Report No. IR1013/PS
Date: April 2020

PLANNING STATEMENT:
PROPOSED SOLAR FARM

PANTYBRAD ROAD | LLANTRISANT | CF72 8YY

PREPARED BY

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B	Phase 1 Ecological Appraisal
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D	Coal Mining Risk Assessment
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 FORWARD

1.1.1 Solar farms are a simple and established technology, providing a source of safe and clean energy which produce zero emissions when in operation. Solar energy is not only sustainable; it is renewable meaning that we will never run out of it.

1.1.2 In 2018 Solar PV accounted for 11.7% of renewable electricity generation in the UK[1]. In 2018 there was circa 13.1GW of installed capacity of solar energy in the UK[2].

1.1.3 The Welsh Government's Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 confirms that it:

"… is committed to delivering the outcomes set out in Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition. Our priorities are:

reducing the amount of energy we use in Wales;

reducing our reliance on energy generated from fossil fuels; and

actively managing the transition to a low carbon energy."

1.1.4 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) has signed up to the UK100 Clean Energy Commitment and has an ultimate goal of becoming 'Net Zero' by 2050.

1.1.5 Solar farms are an effective and unobtrusive way of creating the electricity we all use – with the panels having a low visual impact on the local landscape and creating no noise, pollution, by-products or emissions. Additionally, solar farms result in minimal disturbance to the ground and can enhance local biodiversity, for example through planting a species rich wildflower mix in field margins, creating a more diverse habitat.

1.1.6 It is also noted that the non – intrusive nature of the proposal means that after the 25-year lifespan of the panels, they can be lifted and removed from the site and the land can continue to be used for agriculture.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

1.2.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Sirius Planning on behalf of Infinite Renewables, in support of an application for planning permission to construct and operate a 2MW solar farm on land the north of the Royal Mint in Llantrisant.

1.2.2 The proposal site comprises approximately 2ha and consists of low quality agricultural pasture land, on sloping ground which forms the lower slopes of Mynydd y Glyn. The site is within a semi-rural setting, with agricultural land surrounding the site to the north and an industrial built-up area including the Royal Mint and Llantrisant Business Park, located to the south. A recently constructed wind turbine, known locally as the 'Daffodil', is located within the same field unit as the proposed solar farm.

1.2.3 The site will be accessed from the north utilising the existing wind turbine access which has been constructed off Pantybrad Road, which in turn is accessed via the A4119.

1.2.4 The solar farm and associated infrastructure will have a peak electrical generating capacity of circa 2MW and will be designed to supply power directly to the Royal Mint, a key local employer, who are a huge consumer of energy. The proposal will provide an opportunity to help reduce the environmental impact of the Royal Mint's activities and contribute towards the Welsh Government's and RCTCBC targets for renewable energy.

[1] Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES): renewable sources of energy
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840014/Chapter_6.pdf
[2] Capacity of, and electricity generated from, renewable sources (DUKES 6.4) https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/renewable-sources-of-energy-chapter-6-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes

1.3 THE APPLICANT

1.3.1 Infinite Renewables is a specialist renewable energy scheme developer based in South Wales and have co-developed over 50MW of ground mounted solar.

1.4 REQUEST FOR A SCREENING REPORT

1.4.1 A Screening Direction was received from the Welsh Ministers on 17th January 2020 confirming that given the scale and nature of the proposal the facility would not constitute 'EIA development', and therefore no Environmental Impact Assessment would be required.

1.5 SCOPE AND FORMAT OF PLANNING STATEMENT

1.5.1 This Planning Statement has been organised into the following chapters:

- The Site and Surroundings;
- The Proposed Development;
- Environmental Considerations;
- Planning Policy Appraisal; and
- Summary and Conclusions.

1.6 OBTAINING INFORMATION

1.6.1 Electronic copies of all documents submitted to Rhondda Cynon Taf Council in respect of the planning application are available at the following website:

https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/PlanningandBuildingControl/PlanningApplications/SearchthePlanningRegister.aspx

1.6.2 Paper format copies of the planning application and supporting information are available on request.

1.6.3 All requests for hard copy information should be addressed to the following:

Infinite Renewables

c/o Sirius Planning

4245 Park Approach

Thorpe Park

Leeds LS15 8GB

2. THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 This chapter provides a description of the site in terms of its location, history, and surrounding land uses.

2.2 LOCATION

2.2.1 The site is located on land off Pantybrad Road to the north of the Royal Mint, centred on National Grid Reference 303593, 185447. The location of the site is shown on drawing IR1013/04/01 and Figure 2.1 below.

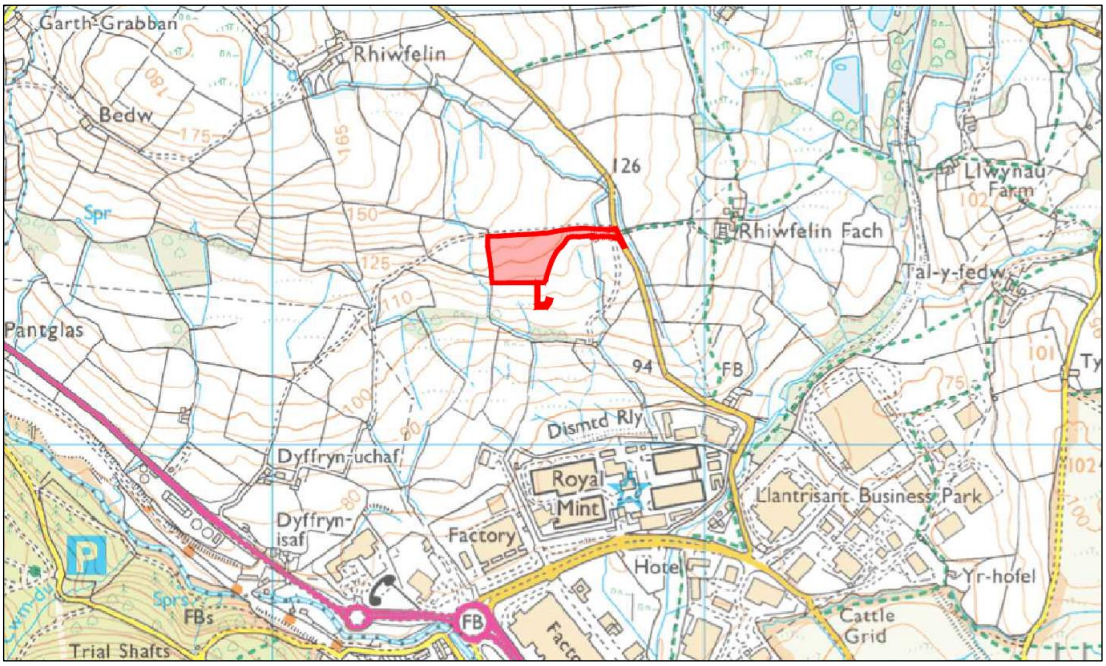

Figure 2.1: Site Location

2.3 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.3.1 The site covers an area of approximately 2ha comprising of typical agricultural pasture land, on sloping ground (between c.115m and c.130m AOD) which forms the lower slopes of Mynydd y Glyn and is surrounded by mature hedgerows, areas of scrub and trees.

2.3.2 A recently constructed wind turbine, known locally as the 'Daffodil', dimension 100m to tip and 38.5m to rotor radius (planning reference 16/0124/10), is located within the field unit of the proposed solar farm.

2.3.3 The site is within a semi-rural setting, with agricultural land surrounding the site to the north and an industrial built-up area including the Royal Mint and Llantrisant Business Park, located to the south.

2.4 SITE ACCESS

2.4.1 The site will be accessed via Pantybrad Road, which in turn is accessed via the A4119, utilising the existing wind turbine access which has been constructed. This access will be utilised during the construction and operational phases of the development.

Figure 2.2: View of the application site looking west from the site entrance

Figure 2.2: View of the application site looking south

Figure 2.2: View of the application site looking east

2.5 IDENTIFIED RECEPTORS AND DESIGNATIONS

2.5.1 The nearest residential receptors to the site are Rhiwfelin Fach Farm located approximately 400m to the east of the site.

2.5.2 The nearest statutory ecological designation is Rhos Tonyrefail SSSI located approximately 80m to the south-west at its closest point and Llantrisant Common and Pastures SSSI located approximately 1km to the south-east of the site.

2.5.3 The nearest Listed Building is the former 'explosives store of former Llantrisant Colliery' located approximately 1km to the south-west of the site. In addition, there are several Scheduled Ancient Monuments located within 3km of the site.

2.5.4 The site is located within Flood Zone A which is considered to be of little or no risk of flooding. A small shallow ditch is present to the east of the site.

2.5.5 Under the adopted proposals map the site is located outside settlement boundaries and is therefore within the 'open' countryside. The site is also designated as within a Special Landscape Area and a Minerals Safeguarding Area for Sandstone Resources.

2.6 SITE HISTORY

2.6.1 From using the planning application search facility on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website, Table 2.1 below outlines a summary of the recent planning history for the site.

Planning Reference	Planning Description	Decision Date
13/5733/35	Screening Opinion for a single 1.5MW wind turbine – EIA not required	16th January 2014
14/5102/35	Screening opinion for solar farm – EIA not required	9th May 2014
16/0124/10	Erection of a single wind turbine and associated infrastructure – Approved and implemented	19th Jul 2016

Table 2.1: Site Planning History

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The proposed development is for the construction and operation of a 2MW solar farm on land to the north of the Royal Mint in Llantrisant.

3.2 OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSAL

3.2.1 The proposal will comprise the following:

- Photovoltaic (PV) panels and associated supporting frames;
- String inverters, attached to the underside of the panels, and substation (housed in prefabricated containers);
- Associated cabling (largely below ground);
- Post and rail fencing; and
- Temporary set down area.

3.2.2 The solar farm and associated infrastructure will have a peak electrical generating capacity of circa 2MW and will be designed to supply power directly to The Royal Mint's site. The solar arrays will be connected to string inverters attached to the underside of the panels and a substation which converts the electricity generated by the PV panels. A below ground cable will connect the facility to the point of connection via the existing electrical infrastructure installed for the wind turbine.

3.2.3 The panels will be arranged in rows in an east-west alignment across the deployment area and will be angled between 10˚ and 35˚ to the horizontal and orientated south. All panels will be mounted on frames and have a maximum height of 2.5m above ground level; the lowest part of the panel will be circa 800mm above ground level. The rows of panels will be set to 1.5m apart to avoid shadowing and allow for scheduled maintenance.

3.2.4 The mounting frames will be matt finished galvanised steel with steel posts of circa 200mm diameter, driven (screwed or piled) into the ground, without the need for concrete foundations to a depth of approximately 1.5m. Drawing IR1013/04/04 and Figure 3.1 below provides an indictive specification of the panel and frames.

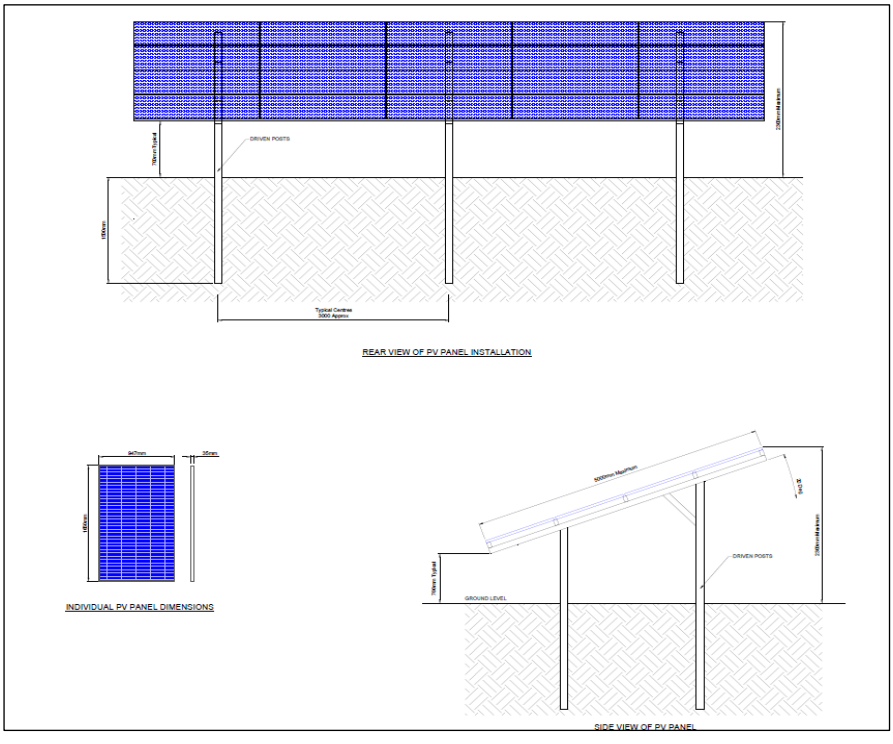

Figure 3.1: Indicative Panel and Frame Specification

3.2.5 The solar arrays will be connected to string inverters which convert the electricity generated by the PV panels from District Current (DC) to Alternating Current (AC). Underground cabling will transfer electricity from the string inverters to the proposed on-site substation. The substation allows electricity to be transferred to the existing 'Daffodil' wind turbine substation with the electricity distribution network at an appropriate voltage. This will then connect into the existing underground connection to the Royal Mint. The proposed substation will be housed in a prefabricated container which will be set on a concrete base. Drawing IR1013/04/06 provides indicative details of the substation.

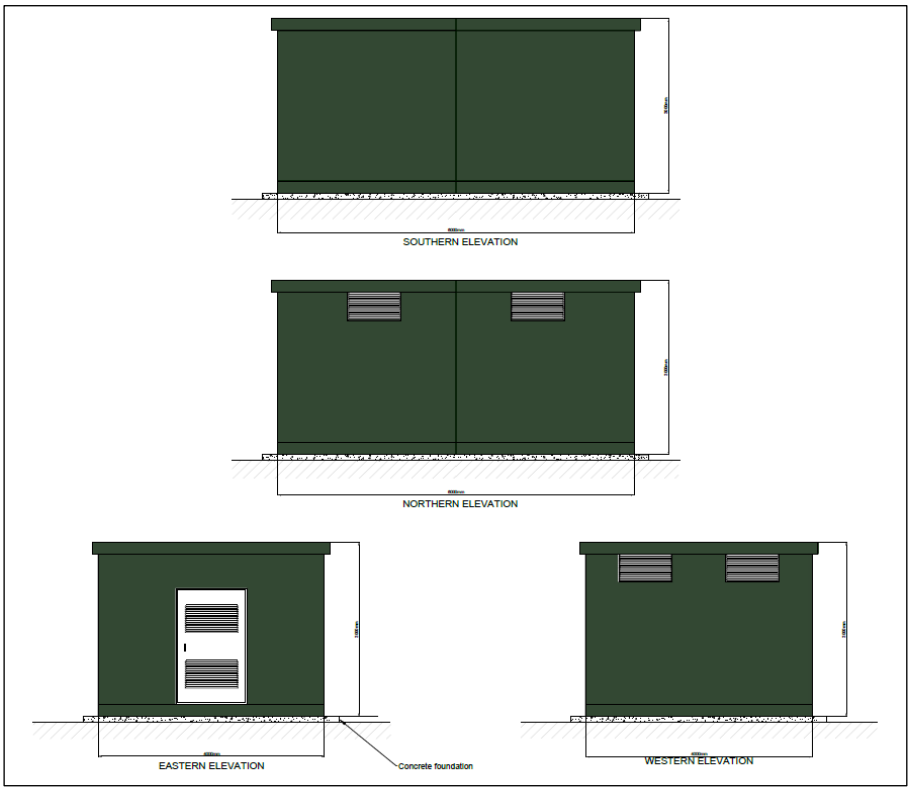

Figure 3.2: Indicative Substation Specification

3.2.6 The cabling / service connections required to transfer energy from the panels to the substation, including earthing traps, DC cables and AC cables will be provided within associated trenches to accommodate them. The cabling trench will vary from 300mm to 1100mm depending on whether they are for earthing, DC or AC cabling or medium voltage cabling.

3.2.7 Due to commercial constraints and potential changes in solar panel manufacturing, at the time of potential granting of planning permission, some element of flexibility is required in relation to the details of the panels, their peak output and their arrangement.

3.3 LANDSCAPING AND BOUNDARY TREATMENT

3.3.1 The application site will be secured by the existing post and wire fence along the northern and western boundary, and a new post and rail fence along the eastern and southern boundary. Fencing details are present on drawing no. IR1013/04/05.

3.3.2 Opportunities exist within the scheme for general biodiversity enhancements to be undertaken; the following are recommended for this site:

- All existing boundary hedgerows will be retained, including hedge trees. The hedges will help screen visibility from publicly accessible areas to the solar panels.
- A 4m perimeter buffer included between the hedgerows and proposed panels within which a meadow grassland mix will be allowed to naturally recolonise (sown if required) subject to a

low intensity management regime (an animal cur or grazing). The meadow grassland fringes will provide enhanced habitat fringes and contribute to increasing biodiversity levels in the local area;

- Beneath the panels, grass pasture will be sown and managed as meadow grassland, allowed to grow or grazed by sheep as deemed appropriate;
- By the site entrance a limited number of additional standard sized hedge trees will be planted along the hedgerows at random spacing's to increase tree coverage levels, filter visibility and provide green links between existing woodland and scrub areas locally; and
- Habitat creation for reptiles including simple structures such as hibernacula and grass snake egg laying heaps, and / or reduced management of grassland along boundaries and ditches.

3.4 SITE ACCESS

3.4.1 It is anticipated that the proposal site will be principally served via Pantybrad Road utilising the existing wind turbine access. This will provide access during the construction phase. As part of the construction phase a temporary set down area, adjacent to the site entrance on the existing hardstanding parking area, will be provided for the delivery of materials, equipment and welfare facilities.

3.4.2 The access during the operational phase will be as per the construction routes.

3.5 CAR PARKING

3.5.1 During construction of the development, it is expected that the existing hardstanding and parking area adjacent to the site entrance will provide sufficient land for temporary parking, storage and lay-down for the construction phase.

3.5.2 Once operational, the site will be manned remotely offsite. However, the site will be required to have maintenance checks three or four times a year.

3.6 CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

3.6.1 Subject to the granting of planning permission, construction activity for the development would last approximately 2 months.

3.6.2 A secure, temporary set-down area will be established within the landholding for the construction phases as required. The set down area will accommodate site materials for the construction works and will be a car park for site construction operatives.

3.6.3 Construction is expected to take place during the hours of 0700 to 1800 (Monday to Friday) and 0700 to 1600 hours (Saturday).

4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 This section sets out and briefly summarises the environmental assessments that have been carried out in support of the proposed development. Those environmental topics not requiring detailed consideration due to the likely negligible effects have also been referenced.

4.2 SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL AND TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS

4.2.1 The following environmental and technical assessments have been undertaken:

- Phase 1 Ecological Appraisal;
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal; and
- Coal Mining Risk Assessment.

4.2.2 These environmental and technical assessments are provided in full within Appendices B, C and D respectively, but are summarised below.

Ecology and Biodiversity

4.2.3 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken for the site by BSG Ecology and is presented in Appendix B.

4.2.4 Two statutory designated sites lie within 1km of the site boundary; Rhos Tonyrefail SSSI and Lantrisant Common and Pastures SSSI. In addition, one non-statutory designated site, Y Gweira Pasture Wildlife Trust Reserve (WRT), also lies within 1km of the site. The WTR comprises marshy grassland and lowland wet heathland which supports breeding birds and a variety of invertebrates including butterflies. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes that there are no anticipated potential impacts of these sites from the proposed development.

4.2.5 In addition, as part of the Screening Direction Request, Natural Resource Wales were consulted regarding the impacts of the proposal on statutory designated sites. Their response is provided within Appendix A and below:

"The Rhos Tonyrefail SSSI lies downslope of the proposed solar farm. Although the SSSI is in close proximity, we consider there is unlikely to be any direct impact on the interest features of the site. The site of the proposed solar farm appears to be agriculturally improved and of low ecological value and does not contain any habitat that might support the marsh fritillary butterfly, which is associated with the adjacent SSSI.

Whilst the proposed solar farm location is upslope from the SSSI, the hydrological regime would mean that any run-off from the site flows predominantly to the south and not into the SSSI. Any potential impacts on water quality in the receiving streams could be negated by ensuring that appropriate mitigation measures are implemented as part of a construction environmental management plan".

4.2.6 It is proposed that the recommended construction environmental management plan be controlled by way of suitably worded planning condition.

4.2.7 The site largely comprises improved and poor semi-improved grassland, which has been identified to be of low ecological value and presents minimal ecological constraints to development. Small areas of local flushing support marshy grassland which are species-poor, dominated by soft rush Juncus effuses, and of low ecological value, but may support low numbers of reptiles. There was no evidence of protected species noted during the site walkover.

4.2.8 The site is bordered by hedgerows including two hedgerows, a ditch and small areas of marshy grassland. These habitats are considered to be of greater ecological interest due to their potential to support a range of protected species. All hedgerows and ditches boarding the site will be retained with a 4m perimeter buffer between the hedgerows and proposed panels, in order to reduce the risk of harm to any species using these features during all phases of the development and to protect the

features themselves from accidental damage.

4.2.9 Overall, the in-field habitats are of low ecological value and pose no significant issues with regard to the development. In addition, with mitigation measures proposed and biodiversity enhancement, the Appraisal concludes there would be net benefits to biodiversity across the site.

Landscape and Visual

4.2.10 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been undertaken for the site and is presented in Appendix C.

4.2.11 The site is concluded to be of low landscape value influenced by the presence of the operational wind turbine and the near distance to the lower lying industrial areas focussed upon the Royal Mint facility. The site has no features that would be lost that could not be replaced and contains landscape elements with a low susceptibility to change. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal concludes that with reference to the evaluation of the landscape effects in accordance with the methodology, a Low landscape sensitivity and a Low magnitude of change is considered to result in a Minor significance of landscape effect overall, this is a Not Substantial effect.

4.2.12 The proposed development would affect an area of recognised landscape character of low value / susceptibility to change but would be limited effect within the local context. Overall, the effects would not be considered to be effects that would be a material factor in the decision-making process.

4.2.13 The Visual Assessment considered the main receptors within 500m of the site. The Appraisal concluded that there are very limited residential receptors with any potential for visibility to the site area with views generally being restricted by the changes in levels, the lower lying developed areas and the site upon the hillside, surrounded by banks of mature vegetation.

4.2.14 The limited areas with visibility are restricted to a very small geographical area and focussed to the locations of the viewpoints. The Appraisal concludes that whilst visible, the scale of the development is small and within a setting of other large-scale features in the locality, e.g. the daffodil turbine and the Royal Mint.

4.2.15 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal demonstrates that the proposed solar farm development could be successfully integrated into the surrounding landscape without causing substantial harm to the landscape character and visual amenity in the local area.

Coal Mining

4.2.16 A Coal Mining Risk Assessment has been undertaken for the site and is presented in Appendix D. Coal Authority geological mapping data suggests that a relatively small coal seam outcrop is potentially located beneath parts of the development area. However, given the lack of information on the seam we are advised that it is likely that the seam is of inferior size and quality, and therefore highly unlikely that the seam would have been historically worked. In addition, there is a substantial thickness of superficial drift cover below the site which would have made the seam uneconomic to work.

4.2.17 It is therefore concluded that there is insignificant risk to the proposed development caused by unrecorded shallow coal mining on the basis that this is likely to be absent.

4.3 ADDITONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.3.1 Below is a reasoned justification as to why the following topic areas have not required detailed assessment.

Traffic and Transport

4.3.2 The main traffic and transport related effects will be associated with the movement of HGVs to and from the site during the construction phase of the development. This section sets out the predicted impacts resulting from the construction traffic related to the proposed development.

Access Arrangements

4.3.3 Access to the proposal site will be via Pantybrad Road utilising the existing wind turbine access. Pantybrad Road can be accessed from Heol y Sarn and the A4119 / Ely Valley Road. A temporary set down area will be located adjacent to the site entrance on the existing hardstanding parking area for the delivery of materials, equipment and welfare facilities.

Proposed Vehicle Movements

4.3.4 The construction of the solar farm is expected to last around 2 months. During this period, there would be journeys associated with the arrival and departure of site staff, and the delivery of parts and construction materials.

4.3.5 Table 4.1 provides a breakdown of expected vehicular movements and an indicative construction schedule. HGV volumes and timings are based on best estimates at this stage and will be dependent on a number of factors, such as shipping schedules.

Construction Activity	Month	
	1	2
Delivery of plant, equipment and materials	12	
Cabling on site	1	
Delivery of inverters, transformer & control equipment	5	
Delivery of frames & support posts		2
Delivery of PV panels		8
Removal of plant and equipment		6
Total	**18**	**16**

Table 4.1: Indicative Vehicular Movements

4.3.6 It is anticipated that the construction phase will generate approximately 34 deliveries to site, or 68 vehicle movements. There would be approximately an average of 1 HGV delivery per day. As all deliveries will result in a return journey for the vehicle there will be up to an average of 2 vehicle movements per day.

4.3.7 Following these deliveries, it is envisaged that deliveries to the site will be fewer in number as the solar farm is constructed from material already delivered to site and stored within the temporary construction compound.

Staff Movements

4.3.8 An estimated 10 staff will be on site during the construction phase, depending on the phases of the construction schedule. It is envisaged that staff trips will be mainly made by private vehicles (LGVs). All vehicle parking will be provided within the temporary construction compound, there will be no parking on the public highway.

Operational Phase

4.3.9 Once operational the solar farm will be unmanned and access for occasional maintenance will be typically made by light goods vehicles. Maintenance and inspections will take place three or four times a year.

4.3.10 On the basis of the anticipated trip generation outlined above and given the temporary nature of the construction works, it is expected that the construction of the proposed solar farm will have no significant impact on the local highway network and therefore a detailed assessment has not been provided.

Agricultural Land Quality

4.3.11 The Predictive Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Map, available on the Welsh Government website, predicts the quality of the soil to be grade 5, very poor-quality agricultural land. The land is used for common pastural grazing, it is considered that no assessment is required.

Flood Risk and Surface Drainage

4.3.12 The site lies within Flood Zone A and therefore is considered to be at little or no risk of fluvial or tidal/coastal flooding.

4.3.13 Whilst the panels themselves will be impermeable surfaces, the permeability of the soil underneath will largely be unaltered. As such, it is considered that rainwater will effectively run of the solar panels onto the unaltered soil surfaces as per the pre-development condition of the site and will therefore not increase run-off rates at any level of significance. A small area of impermeable surface of the site will be created as part of the proposed development for the substation container base. This will be negligible, it is considered that there will be no risk of surface water runoff from this unit which will result in flooding elsewhere.

4.3.14 The drainage scheme for the site is nonetheless subject to approval by the SUDs Approval Body with an application being made to the SAB concurrent with this planning application.

Cultural Heritage

4.3.15 The nearest Listed Building to the proposal site is the former 'explosives store of former Llantrisant Colliery' located approximately 1km to the south-west of the site. In addition, there are several Scheduled Ancient Monuments located within 3km of the site. Given the separation distance between the site and any historic designations and the existing surrounding industrial area and the Daffodil wind turbine, the proposed development is unlikely to cause significant impact upon cultural heritage features with any adverse impact on the setting of designated features considered to be Low.

4.3.16 In addition, as part of the Screening Direction Request, Cadw were consulted regarding the impacts of the proposal on designated heritage assets. Their response is provided within Appendix A and below:

"Schedule Ancient Monuments

GM074 Llantrisant Castle

GM219 Lle'r Gaer

GM280 The Beacons Round Barrows

GM406 Tarren Deusant Sculptured Rock & Spring

The above designated heritage assets are located inside 3km of the proposed development; however, apart from scheduled monument GM074 Llantrisant Castle and listed building 23942 Church of St IIltyd, St Gwynno and St Dyforwg intervening topography, buildings and vegetation are likely to block all views between them. Consequently, it is likely that the proposed development will not have any impact on the setting of these designated heritage assets.

The proposed development will be visible from the upper part of scheduled monument GM074 and the tower of listed building 23942. It will be seen from them as a change to the open rural landscape; however, it will also be seen along with the modern industrial estate of Llantrisant Business Park and the Daffodil wind turbine. Consequently, whilst the proposed development is likely to have an adverse impact on the setting of these two designated heritage assets, and this will be a material consideration in the determination of the planning application, it is unlikely that this will be a significant adverse impact".

Air Quality

4.3.17 Solar farms have no direct point source of emissions to the atmosphere during the operational phase. Possible impacts to local air quality only have the potential to occur during the short period of the construction phase through vehicular and plant emissions or through the creation of dust, which is subject to the ground conditions at the time of construction..

4.3.18 The potential dust generation activities of the construction phase may arise through vehicle movements and any earthworks; in any event these activities will be minor and temporary in nature and will be restricted to certain times. Given the limited duration of the proposed construction works and the nature of works during the construction phase the potential for dust creation will be relatively low and therefore an assessment is not required.

Noise

4.3.19 The nearest residential property is located 400m to the east of the site. The opportunity to generate noise and vibration from the proposed solar farm is considered limited. The two-month construction phase will have the greatest potential to generate any noise and vibration levels from HGVs delivering equipment to site and the operation of field-based equipment installing the panels and ancillary equipment. Vibration is considered not to be an issue for the proposed development due to the low impact nature of the groundworks. Other than delivery vehicles, all other on-site vehicles are likely to be typical husbandry machinery e.g. telehandlers, post-drivers, tractor and trailor.

4.3.20 Overall given the low impact works of the construction phase and the static nature of the operational phase, excessive noise generation and vibration are not anticipated during the proposed development and therefore an assessment is not required.

5. PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 This section sets out the local and national planning policies as well as material considerations which are relevant, both to the application site, and the type of development proposed.

5.1.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.1.3 The proposed development site falls within the administrative boundaries of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. The adopted Local Plan for the application site comprises:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan up to 2021 (Adopted March 2011)

5.1.4 Given the primacy of the development plan in the decision-making process, it is imperative that this Planning Statement identifies and appraises the planning policies that are of relevance in determining this planning application.

5.2 LOCAL CONTEXT

5.2.1 The Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan was formally adopted in March 2011 and sets out how the County Borough will be developed to 2021. The Plan contains detailed policies which controls the form of new development and sets out what new development should look like.

5.2.2 Under the adopted proposals map, the site is located outside settlement boundaries and is therefore within the 'open' countryside. The site is also designated as within a Special Landscape Area and a Minerals Safeguarding Area for Sandstone Resources.

5.2.3 The following table provides an assessment of policies within the Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Development Plan which are considered relevant to the proposed development.

Table 5.1: Policy Appraisal – Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

Policy	Commentary
<u>Policy AW 2 - Sustainable Locations</u> *"In order to ensure that development proposals on non-allocated sites support the objectives of the plan, development proposals will only be supported in sustainable locations. Sustainable locations are defined as sites that …* *2. Would not unacceptably conflict with surrounding uses; …* *5. Do not permit highly vulnerable development and Emergency Services within Zone C2 floodplain…".*	The proposal development is for a 2MW solar farm off Pantybrad Road. The primary purpose of the proposal is to supply green energy to the Royal Mint who are a large consumer of energy. The site is located within the same field unit as the operational 'Daffodil' wind turbine and to the north of an industrial area. The application site has been identified to accommodate PV deployment, located within a suitable distance of the Royal Mint. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal concludes that the site is of a low landscape value and the proposals are considered to be acceptable in landscape and visual terms. The site lies within Flood Zone A and therefore is considered to be at little or no risk of fluvial or tidal / coastal flooding. Whilst the solar panels themselves will be impermeable surfaces, the permeability of the soil underneath will largely be unaltered therefore there is not considered to be any unacceptable impact on the drainage of surface water. The proposed solar farm will contribute towards achieving the renewable energy targets set by the Welsh Government and RCTCBC overarching 2050 target of Net Zero. In addition, the proposed

	development will generate economic benefits such as employment during construction of the proposed development. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with this policy.
Policy AW 5 - New Development *"Development proposals will be supported where: -* *1) Amenity* *a) The scale, form and design of the development would have no unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area;* *b) Where appropriate, existing site features of built and natural environment value would be retained;* *c) There would be no significant impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers;* *d) The development would be compatible with other uses in the locality; …* *2) Accessibility…* *c) The development would have safe access to the highway network and would not cause traffic congestion or exacerbate existing traffic congestion…".*	The proposed development is to construct and operate a 2MW solar farm located within the field unit of 'Daffodil' wind turbine. The primary purpose of the proposal is to supply green energy to the Royal Mint who are a large consumer of energy. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal concludes that the site is of a low landscape value, influenced by the presence of the operational wind turbine and the near distance to the lower lying industrial areas focussed upon the Royal Mint. The proposed development can successfully be integrated into the surrounding landscape without causing substantial harm to the landscape character and visual amenity in the local area. The Preliminary Ecology Appraisal, presented in Appendix B, concludes that there will be no anticipated potential impacts to statutory designated ecological sites. All hedges and ditches bordering the site will be retained with a 4m perimeter buffer included between the hedgerows and proposed panels. In addition, with mitigation measures and proposed biodiversity enhancement, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes there would be net benefits to biodiversity across the site. Access to the proposal site will be via Pantybrad Road utilising the existing wind turbine access. It is anticipated that the construction phase of the development will generate approximately 36 deliveries to site, or 72 vehicle movements. There would be approximately an average of 1 HGV delivery per day (2 vehicular movements). Once operational, the solar farm will be unmanned and access for occasional maintenance will be typically made by light goods vehicles. Given the temporary nature of the construction works, it is expected that the construction of the proposal will not have significant impact on the local highway. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with this policy.
Policy AW 6 - Design and Placemaking *"Development Proposals will be supported where: - …* *2. They are appropriate to the local context in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing, elevational treatment, materials and detailing; …* *7. Landscaping and planting are integral to the scheme and enhance the site and the wider context…*	The proposal is for a solar farm development located within the field unit of 'Daffodil' wind turbine. The primary purpose of the proposal is to supply green energy to the Royal Mint who are a large consumer of energy. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal concludes that the proposals are considered to be acceptable in landscape and visual terms. The existing landscaping bordering the site will be maintained and managed. All hedges and ditches

14. The design protects and enhances the landscape and biodiversity; *15. The development promotes energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy…"*	bordering the site will be retained with a 4m perimeter buffer included between the hedgerows and proposed panels. In addition, with mitigation measures and proposed biodiversity enhancement, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes there would be net benefits to biodiversity across the site. The proposed solar farm will contribute towards achieving the renewable energy targets set by the Welsh Government and RCTCBC overarching 2050 target of Net Zero. Thus, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with this policy.
Policy AW 7 – Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment *"Development proposals which impact upon sites of architectural and / or historical merit and sites archaeological importance will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the site…".*	Given the separation distance between the site and any historic designations and the existing surrounding landscape including the industrial area to the south and the operation 'Daffodil' wind turbine, the proposed development is unlikely to cause significant impact upon cultural heritage features and any adverse impact on the setting of designated features is considered to be Low. Thus, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with this policy.
Policy AW 8 - Protection And Enhancement Of The Natural Environment *"Rhondda Cynon Taf's distinctive natural heritage will be preserved and enhanced by protecting it from inappropriate development. Development proposals will only be permitted where:-* *1. They would not cause harm to the features of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) or other locally designated sites, unless it can be demonstrated that:-* *a) The proposal is directly necessary for the positive management of the site; or* *b) The proposal would not unacceptably impact on the features of the site for which it has been designated; or* *c) The development could not reasonably be located elsewhere, and the benefits of the proposed development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site.* *2. There would be no unacceptable impact upon features of importance to landscape or nature conservation, including ecological networks, the quality of natural resources such as air, water and soil, and the natural drainage of surface water…"*	The proposal is for a solar farm development which will supply green energy to the Royal Mint. The Preliminary Ecology Appraisal, presented in Appendix B, concludes that there will be no anticipated potential impacts to statutory designated ecological sites. The sites in-field habitats are of low ecological value and pose no significant issues with regards to the proposed development. The Appraisal states that the site is bordered by hedgerows, a ditch and small areas of marshy grassland which are considered to be of greater ecological interest. All hedges and ditches bordering the site will be retained with a 4m perimeter buffer included between the hedgerows and proposed panels. In addition, with mitigation measures and proposed biodiversity enhancement, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes there would be net benefits to biodiversity across the site. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal concludes that the site is of a low landscape value, influenced by the presence of the operational wind turbine and the near distance to the lower lying industrial areas focussed upon the Royal Mint. The site has no features that would be lost that could not be replaced and contains landscape elements with a low susceptibility to change. The Appraisal states that the proposed solar farm could be successfully integrated into the surrounding landscape without causing substantial harm to the landscape character of the area.

	The site lies within Flood Zone A and therefore is considered to be at little or no risk of fluvial or tidal / coastal flooding. Whilst the solar panels themselves will be impermeable surfaces, the permeability of the soil underneath will largely be unaltered therefore there is not considered to be any unacceptable impact on the drainage of surface water. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with this policy.
Policy AW 12 - Renewable & Non-Renewable Energy *"Development proposals which promote the provision of renewable and non-renewable energy such as schemes for energy from biomass, hydro-electricity, anaerobic digestion, on-shore oil and gas and small / medium sized wind turbines, will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there is no unacceptable effect upon the interests of soil conservation, agriculture, nature conservation, wildlife, natural and cultural heritage, landscape importance, public health and residential amenity.* *Development proposals should be designed to minimise resource use during construction, operation and maintenance."*	The proposed development is to construct and operate a 2MW solar farm located within the field unit of 'Daffodil' wind turbine. The primary purpose of the proposal is to supply green energy to the Royal Mint who are a large consumer of energy. The environment and technical assessments, provided within Appendices B – D, undertaken for the proposal demonstrate that, along with mitigation, the proposed solar farm would have no unacceptable impacts on sensitive receptors or the environment. Thus, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with this policy.
Policy AW 14 – Safeguarding of Minerals *"…2. The resources of Sandstone, as shown on the proposals map, will be safeguarded from development…".*	The proposed solar farm is of a temporary nature with the proposal having a lifespan of 25 years, after which all equipment will be removed from the site and the land will continue to be used for agriculture. Therefore, it is considered that the development would not permanently sterilise the land for extraction. Thus, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with this policy.
Policy SSA 23 – Special Landscape Areas *"Special Landscape Areas are identified at the following locations:* *1. Llanharry Surrounds;* *2. Talygarn Surrounds;* *3. Ely Valley at Miskin;* *4. Coed-yr-Hendy and Mwyndy;* *5. Llantrisant Surrounds;* *6. Mynydd y Glyn and Nant Muchudd Basin;* *7. Mynydd Hugh and Llantrisant Forest;* *8. Efail Isaf, Garth and Nantgarw Western Slopes;* *9. Craig yr Allt;* *10. Taff Vale Eastern Slopes, and* *11. Treforest Western Slopes.*	The application site is located within the Special Landscape Area 6 Mynydd Glyn and Nant Muchudd Basin. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal presented in Appendix C demonstrates that the proposed development would affect an area of recognised landscape character of low value / susceptibility to change but would be limited effect within the local context. The limited areas with visibility to the site are restricted to a very small geographical area and focussed to the locations of the viewpoints. Whilst visible, the scale of the development is small and within a setting of other large-scale features in the locality, e.g. the daffodil turbine and the Royal Mint. Overall, the Appraisal concludes that the proposal could be successfully integrated into the surrounding landscape without causing substantial harm to the landscape character and visual amenity in the local area.

Development within the defined Special Landscape Areas will be expected to conform to the highest standards of design, siting, layout and materials appropriate to the character of the area."	Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with this policy.

5.3 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 10, December 2018)

5.3.1 In December 2018, the Welsh Government (WG) published an update to national planning policy in the form of the 10th edition of Planning Policy Wales (PPW). PPW sets out the land use planning policies of the WG.

5.3.2 The PPW sets out the key planning principles in Figure 3 stating that *"The planning system has a vital role to play in making development resilient to climate change, decarbonising society and developing a circular economy for the benefit of both the built and natural environments and to contribute to the achievement of the well-being goals."*

5.3.3 Section 5.7 of chapter 5 relates to energy within paragraph 5.7.1 stating that *"The planning system plays a key role in delivering clean growth and the decarbonisation of energy…"* with paragraph 5.7.8 going on to state that *"…The planning system should: … maximise renewable and low carbon energy generation"*.

5.3.4 Paragraph 5.7.16 outlines the Welsh Government's targets for the generation of renewable energy including for Wales to generate 70% of its electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030. In addition, paragraph 5.9.1 of the PPW state that *"Planning authorities should facilitate all forms of renewable and low carbon energy development. In doing so, planning authorities should seek to ensure their area's full potential for renewable and low carbon energy generation is maximised and renewable energy targets are achieved"*.

5.3.5 In relation to development management and renewable and low carbon energy, paragraph 5.9.17 states that *"Planning authorities should give significant weight to the Welsh Government's targets to increase renewable and low carbon energy generation, as part of our overall approach to tackling climate change and increasing energy security…"*.

5.3.6 The proposed development is to construct and operate a 2MW solar farm, the Welsh Government is supportive of renewable and low carbon energy projects. The proposed solar farm will contribute towards achieving the renewable energy targets set by the Welsh Government and RCTCBC overarching 2050 target of Net Zero.

Technical Advice Note (Wales) 8 (TAN 8) – Planning for Renewable Energy (2005)

5.3.7 TAN 8 Planning for Renewable Energy provides advice on how renewable energy technologies should be accounted for as part of the development management process. Paragraph 2.1 states that *"The planning system has an important role to play in achieving the Assembly Government's commitment to enabling the deployment of all forms of renewable energy technologies in Wales"*.

5.3.8 TAN 8 outlines the support for renewable energy schemes providing they do not cause demonstrable harm to the nearby statutory designations, paragraph 3.15 states *"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"*.

Emerging National Development Framework

5.3.9 The draft National Development Framework (NDF) which sets out the direction for development in Wales from 2020 to 2040 was published for consultation in 2019. Under the draft NDF the site is located within a solar and wind energy priority area where significant weight will be given to the proposal's

contribution to reducing Wales' greenhouse gas emissions and meeting Wales decarbonisation and renewable energy targets (draft policy 10). The draft NDF also states that there is an acceptance of landscape change in the identified solar propriety areas.

5.4 CONCLUSION

5.4.1 The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the Development Plan, National Planning Policies and material considerations all of which support renewable energy projects. The proposal is considered to be an appropriate temporary use of land, to which after the 25-year lifespan of the panels, they can be lifted and removed from the site and the land can continue to be used for agriculture

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 Infinite Renewables is seeking to construct a 2MW solar farm across a total area of approximately 2ha. The deployment site is located on land off Pantybrad Road, north of the Royal Mint in Llantrisant. The primary purpose of the solar farm is to supply green energy to the Royal Mint who are a large consumer of energy

6.1.2 Renewable energy generation plays an important role within the response to climate change and is recognised at all levels of governance in Wales. The national economic objective to decentralise energy supply and to lessen dependence on fossil fuels is supported by renewable energy from solar. The Government consequently considers that the wider benefits of renewable energy schemes to society and the economy are significant and must be given weight by decision makers in reaching their decisions on individual planning applications.

6.2 PLANNING POLICY

6.2.1 The proposal has been considered in the context of local and national policies as well as material considerations for which there is support at all levels for renewable energy projects, such as solar, where their scale and cumulative impacts are appropriate.

6.3 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

6.3.1 A number of environmental considerations are set out in chapter 4 of this statement and accompany this application as appendices. These consider the potential effects of the proposed development upon the application site and identified receptors within the receiving environment.

6.3.2 Due to the iterative design process these assessments conclude that the proposal (alongside proposed mitigation) will not lead to adverse environmental effects either locally or upon the wider area.

6.4 CONCLUSION

6.4.1 Overall, the proposed solar farm would secure a viable source of sustainable, low carbon renewable energy and economic benefits to the local and wider areas.

6.4.2 The environmental assessments carried out demonstrate that the proposal can be sympathetically accommodated on site and provide enhancement for biodiversity whilst not adversely affecting local landscape and amenity.


infinite
renewables


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