

# Y TWYNI PLANNING STATEMENT



27th April 2020

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## **1.0 Proposal**

- 1.1 A section 73 application is submitted in order to vary Condition No 1 of planning permission Ref: P2019/0147 and Condition No 1 of planning permission Ref: 2020/0026 to extend the time period in which the building has to be removed by 10 years.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Planning permission was originally granted for the temporary modular teaching building under Ref: 2019/0147 for a 5 year period in order to meet the teaching needs of the University on Bay Campus.
- 2.2 As you are aware, Swansea University has been working closely with ABC (Active Building Centre) in order to develop technologies to help transform construction. Modern buildings in the UK are being constructed to a relatively high sustainable level and therefore it is the existing housing and building stock which is the largest cause of carbon emissions in the UK.
- 2.3 As such ABC saw the modular building as an opportunity to demonstrate how easily an existing building could be retrofitted into an active building and secured £1.5m from the funding body to deliver this project. Planning consent was secured for the PV, battery and car charging points, however the research element of the project requires the installations to be on site for a 9 year period in order to ensure the project can deliver sufficient data. It is an aspiration of the University to try and make Bay Campus zero carbon and the approval of this application will help the University produce energy, store the energy and use the power throughout the day and evening. This proposal is seen as the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of additional renewable energy installations which are planned on Bay Campus with plans for a wind turbine and additional PV being developed.
- 2.4 As such this application has been submitted in order to extend the time period in which the building and PV, battery and charging points can be located on site by a further 5 years.

## **3.0 ABC – Active Building Centre**

- 3.1 The Active Building Centre is an ambitious new company which seeks to:
1. Revolutionise the way the UK designs, constructs and operates buildings by realising the potential for the integration of innovative renewable energy generation and storage technologies, coupled with state-of-the-art digital design.
  2. Deliver a pipeline of Active Building demonstrators and projects. We aim to prove the case for a national adoption of Active Buildings, which has the potential to

substantially reduce both the operational costs of buildings and their demand on the UK energy infrastructure

- 3.2 The Active Building Centre is funded by UKRI as part of the Transforming Construction Challenge through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF). ISCF addresses the major industrial and societal challenges of our time. Transforming Construction seeks to make buildings more affordable, efficient, safer and healthier. Active Buildings contribute to the Clean Growth Grand Challenge aiming to at least half the energy use of new buildings by 2030
- 3.3 The majority of new developments are being constructed in a sustainable and energy efficient manner but as you know it is the existing building stock which is causing the main carbon issue in the UK. This proposal is an opportunity to demonstrate how existing stock can be made 'active' and could be a game changer in how we look to refurbish existing stock
- 3.4 The Active Building Centre has £1.5M allocated to add upgrades to the Y Twyni building, the solar PV and MW energy storage system are already approved under the original application so no additional variations to the current planning are required. The Active Building Centre is looking for the council to extend the term of the original permission for an additional 5 years, the project once installed will have a 5 year learning window with the option to be integrated with other technologies planned on the site for the future. The extension will enable the Active Building Centre to gain valuable learning around the real-world application of active buildings and their interaction with renewable technologies. This learning we be combined with the existing models to further better buildings for all.

#### **4.0 Policy Context**

- 4.1 Both National and Local Planning Policies support proposals for renewable technologies such as this. The Environment Act sets a legal target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050. The Act also requires a series of interim targets (for 2020, 2030 and 2040) and associated carbon budgets for key sectors. The budgets will set limits on the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions emitted in Wales over a 5 year period to serve as stepping stones and ensure progress is made towards the 2050 target. The development of new technologies such as this are critical if Wales seriously wants to meet this ambitious target.
- 4.2 Planning Policy Wales acknowledges that the Welsh Government is committed to delivering the outcomes set out in Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition. Our priorities are:
  - reducing the amount of energy we use in Wales;
  - reducing our reliance on energy generated from fossil fuels; and
  - actively managing the transition to a low carbon economy.
- 4.3 Swansea University and ABC are at the forefront of the Welsh Governments ambitious target of reducing carbon emissions, as part of their approach to decarbonisation, whilst enhancing the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the people and communities of Wales, in order to achieve a better quality of life for our own and future generations.

Planning Policy Wales seeks to prevent Wales being 'locked in' to further fossil fuel extraction and high carbon development and it encourages the planning system to facilitate the delivery of both this and Welsh, UK and European targets on renewable energy.

4.4 Paragraph 5.7.8 states that the benefits of renewable and low carbon energy, as part of the overall commitment to tackle climate change and increase energy security, is of paramount importance. The continued extraction of fossil fuels will hinder progress towards achieving overall commitments to tackling climate change. PPW goes on to state that the planning system should:

- integrate development with the provision of additional electricity grid network infrastructure;
- optimise energy storage;
- facilitate the integration of sustainable building design principles in new development;
- optimise the location of new developments to allow for efficient use of resources;
- maximise renewable and low carbon energy generation;
- maximise the use of local energy sources, such as district heating networks;
- minimise the carbon impact of other energy generation; and
- move away from the extraction of energy minerals, the burning of which is carbon intensive.

4.5 Furthermore Paragraph 5.7.13 states that Energy storage installations such as this have an important part to play in managing the transition to a low carbon economy. The growth in energy generation from renewable sources requires the management of the resultant intermittency in supply, and energy storage can help balance supply and demand. Proposals for new storage facilities should be supported wherever possible.

4.6 Paragraph 5.9 of Planning Policy Wales focuses on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy. PPW states that Planning authorities should facilitate all forms of renewable and low carbon energy development. In doing so, planning authorities should seek to ensure their area's full potential for renewable and low carbon energy generation is maximised and renewable energy targets are achieved.

4.7 The Welsh Government encourages the use of local renewable and low carbon energy as part of the imperative to reduce carbon emissions. Renewable and low carbon energy developments offer significant potential for communities and small businesses to develop their own projects for local benefit.

- 4.8 When considering this application the following Local Plan Policies are relevant to the consideration of the application:

**Policy RE 1 Criteria for the Assessment of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development**

Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy development will only be permitted subject to the following criteria:

1. Large scale wind farm developments (>25MW) will be expected to be located within the boundaries of the refined Strategic Search Areas.
2. Proposals for wind farms of any size outside the SSAs will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that there will be no unacceptable impact on visual amenity or landscape character through the number, scale, size, design and siting of turbines and associated infrastructure.
3. Small scale wind farm developments (<5MW) will be required to demonstrate that impacts are confined to the local scale.
4. All renewable energy or low carbon energy development proposals will be required to demonstrate that:
  - (a) Measures have been taken to minimise impacts on visual amenity and the natural environment;
  - (b) There will be no unacceptable impacts on residential amenity;
  - (c) The development will not compromise highway safety;
  - (d) The development would not interfere with radar, air traffic control systems, telecommunications links, television reception, radio communication and emergency services communications; and
  - (e) There are satisfactory proposals in place for site restoration as appropriate.

**5.0 Main Issues**

- 5.1 Given the principle of this form of development has been established, the main issue for consideration when determining this application relate to the implications of extending the time period for the retention of the building for a further 5 years.

**6.0 Extension of time period**

- 6.1 As discussed, planning permission has already been granted for the battery, pv and charging points, however, the funder requires the installation to be on site for 9 years in order to collect sufficient data from the installation.

- 6.2 The proposal has been approved by ABC and £1.5m secured to deliver the installation which will help reduce Swansea University's carbon usage. The PV will collect power which will be used in the new teaching building and excess power stored in the battery and released when required and simultaneously used to charge electric cars.
- 6.3 The temporary teaching building is a high quality modular building which is used for teaching space. It is not felt the extension of the time period by a further 5 years would negatively impact the character and appearance of the campus. The approval of this application and delivery of this ground breaking project will help meet Welsh Governments aspirations of:
- Reducing carbon emissions.
  - Promoting sustainable methods of producing energy.
  - Help the University move towards low carbon energy
  - Promote energy storage.
- 6.4 The project could revolutionise how the industry can make existing stock 'active'. The ABC Team have chosen this project from a number of other national projects for funding if this application is not supported by the Council the money will be invested in other projects outside of Wales.
- 6.5 We feel extending the time period in order access the funding and deliver this project will help develop new technologies which can help Wales and the wider UK lower its carbon footprint by promoting energy storage, capture and release. The University has an ambitious target of trying to make Bay Campus zero carbon through the delivery of ambitious projects such as this.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

- 7.1 In conclusion, it is considered that the approval of this application to extend the time period by a further 5 years to be able to access the funding to deliver this project will help the University and Wales develop ground breaking technologies which will help the UK reduce its carbon footprint and demonstrate that existing building stock can be fitted with active technologies which can reduce carbon emissions and it is hoped you can support this proposal.