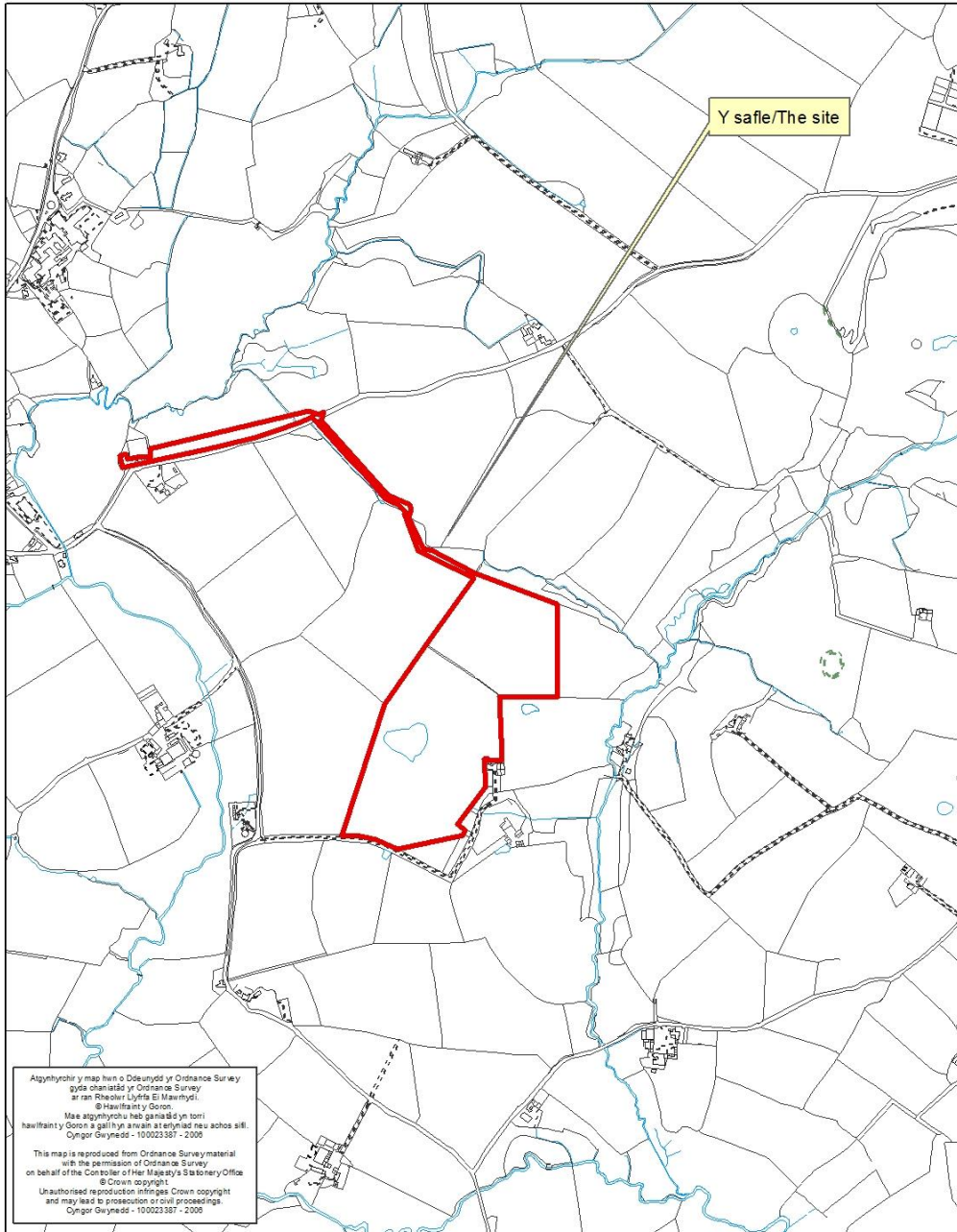


Number: 3



Rhif y Cais / Application Number : C15/0793/32/LL

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



PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

Application Number: C15/0793/32/LL
Date Registered: 23/11/2015
Application Type: Full - Planning
Community: Botwnnog
Ward: Botwnnog

Proposal: ERECTION OF SOLAR FARM AND ASSOCIATED WORKS
Location: NANHORON ESTATE, BOTWNNOG, PWLLHELI, GWYNEDD, LL53 8DP

Summary of the Recommendation: TO DELEGATE POWERS TO APPROVE

1. Description:

1.1 The application was deferred at the Planning Committee on 1 February 2016 in order to undertake a site inspection. This is an application for the installation of photovoltaic solar panels on agricultural land for a period of 30 years in order to create a solar farm, along with supplementary works including the installation of ancillary equipment to connect to the electricity network, building compound, security fence, landscaping improvements and adaptations to the access.

1.2 The application site measures approximately 12 hectares (22.6 acres) and comprises grade 3b and 4 agricultural land, located on a gentle slope approximately 700 metres south east of the village of Botwnnog. The site is in open countryside amongst undulating landscape. Towards the eastern boundary of the site is a mature wood and hedgerows surrounding the majority of the fields.

1.3 The site lies within a Landscape Conservation Area and is also within the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of Historic Interest. The Llŷn AONB is located approximately 450 metres south, 625 metres to the north east and 1km to the east. Access to the site is from the B4413, situated approximately 360 metres to the north west. On the eastern section of the site is a stone building and a little further on to the east is a public footpath. There are some scattered dwellings in the vicinity of the site.

1.4 The proposed solar park would produce approximately 5Mw of electricity annually. The application contains the following elements:

- PV panels laid out in rows across the site from west to east. The majority of the panels will be mounted on metal posts to a height of 2.5m above ground level, however, some may be to a height of 2.7m, dependent on topography. The gap between the rows will vary from 5.1m – 7.6m, depending on the nature and slope of the topography, with approximately 25% of the site covered by the panels. It is proposed to use dark blue coloured PV panels without a metal frame surround.
- Three inverter stations measuring 11.23m long, 1.98m wide and 2.8m high. These structures would be in the form of cabins.
- It is proposed to locate one electricity transfer sub-station (DNO) measuring 10.2m by 3.4m with a height of 3.4m in a green colour.
- The collection station would be in a green colour measuring 8.3m by 3.1m with a height of 2.9m.
- One general storage container in a green colour measuring 12.2m by 2.4m with a height of 2.6m for the storage of maintenance equipment for the PV panels.
- A two metre high security fence around the site. The fence would be a wire netting type in green with gaps along the bottom to enable small mammals to traverse.

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

- Three CCTV cameras mounted on a 6.6m pole. The poles would be green and distributed within the site.
- PADCON monitoring system to assess the condition of the panels. This system would include a camera on a 2.8m high pole and two communication boxes measuring 1.05m by 0.32m, extending in height to 1.25m.
- Three wind and irradiation sensors have been located on the sub-structure of the panels.
- A track to serve the development with a gravel surface and a low soil bund approximately 0.25m high either side of the track.
- Alterations to existing access.
- Temporary building compound with lighting during the construction period.

1.5 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
- Access Appraisal and Traffic Management Plan
- Ecological Evaluation
- Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan
- Tree Restrictions Survey
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Assessment
- Geophysical Survey Report
- Soils and Agricultural Land Classification Report
- Soils and Agricultural Land Classification Addendum
- Glint Study together with an appendix in response to an objection
- Statement of community involvement.
- Decommissioning Method Statement.
- Alternative Site Assessment
- Construction method statement
- Flood Consequence Assessment

1.6 This proposal has already been screened and it was confirmed that no Environmental Impact Assessment was required in this case.

1.7 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 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

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

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.

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.

B10 - PROTECTING AND ENHANCING LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION AREAS – Protect and enhance Landscape Conservation Areas by ensuring that proposals must conform to a series of criteria aimed at avoiding significant harm to recognised features.

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.

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 - Safeguarding the amenities of the local neighbourhood by ensuring that proposals must conform to a series of criteria which aim to safeguard the recognised features and amenities of the local area.

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

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

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

B32 - INCREASING SURFACE WATER - Refuse proposals which do not include flood reduction measures or appropriate alleviating measures which will lead to a reduction in the volume and scale of surface water reaching and flowing into rivers and other water courses.

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

C1 – LOCATING NEW DEVELOPMENTS – 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.

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 access, 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 8, January 2016)
 Technical Advice Note 8: Renewable Energy (2005)
 Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2014)

3. Relevant Planning History:

3.1 There is no relevant planning history.

4. Consultations:

Community/Town Council: Support.

Transportation Unit: No objection to the proposal. The Access Appraisal and Traffic Management Plan document responds to the majority of the transportation considerations and I recommend conditions / notes to ensure that the appropriate measures are

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

set in place prior to the commencement of any work on the site.

Natural Resources Wales:

Observations dated 22 January 2016

Following the submission of additional information including the visual viewpoints showing the site and its extensiveness marked clearly within the view, it is confirmed that we are satisfied that the proposed solar farm can be implemented without significant impact on views from the AONB. In such circumstances, there are factors such as the extensive range of views, distances of views and the location of the development in the landscape that has a strong visual pattern and a variety of colour stemming from the patchwork of fields, field patterns and woods, that all assist to reduce the contrast and visual presence of the development in the landscape. Therefore it is confirmed that there is no objection to the proposal subject to the inclusion of a condition on any permission that includes the landscape mitigation measures included in section 7 of the LIVA (Wardell Armstrong August 2015).

We also draw attention to the conditions recommended in our previous letter dated 16 December 2015 regarding flooding risk.

Comments regarding flooding from correspondence dated 16 December 2015.

The application site lies within zone A, as defined by the development advice map (dam) referred to in TAN 15 – Development and Flood Risk (July 2004). Although TAN 15 notes that flooding is unlikely to restrict development in this zone, a Flooding Consequence Assessment (FCA) has been provided to deal with any concerns from surface water or run-off flooding associated with the development. We generally agree with the findings of the FCA (Wardell Armstrong, Land south-east of Botwnnog, Pwllheli, Gwynedd, LL53 8DP, CA10881, August 2015).

Further mitigation measures may be provided in the form of a Soil Management Plan to ensure that appropriate controls are in place to safeguard the soil structure during the construction, implementation and decommissioning phases in order to avoid excessive compaction of the soil. Significant soil compaction may reduce the scale of infiltration and therefore increase the degree of run-off water from surface water off the developed site. Your authority may be of the opinion that it may be appropriate to attach a planning condition on any planning consent, that requires a Soil Management Plan to be implemented to alleviate any soil compaction and assist to ensure that the soil structure is kept in good condition throughout and following the plan's lifetime. We therefore require that conditions are imposed dealing with the submission of details and implementing a surface water management system and also that no building or structure is erected or raising of the ground levels within 4 metres of the

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

bank of any watercourse

Welsh Water: Submit observations as the path is crossed by a water main and that an understanding is required on how their equipment will be safeguarded during construction work and how they would gain access to their equipment following the development work.

Public Protection: Not received.

Biodiversity Unit: An Ecological Report and Biodiversity Management and Landscape Plan have been submitted with the application:

- Botwnnog Solar Farm, Ecology Apraisal 2 September 2015
- Botwnnog Solar Farm, Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan August 2015

I am satisfied with the contents and the conclusions of the Ecology Assessment. The surveys in the report are sufficient and I agree with the mitigation recommendations and the biodiversity improvements recommended.

The details of the mitigation and improvement measures have been included in the management plan. I would like to impose a condition that the measures detailed in Table 1 of the Management Activities Schedule are followed exactly as described.

In addition, I wish to include the following conditions:

- The developer should submit a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to the Authority prior to the commencement of the work. This should include pollution prevention measures in the form of a Pollution Incident Control Plan.
- The developer should submit details of the pasture seed mixture to the authority for approval prior to the commencement of the re-seeding work.
- The developer should submit details of the locations of the bird and bat boxes to the Authority, once these details have been determined.
- The developer should submit the results of the annual assessments, together with a revised management plan, at the end of the initial five years of the Plan as detailed in Objective 6 of the Management Plan.

I agree with the conclusion of the management plan that this development has the potential to bring benefits to biodiversity in the long-term.

Trees Unit: I have read the trees survey and I agree with the contents of the report. It appears that no trees will be harmed if the application is approved. The applicant has proposed to undertake an Arboricultural Impact Statement and an Arboricultural Method Statement and there is mention of planting new trees to take over from some of the old trees on

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

the site. I have no objection to the application provided that the trees survey is followed.

AONB Unit:

The principle of generating renewable energy is praiseworthy, as it will reduce the need for conventional energy and therefore reduce environmental pollution. However, it is important to ensure that developments do not unacceptably impair on natural and local amenities.

In this case, the site is not very prominent in the rural landscape due to a combination of factors. In addition, as part of the development it is proposed to present some measures to limit the visual impact of the development - to include the planting of a hedge and filling gaps in hedgerows.

The site of the proposed development is not located within the AONB but it is fairly close to the boundary and it is accepted that it would be visible from some areas within the AONB - however, these would mainly be views from a distance (such as higher grounds in the Rhiw and Garn Fadryn area).

Detailed attention is given to the likely visual impact of the development in the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. There is no reason to disagree with the Assessment's conclusions and it is not considered that this development would have a significant impact on the AONB.

The proposal to improve landscaping is noted and supported - if it is intended to approve the application it is suggested that the hedgerows are completed in accordance with the Glastir standards and are maintained regularly with a condition to prevent any light on the site during the night.

CADW:

The role of Cadw in the planning process entails that we provide an assessment to the local planning authority regarding the likely impact the proposal may have on scheduled ancient monuments or on Registered Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens. It is a matter for the local planning authority to weigh and measure the Cadw assessment against all the material planning considerations when determining if a planning permission should be approved, including matters regarding listed buildings and conservation areas.

The proposed development is located within the historic landscape called the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of Historic Interest. The proposal has the possibility to have more than merely a local impact on the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of Historic Interest due to its scale, as it has an area greater than 12ha. The area of the proposed development is a little higher than the important Ceunant Nanhoron and within landscape character area 15, Neigwl. However, the size of the Neigwl Character Area is large compared to the scale of the development and in this case we

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

do not consider that ASIDOHL2 would be productive.

Gwynedd Archaeological
Planning Service:

The archaeological reports submitted with the application have been undertaken in compliance with planning and professional requirements. I cannot agree with the assessment of the recommendations in relation to the potential of buried archaeological remains. Although none of the reports have identified any clear archaeology on the site, the results of the geophysical survey are inconclusive. It is agreed that many irregularities may be due to natural or recent agricultural sources, although the results in the southern field are indicative of wet land where archaeological inconsistencies may be unclear. In the northern field the survey identified curved irregularities in two areas. These have been temporarily interpreted as geological, however their form and location on a fairly level floor above a watercourse and close to a confluence indicates that an archaeological source is possible. The most likely archaeological interpretation is that of a pre-historical enclosure. One of these areas coincides with the proposed location of the main compound and therefore it may have an impact on its setting, and possibly on the feasibility of the proposal if it were confirmed as archaeological. Further research is required including test trenches to establish if the geophysical inconsistencies are natural or archaeological and to establish the validity of survey results and the potential for archaeological remains. Since the information is required to assess the impact of the development on the historical environment the test trenches will have to be dug prior to determining the planning application.

ScottishPower:

Not received.

The Welsh Government's
Land Use Planning Unit:

The documents have been assessed. The Soils and Agricultural Land Assessment Classification and the Soils and Agricultural Land Classification Addendum are in compliance with the Revised Guidance and Criteria for Grading Agricultural Land (MAFF 1988). The results offer a fair and reliable reflection of the quality of agricultural land across the site.

Flood Risk and Coastal
Erosion Management Unit:

Submit details in terms of the need to safeguard water courses.

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

Public Consultation:

A notice was posted on the site and nearby residents were notified. The advertisement period has expired and two letters / items of correspondence have been received objecting on the following grounds:

- One objector specifically opposes the development of the smaller of the two fields.
- The visual impact of the proposal.
- The impact on the AONB.
- The report of the Anglesey, Gwynedd and Snowdonia National Park Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment (March 2014) notes that this area has high sensitivity to solar developments and recommend that there is no capacity for solar energy developments at a field scale.
- Detrimental effect on the area
- Concerns regarding glint and glare.
- No soil samples taken from the smaller field shown in the document. Soils and Agricultural Land Classification Report
- One objector recommends that the field to the north west is used rather than the smaller of the two fields which forms part of the application.

One letter / correspondence was received supporting the application on the following grounds:

- That it was a good idea.

5. Assessment of the relevant planning considerations:

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, the AONB is located approximately 450m south, 625m to the north east and 1km east of the site. The proposal is located

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

on fields with a gentle slope and there is a mature wood towards the eastern boundary of the site with a variety of hedges surrounding the majority of the site's fields. The land rises towards the north. Land to the east of the site descends and the application site is as if it is located on the ridge of the slope with the application site land levelling out and therefore in terms of landform it is not as prominent as the fields towards the west of the site. This is also true of the land towards the south of the site. The form of the landscape, trees and bushes together with high hedges and winding, narrow roads restrict the visibility of the site from land within the AONB. Although it would be possible to see parts of the proposed development from more elevated points within the AONB, such as Mynydd Rhiw and Garn Fadryn, this would be from a distance. 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 approximately 12ha. 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 that has been undertaken, the site of this application is located within the G07 West Llŷn Landscape Character Area. It is also stated that there is no capacity for solar energy developments on a field-scale within this area, apart from micro-level developments that should have a good relationship with existing dwellings/buildings. Under the definition by Gillespies, a large scale development would be a development of 10-20 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.

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 elevated points of the AONB the views of the development would be minor, with the form of the landscape, trees and bushes together with high hedges and winding, narrow roads restricting the visibility of the site and assisting to integrate the development with the surrounding landscape. The LVIA recognises that the impact on the landscape and its visual impact would be worse during the construction phase than when the development has been completed. The LVIA comes to the following conclusions regarding the proposal following its construction:-

- Negligible adverse impact on the Landscape Character Area as a whole including the AONB.
- Negligible to minor-medium adverse visual impact on highways.
- Medium adverse impact from the track towards the south of the site where there is a gate access to a field.
- Negligible to minor adverse impact on rights of way where views of the development are available.
- Negligible to minor adverse visual impact from rights of way within the AONB.
- Negligible to minor-medium adverse visual impact on the property in the study area.

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

- Once the mitigation planting measures have thickened sufficiently to screen the views, the visual impact would generally be no more than a minor adverse impact.

The assessment concludes that the proposal is in accordance with Policies B8 and B10 of the GUDP, and that the design of the plan has been amended to withdraw the most prominent field, west of the site, from the plan to reduce its impact. It is also considered that locating the access track near existing hedges / trees together with using dark green coloured materials for the ancillary equipment on the site will also assist to reduce the impact of the development.

- 5.6 The proposal is located on fields with a gentle slope with trees towards the eastern boundary and hedges surrounding the majority of the site's fields. It is also intended to add a row of hedges near the north eastern side of the site. The existing landscaping and the landscaping measures proposed together with the surrounding landscape form assist to incorporate the development into the site. Therefore it is considered that the scale and design of the development are appropriate to the site in terms of its impact on the landscape, hence it 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, collection station and storage container, 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 will be mainly located towards the northern section of the site, however, some would also be located amongst the solar panels. A condition may be imposed that all the buildings/structures are in a dark green colour. It is also proposed to erect a security fence to a height of two metres around the site along with CCTV cameras. It is proposed that this fence and poles will be in a green colour. It is not considered that the fence or the cameras would 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 note that there is no intention to install 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 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 quite wet. NRA recommend that a Surface Water Management Plan is provided. 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.

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

- 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 16 weeks. Access to the site is from the B4413 and the work would include altering the existing access to the field. As it is anticipated that the greatest level of traffic will be during the construction phase, it is not considered that the proposal would cause significant disturbance. Nevertheless, measures have been included in the Access Appraisal and Traffic Management Plan 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 to 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 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 aim at protecting the recognised features of the site. The site itself is not located within the AONB, but it is fairly close to the boundary and it is accepted that it would be visible from some areas within the AONB. However, these would mainly be views from a distance such as from higher grounds in the Rhiw and Garn Fadryn area. Having assessed the details submitted as part of the application, including 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 and it is not considered that the proposal would have a significant impact on the AONB. The observations of AONB Unit on the proposal were received and they are also of the opinion that the proposal would not have a significant impact on the AONB. The site is also located within a Landscape Conservation Area, and in the same manner due to the location, landscaping and surrounding landforms it is not considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the Landscape Conservation Area. Following the submission of additional information including the visual viewpoints showing the site and its extensiveness marked clearly within the view, it is confirmed that we are satisfied that the proposed solar farm can be implemented without significant impact on views from the AONB. The comments of Natural Resources Wales state that the extensive range of views, distances of views and the location of the development in the landscape that has a strong visual pattern and a variety of colour stemming from the patchwork of fields, field patterns and woods all assist to reduce the contrast and visual presence of the development in the landscape. Natural

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

Resources Wales recommend that there should be a condition imposed on any planning permission that the development is undertaken in accordance with the landscape mitigation measures included in section 7 of the LIVA (Wardell Armstrong, August 2015). Therefore, as a result of the above, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in respect of Policies B8 and B12 of the GUDP.

Design and Materials

- 5.16 Policy 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 mainly 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 install a security fence and CCTV. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal is suitable, respects the site and the character of the landscape and hence complies with the requirements of policies B22 and B25 in 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 thick row of mature trees on the eastern boundary that would be an effective screen for the proposal, however, there are weak spots. The Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan submitted indicates that it is proposed to plant a new hedge that would be a mixture of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Elder and rose varieties along the eastern boundary of the most northerly field of the site. The plants would be approximately 1.2m high to start and would eventually be allowed to grow to a height of 2.5 - 3m. Wildflowers would also be grown throughout the site. Despite what is proposed, it is considered that it would be appropriate to impose a condition to agree on the details of more landscaping work in order to reinforce the existing hedgerows that are in places fairly weak and thin. A condition may be imposed to agree on a more detailed landscape plan as part of the permission. 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. In light of the above, and by incorporating additional landscaping in the revised Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in relation to 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 over-development 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 Correspondence has been received from the owner of a nearby property who objects specifically to the development of the smaller field on the northern section of the site and this is mainly on the grounds of the impact on views from the property and the impact of glint and glare. Caeau is located approximately 273m east of the site with the main property's elevation to the south west, although an extension has received

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

consent it would have windows looking towards the site. It is the northern field that has the potential of impairing on the property and this is reflected in the objection as it is this field that is referred to in the objection. This site would be visible from Caeau. In terms of the site's layout, it would be the side of the panels that would face this property. It is intended to plant a hedge that would be allowed to grow to a height of 2.5 to 3m on the field's eastern boundary and this would be a means to screen the proposal and reduce its visual impact from the property of Caeau. Having considered this and the distance of the property from the site, approximately 273m, it is not believed that the development would be oppressive to the property's occupants or that its impact on the landscape would be harmful enough to justify refusing the application. Although this is a vast site, it is not considered that the proposal will lead to an overdevelopment of the site in this case. Responses to the consultation from the Gwynedd Council Transportation Unit confirm that it is possible to ensure effective traffic flow management. Given the above, it is not considered that the proposal would cause significant harm to the amenities of the local neighbourhood and it is therefore considered that the proposal conforms to the requirements of Policy B23 above.

- 5.20 Policy B34 of the Unitary Development Plan relates to light pollution and lighting and it ensures 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.
- 5.21 The Glint Assessment received as part of the application recognises that there is potential for the impact of glinting to be present from an individual property and on some of the roads surrounding the site. However, it is possible that the existing screening around the site itself, and also in the locality in the form of trees and hedges, would prevent the majority of these effects but this cannot be confirmed. Therefore, at some times of the day and during the year there is potential for glinting reflection. These impacts have been labelled to be of a low density and because of the infrequency of these cases, even if they are visible, they are not expected to cause a significant nuisance to residents. The Glint Assessment also recommends that the hedges surrounding the site should be left to grow to be 2.5-3m high and that any gaps should be planted. This would mainly reduce the visual impact of the proposal to visual receivers near the site but would also reduce the impact of the proposal on distant views.
- 5.22 The objector's property, namely Caeau, is situated approximately 270 metres east of the site. In the Glint Assessment it is recognised that there is scope for glinting to occur to this property. From the modelling undertaken the glinting potential to this property is between March and September between 17.50 and 19.00, and it should not continue for more than 30 minutes a day. It is likely that this would be low density but there is potential for medium density between 17.30 and 18.30 during March - April and September - October. The Glint Assessment also notes that there is natural screening between Caeau and the site. Having visited the site it is not considered that there is any existing natural screen between the application site and Caeau and this is mainly due to the fact that this property is at a similar level to the northern section of the application site. In response to the objection, an addition was made to the Glint Assessment that gives attention mainly to the impact of glinting on the property of Caeau. It is understood from this information that the modelling method to assess glint and glare does not take into consideration screening by other panels within the site nor screening by landforms. Having taken this into consideration, it is understood that the glinting would be for periods much less than the 30 minutes stated in the original report, with the majority of the anticipated glinting of a low density and

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

where it is not expected to cause a nuisance. Some medium density glinting is to be expected during the months of March and mid September to mid October, but for lesser periods of between 2 and 22 minutes a day and when it is considered that Mynydd Rhiw (3.75km) is west of the site it is expected that this will be reduced further by 68%. Neither does this take into account the additional hedgerow to be planted on the eastern boundary of the northern field. Whilst recognising that there is a potential for glint and glare, having considered the contents of the assessments, proposal to plant a new hedgerow together with a proposal as referred to previously in the report to have a further landscaping scheme to include reinforcing the existing hedges, it is not considered that the proposal would cause significant harm in terms of amenities. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy B34 above.

Transport and access matters

- 5.23 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. Access to the site is from the B4413 and the work would include altering the existing access. It is proposed to adapt this initially for a temporary period whilst the construction work proceeds. It is then proposed to change the access permanently to a standard agricultural access with the gate set back rather than being located close to the side of the road. This is considered to be an improvement in terms of road safety as vehicles could pull in off the county highway to open and close the gate. This would be an improvement for those who maintain the site and also in terms of general access to the field. It is also proposed to have a gravel surface track along the side of the field from the access towards the solar farm site. The Transportation Unit is satisfied with the proposal in terms of road safety and recommend standard conditions regarding the completion of the access in accordance with the plans. It is also considered that it would be appropriate that a condition is imposed that the construction work is undertaken in accordance with the Access Appraisal and Traffic Management Plan as this sets out the details of how it is proposed to control the flow of traffic and ensure road safety when constructing the solar farm. Based on the above, 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

- 5.24 The site lies within the Llŷn and Bardsey Island Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. Observations were received from Cadw which state that there is potential for the development to have more than a local impact, however, bearing in mind that the size of the Neigwl Character Area is large compared to the scale of the development, it is not considered in this case that ASIDOHL2 would be productive. Generally, the physical patterns of the fields would be retained and due to its location, landscaping and landforms, it is not considered that the proposal would significantly impair on the Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. At the end of the solar farm's period of operation, the site will be returned to its current condition and therefore it is considered that in the long-term the site's historical features would be retained. It is not considered that there would be a detrimental impact on the Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest and that therefore it is acceptable in terms of Policy B12 of the GUDP.
- 5.25 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. A Geophysical Survey Report and an Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Assessment

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

were submitted as part of the application. When undertaking the survey for the Geophysical Survey Report, the previous boundaries of the fields were discovered together with possible land drainage and a plough furrow. According to the documents submitted as part of the application, the majority of the geophysical anomalies found appear to be geological features and no specific archaeological remains were discovered. The Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service was consulted and they do not agree with the assessment and recommendations in relation to the potential of buried archaeological remains. Although none of the reports have identified any clear archaeology on the site, the results of the geophysical survey are inconclusive. It is agreed that many irregularities may be due to natural or recent agricultural sources, although the results in the southern field are indicative of wet land where archaeological inconsistencies may be unclear. In the northern field the survey identified curved irregularities in two areas. These have been temporarily interpreted as geological, however their form and location on a fairly level floor above a watercourse and close to a confluence indicates that an archaeological source is possible. The most likely archaeological interpretation is that of a pre-historical enclosure. One of these areas coincides with the proposed location of the main compound and therefore it may have an impact on its setting, and possibly on the feasibility of the proposal if it were confirmed as archaeological. Further research is required including test trenches to establish if the geophysical inconsistencies are natural or archaeological and to establish the validity of survey results and the potential for archaeological remains. Since the information is required to assess the impact of the development on the historical environment test trenches will have to be dug prior to determining the planning application. It is understood that the applicant has been in contact with the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service following the receipt of their comments, however, no additional information has been received when preparing the agenda. From the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Assessment it can be seen that the impact on designated cultural designation such as scheduled monuments found on Garn Fadryn and Mynydd Rhiw would be a minor adverse impact. Therefore based on the above, the applicant will need to submit further archaeological details to assess if the proposal complies with policy C27 GUDP.

- 5.26 Policy B3 safeguards the setting of listed buildings. There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of the site. However, due to the features of the topography and vegetation it is not considered that the development would impair upon the settings of these listed structures. The Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Assessment state that there would be a minor adverse impact on the listed buildings. It is not considered that the development would lead to undermining the setting and the relationship of the listed buildings with the adjacent land. It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in relation to Policy B3 of the GUDP.

Biodiversity Matters

- 5.27 Submitted An Ecological Report and Biodiversity Management and Landscape Plan as part of the application and its contents was assessed by the Biodiversity Unit and Natural Resources Wales. The Biodiversity Unit and Natural Resources Wales agree with the assessments made and what is recommended to manage biodiversity on the site. The Biodiversity Unit have suggested conditions to be imposed on a planning permission including compliance with the measures in Table 1 Management Activities Schedule for the Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, submission of a Construction Environmental Plan prior to commencement of the work, submission of the details of seed mixture to create pasture, submission of details of location of bat and bird boxes and submission of the result of the annual assessments and revised management plan at the end of the initial five years. The Biodiversity Unit is also of the view that this development has the potential to bring

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

benefits to biodiversity in the long term. 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.

Flooding matters

- 5.28 The site lies within flooding zone A as defined for the purpose of TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk. The site is therefore in an area where it is not considered that flooding is a restriction to a development, however, the Flooding Consequence Assessment was prepared as part of the application in order to assess concerns regarding surface water flow in connection with the proposal. Natural Resources Wales were consulted on this application and they have recommended conditions dealing with the submission of details and implementing a surface water management system and also that no building or structure is erected or raising of the ground levels within 4 metres of the bank of any watercourse. It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of Policy B29 GUDP and if a condition is imposed to submit the details of a surface water management system, the proposal will be considered acceptable in terms of Policy C32 of the GUDP.

Operational period

- 5.29 The application seeks an operational period that is longer than is customary for such developments. Upon considering that the development would continue to be a temporary one, and that the addition to the period is not significant in terms of any significant planning consideration, it is considered that approving the development for 30 years rather than the customary 25 years, is acceptable.

Community benefit

- 5.30 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 handouts to the public and a local exhibition has taken place. It is understood that if the application is approved then the residents of the community of Botwnnog will have an opportunity to invest in the solar farm, with the minimum investment of approximately £60.

Response to the public consultation

- 5.31 The above assessment gives full consideration to observations received on the application as a result of the public consultation period and it is considered that there are no relevant planning matters received that outweigh the relevant planning policies.

6. Conclusions:

- 6.1 In accordance with the observations of the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service, additional archaeological details will need to be submitted before the application can be determined. However, except for the archaeological matters, the proposal is not considered to be contrary to any relevant policy noted above and there are no other relevant planning matters that state otherwise. Therefore, it is considered that it would be reasonable to delegate powers to the Senior Planning Manager to approve the application, subject to the receipt of sufficient archaeological information that satisfies the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service.

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

7. Recommendation:

7.1 To delegate powers to the Senior Planning Manager to approve the application, subject to receipt of sufficient archaeological information that satisfies the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service and to the following conditions:-

1. Commence within five years
2. In accordance with 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. Submit additional landscaping details for approval to include reinforcing the existing hedgerows along the boundaries.
7. Undertake work in accordance with the landscaping scheme during the first planting season following commencement.
8. To incorporate the additional landscaping details in the revised Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan.
9. Construct the temporary site access in accordance with the details submitted.
10. Construct the permanent access in total accordance with the plan submitted and to be completed within a month of completing the solar farm development.
11. The site to be developed in accordance with the Access Appraisal and Traffic Management Plan and the Construction Method Statement.
12. The development to be completed in accordance with Table 1 Management Activities Schedule to the Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan.
13. Submission and agreement on a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) prior to the commencement of the work. This should include pollution prevention measures in the form of a Pollution Incident Control Plan.
14. Submit and agree the details of the pasture seed mixture with the authority for approval prior to the commencement of the re-seeding work.
15. To submit and agree on the details of the locations of the bird and bat boxes with the Authority.
16. Submission of the results of the annual assessments, together with a revised management plan, at the end of the initial five years of the Plan as detailed in Objective 6 of the Management Plan.
17. Work to be completed in accordance with section 4 Summary and Recommendations, of the Tree Restrictions Survey.
18. Need to submit and agree a surface water management plan and then implement the development in accordance with the agreed plan.
19. No buildings, structures or raising of ground levels within 4 metres to the bank of any watercourse
20. Except for lighting during the construction phase, no lighting will be permitted on the site unless this is agreed beforehand with the Local Planning Authority.
21. Any electricity cables from the development to link to the electricity connection should be installed underground, in accordance with the details shown on Botwnnog Solar Farm _P23_PPOC_RevB Plan.
22. Permission for 30 years.
23. 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
24. The development to be undertaken in accordance with the landscape mitigation measures included in section 7 of the LIVA (Wardell Armstrong, August 2015).

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 14/03/2016
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE	CAERNARFON

Notes

1. Need permission under Section 171/184 Highways Act for work to be done within the road / pavement / greenside.
2. All costs for road signs, road markings and traffic order to be paid by the applicant.
3. Need permission under Section 40 of the Highways Act 1980 to install equipment within or under the highway.
4. Every care should be taken to prevent surface water running from the curtilage of the site onto the highway.
5. Need a copy of the 6 December letter 2015, Welsh Water, and the requirement to be aware of the guidance in it.
6. Safeguarding water courses.
7. Copy of the Natural Resources Wales letter 16 December 2015, and the need to be aware of the guidance in it regarding avoiding pollution and waste management.