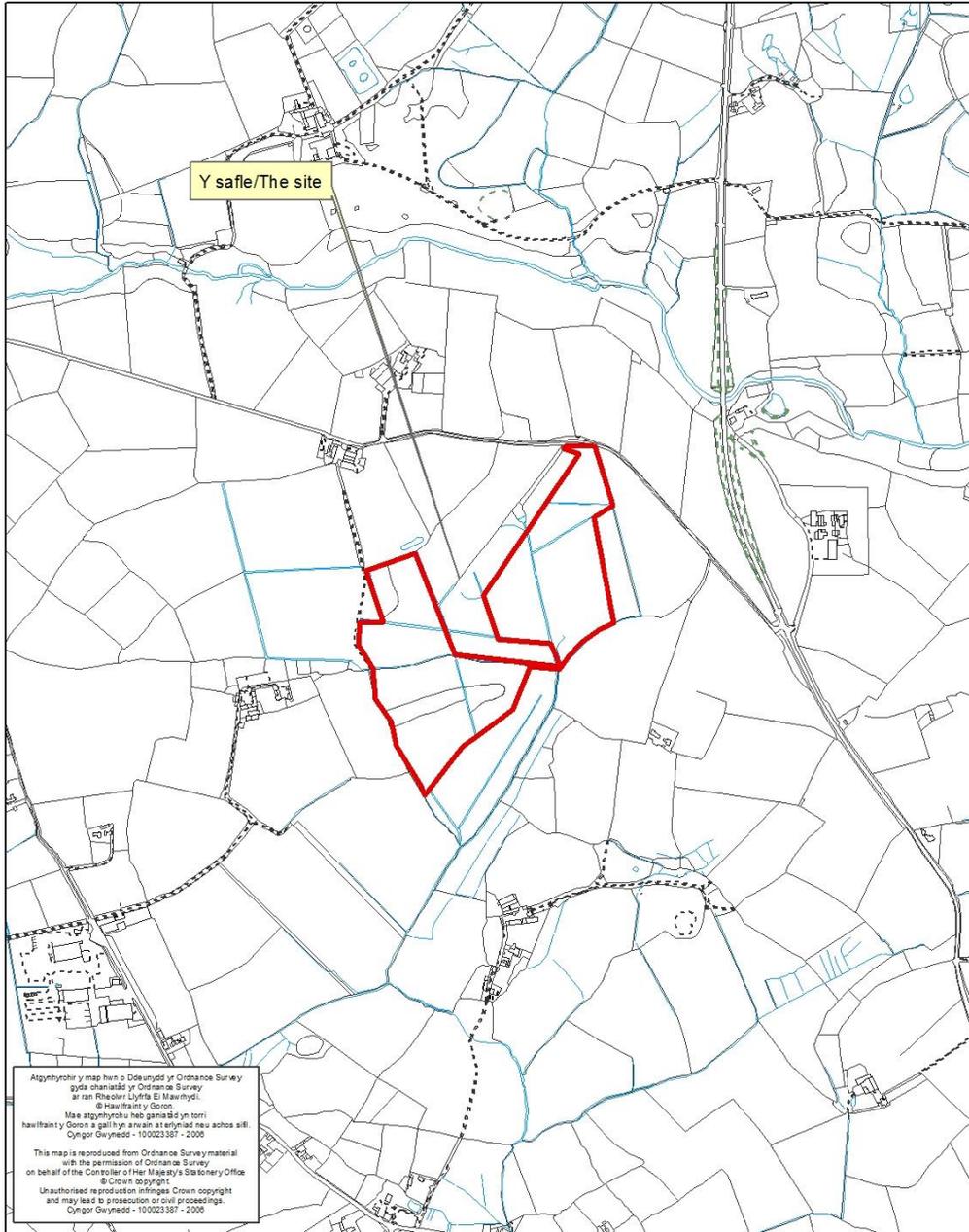


Number: 10



Rhif y Cais / Application Number : C15-0810-40-LL

Cynllun lleoliad ar gyfer adnabod y safle yn unig. Dim i raddfa.
Location Plan for identification purposes only. Not to scale.



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REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGER	CAERNARFON

Application Number: C15/0810/40/LL
Date Registered: 10/08/2015
Application Type: Full - Planning
Community: Llannor
Ward: Abererch

Proposal: CONSTRUCTION OF SOLAR FARM WITH ASSOCIATED WORKS TO LINK WITH THE ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION NETWORK, ACCESS ROAD, TEMPORARY BUILDING COMPOUND, SECURITY FENCING AND ECOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS AND LANDSCAPING

Location: FARM LAND, LLWYNDYRYS FARM, Y FFÔR, PWLLHELLI, LL53 6RH

Summary of the Recommendation:

TO APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

1. Description:

- 1.1 The application concerns the establishment of a solar farm on Llwyndyrys Farm farmland. As part of the proposal associated work will need to be undertaken to link with the electricity distribution network, create an access road and a temporary compound, erecting security fencing and undertaking ecological improvements and landscaping.
- 1.2 The application site measures approximately 11.56 hectares (28.56 acres) and includes six grade 3 and 4 agricultural fields. Generally, these are flat pasture fields with a slight slope to the south and are located in open countryside. There is a thick row of mature trees east of the site with hedges around the majority of the field boundaries. A class 3 county highway runs north of the site and the nearest field to the road is visible. Adjacent to the western boundary of the site are a cluster of fields identified as a proposed wildlife site. The site is within the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and the AONB is approximately 2km north-west. Llwyndyrys grade II listed farm buildings stand approximately 190m north-west of the site. The site is approximately 500m from the junction with the A499 class 1 highway.
- 1.3 The proposed solar park would produce approximately 4,450 Mw of electricity annually. The application comprises the following elements:
 - PV panels laid out in rows across the six fields from west to east. The panels will be placed on steel frameworks to a height of 2.4m above ground level and at a horizontal scale angle of 10-15. The gap between the rows will vary from 3m – 7m depending on the nature and slope of the topography.
 - 3 inverter stations measuring 16 metres long by 2.5 metres wide and 2.4 metres high. The structures are in the form of cabins and will be a dark green colour.
 - It is proposed to locate one gear changing sub-station (DNO) on the site, where the electrical equipment will be controlled and protected. The sub-station would measure 5m by 4.5m to a height of 2.3m in a green colour.
 - Customer Cabin for the solar farm which will also include electrical safety equipment. Again, the cabin would be in green and would measure 10m long, 2.5m wide and 3.1m high and located on the southernmost section of the site.
 - One control room in the form of a green cabin measuring 3.7m by 2.4m long and 2.3m high.

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- A two metre high security fence around the site. The fence would be in the form of a timber post and wire fence. It is proposed to include small gates for small animals here and there in the fence.
- CCTV cameras mounted on a pole measuring 2.5m high around the entire site.
- Tracks to serve the development.
- Temporary building compound to be situated near the entrance during the construction period to include a parking site, office and equipment storage shed.

1.4 The following documents have been submitted as part of the application:

- Planning, Design and Access Statement
- A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Photomontages of the site
- Transport Statement
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment
- Tree Survey and impact assessment and tree protection plan
- Drainage Strategy
- Environmental Noise Impact Assessment
- Cultural Heritage Desk-based Assessment
- Agricultural Land Classification Assessment
- Glint and Glare Study
- Statement of community involvement

1.5 This proposal has already been screened under reference C15/0754/40/SC and C15/0372/40/SC and it was confirmed that no Environmental Impact Assessment was required in this case.

1.6 The application is submitted to Committee due to the scale of the development that is of interest to the public.

2. **Relevant Policies:**

2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 2.1.2 of Planning Policy Wales emphasise that planning decisions should be in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. Planning considerations include National Planning Policy and the Unitary Development Plan.

2.2 **Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan 2009:**

STRATEGIC POLICY 9 – ENERGY - Development proposals to provide energy from renewable sources will be approved provided they do not significantly harm the environment or the amenities of nearby residents.

A1 – ENVIRONMENTAL OR OTHER IMPACT ASSESSMENTS - Ensure that sufficient information is provided with the planning application regarding any environmental impacts or other likely and substantial impacts in the form of an environmental assessment or assessments of other impacts.

A3 – PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE - Refuse proposals if there is any possibility of serious or irreversible damage to the environment or the community unless the relevant impact assessment can show beyond doubt ultimately that the impact can be avoided or alleviated.

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B3 – DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING THE SETTING OF A LISTED BUILDING - Ensure that proposals have no adverse effect on the setting of Listed Buildings and that they conform to a number of criteria aimed at safeguarding the special character of the Listed Building and the local environment.

B7 – SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE - Refuse proposals which will damage or destroy archaeological remains that are of national importance (whether scheduled or not) or their setting. It also refuses any development that will affect other archaeological remains unless the need for the development overrides the significance of the archaeological remains.

B8 - THE LLŶN AND ANGLESEY AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB) - Safeguard, maintain and enhance the character of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty by ensuring that proposals conform to a number of criteria aimed at protecting the recognised features of the site in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

B12 – PROTECTING HISTORIC LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GARDENS - Safeguard landscapes, parks and gardens of special historic interest in Wales from developments which would cause significant harm to their character, their appearance or their setting.

B17 - PROTECTING SITES OF REGIONAL OR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE - Refuse proposals which are likely to cause significant harm to sites of regional or local significance unless they conform to a series of criteria aimed at the protecting, promoting and managing recognised features within the sites.

B20 SPECIES AND THEIR HABITATS THAT ARE OF INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL IMPORTANCE – Refuse proposals which are likely to cause disturbance or unacceptable damage to protected species and their habitats unless they conform to a series of criteria aimed at safeguarding the recognised features of the site.

B22 BUILDING DESIGN - Promote good building design by ensuring that proposals conform to a series of criteria aimed at protecting the recognised features and character of the local landscape and environment.

B23 AMENITIES - Safeguard the amenities of the local area by ensuring that proposals conform to a series of criteria aimed at protecting the recognised features and amenities of the local area.

B25 BUILDING MATERIALS - Safeguard the visual character by ensuring that building materials are of high standard and in-keeping with the character and appearance of the local area.

B27 LANDSCAPING SCHEMES Ensure that permitted proposals incorporate soft/hard landscaping of a high standard which is appropriate for the site and which takes into consideration a series of factors aimed at avoiding damage to recognised features.

B34 LIGHTING AND LIGHT POLLUTION - Ensure that proposals do not significantly impair the amenity of neighbouring land uses and the environment.

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C1 LOCATING NEW DEVELOPMENTS – Land within town and village boundaries and the developed form of rural villages will be the main focus for new developments. New buildings, structures and ancillary facilities in the countryside will be refused with the exception of a development that is permitted by another policy of the Plan.

C27 RENEWABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SCHEMES – Proposals for renewable energy and sustainable energy management schemes will be approved provided that a series of criteria relating to the impact on the visual quality of the landscape and environmental and social factors can be met.

C28 SAFEGUARDING AGRICULTURAL LAND - Proposals which would lead to the loss of grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land will be refused unless it can be shown that there is an overwhelming need for the development, and proved that there is no previously developed land available and that there is no land of lower agricultural grades available apart from land of environmental value which outweighs agricultural considerations.

CH33 SAFETY ON ROADS AND STREETS – Development proposals will be approved if they comply with specific criteria relating to the vehicular entrance, the standard of the existing roads network and traffic calming measures.

Final Report of the Anglesey, Gwynedd and Snowdonia National Park Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (March 2014)

2.3 National Policies:

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7, July 2014)
 Technical Advice Note 8: Renewable Energy (2005)
 Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2014)

3. Relevant Planning History:

3.1 C15/0372/40/SC – Application for a screening opinion for the proposal. It was concluded that the development did not require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

C15/0754/40/SC – Amended application for screening with minor amendments to the fields. Again, there was no need for an environmental impact assessment for this proposal.

4. Consultations:

Community/Town Council: Support. Need to ensure that the development does not abut too closely to Pwll Gro. Need confirmation of the planning gain, namely who will be the local committee responsible for the distribution of funds to the community.

Transportation Unit: No objection to the proposal. Conditions / standard notes are recommended including the need to agree on traffic management measures and a road condition survey prior to the commencement of any work on site.

Flood Risk and Coastal Erosion Management: Suggest conditions to safeguard water courses in order to protect nearby amenities.

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Biodiversity Unit:

- No impact on adjacent Ty'n y Coed Wildlife site.
- No significant species were found on the site therefore development is unlikely to have an impact on important species.
- Important that there are measures to ensure that the Water fern weed found on the site does not spread.
- The landscaping plan has denoted 'Field E' for biodiversity with the intention of sowing with wildflowers. It is suggested that it would be more suitable for it to grow naturally and it should not be grazed for at least a year.
- Important that the security fence has low gaps for access to mammals
- The lighting system should be suitable to reduce the impact on a bat roost in the vicinity.
- Work to excavate soil required to create trenches for the electricity cables and for the compound area. A method and soil statement should be submitted.
- Number of water courses on the site, need to ensure that the quality of the water is maintained during the construction work.
- Need to maximise biodiversity and monitoring.
- The 11ha development will cause the loss of sections of marshy grassland. If measures are taken to leave the habitats to re-establish then only a temporary impact is expected.
- It is suggested that the development provides another site to create a biodiversity habitat such as the adjoining field, as woodland or a flower meadow.
- Five conditions are suggested:
 - That a surface water management plan should be submitted.
 - That a Biodiversity Management Plan should be submitted
 - No work or clearance to take place during the nesting season (1 April – 1 August)
 - Submit details on the security fence
 - Submit details on the lighting system

Welsh Water:

No observations.

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Natural Resources Wales:

Ecology

NRW consider the assessment by Avian Ecology (July 2015) to be satisfactory and agree with their conclusion. However, although it refers to a record of bats in the area it does not refer to their location or current status. NRW have a historical record (1988) of a roost of 40 eared bats in the outbuilding of Fferm Ty'n Coed which is approximately 170m from the boundary of the site with droppings in the farmhouse roof. A larger assessment of this roost will be required to find out if this development will have an impact on the colony. The assessment's conclusion should meet with the consent of the local authority, in consultation with NRW.

Flooding Risk and Drainage

NRW has reviewed the Drainage Strategy (PFA Consulting: July 2015) submitted. The document also considers the flooding risk from the development that is totally within zone A, TAN 15 Development and Flooding Risk (2004) maps. We are satisfied that it is possible to control the risk of flooding and drainage and note that the existing water courses will be used and that sustainable drainage techniques will be adopted. We also agree that the land compacted during the development period will be harrowed and sown. Any culvert will be subject to a Flooding Defence Consent controlled by the Council.

Landscape:

The solar farm will be within 2km south of the Llŷn AONB and within the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. The site stands within a low undulating plateau of grass fields and irregular closed marshes bordered by trees and hedgerows. The wooded valley of Afon Erch is north of the site. The plateau has robust, visually closed land with a few views of the AONB hills. Views of the site from the AONB are far and extensive. The woods, trees and hedgerows create a strong pattern in the landscape.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has considered the views into and from the AONB and within the historic landscape. In the review it is noted:

- The proposed development would be located low in an undulating plateau that is visually closed by hedgerows, trees and woods.
- Hedgerows along the field boundaries enclose the site visually yet there are fragmented gaps in the landscape in places where it is proposed to plant hedges and trees to close the existing views of the site.
- It is anticipated that there will be a significant visual impact in terms of view 12 from the county highway to the north of the site. The mitigation measures will not screen the development completely from this site

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but will moderately reduce its impact.

- Within the other views into and from the AONB and the historic landscape, the consequence of the development would be minor, negligible or would not change the area's character without any significant impact.

NRW is satisfied with the landscaping element of the application. However, a Landscape Mitigation Plan should be implemented and a condition attached that the management will be over the development's lifetime.

Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service:

Confirm that the archaeological assessment meets with the planning/professional requirements. Agree with the results of the assessment that the development would mean an adaptation of land use and the appearance of the site; however, it would not have an impact on the ancient monuments, listed buildings assessed nor on the character and the interest of the registered historical landscape.

The assessment states that the pasture is marshy and therefore there is limited potential of evidence of previous occupation. The solar developments in the vicinity have identified archaeological features on land a little further up that has been drained better. On the grounds of the character of the site and the results of the assessment, it is not considered that further field work is required for planning determination. However, it is appropriate for mitigation measures to be set to recognise that there is potential to find archaeological evidence during the construction work. It is therefore suggested that an archaeological programme condition is submitted prior to commencement of the work.

Public Consultation:

A notice was placed in the press, and posted in various places around the site and nearby residents were informed. The consultation period has expired and correspondence was received giving observations:

Observations (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales)

- State general support as it would contribute to local sustainable energy with a small impact on the landscape and local amenities.
- Area adjacent to the county highway and is open and the efficiency of the landscaping screen here is vital. Concern that the landscaping measures will be implemented effectively over the project period; these should be enforced.
- Concern regarding the accumulative impact of these developments on the electricity grid and if this can be supported without upgrading the electricity connections.

5. Assessment of the material planning considerations:

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The principle of the development

- 5.1 Policy C1 of the Unitary Development Plan relates to locating new developments, and states that land within town and village development boundaries and the developed form of rural villages will be the main focus for new developments. New buildings, structures and ancillary facilities in the countryside will be refused with the exception of a development that is permitted by another policy of the Plan. Developments to generate renewable energy that use natural resources are specifically noted as developments that could be suitable if approved by another policy in the Plan; therefore, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of the policy in this way. Nevertheless, the policy proceeds to state that new buildings, structures and ancillary facilities in the countryside will be strictly controlled and that a good visual relationship between them and existing developments should be ensured wherever possible. This is assessed in accordance with those relevant policies below.
- 5.2 Policy C27 of the GUDP states that proposals for renewable energy and sustainable energy management schemes will be approved provided that a series of criteria relating to the impact on the visual quality of the landscape and environmental and social factors can be met.
- 5.3 Criterion 1 of the policy notes that no proposal should lead to the siting of a scheme with a higher capacity than 5MW within the Llŷn AONB, or that no plan located outside the Llŷn AONB causes any significant harm to its setting or to the setting of the Llŷn/Anglesey AONB or Snowdonia National Park. In this case, the proposal is not located within the Llŷn AONB; however, it is located within 2km of the AONB. The proposal is located on level fields and on fields with a slight slope to the south and apart from the field near the access, it is surrounded to a great extent by hedgerows, ‘cloddiau’ and mature trees along the field boundaries. Although it would be possible to see parts of the proposed development from more elevated points within the AONB, this would be from a distance and it is likely that they would be mostly visible during the winter months when the leaves have fallen. However, it is not considered that the proposal would cause a significant impact on the AONB. It is considered that the proposal complies with criterion 1 of policy C27.
- 5.4 Criterion 2, C27 states that the type, scale and design of the proposed development should be appropriate in terms of the site, the location and the impact on the landscape. The proposal is for the provision of solar panels on land that extends for 11.56ha. Recent work undertaken by Gillespies on behalf of the Council has assessed the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape to cope with specific types of developments. According to the work undertaken, the application site is located within the G10 Canoldir Llŷn Landscape Character Area and the work proceeds to state that the capacity within this area, outside the AONB, is for well-placed micro to small-scale developments. Under the definition by Gillespies, a large scale development would be a development of 10-120 hectares. The assessment states that sensitivity varies locally within the Landscape Character Area and consideration should be given to evidence submitted with applications together with the case officer’s assessment having visited the site, prior to determining if the nature of the site can cope with a development at a larger scale than recommended in the work of Gillespies. Bearing in mind the undulating nature of the landform and the existing landscape, it is deemed that there is capacity here to cope and integrate the large scale development into the landscape.

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- 5.5 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which includes photomontages, was submitted with the application. The photomontages have been taken from close areas and from higher points within the AONB. From the high points in the AONB the views of the development would be minor with mature woodland, the undulating nature of the land, hedgerows along the field boundaries, dispersed dwellings and buildings assisting to integrate the development into the surrounding landscape. The LVIA concludes that the visual impact would be minor from the majority of the viewpoints shown except for land to the north of the site that is open and visible from the adjacent county highway, where it is proposed to undertake landscaping work. Although planting trees and hedgerows will not lessen the visual impact within the site, it is considered that planting at the northern boundary would certainly improve the situation from outside the site. It is anticipated that the additional landscaping, once it has been established, will moderately reduce the visual impact of the proposal. Consideration was also given to the accumulative impact of the proposal with other solar sites, but due to the distance and nature of the landscape it is not considered that the developments would form one visual context. The assessment concludes that the development would be suitable to the setting and character of the landscape and would offer appropriate mitigation measures in terms of visual amenities.
- 5.6 Except from close areas near the adjacent county highway, the site on the whole is fairly hidden from outside. Due to the open nature of the northern boundary the likelihood is that there will be a visual impact in the short term, however, on the whole this would be concentrated in areas close to the site's access. With the landscaping measures proposed along the northern boundary, it is believed that with time the development would blend in unnoticed into the landscape once the landscaping is established. Therefore, it is considered that the scale of the development is appropriate for the site in terms of its impact on the landscape and it therefore complies with criterion 2, policy C27.
- 5.7 Criterion 3 of the policy notes that any associated ancillary equipment should be designed and located in a way that would alleviate the visual impact on the landscape. This proposal includes the installation of three inverter stations, one DNO sub-station, customer cabin and a control room with the majority of the cabins to be finished in a dark green colour. The buildings vary in size; however, they are not considered excessive. The structures would be split on three locations on the site, which on the whole are inconspicuous areas with an existing background of hedgerows. A condition may be imposed that all the buildings/structures are to be in a green colour and in materials that reflect the agricultural buildings seen around the area. It is also proposed to erect a security fence to a height of two metres around the site along with CCTV cameras mounted on 2.5m high poles. The fence is high, but will be constructed in a suitable material, namely wire and timber posts. It is not considered that the fence or the cameras would not add substantially to the visual impact. On these grounds, it is considered that the ancillary equipment is suitable and that it is not likely to have a substantial impact on the landscape; thus the proposal complies with the requirements of criterion 3 of policy C27.
- 5.8 Criterion 4 notes that no associated overhead cables or pipes should cause any significant harm to the visual quality of the landscape. The Design and Access Statement notes that there is no intention to place any overhead cables and that the solar panels will be linked via underground cables. The proposal, therefore, complies with criterion 4 of Policy C27.
- 5.9 Criterion 5 of the policy notes that the proposed development should not lead to an unacceptable increase in noise, odour, dust or gas levels. The nature of this

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development means that there will be no increase in noise, odours, dust or gases. It is possible that there will be a period of local disturbance during the construction phase; however, this is not considered to be substantial. It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of criterion 5 of Policy C27.

- 5.10 Criterion 6 of the policy notes that the proposal should not cause any unacceptable damage to hydrological systems (ground water and surface water), thus harming biodiversity. A number of water courses cross the land and some of the fields are marshy. NRW is satisfied with the drainage strategy submitted as part of the application. The Council's Biodiversity Unit states that it is important to maintain the water quality in the ditches and rivers and suggest that measures should be taken to prevent soil from being washed into the water courses. It suggests that a Surface Water Management Plan and a Construction Environmental Management Plan are provided that include measures to prevent surface water and soil from getting into the water courses. It is considered that with the above details and the likely mitigation measures that the proposal would be acceptable to conform to the requirements of criterion number 6 of policy C27.
- 5.11 Criterion 7 of the policy notes that a development shall not produce unacceptable traffic levels considering the quality of the roads and the nature of the surrounding area. The highest level of traffic will be restricted to the construction phase and this is expected to be approximately 12 weeks. The nearest road is not very busy in terms of traffic levels and therefore the proposal is unlikely to cause significant nuisance. Nevertheless, measures have been included in the Traffic Statement that detail the transportation methods and traffic management during the development work. If the details noted in the statement are implemented it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in respect of traffic levels and in compliance with the requirements of policy C27.
- 5.12 Based on the above, it is considered that the proposal conforms with the requirements of policy C27 of the GUDP.
- 5.13 Policy C28 of the GUDP relates to the safeguarding of agricultural land and proposals which would lead to the loss of grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land will be refused unless it can be shown that there is an overwhelming need for the development, and proved that there is no previously developed land available and that there is no land of lower agricultural grades available apart from land of environmental value which outweighs agricultural considerations. In this case, a report submitted as part of the application confirms that the land is classified as 3b and 4; therefore, the proposal complies with the requirements of policy C28 above.
- 5.14 On this basis, it is therefore considered that the principle of the proposal is acceptable and that it is also consistent with the Strategic Policy relating to the provision of energy from renewable sources.

Visual amenities

- 5.15 Policy B8 of the GUDP deals with safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing the character of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty by ensuring that proposals conform to a number of criteria aimed at protecting the recognised features of the site. The site itself is not within the AONB, but the higher grounds of the AONB are approximately 2km away. Having assessed the photomontages taken from the AONB towards the proposal site, there is no significant concern on the impact on the visual amenities of the AONB as the development would integrate and blend in well into the existing landform. The site also lies within the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of

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Outstanding Historic Interest. The physical patterns of the fields will be retained and no further impact or local impact is anticipated on the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. The Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service is satisfied that the development will not change the historical features of the site and it is considered that the impact will be negligible on the designation. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in respect of Policies B8 and B12 of the GUDP.

Design and Materials

- 5.16 Policies B22 and B25 of the GUDP promote good building design and suitable building materials with the aim to protect the recognised features and character of the local landscape and environment. As has already been stated, the proposal also includes the erection of ancillary structures to locate the technical equipment. The structures would vary in size and they are shown finished in aluminium and in a green colour, which is considered to be a suitable finish for this rural location and reflects the agricultural buildings. It is also proposed to erect a security fence and CCTV. It is considered that the proposed ancillary equipment is suitable, respects the site and character of the landscape and is therefore in compliance with the requirements of policies B22 and B25 of the GUDP.

Landscaping

- 5.17 Policy B27 of the Unitary Development Plan relates to ensuring that permitted proposals incorporate soft/hard landscaping of a high standard which is appropriate for the site. On the whole, the majority of the site's boundaries have a covering of existing landscaping, with trees and hedgerows varying in size and quality. There is a row of thick mature trees on the eastern boundary that would be an effective screen for the proposal, however, currently there are weak spots that entail very open views of the site from the direction of the adjacent county highway. The Landscape Mitigation Plan submitted indicates that it is proposed to reinforce the hedgerow on the northern, eastern and western boundaries of the nearest field to the road as well as planting a row of native plants to form a hedge in front of the security fence near the compound and access to the site. It is appreciated that landscaping is likely to take time to establish and grow in order to form an effective screen; however, it is considered that this measure would certainly improve the look of the site in the landscape. It is proposed to leave the area under the solar panels as grazing land. It is considered that the landscaping details submitted are acceptable; however, it would be necessary to submit and agree on the landscaping management plan to ensure that the landscaping is maintained to a high standard over the scheme's lifetime. With the above condition it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of policy B27.

General and residential amenities

- 5.18 Policy B23 of the Unitary Development Plan relates to safeguarding the amenities of the local neighbourhood. The policy's criteria require that the development ensures the reasonable privacy of its users and nearby properties, that the development will not lead to an overdevelopment of the site, that the development does not increase traffic nor the noise associated with traffic, that the design of the site reduces opportunities for anti-social behaviour and that the design and external layout of the development takes into account the needs of all its potential users.
- 5.19 A Statement of Community Commitment was submitted with the application. It appears that the developers have undertaken a number of measures to inform the local community of the proposal, with discussions with the Community Council, leaflets to the public and a local exhibition. No local objection to the application has been received. It is not considered that the proposal would have an impact on the

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amenities of the nearest residential properties due to the nature of the landform and the existing thick vegetation that separates the site from the neighbours. Responses to the consultation from the Transportation Unit confirm that it is possible to secure effective traffic flow management. Although this is a vast site, it is not considered that the proposal will lead to an over-development of the site in this case, and it is considered that only parts of the site will be visible from outside the site. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal complies with Policy B23 above.

- 5.20 Policy B34 of the Unitary Development Plan relates to light pollution and lighting and the need to ensure that proposals do not have a significant impact on amenities, on nearby land use or on the environment. This policy specifically relates to lighting plans, however, the policy explanation also refers to the impact of glare. A glint and glare study report was submitted as part of the application and states that the nearest residential property to the application boundary may experience glare. Nevertheless, aerial photographs indicate a thick boundary of high mature trees that separate the premises from the site that would be likely to prevent such problems. Reflections would be possible on a section of the road to the north-east of the site. However, this would only be possible for a period of 20 minutes a day and therefore there is no substantial concern that the impact of glare is neither significant nor detrimental in this case. Despite this, a planning condition will be imposed on any planning permission to ensure that the materials used will minimise the impact of glare as much as possible. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy B34 of the GUDP.

Transport and access matters

- 5.21 Policy CH33 of the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan relates to ensuring safety on roads and streets. It is only during the construction of the solar farm that an increase is expected in traffic and the Transportation Statement submitted as part of the application provides information regarding the path of travel, method of controlling traffic and swept path analysis plans. Access to the site will be off the A499 highway from Caernarfon and the class 3 Llwyndyrys road that extends approximately 500m from the junction to the field access. Because the road from the junction to the site of the proposed application is a narrow single road it is proposed to install a traffic management system on this section of the road during the transportation and construction period. It will also be necessary to widen the access gate to the field to enable HGV lorries to gain access and this will then be reduce to an agricultural gate following the construction phase. The Transportation Unit is satisfied with the proposal in terms of road safety and recommends standard notes regarding undertaking work on a green verge and to agreement on an Extraordinary Traffic Agreement to safeguard the condition of the roads. Based on the observations of the Transportation Unit, it is not considered that the development would cause a detrimental impact to road safety and therefore it is considered to be in compliance with the requirements of policy CH33 GUDP.

Conservation and Archaeology Matters

- 5.22 Policy B7 of the Unitary Development Plan relates to sites of archaeological importance and it refuses proposals which will damage or destroy archaeological remains which are of national importance (whether scheduled or not) or their setting. The Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service has evaluated the Heritage Assessment submitted with the application and is satisfied with its contents. Because of the marshy and wet nature of the site there would be a low and limited potential for archaeological evidence on the site and therefore it is considered that there is no need for any further field surveys. However, it is suggested that a condition is imposed on any permission that an archaeological work programme is submitted prior to the

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commencement of the work to agree on mitigation measures if any archaeological remains are found during the development work. The likely impact of the development on the setting of the Carn Mynydd Carnguwch ancient monument has been evaluated which is 2km from the site. It was noted that whilst it would be possible to see the development from a wider distance from Carn the development would be amongst other modern features, such as farm buildings and vegetation and would be unlikely to have a significant detrimental impact on the setting and views from the ancient monument. Based on the comments of the GAPS it is considered that the development is in compliance with policy B7 GUDP.

- 5.23 Policy B3 safeguards the setting of listed buildings. The site is located within 200m to three grade II listed byres belonging to Llwyndyrys Farm and within 320m to Llwyndyrys Farmhouse which is grade II*. Due to the topography features, vegetation and location of modern farm buildings there is no inter-visibility between the II* Llwyndyrys historic farmhouse and the application site. Although the structure of the listed farm would be within the same visible context it is not considered that the development would change the relationship of the listed structure with the yard and adjacent agricultural land. The panels would be installed within the green boundaries of the existing fields without significant changes to field patterns or setting within the existing agricultural framework. It is not considered that the development would lead to undermining the setting and the relationship of the listed buildings with the adjacent agricultural land. It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in relation to Policy B3 of the GUDP.

Biodiversity matters

- 5.24 An ecological report was submitted as part of the application and its contents was assessed by the Biodiversity Unit and Natural Resources Wales. Concerns were stated by NRW regarding the possible impact on a roost of bats within 170m to the site. The Biodiversity Officer has submitted thorough observations regarding biodiversity matters following her visit to the site and offers advice and recommendations. No protected species were found on the site therefore it is considered that no further information is required for NRW. The condition to control the site's lighting would be sufficient to safeguard the bats' interests. The plan includes a specific field for biodiversity; however the Biodiversity Officer suggests that another field is offered without panels to establish woodland or a flower meadow. It is not reasonable to request an additional biodiversity field as it would have to be provided outside the application site and on land beyond the developer's control. On the whole, it is concluded that the proposal would be likely to cause a moderate loss to biodiversity at a local level for a temporary period only. They suggest that mitigation measures and planning conditions are included to ensure the minimum possible impact to biodiversity. As a result of their comments it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of biodiversity and it will not have a detrimental impact on protected species or their habitats if the conditions proposed are implemented. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in respect of Policy B20.
- 5.25 The site is located adjacent to a prospective Wildlife Site 493 (near Ty'n Coed) that has been designated because of its rush pasture. The Biodiversity Unit is satisfied that the development will have no impact on this Wildlife site and therefore it is considered to be in compliance with Policy B17, GUDP.

6. Conclusions:

- 6.1 As a result of the above assessment, it is not considered that the proposal is contrary to any relevant policy noted above, neither are there any other relevant planning

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matters to state otherwise. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable subject to relevant planning conditions.

7. Recommendation:

7.1 To approve – conditions

1. Five years
2. To complete the development in accordance with the plans
3. The panels must be located as shown in the plans, or as agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority
4. Agree on the external materials of all the buildings, fence and camera poles
5. Agree on the materials/colour of the frames and anti-glare covers
6. Undertake work in accordance with the landscaping scheme during the first planting season following commencement
7. Submit and agree on the long term landscaping management plan
8. Highway conditions
9. Work traffic flow and timing management plan
10. Biodiversity conditions – to include, submission of Surface Water scheme, submission of Biodiversity Management Plan, no clearance during nesting season, agree on fence details and on lighting plan
11. Submit an archaeological programme prior to commencement of work
12. Any electricity cables from the development to the electricity connection should be installed underground, and this should be agreed beforehand with the Local Planning Authority
13. If the solar panels approved in this application remain unused for the purposes of generating electricity for 12 months, they must be permanently removed from the site and the site should be restored to its original condition
14. Safeguarding water courses
15. Operate in accordance with Drainage Strategy