures and/or limits, according to predefined criteria such as characteristics of projects, the locations of projects and the type and characteristics of the potential impact as set out in Annex III of the amended Directive.

2.6.2 Methodology and Guidance

Screening the Proposed Development is a process used to establish whether an EIA is required to be undertaken. There are a number of steps in the screening process. The mandatory requirement for an EIA is generally based on certain project categories as set out in Annex I and II of the amended Directive. This identifies certain types and scales of development, generally based on thresholds of scale, for which EIA is mandatory. There is sometimes a requirement for EIA 'sub-threshold' developments to undergo a screening exercise to assess whether or not the Proposed Development requires the preparation of an EIAR. The methodology used in this report was developed to formally screen the Proposed Development, which was based on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (EPA, 2003) and the 2017 guidance issued by the European Commission. The screening exercise is divided into a section on Mandatory EIA and another on Sub-threshold or Discretionary EIA. In each section below a screening assessment has been undertaken which examines the requirement for EIA according to the criteria set out in the relevant legislation. The rationale behind the responses within the matrix is provided at the end of each section.

Summary of guidance documents used:

- Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (EPA, 2003)
- European Commission Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EC, 2017)
- European Commission Guidance on Screening (EC, 2017)

- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (2018)
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) Practice Note – Environmental Impact Assessment Screening (2021)
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (2022).

An EIA Screening Determination Report has been prepared by MKO and accompanies this planning application. (Appendix 7)

Meath County Council - Viewing Purposes Only!

3.

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The Proposed Development will consist of approximately 559,033 sqm of solar panels on ground mounted steel frames, with a maximum overall height of 2.96 metres, within an overall site area of 149 hectares. The solar panels will be installed on pre-erected galvanized steel mounting frames arranged into a series of rows ranging 3-7m metres apart, depending on the topography and panel tilt angle. Appropriate separation distances are maintained between rows to avoid overshadowing and allow maintenance of the grassland. The rows will be arranged in an east-west alignment across the site and positioned south at an angle of 15°-25° in order to maximise solar irradiance. Panel designs will vary depending on the optimal layout for energy production and the selected manufacturer; however, designs have been over engineered, and therefore the total structure height and boundaries will not exceed that indicated in the accompanying planning drawings. The proposed Development will have an installed capacity of up to 130 MWp. Planning permission is sought for a period of 10 years with an operational life of 40 years from the date of commissioning.

Ancillary equipment and other site development works and services associated with the proposed Rathcoon Solar Farm will include up to 21 no. inverter/transformer skid units, internal underground electrical cabling and ducting, a temporary construction compound, security fencing and CCTV, new internal access tracks, site drainage, landscaping and all ancillary works. Construction and operational access to the site by 3 no. site entrances using 2 no. existing field access points 1 no. new access point.

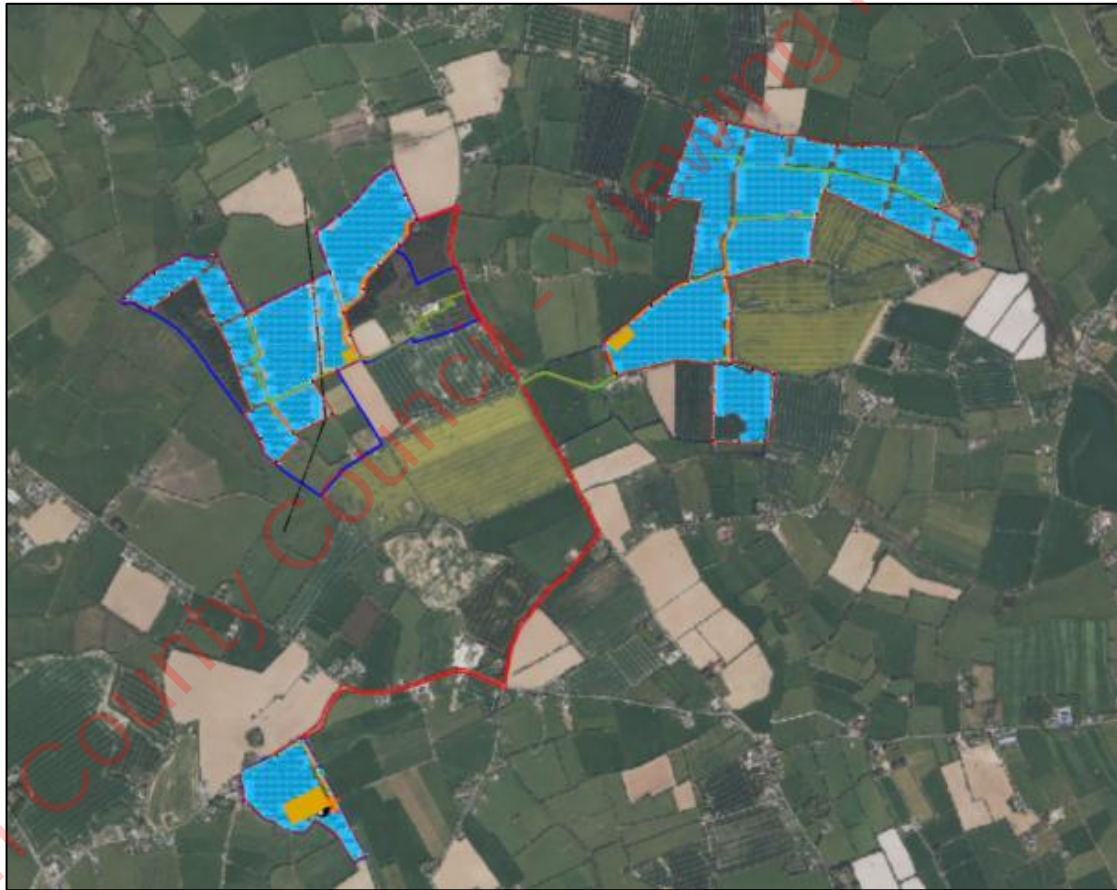


Figure 7 Site Layout Map - Orniographical View

3.1

Design Flexibility

The Applicant would like to respectfully advise Meath County Council that some minor details set out in the plans for the Proposed Development are indicative at this stage and will be confirmed at condition compliance stage in detail should the scheme receive planning permission. Given the ever-evolving nature of technological advancements, The Applicant respectfully requests a degree of flexibility from Meath

County Council within the parameters of the planning permission. As innovation continues to influence design, construction methods, and operational requirements, it is essential that the development can adapt accordingly. To accommodate these minor potential changes without compromising the overall intent and integrity of the scheme, we request flexibility is provided through appropriately worded planning conditions, which will allow for final layouts/details to be agreed prior to commencement of development. Accordingly, the applicant would welcome a planning condition to facilitate some flexibility in siting the solar infrastructure be permitted under a planning condition, whereby a micro siting tolerance can be accommodated for all principal components be allowed as long as there is no additional impact arising and no infringement of other rights to the land and its surrounds. All recommended buffer zones and setbacks will be fully maintained. This will enable, at the final, pre-commencement design stage, any improvements to the layout and output of the scheme that may be bought about by any improvements in solar technology in upcoming years.

There is precedent for the facilitation of a level of flexibility in the siting of elements of commercial scale solar schemes both Meath and elsewhere. We respectfully draw your attention to the following relevant case examples:

Pl. Ref. 2460134 granted by **Meath County Council** on the 6th of June 2024 and Condition 11 in particular:

'11. The exact detail of the transformers / inverters and other ancillary units and structures shall be submitted to the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development for written agreement.'

Pl. Ref. No: 2460288 granted by **Meath County Council** on the 29th of July 2024 and Condition No. 10 in particular. This condition states that:

'10. The exact detail of the MV power stations (transformers / inverters and MV switchgear) and other ancillary units and structures shall be submitted to the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development for written agreement.'

Pl. Ref. No: 23576 granted by **Meath County Council** on the 14th of November 2024 and Condition No. 11 in particular. This condition states that:

'11. The exact detail of the transformers / inverters and other ancillary units and structures shall be submitted to the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development for written agreement.'

Pl. Ref. No: 2460979 granted by **Meath County Council** on the 9th of June 2025 and Condition No. 17 in particular. This condition states that:

'17. The exact detail of the transformers / inverters and other ancillary units and structures shall be submitted to the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development for written agreement.'

Pl. Ref. No: 2460338 granted by **Offaly County Council** on the 3rd of March 2025 and Condition No. 6 in particular. This condition states that:

'6. Prior to commencement of the development the developer shall submit for the written agreement and consent of the Planning Authority details of final placement and design and material finishes of all principal components of the solar farm development within the site.'

We respectfully request that, in the event of a grant of permission, that a similar condition could be attached to any grant of permission.

Solar PV Panels and Racking System

Solar Photovoltaic (PV) technology collects and converts solar radiation directly into electricity. The panels are composed of photovoltaic cells as part of the PV system and are designed to maximise the absorptency of the sun's rays. A solar PV system consists of solar cells and other associated infrastructure such as inverters, transformer, cabling, and mounting frames.

The proposed solar PV panels are arranged into rows which are spaced and oriented to maximise sunlight exposure. The panel's surface materials will comprise of toughened glass, with design consideration of both capturing maximum sunlight and minimisation of reflectance.

The individual panels proposed are c. 1.31m x 2.39m in size and the indicative solar panel design is illustrated in Solar Panel Plan & Elevations Drawing No. 250403-09 enclosed with this Planning Application. Each solar panel will be mounted 0.9m above the ground at the lowest edge, and up to 2.96m above the ground at the highest point (the rearmost edge of the panel).

The solar panels will be arranged in rows approximately 3-7m apart to best suit the topography of the site and panel tilt angle to maximised electrical generation potential chosen at detailed design stage pre-construction. Rows will be set out in an east-west orientation, facing south, and have a fixed position throughout the year.

Each solar cell will be erected on a galvanised steel support structure/ frame. The frame support structures will consist of aluminium cross bars and steel uprights. The precise nature and type of support structure to be used will be determined during the pre-construction detailed design phase of the development and will largely depend upon site characteristics determined following detailed geophysical and geotechnical investigations and the Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment. Civil works associated with the installation of the steel mounting frames will be minor with minimal ground disturbance. Depending on soil conditions, the frames will be anchored using earth screws or rammed profiles to a depth of up to 1.5m depending on site-specific ground conditions. However, it is proposed to use pre-cast concrete blocks or slabs ('concrete feet') as ground anchors for solar panels within the specified archaeological mitigation zones. Please refer to the accompanying CEMP, as prepared by MKO, for further information on this.

The characteristics of particular solar PV modules will vary between manufacturers in terms of appearance and dimensions, or alternatively, new solar PV models or variants may be available that were not on the market at the pre-planning stage which would better suit the application site and fit within the proposed size envelope. Another important consideration underpinning the detailed design process is that some areas of the application site may ultimately be excluded from construction due to unforeseen ground conditions or to further minimise environmental impact. As such, some PV panels may be removed and/or the positioning of solar arrays and other infrastructure (site tracks, fencing, and CCTV) may be relocated. This requires a certain amount of flexibility to facilitate minor amendments in layouts and dimensions.

Should a similar scenario to the above arise, the specific parameters of the finalised PV modules will comply with the criteria set out and considered in this planning and environmental report and appendices, the relevant guidance in place at the time, and all conditions that may be attached to a favourable grant of planning permission.

The solar panel height allows for the area to be grazed by small grazing animals, such as sheep should the landowner so wish.

It is proposed to install 21 no. transformer/transformer skid units on the subject site. Transformers are used to transfer electric energy from a number of low voltage AC circuits (or combine) to the onsite substation for export to one or more other circuits, either increasing (stepping up) or reducing (stepping down) the voltage.

Inverters convert Direct Current (DC) (electricity generated by the solar PV panels) to Alternating Current (AC) for the transport of the electricity. String inverters are an alternative to combined inverter/transformer

skid units, whereby the small inverter units are mounted on the support structures to the rear of the solar panels at the end of each row of panels.

3.2.1.1 Internal Cabling and Ducting & Collector Cables

Underground cables and cabling ducts will be laid across the site and will link the solar panel arrays and inverter/transformer skid units to the proposed 110 kV substation (the 110 kV substation will be the subject of a separate future planning application as discussed in Section 3.6). Specifically, solar arrays will be interconnected via low-voltage (LV) electrical internal cabling and associated junction boxes up to the inverter/transformer skid units. From each skid unit, the electricity will then be stepped up and transferred via 33 kV underground collector cables, which will facilitate the transmission of power to the 110 kV substation and ultimately to the electrical transmission system. Where possible, underground electrical and communications cabling will run alongside the internal site access tracks to minimise trenching through the solar panel areas. The collector cables are shown in orange in Figure 8 below.

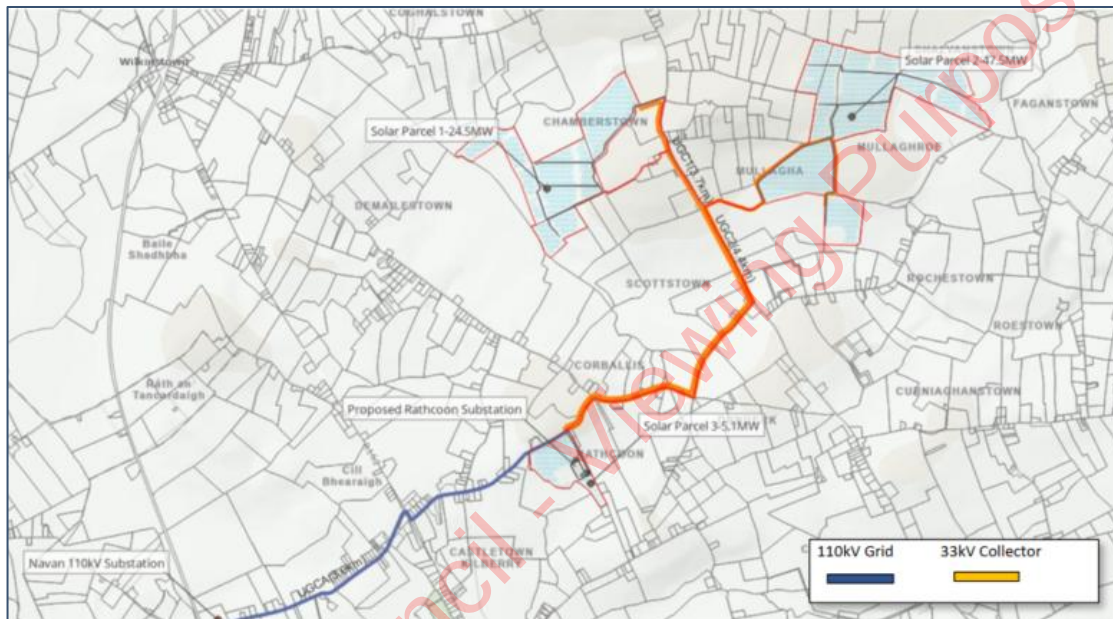


Figure 8 Future Rathcoon Solar Farm 100kV Grid Connection UGC & 33kV Collector Network UGC Layout Plan

The proposed collector network consists of three 33kV cables, UGC1 single circuit and UGC2 double circuit, in a single trench travelling initially north within solar farmlands from the proposed substation for 300m. The collector cables turn northeast onto the public road network (R163). The proposed cables travel northeast within the carriageway of this regional road, R163 for approximately 400m before turning east on the L-34101.

At Scottstown, the collector network turns northeast onto the L-74162 for 800m before turning north west onto the L-7416. At Mullagha, UGC2 turns east along a local access path to Area 2. UGC1 continues northwest along the L-7416 for 900m. At Chamberstown UGC1 turns west on a local access road to Area 1.

The 33kV UGC collector network route, UGC1 is approximately 4.2km in length and traverses in a northeastern direction from the proposed substation location to the northwestern Area 1 in Chamberstown, Co Meath utilising solar farmlands and access track and public roads. The 33kV UGC collector network route, UGC2 is approximately 4.8km in length and traverses in a northeastern direction from the proposed substation location to the northern eastern solar parcel in Mullagha, Co Meath utilising solar farmlands and access track and public roads. Please refer to the Outline Construction Methodology, as prepared by TLI for further detail on the matters above.

The exact location of the 33kV UGC within the curtilage of solar farmlands and access track and public roads may be subject to minor modification following confirmatory site investigations to be undertaken prior to construction. The cable location will take into consideration Meath County Council and all other relevant stakeholders' requirements. Installation of the cable will consider all environmental protection

measures forming part of the planning application for the Proposed Development and accompanying technical reports.

Table 4: Proposed Development 33kV Collector Network Route Location Summary

Underground Cable (UGC)	Solar Farm Lands	Public Road
UGC1	700m	3500m
UGC 2	1700m	3100m

The depth of the cables will meet all safety requirements with suitable marking tape laid between the cables and the finished surface. The excavated material will be laid alongside the trench for use in reinstatement following the laying of the cables. Vegetated turves will be stockpiled separately from subsoil for reinstatement. Trenches will be backfilled with subsoil and topsoil, and vegetated topsoil turves will be reinstated.

3.3 Security Infrastructure

3.3.1 Perimeter Fencing

The proposed security fencing is a deer fence constructed to a height of up to 2.0m using high pressure treated timber posts and high tensile galvanised wire. High tensile tension wire will be fitted on top with tensioner and tension springs. Timber fence posts will have a minimum spacing of 3m. Additionally, the fence will include a minimum of a 200mm gap at ground level to facilitate continued uninterrupted mammal access throughout the site.

A more secure palisade fence type will be used for short sections requiring additional security. Temporary palisade security fencing may also be erected around the temporary construction compound and decommissioned after the construction stage.

Controlled access points in the form of site entrances will be kept locked outside of normal working hours. Appropriate signage will be provided at the site to alert pedestrians to the construction activities and related traffic at the site. The contractor will be required to undertake the following:

- Operate a site induction process for all site staff.
- Ensure all site staff shall have current 'Safe Pass' cards.
- Maintain site security staff at all times.
- Install access security in the form of gates for staff.
- Ensure restricted access is maintained to the works.

Please refer to Site Layout Orthographical View Drawing No: 250403-03 for detail in respect of the layout of the proposed fencing extent and Typical Stock Fence Detail, Elevation & Indicative Images Drawing No: 250403-11 for fencing specifications.

3.3.2 Closed Circuit Television

The Proposed Development will be unmanned and remotely monitored using closed circuit television cameras (CCTV). The CCTV system, which will be installed at various locations around the site, will be erected on dedicated stands at a height of up to 4 metres above ground level as detailed on the submitted planning drawings (refer to Typical CCTV Detail Plan & Elevations Drawing number 250403-10).

The cameras will only be orientated toward the interior of the solar farm and will not point towards any external landowners or dwellings. The CCTV system will include detection control and recording and will be connected to a remote alert centre where security footage will be monitored. The cameras will be monitored on a continual basis using infrared lighting as the facility will be unlit at night-time.

3.4

Temporary Construction Compound

Temporary construction compounds will be created during the construction phase for the duration of the site works. The location of the main compound is along the eastern boundary of Area 3 of the subject site, with two smaller compounds in Areas 1 and 2 also. These are identified in Site Layout Orthographical View Drawing No: 250403-03.

The main temporary construction compound will be located in the Area 3 of the site, nearby the site entrance location of the future 110kV substation area. There will be two further satellite temporary compounds in each of the other two parcels. The main temporary construction compound will consist of temporary site offices, staff facilities and welfare, storage areas and car-parking areas for staff and visitors. The satellite temporary compounds will contain similar equipment and facilities as the main compound but at a reduced scale.

Following the completion of construction works, these temporary compounds will be decommissioned: all site offices, containers, machinery and equipment shall be removed and covered over with soil to allow for revegetation.

3.5

Site Development Works

3.5.1

Site Entrance and Access

It is proposed that construction and operational access to the site by 3 no. site entrances using 2 no. existing field access points (Area 1 & 2), and 1 no. new access point (at Area 3). The proposed site entrances will function as the sole entry points to the application site during both the construction and operational phases of development with access managed by the Applicant, as required.

During the 12-month construction programme, daily traffic volumes will vary according to the works scheduled for each month. On average, the development is expected to generate approximately 7 HGVs (1-way) and 89 cars/LGVs per day. The peak traffic demand is forecast for Month 4, when up to 16 HGVs (1-way) – equivalent to 32 HGV movements – will be required for the delivery of materials such as mounting frames, solar panels, hard-core, and substation components, in addition to 80 daily car/LGV associated with construction staff. In lower-activity months, HGV traffic may reduce to as few as 2 movements per day.

The new site entrances will be constructed as a steel double gate entrance as shown in Typical Site Entrance Gate Detail Drawing No. 250403-07.

Once constructed and operational, the proposed solar farm will be monitored remotely, there will be regular visits in the region of once a month by security and/or maintenance personnel. There will also be occasional site visits required to undertake repairs to plant / equipment over the lifetime of the project. These predicted traffic movements are envisaged to have a negligible impact on local traffic.

3.5.2

Internal Access Tracks

The existing track serving the application site is currently used to provide agricultural access. It is proposed to construct new sections of access track to provide construction and maintenance access to the full extent of the application site. The typical detail of new access tracks is identified in Typical Access Tracks Cross Section - Standard Detail (Drawing No. 250403-08). The new on-site tracks will typically be 3500mm wide, at a minimum.

Typical access tracks are excavated to a depth of 200mm, a permeable geogrid membrane will be placed along the excavated track and the road will be constructed on top of the geogrid membrane using stone and gravel. The access tracks will be finished with 40mm of dust crushed stone (Refer to Drawing No. 250403-08).

3.5.3 Landscaping

The Proposed Development site currently benefits from significant and robust landscaping in the form of hedgerows and natural vegetation along both its perimeter and internal agricultural fields. The Proposed Development has been designed to minimise the loss of treeline and hedgerow habitats and to retain this network connection of these throughout the site.

Where existing landscaping is required to be removed (e.g. for access to fields and the new security fencing locations) or is damaged over the lifetime of the solar farm, infill landscaping, e.g. hedgerows, will be planted where needed. In areas where vegetation is scarce or gaps occur, additional native screening planting in the form of native species characteristic of the local area. Once the solar farm is operational, the hedgerows and landscaped areas will be maintained on an ongoing basis by landscaping/agricultural contractors. Please refer to the dedicated Landscape Mitigation Plan (Appendix 9) for more details.

3.6 Electrical Substation

As noted previously, it is proposed to construct a 110 kV electrical substation to the southwest of and adjacent to the Proposed Development. All 110kV electrical elements will come forward under a future planning application made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála under section 182 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The subject planning application includes for the provision of a substation control building within the substation compound. As these elements have formed part of the wider assessment undertakings, they are detailed here at Section 3.6 of this PER. The substation building will be 217 sqm, secured by a 2.65m fence.

The 110kV substation will be accessed via the internal access tracks from the Proposed Development, while the boundary of the 110kV substation will be gated and fenced off. This substation will connect via underground cable (UGC) circuits to accommodate a grid connection from Navan 110kV Substation. These works will form part of a separate, future planning application to An Coimisiún Pleanála in due course.

Substations are an integral part of the power system and serve as an important link between the generating stations, transmission systems, distribution systems and load points. Switchgear systems are used to control the power flow within the grid as well to ensure that system failures and malfunctions are contained within a specified area and specified technical limit which guarantees overall network stability. The proposed 110kV electrical substation has been designed to EirGrid's specifications, it will be supplied with power from the Proposed Development via underground cabling to be exported onto the national grid, by connecting into the existing 110kV overhead line.

3.6.1 Potable Water Supply

Given the low operational occupancy / usage, the substation control buildings will require a minimal potable water supply for domestic use. Water usage within the site will be low as well as the proposed substation will be typically unmanned and operated remotely. Drinking water demand for the control buildings will be supplied via cooler systems which is proposed to be sourced from contracted water suppliers. Rainwater harvesting is proposed to accommodate operational water demand (e.g. toilet cisterns).

3.6.2 Foul Wastewater

A shared foul wastewater drainage network is proposed within the substation compound to cater for the wastewater generated in the welfare facilities of the control buildings. The drainage system will consist of an underground pipe network, foul manhole and a foul water holding tank. The wastewater storage tank alarm will be monitored remotely as part of the overall SCADA system installed on-site. Only waste collectors holding valid waste collection permits under the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations, 2007 (as amended), will be employed to transport wastewater off-site to permitted wastewater treatment plants.

3.7 Development Timeframe

Planning permission for the Proposed Development is sought for a period of 10 years. The duration of this permission had been identified with regard to the given variabilities in relation to electricity grid connection. The Applicant is engaging with EirGrid, the Transmission System Operator (TSO), via the Electricity Generation Policy – Generation and System Services (ECP-GSS) process which will determine a timeline for connecting to the grid following a grant of permission.

Planning permission for the Proposed Development is being sought for a 40-year operational period commencing from the date of full operational commissioning.

3.7.1 Construction Phase Activities

Employment created by the Proposed Development will come primarily during the construction phase of development. It is the objective of the Applicant to employ local people, where possible, with local contractors to carry out civil works as well as to source materials and plant hire locally.

3.7.1.1 Construction Phase Description and Duration

It is estimated that the construction phase of the Proposed Development will take approximately 12-months, from commencing enabling works on site to the commissioning of the solar farm, 110 kV substation and grid connection. Construction works will include the following activities:

- Erection of fences & gates;
- Preparation of on-site tracks and laydown areas;
- Temporary construction compound;
- Delivery of panels, frames, centralised MP power stations;
- Installation of frames and panels;
- Construction of substation building;
- Cable trenching and cable laying;
- Erection of security CCTV stands;
- Inverter/transformer skid units;
- Commissioning of the panels and grid connection;
- Site reinstatement; and
- Demobilisation from site.

These works will be undertaken without significant and permanent alteration to the existing landform. During the final stage of the construction programme, all construction debris, materials and equipment will be removed from the site.

The construction and installation programme may potentially be affected by weather conditions and the availability of plant and materials, but it is anticipated that the overall construction period will last approximately 12 months. The final programme will be developed in consultation with the Project Supervisor Construction Stage, based on availability of plant, materials and projected delivery dates. In the event of favourable consideration, the Applicant is committed to a prompt delivery of the project, however, these outside variables may require the construction programme for the solar farm to be delayed, hence the request for a ten-year permission. A Construction and Environmental Management Plan has been submitted with this Planning Application, and will be implemented in full.

During the 12-month construction programme, daily traffic volumes will vary according to the works scheduled for each month. On average, the development is expected to generate approximately 7 HGVs (1-way) and 89 cars/LGVs per day. The peak traffic demand is forecast for Month 4, when up to 16 HGVs (1-way) – equivalent to 32 HGV movements – will be required for the delivery of materials such as mounting frames, solar panels, hard-core, and substation components, in addition to 80 daily car/LGV associated with construction staff. In lower-activity months, HGV traffic may reduce to as few as 2 movements per day.

Site development and building works during the construction phase of development will be carried out only between the normal working hours of 07:00 and 19:00 from Monday to Friday (inclusive) and 07:00 to 14:00 Saturday, and not on Sundays. Public holidays will be observed unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority. During certain stages of the construction phase, it is expected that some work will have to be carried out outside of normal working hours, however, this will be kept to a minimum.

3.8

Construction and Environmental Management Plan

This CEMP has been prepared as part of the planning application for the Proposed Development and will provide the environmental management framework to be adhered to during the pre-commencement and construction phases of the Proposed Development and it incorporates the mitigating principles to ensure that the work is carried out in a way that minimises the potential for environmental impacts to occur. The CEMP has been informed by and takes account of the accompanying documents which have been prepared for the Proposed Development.

All measures identified in this CEMP, which will be finalised subsequent to any permission granted and updated prior to construction will include all mitigation measures identified and to be adhered to during the pre-commencement and construction phases of the Proposed Development.

The CEMP to be prepared by the appointed contractor will be a single, amalgamated document that can be used during the construction phase of the project, as a single consolidated point of reference relating to all construction, environmental and drainage requirements for the Planning Authority, developer and contractors alike. The CEMP may evolve over further iterations as the construction works progress, but at all times must meet or exceed the standards and requirements set out in this document. It will be the contractor's current version of the CEMP, which at any point in time, will guide the construction activities on site and the implementation of which will be audited during construction.

The final detailed design will be informed by a series of key targets and objectives, with particular consideration given to the buildability of the emerging designs. Adopt a sustainable approach to construction and, ensure sustainable sources for materials supply where possible. Correct fuel storage and refuelling procedures to be followed, Construction Methods and designs will be altered where it is found there is an adverse effect on the environment, good waste management and housekeeping to be implemented, using recycled materials, if possible, e.g., excavated stone, soil and subsoil material, avoidance of vandalism, air and noise pollution prevention to be implemented, monitoring of the works and any adverse effects that it may have on the environment and provide adequate environmental training and awareness for all project personnel.

The CEMP, as prepared by MKO is enclosed with this Planning Application.

3.9

Operational Phase Activities

The Proposed Development is expected to have a lifespan of approximately 40 years. During the operational period, on a day-to-day basis, the solar farm will operate automatically, responding by means of control systems to changes in sunlight.

Photovoltaic panels contain no moving parts, hence the maintenance requirement of a PV system is very low. During the operational period, the routine operation and monitoring will be carried out with the assistance of a remote computerised control system. The SCADA System allows for continuous off-site monitoring via telephone/broadband connection. This avoids the need for staffing the solar farm except during planned maintenance visits. These site visits are expected to be a quarterly with annual servicing, except in the unlikely event of malfunction or breakdown. Maintenance traffic will consist of four-wheel drive vehicles or vans.

Decommissioning Phase Activities

The decommissioning of the site will involve the removal of all solar panels and associated fencing, storage and operational facilities, with the exclusion of the substation which will be retained. The site is proposed to be fully restored.

Existing hedgerow field boundaries will have been maintained and reinforced with additional planting during the construction and operational phases, will remain intact following the decommissioning and restoration phases.

An experienced main contractor will be appointed to undertake the decommissioning of the site. The main contractor will comply with the Decommissioning and Restoration Plan (DRP) prepared for the decommissioning and restoration phase.

Prior to any works being undertaken on solar panels, they will be disconnected from the grid by the site operator in conjunction with ESB Networks. The dismantling and removal of the solar panels and their associated structures is a specialist operation which will be undertaken by the solar panel supplier or competent subcontractor. Solar panel and associated support structures dismantling will be undertaken in reverse order to methodology employed during their construction.

The necessary plant and equipment will be brought back to site to assist in the dismantling of the support structures/frames. The dismantling of the solar panels and their associated support structures will be bound by the same health and safety considerations as will be the case during construction. The panels and their associated support structures will be removed from site in a similar manner to how they will be transported to the site and sent for recovery. In the event of favourable consideration, any future decommissioning works could be made subject to an appropriate condition.

The above programme of decommissioning will be carried out in a safe manner and all materials plant and equipment contained on or in the site will be removed in a manner in accordance with the prevailing statutory provisions and requirements to ensure environmental impact is minimised and pollution does not arise.

A Decommissioning Report (Appendix 6), as prepared by MKO, accompanies this planning application and contains further information.

4.

PLANNING APPRAISAL

This section of the PER sets out the strategic planning context for the Proposed Development. It identifies the European, national, regional, and local planning policies and objectives that are relevant to the Proposed Development and demonstrates how it will be consistent with the same. These assessments mutually conclude that the Proposed Development is consistent with the overarching planning framework regarding facilitating further integration of renewable generation, optimising the existing transmission network and the promotion of proper planning and sustainable development.

4.1

European Policy

European policy on renewable energy is structured around ambitious goals aimed at transitioning to climate neutral energy system by 2050. The main policy and legislative components relevant to the Proposed Development are as follows:

4.1.1

EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED III)

In November 2023, a revision of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III), came into force. RED III increases the EU wide renewable energy target from 32% set under the previous revision of the directive to at 42.5%, with an ambition to reach 45% by 2030. This increase comes following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the publication of REPowerEU plan in May 2022.

The most recent changes to Irish planning legislation have been introduced through S.I. No. 274 of 2025 – European Union (Planning and Development) (Renewable Energy) Regulations 2025, which transposes key elements of the EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) into planning law. This statutory instrument amends the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) by requiring specific additional wording in planning notices for renewable energy projects, including the declaration that the application is a “RED III application” and is “subject to a completeness check.” These changes ensure that such applications are formally identified within the planning system, trigger the statutory timelines set out under RED III, and align Ireland’s planning framework with the EU’s accelerated permitting obligations for renewable energy.

Article 16(2) of REDIII provides that for applications for development outside renewable acceleration areas, the competent authority shall acknowledge the completeness of the application within 45 days. Table 5 below outlines elements of the planning application that should be agreed upon with the planning authority at pre-application stage. Table 6 sets out the necessary items of the ‘completeness check’.

Table 5 Pre-Application stage requirements

Requirement	N/A	Yes	No	Notes
Drawings, maps and plans sufficient to describe the proposed project to the detail required to determine the application, including to an appropriate metric scale or scales, and to an appropriate quality. However, the aim of both parties should be to ensure the number of drawings, maps and plans are sufficient, rather than excessive, and each drawing, map or plan should therefore clearly be seen to perform a discrete function.		X		The scales of all drawings, maps and plans submitted have been agreed with Meath County Council, prior to submission of Planning Application.
The scope of the EIAR. While the planning authority/Commission and the applicant may reasonably decide that each factor of the environment should be addressed by the EIAR, the focus of EIAR should be on those factors of the environment to which the project is likely to pose a significant risk. The prospective applicant, in discussion, should rely on the Commission, with its experience, to provide clear direction on the focus of the EIAR on the key factors of the environment. In this regard both parties should ensure compliance with the EIA Directive and should have regard to the EPA's Guidelines on the Content of EIARs.	X			Non-EIAR Project. An EIA Screening Determination Report accompanies this planning application.
The Commission and the applicant should, subject to the carrying out of stage 1 AA (screening) by the applicant, agree the sites to progress to stage 2 AA, in consultation with the NPWS.	X			Appropriate Assessment Screening prepared for the Proposed Development was undertaken by MKO, who identified the potential for likely significant effects on the following European Site, as a result of the development: • River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC • River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA MKO ecologists are highly experienced in undertaking Appropriate Assessment Screening and possess an in-depth knowledge of the EU Habitats Directive. They have worked on a wide range of small to large

			scale developments throughout Ireland, including solar farms, wind farms, road schemes, restoration and biodiversity enhancement projects, housing developments, and strategic infrastructure developments, and are confident that potential for likely significant effects on any other site can be ruled out, based on the nature of development or distance from the Proposed Development site. MKO have further provided a Natura Impact Statement, which assess the potential for the Proposed Development to result in adverse effects on the screened in European Sites, and provides the information necessary for the competent authority (Meath County Council) to undertake an Appropriate Assessment for the Proposed Development.
Surveys and data – Matters relating to the surveying of habits and species to inform the environmental assessments should be agreed with the Commission at the earliest possible stage of the pre-application process, in consultation with the NPWS. Matters including the duration of surveys, location of surveys and methodologies, having regard to current and developing best practices. The Commission should be notified of any departure from same, accompanied by justification or reasons for it in writing.	X		In preparation of the planning application for the Proposed Development MKO held a pre-planning meeting (minutes are available in Appendix 1 of this PER) with the competent authority (Meath County Council). In this meeting, the scope of surveys proposed by MKO, including survey extent, targets, and locations, was presented and the planning authority were satisfied with what was proposed. All surveys were carried out in line with the most recent available best practice guidance documents.
Policy context – clear justification of the policy context for the proposed development.		X	Please refer to Section 4 of the PER.

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Requirement	N/A	Yes	No
Miscellaneous			
Correct Fee Submitted		X	
Completed copy of application form		X	
Is the application in the Gaeltacht Area			X
Standalone website provided	X - Website is not a requirement for Section 34 Planning Applications		
Two hard copies and 8 soft copies	X - This is being submitted via the E-Planning Portal		
Land Ownership			
Interest of applicant in land confirmed, if no, written consent of owner submitted		X	
Design Flexibility			
Was a Design Flexibility Opinion served			X
If yes – does application comply with the Opinion	X		
Public Notices			
Is time period and fee for submissions/observations specified		X	
Reference to RED III and completeness check where applicable		X	
Include standalone website Address	X - Website is not a requirement for Section 34 Planning Applications		
Are notices in Irish if in Gaeltacht	X		
Transboundary environmental effects			X
Do COMAH Regulations (Major Accident Hazard Regulations 2015) Apply			X
If Design Flexibility provided, is this referenced	X		
Are EIAR and NIS referenced		X	
Prescribed Bodies			
Have the Prescribed Bodies specified at conclusion of pre-application consultation been Notified	X		
Planning Statement			
Renewable Energy designation policy statement		X	
EIAR			

Have EIAR portal requirements been completed	X - Non-EIAR project		
Are all appendices referenced included	X - Non-EIAR project		
Drawings			
Site Location Map		X	
Site Layout Plan – wayleaves, site notices		X	
Are the Drawing Scales Appropriate		X	

4.1.2 European Green Deal

Table 6 Completeness Check The European Green Deal EU (2021/1119) was launched in December 2019. The Green Deal is a broad policy framework to achieve the aim of carbon neutrality by 2050. Part of the EU Green Deal, the 'Fit for 55 Package' saw the RED II targets revised upward from 32% to 40% renewable energy consumption by 2030. Specific to the Proposed Development, it aims at making the energy system cleaner and more efficient by fostering renewables-based electrification of the energy sector. The Green Deal focuses on three key principles to ensure the transition to clean energy, which are as follows:

1. Ensuring a secure and affordable EU energy supply.
2. Developing a fully integrated, interconnected and digitalised EU energy market.
3. Prioritising energy efficiency, improving the energy performance of our buildings and developing a power sector based largely on renewable sources.

4.1.3 REPower EU

The REPowerEU Plan was launched in May 2022 aims to rapidly reduce the EU's Dependency on the importation of Russian fossil fuels through the diversification of energy supply and through the acceleration of clean energy provision. As a result of the strategy, EU Directive 2023/2413, adopted in October 2023 revised the renewable energy targets set out in the RED II Directive to upwards to 42.5% for each member state. With a specific focus on solar renewable energy, the REPowerEU Plan sets an objective of doubling solar photovoltaic capacity by 2025, and to install 600GW by 2030. The Proposed Development aligns with the ambitious targets and objectives set out at a European level, specifically the target of 42% of energy from renewable energy resources by 2030, and 600GW of installed solar energy by 2030.

4.2 National Policy

National policy has developed in line with European and International policies, targets and commitments, with specific regard to the importance and urgency of decarbonising the energy generation sector and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Proposed Development complies with the nationally stated need to provide a greater amount of renewable energy onto the national grid and will further reduce the national reliance on fossil fuels for electricity generation.

4.2.1 Programme for Government 2025

The Programme for Government 2025 (published in January 2025) states in relation to climate change that the next ten years are a critical period in addressing the climate crisis. It is therefore an ambition of the programme to more than halve carbon emissions over the course of the decade (2020-2030). The programme further notes that the government are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by an

average 7% per annum over the next decade in a push to achieve a net zero emissions by the year 2050. The programme also recognises the severity of the climate challenge as it clarifies that “*climate change is the single greatest threat facing humanity*”.

In the context of the Programme for Government 2025 and overarching renewable energy targets, the objectives of decreasing demand for traditional energy resources and increasing uptake of renewable energy are an encouraging indicator that on-going efforts to transition to a national renewable energy system are succeeding. However, Ireland still faces significant challenges to meet its EU targets for renewable energy by 2030 and its commitment to transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. As such, the urgency to continue decarbonisation of the energy network in order to meet future targets remains a critical impetus for continued investment within renewable energy. The Proposed Development will significantly contribute towards Ireland meeting its energy and climate targets along with addressing the country’s over-dependence on imported fossil fuels.

4.2.2 Project Ireland 2040

‘Project Ireland 2040’ comprises the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2030, both of which stress the urgency required to decarbonise Irish society. This is reflected in the NPF through National Strategic Outcome 8: “*Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy*”. The NDP emphasises the importance of addressing climate change, stating “*The next 10 years are critical if we are to address the climate crisis and ensure a safe and bright future for the planet, and all of us on it*”. The NDP sets out a Renewable Electricity Share (RES-E) target of 80% by 2030, calling for an “*unprecedented commitment to the decarbonisation of electricity supplies*”.

The first draft of the revised National Planning Framework, published in July 2024, includes national policy objectives that support the accelerated roll-out of the renewable electricity and the development of national electricity grid infrastructure. The draft revision also includes regional renewable electricity allocations, for which the southern region has an allocation of installing a further 978MW of onshore wind energy by 2030.

4.2.3 National Planning Framework First Revision (2025)

On the 8th of April 2025, the Government approved the National Planning Framework First Revision (Revised NPF) which was subsequently passed through both Houses of the Oireachtas. The Revised NPF aims to address changes that have occurred in Ireland since 2018.

The Revised NPF provides an updated projection for the population of Ireland, with the population expected to increase to 6.1 million by 2040. This population growth will place further demand on both the built and natural environment, and subsequently, the services required to meet said demands. In order to strengthen and facilitate more environmentally focused planning at the local level, the Revised NPF states that future planning and development will need to:

“Tackle Ireland’s higher than average carbon-intensity per capita and enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, through harnessing our country’s prodigious renewable energy potential.”

National Strategic Outcome 8 (Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society) 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 which connects established and emerging energy sources, i.e. renewables, to major sources of demand.

Chapter 9: Climate Transition and Our Environment, aims to address key national environmental challenges including the transition to a climate neutral economy, sustainable land management, renewable energy and resource efficiency. As per NPO 70, the Revised NPF highlights the importance of renewable energy infrastructure to achieve national climate action targets.

“Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a climate neutral economy by 2050.”

Regional Renewable Energy Capacity Allocations have been introduced under the Revised NPF. This was one of the key actions under CAP24 and is supported within CAP25. The Northern and Western Region, in which the Proposed Development is located, is allocated a target of installing an additional 1,389 MW of onshore wind energy by 2030.

Under NPO 74 Regional Assemblies are required to plan for the delivery of the regional renewable electricity capacity allocations outlined in the Revised NPF and identify allocations for each of the local authorities within their RSES. Furthermore, NPO 75 requires Local Authorities to plan for the delivery of Target Power Capacity (MW) allocations consistent with the relevant RSES, through their City and County Development Plans. At the time of writing, no local Target Power Capacity allocations have been established, however it is clear from the regional allocation that the Northern and Western Region is set to deliver a significant amount of onshore wind energy in the coming years.

The introduction of renewable energy targets represents a more active and prescriptive approach to land use planning for renewable energy development. The Revised NPF aligns the national target of 9GW of onshore wind energy with the policies and objectives of Local Authorities. In regard to this, it is clear that the provision of new renewable energy generation through the Proposed Development is in line with aims and objectives of the Revised NPF, which seeks to transition to a carbon neutral economy.

4.2.4 Climate Action Plan 2025

The Climate Action Plan 2025 ('the CAP') was published on the 15th of April 2025 and is read as an update to CAP 2024. The CAP sets out a roadmap to delivery on Ireland's climate ambition. At the time of publication, the CAP identified the key sources of Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions include agriculture (34.3%), Transport (19.5%) and Energy (12.9%). Current and future actions require the full implementation of measures from the CAP 2025, and further future Climate Action Plans. Under Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP 25), the state has committed to achieving 6 GW of onshore wind energy by 2025 and 9GW by 2030. There is also a commitment to achieve up to 5GW of solar energy by 2025 and 8GW by 2030. To achieve emissions abatement targets, CAP 24 has identified that an approximate eight-times increase of renewable energy deployment to 2.3 GW annually would be needed between 2024 and 2030.

4.2.5 National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021 – 2030

Published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in 2021 and updated in July 2024, the National Energy & Climate Plan (NECP) was produced in accordance with EU Regulation 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action. The NECP identifies 5 'dimensions' which form the basis of the policies and measures outlined in the plan. These dimensions have associated key objectives to be achieved over the NECPs lifetime. Most relevant to the Proposed Development are the dimensions relating to decarbonisation and energy security, the key objectives are outlined below.

- Ireland has established an objective of achieving a 43% share of renewable energy in energy consumption by 2030.
- Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 80%.
- Onshore wind capacity of up to 9 GW. & 8 GW solar
- Up to 5 GW of solar by 2025 and 8 GW of solar by 2030.
- Ireland is committed to maintaining the security of our energy system in the most cost-effective manner.

The Proposed Development will progress the key objectives of the NECP, particularly the dimensions relating to decarbonisation and energy security, by adding a new renewable electricity generator to the national grid.

4.2.6

The Climate Change Advisory Council Annual Review 2024

The Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) are an independent advisory body tasked with assessing and advising on how Ireland can achieve the transition to a climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable, and climate-neutral economy. The Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) open their 'Annual Review 2024-Summary for All' quite starkly, stating "... progress to reduce emissions is not sufficient for Ireland to meet its national and EU climate obligations. Reliance on fossil fuels needs to end, and urgent action is required to ensure that people, places and nature can adapt to the changing climate and prepare for rapidly emerging climate risks. The current rate of policy implementation is too slow and fragmented, and more effective engagement across all segments of policy and society is required to empower sustainable decision-making and to understand and remove barriers to action." In addition, the standout recommendation from the CCAC is that "So that Ireland can end its reliance on fossil fuels, Government should cease subsidising fossil fuel consultation and increase funding and make it more accessible to enable and accelerate the rapid uptake of low-carbon technologies and alternatives across all sectors." In relation to the electricity sector specifically planning reform continues to be cited as a key area requiring urgent attention.

4.2.7

The Climate Change Advisory Council Annual Review 2025 – Electricity

The CCAC published its annual review in April 2025 where it outlines detailed observations and recommendations for the Electricity sector in Ireland. This review emphasises the urgent need for Ireland to accelerate its transition to renewable energy to meet its 2030 electricity capacity targets and adhere to sectoral emissions ceilings. The CCAC states:

"To meet the carbon budgets, emissions from the Electricity sector will need to reach zero by the end of the 2030s. In 2024, electricity emissions fell by approximately 7% relative to 2023, reaching the lowest level since record-keeping began in 1990. This was driven by a continued decline in the use of coal for electricity generation, coupled with a notable rise in imported electricity for the second consecutive year. Renewable energy is still not being rolled out fast enough, and insufficient investment in the electricity grid means that some of the renewable energy we currently generate cannot be used. Emissions are currently projected to exceed the sectoral emissions ceiling, even in the most optimistic scenario."

Key observations in relation to Renewable Electricity are outlined below:

- In 2024, 1.6 GW of onshore wind (0.7 GW) and solar (0.9 GW) projects received planning permission, but only 0.5 GW (0.2 GW wind, 0.3 GW solar) were connected, which is well below the 1.8 GW annual target needed to achieve 2030 targets.
- Grid constraints led to 1,266 GWh (10.1% of the total available wind energy) of wind and energy being curtailed.
- During 2024, an additional 0.5 GW (0.2 GW wind and 0.3 GW solar) of new utility scale renewable capacity was connected, representing a decrease compared with the 0.6 GW connected in 2023 and significantly below the 1.8 GW annual average increase in capacity that is required to meet 2030 targets.

4.2.8

Energy in Ireland (December 2024)

In December 2024, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) released an annual publication 'Energy in Ireland' report which looks at trends in national energy use and at the underlying driving forces, such as the economy and weather, and more recently the impacts of high energy prices. It also examines GHG emissions from energy use, energy security, cost competitiveness, and Ireland's progress towards EU renewable energy targets.

The report identifies that Ireland's national energy-related emissions in 2023 were at their lowest level in over 30 years. Energy-related emissions in 2023 were 31.4 MtCO₂eq, down 8.3% on 2022 levels, and lower even than those observed during the height of COVID impacts in 2020. Energy-related emissions fell by over 2.8 MtCO₂eq in 2023 - the largest annual reduction observed in 12 years. The following are some of the key points, relating to renewable energy and energy emissions:

- Ireland's national energy-related emissions have fallen for seven of the last ten years.
- 14.1% of Ireland's primary energy was renewable in 2023, with fossil fuel remaining the dominant source of Ireland's energy.
- Wind generation provided 33.7% of electricity supply in 2023.
- 2023 electricity emissions were 7.6 MtCO₂eq, the lowest on record, down 22% on 2022 levels.
- 2023 was the first year in which fossil fuel generation accounted for less than half of Ireland's gross electricity supply.
- In 2023, Ireland had 4.74 GW of installed wind capacity, up 4.5% on the previous year.

The report states that the amount of renewable energy from solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generation in Ireland increased significantly in 2023. Ireland generated 0.65 TWh of solar PV, up 335% on 2022 levels. The rapid increase in solar PV was due to the connection of several utility-scale solar farms to the grid in later 2022 and early 2023. In just one year, electricity generation from these large-scale solar farms exceeded that from all rooftop solar generation. In 2023, just under two-thirds of all solar PV generation in Ireland came from solar farms.

The report then goes on to state the following: "*Renewable capacity must be added faster than electricity demand increases. We must do everything we can to support the roll-out of both onshore and offshore wind and grid-connected solar PV capacity*". (emphasis added).

4.2.9

Ireland's Climate Change Assessment (January 2024)

In January 2024, the EPA published Ireland's Climate Change Assessment (ICCA). This assessment provides a comprehensive overview and breakdown of the state of knowledge around key aspects of climate change with a focus on Ireland. The ICCA report is presented in four volumes.

- Volume 1: Climate Science - Ireland in a Changing World
- Volume 2: Achieving Climate Neutrality in 2050
- Volume 3: Being Prepared for Ireland's Future
- Volume 4: Realising the Benefits of Transition and Transformation

The ICCA Synthesis Report states that having peaked in 2001, Ireland's GHG emissions have reduced in all sectors except agriculture. However, Ireland currently emits more GHGs per person than the EU average. The ICCA Synthesis Report goes on to state that there has been an identified gap in policy that indicates that Ireland will not meet its statutory GHG emission targets. Achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 requires significant and unprecedented changes to Ireland's energy system. Policies tailored to suit different stages of technology development are critical for achieving a net zero energy system. Established technologies, such as wind energy, solar photovoltaics and bioenergy will be key in meeting short-term emission reduction targets (i.e. 2030), whereas offshore wind infrastructure is expected to be the backbone of future energy systems. This can only be achieved with appropriate support schemes, regulation and investments for synergistic growth of offshore wind and other renewable technologies.

In relation to Ireland's target of achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 and the role renewable energy will contribute to this; the ICCA Synthesis Report states the following:

"There are well-established 'no-regret options' that need to happen now, which can get us most of the way to net zero carbon dioxide emissions. Beyond that, there are 'future energy choices' relating to the scale and magnitude of technologies that will help get us all the way. Ireland's no-regret options are demand reduction (e.g. through energy efficiency and reduced consumption), electrification (e.g. electric vehicles and heat pumps), deployment of market-ready renewables (e.g. wind energy and solar photovoltaics) and low-carbon heating options (e.g. district heating), while our future choices include hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, nuclear energy and electro fuels. Renewable energy can

increasingly provide our future energy needs but will need to be complemented with carbon dioxide removals to achieve a net zero energy system in hard-to-abate sectors”.

4.3 Regional Policy

4.3.1 Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region 2019 - 2031

The Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region 2019 - 2031 (RSES) provides a strategic planning framework for the Eastern and Midlands region of Ireland. The principal statutory purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of the NPF / National Development Plan and the economic policies and objectives of the Government. The RSES sets out a vision for the region which includes the action to “Pursue climate mitigation in line with global and national targets and harness the potential for a more distributed renewables-focussed energy system to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050”. It also provides a Climate Action Strategy - “to accelerate the climate action, ensure a clean and healthy environment and to promote sustainable transport and strategic green infrastructure”.

It's overarching strategy is made up of 3 key principles, one of which is Climate Action which addresses the need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon society recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this. Under this principle are 6 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) which address climate change.

Chapter 7, Environment and Climate, provides a five-part strategy which is intended to reduce emissions by 40% by 2030 and support transition to a low carbon Region by 2050. Furthermore, it highlights priority areas for action to address climate change including:

- Decarbonising the Energy Sector
- Support Transition to a Low Carbon, Circular & Climate Resilient Region
- Resilience of Critical Infrastructure

In line with this strategy, the RSES sets out a series of Regional Policy Outcomes (RPO), which are specific outcomes aimed to steer the Regions growth and development in line with the key objective of the RSES.

It is considered that the Proposed Development accords with these provisions and it is clear that the RSES actively encourage the development of commercial scale solar PV farms such as the one which is the subject of this planning application. As per the National and Regional Policy documents outlined above it is evident that renewable energy production is of significant importance for both Europe and Ireland to achieve reduced carbon emissions. Solar energy production provides an opportunity for Ireland to increase renewable energy availability, diversify the countries energy provision and move away from fossil fuel reliance. The Proposed Development is intended to aid in the fulfilment of this renewable energy progression by increasing indigenous solar energy production in Ireland.

4.4 Local Policy

4.4.1 Meath Development Plan 2021 – 2027

The subject site is located within the functional area of Meath County Council, and the relevant policy document is the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied (the Plan). The original Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (adopted on 22nd September 2021) has been superseded by the Consolidated version of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (includes Variations 1 & 2 adopted on the 13th of May 2024 & Variation 3 adopted on the 27th of January 2025) and came into effect on the 3rd of November 2021.

A Climate Change Adaptation Strategy has been prepared for the MCDP as part of the requirements of the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2012). Climate change is a cross-cutting theme of

the plan and is specifically addressed in detail as part of Chapter 10 Climate Change. This chapter outlines the approach to climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas mitigation, as required by the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. This chapter highlights the need to reduce the overall quantity of greenhouse gas emissions and to develop an adaptation strategy to manage anticipated future climate risks.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies have been incorporated into the core policies and objectives of the MCDP. The Energy mitigation strategy is to “*Encourage the uptake of more renewable energy sources*” therefore policies and objectives need to focus on reducing demand and need for fossil fuels and increase uptake of renewable energies.

The relevant policies and objectives are as follows:

- **INF POL 34**
To promote sustainable energy sources, locally based renewable energy alternatives, where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity, natural and built heritage, residential or local amenities.
- **INF POL 35**
To seek a reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources utilising the natural resources of the County in an environmentally acceptable manner consistent with best practice and planning principles.
- **INF POL 42**
To support the identification, in conjunction with EMRA, of Strategic Energy Zones, areas suitable to accommodate large energy generating projects within the Eastern and Midlands Regional area.
- **INF POL 44**
To support Sustainable Energy Communities and local community group initiatives to develop clean energy opportunities within the county.
- **INF OBJ 39**
To support Ireland’s renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and bio-energy at suitable locations within the County where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities so as to provide for further residential and enterprise development within the county.
- **INF OBJ 41**
To promote the generation and supply of low carbon and renewable energy alternatives, having regard to the opportunities offered by the settlement hierarchy of the County and the built environment.
- **INF OBJ 42**
To support the recording and monitoring of renewable energy potential in the County in partnership with other stakeholders including the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).
- **INF OBJ 47**
To investigate the preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy promoting technologies which are most viable in the County.

It is evident that Meath County Council are generally in support of the development of solar farms such as that being proposed. The MCDP sets out general guidance and development management standards against which proposals for solar development will be assessed, as set out below –

- **INF OBJ 28:** To ensure that proposals for the development of solar farms located within areas identified as being within Flood zones A or B are subject to a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment as per the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009 for Planning Authorities (or any updated guidelines).

A Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared by Langan Consulting Engineers, and accompanies this planning application. The Flood Risk Assessment is also detailed in Section 5.5 of this PER.

- **DM OBJ 77:** In the assessment of individual proposals, the Council will require the following to be submitted as part of any planning application:
 - Glint & Glare Assessment
 - Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
 - Biodiversity Management Plan
 - Public Consultation details
 - Noise Assessment
 - Socio-Economic Assessment
 - EIA Screening
 - Ecology Assessment
 - Archaeology Assessment
 - Traffic & Transport Assessment
 - Landscape and Visual Assessment
 - Hydrology Appraisal/Flood Risk Assessment
 - Decommissioning/Restoration Plan

A comprehensive planning application has been prepared for the proposed solar development in full compliance with the requirements of DM OBJ 77 of the Plan. The application is accompanied by all necessary documentation and supporting assessments to enable a complete and informed evaluation by the Planning Authority. It is considered that the submitted material provides a robust basis for decision-making and fully addresses the criteria set out under this objective.

4.4.2 Meath Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029

Meath County Council has prepared this Climate Action Plan (CAP), to create a low carbon and climate resilient County, by delivering and promoting best practice in climate action, at the local level. This CAP is aligned to the Government's overall National Climate Objective, which seeks to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It supports the development and protection of renewable energy infrastructure to help decarbonise the national grid and provide a low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels.

4.5 Planning Appraisal Conclusion

The principle of developing a solar farm of this nature and scale, as proposed by Circal has been established through the site's planning history. The Proposed Development aligns with the strategic planning context of European, national, regional, and local policies and objectives. Additionally, solar energy production offers Ireland an opportunity to increase renewable energy availability, diversify its energy provision, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. This development will help Ireland achieve both national and European energy targets, along with similar projects proposed throughout the county.

5.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Proposed Development has been subject to a rigorous design process informed by comprehensive planning and environmental assessments and surveys, which have collectively concluded that the proposal is in line with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Specifically, there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Development during either the construction, operational or decommissioning phases of the development nor will the development have any significant effects on any European Sites (as assessed within the accompanying Natura Impact Statement). Potential environmental impacts will be minor and can be managed through standard mitigation and established best practice.

The following sections consider the potential environmental impacts arising from the Proposed Development during both the construction and operational phases of development. The complete impact assessments reports and surveys have been appended to this report and are cited within their respective sections.

5.1

EIA Screening

As noted in Section 2.6 earlier in this report and set out in full in the EIA Screening Determination Report in Appendix 7, having regard to the above, it is clear that none of the statutory thresholds established in Schedule 5 of the Regulations are applicable to the proposed solar PV project, and accordingly, a sub-threshold EIA cannot be requested. Notwithstanding this fact, and for the avoidance of any doubt, a sub-threshold EIA Screening Report (Appendix 7) has been prepared to allow Meath County Council to be fully informed on this matter. The EIA Screening Report has only been prepared on a pre-cautionary basis to demonstrate that the Proposed Development will not result in any significant impacts to the receiving environment. Schedules 7 and 7A of the Regulations sets out the information to be provided by the applicant or developer for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for environmental impact assessment.

As part of the preparation of the EIA Screening Report, a broad range of environmental media have been assessed. No potential impacts of significance were identified during either the construction or operational phase of the Proposed Development's lifetime.

5.2

Biodiversity

The planning application is supported by an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, associated Natura Impact Statement (NIS), Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan and an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). In line with policy the potential for significant effects and/or adverse impacts on the integrity of European Sites is fully assessed in these documents.

5.2.1

Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement

Screening for Appropriate Assessment is required under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). Where it cannot be excluded that a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, would have a significant effect on a European Site then same shall be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The current project is not directly connected with, or necessary for, the management of any European Site. Consequently, the project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process.

The NIS assesses the likely significance of all potential impacts arising from the Proposed Development on the integrity of the relevant Natura 2000 sites. It has been prepared taking into account the precautionary principle and is based on the best scientific knowledge in the field. The information in this NIS ensures that the competent authority is capable of determining that all reasonable scientific doubt has been removed as to the effects of the proposed project on the integrity of the relevant Natura 2000 sites.

The NIS provides a detailed assessment of the Proposed Development and assesses the potential for any residual adverse effects on any European Sites, their integrity or their conservation objectives which might result from the proposed project alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Where the potential for any adverse effect on any European Site has been identified, the pathway by which any such effect may occur has been robustly blocked through the use of avoidance, appropriate design and mitigation measures. The measures set out within the NIS and CEMP will ensure that the proposed works do not prevent or obstruct any of the qualifying interests from reaching favourable conservation status as per Article 1 of the EU Habitats Directive. The potential for the Proposed Development to result in cumulative impacts on any European Sites in combination with other plans and projects was considered in the assessment that is presented in Table 4-1 of the NIS.

Cumulative effects are considered in Section 8.3 of the NIS, and concludes that –

Following the detailed assessment provided in the preceding sections, it is concluded that, the Proposed Development will not adversely affect the integrity of any relevant European site in view of that site's conservation objectives when considered on its own. There is therefore no potential for the Proposed Development to contribute to any cumulative adverse effects on any European Site when considered in-combination with other plans and projects.

In the review of the projects that was undertaken, no connection or pathway, that could potentially result in additional or cumulative impacts was identified. Neither was any potential for different (new) impacts resulting from the combination of the various projects and plans in association with the Proposed Development.

Taking into consideration the reported residual impacts from other plans and projects in the area and the predicted impacts with the current proposal for the reasons set out in detail above, in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field, it has been concluded that the Proposed Development, by itself, or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any relevant European site in view of that site's Conservation Objectives.'

The NIS concludes that –

'This NIS has provided an assessment of all potential direct or indirect adverse effects on European Sites. It has also assessed the potential for in-combination effects on European sites with other plans and projects.

Where the potential for any adverse effect on any European Site has been identified, the pathway by which any such effect may occur has been robustly blocked through the use of avoidance, appropriate design and mitigation measures as set out within this report and its appendices. The measures ensure that the construction and operation of the Proposed Development does not adversely affect the integrity of European sites.

Therefore, it can be objectively concluded in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field that the Proposed Development, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in view of that site's Conservation Objectives.

5.3

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) (Appendix 3) has been prepared for the Proposed Development. The EcIA provides a comprehensive description of the baseline ecological environment and completes a thorough assessment of the impacts of the Proposed Development on biodiversity. Where likely ecologically significant effects are identified, measures are prescribed to avoid or minimise or compensate for such effects.

The EcIA includes a desk study and field surveys as detailed in Section 3: Methodology. A full ecological impact assessment is set out in Section 6 of the report.

A search and review in relation to plans and projects that may have the potential to result in cumulative and/or in-combination impacts on Biodiversity was conducted. The cumulative assessment concluded that

Following the detailed assessment provided in the preceding sections, it is concluded that the Proposed Development will not result in any residual adverse effects on the biodiversity, flora, and fauna of the existing environment, when considered on its own. There is therefore no potential for the Proposed Development to contribute to any cumulative adverse effects on biodiversity when considered in-combination with other plans and projects.

In the review of the projects that was undertaken, no connection that could potentially result in additional or cumulative impacts was identified. Neither was any potential for different (new) impacts resulting from the combination of the various projects and plans in association with the Proposed Development.

Taking into consideration the reported residual impacts from other plans and projects in the area and the predicted impacts with the current proposal, no residual cumulative impacts have been identified with regard to the biodiversity, flora, and fauna of the existing environment.

5.4

Noise and Vibration

A Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Report (Appendix 12) has been prepared by MKO, and accompanies this planning application. The assessment includes the identification of the nearest receptors, description of the baseline soundscape, description and assessment of the proposed construction noise levels arising from the Proposed Development and potential vibration impacts of same. Additionally, operational noise impacts are described and assessed, as well as the potential cumulative impacts arising in conjunction with other sources.

L_{Aeq} 1h levels at all receptors due to onsite construction works will be lower than the 70 dB TII criterion at all receptors. Apart from two exceptions, levels will also be lower than the 65 dB BS 5228-1:2009 criterion, specific mitigation measures are not warranted in most cases. The applicant nonetheless proposes to apply general mitigation measures throughout the construction phase, which are outlined in Section 6 of the Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Report. The noted exception, consist of received L_{Aeq} 1h levels during local mini-piling operations reaching 66 and 68 dB respectively. This activity will be temporary, and is expected to last less than two days in the vicinity of each receptor. The most effective mitigation measure is prior notification to residents at these receptors in advance of local mini-piling works.

Following commissioning, noise levels at receptors due to the Proposed Development will be markedly lower than the 55 dB daytime, 50 dB evening and 45 dB night-time EPA and WHO criteria. Operational phase noise impacts, when assessed with reference to IEMA guidance, will be imperceptible at all receptors. Specific mitigation measures are therefore not warranted.

Given the predicted compliance with construction phase noise criteria, construction phase noise monitoring is not warranted. Once operational, the facility will be required to comply with any noise criteria attached to planning permission, and noise monitoring may be undertaken where specified by planning permission.

5.5

Flood Risk Assessment

Langan Consulting Engineers (LCE) carried out a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) (Appendix 15) to accompany this planning application to Meath County Council for the Proposed Development. The full assessment is available in the Flood Risk Assessment enclosed with this application.

The detailed Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) consisted of a desk study, site visit and survey, assessment of historical flooding in the area and an assessment of the impact of the development on flooding in the area. This assessment was carried out in accordance with the Office of Public Works (OPW) “*Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines*” as published in November 2009 by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

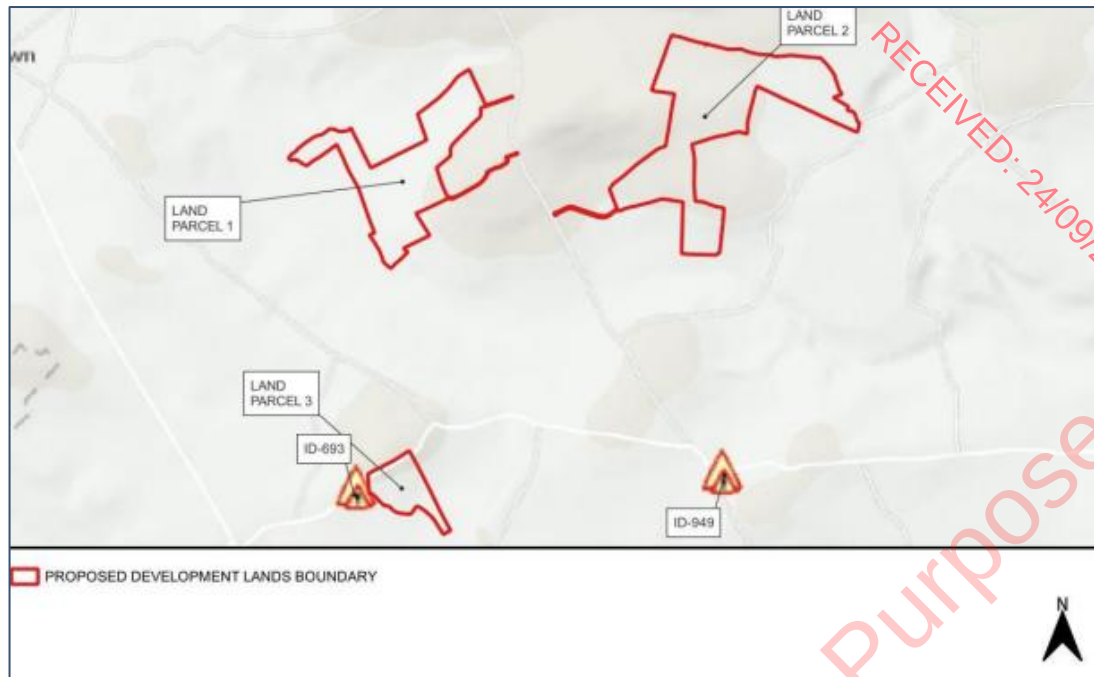


Figure 9 Closest record floods as per floodinfo.ie

Review of the OPW's Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) maps note lands to the west of Parcel 1 and lands to the north and south of land Parcel 2 are estimated as flooding in the 1 in 100-year fluvial event. Flood zones were defined using this information. The vast majority of the Proposed Development lands are in Flood Zone C. Small portions of lands at the westerly extents of land parcel 1, and to the northerly and southerly extents of land parcel 2, are located in Flood Zone A/B.

All utility units, essential infrastructure such as transformers and substations, access and egress routes within the Proposed Development are located within Flood Zone C. The vast majority of solar panels are located in Flood Zone C, with some in Flood Zone A/B. Solar panels are constructed for external use and to withstand weather events, and are therefore appropriate to be located in Flood Zones A/B. The proposed elevated solar panel infrastructure is supported on ground mounted, galvanised steel frames, with a minimum panel height of 900mm above ground level, 400mm higher than the estimated maximum flood depth during the 1 in 100-year flood event, including an allowance for climate change. The frames are flood resilient and water compatible. The slender framework proposed ensures there will be no loss of flood storage within the flood plain.

The FRA concludes that –

‘The development, as described in this report, will have negligible impact of the current flood risk and will not increase the existing risk of flooding elsewhere’.

5.6

Landscape and Visual Assessment

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (Appendix 8) has been prepared by MKO and is submitted with the planning application. The LVIA assesses the potential impacts on the landscape as a result of the proposed development primarily through the use of photomontages to carry out visual comparison. The LVIA establishes a landscape and visual baseline through identifying the landscape policy context, sensitive landscape receptors and the selection of photomontage viewpoints. A field survey took place in May 2025 to investigate the topography, drainage, landcover and land use of the site. The gathered data was used to establish the landscape context and baseline of the subject site. This informed an assessment of the landscape value which was deemed to be Low.

The LVIA concludes that the predicted landscape impact of the Proposed Development is considered to be Low. While the subject site will undergo change as a result of the Proposed Development, the strategic siting, design and landscaping of the Proposed Development will help to preserve and conserve the integrity

of all sensitive landscape receptors on the site. The LVIA concludes that the Proposed Development can be effectively accommodated into the receiving environment. Please refer to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for full details on the methodology and conclusions.

5.7

Glint and Glare

MKO have prepared a Glint and Glare Assessment (Appendix 10) to address the possible effect of glint and glare arising from the Proposed Development. Potential occurrences of solar glint and glare from the Proposed Development have been assessed in relation to 132 no. residential receptors and the R163 Regional Road within the 1km Study Area for the assessment of glint and glare effects. As a result of substantial levels of visual screening surrounding the site from existing hedgerows and treelines and stands of dense vegetation, as well as mitigation measures included in the Landscape Plan accompanying this planning application, there will be no instances where Substantial glare will occur on the residential and road receptors identified.

In relation to aviation receptors, the Navan Airfield, is located 1.3km south from the Proposed Development at its closest point, and glare was assessed on both the eastern and western approach to this small recreational airport. Any potential glare is likely to be brief in duration, at the start of an easterly approach in the very periphery of views with greatest elevation and set back distance from the runway. While glare will potentially occur at points on the eastern approach to the runway, no adverse effects on aviation safety are anticipated for this small recreational airport. Please refer to the Glint and Glare Assessment for details on the full methodology and assessment.

5.8

Air and Climate

Construction activities can result in temporary effects from dust (PM_{10} / $PM_{2.5}$). Dust is a generic term usually refers to particulate matter in the size range of 1-75 microns in diameter. The most common impacts from dust emissions are soiling and increased ambient PM_{10} concentration. Dust can arise from numerous construction activities such as concrete batching, excavation, piling, wind erosion on material stockpiles and earth moving. It can be mechanically transported either via wind or through the movements of vehicles onto public highways (transport of debris on vehicle wheels or uncovered loads).

Guidance from the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM)¹ recommends splitting the construction activities into four separate source categories (demolition, earthworks, construction and trackout) and determining the dust risk associated with each of these individually as set out in Table 7. Due to the nature of the proposed construction activities, demolition is not considered relevant in this specific assessment.

Table 7 Determination of Dust Emissions Magnitudes (IAQM)

Source	Large	Medium	Small
Earthworks	Total site area >10,000m ² , potentially dusty soil type (e.g. clay, which will be prone to suspension when dry to due small particle size), >10 heavy earth moving vehicles active at any one time, formation of bunds >8m in height, total material moved >100,000 tonnes	Total site area 2,500m ² - 10,000m ² , moderately dusty soil type (e.g. silt), 5-10 heavy earth moving vehicles active at any one time, formation of bunds 4m - 8m in height, total material moved 20,000 tonne - 100,000 tonne	Total site area <2,500m ² , soil type with large grain size (e.g. sand), <5 heavy earth moving vehicles active at any one time, formation of bunds <4m in height, total material moved <10,000tonne, earthworks during wetter months
Construction	Total building volume >100,000m ³ , piling, on site concrete batching; sandblasting	Total building volume 25,000m ³ - 100,000m ³ , potentially dusty construction material (e.g. concrete), piling, on site concrete batching	Total building volume <25,000m ³ , construction material with low potential for dust release (e.g. metal cladding or timber)
Trackout	>100 HDV (>3.5t) trips in any one day, potentially dusty surface material (e.g. high clay content), unpaved road length	25-100 HDV (>3.5t) trips in any one day, moderately dusty surface material (e.g.	<25 HDV (>3.5t) trips in any one day, surface material with low potential

¹ Institute of Air Quality Management (2014). 'Guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction.'

Source	Large	Medium	Small
	>100m	high clay content), unpaved road length 50m – 100m	for dust release, unpaved road length <50m

The assessment considers three separate effects from dust:

- Annoyance due to dust soiling;
- Harm to ecological receptors; and
- The risk of human effects due to increased exposure to PM₁₀

The risk of each source for dust effects can be described as ‘negligible’, ‘low risk’, ‘medium risk’ and ‘high risk’ depending on the nature and scale of the construction activities and the proximity of sensitive receptors to the construction activities or site boundary.

Potential dust emissions from the Proposed Development will only occur during the construction and decommissioning phases, and therefore, all effects from the construction dust emissions are described as temporary. Table 8 presents a summary of the dust emission magnitude assigned to each construction activity applicable to the development site.

Table 8 Construction Phase - Determination of Dust Raising Magnitudes

Source	Dust Emission Magnitude	Analysis
Earthworks	Small/Medium	The overall application site boundary exceeds 10,000m ² , however, the entirety of the site will not be subject to earthworks; specifically, no soil/material will be excavated for the solar arrays and the general topography of the land will not be affected. Earthworks will be required for the construction of the internal access track, installation of the underground electrical cabling and ducting, site drainage and the construction of the temporary construction compounds and substation compound (future application) and installation of foundations.
Construction	Medium	The total estimated ground disturbance for constructing the solar PV array, 110 kV substation and grid connection is c. 275,544m ² . The construction of the solar arrays (e.g. installation of the frame support structures) will not require concrete but will be driven into the ground using a piling unit. Only ready-mixed concrete will be used during the construction phase, with all concrete being delivered from local batching plants in sealed concrete delivery trucks. The use of ready-mixed concrete deliveries will eliminate any potential environmental risks of on-site batching. It should be emphasised that the majority of building materials required to construct the Proposed Development have low potential for dust release (e.g. metal, steel, etc.).
Trackout	Small/Medium	During construction, the assessment estimated that on average day of construction there will be 4-5 heavy goods vehicles (HGV) (1-way) and 20 cars/light goods vehicles (LGV) per day. The peak traffic demand is forecast for month 4 of construction, when up to 16 HGVs (1-way) movements will be required for the delivery of materials, in addition to 80 daily car/LGVs associated with construction staff a day. In lower-activity months, HGV traffic may reduce to as few as 2 HGVs. There are no trips of significance to remove material from the site with weekly waste removal or staff toilet emptying being typical activities. Shared site access for the solar farm and substation will be constructed early within the first 50-weeks of construction with internal site tracks installed following Week 48. As such, there will be a limited period of time where internal site tracks may comprise potentially dusty material.

Table 9 below presents the sensitivity of the surrounding environment to effects caused by the proposed construction activities.

Table 9 Proposed Development Construction Phase - Determination of Dust Sensitivity

Potential Impact	Sensitivity of the Surrounding Environment			
	Earthworks	Construction	Trackout	Analysis
Sensitivity of the area to dust soiling	Low	Low	Low	There are 132 no. residential receptors identified within 1km of the project site; however, due to the site's setback distance from the local road network (arising from the intervening field systems and significant vegetative screening along the entirety of the site's boundary), there is a minimum 22m separation distance between the development and

Potential Impact	Sensitivity of the Surrounding Environment			
	Earthworks	Construction	Trackout	Analysis
				all residential dwellings (not owned by involved landowners). This setback distance is considered effective in limiting potential air quality impacts arising from potential dust emissions. There are residential properties situated along the public road network however, these transportation routes are paved and dust emissions from construction vehicles will be minimal / negligible due to the nature of the construction activities (e.g. reuse excavated materials in the reinstatement of and landscaping areas, where appropriate).
Sensitivity of the area - Human Health ²	Low	Low	Low	Background PM ₁₀ and PM _{2.5} concentrations are not available for Rathcoon townland with the nearest air monitoring station located in Navan (c. 8.7km south of the project site). There have been no recorded exceedances of the 24-hour limit for PM ₁₀ (50 µg/m ³) in the last month. Due to the distance between the project site and monitoring, these background exceedances are considered highly conservative in the context of the project. Furthermore, the general location of the project site indicates that any human exposure to dust would be transient in the context of the surrounding rural / agricultural setting.
Sensitivity of the area - Ecology	Low	Low	Low	Excavation activities may result in minor temporary generation of dust in the immediate locality of the works area. There are no key ecological receptors located within or immediate adjacent to the proposed excavation work areas, and therefore, no significant impacts on biodiversity from potential dust emissions have been identified.

Based on the above assessment, the overall effect of dust nuisance and/ or loss of amenity from the construction phase is described as a Low Risk, without mitigation. As referenced above in Table 9, and further discussed in the accompanying Ecological Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) and Natura Impact Statement, localised effects from potential dust emissions on flora and fauna are not considered significant. Notwithstanding, the attached CEMP (Appendix 5 Section 3.5 – Dust Control) sets out several mitigation measures which will limit dust emissions and prevent construction debris arising on the public road network during the construction phase of development. Mitigation measures will include, but are not limited to:

- Any site entrances with the potential to give rise to dust will be regularly watered, if required, during dry and/or windy conditions.
- The designated public roads outside the site and along the main transport routes to the site will be regularly inspected by Site Management for cleanliness and cleaned as necessary.
- Material handling systems and material storage areas, if required will be designed and laid out to minimise exposure to wind.
- Water misting will be utilised on-site as required to mitigate dust in dry weather conditions.
- The transport of soils, aggregates, or other material, which has significant potential to generate dust, will be undertaken in tarpaulin-covered vehicles where necessary.
- Daily inspection of construction sites to examine dust measures and their effectiveness.
- All vehicles leaving the construction areas of the site will rinse their wheels at a designated wheel wash area prior to entering the local road network.
- All construction related traffic will have speed restrictions on un-surfaced areas within the site.

Potential dust emissions from the construction of the Proposed Development will only occur during the construction or decommissioning phases of development, thus all effects from dust emissions are described

² PM₁₀ 24-hour threshold limit - 50 µg/m³ and PM_{2.5} Calendar Year threshold limit - 25 µg/m³

as temporary. There are no predicted impacts from dust during operation, and therefore, no mitigation proposed in relation to potential operational effects on air quality.

5.9 Traffic and Transport

A Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) Report has been prepared by Langan Consulting Engineers and accompanies this application (Appendix 13). The TTA considers the receiving environment, traffic generation and impact, along with likely impact and associated mitigation.

Traffic counts were undertaken by Idaso Ltd. at 5 no. locations. The Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) surveys were conducted over a full seven-day period from 14th May 2025 at the following locations, which are listed and shown in Figure 10 below -

- ATC 1 - Navan 110kV Substation
- ATC 2 - Castletown Kilbery Road
- ATC 3 - Kilbery Cross
- ATC 4 - R163/L74162 Junction
- ATC 5 - L7416

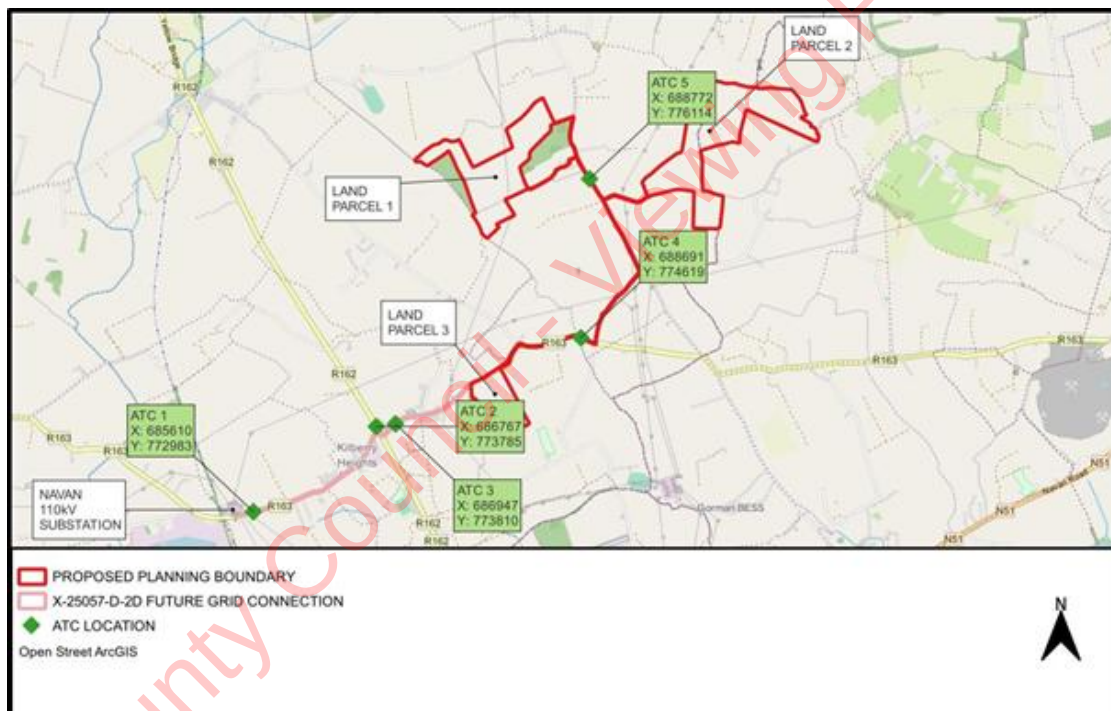


Figure 10 Location of ATC surveys

Construction traffic is expected to occur in 2027-2028, thus the traffic data collected in 2025 has been adjusted for projected 2027 traffic, with an applied growth factor established from Transport Infrastructure Ireland's guidelines. The adjusted traffic flows are shown in Table 5.1 of the TTA report.

During the 12-month construction programme, daily traffic volumes will vary according to the works scheduled for each month. On average, the development is expected to generate approximately 7 HGVs (1-way) and 89 cars/LGVs per day. The peak traffic demand is forecast for Month 4, when up to 16 HGVs (1-way) – equivalent to 32 HGV movements – will be required for the delivery of materials such as mounting frames, solar panels, hard-core, and substation components, in addition to 80 daily car/LGV associated with construction staff. In lower-activity months, HGV traffic may reduce to as few as 2 movements per day.

During the operational phase, typical traffic generation will be in the region of four visits per year by a service engineer. Additional occasional visits may be required for repairs to plant or equipment over the lifetime of the project.

The Proposed Development has one existing entrance for each land parcel. The entrances for Land Parcel 1 and Land Parcel 2 are located along the L-7416 and are considered adequate for agricultural traffic. Land Parcel 3 also has an existing entrance; however, a new entrance is proposed under the solar farm planning application to provide adequate sightlines for construction and operational traffic.

It is proposed to create a new bell mouth type entrance, into the private land of the landowner's farmyard, circa 150m northeast of the existing entrance. This entrance will provide adequate, safe sightlines in accordance with TII and planning guidelines. A section of existing hedgerow will be set back as part of the works. The new entrance will be re-planted at set back location. A new double gate will be installed at set back distance of 20 metres from the road edge to facilitate HGV movements.

To reduce potential traffic and safety issues during construction, a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been prepared by Langan Consulting Engineers. Key mitigation measures include -

- Constructing new entrances with adequate sightlines for safety.
- Providing sufficient on-site parking for staff.
- Encouraging car-pooling among staff.
- Setting back gates at least 20 meters from the public road to prevent congestion.
- Ensuring adequate turning circles within construction compounds for large vehicles.
- Placing advance warning signs for proposed entrances.
- Coordinating deliveries of materials to avoid peak traffic times.
- Scheduling HGV deliveries to avoid peak morning/evening traffic and not coincide with LGV arrivals.
- Implementing measures to keep public roads free of mud, dust, and debris.
- Conducting pre- and post-construction road condition surveys to ensure roads are restored if damaged.

The Traffic and Transport Assessment concludes that -

'In summary, with the proposed mitigation measures in place, the Proposed Development construction traffic can be effectively managed, minimising disruption to local roads and ensuring safe, efficient operations throughout the project.'

5.10

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Assessment

An Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Rubicon Archaeology, and accompanies this planning application (Appendix 16). This assessment outlines the likely significant effects on Cultural Heritage and Archaeology arising from the Proposed Development. The construction, operational and decommissioning phase of the Proposed Development have been fully considered in this assessment. The full assessment is included with this application.

The assessment details that the assessment carried out has been based on desktop research, GIS analysis, site inspections and photographic record. An inspection of the Proposed Development site was carried out in May 2025 where a photographic record was made of the site and any relevant monuments or structures of interest were inspected and assessed. In total, there are 110 known or suspected monuments within the study area (see Section 1.2 of the Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment), of which three are noted as redundant records. There are 6 no. National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) registration which all have Protected Structures listing as well (CH097-CH102). There are 4 no. undesignated cultural heritage sites (UCHs), 2 no. areas of archaeological potential (AAPs), and two townland boundaries crossed. There are 2 no. Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) CH001 and CH002 (ME018-058---/ ME018-056---) within the development boundary. The application boundary does not cross any Zones of Notification for Record of Monuments and Places (RMPs). Please refer to Table 8 of the Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment which accompanies this planning application for further details on this. It is noted that the Proposed Development crosses townland

boundaries, however, these boundaries have already been broken by the modern road network, and no additional impacts are predicted.

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6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

This section of the Planning and Environmental Report (PER) contains an assessment of the Proposed Development against the key planning policy considerations outlined above in Section 5 of this report.

6.1 Principle of Development

The principle of development is considered acceptable in that the local planning policy framework in the form of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied, is wholly supportive of the continued deployment of renewable energy developments to support the county's transition to a climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. The Council's dedicated Climate Action Plan aims to maximise the energy resources within the county, by *'translating the National Climate Policy into local actions'* and reaching the net zero goal by 2050. In addition, Meath County Council's objective INF OBJ 39 supports solar development, subject to it having no negative impact on the surrounding environment – *'To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and bio-energy at suitable locations within the County where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities so as to provide for further residential and enterprise development within the county.'*

Through early constraints exercises the site layout has been refined, maximising the site area while respecting environmental, ecological and cultural heritage aspects of the site. The Plan's key considerations in relation to large-scale ground mounted solar PV installations are acknowledged and considered as demonstrated in this PER and supporting information. No significant adverse impacts on the built or natural environment, visual character of the landscape or residential amenity will arise as a result of the Proposed Development. As such, it is considered that the principle of a solar PV ground mounted array at the subject site is wholly acceptable and in line with the provisions of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, as varied as set out.

6.2 EIA Screening

As noted in Section 2.6 of this PER, none of the statutory thresholds established in the Section 5 of the Regulations are applicable to the Proposed Development. Notwithstanding this fact, and for the avoidance of doubt, an EIA Screening Determination Report has been prepared by MKO, and accompanies this planning application, to allow Meath County Council to be fully informed on the matter. This report has been prepared to demonstrate that the Proposed Development will not result in any significant impacts to the receiving environment. Schedules 7 and 7A of the Regulations sets out the information to be provided by the applicant or developer for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for environmental impact assessment.

As part of the preparation of the EIA Screening Determination Report, a broad range of environmental media have been assessed. No potential impacts of significance were identified during either the construction or operational phase of the Proposed Development's lifetime.

6.3 Biodiversity

As detailed in Section 5.2 of this PER, an Appropriate Assessment (AA), Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) have been undertaken. In relation to the AA undertaken, it was identified that a potential pathway exists for effects and as such further assessment was undertaken. The subsequent NIS found that there is no potential for direct effects on the European Sites listed as the Proposed Development is located completely outside of any European Site. Potential for indirect effects related to hydrological connections and resulted in best practice environmental control measures being incorporated into the design of the development (refer to Section 6.2 of the NIS for more detail). The NIS provides a detailed assessment of the Proposed Development and assesses the potential for any residual adverse effects on any European Sites, their integrity or conservation objectives. Where the potential for

any adverse effect on any European Site has been identified, the pathway by which any such effect may occur has been robustly blocked through the use of avoidance, appropriate design and mitigation measures.

Based on the assessments of biodiversity, which includes both the Ecological Impact Assessment and the combined Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement reports included with this planning application, as well as the description in Section 5.2 of this PER it is concluded that the proposal is in accordance with the Meath County Development Plan Policy HER POL 31 within the Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy Chapter, which aims to *'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).* The reports accompanying this planning application identify and assess important natural heritage and biodiversity within the site and surrounding area. The Proposed Development is not considered to be in contravention of the policies and objectives within the plan.

As part of the Proposed Development, a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP) has been prepared by MKO. The BEMP has been included in the planning application to ensure that the Proposed Development will result in a net gain in biodiversity. The BEMP provides for the following –

- Bolstering of 16104.6m of hedgerow
- Planting 146.25m of new hedgerow in Area 3
- 6.2 ha worth of field margins to be maintained (or 10016.86 m)
- Management of 137.4 ha of grassland to promote greater diversity.

With the implementation of the above, the losses of linear habitats to facilitate the Proposed Development will be offset, and a net gain in such habitat will be achieved.

6.4

Noise and Vibration

Section 5.4 above sets out the findings of the Noise and Vibrations Impact Assessment, as prepared by MKO which supports this planning application. The assessment has been undertaken in line with the relevant guidance as set out and industry best practice. Ultimately, no significant direct or indirect effects associated with the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development has been detected. As such the Proposed Development is in line with INF OBJ 39 of the Meath County Development Plan, as discussed above.

The County Meath Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 describes a strategic plan based on noise mapping undertaken in 2022, and has been considered as part of the Noise and Vibrations Impact Assessment. The nearest major roads subject to mapping are a segment of national route N51 in the vicinity of Slane, 4.2 km southeast of the Proposed Development site, and the M3 motorway 7.5 km to the southwest. In this context, the Proposed Development will not have any implications for the noise action plan.

6.5

Flood Risk

Langan Consulting Engineering have prepared a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) of the Proposed Development, discussed in Section 5.5 of the PER, and included as a report to support this planning application. This is in accordance with INF OBJ 28 of the Meath Development Plan. The FRA undertook a desk study, site visit and survey and assessment in accordance with the Office of Public Works and Department of the Environment and Local Government's Guidelines. The FRA aligns with national and local guidelines.

The Proposed Development includes infrastructure compatible with wet ground conditions, as well as strategically raising the panels to a minimum height of 900mm above ground level. As essential infrastructure as noted within the guidelines, will be located entirely within Flood Zone C, which is considered appropriate for this type of development.

The drainage design for the site will include all sources of flooding, will be designed to minimise flood risk and include sustainable flood risk measures, such as SuDS where suitable.

6.6 Landscape & Visual Impact

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (Appendix 8) has been prepared by MKO and is submitted with the planning application. The LVIA assesses the potential impacts on the landscape as a result of the proposed development primarily through the use of photomontages to carry out visual comparison. The LVIA establishes a landscape and visual baseline through identifying the landscape policy context, sensitive landscape receptors and the selection of photomontage viewpoints. A field survey took place in May 2025 to investigate the topography, drainage, landcover and land use of the site. The gathered data was used to establish the landscape context and baseline of the subject site. This informed an assessment of the landscape value which was deemed to be Low.

The LVIA concludes that the predicted landscape impact of the Proposed Development is considered to be Low. While the subject site will undergo change as a result of the Proposed Development, the strategic siting, design and landscaping of the Proposed Development will help to preserve and conserve the integrity of all sensitive landscape receptors on the site. The LVIA concludes that the Proposed Development can be effectively accommodated into the receiving environment. Please refer to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for full details on the methodology and conclusions.

6.7 Glint & Glare

MKO have prepared a Glint and Glare Assessment (Appendix 10) to address the possible effect of glint and glare arising from the Proposed Development. Potential occurrences of solar glint and glare from the Proposed Development have been assessed in relation to 132 no. residential receptors and the R163 Regional Road within the 1km Study Area for the assessment of glint and glare effects. As a result of substantial levels of visual screening surrounding the site from existing hedgerows and treelines and stands of dense vegetation, as well as mitigation measures included in the Landscape Plan accompanying this planning application, there will be no instances where Substantial glare will occur on the residential and road receptors identified.

In relation to aviation receptors, the Navan Airfield, is located 1.3km south from the Proposed Development at its closest point, and glare was assessed on both the eastern and western approach to this small recreational airport. Any potential glare is likely to be brief in duration, at the start of an easterly approach in the very periphery of views with greatest elevation and set back distance from the runway. While glare will potentially occur at points on the eastern approach to the runway, no adverse effects on aviation safety are anticipated for this small recreational airport. Please refer to the Glint and Glare Assessment for details on the full methodology and assessment.

6.8 Air and Climate

Matters relating to air and climate have been considered at Section 5.8 of this Report. It has considered the sensitivity of the surrounding environment to effects caused by the proposed construction activities associated with the construction of the Proposed Development. Potential dust emissions from the construction of the Proposed Development will only occur during the construction or decommissioning phases of development, thus all effects from dust emissions are described as temporary. There are no predicted impacts from dust during operation, and therefore, no mitigation proposed in relation to potential operational effects on air quality.

6.9 Traffic & Transport

Section 5.9 of this PER summarises the traffic and transport matters in respect of the Proposed Development. A dedicated Traffic and Transport Assessment supports this planning application. The proposed new site entrance, has been designed to accord with TII's Guidelines and can safely serve the site. A detailed site traffic management plan will be prepared prior to commencement of construction and submitted to Meath County Council for approval of the final traffic management plans.

The Proposed Development, its construction, operation and decommissioning are not considered to have significant effects on either traffic or access to the site, and the roads have the capacity to accommodate the

additional journeys. Traffic increases during the operation phase is expected to be minimal and only for quarterly maintenance by service engineers. During construction and decommissioning phases, the traffic impacts are only considered to be temporarily adverse and manageable, with no significant effect on overall traffic performance.

6.10

Cultural Heritage

An Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Rubicon Archaeology, and accompanies this planning application. As per Section 5.10 of this PER, the Proposed Development will have a potential direct impact on 8 no. Cultural Heritage sites, and an indirect impact on 9 no. Cultural Heritage Sites. Rubicon Archaeology have outlined a number of mitigation measures to address these potential impact.

In line with the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) Practice Note PN03 – Planning Conditions (Conditions C.1 & C.2), and following consultation with the National Monuments Service and the Local Authority, it is proposed that the archaeological investigations be appropriately addressed by way of a planning condition, post-permission stage. This approach would ensure that all necessary works are carried out at prior to the commencement of construction, and in a manner that is fully aligned with national best practice. Specifically, we request that a programme of advance geophysical survey followed by targeted archaeological test trenching be undertaken by a suitably qualified archaeologist, operating under licence from the National Monuments Service (DoHLGH). The test trench layout would be informed by the results of the geophysical survey to ensure that areas of archaeological potential are appropriately examined and mitigated in advance of works.

7.

CONCLUSION

This Planning and Environmental Report has been prepared in support of the Proposed Development located in the townlands of Rathcoon, Chamberstown, Scottstown, Shalvanstown, Mullaghroe and Corballis approximately c. 8km northwest of Slane, c. 9km north of Navan and c. 15 km east of Kells, Co. Meath.

As climate change is now a clearly acknowledged emergency in Ireland, the establishment of low carbon economies through increased renewable energy generation has become a time-critical consideration. The Climate Action Plan (CAP 2025) unequivocally states that current policy frameworks will not achieve the required step-change in Ireland's emissions performance over the coming decade to ensure EU targets for 2030 are met.

This report has outlined the requirement for and benefits of the Proposed Development. It can be concluded that in order to achieve national and local climate and energy targets and to ensure a transition to a lower carbon economy, solar energy production facilities such as the one proposed are essential. This report also outlines the suitability of the subject site for the Proposed Development given the previously permitted development which pertains to an identical development.

As outlined in this PER and the documents enclosed with this application, the subject site has undergone stringent environmental and ecological surveys which demonstrate its suitability for the Proposed Development.

In summary, by investing in renewable energy infrastructure and supporting projects like the Proposed Development, significant strides can be taken towards building a sustainable future. This approach not only aligns with environmental conservation and mitigating climate change, but it also fosters low carbon economic growth, job creation, and technological advancement. Renewable energy production facilities such as that proposed plays a critical role in supporting a pathway to a cleaner, more resilient, and sustainable energy system in line with all levels of policy relating to renewable energy, climate action and energy security.

Having regard to the above, and the details set out herein, we respectfully request Meath County Council to grant permission for the Proposed Development.

8.

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