Date: July 2025

PLANNING STATEMENT:
ELY VALLEY SOLAR FARM

LAND OFF ELY VALLEY ROAD | YNYSMAERDY | NR LLANTRISANT

SiriUS Planning

PREPARED BY

PREPARED FOR

WINDEL SOLAR 8 LTD

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 FORWARD

1.1.1 Climate change is generally considered to be the greatest existential threat to the environment, our way of living and humanity in general. Addressing this huge challenge requires a sea change in how we live our lives in the future and the decisions we make.

1.1.2 In order to address this challenge, the UK Government have set a target to decarbonise the power grid and ensure all cars are zero emissions capable by 2035 thus moving away from fossil fuels and replacing this capacity with renewable energy.

1.1.3 Our ever-growing need for energy and where it comes from has been a significant issue recently. To address this the recently published British Energy Security Strategy seeks to build a 'British energy system that is much more self-sufficient'. To achieve Net Zero the UK will need to expand its renewable capacity alongside other low carbon options. In terms of large scale solar the Government

> *"…will continue supporting the effective use of land by encouraging large scale projects to locate on previously developed, or lower value land, where possible…"*

1.1.4 Solar farms are an effective and unobtrusive way of creating the electricity we all use – with the panels having a low visual impact on the local landscape and creating no noise, pollution, by-products or emissions. Additionally, solar farms result in minimal disturbance to the ground and can significantly enhance local biodiversity, for example through planting a species rich wildflower mix in field margins, creating a more diverse habitat.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT

1.2.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Sirius Planning on behalf of Windel Solar 8 Ltd to support the planning application for the proposed development of a ground mounted solar farm including associated, ancillary equipment ("the proposed development").

1.3 PLANNING APPROACH

1.3.1 The proposed development will be appraised in the context of relevant national and local planning policies. Policy documents reviewed include relevant national strategies, policy and guidance, and the Local Plan.

1.4 OUTLINE DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSAL

1.4.1 The proposed development comprises the construction and operation of a solar farm on land located c.0.4km north of Ynysmaerdy and 0.8km east of Coedely. The application site totals approximately 20.9ha.

1.4.1 The site is irregular in shape and comprises several agricultural fields.

1.4.2 Drawing WN1011/01/01 identifies the site location.

1.4.3 The Application Site is situated within the administrative area of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC).

1.4.4 The proposed solar farm will have a generating capacity of up to 9.9MW renewable electricity, enough to power over 2,678 homes[1] per year and offset nearly 2,850

[1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/295244/Revisions_to_DECC_domestic_energy_bill_estimates.pdf

tonnes[2] of CO2 every year.

1.5 THE APPLICANT

1.5.1 Ely Valley Solar Farm is being developed by Windel Solar 8 Ltd a subsidiary of Windel Energy and Recurrent Energy.

1.5.2 Founded in 2018, Windel Energy is a privately held company that specialises in the development and asset management of renewable energy projects and low carbon technologies.

1.5.3 With more than 3 gigawatts (GW) of clean, renewable power and battery energy storage in various stages of development, Windel is at the forefront of low carbon technologies including solar, energy storage, and onshore wind, and are helping to pave the way to achieve the UK's net zero target by 2050.

1.5.4 Windel Energy is committed to responsible land use and believe that the development and delivery of a large-scale solar farm can be achieved in harmony with its surroundings.

1.5.5 Recurrent Energy is one of the world's largest and most geographically diversified utility-scale solar and energy storage project development, ownership, and operations platforms. With an industry-leading team of in-house energy experts, we are a wholly-owned subsidiary of Canadian Solar Inc. and function as Canadian Solar's global development and power services business.

1.5.6 To date Recurrent Energy have completed the development of 9 GWp of solar and 3 GWh of battery storage projects across six continents. Recurrent Energy's power services business manages more than 3.7 GW of operational projects under long-term operations and maintenance (O&M) agreements, and an additional 2.3 GW of contracted projects that will be operated and maintained by Recurrent Energy once they are placed in operation.

1.6 PLANNING STATEMENT STRUCTURE

1.6.1 This Planning Statement has been organised into the following chapters:

- Introduction;
- The Site and Surroundings;
- The Proposed Development;
- Environmental Considerations;
- Planning Policy and Material Considerations; and

1.7 REQUIREMENT FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1.7.1 In April 2025, the Applicant submitted a request for a formal Scoping Opinion from RCTCBC under Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017. The purpose of the request for a Scoping Opinion was to:

- Define the scope of the Environmental Statement (ES) which will accompany the planning application;
- Anticipate and so allow potentially adverse environmental impacts to be considered at an early stage;
- Define methodologies to be used in the EIA process to assess the potential effects of the proposal; and

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/715425/Conversion_Factors_2018_-_Condensed_set__for_most_users__v01-01.xls

- Engage relevant stakeholders at an early stage of the proposals to enable contribution of relevant information.

1.7.2 A Scoping Opinion was received on 30 June 2025 and confirmed that the following should be included in the Environmental Statement:

- Ecology and Nature Conservation;
- Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Noise; and
- Cumulative Impacts

1.7.3 The Scoping Opinion is shown in Appendix A.

1.8 PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

1.8.1 Requests for pre-application discussions was made to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) on 14 June 2024. Following preliminary consultations with the Authorities' in-house consultees, RCTCBC issued a response on 1 August 2024 and is included in Appendix B.

1.9 PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

1.9.1 The Town and County Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016, requires pre-application consultation to be undertaken for all planning applications for 'major' development. Given the planning application area is larger than 1 hectare the proposal falls within the 'major' development category therefore pre-application consultation is required.

1.9.2 Pre-application consultation takes the form of:

- Erecting site notices up near to the site;
- Notifying those adjacent landowners to the site;
- Notifying relevant Community Councils and Ward Members;
- Notifying relevant statutory consultees;
- Project website containing information on the proposals, the draft planning application, ways to make comments / provide feedback on the proposals and details of the project team for any queries; and
- Pre-Application Consultation Report.

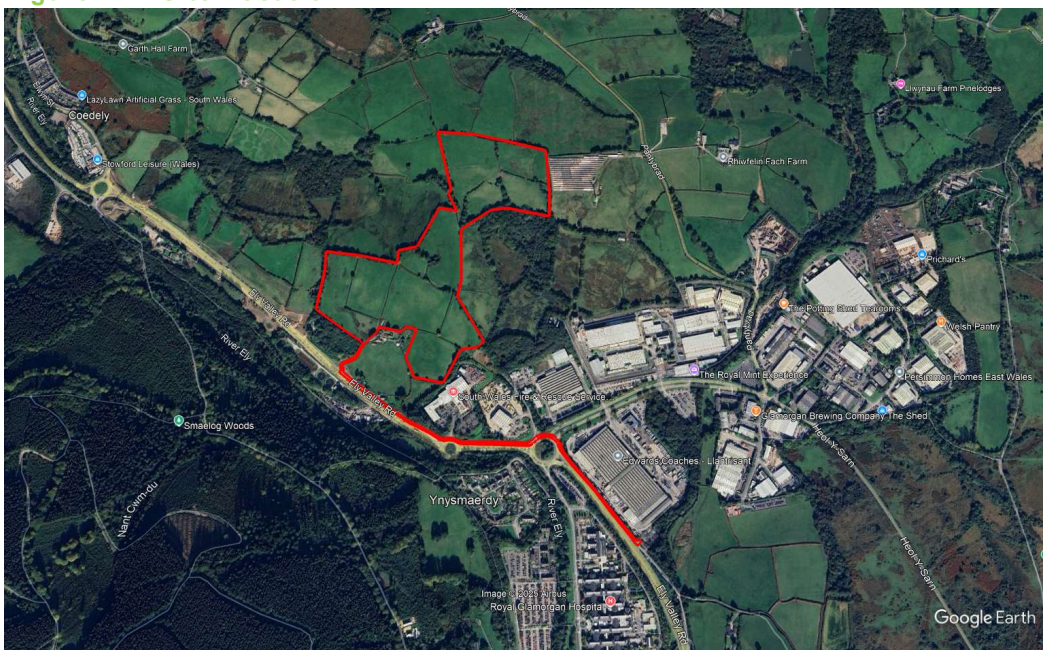
2. THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 This chapter provides a description of the site in terms of its location, history, and surrounding land uses. It also sets the development within the context of surrounding land uses.

2.1.2 The site location and extent of site boundaries are shown in Drawing WN1011/04/01 and below in Figure 2.1. The application site boundary measures 20.9ha.

Figure 2.1: Site Location



2.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.2.1 The site has a rural setting with several farms in the locality. Elevation of the site ranges from 79m to 153m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with higher terrain in the north descending southwards.

2.2.2 There are a number of overhead electricity transmission lines that cross the site, drainage channels and streams, and underground utility infrastructure. A small-scale solar farm (1.3MW) and wind turbine (60m in height (to tip)) is located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the proposal site. There is another turbine (90m to tip) located further east. There is significant industrial development located adjacent to the south east of the site.

2.2.3 The solar farm will connect to an existing substation located approximately c.1.2km to the south east of the application site off Ely Valley Road. The cable from the on site substation will largely run in the highway.

2.2.4 Access to the site Is via existing point off Ely Valley Road which serves the farmhouse of Dyffryn Farm.

2.3 DESIGNATIONS

2.3.1 The Local Plan Proposals Map shows that the site is within a Special Landscape Area outside of settlement limits, in an area designated as comprising Sandstone resources.

2.3.2 The Rhos Tonyrefail Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located adjacent on the eastern boundary of the application site. In addition, the Rhiwfelin Fawr Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) which is located 0.09km northwest of the site.

2.3.3 The site is within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has a low risk of flooding.

2.3.4 There are no designated heritage assets on site. Historic Wales Maps show there are three national monuments near the site; Rhiwefelen is a Post Medieval House located to the northeast of the site (c.125m) and Dyffryn-Uchaf is noted on the Historic Environment Record as a Post Medieval House and Farmstead located to the south of the site (c.220m). Beddw, a Post-Medieval House is sited c.215m to the northwest of the site.

2.3.5 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the proposed site, but there is one within 2.5km of the site. No Listed Buildings lie within the proposed site. There are 27 Listed Buildings within 2.5km of the site, 8 of which are within 1km. The site does not form part of a Conservation Area, nor are there any Conservation Areas in proximity to the site.

2.4 PLANNING HISTORY

2.4.1 Whilst there is no planning history of relevance to the site itself, there are three nearby renewable energy related developments to the east of the site.

2.4.2 On 15th November 2019, the Council advised that a proposed solar farm (located c.320m to the east of the site) was EIA development. Following an appeal against this opinion, the Welsh Government confirmed on 17th January 2020 that the proposed solar farm was not EIA development. Permission was then subsequently granted by Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC on 16th November 2020 for the proposal.

2.4.3 Permission was granted for the wind turbine located to the east of the site by way of a decision notice dated 19th July 2016 under application reference 16/0124/10, with a subsequent application being granted to increase the height (ref: 18/0761/39).

2.4.4 To the immediate east of Pantybrad consent was granted on 27 April 2022 for a single wind turbine and associated infrastructure (21/0661/FUL).

2.4.5 Permission was granted for the construction and operation of a solar farm directly to the north and west of the site by way of a decision notice dated 25th April 2024 under application reference 22/1414/FUL.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The proposed development comprises the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a ground-mounted solar farm plus ancillary infrastructure including the following:

- Photovoltaic (PV) panels;
- Mounting frames – matt finished small section metal structure;
- Scheme of landscaping and biodiversity enhancement;
- Inverters and transformers and associated cabling (largely below ground);
- Distribution Network Operator (DNO) substation and customer cabins;
- Deer fencing, sympathetic to the area, and infra-red CCTV (CCTV cameras would operate using motion sensors and would be positioned inward only to ensure privacy to neighbouring land and property);
- Temporary set down area;
- Internal service roads; and
- Site access for the construction, operational and decommissioning phases.

3.1.2 Ely Valley Solar Farm will have a generating capacity of up to 9.9MW of renewable electricity, enough to power over 2,678 homes per year and offset nearly 2,850 tonnes of CO2 every year.

3.1.3 The panels will be arranged in rows in an east-west alignment across the development areas and orientated south. Once constructed, the scheme will be operational for 40 years after which all equipment can be removed from site.

3.2 SITE DESIGN AND LAYOUT

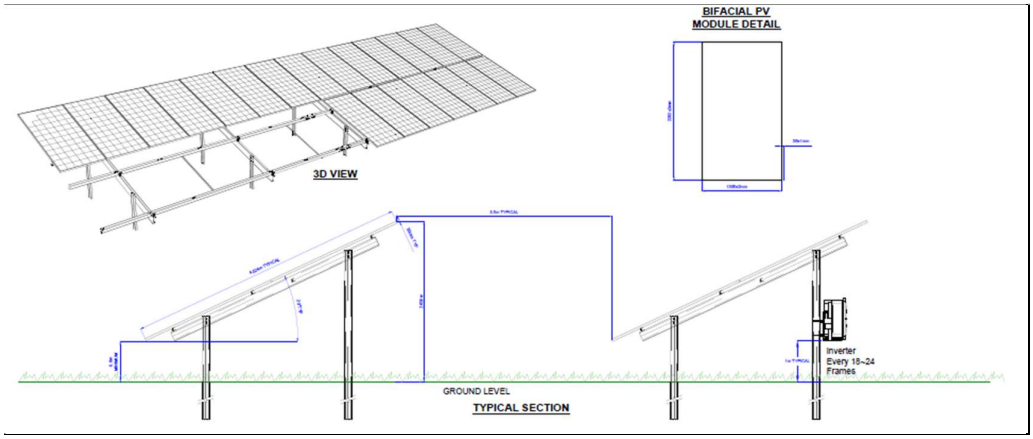
3.2.1 The proposed layout is shown on Drawing WN1011/04/03. Due to commercial constraints, potential changes in solar panels, transformer and substation manufacturer during the determination process an element of flexibility is required in relation to their dimensions, appearance and their arrangement. The submitted layout is therefore indicative as the detailed layout and phasing of construction will be agreed with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) by way of planning condition following grant of planning consent. This approach is commonplace in solar farm planning permissions.

3.2.2 The panels will be arranged in rows in an east-west alignment across the development areas and will be angled at up to 20° from the horizontal and orientated south. The height of the panels will be circa 2.6m above ground level; the lowest part of the panel will measure approximately 0.8m above ground level. The rows of panels will be set approximately 3.5m apart to avoid shadowing and allow for scheduled maintenance, this will be dependent on local topography.

3.2.3 During construction, operation and decommissioning a 15m setback from woodland edge will be implemented and a 4m setback will be established from the hedgerows, ditches and field drains.

3.2.4 The mounting frames will be matt finished galvanised steel that will be fixed to the ground employing a pile mounting system, depending on ground conditions. Drawing WN1011/04/04 and Figure 3.1 below provide a specification of the panel and frames. The piles will be pushed into the ground via a mobile piling rig.

Figure 3.1: Typical Panel and Frames Specification



3.2.5 The solar panels will be connected to small inverter units typically located on the racking of the frames. The inverters will connect to transformer stations which converts the electricity from Direct Current (DC) to Alternating Current (AC). The transformers ensure that electricity can be transferred to the substation and then to the 'local grid' at the correct voltage. For comparison metering of the electricity generated by the solar farm, 'customer' substation will also be provided. Details of the proposed ancillary equipment within the site are provided on:

- Drawing WN1011/04/05 and 07 - substations specifications;
- Drawing WN1011/04/03 - equipment locations across the development area; and
- Drawing WN1011/04/06 – transformer station details.

3.2.6 Cabling from the transformers to the substation will be below ground. An earth cable will be required around the perimeter the deployment area. Trench depths will vary from 0.4m to 1.3m depending on whether they are for earthing or AC cabling.

3.3 POINT OF CONNECTION AND CABLE ROUTE

3.3.1 The solar farm will connect to the local distribution network at the existing substation located c.1.3km to the south of the application site off Ely Valley Road. The cable from the on site substation will be underground and will largely run in the highway.

3.3.2 The indicative cable routes are presented in Drawing WN1011/04/13. The drawing shows a 'corridor' within which the cable will be laid. The exact alignment of the route is to be confirmed at the detailed design stage via separate authorisation from the Local Highway Authority.

3.4 SITE SECURITY

3.4.1 Once operational, the solar farm deployment areas will be secured by a c. 2m high stock fence or similar. Infra-red (non-visible at night), inward facing pole mounted CCTV cameras (c. 2.5m – 3m in height) will also be provided at between 50m and 100m intervals along the boundary fence. These will enable remote surveillance of the site. Fencing and CCTV camera details are presented on Drawing WN1011/04/09. The CCTV cameras will be positioned to avoid views of any private property.

3.5 CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

3.5.1 The construction of the solar farm is expected to last approximately 6 months and employ up to 50 staff over the construction period. A Transport Statement (TS) accompanies the application (see Appendix C). The TS provides details of proposed access arrangements, the anticipated build programme, construction vehicle numbers and type, construction worker numbers and the proposed construction hours.

3.6 SITE ACCESS

3.6.1 Access to the application site is taken from Ely Valley Road (A4119) using an existing access that serves Dyffryn Farm and two other residential properties. The access will be used during both the construction and operational phases of the development.

3.6.2 The recently upgraded A4119 is a dual carriageway subject to a 50mph speed limit. Being a dual carriageway, vehicles can only access the site from the north west (turning left into site) and leaving the site turning left onto A4119.

3.6.3 Drawing WN1011/04/12 identifies the location of the temporary set down area.

3.6.4 Within the site, internal service roads will be constructed to access all areas of the site. The roads will be approximately 4m wide and will be finished with compacted crushed stone.

3.6.5 After commissioning and once operational, the site will only be visited during routine monthly maintenance checks. The access during the operational phase will be as per the construction routes.

3.6.6 The proposed development will have restricted public access. In designing the proposed development, emphasis will be placed on security. The design ensures the site is secure and not readily accessible to the public through the installation of deer fencing and infra-red CCTV. Access to the site will be through invitation only.

3.6.7 Details of the proposed access arrangements during construction are presented in the TS (Appendix C). Once operational, the proposal will generate minimal traffic flow from monthly inspections and maintenance.

3.7 PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY

3.7.1 There are no Public Rights of Way which run either through or adjacent to the site.

3.8 BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS AND LANDSCAPING

3.8.1 The landscape and visual impact assessment and ecology and nature conservation chapters (ES Chapters 7 and 9 respectively) provide full details of the enhancement proposals, but in summary these include:

- The existing field boundary vegetation, in the form of native hedgerows and trees, including those within the site, will be retained where possible and managed to an appropriate height to provide visual screening, but also to enhance landscape and ecological structure.
- Analysis of historic mapping will be undertaken to determine whether there are any lost landscape features that could be reinstated and integrated with the solar development e.g. copses, banking, ditches and hedgerows.
- Grassland will be managed and enhanced for landscape and ecological benefit, Species mixes will be appropriate to the local area and follow recommendations

of the project and County Ecologists

- Appropriate development offsets (clear zones) will be initiated from adjacent habitats including the woodland and grassland SINC and neighbouring SSSI as well as field margins to ensure visual effects are not of a significant nature and that existing habitats have a sufficient buffer to enable transition/connectivity between existing and proposed habitat areas.
- Development will facilitate the management of the range of semi-natural habitats – trees, hedgerows and grassland mosaic/upland meadows, found throughout the solar plot and adjoining areas.
- Mitigation proposals will serve the dual purpose of providing landscape and visual mitigation and to increase the site's value and reflect Local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives.

3.8.2 A Landscape Masterplan Plan is shown in drawing WN1011/07/07. A Green Infrastructure Strategy is presented in Appendix K.

3.9 SITE WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

3.9.1 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be prepared prior to the development works commencing on site. A Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will be prepared as part of the CEMP. The SWMP will detail:

- Actions to meet the waste hierarchy;
- Identify the person with responsibility for the SWMP;
- Details of the types and quantities of waste that will be produced by the Contractor as part of the construction phase; and
- Details of all consignments made for example a WRAP waste recording and reporting spreadsheet.

3.10 SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT

3.10.1 Although the solar panels will divert the downward path of falling rain, being raised off the ground on frames, they will not reduce the permeable area where they are sited. Rainfall that does fall onto the site will, as now, infiltrate into the soil substrate. The amount of land that is made impermeable by the installation of the facility is limited to the concrete pads of the transformers and substations. Therefore, the surface water runoff from the developed site will be no different pre and post-development. There will be no increase in surface water run-off or exacerbation of off-site risk as a result of the proposals.

3.10.2 A separate application for SAB approval will be made.

3.11 DECOMISSIONING

3.11.1 After 40 years of operation the panels and associated infrastructure will be removed from site. The TS presented in Appendix C details the programme and anticipated vehicle movements associated with this phase of development.

4. POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 This section presents the key policy, legislation and guidance relevant to the proposed development. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Act states that:

> *"…if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise".*

4.1.2 The following section considers relevant national strategies, policy and guidance, and development plans as far as they are relevant to the proposed development. This relates to matters of energy and planning.

4.2 NATIONAL ENERGY CONTEXT

Climate Change Act

4.2.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 required long term targets for the UK to achieve an 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050 against 1990 levels. In June 2019, the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 target Amendment) Order came into effect which required the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 to be 100% of 1990 levels.

4.2.2 The UK Act requires governments to set legally binding 'carbon budgets'. Each budget provides a five-year cap on total greenhouse emissions; in order to meet the UK's emission reduction commitments caps should not be exceeded.

4.2.3 The first carbon budget (2008-12) and the second (2013-17) have been met and the UK is on track to outperform the third (2018-22). However, it is not on track to meet the fourth (2023-27) or the fifth (2028-32).

The Clean Growth Strategy: Leading the Way to a Low Carbon Future

4.2.4 The Clean Growth Strategy sets out a comprehensive set of policies and proposals that aim to accelerate the pace of clean growth. In order to meet the fourth and fifth carbon budgets (covering the periods of 2023-2027 and 2028-2032) the Government will need to drive a significant acceleration in the pace of decarbonisation and this Strategy sets out the policies that keep the UK on track to meet the carbon budgets.

COP26 and the Net Zero Strategy

4.2.5 The UK hosted the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31 October – 13 November 2021. The COP 26 summit brought together 120 world leaders and representatives from 194 countries to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. COP26 secured near-global Net Zero commitments from 153 countries. As highlighted during the COP26 event in Glasgow:

> *"We cannot afford to wait to act against the threat of climate change. We must work together to protect our planet and people and ensure a greener, more resilient future for us all".*

4.2.6 In October 2021, the UK Government launched its Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener which will be submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the UK's second Long Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy under the Paris Agreement and includes the target

for decarbonising the UKs electricity grid by 2035. To deliver the strategy, overall electricity demand is expected to increase 40-60% by 2035, all met from low carbon source.

4.2.7 The 'Net Zero Strategy'[3] commits the UK to be powered entirely by clean electricity by 2035, which, in addition to a significant increase in renewable energy generation capacity, will require the deployment of new flexibility measures including energy storage to help smooth out power supply and future price spikes.

4.2.8 The British Energy Security Strategy was published in April 2022, in response to rising global energy prices, provoked by surging demand following the Covid-19 pandemic as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This strategy is designed to reduce the UKs reliance on expensive fossil fuels, which are subject to volatile gas prices set by international markets we are unable to control, and boost its diverse sources of homegrown renewable energy to deliver greater energy security in the long-term. The strategy commits to a fivefold increase in solar deployment, with up to 70GW installed capacity by 2035. The paper sets out that by 2050, the Government ambition is to have a low-cost net zero consistent electricity system, most likely to be composed of predominantly wind and solar generation.

Environmental (Wales) Act 2016

4.2.9 The Act provides the necessary legislation to improve planning and management of natural resources in Wales. Part 2 of the Act relates to Climate Change and places an obligation on Welsh Ministers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions such that in the year 2050 they are at least 80% lower than baseline figures for 1990 or 1995, depending on the type of GHG.

Advice Report: Path to a Net Zero Wales

4.2.10 Required under the Environmental (Wales) Act 2016, the Report provides ministers with advice on Wales' climate targets between now and 2050 and assesses progress on reducing emissions to date. Prepared in December 2020 by the Climate Change Committee (an independent statutory body) the report states that meeting the Net Zero target in Wales requires action across four key areas; Reducing demand for carbon-intensive activities; Take-up of low-carbon solutions; Expansion of low-carbon energy supplies; Land; and Flexibility to meet Net Zero.

4.2.11 In April 2019, the Welsh Government Minister for the Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths AM declared a climate change emergency in Wales. The Welsh Government initially committed to a 95% reduction in emissions by 2050, but in February 2021 amended this to a legal commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, with a stated ambition to *"get there sooner"*. RCTCBC by 2030, will be a Carbon Neutral Council and the County Borough will be as close as possible to Carbon Neutral as we can get by then.

Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales

4.2.12 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires Welsh Government to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in Wales by at least 80% for the year 2050 from 1990 levels with a system of interim emissions targets and carbon budgets. Under s39 of

[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy

that Act, Welsh Ministers must prepare and publish a report for each budgetary period setting out their policies and proposals for meeting the carbon budget for that period.

4.2.13 Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales is the Welsh Government's first statutory decarbonisation plan. It sets out the Welsh government's approach to cut emissions and increase efficiency in a way that maximises wider benefits for Wales, ensuring a fairer and healthier society. It sets out a hundred policies and proposals that directly reduce emissions and support the growth of the low carbon economy.

4.2.14 It specifically seeks to reduce the use of fossil fuels for power generation, and promote and accelerate the deployment of renewable energy generation. The plan also recognises that energy storage and flexibility services will need to be provided to integrate with new renewable energy development as part of a whole system approach.

4.2.15 The Welsh Government published its second statutory decarbonisation plan (LCDP2) in Autumn 2021. The Plan sets out:

- the overall vision for Wales in 2025 and beyond to 2050, an overview of the reduction trajectory, the latest emissions data, and a broader view of our consumption emissions and global responsibilities;
- setting out the pathways for each emissions sector, describing what is in scope, where the emissions come from, progress to date setting out our governance structures, performance indicators, financial costings; and
- highlighting key engagement and emissions reducing deliverables over this carbon budget and the timeframe for developing our third delivery Plan to meet Carbon Budget 3.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

4.2.16 In addition to the policy provisions outlined above, under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 all public bodies in Wales have a duty to secure sustainable development by improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales to achieve the 7 "well-being goals". All planning applications in Wales need to demonstrate how they align with the seven well-being goals:

- A Prosperous Wales.
- A Resilient Wales.
- A More Equal Wales.
- A Healthier Wales.
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities.
- A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language.
- A Globally Responsible Wales.

4.3 NATIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

Futures Wales: The National Plan 2040

4.3.1 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (adopted February 2021) sets the direction of development in Wales to 2040. Future Wales constitutes the development plan for Developments of National Significance (DNS) in line with s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It states:

> *"Wales can become a world leader in renewable energy technologies. Our wind and tidal resources, our potential for solar generation, our support for both large and community scaled projects and our commitment to ensuring*

the planning system provides a strong lead for renewable energy development, mean we are well placed to support the renewable sector, attract new investment, and reduce carbon emissions".

4.3.2 As set out in legislation (Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015), applications for DNS must be determined in accordance with Future Wales, which is the national development plan for Wales.

4.3.3 Future Wales identifies 11 Outcomes to be achieved in 20-year's time. Outcome 9 seeks a Wales where people live in places that sustainably manage their natural resources and reduce pollution. Outcome 11 seeks a Wales where people live in places which are decarbonised and climate resilient.

4.3.4 Future Wales states:

"Wales is abundant in opportunities to generate renewable energy and the Welsh Government is committed to maximising this potential. Generating renewable energy is a key part of our commitment to decarbonisation and tackling the climate emergency."

4.3.5 Furthermore, Future Wales sets the following ambitious targets for the generation of renewable energy:

- For 70% of electricity consumption to be generated from renewable energy by 2030.
- For one gigawatt of renewable energy capacity to be locally owned by 2030.
- For new renewable energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership from 2020.

4.3.6 The National Plan includes Policies 17 and 18 which are strategic spatial and detailed criteria-based policies respectively and should be considered together in the determination of applications.

4.3.7 Policy 17 demonstrates the Welsh Government's support in principle for all renewable energy projects and technologies. Proposals should ensure there is no significant unacceptable detrimental impact on the surrounding natural environment and local communities and that the development delivers positive social, environmental, cultural and economic benefits. Policy 17 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure states:

"The Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs. In determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy development, decision-makers must give significant weight to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and our target to generate 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030 in order to combat the climate emergency…

Proposals should describe the net benefits the scheme will bring in terms of social, economic, environmental and cultural improvements to local communities…"

4.3.8 Policy 18 provides a decision-making framework for renewable and low carbon energy technologies. Policy 18 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance states:

"Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects (including repowering) qualifying as Developments of National Significance will be permitted subject to policy 17 and the following criteria:

1. outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind developments and everywhere for all other technologies, the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty);

2. there are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individual dwellings;

3. there are no adverse effects on the integrity of Internationally designated sites (including National Site Network sites and Ramsar sites) and the features for which they have been designated (unless there are no alternative solutions, Imperative Reasons or Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and appropriate compensatory measures have been secured);

4. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on national statutory designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated), protected habitats and species;

5. the proposal includes biodiversity enhancement measures to provide a net benefit for biodiversity;

6. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on statutorily protected built heritage assets;

7. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of shadow flicker, noise, reflected light, air quality or electromagnetic disturbance;

8. there are no unacceptable impacts on the operations of defence facilities and operations (including aviation and radar) or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area (TTA-7T);

9. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the transport network through the transportation of components or source fuels during its construction and / or ongoing operation;

10. the proposal includes consideration of the materials needed or generated by the development to ensure the sustainable use and management of resources;

11. there are acceptable provisions relating to the decommissioning of the development at the end of its lifetime, including the removal of infrastructure and effective restoration.

The cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 12

4.3.9 The Welsh Government published Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (PPW) in February 2024. This provides the overarching national level source of planning policy for Wales and is a material consideration alongside Futures Wales. It has been updated to take into account Futures Wales and the Wellbeing of Futures Generations Act which incorporates 7 wellbeing goals. It seeks to support the requirement for sustainable development via the planning system whereby the presumption in favour of sustainable development forms the overarching role together with a firm view on improving population wellbeing.

4.3.10 PPW sets out the specific planning policies for achieving sustainable development across Wales. Figure 4 sets out the key planning principles of this national policy, stating that:

"The planning system has a vital role to play in making development resilient to climate change, decarbonising society and developing a circular economy for

the benefit of both the built and national environments and to contribute to the achievement of well-being goals".

4.3.11 Chapter 5 (Providing and Enterprising Places) of the PPW sets out the Welsh Government's policies regarding Enterprising Placemaking and Wellbeing across Wales. One of the key aims in relation to energy is for Wales to generate 70% of its electricity consumption from renewable generation by 2030 and actively manage the transition to a low carbon economy.

4.3.12 Chapter 5 of the PPW outlines the importance of the planning system to deliver these targets, paragraph 5.7.15 states:

"The planning system has an active role to help ensure the delivery of these targets, in terms of new renewable energy generating capacity and the promotion of energy efficiency measures in buildings."

4.3.13 Paragraph 5.9.19 states that:

"In determining applications for the range of renewable and low carbon energy technologies, planning authorities should take into account:

The contribution a proposal will make to meeting identified Welsh, UK and European targets;

The contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and

The wider environmental, social and economic benefits and opportunities from renewable and low carbon energy development.

4.3.14 Paragraph 5.9.20 continues stating:

"Planning authorities should also identify and require suitable ways to avoid, mitigate or compensate adverse impacts of renewable and low carbon energy development. The construction, operation, decommissioning, remediation and aftercare of proposals should take into account:

The need to minimise impacts on local communities, such as from noise and air pollution, to safeguard quality of life for existing and future generations;

The impact on the natural and historic environment;

Cumulative impact;

The capacity of, and effects on the transportation network;

Grid connection issues where renewable (electricity) energy developments are proposed; and

The impacts of climate change on the location, design, build and operation of renewable and low carbon energy development. In doing so, consider whether measures to adapt to climate change impacts give rise to additional impacts."

4.3.15 Chapter 5 also outlines that before an application is submitted "…developments should, where possible, consider how to avoid, or otherwise minimise, adverse impacts through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures". Furthermore, active engagement with the local community should be undertaken at pre-application stage.

Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)

4.3.16 This Technical Advice Note provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. It:

- sets out the key principles of planning for nature conservation;

- provides advice about the preparation and review of development plans, including the relevant statutory requirements;
- addresses nature conservation in development management procedures;
- deals with the conservation of internationally and nationally designated sites and habitats and also covers local sites; and
- deals with the conservation of protected and priority species.

Technical Advice Note 18: Transport

4.3.17 TAN18 states that in relation to traffic management well designed and implemented traffic management measures can help to secure planning objectives in a number of ways, including:

- reducing community severance, noise, local air pollution and traffic accidents;
- promoting safe walking, cycling and public transport;
- improving the attractiveness of urban areas by helping to avoid or manage congestion;
- controlling on street parking (including resident parking schemes) in areas of high parking demand;
- promoting safer road conditions leading to improved opportunity for children's safety and play; and
- promoting safer road conditions in rural areas and reducing the impact of roads on the environment whilst maintaining access for rural businesses."

Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood Risk

4.3.18 TAN 15 (updated March 2025) is a technical advice note that provides technical guidance to supplement Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Future Wales, in relation to development and flooding. TAN 15 advises on development and flood risk, and provides a framework within risks arising from both river and coastal flooding, and from additional run-off from development in any location, can be assessed.

4.3.19 The general approach of PPW and TAN 15 is to advise caution with respect to new development in areas at high risk of flooding by setting out a precautionary framework to guide planning decisions.

> *Proposals that address national security or energy security needs, mitigate the impacts of climate change, that are necessary to protect and promote public health may also, by exception, be appropriate provided that their locational need is clear and the potential consequences from flooding have been considered and found to be acceptable.*

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

4.3.20 The purpose of TAN24 is to provide guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning and Listed Building (LBC) applications.

4.3.21 Conservation Principles should be used by others (including owners, developers and other public bodies) to assess the potential impacts of a development proposal on the significance of any historic asset/assets and to assist in decision making where the historic environment is affected by the planning process.

4.3.22 There are six principles.

- Historic assets will be managed to sustain their values.
- Understanding the significance of historic assets is vital.
- The historic environment is a shared resource.
- Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.

- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent.
- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.

4.3.23 Applicants and other organisations are strongly encouraged to make use of these Conservation Principles when considering development proposals and other works to historic assets. It is important for those responsible to understand the heritage values and assess the significance of the historic assets that will be affected

4.4 LOCAL CONTEXT

4.4.1 The Development Plan comprises:

- The Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011).

4.4.2 Tackling climate change is a priority of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as it continues to commitment to become a 'carbon free council' by 2050. The Council have already cut its carbon emissions by almost 40% over the last five years and latest figures show its carbon footprint has fallen by 12,725 tonnes since 2014.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Local Development Plan

4.4.3 The Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Local Development Plan was adopted on 2nd March 2011.

4.4.4 The relevant policies to the proposed development are:

- Policy CS2 – Development in the South
- Policy CS10 - Minerals
- Policy AW2 – Sustainable Locations
- Policy AW5 – New Development
- Policy AW6 – Design and Placemaking
- Policy AW7 - Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment
- Policy AW8 - Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment
- Policy AW10 - Environmental Protection and Public Health
- Policy AW12 - Renewable & Non-Renewable Energy
- Policy AW14 - Safeguarding of Minerals
- Policy SS23

4.4.5 Policy CS2 seeks to manage residential and commercial growth in the Southern Strategy Area in a manner that seeks to balance the economic potential of the area with environmental capacity.

In the Southern Strategy Area the emphasis will be on sustainable growth that benefits Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole. This will be achieved by:

1. Promoting residential development with a sense of place which respects the character and context of the Principal Towns and Key Settlements of the Southern Strategy Area;

2. Protecting the culture and identity of communities by focusing development within defined settlement boundaries and promoting the reuse of under used and previously developed land and buildings;

3. Promoting large scale regeneration schemes in the Principal Town of Pontypridd and Key Settlement of Tonyrefail;

4. Realising the importance of the Principal Town of Llantrisant /Talbot Green as an area of social and economic growth;

5. Providing opportunities for significant inward investment, in sustainable locations, that will benefit the economy of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Capital Region;

6. Reducing daily out commuting by private car and promoting sustainable forms of transport;

7. Protecting the cultural identity of the Strategy Area by protecting historic built heritage and the natural environment, and

8. Promoting and enhancing transport infrastructure services to support growth and investment.

4.4.6 Policy CW10 seeks to balance the need for the safeguarding of nationally, regionally and locally important mineral resources whilst considering their appropriate extraction against the potential impact of such development on residential and sensitive occupiers, the landscape and on sites of nature conservation interest.

The Council will seek to protect resources and to contribute to the local, regional and national demand for a continuous supply of minerals, without compromising environmental and social issues, by;

1. Maintaining a minimum 10 year landbank of permitted rock aggregate reserves throughout the plan period (to 2021), together with an extended landbank in the form of a Preferred Area of Known Mineral Resource;

2. Defining safeguarding areas for mineral resources, including coal, high quality hard rock, limestone and sand and gravel, taking into account the range, quality and extent of resources and environmental, planning and transportation considerations;

3. Where proven resources are under threat from sterilisation by necessary development, the pre-working of the mineral resource will be encouraged;

4. Ensuring that appropriate restoration and aftercare measures are incorporated;

5. Promoting efficient usage, minimising production of waste, and promoting alternatives to primary won aggregates;

6. Ensuring that impacts upon residential areas and sensitive land uses from mineral operations and the transportation of minerals are limited to an acceptable proven safe limit.

4.4.7 Policy AW2 ensures that where unallocated sites come forward for development, those considered to be unsustainable locations for new development will be resisted.

In order to ensure that development proposals on non-allocated sites support the objectives of the plan, development proposals will only be supported in sustainable locations. Sustainable locations are defined as sites that:–

1. Are within the defined settlement boundary or in the Northern Strategy Area, accord with Policy NSA 12;

2. Would not unacceptably conflict with surrounding uses;

3. Have good accessibility by a range of sustainable transport options;

4. Have good access to key services and facilities;

5. Do not permit highly vulnerable development and Emergency

Services within Zone C2 floodplain. Within Zone C development will be permitted where it can be justified that: -

a) It is necessary to assist the regeneration of a Principal Town or Key Settlement including the key employment objectives, or where development involves a large brownfield site.

b) he potential consequences of a flooding event have been considered and found to be acceptable in accordance with national guidance and meet the definition of previously developed land.

6. Support the roles and functions of the Principal Towns, Key Settlements and Small Settlements;

7. Support the development of the 8 Strategic Sites;

8. Are well related to existing water, sewerage, waste, electrical, gas and telecommunications infrastructure and improvements to such services will be provided where necessary.

9. Where proposals relate to existing buildings in the countryside, accord with AW 9

4.4.8 Policy AW5 make provisions for new development:

Development proposals will be supported where:-

1) Amenity

a) The scale, form and design of the development would have no unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area;

b) Where appropriate, existing site features of built and natural environment value would be retained;

c) There would be no significant impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers;

d) The development would be compatible with other uses in the locality;

e) The development would include the use of multi-functional buildings where appropriate;

f) The development designs out the opportunity for crime and anti social behaviour.

2) Accessibility

a) The development would be accessible to the local and wider community by a range of sustainable modes of transport;

b) The site layout and mix of uses maximises opportunities to reduce dependence on cars;

c) The development would have safe access to the highway network and would not cause traffic congestion or exacerbate existing traffic congestion;

d) Car parking would be provided in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Delivering Design and Placemaking: Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements

4.4.9 Policy AW6 seeks to raising the standard of design on all new developments across the County Borough.

Development Proposals will be supported where:-

1. They are of a high standard of design, which reinforces attractive qualities and local distinctiveness and improves areas of poor design and layout;

2. They are appropriate to the local context in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing, elevational treatment, materials and detailing;

3. In the case of extensions to buildings, they reflect, complement or enhance the form, siting, materials, details and character of the original building, its curtilage and the wider area;

4. In the case of proposals for new and replacement shop fronts and signage, they make a positive contribution to the streetscene;

5. In the public realm and key locations such as town centres, major routes, junctions and public spaces, the character and quality of the built form is to a high standard of design;

6. They include public art;

7. Landscaping and planting are integral to the scheme and enhance the site and the wider context;

8. They include an integrated mixture of uses appropriate to the scale of the development;

9. They include the efficient use of land, especially higher-density residential development on sites in proximity to local amenities and public transport;

4.4.10 Policy AW7 seeks to protect and enhance the character, quality and appearance of recognised heritage features.

Development proposals which impact upon sites of architectural and / or historical merit and sites of archaeological importance will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the site.

Development proposals which affect areas of public open space, allotments, public rights of way, bridleways and cycle tracks will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that :-

1. There is a surplus of such facilities in the locality, or;

2. The loss can be replaced with an equivalent or greater provision in the immediate locality; or

3. The development enhances the existing facility.

4.4.11 Policy AW8 relates to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment:

Rhondda Cynon Taf's distinctive natural heritage will be preserved and enhanced by protecting it from inappropriate development. Development proposals will only be permitted where:-

1. They would not cause harm to the features of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) or other locally designated sites, unless it can be demonstrated that:-

a) The proposal is directly necessary for the positive management of the site; or

b) The proposal would not unacceptably impact on the features of the site for which it has been designated; or

c) The development could not reasonably be located elsewhere and the benefits of the proposed development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site.

2. There would be no unacceptable impact upon features of importance to landscape or nature conservation, including ecological networks, the quality of natural resources such as air, water and soil, and the natural drainage of surface water.

All development proposals, including those in built up areas, that may affect protected and priority species will be required to demonstrate what measures are proposed for the protection and management of the species and the mitigation and compensation of potential impacts.

Development proposals must be accompanied by appropriate ecological surveys and appraisals, as requested by the Council.

Development proposals that contribute to the management or development of Ecological Networks will be supported.

4.4.12 Policy AW10 relates to environmental protection and public health.

"Development proposals will not be permitted where they would cause or result in a risk of unacceptable harm to health and / or local amenity because of:-

Air pollution;

noise pollution;

light pollution;

contamination;

landfill gas;

land instability;

water pollution;

flooding;

Or any other identified risk to the environment, local amenity and public health or safety.

unless it can be demonstrated that measures can be taken to overcome any significant adverse risk to public health, the environment and / or impact upon local amenity.

4.4.13 Policy AW12 relates to renewable energy:

Development proposals which promote the provision of renewable and non-renewable energy…will be permitted where it can be demonstrated there is no unacceptable effect upon the interests of soil conservation, agriculture, nature conservation, wildlife, natural and cultural heritage, landscape importance, public health and residential amenity.

Development proposals should be designed to minimise resource use during construction, operation and maintenance.

4.4.14 Policy AW14 seeks to safeguard minerals.

The following mineral resources shall be safeguarded from any development which would unnecessarily sterilise them or hinder their extraction.

1. The resources of Sand and Gravel, as listed below and shown on the proposals map, will be safeguarded from development.

a) Llanilid, East of Felindre Road

b) Brynsadler, North of Llanharry Road

c) South of Tylegarw, Pontyclun

d) Ceulan Farm, Miskin

e) Pant Marsh, Talbot Green

f) Llantrisant and Pontyclun golf course

g) Rhiwsaeson Road, Cross Inn

h) Heol y Creigiau, Rhiwsaeson

2. The resources of Sandstone, as shown on the proposals map, will be safeguarded from development.

3. The resources of Limestone, as shown on the proposals map, will be safeguarded from development.

4.4.15 Policy SSA23 makes provision for Special Landscape Areas. The policy identifies the following locations:

1. Llanharry Surrounds;

2. Talygarn Surrounds;

3. Ely Valley at Miskin;

4. Coed-yr-Hendy and Mwyndy;

5. Llantrisant Surrounds;

6. Mynydd y Glyn and Nant Muchudd Basin;

7. Mynydd Hugh and Llantrisant Forest;

8. Efail Isaf, Garth and Nantgarw Western Slopes;

9. Craig yr Allt;

10. Taff Vale Eastern Slopes, and

11. Treforest Western Slopes.

Development within the defined Special Landscape Areas will be expected to conform to the highest standards of design, siting, layout and materials appropriate to the character of the area.

5. POLICY APPRAISAL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 This chapter provides an appraisal of the proposed development against the development plan and other material considerations, to determine if planning permission should be granted. The structure of the chapter is as follow:

- Principle of development;
- Landscape and visual;
- Hydrology and flood risk;
- Noise;
- Historic environment;
- Ecology
- Agricultural Land Classification
- Traffic and Transport and
- Air Quality.

5.2 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

5.2.1 National and local planning policy is overwhelmingly supportive of renewable energy developments and therefore the 'in principle' acceptability of the proposed development is established.

5.2.2 Policy 17 of Futures Wales states "The Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs". The proposal will make a significant contribution to meeting the target of "70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030".

5.2.3 Policy 18 takes a positive approach to proposals for renewable energy development so long as it meets environmental criteria. Overall, potential environmental effects are limited to a small number of localised visual receptors. However, it is considered the enhancements to local biodiversity and the positive effects to the local economy far outweigh the limited adverse effects. The potential effects have been fully assessed and where appropriate mitigated as a result of an iterative design process for the development, and through careful consideration of environmental control, abatement techniques, and high-quality process and landscape design.

5.2.4 Planning Policy Wales 12 (PPW12) reinforces the support for renewable energy by stating "the benefits of renewable and low carbon energy, as part of the overall commitment to tackle the climate emergency and increase energy security, is of paramount importance". Paragraph 5.9.6 of PPW12 states that:

> *"Targets must not be seen as maximum limits, but rather used as a tool to maximise available resource. Planning applications should not be refused on the basis of exceeding a renewable energy target".*

5.2.5 As mentioned above, Welsh Government have a target to increase this to 70% by 2030. Paragraph 5.9.15 of PPW12 confirms that the need for renewable energy generation is not a material planning consideration as such the proposal will 'optimise renewable and low carbon energy generation'.

5.2.6 There is clear policy support for new energy development within RCTCBC, evidenced through the Council's commitment to become a 'carbon free council' by 2050.

5.2.7 At a local level, Policy AW12 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Local Development Plan confirms support for renewable energy schemes:

> *"Development proposals which promote the provision of renewable and non-renewable energy…will be permitted where it can be demonstrated there is no unacceptable effect upon the interests of soil conservation, agriculture, nature*

conservation, wildlife, natural and cultural heritage, landscape importance, public health and residential amenity. Development proposals should be designed to minimise resource use during construction, operation and maintenance

5.2.8 Chapter 5 of the ES and the Design and Access Statement sets out how the proposal has evolved following detailed non-statutory consultation with the Local Planning Authority, stakeholders and statutory consultees.

5.2.9 This application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment which demonstrates the significant benefits of the proposals and that the identified adverse impacts can be addressed through thoughtful design and mitigation and a careful approach to construction and the reversible nature of the proposal.

5.2.10 Renewable energy generation has an important role in achieving sustainable development. As part of de-carbonising the Welsh economy, the proposal will provide economic, social and environmental enhancements. Economic benefits will include the creation of temporary jobs, supporting supply chains during the construction phase and support the renewable energy as a key growth sector in RCTCBC. Social benefits will be realised through decentralised energy generation and not relying on energy imports. Environmental gains would be secured through carbon reduction and local biodiversity enhancements.

5.2.11 Therefore, the proposed development demonstrates that the requirements of Policy AW12 of the Local Development Plan and PPW12 would be satisfied and that the principle of development is supported.

5.3 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL AMENITY

5.3.1 Policy 18 of Futures Wales states that "proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects (including repowering) qualifying as Developments of National Significance will be permitted subject to policy 17 and the following criteria:

"1. outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind developments and everywhere for all other technologies, the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty);

2. there are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individual dwellings"

5.3.2 Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW12 states:

"The construction, operation, decommissioning, remediation and aftercare of proposals should take into account:

the need to minimise impacts on local communities, such as from noise and air pollution, to safeguard quality of life for existing and future generations;…"

5.3.3 Paragraph 5.9.25 of PPW12 states that:

"The social, environmental and economic (including job creation) benefits associated with any development should be fully factored into, and given weight in the decision making process.".

5.3.4 Chapter 6 of PPW is most relevant to landscape with paragraph 6.3.3 stating that:

Considering landscape at the outset of formulating strategies and polices in development plans and when proposing development is key to sustaining and enhancing their special qualities, and delivering the maximum well-being benefits for present and future generations as well as helping to deliver an effective and integrated approach to natural resource management over the

long term. Collaboration and engagement with adjacent planning authorities, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Cadw and the third sector will be necessary to draw on a wide range of expertise and evidence. This means:

- *Ensuring Wales contributes to meeting international responsibilities and obligations for landscapes*
- *Ensure statutory and non-statutory designated sites are properly protected and managed;*
- *Ensuring that the value of all landscapes for their distinctive character and special qualities is protected; and*
- *Ensuring the opportunities landscapes provide for tourism, outdoor recreation, local employment, renewable energy and physical and mental health and well-being are taken into account and multiple well-being benefits for people and communities secure."*

5.3.5 Policy AW5 relates to new development:

"Development proposals will be supported where:

Amenity

The scale, form and design of the development would have no unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area;

Where appropriate, existing site features of built and natural environment value would be retained;

There would be no significant impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers;

The development would be compatible with other uses in the locality;

The development would include the use of multi-functional buildings where appropriate;

The development designs out the opportunity for crime and anti social behaviour.

Accessibility

The development would be accessible to the local and wider community by a range of sustainable modes of transport…;

5.3.6 Policy AW6 refers to design and placemaking. It states:

Development Proposals will be supported where:-

7. Landscaping and planting are integral to the scheme and enhance the site and the wider context…;

14. The design protects and enhances the landscape and biodiversity…;

The development promotes energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy…'

5.3.7 Policy AW7 relates to the protection and enhancement of the built environment and states:

"Development proposals which affect areas of public open space, allotments, public rights of way, bridleways and cycle tracks will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that :-

1. There is a surplus of such facilities in the locality, or;

2. The loss can be replaced with an equivalent or greater provision in the immediate locality; or

3. The development enhances the existing facility.".

5.3.8 Policy AW8 also relates to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment:

"Development proposals will only be permitted where…

There would be no unacceptable impact upon features of importance to landscape or nature conservation, including ecological networks, the quality of natural resources such as air, water and soil, and the natural drainage of surface water.

5.3.9 Policy AW12 relates to renewable energy and states:

"Development proposals which promote the provision of renewable and non-renewable energy…will be permitted where it can be demonstrated there is no unacceptable effect upon the interests of soil conservation, agriculture, nature conservation, wildlife, natural and cultural heritage, landscape importance, public health and residential amenity. Development proposals should be designed to minimise resource use during construction, operation and maintenance."

Landscape

5.3.10 The landscape and visual impact assessment (see chapter 7 of the ES) demonstrates that the proposed solar farm development can be assimilated within the local landscape of the site and the study area without wide scale significant landscape effects. The proposed development is to take place within the existing field structure of the site with only internal boundaries removed (post and wire fencing) to facilitate the layout of the solar deployment area with all site boundaries and vegetation fully retained.

5.3.11 The site comprises an existing pastoral farm surrounded by mature landscape features which limit the scale of effect upon the character in the immediate area. Landscape effects are generally restricted to the site area and immediately adjoining areas forming the prevailing setting to the site only. The development would have minimal effect upon the existing landscape structure but would be placed within it upon small scale fields with solar panels.

5.3.12 The main changes occurring relate to the landcover and landscape pattern characteristics of landscape character rather than the overall defining structural character of the site which will remain. The effects whilst long term are also reversible upon decommissioning of the scheme. Mitigation and management measures such as new hedgerow and tree planting proposed would over time enhance the landscape structure of the area and aid the integration of the development whilst also providing an overall net gain in site wide biodiversity.

Cumulative

5.3.13 Overall, due to the close nature of the one cumulative site, the local topographic setting and considering the solar design features which set the array deployment areas within the existing field / vegetation structure, it is predicted that once both sites are constructed, they will be seen as one combined scheme. This combination, from a landscape balance perspective, is considered preferable to a number of disparate schemes upon hillsides in the local area.

Visual Amenity

5.3.14 The visual assessment demonstrates that the area from which the proposed solar farm would be potentially visible would be less in reality than illustrated by the ZTV. This is due to localised reductions where intervening vegetation not included as visual barriers in the model would reduce the extent of the solar deployment and number of arrays visible. Views of the arrays would be focussed in distinct zones of intervisibility largely in the mid to long range locations in the south east, far east and elevated western parts of the study area as illustrated by the ZTV (Refer to Drawing WN1011/07/03 in Appendix G2).

5.3.15 Visibility of the development in the immediate setting is well screened by a combination of sloping and undulating topography, mature vegetation around the site and the limited number of receptors within the site's immediate context up to c.250m out from the site.

5.3.16 The residential visual receptors within 500m of the site have been assessed, most of the residences are local farmsteads in what is predominantly a rural / urban fringe farming area. Overall, no residential receptors experience visual effects of a 'significant' nature. The assessment established that despite the scale of development (ground area coverage) due to localised screening features, the dispersed spread of properties and the height of the proposed arrays, there are very limited residential receptors / groups with the potential for views to or over the development proposal.

5.3.17 With regard to views from PROW, the site is not publicly accessible, and the immediate setting of the site (<500m) has no public rights of way (PROW) from where it is possible to obtain views looking to the site area. The ZTV also demonstrates the limited areas of landscape that has intervisibility with the site. The closest PROW with potential visibility is also assessed within Viewpoint 4, Public Footpath RH|ANT|225/1, Llantrisant Common. Although there would be some open visibility from the route towards the site, considering the setting, separation distance and localised features, a Moderate / Major, 'Not Significant' visual effect is concluded upon the route (as the worst case scenario, for areas with the most open visibility).

5.3.18 This assessment demonstrates that the proposed development of Ely Valley Solar Farm could be integrated into the local area without causing extensive harm to the landscape character and visual amenity. No significant landscape effects are concluded upon the identified landscape receptors. Visual effects are focussed to the local study area, a sparsely populated area with limited public access. No significant visual effects are concluded upon any of the identified visual receptors.

5.3.19 The landscape design and retention of ecological features at the site has played a key role in the evolution of the site layout.

5.3.20 The proposed development will result in the retention and protection of the majority of existing native species-rich hedgerows and trees on site. Additional hedgerows are to be planted and overall a net gain in hedgerows will be delivered.

5.3.21 The active use of the site will allow ongoing maintenance and careful management of the hedgerows and trees around the site perimeter.

5.3.22 The mitigation proposals seek to integrate the development into the existing landscape structure, continue screening the development from the view of close range sensitive receptors and provide wider scale landscape and biodiversity improvements.

5.3.23 Accordingly, the proposed development is in accordance with national and local planning policy, specifically Policy AW5, AW6, AW7 and AW12 of the Local Plan.

5.4 HYDROLOGY AND FLOOD RISK

5.4.1 Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW12 outlines considerations to be taken into account for renewable and low carbon energy developments which includes the impact on the natural environment and impacts of climate change on the location of the development.

5.4.2 Policy AW8 relates to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment:

> *"Development proposals will only be permitted where …*
>
> *"There would be no unacceptable impact upon features of importance to landscape or nature conservation, including ecological networks, the quality of natural resources such as air, water and soil, and the natural drainage of surface water."*

5.4.3 Policy AW10 relates to environmental protection and public health:

> *"Development proposals will not be permitted where they would cause or result in a risk of unacceptable harm to …. water pollution; flooding; or any other identified risk to the environment, local amenity and public health or safety."*

5.4.4 A Flood Consequence Assessment (FCA) has been carried out for the proposed development in accordance with guidance contained in Planning Policy Wales and TAN15. The FCA identifies and assesses the risks of all forms of flooding to and from the development and demonstrates how these flood risks will be managed so that the development remains safe throughout its lifetime taking climate change into account.

5.4.5 The FCA identifies that the site is not at risk of flooding from a major source (e.g. fluvial and/or tidal). The majority of the site is located within Zone 1. It has been concluded that the site has not historically flooded.

5.4.6 The Flood Map for Planning (FMfP) shows that the site is located within Flood Zone 1 for rivers and sea flooding. The majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1 for surface water and / or small watercourses however, a small proportion of the site is located within Flood Zone 3 with more than a 1 in 100 (1%) change of flooding from surface water and / or small watercourses in a given year, including the effects of climate change. This is associated with small watercourses and it should be noted that the proposed built development will be located within Flood Zone 1. The floodwater is shown to be retained within the channel of the watercourses.

5.4.7 The proposed development would not result in any net loss to flood storage capacity or impact on movement of flood water across the site.

5.4.8 The FCA concludes that the proposed development would be operated with minimal risk from flooding, would not increase flood risk elsewhere and is compliant with the requirements of TAN15.

5.4.9 In terms of surface water runoff, the proposals will not increase the impermeable area on the site, as the size of the inverter housing and PV modules are considered to be negligible in the context of the size of the site. Research into the impact of the solar farm panels on runoff rates and volumes indicates that the solar panels will not have a significant impact on runoff volumes, peak rates or time to peak rates when the ground below panels is vegetated. Therefore, the solar panels themselves will not have a significant impact on the runoff volumes, peaks or time to peak.

5.4.10 Therefore, the proposed development is considered to be compliant with national (PPW12) and local planning policy (AW8 and AW10) from a hydrology and flood risk perspective.

5.5 NOISE AND VIBRATION

5.5.1 Policy 18 of Futures Wales: The National Plan 2040 states that:

> *"Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects (including repowering) qualifying as Developments of National Significance will be permitted subject to…*
>
> *7. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of…noise..".*

5.5.2 Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW12 states that:

> *"Planning authorities should also identify and require suitable ways to avoid, mitigate or compensate adverse impacts of renewable and low carbon energy development. The construction, operation, decommissioning, remediation and aftercare of proposals should take into account:*
>
> *The need to minimise impacts on local communities, such as form noise and air pollution, to safeguard quality of life for existing and future generations".*

5.5.3 Policy AW10 relates to environmental protection and public health:

> *"Development proposals will not be permitted where they would cause or result in a risk of unacceptable harm to health and / or local amenity because of air pollution; noise pollution; light pollution; contamination; landfill gas; land instability; water pollution; flooding; or any other identified risk to the environment, local amenity and public health or safety."*

5.5.4 An environmental baseline sound survey has been carried out at two locations representative of the nearest NSRs around the site.

5.5.5 Noise surveys were simultaneously carried out at these locations to understand the local noise climate. These background levels were then compared with likely sound levels generated during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the proposal.

5.5.6 During the construction and decommissioning phases, there would be a variety of noise sources from various activities at different times such as deliveries, trenching or constructing the arrays and associated equipment. The highest noise levels relative to nearest receptors are likely to occur during the site preparation and infrastructure activities. However, the proposed mitigation will ensure noise levels are kept to acceptable levels. Such measures include:

- Restricting activity to current permitted hours during the daytime;
- Regular maintenance of plant;
- Where required, use of local screening where plant is being used in close proximity to sensitive receptor boundaries or around plant (e.g. within 50m of sensitive boundary) using temporary hoarding.

5.5.7 During the operational phase noise levels will be low at identified receptor locations. This is due to the relatively quiet nature of the operational equipment.

5.5.8 Due to the nature of the construction techniques and the distance to sensitive receptors, the potential for vibration effects are considered unlikely.

5.5.9 Solar farms are inherently quiet operations, with only the air-cooling systems associated with the inverters and substations and the general operation of the transformers generating sound power levels. The noise assessments undertaken for the project are reported in the ES Volume 1.

5.5.10 Chapter 8 of the ES demonstrates that there will be no significant impacts due to noise on any sensitive receptors in the construction or operational phases. The

project is therefore considered to satisfy the requirements for noise protection afforded by Policy 18 of Futures Wales, PPW12 and policy AW10 of the LDP.

5.6 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

5.6.1 Policy 18 of Futures Wales 2040 states that "Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects (including repowering) qualifying as Developments of National Significance will be permitted subject to…

"6. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on statutorily protected built heritage assets;"

5.6.2 Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW12 states:

"Planning authorities should also identify and require suitable ways to avoid, mitigate or compensate adverse impacts of renewable and low carbon energy development. The construction, operation, decommissioning, remediation and aftercare of proposals should take into account:

The impact on the natural and historic environment;"

5.6.3 Policy AW12 relates to renewable energy:

"Development proposals which promote the provision of renewable and non-renewable energy…will be permitted where it can be demonstrated there is no unacceptable effect upon the interests of soil conservation, agriculture, nature conservation, wildlife, natural and cultural heritage, landscape importance, public health and residential amenity. Development proposals should be designed to minimise resource use during construction, operation and maintenance."

5.6.4 There are 39 recorded heritage assets within the 1km study area, including eight Listed Buildings. Only one previously identified heritage assets is noted within the site boundary, although this is likely an error, and the site is likely located outside the redline boundary. A newly identified site was noted on the 1921 Ordnance Survey Map comprising a rectangular building (DYF01) on the north-western edge of the site.

5.6.5 The wider 5km study area contained a further twelve Scheduled Monuments, 66 Listed Buildings, three Registered Parks and Gardens, and five Conservations Areas.

5.6.6 The development of the site would have a negligible visual impact on any of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, and Conservation Areas in the wider landscape. Most of the assets within the 5km radius do not have a direct line of sight to the proposed development due to the topography of the landscape and the presence of intervening vegetation. The assets that do have a view of the site have had their setting's previously altered by the presence of modern industrial estates and renewable energy infrastructure such as wind turbines and solar farms neighbouring the site.

5.6.7 There was no requirement to alter the proposed layout as a consequence of the identified heritage assets. It is demonstrated in the accompanying Archaeological Desk Based Assessment that there would be no unacceptable impact on cultural heritage. As noted, the proposed development will not adversely impact upon cultural heritage assets and as such is deemed to be compliant with Policy AW12 and PPW12.

5.7 ECOLOGY

5.7.1 Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW12 states:

Planning authorities should also identify and require suitable ways to avoid, mitigate or compensate adverse impacts of renewable and low carbon energy

development. The construction, operation, decommissioning, remediation and aftercare of proposals should take into account:

• the impact on the natural and historic environment;

5.7.2 Policy AW8 relates to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment:

"Development proposals will only be permitted where they would not cause harm to the features of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)…unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is directly necessary for the positive management of the site; or the proposal would not unacceptably impact on the features of the site for which it has been designated; or the development could not be reasonably located elsewhere and the benefits of the proposed development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site."

"There would be no unacceptable impact upon features of importance to landscape or nature conservation, including ecological networks, the quality of natural resources such as air, water and soil, and the natural drainage of surface water."

"All development proposals…that may affect protected and priority species will be required to demonstrate what measures are proposed for the protection and management of the species and the mitigation and compensation of potential impacts."

5.7.3 Policy AW12 relates to renewable energy:

"Development proposals which promote the provision of renewable and non-renewable energy…will be permitted where it can be demonstrated there is no unacceptable effect upon the interests of soil conservation, agriculture, nature conservation, wildlife, natural and cultural heritage, landscape importance, public health and residential amenity. Development proposals should be designed to minimise resource use during construction, operation and maintenance."

5.7.4 The Site comprises eleven adjoining pasture fields covering approximately 20.3ha and supports a mosaic of grassland habitats. Key features include 2.08ha of Acid Grassland and 2.06ha of transitional habitat between Acid and Semi-improved Grassland. The majority of the Site (13.73ha) is classified as Poor Semi-improved Grassland. Nineteen permanently wet areas occur across the Site, supporting rushes and other wetland flora, although none meet the criteria for distinct habitat types such as Rhos Pasture. Boundary features extend over 3.88km (occupying 2.09ha) and include 1.35km of species-rich native hedgerows, 0.74km of species-poor native hedgerows, and 1.79km of ecologically valuable lines of trees. Five streams and one wet ditch, totalling 1.06km, also traverse the Site. A small parcel (0.08ha) of Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, part of the Rhos Tonyrefail SSSI, lies along the southern boundary of Fields 10 and 11. The SSSI also borders the majority of the Site's eastern edge.

5.7.5 Surveys confirmed the presence of six bat species, including the Annex II-listed Lesser Horseshoe Bat, with foraging and commuting activity concentrated along hedgerows and woodland edges, particularly by Myotis species. Breeding Meadow Pipits were recorded within the grassland (six active territories), alongside 18 bird species nesting in trees or hedgerows, of which seven are protected or notable. Although wildfowl and waders were absent during winter surveys, 14 notable bird species were observed using boundary habitats, with occasional use of fields by small passerines. Three locally important waxcap fungi were identified in two fields, indicating the presence of unimproved grassland. While no direct evidence of

Dormice was found, their presence is considered likely due to suitable habitat and nearby records.

5.7.6 All existing Acid Grassland has been excluded from the development footprint, and semi-improved and transitional grasslands within buffer zones (5m around hedgerows and watercourses, 15m around woodlands) will be preserved during construction and operation. The areas between and around the solar panels will remain undisturbed, with only temporary disturbance during installation.

5.7.7 Short-term impacts to species such as bats, birds, and Dormice, due to noise, vibration, or human activity, will be mitigated through buffer zones and construction controls. Any necessary hedgerow removal for access or fencing will adhere to strict Dormice protection protocols. If works coincide with the bird nesting season, pre-construction surveys will prevent disturbance to active nests.

5.7.8 The risk of soil compaction in sensitive grasslands will be minimised through low-pressure machinery and work suspension during wet conditions. Traffic management will limit vehicle movement across sensitive habitats, particularly fungi-rich fields and transitional grassland. Hydrocarbon pollution risks will be managed through best-practice fuel handling protocols outlined in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

5.7.9 Mitigation measures will protect foraging bats, nesting birds, Dormice, waxcap fungi, and other species such as Badgers, reptiles, and amphibians. Following construction, ongoing habitat management and monitoring will ensure that any residual impacts are negligible.

5.7.10 In conclusion, the solar development complies with national and local planning policies, with embedded mitigation strategies designed to protect biodiversity. With long-term habitat enhancement and monitoring, it is expected to result in a measurable, long-term net gain for biodiversity.

5.7.11 The proposed solar farm complies with Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, fulfilling the Section 6 duty to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. The design follows the principles of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) (PPW Sections 3.34–3.37), ensuring positive contributions to ecosystem services by protecting and enhancing key habitats.

5.7.12 In addition, the design ensures there are no adverse effects on the adjacent Rhos Tonyrefail SSSI, with buffer zones and sensitive construction methods in place to protect this designated site, in accordance with PPW Sections 6.4.26 -6.4.27.

5.7.13 The development aims to deliver a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB), consistent with PPW Section 6.4.5, through measures such as planting 0.2km of native hedgerows and improving grassland distinctiveness through a specific conservation grazing regime across The Site, aiming to support the restoration of historically widespread Acid Grassland.

5.7.14 Locally, the proposal aligns with Policy AW8 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan, safeguarding Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), protected species, and ecological networks. Comprehensive surveys and a robust mitigation strategy ensure that the scheme adheres to PPW Section 6.4.31.

5.8 SOILS AND AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

5.8.1 Paragraph 3.59 of PPW12 states that “Agricultural land of grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification system (ALC)16 is the best and most versatile, and should be conserved as a finite resource for the future”. Paragraph 3.59 continues:

"...If land in grades 1, 2 or 3a does need to be developed, and there is a choice between sites of different grades, development should be directed to land of the lowest grade".

5.8.2 Policy AW8 relates to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment:

"Development proposals will only be permitted where…

"There would be no unacceptable impact upon features of importance to landscape or nature conservation, including ecological networks, the quality of natural resources such as air, water and soil, and the natural drainage of surface water…"

5.8.3 Policy AW10 relates to environmental protection and public health:

"Development proposals will not be permitted where they would cause or result in a risk of unacceptable harm to health and / or local amenity because of air pollution; noise pollution; light pollution; contamination; landfill gas; land instability; water pollution; flooding; or any other identified risk to the environment, local amenity and public health or safety."

5.8.4 Policy AW12 relates to renewable energy:

"Development proposals which promote the provision of renewable and non-renewable energy…will be permitted where it can be demonstrated there is no unacceptable effect upon the interests of soil conservation, agriculture, nature conservation, wildlife, natural and cultural heritage, landscape importance, public health and residential amenity. Development proposals should be designed to minimise resource use during construction, operation and maintenance.

5.8.5 The soils were found to mainly comprise sandy clay loams, sandy loams or sandy silt loams, with evidence of waterlogging (greyish colours with ochreous mottles) within the subsoil.

5.8.6 The ALC Survey concludes (Appendix D) that ALC grades 3b and 4 occur across the site due to wetness and gradient.

5.8.7 The assessment has determined that the application site does not contain 'Best and Most Versatile' (BMV) agricultural land. In addition, given the temporary nature of the development, there will be little impact on land quality as the fields can be returned to agricultural use on removal of the solar farm. The proposed development does not therefore result in a detrimental impact on land quality or the supply of 'Best and Most Versatile' land.

5.8.8 As such, it is considered that the proposed development is therefore in accordance with Policies AW8, AW10 and AW12, and PPW12.

5.9 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

5.9.1 Policy 18 of Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 states that "Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects (including repowering) qualifying as Developments of National Significance will be permitted subject to: …

"9. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the transport network through the transportation of components or source fuel during its construction and / or ongoing operation…"

5.9.2 Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW12 states:

The construction, operation, decommissioning, remediation and aftercare of proposals should take into account:

the capacity of, and effects on the transportation network.

5.9.3 Policy AW5 relates to new development:

"Development proposals will be supported where:

Amenity

The scale, form and design of the development would have no unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area;

Where appropriate, existing site features of built and natural environment value would be retained;

There would be no significant impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers;

The development would be compatible with other uses in the locality;

The development would include the use of multi-functional buildings where appropriate;

The development designs out the opportunity for crime and anti social behaviour.

Accessibility

The development would be accessible to the local and wider community by a range of sustainable modes of transport;

The site layout and mix of uses maximises opportunities to reduce dependence on cares;

The development would have safe access to the highway network and would not cause traffic congestion or exacerbate existing traffic congestion;

Car parking would be provided in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Delivering Design and Placemaking; Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements

5.9.4 The Transport Statement (Appendix C) sets out the current and proposed access arrangements, the anticipated construction programme, construction vehicle numbers and routing of deliveries, construction worker numbers and the proposed construction hours.

5.9.5 The construction of the solar farm is expected to last around 6 months. During this period, there will be journeys associated with the arrival and departure of site staff and the delivery of parts and construction materials.

5.9.6 It is anticipated that the construction phase will generate approximately 175 return journey deliveries to site, or 350 individual movements. The first month will see the highest deliveries to site at 60. Even at the most intense period of construction when plant, equipment, materials, security fencing, frames and support posts and the panels are being delivered, there would be approximately an average of just over 3 HGV deliveries per working day. As all deliveries will result in a return journey for the vehicle there will be up to an average of just over 6 movements per working day.

5.9.7 An estimated 50 staff will be on site during the peak of the construction period, depending on the phases of the construction schedule. It is envisaged that staff will be from both local and regional contractors who will be encouraged to use shared transport such as minibus or car-sharing providing this is possible in terms of current public health guidelines. All vehicle parking will be provided within the temporary construction compound, there will be no parking on the local highway network.

5.9.8 The Transport Statement concludes that the proposal would not have a discernible impact upon the serving highway network and surrounding area. As such, it is considered that the proposed development meets the objectives of Policy 18 of the Future Wales, PPW12 and policy AW5 of the LDP.

5.10 AIR QUALITY

5.10.1 Policy 18 of Futures Wales: The National Plan 2040 states that "proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects (including repowering) qualifying as Developments of National Significance will be permitted subject to policy 17 and the following criteria:…

7. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of… air quality…".

5.10.2 Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW12 states that "The construction, operation, decommissioning, remediation and aftercare of proposals should take into account: …

The need to minimise impacts on local communities, such as from… air pollution, to safeguard quality of life for existing and future generations".

5.10.3 Policy AW10 relates to environmental protection and public health.

"Development proposals will not be permitted where they would cause or result in a risk of unacceptable harm to health and / or local amenity because of:-

Air pollution;

5.10.4 Possible impacts to the local air quality only have the potential to occur during the short period of the construction and decommissioning phase through vehicular and plant emissions and through the creation of dust.

5.10.5 The site is not within or near an Air Quality Management Area and proposed traffic generation during the limited duration of the construction period will not lead to significant vehicle emissions. Excessive dust is unlikely to be generated through anchoring of the frames to the ground as the majority of the frames will be secured by piles that will be pushed into the ground. Excavation is limited to scraping of top and sub soil for proposed tracks and foundations for the transformers and substation bases and trenching thus minimising the potential for ground disturbance and the liberation of dust emissions. Vehicle movements on site will be limited to transportation of equipment to/and across site.

5.10.6 Given the limited duration of the proposed construction works and the nature of works during the construction phase the potential for dust creation will be relatively low. The potential impacts during the decommissioning phase are expected to be similar to those identified for the construction phase.

5.10.7 The proposed development will not result in any adverse impacts on local air quality and is considered to be compliant with objectives of Policy 18 of the Future Wales, PPW12 and policy AW10 of the LDP.

5.11 SUMMARY OF KEY PLANNING ISSUES

5.11.1 This policy appraisal has considered the key planning issues associated with the proposed development. The principle of development is supported strongly by national and local planning policies.

5.11.2 The LVIA demonstrates that the proposed development could be successfully integrated into the local landscape without causing significant and wide scale harm to the landscape character. No 'significant' visual effects are noted. It is expected that the extensive proposed planting mitigation and management of existing perimeter vegetation over time will further filter views to the development to reduce the level of

visual effects.

5.11.3 The Ecology Assessment confirmed the solar development complies with national and local planning policies, with embedded mitigation strategies designed to protect biodiversity. With long-term habitat enhancement and monitoring, it is expected to result in a measurable, long-term net gain for biodiversity.

5.11.4 The policy appraisal summarises there will be no adverse impact to the following environmental topics:

- Hydrology and Flood Risk
- Noise and Vibration
- Agricultural Land
- Traffic and Transport
- Air Quality

5.12 PLANNING BALANCE

5.12.1 The proposed development clearly accords with the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' under Future Wales and PPW12 as it secures environmental, economic and social betterment. The potential impacts (with mitigation) of the proposal have been demonstrated to be limited and are significantly outweighed by the renewable energy benefits.

5.12.2 The proposed development will provide renewable energy and will contribute towards reducing the causes of climate change by reducing CO2 emissions, thereby ensuring future generations have access to low carbon energy and a high quality environment. It is considered that potential impacts from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposal are not significant and, when balanced against the pressing need for renewable energy and that local and national government strategies support this, the identified potential impacts following mitigation are considered acceptable. It is therefore considered that the proposal accords with the Development Plan and material considerations and should be granted planning permission.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 This Planning Statement describes a proposal by Windel Solar 8 Ltd to construct and operate a solar farm on approximately 20.9ha of land.

6.1.2 The proposed development will have a generating capacity of circa 9.9MW, enough to power over 2,600 homes per year and offset nearly 2,850 tonnes of CO2 every year.

6.2 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

6.2.1 Of the environmental topic areas considered as part of the EIA, the significance of impacts from the proposed operations considered to be greater than negligible are limited to:

- Landscape and Visual;
- Noise and Vibration; and
- Ecology;

6.2.2 It is identified that the proposal, without the proposed mitigation has the potential to create minor adverse impacts in respect of landscape and visual, noise and ecological matters. However, proposed measures including avoidance, mitigation and enhancement are considered to minimise these residual impacts to be not significant. Overall, the betterment for biodiversity demonstrates the proposal will provide a significant enhancement.

6.2.3 The landscape and visual impact assessment and ecology and nature conservation chapters of the ES provide full details of the enhancement proposals, but in summary these include:

- The existing field boundary vegetation, in the form of native hedgerows and trees, including those within the site, will be retained where possible and managed to an appropriate height to provide visual screening, but also to enhance landscape and ecological structure.
- Analysis of historic mapping will be undertaken to determine whether there are any lost landscape features that could be reinstated and integrated with the solar development e.g. copses, banking, ditches and hedgerows.
- Grassland will be managed and enhanced for landscape and ecological benefit, Species mixes will be appropriate to the local area and follow recommendations of the project and County Ecologists
- Appropriate development offsets (clear zones) will be initiated from adjacent habitats including the woodland and grassland SINC and neighbouring SSSI as well as field margins to ensure visual effects are not of a significant nature and that existing habitats have a sufficient buffer to enable transition/connectivity between existing and proposed habitat areas.
- Development will facilitate the management of the range of semi-natural habitats – trees, hedgerows and grassland mosaic/upland meadows, found throughout the solar plot and adjoining areas.
- Mitigation proposals will serve the dual purpose of providing landscape and visual mitigation and to increase the site's value and reflect Local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives.

6.2.4 From a landscape perspective, the landscape and visual impact assessment demonstrates that the proposed development could be successfully integrated within the existing site features and could be assimilated into the surrounding landscape without causing an unacceptable degree of change to landscape character and visual amenity of the local area.

6.2.5 The potential impacts on landscape character and visual amenity were identified

during the construction and decommissioning phase as minor (negative) due to the short duration. During the operational phase whilst adverse landscape effects are acknowledged, a moderate significance of landscape effect is concluded, this is not significant in EIA terms. In terms of visual amenity, up to and including major adverse significant impacts will be limited to one locally elevated position along a PROW and focussed to a particular location with the most open visibility.

6.2.6 With regards to Noise and Vibration impacts during the construction and decommissioning phases a minor adverse impact is expected. However, this is a temporary impact and measures to control noise will be implemented.

6.3 PLANNING POLICY

6.3.1 This policy appraisal has considered the key planning issues associated with the proposed development. The principle of development is supported strongly by National and Local planning policy.

6.3.2 The proposed development is considered to be entirely in accordance with Policies 17 and 18 of Futures Wales, Planning Policy Wales 12 and the adopted Local Development Plan.

6.4 CONCLUSION

6.4.1 It is demonstrated in this Planning Statement that the proposed development will realise substantial benefits in terms of renewable electricity, enhanced local biodiversity and improved socio-economic opportunities for the area and it is considered, on balance, to be in accordance with the development plan.

6.4.2 The proposal will contribute towards the Wales and UK targets of becoming net zero. Consequently, it is considered that planning permission should be granted.


SiriUS Planning