

Code No. and Date Received	Name and Address of Applicant	Description and Location of Proposed Development
15/0451/FULL 09.07.2015	Tealing Solar Parks Ltd C/o Pegasus Planning Group Ltd Mr C Cox First Floor South Wing Equinox North Great Park Road Almondsbury Bristol BS32 4QL	Install ground mounted photovoltaic solar arrays with transformer stations; internal access tracks; biodiversity enhancement; landscaping; stock fencing; security measures; access gate and ancillary infrastructure Land At Pen-Yr-Heol-Las Manmoel Road Manmoel NP12 0RQ

APPLICATION TYPE: Full Application

SITE AND DEVELOPMENT

Location: Land at Pen-Yr-Heol-Las, Manmoel Road, Manmoel, NP12 0RQ. The site is located to the west of Manmoel Road, south of the settlement of Manmoel and directly north of Pen-y-Fan Caravan and Leisure Park. The site is bounded by agricultural land to the northeast and west.

Site description: The site extends across an area of approximately 11.1 hectares (27.4 hectares) and comprises eight agricultural fields (Grade 4 and 5) currently used for grazing. The site is screened by trees and hedgerows to the north, south and west. A hedge and trees along Manmoel Road provides screening to the east.

The site slopes down to the south towards the caravan park. A farmstead (Pen y Fan Cottage) is located to the east of the site on the opposite side of Manmoel road and Hafodriscladd Isaf Farm is located to the south of the site. Some isolated dwellings are located to the south west and west of the application site.

The site is accessed from Manmoel Road, which connects to the B4251.

Development: Full planning permission is sought in respect of the installation of ground mounted photovoltaic solar arrays with transformer stations; internal access tracks; biodiversity enhancement; landscaping; stock fencing; security measures, access gate; and ancillary infrastructure. The ground mounted solar park would have an operational lifespan of 25 years.

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In terms of the site layout, the PV panels will be set back from the boundary of each field by at least 6m in order to provide for access around the edge of each field and to ensure the continuing health of existing trees and hedgerows. Any bare areas created during the construction period would be sown with species diverse grassland and meadow seed mix. Grassland around the field margins would be managed as tall tussocky grassland. To the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the application site a 1m width native hedgerow would be planted, offset from the existing mature hedgerow trees. Along the western site boundary larger gaps in the existing vegetation would be infilled with proposed native hedgerow. This new hedgerow would assist in screening views, whilst increasing the net tree and hedgerow resource of the site. An instant hedgerow would be planted along the south-eastern boundary in order to screen views from a nearby residential property with a number of hedge trees.

Each array will be mounted on a supporting metal framework laid out in parallel arrays (rows) running east to west across the various field enclosures. The panels, would be tilted at 18 degrees from the horizontal, orientated to face due south towards the sun, would be some 0.85m above ground level, with the trailing top edge set at 2m above ground level.

The solar farm would use small inverters, mounted on the back/underside of the solar panels, thereby removing the need for visible inverter buildings.

There would be two power station building (L6.05m x W2.43m x H2.59m) and low voltage substation (L6.08m x W3.1m x H2.68m).

Connection to the local grid network would be via cables to an existing substation to the south-east of the application site.

The strings of solar panels would be connected together by underground cabling, with no new above ground cabling required.

In total the panels will cover only 30% of the total area of the site if viewed directly from above. Strips of grass between the panels will be retained and grazed by sheep during the life of the scheme. The distance between the rows of panels will vary depending on the ground levels but is generally 2.5m to avoid any overshadowing effect.

Construction vehicles would access the site from a short section of new access track off Manmoel Road, to the northeast of the application site. Internal access tracks will be provided, which will facilitate the installation of the solar arrays and post construction will be retained to allow for maintenance. The tracks will be constructed using locally sourced permeable aggregate.

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A secure temporary compound will be used to store materials and ancillary welfare facilities during construction period. It is anticipated the construction phase will take up to three months, with mounting structures, fencing and modules being delivered first followed by inverters, substations, cabling and CCTV. It is estimated that an average of 1.5 HGV deliveries per day for six days.

Access to the solar park is restricted for security reasons. The development includes the erection of a 2m high deer fence, mounted on timber poles.

A CCTV system would be mounted on 4m high poles, 1m inside the deer fence close to the array. Cameras will be dotted around the application site.

The application has been supported by a Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, a Heritage Desk-Based Assessment prepared by Cotswold Archaeology dated May 2015, A Glare Assessment prepared by IZEN International, An Agricultural Assessment prepared by Kernon Countryside Consultants Limited dated June 2015, Flood Consequences Assessment prepared by Clive Onions dated July 2015, an Ecological Survey prepared by Clarkson and Woods dated June 2015, an appraisal of Landscape and Visual Effects prepared by Pegasus Group dated July 2015, construction Traffic Management Plan, and a Statement of Community Engagement and an assessment for Protected species prepared by Ethos Environmental Planning.

Dimensions: The site extends across an area of approximately 11.1 hectares. The solar park will generate circa 4.89MW of renewable energy. This is sufficient to provide the annual power needs of approximately 1522 households. The power station with 2 invertors has maximum dimensions of 6.05m x 2.59m x 2.4m. The sub-station has maximum dimensions of 6.08m x 3.1m x 2.5m.

Materials: The power station and sub-station are proposed to be of pre-fabricated modular design.

The silicone PV panels will be coloured black or blue and faced with anti-reflective glass. They will be mounted on galvanised steel frames.

Ancillary development, e.g. parking: Parking within the compound and portable welfare facilities will be provided during the course of construction.

PLANNING HISTORY 2005 TO PRESENT

No previous planning history.

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POLICY

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Site Allocation: Outside of settlement boundary.

Policies:

SP2 - Development Strategy in the Northern Connections Corridor, SP6 - Place making, SP8 - Minerals Safeguarding, SP10 - Conservation of Natural Heritage, SP21 - Parking standards.

Countywide Policies

CW2 - Amenity, CW3 - Design considerations - highways, CW4 - Natural Heritage Protection, CW5 - Protection of Water Environment, CW6 - Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerow Protection, CW15 - General locational constraints, CW19 - Rural Development and Diversification, CW22 - Minerals.

NATIONAL POLICY

Planning Policy Wales, 7th Edition July 2014, TAN 5 - Nature Conservation and Planning (2011), TAN 6 - Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010), TAN 8 - Renewable Energy (2005), TAN 12 - Design, Welsh Office Circulars 11/99 Environmental Impact Assessment, Circular 60/96 Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology, circular 61/96 Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas. Welsh Assembly Practice Guidance Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy 2011.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Did the application have to be screened for an EIA? Yes.

Was an EIA required? Prior to the submission of the application a screening request was submitted and a screening opinion was issued on the 8th June 2015 which confirmed that an Environmental Impact assessment was not required.

COAL MINING LEGACY

Is the site within an area where there are mining legacy issues? Not an issue in respect of this application.

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CONSULTATION

Argoed Community Council - No response.

Transportation Engineering Manager - Has no objection to the development subject to conditions including that the development be carried out in accordance with the Construction Traffic Management Plan submitted with the application and the developer carrying out a highway condition survey along Manmoel Road. The agreed survey shall include a scheme and timetable for the repair of any damage caused to the highway by delivery vehicles associated with this development.

Head Of Public Protection - Have no objections to the development subject to conditions being attached to any consent restricting the hours worked during construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of the site, details of sound insulation proposals in respect of the substation being submitted and approved by the local planning authority and site control measures in respect of dust and noise suppression.

Senior Engineer (Land Drainage) - No objections.

Strategic & Development Plans - No response

Rights Of Way Officer - FP158 in the Community of Bedwellty abuts the site and must be protected at all times.

Dwr Cymru - Holding objection.

Western Power Distribution - No response.

Countryside And Landscape Services - Requests conditions are attached to any consent requiring existing and proposed Landscaping (mitigation) details, details of the route connection to the National Grid, details of the external colours of the transformer and inverter cabinets and CCTV poles, a detailed Landscape and Management Plan, a Construction Environmental Management Plan and a monitoring programme for grassland habitats together with revised design detail in respect of the proposed substation.

Senior Arboricultural Officer (Trees) - Requests conditions are attached to any consent requiring an Arboricultural Method Statement together with a Tree Protection Plan.

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Natural Resources Wales - Do not object to the proposal as submitted. They advise the proposed development is taken forward in line with the recommendations set out in Section 7.5 of the Ecological Survey prepared by Clarkson and Woods, dated June 2015.

Glam/Gwent Archaeological Trust - Confirms that it is unlikely that any buried archaeological features encountered during construction would be of sufficient importance to prevent the positive determination of the current application. Nonetheless the impact of the development on any archaeological resource will require mitigation. It requests a condition is attached to any consent requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation in order to identify and record any features of archaeological interest discovered during the works in order to mitigate the impact of works on the archaeological resource.

Civil Aviation Authority - The proposed development has been examined from a technical safeguarding aspect and does not conflict with our safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS (En Route) Public Limited Company ("NERL") has no safeguarding objection to the proposal. They provide advice to be conveyed to the developer

Police Architectural Liaison Officer - The Gwent Police Designing Out Crime Unit have no objections to this application. Advice is provided to be conveyed to the developer.

Police Air Support Services - No response

Wales Air Ambulance - No response.

Chief Fire Officer - No response.

The Wildlife Trust Of South And West Wales - No response.

National Grid - No response.

Ramblers Cymru - No response.

Natural Environment & Agriculture Team - No response.

Minerals Officer - The site is within a sandstone safeguarding area identified in the LDP. Policy CW22 is relevant to the determination of the application.

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This policy seeks to protect mineral resources that society may need in the future from development that would constrain exploitation of the resource. The pennant sandstone in the south Wales coalfield is a nationally important resource because it meets the specification for High Specification Aggregate, which is used for skid resistant road surfacing.

However, the development is temporary development and there is currently no indication that the resource near this site will be needed within the next 25 years. Therefore the proposal accords with policy CW22 B in the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 - Adopted November 2010.

Council For The Protection Of Rural Wales - No response.

ADVERTISEMENT

Extent of advertisement: The application has been advertised on site, in the press and nineteen neighbouring properties have been consulted.

Response: Six.

Summary of observations:

- adverse visual impact as a result of the scale of the development,
- adverse impact as a result of glint and glare,
- change in landscape character,
- cumulative impact,
- impact upon residential amenity,
- close proximity to two public rights of way,
- insufficient community engagement,
- unclear description of site location,
- noise pollution,
- close proximity to Hafodrisclawdd-isaf site of Importance for Nature conservation (SINC) identified by Policy NH3.34 of the LDP,
- drainage,
- adverse impact upon ecology,
- loss of privacy and crime target.

SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT

What is the likely effect of the determination of this application on the need for the Local Planning Authority to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area?
There are no specific crime and disorder implications material to the determination of this planning application.

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EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

Does the development affect any protected wildlife species?

An ecological survey has been submitted undertaken by Clarkson and Woods dated June 2015 and a Protected Species Survey undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning dated August 2015.

The site lies adjacent to the Hafodrisclawdd Site of Importance for nature Conservation (SINC) (Policy NH3.34). The stream that runs through this SINC will receive surface run off from the site. The potential impact of this run off is most likely to occur during the construction period when there is the potential for construction vehicles to create bare ground/mud, increasing the risk of sediment in the surface run off. The applicant has proposed to create a swale along the southern perimeter within the vicinity of the smallholding, which will encourage infiltration and reduce run off rates into the nearby SINC. These proposals are acceptable.

The site was found to support semi-improved neutral grassland that is a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and a habitat of principal importance in Wales. Construction may result in the damage to the grassland, if construction occurs during the winter months or during wet conditions. The ecological report recommends that damaged/ bare areas are reseeded with a locally sourced wild flower and grass seed mix. The current management is a mixture of cattle and sheep grazing with some fields cut for hay. Cattle are not considered suitable for solar farms, so sheep grazing is recommended for future management between the solar panels. Sheep grazing is less suitable to achieve species rich grassland beneficial to invertebrates and pollinators, so removal of grazing stock during the summer months will be necessary to achieve the increase in species diversity proposed as mitigation for the loss of habitat beneath the hard structures put on site. This can be achieved through the preparation and implementation of a Landscape and Ecological Management plan as a planning condition.

The site also supports a network of hedgerows and connected woodland. Several hedgerows were identified as being Important Hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations and all have the potential to provide commuting and foraging habitat for bats. The applicant is proposing to retain all the hedgerows, and this council's Arboriculturalist has recommended an Arboricultural Method statement is prepared incorporating a tree protection plan.

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This will also serve to protect the habitat and species associated with the hedgerows and woodland and may be addressed by attaching appropriate conditions to any consent.

The assessment for protected species included a reptile survey, bat survey and bird survey. No evidence of reptiles were recorded on site.

With regard to bats, all trees were inspected for suitability as roosts for bats. The age of the beech trees meant that the majority of trees on site had high potential to support bats. A bat activity was also undertaken, and confirmed that 7 species of bat foraged and commuted around the site, with the highest level of activity being along the mid-west and south-west perimeters, and few records along the internal hedgerows. In view of these findings, and as all trees are proposed to be retained and protected during construction, there is unlikely to be an impact on bats and the three European tests do not need to be applied to this application. Research has indicated that bats have the potential to collide with panels, and as the site is 950metres from Pen-y-fan Pond, as a precautionary measure a bat monitoring programme during the first 12 months of operation should be conditioned.

A bird survey confirmed that twenty-one species of bird were present on site, with notable breeding birds associated with the hedgerows and trees included redstart, nuthatch and great tit, and tawny owls may also breed on site. The grassland provides foraging habitat for house martins and swallows, nesting nearby. No ground nesting birds were recorded. In view of the retention of all trees on site, there is unlikely to be an impact on breeding birds on site and the management changes that will be proposed through the Landscape and Ecological Management plan have the potential to increase the availability of invertebrates for foraging birds.

The enhancement measures proposed in section 7.4 of the ecological report are welcomed, the details of which should be included in a plan and their subsequent management in a Landscape and Ecological Management plan to be addressed by attaching an appropriate condition to any consent.

With regards to the ecological objections referred to, the comments above have addressed those objections.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

Is this development Community Infrastructure Levy liable? No.

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ANALYSIS

Policies:

The development has been considered in accordance with local plan policies and national planning guidance.

National Policy is contained within Planning Policy Wales Edition 7 (July 2014) and Technical Advice note (TAN) 8: Renewable Energy (2005). PPW reflects a UK target of 15% of energy from renewables by 2020, and here in Wales "we have set a 4TWh per annum renewable electricity production by 2010 and a 7TW target by 2020 as stepping-stones to our ambition of 60% carbon savings by 2050." In order to meet these targets Welsh Government has concluded that 800MW of additional installed capacity is required from onshore wind sources and a further 200MW of installed capacity is required from offshore wind and other renewable technologies. The provision of this solar farm falls under the heading of 'other renewable technologies' and will help to contribute to this target.

There are no specific policies in the LDP relevant to the provision of large solar farms. The application site lies in the countryside for purposes of the LDP. Policy CW15 - Locational Constraints is therefore relevant. Criterion C (iv) states that development in such locations will not be permitted unless the proposal is associated with the provision of public utilities and infrastructure that cannot be reasonably located elsewhere. Policy SP10 - Conservation of Natural Heritage sets out the overarching intention that the natural heritage of the Borough, including landscape, is to be protected. Policy CW4 - Natural Heritage Protection supports this and permits proposals, which conserve, and where appropriate, enhance the distinctive or characteristic features of the Special Landscape Area. Policy CW2 sets out specific aims with regard to development, namely development should not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of adjacent properties or land, should not result in overdevelopment, and be compatible with surrounding land uses. Policy CW3 - Design considerations - Highways ensures that development satisfies and follows highway requirements.

The proposed development raises several key issues and these are addressed as follows:-

- Principle of development.
- Use of agricultural land.
- Landscape and visual impact.
- Impact upon the historic environment.

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- Ecology.
- Highway safety and access.
- Drainage.
- Duration of permission.

PRINCIPLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Policy CW19 - Rural Development and Diversification. The applicant has cited Policy CW19 as a policy consideration. The reasoned justification to Policy CW19 states "Diversification is essentially changing an existing facility that is no longer suited to its original purpose to another use that will benefit the local community, economy and people". This policy is therefore aimed at conversions and more local considerations than this proposal which is for the production of sustainable energy that has much wider implications. It is the case though that Welsh Assembly Practice Guidance Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy 2011 part 8.4.16 does predict that a "significant proportion of proposals for solar PV arrays will be on agricultural land" and as such can support farm diversification (as per Planning Policy Wales 2012 part 7.3).

That practice guidance explains that whilst many solar proposals will be on agricultural land it is not expected that such land should be of a high grade. The application site is not high grade in accordance with that expectation.

In terms of the principle of the development, ideally large-scale solar PV arrays should be directed towards previously developed land or Brownfield sites. However, with relatively few sites of appropriate status and size within the Caerphilly County Borough, it is considered that, subject to other considerations set out below the principle of the proposed photovoltaic development on this undeveloped land in the countryside is endorsed by planning policy as a suitable source of obtaining renewable energy to meet the energy demands of the county. The applicant advises that an assessment of other land within the county borough was considered but solar PV is highly constrained by the requirement to be close to a suitable grid connection point. This site has the capacity to accept additional load on the overhead lines crossing the site and therefore fulfils this critical constraint. Other barriers to development such as site access and ecological impacts have been demonstrated to be manageable. The risk of disturbing buried features of archaeological interest has shown to be low. The applicant advises that finding alternative sites, which satisfy the above criteria where the landowner embraces the development, is even more difficult.

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USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is a standardised method for classifying agricultural land according to its versatility, productivity and workability based upon interrelated parameters including climate, relief, soil characteristics and drainage. These factors form the basis for classifying agricultural land into one of five grades (with grade 3 land divided into sub grades 3a and 3b). Best and most versatile agricultural land is classified as grades 1, 2 or 3a; whereas moderate, poor and very poor quality land is designated sub grade 3b or grades 4 and 5 respectively. The ALC map for Wales shows that the site has an ALC of grade 4.

The proposal is for the temporary use of the land for the purposes of solar power generation. It is the intention of the landowner to use the land to graze sheep to prevent it from becoming overgrown and will assist eventual full restoration. The installation is capable of being decommissioned and removed from site at the end of its viable life or duration of planning permission if approved, whichever is the sooner, with the site returned to its original appearance; this would be enforced by planning condition.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

Objection has been received regarding the adverse visual impact the development will have in this countryside location as a result of the scale of the development, the change in landscape character and its cumulative impact with other development. The application site lies in the countryside for purposes of the LDP. Policy CW15: Locational Constraints, at criterion C, states that development in such locations will not be permitted unless the proposal is associated with the provision of public utilities and infrastructure that cannot be reasonably located elsewhere (criterion iv). Policy SP10: Conservation of Natural Heritage sets out the overarching intention that the natural heritage of the Borough, including landscape, is to be protected. Policy CW4 furthers this: Natural Heritage Protection permits proposals, which conserve, and where appropriate, enhance the distinctive or characteristic features of the Special Landscape Area. The site has no land use designations. The main issue in respect of this application relates to the extent of impact the PV panels would have on the landscape character of the site and its adjacent landscape and the visual impact of the PV panels on people living, working enjoying or passing through the area. The applicant has submitted a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in respect of the proposed application, which is in accordance with what is currently regarded as best practice.

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The methodology used to undertake the Appraisal of Landscape and Visual Effects is robust and in accordance with what is currently regarded as best practice. A series of matrices are used to guide the assessment of potential effects of the development upon Landscape Character and Visual receptors. This formulae approach is supplemented by professional judgement.

A study area of 5 kilometres from the centre of the application site and 13 representative photo viewpoints were selected following analysis of the Zone of Theoretical visibility mapping and discussions with the Council's Landscape Architect. It is considered that there is unlikely to be any significant effect upon Landscape Character or visual receptors. The proposed development is visually well contained within the existing field structure and distant views of the proposal are likely to be extremely limited. Some local views into the site will be possible where existing hedgerow boundaries are fragmented. However this can be addressed by management and additional planting, which will within a reasonable timeframe provide a suitable vegetation screen and a benefit to the local landscape in the long term. In this respect it is considered appropriate to attach conditions to any consent requiring details of existing and proposed landscaping, a detailed landscape and ecology management plan, details of the route and method of connection to the National Grid, and conditions relating the colour of the transformer cabinets, substation and CCTV poles.

IMPACT ON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

A detailed Archaeological assessment of the potential impacts on the historic environment of the proposal was undertaken on behalf of the applicant and submitted as part of this planning application and included a desk based assessment, a site walkover and geophysical analysis.

ECOLOGY

Objection has been raised regarding the adverse impact the proposed solar farm will have upon ecology and particularly given its close proximity to Hafodrisclawdd-isaf Site of Importance of Nature Conservation. Policy SP10 - Conservation of Natural Heritage, Policy CW4 - Natural Heritage Protection and Policy CW6 - Trees Woodland and Hedgerow Protection of the LDP are relevant and aim to protect, conserve, enhance and manage the natural heritage of the county borough. The ecological assessment that accompanied the planning application comprised a desk study, a site survey and a report. The assessment concluded that the proposed development is not anticipated to result in any significant adverse impacts on designated sites; important habitats or protected species during the construction or operational phase and it also recommends opportunities for habitat creation. This Council's Ecologist has addressed the issues raised by the objector above.

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In terms of ecology and biodiversity it is considered that the proposed development does not conflict with policies CW4 and CW6 of the LDP and subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions is considered acceptable in planning terms.

HIGHWAY SAFETY AND ACCESS

Objection has been raised regarding the close proximity of the development to two Public Rights of Way. This Council's Rights of Way Officer has considered the proposed development and has not raised objection to the development subject to Footpath 158 in the Community of Bedwellty, which abuts the site being protected at all times. There are a number of Public Rights of Way that are located within the vicinity of the application site and the visual impact of the development upon users of these footpaths has been considered in the Appraisal of Landscape and Visual Effects submitted with the application. As discussed above this Council's Landscape Planner has concluded that if approved there is unlikely to be any significant effect upon Landscape Character or visual receptors.

Vehicular traffic, which is mainly in the construction phase of the development, is anticipated to last for approximately 3 months. A construction compound would be provided within the site boundary. Following construction, the installation would be monitored remotely and not require permanent staff to be located on-site. Servicing of equipment on the site would only need to be undertaken every 2 - 3 months by a maintenance engineer using a small van/truck. As such, the level of traffic generated by the proposed development is considered to be minimal.

The Construction and Traffic Management Plan and Method Statement submitted considers the traffic impacts that could arise during construction of the proposed development and outlines the principles to manage site operations with the view to minimising any transport and traffic-related issues during the construction

The Council's Transportation Engineering Manager has considered the information submitted in support of the application and raised no objection to the development subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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DRAINAGE

Objection has been raised regarding the impact the proposed solar farm will have upon drainage. In this respect Policy CW5 of the LDP - Protection of the Water Environment is relevant. The flood risk assessment submitted as part of the planning application has identified that the development is not at risk of flooding. The applicant has also investigated the impact of run-off rates from the site. As the photovoltaic power plant's substructure allows for flexible installation, no changes to drainage are anticipated. Specifically, the steel substructure will follow the contours of the land, eliminating the need for any cut or fill of the topography. Existing grasses and vegetation will be maintained such that surface flows will be minimised and kept at current levels.

GLINT AND GLARE

Objection has been raised in this respect. A Glint and Glare Report has been submitted with the application and discusses the potential for glare from the PV panels on the surrounding roads, residential properties and settlements.

Solar PV panels are specifically designed to absorb, not reflect, light from the sun. The PV panels are manufactured with anti-reflective coatings to be as absorbent as possible in order to maximise their efficiency in producing electricity. The report, which concludes the predicted impact of glare from the solar park on surrounding roads, residential properties and settlements, is considered negligible. There have been no consultee objections in respect of this aspect of the development.

DURATION OF PERMISSION

The application seeks consent for a temporary period of 25 years and this can be conditioned within any planning permission. Once the life of the permission is reached, the recommended condition would require the site be decommissioned, all infrastructure removed and the site restored to its original state.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Objection has been raised that the developer has not extended their public consultation wide enough given the size of the development and its location in an unspoilt area well used for recreational purposes. TAN 8 encourages developers to take an active role in engaging with the local community on renewable energy proposals (Para. 2.15). The applicant has followed that advice and engaged with the local community in Gelligaer. The applicant has submitted a Statement of Community Engagement and confirmed that it sent out 16 consultation letters distributed to local business and residents. Notwithstanding this the Council has advertised this planning application on site, in the press and nineteen neighbouring properties were consulted.

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CRIME

An objection has been raised concerned that the proposed solar park will generate theft and vandalism, with solar parks being targeted specifically. In response, the DAS submitted with the application addresses potential crime issues. A secure compound will be used to store materials and ancillary welfare facilities will be provided during the construction period and possibly a night watchman. The period of construction is indicated to be around 3 months. Post construction the development will be secured by a 2m high stock fence which will encompass a gated entrance, cameras with external perimeter intruder detection (PID) will also be erected and finally additional native hedgerow planting along the site perimeter will increase the site's privacy and security.

An objection has been raised suggesting the description of the site has not been made clear particularly as he lives in the adjacent Hafodrisclawddd-isaf farm to the application site. It is considered that the plans and supporting documents submitted with the application are sufficient in terms of the processing of the application and the site plan submitted with the application at a scale of 1:5000 clearly identifies the surrounding area including neighbouring farmsteads and other dwellings.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is considered the selected site is appropriate in that it can accommodate the proposed solar farm without significantly affecting the landscape character and appearance of the surrounding area, and potential archaeology or the amenities of residents in the vicinity. The temporary and reversible nature of the development, together with the measures that are to be taken to enhance and encourage ecological diversity of the site will ensure that, in the long term, the site can not only be restored to its current use, but will also have been improved.

Comments from Consultees: The concerns of the statutory consultees referred to above may be addressed by attaching appropriate conditions to any consent.

Comments from public: See above.

Other material considerations: None.

The proposals are consistent with national, regional and local plan policy and subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions referred to above are considered acceptable in planning terms.

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RECOMMENDATION that Permission be GRANTED

This permission is subject to the following condition(s)

- 01) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.
REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 02) At least 5 working days, notice in writing shall be given to the Local Planning Authority in respect of the commencement of works.
REASON: To enable the Local Planning Authority to ensure construction works take place in a timely manner and to minimise disturbance to neighbouring amenity in accordance with Policy CW2 of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021- Adopted November 2010.
- 03) The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved Construction Traffic Management Plan prepared by TPA dated June 2015.
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.
- 04) Prior to the commencement of works on site, a scheme to prevent mud and other debris being deposited on the public highway, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme.
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.
- 05) The development shall not commence until a means of vehicular access has been constructed in accordance with details that shall have first been submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.
- 06) The development shall not commence until vehicle parking and turning space has been surfaced and marked out in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The spaces shall not thereafter be used for any purpose other than parking and turning.
REASON: To ensure that the development is provided with adequate car parking to prevent the likelihood of on-street car parking which would be a danger to other road users.

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- 07) Prior to the delivery of any components a highway condition survey along Manmoel Road shall be carried out and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The agreed survey shall include a scheme and timetable for the repair of any damage caused to the highway by delivery vehicles associated with this development. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with those agreed details.
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.
- 08) Prior to the commencement of the development a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, including a timetable and extent of work, shall be submitted by the applicant and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme.
REASON: In the interests of the archaeological and historical heritage of the Borough.
- 09) Notwithstanding the submitted plans, details of the colours of the external finishes of the Transformer and Invertor Cabinets together with the CCTV poles and associated attachments shall be submitted for consideration and approval in writing with the Local Planning Authority. the development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.
REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.
- 10) Notwithstanding the submitted plans, revised details shall be submitted for consideration and approval in writing with the Local Planning Authority, in respect of the location of the substation together with the design of the substation, which shall include a pitched roof building with either a stone/timber clad or rendered finish to the external walls. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.
REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.
- 11) Prior to the commencement of the development a scheme depicting hard and soft landscaping shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Those details shall include:
(a) Proposed finished ground levels or contours; means of enclosure; car parking layouts; other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas; hard surfacing materials; minor structures including furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units; and
(b) Proposed and existing functional services above and below ground (e.g. drainage, power, communications cables, pipelines etc. indicating lines, manholes etc.); and

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c) Planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed scheme and all planting, seeding, turfing/hard landscaping works comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting season following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner. Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

REASON: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area.

- 12) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved an Ecology and Landscape Management plan shall be prepared and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its agreement. The agreed plan shall be complied with during and after the completion of the development hereby approved.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection to protected species.

- 13) Construction, movement of materials and decommissioning works shall take place only between the hours of 0800 - 1800 Mondays to Fridays and 0800 - 1300 Saturdays and not at all on Sundays or Public Holidays.

REASON: In the interests of residential amenity to minimise disturbance to foraging/commuting bats and other nocturnal animals.

- 14) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, 1995 (or any Order amending, replacing or re-enacting that Order), no fixed plant or machinery, buildings, structures and erections, or private ways shall be erected, extended, installed, rearranged, replaced, repaired or altered at the site without prior planning permission from the Local Planning Authority, except for those works permitted by this consent.

REASON: To protect the landscape character of the area in accordance with Policies CW4 of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021- Adopted November 2010.

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- 15) Within 25 years and 6 months following completion of construction of development, or within 6 months of the cessation of electricity generation by the solar PV facility, whichever is the sooner, the solar PV panels, frames, foundations, inverter housings and all associated structures and fencing approved shall be dismantled and removed from the site. The developer shall notify the Local Planning Authority in writing no later than five working days following cessation of power production. The site shall be subsequently restored in accordance with a scheme, the details of which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority no later than three months following the cessation of power production.
REASON: In the interest of visual amenity.
- 16) Prior to the development commencing on the construction of any roads, drainage, or buildings hereby approved a scheme for dust mitigation shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the agreed scheme shall be employed as necessary to deal with dust arising from construction works.
REASON: In the interests of the amenity of the area.
- 17) Prior to the development commencing on the construction of any roads, drainage, or buildings hereby approved a scheme for noise mitigation shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the agreed scheme shall be employed as necessary to deal with noise arising from construction works.
REASON: In the interests of the amenity of the area.
- 18) The details of the Substation referred to in condition (10) above shall include details of sound insulation materials. The agreed details shall be implemented before the first use of the Substation commences.
REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area.
- 19) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be prepared and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its agreement. The agreed plan shall be complied with during and after the completion of the development hereby approved.
REASON: To ensure adequate protection to protected species.

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- 20) Within 6 months of the commencement of the development a monitoring programme for grassland habitats, and bats shall be submitted for consideration and approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed management programme shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed details and copies of the monitoring reports submitted to the Local Planning Authority in accordance with an agreed timeframe.
REASON: In the interests of biodiversity.
- 21) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following plans and other submitted details: drawing no: 20141008132049 dated 10.3.15 and CCTV Security post dated 10.3.15 and Frame structure dated 10.3.15 (or any plans or details subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority as an amendment to the approved plans).
REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority.
- 22) The wearing course of all access tracks/vehicle routes through the site hereby approved shall be constructed of locally occurring sandstone.
REASON: To reflect the underlying geology of the site.
- 23) Details of the route and method of connection to the National Grid within the site hereby approved shall be submitted for consideration and approval in writing with the Local Planning Authority. the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and biodiversity.
- 24) No vegetation clearance, works or development shall take place until a scheme for the protection of the retained trees (section 7, BS59837, the Tree Protection Plan) has been agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. This scheme shall where the Local Planning Authority consider appropriate include:
a) a plan to a scale and level of accuracy appropriate to the proposal that shows the position, crown spread and Root Protection Area (para. 5.2.2 of BS5837) of every retained tree on site and on neighbouring or nearby ground to the site in relation to the approved plans and particulars. The positions of all trees to be removed shall be indicated on this plan,
b) the details of each retained tree as required at para. 4.2.6 of BS5837 in a separate schedule,

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- c) a schedule of tree works for all the retained trees in paragraphs (a) and (b) above, specifying pruning and other remedial or preventative work, whether for physiological, hazard abatement, aesthetic or operational reasons. All tree works shall be carried out in accordance with BS3998, 1989, Recommendations for tree work,
- d) written proof of the credentials of the arboricultural contractor authorised to carry out the scheduled tree works,
- e) the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Ground Protection Zones (section 9.3 of BS5837),
- f) the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Tree Protection Barriers (section 9.2 of BS5837), identified separately where required for different phases of construction work (e.g. demolition, construction, hard landscaping). The Tree Protection Barriers must be erected prior to each construction phase commencing and remain in place, and undamaged for the duration of that phase. No works shall take place on the next phase until the Tree Protection Barriers are repositioned for that phase,
- g) the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Construction Exclusion Zones (section 9 of BS5837),
- h) the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the underground service runs (section 11.7 of BS5837),
- i) the details of any changes in levels or the position of any proposed excavations within 5 metres of the Root Protection Area (RPA) (para. 5.2.2 of BS5837) of any retained tree, including those on neighbouring or nearby ground,
- j) the details of any special engineering required to accommodate the protection of retained trees (section 10 of BS5837), (e.g. in connection with foundations, bridging, water features, surfacing)
- k) the details of the working methods to be employed with the demolition of buildings, structures and surfacing within or adjacent to the RPAs of retained trees,
- l) the details of the working methods to be employed for the installation of drives and paths within the RPAs of retained trees in accordance with the principles of "No-Dig" construction,
- m) the details of the working methods to be employed with regard to the access for and use of heavy, large, difficult to manoeuvre plant (including cranes and their loads, dredging machinery, concrete pumps, piling rigs, etc) on site,
- n) the details of the working methods to be employed with regard to site logistics and storage, including an allowance for slopes, water courses and enclosures, with particular regard to ground compaction and phytotoxicity,

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- o) the details of the method to be employed for the stationing, use and removal of site cabins within any RPA (para. 9.2.3 of BS5837),
- p) the details of tree protection measures for the hard landscaping phase (sections 13 and 14 of BS5837).
- q) the timing of the various phases of the works or development in the context of the tree protection measures.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.

- 25) The permission hereby granted shall endure for a period of 25 years from the date when electricity is first exported from the solar farm. Written confirmation of the first export date shall be sent to the Local Planning Authority within one month of the first export date.

REASON: In order to retain effective control over the development.

- 26) Within 25 years from the date when electricity is first generated to the grid, or within six months of the cessation of electricity generation by the solar farm facility, whichever is sooner, the solar farm and all associated works/equipment shall be dismantled and removed from the site and the land restored to its former condition in line with a restoration scheme, details of which shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.

- 27) Within the year prior to decommissioning of the site, and during the appropriate survey period prior to decommissioning, a full ecological survey of the site shall be undertaken to inform decommissioning, as required by Condition 26). A survey report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of decommissioning and then implemented as approved. The report shall include ecological mitigation measures, as appropriate, based on the ecological assessment findings to be followed during commissioning and beyond.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and biodiversity.

Advisory Note(s)

The following policy(ies) of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 - Adopted November 2010 is/are relevant to the conditions of this permission: CW2 and CW3.

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The applicant is advised of the comments of Natural Resources Wales, Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust, Heddlu Gwent Police, Rights of Way Officer, Nats, Council's Ecologist, Senior Arboricultural Officer (Trees) and Countryside and Landscape Services.
