



## PLANNING COMMITTEE – 4TH NOVEMBER 2015

**SUBJECT: SITE VISIT - CODE NO. 15/0433/FULL – PEN-Y-FAN FARM, PEN-Y-FAN FARM LANE, MANMOEL, BLACKWOOD, NP12 0HZ.**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER**

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PRESENT:

Councillor D.G. Carter – Chair

Councillors M. Adams, Mrs E.M. Aldworth, Mrs P. Cook, Ms J. Gale, L. Gardiner, A. Lewis and K. Lloyd

1. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, D. Bolter, W. David, A.G. Higgs, D. Rees, J. Simmonds and Mrs J. Summers.
2. The Planning Committee deferred consideration of this application on 7th October 2015 for a site visit. Members and Officers met on site on Monday, 26th October 2015.
3. Details of the application to erect a 4.1MW solar farm, consisting of around 15,796 solar modules – on-site access tracks, substations, under ground cables, perimeter fencing and CCTV cameras at Pen-y-Fan farm, Pen-y-Fan Farm Lane, Manmoel, Blackwood, NP12 0HZ were noted.
4. Those present viewed and walked the site and examined the plans submitted with the application to fully appreciate the proposals.
5. Members were asked to note that the proposed development will consist of rows of fixed solar photovoltaic panels with a maximum height of 2.18m above ground level, enclosed by a 1.8m high tensile street deer fence. The spacing, finish and position of the transformer, sub station and grid connects were confirmed. The site is located in open countryside with the south easternmost field of the site lying within the Pen-y- fan Pond and Meadows Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.
6. Members raised concerns with regard to its visual impact as well as its impact on the ecology of the conservation area. The Officer confirmed that the fields within the application site are agriculturally improved grassland which has recently been ploughed through so the impact on habitat would be minimal, the applicant has agreed to plant a wildflower meadow and wild bird cover strips, which if managed appropriately will provide a net benefit for biodiversity. The detrimental visual impact of the development on Pen-y-Fan Bungalows and the Pen-y-Fan Country Park were discussed at length and the objections of the Gwent Wildlife Trust were referenced. Concerns were expressed that taking into account the cumulative effective of existing wind turbines this further addition would constitute an unacceptable loss of much valued countryside.

Clarification was sought as to any 'Community Benefit' associated with the development, the Officer confirmed that this would be a matter for the developer and she was not aware that any obligation had been considered but would seek further information and advise the Planning Committee accordingly.

7. Concerns were expressed in relation to the construction process and the disruption caused during this period, as well as its impact on lane surface. Officers confirmed that a condition road survey assessment would be carried out before and after the construction process and the applicant would be obligated to put right any damage caused.
8. Officers confirmed that following advertisement to 31 neighbouring properties, advertisement in the press and a site notice being posted, 2 letters of objection and 8 letter of support had been received, details of which are within the Officer's original report.
9. The initial planning report concluded that having given due regard to relevant planning policy and the comments from consultees and objectors, the application is considered to be acceptable and Officers recommended that permission be granted.
10. A copy of the report submitted to the Planning Committee on 7th October 2015 is attached. Members are now invited to determine the application.

Author:	E. Sullivan	Democratic Services Officer, Ext. 4420
Consultees:	M. Davies	Principal Planner
	M. Noakes	Senior Engineer (Highway Development Control)

Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Report submitted to Planning Committee on 7th October 2015