

BRYN HENLLYS EXTENSION

PROPOSED SOLAR FARM

PLANNING STATEMENT

PREPARED BY PEGASUS GROUP | AUGUST 2019
P18-2622 | LIGHTSOURCE BP



lightsource bp



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Lightsource BP (“the Applicant”) in support of a full planning application for the 9.9MW Photovoltaic (PV) installation (“Solar Farm”) extension to Bryn Henllys Extension Solar Farm at land at Waunlwyd Farm, Upper Cwmtwrch, Swansea, Powys, SA9 2XE (“the application site”).
- 1.2 This statement identifies the context of the application 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.

The Applicant

- 1.3 Lightsource BP is a global market leader in the development, acquisition and long-term management of large-scale solar projects and smart energy solutions. Lightsource were established in 2010 and have developed significant expertise in the UK renewable energy sector. In 2017 Lightsource joined forces with BP and rebranded to become Lightsource BP. The company has invested £2.5 Billion into solar assets in just 7 years and currently manage 2GW of solar projects.

Proposed Development

- 1.4 This application seeks full planning permission for:
- “Extension to existing Solar Farm (inclusive of 9.9MW PV installation and associated infrastructure)”**
- 1.5 Planning permission is sought for a temporary period of 40 years from the date of the first export of electricity to the electricity grid.

Planning Application Documents

- 1.6 This planning application submission comprises:
- 1APP Application Form, notices and certificates;
 - This planning statement;
 - Associated application drawings, as detailed within the covering letter;
 - Associated reports, as detailed within the covering letter.

Planning Statement Structure

1.7 This statement takes the following form:

- Section 2, provides a description of the application site and its immediate surrounding context;
- Section 3, describes the various elements of the proposed development;
- Section 4, highlights the main planning policy and guidance at a national and local level relevant to the determination of this application and assesses the compliance of the proposed development with the relevant policies;
- Section 5, considers the wider material considerations relevant to solar PV development to be considered in the planning balance;
- Section 6, provides an overall assessment of the proposed development in the context of planning policy contained within the Development Plan and other material considerations; and
- Section 7, provides a summary of the key findings from this planning statement.

Pre-Application Advice

1.8 The applicant has engaged in pre-application discussions with Powys County Council (reference: 19/0014/PRE) regarding the proposed development (See Section 3) which have included holding discussions, concluding in the written response from Officers dated 8th April 2019. Consideration has been given to the comments of Officers in preparing the planning application.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping

1.9 The applicant has scoped the proposed development with Powys County Council (reference: 19/0966/SC). Powys County Council provided the scoping opinion on 1st August 2019. The scoping opinion provided responses from a number of consultees.

2. APPLICATION SITE AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The application site forms two parcels of land connected by an unnamed road at Waunlwyd Farm, Ystradowen, Swansea. The site location is shown on the accompanying plans centred on coordinates [X: 275991, Y: 212620].
- 2.2 The 'northern parcel' is c. 13.1 ha (32.4 acres) and comprises four irregular shaped fields. The Afton Twrch lies to the west of the parcel within dense woodland near to the Application Site's western boundary. A farmstead and aggregate compound lie to the south west. Further fields are present to the north and east.
- 2.3 The 'southern parcel' is c. 11.3 ha (27.9 acres) and comprises six fields of varying shapes and sizes. The Afton Twrch lies to the west of the parcel within dense woodland to the western, northern and eastern boundaries. Further fields with hedgerow boundaries are present to the south, beyond which lies a number of isolated properties to the south and southeast.
- 2.4 Immediately to the east of the application site ('southern parcel') is an existing 20MW solar farm (Bryn Henllys Solar Farm) granted in June 2018 under planning permission reference P/2015/0176.
- 2.5 The application site comprises a number of fields of varying shapes and sizes, bound by hedgerows and adjacent woodland in places. The application site is crossed by a number of drainage channels, which follow the landform while small to medium ponds are located within or close to the application site boundaries. There is a small reservoir to the east of the northern parcel.
- 2.6 Historic Ordnance Survey (OS) maps identify that the proposed application sites are located within a former coal mining area, and within/adjacent to locations of unknown filled ground (associated with former mining operations). In addition to former coal mining sites, the surrounding land is predominantly in agricultural use.
- 2.7 According to the Welsh Agricultural Land Classification Map the application site forms predominantly Grade 4 land with some Grade 5, both of which are subgrade and do not constitute the best or most versatile agricultural land.
- 2.8 The proposed development is not located within any statutory landscape designations. The Brecon Beacons National Park lies in close proximity to the north of the application site, with the National Park boundary broadly concurrent with the linear woodland belt located approximately 150m north of the application site, beyond the intervening fields adjacent to the application site.
- 2.9 There are no designated assets located within the application site. The site is not located within or in close proximity to any World Heritage Sites, Historic Landscape Areas, Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest, Registered Park and Gardens, Conservation Area or Heritage Coast.

- 2.10 There are several Grade II Listed buildings near the application site. The Henllys Vale Colliery Limekilns (large bank of lime kilns associated with the quarries on the Black Mountain) is located c.1.3km north of the proposed development. Henllys Vale Colliery Chimney (Colliery chimney built for Henllys Vale Colliery, an anthracite drift mine that operated from 1898 to 1918) is located c.1.3km north of the proposed development. Lastly, Henglyn Isaf (Early C18 thatched farmhouse, one of the older surviving houses around Ystradgynlais) is located c.1.3km east of the proposed development
- 2.11 Bryn Henllys Solar Farm takes access from the existing access from Palleg Road. This existing access was used for the previous open cast minerals extraction which ceased in 2003, as such it is of a standard and scale to accommodate regular HGV traffic.
- 2.12 The National Landscape Character Areas for Wales represent a strategic approach to landscape character assessment. The application site and much of the study area, falls within the NLCA 37 South Wales Valleys. The northern part of the study area coincides with the Brecon Beacon National Park and the associated NLCA 30 Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains.
- 2.13 LANDMAP is a Wales specific resource (managed by National Resources Wales) where the landscape, visual and heritage baseline is recorded at varying spatial levels (based on collated datasets). The site sits within LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Area BRCKNVS365. The assessment gives the area a 'Low' overall evaluation. It is noted that the justification for this assessment states: 'Open cast mining has created a disturbed landscape of tips which are detractors. The current waste tipping is also a detractor. Colonising vegetation on the fringes do not screen the slopes of the tip.' (Dated 28th January 2003).
- 2.14 There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) near to the Application Site, these include footpaths, Byways Open to all Traffic (BOAT's) and open access land. Public Rights of Ways run along parts of the eastern boundaries of the Application Site and cross land (outside of the sites themselves) between the northern and southern parcels of land, with a further network of Public Rights of Way in the surrounding area.
- 2.15 The nearest residential properties are found on the eastern periphery of the villages of Cwm-Twrch Ucha and Ysdradowen, which are approximately 300m west and south west of the application site. The villages follow a broadly linear pattern along the A4068, to the north of the town of Ystradgynlais.
- 2.16 The site is wholly within the administrative area of Powys County Council and is in the Ystradgynlais Community Parish.
- 2.17 The site forms 'open countryside' but is not within the Green Belt. Matters of planning policy are returned to in Sections 4 and 6 of this document.
- 2.18 The site extent is not included within a designated or made Neighbourhood Plan area.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 This application seeks full planning permission for:

“Extension to existing Solar Farm (inclusive of 9.9MW PV installation and associated infrastructure)”

3.2 The proposed development comprises solar panels arranged into linear arrays facing to the south within approximately 65 acres (26.3 ha) of land. The solar panels would be composed of photovoltaic cells which are designed to maximise the absorbency of the sun’s rays and to minimise solar glare. The proposed development would be in association with the previously approved Bryn Henllys Solar Farm, which extends to approximately 42.5 hectares.

3.3 The proposed solar PV installation, as shown on the accompanying drawings, would consist of:

- Solar PV Panels arranged on a simple metal framework facing south to form tables (“arrays”) with string inverters;
- 4 no. Switchgear Substations (4.2m x 2.6m x 3m);
- 4 no. Transformers (5.5m x 4.5m x 3m) and 4 no. AC Boxes (1.2m x 4.2m x 2m), adjacent to the Switchgear Substations around the site;
- Security fencing around the site perimeter is to form secure ‘deer style’ fencing with mammal gates. Gates are included in the fencing for access to the site and to the field margins for maintenance access within each field;
- Internal access tracks within the site (3.5m wide, crushed aggregate);
- CCTV and site security systems;
- The application also includes the associated works required in ground preparation, the construction of building foundations and provision of swales (etc).

3.4 It is requested that a Condition be applied to any planning permission which allows for limited flexibility in order to amend the final specification of the solar panel supporting framework and buildings at the site to the yet to be appointed Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) company specification:

“Notwithstanding the details submitted, prior to the installation/erection of any solar panel supporting framework or building at the site final details of the design, appearance, external materials and dimensions for the hereby approved panel framework and for all buildings to be erected shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.”

- 3.5 The solar panels would be set back from the site boundaries to allow for perimeter security fencing, CCTV coverage and maintenance access. The solar panels would be mounted on a metal framework supported by pile driven foundations, without the need for concrete foundations. Between each line of solar panels there would be a gap of approximately 5.5m to avoid over shadowing from one solar panel to another. The solar panels would be tilted at 25 degrees from the horizontal axis and orientated south. The height of the solar panels would be a maximum height of 2.9 metres with the lower edge of the solar panel elevated to 1 metre off the ground.
- 3.6 The solar PV installation would require supporting infrastructure including gravel maintenance tracks, transformers, switchgear substations, and security systems. The cabling that links the solar panels and inverters to the substations would be connected via a network of shallow trenches which would be backfilled.
- 3.7 The arrays would be set within a 2m high timber & post / deer stock fence around the application site. The stock fence is fitted with small mammal gates (0.25m x 0.2m) fitted at appropriate points near the bottom of the fence to enable free access. CCTV cameras are positioned to cover the site access point in order to provide security to the site and prevent unauthorised access by members of the public.
- 3.8 Gaps in the existing vegetation would be infilled or reinforced with appropriate native tree or shrub planting to enhance the visual screening of the site. The proposals are detailed on the supporting landscaping plan.
- 3.9 The solar PV installation would result in a reduction in carbon emissions associated with energy generation equating to approximately 3,372 tonnes of CO₂ per annum or the removal of approximately 717 family cars from the road each year. The proposed solar PV installation of 9.9MW is the equivalent to the energy needs of approximately 2,679 homes within the UK. The abovementioned

reduction in carbon emissions would be in addition to the reductions in carbon emissions resulting from the approved Bryn Henllys Solar Farm.

4. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1 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.

4.2 The Development Plan comprises the Powys Local Development Plan (2011-2026) which was adopted on 17th April 2018, which sets out site allocations, designations and detailed policies for determining planning applications. The Local Development Plan is applicable to all of Powys except for the area of the county falling within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

4.3 The site is not included within a designated or made Neighbourhood Plan area.

4.4 Other material planning considerations include national legislation, policy and guidance, comprise the:

- EN-1: Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (July 2011);
- EN-3: National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (July 2011);
- Planning Policy Wales (December 2018);
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8 – Renewable Energy
- Written Ministerial Statements.

4.5 This chapter identifies the key relevant planning matters contained within the Development Plan and other material planning considerations pertinent to the determination of the planning application. Against each relevant policy the development proposals are assessed.

National Planning Policy

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (July 2011)

4.6 EN-1 was published in July 2011 to set out national policy for energy infrastructure in the UK. Its primary purpose is to be applied to decisions for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), but it is confirmed this document can be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4.7 Paragraph 3.4.1 sets out the UK commitments to sourcing 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020. To hit this target, and to largely decarbonise the power sector by 2030, EN-1 states that:

“It is necessary to bring forward new renewable electricity generating projects as soon as possible. The need for new renewable energy electricity generation projects is therefore urgent.”

4.8 The National Policy Statement sets out how the energy sector can help deliver the Government’s climate change objectives by clearly setting out the need for new low carbon energy infrastructure to contribute to climate change mitigation.

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (July 2011)

4.9 EN-3 was also published in July 2011 and sets out the national policy for renewable energy projects. EN-3 should be read in conjunction with EN-1.

4.10 Similar to EN-1, EN-3 sets out the importance of renewable energy in achieving the Government’s ambitious targets for renewable energy generation, highlighting that a “significant increase in generation from large-scale renewable energy infrastructure is necessary to meet the 15% renewable energy target”.

Welsh Planning Policy (PPW) (December 2018)

4.11 Edition 10 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW), adopted in December 2018, sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales. PPW, the TANs, MTANs and policy clarification letters comprise national planning policy.

4.12 Planning Policy Wales confirms that Planning Authorities, including Powys County Council, should ensure development plan policies are supportive of renewable and low carbon energy development in all parts of Wales and that developments are directed to the right locations and set out clearly the local criteria against which proposals will be evaluated (paragraph 5.9.4).

4.13 Paragraph 5.9.9 confirms that planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy developments should be determined based on the merits of the individual proposal. The local need for a particular scheme is not a material consideration, as energy generation is of national significance and there is a recognised need to optimise renewable and low carbon energy generation.

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- 4.14 It is also confirmed in circumstances where protected landscape, biodiversity and historical designations and buildings are considered in the decision-making process, only the direct irreversible impacts on statutorily protected sites and buildings and their settings (where appropriate) should be considered. In all cases, considerable weight should be attached to the need to produce more energy from renewable and low carbon sources, in order for Wales to meet its carbon and renewable targets (paragraph 5.9.17).
- 4.15 The proposals would result in a reduction in carbon emissions associated with energy generation equating to approximately 3,372 tonnes of CO₂ per annum or the removal of approximately 717 family cars from the road each year. The proposed solar PV installation of 9.9MW is the equivalent to the energy needs of approximately 2,679 homes within the UK. The abovementioned reduction in carbon emissions would be in addition to the reductions in carbon emissions resulting from the approved Bryn Henllys Solar Farm.
- 4.16 The generation of renewable energy reduces reliance on non-renewable energy sources, particularly by businesses, and therefore the proposals will cut greenhouse gas emissions from major electricity users.

Technical Advice Note 8 (TAN8): Renewable Energy (2005)

- 4.17 The next tier of planning policy for Wales is a series of Technical Advice Notes.
- 4.18 The most relevant is TAN8, which concerns renewable energy.
- 4.19 Paragraph 3.15 of TAN8 (2005) states that other than in circumstances where visual impact is critically damaging to a listed building, ancient monument or a conservation area vista, proposals for appropriately designed solar thermal and PV systems should be supported.
- 4.20 Paragraph 1.4 of TAN8 (2005) states that the provision of electricity from renewable sources is an important component of the UK energy policy, which has an established target of producing 10% of electricity production from renewable energy sources by 2010. The Assembly Government has a target of 4TWh of electricity per annum to be produced by renewable energy by 2010 and 7TWh by 2020.

Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019

- 4.21 On 12 June 2019 the Government laid the draft Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is otherwise known as a net zero target. The draft order amended the 2050 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target in the Climate Change Act from at least 80% to at least 100%, thereby constituting a legally binding commitment to end the UK's contribution to climate change.
- 4.22 The draft instrument was subject to the affirmative procedure and was debated and approved by the House of Commons on 24 June 2019; and by the House of Lords on 26 June 2019. The Order came into force on 27 June 2019.
- 4.23 Having regard to the above, the application proposals make an appreciable contribution to meeting the amended Climate Change targets as set out within the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. It is clear that in order for the UK to meet the ambitious target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050, a presumption in favour of increasing the number and output of low carbon energy sources, such as solar farms, is entirely appropriate and necessary.

Speech by the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP to the Large-Scale Solar Conference (April 2013)

- 4.24 This speech relates to the need for solar PV and placing it at the heart of the UK's energy mix.
- 4.25 The speech also refers to the Ministers desire to 'see a lot, lot more' but that as 'we take solar to the next level, we must be thoughtful, sensitive to public opinion and mindful of the wider environmental impacts.'

Speech by Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs in the Senedd (September 2017)

- 4.26 In September 2017, in a statement in the Senedd, the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs proposed that Wales should have a target of generating 70% of its electricity consumption generated by renewable energy by 2030.

4.27 PPW (2018) generally reflects the abovementioned approach of encouraging and requiring large scale solar schemes to be developed in a sustainable manner. The Ministers speeches are not policy as such.

Local Planning Policy

Adopted Local Development Plan

Powys County Council Local Development Plan (2011-2026) (April 2018)

4.28 The Powys County Council Local Development Plan was adopted in April 2018. The Powys Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out the guiding principles for development and land use over the plan period. The relevant policies contained within the LDP are discussed below.

4.29 Policy RE1 of the LDP is clear in its support of the the delivery of national policy by encouraging renewable and low and zero carbon energy projects, subject to material planning considerations. Policy RE1 states:

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

1. Within or close to the Strategic Search Areas (SSAs), proposals for wind energy greater than 25MW will be permitted subject to criteria 3 to 5; all other proposals for renewable and low carbon energy will only be permitted where they can demonstrate they would not prejudice the purpose of the SSA.

2. Within the Local Search Areas (LSAs), proposals for solar PV between 5 – 50MW will be permitted subject to criteria 3 to 5; all other proposals for renewable and low carbon energy will only be permitted where they can demonstrate they would not prejudice the purpose of the LSA.

3. Proposals for all types of renewable and low carbon energy development and associated infrastructure either on their own, cumulatively or in combination with existing, approved or proposed development, shall comply with all other relevant policies in the LDP.

4. Satisfactory mitigation shall be in place to reduce the impact of the proposal and its associated infrastructure. Proposals shall make provision for the restoration and after-care of the land for its beneficial re-use.

5. Where necessary, additional compensatory benefits will be sought by agreement with applicants in accordance with Policy DM1 - Planning Obligations."

- 4.30 Policy RE1 goes on to state that all renewable energy proposals and associated infrastructure, such as power lines or battery storage facilities, must respect the existence and amenities of neighbouring residential and sensitive properties including approved development.
- 4.31 Policy RE1 criterion 2 sets out the spatial framework against which applications for stand-alone "Local Authority-wide" scale solar PV farm development in excess of 5MW installed capacity can be assessed. Informed by the Powys Renewable Energy Assessment 2017, it identifies 20 broad areas of search to provide clear guidance for medium- to large-scale solar PV farm development in Powys known as LSA (Local Search Areas). The solar LSAs were identified by applying a series of constraints and the resulting areas were further reduced in number by a Landscape Sensitivity Study. The LSAs are strategic in nature and whilst they are generally the least-constrained parts of Powys in terms of the assumptions applied in the REA, they are not without site specific constraints.
- 4.32 The application site does not fall within one of the LSAs identified, and therefore the application is supported subject to meeting the requirements of criteria 3, 4 and 5 which apply to solar farm proposals (of all sizes and installed capacities) that fall outside of LSAs. The requirements of criteria 3, 4 and 5 are covered in greater detail in section 6 of this document.
- 4.33 Policy DM2 of the LDP, which concerns the natural environment, requires that proposals demonstrate how they protect, positively manage and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity interests including improving the resilience of biodiversity through the enhanced connectivity of habitats within, and beyond the site. An Environmental Statement accompanies the application which addresses the above considerations in greater detail.
- 4.34 Policy DM4 of the LDP concerns landscape and states the following;

"Proposals for new development outside the Towns, Large Villages, Small Villages and Rural Settlements defined in the Settlement Hierarchy must not, individually or cumulatively, have an unacceptable adverse effect, on the valued characteristics and qualities of the Powys landscape. All proposals will need to:

1. Be appropriate and sensitive in terms of integration, siting, scale and design to the characteristics and qualities of the landscape including its: topography; development pattern and features; historical and ecological qualities; open views; and tranquillity; and

2. Have regard to LANDMAP, Registered Historic Landscapes, adjacent protected landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the visual amenity enjoyed by users of both Powys landscapes and adjoining areas.

Proposals which are likely to have a significant impact on the landscape and/or visual amenity will require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to be undertaken.”

4.35 Having regard to the above, the application is accompanied by a landscape and visual assessment (LVIA) which has regard to the criteria set out within Policy DM4 as well as national planning policy guidance. Please refer to section 6 of this document for detailed comments.

4.36 Policy DM13 of the LDP concerns design and requires that proposals must be able to demonstrate a good quality design and shall have regard to the qualities and amenity of the surrounding area, local infrastructure and resources.

4.37 In summary, the proposals have been designed such that they have a height of 2.9m, inclusive of the associated equipment. While the proposals are of functional appearance, where practical, steps have been taken to soften the design, such as in the use of shorter CCTV poles and deer fencing forming the perimeter fencing rather than more industrial palisade fencing.

4.38 The siting in the landscape has been considered at length. The accompanying LVIA concludes that there are a limited number of locations in the surrounding landscape where views of the proposed development could be experienced, and that although the character of the immediate site would change as a result of the proposal, the overall landscape character of the wider area would remain predominantly unchanged by the proposed development.

4.39 The proposal includes the retention and reinforcement of existing hedgerows and tree belts that bound the site, which would be maintained at a minimum height of 3 metres. This aspect of the proposal would greatly improve visual screening of the site and would result in subsequent ecological benefits. Further boundary

treatment details are contained within the submitted Planting Plan accompanying the application.

- 4.40 The effects on the environment are likewise very limited and a series of mitigation and improvement measures are set out which would be to the benefit of localised ecology on the site. These details, and assessment of affects are set out in the accompanying Environmental Statement and supporting reports.
- 4.41 In terms of material harm on residential amenity these impacts are considered very limited given the predominantly isolated nature of the application site and benign nature of the proposals. Careful consideration has been given to the nearest residential properties, as set out in Sections 2 and 6 of this document. It is submitted that the proposals, on account of low overall height and benign nature, would not give rise to loss of amenity as a result of overshadowing or overbearing structures, noise pollution or effluence, and that outlook from the nearest residential properties would not be compromised.
- 4.42 In respect of noise output, the proposed transformers and switchgear substations would give rise to a slight hum during operation, however this will be contained to within the site boundary with the panels themselves silently converting solar irradiation to electricity. The nature of the proposed development does not give rise to air quality issues or odours.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 4.43 The site is not included within a designated or made Neighbourhood Plan area.

LPA Solar Energy Guidance

- 4.44 The Powys Local Development Plan (2011-2026) is accompanied by Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) focusing on renewable energy, which was adopted on 30th April 2019.
- 4.45 The purpose of the supplementary planning guidance is to assist in the delivery of renewable energy projects by providing detailed guidance on how the Council will implement the relevant policies and proposals contained within the LDP.
- 4.46 The SPG confirms that the planning system has an important role in supporting and encouraging renewable energy projects as a means to combat climate change by reducing the reliance on fossil fuels. In addition, the SPG confirms that such projects also offer potential for both economic regeneration and economic

resilience. The local economic benefits derived through renewable energy should not be understated or undersold, with numerous studies showing the positive local economic benefits that can accrue for these technologies in Wales.

- 4.47 At a local level, the SPG supports the opportunities for all renewable and low carbon energy technologies across the County, including the potential for solar photovoltaic energy generation (solar PV) and less mature technologies such as storage and hydrogen generation which will develop over time.
- 4.48 The importance of low-carbon technologies is recognised as a priority of Powys County Council, as expressed through '*Towards 2040 - the Powys Well-being Plan*' which has the objective of developing a carbon positive strategy that maximises green energy production and '*Vision 2025: Corporate Improvement Plan*' in developing resilience, enhancing skills and enabling economic growth.
- 4.49 The SPG has been produced to support the policies of the LDP which are used in the determination of planning applications. The guidance within the SPG has had regard to relevant legislation, national planning policy and other available guidance and information. The SPG is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the Powys Local Development Plan area.

5. ENERGY LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 It is considered instructive to provide a summary of energy legislation, policy and guidance which is material to this proposed solar PV installation. There are a significant number of documents which provide the background and context for this application.
- 5.2 The European Union Renewable Energy Sources Directive (2009/28/EC) was published in April 2009. A key principle of this document is the inclusion of a binding agreement which commits member states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels.
- 5.3 Targets are outlined in the Directive in relation to the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources. This includes individual targets for each member state confirming the share of energy from renewable sources in its gross final consumption for 2020. The legally binding obligation for the United Kingdom was set at 15% of final energy consumed to be from renewable sources by 2020.
- 5.4 This target has been further updated under the European Union 2030 Energy and Climate Change Framework which builds on the 2020 climate and energy package and was adopted by European Leaders in October 2014. The 2030 framework sets three key targets for the year 2030:
- At least 40% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels;
 - At least 27% share for renewable energy; and
 - At least 27% improvement in energy efficiency.
- 5.5 Every two years, European Union (EU) countries report on their progress towards the EU's 2020 renewable energy goals. Based on the national reports and on other available data, the European Commission (EC) produces an EU-wide report which gives an overview of renewable energy policy developments in EU countries. The European Commission Renewable Progress Report for 2017 indicates that solar PV deployment increased rapidly in 2015 accounting for 12% of all renewable electricity which has been driven by rapid technological progress, costs reductions and relatively short project development times.
- 5.6 With regard to the United Kingdom (UK), the EC report outlines that progress towards the 15% target is being made but based on current projections it is due to fall short of the target at 14.8% by 2020. It goes on to conclude that Member

States such as the UK "...might have to reinforce cooperation with other Member States by using cooperation mechanisms such as statistical transfers to timely reach their national binding targets".

- 5.7 Therefore, the continuing deployment of solar PV developments will help assist the UK to meet its legally binding target for 2020 of 15% of final energy consumed to be from renewable sources without the need for 'statistical transfers'. Thereby providing a platform for the UK to meet its more challenging target of 27% by 2030.
- 5.8 Looking longer term to 2050, the Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK Government to significantly reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 to 100% below 1990 levels.
- 5.9 This target is reflected in the European Commission Roadmap for Moving to a Competitive Low Carbon Economy in 2050 published in March 2011 which suggests that the power sector has the biggest potential for cutting emissions, it can "...almost totally eliminate CO2 emissions by 2050". It goes on to say that electricity will come from renewable sources like wind, solar, water and biomass or other low-emission sources like nuclear power plants or fossil fuel power stations equipped with carbon capture and storage technology.
- 5.10 Meeting Carbon Budgets: Closing the Policy Gap, a June 2017 Report to the UK Parliament, is the Committee on Climate Change's 9th annual assessment of UK progress in reducing emissions and meeting carbon budget. 'Delivering system flexibility' is confirmed as a key message and action in respect of decarbonising the UK power sector. The report outlines progress made in terms of expansion of low-carbon generation and integration of low-carbon sources into the electricity system but sets out measures to reduce emissions further to increase from 45% generation in 2016 to around 75% in 2030. This includes 'flexibility' and it is confirmed that the UK electricity system will have to become more flexible in order to accommodate more variable and inflexible generation and changing demand patterns.
- 5.11 The Clean Growth Strategy published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in October 2017 states that in 2016, 47% of electricity in the UK came from low carbon sources and has been aided by the falling costs of many low carbon technologies such as renewable energy sources like solar and wind. To drive down emissions throughout the next decade the Strategy sets out

a number of policies and proposals. In respect of the power sector, the Strategy anticipates that by 2050 emissions from this sector need to be close to zero. In the meantime, one possible pathway to 2032 could see power emissions fall by 80% compared to 2017 levels and could be achieved by, inter alia, growing low carbon sources such as renewables and nuclear to over 80% of electricity generation, and phasing out unabated coal power.

- 5.12 The Reducing UK emissions – 2018 Progress Report to Parliament, published in June 2018, highlights that UK emissions are down 43% compared to the 1990 baseline crediting much of this reduction on the “*excellent progress in reducing emissions from electricity generation, while reductions in other sectors have stalled*”. The UK cannot therefore become compliant in actions to reduce emissions and increase the take up of renewable energy should the targets be met.
- 5.13 More recently in June 2019, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, announced plans to commits to “net zero” UK carbon emissions by 2050 in legislation amending the Climate Change Act 2008 following one of the recommendations of the Committee on Climate Change.
- 5.14 This amendment to the Climate Change Act 2008 was enacted on the 27th June 2019.

Summary

- 5.15 The above documents outline the immediate and pressing need for deployment of renewable energy generation in the UK, which is derived from the challenging legally binding obligation in relation to the generation of 15% of energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020 initially and thereafter to meet more challenging targets by 2030 and 2050. Furthermore, it is clear that solar PV development is recognised by the Government as a key part of the UK’s transition to achieving a low carbon economy.
- 5.16 These are significant material considerations in the assessment of this planning application.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 This chapter provides a summary of the assessment made previously of the proposed development compliance against the planning policy requirements outlined in Chapter 4. The chapter considers whether the development can be supported in this location in principle and then considers both the benefits that would be received from the development being granted planning permission and any potential adverse impacts.

Principle of Development

6.2 The generation of renewable energy is supported at a national scale in policy and legal commitments to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions. The national policy states, subject to sensitive siting of proposals, applications should be approved. The generation of renewable energy is a significant material consideration which weighs substantially in the applications favour.

6.3 At a local level, there is clear policy support for the proposed development in the Local Development Plan. Policy RE1 of the LDP (2018) provides in principle support to proposals that maximise the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources where impacts are or can be made acceptable.

6.4 Having regard to the above, and more specifically the requirements set out within criteria 3, 4 and 5 of Policy RE1, it is necessary to consider the impacts of the proposed development to establish whether planning permission should be granted. This assessment is undertaken below following the consideration of the benefits the proposed development will provide.

Benefits of Development

6.5 This proposal will have an approximate installed electricity generating capacity of approximately 9.9MW, all of which is generated by renewable sources (solar irradiation). In this instance the proposed solar PV installation would result in a reduction in carbon emissions associated with energy generation equating to approximately 3,372 tonnes of CO² per annum or the removal of approximately 717 family cars from the road each year.

6.6 The proposed solar PV installation of 9.9MW is the equivalent to the energy needs of approximately 2,679 homes within the UK, and therefore presents a low-carbon energy alternative capable of contributing towards energy needs at District and national level. The abovementioned reduction in carbon emissions

would be in addition to the reductions in carbon emissions resulting from the approved Bryn Henllys Solar Farm.

6.7 The proposal therefore represents a significant and important contribution to meeting the legally binding target the UK is required to achieve by 2020 of 15% of its energy consumption to be derived from renewable sources and the more challenging targets beyond this date in 2030 and 2050.

6.8 In addition to the generation of renewable energy the proposed development would provide a number of other benefits:

- Enhancements to existing vegetation;
- Additional planting to improve visual screening of the site and the subsequent ecological benefits;
- Enhanced biodiversity potential of the site and its immediate surroundings;
- Natural maintenance of the site by sheep grazing, thereby retaining an agricultural use of the land;
- Temporary use (40 years after first export of electricity), before the site is restored and returned to its current state with no long-term effects on ground condition.

6.9 These benefits can be achieved in a location where the impacts are relatively benign given the site characteristics and its relationship with the wider environment.

Impacts

Visual Impact

6.10 Policy DM4 of the LDP concerns landscape and is particularly relevant as it refers to the character and quality of Powys' landscape:

"Proposals for new development outside the Towns, Large Villages, Small Villages and Rural Settlements defined in the Settlement Hierarchy must not, individually or cumulatively, have an unacceptable adverse effect, on the valued characteristics and qualities of the Powys landscape. All proposals will need to:

1. Be appropriate and sensitive in terms of integration, siting, scale and design to the characteristics and qualities of the landscape including its: topography; development pattern and features; historical and ecological qualities; open views; and tranquillity; and

2. Have regard to LANDMAP, Registered Historic Landscapes, adjacent protected landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the visual amenity enjoyed by users of both Powys landscapes and adjoining areas.

Proposals which are likely to have a significant impact on the landscape and/or visual amenity will require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to be undertaken."

- 6.11 The Landscape SPG (adopted in April 2019) is a material consideration in the determination of the proposed Bryn Henllys solar farm. The Landscape SPG provides a useful definition of landscape referring to **"...remoteness, tranquillity, shape, patterns, form, land uses, vernacular, textures and colours."**
- 6.12 The character and quality of Powys' landscape is one of its most important assets being a combination of its natural history and geology and the influence of human activity on these natural assets. Maintaining the distinctiveness of Powys' landscape is an important factor in safeguarding the quality of its environment and ensuring the social, cultural and economic well-being of the area. The quality of the Powys' landscape helps attract inward investment and creates employment opportunities. It is important for the tourism industry and also provides an attractive setting and sense of place in which local people can live and work.
- 6.13 The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement with a landscape and visual chapter dedicated to the assessment of the effects of the proposals on landscape character. The existing native trees, hedgerows and woodlands within and bounding the site are retained. These features contribute to the physical and visual enclosure of the site. The proposals further include the introduction of new hedgerows and infilling of gaps to improve the site screening offered and provide for an overall increase in extent of hedgerows which enhances the landscape and offers biodiversity benefits as set out in the accompanying reports.
- 6.14 The chapter has taken into account the existing context, potential change to the receiving landscape and influence on the visual amenity of the identified receptors. The assessment has concluded that there would be some localised significant effects but in majority of cases these can be mitigated, including the

cumulative effects. Overall, the proposed development has been considered as responding well to the characteristic of the receiving environment, mitigating visual effects, whilst not compromising the requirements and technical aspects of this solar energy scheme.

Residential Amenity, Noise and Air Quality

- 6.15 The residential amenity of the nearest properties, as discussed under section 2 above, have been given consideration as part of the application.
- 6.16 Policy DM13 contained within the LDP sets out under part 11 of the policy that the amenities enjoyed by the occupants or users of nearby or proposed properties shall not be unacceptably affected by levels of noise, dust, air pollution, litter, odour, hours of operation, overlooking or any other planning matter.
- 6.17 Having regard to the above, the proposed layout and degree of separation from neighbouring development ensures that residential properties within the locality do not suffer from an unacceptable reduction in amenity including overbearing impacts, loss of light and privacy.
- 6.18 In respect of noise output, the proposed transformers and switchgear substations would give rise to a slight hum during operation, however this will be contained to within the site boundary with the panels themselves silently converting solar irradiation to electricity. The nature of the proposed development does not give rise to air quality issues or odours. The residential amenity of nearby properties is unaffected given the benign nature of the proposal which do not have any adverse emissions. The nature of the proposed development does not give rise to air quality issues or odours.
- 6.19 Having regard to the above, therefore, and on account of the relatively low heights of the proposals, existing and improved screening and benign nature of the proposals, there would not be an unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties or land uses.

Flood Risk

- 6.20 Policies DM5 and DM6 of the LDP address 'Development and Flood Risk' and 'Flood Prevention Measures and Land Drainage' respectively. Policy DM5 is clear that avoiding unnecessary flood risk will be achieved by strictly assessing the flood risk implications of development proposals within areas susceptible to tidal or fluvial flooding and preventing development that unacceptably increases risk.

Similarly, Policy DM6 sets out that development proposals must avoid unnecessary flood risk by assessing the implications of development within areas susceptible to all types of flooding; any development that unacceptably increases risk will be refused.

- 6.21 The river known as Afon Twrch lies approximately 150m west of the application site at the bottom of the valley. Nant Gwyns lies further south of the southern parcel a distance of approximately 700m. Parts of the site are noted as being susceptible to Surface Water flooding based on detailed NRW mapping. These areas are associated with low lying areas in the northern development parcel.
- 6.22 The application site is crossed by a number of drainage channels, which follow the landform, in conjunction with hedgerows used as agricultural boundaries for adjoining field. Small to mediums ponds are located within or close to the application site boundaries, and there is small reservoir approximately 250m east of the northern parcel. The application site does not lie within a Groundwater Source Protection Zone.
- 6.23 The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement which contains a chapter dedicated to Flood Risk and Drainage, which concludes that the site is not considered to be at risk from River or Sea flooding based on Natural Resources Wales (NRW) mapping.

Highways and Public Rights of Way

- 6.24 Strategic Policy SP7 of the LDP deals with safeguarding of strategic resources and assets and states development proposals should not have an unacceptable impact on assets and their operation, including National Trails, Public Rights of Way Network, Recreational Trails and the National Cycle Network.
- 6.25 Policy DM13 of the LDP deals with design and resources and states at paragraph 10 that:

“The development has been designed and located to minimise the impacts on the transport network - journey times, resilience and efficient operation - whilst ensuring that highway safety for all transport users is not detrimentally impacted upon.”

- 6.26 The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement with a detailed chapter dedicated to transport and access issues, and which addresses the planning policy considerations as well as assessing the traffic and transport

related effects relating to proposed development during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) is appended to the Environmental Statement.

6.27 Without seeking to repeat the contents of the abovementioned report, the key findings are summarised below.

- Bryn Henllys solar farm takes access from the existing access from Palleg Road. This existing access was used for the previous open cast minerals extraction which ceased in 2003, as such is of a standard and scale to accommodate regular HGV traffic. The existing access is proposed to be used in conjunction with the proposed extension to the Bryn Henllys Solar Farm.
- The main traffic and transport related environmental effects will be associated with the movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) to and from the application site during the construction phase of the proposed development. The construction of Bryn Henllys extension would be undertaken at the same time as Bryn Henllys Solar Farm, by means of an extended construction period. Bryn Henllys extension construction would take approximately 3 months.
- When operational, solar farms do not give rise to significant traffic movements and therefore the operational phase of development is not expected to result in any significant environmental effects in terms of traffic generated. The effect of Bryn Henllys extension long-term during operation on local roads and PROW will be negligible.

6.28 Three Public Rights of Way pass through Bryn Henllys solar farm; all of which are footpaths. Reinstated BOAT No. 7 currently routes along the existing farm access track, north of Bryn Henllys Solar Farm and between the northern and southern parcels of Bryn Henllys extension. Whilst Footpath 122A also routes along the existing farm access track between the northern and southern parcels of Bryn Henllys Extension. Footpath 122A also follows the eastern boundary of the northern parcel. Access to all rights of way will be maintained throughout the construction, operational and decommissioning periods of Bryn Henllys extension.

6.29 Although the Public Rights of Way in the vicinity of Bryn Henllys extension will be kept open during construction, pedestrian amenity in terms of the relative

pleasantness of the journey will be affected by the presence of delivery and construction vehicles crossing the routes of the footpaths within Bryn Henllys solar farm and routing along the farm access track. This is subjective, but during the times when a construction vehicle is passing the magnitude of the effect is likely to be regarded by any pedestrians present as high and the significance as major and adverse but will also be temporary.

- 6.30 Having regard to the above, adopting best practice construction management and the effect of construction of Bryn Henllys Extension will be minimised. The effect of Bryn Henllys extension long-term during operation on local roads and PROW will be negligible. Therefore, the proposal meets the requirements of Policy SP7 and Policy DM13 and is acceptable.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 6.31 Policy DM2 of the LDP concerns the natural environment and seeks to ensure that development proposals demonstrate that they protect, positively manage and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity interests including improving the resilience of biodiversity through the enhanced connectivity of habitats within, and beyond the site.
- 6.32 Policy DM2 goes on to state development proposals which would impact on the following natural environment assets will only be permitted where they do not unacceptably adversely affect (inter alia);
- The important site designations, habitats and species afforded the highest levels of protection through European legislation including European Sites (SAC, SPA and Ramsar);
 - European Protected Species afforded strict protection by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Directive Annex IV Species);
 - The important site designations, habitats and species afforded levels of protection in line with national policy and legislation including National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
 - Locally important site designations, habitats and species including Local Nature Reserves, Local Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats and Species and

Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites and Geological Conservation
Review Sites.

- 6.33 The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement which includes a detailed chapter on biodiversity. The information submitted in conjunction with the application has been compiled from a desk study, an Extended Phase 1 habitat survey and a breeding bird survey, enabling the determination of the likely ecological effects of the proposed development.
- 6.34 The accompanying Environment Statement concludes that the proposed development, following the adoption of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, will not have significant adverse effects on any statutory or non-statutory site designated for nature conservation, nor on habitats or protected and notable species.
- 6.35 On the basis of the findings of the accompanying Environment Statement, the proposals meet the expectations of the policy requirements set out within Policy DM2 of the LDP and go further by improving existing hedgerows and bringing about wider ecological benefits to biodiversity and wildlife habitats.

Heritage

- 6.36 Planning applications in Powys are currently considered against the Powys Local Development Plan 2011–2026 (adopted April 2018). Relevant extracts from policies relating to the historic environment are cited below:

Strategic Policy 7: Safeguarding of Strategic Resources and Assets

“To safeguard strategic resources and assets in the County, development proposals must not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the resource or asset and its operation.

The following have been identified as strategic resources and assets in Powys:

2. Historic environment designations, including:

- i. Registered Historic Landscapes.**
- ii. Registered Historic Parks and Gardens.**
- iii. Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological remains.**
- iv. Listed Buildings and their curtilages.**
- v. Conservation Areas.**

AND the setting of designations i.-v.”

Policy DM13: Design and Resources

“Development proposals must be able to demonstrate a good quality design and shall have regard to the qualities and amenity of the surrounding area, local infrastructure and resources.

Proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:

- 1. Development has been designed to complement and/or enhance the character of the surrounding area in terms of siting, appearance, integration, scale, height, massing, and design detailing.**
- 2. The development contributes towards the preservation of local distinctiveness and sense of place.**
- 3. Any development within or affecting the setting and/or significant views into and out of a Conservation Area has been designed in accordance with any relevant adopted Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Conservation Area Management Plans, or any other relevant detailed assessment or guidance adopted by the Council...”**

- 6.37 The application is accompanied by a heritage assessment which draws together available information on designated and non-designated heritage assets, topographic and land-use information so as to establish the potential for non-designated archaeological assets within the study site.
- 6.38 There are no designated historic assets located within the application site. Anticipated non-designated historic assets located within the application site comprise Bryn Henllys post-medieval / modern stock enclosure, and possible historic mining and agricultural remains. None of these would be considered historic assets of the highest significance, and none would be anticipated to require preservation in situ. Of relevance, the larger part of the application site has already been truncated by later 20th-century opencast mining. Any remains that may have survived buried within the footprint of the opencast works are likely to have been removed.
- 6.39 The application site does not contribute to the setting or heritage significance of any historic assets within its wider environs. This includes Grade II Listed Henllys Vale Colliery Limekilns, Grade II Listed Henllys Vale Colliery Chimney, Grade II Listed Henglyn Isaf Farmhouse, Grade II Listed Bethel Independent Chapel, the five Grade II Listed buildings at Heol Giedd, Cwm Giedd, and any Scheduled Monuments along the lower reaches of the Black Mountains, north of the

application site. The significance of all of these assets would be preserved under the proposals.

- 6.40 The assessment found no overriding heritage constraints to the proposed development. The site appears to have comprised farmland throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. A stone spread, located in the north-western corner of the southern parcel of the site, was excavated in 1995. It was interpreted as the probable remains of a post-medieval or modern sheep-fold or a dismantled field boundary bank. It may be the feature shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1878.
- 6.41 There is no evidence for industrial activity within the site prior to the 1960s, when the eastern part of the northern parcel and the majority of the southern parcel were subject to opencast coal mining. After restoration of these areas in the 1970s or 80s, extraction recommenced in the 1990s – this time seeming to include the western part of the northern parcel but again leaving the western strip of the southern parcel untouched. Operations ceased in 2003 and the areas restored once again. This will have greatly impacted on the survival of archaeological remains from earlier periods. There is potential for evidence of agricultural and industrial activity, including the previously-excavated enclosure, to survive only within the western strip of the southern parcel and other marginal areas that may have escaped extraction and restoration. Any remains of historic land use are anticipated to be of low or very low significance and would not warrant preservation in situ or otherwise preclude development.
- 6.42 In accordance with pre-application advice received from CPAT and CADW, an appropriate and proportionate level of settings assessment has been carried out for designated historic assets located within a 3km radius of the site. It has been established that the site does not contribute to the significance of any of these assets through setting. As such, none of these assets are considered sensitive to the proposed development.
- 6.43 Having regard to the above heritage and archaeological considerations, the proposals are considered to be acceptable due to the minimal impact of the development. The proposals therefore comply with the requirements of Strategic Policy 7 and Policy DM13 of the LDP.

Temporary Nature

- 6.44 Planning permission is sought for a temporary period of 40 years from the date of the first export of electricity to the electricity grid.
- 6.45 A suitably worded planning Condition is suggested below which, in line with other Solar Farms which have received Planning Permission in Wales, could be applied.

“Within 40 years and 6 months following the first export of renewable electrical power from the site, or within 6 months should the permanent cessation of the renewable electrical power generation occur, whichever is the sooner, all infrastructure associated with the development hereby approved shall be removed from the site and the land restored to its original condition. The date of the first export of renewable electrical power is to be provided in writing to the Local Planning Authority within 30 days of the event.”

Planning Balance

- 6.46 To summarise, the above planning assessment has demonstrated that:
- The proposed development is acceptable in principle, being in a location that could accommodate this type of development and not adversely affect the rural environment;
 - The operation of the proposed solar PV installation would bring significant benefits at a national level by contributing towards the transition to a low carbon economy and at a local level through enhancement to existing vegetation, enhanced biodiversity;
 - Impacts associated with the development at this location are limited, and the proposal is in compliance with relevant issue specific planning policies in the Development Plan;
- 6.47 Taken as a whole, compliance with the Development Plan and other planning policy requirements, the significant benefits associated with the proposed development and the particularly limited impacts, it is clear that this development is, on balance, acceptable in planning terms.
- 6.48 This planning application therefore represents a sustainable development as defined by the PPW (2018) and is a scheme which complies with the LDP. In such circumstances, the application should be approved without delay.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Lightsource BP (“the Applicant”) in support of the accompanying full planning application for the 9.9MW Photovoltaic (PV) installation (“Solar Farm”) extension to Bryn Henllys Solar Farm at land at Waunlwyd Farm, Upper Cwmtwrch, Swansea, Powys, SA9 2XE (“the application site”).
- 7.2 The application site forms two parcels of land connected by an unnamed road at Waunlwyd Farm, Ystradown, Swansea. Historic Ordnance Survey (OS) maps identify that the Application Site is located within a former coal mining area, and within/adjacent to locations of unknown filled ground (associated with former mining operations).
- 7.3 Immediately to the east of the application site (‘southern parcel’) a 20MW solar farm (Bryn Henllys Solar Farm) has been granted planning permission (reference P/2015/0176).
- 7.4 Bryn Henllys Solar Farm takes access from the existing access from Palleg Road. This existing access was used for the previous open cast minerals extraction which ceased in 2003, as such it is of a standard and scale to accommodate regular HGV traffic. The construction access to serve Bryn Henllys Solar Farm is proposed to be used for the proposed development, with materials transferred within Bryn Henllys and the site.
- 7.5 The proposed development would involve the construction of a ground mounted solar PV farm along with associated security fencing and buildings within the application site.
- 7.6 The development supports the UK Government’s intention to provide a balanced energy system and will assist in moving to a low carbon economy and limit the requirement to upgrade the existing electricity network.
- 7.7 The Development Plan for the area relevant to this application comprises the Powys County Council Local Development Plan (LDP) which was adopted 17th April 2018. This is in addition to the supplementary planning guidance which accompanies the LDP.
- 7.8 The proposal has been shown to be in compliance with the relevant LDP policies, specifically Strategic Policy 7, Policy RE1, Policies DM2, DM4 and DM13 of the

Powys County Council Local Development Plan (2018), Planning Policy Wales (2018), and TAN8, which concerns renewable energy.

- 7.9 The development supports the Government's policy for the UK's transition to achieving a low carbon economy and assists in meeting the pressing need for deployment of renewable energy generation in the UK to meet legally binding obligations for 15% of energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020.
- 7.10 The development would contribute to the UK Government's obligation to significantly reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 to 100% below 1990 levels.
- 7.11 This proposal will have an approximate installed electricity generating capacity of approximately 9.9MW, all of which is generated by renewable sources (solar irradiation). In this instance the proposed solar PV installation would result in a reduction in carbon emissions associated with energy generation equating to approximately 3,372 tonnes of CO² per annum or the removal of approximately 717 family cars from the road each year.
- 7.12 The impacts of the proposal have been shown to be acceptable and, where harm has been identified, it has been demonstrated this is particularly limited and falls some way below a threshold which would warrant the withholding of Planning Permission.
- 7.13 Other benefits arise in the form of ecological and landscape enhancements, weigh heavily in favour of support for this development.
- 7.14 This statement therefore demonstrates that, upon considering the following matters, this proposal, on balance falls well within the scope of acceptability:
- Compliance with the Local Development Plan and Welsh Planning Policy guidance;
 - The significant benefits associated with the scheme; and
 - The benign impacts associated with the development.
- 7.15 Accordingly, this proposal represents sustainable development and as such, this application should be approved without delay.

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DESIGN



ENVIRONMENT



PLANNING



ECONOMICS



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