

CIL-LONYDD SOLAR FARM

Planning Statement

JPW2051
08 April 2024

PLANNING STATEMENT

Document status

Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Review date
1	Draft for PAC	LS	RI	DP	17/04/2024

Approval for issue

Darren Parker



22 April 2024

The report has been prepared for the exclusive use and benefit of our client and solely for the purpose for which it is provided. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by R P S Group Limited, any of its subsidiaries, or a related entity (collectively 'RPS') no part of this report should be reproduced, distributed or communicated to any third party. RPS does not accept any liability if this report is used for an alternative purpose from which it is intended, nor to any third party in respect of this report. The report does not account for any changes relating to the subject matter of the report, or any legislative or regulatory changes that have occurred since the report was produced and that may affect the report.

The report has been prepared using the information provided to RPS by its client, or others on behalf of its client. To the fullest extent permitted by law, RPS shall not be liable for any loss or damage suffered by the client arising from fraud, misrepresentation, withholding of information material relevant to the report or required by RPS, or other default relating to such information, whether on the client's part or that of the other information sources, unless such fraud, misrepresentation, withholding or such other default is evident to RPS without further enquiry. It is expressly stated that no independent verification of any documents or information supplied by the client or others on behalf of the client has been made. The report shall be used for general information only.

Prepared by:

RPS

Ross Irvine
Senior Planner

2 Callaghan Square
Cardiff
CF10 5AZ

E ross.irvine@rpsgroup.com

Prepared for:

Cenin Renewables Ltd

Martyn Popham
Director

Solcer House
Parc Stormy
Bridgend
CF33 4RS

E martynp@cenin.co.uk

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
	Background to the Application.....	1
	Community Involvement.....	2
	Planning History	2
	Site Description	3
	The Proposed Development.....	3
	Key Benefits	3
2	PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	4
	National Planning Policy.....	4
	Local Planning Policy	9
3	KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS	13
	Introduction.....	13
	Principle of Development	13
	Land Use	13
	Landscape and Visual.....	14
	Residential Amenity	15
	Highways and Traffic.....	15
	Biodiversity	16
	Hydrology and Flood Risk	17
	Heritage and Archaeology.....	17
	Human Health	18
4	CONCLUSION	19

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 RPS Consulting Services Ltd is instructed by Cenin Renewables Limited (“Cenin”) to submit a planning application for a solar photovoltaic electricity generating station (or ‘solar farm’) with an installed generation capacity of approximately 35MW and associated ancillary development, including a battery energy storage system (BESS).
- 1.2 This Planning Statement identifies the context of the Site and surrounding area, and the need for the Proposed Development, including an assessment of how it accords with relevant national and local planning policies and against other material planning considerations.
- 1.3 Paragraph 5.7.5 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12 (February 2024) highlights that planning applications for onshore generating projects in Wales which have an installed generation capacity of between 10MW and 350MW (there is no upper limit for onshore wind generating stations) are made directly to the Welsh Ministers under the Development of National Significance (DNS) process and considered under policies in Future Wales. Therefore, with a generating capacity of approximately 35MW, the proposed Cil-Lonydd Solar Farm is considered a DNS application.
- 1.4 The structure of this Planning Statement is as follows:
- **Chapter 1 Introduction** - Details the Site Context and Proposed Development;
 - **Chapter 2 Policy Context** - Discusses relevant national and local policy context for the Site;
 - **Chapter 3 Key Planning Considerations**– Provides an assessment of the relevant topic themes in planning terms:
 - **Chapter 4 Summary and Conclusions**

Background to the Application

- 1.5 National Grid anticipates annual electricity demand in the UK could increase from 330 TWh in 2020 to up to 627 TWh in 2050, an increase of 90%. Similarly, peak demand in 2019 of 59 GW could increase to up to 96 GW, an increase of 63% over the same period. There is therefore an urgent need to increase electricity capacity in the UK to ensure a secure and stable supply in the future and achieve renewable energy and net zero targets.
- 1.6 The need to introduce a change in how the country deals with climate change has been recognised by the UK and Welsh Governments. In 2019 both Governments declared ‘climate emergencies’, recognising the potentially catastrophic consequences of global warming on ecosystems and human populations. Consequently, there is an urgent need to install renewable electricity generating stations.
- 1.7 In 2020, Caerphilly County Borough Council produced the Decarbonisation Strategy – ‘Reduce, Produce, Offset, Buy’ as a response to the climate emergency. This Strategy focuses on reducing the Council’s own carbon footprint and sets out the overarching objective of being a net carbon neutral authority by 2030. The ‘Produce’ facet of this strategy highlights the role of solar to make the radical carbon reductions that are needed.
- 1.8 Solar energy is the most abundant energy source on earth. It is estimated that the sun transmits enough energy to the surface of the planet in 1.5 hours to power its entire human population’s energy needs for a year. Solar therefore represents a key achievable way of meeting the global human population’s electricity needs while combating climate change and its consequences. The key benefit solar has over other energy sources is that a solar installation can be constructed and operational within a matter of months, whereas other technologies require several years to reach full operational capacity. In addition, solar has a relatively low environmental impact (both visually and in terms of biodiversity in comparison to some other energy sources) and is a proven safe and stable technology.

Community Involvement

Informal Community Engagement

- 1.9 The initial proposals for the site were included in a consultation brochure circulated to the local public in November 2023. This brochure was delivered to households where views were sought on the emerging proposals.
- 1.10 A second consultation brochure was produced and circulated to local residents which included the updated development proposals and to inform local residents about the impending Pre-Application Consultation.

Formal Community Engagement

- 1.11 The DNS (Wales) Regulations 2016 (“the DNS regulations”) requires the applicant to undertake statutory pre-application consultation (PAC) on the full draft planning application for a period of no less than 42 days. This is to provide technical and community stakeholders, and local people, a further opportunity to provide feedback on the project and the technical assessments produced for the Proposed Development.

Planning History

- 1.12 The Site lies within the administrative boundary of Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC). The Local Planning Authority (LPA) online records outline the following historic planning applications of relevance:

Application Ref.	Address	Description of Development	Submission Date	Decision	Decision Date
2/09247	Cei-Lonydd Farm Former South Celynen Colliery	Pennant sandstone quarry including stone processing plant, conveyor route and railhead.	22 February 1992	Refused	10 April 1992
2/09826	Land At Cil-Lonydd The Pant Newbridge Gwent	Agricultural Workers Dwelling.	29 June 1991	Refused	16 August 1991
2/08102	A. Land at Cil Lonydd Farm and South Celynen Tip; 17 Ha (41.99 Acres) Working Area Grid Ref. 229 972 B. Part of Former South Celynen Colliery; 4.9 Ha (12.2 Acres) Grid Ref; 215 960.	Pennant sandstone quarry, conveyor route and railhead; stone processing plant, block making plant, concrete plant, tarmacadam coating plant, access road and bridge across the Ebbw river.	19 October 1988	Refused	6 December 1988
2/05488	The Double "D" Trekking Centre Cil	10 No. Holiday Chalets.	2 October 1984	Granted	19 November 1984

Lonydd Farm
Newbridge

2/03597	Hafod Fach Farm Abercarn	11 K.V. O.H. line extension.	19 August 1980	Granted	6 October 1980
---------	-----------------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------	---------	-------------------

Site Description

- 1.13 The site comprises Land at Cil-Lonydd Farm, to the east of Panside and south of Hafodyrynys. The site is situated between Newbridge to the west and Cwmbran to the east. It is located within the administrative boundary of Caerphilly County Borough. The location of the site is shown in Figure 2.1: Site Location Plan.
- 1.14 The Site itself extends to approximately 37.5 hectares (including the cable route) and consists of several parcels of land. The parcels are irregular in shape and comprise a series of agricultural fields of varying sizes. They are currently primarily used for pasture grazing, bound by a mixture of mature woodland, trees and hedgerows. The site adjoins registered common land to the east.

The Proposed Development

- 1.15 The applicant proposes to develop a solar photovoltaic electricity generating station (or 'solar farm') with an installed generation capacity of approximately 35MW and associated ancillary development, including battery storage. The power generated would be enough to power approximately 15,000 typical family homes.
- 1.16 The point of connection is proposed to be located at an existing 132kV substation to the southeast on Mynydd Maen Common, which would be connected to the site by a cable route of 3km.
- 1.17 The main components of a solar farm are:
- Solar panels and frames;
 - Inverters;
 - Transformers;
 - Cabling; and
 - BESS.

Key Benefits

- 1.18 The proposal will result in several key benefits, including:
- Safe, stable and affordable electricity for approximately over 12,500 homes;
 - Contributing to sustainable development and government carbon reduction targets;
 - Increased revenue from the energy sector to be spent in the local economy;
 - The construction phase will result in jobs and increased expenditure in local shops, eating and drinking establishments and overnight accommodation; and
 - The maintenance of the application site will generate further opportunities for employment.
- 1.19 The solar farm will be designed to accommodate sheep grazing beneath and between the rows of panels, providing an efficient dual use of land for renewable energy generation and agriculture. A solar farm is a temporary and fully reversible use, unlike housing for example, with no ground reprofiling required and all equipment removed from site at the end of the installation's operational life (approximately 50 years). The methods used in construction mean that remediation works following the removal of the panels and associated infrastructure are relatively minor and will return the Site to its previous use.

2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 This section of the statement identifies the national and local planning policy and guidance relevant to the Proposed Development and Site. These include:

- Future Wales - the National Plan 2040, published February 2021 ('Future Wales'),
- Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 published February 2024 ('PPW'),
- Welsh Government Technical Advice Notes (TANs),
- Caerphilly Local Development Plan adopted November 2010 (the 'LDP'), and
- Other Material Considerations

2.2 A summary of relevant planning policies and guidance is provided below.

National Planning Policy

Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 (February 2021)

2.3 Future Wales is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It addresses key national priorities, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of communities.

2.4 Regarding climate change, Future Wales recognises that changes to our climate and weather patterns will have a significant impact on well-being on both current and future generations. Increasing temperatures and extreme weather events are putting pressure on ecosystems, infrastructure, the built environment and our unique landscape and cultural heritage, which all contribute to social, economic and ecological resilience.

2.5 Climate change is identified as an equality issue as it will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities in Wales and the wider world. This is despite the most vulnerable communities historically contributing least to the problem of climate changing emissions. Vulnerable communities are more likely to be exposed to the risks and impacts of climate change without the ability to cope with, or recover from, those impacts.

2.6 It is noted that it is vital that we reduce our emissions to protect our own well-being and to demonstrate our global responsibility. Future Wales together with PPW will ensure the planning system focuses on delivering a decarbonised 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.

2.7 Regarding energy generation, Future Wales identifies that Wales can become a world leader in renewable energy technologies. Wales' wind and tidal resources, potential for solar generation, its support for both large and community scaled projects and commitment to ensuring the planning system provides a strong lead for renewable energy development means it is well placed to support the renewable sector, attract new investment, and reduce carbon emissions.

2.8 Future Wales contains two policies (17 and 18) of specific relevance to this project.

2.9 **Policy 17 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure** – expresses strong support for the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs. The policy states that 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 100% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2035 in order to combat the climate emergency.

2.10 In respect of large-scale solar, Policy 17 states that all proposals should demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment. It also expects 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.

- 2.11 **Policy 18 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance** – deals with Developments of National Significance ('DNS'). It is a criteria-based policy which states that such developments will be permitted (subject to policy 17) and the following:
1. outside of the Pre-Assessed 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.
- 2.12 Policy 18 also requires that the cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered.
- 2.13 In addition to topic-based policies, Future Wales establishes 4 regions and policies appropriate to them. Caerphilly is within the 'South East' region in which it is noted that decarbonisation and responding to the threats of the climate emergency should be central to all regional planning.
- 2.14 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 are important for ensuring communities in proximity to renewable energy development benefit from it and that the future energy system better serves Wales.

Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 February 2024

- 2.15 Edition 12 of PPW was released in February 2024. It remains centred around the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 ('WBG'). These are:
1. A prosperous Wales
 2. A resilient Wales
 3. A healthier Wales
 4. A more equal Wales

5. A Wales of cohesive communities
 6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
 7. A globally responsible Wales
- 2.16 PPW sets out five 'Key Planning Principles' (page 17), the fifth of which concerns 'Maximising environmental protection and limiting environmental impact', which states:
- "Natural, historic and cultural assets must be protected, promoted, conserved and enhanced. Negative environmental impacts should be avoided in the wider public interest. This means acting in the long term to respect environmental limits and operating in an integrated way so that resources and/ or assets are not irreversibly damaged or depleted. The polluter pays principle applies where pollution cannot be prevented and applying the precautionary principle ensures cost effective measures to prevent environmental damage." (our emphasis)*
- 2.17 Section 5.7– Energy – outlines the context to, and the requirements of, energy projects. Paragraph 5.7.1 states low carbon electricity must become the main source of energy in Wales. Renewable electricity will be used to provide both heating and transport in addition to power.
- 2.18 Paragraph 5.7.2 acknowledges that overall power demand is expected to increase as a result of growing electrification of transport and heat. PPW highlights that 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.
- 2.19 Paragraph 5.7.6 stresses that the planning system should secure an appropriate mix of energy provision, which maximises benefits to our economy and communities whilst minimising potential environmental and social impacts. This forms part of the Welsh Government's aim to secure the strongest economic development policies, to underpin growth and prosperity in Wales, recognising the importance of decarbonisation and the sustainable use of natural resources, both as an economic driver and a commitment to sustainable development.
- 2.20 Paragraph 5.7.7 states:
- "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." (our emphasis)*
- 2.21 In terms of delivery, Paragraph 5.7.7 goes on to state that the planning system should (inter alia):
- integrate development with the provision of additional electricity grid network infrastructure;
 - optimise energy storage,
 - optimise the location of new developments to allow for efficient use of resources, and
 - maximise renewable and low carbon energy generation
- 2.22 Paragraph 5.7.8 states an effective electricity grid network is required to fulfil the Welsh Government's renewable and low carbon ambitions. It advocates an integrated approach towards planning for energy developments and additional electricity grid network infrastructure. In certain circumstances, additional electricity grid network infrastructure will be needed to support the Pre-Assessed Areas in Future Wales, but also new energy generating developments more generally.
- 2.23 PPW paragraph 5.7.14 confirms that the Welsh Government targets for the generation of renewable energy are:
- Wales to generate 70% of its electricity from renewable energy by 2030,
 - one Gigawatt of renewable electricity capacity in Wales to be locally owned by 2030, and
 - new renewable energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership.
- 2.24 Section 5.9.19 sets out the key issues in determining applications for renewable and low carbon energy technologies. It states planning authorities should consider:
- the contribution a proposal will make to meeting identified Welsh, UK and European targets;
 - the contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and

- the wider environmental, social and economic benefits and opportunities from renewable and low carbon energy development.
- 2.25 PPW paragraph 5.9.20 states planning authorities should also identify and require suitable ways to avoid, mitigate or compensate adverse impacts of renewable and low carbon energy development. The construction, operation, decommissioning, remediation and aftercare of proposals should take into account:
- 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.
- 2.26 Prior to an application being submitted, developers for renewable and low carbon energy developments are encouraged, wherever possible, to consider how to avoid, or otherwise minimise, adverse impacts through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures.
- 2.27 Paragraph 5.9.22 states developers should take an active role in engaging with the local community on renewable energy proposals. This should include pre-application discussion and provision of background information on the renewable energy technology that is proposed.
- 2.28 Paragraph 5.9.24 states the Welsh Government supports renewable and low carbon energy projects that provide proportionate benefit to the host community or Wales as a whole.
- 2.29 Paragraph 5.9.25 states the social, environmental and economic (including job creation) benefits associated with any development should be fully factored into and given weight in the decision-making process.
- 2.30 Paragraph 5.9.26 states that there are significant opportunities to achieve local benefits through renewable energy developments. Some benefits can be justified as mitigation of development impacts through the planning process. In addition, developers may offer benefits not directly related to the planning process. Local authorities, where practical, should facilitate and encourage such proposals.
- 2.31 Chapter 6 – Distinctive and Natural Places - has been significantly updated in PPW12 with key policy changes relating to Green Infrastructure, Net Benefit for Biodiversity, the Step-wise Approach, protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Trees and Woodlands.
- 2.32 Section 6.2 - Green Infrastructure – outlines the context to and the requirements in relation Green Infrastructure for applications. Paragraph 6.2.12 states that a green infrastructure statement must be submitted with all applications. It should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed developed.
- 2.33 Paragraph 6.4.5 states that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species (not including non-native invasive species) and provide a net benefit for biodiversity an improve, or enable the improvement, of the resilience of ecosystems. LPA's are advised to take particular account of 'DECCA' attributes of ecosystems which relate to diversity, extent, condition, connections and adaptability.
- 2.34 Paragraphs 6.4.11 outlines the step-wise approach that must be followed as a means of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity. The step-wise approach dictates that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. Enhancement must be secured by delivering a biodiversity benefit primarily on site or immediately adjacent to the site, over and above that required to mitigate or compensate for any negative impact.

Welsh Government Technical Advice Notes

2.35 Technical Advice Notes (TAN) provide detailed planning advice on a variety of topics. It is advised that they be read along with PPW which sets out the land use planning policies. The relevant TANs to this application are as follows:

- TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (September 2009);
- TAN 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (July 2010).
- TAN 12: Design (March 2016)
- TAN 15: Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion (December 2021); and;
- TAN 18: Transport (March 2007).

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5: Nature Conservation and Planning

2.36 This TAN provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation, including protected species and habitats.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities

2.37 The purpose of this TAN is to provide practical guidance on the role of the planning system in supporting the delivery of sustainable rural communities.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design

2.38 This TAN provides guidance on how good design should be achieved through the planning process. Paragraph 2.6 states that “*design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to grasp opportunities to enhance the character, quality and function of an area, should not be accepted, as these have detrimental effects on existing communities*”.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion

2.39 TAN15 provides technical guidance which supplements the policies set out in PPW in relation to flooding and coastal erosion. The note provides a framework within which the flood risks arising from rivers, the sea and surface water, and the risk of coastal erosion can be assessed. It also provides advice on the consequences of the risks and adapting to and living with flood risk.

2.40 A new TAN15 is being drafted and will utilise the Flood Map for Planning (FMfP), which has been prepared to coincide with the publication of the new TAN15. The current zones A, B, C1 and C2 are set to be replaced by zones 1, 2 and 3, with greater emphasis on the various sources of flooding.

2.41 The FMfP takes into account allowances for climate change and incorporates flood risk from surface water and small watercourses, as well as rivers and sea. The FMfP is already being heavily used by the decision makers across Wales.

2.42 TAN15 has been considered in the Flood Consequences Assessment (FCA)/Drainage Strategy submitted with this planning application.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 18: Transport

2.43 This TAN states that integration of land use planning and development of transport infrastructure has a key role to play in addressing the environmental aspects of sustainable development, in particular climate change and the outcomes identified by Welsh Government

2.44 Paragraph 9.2 requires developers to submit transport assessments to accompany planning applications for developments that are likely to result in significant trip generation. Given the nature of the Proposed Development it would not result in significant trip generations once completed, with the only potential highway impacts during the temporary construction phase. Therefore, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) accompanies the planning application.

Local Planning Policy

Development Plan

- 2.45 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.46 The development plan for the Site is the CCBC Local Development Plan, adopted November 2010.
- 2.47 The LDP Constraints Map and publicly available geographical information systems (GIS) indicates the site is affected by the following designations or features:
- Within a Visually Important Local Landscape (VILL) NH2.3 Abercarn,
 - Within a Sandstone Safeguarding Area,
 - Within a Mineral Site Buffer Zone (MN1.3),
 - Bridleway Abercarn BR179 and Restricted Byways Abercarn RBW171,172, 316 and 320 run through the site.
- 2.48 The Site also immediately adjoins or lies in the vicinity of the following designations or features:
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)
 - SINC NH 3.112 Coed Cil-Lonydd, East of Newbridge,
 - SINC NH 3.113 Mynydd Maen, East of Newbridge,
 - SINC NH 3.124 Gwydon Valley Woodlands, Abercarn,
 - SINC NH 3.128 Cwm Hafod-Fach Woodlands, North of Abercarn
 - The eastern boundary of the Site adjoins registered Common Land.
- 2.49 With regard to historic designations, Schedule Ancient Monument (SAM) MM250 Charcoal Blast Furnace at Abercarn, is located within 3km of the Site.
- 2.50 The following Strategic Policies are of relevance to the Proposed Development.
- 2.51 **Policy SP2 Development Strategy - Development within the Northern Connections Corridor (NCC):** The development proposals in the Northern Corridor will promote sustainable development that:
1. Focuses significant development on both brownfield and greenfield sites that have regard for the social and economic functions of the area.
 2. Reduces car borne trips by promoting more sustainable modes of travel.
 3. Makes the most efficient use of the existing infrastructure.
 4. Protects the natural heritage from inappropriate forms of development.
 5. Capitalises on the economic opportunities offered by Oakdale / Penyfan Plateau.
- 2.52 **Policy SP4 Settlement Strategy** states that the council will support existing settlements, which will be enhanced based on their role and function in the settlement strategy strategy:
1. Principal Towns: Bargoed (HOVRA), Blackwood (NCC), Ystrad Mynach (NCC), Caerphilly (SCC) and Risca/Pontymister (SCC)
 2. Local Centres: Rhymney (HOVRA), Nelson (NCC), Newbridge (NCC) and Bedwas (SCC)
 3. Residential Settlements: All other villages within defined settlement boundaries
- 2.53 **Policy SP5 Settlement Boundaries** outlines how the plan defines settlement boundaries in order to:
1. Define the area within which development would normally be allowed, taking into account material planning considerations.

2. Promote the full and effective use of urban land and thus concentrate development within settlements.
3. Prevent the coalescence of settlements, ribbon development and fragmented development.
4. Prevent inappropriate development in the countryside.

2.54 **Policy SP6 Place Making** seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute to creating sustainable places by having full regard to the context of the local, natural, historic and built environment and its special features.

2.55 **Policy SP8 Mineral Safeguarding** states that the Council will contribute to the regional demand for a continuous supply of minerals by:

1. Safeguarding known resources of coal, sand and gravel and hard rock.
2. Maintaining a minimum 10-year land bank of permitted aggregate reserves in line with national guidance.

2.56 **Policy SP10 Conservation of Natural Heritage** seeks to protect, conserve, enhance and manage the natural heritage of the County Borough in the consideration of all development proposals within both the rural and built environment.

2.57 The following Countywide Policies are of relevance to the Proposed Development.

2.58 **Policy CW3 Design considerations – Highways** states that development proposals must satisfy the following highways requirements:

1. The proposal has regard for the safe, effective, and efficient use of the transportation network.
2. The proposal ensures that new access roads within development proposals are designed to a standard that:
 - Promotes the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport before that of the private car, and
 - Safely and effectively accommodates the scale and nature of traffic, which those roads are intended to serve.
3. Parking, appropriate servicing and operational space have been provided in accordance with the CSS Wales Parking Standards 2008.
4. Where access onto a highway is required, the proposal takes account of the restrictions relevant to the class of road as designated in the road hierarchy ensuring movements and speeds are controlled through appropriate design, in order to ensure highway safety and amenity.

2.59 **Policy CW2 Amenity** requires that Development proposals must have regard for all relevant material planning considerations in order to satisfy the following requirements:

A There is no unacceptable impact on the amenity of adjacent properties or land

B The proposal would not result in overdevelopment of the site and / or its surroundings

C The proposed use is compatible with surrounding land-uses and would not constrain the development of neighbouring sites for their identified land-use

D Where applicable, the viability of existing neighbouring land uses would not be compromised by virtue of their potential impact upon the amenity of proposed new residential development

2.60 **Policy CW4 Natural Heritage Protection** seeks to ensure that development proposals that affect locally designated natural heritage features, will only be permitted:

1. Where they conserve and where appropriate enhance the distinctive or characteristic features of the Special Landscape Area (SLA) or Visually Important Local Landscape (VILL).
2. Within, or in close proximity to sites designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), Green Corridors, or Local Priority Habitats and Species, where proposals either:
 - Conserve and where appropriate enhance the ecological or geological importance of the designation, or

- are such that the need for the development outweighs the ecological importance of the site, and where harm is minimised by mitigation measures and offset as far as practicable by compensation measures designed to ensure that there is no reduction in the overall value of the area or feature.

2.61 **Policy CW5 Protection of the Water Environment** states that development proposals will only be permitted where:

1. They do not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the water environment, and
2. where they would not pose an unacceptable risk to the quality of controlled waters (including groundwater and surface water).

2.62 **Policy CW6: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerow Protection** Development proposals on sites containing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, or which are bordered by one of more such trees or hedgerows, will only be permitted provided that:

A Where arboricultural surveys are required, they are submitted and approved, including any mitigation, compensation or management requirements, as part of the planning application.

B Root systems will be retained and adequately protected for the duration of all development activity on site.

C Development proposals have made all reasonable efforts to retain, protect and integrate trees, woodlands or hedgerows within the development site.

D Where trees, woodlands or hedgerows are removed, suitable replacements are provided where appropriate.

2.63 **Policy CW15 General Locational Constraints** outlines the criteria development proposals will be considered against, where they apply:

1. Development proposals will not be permitted if they prejudice the implementation of wider comprehensive redevelopment or constrain the development of any adjacent site for its allocated land-use.
2. Within settlement boundaries proposals for all types of development accord with the role and function of the settlement within which they are located, and
3. Outside settlement boundaries proposals will not be permitted unless the proposed development is either:
 - Associated with either agriculture, forestry or the winning and working of minerals or
 - For the conversion, rehabilitation or replacement of rural buildings and dwellings, or
 - For recreation, leisure and tourism proposals that are suitable in a countryside location or
 - Associated with the provision of public utilities, infrastructure and waste management facilities that cannot reasonably be located elsewhere or
 - Associated with the reclamation / treatment of derelict or contaminated land.

2.64 **Policy CW19 Locational Constraints - Rural Development and Diversification** states that rural development and diversification schemes will be permitted where:

1. They are consistent in scale and compatible with their rural location, including the retention and enhancement of existing natural heritage features,
2. That where buildings are required to deliver the scheme, existing buildings are reused where possible, or the new buildings relate to an existing group of buildings
3. They will be complementary to, and not prejudice, the operation of the existing business

2.65 **Policy CW22 Locational Constraints – Minerals** states that development proposals which may impact on minerals safeguarding areas will be considered against the following requirements, as applicable:

1. Proposals for permanent development uses within identified mineral safeguarding areas will not be approved unless:

- The applicant can demonstrate that the mineral is no longer of any value or potential value, or
 - The mineral can be extracted satisfactorily prior to the development taking place, or
 - There is an overriding need for the development, or
 - The development comprises infill development within a built-up area or householder development or an extension to an existing building.
2. Proposals for development uses of a temporary nature within identified mineral safeguarding areas will not be approved unless they can be completed, and the site restored to a condition that does not inhibit mineral extraction within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed.

2.66 **Policy CW23 Locational Constraints - Mineral Site Buffer Zones** seeks to ensure proposals for sensitive or minerals development will not be permitted within the mineral site buffer zones identified on the proposals map.

2.67 **Policy NH2 Visually Important Local Landscapes (VILLs)** states that VIL's will be protected at Northern Rhymney Valley (NH2.1) and (NH2.2).

Replacement Local Development Plan

2.68 Preparation has commenced on the replacement of the current LDP which will set out the planning policy for the borough up to 2035.

2.69 In considering this application the most up to date development plan is Future Wales. This has been confirmed in similar circumstances when DNS applications have been assessed.

Other Material Considerations

2.70 National and International legislation has set targets for reducing carbon emissions and increasing renewable energy generation.

2.71 Wales has set a target that by 2030, renewables are to generate electricity equal to 70% of its consumption. Currently, it is estimated up to 51% of electricity consumption in Wales is from renewables. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 to 'net zero'.

2.72 Renewable energy development, like Cil-Lonydd Solar Farm, will positively contribute to the ongoing work of the Decarbonisation Strategy and considerably assist in reaching the renewable energy target by 2030 and legal requirement by 2050.

3 KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Having regard to the positive planning policy context in respect of renewable energy development set out above, it is clear that a presumption in favour of sustainable development exists in respect of the proposal, particularly under the considerations set out under PPW. However, the planning policy context indicates that any planning application must address the following key issues:

- Principle of Development;
- Land Use
- Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Residential Amenity;
- Highways and Traffic (in respect of temporary construction works);
- Ecology;
- Hydrology and Flood Risk;
- Heritage and Archaeology; and
- Human Health

3.2 The key issues with reference to specific reports is set out below.

Introduction

3.3 The Proposed Development will generate an approximate 35MW export capacity of renewable energy. The Proposed Development will also reduce reliance on fossil fuels for electricity generation in Wales by introducing a low carbon energy source.

3.4 Welsh Government have set targets of generating 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030 and seek to achieve net zero in accordance with the legal obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 100% by 2050 under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The Proposed Development will be a key renewable energy source and will contribute to Welsh Government's net zero aspirations. The Proposed Development will also benefit CCBC as they continue to invest in services for local communities and residents.

Principle of Development

3.5 Policy 17 of Future Wales supports renewable energy development in principle, provided development proposals must demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment, and states that decision makers must give significant weight to the need to meet the consumption of renewable energy.

3.6 There is no policy of specific relevance to renewable energy generation in the CCBC LDP, but the Proposed Development does demonstrate that it will address any adverse environmental impacts created, through appropriate mitigation.

3.7 The following sections address the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Development and provides details of the environmental assessments which have been undertaken and accompany this application.

Land Use

3.8 Paragraph 3.58 of PPW states land of grades 1, 2 and 3a of the DEFRA ALC system are best and most versatile (BMV) and should be conserved as a finite resource for the future. Development plan policies and development management decisions should give considerable weight to protecting such land from development, because of its special importance. Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a should only be developed if there is an overriding need for the development and either previously developed land or land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable, or available lower grade land has an environmental value recognised by a landscape, wildlife, historic or

archaeological designation which outweighs the agricultural considerations. If land in grades 1, 2 or 3a does need to be developed, and there is a choice between sites of different grades, development should be directed to land of the lowest grade.

- 3.9 The Site consists of several parcels of agricultural land. However, this land is not considered to be the best available for grazing and has a predictive agricultural land classification of Grade 4 - *'Land with severe limitations due to adverse soil, relief or climate (or a combination of these)'*.
- 3.10 The land is currently being used primarily for pasture grazing. The Proposed Development will be designed to be capable of enabling sheep grazing during its operational life and therefore energy and agriculture would co-use the site. A Soil Management Plan support this planning application.
- 3.11 The Site is located within a Sandstone Safeguarding Area and partially within a Mineral Site Buffer Zone, as defined by the CCBC Local Development Plan Proposals Map, Policies SP8 and MN1.3, where the LDP advocates that mineral resources should be safeguarded from permanent development that would prevent their future working. A Ground Conditions Review supports this planning application.

Landscape and Visual

- 3.12 Policy 18 of Future Wales considers renewable and low carbon energy and such developments qualifying as DNS schemes. In relation to these policies, developments will be permitted if it does not have *'an unacceptable adverse impact'* on the surrounding landscape. Similarly, Chapter 6 of PPW requires landscape is considered when proposing development and promotes engagement with statutory bodies such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and CADW to ensure the opportunities landscapes provide for renewable energy are taken into account and bring benefit to people and communities. This will be achieved through the PAC process.
- 3.13 Landscape matters are considered in ES Chapter 5 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The LVIA, ES Chapter 5, robustly demonstrates that the landscape and visual amenity impact of the Proposed Development is not significant in EIA terms. The landscape proposals are designed to ensure that any adverse impacts on the landscape and visual amenity are minimised and or eliminated, where possible.
- 3.14 The Site is located within a Visually Important Local Landscape (VILL) NH2.3 Abercarn, The VILL will be protected by Policy NH2 of the CCBC LDP.
- 3.15 The Site is located within the Wales National Landscape Character Area 37 - South Wales Valleys. The Site is also located within the Mynydd Llwyd and Mynydd Maen LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Area (CYNONVS214). The area has an overall LANDMAP evaluation of moderate for scenic quality.
- 3.16 There are Special Landscape Areas (SLA) within 5km of the Site. The closest are 'St Illtyd Plateau & Ebbw Eastern Sides' which lie approximately 1.5km to the north, 'Mynyddisllwyn' approximately 1.7km to the southwest and 'South West Uplands' 2.6km to the east of the Site. The 'Eastern Ridge & Mynydd James' SLA lies around 3.5km to the north. The absence of any statutory landscape designations on Site is beneficial to the Proposed Development and limits harm to the landscape of highest value and clearly demonstrates compliance with Policy CW4 of the CCBC LDP.
- 3.17 Viewpoints have been agreed and identified for the purposes of the Landscape Assessment. The LVIA concludes that the Proposed Development is well screened by trees and hedgerows from most viewpoints. The LVIA concludes that there would be sequential views of the Proposed Development from the surrounding public rights of way (PRoW). There would be varying views of the Proposed Development from these routes which would further vary along each route.
- 3.18 The overall visual effects of the Proposed Development would be noticeable from some viewpoints and routes in close proximity to the Site. The visual effects of the Proposed Development would diminish with distance from the Site as well as with intervening screening effects of landform and vegetation which limit views to the Site depending on the viewing angle.
- 3.19 The attached Landscape and Ecology Masterplan (Figure 5.25) shows the planting of a number of trees and lengths of hedgerows. This has been prepared in conjunction with the project's ecologist to ensure that habitat creation particular to this site has been included. The mitigation measures are the planting of indigenous trees and hedgerows. The proposed tree planting and hedgerow

planting would integrate the Proposed Development into the landscape as well as provide screening.

- 3.20 In addition to the proposed planting, the retention and protection of the existing trees and hedgerows demonstrates compliance with Policy CW6 of the LDP.

Residential Amenity

- 3.21 The residential amenity impact of the Proposed Development is assessed against the CCBC LDP Policy CW2. This requires consideration for the adjacent properties or land, avoidance of overdevelopment compatibility with the surrounding land uses. This is demonstrated in across the submission through various technical reports.

Glint and Glare

- 3.22 A Glint and Glare Assessment has been undertaken and submitted as part of the application as an appendix to the ES Chapter 5 LVIA (Appendix 5.2). The study assesses the possible effects of glint and glare from the Proposed Development.
- 3.23 The findings of the assessment conclude the Proposed Development creates no significant impacts upon road safety, residential amenity and the 16 viewpoints considered within the LVIA. Therefore, no mitigation has been proposed or required for the scheme in respect of Glint and Glare.
- 3.24 In terms of Planning Policy, the Proposed Development demonstrates compliance with Future Wales Policy 18 by ensuring the use of the site creates '*no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of reflected light or on the operations of defence facilities and operations (including aviation and radar)*'.

Noise and Disturbance

- 3.25 During the construction phase, there is potential for some minor impacts in terms of noise and disturbance from the installation of the panels and construction traffic associated with the Proposed Development.
- 3.26 Any impacts will be managed and controlled through suitable measures such as working hours and reduced deliveries as detailed in the CTMP attached to this planning application.
- 3.27 Once constructed, it is expected that activity on site will be limited, with only scheduled maintenance checks in place.
- 3.28 Therefore, it is considered that the Proposed Development would have no unacceptable impact in terms of noise and disturbance, as demonstrated through the Noise Impact Assessment submitted in support of the application.

Highways and Traffic

- 3.29 HGVs will access the Site via the existing access to Cil-Lonydd Farm located along the section of Abercarn Mountain Road south through Mynydd Maen Common. An internal access track constructed of permeable materials will lead to the temporary construction compound and car parking area from the Site access,
- 3.30 The anticipated duration of construction is 12-15 months. The Proposed Development will give rise to a maximum of 20 HGV movements (10 inbound movements plus 10 outbound movements) per day at the peak of the construction phase, with fewer number of HGV movements per day outside of peak activities.
- 3.31 Policy 18 of Future Wales permits DNS renewable energy projects provided, there are no '*unacceptable adverse impacts on the transport network*' caused by transportation movements during the construction or operation phase. Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW also states that all aspects of the scheme from construction to decommission must consider the capacity of and effects on the transport network.

- 3.32 It is acknowledged that there are sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the Site boundary; however, based upon the expected construction traffic flows they are considered to be low enough so as not to result in any significant environmental effects.
- 3.33 Once operational, the Proposed Development will be monitored remotely and will not require any permanent staff to be located on Site; therefore, only occasional visits (typically once a quarter) by 4x4 vehicles / LGVs will be required for maintenance, monitoring and cleaning purposes. Due to the minimal vehicle movements generated by the Proposed Development during the operational phase, the Proposed Development will not have a significant impact upon the local highway network.
- 3.34 The planning application is supported by a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). This includes details of the proposed construction vehicle movements and types of vehicles, consideration of the travel journeys for operation/maintenance workers, details of the proposed access junction arrangement, visibility splays (where relevant), details of the proposed haulage route and its suitability, details of traffic management measures to be adopted, construction working hours and duration of works.
- 3.35 The Proposed Development complies with highways requirements set out in Policy CW3 of the CCBC LDP. The Proposed Development will use the existing road network for access. Any new access tracks created on the Site would be minimal using permeable and compacted hardcore. The proposed access arrangements (highlighted in the CTMP) take account of highways and pedestrian safety highlighted in national and local planning policy.
- 3.36 In conclusion, the Proposed Development could achieve a safe means of access for construction and operational phases, and there would be no significant impact of highway safety.

Biodiversity

- 3.37 The Site does not form part of any international statutory ecological designations, however several international designated sites are located within the surrounding area. Two international designated sites of value to highly mobile species are located within 20km, namely the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site to the south and the River Usk Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to the east. Within 10km of the Site are two designations at international level for habitat features - the Aberbargoed Grasslands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and the Cardiff Beech Woods SAC.
- 3.38 One statutory national designated site is located within 2km from the Site boundary, namely the Ty'r Hen Forwyn Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). There are a number of locally designated sites within 2km including Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Sites Important for Nature Conservation (SINC). Several ancient woodland sites, including a woodland designated as a SINC are also located adjacent to the boundaries of the Proposed Development.
- 3.39 Considering the distance from the Proposed Development and the designations, and the size and nature of the solar farm, no significant impact on these designated sites or their qualifying features would be expected to result from the Proposed Development. A Phase 1 habitat survey of the Site has been undertaken. In summary, the main habitat types within the Site comprise a mix of species-poor improved grassland and semi-improved grassland.
- 3.40 ES Chapter 6 Biodiversity assesses the ecological impact of the Proposed Development. This includes the findings of all surveys undertaken on Site and is accompanied by a Landscape and Ecology Illustrative Masterplan (Figure 5.25) and Green Infrastructure Statement.
- 3.41 Policy 18 of Future Wales states that proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects that qualify as DNS will be permitted subject to '*no adverse effects on internationally or nationally statutory designated sites for nature conservation*'.
- 3.42 Paragraph 5.9.20 of PPW states that from construction through to decommissioning and remediation consideration should be given to the impact on the natural and historic environment. Paragraph 6.4.3 seeks to reverse the decline in biodiversity through conservation, protection and enhancement where possible. Paragraph 6.4.5 requires planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must

provide a net benefit for biodiversity. Policy CW6 of the LDP seeks to promote biodiversity in terms of conservation and enhancement.

- 3.43 The assessment has concluded that there are unlikely to be any significant residual effects on ecological receptors during the construction and operation phases of the Proposed Development. The significance of effects during the operational phase of the Proposed Development is negligible and not significant for designated and ancient woodland sites and priority habitats, minor and not significant for ground nesting birds, and significantly beneficial for all other species receptors and hedgerows.

Hydrology and Flood Risk

- 3.44 A Flood Consequences Assessment (FCA)/Conceptual Drainage Strategy has been prepared as part of the application. The report has been produced in accordance with the guidance detailed in PPW and TAN15. Reference has also been made to local flood risk documents and provides an outline of any potential flood risk and hydrological constraints to the Site.
- 3.45 New development is expected to avoid unnecessary flood risk and to meet the requirements of TAN15. No highly vulnerable development will be permitted within flood risk zones and development will only be considered in areas at risk of flooding where it can be demonstrated that the Site can comply with the justification and assessment requirements set out in TAN15. The revised TAN15 is supported by the new Flood Map for Planning.
- 3.46 The Proposed Development falls entirely within Rivers and Sea Flood Zone 1, the lowest risk of flooding. The New Flood Map for Planning data has been used as the 'best available information' on flood risk to inform the planning application.
- 3.47 The Natural Resource Wales (NRW) Flood Risk from Surface Water map indicates a small area of High, Medium and Low risk of surface water flooding from Surface Water and Small Watercourses. This correlates with the mapping location of the Nant Hafod-fach stream that rises at Cil-Lonydd Farm within the southern part of the Site and flows in a southwest direction towards Abercarn.
- 3.48 Overall, the development therefore accords with the requirements of planning policy, in particular Policy CW5 of the LDP by not creating unacceptable risk on ground and surface water, as the developable area, solar panels and ancillary buildings, will be located wholly within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore not located in an area at risk of flooding.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 3.49 Within a 5km radius of the Site, there are 10 Scheduled Monuments, 163 listed buildings, and 5 Conservation Areas. No other asset types are present within this 5km search area. The nearest designated heritage assets are 1.8km from the site to the north. Any potential development impacts on the historic environment would consist of direct impacts on buried archaeological remains within the Site.
- 3.50 A Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment (DBA) has been undertaken which determined that there is the potential for some negligible impacts on the settings of designated heritage assets, but in no case would the Proposed Development be likely to have an effect on the significance of any designated heritage asset.
- 3.51 The Proposed Development complies with Policy SP10 of the LDP through high quality design to protect, conserve, enhance and manage the natural heritage of the Site.
- 3.52 This is achieved by the positioning of the solar PV panel arrays and retention of the existing field boundaries with the Proposed Development. Suitable fencing and hedgerow planting to screen the Proposed Development from local views also demonstrates compliance with planning policy.
- 3.53 Chapter 7 of the ES on Cultural Heritage claims that no effects are predicted in respect of designated historic assets at any stage of the Proposed Development's lifespan.
- 3.54 The construction phase of the Proposed Development has the potential to disturb archaeological remains associated with a Medieval grange and, potentially, earlier features. This will be addressed through mitigation measures that will allow for the preservation in situ of remains, the

offsetting of physical loss through a programme of archaeological work or a combination of the two.

- 3.55 Elements of the hedgerows within the Site will be removed during construction. The hedgerows meet the criteria for important historic hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations. They are considered to be of local importance and low sensitivity. The loss of small sections would result in an effect of minor significance. This is not significant in the context of the EIA Regulations.
- 3.56 No effects are predicted in respect of the operational or decommissioning phases and no potential cumulative effects have been identified.

Ground Conditions

- 3.57 The Site is located within a Sandstone Safeguarding Area and partially within a Mineral Site Buffer Zone, as defined by the CCBC LDP Policies SP8 and MN1.3, Through these policies, the LDP advocates that mineral resources should be safeguarded from permanent development that would prevent their future working. This is further supported by the conclusions to the Ground Conditions Review that forms part of this planning application.

Human Health

- 3.58 An assessment of the likely significant population health effects of the Proposed Development has been undertaken in demonstrated in ES Chapter 8.
- 3.59 The visual impacts of the Proposed Development during operation have been considered to determine whether population health may be affected by a change in community identity. The assessment considered the population of Newbridge and Abercarn, and a relevant sub-population of vulnerable groups who may be more susceptible to health effects due to low income, age, poor health and/or proximity. The assessment is informed by the Chapter 5 (Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment). The assessment identifies, at most, a minor adverse (not significant) effect. This is driven by the local topography and vegetation providing screening, such that the effect on population health is very limited.
- 3.60 The operation of the Proposed Development will support energy security nationally in Wales and the UK, as well as contributing to reducing adverse health effects of climate change. The climate change related benefits apply to a global population, particularly deprived populations in low- and middle-income countries. The assessment identifies a moderate beneficial (significant) effect driven by the energy security benefits, but also accounting for the climate change related benefits. Health protection, healthcare, and health improvement are the three pillars of public health, and many day-to-day activities relating to these are reliant on energy security; with low-income groups benefiting, particularly where this overlaps with poor health or social disadvantage.
- 3.61 Cumulative and inter-related effects have been assessed. The effects of these are not considered to result in combined population health effects that are greater than the individual effects.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by RPS Consulting Services Ltd on behalf of Cenin Renewables Ltd ("the Applicant") as part of a planning application for a Development of National Significance (DNS) for Cil Lonydd Solar Farm, on land east of Cwmbran and west of Newbridge, Caerphilly ("the Site"). The Proposed Development would involve the construction a solar photovoltaic electricity generating station (or 'solar farm') with an installed generation capacity of approximately 35MW and associated ancillary development, including Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).
- 4.2 The Proposed Development will support the UK and Welsh Government's intention to move to a low carbon economy. At a local level, the Development Plan for the area relevant to the application comprises the CCBC Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (Adopted November 2010).
- 4.3 National planning policy and guidance is also applicable for the determination of this planning application. The proposal has been shown to be in compliance with the relevant national and Development Plan policies. Policies 17 and 18 of Future Wales states that the Welsh Government strongly supports renewable energy development in principle, and decision makers must give significant weight to the need to meet Wales's international commitments and targets set for the consumption of renewable energy provided proposals demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment.
- 4.4 The Proposed Development provides the opportunity to significantly increase renewable energy availability and to further the decarbonisation of the Welsh energy generation and economy. With an export capacity of approximately 35 MW, the Proposed Development would offer a significant contribution to the legally binding and demanding targets set by the Welsh Government to meet 70% of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2030.
- 4.5 The CCBC Local Development Plan is also supportive of renewable energy projects provided they are not detrimental to other themed policy. On 4th June 2019, CCBC declared a climate emergency and set a goal to reach a net zero carbon position/carbon neutrality by 2030. As part of this, the development of new solar farms and other renewable projects is considered to be one of their primary actions.
- 4.6 The Proposed Development will provide benefits from an environmental, social and economic perspective, including introducing a low carbon energy source, and increasing security and reliability of energy supply.
- 4.7 The Site is classed as Grade 4 (poor quality), which means that it would not result in the loss of BMV Agricultural Land.
- 4.8 In terms of landscape and visual amenity, the LVIA concludes that over time any adverse effect on the landscape features on Site would diminish and mitigate would create an overall net beneficial effect upon the trees, hedgerows and grassland. This may also result in long-term net benefits beyond the lifetime of the solar farm.
- 4.9 With regards to highway and traffic, the planning application assesses proposed access arrangements, and it is considered that the Proposed Development would not have any adverse impacts in terms of highway or pedestrian safety.
- 4.10 This Planning Statement and the detailed assessments accompanying the application assesses the proposal in terms of other planning issues of noise, glint and glare, historic environment, ecology, ground conditions and hydrology/flood risk. The impacts of the Proposed Development have been shown to be acceptable and, where necessary, mitigation measures have been embedded into the design to reduce or negate any potential impacts of the Proposed Development. In addition to mitigation, the application incorporates substantial measures to ensure ecological enhancement is achieved as part of the project.
- 4.11 The temporary and reversible nature of the development will ensure that the Site can later be restored to its current use. The environmental benefits as well as the increased production of energy from renewable sources represents a significant case in favour of the Proposed Development, weighing positively in the planning balance.
- 4.12 This statement demonstrates that the proposal is acceptable for the following reasons:

PLANNING STATEMENT

- Clear compliance with the CCBC LDP and national planning policy guidance;
- Sufficient mitigation to be implemented to overcome any adverse environment effects; and
- The significant benefits associated with the development in respect of contribution to legally binding renewable energy targets.

4.13 In conclusion, the favourable planning policy and other material considerations indicate that planning permission should be granted as, on balance, the significant benefits outweigh any limited potential adverse impacts.