



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
PROPOSED GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR PV DEVELOPMENT
LAND AT AEROSPACE BUSINESS PARK, LLANMAES, ST ATHAN, CF62 4QN
PLANNING STATEMENT



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1.0 Introduction

Cenin Renewables Ltd (Cenin) has prepared this planning statement in support of a new ground-mounted solar PV array (proposed development). This planning statement will assess the proposed development against the relevant planning policy and any relevant supplementary planning guidance (SPG) documents including The Vale of Glamorgan Council Local Development Plan (2017) (LDP) and Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (December 2018) (PPW).

1.1 Application Documents

This document forms part of the planning application submitted to The Vale of Glamorgan Council. The following documentation has been submitted to the Council as part of this application:

1. 2019005DA Covering Letter
2. 2019005DA Application Forms
3. 2019005DA Planning Statement (This Document)
4. 2019005DA Visual Impact Assessment
5. 2019005DA Visual Impact Assessment Appendices
6. 2019005DA Proposed Site Location Plan
7. 2019005DA Proposed Block Plan
8. 2019005DA Proposed Elevation Plans
9. 2019005DA Existing Block Plan
10. 2019005DA Substation Plan
11. 2019005DA Inverter Station Detail
12. 2019005DA Ecological Assessment

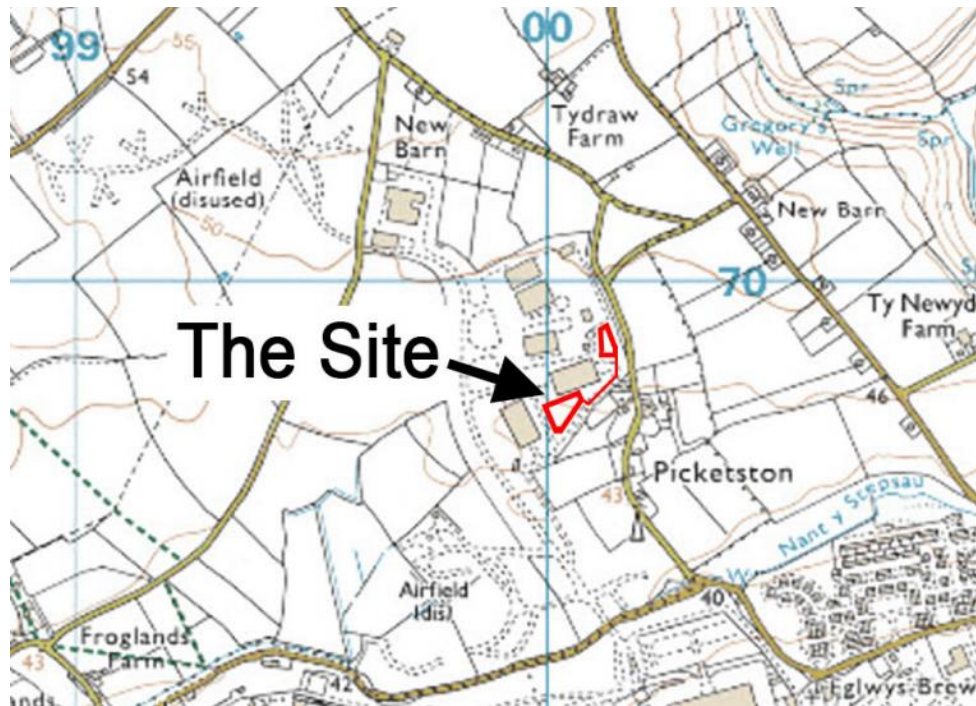
2.0 Application Background

Climate change has become a priority issue from local communities to international governments and new initiatives and technologies are seeking to challenge and adapt to the changing climate. There is a growing trend in Wales between Local Authorities to achieve The Welsh Government's objective for Wales to become carbon neutral by 2050 and this has also recently been adopted by The UK Government. To meet this objective, the reduction of energy generation methods using fossil fuels has and continues to reduce in favour of renewable sources of energy generation, most notably wind and solar power in South Wales. Part of the strategy for meeting future energy demand focus' on local power generation with less reliance on the national grid. Small renewable developments near employment zones, urban centres and transportation hubs are being considered and implemented as a more sustainable and low-cost method of meeting energy requirements. We have been working in coordination with The Welsh Government to implement such a scheme in Picketston, St Athan, more specifically the construction of a ground-mounted solar array that would be capable of generating clean energy for the adjacent hangers and potentially entice new commercial businesses to the underutilised area.

2.1 Site Location

The application site (Figure 1) is located within the Community Council District of Llanmaes, Vale of Glamorgan (Figure 1). This area of land is north east of Llantwit Major, North of St Athan and approximately 6 km west of Cardiff Airport. The B4265 connects Cardiff Airport to Bridgend along the south and west coast of the Vale whilst St Athan Road to the east and Llantwit Major Road to the west provides a main access from St Athan to Cowbridge and the A48. Between these cross-County roads is Picketston which includes several country lanes, agricultural fields, camping site, residential properties and the Aerospace Business Park.

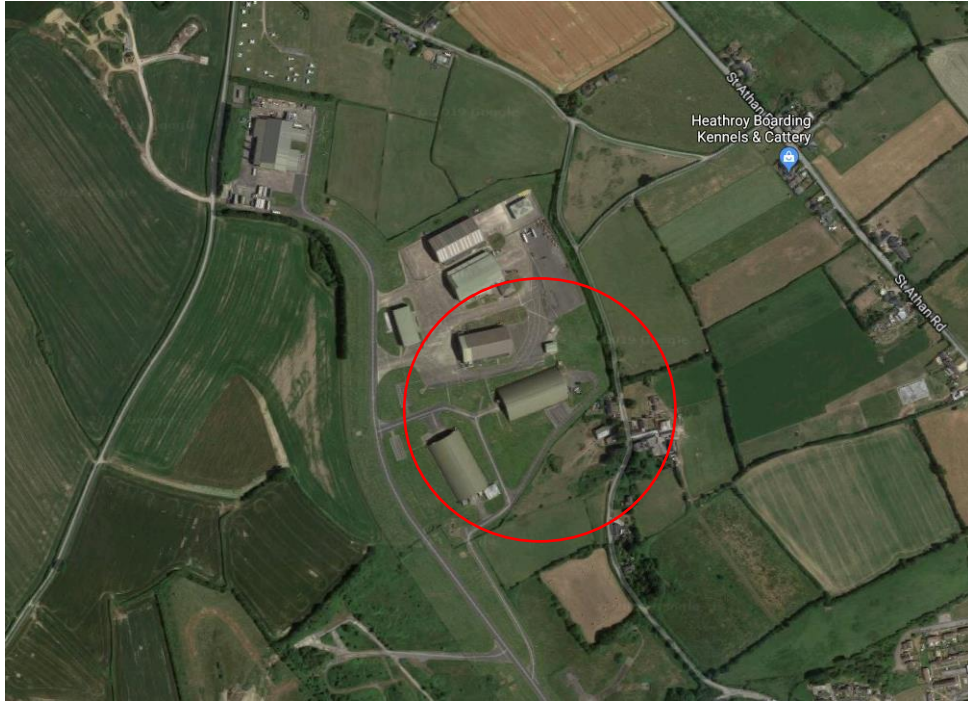
Figure 1: The map below displays the proposed site location (outlined in red).



2.2 Site and Context

The application site is situated amongst large green aircraft hangers which were previously utilised by MOD St Athan. This area of land is known as Picketston Business Park consisting of commercial businesses focused on aviation and aircraft maintenance. The scheme is split into two separate brownfield plots with plot one enclosed by hardstanding and a hanger north adjacent and plot two by hardstanding, the same hanger west adjacent and a hedgerow to the east. The land on both sites is flat and turfed with monoculture grass (Figure 2). There is a hamlet consisting of a few residential properties and a farmstead to the south-east.

Figure 2: The proposed site is shown below. (Sources: Google Maps).



3.0 Planning History

This section will indicate publicly available planning history specific to the site location. Previous planning applications, enforcement contraventions, planning appeals and other items related to the property will be explored.

3.1 Applications

2008/00877/SC2: St. Athan: Scoping request - provision of a new access road and other associated highway works and improvements, including a garage for Rose Cottage, and all associated ancillary building, sports, community, ecological mitigation and enhancement, engineering, landscaping, means of enclosure and other works.

2010/00707/RES: Reserved Matters submission in accordance with planning permission 2009/00500/OUT for a proposed Defence Technical College (DTC), in respect of Zone 6 (Picketston South) incorporating matters including: - Picketston Sport building and pitches; access; parking facilities; landscaping; sustainability; fencing; and retained trees and hedges (and including submissions for approval of specified details in respect of conditions attached to 2009/00500/OUT relating to the DTC site as a whole).

2010/00901/RES: Reserved Matters submission in accordance with planning permission 2009/00500/OUT for a proposed Defence Technical College (DTC), in respect of Zone 7 (Picketston North) incorporating matters including: - Buildings (MT Workshop; Grounds Maintenance; Waste Compound; Command Task Area Storage; Outdoor Firing Range; Respirator Testing Facility); Access; Parking Facilities; Landscaping; and Sustainability.

3.2 Enforcement

No enforcement notices have been issued in relation to the proposed site location.

3.3 Appeals

No planning appeals have been submitted to the Secretary of State in relation to the proposed site location.

3.4 Other Planning Matters

There are no other planning matters that need to be considered.

4.0 Designations and Issues

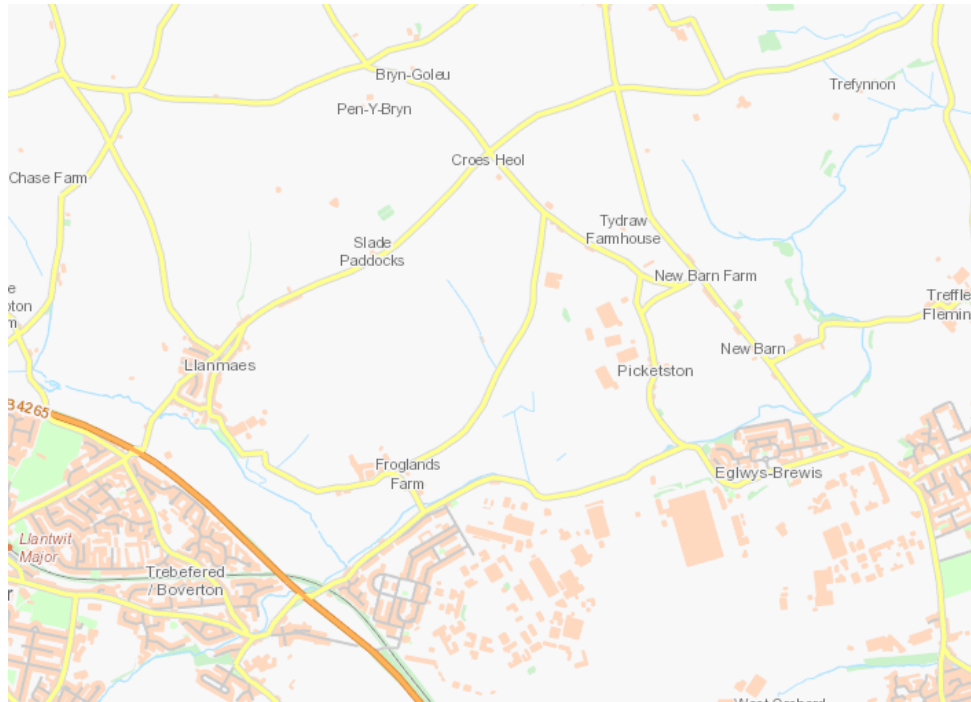
Section 4 of this statement will highlight key land designations that will need to be considered when assessing the development. The land designations are partly found within The Vale of Glamorgan (VOG) Adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) (2017) Policy Maps (Figure 2).

Figure 3: The LDP Policy Map below depicts the proposed site at Picketston, St Athan.



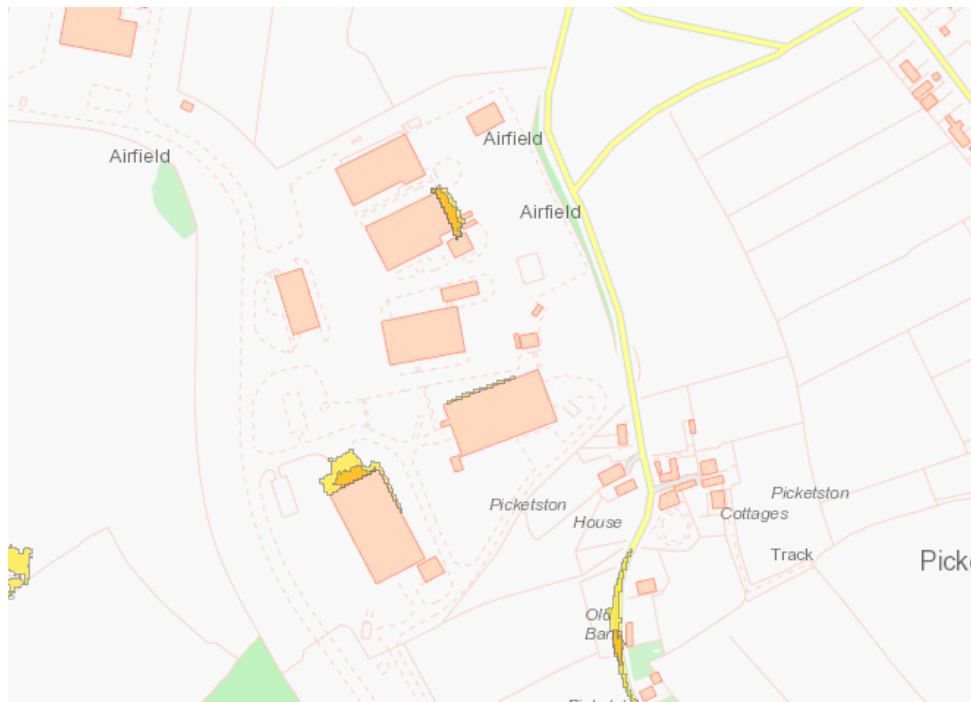
4.1 Mining Risk

According to the Coal Authority (map below), the site does not reside within a high-risk coal mining area.



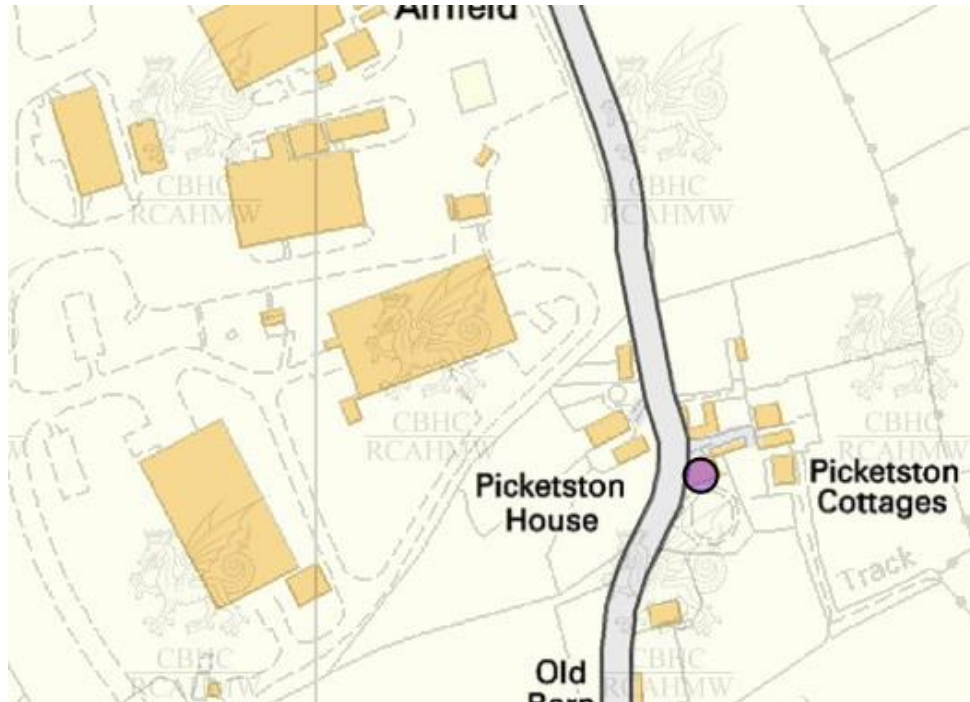
4.2 Flood Risk

The site is not located within or near a C2 or C3 flood zone according to the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) interactive flood map (below).



4.3 Listed Buildings

No buildings or features are listed within the curtilage or site plan in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. However, there is a Grade II listed building (81302) approximately 150 m from the site location. (Source: Historic Wales)



4.4 Conservation Area

The site location does not reside within a designated conservation area detailed in VOG LDP policy maps; therefore, the development is not subject to any special design or conservation guidance.

4.5 Green Wedge

The proposed site is not situated within a designated green wedge.

4.6 Settlement Boundary

The site is situated outside of designated settlement boundaries and is, therefore, considered to be within the open countryside.

4.7 Tree Preservation Orders

There are no trees within the proposed location plan that are subject to a tree preservation order.

4.8 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The site is not included within an AONB as defined in the Council's Local Development Plan (2017).

4.9 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)

There are no SINC designations in close vicinity to the proposal site.

4.10 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

The VOG LDP (2017) does not indicate any SSSI that are near the proposal site.

4.11 Special Landscape Areas (SLA)

The site is not located within a special landscape area.

4.12 Aggregates and Minerals

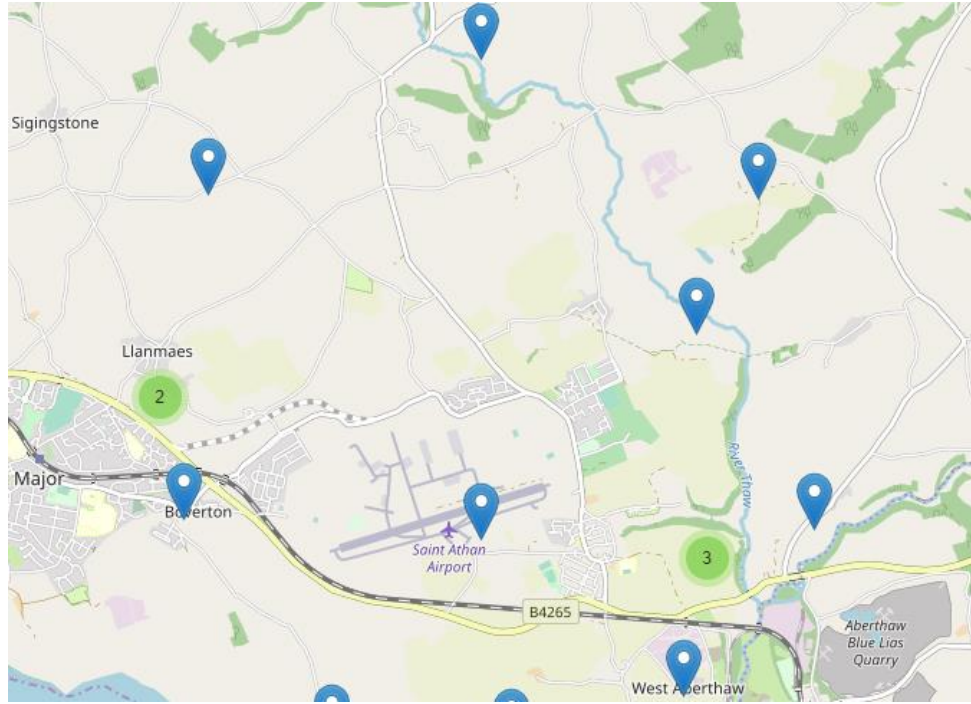
The development site is located within a mineral safeguarding area.

4.13 Aviation Safeguarding Zone

The site is situated North of MOD St Athan and north west of Cardiff Airport. According to the VOG LDP Constraints Map, the proposal site is located within the aviation safeguarding area.

4.14 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The application site is surrounded by 9 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. However, the site is not within 1 km of any Scheduled Ancient Monument, the closest being GM189 Domen Fawr Round Barrows. (Source: ancientmonuments.uk).



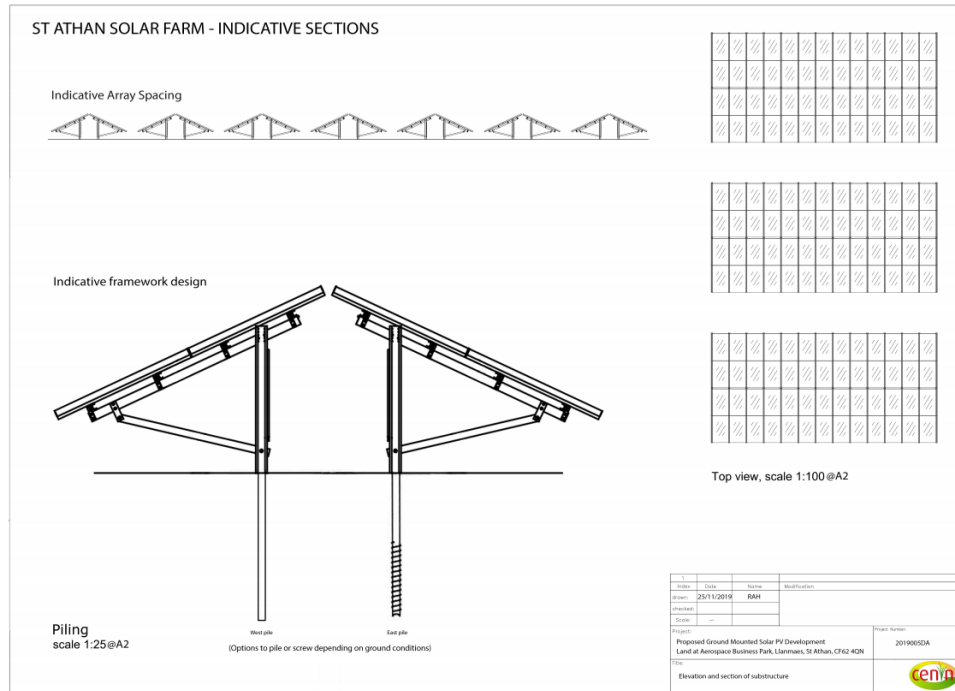
5.0 Proposed Development

This full planning application proposes the development of 1.46MW of decentralised low-carbon energy generation through the installation of a ground mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar array on brownfield land at the Aerospace Business Park, St Athan. (Figure 3 and Figure 4). The proposed scheme would involve the development of two small parcels of land, in close proximity to each other, where fixed east-west solar panels would be erected along with a small substation and inverter. The scheme would cover a total land area of 0.975 hectare and would be connected by power cable indicated on drawing reference 2019005DA Proposed Block Plan. It is intended that this scheme would supply locally generated low-cost renewable energy to local businesses & Industries within the Aerospace Business Park.

Figure 5: The proposed site layout.



Figure 6: The proposed east-west design would be a maximum height of 2.5 metres, maximum depth of 2 metres and maximum panel angle of 27 degrees. The panels will be mounted on metal struts that will either be piled or screwed into the ground.



6.0 Planning Policy

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 states that applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This planning application should be assessed against the Vale of Glamorgan (VOG) Local Development Plan Document (Adopted 2017), however, if the proposed development cannot be assessed due to a gap in local planning policy, then Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (2018) should be considered. This section will outline the specific policy and guidance documents that will need to be considered when assessing the proposed development.

- 6.1 The current local policies that govern this proposal are found in the [VOG Local Development Plan \(LDP\) \(adopted in 2017\)](#). We recommend that the following policies should be considered during the planning application process:

Strategic Policies:

- Policy SP1 Delivering the Strategy
- Policy SP2 Strategic Sites
- Policy SP5 Employment Requirements
- Policy SP7 Transportation
- Policy SP10 Built and Natural Environment

Growth Policies:

- Policy MG9 Employment Allocations
- Policy MG10 St Athan – Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone
- Policy MG30 Local Areas for Solar Energy

Development Policies:

- Policy MD1 Location of New Development
- Policy MD2 Design of New Development
- Policy MD7 Environmental Protection
- Policy MD9 Promoting Biodiversity
- Policy MD15 Protection of Allocated Employment Sites
- Policy MD16 Protection of Existing Employment Sites and Premises
- Policy MD19 Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Generation

6.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

Alongside the Local Development Plan, the Council may also assess any development against their [adopted supplementary planning guidance documents](#).

We believe that the SPG documents below are material to this application:

- Biodiversity and Development April (2018)
- Renewable Energy (2019)
- Trees, Woodland, Hedgerow and Development (2018)
- Design in the Landscape (1996 – 2011)

The above SPG documents are material planning considerations when assessing development proposals, however, they should not be treated as determinative by the Local Planning Authority. These documents will, nonetheless, provide further detailed guidance about specific development requirements.

6.3 National Planning Policy

Where no clear local planning policy is applicable to the proposed development, national planning policy will be considered to assess the development. The most recent national planning policy document is [Planning Policy Wales \(PPW\) Edition 10 \(December 2018\)](#). Welsh Government also publishes [Technical Advice Notes](#) which provide national detailed planning advice and are considered material to planning application decisions. The TAN documents below are considered material to this proposal:

- TAN 05: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)
- TAN 06: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010)
- TAN 08: Renewable Energy (2005)
- TAN 12: Design (2016)

6.4 Other Material Considerations

- Welsh Government Circular 016/2014: The Use of Planning Conditions for Development Management.
- Draft National Development Framework 2020-2040

7.0 Planning Appraisal

The proposed development and planning policy criteria in previous sections of this statement have been thoroughly established. The following section (6) will now assess the development to ensure that it is sustainable and acceptable in accordance with key planning policies and supplementary guidance.

7.1 Settlement Hierarchy

The LDP stipulates that in order to deliver the LDP Strategy, specific area objectives have been identified for the key settlement of Barry, service centre settlements and St Athan as a key development opportunity. There are several St Athan Area Objectives that are relevant to this proposed development including:

- *“promote land within and adjoining St Athan Enterprise Zone as an area of excellence for the aerospace and military sectors;*
- *promote new opportunities for job creation, business investment, training and learning to reflect its identification as a Strategic Opportunity Area and Enterprise Zone; and*
- *Provide opportunities for new and enhanced community facilities and infrastructure to support existing and future development proposals and the needs of existing and future residents.”*

The scheme is the first of several potential solar array developments that could be developed within and around St Athan which would provide low-carbon energy and green infrastructure which would contribute to the sustainable economic growth of the area, both residential and commercial. The strategic importance of St Athan and its strong regional opportunities are further explained in the opening foreword of the VOG LDP 2017 by Councillor Bird, The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning, as he states; *“The Plan seeks to grasp the opportunities offered by the St Athan - Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone and demonstrates the essential role that the Vale of Glamorgan plays in the success of the wider City-Region Area. It also demonstrates a firm commitment to the on-going regeneration of Barry and the Vale of Glamorgan.”* The Local Authority are keen to explore the strategic and sustainable development of St Athan and the proposed development would subscribe to such an endeavour whilst contributing towards Welsh Government’s zero-carbon objectives on a national level.

7.2 Delivering the Strategy

The aim of SP1 is to improve the living and working environment, promote enjoyment of the countryside, coast and manage important environmental assets. This goal is achieved through several objectives set out by the Policy. Promoting a range of employment sites is one of these objectives and it is strongly believed

that the proposal would promote the employment and enterprise zone at St Athan by providing localised low-carbon and sustainable green power generation to local businesses which can provide greatly reduced electricity rates relative to the national grid. Furthermore, Cenin Renewables are investing in electric vehicle infrastructure and could collaborate with innovative automotive companies that are exploring the development of electric vehicles in South Wales, by locating their operations within the hangers adjacent to the site. This could contribute towards diversification of the local economy in St Athan and could help facilitate a potential innovative industry cluster on a strategic employment site.

7.3 Strategic Sites

There are three strategic sites allocated within the LDP namely Barry Waterfront, St Athan and Cardiff Airport. In the amplification of SP2 St Athan is identified as a Strategic Opportunity Area (SOA) in the Wales Spatial Plan (2008 Update) and designated an Enterprise Zone together with Welsh Government's Aerospace Business Park (ABP). The LDP explains the importance of these designations and that St Athan is a key development opportunity for employment and training excellence particularly for military and aerospace sectors. One of the main concerns for any business or organisation that is industrial in nature is its energy consumption, usually supplied by the national grid. The development of renewable energy, specifically solar arrays, on brownfield land amongst these businesses and organisations can help make their operations more viable as local power generation would be cheaper per kw than through the national grid. This efficiency could facilitate lower overheads which allows for further capital investment, training and employment for existing businesses whilst making it an attractive site for new businesses and existing businesses to relocate.

7.4 Employment Requirements

As an SOA the Aerospace Business Park in St Athan is one of the major employment land allocations with approximately 208.00 ha with some 261,000 sqm of business space provisionally proposed at St Athan, as mentioned in the 2013 Employment Land Study (ELS) commissioned by The Vale of Glamorgan Council. With the slow decline of MOD operations, The Welsh Government is seeking Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) accreditation for the St Athan airfield to enable a transition from military to civil use and will allow the Aerospace Business Park to be more flexible to business needs and meet the demands of the aerospace market.

SP5 has allocated 492 hectares (369 ha net) of land to meet regional and local employment need. The ELS found that of the 433.50 ha of strategic employment land available, the actual net area of developable strategic employment land is identified as being 319.54 ha. The initial plans for the St Athan Enterprise zone designated the Business Park South comprising of 45,000 sqm and Business Park North comprising of 100,000 sqm for B1, B2 and B8 land uses for the aviation sector. The ELS expands on the development of a business park for aviation support services at Picketston which would be designated for low-security civilian aviation companies and will provide 46,000 sqm of accommodation with a 60/40 split between hanger refurbishment and new build development.

7.5 Principle of Development

Taking the planning policy context of sections 7.1 to 7.4 into account, it suggests that the wider location would be suitable for the development of solar arrays in principle on a national strategic level and local level. Whilst in draft form and adoption set for 2020, the National Development Framework could be awarded very limited material weight when assessing this scheme. The document sets out key strategic objectives and land use planning guidance across Wales over numerous sectors such as economy, energy, housing and transport. Regarding renewable energy the document stipulates that there is a presumption in favour of large-scale onshore wind and solar energy development and acceptance of landscape change within the Wales Energy Priority Areas Map located on page 42. The proposed site is located within the Priority Area meaning that significant weight, under the NDF, would be given to the proposal's contribution to reducing Wales' greenhouse gas emissions.

The development site falls within an employment allocation under the Local Development Plan, thus, it is afforded some protection under Local Policy MD9 and MD15 which ensures the adequacy of supply and choice of employment land and that non-B-Class uses will not be permitted other than ancillary uses. Policy MD16 conveys the criterion that would allow non-B-use developments within employment allocation. It is considered by the applicant that the scheme would not lead to a material change in nature of the employment site as it would not affect the successful day to day operations of neighbouring businesses. The scheme would also not create an unacceptable adverse impact on amenity or the environment and the land to which it would be in situ is not suitable nor viable for employment purposes presently or in the foreseeable future. The typical life span of a solar array is approximately 25 years, after which it would be replaced with fresh panels or be dismantled, and land returned to its state prior to development.

The proposed scheme would, therefore, not impose a degree of permeance that would sterilise the site or conjure a situation where future employment provision would be deemed difficult to implement. Suitable planning conditions under the Welsh Government Circular 016/2014 could be utilised to secure the land remediation once the cessation of operations has come to fruition. As such, the scheme would follow Policy MD1 which requires developments to have no unacceptable impact on the countryside or versatile agricultural land. It is considered by the applicant that the principle of development would be acceptable under Local and National Planning Policy whilst meeting Welsh Government and Future Generations goals and objectives.

7.6 Visual Amenity

The resultant impact on visual amenity delivered by the proposed development has been thoroughly analysed within the submitted Visual Impact Assessment. In summary, five key areas require assessment through vantage points within and around the development site. These areas can be broadly categorised into the unadopted road east of the site, the properties situated on this road, the access road approaching the Business Park, within the Business Park and the field of view to and from the residential dwellings south of the site. Most of the vantage points within the site do not suffer any significant visualisation of the two development sites. These insignificant views mostly occur on the unadopted road east of the site, on the approach road to the Business Park and from within the Business Park. The latter category does have fairly clear cones of vision onto elements of the development sites, but the existing hangers and ancillary buildings largely obstruct these visuals and their relative massing mitigates the perceived scale of the development. The most significant views are from within the site, though this is to be expected, however, there are two dwellings south of the site that have potential visuals onto both development sites. After assessing the positioning of the windows, proposed panel design, obstructing vegetation and aspects of the site location, the scheme would have an insignificant overall visual impact on the existing landscape, surrounding highways and nearby residents.

7.7 Highway Impact

When fully implemented the development would have a very limited impact on the existing highway infrastructure with only regular maintenance carried out once a year by a single technician. The highway network surrounding the proposal site is well established and recently upgraded to accommodate future capacity of the wider strategic St Athan location. Locally the site is serviced by numerous wide two-lane roads which service the hangers adjacent (see Visual Impact Assessment

Appendices). It is considered that the proposed scheme would not detriment highway safety or use during operations. The scheme will impact local highway infrastructure most during implementation of the scheme. However, given the relatively small scale of the solar scheme the equipment can be delivered in a very short span of time by a small number of HGVs meaning the scheme during construction will have a limited highway impact.

7.8 Built and Natural Environment

It is stipulated in Local Policy SP10 that the development proposals must preserve and where appropriate enhance the rich and diverse built and natural environment. There is a Grade II Listed Building approximately 150m from the two proposed sites. The scheme of two solar arrays would have a limited impact on this listed building given that adjacent to both development sites is one of several large green industrial hangers and hardstanding currently utilised by local aviation businesses. When assessing the proposed scheme against its surrounding industrial context, it is clear that the scheme would not have a damaging visual impact to the nearby Listed Building or the natural and built environment that would warrant its refusal. This is further exemplified within the Visual Impact Assessment accompanying this Planning Statement. The Listed Building and development are separated between a pair of semi-detached dwellings, paddocks, stable building and vegetation including trees. These landscape assets create a visual barrier which means that the development does not impede on the setting of the Listed Building. The land to which the development would be sited is not utilised as agricultural land and due to the surrounding industrial context, it is unlikely the land pertains as agricultural in the near future. The scheme itself would not require concrete footings for the implementation of the development, instead the steel struts holding the panels will be piled or screwed into the ground. This method of erecting the panels will have a minimal impact on the land which can be restored following cessation of the development.

7.9 Ecological Value

The concluding extract from the submitted Ecological Assessment stated; *“The hedgerow to the east of the site is of ecological importance in the local area as a potential foraging route for bats, including lesser horseshoe bats, and hibernation site for amphibians, including great crested newts. The possibility of newts within the lower value grassland cannot be discounted. Although it is suboptimal as terrestrial habitat due to the lack of cover great crested newts have been encountered hibernating underground in similar areas (personal observation). For this reason, the grassland is considered ecologically important, within the zone of*

influence only. No impacts to habitats or sites outside the development area are anticipated as both construction access and connection of the solar panels to the grid will be done using existing infrastructure.” The assessment continues with impact and mitigation sections most notably in relation to Great Crested Newts and Bats. It is considered that the scheme will not cause an unacceptable impact on biodiversity.

7.10 Surface Water Drainage

The requirements for a SAB application are found under Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (Schedule 3) para 7(2) states:

“(1) Construction work which has drainage implications may not be commenced unless a drainage system for the work has been approved by the approving body.

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)—

(a) construction work means anything done by way of, in connection with or in preparation for the creation of a building or other structure, and

(b) construction work has drainage implications if the building or structure will affect the ability of land to absorb rainwater.”

The proposed development would involve mounting the solar panels onto metal struts that will be piled or screwed into the ground. Given that the sole land take of the scheme would consist of these metal struts and the small inverter and substation boxes, it is considered not that the scheme would have drainage implications that will affect the ability of the land to absorb excess water. This is compounded by the fact that no hardstanding or surface replacement would be implemented on site apart from the small inverter and substation, and the solar panels would contribute to a small increase in drainage capacity because residual rainwater would collect and filter onto ground levels in adverse weather. For these reasons it is believed that the development would not require a SAB application in accordance with the above statutory framework which sits outside of the planning system.

8.0 Summary & Conclusion

The proposed scheme would involve the development of two small parcels of land, in close proximity to each other, where fixed east-west solar panels would be erected along with a small substation and inverter.

8.1 Main Issues

In summary there are several key points that need to be addressed by the developer to ensure the development is acceptable under local and national planning policy. The first issue relates to the principle of development, more specifically whether the development is acceptable within the Picketston Business Park. The development could also have an impact on visual amenity, highway infrastructure, ecology and heritage assets.

8.2 Recommendations

After assessing the proposed development against relevant planning policy, it is considered that the scheme is fully compliant with local and national planning policy. Whilst no existing energy generation is present at the site, the scheme would still reflect the character and nature of the surrounding industrial area while providing a high-quality renewable energy source that could help facilitate economic growth in the wider area. Visual and residential amenity impacts have been broadly discussed in the Visual Impact Assessment which should be studied in conjunction with this Planning Statement. The Assessment found that the scheme would not detriment key landscape visuals and would have little significance in relation to the Listed Building nearby. As the site is situated within the St Athan area, a precautionary GCN mitigation strategy has been submitted and a phase one ecological survey submitted. Regarding highway impact, it is not conceived that the development would have any adverse effect on existing highway infrastructure during construction and operation.