
Pre Consultation Statement


**Planning application for the erection
of a 1,087 Kw ground mounted solar
array and all associated works at:**

**Land at Woodlands
Forden
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 8NP**

D & S Gethin

Date: November 2022
Prepared by: Lyndsey Fisher
Check by: Richard Corbett MRICS FAAV

Roger Parry & Partners LLP
www.rogerparry.net
mail@rogerparry.net
Tel: 01691 655 334



**Roger
Parry**
& Partners

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Application Documents.....	3
3.	Need for the Proposed Development.....	3
4.	Farm Diversification and support	5
5.	Site and Surrounding Area	6
6.	Proposed Development	8
7.	Planning Policy.....	9
8.	Planning Policy Assessment	16
9.	Conclusion.....	17

1. Introduction

Overview

1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted on behalf of D & S Gethin. It is intended to assist Powys County Council in its determination of a full planning application for a solar array with an electrical output of 1087kw on land at Woodlands, Forden.

1.2 This planning statement also includes the necessary information required for a Design and Access Statement.

2. Application Documents

2.1 This section identifies the documents that accompany the planning application to assist Powys Council in its consideration of this proposal.

2.2 The drawings and technical specifications accompanying this application provide detailed information on the following features of the Proposed Development, including:

- A technical specification of the proposed photovoltaic (PV) module;
- Details of the proposed orientation and layout of the PV modules;
- Details of the proposed mounting frames;
- Details of the inverters, transformers and grid connection cabinets;

3. Need for the Proposed Development

Introduction

3.1 This section describes the need for the Proposed Development in terms of the overall need for renewable energy generation in favor of fossil fuel based generation. Planning Policy Wales Framework states that applicants should not have to demonstrate a need for renewable low-carbon energy. The need for it is set against a background of International, European wide and National targets for reducing carbon emissions.

Overall Need

3.2 It is the Welsh Government's aim to enhance the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the people and communities of Wales and its ambition is to "create a sustainable, low carbon economy for Wales". In doing so, the Government wants to ensure that full advantage is taken of the transition to a low carbon economy to secure a wealthier, more resilient and sustainable future for Wales.

Paragraph 5.1.2 The UK Government is committed to delivering its share of the EU target for 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020 as implemented by the Renewable Energy Directive (2009). Welsh Government has an ambition to make low carbon energy a reality in Wales. Welsh Government's energy policy and aspirations are set out in "A Low Carbon Revolution" which identifies Wales' sustainable renewable energy potential to 2020/2025. The Welsh Government is committed to pursuing these aspirations and promoting all forms of renewable energy with onshore

wind currently the most viable technology. Welsh Government policy seeks to achieve these targets through the following objectives:

- Maximising energy savings and energy efficiency in order to make producing the energy we need from low carbon sources more feasible and less costly;
- Energy needs must be met from low carbon sources and move to a resilient low carbon energy production via indigenous sources and thus secure renewable energy, on both a centralised and localised basis; and
- By ensuring that this transition to low carbon maximises the economic renewal opportunities for practical jobs and skills. Annually, the Welsh Government aims to double renewable electricity production by 2025 in comparison to 2010. By 2050, at the latest, to be in a position where all local energy needs can be met by low carbon electricity production.

Site Selection

3.5 The Applicant's site requirements for a 1,087 Kw solar array, based on technical and operational requirements have informed the site selection process. The Application Site meets these requirements in the following respects:

- Sunlight intensity levels – the site is well located geographically for solar gain, is flat and free of landscape features that could cause overshadowing;
- Grid connection - proximity of a site to a sub-station that has capacity is essential. Woodlands solar array will utilise an existing export/import grid connection.
- Good road access for construction/routine maintenance and eventual decommissioning. The site benefits from excellent access an existing access off a council maintained road. The site is approximately 1mile from the 200m from the B4388.
- No environmental constraints – the application site is not subject to any landscape, ecological, archaeological or conservation designations
- The chosen site is located in a poor area of the field and as such is suitable for such a development. The site will still be farmed as wild flower/pollinator/bird food mixes will be sown and sheep will graze the area at appropriate times of the year.

Benefits

3.6 The indirect benefits of the scheme include the following:

Environmental Benefits

- Reducing carbon emissions – in the long term, reduced carbon emissions are expected to contribute to a deceleration in the rate of global climate change;
- Air quality improvements; renewable energy proposals have indirect benefits in this regard through the contribution to reduced fossil fuel emissions;
- As the site is changing from a single annual crop to being sown with wild flower/pollinator/bird food mixes, an improved environment for flora and fauna can be expected.

Economic Benefits

- Reduce reliance on expensive predominantly fossil fuel derived imported electricity.
- Job creation: direct (e.g. construction of, management and operational maintenance of solar energy generating installations) and indirect (e.g. making components for renewable

installations) and induced economic multiplier effects (e.g. re-circulating income in local area);

- Increased security and reliability of supply: through more distributed generation closer to the point of use, less power wastage in transmission over long distances, more diverse sources and technology types, domestically available fuels; and
- Economic gains or penalties may soon be linked to the farms carbon balance. The farm is already approaching carbon negativity and this development will take them further down that road.

4. Farm Diversification and support

The DEFRA definition of a diversified enterprise is:

‘The entrepreneurial use of farm resources for a non-agricultural purpose for commercial gain’

Under this definition, activities such as non-agricultural contracting, the letting of buildings for non-agricultural purposes, processing and retailing of farm produce, using farm resources for tourism, sport and recreational activities would be included as diversification. On-site energy generation which either offsets on-site use or is exported to the grid is also considered to be a diversification activity.

Farm diversification is of increasing importance to those with an interest in agriculture and rural communities as a whole. With rising uncertainty in farming, diversification offers a way of supplementing incomes and improving the economic viability of a farm business. Diversification reflects the reduced dependence of farmers on agriculture as a source of income. Diversification also implies some kind of entrepreneurial activity on behalf of the farmer.

The proposal is a farm diversification scheme. The business wishes to further improve the sustainability of the farm to ensure they are utilising available resources to provide renewable energy, together with gaining an additional farm income by reducing the reliance on imported electricity and for the future proofing of the business against future raises in electricity tariff. The farms proposal is supported by National, Regional and Local planning policy.

The generation of renewable electricity through the operation of the proposed solar scheme would benefit the applicant and help secure the future of the family farm.

Business Assessment

Pressure Faced by Farming Businesses

British agriculture has been under significant pressure over many years. Farms without diversification projects or other external incomes are struggling to survive and indeed many thousands have left the industry. The solar development will cement the renewable energy base and provides increased strength and stability to the core business. The company also provides a large amount of part time and indirect employment which will be further enhanced and protected through this development.

Carbon Footprint

This solar array will further drive the business down this track to the benefit of us all as we strive to combat the negative effects of climate change. The solar array will produce enough renewable energy to counter 271,199 kg of CO₂ emissions per annum.

Proposed Usage

The solar array will produce 1,164,036 kWh of renewable energy per annum which will be used to reduce the farming business electricity requirement and export surplus to the national grid.

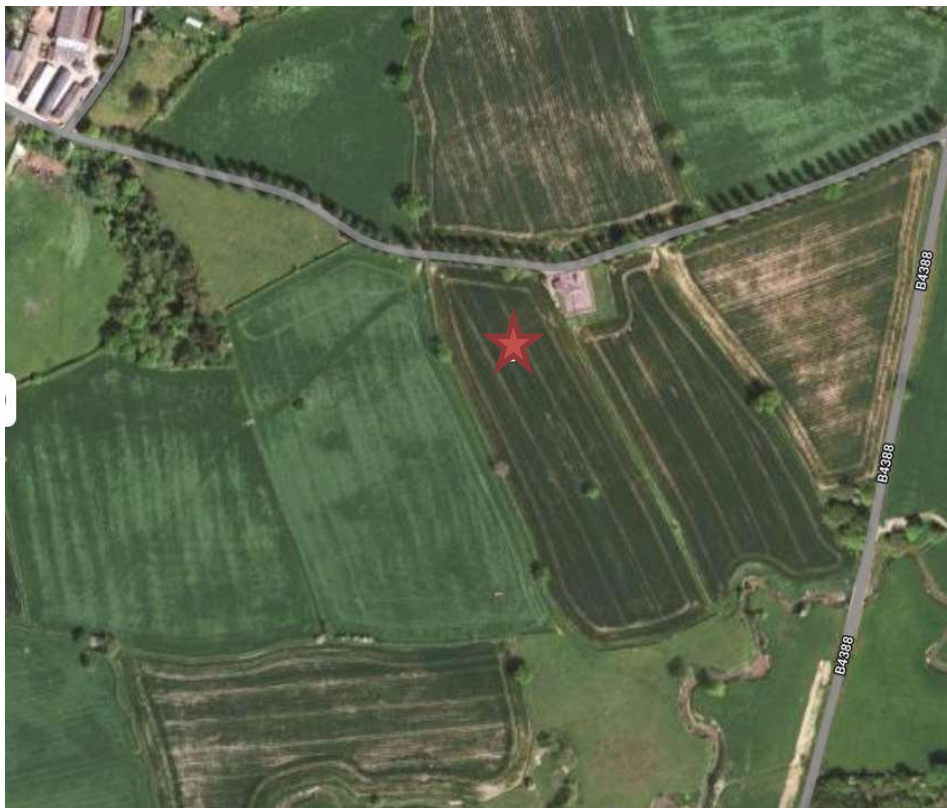
Energy Crisis

Since the beginning of this year the UK have seen the price of energy rises dramatically from several political events occurring. This has caused widespread fuel poverty throughout the UK. Most energy bills have risen by 54%. Through producing energy through renewable energy especially in the UK it will mean the UK will eventually become self-sufficient, as well as reducing the cost of importing energy from other countries.

5. Site and Surrounding Area

Location

- 5.1 The Application Site is located approximately 1 mile South of Forden.
- 5.2 The site is part of a grazing/arable field. The surrounding area is illustrated on the aerial photograph below. The chosen site is the wetter heavier part of the land.



- 5.3 Access to the site will be through an existing entrance.

Boundaries

5.4 The application site is bounded with existing hedge rows, any views from the near by road will also been screened with hedge rows.

Existing Rights of Way

5.5 There are no public rights of way on the proposed site.

Tree Preservation Orders and Landscape Designations

5.6 There are no Tree Preservation Orders or Landscape Designations which effect the Application Site or the surrounding area.

Historic Environment and Heritage Assets

5.7 The Application Site is not within close proximity to and listed buildings or scheduled monuments.

Ecological Designations and Habitats

5.8 The Application Site is not subject to any ecological designation. Arbor Vitae were commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in order to assess the impact of the development on habitats and protected species. The appraisal concluded the proposal will have no detrimental effect on the sites ecology.

Flood Risk

5.9 The Application Site is located outside the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Flood Zone.



6. Proposed Development

Use

6.1 The proposal is for the installation of a 1,087kw ground mounted solar array. The Proposed Development will include a ground mounted racking system to which are attached to the PV panels.

6.2 The use of land in the countryside for the production of energy is consistent with tradition and practice going back many centuries. Woodland has been planted as fuel for heating and oats have been grown to feed workhorses. In the last century crops such as oil seed rape and wheat have been grown to produce biofuels.

6.3 The site is to be laid out as per the Site Layout Plan and will include the following elements:

- 1,087 kw solar photovoltaic arrays
- Generator cabinet set on a small concrete base close to the array
- Underground cable installed parallel to the existing access track to connect to the existing export connection.

6.4 The UK imports both food and fuel and security of supply is a consideration in relation to both. The use of farmland for energy production will contribute to the UK's energy security and will allow a reduction in reliance on fossil fuels. The parcel of land was chosen as it is one of the poorest areas of the farm holding.

Layout

6.5 Solar Arrays – Solar panels will be fixed on metal frames attached to the ground by shallow piles driven 1.2m into the ground. The frames will be orientated to face south in rows approximately 5 meters apart with a tilt related to the latitude of the site and therefore its angle according to the sun. The panels will be 1m above ground level and the finished height of the PV modules will be about 3 meters above ground level. (Refer to drawing for site layout)

6.6 Inverters will be mounted directly on the framework and positioned at the end of each run of panels.

6.7 External transformer positioned on a concrete base housed in a small wooden fenced enclosure. Adjacent to this will be a GRP enclosure to house the switchgear and ancillary items. Dimensions are shown on the accompanying plans.

6.8 Lighting – No permanent lighting is proposed.

6.9 Access tracks – Existing track will be used

Construction

6.10 The total construction period is typically 6 weeks. The materials will be stored off site and will be transported at phased intervals during the construction period to control vehicle movements.

Grid Connection

6.11 No upgrade to the grid network is required for the site to connect to the Grid. The site will connect to the existing on-site infrastructure. The connection will be approved by the Distribution Network Operator.

Access

6.12 Access to the Application Site would be through an existing farm access.

6.14 During the construction phase it is anticipated that approximately 10 two-way lorry movements will be generated delivering materials.

6.15 During the operational phase it is anticipated that one two-way car or light van movements will be generated every month for inspection and general maintenance.

6.16 Therefore minimal vehicle movements will be generated during the construction phase and negligible traffic generated during the operational phase.

6.17 It is expected that the construction of the solar array would result in no material impact on the local highway network.

6.18 After commissioning, there will be around three visits to the site per year for maintenance and these would be made by van or 4x4 type vehicles. In addition there will be a need for 4-6 visits per year for ground maintenance.

Landscaping

6.19 The site is screened by existing boundary trees and hedge rows.

7. Planning Policy

7.1 This section assesses the principle of the Proposed Development against policies contained within the statutory development plan and also other material considerations, including national planning policy, government circulars.

Planning Policy Wales- Edition 11

7.2 It is the Welsh Government's aim to enhance the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the people and communities of Wales and its ambition is to "create a sustainable, low carbon economy for Wales". In doing so, the Government wants to ensure that full advantage is taken of the transition to a low carbon economy to secure a wealthier, more resilient and sustainable future for Wales.

Planning Policy Wales sets the Government's objectives regarding renewable energy and climate change. The Government's objective is that planning should fully support the development of renewable and low carbon energy sources, which will contribute to the seven goals of Well-being of Future Generations Act including;- specifically, Prosperous Wales, Resilient Wales and Globally Responsible Wales:

A Prosperous Wales can be achieved through increased economic activity across all sectors and at all scales. This is realised through the availability of employment land, lifelong learning and training opportunities, reliable communication networks and investment in renewable and low carbon energy sources. Resource efficient choices are promoted which have financial benefits both now and over the lifetime of development.

A Resilient Wales is supported by our agriculture and tourism industries and through the beauty of our natural, built and historic environment. Tourism development, which can finance preservation activities, needs careful management to ensure continued enjoyment by future generations. Sustainable agricultural practices can also assist in nature conservation and enhancement. Wales' topography also lends itself to renewable energy generation.

Globally Responsible Wales is promoted by reducing our carbon footprint through integrated public transportation infrastructure, encouraging globally responsible business and the promotion of renewable energy over carbon-emitting sources and resource choices through which multiple benefits can be realised.

7.3 Within Section 5 of PPW one key issues in which the Welsh Government are experiencing is, embracing the challenge of decarbonising our energy and transport sectors including phasing out of fossil fuels and moving towards local, decentralised renewable energy systems, the increased use of energy storage to balance supply and demand and the challenge this creates on our distribution networks. Wales have directly encouraged policies and proposals which promote low carbon developments and sites for renewable energy.

5.6.13 Diversification activities come in many forms and include both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Activities could include, for example, livestock and crop processing, non traditional livestock and crop farming, tourism projects, farm shops, and making and selling non agricultural products. Diversification can also include renewable energy proposals such as anaerobic digestion facilities or solar and wind installations, which will help to increase the viability of rural enterprises by reducing their operating costs.

5.7.14 The Welsh Government has set targets for the generation of renewable energy:

- for Wales to generate 70% of its electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030;
- for one Gigawatt of renewable energy capacity in Wales to be locally owned by 2030; and
- for new energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership

5.7.15 The planning system has an active role to help ensure the delivery of these targets, in terms of new renewable energy generating capacity and the promotion of energy efficiency measures in buildings.

5.9.12 Planning authorities should plan positively for the use of locally generated electricity and heat to help meet the national target of one Gigawatt by 2030. They should develop policies and proposals which:

- facilitate the co-location of major developments to enable the use of local heat opportunities;
- facilitate the linking of renewable and low carbon energy with major new development and high energy users;
- maximise the use of waste heat or other heat sources such as former mine workings;
- promote heat networks.

Local Planning Policy – Powys County Council Adopted (2011-2026)

7.7 The Core Strategy has an aim and strategy for promoting sustainable economic development in rural areas through encouraging development and making enterprises more efficient.

7.8 LDP Objective 5- Energy and Water sets out to support the conservation of energy and water and to generate energy from appropriately located renewable resources where acceptable in terms of the economic, social, environmental and cumulative impacts. In particular, to:

- i. Contribute to the achievement of the Water Framework Directive targets in Powys.
- ii. Deliver the county's contribution to the national targets for renewable energy generation

Under Policy DM13- Design and Resources, stating the development proposals must be able to demonstrate a good quality design and shall have regard to the qualities and amenity of the surrounding area, local infrastructure and resources. Point 13 of DM13 states clearly that all the applications must demonstrate the supply of electricity and heat from renewables as well as energy conservation and efficiency.

Policy RE1- Renewable Energy

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

- 1. Within or close to the Strategic Search Areas (SSAs), proposals for wind energy greater than 25MW will be permitted subject to criteria 3 to 5; all other proposals for renewable and low carbon energy will only be permitted where they can demonstrate they would not prejudice the purpose of the SSA.*
- 2. Within the Local Search Areas (LSAs), proposals for solar PV between 5 – 50MW will be permitted subject to criteria 3 to 5; all other proposals for renewable and low carbon energy will only be permitted where they can demonstrate they would not prejudice the purpose of the LSA.*
- 3. Proposals for all types of renewable and low carbon energy development and associated infrastructure either on their own, cumulatively or in combination with existing, approved or proposed development, shall comply with all other relevant policies in the LDP.*
- 4. Satisfactory mitigation shall be in place to reduce the impact of the proposal and its associated infrastructure. Proposals shall make provision for the restoration and after-care of the land for its beneficial re-use.*
- 5. Where necessary, additional compensatory benefits will be sought by agreement with applicants in accordance with Policy DM1 - Planning Obligations.*

RE1 states proposals for all types of renewable and low carbon energy development and associated infrastructure either on their own, cumulatively or in combination with existing, approved or proposed development, shall comply with all other relevant policies in the LDP.

Paragraph 4.10.1 states that renewable energy and low carbon energy are defined by PPW (Paragraph 12.8.7). Renewable energy includes wind, water, solar, geothermal energy and plant material (biomass). Low carbon energy covers technologies that are energy efficient (but does not include nuclear). The Renewables Directive (2009/28/EC) requires 20% of energy consumed in the

European Union (EU) to be generated from renewable sources by 2020. This target is pooled across the EU, the UK's legally binding target by 2020 is 15%.

Paragraph 4.10.2 says to meet the legally binding target, the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan 2009 sets out that by 2020:

- 30% of electricity will be generated by renewables (e.g. wind, solar PV, biomass, hydro, wave or tidal power);
- 12% of heat will be derived from renewables (e.g. biomass, biogas, solar, or heat pump);
- 10% of fuel will be derived from renewables (e.g. electrification). This is implemented through the UK Renewable Energy Strategy 2009 and these targets were reaffirmed in the Energy Act 2013. This strategy explains that climate change, economic opportunities and security of supply are the key drivers for meeting the targets.

Paragraph 4.10.3 states the Welsh Government is committed to using the planning system to optimise renewable energy and low carbon energy generation. PPW (12.8.9) explains that Local Planning Authorities can make a positive provision by considering the contribution that their area can make towards developing and facilitating renewable and low carbon energy, and enable this contribution to be delivered.

Local Planning Policy – Powys County Council Adopted (2011-2026) **Supplementary Planning Guidance – Renewable Energy**

4.0 Policy Context

4.1 UK National Policy

4.1.1 National policy relating to renewable and low carbon energy follows European Union commitments and directives, including the EU Renewable Energy Directive (2009), which included objectives to reduce CO₂ emissions by 20% from 1990 levels, boost renewable fuel use by 20% and reduce predicted energy consumption by 20%, by 2020.

4.1.2 To meet these objectives, the UK has set a legally binding target of 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020 [UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009)]. Modelling, undertaken on behalf of the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), suggests that by 2020 this could mean more than 30% of electricity, 12% of heat and 10% of transport energy being generated from renewable energy sources.

4.1.3 The UK Climate Change Act (2008) sets goals of a 34% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and a reduction of at least 80% in greenhouse house gas emissions by 2050. Five yearly carbon budgets have been introduced to help ensure that the targets are met and the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan: National Strategy for Climate and Energy (2009) outlines how the 34% target will be met. It also states that by 2020, 40% of electricity will be from low-carbon sources, nuclear, clean coal and renewable energy generation. The UK Renewable Energy Road Map (2011), published jointly by the four UK administrations in July 2011, outlined a plan of action to accelerate renewable energy deployment while driving down costs.

4.1.4 The UK Government provides financial support for renewable energy generation through the Renewables Obligation and Feed in Tariff schemes. The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme is now the government's main mechanism for supporting low-carbon electricity generation. CfDs incentivise investment in renewable energy by providing developers of projects with high upfront costs and long lifetimes with direct protection from volatile wholesale prices, and they protect consumers from

paying increased support costs when electricity prices are high. The 'Renewables Obligation' places an obligation on electricity suppliers to generate a certain portion of electricity from renewable sources and is regulated by the 'Office for Gas and Electricity Markets' (Ofgem). The Renewables Obligation scheme closed to all new generating capacity on 31st March 2017.

4.1.5 Six National Policy Statements (NPSs) for Energy Infrastructure were issued by the Department of Energy and Climate Change in 2011. Major energy project proposals (i.e. greater than 50MW) are dealt with at UK government level by the National Infrastructure Directorate (part of the Planning Inspectorate) and the NPSs set out national policy against which such proposals are to be assessed. Within Wales, Developments of National Significance (including energy generation proposals greater than 10MW but less than 50MW [N.B. 350MW from April 2019]) are determined by Welsh Ministers. The exception to this is on-shore windfarms of all capacities above 10MW which are determined by Welsh Ministers.

4.2 Wales Policy Context

4.2.1 Applying these UK wide principles, the Climate Change Strategy for Wales (2010) outlines the importance of renewable energy generation in meeting the energy demand in Wales and sets out a vision for the country up to 2050. The strategy intends to ensure that climate change is considered in all decision-making; that increased energy efficiency is delivered through making low carbon transport a reality; that the skills are developed to ensure that Wales can make the most of opportunities from a low carbon economy; that opportunities are taken to cut emissions and adapt to climate change where natural resources, land management pattern, and economic position allow; that the approach to Research & Development (R&D), technology, innovation and skills helps Wales gain maximum benefits from climate change related business and research; and that land use and spatial planning promote sustainable development and enable a move towards a low carbon economy which takes account of future climate impacts. The Strategy includes the targets of achieving 3% emission reduction per year and at least 40% emissions reduction by 2020 compared to 1990.

4.2.2 In March 2010, the Welsh Government published 'A Low Carbon Revolution – The Welsh Assembly Government Energy Policy Statement' which set out the potential for 22.5GW of installed capacity from renewable sources by 2020/2025, 2GW of which would be from onshore wind. The policy statement set out how this installed capacity should be achieved with individual 'aspirations' for different renewable energy technologies in Wales.

4.2.3 Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition (2012) subsequently set out the Welsh Government's ambitions and intentions with regard to the move towards low carbon energy. The measures outlined included: improving the planning and consenting regime; putting in place a 21st Century energy infrastructure; coordinating and prioritising delivery through an energy programme; ensuring Wales benefits economically from energy developments; ensuring Wales' communities benefit from energy developments; focusing on energy projects of greatest potential benefit; unlocking the energy in our seas; and leading the way to smart living. This document was supported in 2014 by Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition Delivery Plan setting out progress so far, priorities for action and delivery targets for high level milestones.

4.2.4 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets a legally binding target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 1990/95 levels (dependent on which greenhouse gas is being measured) by 2050. The Act also requires a series of interim targets for 2020, 2030 and 2040 to be met, and carbon budgets for key sectors of the economy. The budgets will ensure that over successive 5 year periods progress is made towards the 2050 target.

4.2.5 In September 2017, in a statement in the Senedd, the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs proposed that Wales should have a target of generating 70% of its electricity consumption generated by renewable energy by 2030. The statement further highlighted the Welsh Government's ambition that 1GW of renewable and low carbon energy generation should be locally owned by that date, and that all renewable energy schemes from 2020 should have an element of local ownership.

4.2.6 The most recent Welsh Government statistics published in Energy Generation Wales (2017) indicate 48% of gross electricity consumption was generated from renewable sources, further emphasising the progress towards a low carbon future. Despite the positive indicators, further progress towards the 22.5GW installed capacity target by 2020/2025 identified in "The Low Carbon Revolution" (2010) and the new target of 70% of consumption by 2030 has to be supported by policy and guidance at the national, regional and local levels.

4.3 Welsh Planning Policy

4.3.1 Welsh planning policy supports and helps to implement Welsh Government legislation, principles and policies. Of particular relevance is Planning Policy Wales (PPW) supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs).

4.3.2 Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (2018) identifies that the planning system plays a key role in delivering clean growth and the decarbonisation of energy, as well as being crucial in building resilience to the impacts of climate change. As such, planning policy at all levels should facilitate delivery of the ambitions of Energy Wales: a Low Carbon Transition and Welsh, UK and European targets.

4.3.3 It is stressed that development of all forms of renewable and low carbon energy should be facilitated by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) which should seek to ensure that their area's full potential for renewable and low carbon energy generation is maximised and renewable energy targets are achieved. Renewable energy projects should generally be supported by LPAs provided irreversible impacts are avoided on statutorily protected sites and buildings and nationally and internationally designated areas are not compromised.

4.3.4 Development Management decisions need to be consistent with national and international climate change obligations, including contributions to renewable energy targets and aspirations.

4.3.5 In relation to onshore wind energy specifically, PPW states that this constitutes a key part of meeting the Welsh Government's vision for future renewable electricity production. Strategic Search Areas (SSAs) have been identified as the most appropriate locations for the development of a limited number of large-scale (over 25MW) wind energy developments which are required to contribute significantly to the Welsh Government's onshore wind energy aspirations. Further information is given in TAN 8 (see para. 4.3.8).

4.3.6 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design (2016) provides advice on national planning design policy with regards to good building design and the importance of considering design at an early stage of a planning application. It provides detail on how energy efficiency and energy conservation can be incorporated into planning and the design of a building.

4.3.7 Practice Guidance: Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (Welsh Government 2011) gives detailed advice on types of renewable and low carbon energy and the determination of planning applications.

4.3.8 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8: Planning for Renewable Energy (2005) provides guidance for the land use planning considerations of renewable energy and also stresses the importance of improving energy efficiency and energy conservation as well as developing sources of renewable energy. The TAN covers all types of renewable energy and also gives advice on associated issues such as community benefits.

4.3.9 TAN 8 acknowledges that onshore wind power offers the greatest potential for achieving identified targets, and introduced the concept of SSAs for the location of large scale wind farms (over 25MW) identifying seven SSAs throughout Wales. The boundaries are at a 'broad brush' scale, allowing local authorities to undertake local refinement to amend the SSA boundaries.

Significant amendment should not be made without local evidence. The TAN provides guidance on how such amendment may be undertaken.

4.3.10 The Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development in a letter dated July 2011 confirmed the ongoing commitment of the Welsh Government to limiting the development of large scale wind farms to the seven SSAs, and identifying indicative maximum capacities within each area. The letter revised the maximum capacities for each SSA.

4.3.11 Key points from TAN 8 to be considered by Local Planning Authorities in the determination of applications and by applicants in designing schemes include:

- Most areas outside SSAs should remain free of large wind power schemes. LPAs should consider the cumulative impact of small schemes in areas outside of the SSAs and establish suitable criteria for separation distances from each other and from the perimeter of existing wind power schemes or the SSAs (para. 2.13).
- Extending or re-powering existing wind farms outside SSAs should be encouraged (para. 2.14).
- Some community benefits can be justified as mitigation, while others may be offered not directly through the planning process (para 2.16).
- The TAN describes a number of other renewable energy processes and their planning considerations including: Anaerobic Digestion (biomass), Bio-fuels for Vehicles, Combined Heat and Power, Community (or District) Heating, Energy from Waste, Fuel Crops (biomass including Woodfuel), Hydro-Power, Methane, Solar Thermal and Solar Photo-Voltaic (PV).
- Appropriate planning conditions for decommissioning wind farms or turbines, their restoration and proposed after-use of the site should be used (para. 6.4).

8. Planning Policy Assessment

8.1 At all levels of planning policy making there is a strong commitment to generate energy from renewable sources.

8.2 The acceptability of the Proposed Development is therefore influenced most by the details of the proposal and its associated impacts.

8.3 In summary, the planning considerations for a solar development at Woodlands, Forden are identified below and considered in turn:

- The principle of the development;
- Landscape and visual impacts;
- Nature conservation and biodiversity;
- Historic environment and heritage assets;
- Residential amenity;
- The highway network and access; and

The Principle of the Development

8.4 The Application Site is located outside Forden and as such is in the countryside where new development is strictly controlled. However, Government and Local Authority have a commitment to the provision of renewable energy development.

8.5 The Application Site is technically suitable for this renewable energy proposal being open and level, without major overshadowing from buildings, other structures or trees and being sited close to a suitable National Grid connection point that has capacity. It has no environmental designations or constraints and is capable of being used as grassland habitat during and after its solar development use. It is considered that this is an appropriate location for this type of development and that it complies with the relevant criteria of policies.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

8.6 It is identified that visibility of the proposed site is largely limited to views when on or very close to the Application Site. Views from other nearby receptors are largely prevented by the Application Site's mature boundaries and other boundaries further out from the site.

8.7 Views from more distant locations to the application site are prevented by intervening vegetation and topography.

8.8 It is felt that there would not be any significant effects to the landscape character of the surrounding area.

8.9 The visual impacts are limited by the visual containment provided by existing hedges and existing buildings along the application site's boundaries. The closest range visual impacts would be from the road which runs to the north of the site.

8.10 It is concluded that the Proposed Development would not have a materially significant adverse landscape or visual impact on either the surrounding landscape character or from the visual receptors identified, visual and landscape impacts would not be of significant impact. Thus the proposed development complies with criteria of policy.

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

8.11 The Application Site is not the subject of any nature conservation designation nor is it close to any designated site that could be affected by the Proposed Development.

8.12 The proposed development also includes the retention of all other boundaries of the site which act as an important habitat corridor between the boundaries of the site.

Historic Environment, Heritage Assets and Archaeology

8.13 The proposal will have a positive effect in relation to climate change which is supported by a heritage assessment.

Residential Amenity

8.15 In considering if the proposed development would have an adverse impact on residential amenity, the key potential impacts are identified as the visual impact and this is considered above.

The Highway Network and Access

8.16 The construction of the solar development would result in the temporary generation of construction and staff related vehicle trips over a 12 week construction period. The site benefits from excellent access from the existing farm drive. The site is approximately 200m from the B4388. Construction vehicles will use this existing access, which is suitable to accommodate their movements then use the existing farm tracks to access the Application Site.

9. Conclusion

9.1 There is a need, both nationally and regionally, for additional renewable energy generating infrastructure if the country is to meet its commitments to reducing CO2 emissions.

9.2 The proposed development would make a significant contribution to meeting the region's targets for reducing CO2 emissions and to increasing the supply of secure, renewable energy. Government policy and guidance recognises that there are many issues that influence the choice of site for such proposals and requires that LPAs should not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable energy and its distribution.

9.3 Government planning policy on the provision of renewable energy generation facilities explicitly supports the principle of providing such development.

9.4 The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the PPW and related policy documents and is also in accordance with relevant Development Plan policies.

9.6 The proposed development would have positive benefits in that it will make a valuable contribution to cutting carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions arising from energy generation and so assist in meeting regional, national and International targets for CO2 reduction through increasing energy supply from renewable sources. The proposal complies with planning policy supporting the Welsh Governments aim to use more renewable energies. The development would also support farm diversification and help to create and retain jobs in the existing farm business.