STEPHENSON HALLIDAY

Planning, Landscape & Environment
an RSK company

MYNYDD TY-TALWYN ENERGY PARK

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Galileo 03 Ltd

April 2025

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) has been prepared by Stephenson Halliday (part of RSK Group) on behalf of Galileo 03 Ltd (the 'Applicant'). The PDAS accompanies a planning application to Welsh Ministers, under the Development of National Significance (DNS) process, which seeks planning permission for:

"Installation of an Energy Park comprising: up to 6 wind turbines and ancillary infrastructure including turbine foundations, crane hardstandings and erection areas; Solar PV Panels and ancillary infrastructure including invertors and transformers; battery energy storage system compound and ancillary infrastructure; substation compound and ancillary infrastructure including control building; fencing and CCTV; upgraded and new access tracks, watercourse and pipeline crossings, highway junctions and highway remedial works; underground cabling; associated construction enabling earthworks; associated drainage; landscaping, ecological mitigation/enhancement; temporary construction compounds; and, other associated ancillary works/infrastructure" (herein referred to as the 'Proposed Development')

1.1.2 A 50-year permission is sought for the Proposed Development. A 10-year implementation period for the commencement of the development, from the date of the grant of planning permission, is also sought to ensure that the grid network has been suitably upgraded to facilitate a connection. The same was recently granted for another DNS wind farm application.[1]

1.1.3 The Proposed Development is located predominantly within the administrative boundary of Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), with the exception of the western land parcel which is situated within the administrative boundary of Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC). The planning application boundary (herein referred to as 'the Site') extends to 580 hectares (ha) and is located c. 4km north-west of the town of Bridgend and 0.6km north-west of the village of Tondu.

1.2 Development of National Significance Consenting Process

1.2.1 The statutory basis for the DNS consenting process is provided by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015[2], which amends the Town and Country Planning Act 1990[3] (TCPA), and the Developments of National Significance (Wales) Regulations 2016 (as amended)[4] . The purpose of the DNS process is to ensure timely decisions are made on those planning applications that are of the greatest significance to Wales.

[1] DNS/3244499 Garn Fach Wind Farm

[2] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/4/contents/enacted

[3] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents

[4] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/56/contents

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1.2.2 The scheme comprises an electrical generation station (part onshore wind and part solar) with an installed generating capacity of approximately 98 megawatts (MW) and therefore it falls within the definition of a 'Development of National Significance' (DNS) under regulations 3, 4(1) and 4A(1) of the Proposed Developments of National Significance (Specified Criteria and Prescribed Secondary Consents) (Wales) Regulations 2016 (as amended)[5], for the purposes of s62D of the TCPA 1990.

1.2.3 The application is therefore made to Welsh Ministers instead of the local planning authorities.

1.3 Scope and Format of this Planning Statement

1.3.1 This PDAS provides a background to the proposals, describes the Site and its surroundings and the Proposed Development. The key role of the Planning Statement is to set out an assessment of the Proposed Development against relevant national and local planning policies and guidance, principally those set out in Future Wales, together with BCBC and NPTC Local Development Plans, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and other material considerations. The PDAS also considers the benefits, and potential harm, which may arise from the Proposed Development and reaches conclusions on its acceptability considering the planning policy framework and relevant material considerations.

1.3.2 This PDAS is separate from the Environmental Statement (ES) and other environmental reports which accompany the application, although it draws upon their conclusions in undertaking the assessments against the relevant policies.

1.3.3 This PDAS is organised and structured into the following sections:

- Section 1 provides an introduction to the Proposed Development, introduces the Applicant, information on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and the structure of this PDAS;
- Section 2 describes the planning application documents including non-statutory and statutory consultation;
- Section 3 describes the Site and its surrounding area;
- Section 4 describes the Proposed Development;
- Section 5 provides the Design and Access Statement;
- Section 6 outlines the relevant national and local planning policy context including material considerations;
- Section 7 provides an overview of the renewable energy policy framework, in terms of international commitments, UK legislation and policy and Welsh specific legislation and policy in relation to climate change and renewable energy commitments;

[5] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/53/contents/made

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- Section 8 provides an assessment of the Proposed Development against the relevant Development Plan policies and material considerations; and

- Section 9 summarises the planning balance and reaches conclusions on the acceptability of the Proposed Development.

1.4 Environmental Impact Assessment

1.4.1 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017[6] (EIA Regulations) sets out a procedure for assessing, consulting on, and coming to a decision on projects that may have likely 'significant' environmental effects.

1.4.2 Regulation 3 of the EIA Regulations provides that, before consent is granted for certain types of development, an EIA may be required. The EIA Regulations set out the types of development which must be subject to an EIA (referred to as Schedule 1 development) and other developments, which may be subject to an EIA depending on certain parameters and/or their potential to give rise to 'significant' environmental effects (referred to as Schedule 2 development).

1.4.3 The Proposed Development does not fall under any of the types of development set out in Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. However, the proposed development is of a type and scale described in Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations 2017, as follows:

1.4.4 *"Energy industry*

a) Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (projects not included in Schedule 1 to these Regulations);

b) Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms)".

1.4.5 Therefore, the Proposed Development constitutes Schedule 2 development and may be subject to an EIA if certain parameters are met and/or if there is potential for the Proposed Development to give rise to 'significant' environmental effects. As such, the selection criteria outlined in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations needs to be considered to determine whether the Proposed Development is likely to have 'significant' effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

1.4.6 The selection criteria, as set out in the EIA Regulations, identifies three broad criteria which should be considered:

- "*The characteristics of the development (size, design, use of natural resources, quantities of pollution, waste generated, risk of accidents and risk to human health);*

- *The environmental sensitivity of the location; and*

- *The types and characteristics of the potential impact (magnitude and duration)."*

[6] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/567/contents/made

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1.4.7 It was concluded, having reviewed the selection criteria, that the Proposed Development qualifies as EIA development, due to the size and the potential for 'significant' environmental effects. An ES has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations and accompanies the planning application.

EIA Scoping

1.4.8 Decisions on DNS applications are made by the Welsh Ministers rather than Local Planning Authorities; Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) handle DNS applications on behalf of the Welsh Ministers. Given the potential for 'significant' environmental effects the Applicant decided not to seek a formal Screening Opinion as the development would constitute EIA development.

1.4.9 An EIA Scoping Direction Request (CAS-03018-G7G6H7) was submitted to PEDW on the 27 November 2023 in accordance with Regulation 33(7)(b) of the EIA Regulations. The purpose of the EIA Scoping Direction Request was to establish the scope of the ES to be submitted in accordance with EIA Regulations 2017 with the planning application and to seek the views of PEDW and statutory consultees on that proposed scope.

1.4.10 PEDW issued a Scoping Direction under Regulation 24 of the EIA Regulations on 11 April 2024 on behalf of the Welsh Ministers. The Direction set out where it has/has not agreed with the scope of matters on the basis of the information contained within the Scoping Direction.

1.4.11 The responses from PEDW and the statutory consultees raised in the Scoping Direction, provided at **ES Volume III, Appendix 1.2** have been taken into account where relevant in the ES technical chapters, **ES Volume II, Chapters 5 - 15**.

The Applicant and Rationale for the planning application

1.4.12 Founded in 2020, Galileo is a fast-growing European, multi-technology, renewable energy developer, owner, and operator with a mission to significantly contribute to achieving global emission reduction targets. Galileo are aiming to do this by developing smart, efficient, high quality and integrated green energy projects, such that renewable energy becomes the primary source of electricity for all energy consumers in Europe.

1.4.13 Galileo currently has a project development portfolio of over 7GW across multiple European countries, including the UK, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Germany, France and Poland. With an office in Cardiff, the Proposed Development is one of a pipeline of proposed renewable energy projects in development across Wales.

1.4.14 The Proposed Development will have an export capacity of circa 98MW of electricity. This will make a substantial contribution towards Welsh and UK targets to significantly increase the provision of clean, renewable energy and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

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2 PLANNING APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

2.1.1 The planning application is accompanied by an ES which provides a full appraisal of the environmental baseline conditions of the Site and surrounding area and an assessment of the potential and 'significant' environmental effects of the Proposed Development when considered against and in combination with the environmental baseline. The ES also provides, where necessary, recommendations for mitigation measures to ensure the residual environmental effects of the Proposed Development are acceptable.

2.1.2 The ES is presented as follows:

- Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary (NTS) - a report which summarises the findings of the EIA written in non-technical language in accordance with Part 4; Regulation 17(3)(a) of the EIA Regulations 2017
- Volume 2: Environmental Statement comprising 16 chapters;
- Volume 3: Figures; and
- Volume 4: Technical Appendices.

2.1.3 The content of the ES is listed within the DNS Document Register, which accompanies the application.

2.1.4 The ES has been prepared in full accordance with the EIA Regulations, as detailed within **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Schedule 4 Requirements for inclusion with EIA

Schedule 4 Requirement	Where assessed/included in the ES
A description of the development including; a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development, A description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the development (in particular any production process); an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions.	ES Volume II, Chapter 2
A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale)	ES Volume II, Chapter 3
A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline scenario)	ES Volume II, Chapters 5 to 15
A description of the factors specified in regulation 4(2) likely to be significantly affected by the development: population, human health, biodiversity, land, soil, water, air, climate, material	ES Volume II, Chapters 5 to 15

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Schedule 4 Requirement	Where assessed/included in the ES
assets, cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape	
A description of the likely 'significant' effects of the development on the environment resulting from e.g. the use of natural resources, the emission of pollutants and the risks to human health	ES Volume II, Chapters 5 to 15
A description of the forecasting methods or evidence used to identify and assess the effects on the environment	ES Volume II, Chapters 5 to 15
A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified 'significant' adverse effects on the environment	ES Volume II, Chapters 5 to 15
A description of the expected 'significant' adverse effects of the development on the environment deriving from risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned	ES Volume II, Chapters 5 to 15
A non-technical summary of the above information	ES Volume I
A reference list detailing sources used in the ES	ES Volume II, Chapters 5 to 15.

2.1.5 The planning application also includes the following supporting information, which should be read in conjunction with this PDAS:

- Planning Application Form and Certificates;
- Green Infrastructure Statement; and,
- Written Statement of Planning Obligations.

2.1.6 The planning application is accompanied by a series of planning drawings, which are listed within **Appendix 1**.

2.2 Statutory Consultation

2.2.1 As set out in **Section 1.3** the Proposed Development falls within the definition of a Development of National Significance. A statutory requirement to consult under section 61Z of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is specified by Article 7 of The Developments of National Significance (Procedure) (Wales) Order 2016. Further provision on the procedure for this consultation is contained in that Order. The statutory requirements set out a number of consultation activities that need to be undertaken by the developer before a planning application can be submitted. This includes:

- A requirement for the Applicant to publicise the proposed application by:

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- Giving requisite notice to affected landowners and the local community (via local newspapers and site notices) as well as other consultees under the Town and Country Planning Act; and,
    - Publishing the draft planning application documents on a website for review by interested parties, for no less than 42 days.

2.2.2 The results of the consultation will be set out in a PAC Report in accordance with Section 61Z of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)[7] (as inserted by Section 17 of the Planning (Wales) Act 2015) and under Articles 10 and 11 of the Developments of National Significance (Procedure) (Wales) Order 2016 (as amended).

2.2.3 A draft version of the planning application documents including this PDAS will be made publicly available for a minimum 42 days. The statutory 42-day consultation period will be held ahead of submission of the planning application.

2.2.4 The PAC Report will contain the Site notices (as required under Part 1A) in the form these will have been provided to all adjoining owners/occupiers, community and specialist consultees. The PAC Report will provide a summary of all the comments received during the consultation and will include a summary of the responses from the specialist consultees. All comments received within the specified timescale will be considered.

2.3 Local Planning Authority Consultation

2.3.1 Following receipt of the Scoping Direction, the Applicant sought pre-application advice from both BCBC and NPTC.

2.3.2 The Applicant was advised that the statutory pre-application advice service could not be provided for DNS applications and that a joint Planning Performance Agreement (PPA), across both local planning authorities, would be required with BCBC taking the lead as the majority of the Proposed Development lies within their jurisdiction.

2.3.3 The Applicant liaised with both local planning authorities and terms were agreed with BCBC and subsequent advice provided, as detailed within the ES technical chapters, **ES Volume II, Chapters 5 - 15**. Liaison with NPTC continues, however at the point of commencing statutory consultation, a response from NPTC to latest communication had not been received.

[7] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents

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3 THE SITE

3.1 Site Location and Surroundings

3.1.1 A detailed description of the Site and the Proposed Scheme is provided in **ES Volume II, Chapter 2: Proposed Development Description** and **Chapter 3: Environmental Context and Reasonable Alternatives Considered**. A summary is set out in this Chapter of the PDAS.

3.1.2 The Site is located in South Wales. It is principally situated within the administrative boundary of BCBC, although the northwestern portion of the Site (approximately 25ha) is situated within the administrative boundary of NPTC. Craig-yr-Aber Woodland sits outside the Site, and dissects the larger eastern portion of the Site, from the smaller western portion; the two areas are connected by the existing highway.

3.1.3 The nearest closest large settlements are Bridgend, situated approximately 5km to the south-east and Port Talbot, approximately 8km to the west of the Site. Other outlying settlements in the vicinity of the Site include Sarn, Aberkenfig, Tondu, Llangynwyd and Brynmenyn. The City of Swansea is located approximately 17 km to the north-west of the Site. The M4 transport corridor, which runs east-west, is located approximately 1.7km to the southeast of the Site at its closest point.

3.1.4 The Site occupies a total area of approximately 580ha, although the actual footprint of the Proposed Development occupies a much smaller proportion of this overall area. The application boundary is set out in **Plate 3.1** below and **ES Volume IV, Figure 1.2: Planning Application Boundary**.

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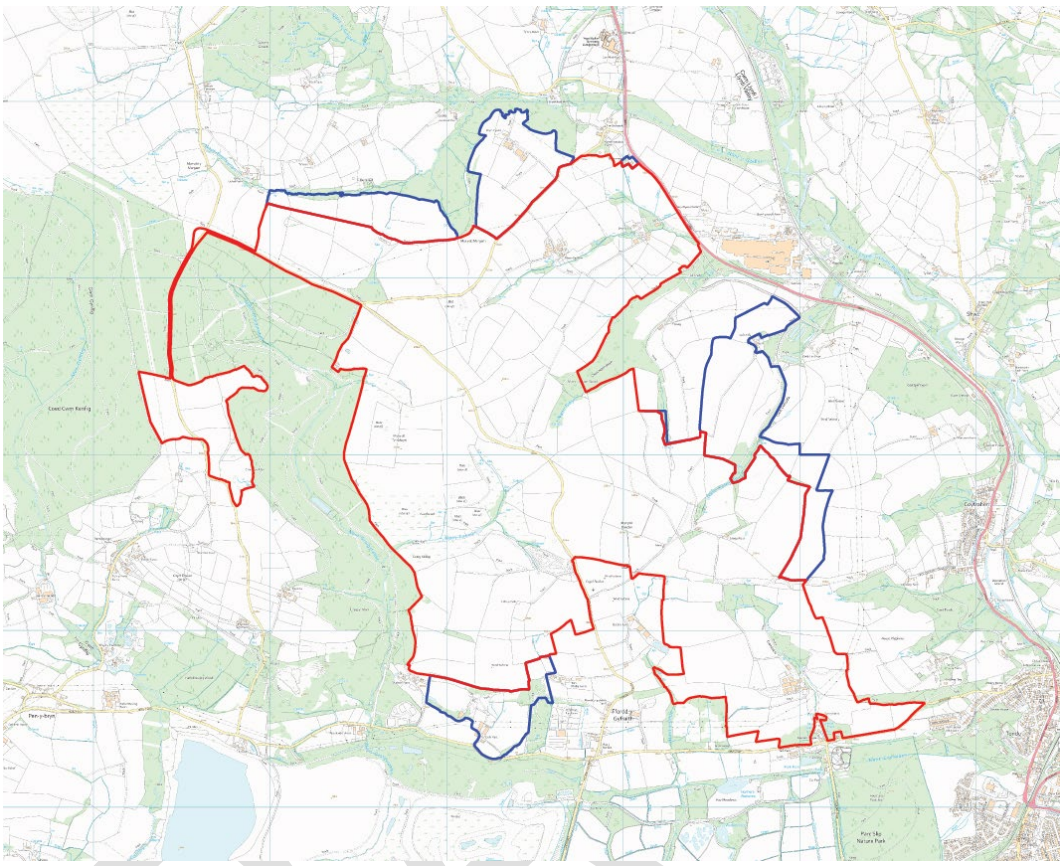
Plate 3.1: Planning Application Boundary



3.1.5 The Site extends across an area of elevated land, albeit the topography falls in multiple directions from localised high points. Mynydd Baeden is a high point located in the southern extent of the Site, at a level of approximately 250m above ordnance datum (AOD). Mynydd Ty-talwyn is the second localised high point on-site, located within the centre of the site at a level of approximately 232m AOD.

3.1.6 The Site currently comprises rough grassland and agricultural land used for pasture with hedgerows, scattered trees and patches of woodland. Four residential properties and their associated farmsteads are dispersed across the site.

3.1.7 There are two National Grid overhead lines (OHL) which cross a small portion of the Site towards the north and west. There are also two telecommunications masts (up to 30m in height) which are located towards the east of the Site. There are also several operational farm-scale wind turbines within and adjacent to the site: one at Cwm Risca Farm; two adjacent to the south at Baiden Farm; and, two adjacent to the north towards Gelli-las Fawr.

3.2 Environmental Site Features

3.2.1 The Site encompasses several local and national designations, relating to environmental features. The key environmental features are set out in detail in **ES Volume IV, Figure 3.1: Environmental Features**, with more detail provided in the relevant ES technical chapters, **ES Volume II, Chapters 5 - 15**. A summary of these features is set out below.

Landscape Designations

3.2.2 The Site is not located within a nationally or regionally designated landscape. The Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (BBNP) boundary lies approximately 21.5km to the north of the Site. The Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies approximately 22 km to the west of the site. An area of Heritage Coast lies approximately 7.5 km to the south of the site.

3.2.3 The Site is located within the Western Uplands Special Landscape Area (SLA) as set out in the Bridgend Local Plan (2006-2021) and Margam SLA, as set out within the Neath Port Talbot Local Plan (2011-2026).

Cultural Heritage Designations

3.2.4 There are 4 identified designated heritage assets within the Site, all of which are Scheduled Monuments (SMs). The location of these SMs is set out in **ES Volume IV: Figure 7.1: Designated Historic Assets**. Further detail pertaining to each SM is contained in **ES Volume III, Appendix 7.1: Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment**. The 4 SMs are:

- Earthwork and Platform Houses North of Nant Fadog;
- Mynydd Ty Talwyn Ancient Farms (West);
- Mynydd Ty Talwyn Ancient Farms (East); and,
- British Fortified Residence.

3.2.5 There are several Listed Buildings within a 3km radius of the Site, as set out in **ES Volume IV: Figure 7.1: Designated Historic Assets**. The closest Listed Buildings to the Site are situated c. 0.12km from the south-east boundary, within the settlement of Tondu, and c. 0.16km from the northwestern and 0.46km from the southwestern Site boundary.

3.2.6 The nearest Registered Historic Park and Garden is Margam Park, located approximately 2.5km to the west of the Site. Margam Park is registered Grade I as a multi-layered site of outstanding historical importance[8].

Ecological Designations

3.2.7 The Site is not located within any statutory site designated for ecological interests.

3.2.8 There is one statutory international designated ecological site within a 10km radius of the Site, as illustrated in **ES Volume III, Appendix 10.1: Ecological Baseline Report**. This is Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr / Cefn Cribwr Grasslands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located approximately 2km to the south of the Site. The SAC is designated on account of its Molinia meadows Annex I habitat[9].

[8] Reason for designation: Historic Parks & Gardens - Full Report - HeritageBill Cadw Assets - Reports

[9] Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr/ Cefn Cribwr Grasslands - Special Areas of Conservation

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3.2.9 Four national statutory designated sites for their ecological interests are located within 10 km of the Site, these all being SSSIs: Cwm Risca Meadow SSSI, Caeau Cefn Cribwr SSSI, Waun Cimla SSSI and Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr / Cefn Cribwr Grasslands SSSI. Cwn Risca Meadow Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the closest to the Site, being located to the immediate south and west of the Site boundary.

3.2.10 There are four non-statutory designated ecological designations within the Site:

- Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Watercourses SINC: All NPT watercourses are designated as SINCs;
- Cwm Nant Gwyn SINC: Broad leaved semi natural woodland;
- Gilfach Uchaf SINC: marsh grassland, semi-improved acid grassland and natural acid/neutral rock exposure; and
- Nant Cwm-bach SINC: broadleaf woodland, coniferous plantation and marshy grassland.

Hydrology

3.2.11 Towards the north of the Site, there is a watercourse known as Nant y Gadlys, which conveys flow north and is a tributary of Afon Llynfi. There are two small watercourses in the southern extent of the Site: Nant-y-gedd and an unnamed watercourse which both convey flow south. Nant Craigyraber runs through Craig-yr-Aber woodland, outside the Site boundary), but between the eastern and western portions of the Site. Nant Craigyraber conveys flows to the south.

3.2.12 The Site is predominantly located within Flood Zone 1, with a small section of Flood Zones 2 and 3, coinciding with the downstream extent of Nant Craigyraber and partly along the route of Nant Fadog. These Flood Zones are mainly contained within the immediate vicinity of the watercourses themselves and there is no built development proposed in these areas.

Arboricultural

3.2.13 There are several areas of woodland present on the Site, and three areas of Ancient Woodland situated adjacent to the northeast, east and southeast of the Site comprising of ancient semi-natural woodland, plantation on ancient woodland sites and restored ancient woodland.

3.2.14 Additionally, Craig-yr-Aber Woodland (partially designated Ancient Woodland) is situated adjacent to the Site, between the eastern and western portions; a 15m buffer to the designated area has been incorporated in the design of the Proposed Development.

Agricultural Land Classification

3.2.15 Based on the Predictive Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) mapping (DataMapWales, 2019), the majority of the Site is classed as Grade 4 (poor quality agricultural land) and is therefore not considered Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.

Access / Rights of Way

3.2.16 A C-Class Road known as Ffordd-y-Gyfraith, dissects the Site in a southeast to northwest direction.

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3.2.17 A map showing the Public Rights of Ways (PRoWs), bridleway and Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) is set out in the **ES Volume III, Appendix 13.1:Outline Access (PRoW) Management Plan.** There are 22 PRoW within the Site boundary. Some of these paths are routes that are actively promoted to encourage use of these paths for leisure opportunities, including the Ogwr Ridgeway Walk, which runs in an east to west direction across the Site.

3.2.18 There are also four DMMOs within the Site boundary, as follows:

- A763/1/217 – Upgrade FP 5 LDL to a Restricted Byway and modify the Definitive Statement;
- A763/1/218 – Upgrade FP 12 LDL to a Restricted Byway and add a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) from Cwmrisca Cross;
- A763/1/219 – Upgrade FP 4 LDL to a Restricted Byway and modify the Definitive Statement; and
- A763/1/272 - add a Bridleway Leading from the Junction of Heol Moch and County Road to Bridleway 17, Llangynwyd Middle, at the County Boundary, and from Bridleway 17 to Junction of Footpaths 2 and 55, Maesteg.

3.2.19 The National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 4 (Cefn Cribwr to Bridgend) runs to the south of the Site.

3.3 Properties Within the Site

There are a total of four residential properties situated within the Site, comprising of Cwmrisca Farm, Maescadlawr (unoccupied), Maescadlawr Farm, and Bryn-y-fro (tenanted), all of which are financially involved in the Proposed Development, except the tenants occupying Bryn-y-fro. The properties and associated farm buildings (except Bryn-y-fro) are served by separate accesses to Site than those proposed to facilitate the Proposed Development.

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4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Description of Proposed Development

4.1.1 The main elements of the Proposed Development are as follows:

- Six three-bladed horizontal axis wind turbines (each with an anticipated generating capacity of approximately 42MW) each with a blade tip to height of up to 200m. Each turbine has an internal transformer;
- Wind turbine foundations and hardstanding areas which include crane hardstanding areas, cabling and laydown/storage areas;
- A 50m micro-siting allowance for the wind turbines and associated infrastructure;
- Solar PV modules (with an anticipated generating capacity of c.55MW) and associated infrastructure including invertors, transformers, associated mounting structures, fencing, CCTV and cabling;
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), with an installed capacity of c.50MW, comprising batteries and associated infrastructure including inverters, transformers, switchgear, enclosures, monitoring systems, air conditioning, cabling, fire safety infrastructure, water storage, cabling, fencing, CCTV and access tracks;
- An on-site electrical substation to connect the solar PV modules, wind turbines and BESS to distribution and transmission networks, including transformers, switchgear, busbars, control equipment buildings including an office, control functions, material storage, firewalls, cabling, as well as wider monitoring and maintenance equipment;
- Underground electrical cables linking the wind turbines, solar PV, BESS and the on-site substation, generally laid in trenches alongside access tracks where possible;
- Site access from the northeast (A4063) and south (New Road).
- On-site access tracks, passing places and turning heads;
- Watercourse crossings and associated infrastructure;
- Landscape and biodiversity enhancements; and
- Drainage Infrastructure.

4.1.2 In addition to the above, the following temporary components of the Proposed Development are proposed during the construction phase:

- An interim construction and storage compound;
- One temporary construction and storage compound and a smaller separate construction laydown area; and
- Temporary tracks within the solar compartments.

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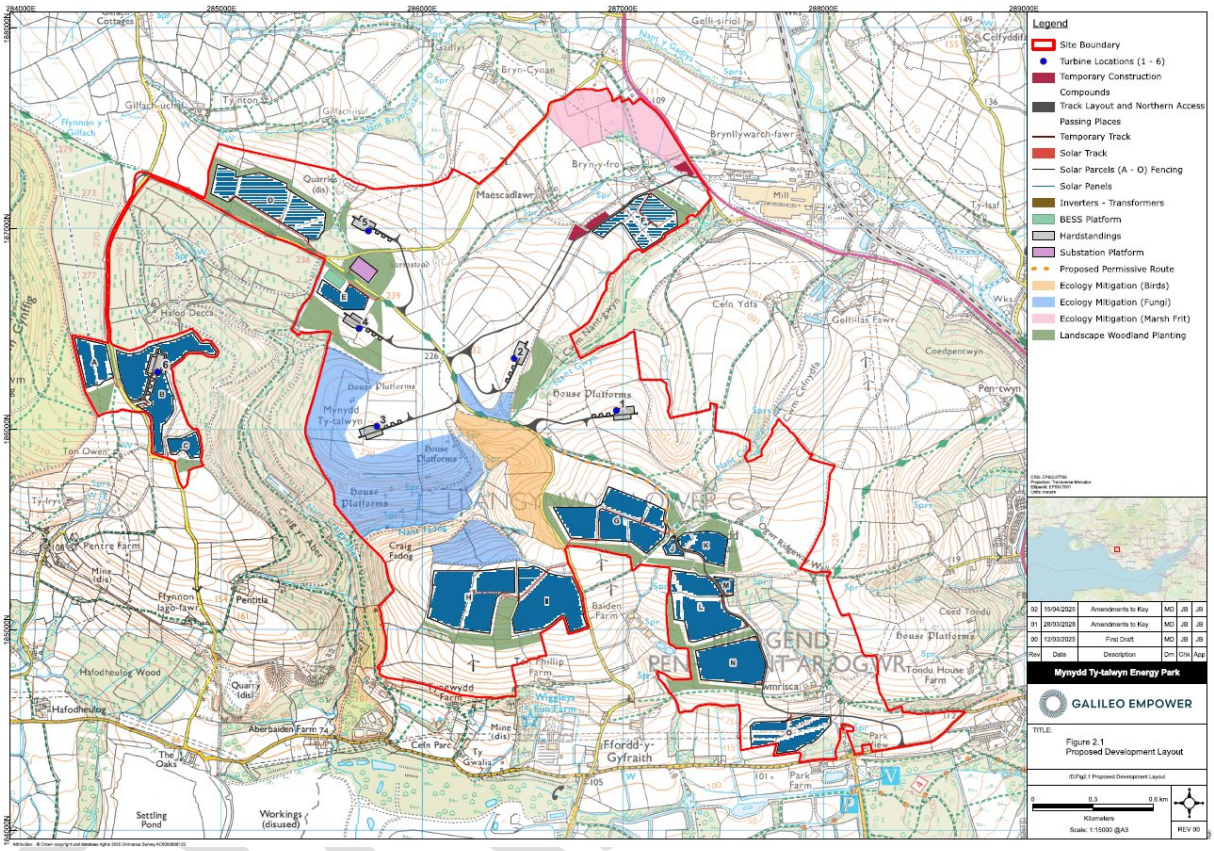
Proposed Layout

4.1.3 The proposed layout is shown in **ES Volume IV, Figure 2.1: Proposed Development Layout**. An extract is set out in **Plate 4.1** below.

Plate 4.1: Proposed Development Layout



Operational Design Components

4.1.4 Full details of the operational design components of the Proposed Development are set out in **ES Volume II, Chapter 2: Proposed Development Description**.

4.1.5 The key features of the main operational development components are as follows:

- The wind turbines would be three bladed, horizontal axis turbines with solid tubular towers. The blades will be attached to a rotor hub, which connects to a nacelle that would house a turbine generator and other operating equipment;
- The wind turbines would be 200m from ground level to the tip of the blade in an upright position (the 'tip height');
- The wind turbines would be of a basic appearance and colour (light grey colour finish);
- A 50m allowance is proposed for the micro-siting of the wind turbines and associated infrastructure. The Applicant proposes a planning condition to submit a scheme of micro-siting to inform the exact siting of the turbines and associated infrastructure;

- The turbines would likely, subject to site investigation work to confirm ground conditions during the engineering design stage, be installed on a steel reinforced concrete base (gravity foundation). The concrete gravity foundations would be sited underground. There would be some earthworks associated with the installation of the foundations (and the turbine). The foundations would be a maximum 3-4m depth and an approximate diameter of 25m (circular footprint);

- Level hardstanding areas of approximately 7,000m² would be required adjacent to each turbine base for the operation of cranes used for the assembly of the turbine components, as well as storage of turbine components. A 6m wide track would run along the length of the hardstanding;

- All six wind turbines would be lit using Ministry of Defence (MOD) Infra-Red lights, which would be invisible to the general public but detectable to aircrew night vision aids. The three perimeter turbines (turbines 1, 5 and 6) would be lit by 2000 candela visible red lights to delineate the outline of the wind farm;

- A transformer would be required for each wind turbine and these would be located within the turbines. The transformers would increase the electrical voltage to 33kV and would be connected to the control building within the on-site substation via underground high voltage power export cables. These would be laid in trenches that run alongside the access tracks. The cable trenches would be excavated to a minimum depth of 1.25m and backfilled;

- The Solar PV modules, more commonly known as solar panels, would be held together by a metal frame in a mountable unit in groups known as ‘strings’. The individual solar PV modules would have a maximum height of 3m. The solar PVs would be separated with a minimum row separation space of 3.35m; the exact row spacing would vary across the Site dependent upon topography, orientation and minimising the effects of overshadowing. There would be a number of transformer houses in shipping containers spaced within the solar array. These would have dimensions of 6.2m in length and 2.4m in width. The height above ground level will be 3.4m. Power export cables would connect the various generation/storage technologies to the on-site Substation. These would be laid in trenches along the access tracks, to a minimum depth of 1.25m and backfilled;

- The substation and control building compound would be located in the north of the Site and would contain a control building and electrical equipment, as well as vehicle access and parking. The purpose of the on-site Substation is to convert low voltages from electricity generation to high voltages, or vice versa, using power transformers. The Applicant is willing to volunteer a condition controlling the appearance of the control building, pursuant to the grant of planning permission;

- The BESS battery units would comprise batteries housed in shipping container style structures. The BESS units would be approximately 6.1m in length and 2.4m in width and up to 4.1m in height. The BESS unit would be fitted with heating, ventilation and cooling systems, as well as an in-built fire safety system. BESS invertor/transformers would transmit electricity to the National Grid as alternating current (AC) would be located adjacent to the BESS battery containers, measuring circa 6.1m (length) x 2.4m (width) x 3.4m (height). Associated infrastructure including the BESS control room, spares and welfare unit, DNO cabin and water storage tank would be located within the BESS area; and

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- The substation compound and BESS compound would be fenced by 2.4m high palisade fencing; assumed to be a dark green colour. The solar area would be fenced using post and stock proof wire fencing to a maximum height of 2.4m. Access gates into fenced off areas would be circa 6m wide. CCTV infrared cameras would be mounted on poles with a maximum height of 3.6m interspersed through the Site.

Access

4.1.6 Two access points are proposed into the Site; a northeastern access from Maesteg Road and a southern access from New Road.

4.1.7 The northeastern access point would provide access for all construction material, abnormal loads and ongoing operational traffic. The southern access point to the Site would provide an additional access for just abnormal loads associated with the turbine equipment; this would be an entrance only as any abnormal load deliveries using this entrance would contract to a normal HGV size once the load had been delivered and exit the site through the northern entrance.

4.1.8 Within the centre of the Site, to provide connectivity between turbine locations and the solar areas, and to minimise environmental impacts, the existing adopted highway, Ffordd-y-Gyfraith, would be utilised, widening it in sections as necessary. The general arrangement of the highway junctions is provided in **ES Volume III, Appendix 12.3: Highway Junctions General Arrangement** and **ES Volume IV, Figure 2.27: Highway Overrun Areas**.

4.1.9 Any areas of over-run required to facilitate the delivery of the abnormal load turbine components would remain in situ for the operational life of the Proposed Development, however it is proposed to construct these areas from grasscrete, or similar, in order to minimise the visual impact once the area has revegetated. Access to these widened areas would be controlled via removable bollards during the construction phase and then fenced off during the operational phase.

4.1.10 The Site entrances would be well maintained and monitored during the operational life of the Proposed Development.

4.1.11 From the Site entrances, approximately 7.9 km of new site access tracks would be constructed as part of the Proposed Development. Approximately 3.9 km of existing farm tracks would be upgraded as part of the Proposed Development. Site tracks are required throughout the operation phase of the Proposed Development to permit access for maintenance and repair operations. They would also allow access during the decommissioning phase.

4.1.12 The Site access track layout has been designed to minimise environmental disturbance by avoiding sensitive features and keeping the length of track commensurate with the minimum required for operational safety. The nominal running width would be approximately 6m, although track widths may be wider in some sections to accommodate bends in the road alignment. A typical Site access track cross-section is shown in **ES Volume IV, Figure 2.23: Typical Access Track Cross Section.** Temporary track mats would also be used in the solar areas to minimise disturbance to the ground from machinery and the amount of permanent tracks.

4.1.13 The Site access track layout, from the northeastern access up the hillside, includes passing places for safe vehicular access and egress. In addition, turning heads would be constructed adjacent to turbine locations to accommodate empty abnormal load turning.

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4.1.14 Adjacent to the track would be an assumed 1.2 m verge for cabling alongside an appropriate drainage verge.

Watercourse Crossings

4.1.15 There are two proposed crossing points within the Site. This includes the crossing of an unnamed ordinary watercourse to facilitate the northern access, where a clear span bridge or open arch culvert is currently proposed. A further small pipe culvert crossing is proposed. **ES Volume IV, Figure 2.25: Indicative Watercourse Crossings** shows indictive watercourse crossing designs.

Utility Crossings

4.1.16 There are various overhead lines (OHLs) that pass through the solar areas of the Site. The proposed layout has been designed to accommodate this with standard off-sets. One OHL, near Cwm Risca Lane, is proposed to be undergrounded where the access route passes through to ensure that it is not an obstacle for the Abnormal Indivisible Load (AIL) deliveries.

4.1.17 There are also a number of gas pipes that pass through the Site, operated by Wales & West Utilities. Where required, off-sets will be incorporated into the design. **ES Volume IV, Figure 2.26: Indicative Gas Pipeline Crossing** shows an indicative gas pipeline crossing; the final design will be agreed with the utility operators.

Biodiversity Enhancement Proposals

4.1.18 A number of biodiversity enhancement measures are proposed as part of the Proposed Development as detailed in **ES Volume III, Appendix 11.4: Net Benefit Report**. These are discussed further in the assessment section of this PDAS.

Construction Phase

4.1.19 The construction of the Proposed Development is anticipated to be undertaken over a 24month period. The final length of the programme would be dependent on seasonal working and weather conditions. The construction works are anticipated to begin in 2029 and be completed in 2031.

4.1.20 During this period, a number of key construction activity ‘stages’ would be undertaken. An indicative construction programme and an overview of the core stages is set out in **ES Volume II, Chapter 2: Proposed Development Description**.

Construction Compounds

4.1.21 The temporary construction compounds would act as the main interface between the construction work sites and the public highway. The compounds have been included as part of the Proposed Development (please refer to **ES Volume IV**, **Figure 2.1: Proposed Development Layout)**.

4.1.22 An initial compound is proposed to be located close to the northeastern Site access point; this initial compound would be used to facilitate the site mobilisation, access upgrading and the construction of the water crossing.

4.1.23 Once the water crossing has been built, the construction compound would be relocated further up the northern access track and split into two areas, as shown in **ES Volume IV**, **Figure 2.1:**

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Proposed Development Layout. Typical arrangements for the proposed compound are provided in **ES Volume IV**, **Figures 2.22a and 2.22b: Indicative Temporary Construction Compound**.

4.1.24 The construction compounds would include space for:

- Temporary modular building(s) to be used as a Site office;
- Welfare facilities;
- Parking for construction staff and visitors;
- Reception area;
- Fuelling point or mobile fuel bowser;
- Secure storage areas for tools, materials and plant;
- Waste storage facilities; and
- Laydown area.

4.1.25 The construction disturbance associated with the temporary construction compounds would be minimal. Typically, surface soils will be stripped and stockpiled, and the surface would then be capped with geofabric and aggregate. CCTV would be installed within the construction compounds as required and the perimeter secured by a temporary security fence. Should further mobile compounds be required, these would be located within areas proposed for other infrastructure such as the BESS / Substation compounds.

4.1.26 The construction compound and laydown area would be retained for the duration of the construction phase and then reinstated.

4.1.27 Artificial lighting would be required during the construction phase to ensure safe working conditions, during periods of limited natural light. Examples include vehicle and plant headlights, construction compound lighting, floodlights and mobile lighting units, to be used around specific construction activities. It is intended that the type of lighting would be non-intrusive (e.g. directed down and towards works activity and away from the Site), to minimise impact on local properties and any other environmental considerations.

4.1.28 The construction compound would be fenced throughout the works. Fencing would be kept to a minimum and used for health and safety purposes, acoustic mitigation, security and animal welfare, as and when required.

Construction Site Logistics

4.1.29 In general, the proposed working hours for construction would be from 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday and 07:00 to 13:00 on Saturday. No work is proposed on Sundays and public holidays unless otherwise agreed. Exceptions to the proposed working hours are set out in **ES Volume II, Chapter 2: Proposed Development Description**, relating to any necessary continuous works, such as concrete pours to the turbine foundations and safe turbine erection.

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4.1.30 The number of construction staff present on-site would vary according to the construction phase and activities being undertaken; the maximum number of staff estimated to be present at any one-time during construction of the Proposed Development would be approximately 45.

4.1.31 In addition to direct employment opportunities the construction Site would bring benefits to local businesses which as the supply of materials or services for construction and accommodation for workers.

Construction Traffic

4.1.32 The largest volume of traffic is anticipated during the construction phase of the Proposed Development, when vehicles are likely to be travelling from major centres and ports to deliver materials to the Site. Further detail is provided in **ES Volume II**, **Chapter 12: Traffic and Transport**.

4.1.33 During the construction period, the following traffic would require access to the Site:

- Staff transport;
- Construction equipment and materials, deliveries of machinery and supplies such as crushed rock; and
- Abnormal loads comprising wind turbine components, PVs, grid infrastructure and also heavy lift crane(s).

4.1.34 The proposed construction routes to Site are illustrated in **ES Volume IV, Figure 12.2: Abnormal Load Delivery Route** and **Figure 12.5: Construction Traffic Distribution.** These would be predominantly from the south, via Junction 36 of the M4 and A4063, entering the site via the northeastern access. AIL deliveries for the southern access would also exit the M4 at Junction 36 and travel via the A4063, B4281, Fountain Road and New Road. Within the Site, the adopted highway, Ffordd-y-Gyfraith, bisects the Site; this will provide connectivity between turbine locations and the solar array areas along with the proposed internal Site access tracks.

Abnormal Indivisible Load Deliveries

4.1.35 The wind turbines are broken down into components for transport to the Site. The nacelle, blades and tower sections are classified as AILs due to their weight, length, width and height when loaded.

4.1.36 In addition to the turbine deliveries, one high-capacity erection crane would be needed to offload a number of components and erect the turbines. The cranes are likely to be mobile cranes with a capacity up to 1,000 tonnes that are escorted by boom and ballast trucks to allow full mobilisation on Site. Smaller erector cranes (up to a capacity of 200 tonnes) would also be present to allow the assembly of the main crane and to assist with the overall erection of the turbines.

4.1.37 Escort vehicles would accompany the AIL convoys to support the traffic management measures. Up to three vehicles would be deployed at a time and it is assumed that three turbine components would be delivered per convoy.

4.1.38 AIL would be routed from the M4 to enter the Site through either the northeastern or southern access junctions. Both of the site access junctions have been designed to accommodate the

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AILs and it is anticipated that both access points would be used as needed during the delivery of AILs.

General and Material Deliveries

4.1.39 Throughout the construction phase, general deliveries would be made to the Site by means of HGV. These would include plant, material, fuel, site office and staff welfare facilities. These deliveries would enter the Site using the northeastern access only.

Construction Traffic Management

4.1.40 Principles of traffic management and movement have been provided within **ES Volume III, Appendix 12.1 Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan** (OCTMP); it is anticipated that a detailed CTMP will be prepared and agreed with BCBC/NPTC in advance of the construction phase through the discharge of planning conditions.

Public Rights of Way Management

4.1.41 Once operational the Proposed Development would not physically impact on any PRoW. All PRoW within the Site would be kept open during construction as far as is practicable and safe. **ES Volume III, Appendix 12.2: Outline Access (PRoW) Management Plan** provides an overview of the management of PRoWs during the construction period.

Site Reinstatement

4.1.42 Following construction, the Site will be reinstated by the Contractor and implemented on areas subject to disturbance during construction as soon as is practicable. Specific details regarding the general approach and the feature specific reinstatement (i.e. for the turbine foundations, site access tracks and temporary construction compounds) is set out in **ES Volume IV, Chapter 2: Proposed Development Description.**

4.2 Operational Phase

4.2.1 The expected operational life of the Proposed Development is 50 years from the date of commissioning. The Applicant is also seeking for an up to 10 year implementation period for the commencement of the development, from the date of the grant of planning permission, to ensure that the grid network has been suitably upgraded to facilitate a connection.

Operational Workforce

4.2.2 A team of several staff including engineer fitters would supervise the operation of the Proposed Development and would visit the Site to conduct routine maintenance. The frequency of these visits would depend on the manufacturer of the installed infrastructure.

Operation and Maintenance

4.2.3 During the operation of the Proposed Development, maintenance work would involve visiting the Site regularly to undertake scheduled maintenance and operational checks.

4.2.4 The operational phase of the Proposed Development is unlikely to generate significant amounts of waste except for minor quantities of material collected during routine maintenance inspections. Waste streams during this phase include relatively small quantities of municipal waste, waste chemicals, oils, and sewage. Measures will be put in place to ensure waste

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generated from the Proposed Development is kept to a minimum and does not have a significant cumulative effect on local waste management infrastructure. All wastes arising as a result of servicing and maintenance (e.g. lubricating oils, cooling oils, packaging from spare parts or equipment, unused paint etc.) would be removed from the Site and reused, recycled or disposed of in accordance with best practice.

4.2.5 Renewable energy developments are designed to operate largely unattended. Each turbine would be fitted with an automatic system designed to supervise and control a number of parameters to ensure proper performance (e.g. start-up, shut-down, rotor direction, blade angles etc.) and to monitor condition (e.g. generator temperature). The control system would automatically shut the turbine down should the need arise.

4.2.6 The Proposed Development would have a sophisticated overall Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system that would continually interrogate each of the turbines and the electrical connections. An operator would be employed to operate and maintain the turbines, largely through remote routine interrogation of the SCADA system. The operator would also look after the day-to-day logistical supervision of the Proposed Development and would be on-site intermittently.

4.2.7 In the case of any fault, including over-speed of the blades, overpower production, or loss of grid connection, the turbines shut down automatically through integrated braking mechanisms. They are also fitted with vibration sensors so that, if, in the unlikely event a blade was damaged, the turbines would again be automatically shut down.

4.2.8 For the solar PV modules and BESS, data cables (typically fibre optic) would be installed, typically alongside electrical cables, in order to allow for monitoring during operation and maintenance, such as the collection of solar data from devices known as pyranometers for solar PVs. The solar PV modules would also require cleaning and maintenance throughout operation.

4.2.9 Measures for protecting the wind turbines against meteorological effects and track and access maintenance are set out in **ES Volume IV, Chapter 2: Description of Proposed Development.**

4.3 Decommissioning

4.3.1 At the end of the operational period, the Proposed Development would be decommissioned.

4.3.2 Decommissioning activities and sequence are envisaged to be broadly the reverse of the construction activities and would utilise similar equipment and personnel. Activities would likely take place in a shorter overall duration (approximately 6 months).

4.3.3 The specific decommissioning details are set out in **ES Volume II, Chapter 2: Proposed Development Description**. Key elements include:

- Infrastructure components would need to be dismantled and removed in a similar fashion to their delivery and erection. Cranes would be used to split the turbines into sections which would then be transported from the site by HGVs. The components would be reused, recycled or if appropriate disposed of in accordance with the relevant waste management regulations at the time.

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- Tracks and hardstandings would be left in situ for use by the landowner or covered in topsoil. No stone is proposed to be removed from the Site during decommissioning. This approach is considered to be less environmentally damaging than seeking to remove all track foundations, underground power export cables and tracks entirely.

- A Decommissioning Strategy would be submitted by the Applicant for agreement with BCBC and NPTC prior to the decommissioning works taking place, and this is likely to be subject to an appropriately worded condition on any planning permission. A Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) would perform a similar role to the CEMP for the construction phase and set out the mitigation measures to be implemented throughout the works.

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5 DESIGN AND ACCESS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This Section of the report constitutes a Design and Access Statement (DAS). It has been prepared in line with the requirements and recommendations of Technical Advice Note 12: Design (TAN 12)[10] and with reference to the 'Design and Access Statements in Wales Why, What and How' (April 2017)[11] guidance, which builds on that understanding and responds to legislative requirements for DAS under the Planning (Wales) Act 2015[12].

5.1.2 This section contains a summary of the site context, analysis of the surrounding areas and an explanation of the relevant design frameworks. It explores how the physical characteristics of the Proposed Development have been informed by the design process and explains the steps taken in the process to arrive at the proposed design.

5.2 Relevant Design Guidance for Designing for Renewable Energy

Designing for Renewable Energy

5.2.1 Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales (2023) was produced by The Design Commission for Wales, an independent expert body for design quality in the built and natural environment. The guidance document sets out the key design objectives and considerations for the development of large-scale, ground mounted on-shore wind and solar installations in Wales.

5.2.2 The key principles for good design for wind and solar schemes is set out in section 4 of the guidance as follows:

- **Section 4.1 – The design process**. The construction of large-scale wind and solar installations should result from a thorough, multidisciplinary site selection and design process, which starts with a comprehensive design brief that establishes clear principles and objectives and which is informed by the key characteristics of the receiving landscape and habitat. The guidance document states that creative landscape design should be considered from the outset in the design process.

- **Section 4.2 – Design objectives**. These are listed as follows:

  - Avoid unacceptable environmental impacts on local communities through the design process – impacts on the setting of cultural, historic or archaeological landscape features should also be carefully considered.

[10] https://www.gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-12-design

[11] https://www.gov.wales/planning-applications-guidance-design-and-access-statements-das

[12] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/4/contents/enacted

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- Maximise benefits to local communities – wind and solar farm designs should seek to maximise the benefits to local communities in terms of meaningful participation in the site selection and design process, access to employment, local landscape and infrastructure improvements.

- Avoid negative environmental impacts on nature and wildlife – Development proposals should be directly shaped by the principle of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, so that wider ecosystem resilience is secured and sensitive locations avoided.

- Enhance the ecological diversity of the site to provide a net benefit – The requirement in Future Wales to enhance nature conservation and biodiversity, and to provide a net benefit within wind and solar sites, should be a fundamental element of the design, delivery and management of wind turbine and solar developments.

- Use of the highest quality emerging technology – New developments should seek to make use of high quality, new and innovative technology to maximise power generation.

- Sustainable Construction – Designs should take care to ensure that construction minimises the environmental impacts of wind and solar development by maximising resource efficiency, optimising potential material reuse and land restoration and minimising the impact on land during all stages in the life of the wind or solar farm.

- Make meaningful changes to the landscape through design – The arrangement of turbines or solar arrays needs to be carefully considered as a landscape design challenge.

- Site design and wider impacts – Careful design consideration is required in relation to other elements of wind and solar farm developments, including access roads, storage and maintenance facilities etc. with respect to the scale, form and dominant construction materials used in the architecture of the local area.

- **Section 4.3 – The Landscape design challenge.** Careful siting of large moving tower structures against the landscape and skyline backdrop for wind and on lower lying land, or in a form that reflects the existing field and landscape pattern for solar.

- **Section 4.5 – Woodland.** Trees can act as a scale indicator if wind farms are sited immediately adjacent to, or within, woodland areas. Trees can have a screening effect if they occur in the fore or midground of views towards turbines.

- **Section 4.6 – Agricultural land, soils and hydrology.** The layout and siting of energy developments can reduce the adverse impacts on hydrology. Likewise, when considering site selection consideration should be given to the quality of the agricultural land (Best and Most Versatile grades 1, 2 and 3a).

- **Section 4.7 – Ecology**. Proposals for wind and solar schemes should demonstrate how decisions on design, layout and siting and other key considerations have been informed by biodiversity and ecosystem resilience considerations.

- **Section 4.9 and 4.10 – Impact Assessments and Design and Access Statement.** EIA and LVIA assessments will assist in reducing the visual intrusion of wind turbines and solar developments as part of the design process. Wind/solar developments should have a

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cohesive design, which relates to the surrounding landscape. A DAS should set out how the local context has influenced the design of the development.

5.3 Site Context and Proposed Development

5.3.1 The Site, as defined by the red line boundary shown on **Plate 3.1** above, measures an area of approximately 580 ha. The proposed built infrastructure would only occupy 7.1% of the whole Site area.

5.3.2 A description of the Site and its surroundings, together with site specific features and designations is set out in Section 3 of this PDAS.

5.3.3 A detailed description of the Proposed Development is set out in Chapter 4 of this PDAS and **ES Volume II, Chapter 2: Proposed Development Description**.

5.4 Site Selection

5.4.1 As outlined in Section 3.5.5 of **ES Volume II, Chapter 3: Environmental Context and Reasonable Alternatives Considered**, the overall approach to renewable energy park site selection is to identify areas of land where the siting of the energy park would result in acceptable environmental effects, would align with planning and renewable energy policy, be free from overriding technical constraints and be economically viable.

5.4.2 The initial site identification exercise involves sites being evaluated against the following criteria:

- A review of current and emerging planning policy (National and Local);
- Geographical Information System (GIS) constraints analysis;
- A review of suitable site access points, grid availability/viability and access/transportation feasibility;
- Consideration of wind speeds and terrain characteristics, to understand whether these will be sufficient for optimal operation of wind turbines;
- Consideration of land slope and orientation for suitability for solar PV modules including irradiance levels;
- Desk-based assessment of site technical and environmental constraints; and
- Ability for extant land use to be maintained as much as possible alongside the simultaneous operation of the renewable energy components.

5.4.3 An essential element of the search for potential sites is the identification of landowners interested in development.

5.4.4 The Proposed Development area was confirmed as a good site for development following feasibility work.

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5.5 Design Strategy

5.5.1 The design strategy defines the overall approach to the design of the Proposed Development. It provides the starting point for the Proposed Development's design, and subsequent alterations to this design that were made in response to various considerations including landscape and visual amenity, cultural heritage, noise, ecological, ornithological, hydrological and geological constraints and effects, together with wind yield, and feasibility of construction, as information emerged through the EIA process.

5.5.2 The overall aim of the design strategy was to create an Energy Park with a cohesive design that is sympathetic in form and scale to the surrounding landscape context, whilst achieving an appropriate balance between maximising renewable energy yield and minimising other environmental and technical effects.

Design Objectives

5.5.3 The Design objectives are as follows:

- To maximise the potential energy yield throughout the Site through the employment of wind, solar PVs and BESS technology in optimal locations;
- To use the latest wind turbine technology, consisting of more efficient and larger turbines where these can be reasonably accommodated within the landscape;
- To ensure that the proposed infrastructure responds to the scale of the underlying landscape and operational, consented and proposed developments in the surrounding context;
- To develop a proposed layout which minimises adverse effects upon cultural heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings and non-designated but locally important heritage assets;
- To make use of natural and topographical screening of turbines, solar, BESS and Substation in key views where possible;
- To explore opportunities within the Site to restore and enhance biodiversity and provide greater access and recreational opportunities; and
- To develop a layout that fulfils the above objectives whilst minimising or avoiding other environmental and technical constraints as far as possible, including noise, hydrology (watercourses), priority habitats, steep slopes, telecommunications links, and other technical constraints identified during the EIA process.

Alternative Designs

5.5.4 **ES Volume II, Chapter 3: Environmental Context and Reasonable Alternatives Considered** provides a summary of alternatives that were considered for the Proposed Development including its design and technology, as follows:

- Different turbine, solar PVs and infrastructure layouts/locations within the Site; and

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- Different access routes to and from the Proposed Development site in terms of delivery of AILs.

5.5.5 The design and layout of the Proposed Development has been adapted and altered in response to environmental constraints, survey and assessment results and consultation feedback.

5.5.6 Individual technical chapters in the ES refer to the specific design input into the proposed design and layout in further detail. The main considerations with regard to facilitating a detailed design assessment are presented in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Site and Environmental Constraints and Opportunities

Site and Environmental Constraints or Opportunity	Design Response
Biodiversity	Where possible, sensitive features or habitats likely to support protected species have been avoided. Where this has not been possible off-sets been incorporated into the design, including but not limited to: - Triangulated 50m buffer from the tip of any turbine blades to any woodland or hedgerows that may be used by bats; - Incorporated a 10m buffer from hedgerows and field boundaries (except crossings) to minimise impacts on Dormice; - Incorporated a 50m buffer from the Cwm Risca Meadow SSSI; - Realigned access tracks to utilise gaps in hedgerows and avoid tree removal as far as possible; and, - Incorporated ecological mitigation for Marsh Fritillary Butterfly,, Birds and Fungi.
Hydrology	- Internal access tracks and cable routes utilise existing tracks, crossings and/or gaps in the hedgerows, where reasonably practicable; - Watercourse crossings have been kept to a practical minimum by careful infrastructure design. At locations where the access track crosses small watercourses, will allow the water to flow through; - A minimum of 15m buffer from all watercourses within the Site has been applied, with infrastructure sited outside of this buffer where possible (except proposed crossings);
Cultural Heritage	- Avoidance of all designated and non-designated historic assets within the Site where possible; - All built infrastructure located a minimum 100m buffer from Scheduled Monuments; - Solar parcels, BESS and Substation sited to accommodate woodland planting blocks to provide long-term screening in views from the wider landscape; and - Re-routing of proposed new access tracks to avoid any non-designated heritage assets identified within the geophysical surveys.
Landscape and Visual	- Appropriate offsets from all properties and settlements (800 m buffer) have been applied and the turbines are proposed to be

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	positioned either side of the more open central grassland areas in order that they can be located as close as is feasibly possible to the woodland blocks that provide enclosure to both the west side (Craig yr Aber Woodland) and east side (wooded tributary valley of the Lynfi) of the Site; - The BESS and substation have been sensitively located away from the more visually prominent central areas; - Where reasonably practicable, existing hedgerows, woodland, ditches and field margins have been retained; - A minimum offset distance of 10 m from any existing woodland, trees (from the edge of the canopy) and hedgerows and 15 m from any ancient woodland has been incorporated; The Proposed Development design will incorporate woodland planting around new infrastructure, including the solar PVs, the BESS and substation;
Noise and Vibration Effects	- Noise emitting equipment has been located as far away as practicable from sensitive receptors, and modelling has confirmed noise levels at the nearest receptors are acceptable.
Effects on Public Access	- An oversail distance from PRoW and a minimum 200m buffer from bridleways have been incorporated, with all PRoW's sought to be retained in the current position.
Effect on Telecoms	- Turbine numbers reduced to accommodate six turbines with maximum height to blade tip height of 200m, thus reducing any effects upon telecommunication links following consultation with technical specialists.
Effect on Highways	- Both the northeastern and southern Site access junctions have been designed to accommodate abnormal loads, as it is anticipated that both access points would be used as needed during the delivery of AILs. - The northeastern access has been designed for a left-in, left-out arrangement for the access and egress of all construction vehicles as a means of improving road safety and reducing possible delays on the A4063 while the southern access has been designed to be an inward access only for abnormal loads, following consultation with BCBC Highways.

5.5.7 In addition to the above considerations, planning guidance, discussions and/or consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees have influenced the evolution of design.

Design Evolution and Development of the Preferred Option

5.5.8 The Proposed Development went through a series of design iterations, with three main iterations being presented in **ES Volume IV**, **Figure 3.2: Design Iterations** and a summary of the layout iterations is set out in below.

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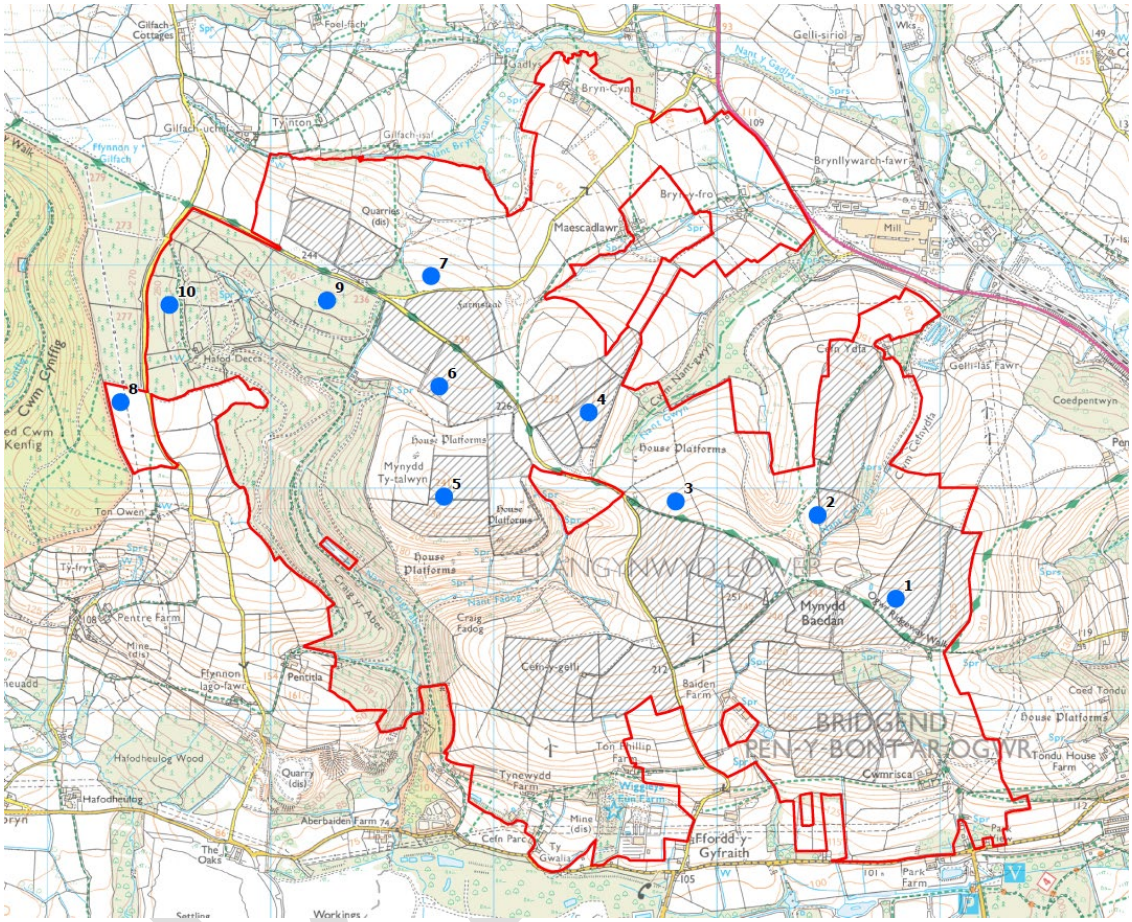
Layout A – Scoping Stage Layout – September 2023

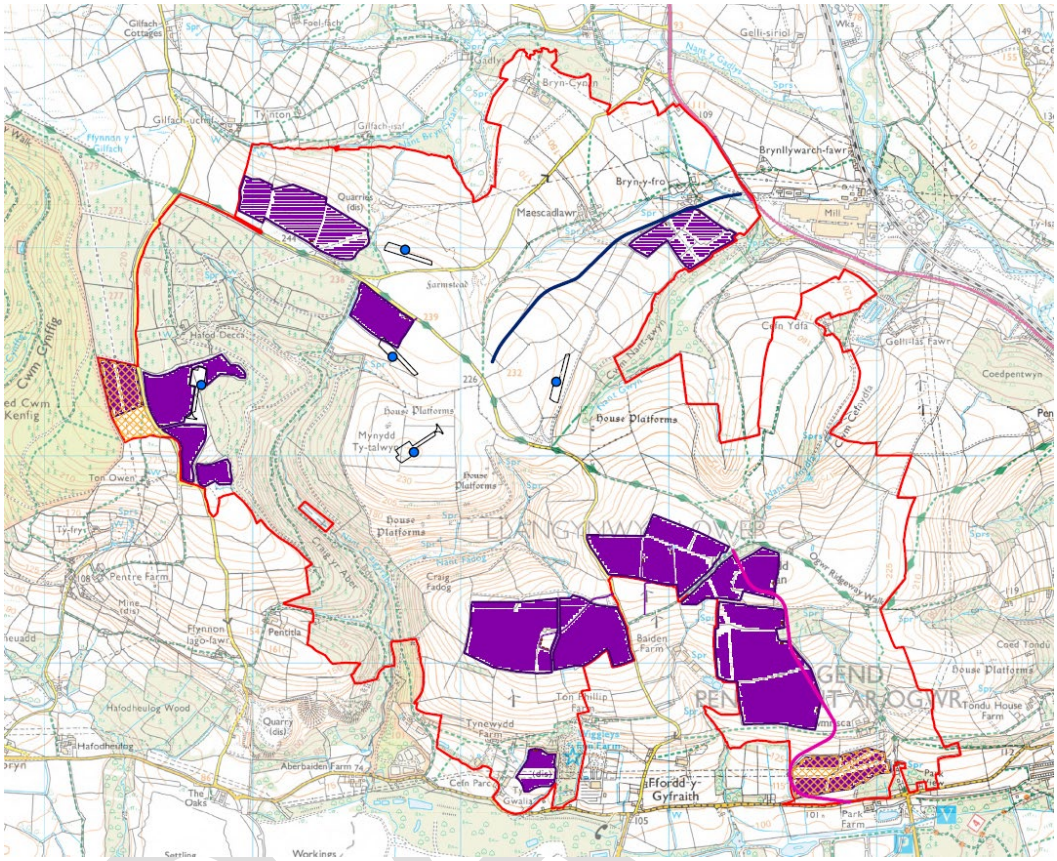


5.5.9 The Site layout proposed in the Scoping Request comprised 10 turbines with a maximum height to blade tip of 230m, together with solar PV and a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated ancillary infrastructure. The Site size was approximately 814 ha and included the Craig-yr-Aber woodland.

5.5.10 The indicative layout was developed prior to many of the detailed site-specific surveys being completed and was based on information collected from desktop studies and consultants' preliminary advice. This layout sought to optimise wind and solar generation capacity but to avoid adverse effects on local dwellings, sensitive environmental receptors, aviation and telecommunications receptors, existing infrastructure and engineering constraints.

5.5.11 The proposed turbine height to blade tip was 230m, which represented the maximum physical capacity of the turbine area from a wind resource perspective prior to the establishment of detailed constraints and a detailed wind resource assessment.

Layout B



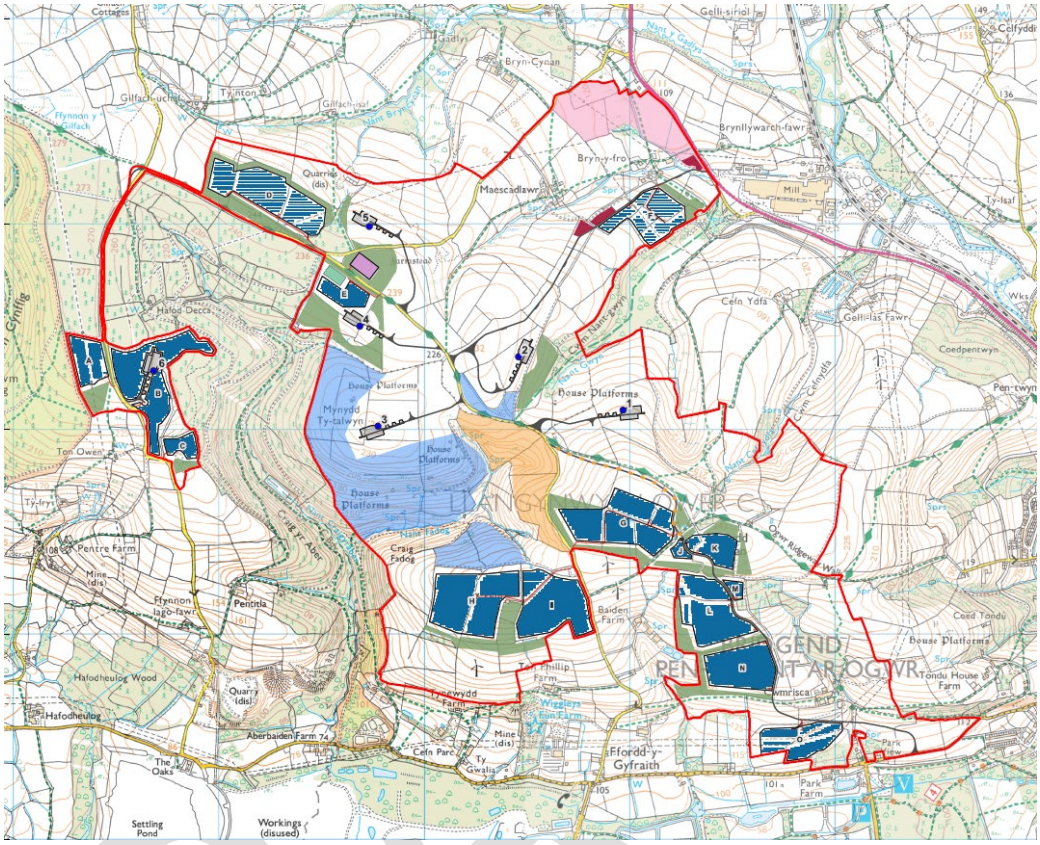
5.5.12 The revised layout reduced the total solar generation area and number of turbines to five with a maximum height to blade tip height of 200m, in order to reduce the visual effects on sensitive receptors and to remove any effects upon telecommunication links. The Site increased in size to approximately 830ha following landowner agreements.

5.5.13 The layout was developed following completion of detailed site-specific surveys, which refined the environmental baseline and key constraints and following consultation with technical specialists. Following consultation with the Joint Radio Company (JRC), proposed turbines T1, T2 and T3 were removed as they were found to be located within telecom link areas. Additionally, proposed turbines T9 and T10, located within Craig-yr-Aber woodland, were also removed from the development as landowner agreements were not concluded.

5.5.14 The remaining 5 proposed turbine locations and their foundations and crane hardstandings, were adjusted to reduce the amount of cut / fill earthworks disturbance to the ground, to avoid utilities and to maintain a 100m buffer from all on site Scheduled Monuments

5.5.15 The layout explored access options from the north and south – as illustrated by the blue line (from the north) and the pink line (to the south). Solar and BESS / Substation areas were further refined based on inputs from heritage, landscape and ecology consultants. Two options for the BESS and Substation areas were identified.

Layout C – Proposed Development – April 2025



5.5.16 The proposed development layout being submitted for planning permission comprises six wind turbines with a maximum height to blade tip of 200m, together with 55W solar and 50 MW BESS, a Substation and associated infrastructure.

5.5.17 This revised layout has been informed by onsite surveys, consultation and further landscape assessment with detailed ancillary infrastructure design. Individual assessment chapters in the ES outline the specific inputs into refining the site layout in further detail and respond to specific matters, in particular the scale of the proposed turbines and the landscape fit of the scheme.

5.5.18 The site decreased in size to approximately 580 ha, with the key amendments being:

- Reduction in the red line boundary to remove the Craig-yr-Aber woodland, together with areas to the north, east and south of the site where no infrastructure or mitigation will be located;
- Reintroduced Turbine 3 to the scheme following further telecom consultation and upgrade works.
- Amended solar design to mitigate the impact on landscape character and visual amenity;
- BESS / Substation and construction compound areas identified through further design work and consideration of the effects on heritage assets, landscape views and ecological habitats;
- The location of internal access tracks were developed taking into consideration landscape, ecology and heritage considerations and consultation with the highways department; and

- Access agreed from the northeast and south for AILs and northeastern access route for all other construction materials.

5.5.19 The final layout of the Proposed Development) including ancillary infrastructure is shown in **ES Volume IV, Figure 2.1: Proposed Development Layout.**

5.6 Access Arrangements

5.6.1 Two Site access points are proposed into the Site; a northeastern access from the Maesteg Road (A4063) and a southern access from the New Road.

5.6.2 The northeastern access point would provide access for all construction material, AILs and ongoing operational traffic. The southern access point to the Site would provide an additional access for just AILs associated with the turbine equipment; this would be an entrance only as any AIL deliveries using this entrance would contract to a normal HGV size once the load had been delivered and exit the site through the northern access point.

5.6.3 Within the centre of the Site, to provide connectivity between turbine locations and the solar areas and to minimise environmental impacts, the existing adopted highway (Ffordd-y-Gyfraith) would be utilised, constructing additional overrun areas in sections, as necessary. The general arrangement of the highway junctions and overrun areas is provided in **ES Volume III, Appendix 12.3: Highway Junctions General Arrangements** and **ES Volume IV, Figure 2.27: Highway Overrun Areas**.

5.6.4 Any areas of over-run required to facilitate the delivery of the abnormal load turbine components would remain in situ for the operational life of the Proposed Development, however it is proposed to construct these areas from grasscrete, or similar, in order to minimise the visual impact once the area has revegetated. Access to these widened areas would be controlled via removable bollards during the construction phase and then fenced off during the operational phase.

5.6.5 Within the Site, approximately 7.9 km of new site access tracks would be constructed as part of the Proposed Development. Approximately 3.9 km of existing farm tracks would upgraded as part of the Proposed Development. Site tracks are required throughout the operational phase of the Proposed Development to permit access for maintenance and repair operations. They would also allow access during the decommissioning phase.

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6 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section of the PDAS reviews the key national and local planning policies which relate specifically to the Proposed Development. The aim of this section is to establish the land use implications of the Proposed Development, consider its compliance with the Development Plan and identify other material considerations which should be taken into consideration during the determination process.

6.2 Planning Legislation

6.2.1 Legislation for planning is enshrined in the Planning (Wales) Act 2015[13]. This Act sets out the plan-led approach to planning in Wales and includes the development of a National Development Framework (known as Future Wales 2040) which provides an integrated and comprehensive national planning vision and policy framework.

6.2.2 Other relevant primary legislation, includes the Town and Country Planning Act (1990)[14]. This is the principal Act regulating the development and use of land in England and Wales. The TCPA sets out the primacy of the Development Plan in the decision making process. Section 70(2) of the TCPA requires that: *"…in dealing with an application for planning permission, the authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application".*

6.2.3 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004[15] introduced the Local Development Plan system in Wales and made other reforms to development management provisions in the TCPA. Section 38(4) of the Act states that: *'For the purposes of any area in Wales the development Plan is a) the National Development Framework for Wales, b) any strategic development plan for an area that includes all or part of that area and c) the local development plan for that area*'. The Act also requires that the most recent development plan policy takes precedence over a previous development plan policy in the event of a conflict between them (Section 38(5), The Local Development Plan must also *'be in general conformity with the National Development Framework for Wales'* (Section 62.3A). Furthermore, applications for planning permission should be determined: *"…in accordance with the provisions of the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise"* - Section 38(6).

6.2.4 These legislative provisions are reiterated within Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (PPW12)[16] where it is stated at Paragraph 1.22 that: *"Plans at all levels of the development plan hierarchy must be prepared in accordance with national planning policies. Planning applications must be*

[13] Planning (Wales) Act 2015

[14] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents

[15] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/ukpga/2004/5

[16] https://www.gov.wales/planning-policy-wales

determined in accordance with the adopted plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

6.2.5 The Historic Environment Act (Wales) (2023) at Section 90 requires that when considering whether to grant planning permission for a development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Welsh Ministers must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, the setting of the building or any features of special architectural or historic interest the building possesses. This clause has in turn been introduced into the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) under Section 314A.

6.2.6 Furthermore, Section 160 of the Historic Environment Act (Wales) (2023) requires that:

'In exercising a planning function in relation to a building or other land in a conservation area, a person must have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

6.2.7 The adopted Development Plan (LDP) applicable to the Site comprises:

- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (adopted February 2021);
- Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033 (adopted March 2024); and
- Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC) Local Development Plan (2011 – 2026).

6.2.8 For completeness it is noted that there are no Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) applicable to the Site at this time.

6.3 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

6.3.1 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (2021) (hereafter 'Future Wales') is the Welsh Government's National Development Framework and is the highest tier of the development plan in Wales. It sets out (page 96) that proposals for large scale energy development are classed as DNSs:

- "*All on-shore wind generation of 10 or more megawatts; and*
- *Other energy generation sites with generating power between 10 and 350 megawatts.*"

6.3.2 As set out in legislation, Future Wales states that: *"applications for developments of national significance must be determined in accordance with Future Wales, which is the National Development Plan for Wales" (p96).*

6.3.3 As the most recent expression of national planning policy and as the highest tier of the Development Plan, Future Wales is therefore considered to have primacy in the planning policy hierarchy. It provides a framework for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy and achieving decarbonisation and climate resilience, as well as developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of communities. Page 10 of Future Wales sets out that: "*the specific purpose of Future Wales is to ensure the planning system at all levels is consistent with, and supports the delivery of, Welsh Government strategic aims and policies".*

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6.3.4 Future Wales (page 15) sets out the structure of the Welsh planning system, referring to the three tiers of development plan which should be aligned and complement each other: namely, Future Wales, Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs). It adds that LDPs must be in conformity with Future Wales and the SDPs for their respective area, should they be in place. It adds that LDPs must be kept up to date to ensure that they, and Future Wales, work together effectively.

6.3.5 Future Wales (page 15) also outlines that the content and policies of all three tiers of the development plan are strongly influenced by Planning Policy Wales (PPW), which is the complete land use planning policy document for Wales (as referred to below) and is a material consideration in the decision-making process for DNSs.

6.3.6 Future Wales does not contain statements on all land use planning issues as set out in PPW, however importantly, it states (at page 14) that Future Wales "*Supports a low carbon economy and the decarbonisation of industry, and the growth of sustainable and renewable energy.*" Whilst page 15 states that: *"Deciding where to locate renewable energy generation technology is a spatial issue of such significance that national ambitions are unlikely to be achieved without national planning policies".*

6.3.7 Chapter 2 of Future Wales explains how the policy document has been informed by a range of challenges and opportunities and a key matter is climate change. It sets out (page 45) that climate projections *"show an increased chance of milder, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, rising sea levels and an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events".*

6.3.8 It states that climate change is an equality issue as it will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities and that:

"*It is vital that we reduce our emissions to protect our own well-being and to demonstrate our own global responsibility. Future Wales together with PPW will ensure the planning system focusses on delivering a de-carbonised and resilient Wales through the places we create, the energy we generate, the natural resources and materials we use and how we live and travel*".

6.3.9 With regards to renewable energy, the plan notes (page 48) that:

"Wales can become a world leader in renewable energy technologies. Our wind and tidal resources, our potential for solar generation, our support for both large and community scaled projects and our commitment to ensuring the planning system provides a strong lead for renewable energy development, mean we are well placed to support the renewable sector, attract new investment, and reduce carbon emissions."

6.3.10 Future Wales also has a focus on the need to protect natural resources and states (page 48) that there is a need "*to reverse biodiversity decline and assist nature recovery which is seen as being of imperative importance in its own right".*

6.3.11 Section 3 of Future Wales sets out the expected Government outcomes which are described as:

"collectively a statement of where we want to be in 20 years' time. Every part of Future Wales… is concerned with achieving the outcomes".

6.3.12 The outcome of principal relevance to the Proposed Development is outcome 11, as follows:

"A Wales where people live… in places which are decarbonised and climate resilient. The challenges of the climate emergency demand urgent action on carbon emissions and the

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planning system must help Wales in leading the way and promoting and delivering a competitive, sustainable decarbonised society. Decarbonisation commitments and renewable energy targets will be treated as opportunities to build a more resilient and equitable low carbon economy, develop clean and efficient transport infrastructure, improve public health and generate skilled jobs in new sectors".

6.3.13 Future Wales has a specific section on South-East Wales, wherein the Site is located. It states that:

'It is vital the region plays its role in decarbonisation and supports the realisation of renewable energy. Policies 17 and 18 set out Future Wales' approach to renewable energy generation across Wales. There is strong potential for wind, marine and solar energy generation and Strategic and Local Development Plans should provide a framework for generation and associated infrastructure. The Welsh Government wishes to see energy generation, storage and management play a role in supporting the South East economy. Local ownership and distribution is important for ensuring communities in proximity to renewable energy development benefit from it and that our future energy system better serves Wales'.

Development Management Policies

6.3.14 Policies 17 and 18 of Future Wales set out requirements in respect of renewable energy and are the policies against which DNS applications will be determined.

6.3.15 *Policy 17: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure* states that:

"The Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs.

In determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy development, decision-makers must give significant weight to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and our target to generate 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030 in order to combat the climate emergency.

In Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy the Welsh Government has already modelled the likely impact on the landscape and has found them to be capable of accommodating development in an acceptable way. There is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development (including repowering) in these areas, subject to the criteria in policy 18.

Applications for large-scale wind and solar will not be permitted in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and all proposals should demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment.

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

New strategic grid infrastructure for the transmission and distribution of energy should be designed to minimise visual impact on nearby communities. The Welsh Government will work with stakeholders, including National Grid and Distribution Network Operators, to transition to a multi-vector grid network and reduce the barriers to the implementation of new grid infrastructure."

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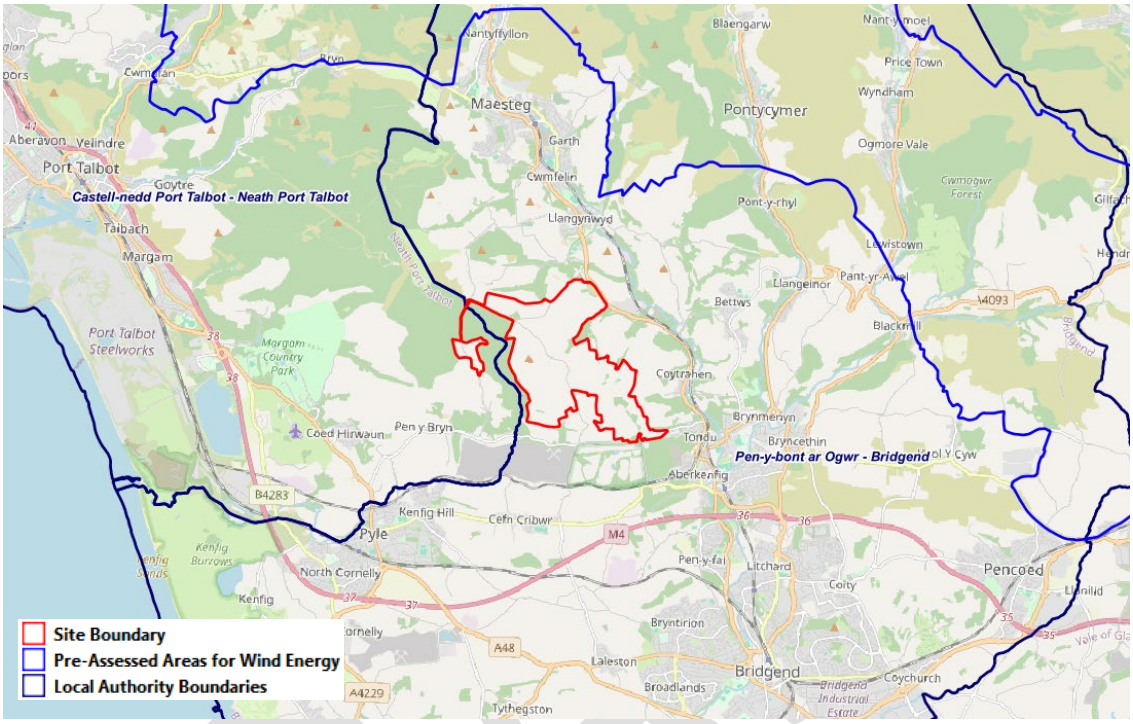
6.3.16 The Proposed Development is located outside of, but in close proximity to Pre-Assessed Area (PAA) 9 for Wind Energy, as set out on page 94 of Future Wales. **Plate 6.1** below illustrates the Site location in relation to the PAA.

Plate 6.1 – Proposed Site Boundary and PAA9 Boundary



6.3.17 Policy 18 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance provides the criteria for assessing large scale proposals for renewable and low carbon energy and it is required to be read together with Policy 17. It states:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.3.18 The supporting text to Policies 17 and 18 (page 96) sets out that Wales is abundant in opportunities to generate renewable energy: *"…and the Welsh Government is committed to maximising this potential. Generating renewable energy is a key part of our commitment to decarbonisation and tackling the climate emergency".*

6.3.19 Reference is then made to a number of targets for the generation of renewable energy as follows:

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

6.3.20 The supporting text adds that Policies 17 and 18 contain strategic spatial and criteria-based policy provisions which are required to be considered together in the determination of applications, along with detailed advice on assessing benefits and impacts in PPW.

6.3.21 The supporting text with regard to Policy 17 also adds that *"proposals should ensure that there is no significant unacceptable detrimental impact on the surrounding natural environment and local communities and that the development delivers positive social, environmental, cultural and economic benefits".*

6.3.22 On page 97, the supporting text to the policies sets out that the Government recognises that there are landscapes across Wales *"whose intrinsic value should be protected from inappropriate development. Sites in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*

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are considered unsuitable for large scale wind and solar. Outside of these areas a positive policy framework exists".

6.3.23 Within the PAAs for wind energy (map on page 94 of Future Wales), the supporting text states (page 97) that the Welsh Government "*has undertaken an assessment to identify these areas to provide certainty where, in principle, developments would be acceptable. In these areas there is a presumption in favour of large scale onshore wind energy development and the associated landscape change subject to the criteria in Policy 18".* It adds that outside of the PAAs *"a positive policy framework still exists, subject to Policy 18".*

6.3.24 The supporting text adds that the Welsh Government will use its policy levers to assist in the delivery of renewable energy projects in these areas by coordinating strategic action to build the case for new or reinforced grid infrastructure where necessary and that they will work with relevant stakeholders *"to help unlock the renewable energy potential of these areas and the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits they can bring to communities".*

6.3.25 The supporting text states that large scale renewable and low carbon energy schemes can generate direct social and economic benefit to local communities and that developers should explore "*how infrastructure improvements associated with a development (including transport infrastructure and communication systems) may be utilised by the host communities to bring additional, non-planning related benefits. Although not a planning consideration, local ownership of projects, in whole or in part, can ensure these benefits are accrued over the long term*".

6.3.26 Page 99 of Future Wales also recognises the importance of large scale energy storage as part of the energy system *"…to provide grid balancing"*.

6.3.27 The supporting text also states, in relation to wind energy developments, that: *"Irrespective of location or scale, the design and micro-siting of proposals must seek to minimise the landscape and visual impact, particularly those in close proximity to homes and tourism receptors. Both within and outside Pre-Assessed Areas, communities should be protected from significant cumulative impacts to avoid unacceptable situations whereby, for example, smaller settlements could be potentially surrounded by large wind schemes".*

6.3.28 Future Wales Policy 9 (Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure) is also relevant in planning for renewable energy infrastructure in recognition of the nature and climate emergency and the need for a balanced approach. The thrust of the Policy is upon Welsh Government to work with partners and for local planning authorities to adapt to their LDPs. It states that:

"To ensure the enhancement of biodiversity, the resilience of ecosystems and the provision of green infrastructure, the Welsh Government will work with key partners to:

- *identify areas which should be safeguarded and created as ecological networks for their importance for adaptation to climate change, for habitat protection, restoration or creation, to protect species, or which provide key ecosystems services, to ensure they are not unduly compromised by future development; and*

- *identify opportunities where existing and potential green infrastructure could be maximised as part of placemaking, requiring the use of nature-based solutions as a key mechanism for securing sustainable growth, ecological connectivity, social equality and well-being.*

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- *Planning authorities should include these areas and/or opportunities in their development plan strategies and policies in order to promote and safeguard the functions and opportunities they provide. In all cases, action towards securing the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity (to provide a net benefit), the resilience of ecosystems and green infrastructure assets must be demonstrated as part of development proposals through innovative, naturebased approaches to site planning and the design of the built environment".*

6.4 Local Development Plan Policy

6.4.1 As outlined in the preceding sections, Future Wales states that applications for DNS applications must be determined in accordance with Future Wales which is the highest tier of the Development Plan hierarchy. Local Development Plans (LDPs) also form part of the Development Plan and require due consideration. The Site is located within the administrative boundaries of BCBC and NPTC. As such, there are two LDPs which cover the site:

- Bridgend County Borough Local Development Plan 2018-2033 (adopted March 2024); and
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011 – 2026).

6.4.2 The site is also situated within the Community Council areas of Margam Community, Llangynwyd Middle Community and Llangynwyd Lower Community.

Bridgend County Borough Council Local Development Plan 2018-2033

6.4.3 The BCBC Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), adopted March 2024, covers the period 2018-2033 and sets out how the Council will deliver sustainable development, guide growth and change across the borough and reflect local aspirations. The BCBC RLDP is supported by several Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes (SPGNs). The BCBC RLDP includes various strategic policies, development management and monitoring policies.

Relevant RLDP Policies and Site Allocations

6.4.4 The relevant local policies within the BCBC RLDP are set out below, with their full wording provided in **Appendix 2** to this Planning Statement:

- Policy SP13: Renewable and Local Carbon Development;
- Policy SP3: Good Design and Sustainable Placemaking;
- Policy SP4: Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change;
- Policy SP5: Sustainable Transport and Accessibility;
- Policy SP17: Conservation and Enhancement of the Natural Environment;
- Policy PLA8: Transportation Proposals;
- Policy PLA9: Development affecting Public Rights of Way;

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- Policy ENT12: Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas;
- Policy DNP1: Development in the Countryside;
- Policy DNP4: Special Landscape Areas;
- Policy DNP5: Local and Regional Nature Conservation Sites;
- Policy DNP6: Biodiversity, Ecological Networks and Habitats and Species;
- Policy DNP7: Trees, hedgerows and development;
- Policy DN9: Natural Resource Protection and Public Health; and,
- Policy SP18: Conservation of the Historic Environment.

6.4.5 Policy SP13 is the overarching policy with respect to Renewable Energy development. The supporting text to Policy SP13 outlines how the Local Search Areas (LSAs) have been defined, as a result of the direction set by National Policy (Future Wales) for large scale wind energy and solar developments to be directed towards Pre-Assessed Areas. In those areas there is a presumption in favour of large scale on-shore wind and solar energy development and an acceptance of landscape change. Three LSAs have been identified as being suitable for wind and solar energy development. **The Site is located within LSA1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands & Forestry, which is identified as suitable for Wind Energy development**. Policy SP13 outlines that within the LSAs, proposals for wind and solar energy generation will be permitted subject to specific criteria, and other relevant plan policies, summarised in **Appendix 2**.

6.4.6 Table 10 of the supporting text to Policy SP13 also sets out the local renewable energy targets for the BCBC administrative area; these are not maximum limits but rather a guide to maximise the available resource.

6.4.7 The Site is also intersected by three Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)/Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). It is also located adjacent to several other LNRs / SINCs located along the Site boundary. Policy DNP5 requires that development located within or adjacent to a LNR / SINC *"must be compatible with the nature conservation or scientific interest of the area, whilst promoting their educational role".* Where it is considered that development would have an adverse impact on these identified sites, the proposal will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the benefits associated with the development outweigh the harm.

6.4.8 Additionally, the Site is situated within a Special Landscape Area (SLA), therefore Policy DNP4(3) – Special Landscape Areas is pertinent to the Proposed Development. Policy DNP4 sets out that development within the identified SLAs will only be permitted where it retains or enhances the character or distinctiveness of the area, the design assimilates itself into the wider landscape and is accompanied by a Landscape Impact Assessment (LIA). Further, the policy notes that where development is necessary and could result in a significant impact, a landscaping scheme should be provided setting out appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures.

6.4.9 The Site is also located within a Minerals Safeguarding Zone for Category 1 – Sandstone and Igneous Rock and Category 2 – Sandstone and Category 3 – Sand and Gravel. Policy ENT12 requires that development proposals within minerals safeguarding areas must demonstrate for

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temporary development that "*it can be implemented and the site restored within the timescale the mineral is likely to be required'"*. This is considered further in Section 8.12 of this PDAS.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011 – 2026)

6.4.10 The NPTC Local Development Plan (2011 – 2026) (LDP) was adopted in January 2016 and expresses a clear vision for the County Borough, outlining where, when and how much new development should take place over the plan period.

6.4.11 The LDP was adopted prior to the publication of the most recent Welsh National Policy: Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11, Feb 2021) and Future Wales (Feb 2021). As such, in the instances where the LDP is in conflict with National Policy, limited weight should be afforded to those parts.

6.4.12 The relevant local policies within the NPTC LDP are set out below, with their full wording provided in **Appendix 2** to this Planning Statement:

- Policy SP1 – Climate Change;
- Policy SC1 – Settlement Limits;
- Policy SP4 – Infrastructure;
- Policy I1 – Infrastructure Requirements;
- Policy SP14 – The Countryside and the Undeveloped Coast;
- Policy SP21 – Built Environment and Historic Heritage;
- Policy EN2 – Special Landscape Areas;
- Policy EN6 – Important Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites;
- Policy EN7 – Important Natural Features;
- Policy EN8 – Pollution and Land Stability;
- Policy SP14 – The Countryside and the Undeveloped Coast;
- Policy SP15 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Policy SP16 – Environmental Protection;
- Policy SP18 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy;

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- Policy RE1 – Criteria for the Assessment of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development[17];
- Policy SP20 – Transport Network;
- Policy TR2 – Design and Access of New Development;
- Policy BE1 – Design; and,
- Policy M1 – Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas.

6.4.13 Policy SP18 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy) is the principal policy with respect to renewable energy development. It discusses the county's need to contribute to national energy targets, which will be achieved by encouraging renewable energy and low carbon technology, conservation and efficiency measures and ensuring that development does not have an unacceptable impact.

6.4.14 The Site is situated within the Margam SLA (Policy EN2/4). Policy EN2 sets out that development within SLAs will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the features or characteristics for which the SLA has been designated. The supporting text at Paragraph 5.3.12 highlights that minerals and renewable energy developments are considered to be the *'predominant'* types of proposal with the potential to have significant impacts. Renewable developments proposals will need to demonstrate that *"component elements have been designed and sited to minimise visual intrusion and adverse effects on the landscape"*.

6.4.15 The Site is also located within a Minerals Safeguarding Zone for Category 1 – Sandstone. Policy M1 requires that development proposals within minerals safeguarding areas will only be permitted where they demonstrate that they meet defined criteria, including for temporary development that it can be implemented and the site restored within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be required.

Emerging Planning Policy

Neath and Port Talbot Local Development Plan

6.4.16 NPTC are progressing a Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). The RLDP will cover the period 2023-2038 and will replace the adopted LDP 2011-2026. Consultation on the Preferred Strategy (Pre-Deposit Plan)[18] ran from 12 December 2024 to 6 February 2025. The Preferred Strategy is the first statutory consultation stage of the Replacement Local Development Plan. It sets out the proposed strategic direction for land use planning in Neath Port Talbot over the period 2023 – 2038 and provides the framework for the preparation of

[17] This policy is inconsistent with national policy and as such is not considered relevant. This is in accordance with Future Wales, whereby development plans must be consistent with national policy and if a development plan is absent or has lapsed, the national policies in Future Wales or PPW assume significant weight in the planning decision-making process.

[18] Preferred Strategy - Neath Port Talbot Council

more detailed policies, proposals and land use allocations that will be included in the Deposit Replacement Plan.

6.4.17 The Preferred Strategy sets out identified objectives. Draft Objective NO11 sets out the renewable energy development objective as: "*Enable Neath Port Talbot to make an appropriate contribution to renewable and low carbon energy development while encouraging all appropriate steps to be taken to reduce energy demand and improve efficiency across all sectors*".

6.4.18 The Preferred Strategy is also underpinned by draft policies. Those draft policies that are relevant to the Proposed Development are listed in full in **Appendix 3** to this PDAS and are as follows:

- Draft Policy SP1 – Strategic Placemaking;
- Draft Policy SP2 – Climate Change;
- Draft Policy SP3 – Nature Emergency, Biodiversity and the Natural Environment;
- Draft Policy SP6 – Strategy Areas;
- Draft Policy SP12 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development;
- Draft Policy SP13 – Minerals;
- Draft Policy SP15 – Historic Environment;
- Draft Policy SP17 – Countryside, Landscapes and Undeveloped Coast; and
- Draft Policy SP18 – Environmental Protection.

6.4.19 Draft Policy SP12 is most pertinent to the Proposed Development, and requires that *'Opportunities for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy developments and associated infrastructure will be supported where appropriate. This will be achieved by:*

1. *Making a proportionate contribution to meeting national renewable energy targets and energy efficiency targets;*
2. *Identifying renewable energy generation targets, criteria-based policies, local search areas and or allocations for the county borough;*
3. *Promoting the optimisation of renewable and low carbon energy supply and distribution options for local communities;*
4. *Ensuring that development will not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and amenity of local residents and takes into consideration any cumulative impacts.*

6.4.20 Whilst no or only limited weight can be applied to the draft RLDP at this stage, it is relevant in terms of providing direction on the emerging strategic direction for land use planning in NPTC area. Importantly its draft objectives and draft policies have are being developed to be in accordance with national policy (Future Wales and Planning Policy Wales Edition 12).

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6.5 Material Considerations

Planning Policy Wales: Edition 12 (February 2024)

6.5.1 Future Wales (page 15) sets out that whilst Planning Policy Wales (PPW) is not part of the Development Plan it has substantial weight in the determination of planning applications, as the principal statement of national planning policy.

6.5.2 PPW Edition 12, published February 2024, sets out the land use policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars and Policy Clarification Letters which together with PPW provide the overall national planning policy framework for Wales.

6.5.3 The primary objective of PPW is to help ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation.

6.5.4 Paragraph 1.9 of PPW states that:

'PPW should be read as a whole, as aspects of policy and their application to a particular development proposal could occur in several parts of the document. Where 'must' is used in the document it reflects a legislative requirement or indicates where action is needed now to make changes in practice over the long term to achieve strategic outcomes. Where 'should' is used it reflects Welsh Government expectations of an efficient and effective planning system'.

6.5.5 At Chapter 5 'Productive and Enterprising Places', through sub-heading 'Energy', PPW highlights the Welsh Government's priority to reduce energy demand and affordability. It goes on to state that *"low carbon electricity must become the main source of energy in Wales.*"

6.5.6 Paragraph 5.7.2 identifies that the power demand is expected to continue to increase, stating:

> *"In order to ensure future demand can be met, significant investment will be needed in energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure. The system will need to integrate renewable generation with storage and other flexibility services, in order to minimise the need for new generation and grid system reinforcement. Collectively we will need to concentrate on reducing emissions from fossil fuel sources, whilst driving further renewable generation which delivers value to Wales".*

6.5.7 Paragraph 5.7.6 requires the planning system to secure an appropriate energy mix, which maximises economic and social benefits and minimises environmental and social impacts. Paragraph 5.7.7 continues that:

"The benefits of renewable and low carbon energy, as part of the overall commitment to tackle the climate emergency and increase energy security, is of paramount importance... The planning system should… maximise renewable and low carbon energy generation".

6.5.8 Paragraph 5.7.12 also states that: "*Energy storage has an important part to play in managing the transition to a low carbon economy*".

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6.5.9 With regards to renewable energy targets, PPW also notes that The Welsh Government has set targets for the generation of renewable energy (as set out in the Future Wales section above).

6.5.10 Paragraph 5.9.1 states that: "*Local authorities should facilitate all forms of renewable and low carbon energy development and should seek cross-department co-operation to achieve this. 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*."

6.5.11 Paragraph 5.9.20 places a requirement on planning authorities to identify opportunities to "*avoid, mitigate or compensate adverse impacts of renewable and low carbon energy development throughout all life stages of the development*". This should include consideration of the following:

- "*The need to minimise impacts on local communities, such as from noise and air pollution, to safeguard quality of life for existing and future generations;*
- *The impact on the natural and historic environment;*
- *Cumulative impact;*
- *The capacity of, and effects on the transportation network;*
- *Grid connection issues where renewable (electricity) energy developments are proposed; and*
- *The impacts of climate change on the location, design, build and operation of renewable and low carbon energy development. In doing so, consider whether measures to adapt to climate change impacts give rise to additional impacts*."

6.5.12 The latest edition of PPW included an update to Chapter 6 – Distinctive and Natural Places. The updates are particularly focussed upon taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure and securing a net benefit for biodiversity. PPW states at Paragraph 6.4.5 that:

"A net benefit for biodiversity is the concept that development should leave biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in a significantly better state than before, through securing immediate and long-term, measurable and demonstrable benefit, primarily on or immediately adjacent to the site".

6.5.13 PPW through the step-wise approach requires that all development must deliver a net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience from the baseline state (proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed). Furthermore, even if the biodiversity value has been maintained, there must still be a proactive process to look for and secure enhancement through the design and implementation of the development.

6.5.14 Section 6.2 of PPW outlines that Green Infrastructure is the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places. At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways and peatlands, or be connected networks of mosaic habitats, including grasslands/ At the local scale it may comprise parks, ponds, natural green spaces, rights of way, amongst other features. Street trees, hedgerows, verges can also all contribute towards green infrastructure networks. Paragraph 6.22 of PPW states that the protection and provision of green

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infrastructure can make a significant contribution to the sustainable management of natural resources and in particular to protecting, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in terms of the diversity within and connections between ecosystems and the extent and condition of these, so that they are better able to resist, recover from and adapt to pressures.

6.5.15 Paragraph 6.1.11 of PPW also requires that for development proposals: '*The quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes'.*

6.5.16 Paragraphs 6.4.25 – 6.4.26 outline that development in a SSSI not necessary for the management of the site must be *'avoided'* and aside from activities that are necessary to secure its role as a living landscape, there is a *'presumption against'* development in SSSIs. There is also a presumption against development not within a SSSI but likely to damage a SSSI. In such cases, PPW outlines that proposals must be: *'carefully assessed to ensure that effects on those nature conservation interests which the designation is intended to protect are clearly understood and development should be refused where there are adverse impacts on the features for which a site has been designated.'*

Technical Advice Notes

6.5.17 PPW12 is supplemented by several Technical Advice Notes[19] (TANs). Those which are considered relevant to the Proposed Development are detailed in **Table 6.1**.

Table 6.1: List of Technical Advice Notes

TAN Reference Number	TAN Title	Summary
TAN 5	Nature Conservation and Planning	TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009) provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. It seeks to demonstrate how local planning authorities, developers and key stakeholders in conservation can work together to deliver more sustainable development that does not result in losses to natural heritage but instead takes opportunities to enhance it.

[19] https://www.gov.wales/technical-advice-notes

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TAN Reference Number	TAN Title	Summary
TAN 6	Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities	TAN 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010) sets out the Government's policies for supporting rural communities. The TAN provides guidance on how the planning system can contribute to sustainable rural economies, rural housing, rural services and sustainable agriculture.
TAN 11	Noise	TAN 11: Noise (1997) provides advice on how the planning system can be used to minimise noise impact without placing unreasonable restrictions on development. It outlines some of the main considerations which local planning authorities should consider when drawing up development plan policies and when determining planning applications for development which will either generate noise or be exposed to existing noise sources.
TAN 12	Design	TAN 12: Design (2016) provides advice on design considerations and asks for a holistic approach to design, moving away from reliance on prescriptive standards, and encouraging innovation and creativity. Design responses should respond to local context, through the lifetime of the development (from procurement to construction through to completion and eventual use).
TAN 15	Development and Flood Risk	TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk (2025) provides technical guidance which supplements the policy set out in PPW in relation to development and flooding. It provides a framework within which risks arising from both river and coastal flooding and from additional run-off from development in any location can be assessed. The TAN has been updated in response to the effects of climate change and utilises the Flood Map for Planning. TAN 15 categorises development based on vulnerability and directs development to certain zoned land based on flood risk.
TAN 18	Transport	TAN 18: Transport (2007) confirms that the integration of land use planning and development of transport infrastructure has a key role to play in addressing the environmental aspects of sustainable development. Paragraph 2.4 indicates that by influencing the location, scale, density and mix of land uses and new development, land use planning can help to reduce the need to travel and length of journeys, whilst making it easier for people to walk, cycle or use public transport.

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TAN Reference Number	TAN Title	Summary
TAN 24	The Historic Environment	TAN 24: The Historic Environment (2017) provides guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment (including Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) during the planning process. Six principles of conservation are set out, which should be used to assess the potential impacts of Proposed Developments on the historic environment. An emphasis is placed on the relationship between the historic environment and climate change.

Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales (November 2023)

6.5.18 As set out in Section 5 of this PDAS, the Design Commission for Wales published a guidance document in 2023 which sets out the key design objectives and considerations for the development of large-scale, ground mounted on-shore wind and solar installations in Wales. The focus of the guidance is the source of power generation rather than the associated grid transmission and distribution.

6.5.19 The document provides an update to the *Designing Wind Farms in Wales 2014* good practice guidance, following changes to the legislative planning context in Wales through the publication of Future Wales, updates to PPW and the Well-Being of Future Generations Act (WBFGA). It is not a policy document and rather provides guidance relating to policy, specifically Policies 17 and 18 of Future Wales. The role of this guidance is to help secure the highest standard of design for renewable energy schemes, and to provide information on the main issues that should be considered for wind and solar developments.

6.5.20 The guidance is intended to be used by decision makers (Welsh Ministers, Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) and Local Authorities) in their role reviewing, influencing and determining wind and solar development, as well as developers, statutory consultees and as a source of information for the general public and constitutes a material planning consideration.

6.5.21 Section four of the guidance introduces design considerations for both wind and solar proposals, which comprise, whilst Sections five and six of the guidance provide more specific guidance for wind farms and solar farms respectively. This is set out in further detail and regard has been given to this guidance within Section 5 of this PDAS.

Supplementary Planning Guidance: Bridgend County Borough Council and Neath Port Talbot Council

6.5.22 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is a means of setting out more detailed topic or site specific guidance on the means in which the policies of LDPs will be applied. SPGs do not have full statutory weight but these are a material consideration for the determination of planning applications and are to be afforded ‘substantial weight’.

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6.5.23 BCBC and NPTC have prepared several SPGs which provide detailed guidance on a range of development issues and topics identified within their respective LDP, summarised in Table 6.2 below.

6.5.24 To note is that in the case of BCBC's SPGs, there will be a programme of updating and revising previously approved SPGs following the adoption of the RLDP. No consultation has been undertaken at the time of writing this PDAS on SPG 20 (Sustainable Energy, adopted 2016).

Table 6.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) No	Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Title	Summary
Bridgend County Borough Council		
SPG 07	Trees and Development (2007)	The aim of SPG 07 is to ensure that: existing trees are taken into account in the scheme design; new built development is balanced by new tree planting; that wildlife interests are protected; that the design of development is compatible with trees to be retained and planted and that provision is made for a natural succession of trees. It is stated that a tree survey is required if trees on or next to the site may be affected by the proposed development and that if a development requires trees to be lopped or felled then the application should be accompanied by an assessment of the wildlife impact of the work and relevant mitigation measures. Key aspects of the SPG that pertain to this Proposed Development include Root Protection areas, Canopy spread, Protection of trees from development, Tree Protection Plans and Proximity of trees to the development.
SPG 19	Biodiversity and Development (2014)	SPG 19 expands on the Council's existing planning policy on green infrastructure and biodiversity policies and requires that habitats are to be considered as part of development proposals. The SPG provides guidance for developers and sets out that all major and sensitive developments will be expected to make a positive contribution to enhancing Green Infrastructure. This is defined as a network of multifunctional green spaces, natural features and environmental management systems which provide a natural life support system for people and wildlife.
SPG 20	Renewables in the Landscape (2016)	This SPG provides landscape design guidance for renewable energy developments (wind turbines/farms and solar development) incorporating the results from the Special Landscape Area Assessment.

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		The SPG states that the Council recognises the requirement to maximise renewable energy generation, which can also have environmental, economic, social and other benefits. In order to understand how best to design and site wind and solar PV developments at the right scale and in the right places, the SPG provides an assessment of the sensitivity of the County Borough's landscapes to different scales of wind and solar PV developments. It also includes general guidance for developers to follow, including specific information in relation to each of the County Borough's Landscape Character Areas to reflect local variations in character. The Site is almost wholly located within Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands and Forestry Landscape Character Area.
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council		
SPG	Landscape and Seascape (2018)	The SPG outlines the landscapes and seascapes relevant to Neath Port Talbot and sets out the measures taken through the planning system to meet the LDP objectives. The purpose of the SPG is to assist and guide the design of renewable energy developments. The development layout, form and detailed design should respond to the landscape and should seek to enhance it where possible.
SPG	Biodiversity and Geodiversity (2018)	The SPG provides guidance and sets out the Council's expectations for all development proposals to protect, conserve, enhance and manage important habitats, species and sites of geological interest.
SPG	Pollution (2016)	The SPG outlines the relevant Council's policies and matters to be taken into consideration in relation to noise, air, light and water pollution, including details of Air Quality Management Areas, air quality objectives.
SPG	Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (2017)	The SPG sets out the matters to be taken into account for planning renewable and low carbon energy developments in the Council area and contains advice/guidance in relation to the implementation of the relevant policies.
SPG	The Historic Environment (2019)	The SPG provides an overview of the historic environment of Neath Port Talbot and outlines the planning policy protections in place to safeguard and conserve the historic assets of the Council area.

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Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessments

Bridgend County Borough Council (2018-2033)

6.5.25 BCBC commissioned the Carbon Trust to undertake a Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment. The Assessment is dated January 2020 and informed the preparation of the RLDP.

6.5.26 The current and future energy demands of BCBC have been forecasted within the assessment, together with available land to identify the potential for renewable and low carbon energy project deployment. Specific strategic sites that might be integrated into the LDP to meet renewable energy targets have also been considered.

6.5.27 The assessment recommends that:

- BCBC should set ambitious renewable energy deployment targets to maximise the use of the local resources available within the borough (page 12). An approximately ten-fold increase in local renewable energy generation will be required to meet/offset the proposed future energy demand of BCBC from local sources;
- The county has high wind and solar resource capacity and have been identified as the predominant energy resource in the county borough, with a large portion of the county borough designated for priority large scale wind and solar developments (page 12);
- BCBC should '*adopt'* a local renewable power deployment target of 340MW (capacity) and 418GWh (production) per annum, with 81MW and 191GWh anticipated to be met by wind energy and the remainder to be met by a mixture of ground mounted and roof mounted solar developments; and,
- BCBC should '*prioritise'* the least sensitive landscape character areas for wind and solar developments – including LCA1: Llangywyd Rolling Uplands, wherein the Site is located.

Neath Port Talbot Borough Council (2023 – 2038)

6.5.28 NPTC commissioned City Science to undertake a Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment for their administrative area. The Assessment is dated November 2024.

6.5.29 The purpose of the study is to formulate a robust renewable and low carbon energy evidence to inform the preparation of the NPT Replacement Local Development Plan (2023-2038) and to identify the renewable and low carbon targets for deployment by 2038.

6.5.30 The results of the energy assessment outline that:

- The total energy demand at 2038 is forecasted to be approximately 25,000 GWh. It also sets out that *"the combined energy generation (electricity and heat) from existing assets (1,723 GWh) is approximately 8% of the total energy requirements"*. These figures may however change significantly following the implementation of the steelworks decarbonisation plans.
- The total capacity and generation potential is set out in Table 4-1 of the document as 247MW (capacity) and 584GWh/year.

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- A maximum potential for up to 38,850MW was identified in the County Borough for solar PV, across 932km² of land.

- Areas identified as having potential for onshore wind development are shown in Figure 12-6 of the document.

6.5.31 Chapter 7 concludes that the results of this energy assessment will be taken forward in the forthcoming Deposit Plan for mapping out candidate sites for onshore wind and ground mounted PV.

South West Wales Energy Strategy (2022)

6.5.32 The Regional Energy Strategy for the South West Wales Region was commissioned by the Welsh Government. The overall objective of the strategy is to develop a strategic pathway identifying key interventions to decarbonise the region's energy system by 2050.

6.5.33 The baseline energy assessment sets out the current energy use and generation in the region and confirms that:

- South Wales consumes circa 36% of all energy consumed in Wales due to the concentration of some very large industrial sites;

- Renewable assets in South West Wales currently generate the equivalent of 44% of the region's electricity consumption; and,

- The region hosts 27% of Wales' renewable energy capacity with 388MW of solar PV and 401MW of onshore wind.

6.5.34 The strategy sets the following targets for renewable energy development:

- Offshore wind capacity increased from 50MW to 696MW;

- 1,215MW of solar PV installed (827MW of new capacity) with 375MW on rooftops and 840MW ground mounted;

- Sufficient flexibility, including storage, and network infrastructure upgrades to enable low carbon generation and demand technologies to connect; and

- The region to generate the equivalent of 147% of its total electricity consumption in 2035 from regional renewable sources.

6.6 Conclusions on the Planning Policy Framework

6.6.1 This Chapter has set out the applicable planning policies and material considerations that are relevant to the Proposed Development, from the national level through to the respective LDPs for the Council areas which cover the Site. The Future Wales element of the Development Plan makes it expressly clear that it is the primary policy consideration for the assessment of DNS applications.

6.6.2 Chapter 8 of this PDAS therefore sets out a planning policy assessment which is focused on the various development management provisions within Future Wales. The assessment is

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presented by way of relevant environmental and technical topics, and it also makes reference to the LDP provisions where relevant.

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7 THE RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY FRAMEWORK

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This Chapter refers to the renewable energy policy and emissions reduction legislative framework with reference to relevant international, UK and Welsh Government provisions. The framework of international agreements, legally binding targets and climate change global advisory reports is the foundation upon which national energy policy and emissions reduction law is based. This underpins what can be termed the need case for renewable energy from which the Proposed Scheme can draw a high level of support.

7.1.2 This renewable energy policy framework is a material consideration in the determination of the application. It is not necessary to find explicit expression in national planning policy for it to be or become a material consideration. The weight given to any policy, subject to taking a reasonable and rational approach, is a planning judgement and a matter for the decision maker.

7.1.3 The Proposed Scheme must therefore be considered against a background of UK and Welsh Government energy and climate policy and legislative provisions, as well as national planning policy and advice.

7.1.4 It is evident that there is clear and consistent policy support at all levels, from international to local, for the deployment of renewable energy generally to combat the global heating crisis, diversify the mix of energy sources, achieve greater security of supply, and to attain legally binding emissions reduction targets.

7.1.5 Government renewable energy policy and associated renewable energy and electricity targets are important considerations.

7.2 International Commitments

The Paris Agreement (2016)

7.2.1 The Paris Agreement[20] is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that seeks to address greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance.

7.2.2 In 2015, parties to the UNFCCC adopted the Paris Agreement, the aims of which are stated as: *"This Agreement, in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by: a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change; and (b) Increasing the*

[20] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015). Paris Agreement. (Online) Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

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ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production." The agreement sets targets for countries' greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but these are not legally binding or enforceable.

7.2.3 Moving to a low carbon economy is a globally shared goal and will require absolute emission reduction targets. The UK Government's commitment under the Paris Agreement links through to the Committee on Climate Changes' advice to both the UK and Welsh Governments on 'net zero' targets which have now, at both the UK and Welsh Government levels, been translated into new legislative provisions and targets leading to Net Zero by 2050.

7.2.4 The Paris Agreement does not itself represent Government policy in the UK or Wales. However, the purpose of domestic and renewable energy and GHG reduction targets is to meet the UK's commitment in the Paris Agreement.

Glasgow Climate Pact (2021)

7.2.5 The Conference of the Parties (COP 26) under the UNFCCC held in Glasgow in November 2021 resulted in almost 200 countries agreeing on: the acceleration of action on climate change this decade to reduce emissions (mitigation); helping those already impacted by climate change (adaption); enabling countries to deliver on their climate goals (finance); and working together to deliver even greater action (collaboration). This agreement is in the form of the Glasgow Climate Pact which reaffirms the long-term goal to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and resolves to pursue efforts to achieve this, recognising that limiting global warming to 1.5°C *"requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global CO2 emissions by 45% by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases"*[21].

The UK's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) (2022)

7.2.6 In December 2020, the United Kingdom communicated its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)[22] to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in line with Article 4 of the Paris Agreement.

7.2.7 In light of the Glasgow Climate Pact and the urgency conveyed by the latest science, the UK has been through a process to revisit its NDC and ensure it is aligned with the Paris Agreement temperature goal, whilst exploring ways to strengthen it in line with best practice. This process involved analysis of a range of factors including the latest available science, expectations in the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact, the UK's existing 2050 net zero commitment, and energy security, as well as advice and evidence from the Climate Change Committee and other independent commentators.

7.2.8 The UK's target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030, on 1990 levels, aligns with the Paris Agreement temperature goal.

[21] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2021). COP26 The Glasgow Climate Pact. (Online) available at: https://ukcop26.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/COP26-Presidency-Outcomes-The-Climate-Pact.pdf

[22] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uks-nationally-determined-contribution-communication-to-the-unfccc

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COP28 (November – December 2023)

7.2.9 A Conference of the Parties (COP 28) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in the United Arab Emirates in November - December 2023. "*COP28 was particularly momentous as it marked the conclusion of the first 'global stocktake' of the world's efforts to address climate change under the Paris Agreement. Having shown that progress was too slow across all areas of climate action – from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to strengthening resilience to a changing climate, to getting the financial and technological support to vulnerable nations – countries responded with a decision on how to accelerate action across all areas by 2030. This includes a call on governments to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels to renewables such as wind and solar power in their next round of climate commitments.…*"[23].

COP29 (November 2024)

7.2.10 The most recent COP (COP29) was held in Baku, Azerbaijan. The Global Energy Storage and Grids Pledge was launched which commits signatories to a collective goal of deploying 1500GW energy storage locally by 2030. The global community of 45 utilities and power sector suppliers reinforced their commitment to annual grids and renewable energy investment of more than USD $117 billion.

7.2.11 Climate TRACE[24] released its most recent inventory which provides details of monthly emissions data for every country and every major individual source of emissions in the world, as well as provinces and 9,000 major urban areas.

7.2.12 Delegates at COP29 pledged to provide USD $300 billion of annual funding as assistance to less developing countries to achieve climate change targets.

7.3 UK Acts of Parliament and Regulations

Climate Change Act 2008 (As amended)[25]

7.3.1 One of the key provisions of the original 2008 Act was the introduction of legally-binding targets on GHG emissions comprising reductions of at least 80% GHG emissions by 2050, and reductions in emissions of at least 26% by 2020, against a 1990 baseline. The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 20195 came into force on 27 June 2019.

7.3.2 This amended the legally-binding target to reduce GHG emissions set in section 1 of the Climate Change Act 2008 from 80% to 100% against a 1990 baseline, achieving 'net zero' emissions. The Act also requires the Government to establish 5-year carbon budgets. The generation of electricity by renewable means is considered to be a key contributor to meeting these targets.

[23] COP28: What Was Achieved and What Happens Next?, 12 January 2024, UN Climate Press Release (https://unfccc.int/cop28)

[24] Climate TRACE data reveal high-impact opportunities for cutting greenhouse gas emissions - Climate TRACE

[25] UK Government (2008). Climate Change Act 2008. (Online) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents

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The Carbon Budgets Order 2009[26]

7.3.3 This legislation implements the carbon budgets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. The budgets require the UK to continually reduce emissions in line with the carbon reduction commitments established under the Climate Change Act. The carbon budgets are:

- first carbon budget, 2009 to 2012, 3,018 mega tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO2e) representing 25% reduction below 1990 levels;
- second carbon budget, 2013 to 2017, 2,782 MtCO2e representing 31% reduction below 1990 levels;
- third carbon budget, 2018 to 2022, 2,544 MtCO2e representing 37% reduction below 1990 levels by 2020;
- fourth carbon budget, 2023 to 2027, 1,950 MtCO2e representing 51% reduction below 1990 levels by 2025;
- fifth carbon budget, 2028 to 2032, 1,725 MtCO2e representing 57% reduction below 1990 levels by 2030; and
- sixth carbon budget, 2033 to 2037, 965 MtCO2e representing a 78% reduction below 1990 levels by 2035.

7.3.4 Government figures show a significant shortfall in expected carbon reductions against legally binding target. Data from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) shows that with existing and near-fully planned policies, the UK is projected to emit nearly double the amount of greenhouse gases than it should under its legally-binding objectives.

7.3.5 The BEIS document 'Updated energy and emissions projections 2021 to 2040' published in October 2022[27] states in the Executive Summary that: "*The Climate Change Act (CCA), passed in 2008, established a system of legally binding interim targets called carbon budgets, covering successive five-year periods. Since June 2019, the 2050 target under the CCA is to reach net zero. EEP provides projections of performance against carbon budget targets under EEP-ready policies. Carbon Budgets 3 and 4 (CB3 and CB4), covering 2018-2022 and 2023-2027 respectively, are projected to be met. Under EEP-ready policies, projected gaps between target and performance remain for Carbon Budgets 5 and 6 (CB5 and CB6, covering the periods 2028-2032 and 2033-2037 respectively)…*".

[26] The Carbon Budgets Order 2009

[27] Updated energy and emissions projections 2021 to 2040

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7.4 UK wide Energy Policy

The UK Energy White Paper – Powering Our Net Zero Future (December 2020)

7.4.1 The Energy White Paper[28] set out the policies and commitments by the Government to put the UK on course to achieve Net-Zero.

7.4.2 The White Paper sets out that: "*electricity is a key enabler for the transition away from fossil fuels and decarbonising the economy cost-effectively by 2050"*.

7.4.3 It adds a key objective is to *"accelerate the deployment of clean electricity generation through the 2020s"* (page 38). Electricity demand is forecast to double out to 2050, which will *"require a four-fold increase in clean electricity generation with the decarbonisation of electricity increasingly underpinning the delivery of our net zero target"* (page 42).

7.4.4 In terms of electricity policy in the White Paper, the UK Government clearly recognise that the scale of change that is required to respond to climate change is at a pivotal point. The anticipation is that there is going to need to be a global green industrial revolution and it is only through this that an appropriate response would be made to tackling climate change issues. Chapter 1 of the White Paper sets out this context and makes clear the likely change in the nature and volume of electricity generation. It recognises the very significant role that renewable electricity generation will play in relation to delivering total energy usage.

British Energy Security Strategy (2022)[29]

7.4.5 On 7 April 2022, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) published the British Energy Security Strategy. The Strategy seeks to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewables. As part of the 10-point plan for a green industrial revolution, significant investment into renewables has been identified – with the desire to go further and faster. The Strategy notes that onshore wind is one of the cheapest forms of renewable power.

7.5 Welsh Climate Change & Energy Legislation & Policy

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

7.5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)[30] is a statutory instrument which places a duty on public bodies (including Local Authorities) to secure sustainable development by improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales to achieve the 7 well-being goals.

[28] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5fdc61e2d3bf7f3a3bdc8cbf/201216_BEIS_EWP_Command_Paper_Accessible.pdf

[29] Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) (2022). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy

[30] https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/

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7.5.2 All planning applications in Wales should demonstrate how they align with these well-being goals:

- A Prosperous Wales.
  - *"An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work".*
- A Resilient Wales.
  - *"A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change)".*
- A More Equal Wales.
  - *"A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances)".*
- A Heathier Wales.
  - *"A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood".*
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities.
  - *"Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities'.*
- A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language.
  - *"A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation."*
- A Globally Responsive Wales
  - *"A nation which when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being".–*

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016

7.5.3 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 set in place an obligation on the Welsh Government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 100% against 1990 levels by 2050. The legislation promotes the sustainable management of natural resources.

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Climate Change and Energy Targets & Policy: Wales

7.5.4 The Climate Change Committee (CCC) published the 'Progress Report: Reducing Emissions in Wales'[31] in June 2023. The Executive Summary states (page 11):

"With an ambitious target to reach Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, action on decarbonisation in Wales must now accelerate. Wales's journey to Net Zero is mapped out by a series of legislated five yearly carbon budgets and decadal interim targets. While the first carbon budget (2016-2020) has been achieved, Wales is not yet in track to meet its targets for the second half of this decade and beyond"

7.5.5 The report also states that the third carbon budget (2026-2030) in terms of its midpoint is only five years away and by then, Wales should have reduced emissions by 39% compared to pre-pandemic (2019) levels. It states that policy action in all sectors across the economy is needed.

7.5.6 Chapter 2 of the report states that Wales must now accelerate action to ensure it is on track to meet its future carbon budgets and Net Zero target.

Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales (2019)

7.5.7 This publication by the Welsh Government set out Wales' commitment to tackling climate change, with respect to cutting emissions and increasing energy efficiency in a way that ensures a fairer and healthier society. The document sets out 100 policies and proposals that directly reduce emissions and support the growth of a low carbon economy.

7.5.8 Page 65 of the document sets out that low carbon energy needs to become the main source of energy in Wales and that renewable generation needs to continue to increase to meet a large portion of power in a decarbonised system. Policy 31 seeks to accelerate the deployment of renewable generation.

Climate Emergency declared in Wales (2019)

7.5.9 A critical part of the response to the challenge of climate change was the Climate Emergency which was declared in Wales on 29 April 2019. The Welsh Government has committed to achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030 and to coordinating action to help other areas of the economy to make a decisive shift away from fossil fuels, involving academia, industry and the third sector and to achieve Net Zero emissions no later than 2050.

7.5.10 In March 2021, new legislation came into force in Wales, amending the 2050 emissions target[32] and the interim emission targets[33]. As well as amending the 2050 emissions target to net zero, the 2030 target was increased from 45% to 63% below the 1990 baseline, and the 2040 target was increased from 67% to 89% below the 1990 baseline.

[31] https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Progress-Report-Reducing-emissions-in-Wales.pdf

[32] The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Amendment of 2050 Emissions Target) Regulations 2021

[33] The Climate Change (interim Emissions Targets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021

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7.5.11 Evidence for the third UK Climate Risk Independent Assessment (CCRA3) in relation to Wales[34], highlights that the climate in Wales is already changing, with an increase of 0.9 degrees Celsius in the average annual temperature since the mid-1970s, an increase of 2.0% in annual mean rainfall and 6.1% in sunshine hours during the same period, approximately 1.4mm of sea level rise per year since 1901, and an increase in heat events.

7.5.12 With respect to the local planning authorities relevant to this application, BCBC declared a climate emergency in June 2020 and NPTBC also declared a climate emergency in October 2022.

Nature Emergency declared in Wales (2021)

7.5.13 The Welsh Parliament declared a 'nature emergency' in 2021, in recognition of human induced declines in biodiversity. This followed the publication of the State of Nature Report (2019)35, which identified that 17% of Wales' 3,902 species are threatened with extinction. The report highlighted that the major pressures that have caused the loss of wildlife include farm management, woodland management, pollution from fertiliser and plastic, increasing urbanisation, hydrological change, climate change and invasive species.

7.5.14 The declaration of a nature emergency is closely linked to the climate emergency, with the releasing of harmful carbon emissions and the loss of natural habitats as a result of weather and temperature changes.

Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021-25)

7.5.15 The Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 released by Welsh Government focuses on how Wales will meet its second carbon budget which spans the years 2021-2025. However, the document also looks beyond this time period and builds the foundations for the third carbon budget and looks towards the target of Net-Zero by 2050.

7.5.16 The plan states (page 10) that in 2019 the Welsh Government accepted the Climate Change Committee's recommendation to increase the ambition to reduce emissions to 95% shortly after the Senedd became the first Parliament in the world to declare a Climate Emergency in 2019. It adds that on accepting the recommendation, the Welsh Government asked the CCC to look again at how Wales could reach Net Zero. Further advice by the CCC published in December 2020 showed that there was a credible route for Wales to achieve Net Zero. The plan states "*we are proud that in March 2021 the Senedd agreed to set a legally binding net zero target. We are choosing to base our ambition on the evidence as we tackle the climate emergency, making Wales' fair contribution to the UK's obligations under the Paris Agreement*".

7.5.17 The pathway to the 2050 Net Zero target is set through five yearly Carbon Budgets. These cover all territorial emissions in Wales. The Carbon Budgets are set in law and follow the CCC's recommendations, as follows:

- Carbon Budget 2 (2021-2025): 37% reduction

[34] www.ukclimaterisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CCRA-Evidence-Report-Wales-Summary-Final.pdf

[35]

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- Carbon Budget 3 (2026-2030): 58% reduction
- 2030: 63% reduction
- 2040: 59% reduction
- 2050: At least 100% reduction (net zero).

7.5.18 Electricity and heat generation is addressed in the plan from page 54. The vision is

"for a decarbonised energy system which provides wider economic and social benefits for Wales than the system we see today. We aim to virtually eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from the power stations by 2035…".

7.5.19 On page 64 it states that an objective is "*increasing low carbon and renewable generation – planning for a more integrated net zero energy system"*. It adds that alongside reducing fossil fuel generation in Wales "*we need to increase generation from renewables in ways that are most cost effective and beneficial for Wales".*

7.5.20 Policy 22 is entitled 'increasing renewable energy developments on land through our planning regime'. References are made to Future Wales which it states, "*provides a positive policy framework for new renewable energy developments and associated infrastructure".*

7.5.21 It adds that *"proposals are beginning to come forward in the pre-assessed areas and, subject to consenting by Welsh Ministers, are likely to be built and producing energy within the Carbon Budget 2 period"*.

Renewable Energy in Wales 2022

7.5.22 Against the backdrop of COP 26 in late 2021, the looming energy price crisis and the ever-present climate emergency, the Welsh Parliament Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee commissioned a report which outlined the steps needed to be taken to stimulate renewable energy generation in Wales. The report produced Renewable Energy in Wales 2022.

7.5.23 The Chair of the CCEI Committee noted that *"Wales' geography and topography offer abundant opportunities for renewable energy development, both on land and offshore. If these opportunities are seized, Wales can go beyond meeting domestic energy need to become a world leader in renewable energy production, supplying clean, affordable energy across the UK and beyond. But there are significant, long-standing barriers to development that must be addressed, and urgently, for Wales to unlock its full renewables potential. A lack of grid capacity and a complex and slow consenting regime, amongst other things, are holding back the work of developing a more sustainable energy future. If left unaddressed, there is a real risk Wales will fail to meet its climate change commitments – losing out on the social and economic benefits the renewable energy revolution offers"*.

7.5.24 The Renewable Energy in Wales (2022) report published 17 recommendations which are targeted actions to invigorate the identified constraints to achieving the renewable energy targets and net zero carbon energy production.

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Review of Wales' Renewable Energy Targets: Consultation (2023)

7.5.25 The Welsh Government consulted on their proposed new renewable energy targets[36] in 2023. The targets will make sure that Wales meets their duties and ensure renewable generation delivers wider benefit to Wales. The Welsh Government are consulting as they have a statutory duty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; have a duty to carry out sustainable development; and need a secure, affordable energy supply.

7.5.26 The consultation noted that the deployment of renewables in Wales and the UK has slowed since 2015. Whilst renewables-based electrical capacity continues to increase year-on-year, the current rate of growth will not be enough to meet Wales' demand, especially in light of future electricity demands.

7.5.27 As part of the consultation, the Welsh Government also published '*Welsh energy targets review: graphing outputs*'. This document notes that "*An analysis of active and in-development renewable electricity generation projects has identified a potential pipeline of 4.2 GW of onshore and offshore projects. Approximately 1.7 GW of this pipeline is made up of onshore wind and solar PV, most of which has an accepted grid connection. Approaching 2.5 GW of in-development offshore wind projects were identified. While this healthy pipeline of projects, if deployed, could approximately double current Welsh renewable electricity generation, it is not substantial enough to match future Welsh electricity demand*."

7.5.28 As such, it is important that significant weight is applied in favour of renewable energy development projects, as per policies 17 and 18 of Future Wales. The consultation provides a clear justification and requirement for the deployment of renewable energy in Wales. The Proposed Development is part of the identified pipeline, with a secured grid connection, that will support these targets and the need for the development, and the circa 98MW of renewable energy generation, should be given substantial weight due to it comprising a sizeable contribution to Wales' current and future targets to help address climate change.

7.5.29 Noting the extract in the previous paragraph, the document identifies that to deliver a higher 2035 target would require significant new onshore and offshore projects to being development in the next 5 years. Referencing back to the IPCC report, only swift, positive action can avert climate catastrophe.

7.5.30 On 14 July 2023, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, published the summary of responses to the consultation and adopted the targets for Wales. This stated that:

"*Regarding energy generation, there was broad agreement with our proposals to continue focussing on electricity to meet future demand, and for us to use the Climate Change Committee's Balanced Path as a basis for our electricity demand projections. Following the support we had for our proposal, I am adopting the target for Wales to meet the equivalent of 100% of our annual electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2035, and to continue to keep pace with consumption thereafter*".

[36] Review of Wales' renewable energy targets | GOV.WALES

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Energy Generation in Wales 2023 (published March 2025)

7.5.31 The Welsh Government published *Energy Generation in Wales* in March 2025. This forms part of a series of annual updates which provide a consistent measure of progress against the Welsh Government's energy targets. The overall purpose of the reports is to support the Welsh Government with the development of energy policy helping to "*evidence the economic, social and environmental benefits from the development of Welsh energy projects"*.

7.5.32 The Ministerial Foreword sets out that the vision for Wales is *"for Wales to generate renewable energy to meet our needs now and for the future. Paramount to that, is ensuring renewable energy generation in Wales has tangible social and economic benefits".*

7.5.33 The headline target set out in the document is for renewable energy generation to be equivalent to 100% of Wales' electricity demand by 2035. The report sets out that approximately 53% of annual electricity consumption in Wales came from renewables in 2023. As such, there is a great need for significant renewable energy development to be secured to meet the overall target, especially, as the document notes: *'…as electricity consumption is projected to increase significantly this target is effectively a moving one'*. Page 10 of the document estimates that total energy demand could nearly triple by 2050 and as such it states that: *'renewable energy generation needs to increase nearly fourfold by 2035 to achieve its targets'.* This represents a significant increase and clearly there is a significant need for renewable energy projects to come forward and to be consented to meet national targets.

7.5.34 Despite this, there has been a significant deployment in wind generation in Wales; no wind projects were commissioned in the country in 2023, which marks the fourth consecutive year of decreasing deployment of wind energy in Wales. This trend needs to be reversed if overall renewable energy targets are to be secured.

7.6 Bridgend County Borough and Neath Port Talbot Climate and Renewable Energy Policy Context

Bridgend 2030 Net Zero Carbon Strategy

7.6.1 In June 2020 BCBC declared their own climate emergency, following from the Welsh Governments own declaration in April 2019. BCBC set out in the 'Bridgend 2030 Net Zero Carbon Strategy' ('the Bridgend 2030 Strategy') document that climate change is *"the biggest threat facing our planet today"* and committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030 across its operations.

7.6.2 The Bridgend 2030 Strategy sets out how the Council intends to enable, support, and deliver actions to meet their net zero ambitions and contribute to the wider Welsh Government's ambition for Wales to be Net Zero by 2050. The 'Route map to a Net Zero Bridgend' highlights the viral role that stand-alone renewable energy will play between 2026 and 2028.

7.6.3 Appendix 2 to the Bridgend 2030 Strategy outlines six action plans the Council aim to deliver to assist in their ambition to achieve Net Zero by April 2030, noting that these action plans should be reviewed annually to track progress. These action plans include Carbon Management, Buildings, Transport, Procurement, Land Use and Waste.

7.6.4 Action Plan 5 – Land Use recognises that *"the generation of renewable energy, carbon sequestration and creating spaces to Land Use Initiatives encourage biodiversity will have a*

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positive impact on public health, wellbeing and decarbonisation" and goes on to set out that the Council will influence and support county-wide renewables schemes through their role in the planning process, along with identifying their own and neighbouring land for large-scale renewable projects (primarily solar and wind).

The Neath Port Talbot Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy

7.6.5 The Neath Port Talbot Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy ('the DARE Strategy') forms NPTC's response to the climate challenges faced from a dependency on fossil fuels and follows from the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2022.

7.6.6 The DARE Strategy sets out NPTC's vision for *"a cleaner, more prosperous and healthier borough"*, with a mission to *"maximise the economic, social, health and environmental benefits of decarbonisation through a focus on renewable energy"* through three strategic themes, comprising transport, buildings and spaces and influencing behaviour. As part of this mission, the Council set out that they will reduce carbon emissions resulting from delivering their work programme and encourage the use of sustainable and renewable resources.

7.6.7 While the DARE Strategy does not outline the Council's approach to large-scale renewable developments, the document evidences the Council's positive approach to the implementation of renewable energy technologies county-wide, and details some of the Council's efforts to install, refurbish and implement renewable energy technologies.

Neath Port Talbot Local Area Energy Plan 2024

7.6.8 The DARE Strategy is further supported through the Neath Port Talbot Local Area Energy Plan 2024 ('the NPT LAEP') which outlines the characteristics the Council will need in order to achieve a net zero energy system, including to *"enable the planning of energy infrastructure that aligns with the current and future needs of the community".*

7.6.9 Furthermore, the NPT LAEP sets out key National Regional and Local policy ambitions, outlining that the *"emerging Local Development Plan has a strong net zero focus and will be supported by a Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment"*.

Climate Change and Energy Policy: Conclusion

7.6.10 The Applicant's position is that the Proposed Scheme is strongly supported by the current policy framework, as set out above, and that there is a clear and demonstrable need for the proposal in order to achieve the very ambitious renewable energy deployment targets set by the Welsh Government.

7.6.11 It is clear that UK and Welsh policies recognise the importance of decarbonisation to mitigate the effects of climate change and in achieving net zero targets.

7.6.12 It is clear from the latest Energy Generation in Wales 2023 report, published by the Welsh Government in March 2025, that there has been a considerable fall in the deployment rate for onshore wind. Given wind energy is the key technology driving the Welsh 100% of annual energy consumption being from renewables by 2035, it is imperative that the deployment rate increases in order to attain that target and also to provide the foundation for reaching Net Zero. Similarly whilst there has been an uplift in solar PV commitments, these are primarily from very

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small scale projects (roof top PV, as opposed to ground mounted). There are significant efficiencies to be gained from much larger solar PV schemes, as proposed under this Proposed Development and clearly greater deployment of renewable energy is required to meet the Welsh Government targets.

7.6.13 Similarly, the Carbon Budget 2 for Wales makes it clear that making substantial progress this decade will be critical, not just for the 2030 legally binding target, but to stay on a credible pathway to reach Net Zero.

7.6.14 The trajectory, in terms of the scale and pace of action to reduce emissions, is steep and it is essential that rapid progress is made through the 2020s. The rate of emission reductions must increase otherwise the Carbon Budget targets and Wales' renewable energy target for 2035 of 100% of electricity demand being from renewables will not be met.

7.6.15 It is clear from the UK Energy White Paper and the forecasts by the CCC that electricity demand is expected to grow substantially as carbon intensive sources of energy are displaced by electrification of other industry sectors, particularly heat and transport.

7.6.16 The various legislative interventions and statements of Government policy such as described above are material considerations of relevance that should be afforded substantial weight.

7.6.17 Furthermore, adopted local strategy documents set out BCBC's and NPTC's commitment to contributing to national targets, and setting local targets and actions in order to achieve this. Notably, both Councils are committed to achieving Net Zero Carbon ahead of the Welsh Government's target of 2050, having set the ambitious target to be Net Zero by 2030.

7.6.18 The Proposed Development will make a significant contribution to the Welsh and UK Government's objectives to reduce carbon emissions by 2050 and the interim targets that apply in each carbon budget period before then.

7.6.19 It must follow that the need case is to be afforded substantial weight in the planning balance, which must be acted upon. The way that decision makers can do that is by recognising the seriousness and importance of energy policy related considerations in the planning balance. It is the cumulative effect of a large number of individual projects which will move Wales towards where it needs to be.

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8 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Overview

8.1.1 This section of the PDAS provides an assessment of the key planning policy matters and material considerations relevant to the determination of this application. It considers the technical assessment work undertaken and presented within the ES which accompanies the application and appraises that against the relevant planning policy and energy policy frameworks set out in Chapters 6 and 7 of this PDAS.

8.1.2 The assessment of the Proposed Development has been grouped into the following key matters:

- The principle of development;
- Consideration of specific matters:
  - Landscape Character and Visual Amenity;
  - Ecology, Ornithology and Net Biodiversity Benefit;
  - Cultural Heritage and Archaeology;
  - Noise and Vibration;
  - Shadow Flicker, Glint and Glare and Aviation and Defence Traffic and Highway Safety;
  - Land Use and Public Access;
  - Hydrology and Flood Risk;
  - Land and Soils; and
  - Minerals Safeguarding.
- Planning Balance and Conclusions.

8.1.3 In the first instance, the planning assessment presented below considers the Proposed Development against the provisions of Future Wales; as the highest tier of the development plan, the most recent expression of national policy for renewable energy and the principal policy for decision making for DNS applications. The assessment also considers the relevant provisions of other national planning and energy policy and the relevant provisions of the respective LDPs, as material considerations to the decision-making process. The assessment also considers the compliance of the Proposed Development with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015. The benefits that would arise from the Proposed Development are also described.

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8.2 The Principle of Development

Principle of Development – National Policy

8.2.1 The UK and Welsh Governments (and both BCBC and NPTC) have declared a climate emergency. A nature emergency has also been declared by the Welsh Government and is inherently linked to the climate emergency. Both the UK Government and the Welsh Government have accordingly legislated an ambitious net zero emissions target by 2050. As identified in section 7 of this PDAS, the Welsh Government has subsequently published a consultation to amend its renewable energy targets including the commitment that 100% of Wales' electricity will come from renewable energy sources by 2035.

8.2.2 The pathway to Net Zero is set through yearly Carbon Budgets which are enshrined in law. In December 2020, the Committee on Climate Change published a progress report[37] (updated in June 2023[38]) on emissions reduction in Wales that shows emissions of greenhouse gases have fallen by 31% since 1990. Although this satisfied the first carbon budget target of a 23% reduction in Welsh greenhouse gas emissions, the Committee on Climate Change's 2023 Progress update report noted that '*Wales must now accelerate action to ensure that it meets its future carbon targets and the net zero target'* (page 34). There is still clearly much to be done in order to meet the net zero target by 2050 and the interim targets set out by the Welsh Government.

8.2.3 According to the Welsh Government figures, Wales is substantially behind its own 2050 net zero target. The evidence for CCRA3, set out in Section 7.5 of this PDAS, shows that the effects of climate change are already being seen in Wales, including rising sea levels and an increase in extreme heat events, highlighting the need for greater urgency in decarbonisation efforts.

8.2.4 Welsh energy policy acknowledges that renewable energy development is a key contributor to the net zero target. Specifically, *Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales* (2019) seeks to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy generation to reduce emissions. At a UK level, a key objective set out by the Energy White Paper (2020), is to accelerate the deployment of clean electricity generation, which is forecast to require a four-fold increase to meet demand and to replace the old retiring capacity of energy production via fossil fuels.

8.2.5 The Proposed Development will have an export capacity of circa 98MW of electricity, enough to power approximately 60,775 homes per year (Wind Powered Homes Equivalent - 39,174, Solar Powered Homes Equivalent - 21,601 and is anticipated to result in savings of over 4,000,000 savings of tCO_2e against a fossil fuel mix electricity generation. The Proposed Development will therefore make a substantial contribution towards national targets and the identified legislative and policy need to significantly increase the provision of clean, renewable energy production. This is a highly significant, material consideration that carries significant weight in favour of the Proposed Development. The significant weight to be placed on the need to meet Wales'

[37] reducing-emissions-in-wales-progress-report.pdf

[38] Progress Report: Reducing emissions in Wales

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renewable energy targets is evident in recent decisions taken by Welsh Ministers in respect of other DNS applications[39].

8.2.6 There is unequivocal planning policy support for the principle of renewable energy development through Future Wales, which specifically: "*Supports a low carbon economy and the decarbonisation of industry, and the growth of sustainable and renewable energy.*"

8.2.7 Policy 17 of Future Wales provides strong support for the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales. It specifically requires that decision makers give '*significant weight'* to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and the Welsh target to generate 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030. Noting, of course, that this target would be superseded by the proposed amendment to the renewable target for 100% of Wales' electricity to come from renewable energy sources by 2035[40]. The Proposed Development will make an important contribution towards meeting these targets and commitments, as stated above, which should be afforded significant weight in the determination of this application.

8.2.8 The most recent Welsh Government figures set out in the Energy Generation in Wales report (published March 2025), estimate that the renewable share of Wales' electricity generation was equivalent to 53% of its electricity consumption in 2023. This highlights that achieving the 70% target by 2030 and the 100% target by 2035 will be challenging and clearly a significant increase in the deployment of renewable energy is required to meet these targets and the forecasted increase in demand for electricity.

8.2.9 With respect to wind energy, Policy 17 of Future Wales sets out Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy, for which there is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development (including repowering) in these areas, subject to the criteria in policy 18. As outlined in Section 6 of this PDAS (specifically **Plate 6.1**), the Proposed Development is located c. 1.75km south of Pre-Assessed Area 9 for Wind Energy. Notwithstanding this, the supporting text to Future Wales Policy 18 states that outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas *'a positive policy framework'* for large scale wind energy development exists subject to compliance with Future Wales Policy 17 and 11 criteria set out by Policy 18. The subsequent sections of this Chapter of the PDAS assesses the proposal in relation to these specific matters.

8.2.10 PPW also considers the responsibility of renewable energy development. Paragraph 3.30 states that "*the planning system plays a key role in tackling the climate change emergency through the decarbonisation of the energy system*". Section 5.7 (Energy) of PPW states that low carbon electricity must become the main source of energy in Wales and that significant investment will be needed in energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure in order to ensure future demand can be met. PPW also states that the benefits of renewable and low carbon energy, as part of the overall commitment to tackle the climate emergency and increase energy security, is of paramount importance.

[39] Parc Worlton Solar Farm (DNS CAS-02112-T2N0G8), Bretton Hall Solar Farm (DNS/3251545), Mynydd Fforch Dwm Wind Farm (DNS/3255801) and Mynydd Y Glyn Wind Farm (DNS/3280378).

[40] Energy Generation in Wales 2023 (published March 2025): Energy Use in Wales 2023

8.2.11 Future Wales also provides specific support for battery energy storage proposals, stating at page 99 that:

"The UK's energy system is now undergoing significant change, with energy generation and delivery becoming more distributed in the communities and regions where the energy is used. The boundaries between systems are also becoming blurred, with energy being converted into (and stored in) different forms to address a range of needs. There is also a need to consider large-scale energy storage as part of the energy system to provide grid balancing".

8.2.12 This is supported by paragraphs 5.7.8 – 5.7.12 of PPW, which provides more detailed national policy guidance on battery energy storage and specifically confirms that:

"An effective electricity grid network is required to fulfil the Welsh Government's renewable and low carbon ambitions. An integrated approach should be adopted towards planning for energy developments and additional electricity grid network infrastructure…

***…Energy storage has 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**." (own emphasis added).*

8.2.13 It is clear that national planning policy strongly supports the delivery of large scale renewable energy proposals in principle and recognises the importance of the growth in renewable energy generation if carbon reduction targets are to be achieved. The principle of the Proposed Development is therefore wholly supported by Future Wales and, as material planning considerations, PPW and national energy policy.

Principle of Development – Local Planning Policy

8.2.14 As outlined in the preceding sections, whilst Future Wales states that applications for DNS must be determined in accordance with Future Wales, the two LDPs of BCBC and NPTC also form part of the Development Plan and require due consideration.

Bridgend County Borough Council RLDP

8.2.15 The BCBC RLDP is supportive in principle of proposals for renewable and low carbon energy. Strategic Policy SP4(4) of the RLDP seeks to mitigate the impact of climate change by *'encouraging the development of renewable and low/zero carbon energy generation'*. The Proposed Development is also acceptable in principle in accordance with RLDP Policy DNP1, where there is a general presumption against development in the open countryside, wherein the Site is located, except for exempt developments, including renewable energy proposals.

8.2.16 Policy SP13 (Renewable and Low Carbon Development) sets out a permissive framework for renewable development proposals, where these: firstly, contribute towards meeting national and local renewable and low carbon energy and energy efficiency targets and satisfy specific criteria (a-f) and secondly, with respect to wind and solar energy proposals, are located within a LSA. The Site is located within LSA 1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands & Forestry, which is identified as suitable for Wind Energy. The Proposed Development would also make a substantial contribution towards meeting the renewable energy targets for the borough, which are set out in the county's Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment, undertaken by the Carbon Trust (2020), which has directly informed BCBC's renewable energy targets as set out in the RLDP. As set out in Section 6.5 of this PDAS, the Carbon Trust's Assessment

recommends that BCBC sets ambitious renewable energy deployment targets to maximise the use of the local resources available within the borough, to capitalise on the county's high wind and solar resource capacity. The assessment also notes that a ten-fold increase in local renewable energy generation will be required to meet/offset the proposed future energy demand of BCBC from local sources. The Proposed Development would substantially contribute towards these energy generation targets, particularly the 81MW[41] target for wind energy generation.

8.2.17 The Proposed Development is therefore acceptable, in principle, in accordance with BCBC's RLDP policies SP4, SP13 and DNP1, subject to compliance with the specific criteria (a-f) listed in Policy SP13 and alignment with the broader policies of the RLDP.

Neath Port Talbot Council LDP

8.2.18 NPTC's LDP was adopted in 2016 prior to the publication of Future Wales and PPW. In accordance with Future Wales, where the LDP conflicts with national policy, limited weight should be afforded to those parts of the LDP and national policy takes precedence.

8.2.19 The adopted NPTC LDP is supportive, in principle, of renewable energy generation. Strategic Policy SP1(4) (Climate Change) outlines that the causes and consequences of climate change will be addressed by making provision for renewable and low carbon energy generation, whilst Strategic Policy 18 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy) encourages *"where appropriate, renewable energy and low carbon technology development"*. Furthermore, Policy SC1 (Settlement Limits) makes an allowance for renewable energy development outside of defined settlement limits.

8.2.20 As outlined in Section 6.4, the NPTC Replacement LDP is in its early stages of preparation and can only be afforded limited weight. Notwithstanding this, it is a relevant material consideration in setting out the emerging strategic direction for land use planning in NPTC area. The draft objectives and policies are supportive of renewable and low carbon energy development in principle.

8.2.21 Furthermore, in terms of the supporting evidence to inform the RLDP preparation, NPTC commissioned City Science to undertake a Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment (November 2024). The results of the energy assessment are summarised in Chapter 6 of this PDAS, but the key message is that there needs to be a significant increase in renewable energy generation in the NPTC authority area to meet the forecast energy demand by 2038. The total energy generation from existing assets constitutes only 8% of the total forecasted energy requirements.

8.2.22 On this basis, the Proposed Development is acceptable in principle in accordance with NPTC's policies SP1 and SP18 and emerging local planning policy.

Conclusion on the Principle of Development

8.2.23 In summary, national and local planning policy is overwhelmingly supportive of renewable energy developments and seeks to facilitate their delivery in appropriate locations. Therefore, the in-principle acceptability of the Proposed Development is established. It is now necessary

[41] The supporting text to Policy SP13 states that these are not maximum limits but rather a guide to maximise the available resource.

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to consider whether there would be any unacceptable impacts in relation to the more detailed areas of technical assessment that would not be outweighed by the benefits of the Proposed Development. Future Wales Policy 18 sets out the criteria for assessing large scale proposals for renewable and low carbon energy generation. This criteria are considered in the topic sections below along with the relevant LDP policies.

8.3 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

Designated Landscapes

8.3.1 Policy 17 of Future Wales states that there is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development within PAAs for Wind Energy and that the Welsh Government has already modelled the likely impact on the landscape and has found the PAAs to be capable of accommodating development in an acceptable way. The supporting text to Policy 17 does not however, preclude wind development; it states that outside of the PAAs *"a positive policy framework still exists, subject to Policy 18".* The Proposed Development is located outside of, but within 1.75km, of Pre-Assessed Area (PAA) 9 for Wind Energy, as set out on page 94 of Future Wales. **Plate 6.1** in Chapter 6 of this PDAS illustrates the Site location in relation to the PAA.

8.3.2 Criterion 1 of Policy 18 in Future Wales states that, outside of the PAAs, proposals for renewable and local carbon energy DNS will be permitted where the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape, with particular attention to National Parks and Areas of Outstanding National Beauty (now renamed National Landscapes).

8.3.3 Policy SP13 of the BCBC RLDP is also supportive of renewable and low carbon development proposals subject to specific criteria, including where the proposal and its associated infrastructure has sought to minimise the landscape and visual impact through its design and micro-siting (Policy SP13.1b). LSAs have been defined by BCBC RLDP, for large scale wind energy and solar developments. The Proposed Development, with the exception of the smaller western portion of the Site which is within NPTC's jurisdiction, is sited within **LSA1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands and Forestry**; this is identified as being suitable for Wind Energy development in the BCBC RLDP (Policy SP13). In this location there is an understanding that there would be some degree of landscape change to accommodate large scale wind development.

8.3.4 The landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Scheme are addressed in **ES Volume II, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual** supporting appendices **(ES Volume III, Appendix 8.1 – 8.12)**.

8.3.5 There are no international or national landscape designations covering the Site or the immediate surroundings; Bannau Brycheiniog National Park is located approximately 20.4 km to the northeast of the Proposed Development at its closest point, whilst the Gower National Landscape is located 21km from the Site at its closest point. The LVIA concludes effects of no greater than minor, which are not significant, in relation to the landscape character and the Special Qualities of either area, and thus, the Proposed Development is also in accordance with Future Wales Policy 18.

8.3.6 The LVIA also considers the effects of the Proposed Development upon the non-statutory locally designated Special Landscape Areas (SLAs), which overlap the 20km study area. Effects on the SLAs are considered further within **ES Volume III, Appendix 8.5: Special**

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Landscape Areas. Of these SLAs, the Western Uplands SLA (BCBC) covers the majority of the Site, together with the Margam Special Landscape Area (NPTC) which covers part of the western portion of the Site. A section of the northern portion of the Site falls within the Foel y Dyffryn SLA (BCBC). The LVIA concludes that the only SLA which would experience a significant effect is SLA 3 Western Uplands (BCBC) for which there would be a high magnitude of change and a major significant effect, both within the Site and its immediate environs. The SLA is at present a distinctive agricultural landscape, which is characterised by rough grazing land, several plantations and small woodlands. The Proposed Development would cover the majority of the visual envelope of the SLA and the turbines would introduce large scale features that would become new focal points in the landscape and skyline views, however the fabric of the landscape will be retained with the grazing land and woodland plantations. Thus, the aforementioned effect of the Proposed Development upon the Western Uplands SLA is considered to be in accordance with BCBC RLDP Policy DNP4(3) which, amongst other matters, requires that development within the SLAs will only be permitted where it retains or enhances the character or distinctiveness of the area, when considered within the context of BCBC RLDP Policy SP13 which allocates the majority of the Site as LSA 1 (**Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands and Forestry**), where there is an understanding that there would be some degree of landscape change to accommodate large scale wind development.

Landscape Character

8.3.7 With regard to the wider landscape impacts, the iterative design process in the evolution of the Proposed Development has provided embedded mitigation to reduce the effects upon landscape character. These measures are set out in Table 8.6 of **ES Volume II, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual** and includes the positioning of turbines on the elevated northern slopes of the Site, with appropriate offsets from all residential properties and settlements (800m buffer) and furthest away from the settlements to the south of the Site. The turbines are also proposed to be positioned either side of the open central grassland areas, so that they are as close as feasibly possible to the woodland blocks, without having any other associated environmental impacts, to provide enclosure to both the eastern and western site boundaries. The BESS and substation are also proposed to be located in the northwest of the Site, screened by the existing woodland block and away from the more visually prominent central areas of the Site, with additional woodland planting blocks proposed. The solar arrays have been located on the lower lying portions of the Site, set down and well assimilated into the landscape as far as possible. The existing highway is also proposed to be used as much as possible to minimise vegetation removal and the impact to landscape character.

8.3.8 The LVIA concludes that during construction works there would be a moderate effect on the landscape, but these would be short-term, temporary and reversible.

8.3.9 During the operational phase of the Proposed Development the LVIA concludes that the Proposed Development would introduce a large vertical scale of change to the landscape character and that significant effects would be experienced up to a distance of 5km; the effects are expected to reduce when the proposed woodland screening matures. The LVIA notes that the wind turbines would not be entirely uncharacteristic of a wider landscape that hosts other energy developments, including wind farms and would be temporary and completely reversible. The LVIA concludes that the proposed turbines would result in an overall significant effect upon CYNONVS473 - Mynydd Baedan during the operational phase. However, the LVIA concludes that beyond the immediate environs of the Site, the ground level components of the Proposed Development, including solar arrays, access tracks, areas of hardstanding, the substation, BESS containers and temporary construction compound would often either not be discernible, or hardly discernible, due to the elevation of the rolling upland upon which they are located.

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Existing vegetation both within and set close to the Site will provide additional ground level screening such that visibility is likely to be further reduced.

8.3.10 As such, effects on landscape character, as experienced in the wider landscape, arise largely in relation to the introduction of the 6 proposed turbines into the landscape and the resultant changes to the perceptual experience of landscape character. It is noted in the LVIA, that this change in landscape character would incrementally decrease with distance from the wind turbines as they become gradually less prominent. Indeed, Section 8.9.47 of the LVIA concludes that there would be no significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development on landscape character in the area beyond 10km from the Site.

8.3.11 BCBC RLDP Policy SP17 states that development would not be permitted where it has an adverse impact upon the character of its landscape, however most developments are likely to generate some degree of adverse impacts on the landscape and this policy is not consistent with the site's designation as a LSA for large scale wind, within BCBC, and also BCBC RLDP Policy SP13 which refers to 'unacceptable' rather than 'adverse' impacts and NPTC LDP Policy RE1 which refers to minimising impacts on the natural environment. Overall, whilst it is accepted that there would be significant impacts on the landscape up to a distance of 5km, it is considered that impacts have been minimised as much as possible through the appropriate siting of infrastructure and proposed mitigation and as the majority of the site is located within an area allocated for large scale wind development, and thus some level of landscape impact is deemed to be acknowledged, that the Proposed Development is in accordance with relevant BCBC RLDP and NPTC LDP landscape policies, when read as a whole.

Visual Effects

8.3.12 The LVIA concludes that visibility of the proposed wind turbines would be fairly wide ranging extending up to and beyond 10km, but the visibility of the solar, BESS and Substation elements is more contained and more easily screened, with views largely contained within 3km; these would be further reduced once the mitigation planting matures.

8.3.13 Significant effects have been concluded from various settlements up to a distance of c.3km from the site. Given the scale of the development, this level of visual change is to be expected, however, a significant effect does not equate to an unacceptable impact; views from the majority of properties within the settlement will be screened by intervening vegetation and buildings and at these distances (the closest settlement being Llangynwyd at 2km) effects would not be dominant or overbearing.

8.3.14 Significant effects are also concluded for the Ogwr Ridgeway Walk, which is a regional PRoW that passes through the site. Visibility of the lower infrastructure elements would be variable as the users pass along the route, with proposed planting obscuring many of the views once matured. The turbines would be a notable feature, albeit only for the stretch through the site and effects would diminish with distance.

8.3.15 A Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) has also been undertaken and is set out in **ES Volume III Appendix 8.9** .This sets out the methodology and results for the assessment

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and confirms that the Proposed Development will not lead to the 'Residential Visual Amenity Threshold'[42] (RVAT) being reached.

8.3.16 As a consequence of the iterative design approach, whilst a high magnitude was predicted at several properties, the RVAA has concluded that there would be no potential for a Very High magnitude of change to be experienced from any dwelling in the scale of views that would be experienced by residents. Thus, none of the effects assessed from the Proposed Development would be close to meeting the RVAT and would not therefore have the potential to be 'overbearing' in respect of the visual amenity of any property.

8.3.17 Policy 18(2) of Future Wales requires that there are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individual dwellings arising from renewable energy development. BCBC RLDP Policy SP13(b and f) seeks to minimise the landscape and visual impact of renewable energy infrastructure and NPTC LDP Policy SP12 states there should be no unacceptable impacts on the amenity of local residents. Whilst visual change is considered high in some places, resulting in significant effects in EIA terms, the impacts are not to the extent that they are dominant or overbearing and they would not exceed the RVAT; thus, they are considered acceptable and in accordance with national and local policies.

Cumulative Effects

8.3.18 Undertaking a cumulative assessment is in accordance with the requirements of Future Wales Policy 18 which requires that the cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should be considered. With respect to wind energy developments, the supporting text to Future Wales Policy 18 specifically states that:

"Irrespective of location or scale, the design and micro-siting of proposals must seek to minimise the landscape and visual impact, particularly those in close proximity to homes and tourism receptors. Both within and outside Pre-Assessed Areas, communities should be protected from significant cumulative impacts to avoid unacceptable situations whereby, for example, smaller settlements could be potentially surrounded by large wind schemes".

8.3.19 The LVIA has undertaken a cumulative assessment of the anticipated impact of the Proposed Development on landscape character and visual amenity, relative to consented and built energy developments.

8.3.20 The LVIA considers that the Proposed Development would contribute to an evolving pattern of renewable energy (in particular wind farm) development across the study area, and most consequently for the upland landscapes surrounding the Llynfi Valley and its adjacent valleys. The key cumulative effects are concentrated in the host landscape character area and immediate surroundings, with effects diminishing with distance.

8.3.21 The cumulative effects on landscape character associated with operational and consented schemes, would represent an incremental increase in the influence of renewable energy

[42] *"The threshold at which the visual amenity of a residential property is changed and adversely affected to the extent that it may become a matter of Residential Amenity and which, if such is the case, competent, appropriately experienced planners will weigh this effect in their planning balance."*

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development but does not fundamentally alter the assessment conclusions reached for the Proposed Development in isolation.

8.3.22 The cumulative visual effects on landscape character associated with operational and consented schemes remain broadly consistent with those assessed for the Proposed Development in isolation, with significant effects limited to receptors in close proximity to the Site or with direct views toward it. The viewpoint assessment shows that the most significant effects occur at locations within approximately 3-4 km of the Site, particularly with receptors with views both towards the Proposed Development and the Craig yr Aber forestry operations, but that this would not fundamentally alter the assessment conclusions reached for the visual effects of the Proposed Development in isolation.

8.3.23 The sequential experience of wind farms becomes more pronounced along key routes, particularly the Ogwr Ridgeway Walk, the Cistercian Walk and Ffordd-y-Gyfraith (the minor road through the site). These routes would provide an experience of passing through a landscape increasingly defined by renewable energy development, particularly wind farms on the upland areas. The forestry operations would further contribute to these effects, creating a more complex visual experience that includes both renewable energy development and commercial forestry.

8.3.24 In conclusion, whilst the Proposed Development would contribute to significant cumulative effects in some locations, particularly in combination with wind farm developments and forestry operations across the upland areas, these effects would be localised and would form part of a broader pattern of upland landscape management that is increasingly characteristic of the region. The viewpoint assessment that accompanies the LVIA confirms that no significant effects would be experienced from nationally designated landscapes such as the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park.

8.3.25 These effects should be viewed within the context of the majority of the site being allocated as a LSA for large scale wind energy development, under BCBC RLDP Policy SP13. Cumulative impacts are considered acceptable and therefore the Proposed Development is in accordance with Future Wales and BCBC RLDP Policy SP13 which considers cumulative impacts.

Conclusions on Landscape and Visual Effects

8.3.26 In landscape and visual impact terms, whilst significant effects are concluded in EIA terms, these are considered acceptable and the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with Policy 18 of Future Wales and BCBC RLDP and NPTC LDP Policies.

8.4 Ecology, Ornithology and Net Biodiversity Benefit

8.4.1 Future Wales Policy 18 requires that proposals for renewable energy must have no adverse effects on the integrity of internationally designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated). It also requires that there are no ‘unacceptable’ adverse impacts on national statutory designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated), protected habitats and species. Future Wales Policy 18 also requires that proposals for renewable energy include biodiversity enhancement measures to provide a net benefit for biodiversity.

8.4.2 In accordance with national policy, BCBC RLDP Policy SP17(3) also requires that development proposals will not be permitted where they would have an adverse impact on the character of the County’s biodiversity and habitats, whilst BCBC RLDP Policy DNP6 requires development

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proposals to provide a net benefit for biodiversity, and provides a criteria whereby development would be permitted if the development proposals resulted in adverse effects on the connectivity of biodiversity and ecological networks and/or have a significant adverse effect on protected habitats or species. BCBC RLDP Policy DNP7 relates to trees and hedgerows and states that adverse effects would not normally be permitted and that appropriate assessments should be submitted with the planning application.

8.4.3 NPTC LDP Policy SP3 also requires that developments ensure that identified protected species and designated habitats will be safeguarded and conserved in accordance with statutory requirements; and that the integrity of statutory and non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation will be protected and that development is directed away from such sites where possible.

8.4.4 In accordance with the preceding policy requirements, **ES Volume II, Chapter 10: Terrestrial Ecology** and **ES Volume II, Chapter 11: Ornithology** provides an assessment of the likely significant effects upon terrestrial ecology and ornithology arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. The ES Chapter is supported by technical reports set out in **ES Volume III, Appendices 10.1 – 10.4 and 11.1 – 11.3**, which includes an ecological baseline report, an ornithology report and a net biodiversity benefit report.

Ecology

8.4.5 The potential effects of the Proposed Development concluded in the ES is informed by the ecology desk study, UK Habitats survey, Phase 1 Ecology Survey, National Vegetation Classification habitat survey and a suite of baseline surveys for protected and notable species, including fungi, bat activity surveys, great crested newt surveys and surveys for water vole and otter.

8.4.6 The Site is not located within any statutory site designated for ecological interests. With respect to the wider area, there are three statutory international designated ecological sites within a 10km radius of the Site. These are as follows:

- Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr / Cefn Cribwr Grasslands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which comprises 4 parcels, is designated on account of its Molinia meadows Annex I habitat[43] and at its closest point is located a minimum distance of 965m to the south of the Site boundary.
- Blackmill Woodlands SAC is designated on account of its Annex I habitat[44]and is located 3.8km from the Site boundary.
- Kenifig/Cynffig SAC is designated on account of its Annex I habitat[45] and is located 5.1km from the Site boundary.

[43] Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr/ Cefn Cribwr Grasslands - Special Areas of Conservation

[44] Blackmill Woodlands - Special Areas of Conservation

[45] Kenfig/ Cynffig - Special Areas of Conservation

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8.4.7 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report, set out in **ES Volume III, Appendix 10.3** provides a screening matrix for the 3 SACs. This sets out that the Proposed Development would not result in any direct loss of SAC qualifying habitat or fragmentation of habitats within the SACs and would not result in a likely significant effect on the habitats which support the qualifying features of the SAC. On this basis, there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of internationally designated sites for nature conservation in accordance with Future Wales Policy 18.

8.4.8 Four national statutory designated sites for their ecological interests are located within 10km of the Site, these all being SSSIs: Cwm Risca Meadow SSSI, Caeau Cefn Cribwr SSSI, Waun Cimla SSSI and Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr / Cefn Cribwr Grasslands SSSI. The closest to the Site is Cwm Risca Meadow SSSI, which is located adjacent to Site, albeit a 50m buffer to any proposed infrastructure has been retained, and is designated for old wet acidic meadow on coal measure rocks supporting over 80 species of herbaceous plants and a colony of Marsh Fritillary butterfly (Euphydryas aurina).

8.4.9 There are four non-statutory designated Local Nature Reserves / Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) within, or partially present within, the Site. Cwm Nant Gwyn SINC, Nant Cwm-bach SINC and Gilfach Uchaf SINC are all located within the eastern portion of the Site within BCBC's jurisdiction. The NPT watercourses SINC is located within the western portion of the Site within NPTC's jurisdiction. Cwm Nant Gwyn SINC is designated for its broadleaf woodland and good ground flora, whilst Nant Cwm-bach SINC is designated on account of its broadleaf woodland, coniferous plantation and marshy grassland. Gilfach Uchaf SINC comprises a mosaic of habitats, including marsh grassland, semi-improved acid grassland and natural acid/neutral rock exposure.

8.4.10 The Proposed Development has been designed to avoid or minimise adverse effects upon statutory and non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated), together with protected habitats and species as far as possible. Minimum offsets from Cwm Risca Meadow SSSI, NPT Watercourses SINC and Cwm Nant Gwyn SINC for infrastructure and from construction areas has been incorporated to prevent any direct damage to these areas. The exceptions are Gilfach Uchaf SINC and Nant Cwm-bach SINC, wherein an access track will cross a section of the SINC, which is discussed further below. The proposed design has also implemented the PPW step-wise approach to avoid and minimise the impact of the Proposed Development upon biodiversity and to seek biodiversity enhancement on Site, as set out in further detail in this PDAS.

8.4.11 Embedded design features to mitigate the impact on ecological features include minimum offsets from habitats (existing woodland and watercourses and hedgerows), where possible. The offset from hedgerows will also provide a wildlife corridor across the Proposed Development for foraging and will maintain bat flight lines across the landscape. Minimal lighting is proposed and to be directed downwards and away from boundaries and vegetation to avoid disturbance and displacement of protected and notable species, particularly bats and otter. Mammal gates will also be installed in fencing around the solar panels to allow access to areas under the solar PV modules for foraging. Habitat management and enhancement/creation is also proposed to improve suitability for Marsh Fritillary butterfly and Fungi.

8.4.12 **Chapter 10 of the ES** concludes that by virtue of the proposed mitigation, there would be no significant effects from the Proposed Development that would influence the populations of the qualifying features of Cwm Risca Meadow SSSI, Neath Port Talbot Watercourses SINC and Cwm Nant Gwyn SINC. It is also considered that there would be no unacceptable adverse

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effects on the Gilfach Uchaf SINC as, whilst the access track would be constructed within improved grassland, this is not a qualifying feature of the SINC; as such, it is considered there are no unacceptable adverse effects upon the integrity of the SINC for nature conservation in accordance with Future Wales Policy 18.

8.4.13 The Proposed Development would result in the loss of a small area of trees within Nant Cwm-bach SINC, by virtue of the construction of the proposed access track across the end of the SINC. However, the impacts would only effect 3% of the SINC and replacement tree/hedgerow planting (2.89 km of hedgerow and 28 ha of woodland) would occur on the wider site. Whilst the ES Chapter concludes significant effects, this is based on CIEEM guidelines[46] and therefore when translating to EIA methodology is consistent with the other technical assessments, which accounts for the lower importance of the receptor. This small impact would not result in a significant EIA effect and impacts would be considered acceptable and mitigated.

8.4.14 With respect to protected species, the ES concluded residual adverse effects on two species, otter and bats. Otters have the potential to be impacted by noise during the construction phase of northern watercourse crossing. The ES considers this impact to be temporary, short term and not significant.

8.4.15 The ES concludes that during the operational phase of the development there would be adverse impacts on bats at the local level. This is by virtue of the proposed lighting during operation which will potentially affect the paths of foraging and commuting bats, whilst the installation of solar PV modules may also have an adverse effect on bat activity, in terms of polarising light and reflecting sound, with the potential to cause collisions and injury. However, the solar panels are proposed to be a maximum height of 3m and tilted, which would significantly reduce the potential for collision as most bats fly higher than 3m. Furthermore, manually operated and motion detection directional lighting is proposed to be utilised for operational and security purposes to minimise disturbance to foraging and commuting bats. In accordance with academic studies on the matter, the red light on the wind turbines would also be unlikely to attract bat activity to the wind turbines, as bats are not drawn to red light. Furthermore, a 50m standoff buffer from the woodland edge and the tip of the wind turbine blades has been included within the site design to reduce the potential harm to bats associated with rotating blades in the wind turbines.

8.4.16 As such, whilst the ES concludes that there would be adverse impacts on common and soprano pipistrelle bats at the local level the integrity of the local bat population is not expected to be affected by the Proposed Development; both bat species are common and widespread across Wales and, as such, the local bat population is not expected to be affected by the Proposed Development.

8.4.17 Overall, following CIEEM guidelines the ES chapter concludes a significant impact but, as before, when translated to EIA methodology to be consistent with other technical assessments, this is not considered a significant EIA effect.

8.4.18 The ES concludes that there would be a number of beneficial effects during the construction and operational phase of the development, linked to: the creation of 2.89 km of hedgerow and 28 ha of woodland areas within the Site; the enhancement of an area of the site to support the growth of Fungi; the enhancement of an area of the site to support habitat for Marsh Fritillary;

[46] Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2018

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and, the management of invasive non-native species. These will, amongst benefits to other species using the site, provide an increase in bat habitat and connectivity throughout the Site and generate significant beneficial effects at the local level.

8.4.19 These concluded effects need to be weighed in the planning balance relative to planning policy and other material considerations.

Ornithology

8.4.20 The potential effects of the Proposed Scheme on bird populations during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases have been assessed and reported on in **ES Volume II, Chapter 11: Ornithology**. Baseline surveys (provided in **ES Volume III, Appendix 11.1 – 11.3**), including vantage point flight activity surveys to record the location and quantity flight paths across the Site, moorland breeding surveys, Nightjar surveys, winter transect surveys and Schedule 1 breeding raptor and owl surveys were carried out over a two-year period, between 2021 and 2023. Additional wintering bird surveys were undertaken between December 2024 and February 2025 to provide an update to the condition of the ornithological baseline present within the site.

8.4.21 There are no statutory internationally designated sites notified or classified for their ornithological interest (i.e. Special Protection Area/Ramsar site) within 10 km of the Site. In addition to this none of the six nationally designated sites (i.e. SSSI/SAC) are of relevance for qualifying ornithological features.

8.4.22 There are three non-statutory designated sites of potential ornithological interest identified outside, but within 2km of the Site. Aberbaiden Farm Meadows SINC, a wet grassland habitat which is located circa 380m south of the Site and supports a population of breeding lapwing; Lletty Brongu SINC, designated for its Ancient Woodland, which is located circa 800m north of the Site and supports a habitat for rare breeding birds and Tylacoch South SINC located 1.4km north east of the Site which also supports a habitat of rare breeding birds. The ES chapter concludes that there would be no significant effects from the Proposed Development that would influence the populations of the qualifying features of these SINCs by virtue of the distance of the Site and the embedded mitigation in the proposed scheme design and additional management measures, including the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (OCEMP) (**ES Volume III, Appendix 2.1: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan**).

8.4.23 Baseline breeding bird surveys identified territories for red kite (at least two territories within the Site and within 500m of the Site boundary), lapwing (three territories) and barn owl nest/roost site (two identified). Vantage point surveys recorded a number of target species but, apart from red kite, grey heron and lapwing, all were only recorded occasionally, in low numbers.

8.4.24 The Proposed Development has been designed to avoid or minimise negative effects upon ornithology as much as possible. The habitats on Site are largely dominated by agricultural land, within which the infrastructure will be located, and is considered to be highly modified and are of low ecological value, thus limiting impacts on ornithological features. Further measures incorporated in the design of the Proposed Development, to reduce the impact on ornithology, include minimum offsets from habitats (woodland, hedgerow and watercourses) and avoidance of habitat removal where possible. Other measures include the management of noise, dust and vibration through the OCEMP and no nighttime working to reduce the potential disturbance/displacement effects on the behaviour of birds utilising the Site. The proposed

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aviation lighting (refer to section 8.9 of this PDAS) will also increase the visibility on turbines to reduce the risk of bird collision.

8.4.25 Mitigation measures are proposed which would offset the potential effects on ornithology within the Site and associated ornithological zone of influence. This will include habitat enhancement of grassland areas within the western portion of the Site, together with new woodland planting, hedgerow creation and bird box provision within the Site, enhancing nesting and foraging opportunities.

8.4.26 Cumulative assessment was undertaken for other projects located within the core foraging range of the relevant species (10km). Whilst the ES concludes that there is the potential for cumulative impact on ornithology from these combined developments, by virtue of the increased habitat disturbance, displacement impacts and cumulative risk of collision for birds foraging and commuting through a landscape, the assessment concludes that no significant residual effects are anticipated.

Arboriculture

8.4.27 The arboricultural impacts of the Proposed Development are addressed in the technical assessment undertaken by TR33 Environments, provided at **ES Volume II, Appendix 2.2**: **Arboricultural Impact Assessment**.

8.4.28 The report comprises an arboricultural survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA). The tree survey boundary was defined as all land within the Site boundary, together with a 50m offset construction buffer.

8.4.29 The desk study and the physical tree survey identified:

- An absence of trees with Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) within the study area.
- The presence of 52.6ha of ancient woodland within the study area, comprised of ancient semi-natural woodland, plantation on ancient woodland sites and restored ancient woodland. No temporary or permanent construction will be undertaken with the ancient woodland protection zones and as such, there will be no adverse effects to ancient woodland associated with the development.
- Two trees, one tree group and three wooded areas of high-quality (Category A trees). All three wooded areas correspond with identified ancient woodland, whilst the high-quality tree group is comprised of common beach hedgerow, of a considerable age and a potential remnant of a historic land boundary.

8.4.30 The tree survey outlines that removal of trees will be avoided wherever this is reasonably practicable, the Proposed Development would require:

- The potential removal of 15 trees, comprising one moderate-quality tree and 14 low-quality trees.
- The partial removal of 5 tree groups, one wooded area and parts of 12 hedgerows, comprising predominately low-quality tree groups and low-quality hedgerows. The overall area subject to partial tree removal is the equivalent of 338m². The removal of the 12 low-quality hedgerows is approximately 295 linear metres. The majority are small hedgerow removals (ranging from 2m-19m). Adverse arboricultural impacts associated with the removal of trees, tree groups,

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wooded areas and hedgerows will be mitigated by the planting of replacement trees, to a ratio of three new trees for each tree that is lost.

8.4.31 All retained trees, tree groups, wooded areas and hedgerows shall be protected during construction works in accordance with BS5837. Tree protection measures will be set out within an Arboricultural Method Statement. The Principal Contractor would have the responsibility to ensure that all works near retained trees are undertaken in accordance with appropriate tree protection measures.

Conclusions

8.4.32 Future Wales Policy 18 requires there to be no unacceptable impacts on the integrity of International and national designated sites, protected habitats or species, unless there are no alternative solutions and overriding public interest reasons exist. The ES chapters conclude that there are, at most, local impacts associated with the Proposed Development, and none that would affect nationally or internationally designated sites, or local species populations; thus, the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with the national Development Plan.

8.4.33 BCBC RLDP Policy SP17 states that development proposals will not be permitted where they have an adverse impact upon the County's biodiversity and habitats, and continues to state "*the weight to be afforded to environmental designations in the determination of the relevant planning applications will be based on their statutory or non-statutory status and geographical scale of designation*". Further, BCBC RLDP Policy DNP5 refers specifically to SINCs, with the policy stating that "*an adverse impact on these sites will not be permitted unless the benefits associated with the development can be demonstrated to outweigh the harm…*" and BCBC RLDP Policy DNP6 states development proposals that result "*in an adverse effect on the connectivity of biodiversity and ecological networks … will only be permitted where the needs for the development outweighs the nature conservation importance of the site*".

8.4.34 The ES concludes that the development would have an adverse impact on Nant Cwm-bach SINC, through the loss of some trees; however, the impact is very minimal, effecting only 3% of the designated area and the site designation is only at the local level. Given that the renewable energy generation benefits of the site carry significant weight (as determined in the Principle of Development section above), it is considered that the concluded impacts are demonstrably outweighed by the limited impact to the SINC and residual impacts to bats (which would not impact the integrity of the local bat population), and therefore the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with these BCBC policies. NPTC LDP Policy EN7 and SP15 refer to the protection of natural features and where removal is unavoidable mitigation measures agreed; the Proposed Development, with embedded mitigation measures, is considered to accord with these policies.

8.4.35 The iterative design process has resulted in impacts on trees and hedgerows being minimised and substantial mitigation through hedgerow and woodland planting is proposed. Therefore it is considered that the requirements of BCBC RLDP Policy DNP7 and NPTC LDP Policy EN7 are met.

Net Benefit for Biodiversity and The Step Wise Approach

8.4.36 Future Wales Policy 9 seeks to enhance biodiversity, preserve the resilience of ecosystems and provide green infrastructure, whilst Future Wales Policy 18 requires that the proposal includes biodiversity enhancement measures to provide a net benefit for biodiversity (BNB). As outlined in Chapter 6 of this PDAS, PPW sets out a step wise approach for securing a net

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benefit for biodiversity. This requires that all development must deliver a net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience from the baseline state to secure enhancement through the design and implementation of the development. This policy approach seeks to address the Nature Emergency, declared by the Welsh Parliament in 2021, in recognition of human induced declines in biodiversity.

8.4.37 In line with national policy, BCBC RLDP Policy DNP6 requires that all proposals must provide a net gain for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience and particular importance should be given to maintaining and enhancing the ecological networks. NPTC Policy SP3 also requires that development proposals will be required to demonstrate how an overall net benefit for biodiversity will be achieved through the implementation of the proposal.

8.4.38 The proposed design has implemented the PPW step-wise approach to avoid and minimise the impact of the Proposed Development upon biodiversity and to seek biodiversity enhancement on Site. The approach and recommendations are provided in **ES Volume III, Appendix 11.4: Net Benefit Report** and the **Green Infrastructure Statement** which accompanies the application**.** The Net Biodiversity Benefit Report also includes an outline Habitat Management Plan (HMP) which outlines measures to manage and monitor the success of created and enhanced habitats. The Green Infrastructure Statement highlights the baseline data and surveys and assessments undertaken as part of the planning application and demonstrates that the Proposed Development has been developed in accordance with a range of legislative and policy matters, including, but not limited to, Future Wales, PPW, BCBC RLDP and NPTC LDP.

8.4.39 The step-wise approach assists developments with securing a net benefit for biodiversity. The 6 stages are: avoid damage to biodiversity (**step 1**); minimise impact on biodiversity (**step 2**); mitigate/restore any biodiversity features lost/harmed by development (**step 3**); compensate for any unavoidable damage to biodiversity (**step 4)**; implement a long-term management plan to avoid, minimise, mitigate/restore and provide compensation measures (**step 5)**; and refuse planning permission if the adverse effect on biodiversity and ecosystem resilience outweighs other material considerations (**step 6**).The Green Infrastructure Statement sets out the Site was selected or the Proposed Development on the basis that it was considered that a viable renewable energy park could be designed and developed in this location whilst avoiding, minimising and mitigating effects upon biodiversity and enhancing key environmental assets, in line with the step-wise approach.

8.4.40 With respect to the first step, the site selection and proposed layout has sought to avoid damage to biodiversity and other material matters. This has included ensuring that the Site is not located within any nationally or locally designated landscapes. The final design layout has avoided PROWs and designated and non-designated cultural heritage assets within the Site whilst providing a 50m buffer to the adjacent SSSI. The Proposed Development also maintains a 800m buffer around residential properties, and has avoided the one area of identified peat, as well as avoided the removal of trees where feasible.

8.4.41 Habitat loss associated with the Proposed Development has been avoided and minimised where possible in accordance with steps 1-3 of the Green Infrastructure Statement. Table 4.1 sets out there will be a total of 17.54ha of habitat lost across the Site. This will however be compensated by the significant enhancement of parts of the remaining habitat and creating habitats of higher value, namely the creation of new woodland (28ha created), Marshy Grassland (12.5ha created), grassland (62ha) and hedgerow habitats (2.8km of species rich hedgerow created). This is a total of 40.5ha of habitats to be created and 62ha to be enhanced.

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These habitats, once at target condition, will be considerably more diverse, and of a higher quality than the baseline habitats within the Site.

Conclusions on Net Benefit for Biodiversity and the Step-wise Approach

8.4.42 In accordance with PPW the proposal has adhered to the Step-wise approach in avoiding and minimising the impact upon biodiversity and other site features of environmental importance, through a careful site selection and design iteration process, resulting in a net benefit to biodiversity and no overall harm.

8.4.43 On this basis the Proposed Development is in accordance with the relevant provisions of Policy 18 of Future Wales, PPW, BCBC RLDP policies SP17 and DNP6 and NPTC LDP Policy SP3 with respect to the implementation of the step-wise process and providing a significant net biodiversity gain.

8.5 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

8.5.1 Criterion 6 of Policy 18 in Future Wales states that renewable and low carbon energy projects qualifying as DNSs will be permitted provided that the proposal does not have unacceptable adverse impacts on statutorily protected built heritage assets. Additionally, Paragraph 6.1.9 of Section 6 of PPW states that any decisions made through the planning system must fully consider the impact on the historic environment and on the significance and heritage values of individual historic assets and their contribution to the character of place. TAN 24 (The Historic Environment), which underpins PPW, sets out 6 principles of conservation, which should be used to assess the potential impacts of proposed developments upon the historic environment.

8.5.2 Cadw's 'Conservation Principles' guidance document (2011) sets out that: "*balanced and justifiable decisions about change to the historic environment depend upon understanding who values different historic assets and why they do so, leading to a clear statement of their significance and, with it, the ability to understand the impact of the proposed change on that significance. Every reasonable effort should be made to eliminate or minimise adverse impacts on historic assets. Ultimately, however, it may be necessary to balance the benefit of the proposed change against the harm to the asset".*

8.5.3 BCBC RLDP Policy SP18 (Conservation of the Historic Environment) seeks to protect, conserve and where appropriate, preserve and enhance the significance of historic assets and their settings. BCBC RLDP Policy DNP1 specifically requires that development in the open countryside must respect the cultural heritage of the area, whilst BCBC RLDP Policy SP13 requires that there will be no unacceptable impacts on the historic environment from renewable energy developments. NPTC LDP Policy SP21 also requires that the built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced through high quality design and safeguarding features of historic and cultural importance.

8.5.4 In accordance with the preceding policy requirements, **ES Volume II, Chapter 7: Heritage** provides an assessment of the likely significant physical and non-physical effects arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development upon the significance of identified historic interests, their setting and archaeological potential within the

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Site. The ES Chapter is supported by technical reports set out in **ES Volume III, Appendices 7.1 – 7.6**, which include heritage desk-based assessment and geophysical surveys[47].

Designated Heritage Assets

8.5.5 There are four designated heritage assets (all Scheduled Monuments) located within the Site:

- British Fortified Residence at Maescadlawr (ref. GM086);
- Mynydd Ty Talwyn Ancient Farms (refs. GM092 and GM093); and
- Earthwork and Platform Houses N of Nant Fadog (ref. GM340).

8.5.6 The Proposed Development would have no physical effects on any of the designated Scheduled Monuments within the Site; the proposed layout has purposefully avoided known historic assets and physical impacts above and below ground.

8.5.7 The assessment concludes that the proposal would have non-physical effects on the four heritage assets within the Site due to the changes to their rural landscape settings during the operational phase of development, particularly where there is co-visibility of wind turbines, solar arrays and the substation. The assessment concludes, however, that the residual effects on these designated assets would be minor adverse for the British Fortified Residence and moderate adverse on the other 3 scheduled monuments; which whilst considered a significant impact in EIA terms would not have a "*demonstrably and unacceptably damaging effect upon its setting"*[48] . Further, whilst the effects would be long term, they would be reversed upon the decommissioning of the development when the Site would be restored to baseline conditions. As such, the Proposed Development is considered to accord with Paragraph 6.1.24 of PPW, together with BCBC RLDP Policy SP18 and NPTC LDP Policy SP15 with respect to the preservation of the setting of the historic assets.

8.5.8 There are various designated heritage assets within a 10km radius of the Site, including 560 Listed Buildings, 105 Scheduled Monuments, 19 Conservation Areas, 9 Historic Parks and Gardens and 3 Registered Historic Landscapes. Chapter 6 of the ES considers that there is potential for impact on the setting of two of these designated assets situated outside the Site boundary. These are the Grade I Listed Church of St Cynwyd at Llangynwyd and Llangynwyd Conservation Area.

8.5.9 The heritage assessment considers that the semi-remote and undeveloped character of the landscape featuring in both long-ranging northerly views towards the church and the Conservation Area and long-ranging southerly views from these assets towards the Site make a small contribution to the significance of these assets. Woodland planting around the solar parcels, selected wind turbines, the BESS and the substation are proposed to screen the Proposed Development in views from the Llangynwyd Conservation Area and to reduce the extent of change to its setting. The heritage impact assessment concludes that by virtue of the proposed layout, the mitigation planting and the temporary nature of the development that

[47] Geophysical surveys have been provided for the proposed solar development areas, as well as for he footprints of the substation and BESS. For the 6 wind turbines the geophysical survey has covered a 1ha area centred on the turbine and the associated area of cut-and-fill and hardstanding. This approach was approved by the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT).

[48] PPW policy test from paragraph 6.1.24

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residual effects on these assets are minor adverse and would be reversed upon decommissioning.

8.5.10 PPW sets out a "*strong presumption against the granting of planning permission for developments…which damage the character or appearance of a conservation area or its setting to an unacceptable level"* but accepts there may be exceptional circumstances where this presumption may be overridden. It is considered that there is no damage to the character or appearance of the conversation area, as a whole, and the concluded impacts on its setting are of a level that would be acceptable, and in any event the public benefits of the scheme (within the context of a pressing need for renewable energy deliver) would enable this presumption to be overridden. As such, the Proposed Development is considered to accord with the relevant sections of FW, PPW, BCBC RLDP Policy SP18 and NPTC LDP Policy SP15 and provision of S160 of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023.

8.5.11 During pre-application discussions, the BCBC Heritage officer requested consideration be given to the impact of noise and vibration as a result of the abnormal load traffic on any designated assets along the route. Any impacts on settings would be extremely short lived as the vehicles pass the site and therefore are minimal. Physical impacts are discussed further in the Noise and Vibration section below (Section 8.6).

Archaeology

8.5.12 A total of 23 non-designated historic assets are recorded within the Site. These relate to agricultural and industrial activity and include several farmsteads, historic field bank boundaries, stone quarries, dispersed coal levels, and the buildings and tramway of Ton Phillip Colliery. However, the Proposed Development has been sited to avoid the non-designated heritage assets, where possible, resulting in just 8 that may be susceptible to physical impacts.

8.5.13 The assessment identifies that there is potential for physical effects on potential archaeological remains (Bronze Age burial remains) within Solar Parcel I to the south of the Site (as illustrated in **ES Volume IV, Figure 2.1: Proposed Development Layout,**) and the medieval Ffordd-y-Gyfraith road (which will be used to provide access between wind turbines) during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. The residual effects on these assets are anticipated to be minor adverse.

8.5.14 In line with the provisions of PPW (para 6.1.25) it is considered that minor adverse effects on these two non-designated assets of *"less significant archaeological remains",* is outweighed by the national need for the development.

8.5.15 The assessment also concludes that there is the potential for physical effects on the archaeological remains indicated by geophysical survey anomalies in Solar Parcels F, G, H and I during the construction and decommissioning phases. The residual physical effects on these assets are anticipated to be minor adverse.

8.5.16 Mitigation would include the undertaking of archaeological trial trench evaluation followed by localised strip map sample excavations and/or monitoring and recording for any areas where archaeological remains are identified and to '*preserve by record'* such remains considered to be of a significance less than that of a Scheduled Monument (i.e. of regional or local importance).

8.5.17 Should the intrusive works identify any areas of greater significance, further mitigation for the solar is possible in terms of: shallow piling of solar mounting frames; non-intrusive ballast foundations (such as concrete 'shoes' and cables within 'troughs'); or, if warranted, localised

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development 'exclusion' zones. A 50m micrositing allowance is sought for the wind turbines, which provides mitigation for this element of this Proposed Development.

8.5.18 The geophysical survey for the wind turbine built development areas has concluded that there is low potential for archaeological remains and therefore, preservation by record is considered the most likely mitigation scenario should any be found within these areas. Within the solar, BESS, and substation area, the geophysical survey concluded that most of the site was assessed as having low archaeological potential, with a few pockets being high where potential features were found, and a few fields are unknown where the geophysical survey was unsuccessful.

8.5.19 Early consultation with Heneb on the results of the geophysical survey resulted in a request for trial trenching pre-determination for the solar parcels. PPW states (paragraph 6.1.26) "*Where archaeological remains are known to exist or there is potential for them to survive, an application should be accompanied by sufficient information, through desk-based assessment and/or field evaluation, to allow a full understanding of the impact of the proposal on the significance of the remains".* Given the results of the geophysical surveys for the solar parcels (most of the site being of low archaeological potential) and the nature of the potential mitigation (shallow piling, non-intrusive ballast foundations or exclusion zone solutions) it is considered that any impacts can be wholly mitigated and the Proposed Development can still comply with the provisions of PPW; irrespective of whether the trial trenching is done pre or post determination, the mitigation solutions would remain the same. The purpose of planning conditions is to make largely acceptable developments compliant with planning policy[49]; thus, it is considered that a planning condition requiring a scheme of mitigation based on the results of intrusive field evaluation works is a reasonable and proportionate response to ensure compliance with planning policy.

8.5.20 It is noted that in a recent decision for a wind farm DNS application[50], Heneb presented an argument for pre-determination trial trenching at the hearing and Inspector Jenkins, in his decision, concluded "*whilst I agree that this would provide a better understanding of the archaeological potential of the site, I am satisfied that a post-determination phase archaeological approach would be proportionate and appropriate in this case as the evidence suggests that the area of the proposed works is unlikely to contain any archaeological remains of national significance*". It is considered that a similar approach can reasonably be taken to this Proposed Development due to the low potential for archaeological remains concluded in the geophysical surveys combined with the potential solar mitigation options, which would not differ in outcome if trial trenching was done pre or post consent.

Cultural Heritage: Conclusion

8.5.21 In summary, no unacceptable impacts would arise as a result of the Proposed Development. The historic assets, in the main, would be protected and conserved with only acceptable impacts on the setting of some assets concluded and the potential to mitigate any impacts on archaeological remains. Therefore, on the whole, the Proposed Development is considered to comply with both BCBC RLDP and NPCT LDP policies, as well as guidance set out in PPW and Policy 18 of Future Wales.

[49] unnecessary conditions are considered unlawful

[50] DNS/3253147

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8.6 Noise and Vibration

8.6.1 Future Wales Policy 18 requires that there are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of noise, arising from renewable energy developments. The cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered. This requirement is mirrored by BCBC RLDP Policy SP13 and NPTC LDP Policy SP18 and reiterated in BCBC RLDP Policy DNP9 and NPTC LDP Policy EN8.

8.6.2 Noise and vibration are addressed in **ES Volume II, Chapter 9: Noise and Vibration**. The assessment considers compliance with applicable noise limits and guideline criteria for both the construction/decommissioning and the operational phases of the Proposed Development for the wind turbines, solar PV, BESS and the substation components of the scheme.

8.6.3 Construction and decommissioning noise and vibration have been assessed with reference to British Standards: '*Code of Practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites – Part 1 Noise and Part 2: Vibration'* (BS 5228-1: 2009+A1:2014). These provide a method for rating industrial/commercial sound and a method for assessing impacts upon people. The rating method takes into account specific source characteristics, such as tonality, impulsivity and intermittency. The assessment concludes that the activities, including traffic noise (on and offsite), would have minor noise effects at 4 receptors and negligible noise effects at 7 receptors, albeit these would be temporary in duration and are not considered to be significant.

8.6.4 Operational noise has been assessed in accordance with ETSU-R-97 guidance *'The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Windfarms'* (1996) ('ETSU Guidance') and methodologies advocated within the Institute of Acoustics *"A Good Practice Guide to the Application of ETSU-R-97 for Wind Turbine Assessment"* (May 2013) ('IOA GPG'). The ETSU Guidance sets noise limits, respective to measured background noise measurements, which offer an accepted degree of protection to receptors without placing an unreasonable restriction on proposed renewable energy developments. The assessment has demonstrated that the Proposed Development, including cumulative developments, can operate within the ETSU-R-97 limits; it is anticipated that these limits would form a planning condition.

8.6.5 An assessment of noise generated by the Solar, BESS and Substation has also been undertaken; this indicates that the background sound level is exceeded by a maximum of 4 dB. With regards to BS4142:2014+A1:2019, this predicted noise exceedance above background levels is considered to be small in magnitude and would not have adverse effects.

8.6.6 As mentioned in the Cultural Heritage section above, during pre-application discussions the BCBC Heritage officer requested consideration be given to the physical noise and vibration impacts of large abnormal load vehicles passing any heritage assets on route to site. Consideration has been given to this, concluding that there are only very minimal assets located along the abnormal load delivery routes. Further, abnormal load deliveries are generally large vehicles to enable the weight of the load to be distributed across numerous axles ensuring that they are the necessary weight for use on the highway. Highway departments have a duty to retain their roads surfaces to an acceptable standard free from any significant irregularities which will assist in minimising vibration. It is therefore considered that any potential vibration effects would be minimal and would not affect heritage assets along the construction route.

8.6.7 With the aforementioned conclusions, there would be no *'unacceptable'* adverse impacts by way of noise as required by Policy 18 of Future Wales. It is also considered that the general

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amenity and living conditions of adjacent occupiers would be maintained by virtue of there being no adverse noise or vibration effects. As such the Proposed Development is considered to be in compliance with Policy 18 of Future Wales, RLDP Policy SP13 and NPTC Policy SP18 and guidance set out in Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales.

8.7 Shadow Flicker, Glint and Glare and Aviation and Defence

Shadow Flicker

8.7.1 Future Wales Policy 18 requires that there are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of shadow flicker, whilst BCBC RLDP Policy SP13 and NPTC Policy SP18 requires that there should be no adverse impacts in the amenity of local residents from renewable and low carbon energy development.

8.7.2 Shadow flicker is addressed in the technical assessment undertaken by Pager Power Ltd provided at **ES Volume III, Appendix 4.7: Shadow Flicker Assessment**.

8.7.3 There is no formal limit on the amount of shadow flicker that is considered acceptable within the UK. A typical limit, which has been utilised in Northern Ireland, Germany and Belgium, is 30 hours per year with a maximum of 30 minutes per day. If shadow flicker effects are predicted beyond this limit, mitigation may be required to eradicate the occurrence of shadow flicker.

8.7.4 The shadow flicker assessment is based upon a total of 378 dwelling receptors. A large 3km study area has been used as a precautionary response to the Scoping Direction which queried the robustness of the previously proposed 10 x rotor diameter study area; however, it should be noted that shadow flicker nuisance is not expected to occur at this distance even if the assessment concludes it is theoretically possible. The assessment allows for localised weather conditions and concludes that none of the dwelling receptors are expected to exceed the threshold limits of 30 hours per year.

8.7.5 Notwithstanding this, the Applicant volunteers a condition for a Shadow Flicker mitigation protocol, pursuant to the grant of planning permission, which will set out the procedures in the event of shadow flicker occurrence at a property. Each turbine would also be procured with automated equipment should the mitigation scheme require temporary ‘shut down’ during certain weather conditions.

8.7.6 Subject to the proffered mitigation, there would be no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of shadow flicker as required by Policy 18 of Future Wales, BCBC Policy SP13 and NPTC Policy SP18.

Glint and Glare

8.7.7 Criterion 7 of Policy 18 of Future Wales requires that renewable energy development has no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of reflected light. The Proposed Development comprises ground mounted solar PV panels and therefore the potential for glint and glare from the solar PV modules has been considered.

8.7.8 In the first instance it should be noted that Solar PV modules are specifically designed to absorb light rather than reflect it. Light reflecting from solar PV modules results in the loss of energy output. Solar PV modules are dark in colour due to their anti-reflective coatings and are

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manufactured with low-iron, ultra-clear glass with specialised coatings and textures to enable maximum absorption. The combination of these factors significantly increases electrical energy production of the panels and at the same time significantly reduces reflected rays.

8.7.9 Notwithstanding this, Pager Power has undertaken a Glint and Glare Assessment, provided at **ES Volume III, Appendix 4.6: Glint and Glare Assessment**. Existing and proposed vegetation, intervening terrain and screening by existing buildings has been taken into account in the assessment of the potential glint and glare effects. Detailed geometric analysis has been undertaken using a bespoke glint and glare model for all receptors potentially affected by the Proposed Development.

8.7.10 A low impact is predicted on aviation receptors, albeit the assessment concludes that the glare intensity is acceptable in accordance with industry best practice. No impact is predicted on road users along the A4063 or residential receptors given the significant screening afforded by existing vegetation and the intervening terrain. Overall the assessment concludes that there is no significant impact upon aviation activity, road users and residential amenity and no mitigation is not considered to be necessary. On the basis that there is no unacceptable impact, the proposal is compliant with the Policy 18 of Future Wales and BCBC RLDP Policy SP13 and NPTC Policy SP18.

Aviation and Defence

8.7.11 Developments which include wind turbine infrastructure have the potential to affect aviation interests, either by presenting a physical obstruction or collision risk to aircraft, or by interfering with the operation of navigational equipment. Accordingly, Policy 18(12) of Future Wales requires that there are no unacceptable impacts on the operations of defence facilities and operations (including aviation and radar) or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area (TTA-7T), as a result of the proposed renewable energy development.

8.7.12 A technical report, prepared by Wind Power Aviation Consultants Ltd, which is based upon the guidance in Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Publication CAP 764 Policy and Guidelines on Wind Turbines Version 6 (2016), has been prepared to accompany the DNS application to present an analysis of the aviation issues pertinent to the Proposed Development. The report is set out at **ES Volume III, Appendix 4.4: Aviation Assessment** and assesses the potential for the Proposed Development to affect aviation communications, navigation and surveillance infrastructure in the vicinity of the Site and how this will be mitigated.

8.7.13 Regard has been given to the potential effects on aviation activity[51] associated with the potential glint and glare from solar arrays in the Proposed Development in the preceding section of this PDAS. As such, this is not repeated in this section and the focus is upon the impacts of the proposed wind turbines upon aviation and defence operations.

8.7.14 The Site is located 28km to the northwest of Cardiff Airport, where the closest civil air traffic control radar is located. The only other aviation feature in the area is the small unlicensed airstrip at Old Park Farm, over 4km to the south-west of the closest proposed turbine.

[51] Associated with Old Park Farm airfield, situated 3.6km southwest of the Proposed Development

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8.7.15 There are no radar equipped military airfields in the area, with the closest being Portreath in Cornwall; there is no possibility of the radar being affected by the Proposed Development.

8.7.16 The Site is located within an area designated 'Green' by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) which is defined as 'An area with no military low flying concerns'. It is however in an area where military fast jet and tactical transport aircraft are limited by control measures that limit their routing and altitude. Conversely however, the assessment notes that this is an active helicopter operating region on account of the hilly topography of the Welsh Valleys.

8.7.17 The assessment identifies that the aviation effects of the Proposed Development would be limited to the effects to the radar at Cardiff Airport. The results demonstrate that all the turbines will be visible to the radar and have the potential to cause radar clutter and obscuration of real aircraft. The applicant has engaged with Cardiff Airport on this matter and Cardiff Airport Air Navigation Service Provider is seeking that radar mitigation is required; either through the installation of a new wind farm resistant infill radar at the airport, or to upgrade the existing radar to a new variant which has an inbuilt wind farm filter capability. A planning condition is volunteered that a radar mitigation scheme shall be provided pursuant to the grant of planning permission; this has been applied to other DNS wind farm consents[52], in agreement with Cardiff Airport, and it is expected that a joint mitigation solution, with other wind farm developers, will be provided.

8.7.18 Visible aviation lighting will be required; the proposed lighting design is set out in a separate report produced by Wind Power Aviation Consultants Ltd provided at **ES Volume III, Appendix 4.5: Aviation Lighting and Mitigation Assessment**. This report outlines that 3 of the proposed turbines require ANO visible red lighting, whilst the MOD will require an infra-red light on the hub of all 6 turbines. CAA have been consulted on and have approved the proposed lighting design from an aviation safety perspective.

8.7.19 On this basis there would be no unacceptable impacts on the operation of defence facilities and operations (including aviation and radar) or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area (TTA-7T). The Proposed Scheme is therefore in accordance with Policy 18 of Future Wales with regards to aviation and defence interests.

8.8 Traffic and Highway Safety

8.8.1 Criterion 9 of Policy 18 in Future Wales states that renewable and low carbon energy projects qualifying as DNSs will be permitted provided that the proposal does not have '*unacceptable'* impacts on the transport network through the transportation of components during its construction and / or ongoing operation. Furthermore, PPW at Paragraph 5.9.20 places a requirement on planning authorities to identify opportunities to *"avoid, mitigate or compensate adverse impacts of renewable and low carbon energy development throughout all life stages of the development"* (construction, through to aftercare and decommissioning/remediation), including "*consideration of the capacity of, and effects on the transportation network".*

8.8.2 In accordance with national policy, BCBC RLDP Policy SP13(e) requires that renewable and low carbon development proposals will only be permitted where they do not have an *'unacceptable'* impact on access and highway safety. NPTC LDP Policy TR2 and NPTC LDP

[52] DNS/3272053

Policy RE1(4c) requires that development does not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway network and does not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation. BCBC RLDP Policy SP20(6) similarly does not restrict development which would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

8.8.3 **ES Volume II, Chapter 12: Transport and Movement** provides an assessment of likely effects arising from traffic and transport aspects of the Proposed Development during the construction/decommissioning and operational phases. This is summarised in the sections below and is assessed in relation to the aforementioned planning policies.

Construction Traffic and Decommissioning Traffic Impacts

8.8.4 The construction phase of the Proposed Development would consist of the principal activities outlined in Chapter 4 of this PDAS. It is anticipated that the construction phase will be undertaken over a 24-month period. Standard working hours will generally be 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday and 07:00 to 13:00 on Saturday.

8.8.5 The delivery of materials to the Proposed Development would generally be subject to the same construction working hours. However, AILs may be delivered outside these hours, when the road network is at its quietest, to reduce traffic disturbance. The proposed route for construction vehicles and AILs is set out in Chapter 4 of this PDAS and at **ES Volume IV, Figure 12.2: Abnormal Load Delivery Route** and **Figure 12.5: Construction Traffic Distribution.** Any upgrade works requiring planning permission for this route will be subject to a separate application and falls outside the scope of this DNS application.

8.8.6 As set out in Chapter 4 of this PDAS two access points into the Site are proposed: one from the A4063 to the northeast and one from New Road to the south. Both access points have been designed to accommodate the delivery of AILs.

8.8.7 The impact assessment is based upon the assumed construction programme and average traffic flows in one-month periods. It concludes that spare capacity exists within the local road network to accommodate the proposed construction phase traffic and no transport capacity issues are anticipated.

8.8.8 An Outline Construction Transport Management Plan Statement (OCTMP) has been prepared (**ES Volume IV, Appendix 12.1: Outline Construction Transport Management Plan**), which provides a framework for the management of construction vehicles associated with the Proposed Development. It is anticipated that a detailed CTMP will be produced once a Principal Contractor has been appointed and would be agreed with the highways authority prior to the commencement of construction works.

8.8.9 An Outline Access (PRoW) Management Plan has been prepared (**ES Volume III, Appendix 13.2: Outline Access (PRoW) Management Plan**) and includes a schedule of PRoWs within the Site and provides outline measures to manage public access during construction and operation. This will ensure the continued use PRoWs, as much as possible during the construction phase.

8.8.10 In addition to the above measures, the Applicant volunteers the following measures to mitigate for the anticipated traffic effects:

- A Community Liaison Forum would be established in collaboration with BCBC and local community councils to keep the community informed with respect to the construction progress and key transport-related matters, such as the delivery of AILs.

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- The Applicant would enter into a Highway Wear and Tear Agreement for the local roads/routes to be used by construction vehicles, with repairs being agreed to return the roads to their pre-construction condition.

- An Abnormal Load Transport Management Plan (ALTMP) would be prepared in advance of any AILs to manage all AIL movements to and from the Site.

8.8.11 In summary, the temporary nature of the construction works, together with the aforementioned mitigation measures, means that the anticipated construction traffic impacts would be managed and would not lead to unacceptable impacts on the transport network in accordance with Future Wales Policy 18.

8.8.12 The traffic effects associated with the decommissioning phase of the Proposed Development would be less than the construction phase as some elements, such as the internal access tracks would be left in situ. Consequently, given the conclusion on the construction traffic effects, no 'unacceptable' effects on traffic or the highway network are anticipated through the decommissioning phase of the Proposed Development with respect to Future Wales Policy 18 and BCBC RLDP Policy SP20(6) and NPTC LDP Policies TR2 and RE1(4c) .

Operational Traffic Impacts

8.8.13 Once operational, the level of traffic associated with the Proposed Development would be minimal. Regular monthly or weekly visits would be made to the Site for maintenance checks. The vehicles used are likely to be 4x4 vehicles and there may also be the occasional need for an HGV to access the Site for maintenance and/or repairs. All operational traffic would utilise the northeastern site entrance to access and egress the site. As a worst-case, the assessment of operational traffic, summarised in Table 12.14 of **ES Volume II, Chapter 12: Transport and Movement** has assumed 2 HGV movements per day (two-way) and 10 total vehicle movements per day (two-way).Thus, no unacceptable effects on access and highway safety are anticipated.

Cumulative traffic effects

8.8.14 The assessment of cumulative traffic and movement effects associated with the Proposed Development considers other consented wind farms/major developments that are not yet under construction[53]. Only developments which would impact on the same Study Area (road network) as the Proposed Development have been included in the cumulative assessment.

8.8.15 The cumulative assessment concludes that there would be an increase in the total traffic numbers and HGV traffic on the A4063. The greatest percentage increase in total traffic is estimated to be 3% on all links along the A4063. The greatest increase in HGV traffic is estimated to be 313%.

8.8.16 Notwithstanding this, the assessment concludes that these figures are worse-case and it is highly unlikely that the peak construction period associated with the cumulative developments

[53] Given the minimal operational movements, a cumulative assessment of the operational phase was scoped out as effects would be minimal. There is no potential for significant cumulative effects to occur from those renewable energy developments which are operational due to the minimal vehicle trips attributable to the operational phase of a wind farm development.

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in the area would overlap with the peak construction period of the Proposed Development. Several factors can affect this, including:

- The respective planning applications are at different stages of the planning process;
- It cannot be assumed that all planning applications will secure permission;
- Not all consented developments will be constructed;
- Developments have differing grid connection dates which can influence the programming of their respective construction periods; and
- Duration of the construction period of each development can vary.

8.8.17 Furthermore, during the construction phase the high traffic generating activities, such as the importation of stone and concrete, tend only to occur over a few months of the whole construction period. It is also unlikely that the local capacity for concrete and stone production could supply several developments under construction at once, therefore, high traffic generating activities would inevitably be staggered. However, if the construction of cumulative developments were to take place at the same time as the Proposed Development, then the traffic effects could be suitably managed using a Traffic Management Plan for all of the sites and a phased delivery plan to be agreed by the Highway Authority and the police.

Conclusion

8.8.18 The Proposed Development would not result in *'unacceptable'* impacts on the transport network (including PRoWs) through the construction, operational or decommissioning phases of the development. The cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in highway terms are also considered to be insignificant. As such the Proposed Development is in accordance with Policy 18 of Future Wales with regards to access, traffic and transportation matters, as well as BCBC RLDP Policies SP13(e), SP20(6) and PLA9 and NPTC LDP Policies TR2 and RE1(4c).

8.9 Public Access

8.9.1 BCBC RLDP Policy PLA9 requires that development must link with and seek to minimise impacts on the PRoW network and any predicted adverse impacts on the character, safety, enjoyment and convenient use of a PRoW must be mitigated. BCBC RLDP Policy DNP9 also requires that development proposals will only be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable risk of harm to public health or safety.

8.9.2 There are 22 PRoWs within the Site boundary that allow movement across the Site for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. There are also four Definitive Map Modification Orders within the Site. Some of these paths are routes that are actively promoted to encourage use of these paths for leisure opportunities, including the Ogwr Ridgeway Walk which runs in an east to west direction across the Site.

8.9.3 An Outline Access (PROW) Management Plan (OAMP) has been prepared and accompanies the DNS Application (**ES Volume III, Appendix 13.2: Outline Access (PROW) Management Plan**). It is not proposed to permanently divert or stop up any existing PRoW within the Site during the operational period and that all PRoWs would be kept open during the construction period, as far as is practicable and safe, as outlined in the OAMP.

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8.9.4 The OAMP sets out mitigation measures to ensure the safe use of the PRoWs during the construction phase of the development, including the installation of safe crossing points and signage, temporary traffic lights/temporary management systems, training will be provided for all HGV staff on actions recommended by the British Horse Society, separation of plant equipment and pedestrian mechanisms (for example including Heras fencing as a barrier), enforcement of speed limit on tracks for all construction vehicles and information signage, leaflets etc advising on the development construction activity (plant, vehicles, and machinery) amongst other measures.

8.9.5 It is anticipated that the OAMP would be developed into a detailed Access (PROW) Management Plan by the Principal Contractor following the grant of planning permission.

8.9.6 The impacts to users of PRoWs will be minimised by the proposed mitigation measures set out in the OAMP. Where they do occur the effects will be minimal, short term and temporary. As such, it is not expected that changes to the PRoW will significantly impact the recreational use of the Site and the proposed development is compliant with BCBC RLDP Policy PLA9 in terms of gaining safe access to, and convenient use of, the PRoW.

8.10 Hydrology and Flood Risk

Flood Risk

8.10.1 PPW, supported by TAN15 (updated in 2025), sets out a precautionary framework to guide planning decisions. The overarching aim of the framework is to direct development away from the areas at high risk of flooding. The national policy direction is reflected in the LDPs - BCBC RLDP Policy SP4 and NPTC Policy SP1 both seek to direct development away from flood risk areas and to avoid development that increases the risk of flooding. TAN15 sets out that the Flood Map for Planning[54], published by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Flood Risk Assessment Wales[55] (FRAW) map together make up the Wales Flood Map. It explains that the Flood Map for Planning and the FRAW map are targeted at different users e.g. the FRAW displays present day risk, whereas the Flood Map for Planning indicates predicted future risk over the lifetime of development. TAN15 notes that the Flood Map for Planning is the starting point for consideration of flood risk in the planning system and uses flood zones to indicate the extent to which land is at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, surface water and small watercourses.

8.10.2 With respect to flooding from main rivers, the majority of the Site is located within Flood Zone 1, which is classified as having a less than 1 in 1000 (0.1%) risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, surface water and small watercourses in a given year. **ES Volume II, Chapter 6: Water**, identifies that a small section of the Site at Nant Fadog is designated as Flood Zone 3 (a greater than 1 in 100 or 1% chance of flooding in a given year), however, this flood risk is limited to the river channel only. The assessment also identifies that the risk of pluvial flooding to the Site from surface water and small watercourses is very low risk, albeit with localised high risk associated with the small watercourses which do not extend to any areas of built

[54] Natural Resources Wales / Flood map for planning / development advice map

[55] Geocortex Viewer for HTML5

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development. It should also be noted that renewable energy development is classified as 'Less Vulnerable Development' under TAN 15.

8.10.3 The assessment notes that whilst climate change will likely cause increased and more frequent precipitation raising river levels, it is anticipated that it would not increase the fluvial or pluvial flood risk at the Site based upon modelled risk. This confirms that the Flood Zone 3 designation would remain in the channel of the mapped watercourses.

8.10.4 Notwithstanding this, a site-specific Flood Consequences Assessment (FCA) and Surface Water Drainage Assessment (**ES Volume III, Appendix 6.2**) has been prepared as part of the ES. The FCA concludes that:

- As the Proposed Development is located outside of the fluvial and tidal floodplains there is no requirement from a flood risk perspective to raise components above a designated flood level;
- Earthworks are required surrounding the Substation and the BESS compound. Given the low flood risk category for the Site and the proposed extent of works, it is considered that this would not result in the displacement of flood water elsewhere;
- A development easement of 15m (minimum) has been incorporated into the proposed design between the Proposed Development and the watercourses to allow for access and maintenance of the watercourses if required;
- Two crossing points of existing ordinary watercourses will be required on-site. The crossing points have been assessed using the Water Crossing Baseline Assessment, set out in **ES Volume III, Appendix 6.1;** and,
- The two proposed access points to the Site are within Flood Zone 1 and as such, safe access and egress can be sought at all times.

8.10.5 On this basis, the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with PPW, TAN15, RLDP Policy SP4 and NPTC Policy SP1 with respect to flood risk associated with the Proposed Development.

Sustainable Water Drainage Assessment

8.10.6 The FCA includes a Surface Water Drainage Assessment, which outlines that the Proposed Development will comprise small areas of hardstanding from the BESS compound, substation, panel posts, solar transformer bases and wind turbine foundations. As such, a suitable surface water drainage strategy has been developed to control the additional quantities of runoff entering the nearby watercourses and to ensure that the rate of run-off from the Proposed Development is no greater than that prior to development. The proposed SuDs allow the quality of water to be managed at source, prior to any discharge, thereby helping to prevent any reduction in water quality in aquifers or watercourses downstream of the Site.

8.10.7 In accordance with the SuDS Statutory Guidance[56], which outlines that the first choice of surface water disposal should be to discharge to an adequate soakaway or infiltration system. Infiltration to ground is not considered possible, due to the local geology (which has a low

[56] https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/statutory-guidance.pdf

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permeability) and a shallow groundwater table, as well as the potential for contaminated fire water to impact aquifers, in the unlikely event of a fire within the BESS compound. Surface water on-site will be managed through conveyance towards the proposed point of discharge, directly to the watercourse. This is in line with the drainage hierarchy; as the Site already drains naturally towards these watercourses it utilises the existing setup to mimic the natural scenario.

8.10.8 Sufficient attenuation will be provided for all events up to the 1 in 100 year event inclusive of 30% climate change (as a worst case scenario). This includes a lined gravel subbase surrounding the BESS components of the scheme, as well as cut off swales along the downslope perimeter of the solar panel areas and a gravel filled drainage trench from the transformer stations and swales adjacent to the access roads to ensure that any additional volumes of runoff are captured and managed before discharging to the nearby watercourses. This is in accordance with the requirements of SUDs guidance, PPW, TAN15, BCBC RLDP Policy SP4 and NPTC Policy BE1(9) with respect to hydrology and flood risk matters.

8.11 Land and Soils

8.11.1 This section of the PDAS addresses the effects of the Proposed Development on land, soil and groundwater receptors. **ES Volume II, Chapter 5: Land and Soils** addresses the likely significant impacts of the Proposed Development upon land, soil and groundwater. Information on the EIA study area was compiled using data gathered within a desk study and verified by a programme of fieldwork.

Soils

8.11.2 PPW outlines that planning permission should not be given for peat extraction unless in wholly exceptional circumstances. BCBC RLDP Policy SP17 states that development proposals will not be permitted where they have an adverse impact on the quality of the Borough's soil.

8.11.3 Extensive peat depth probing has been undertaken across the Site(**ES Volume III, Appendix 5.3: Depth of Penetration Survey)**, including targeted investigation at the proposed locations of infrastructure and along the proposed access tracks. Of the 2,213 locations probed, only one probe result was classified as peat soils; this location does not extend to any of the locations with proposed infrastructure.

8.11.4 Measures to manage any potential damage to soil are set out in **ES Volume III, Appendix 5.4: Outline Soil Management Plan;** this will be worked into detailed Soil Management Plan which will be followed by the Principal Contractor (secured by planning condition). It will include measures such as identifying areas of the Site where soils might be more susceptible to damage, defining when soils can be handled or driven over, and use of designated routes for vehicles. On this basis the proposal is in accordance with PPW and BCBC RLDP Policy SP17.

Ground Conditions

8.11.5 NPTC LDP Policy SP16 requires that the quality of the environment will be protected and proposals should have no significant adverse effects on ground quality.

8.11.6 **ES Volume III, Appendix 5.1: Preliminary Risk Assessment** considers existing and potential sources of contamination within the Site alongside ground and mine gas risks. A Coal Mining Risk Assessment has also been completed, and is presented in **ES Volume III, Appendix 5.2:Coal Mining Risk Assessment**. These documents both include recommendations for

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intrusive site investigation phases of work, which will be completed under condition[57], and reported to the local authority and Mining Remediation Authority (formerly known as the Coal Authority). If remediation is required the scope of this, and any necessary verification, will also be agreed with the statutory consultees.

8.11.7 ES Chapter 5 outlines that any potential effects on groundwater will be protected by the measures within the Outline CEMP (**ES Volume III, Appendix 2.1: Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan).**

8.11.8 On the basis of the aforementioned assessment, the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with Future Wales Policy 18, BCBC RLDP Policy DNP9 and NPTC LDP Policy SP18.

8.12 Minerals Safeguarding

8.12.1 The Site lies within a mineral resource safeguarding area under both BCBC and NPTC LDPs (sandstone, sandstone and igneous rock and sand and gravel). Policy ENT12 of BCBC RLDP requires that development proposals within minerals safeguarding areas will only be permitted where, for temporary development, the proposal can be implemented and the site restored within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be required. Policy M1 of NPTC LDP also allows development within minerals safeguarding areas where it satisfies one of five criteria, which includes the same provision as Policy ENT12 of BCBC RLDP (i.e. the proposal is temporary development and the site would be restored within the timeframe that the mineral is likely to be needed).

8.12.2 The South Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party (SWRAWP) released the annual report for 2022 in September 2024[58]. Correspondence with SWRAWP has confirmed that this report contains the latest figures for mineral supply and demand in the region at the time of the writing of this PDAS. The region covers both BCBC and NPTBC administrative areas, wherein the Site is located.

8.12.3 The 2022 annual report concludes that the total sales of primary aggregate decreased by 9.8% in 2022, as compared to 2021. The report states that sales of crushed rock (including sandstone) decreased markedly (by 520,000 tonnes) as compared to the previous year. The report also notes that with respect to supply, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot Minerals Authorities each has a crushed rock reserve landbank in excess of 50 years. Given the extent of supply relative to demand and that the expected operational life of the Proposed Development is 50 years, it is considered that the Proposed Development will not materially impact the provision of mineral resource and therefore it is in accordance with Policies ENT12 and M1 of the respective LDPs.

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[57] Such conditions were imposed on recent decisions DNS/3270299 and DNS/3239181

[58] SWRAWP_Annual_Report_2022_Final.pdf

9 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Planning Balance

9.1.1 The fundamental test to be applied in the decision-making process is whether, on balance, the Proposed Development is in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Development Plan (Future Wales, BCBC RLDP and NPTC LDP) and other material considerations, including PPW12.

9.1.2 The main issues in addressing the planning balance are considered to be:

- Accordance with the Development Plan;
- Material considerations including:
  - Any residual 'significant' effects of the Proposed Development; and
  - The benefits of the scheme.

9.2 Accordance with the Development Plan

9.2.1 This policy assessment has considered the key planning issues associated with the Proposed Development. The principle of the Proposed Development is unequivocally supported by national and local planning policy and guidance.

9.2.2 Policy 17 of Future Wales provides strong support for the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy and requires decision makers to give significant weight to the need to meet Wales' international commitments, and to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and the target to generate 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030 (being a higher percentage target being consulted upon)[59].

9.2.3 Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects qualifying as DNS will be permitted subject to Policy 17 of Future Wales and the criteria set out in Policy 18 of Future Wales, which are summarised in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1: Future Wales Policy 18 Assessment

Criterion		Summary
1	Outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas (PAAs) for wind developments and everywhere for all other technologies, the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	The Site is located in 1.75km from the defined PAA no 9. The Proposed Development comprises a range of renewable technologies (wind, solar and BESS) and therefore must be considered in relation to the provisions of Policy 18. The LVIA concludes that there would be no significant effects to nationally designated landscapes and locally

[59] Noting that as identified in section 7 of this PDAS, the Welsh Government has subsequently published a consultation to amend its renewable energy targets including the commitment that 100% of Wales' electricity will come from renewable energy sources by 2035.

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		significant landscape impacts are largely limited to a 10km distance from the site, due to the wind turbines; the solar, BESS and Substation elements are unlikely to have effects beyond 3km due to them being more easily screened. It is generally accepted that applications including wind turbines will generate some degree of significant landscape effects, but in this instance, these impacts are considered acceptable, particularly given the context of the site being allocated as a LSA for large scale wind development in BCBC RLDP.
2	There are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individual dwellings	Overall, whilst there are some significant visual impacts concluded on nearby sensitive receptors, including residential properties, from the Proposed Development these are not 'unacceptable' to the extent that these are considered not to be 'overbearing' in line with RVAA guidance .
3	There are no adverse effects on the integrity of Internationally designated sites (including National Site Network sites and Ramsar sites) and the features for which they have been designated (unless there are no alternative solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and appropriate compensatory measures have been secured).	The Proposed Development would not have an adverse effect upon the integrity of internationally designated sites, as set out in Chapters 10 and 11 of the ES.
4	There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on national statutory designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated), protected habitats and species.	The Proposed Development has been carefully designed to avoid any impacts on national statutory designated sites for nature conservation and the features for which they have been designated, as well as protected habitats and species, as set out in ES Chapters 10 and 11. In accordance with the proposed mitigation, the Proposed Development would not have any unacceptable adverse impacts on the designated sites, protected habitats and species.
5	The proposal includes biodiversity enhancement measures to provide a net benefit for biodiversity.	The Proposed Development would include enhancement measures to benefit habitats and protected species, as set out in the submitted Net Benefit Report (ES Volume III, Appendix 11.4):
6	There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on statutorily protected built heritage assets.	The Cultural Heritage Chapter of the ES assesses the Proposed Development's impact on the historic environment. It concludes that there would be significant impacts, in EIA terms, on three scheduled monuments however impacts would not have a "*demonstrably and unacceptably damaging effect upon its setting*" and thus these impacts are considered acceptable in the context of this policy.
7	There are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of shadow flicker, noise, reflected light, air quality or electromagnetic disturbance.	Due to the nature of the development there will be no unacceptable adverse impacts with respect to electromagnetic disturbance or air quality.

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		The submitted Shadow Flicker Assessment confirms that there would be no unacceptable adverse impacts from Shadow Flicker on any neighbouring residents. A Shadow Flicker mitigation protocol is also proposed. The submitted noise impact assessment confirms that the predicted noise effects from all infrastructure would be below accepted levels during daytime and night-time hours. The submitted Glint and Glare Report confirms that there will be no unacceptable adverse impacts in terms of reflected light from the solar panels or associated equipment.
8	There are no unacceptable impacts on the operations of defence facilities and operations (including aviation and radar) or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area (TTA-7T).	The aviation assessment identifies that any potential effects on aviation would likely be limited to radar at Cardiff Airport, but a radar mitigation scheme could be conditioned, pursuant to the grant of planning permission. Visible aviation lighting will also be provided to delineate the wind turbines. On this basis, there are no considered to be any unacceptable impacts on the operations of defence facilities and operations or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area.
9	There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the transport network through the transportation of components or source fuels during its construction and/or ongoing operation.	The Traffic and Highways Chapter of the ES concludes that spare capacity exists within the local road network to accommodate the proposed construction and decommissioning traffic and no transport capacity issues are anticipated during construction or operation.
10	The proposal includes consideration of the materials needed or generated by the development to ensure the sustainable use and management of resources.	The general principles of waste minimisation are to design proposals sustainably, to reduce the amount of waste generated, conserve natural resources and re-use waste materials and recycle materials where possible. The Proposed Development has been through an iterative design process and as a result, incorporates suitable measures to minimise the generation of waste. The excavated material from the turbine foundations and access tracks will be re-used where practical on-site for creating the required levels for the infrastructure and restoration and reinstatement. Suitable mitigation measures during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development will be implemented to ensure that wastage of materials is minimised and carefully managed.
11	There are acceptable provisions relating to the decommissioning of the development at the	The Proposed Development is anticipated to have an operational lifetime of up to 50 years after the date on

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	end of its lifetime, including the removal of infrastructure and effective restoration.	which electricity is first exported to the National Grid, with the site returned to its original state and use thereafter.
The cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered.		An assessment of the potential cumulative impact of the Proposed Development relative to existing and consented schemes has demonstrated that it would not represent an unacceptable cumulative impact.

9.2.4 In light of the preceding planning assessment in Chapter 8, it is considered that the Proposed Development complies with all the criteria set out in Policies 17 and 18 of Future Wales, which provides the primary decision-making framework for renewable and low carbon technologies.

9.2.5 In addition to the criteria in Policy 18, the Proposed Development is also considered to accord with Policy 9 of Future Wales and other policy considerations, including PPW and the BCBC's RLDP and NPTC's LDP and emerging planning policy in the RLDP.

9.2.6 The Proposed Development is therefore clearly acceptable in relation to the policy tests set by the Development Plan and should be approved accordingly.

Alignment with WBFG Act

9.2.7 Section 5 of PPW highlights that consideration should be given where contribution is being made to each of the seven goals of the WBFG Act:

- (A Prosperous Wales) - Investment in renewable and low carbon energy sources.
- (A Resilient Wales) – Renewable energy generation.
- (A Healthier Wales) – Reduction in emissions and air pollution as a result of generating energy from non-carbon sources. Greater distribution of economic wealth can also alleviate poverty which is a key determinant of health.
- (A More Equal Wales) – Promotion of sufficient employment and enterprise opportunities for people to realise their potential and by recognising and building on the existing economic strengths of places to assist in delivering prosperity for all.
- (A Wales of Cohesive Communities) – Created by people who have access to fulfilling work.
- (A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language) – Supported by the provision of jobs and economic activity.
- (A Globally Responsive Wales) – Reduction of carbon footprint through the promotion of renewable energy over carbon emitting sources and resource choices through which multiple benefits can be realised.

9.2.8 As such, through the benefits of the Proposed Development (including renewable generation and carbon savings, economic impact and job creation) the proposal is considered to be in accordance with all seven of the Well-being goals as set out in the WBFG Act.

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9.3 Material Considerations

Residual 'significant' adverse effects of the Proposed Development

9.3.1 The iterative design process and proposed mitigation measures has successfully minimised and reduced significant conclusions. A Development of National Significance is likely to result in some residual significant impacts, as detailed below.

9.3.2 **ES Chapter 8 (Volume II): Landscape and Visual** conclude the following residual significant landscape and visual effects, predominately resulting from the proposed wind turbines, rather than the solar, BESS or substation elements of the Proposed Development:

- Landscape impacts on some 'Visual and Sensory Landscape Aspect Areas' within 5km of the site;
- Landscape impacts on the host SLA, Western Uplands;
- Visual impacts 4 settlements within c.3km of the Site, albeit it is noted that this is generally limited to the extents of the settlements where more open views are possible;
- Visual impacts on users of the Ogwr Ridgeway Walk which passes through the site and partial locations along adjacent highways to the north and south;
- Significant visual impacts on a number of individual properties and property clusters, up to a distance of 2km, albeit noting that none of the impacts trigger the RVAT at which residential amenity can be affected.

9.3.3 **ES Chapter 7 (Volume II): Cultural Heritage** concludes that there would be a residual significant impact on three scheduled monument, however, the level of change is considered only to be moderate and it is considered the Proposed Development would not have a "*demonstrably and unacceptably damaging effect*" upon their setting.

Benefits of the Proposed Development

Renewable Generation and Emissions Savings

9.3.4 **ES Chapter 14 (Volume II), Climate Change**, sets out the renewable energy and emissions savings benefits as follows:

- The Proposed Scheme would make a significant contribution (98MW) to the attainment of the UK and Welsh Government policies of encouraging renewable energy developments; and in turn would contribute to the achievement of UK and Welsh Government targets[60].

- [60] As outlined in Chapter 7, The Welsh Government has committed to attaining Net Zero by 2050. In addition, a key medium term Welsh Government target is to generate 100% of consumed electricity by renewable sources by 2035. The Government has

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- It is estimated that the average annual generation expected from the Proposed Development would be equivalent to the approximate domestic needs of around 60,775 average UK households.

- Based on present day carbon dioxide savings figures, the Proposed Development will save the emission of around 88,367 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually against fossil fuel electricity generation and 49,796 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, against grid-mix electricity generation. This is the equivalent of a total of 4,218,920 tonnes of carbon dioxide savings against a fossil fuel mix of electricity and a total of 2,290,363 tonnes of carbon dioxide savings against a grid mix of electricity generation across the 50 year life span of the Proposed Development. As set out in the ES, the overall emissions impact is therefore considered to represent a significant and beneficial climate change effect which is long-term, direct and permanent. Consequently, the Proposed Scheme makes a significant contributes towards Wales' emissions reduction targets as set out in the Environment Wales Act 2016.

- Battery storage is proposed as part of the development. This will be able to store excess power generated by the wind turbines and solar array and release the power on to the grid when the wind drops and, in the case of the solar energy, in the hours of darkness. Inclusion of a battery within the scheme significantly increases the sustainability of the power generated. Energy storage will increasingly enable renewable integration, help to balance supply and demand and enhance security of supply.

Security of Supply

- Reducing Wales' and the wider UK's dependency on hydrocarbons has important security of supply, electricity cost and fuel poverty avoidance benefits. Those actions already urgently required in the fight against climate change are now also required for global political stability and insulation against dependencies on rogue nation states.

Biodiversity Benefits

9.3.5 **ES Volume II, Chapter 10 : Terrestrial Ecology** and **Chapter 11: Ornithology** set out the following benefits of the Proposed Development:

- 28ha of Woodland planting;

- 2.89km of Hedgerow planting;

- 62ha of grassland management to provide habitat for ground nesting birds and grassland fungi;

- 12.5ha of grassland will be enhanced to improve existing habitat for Marsh Fritillary;

- Management of Invasive Non-Native Species; and.

made it clear that large scale onshore wind and solar development plays an important role in the attainment of future targets in relation to helping to combat the crisis of global heating.

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- Bat boxes installed on site.

Economic, Employment and Community Socio-Economic Benefits

9.3.6 The Proposed Scheme would generate economic benefits both during its development and construction and during its operation and maintenance.

Construction Phase

9.3.7 During the development and construction phase, the Proposed Development will bring direct economic benefits to the local area, including job opportunities (both from the construction and operation of the Energy Farm and via the supply chain). The Proposed Development is also likely to influence local expenditure by workers employed on the project. **ES Chapter 13 (Volume II), Population,** sets out that the construction phase of the Proposed Development is estimated to deliver:

- 215 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs in Wales and 145 FTW jobs in the local area (direct and indirect) during the construction phase of development. There will be a wide range of employment roles, including civil construction, electrical and mechanical, specialised wind energy installation professionals and non-construction supporting roles such as security, process, administrative and transport roles. Where possible, materials for the construction works will be sourced from local suppliers.

- An estimated £9.5 million in Gross Valued Added (GVA), generated annually from the Proposed Development across Wales, which is inclusive of an estimated £1.8 million in GVA across the local area.

Operational Phase

9.3.8 The operation of the Energy Park is expected to deliver:

- Approximately 429 FTE (direct and indirect) jobs in Wales and/or the local area. These are likely to be electrical engineering roles as well as site management/maintenance and administrative and security positions. Due to the 50 year lifespan of the operational phase of development, these job roles and the required skills can be passed through generations of the local workforce, creating job security.

- An estimated £522,000 in direct GVA, generated annually from the Proposed Development across Wales and a further estimated £96,000 in GVA annually across the local area.

9.3.9 A S106 financial contribution is also proposed to be spent on PRoW enhancements across the site, and a permissive footpath is proposed along part of the on-site access tracks to improve access, particularly during wetter months.

9.3.10 Further, during the operation, there are opportunities for additional benefits through a return on investment from a potential shared ownership model.

9.4 Conclusion

9.4.1 Future Wales is clear that decision makers must give *'significant weight'* to Wales' need to meet its international commitments, and its target of generating 100% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2035. Future Wales is the latest expression of national planning policy.

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Due to the significant contribution that the Proposed Development will make to meeting Wales' renewable energy targets and net zero objectives, it is considered to be fully compliant with Policy 17 of Future Wales.

9.4.2 This Statement, alongside the wider application documentation, clearly sets out how the Proposed Development will also accord with Policy 18 of Future Wales through a consideration of each of the 11 criteria set out in the policy supported by a robust assessment of the likely environmental effects of the proposals. In each case, there is considered to be no conflict with the policy objectives of Future Wales.

9.4.3 The Proposed Development is also considered to be in accordance with BCBC RLDP and NPTC LDP, with the majority of the site having been allocated as suitable for wind energy development.

9.4.4 It has therefore been demonstrated that the Proposed Development accords with the Development Plan and the principle of the Proposed Development is acceptable. There is a substantial need for this type of development and the benefits weigh significantly in its favour.

9.4.5 While the effects assessment undertaken by the ES Chapters has concluded that there are some residual 'significant' adverse effects in respect of landscape and visual and heritage, it is considered that these are ultimately acceptable in light of the broader policy framework set out in Future Wales.

9.4.6 Overall it is concluded that the benefits of the scheme demonstrably outweigh the limited impacts and the Proposed Development is in accordance with national and local planning policy, when taken as a whole, and other material considerations weigh significantly in favour, including PPW, the UK/Welsh energy framework and the WBFG Act. Accordingly, this DNS application should be approved.

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PLANNING FIGURES

Table 1: Planning Application Figures

Figure ID	Figure Title	Scale
Fig1.2: Planning Application Boundary	Figure 1.2: Planning Application Boundary	1:15000
Fig1.1: Site Context	Figure 1.1: Site Context	1:25000
Fig2.1: Proposed Development Layout	Figure 2.1: Proposed Development Layout	1:15000
Fig2.1A: Proposed Development Layout Inset A	Figure 2.1A: Proposed Development Layout Inset A	1:5000
Fig2.1B: Proposed Development Layout Inset B	Figure 2.1B: Proposed Development Layout Inset B	1:5000
Fig2.1C: Proposed Development Layout Inset C	Figure 2.1C: Proposed Development Layout Inset C	1:5000
Figu2.1D: Proposed Development Layout Inset D	Figure 2.1D: Proposed Development Layout Inset D	1:5000
Fig2.1E: Proposed Development Layout Inset E	Figure 2.1E: Proposed Development Layout Inset E	1:5000
Fig2.1F: Proposed Development Layout Inset F	Figure 2.1F: Proposed Development Layout Inset F	1:5000
Fig2.1G: Proposed Development Layout Inset G	Figure 2.1G: Proposed Development Layout Inset G	1:5000
Fig2.1H: Proposed Development Layout Inset H	Figure 2.1H: Proposed Development Layout Inset H	1:5000
Fig2.2: Indicative Earthworks Requirements	Figure 2.2: Indicative Earthworks Requirements	1:15000
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-3 Typical_Turbine_Elevation	Figure 2.3: Typical Turbine Elevation	1:1250
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-4 Typical Turbine Foundation	Figure 2.4 Typical Turbine Foundation	1:250
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-5 Typical Crane Hardstanding	Figure 2.5 Typical Crane Hardstanding	1:1250
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-6 Solar Panel Elevations and Plan View	Figure 2.6: Typical Solar Panel Elevations and Plan View	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-7 Solar Transformer Substation	Figure 2.7: Solar Transformer Plan and Elevations	1:100

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P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-9 BESS Compound Sections	Figure 2.9: BESS Compound Sections	1:500
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-10 BESS Container Plan and Elevations	Figure 2.10: BESS Container Plan and Elevations	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-11 BESS Inverter & Transformer Plan and Elevations	Figure 2.11: BESS Invertor and Transformer Plan and Elevations	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-12 BESS Switchroom Plan and Elevations	Figure 2.12: BESS Switchroom Plan and Elevations	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-13 BESS Spares Container Plan and Elevations	Figure 2.13: BESS Spares Container Plan and Elevations	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-14 BESS DNO Cabin Plan and Elevations	Figure 2.14: BESS DNO Cabin Plan and Elevations	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-15 BESS Water Tank Plan and Elevations	Figure 2.15: BESS Water Tank Plan and Elevations	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-16 BESS LV Room, Welfare & Control Plan	Figure 2.16: BESS LV Room, Welfare & Control Plan	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-17 BESS Aux & Earth Transformer Plan	Figure 2.17: BESS Aux & Earth Transformer Plan	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-18 Substation Layout Plan	Figure 2.18: Substation Layout Plan	1:500
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P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-20 Solar Fencing and Gate	Figure 2.20: Solar Fencing and Gate	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-21 BESS and Substation Fencing and Gate	Figure 2.21: BESS and Substation Fencing and Gate	1:100
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-22a Temporary Construction Compound	Figure 2.22a: Indicative Temporary Construction Compound	1:500
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P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-23 Typical Access Track Cross Section	Figure 2.23: Typical Access Track Cross Section	1:100

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P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-24 Indicative Cable Trench Arrangement	Figure 2.24: Indicative Cable Trench Arrangement	1:10
P663870_Illustrations_Fig2-25 Indicative Watercourse Crossing	Figure 2.25: Indicative Watercourse Crossings	1:500
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APPENDIX 2: RELEVANT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK POLICIES

Table 1: Bridgend County Borough Local Development Plan 2018 - 2033 (Adopted March 2024)

Policy Number	Policy Title	Policy Text
SP3	Good Design and Sustainable Placemaking	All development must contribute to creating high quality, attractive, sustainable places that support active and healthy lives and enhance the community in which they are located, whilst having full regard to the natural, historic and built environment, by: 1) Demonstrating alignment with the principles of Good Design; and 2) Demonstrating a Sustainable Placemaking approach to their siting, design, construction and operation. Planning applications must be supported through the submission of appropriate design and technical information to demonstrate compliance with criteria a) to o). All development must: a) Have a design of the highest quality possible, whilst respecting and enhancing local distinctiveness and landscape character; b) Be appropriate to its local context in terms of size, scale, height, massing, elevational treatment, materials and detailing, layout, form, mix and density; c) Use land efficiently by being of a density which maximises the development potential of the land whilst respecting that of the surrounding development; d) Provide for an appropriate mix of land uses to promote compact, walkable urban neighbourhoods; e) Maximise opportunities for active travel and increased public transport use and promote connections within and outside the site to ensure efficient and equality of access for all; f) Minimise opportunities for crime to be generated or increased, whilst promoting community safety in accordance with Secured by Design principles; g) Avoid or minimise noise, air, and soil and water pollution; h) Incorporate methods to ensure the site is free from contamination (including invasive species); i) Safeguard and enhance biodiversity and integrated multi-functional green infrastructure networks; j) Make sustainable use of natural resources, including land and water, and adopt circular economy principles that: i. prioritise locally sourced construction materials to help reduce transport emissions

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		ii. Demonstrate that consideration has been given to the use of secondary recycled aggregates or materials before using primary materials to help ensure the availability of materials in the long term; k) Ensure that the viability and amenity of neighbouring uses and their users/occupiers will not be adversely affected; l) Incorporate appropriate arrangements for the disposal of foul sewage, waste and water; m) Respond to the climate emergency by: i. Reducing energy demands and maximising opportunities for renewable or low carbon energy generation, incorporating resource efficient/adaptable buildings and layouts using sustainable design and construction techniques ii. Protecting and increasing the resilience of both ecosystems and communities to address the inevitable effects of climate change; and n) Include the provision of high-speed digital infrastructure from the outset; and o) Appropriately contribute towards local, physical, social and community infrastructure which is affected by the development. Strategic Allocations must be developed in line with site specific policies and associated masterplan development principles set out within the Replacement LDP. A detailed masterplan will need to be developed in line with this and agreed with the Council prior to development commencing. A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment must accompany development proposals on allocated sites with identified likely significant adverse effects (pre-mitigation) in relation to SA Objective 14 (Landscape).
SP4	Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change	All development proposals must make a positive contribution towards tackling the causes of, and adapting to the impacts of Climate Change. Means of achieving this may include: 1) Having a location and layout which reflects sustainable transport and access principles, thereby reducing the overall need to travel (active travel); 2) Having low / zero carbon energy requirements by reducing energy demand, and promoting energy efficiency; 3) Utilising low carbon, local materials and supplies (adopting circular economy principles); 4) Encouraging the development of renewable and low/zero carbon energy generation; 5) Having a design, layout and landscaping which: a. helps wildlife and habitats to adapt to the changing climate;

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		b. assists cooling of the urban environment, including the use of passive building techniques where appropriate; 6) Using resources more efficiently, including averting waste generated from demolition and minimising waste water use and pollution; 7) Directing development away from flood risk areas, and avoiding development that increases the risk of flood and coastal erosion, including through the deployment of sustainable urban drainage systems where relevant. All applications for development proposals must clearly demonstrate how they contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption.
SP5	Sustainable Transport and Accessibility	Development must be located and designed in a way that minimises the need to travel, reduces dependency on the private car and enables sustainable access to employment, education, local services and community facilities. Development must also be supported by appropriate transport measures and infrastructure, and depending on the nature, scale and siting of the proposal will be required to: 1) Accord with the sustainable transport hierarchy for planning (as set out in PPW); 2) Be designed to provide safe and efficient access to the transport network, which includes the active travel, public transport and street networks; 3) Safeguard, enhance and expand the active travel networks identified in the Council's Existing Routes Map and ATNM, including links to those networks as a means of improving connectivity; 4) Prioritise the delivery of the key transport measures and schemes identified in the Bridgend Local Transport Plan, which must be delivered in an efficient and timely manner in accordance with land use development. This includes resolving localised junction capacity issues where they restrain growth; 5) Reduce reliance on private car use by maximising the potential of movement to/from the development by public transport, including for the urban area ensuring developments are served by walking routes to public transport networks; 6) Adopt a placemaking approach in the identification, design and delivery of all transport measures in order to maximise their contribution to sustainable development; 7) Provide new transport infrastructure and improvement measures to mitigate the impact of the development and demonstrate the level and acceptability of impacts on the surrounding road network; 8) Help to reduce transport related airborne pollution by enabling more sustainable travel choices and reducing the demand for travel by car; and 9) Ensure that developments are served by appropriate parking provision, in accordance with the Council's parking guidance, including infrastructure which caters

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		for future technological developments such as electric vehicle charging points, and circulation areas, including adequate road widths to allow access for service vehicles. Development that would have a negative impact on the safe and efficient operation of the transport network will not be permitted.
SP13	Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development	1) Renewable and low carbon development proposals which contribute to meeting national and local renewable and low carbon energy and energy efficiency targets will be permitted where: a. It can be demonstrated that there will be no unacceptable impacts on the natural and historic environment or local communities (such as noise and air pollution) and that no other unacceptable cumulative impacts will arise; b. The proposal (inclusive of its associated infrastructure) has sought to minimise the landscape and visual impact through its design and micro-siting, particularly where in close proximity to homes and tourism receptors; c. Proposals make provision for the appropriate restoration and after-care of the land for its beneficial future re-use; d. The proposal can facilitate a connection to the grid network; e. There would not be an unacceptable impact on access and highway safety; and f. There would not be unacceptable impact on the amenity of residential properties or tourist accommodation. 2) The following Local Search Areas (LSAs) are identified as areas considered suitable for wind and solar energy development: a. LCA1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands & Forestry (Suitable for Wind Energy); b. LCA8: Ogmore Forest and Surrounding Uplands (Suitable for Wind Energy); and c. LCA 12: Newton Down Limestone Plateau (Suitable for Solar Energy). Within the Local Search Areas (LSA), proposals for wind and solar energy generation will be permitted subject to criteria 1a), 1b), 1c), 1d), 1e) and f) and other relevant policies in this plan. LSA 8 is partly located within Pre-Assessed Area 9 for Wind Energy. In accordance with the hierarchical approach of national planning policy, any proposal within this area should not prejudice the ability for large scale wind developments (>10MW) to come forward. Landscape considerations have already been taken into account in Future Wales and Criteria 1(b) should not apply to those parts of LSA 8 within Pre-Assessed Area 9. Proposals for other development within these areas will only be permitted where they can demonstrate that they would not unacceptably prejudice the renewable energy generation

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		potential of the LSA and the Future Wales' Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy.
SP17	Conservation and Enhancement of the Natural Environment	The County Borough has a rich and varied biodiversity with a broad range of species, habitats and unique, rich landscapes. In particular, these include the nationally important Glamorgan Heritage Coast, the outstanding historic landscapes of Kenfig and Merthyr Mawr Warren, and other regionally and locally important areas. Development which will maintain and, wherever possible, enhance the natural environment of the County Borough will be favoured. Development proposals will not be permitted where they will have an adverse impact upon: 1) The integrity of the County Borough's countryside; 2) The character of its landscape; 3) Its biodiversity and habitats; and 4) The quality of its natural resources including water, air and soil. Areas having a high and/or unique environmental quality will be protected and the following strategically important areas within the County Borough will specifically be protected from inappropriate development which directly or indirectly impacts upon them: SP17(1) National Site Network Sites (including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); SP17(2) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); SP17(3) Kenfig and Merthyr Mawr National Nature Reserves (NNRs); SP17(4) The Glamorgan Heritage Coast; SP17(5) Mynydd Margam Registered Historic Landscape. The weight to be afforded to environmental designations in the determination of relevant planning applications will be based on their statutory or non-statutory status and geographical scale of designation. Proposals likely to have direct or indirect adverse effects on Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites, must be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). This includes development proposals on allocated sites where this plan indicates a project level HRA is required and any other development proposals likely to have adverse effects on SACs/SPAs/Ramsar sites. In addition, any proposals that could affect the habitat of marsh fritillary butterfly within 2km of Cefn Cribwr Grasslands SAC, as illustrated on the Policies Map, must be subject to HRA. Development requiring HRA will only be allowed where it can be determined through HRA that: a) taking into account mitigation, the proposal would not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the SACs/SPAs/Ramsar sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects; or b) HRA proves there are no alternatives and that the development is of overriding public interest and appropriate compensatory measures are provided

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		Proposals within or affecting a SSSI must demonstrate how they safeguard, support or where possible enhance identified special features of the designation. The importance and features of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and local wildlife sites must also be considered as appropriate in the determination of relevant planning applications (refer to DNP5).
PLA8	Transportation Proposals	The following transportation proposals are allocated and safeguarded from development that would prevent their implementation: PLA8 (1) Bus improvements along the Llynfi, Garw, Ogmore, Aberkenfig – Bryncethin, Pyle – Aberkenfig, Pencoed – Pyle and Porthcawl – Cornelly Corridor, including a new bus interchange at Porthcawl PLA8 (2) New transport interchange at Porthcawl PLA8 (3) Improvements to the capacity of the Maesteg – Bridgend railway line PLA8 (4) New railway station with park and ride facility at Brackla, Bridgend PLA8 (5) Expand existing park and ride facility at Pencoed PLA8 (6) Expand/relocate existing railway station including strategic park and ride facilities at Pyle PLA8 (7) New transport interchange at Ewenny Road, Maesteg PLA8 (8) Improvements at Ewenny and Broadland roundabouts, A48, Bridgend PLA8 (9) Capacity enhancements between Waterton and Laleston, A48 / A473, Bridgend PLA8 (10) Improvements to A4063 between Sarn and Maesteg PLA8 (11) Improvements to Penprysg Road Bridge, Pencoed PLA8 (12) Highway improvement works in the form of corridor or junction improvement schemes will be required to mitigate the impact of development on the highway network
PLA9	Development affecting Public Rights of Way	As part of adopting a sustainable placemaking approach, development must link with and seek to minimise impacts on the PROW network. Any predicted adverse impacts on the character, safety, enjoyment and convenient use of a PROW must be mitigated.
ENT12	Development in Mineral Safeguarding Zones	Development proposals within mineral safeguarding areas, either permanent or temporary, must demonstrate that: 1) If permanent development, the mineral can be extracted prior to the development, and/or the mineral is present in such limited quantity or quality to make extraction of no or little value as a finite resource; and 2) In the case of residential development, the scale and location of the development e.g. limited infill/house extensions, would have no significant impact on the possible working of the resource; and 3) In the case of temporary development, it can be implemented and the site restored within the timescale the mineral is likely to be required

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DNP1	Development in the Countryside	All development outside defined settlement boundaries must ensure that the integrity of the countryside is conserved and enhanced. There is a presumption against development in the countryside, except where it is for: 1) Agriculture and/or forestry purposes; 2) The winning and working of minerals; 3) Appropriate rural enterprises where a countryside location is necessary for the development; 4) The implementation of an appropriate rural enterprise/ farm diversification project; 5) The expansion of an existing business (subject to other relevant policies in the plan); 6) Land reclamation purposes; 7) Transportation and/or utilities infrastructure to enable implementation of LDP allocations; 8) Renewable energy projects; 9) Affordable housing to meet locally identified need in accordance with COM5; 10) The suitable conversion of, and limited extension to, existing structurally sound rural buildings where the development is modest in scale and clearly subordinate to the original structure; 11) The direct replacement of an existing dwelling; 12) Outdoor recreational and sporting activities; 13) The provision of Gypsy, Traveller and Showperson sites in accordance with COM8; or 14) Education provision where a need has been identified by the Local Education Authority. Countryside development must be of a sustainable form with prudent management of natural resources and respect for the cultural heritage of the area. Where development is acceptable in principle in the countryside it must, in the first instance and where possible, utilise existing buildings and previously developed land. Where such an opportunity to re-use a rural building does exist, development must be in accord with DNP2.
DNP4	Special Landscape Areas	The following areas are designated as Special Landscape Areas (SLAs): DNP4(1) Foel y Dyffryn DNP4(2) Northern Uplands DNP4(3) Western Uplands DNP4(4) Bryngarw Country Park DNP4(5) Mynydd y Gaer DNP4(6) Kenfig Burrows DNP4(7) Laleston DNP4(8) Porthcawl Coast DNP4(9) Merthyr Mawr Warren Development in SLAs will only be permitted where:

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		1) It retains or enhances the character and distinctiveness of the SLA; 2) The design of the development reflects the building traditions of the locality in its form, materials and details, and/or assimilates itself into the wider landscape; and 3) The proposed development is accompanied by a Landscape Impact Assessment (LIA), which takes into account the impact of the development and sets out proposals to mitigate any adverse effects. Where development is necessary, and could result in a significant landscape impact, a landscaping scheme will also be required and appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures must be provided. The settings of SLAs will be protected with consideration of the views from those areas to the settlements of the County Borough. New development within settlements must be designed to provide an attractive transition between the urban area and the countryside.
DNP5	Local And Regional Nature Conservation Sites	Development within or adjacent to a: DNP5(1) Local Nature Reserve (LNR); DNP5(2) Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC); or DNP5(3) Regionally Important Geodiversity Site (RIGS); must be compatible with the nature conservation or scientific interest of the area, whilst promoting their educational role. Developments which would have an adverse impact on these sites will not be permitted unless the benefits associated with the development can be demonstrated to outweigh the harm and/or the harm can be reduced or removed by appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures.
DNP6	Biodiversity, Ecological Networks, Habitats and Species	All development proposals must provide a net benefit for biodiversity and improved ecosystem resilience, as demonstrated through planning application submissions. Features and elements of biodiversity or green infrastructure value should be retained on site, and enhanced or created wherever possible, by adopting best practice site design and green infrastructure principles. Development proposals must maintain, protect and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks / services. Particular importance must be given to maintaining and enhancing the connectivity of ecological networks which enable the dispersal and functioning of protected and priority species. Development proposals that result in an adverse effect on the connectivity of biodiversity and ecological networks and/or have a significant adverse effect on the resilience of protected habitats and species will only be permitted where: 1) The need for development outweighs the nature conservation importance of the site; 2) It can be demonstrated that there is no satisfactory alternative location for the development which avoids damage to biodiversity and ecosystem functioning; 3) A functional connected element of the natural resource is retained as part of the design of the development to

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		maintain and enhance biodiversity and build resilient ecological networks; and 4) Any unavoidable harm is minimised by effective mitigation to ensure that there is no reduction in the overall biodiversity value of the area. Where this is not feasible, compensation measures must be provided to enable habitat creation, or the provision of long-term management arrangements to enhance existing habitats and deliver a net benefit for biodiversity. Compensatory provision must be of comparable or greater ecological value to that lost as a result of the development. A Project Level Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) must accompany development proposals on allocated sites with any identified likely significant adverse effects (pre-mitigation) in relation to SA Objective 9 (Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Soil).
DNP7	Trees, Hedgerows and Development	Development that would adversely affect trees, woodlands and hedgerows of public amenity or natural/cultural heritage value, or that provide important ecosystem services, will not normally be permitted. Development proposals on sites containing or adjacent to, trees will be required to assess the trees in line with BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. The assessment must include: 1) tree survey; 2) an arboriculture impact assessment; 3) an arboriculture method statement; 4) and/or a tree protection plan. Where trees are to be replaced a scheme for tree replacement must be agreed prior to the commencement of development, including details of planting and aftercare. If tree works are recommended, the works must comply with BS 2998:2010 Tree Works - Recommendations.
DNP9	Natural Resource Protection and Public Health	Development proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they would not cause a new, or exacerbate an existing, unacceptable risk of harm to health, biodiversity and/or local amenity due to: 1) Air pollution; 2) Noise pollution; 3) Light pollution; 4) Water pollution; 5) Contamination (including invasive species); 6) Land instability; 7) Sustainable development of mineral resources; 8) Sustainable waste management; 9) Any other identified risk to public health or safety. Development in areas currently subject to the above will need to demonstrate mitigation measures to reduce the risk of harm to public health, biodiversity and/or local amenity to an acceptable level. The use of construction phase Pollution Prevention Plans are encouraged, where appropriate, to demonstrate how proposals can prevent development water run-off from causing

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		pollution of the water environment. All proposals within HSE consultation zones must also demonstrate the acceptability and need for development. All development in flood risk areas must be supported by a Flood Consequences/Risk Assessment and incorporate any mitigation measures required to avoid or manage increased flood risk.
SP18	Conservation of the Historic Environment	The County Borough has a rich and diverse built heritage and historic environment. Development proposals must protect, conserve, and, where appropriate, preserve and enhance the significance of historic assets, including their settings. In particular, there is a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the significance of historic assets and their settings including: 1) World Heritage Sites 2) Scheduled Monuments 3) Archaeologically Sensitive Areas and Archaeological Remains 4) Listed Buildings 5) Conservation Areas 6) Historic Parks and Gardens 7) Historic Landscapes Any application for listed building or conservation area consent will need to be accompanied by a Heritage Impact Statement in accordance with the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Table 2: Neath Port Talbot Council Local Development Plan (2011 – 2026) (Adopted January 2016)

Policy Number	Policy Title	Policy Text
SP1	Climate Change	The causes and consequences of climate change will be addressed by implementing the following measures. In relation to the causes of climate change: 1) The efficiency and sustainability of the County Borough's settlements will be enhanced through developing more cohesive and efficient settlements and settlement patterns, and consequently more sustainable travel patterns; 2) Greenhouse gas emissions from transport will be minimised through encouraging freight / commercial transport by alternatives to road (e.g. rail or sea); 3) Dependence on the private car and the need to travel in general will be reduced through promoting alternative means of transport and more efficient use of existing facilities, co-location and joint use of facilities; 4) Provision will be made for the County Borough's appropriate contribution to renewable and low carbon energy generation. In relation to the consequences of climate change:

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		1) Likely increased flood risk will be taken into account and addressed by ensuring that there is greater resilience by avoiding development on land that is at risk from flooding in the first instance in accordance with the sequential approach set out in national guidance or in locations that could increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; 2) The fragmentation of habitats will be minimised and opportunities made for habitat and species change and migration where possible. LDP Objective: OB 1 and OB 2
SC1	Settlement Limits	Development within settlement limits that is proportionate in scale and form to the role and function of the settlement as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy will be acceptable in principle. Outside settlement limits, development will only be permitted under the following circumstances: 1) It constitutes a sustainable small scale employment use adjacent to a settlement limit; or 2) It constitutes live-work unit(s) immediately adjacent to a settlement limit in the Valleys Strategy Area only; or 3) It constitutes the small-scale expansion of an existing business or the suitable conversion of an existing building; or 4) It constitutes the appropriate replacement of an existing dwelling; or 5) It is an affordable housing exception site; or 6) It is an appropriate rural enterprise dwelling; or 7) It is an appropriate 'One Planet Development'; or 8) It is a sustainable tourism or farm diversification proposal that is suitable in a countryside location; or 9) It is associated with the provision of public utilities, infrastructure and waste management facilities that cannot reasonably be located elsewhere; or 10) It is associated with either agriculture, forestry, minerals or energy generation; or 11) It relates to the appropriate provision of accommodation for Gypsies / Travellers; or 12) It constitutes the provision of open space and small-scale ancillary facilities adjoining the settlement limit. Where development is permitted outside settlement limits, any new buildings must be located adjacent to

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		existing buildings or settlements wherever possible and be of an appropriate scale and form.
SP4	Infrastructure	Developments will be expected to make efficient use of existing infrastructure and where required make adequate provision for new infrastructure, ensuring that there are no detrimental effects on the area and community. Where necessary, Planning Obligations will be sought to ensure that the effects of developments are fully addressed in order to make the development acceptable. LDP Objectives: OB 2, OB 3, OB 4, OB 7, OB 8 and OB 10
I1	Infrastructure Requirements	In addition to infrastructure improvements necessary to make a development acceptable in health, safety and amenity terms, additional works or funding may be required to ensure that, where appropriate, the impact of new development is mitigated. These requirements will include consideration of and appropriate provision for: • Affordable housing; • Open space and recreation facilities; • Welsh language Infrastructure (in Language Sensitive Areas); • Community facilities including community hubs; • Biodiversity, environmental and conservation interests; • Improving access to facilities and services including the provision of walking and cycling routes; • Historic and built environment and public realm improvements; • Community and public transport; • Education and training
SP14	The Countryside and Undeveloped Coast	The countryside and undeveloped coast, including landscapes, seascapes and agricultural land, will be protected and where feasible enhanced through the following measures: 1) The protection of the open countryside through the control of inappropriate development outside settlement limits; 2) The protection of the undeveloped coast through the control of inappropriate development; 3) The designation and protection of Special Landscape Areas; 4) The designation and protection of Green Wedges. LDP Objective: OB 15

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SP21	Built Environment and Historic Heritage	The built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced through the following measures: 1. Encouraging high quality design standards in all development proposals; 2. Protecting arterial gateways from intrusive and inappropriate development; 3. Safeguarding features of historic and cultural importance; 4. The identification of the following designated sites to enable their protection and where appropriate enhancement: (a) Landscapes of Historic Interest; (b) Historic Parks and Gardens; (c) Conservation Areas; (d) Scheduled Ancient Monuments; and (e) Listed Buildings and their curtilage. LDP Objectives: OB 2, OB 23 and OB 24
EN2	Special Landscape Areas	In order to protect areas of high landscape quality, the following Special Landscape Areas are designated: Reference: Special Landscape Area EN2/1: Mynydd y Garth EN2/2: Dulais Valley EN2/3: Vale of Neath EN2/4: Margam EN2/5: Mynydd y Gelli EN2/6: Foel Trawsnant Development within the designated Special Landscape Areas will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the features and characteristics for which the Special Landscape Area has been designated.
EN6	Important Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites	Development proposals that would affect Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs), sites meeting SINC criteria or sites supporting Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) or S42 habitats or species will only be permitted where: 1. They conserve and where possible enhance the natural heritage importance of the site; or 2. The development could not reasonably be located elsewhere, and the benefits of the development outweigh the natural heritage importance of the site. Mitigation and/or compensation measures will need to be agreed where adverse effects are unavoidable.

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EN7	Important Natural Features	Development proposals that would adversely affect ecologically or visually important natural features such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows / field boundaries, watercourses or ponds will only be permitted where: 1. Full account has been taken of the relevant features in the design of the development, with measures put in place to ensure that they are retained and protected wherever possible; or 2. The biodiversity value and role of the relevant feature has been taken into account and where removal is unavoidable, mitigation measures are agreed.
EN8	Pollution and Land Stability	Proposals which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and/or local amenity or would expose people to unacceptable risk due to the following will not be permitted: • Air pollution; • Noise pollution; • Light pollution; • Contamination; • Land instability; • Water (including groundwater) pollution. Proposals which would create new problems or exacerbate existing problems detailed above will not be acceptable unless mitigation measures are included to reduce the risk of harm to public health, biodiversity and/or local amenity to an acceptable level.
SP14	The Countryside and the Undeveloped Coast	The countryside and undeveloped coast, including landscapes, seascapes and agricultural land, will be protected and where feasible enhanced through the following measures: 1. The protection of the open countryside through the control of inappropriate development outside settlement limits; 2. The protection of the undeveloped coast through the control of inappropriate development; 3. The designation and protection of Special Landscape Areas; 4. The designation and protection of Green Wedges. LDP Objective: OB 15
SP15	Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Important habitats, species and sites of geological interest will be protected, conserved, enhanced and managed through the following measures: 1) The identification of the following Internationally and Nationally designated sites

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		within the County Borough to enable their protection: (a) Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar Sites; (b) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); (c) National Nature Reserves (NNRs). 2) The identification and protection of sites of regional and local importance; 3) The protection of important natural heritage features. LDP Objective: OB 15
SP16	Environmental Protection	Air, water and ground quality and the environment generally will be protected and where feasible improved through the following measures: 1) Ensuring that proposals have no significant adverse effects on water, ground or air quality and do not significantly increase pollution levels; 2) Giving preference to the development of brownfield sites over greenfield sites where appropriate and deliverable; 3) Ensuring that developments do not increase the number of people exposed to significant levels of pollution. LDP Objectives: OB 2, OB 16 and OB 17
SP18	Renewable and Low Carbon Energy	A proportionate contribution to meeting national renewable energy targets and energy efficiency targets will be made while balancing the impact of development on the environment and communities. This will be achieved by: 1) Encouraging where appropriate, all forms of renewable energy and low carbon technology development; 2) Encouraging energy conservation and efficiency measures in all new major development proposals; 3) Ensuring that development will not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and amenity of local residents. LDP Objective: OB 19
RE1	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

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		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
SP20	Transport Network	The transport system and infrastructure will be developed in a safe, efficient and sustainable manner through the following measures: 1) Implementing key transport projects and supporting schemes identified in the Joint Transport Plan; 2) Promoting connectivity and access to public transport through improving bus and rail facilities; 3) Supporting enhancements to the walking and cycling network; 4) Promoting park and share schemes along key highway routes; 5) Promoting efficient use and links to the transport network through the identification of a road hierarchy; 6) Restricting development which would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety; 7) Requiring development proposals to be designed to provide safe and efficient access and promote sustainable transport; 8) Requiring appropriate parking provision; Facilitating movement of freight by means other than road.
TR2	Design and Access of New Development	Development proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied: 1) The development does not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway

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		network and does not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation; 2) Appropriate levels of parking and cycling facilities are provided and the access arrangements for the site allow for the safe manoeuvring of any service vehicles associated with the planned use; 3) The development is accessible by a range of travel means, including public transport and safe cycle and pedestrian routes; Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are provided for developments that are likely to create significant traffic generation
BE1	Design	All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places. Proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied: 1) It complements and enhances the character and appearance of the site, building or area in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing and elevation treatment; 2) It respects the context of the site and its place within the local landscape, including its impact on the important arterial gateways into the County Borough, its effects on townscape and the local historic and cultural heritage and it takes account of the site topography and prominent skylines or ridges; 3) It utilises materials appropriate to its surroundings and incorporates hard and soft landscaping and screening where appropriate; 4) It would not have a significant adverse impact on highway safety, the amenity of occupiers of adjacent land or the community; 5) Important local features (including buildings, amenity areas, green spaces and green infrastructure, biodiversity and ecological connectivity) are retained and enhanced as far as possible; 6) It achieves and creates attractive, safe places and public spaces, taking account of 'Secured by Design' principles (including where appropriate natural surveillance, visibility, well lit environments and areas of public movement); 7) It plays a full role in achieving and enhancing an integrated transport and communications network promoting the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and

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		ensures linkages with the existing surrounding community; 8) It uses resources, including land and energy, as efficiently as possible through: (a) Making the best and most efficient use of the land available through being of appropriate density taking into account the character and appearance of the area, normally a minimum of 35 dwellings per hectare in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area or a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare in the Valleys Strategy Area; (b) The layout and form of the development does not preclude the reasonable use of other adjacent land; (c) Developing brownfield land in preference to greenfield land where possible; (d) Minimising building exposure while maximising solar gain. 9) Its drainage systems are designed to limit surface water run-off and flood risk and prevent pollution; 10) The layout and design of the development achieves inclusive design by ensuring barrier free environments, allowing access by all and making full provision for people with disabilities.
M1	Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas	Development proposals within mineral safeguarding areas will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: 1) The mineral concerned is no longer of any value or potential value; or 2) The mineral can be extracted satisfactorily prior to the development taking place; or 3) In the case of temporary development, it can be implemented and the site restored within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed; or 4) There is an overriding need for the development; or 5) The scale and location of the development would have no significant impact on the possible working of the resource.

Table 3: Neath Port Talbot Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) (2023-2038) Preferred Strategy (December 2024)

Policy Number	Policy Title	Policy Text
SP1	Strategic Placemaking	Development proposals will be required to make a positive contribution to sustainable places. The sustainability of communities will be enhanced, the benefits of the green growth economy16 distributed, and the natural environment safeguarded through the

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		implementation of the RLDP growth and spatial strategies. This will be achieved by: 1) Appropriate design, adaptation and mitigation measures to help address climate change; 2) Providing for an appropriate balance of homes and jobs; 3) Directing development to the most sustainable locations in accordance with the spatial strategy, settlement hierarchy and defined settlement limits to promote health and well-being; 4) The creation of inclusive, safe and welcoming places, ensuring an appropriate housing mix to help support the Authority's housing needs and support the creation of vibrant and diverse communities; 5) Minimising the need to travel, utilising, and prioritising sustainable travel linkages, active travel networks and public transport options that are well connected, accessible, and reduce dependency on private vehicles; 6) Promoting the efficient use of land and resources; 7) Making efficient use of existing infrastructure and where required, make provision for new and improved infrastructure appropriate to the scale, type and location of proposed developments through the use of planning obligations; 8) A Green Infrastructure led approach and biodiversity net benefit; 9) The designation and protection of Green Wedges; Promoting and protecting our built and natural heritage, distinctive qualities and character of existing places, culture, and the Welsh language. RLDP Objective: NO4
SP2	Climate Change	Development proposals will be required to make a positive contribution towards mitigating, adapting and building resilience to the impacts of climate change. Proposals should take account of the need to: 1) Be designed in a way that incorporates energy efficiency measures, minimises energy consumption, encourages energy conservation and contributes to achieving low/ net zero carbon targets; 2) Ensure the sustainable and efficient use of energy and resources such as land, water and minerals; 3) Facilitate, where appropriate, renewable energy generation; 4) Be located within appropriate sustainable locations, which are supported through good

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		design, digital connectivity and sustainable travel opportunities; 5) Avoid development in areas identified as being at risk of flooding or that increases the risk of flooding and coastal erosion; 6) Adopt sustainable construction practices; 7) Maximise Green Infrastructure opportunities (and nature-based solutions) and help wildlife and habitats adapt to the changing climate; and 8) Protect and enhance all environmental assets required for climate adaptation and resilience. RLDP Objective: NO1
SP3	Nature Emergency, Biodiversity and the Natural Environment	Development proposals will be expected to address the nature emergency through achieving a net benefit for biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems resilience. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate: 1) How an overall net benefit for biodiversity will be achieved through the implementation of the proposal; 2) That all identified protected species and designated habitats present will be safeguarded and conserved in accordance with statutory requirements; 3) That the integrity of statutory and non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation will be protected and development is directed away from such sites where possible; and 4) Other non-designated sites or features improving the integrity and connectivity of ecological and green infrastructure networks are protected and enhanced. RLDP Objective: NO2; NO3
SP6	Strategy Areas	Two Strategy Areas are identified within Neath Port Talbot (and illustrated on the Key Diagram): The Coastal Corridor and National Growth Area (CCNGA) and The Valleys Opportunity Area (VOA). **The Coastal Corridor and National Growth Area** The Coastal Corridor and National Growth Area is where the majority of the County Borough's population, employment, key services and facilities are located and where the majority of development will be directed. In the Coastal Corridor and National Growth Area, the strategy: 1) Capitalises on employment growth around the Freeport, the Port, and Baglan Energy Park to build upon market interest along the National Growth Area and Port Talbot Steelworks to help with economic recovery; 2) Identifies key housing sites to help deliver affordable housing in the areas identified as being in greatest need;

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		3) Co-locates homes and jobs to reduce commuting; 4) Maximises sustainable transport opportunities and connectivity within the Swansea Bay region and promotes more sustainable modes of transport; and 5) Enhances the Active Travel Network. **The Valleys Opportunity Area** The Valleys Opportunity Area is where key tourism, employment and heritage opportunities will be promoted to act as a catalyst for long term improvements. Within the Valleys Opportunity Area, the strategy: 1) Identifies key tourism, and employment opportunities such as Wildfox Adventure Resort and Global Centre for Rail Excellence; 2) Maximises existing tourism and heritage locations such as Afan Bike Park, Waterfall Country and Neath Heritage Valley; 3) Identifies Pontardawe and its surrounds and Glynneath as Valley Hubs; 4) Recognises that there will be modest housing growth proportionate to the size, role and function of existing settlements; 5) Encourages tourism and smaller scale enterprises through the employment strategy to maximise the potential employment opportunities to meet the needs of the local community; 6) Provides opportunities for Renewable Energy generation; 7) Supports the provision of good quality broadband infrastructure; and 8) Enhances the Active Travel Network. RLDP Objective: This policy will seek to address all new plan objectives.
SP12	Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation	Opportunities for Renewable and Low Carbon energy developments and associated infrastructure will be supported where appropriate. This will be achieved by: 1) Making a proportionate contribution to meeting national renewable energy targets and energy efficiency targets; 2) Identifying renewable energy generation targets, criteria-based policies, local search areas and / or allocations for the county borough; 3) Promoting the optimisation of renewable and low carbon energy supply and distribution options for local communities; 4) Ensuring that development will not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and

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		amenity of local residents, and takes into consideration any cumulative impacts. RLDP Objective: NO9 and NO11
SP13	Minerals	A proportionate contribution to meeting national, regional and local demand for a continuous supply of minerals will be achieved by: 1) Maintaining an appropriate supply of aggregates throughout the Plan period; 2) Safeguarding identified resources of aggregate; 3) Minimising the conflict between sensitive land uses and mineral operations by identifying buffer zones around mineral sites; 4) Promoting the efficient use of aggregates and encouraging the maximum use of alternative materials before the use of raw aggregate; 5) Ensuring that mineral development will not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and amenity of local residents. RLDP Objective: NO12
SP15	Historic Environment	The historic environment including townscapes, important buildings and heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and enhanced through the following measures: 1) Ensuring proposals promote high quality design and placemaking that respects local character, cultural and historic qualities of the area, taking into account heritage assets.; 2) Safeguarding features of historic, architectural and cultural importance; 3) The identification of the following designated sites and areas to enable their protection and where appropriate enhancement: • Historic assets of special local interest (Buildings of Local Importance); • Conservation Areas; and • The canal network and structures. RLDP Objective: NO1
SP17	Countryside, Landscapes and Undeveloped Coast	The countryside and undeveloped coast, including landscapes, seascapes and geodiversity, will be safeguarded and where feasible enhanced through the following measures: 1) The protection of the open countryside outside settlement limits through the control of inappropriate development that would adversely affect its rural character, ecological, landscape, cultural or agricultural value or natural resources; 2) The protection of the undeveloped coast and seascapes through the control of inappropriate coastal development;

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		3) The protection of important landscape and seascape features, characteristics and qualities; 4) The designation and protection of Special Landscape Areas; and 5) The identification and safeguarding of areas of geodiversity importance. RLDP Objective: NO3; NO1
SP18	Environmental Protection	The quality of the environment will be safeguarded and enhanced and potential adverse impacts of existing or anticipated environmental problems will be addressed (including through de-risking approaches) in relation to the following: 1) Air quality; 2) Land contamination, land instability and invasive non-native species; 3) Flood risk and coastal erosion; 4) Lighting; 5) Soundscapes; 6) Water quality; and 7) Water resource availability. RLDP Objective: NO14

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