

Code No. and Date Received	Name and Address of Applicant	Description and Location of Proposed Development
14/0761/FULL 10.12.2014	Mr D Davies Ty Cwm Newport Road Hollybush Blackwood NP12 0BN	Install a 500kw wind turbine generator together with 11KV substation/transformer house, construct an access track and provide electrical cabling and ancillary works Cruglwyn Off Manmoel Road Mynydd Manmoel Blackwood

**APPLICATION TYPE:** Full Application

### SITE AND DEVELOPMENT

Location: The application site is situated at Cruglwyn, Cefn Manmoel, approximately 4km south east of Tredegar and 2.5km north west of Manmoel.

Site description: The proposed site stands on land at a height of approximately 430m above ordnance datum (AOD) and has been used in the past for motorcross events. The site principally consists of grassland, with scattered mature and semi-mature trees. The former motocross tracks run through the grassland and an access track runs through the site which allows access from Manmoel Road to the east. The footprint of the proposed turbine and associated infrastructure covers an area of 0.75 hectares.

The application site is bordered to the south by enclosed farmland and to the west, north and east by the unenclosed moorland on Manmoel Common. The entirety of this area is located on a narrow plateau/ridge, oriented north-south, between the steep-sided, settled and industrialised valleys of the Sirhowy and Ebbw rivers. This arrangement of relatively isolated and open uplands separated from enclosed and semi-urbanised valleys is typical of this part of south Wales. The Cefn Manmoel landform rises in elevation to the north and east, reaching a high point of approximately 504m AOD some 1.7km to the north of the proposed turbine.

The nearest, residential property, Maes-yr-Onn-Fach is located approximately 500m to the south east of the proposed turbine location, with others being in excess of 700m away.

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Other residential properties within 1km of the site are Lower Farm approximately 780m to the west of the proposed turbine location and Pochin House, Nos 1 to 8 Pochin Houses and Pochin Villas located approximately 830m, 850m and 900m to the south west of the proposed turbine location respectively. The nearest settlement is Victoria located approximately 1km to the north east.

Development: The applicant is proposing to construct a single wind turbine and associated infrastructure including turbine foundations, a crane hardstanding/laydown area, a switchroom and associated cabling.

### Wind Turbine

The proposed wind turbine would have a rated output capacity of 500kW and its key maximum parameters are set out below:-

- Hub height: 60m;
- Blade length: 26.5m;
- Rotor diameter: 53m;
- Maximum height to blade tip: 86.5m; and
- Number of blades: 3.

The final selection of turbine manufacturer would be confirmed following a competitive tendering process in which only qualifying turbines that are within the size parameters set out above and can comply with any appropriate noise condition imposed on the development would be considered. As such the applicant is applying for planning consent for a wind turbine with a maximum blade tip height of 86.5m to allow flexibility across the wind turbine market for this class of machine.

The turbine is proposed to be predominantly light grey in colour, with a graduated green colouration to the base of the tower. A micro-siting allowance of 15m is included within the application boundary to take account of unforeseen problems that may be encountered with ground conditions.

### Foundations

The foundation for the turbine proposed would be of reinforced concrete construction, approximately 12m in diameter and up to 3m in depth. The final design of the foundation and reinforcement would be completed following ground investigations and detailed engineering design prior to construction.

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#### Crane Hardstanding/Lay down Areas

The proposed turbine would be located within an area that is currently semi-improved grassland and as such a degree of localised temporary ground improvement will be required during construction to accommodate a crane hard standing and lay down area for components. The area would be carefully stripped of topsoils when in a suitably dry state and the resultant material would be stored in low narrow bunds of no more than 1m height in accordance with BS3882. The total area required for cranes and lay down would be around 600m<sup>2</sup> (20 x 30m).

The turbine would be erected using two mobile cranes to lift the tower sections, nacelle and rotor components into position. It is anticipated that following construction and curing of the turbine foundation it would take approximately 2 weeks to erect the turbine, after which the cranes would be removed from site. Following the erection of the turbines the temporary hardstanding areas would be covered over with the previously stripped soils and seeded so that the field can be reinstated to its former use, with the exception of a track to the base of the turbine to provide maintenance access.

#### Switchroom

The switchroom would be located immediately adjacent to the turbine base. The container would be of fibreglass construction, in a moss green finish or similar. The container would be bolted to a concrete foundation. The container would house the transformer, switch gear and other associated electrical equipment required to connect the wind turbine to the local grid. Cabling from the turbine to the transformer would pass below the turbine foundation in a duct.

Consultation with the local District Network Operation (DNO) has confirmed that connection to the local electricity distribution network is feasible. A formal offer made by the DNO has been accepted and the proposed export capacity has been reserved. The connection would be made to an existing connection point at Festival Park, Cwm, approximately 1km to the north east of the site. The application for the grid connection works would be undertaken by the DNO should the planning application for the wind turbine be approved.

Ancillary development, e.g. parking: None.

#### PLANNING HISTORY

No previous planning history.

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## POLICY

### Site Allocation

Local Development Plan: The site lies in the open countryside beyond a settlement boundary, it is not allocated for any specific use, but it is within a Visually Important Local Landscape (VILL) adjoining a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

### Policies

Local Development Plan: SP1 (Development Strategy), SP5 (Settlement Boundaries), SP8 (Minerals Protection), SP10 (Conservation of Natural Heritage), CW2 (Amenity), CW3 (Highways), CW4 (Natural Heritage Protection), CW15 (General Locational Constraints), CW19 (Locational Constraints - Rural Development and Diversification), CW22 (Locational Constraints - Minerals), NH2 (Visually Important Local Landscapes).

National Policy: Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy, July 2005. Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7), Nov 2014.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

Was an EIA required? - Yes.

## COAL MINING LEGACY

Is the site within an area where there are mining legacy issues? - No.

## CONSULTATION

Minerals Officer - No objection in principle.

Head Of Public Protection - Raises no objection subject to conditions.

Senior Engineer (Land Drainage) - Raises no objection subject to a condition requiring the submission of a drainage scheme.

Countryside And Landscape Services - Recommends that the application be refused on the basis of the visual impact of the development.

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Strategic & Development Plans - The proposal is acceptable in principle subject to the consideration of cumulative visual impact.

National Air Traffic Services - Raises no objection.

Ministry Of Defence - Raises no objection.

Dwr Cymru - Raises no objection.

Western Power Distribution - No objection.

Natural Resources Wales - No objection subject to the Local Planning Authority being satisfied with regard to cumulative visual impacts and biodiversity.

Glam/Gwent Archaeological Trust - No objection.

Atkins Ltd - No objections.

Joint Radio Company Limited - Raises no objection.

OFCOM - Raises no objection.

Public Health Wales - Raises no objection subject to the Local Planning Authority being satisfied that the submitted noise survey is acceptable in accordance with available guidance.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council - No objection is raised from a highway safety perspective. However, given the proposal for a medium typology turbine development in the location indicated and with an understanding of the local landscape characteristics there are likely to be significant negative landscape visual impact effects within the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent associated with this proposal. These may be to such a degree that the proposal is unacceptable from a landscape impact perspective.

Argoed Community Council - Raises an objection to the application on the basis of noise, visual impact and affect on wildlife.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

Extent of advertisement: The application was advertised by means of a press notice, site notice and neighbour letters.

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Response: Four letters of objection were received from members of the public. Seven letters and a petition containing 57 signatures expressing support for the application were also received.

Summary of observations: The objections are summarised as follows:-

1. Cumulative impact of the turbine in connection with other commissioned turbines in the area. It is suggested that the number of turbines in the area has the effect of a dispersed windfarm environment.
2. Visual impact of the turbine which is an alien structure to the open, wild and remote landscape of the area.
3. The proposal would have a harmful impact on the Manmoel Visually Important Local Landscape.
4. The proposal is contrary to policies in the local development plan and national planning guidance.
5. There is no need for the development in this area.
6. The proposal would have a detrimental impact on the wildlife and ecology of the area.
7. The turbine is within 500m of a dwelling that is not connected with the development.

The support is summarised as follows:-

1. The renewable energy provided is much needed.
2. The proposal will help to cut greenhouse gas emissions.
3. The turbine is similar to that erected on Mynydd Bedwellte and is considered to be well proportioned compared to some larger turbines.

#### 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? None.

#### EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE

Does the development affect any protected wildlife species? Based on current evidence, this is unlikely to be a significant issue in this case, but an advisory note will be attached to the consent and sent to the applicant as a precautionary measure.

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## ANALYSIS

Policies: The application has been considered in accordance with national guidance, local plan policy and supplementary planning guidance. The main points to consider in the determination of this application are encompassed within the objections raised by members of the public and as such will be considered in turn below.

### Cumulative Impact

The analysis below is based on the views of the Council's Countryside and Landscape Service's comments.

The location of the proposed Cruglwyn turbine on the Manmoel ridge opposite and slightly north of the Bedlwyn Farm, Penrhiwgwaith and Gelliwen turbines on Mynydd Bedwellte will extend the cluster of turbines across the valley creating a visual link between wind energy developments along both ridges. However, in view of the separation distance between the proposed Cruglwyn turbine and the existing Pen y Fan Ganol and Oakdale turbines it is unlikely that they will be viewed as a single development/cluster.

All of these turbines will be visible sequentially and in small groups to users of the A4048 between Blackwood and Hollybush . All will also be visible sequentially and in small groups to users of the minor road from Oakdale Business Park to Manmoel Common, the minor road from Argoed through Markham and the minor road from Bedwellte Church on to Coed y Moeth Common.

Although frequently seen in groups of one or two turbines the sequential nature of the views will create a feeling that you are driving into and through a landscape where wind energy development is a common, possibly significant, though perhaps not yet a defining feature.

From Markham and Coed y Moeth Common the existing Turbines at Oakdale , Pen y fan Ganol, Penrhiwgwaith, Gelliwen are currently visible and the consented Bedlwyn Farm and Cruglwyn turbine if approved will also be visible within the same 180 degree view from some locations.

The proposed location of the Cruglwyn turbine would not significantly close the existing gaps between the cluster of single turbines north of Bargoed and the cluster of Turbines close to the Heads of the Valleys Road.

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In conclusion it is considered that the cumulative impact of this turbine and others in the area is a significant factor to be considered. However, because of the topography of the area and as a result of existing screening features (i.e. trees, buildings etc) from the relevant viewpoints the views of the turbines would be limited to glimpsed views. It is also considered that not all of the turbines would be visible at any one time and from any one viewpoint within a 180 degree vista. Moreover, given the existing gaps between the turbines in the area the cumulative impact is considered to be such that it is considered to be carefully balanced in terms of acceptability.

### Visual Impact

It is accepted that wind turbine developments have a significant impact on the landscape character and visual amenity of an area by the very nature of their height and prominence. The role of the Local Planning Authority is to consider whether that impact is significant enough to justify a refusal of any planning application.

There will be localised change to the visual context of parts of the Mynydd Bedwellte Visual and Sensory aspect area closest to the application site. This change will be brought about by the introduction of a prominent vertical structure with moving parts, into a landscape largely devoid of prominent vertical structures and movement. Because of the size and variety of influences on the aspect area as a whole the proposed development will not exert an overall significant effect. However, there is the potential for significant localised effects.

With regard to the Sirhowy Valley Visual and sensory aspect area, there will be localised change to the visual context of part of this aspect closest to the application site. The upper valley side and ridgeline forms a strong simple landform that is currently largely devoid of prominent vertical structures and movement. This ridgeline is highly visible and forms an important backdrop to the valley floor settlements. Because of the size and variety of influences on the aspect area as a whole the proposed development will not exert an overall significant effect. However, there is the potential for significant localised effects.

In respect of a number of viewpoints as identified in the application submission the potential views of the turbine would be significant. There is the potential for the proposed turbine to exert significant localised adverse effects upon the landscape character of the Manmoel VILL, and the Cefn Manmoel, and Mynydd Bedwellty, Rhymney Hill and Sirhowy Sides, Special Landscape Areas, in Blaenau Gwent.

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There is the potential for significant adverse visual impacts upon residents of a number of local properties and recreational users of the Manmoel VILL, Cefn Manmoel, and Mynydd Bedwellty, Rhymney Hill and Sirhowy Sides, Special Landscape Areas, and users of the Sirhowy Valley Walk, and the minor road crossing Rhymney common.

The area is highly susceptible to wind energy development where the turbine height to blade tip is greater than 80 meters and there is no capacity for turbines of this height upon this narrow ridge. The proposed turbine at a height to blade tip of 86.5 m is at the bottom end of the wind turbine typology 80 - 109 m used in the Gillespies study. The study recognises that there is some capacity for wind turbines with a height to blade tip of 50-80m within this area, though such development should be associated with the existing built form. There are therefore landscape grounds for objection to this proposal.

Impact on the Manmoel VILL

This issue has been discussed above. Whilst the designation of the land as a VILL elevates its importance from a landscape perspective, the impact has to be balanced against the need to provide renewable energy.

Compliance with Local Plan Policy and National Planning Guidance

The objectors set out a number of policies within the local development plan and national planning guidance, which in their opinion the development fails to comply with. Many policies within the plan and in national guidance require developments to be assessed and for those policies to be interpreted as they relate to the proposal. A deal of subjective opinion can influence the interpretation of these policies and the Local Planning Authority has to do so from a basis of a presumption in favour of sustainable development whereas the objector will invariably have the opposite view. In that regard the application has been assessed against local plan policy and national planning guidance and it is considered that the proposal is broadly compliant subject to the consideration of visual impact, need etc. as discussed above and below.

Need for Renewable Energy in the Area

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The applicant states in his submission that the proposed turbine will provide energy for his farming enterprise and that of a neighbouring landowner as well as supplementing the income to his business. The objectors suggest there is no farming enterprise on the site (or indeed that the applicant has only recently purchased the land for this purpose), that a turbine of this size is not needed to provide sufficient energy for the farming enterprise and that there would be no benefits for the local community as a result of the proposal.

With regard to the farming enterprise it should be noted that neither local plan policy nor national planning guidance require renewable energy schemes to be linked to any such business. Indeed, most wind energy developments are not owned or operated by the owner of the land on which the development is located. In most instances the land is rented to the developers and the landowners either gets reduced cost energy or a sum of money. This is a private matter between the two parties and is not a material planning consideration. However, in this instance the applicant has confirmed that this turbine will provide energy for his enterprise and for the adjacent Maes Yr Onn Farm as well as providing an additional income to supplement his farming enterprise.

With regard to the size of the turbine it is accepted that it would provide more than enough energy to serve the two farming enterprises. However, it would not be financially viable for the landowner to erect a turbine for his own needs and the renewable energy company would not invest in a turbine that did not make financial sense from their perspective. Moreover the Local Planning Authority has to assess the application as submitted and whether this is acceptable in planning terms. The possibility that an alternative proposal may be more acceptable should only be considered if the proposed development is found to be unacceptable.

In respect of community benefits it is noted that TAN8 suggests that developers should consider these, but it is not a requirement that they should be in place in order to make a development acceptable in planning terms.

#### Impact on Ecology and Wildlife

A Baseline Ecological Survey and Bird Surveys were carried out on this site. The findings of those surveys have been considered by Natural Resources Wales and the Council's Ecologists and no objections have been raised. On that basis it is not felt that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on ecology or wildlife.

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Distance to Nearest Dwelling.

Annex D to TAN 8 does suggest that a 500m separation distance between a turbine and any residential property should be used in order to avoid unacceptable noise impacts. However, it also suggests that when applied in a rigid manner this can lead to conservative results and as such flexibility is advised. In that regard a noise survey has been submitted with the application which indicates that the noise levels at the nearest properties are acceptable within established guidelines. In that regard it is not considered that a 500m separation distance is required in this instance.

It is clear from the above discussion that the main point of concern with regard to this application is the visual impact of the development on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area. The comments from the Council's Countryside and Landscape Services and from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council suggest that the impact varies from localised to significant dependant on the viewpoint and the relevant topography and natural screening. However, the comments also suggest that the impact, whilst worse than suggested by the applicant, is not as significant as suggested by the objectors and should be balanced against the need to provide renewable energy.

In that regard the UK is subject to the requirements of the EU Renewable Energy Directive which includes a UK target of 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020. This includes both heat and electricity, and is seen as a minimum and a starting point from which the proportion should rise. At present in terms of electricity, there are 8 wind turbines and 3 solar farms in the county borough. These make a significant contribution. The 2 turbines at Oakdale for example generate as much electricity as the 1,834 domestic pv systems in the county borough. The amount of electricity generated in the county borough is around 12% of the predicted amount likely to be used in 2020. In terms of heat however, the figure is less than 1%. It is envisaged that a further target above the 15% aim is likely to be set soon as it is an initial target on the road to the 80% reduction in carbon emissions required by the EU. Even if Caerphilly exceeds the target of 15% before 2020 we will be expected to push on further and provide more.

Consequently the marginal landscape impacts of this turbine have to be assessed against this backdrop of a shortfall in the energy production within the county borough to meet predicted needs. On balance it is considered that the need to provide renewable energy outweighs the harm that the proposal would have on the landscape character and visual amenity of the area and as such the proposal is acceptable in planning terms.

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Comments from consultees: Addressed above.

Comments from public: Addressed above.

Other material considerations: None.

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) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following plans and other submitted details: Planning Statement and Drawings Environmental Statement Volume 1: Main Report and Figures Environmental Statement Volume 2: Technical Appendices (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.

03) The level of noise from the wind turbine (hereby approved) measured at the nearest noise sensitive properties shall not exceed 35dB(A) (LA90, 10 mins) up to wind speeds of 10m/s at 10m height when calculated in accordance with the attached Guidance Notes, or such other guidance as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interest of the amenity of noise sensitive properties.

04) During the course of the investigation required by Condition 05, should the wind turbine or turbines be identified as operating above the parameters specified in Condition 03, the wind turbines will be modified, limited or shut down as required to ensure compliance with this condition. These measures shall be applied until such time as maintenance or repair is undertaken sufficient to reduce the absolute noise level of the operating turbines to within the parameters specified.

REASON: In the interest of the amenity of noise sensitive properties.

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- 05) Within 21 days from the receipt of a written request from the Local Planning Authority and following a noise complaint to the Local Planning Authority from the occupant of a dwelling which lawfully exists or has planning permission at the date of this consent, the wind turbine operator shall, at the operator's expense, engage an independent consultant approved by the Local Planning Authority to assess the level of noise emissions from the wind turbines at the complainant's property following the procedures described in the attached Guidance Notes or such other guidance as may be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The independent consultant's assessment and conclusions regarding the said noise complaint, including all calculations, audio recordings and the raw data upon which those assessments and conclusions are based, shall be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority within 2 months of the date of the written request, unless otherwise extended in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The assessment recommendations as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority shall be implemented and carried out within a set timescale agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.  
REASON: In the interest of the amenity of noise sensitive properties.
- 06) Following the commission of the wind turbine hereby approved, the power generation, the wind speed and direction data, shall be continuously logged in accordance with a method that shall have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and such data shall be retained for a period of not less than 24 months and it shall be provided to the Local Planning Authority at its written request within 14 days of such request.  
REASON: To monitor the wind turbine use and provide information to the Local Planning Authority to retain effective control.
- 07) Deliveries and construction works associated with the wind turbine hereby approve shall not take place outside the hours of 07.00 and 19.00 Mondays to Fridays, 09.00 and 16.00 Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and Public Holidays, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.  
REASON: In the interest of residential amenity.

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- 08) Prior to the commissioning of the wind turbine hereby approved they shall have been fitted with a control system that automatically shuts down the turbines during times when shadow flicker occurs, in accordance with a scheme of control that shall have been agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority and the turbines shall be operated in accordance with the agreed scheme unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.  
REASON: To control flicker in the interest of amenity of near by flicker sensitive properties.
- 09) Where any species listed under Schedules 2 or 4 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994 is present on the site (or other identified part) in respect of which this permission is hereby granted, no works of site clearance, demolition or construction shall take place in pursuance of this permission unless a licence to disturb any such species has been granted in accordance with the aforementioned Regulations and a copy thereof has been produced to the Local Planning Authority.  
REASON: To ensure adequate protection to protected species.
- 10) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a nature conservation 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.
- 11) Notwithstanding the submitted details the development shall not commence until after a revised Traffic Management Plan (TMP) has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The TMP shall indicate full consultation and approval with neighbouring Authorities which the loads pass through and consultation and approval with the Welsh Government. The TMP shall provide evidence that the necessary permits have been given by the South Wales Police Liaison Transport Officer who co-ordinates the safe passage of abnormal vehicles and shall also include full details of the hauliers indemnity insurance for approval. Details of any highway improvements required to the highway network with Caerphilly County Borough Council shall also be provided for approval by the Local Planning Authority and be completed prior to the delivery of the loads. The development shall proceed in accordance with the TMP following approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority.  
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

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- 12) The wind turbine, tower and ancillary equipment shall be removed from the site and the land restored to its former condition upon cessation of the use in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cessation of the use shall be defined as the wind turbine becoming inoperative for a continuous period of six months.  
REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.
- 13) The demolition or site/vegetation clearance associated with the development hereby approved shall not take place during the breeding season for birds, from March to August inclusive in any given year, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.  
REASON: To ensure that breeding birds are protected. All British birds, their nests and eggs (with certain limited exceptions) are protected by law under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- 14) Details of land drainage shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority before the works commence and shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details before the development is brought into use.  
REASON: In the interests of highway safety.
- 15) All walls and fences removed as part of the development shall be re-instated in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any works commencing on site.  
REASON: In the interests of the landscape character and visual amenity of the area.
- 16) Prior to the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby approved details of the materials to be used shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.  
REASON: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area.

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- 17) The wind turbine and tower hereby approved together with the ground equipment and plant shall be removed from the application site, either before the end of 25 years from the date of commencement of the development hereby approved or within six months upon their becoming no longer operationally active in the generation of electricity, whichever is the earlier.

REASON: In order to define the extent of the permission hereby granted.

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, CW3 and CW4.

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