

Monmouthshire County Council

Development Management Services

Pre-Application Advice – Written Response

1	Ref No: DM/2019/01114
2	<p>Site Address:</p> <p>Land Near The Village Of Redwick, South East Of Newport, Wales, On The Caldicot Levels</p>
3	<p>We understand your proposal to be: Installation of a 49.9MW solar park. (To engage with Monmouthshire on an application adjacent to the boundary of Monmouthshire but within Newport City Council's administrative area.)</p>
4	<p>What information our advice is based on: Site visit dated 19th September 2019 and the following supporting plans: 1578 0201-00 - , 1578-0200-00 - , EIA Scoping Direction - ,</p>
5	<p>Planning Policies you need to be aware of:</p> <p><u>Local Development Plan (LDP):</u></p> <p>S7 LDP Infrastructure Provision</p> <p>S12 LDP Efficient Resource Use and Flood Risk</p> <p>S13 LDP Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment</p> <p>S15 LDP Minerals</p> <p>S17 LDP Place Making and Design</p> <p>S16 LDP Transport</p> <p>SD1 LDP Renewable Energy</p> <p>SD2 LDP Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency</p> <p>LC1 LDP New Built Development in the Open Countryside</p> <p>LC5 LDP Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character</p> <p>GI1 LDP Green Infrastructure</p>

	<p>NE1 LDP Nature Conservation and Development</p> <p>EP1 LDP Amenity and Environmental Protection</p> <p>EP2 LDP Protection of Water Sources and the Water Environment</p> <p>MV1 LDP Proposed Developments and Highway Considerations</p> <p>DES1 LDP General Design Considerations</p> <p><u>Supplementary Planning Guidance (if any):</u></p> <p>Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency SPG March 2016: http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/renewable-energy-energy-efficiency-supplementary-planning-guidance</p> <p>Green Infrastructure April 2015: http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/07/GI-April-2015.pdf</p> <p><u>National Planning Policies)</u></p> <p>Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development and Flood Risk (2004): http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan15/?lang=en</p>
6	<p>RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY</p> <p>None</p>
7	<p>Our initial views about the proposal:</p> <p><u>Principle of the proposed development</u></p> <p>The application is outside of the geographical boundary of Monmouthshire but will impact upon our highway infrastructure. There are also Landscape and Ecology issues for Monmouthshire as well as considerations for the amenity of residents in Monmouthshire.</p> <p>The Council is generally supportive of Sustainable Energy projects and this proposal complies with the LDP policy S12 which encourages sustainable and efficient resource use. While the council is supportive of the proposal, there are certain issues that must be addressed to safeguard the interests of Monmouthshire.</p> <p>The site is located with an Archaeologically Sensitive Area, a SSSI and a C1 Flood zone as defined in TAN6. I note that a EIA Scoping Direction has already been given by the Planning Inspectorate.</p>

Highway Safety

Monmouthshire highways in principle would not object to the development of a 49.9 MW Solar Park on land near the Village of Redwick.

Local Highway Network / Traffic Impact

The highway authority acknowledges that solar farms most significant impact on the local highway network is during the implementation and de-commissioning of the development, the impact during the day to day management of the facility is limited.

The majority of the site is located in Newport City Council and access to the development is expected to be either from the west or via the A4148. The use of the local roads Black Wall Lane, Pill Street and access via Magor is not acceptable and should be discounted from any prospective Construction/De-Commissioning Traffic Management Plan.

Access via A4810

In principle Monmouthshire would not object to the proposed of creating a temporary access from the site onto the A4148, a permanent access would not be supported. It should be noted the a448 is a strategic route and subject to a 50mph speed limit and any temporary access will be required to be designed in accordance with current standards and removed Immediately after completion of the development.

-it is recommended that a robust and comprehensive construction traffic management plan is submitted in support of any future application.

-The applicant will be expected to enter the necessary agreements with the highway authority to construct a temporary access off the A4810.

Residential Amenity

Having reviewed the Scoping Direction and the Scoping Report 3220457 December 2018 , MCC supports the comments provided by Newport City Council dated 5th March 2019. In addition, we would request specific details of the residential properties in Monmouthshire to be included in the noise assessment requested.

Ecology

Protected Sites

Confirmation that ecological survey is well underway at the site is reassuring.

European Marine Site (Severn Estuary SAC, SPA, Ramsar) - It should be noted that under current legislation, a Habitats Regulations assessment will need to be undertaken by the Competent Authority (Welsh Government) as required by Regulation 63 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, in accordance with the EC Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EDC) before the Council as the 'Competent Authority' under the Regulations can grant consent for a project.

The applicant will need to provide information to support this process, probably in the form of a 'Statement to Inform' the Habitats Regulations Assessment. If following survey results it is identified that there will be a loss of supporting habitat for the European Marine Site that could impact on the integrity of the European Marine Site (EMS), the project will need to demonstrate imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) to allow approval by Welsh Government as well as providing compensatory measures. It is my understanding that compensation cannot be provided for loss of EMS supporting habitat unless IROPI has been demonstrated. Compensatory sites will need to be well surveyed to allow demonstration of true compensation. It is anticipated that hazards to the interest features of the EMS are likely to include (but not necessarily be limited to): direct habitat loss (of supporting habitat), indirect habitat loss (via disturbance), Disturbance (construction phase).

Gwent Levels SSSI

Whilst the designation of the SSSI is in relation to the reed habitats, the intervening fields are important parts of the wider ecosystem. The effect of changes to this will need to be considered as part of the planning decision. In addition to protection of the reed features during construction, long term management will be a material consideration.

Priority Habitats (Section 7, Environment Act 2016)

As briefly discussed in the meeting, whilst hedgerows are a Priority habitat there are some locations on the levels where they are undermining the ecological value of the reens which would take precedent. The fields to be covered in solar panel infrastructure may include Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh priority habitat.

Protected (various legislation) & Priority (Section 7, Environment Act 2016) Species

It is understood that species survey is underway to inform the scheme. Priority species for Monmouthshire County Council (i.e. on section 7 list and known to be present) at our boundary with Newport would include as a minimum lapwing, water vole, shrill carder bee. The site surveys and desk study is likely to reveal more.

Net Benefit for Biodiversity

Planning Policy Wales gives local planning authorities guidance on the implementation of the Biodiversity Duty through planning to ensure that all schemes deliver a net benefit for biodiversity. This scheme will need to demonstrate clear net benefit for biodiversity in the design.

Landscape and GI

The site is outside the geographical area of Monmouthshire but is in places immediately adjacent to the county boundary. We would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to relevant policy, supporting documents, observations, opportunities and concerns

The Gwent Levels Landscape of Historic Interest

The site is located within the Gwent Levels Landscape of Historic Interest and the site is within the Caldicot Levels Special Landscape Area. The MCC LDP policies LC5, GI1 and NE1 make reference to the value of amenity, ecological, character, distinctive and Historic Landscapes in Monmouthshire. The proposed site immediately bounds Monmouthshire and sites within the Gwent levels landscape which is contiguous in character across county boundaries in this location.

LANDMAP and Landscape Character Area

The LANDMAP landscape character assessment of the landscape in Monmouthshire County immediately adjacent to the proposed site places high to outstanding values on its quality. Landscape Habitat (Magor, Undy, and Caldicot) evaluated as OUTSTANDING; Visual and Sensory (Western coastal grasslands) evaluated as HIGH; Historic Landscape (Caldicot Levels) evaluated as OUTSTANDING; Cultural (Gwent levels) also evaluated as OUTSTANDING.

It is clear that significant development close to the county boundary and within the wider Gwent levels may have a detrimental visual and potentially physical impact on the character of the landscape if the development is not suitably engaged, informed, designed, approved and constructed without being fully informed by appropriate landscape and visual impact surveys as outlined in the Landscape Institute 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: 3rd Edition' . The MCC Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency SPG March 2016 also provides a comprehensive generic checklist to provide guidance on site planning issues.

A list of potential receptor locations within Monmouthshire to inform an LVIA has been provided previously but to recap:-

Public Rights of Way

379/92/2 East of Llandenny looking south

372/93/1 South west of Llandenny

372/59/2 Junction with Whitewall lane (also on NCN route 4)

372/60/1 Junction with Whitewall lane and junction adjacent to Pill house (also on NCN route 4)

372/100/1 Pedestrian bridge over railway at West End cottages, Undy NP26 3HJ

372/18/1 Footpath west of Knollbury farm, Grange wood NP26 3BX

Additional residential areas potentially affected: view from road adjacent or elevated location eg bridge

Summerleaze settlement by Yew Tree Cottage, Pill St, NP26 3DE (also on NCN route 4)

Vicinity of Poplar tree cottage, Whitewall, NP26 3DD

Designated areas of interest

SINC WS/ST48/09 Barecroft fields, Barecroft common. Adjacent to the site and in ownership of Gwent Wildlife Trust

SAM Wilcrick Hill camp ref MM127

The Monmouthshire Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study 2009
The Monmouthshire Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study 2009 was undertaken as a landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment for areas and defined candidate sites around settlements in the county. Part of the site falls within the Magor and Rogiet MA01 character area. The study highlights the value of the Gwent levels landscape and how the tranquillity and intrinsic landscape value improves the further from the M4 corridor the subject is although still impacted by the presence of overhead power lines. The area is highly sensitive to significant vertical change and key areas and potential sensitive receptor locations have been provided above.

PPW10

Attention is drawn to Planning Policy Wales Edition 10: 6 Distinctive and Natural Places 6.1.20 Historic Landscapes and 6.2 Green Infrastructure; 6.4 Biodiversity and Ecological Networks; 6.4.5 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems duty (section 6 Duty); 6.4.17 SSSI and 6.4.18 SPA/SAC; 6.4.22 Protected Species reference locations to assist with design scope, parameters and production

The Monmouthshire Green Infrastructure SPG 2015

We would consider that a comprehensive GI assessment is undertaken to inform the overall development, to provide an overall masterplan and subsequent GI management plan. As a guide the MCC Green Infrastructure SPG 2015 outlines the 6 key functions of GI as the;

- o Landscape setting and quality of place (local distinctiveness, visual amenity, economic benefits)
- o Green space provision connectivity and enjoyment (leading to health and well-being benefits through creation of greenspace, access to the green network, and play and recreation),
- o Local food production (through opportunities for community growing)
- o Habitat provision and connectivity (orchard and habitat creation and management of greenspace grassland)
- o Flood attenuation & water resource management and sustainable energy uses (through opportunities for surface water drainage systems, incorporation of street trees and helping tackle climate change issues)

The SPG provides guidance on GI design and the planning process and how an applicant can consider, assess and embed high quality sustainable and multifunctional GI into development. This assessment informs:-

- o GI Assets and Opportunities Plan
- o GI Masterplan
- o GI Management plan

A copy of the GI SPG 2015 can be found at:-

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/07/GI-April-2015.pdf>

Additional landscape observations from the provision of the draft outline plan

1. There is scope for improved design consideration to be provided to the way in which the site will be fenced and protected from unauthorised access. The site appeared to be divided into multiple cells based on current ree crossing locations. By exploring improved and rationalised crossing locations, small bridge design there could in places be a reduction in total fence required
2. Adequate space needs to be provided to access reens for ongoing

	<p>maintenance by machine and deposition of excavated debris</p> <p>3. Boundary treatments, gates, fencing, signage, hedge planting if ecologically appropriate needs to be sensitively designed and undertaken to ensure a minimal visual impact</p> <p>4. The colour of boundary fence and built infrastructure facilities should be chosen to be sympathetic to the underlying palette of colours to be found in the localised landscape</p> <p>5. It was mentioned during the meeting that the site if approved and constructed would be a valuable educational resource for local schools and visitors to the area. Appropriately designed, informed and installed information panels would be of benefit at a suitable location.</p>
8	<p>Things we recommend you do, including information you need to submit with your application:</p> <p>NB: Please note that whilst all drawings should be to scale, all proposed plans should include external dimensions annotated on them.</p>

Case officer: Ms Kate Young

Date: 15th October 2019

The views given are current at the time of giving the advice, but planning circumstances can change and will need to be taken into account when any subsequent application is determined.

NB: Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS)

From *January 7th 2019*, all detailed applications for residential development or where the construction area is 100m² or more, will require Sustainable Drainage Systems for surface water (SuDS), to be designed and built in accordance with the statutory standards. Local Authorities will be required to discharge their functions as a SuDS Approving Body (SAB) and approve SuDS schemes prior to the commencement of construction works. SABs will be required to adopt compliant SuDS that are built and function in accordance with the approved proposals, including any SAB conditions of approval. Further guidance is available on the Welsh Government's Website.

Fast Track Services

We now offer a Fast Track service for Householder applications and Lawful Development Certificates (LDCs) (existing and proposed). The Fast Track service will accelerate the administration and processing of your householder or LDC application for a small additional charge.

Please take a look at the services we offer here : -

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/fast-track-application-services>

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Council is currently progressing the implementation of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). If the planning application is approved after the adoption of CIL then the development could be liable to the payment of a CIL charge.

Affordable Housing

The sixth bullet point of Strategic Policy S4 relates to financial contributions to the provision of affordable housing in the local authority area for proposals below this threshold. Full details of the requirements of the Policy are outlined in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance document that was adopted in March 2016. Applications for residential development will need to be considered with reference to this SPG.

Network Rail

Should your development be likely to increase the level of pedestrian and/or vehicular usage at a level crossing any future planning application should be supported by a full Transport Assessment assessing such impact. Any required qualitative improvements to the level crossing as a direct result of the development proposed should be included within the Heads of Terms. Should you wish to discuss the impact of your proposal on the railway network you are advised to contact Network RailWesternLevelCrossings@networkrail.co.uk

Section 50 Agreement

MCC's Highway Department will not enter in to a Section 50 Agreement with anyone who needs to lay off site connections to a Public Utility (PU) apparatus which on completion will be adopted by the respective PU. Works which fall into this category must be noticed to MCC via the PU's EToN 6 noticing system.

If further clarification is required, please do not hesitate to contact Mike Jones (Highways Network Manager) on mikejones@monmouthshire.gov.uk or 01633 644749.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK FORM

To enable us to monitor, review and where necessary change the pre-application service, we would appreciate you taking the time to complete this feedback form.

Reference/Enquiry Number:

Note: If completing in electronic format, please double-click boxes to check/uncheck.

	Yes	No	Comments (including any suggested improvements)
What is important ('what matters') to you as part of your pre-application discussions with us?			
Is the information available on the service useful? (website, guidance notes etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are you satisfied with the way your enquiry for pre-application advice was dealt with?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are you satisfied with the timescales it took to meet with you and provide you with a written response?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is our response to your development scheme enquiry easy to understand and of benefit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you intend to submit a planning application following the advice provided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Would you use the service again or recommend to others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any other improvements you would like to suggest?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Thank you!

Please return to:
Monmouthshire County Council

Planning Department

County Hall

The Rhyadr

Usk

NP15 1GA

Or email: planning@monmouthshire.gov.uk