Pennant Walters

Mynydd Llanhilleth

Draft Planning Statement

This report was prepared by WSP Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited (formerly known as Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited), company registration number 02190074, which is carrying out these services as a subcontractor and/or agent to Wood Group UK Limited

November 2022

Report for

Meryl Lewis
Pennant Walters Ltd
Hirwaun House
Hirwaun Industrial Estate
Hirwaun
Aberdare
CF44 9UL

Main contributors

Edward Purnell
Kieran Hennessy
David Kenyon

Edward Purnell

Issued by

David Kenyon

.....
David Kenyon

Approved by

David Kenyon

.....
David Kenyon

WSP Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited

Canon Court
Abbey Lawn
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury SY2 5DE
United Kingdom
Tel +44 (0)1743 342 000

Doc Ref. 42864 Planning Statement

Copyright and non-disclosure notice

Third party disclaimer

Management systems

This document has been produced by WSP Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited in full compliance with our management systems, which have been certified to ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 by Lloyd's Register.

Document revisions

No.	Details	Date
1	Draft 1	November 2022
2	Draft 2	November 2022
3	Draft 3	November 2022
4	Final	November 2022

Contents

1.	**Introduction**	**5**
1.1	Overview	5
1.2	Purpose of the Planning Statement	5
1.3	Pre-application consultation	5
1.4	Structure of the Planning Statement	5
2.	**Overview of the Proposed Development**	**7**
2.1	The Applicant	7
2.2	The Site	7
2.3	The Proposed Development	9
2.4	Planning history	11
2.5	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	11
3.	**Energy Policy**	**12**
3.1	Background	12
3.2	International agreements	12
3.3	UK energy legislation and policy	13
	Energy Act (2008, 2011, 2013, 2016)	13
	Climate Change Act (2008)	13
	Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)	13
	British Energy Security Strategy (2022)	13
3.4	Welsh energy legislation and policy	14
	Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition (2012)	14
	Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	14
	Environment (Wales) Act 2016	15
	Energy Generation Targets for Wales: Statement to Assembly Members (2017)	15
	Policy Statement: Local Ownership of Energy Generation in Wales – Benefitting Wales Today and for Future Generations (2020)	16
	Programme for Government (2021)	16
	Net Zero Wales (2021)	16
4.	**Planning Policy Review**	**17**
4.1	Background	17
4.2	UK planning policy	17
	Draft National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2021)	17
	National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2011)	17
	Draft National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-3) (2021)	18
	Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2011)	18
4.3	Welsh national policy	18
	Future Wales: The National Plan 2040	18
	Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (2021)	20

	Technical Advice Notes	22
4.4	The Local Development Plan	24
	Torfaen County Borough Council	24
	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	24
4.5	Other local planning considerations	25
	Supplementary Planning Guidance	25
	Emerging Local Development Plan	26
4.6	Planning considerations	26
	Assessment of compliance with national policy	26
	Assessment of compliance with Local Development Plan	38
5.	**Conclusion**	**48**
5.1	The Planning Balance	48

Table 4.1	Assessment against Future Wales Policy 18 requirements	32
Table 4.2	Compliance with Technical Advice Notes	37
Table 4.3	Torfaen County Borough Council Local Development Plan policies	39
Table 4.4	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Local Development Plan policies	43

Figure 2.1	Location Plan	8
Figure 2.2	Site Layout	10

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Draft Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Pennant Walters Ltd by Wood Group UK Ltd (Wood) as one of a suite of documents supporting a planning application for the construction and operation of a wind farm comprising up to eight wind turbines at Mynydd Llanhilleth, to east of Brynithel and Llanhilleth and west of Talywain, Pontypool. The site is within the mainly within the authority of Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC), with the western part lying within the authority of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BCGBC) (referred to as the Proposed Development from here on). This Draft Planning Statement has been prepared to demonstrate the suitability of the Proposed Development in planning terms. It has been prepared as part of a suite of documents to support the process of pre-application consultation prior to the submission of the final proposals to Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) on behalf of the Welsh Government for consent as a Development of National Significance (DNS).

1.1.2 This Draft Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying **Draft Design and Access Statement** (Draft DAS), which sets out the approach taken to the design and access of the Proposed Development, and the **Draft Environmental Statement** (Draft ES), which sets out an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development.

1.2 Purpose of the Planning Statement

1.2.1 The purpose of this Draft Planning Statement is to:

- Provide a brief description of the Proposed Development including its site history and approach to the preparation of the proposal;
- Set out the objectives of the Proposed Development and other design considerations;
- Explain the benefits of the Proposed Development in the context of need for renewable energy and summarise the overall environmental performance of the scheme; and
- Review the planning policy framework and set out the conformity of the scheme with the framework.

1.3 Pre-application consultation

1.3.1 This Draft Planning Statement along with other supporting documents for the proposed DNS planning application, including the Draft ES, will be subject to six weeks pre-application consultation. The results of which will be used to refine and update (where necessary) the application documents prior to final submission to PEDW.

1.4 Structure of the Planning Statement

1.4.1 The remainder of the document provides the following information:

- **Section 2** - Provides a description of the applicant, the site, the Proposed Development, planning history and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) approach;

- **Section 3** - considers the need for the development, the issues of climate change and security of supply and as a consequence the pressing need for renewable energy. The section demonstrates how the Proposed Development could make a contribution to reducing the effect of climate change and improving security of supply;
- **Section 4** - this section summarises the national and local policy context and analyses how the scheme performs against national planning policy requirements. It also sets out how the scheme performs against the TCBC Local Development Plan (LDP) and BGCBC LDP and any other material considerations; and
- **Section 5** - concludes how the scheme meets the planning policy requirements through application of the planning balance.

2. Overview of the Proposed Development

2.1 The Applicant

2.1.1 Pennant Walters Ltd (the Applicant) is seeking planning permission for the construction and operation of a wind farm of up to eight turbines on land at Mynydd Llanhilleth, (the Site).

2.1.2 Based in Wales, Pennant Walters Ltd is a Walters Group company with a focus on renewable energy having developed a wide variety of schemes including onshore wind, solar, small scale hydro and battery storage.

2.2 The Site

2.2.1 The Site boundary is approximately 300m from the eastern edge of Llanhilleth (Grid Reference. The village of Brynithel is located approximately 500m to the south west of the Site at its closest point at Blaencuffin Road.

2.2.2 The Site is accessed from an existing tarmac road called British Road which is accessed from the B4246 to the east of the Site in the settlement of Talywain.

2.2.3 The Proposed Development would be located on the summit and upper slopes of Mynydd Llanhilleth between Afon Valley to the east and the Ebbw Fach Valley to the west.

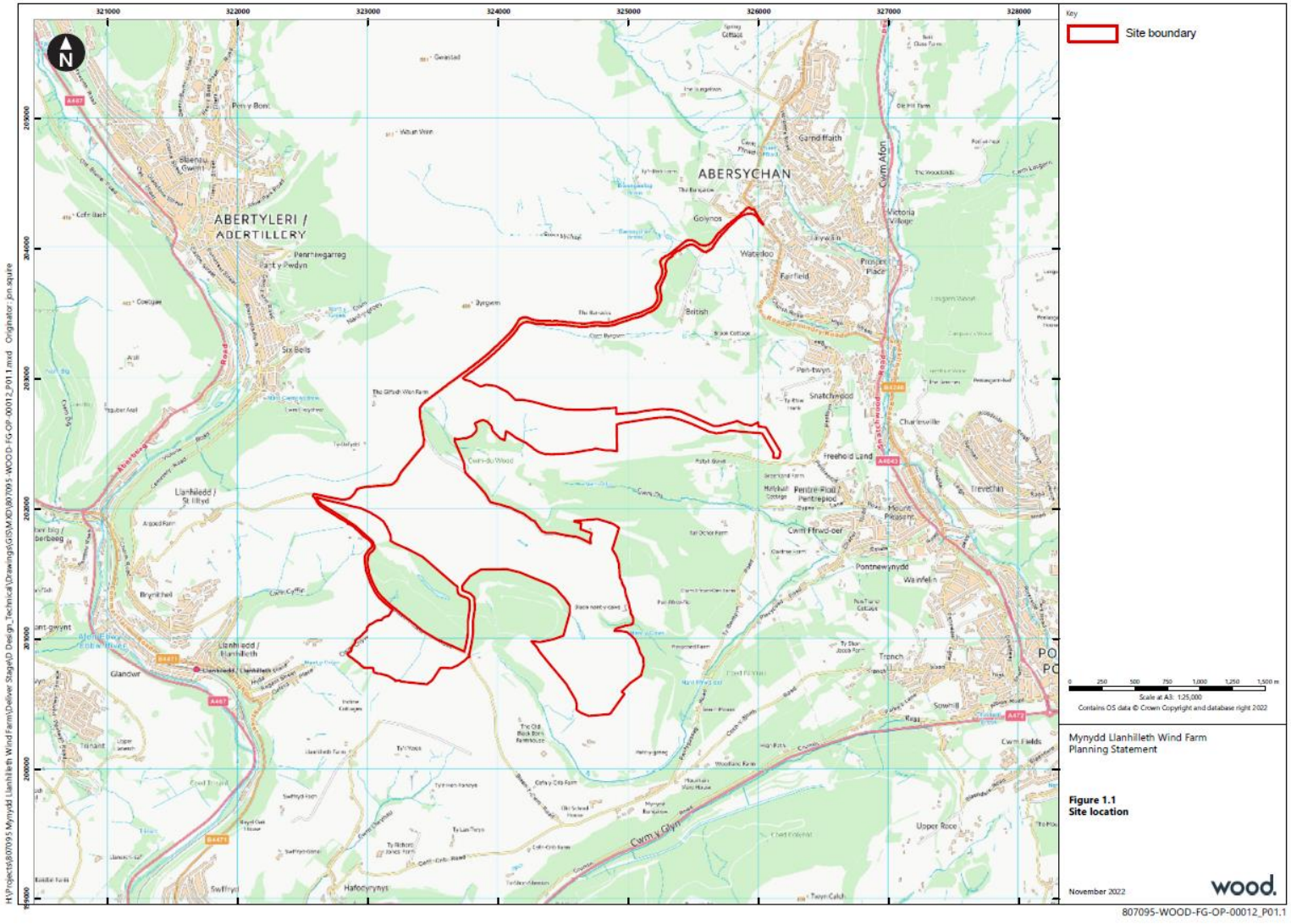
2.2.4 There is no built development within the Site. An overhead electricity transmission line supported by double pole pylons is located to the east of the site.

2.2.5 The Site is crossed by multiple public footpaths (PRoWs) many of which cross the proposed access route to the turbines and the proposed grid connection corridor. A substantial part of the Site is within Mynydd Llanhilleth Common which is designated as common land.

2.2.6 There are several Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), designated within both the TCBC and BGCBC Local Development Plans (LDPs), which are partly present within the Site. Additionally, three SLAs are located within or adjacent to the Site and Proposed Development, including access routes, and would experience direct effects (including Blaenau Gwent SLA D- Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James, and SLA E - St Illtyd Plateau and Ebbw Eastern Sides; and TCBC's SLA H – Western Uplands). The site is 3.75km to the south of Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS) and approximately 5km from the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP).

2.2.7 The site has a total area of approximately 267.59ha. The site location is shown in **Figure 2.1**.

Figure 2.1 Location Plan



2.3 The Proposed Development

2.3.1 The main elements of the Proposed Development are the construction, installation and operation of up to eight wind turbines with an installed capacity of up to 34MW[1] dependent on the final turbine choice. The Proposed Development will also include:

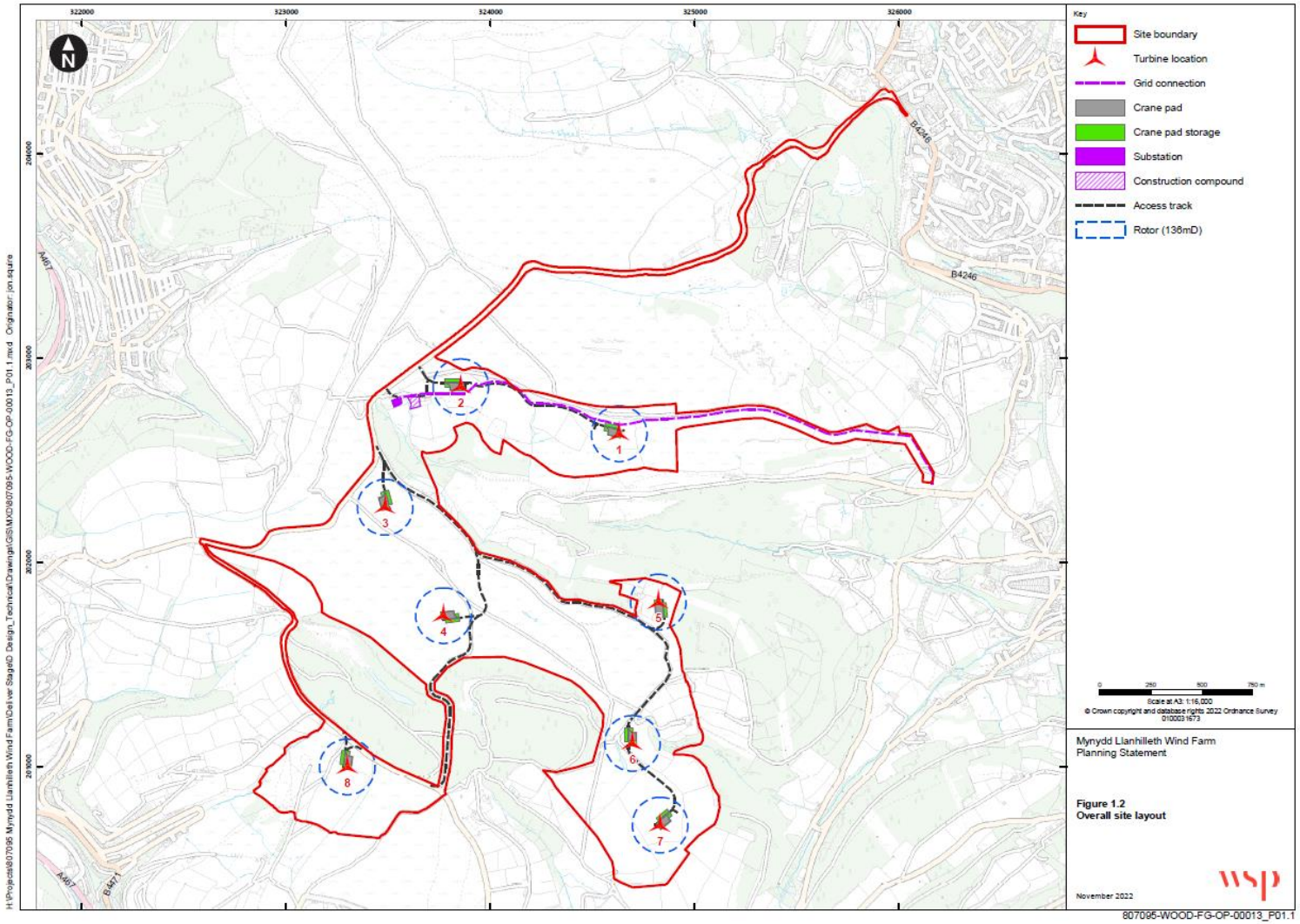
- substation and control building;
- temporary construction compound, including temporary site offices;
- crane pads at each turbine location;
- turbine foundations, laydown and storage areas
- underground power cables linking the turbines and the on-site substation;
- internal access tracks;
- upgraded access from the B4246;
- a grid connection consisting of underground cables which will intersect with the existing WPD overhead line network via a H-pole to the east of the Site near Tal-Ochor Farm to the west of Pontnewynydd other construction enabling works.

2.3.2 The layout of the site is contained in **Figure 2.2**.

2.3.3 A full description is provided in Draft ES **Chapter 4: Description of the Proposed Development**.

[1] The Draft Es considers candidate turbines with a lower output of 4.2MW.

Figure 2.2 Site Layout



2.4 Planning history

2.4.1 Of relevance to the proposed development is the application submitted by the applicant for the installation of a 90m high anemometer mast for a temporary period of up to 3 years (Application reference 22/P/0351/FUL) which was approved on 5 August 2022.

2.5 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

2.5.1 Under Regulation 4A of The Developments of National Significance (Specified Criteria and Prescribed Secondary Consents) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 consent is required from the Welsh Ministers for the construction and operation of all energy generation projects between 10MW and 350MW. The Proposed Development therefore qualifies as a DNS.

2.5.2 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('the EIA Regulations' from here on) apply to DNS applications. The Proposed Development falls with Schedule 2, paragraph 3(i) *("Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms)"* due to exceeding the threshold for both the site area and hub height. For all Schedule 2 developments where it is decided that the particular development may have significant effects on the environment, whether on account of its nature, scale or location, an EIA is required.

2.5.3 A Scoping Report was prepared to identify the potentially significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development that needed to be assessed further and to outline the approach to undertaking the assessments of these effects and submitted to the Planning Inspectorate Wales (PINS)[2] in May 2021. The report enabled statutory and non-statutory organisations and others with an interest in the Proposed Development ('stakeholders') to comment on the proposed scope of the assessment.

2.5.4 Drawing on the consultation responses and previous and subsequent assessment work, the Draft ES reports the findings of an assessment of the potentially significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development. This reflects the requirement of the EIA Regulations for the Draft ES to discuss in depth only those effects that are likely to be significant.

2.5.5 Although the grid connection will be subject to a separate planning application, the Draft ES considers the likely effects on the environmental receptors.

2.5.6 The Draft ES should be read in conjunction with this Draft Planning Statement, the Draft DAS and other application documents.

[2] On October 1st 2021 PINS Wales became the Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) (or Penderfyniadau Cynllunio ac Amgylchedd Cymru)

3. Energy Policy

3.1 Background

3.1.1 There are a range of legislative, regulatory and policy imperatives that embed the need to reduce carbon emissions and increase the renewable energy capacity of Wales and the UK. This section therefore sets out the broad support for the development of proposals for renewable energy.

3.2 International agreements

Paris Agreement 2015

3.2.1 The UNFCCC is the major international body responsible for managing climate change and carbon emissions. In 2015, parties to the UNFCCC adopted the Paris Agreement[3], the aims of which are stated as:

"*This Agreement, in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by: a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change; and (b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production*."

3.2.2 The agreement sets targets for countries' greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but these are not legally binding or enforceable.

Glasgow Climate Pact 2021

3.2.3 The Conference of the Parties (COP 26) under the UNFCCC[4] held in Glasgow in November 2021, resulted in almost 200 countries agreeing on: the acceleration of action on climate change this decade to reduce emissions (mitigation); helping those already impacted by climate change (adaption); enabling countries to deliver on their climate goals (finance); and working together to deliver even greater action (collaboration). This agreement is in the form of the Glasgow Climate Pact which reaffirms the long-term goal to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and resolves to pursue efforts to achieve this, recognising that limiting global warming to 1.5°C "*requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global CO_2 emissions by 45% by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases*".

[3] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015). Paris Agreement. (Online) Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf (Accessed October 2022).
[4] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2021). COP26 The Glasgow Climate Pact. (Online) available at: https://ukcop26.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/COP26-Presidency-Outcomes-The-Climate-Pact.pdf (Accessed October 2022).

3.3 UK energy legislation and policy

Energy Act (2008, 2011, 2013, 2016)

3.3.1 The Energy Act (2008)[5], implemented the legislative aspects of the 2007 Energy White Paper. The content of the Bill included strengthening the Renewables Obligation to drive greater and more rapid deployment of renewables in the UK. The Energy Act (2011)[6] sought to increase investment in energy efficiency whilst the Energy Act (2013)[7], put in place measures to reform the UK energy market to attract investment. The Energy Act (2016)[8] formally established the Oil and Gas Authority as a regulator for that sector whilst it signalled the closure of the Renewables Obligation for onshore wind.

Climate Change Act (2008)

3.3.2 The Climate Change Act 2008[9] set out the first binding UK target for a reduction in GHG emissions with a 80% reduction. The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 came into force on 27 June 2019. This amended the legally binding target to reduce GHG emissions set in section 1 of the Climate Change Act 2008 from 80% to 100%, or net zero emissions. The Act requires that carbon budgets are set for five year periods – the latest update requires a 78% in emissions below 1990 levels by 2035.[10]

Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)

3.3.3 The Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (BEIS, 2021)[11] provides the overarching UK wide strategy to reach the UK's target for net zero emissions in 2050. The strategy sets out a delivery pathway to achieve net zero in 2050 with polices and proposals to keep the UK on track for emission reduction targets to up to the sixth carbon budget covering the period 2033-2037. Amongst its policies, the strategy seeks to fully decarbonise the UK power system by 2035. Key to achieving this is the commitment to "*transform [the UK's] energy system away from fossil fuels to low carbon sources of energy, such as renewable electricity generated in the UK*" (page. 39).

British Energy Security Strategy (2022)

3.3.4 The Strategy[12] notes that external factors have led to significant increases in energy costs with implications for both householders and industry. It recognises that onshore wind is one of the cheapest forms of renewable power and states that in Wales, UK government

[5] UK Government (2008). Energy Act 2008. (Online) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/32/contents (Accessed October 2022).
[6] UK Government (2011). Energy Act 2011. (Online) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/16/contents (Accessed October 2022).
[7] UK Government (2013). Energy Act 2013. (Online) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/32/contents (Accessed October 2022).
[8] UK Government (2016). Energy Act 2016. (Online) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/20/contents (Accessed October 2022).
[9] UK Government (2008). Climate Change Act 2008. (Online) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents (Accessed October 2022).
[10] UK Government (2009). The Carbon Budgets Order 2009 (Online) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2009/1259/contents/made (Accessed October 2022).
[11] HM Government (2021). Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener. (Online)(Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033990/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf (Accessed October 2022).
[12] UK Government (2022). British Energy Security Strategy. (Online) Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-energy-security-strategy/british-energy-security-strategy

will support the work of Welsh Government, Ofgem and networks to improve grid connections.

3.4 Welsh energy legislation and policy

3.4.1 The Welsh Government recognises the importance that energy plays to its economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing and the threats to that wellbeing from climate change. The Welsh Government has made very clear its commitment to renewable energy sources as a way of meeting commitments to reduce carbon emissions as demonstrated by declaration of a climate emergency in April 2019.

Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition (2012)

3.4.2 This strategy[13] states that it is the Welsh Government's ambition to create a sustainable, low carbon economy for Wales. The document highlights the importance of energy to Wales, stating it *'underpins our entire way of life,* but understands that the system is changing, and a low carbon economy will provide sustainable opportunities.

3.4.3 Total electricity generation in Wales has decreased as a result of decreased generation from coal and nuclear. Growth in renewable generation from 2.9% in 2004 to 5.1% in 2010 has helped negate the fall in generation from nuclear. It states Wales has significant onshore and offshore potential in wind resources and other low carbon resources therefore it is well placed to take advantage of a low carbon economy.

3.4.4 The Welsh Government wants to provide leadership on the energy agenda in Wales. It aims to improve a number of areas to ensure the energy agenda progresses to a more low carbon format. This includes unlocking the energy in the sea, energy efficiency, delivering through an energy programme, implementing 21st century energy infrastructure and improving the planning and consent regime.

3.4.5 Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition Delivery Plan (2014, updated 2019) sets out three key priorities for the future:

- providing leadership to ensure that Wales has a clear and consistent framework for investors, regulators and decision makers, and the infrastructure, coordination and stability needed to ensure that Wales is a great place to do business;
- maximising benefit for Wales in terms of jobs and wider economic benefit at every stage of development and operation whilst also ensuring that our communities derive long term benefits; and
- acting now for Wales' long term energy future through support for innovation, research, development, and commercialisation in the areas that offer the greatest potential for long-term benefit for Wales.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

3.4.6 This Act[14] places a duty on public bodies to carry out sustainable development and provides a definition. The Act defines sustainable development as "*The process of*

[13] Welsh Government (2012). Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition. (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/energy-wales-a-low-carbon-transition.pdf (Accessed October 2022).
[14] UK Government (2015). Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. (Online) Available at: https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf (Accessed October 2022).

improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals." The Act also puts in place seven well-being goals to help ensure that public bodies are all working towards the same vision of a sustainable Wales. The wellbeing goals are:

- a prosperous Wales;
- a resilient Wales;
- a healthier Wales;
- a more equal Wales;
- a Wales of cohesive communities;
- a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and
- a globally responsible Wales.

3.4.7 The wellbeing goals act together to ensure outcomes across economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability strands. The achievement of the wellbeing goals informs all policy and decision making. The wellbeing goal – achieving a prosperous Wales – specifically recognises the benefits of developing a low carbon society that recognises the limits of the environment and uses resources efficiently.

Environment (Wales) Act 2016

3.4.8 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (as amended)[15] places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to reduce GHG emissions in Wales by at least 100% in 2050[16]. The target of net zero emissions (rather than 80% as originally stated in the Act) reflects the Welsh Government's acceptance of the independent Climate Change Committee's (CCC) recommendation[17] that Wales could achieve a net zero reduction in emissions, which had previously been considered unfeasible. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (as amended) requires Ministers to set a series of interim targets and five-year carbon budgets to achieve the 2050 target. For 2021-26 this stands at 37% reduction compared to the baseline and for 2026-30 this is set at an average of 58% reduction[18].

Energy Generation Targets for Wales: Statement to Assembly Members (2017)

3.4.9 In September 2017, the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs announced to the Welsh Assembly that the Welsh Government was setting a target for Wales to generate 70% of its electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030 and a target for 1GW of renewable electricity capacity in Wales to be locally owned by 2030[19]. Additionally, it set a target for all renewable energy projects to have an element of local ownership.

[15] UK Government (2016). Environment (Wales) Act 2016. (Online) Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents (Accessed October 2022).
[16] The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Amendment of 2050 Emissions Target) Regulations 2021 changed the statutory target within the Environment Act from 80% to 100% and came into force on 12 March 2021.
[17] Climate Change Committee's (2020) The path to Net Zero and progress on reducing emissions in Wales.
[18] The Climate Change (Carbon Budgets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 amended the 2021-2025 carbon budget from an average reduction of 33% to 37% lower than the baseline and came into force on 19 March 2021. The regulations set the carbon budget for the 2026-2030 period and limit to an average of 58% lower than the baseline.
[19] Welsh Government (2017) Lesley Griffiths high on ambition for clean energy. (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/lesley-griffiths-high-ambition-clean-energy (Accessed October 2022).

Policy Statement: Local Ownership of Energy Generation in Wales – Benefitting Wales Today and for Future Generations (2020)

3.4.10 This policy statement[20] places considerable importance on moving from polluting energy generating technologies to renewables. It also identifies that Wales has made considerable and impressive gains in ensuring energy generating facilities have some form of public ownership, contributing to local economies considerably more than traditional ownership methods.

3.4.11 The Policy Statement clarifies the definition of local ownership as "*energy installations, located in Wales, which are owned by one or more individuals or organisations wholly owned and based in Wales, or organisations whose principal headquarters are located in Wales. This includes the following categories: Businesses; Farms and estates; Households and other domestic scale generation; Local Authorities; Other public sector organisations; Registered Social Landlords; Third sector organisations including social enterprises and charities, their subsidiaries, trading arms and special purpose vehicles*."

Programme for Government (2021)

3.4.12 The Welsh Government's *Programme for Government* (June 2021)[21] seeks to ensure that tackling the climate and nature emergencies is at the heart of Welsh Government activity. One of the ten well-being objectives is "*Embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do*."

Net Zero Wales (2021)

3.4.13 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (as amended) requires the publication of a report setting out policies and proposals for each carbon budget period. In October 2021 the Welsh Government published Net Zero Wales[22]. This sets out a large number of policies and proposals to ensure that Wales meets the required average reduction of 37%[23] in GHG emissions against the baseline for Carbon Budget 2. The Plan reinforces the importance of delivering energy generation from renewable sources to meet the energy needs of Wales.

[20] Welsh Government (2020a). Policy Statement: Local Ownership of Energy Generation in Wales – Benefitting Wales Today and for Future Generations. (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-02/policy-statement-local-ownership-of-energy-generation-in-wales.pdf (Accessed October 2022).
[21] Welsh Government (2021). Programme for Government: Well-being Statement. (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-06/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026-well-being-statement.pdf (Accessed October 2022).
[22] Welsh Government (2021). Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021-25). (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-10/net-zero-wales-carbon-budget-2-2021-25.pdf (Accessed October 2022).
[23] The Climate Change (Carbon Budgets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 amending the 2021-2025 carbon budget from an average reduction of 33% to 37% lower than the baseline came into force on 19 March 2021. The regulations set the carbon budget for the 2026-2030 period and limit to an average of 58% lower than the baseline.

4. Planning Policy Review

4.1 Background

4.1.1 This section of the statement sets out the key planning policies relevant to the consideration of the Proposed Development at the UK, Wales and local level. It begins with an assessment of performance against UK and Welsh planning policy. It is followed by consideration of the scheme against the key policies contained within the LDP and the guidance in non-statutory Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

4.2 UK planning policy

4.2.1 This section sets out the relevant UK wide policy context set out in National Policy Statements (NPS). Developments of National Significance applications are determined in accordance with *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040* (considered in the next section) in line with the revised legal framework since the NPS were enacted in 2011. However, the NPS provide broader energy policy context that applies across England and Wales and are therefore briefly reviewed here.

Draft National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2021)

4.2.2 The Draft NPS EN-1 was published for consultation in September 2021. In Section 2 the Draft NPS refers to the target of net zero in 2050 and a 78% reduction in GHG emissions by 2035. This reflects the latest legislation. The draft also includes revisions that recognise that decisions on renewable energy developments up to 350MW and all onshore wind (above 10MW) are devolved within Wales whilst onshore wind is removed from the NSIP regime. Other changes include incorporation of references to the consideration biodiversity net gain in NSIP.

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2011)

4.2.3 The 2011 NPS provides policy on a range of renewable energy technologies and their potential for likely significant effects. With regard to onshore wind, it notes at 2.7.1 that:

"Onshore wind farms are the most established large-scale source of renewable energy in the UK. Onshore wind farms will continue to play an important role in meeting renewable energy targets"

4.2.4 With specific relevance to Landscape and Visual issues, it notes at 2.7.48 that "*Modern onshore wind turbines that are used in commercial wind farms are large structures and there will always be significant landscape and visual effects from their construction and operation for a number of kilometres around a site*."

4.2.5 It goes on to state that the arrangement of turbines should be designed to minimise effects while meeting technical and operational siting requirements. However, recognition is also given to the potentially significant changes which could reduce electrical output from a resulting reduction in scale.

Draft National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-3) (2021)

4.2.6 A draft NPS for Energy (EN-3) was published for consultation in September 2021. The draft removes reference to onshore wind in line with the Infrastructure Planning (Onshore Wind Generating Stations) Order 2016 which removed all onshore wind generating stations in England and Wales from the definition of nationally significant energy generating stations. In England such development is to be considered through TCPA applications.

4.2.7 As established elsewhere in this Planning Statement, the Welsh Government sees onshore wind as a key element of the infrastructure required in Wales and schemes over 10MW are considered to be of a scale to be nationally significant. This is embedded in *Future Wales: the National Plan* and *Planning Policy Wales 11*. In decision making it is considered that no weight should be given to the fact that the draft NPS removes references to onshore wind.

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2011)

4.2.8 EN-1 was enacted in 2011 and sets out the national policy on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). It reiterates Government policy on energy and energy infrastructure, setting out the roadmap to 2050 and emphasising the urgency with which global emissions must start to fall and the need for the UK to move away from a high carbon energy generation mix. At paragraph 3.4.5 the NPS states "*It is necessary to bring forward new renewable electricity generating projects as soon as possible. The need for new renewable energy electricity generation projects is therefore urgent*."

4.2.9 Section 3.4 sets out the role of renewable energy as envisaged by Government. EN-1 also provides advice on 'good design'. Paragraph 4.5.3 states that applicants may have opportunities to demonstrate good design in terms of siting relative to existing landscape character, landform and vegetation. The NPS includes a reference that it can be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4.3 Welsh national policy

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

4.3.1 *Future Wales Future Wales: The National Plan 2040* (2021) (referred to as Future Wales from here on) was published by the Welsh Government on 24th February 2021. Future Wales provides a national framework to inform planning decision making and the development of strategic regional level plans until 2040 and has development plan status. It is the plan which DNS applications are to be assessed against under s.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA).

4.3.2 The intention of Future Wales is to provide a clear, long term spatial direction for Government policy, action and investment in Wales. It sets out a framework for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, inclusive of decarbonisation. It states (page. 46):

"Future Wales together with Planning Policy Wales will ensure the planning system focuses on delivering a decarbonised and resilient Wales through the places we create, the energy we generate, the natural resources and materials we use and how we live and travel."

4.3.3 Future Wales sets out 11 Outcomes to be achieved through the planning system. Outcome 11: A Wales where people live in places which are decarbonised and

climate-resilient states that: "*The challenges of the climate emergency demand urgent action on carbon emissions and the planning system must help Wales lead the way in promoting and delivering a competitive, sustainable decarbonised society*."

4.3.4 Future Wales includes two policies that provide the strategic and detailed policy wording for consideration of renewable and low carbon energy developments:

- Policy 17 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure; and
- Policy 18 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance.

Policy 17 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure

4.3.5 Policy 17 states that "*The Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs*" whilst decision makers are required to give "*significant weight"* to the need to meet international commitments and Wales' target to generate 70% of energy form renewables by 2030.

4.3.6 Future Wales includes ten Pre-Assessed Areas (PAA) for Wind Energy. These areas have been assessed by Welsh Government and are identified to provide certainty where, in principle, large scale wind farm developments would be acceptable. On publication of Future Wales, Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8: Planning for Renewable Energy (2005) including the approach to Strategic Search Areas (SSA) was revoked.

4.3.7 The Proposed Development is located outside a PAA for Wind Energy. As such Policy 18 is applicable.

Policy 18 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance

4.3.8 As a development qualifying as a Development of National Significance, Policy 18 sets out the following criteria that are applicable to the Proposed Development:

- *"1. Outside of the PAAs for wind development, the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty);*
- *2. there are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individuals;*
- *3. there are no adverse effects on the integrity of Internationally designated sites (including National Site Network sites and Ramsar sites) and the features for which they have been designated (unless there are no alternative solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and appropriate compensatory measures have been secured);*
- *4. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on national statutory designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated), protected habitats and species;*
- *5. the proposal includes biodiversity enhancement measures to provide a net benefit for biodiversity;*
- *6. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on statutorily protected built heritage assets;*
- *7. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of shadow flicker, noise, reflected light, air quality or electromagnetic disturbance;*

- *8. there are no unacceptable impacts on the operations of defence facilities and operations (including aviation and radar) or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area (TTA-7T);*
- *9. there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the transport network through the transportation of components or source fuels during its construction and/or ongoing operation;*
- *10. the proposal includes consideration of the materials needed or generated by the development to ensure the sustainable use and management of resources;*
- *11. there are acceptable provisions relating to the decommissioning of the development at the end of its lifetime, including the removal of infrastructure and effective restoration; and*
- *The cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered*."

4.3.9 The supporting text to Policies 17 and 18 explains the importance which Welsh Government places in protecting National Parks and AONBs from large-scale wind (and solar), which it considers to be unsuitable. The same paragraph does however go on to explain that outside these areas a positive policy framework exists. Similarly, the following paragraph states that a positive policy framework for onshore wind exists in areas outside of PAA, subject to Policy 18.

Policy 33 – National Growth Area – Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys

4.3.10 Within Policy 33 the overall strategic view for development in the South East area is set out. The South East includes the area covered by TCBC and BGCBC. Amongst other provisions, the Policy sets out that: "*The Welsh Government supports co-ordinated regeneration and investment in the Valleys area to improve well-being, increase prosperity and address social inequalities*."

Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (2021)

4.3.11 Planning Policy Wales 11 (PPW11) sets out the land use planning policies for Wales. PPW provides national policy, and is material to the consideration of planning applications, but does not form part of the statutory development plan. The latest edition was adopted in February 2021 to coincide with the publication of Future Wales. PPW11 promotes sustainable development, renewable energy and tackling climate change. Linked to the seven well-being goals of Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. It sets out five key Planning Principles (page. 17) to achieve the right development in the right place:

- **Growing our economy in a sustainable manner** – the planning system should enable development which contributes to long term economic well-being, making best use of existing infrastructure and planning for new supporting infrastructure and services;
- **Making best use of resources** - The efficient use of resources, including land, underpins sustainable development;
- **Facilitating accessible and healthy environments** - Our land use choices and the places we create should be accessible for all and support healthy lives. High quality places are barrier-free and inclusive to all members of society;
- **Creating & sustaining communities** - The planning system must work in an integrated way to maximise its contribution to well-being. It can achieve this by creating well-designed places and cohesive rural and urban communities which can

be sustained by ensuring the appropriate balance of uses and density, making places where people want to be and interact with others; and

- **Maximising environmental protection and limiting environmental impact** - Natural, historic and cultural assets must be protected, promoted, conserved and enhanced. Negative environmental impacts should be avoided in the wider public interest.

4.3.12 PPW11 includes reference to the climate emergency declared by the Welsh Government in 2019 and the Environment Act (Wales) 2016 targets to achieve 80% reduction in emissions by 2050 and evidence that Wales can achieve a 95% reduction. As noted above, following the publication of PPW11, more recent changes in the legal requirement require a reduction of GHG emissions of at least 100% in 2050[24].

4.3.13 PPW11 notes at para 3.30 that:

"*The planning system plays a key role in tackling the climate emergency through the decarbonisation of the energy system and the sustainable management of natural resources. The transition to a low carbon economy not only brings opportunities for clean growth and quality jobs, but also has wider benefits of enhanced places to live and work, with clean air and water and improved health outcomes*."

4.3.14 Mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change is central to PPW, and the planning system it seeks to promote, enabling Wales to meet the needs of present and future generations (para 3.33):

"Climate change is a global challenge, with impacts felt at the local level presenting a significant risk to people, property, infrastructure and natural resources. We need to plan for these impacts, reducing the vulnerability of our natural resources and build an environment which can adapt to climate change. The planning system plays a significant role in managing this risk."

4.3.15 Section Paragraph 5.7.7 "*The benefits of renewable and low carbon energy, as part of the overall commitment to tackle the climate emergency and increase energy security, is of paramount importance*." It sets out eight bullet points for the planning system to achieve:

- "*Integrate development with the provision of additional electricity grid network infrastructure;*
- *Optimise energy storage;*
- *Facilitate the integration of sustainable building design principles in new development;*
- *Optimise the location of new developments to allow for efficient use of resources;*
- *Maximise renewable and low carbon energy generation;*
- *Maximise the use of local energy sources, such as district heating networks;*
- *Minimise the carbon impact of other energy generation; and*
- *Move away from the extraction of energy minerals, the burning of which is carbon intensive*."

4.3.16 PPW11 reaffirms the Welsh Government targets to achieve 70% of its electricity consumption by renewables, one GW of capacity to be locally owned by 2030; and for new energy projects to have at least some local ownership (para 5.7.14) and that "*The planning system has an active role to help ensure the delivery of these targets, in terms of*

[24] The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Amendment of 2050 Emissions Target) Regulations 2021 which change the statutory target within the Environment Act from 80% to 100% came into force on 19 March 2021.

new renewable energy generating capacity and the promotion of energy efficiency measures in buildings" (para 5.7.15).

4.3.17 PPW11 states that Wales has abundant wind power resource and the Welsh Government sees wind as a key renewable energy resource. At para 5.9.17 PPW reaffirms the approach in Future Wales: "*For large scale wind developments, [Future Wales] identifies Pre-Assessed Areas where the Welsh Government has already modelled the likely impact on the landscape and has found them to be capable of accommodating development in an acceptable way. There is a presumption in favour of large scale wind energy development (including repowering) in these areas, subject to other criteria contained within the policy*."

4.3.18 PPW also includes detailed advice at para 5.9.24 on local involvement and community benefit, reflecting the Welsh Government advice that it expects all new renewable energy projects in Wales to have at least an element of local ownership.

Technical Advice Notes

4.3.19 The Welsh Government has produced a number of Technical Advice Notes (TAN) which supplement PPW11. There are a number of guidance notes that are applicable to the development of onshore wind farms.

Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)

4.3.20 TAN 5 provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation within Wales. It sets out the key principles of planning for nature conservation for both LDPs and when deciding planning applications. These include:

- being mindful of the principles of sustainable development, environmental limits, the precautionary principle;
- contributing to the protection and improvement of the environment;
- promoting the conservation and enhancement of statutorily designated areas and undeveloped coast;
- ensuring that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance;
- protecting wildlife and natural features in the wider environment;
- ensuring that all material considerations are taken into account and decisions are informed by adequate information about the potential effects of development on nature conservation;
- ensuring that the range and population of protected species is sustained; and
- avoiding harm to nature conservation, minimising unavoidable harm by mitigation measures, offsetting residual harm by compensation measures and looking for new opportunities to enhance nature conservation.

Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010)

4.3.21 TAN 6 states that planning authorities should support the diversification of the rural economy and that the planning system has a key role to play in supporting the delivery of sustainable rural communities. It notes the need to respond to the challenges posed by climate change and identifies that one method which can contribute to this is renewable energy generation, particularly using local renewable sources. In paragraph 3.7.2, TAN 6

considers farm diversification and notes the range of activities which can be sustainably located on farms and notes that the production of renewable energy is likely to be an appropriate use.

Technical Advice Note 11: Noise (1997)

4.3.22 TAN 11 provides advice on how the planning system can be used to minimise the adverse impact of noise, without placing unreasonable burdens on applicants. Local planning authorities must ensure that noise generating development do not cause an unacceptable degree of disturbance.

Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2016)

4.3.23 The TAN says that good design can be facilitated. There are a number of key objectives in relation to design:

- Access - Ensuring ease of access for all;
- Character - Sustaining or enhancing local character, promoting legible development, promoting a successful relationship between public and private space, promoting quality, choice and variety and promoting inclusive design;
- Community Safety - Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces and security through natural surveillance;
- Environmental Sustainability - Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources, enhancing biodiversity and designing for change; and
- Movement - Promoting sustainable means of travel.

Technical Advice Note 19: Telecommunications (2002)

4.3.24 This TAN deals with both the creation of telecommunication links and also the potential for radio interference from Proposed Development. It notes that large prominent structures such as wind farms can cause disruption to television and other telecommunications services due to the physical obstruction. It puts the onus on local planning authorities to satisfy themselves that the potential for interference has been fully taken into account in the siting and design of such developments, and appropriate mitigation built into the scheme if necessary.

Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development (2014)

4.3.25 TAN 23 sets out guidance for the approach to economic development. Under paragraph 2.1.13 the TAN restates that the planning system should support (inter alia) the low-carbon economy. TAN 23 states that the balance between economic benefits and social and environment impacts need to be carefully weighed up and decisions on each case will depend on local circumstances.

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

4.3.26 TAN 24 provides guidance on how the planning system should consider the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning applications.

4.4 The Local Development Plan

4.4.1 As described in Section 4.3 above, Future Wales forms the highest tier of the Development Plan and contains the primary planning policies against which DNS are determined. This section of the Planning Statement sets out the key LDP policies relevant to the consideration of the Proposed Development.

4.4.2 The Proposed Development is located within the following two administrative areas:

- TCBC; and
- BCGBC.

Torfaen County Borough Council

4.4.3 TCBC adopted its LDP in December 2013 which sets policies to guide development up to 2021. The policies of relevance to the Proposed Development are:

- S3 Climate Change
- S4 Place Making / Good Design
- S7 Conservation of the Natural and Historic Environment
- BW1 General Policy – Development Proposals
- SAA5 The British SAA, Talywain, Pontypool
- M1 Minerals Safeguarding
- M3 Tir Pentwys Preferred Area for Aggregates
- M4 Mineral Sites Buffer Zones
- C2 Special Landscape Areas
- BG1 Locally Designated Sites for Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- HE1 Buildings and Structures of Local Importance

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

4.4.4 BGCBC adopted its LDP in November 2012 which sets policies to guide development up to 2021. The policies of relevance to the Proposed Development are:

- SP7 Climate Change
- SP9 Active and Health Communities
- SP10 Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment
- SP11 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- DM1 New Development
- DM2 Design and Placemaking
- DM4 Low and Zero Carbon Energy
- DM14 Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement
- DM16 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerow Protection

- DM19 Mineral Safeguarding
- ENV2 Special Landscape Areas
- ENV3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
- M1 Safeguarding of Minerals
- M2 Mineral Buffer Zones
- M4 Protected Areas

4.5 Other local planning considerations

Supplementary Planning Guidance

TCBC

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Design Guide (2011)

4.5.1 The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Design Guide (2011) seeks to both protect the historic character of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS) within Torfaen (an area recognised for its 'Outstanding Universal Value'), and to ensure that all development whether alterations, repairs or new development, respects the significance and values for which the site was inscribed.

BGCBC

Nature Conservation Planning Guidance for Small Scale Wind Energy Developments Supplementary Planning Guidance (2017)

4.5.2 The Nature Conservation Planning Guidance for Small Scale Wind Energy Developments Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was adopted in February 2017. The SPG supplements LDP policies SP10, DM1.1(f), DM1.2(e), DM2(g), DM4(a), DM14, DM15 and DM16. The SPG provides guidance on best practice that should be taken into consideration when formulating surveys for small scale wind energy developments. The guidance covers specialist information with regards to bat surveys and the importance of the Usk Bat Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC). As the SPG provides guidance specifically for small scale wind turbines it is considered that the weight that can be attached to it in decision making is very limited.

Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Requirements (2015)

4.5.3 This guidance sets out specific requirements with regards to preparing landscape and visual assessments (LVIA) across the Heads of the Valleys area. The guidance is clear that is applies to community scale developments of smaller scale which the guidance considers to be below 5MW. The SPG sets out the requirements for minimum requirements in relation EIA scoping opinion, the methodology to be applied and the minimum requirements for LVIA. The guidance specifically applies to small community scale developments rather than large scale wind turbine developments such as the Proposed Development. Therefore, overall, the weight that can be applied to the SPG is very limited.

Emerging Local Development Plan

TCBC

4.5.4 Torfaen County Borough Council is currently preparing a replacement LDP (RLDP) to provide the strategic direction for the development and use of land between 2018 and 2033. However, this is unlikely to be progressed until mid-2023 at the earliest. The Preferred Strategy was the last iteration of the replacement LDP (Updated in March 2021).

4.5.5 Draft Policy S6 Climate Change of the Preferred Strategy supports the development of renewable and low / zero carbon energy generation and has a presumption against energy generation utilising fossil fuels and methods that are not low / zero carbon.

4.5.6 Draft Policy S15 Energy of the Preferred Strategy seeks to identify Local Search Areas for renewable energy generation within which there will be a presumption in favour of granting planning consent, subject to not giving rise to unacceptable impacts assessed under other policies of the RLDP. The supporting text to this policy highlights that the Welsh Government has set an interim target of 70% of Wales' electricity demand to be from Welsh renewable electricity sources by 2030 with 1GW of renewable energy capacity to be locally owned. Making provision for sites and Local Search Areas that can accommodate the generation of renewable energies and working towards a low carbon footprint is therefore a fundamental issue for the RLDP.

BGCBC

4.5.7 BGCBC is currently preparing a replacement LDP to cover 2018-2033. In January 2020 the County Borough published the LDP Preferred Strategy for consultation.

4.5.8 Draft Policy SP3 Climate Change seeks to positively contribute to addressing climate change through (inter alia): *"Supporting the development of renewable and low/zero carbon energy generation;"* Overall, the emerging policy context would support the Proposed Development subject to the range of criteria-based policies. Given the current status and early stage of the LDP it is considered that at most, very limited weight could be given to the emerging plan policies at this stage.

4.5.9 The Council's Delivery Agreement sets out the intention to adopt the replacement LDP in 2022 but this was predicated on submission in 2021 which has not been achieved.

4.6 Planning considerations

Assessment of compliance with national policy

4.6.1 Future Wales is the primary planning policy document against which applications qualifying as DNS are to be assessed as the highest tier of the development plan. Future Wales (page. 96) confirms:

"*As set out in legislation, applications for Developments of National Significance must be determined in accordance with Future Wales, which is the national development plan for Wales*."

4.6.2 Future Wales is the most up-to-date development plan and in accordance with the latest PPW. Therefore, an assessment of the Proposed Development against the policies of Future Wales is necessary in order to understand the extent to which the Proposed Development is compliant with policy. However, in reaching a conclusion upon the

compliance or otherwise with Future Wales it is considered necessary to also set it within the policy context of PPW.

Benefits of the Proposed Development

4.6.3 Future Wales sets out two polices concerned with the topic of renewable and low carbon energy Policy 17 and Policy 18. The former policy establishes the Welsh Government's strong support for the principle of delivering renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales and requires decision-makers to give significant weight to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and the target to meet 70% of consumed electricity by 2030.

4.6.4 Policy 17 requires that "*Proposals should describe the net benefits the scheme will bring in terms of social, economic, environmental and cultural improvements to local communities*."

4.6.5 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (as amended) places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to reduce GHG emissions in Wales by at least 100% in 205025. As demonstrated above, under Policy 17 of Future Wales, "significant weight" must be given by decision makers to the need to meet Wales' international commitments on climate change and the target to meet 70% of consumed energy by renewable sources by 2030. PPW (para 5.7.15) states that "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" whilst PPW (para 5.7.7) is also clear that "The benefits of renewable and low carbon energy, as part of the overall commitment to tackle the climate emergency and increase energy security, is of paramount importance." Therefore, the benefits of the Proposed Development in this regard are crucial to meeting the national policy framework requirements.

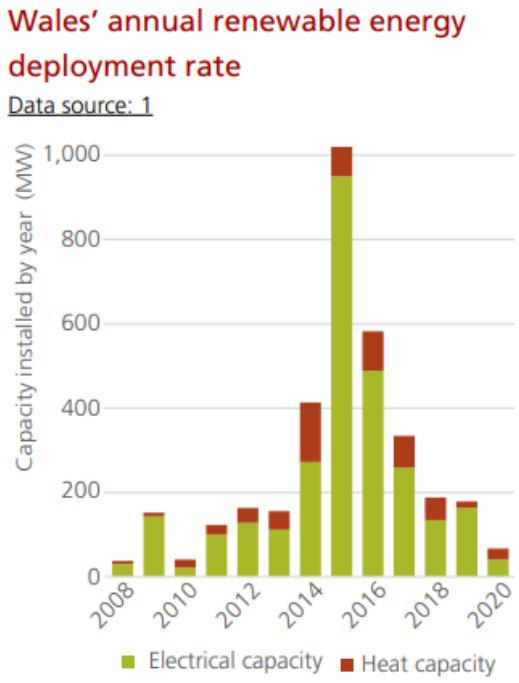
4.6.6 It is recognised that the 70% target is to be achieved through increasing renewable energy generation alongside a reduction in energy consumption through improved efficiency. Therefore, it is not solely related to installed capacity of renewable infrastructure. However, Future Wales is clear that Ministers have considered alternatives to large scale electricity generating infrastructure (including energy efficiency) and they are not considered to be able meet the targets alone. Future Wales is clear that "The Welsh Ministers have considered alternatives to the need for new large-scale electricity generation infrastructure, including building-mounted installations and energy efficiency measures. Although we believe that these measures have an important part to play in meeting our energy, decarbonisation and climate change targets, they will not enable us to meet these objectives on their own." (Welsh Government, 2021a: 97).

4.6.7 Therefore, to address the climate emergency declared by the Welsh Government in 2019 through the planning system's key role (as per PPW para 3.3.0), the delivery of nationally significant renewable energy projects under the DNS regime is central to achieving the required response. This is synthesised through Future Wales Policy 17 which is clear that "The Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs."

4.6.8 The Proposed Development would see the delivery of a combined rated output of up to 34MW of electrical power. The Welsh Government's Energy Generation in Wales Report 2020[26] published in May 2022 assessed the percentage in 2020 to be at 56% (somewhat

[25] The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Amendment of 2050 Emissions Target) Regulations 2021 changed the statutory target within the Environment Act from 80% to 100% and came into force on 12 March 2021.
[26] Welsh Government (2022). Energy generation in Wales 2020. (Online) Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/energy-generation-in-wales-2020.pdf (Accessed September 2022).

below the target of 70% and an increase from 51% recorded for the previous year of 2019). The Report (page. 7) notes with the percentage increase is more a result in the reduction of electricity demand recognising that the year saw a small increase in renewable electricity deployment (indeed the report on page 5 records the year as experiencing the lowest annual deployment rate since 2010).



4.6.9 With regard to the 70% target the report states in view of the factors referenced above concerning the reduction in demand, that the 'relative' surge in 2020 may be temporary. The report goes on to reference planning assumptions that electricity demand will increase as a result of increasing electricity consumption particularly in the heat and transport sectors.

4.6.10 Page 7 continues that "*..there remain significant challenges to deploying renewable generation at a pace required to meet the 70% target by 2030*." These challenges are listed as securing price support, gaining planning permission and securing a grid connection with a recognition that projects are struggling to develop sustainable, subsidy-free business models that accommodate the necessary network reinforcements.

4.6.11 The report concludes on page 8 that the 70% renewable electricity target is just the first step in renewable energy development in Wales, as Wales aims to generate renewable energy to at least meet its consumption. Meeting the 70% target therefore should therefore only be seen as a signpost on the way to 100% renewable energy generation.

4.6.12 Whilst the Applicant is seeking to consent a wind farm of up to 34MW, the Draft ES has considered a candidate turbine of 4.2MW, meaning a maximum annual generation from that machine of 33.6MW which is equivalent to the domestic needs of approximately 21,392 average households[27,28]. The Proposed Development would therefore demonstrably help support an increase in renewable generation; contributing to the achievement of Welsh Government targets. Furthermore, the Applicant has secured a connection offer agreement from WPD and seeks as part of this application to consent the

[27] Assuming a rated capacity of 33.6MW (based on 4.2MW for each turbine) and load factor of 28.2% which takes into account the intermittent nature of the wind, the availability of the wind turbines and array losses.
[28] Homes Equivalent = rated capacity of wind farm (kW) x average load factor for wind x number of hours in a year / average household energy consumption (MWh)

overhead element of the connection. A firm and binding connection offer means that the Proposed Development addresses the challenge of securing a grid connection.

4.6.13 PPW (Welsh Government, 2021b: para 5.7.6) is clear that "*The planning system should secure an appropriate mix of energy provision, which maximises benefits to our economy and communities whilst minimising potential environmental and social impacts*". The balance is weighed between maximising the benefits to the economy and communities and minimising the potential environmental and social impacts. Effectively this is reached when taking into consideration the policy imperatives of Policy 17 and Policy 18 of Future Wales.

4.6.14 In addition to the positive benefits for addressing climate change and enhancing the supply of renewables, the Proposed Development would see economic benefits for the area. The Proposed Development would include the provision of approximately 57 FTE (full time equivalent) jobs during construction and 4 FTE during operation. It is estimated that the expenditure in Wales associated with the construction phase would total £13.4m whilst for the operation phase would equate to £0.99m per annum.[29] This level of investment would support the outcomes that Policy 33 of Future Wales which seeks to deliver investment in the South East region.

4.6.15 The Applicant (Pennant Walters) is a business registered in Wales, and therefore meets the Welsh Government's definition of local ownership (Welsh Government, 2020a). The Proposed Development would therefore contribute to the Welsh Government's local ownership of renewable energy target and support PPW paras 5.7.14 and 5.9.24.

Impacts of the Proposed Development

Landscape and the PPA

4.6.16 Future Wales requires decision-makers to give significant weight to the need to meet amongst other objectives, Wales' target to consume 70% of electricity by renewable means by 2030. It states that the landscapes within PAA are capable of accommodating development (onshore wind) in an acceptable way and provides a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development in the PAA subject to the criteria in Policy 18. It also states that applications for large-scale wind energy development will not be permitted in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and that all proposals should demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment.

4.6.17 Part of the Proposed Development is within a PAA, and the turbines are on the immediately adjacent land to the east of the PAA. The Applicant considers the Proposed Development is complaint with Policy 18 in that it does not have an unacceptable impact upon the landscape as will be demonstrated within this section of the Planning Statement. With regard to its location outside of the PAA, it is the Applicant's opinion that the spatial approach to onshore wind set out in Future Wales has significant limitations because of the high-level approach to constraints mapping which was adopted, an issue consistently set out by the sector/RenewableUK Cymru. This is evidenced by the work undertaken by RenewableUK Cymru which involved detailed analysis of the PAAs in Wales and concluded that only ~5% is suitable for onshore wind and are theoretically deliverable once suitable constraints are applied and operational wind farms have been excluded. The Applicant therefore concluded, consistent with Policy 17 and 18, that the PAAs are only a starting point for large-scale wind energy development and that consistent with

[29] Based on assumptions informed by Regeneris Consulting Ltd and Welsh Economy Research Unit, Cardiff Business School for Renewables UK Cymru, Welsh Government (2013) Economic Opportunities for Wales from Future Onshore Wind Development

these policies that land outside of PAAs can be appropriate for large scale wind energy, subject to Policy 18.

4.6.18 With regard to PAA 10, which is the closest to the Proposed Development, areas of land are included which are considered unfeasible and unviable such as the valleys where there is a lack of wind resource and where there is proximity to local centres of population (Llanhilleth, Aberbegg, Newbridge and farmsteads) with potential proximity issues such as noise, visual and shadow flicker. Therefore, to reduce the potential for impacts, the Applicant concluded that the Proposed Development would need to be located further north than the PAA boundary to an area of higher ground where there is potential for better wind generation and a greater distance to population centres.

4.6.19 Policy 18 permits proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects subject to Policy 17 and to eleven criteria. Criterion 1 concerns effects upon the landscape and states that "*outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind developments and everywhere for all other technologies, the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)*").

4.6.20 The landscape impacts have been assessed within Draft ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The LVIA considers that effects on the following three nationally designated landscapes (noting that the site is located outside these designations meaning only indirect landscape effects have the potential to arise):

- Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP);
- Wye valley AONB; and
- Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS).

4.6.21 Whilst it is acknowledged there will be significant effects on just one LCA that forms part of the BBNP, the draft chapter concludes that no significant effects on the special qualities of the BBNP as a result of the Proposed Development during construction or at operation. In addition, the draft chapter concludes there would be no significant effects to the character or special qualities associated with the Wye Valley AONB and also the character of BILWHS as a result of the development Proposed Development.

4.6.22 The LVIA considers the potential effects on 22 locally designated Special Landscape Areas (SLA) and 5 Local Landscapes (VILLs) within 15km study area. Of these, 4 crossed into the site and would incur both direct and indirect effects from the Proposed Development. Significant overall landscape effects were assessed for the following three SLAs: Blaenau Gwent CBC SLA D; Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James and SLA E; St Illtyd Plateau and Ebbw Eastern Sides; and Torfaen CBC SLA H - Western Uplands. In addition, a further Torfaen SLA (SLA F – Eastern Uplands) was also found to incur significant effects.

4.6.23 No other SLAs or VILLSs would be likely to incur significant effects from the Proposed Development.

4.6.24 The Proposed Development has been designed so as to minimise the effects on these local landscape designations through the use of non-reflective pale grey on the rotor blades and upper towers. Whilst significant effects have been identified, these are inherent given the type of development proposed (ref: NPS EN-1). The majority of PAAs include land designated as SLAs such that it is clear that Welsh Government does not see such local designations as being a barrier to large-scale wind farm development. Whilst a matter to be included within the planning balance, the presence of significant effects upon local landscape designations is not considered to be fundamental to the consideration of the application.

4.6.25 The LVIA also assesses cumulative landscape effects which is concerned with the evaluation of the effects that could be generated were the Proposed Development to become operational along with some or all of the other wind energy developments that are either already operational, have been consented or are proposed i.e. planning application or scoping opinion, within an extended 27 km radius cumulative study area. The focus of the assessment is to identify which, if any, of the landscape or visual receptors that would not experience significant effects as a result of the introduction of the Proposed Development alone, may experience significant effects as a result of the incremental contribution of the Proposed Development.

4.6.26 The LVIA assesses the effects under two scenarios:

- Scenario A – the Proposed Development in addition to Operational and Consented Schemes; and
- Scenario B – the Proposed Development in addition to Operational and Consented plus Schemes in Planning and in Scoping. In reality, not all the wind energy developments proposed under Scenario B will be granted planning consent. As a result, the scenario represents a worst-case scenario that may never come to pass.

Scenario A

4.6.27 In terms of cumulative landscape effects under Scenario A, of the six published character areas of the BBNP assessed only one was found to have significant effects (LCA15 Blorenge Hills and Slopes). However, Scenario A is very similar to the baseline, as there are far more operational wind farms within the study area (which would already be visible in the baseline views) than there are consented schemes. Most operational schemes are on elevated and exposed ground to the west and north-west, but barely visible either on their own, or in combination with the proposed scheme. The extent of cumulative change from this LCA would be largely the same under Scenario A as the non-cumulative scenario, meaning the actual cumulative change is not material and minor. Both consented schemes are at a considerable distance from the Proposed Development, and for operational windfarms, the pattern and distribution of these schemes is largely dispersed and removed from the Site.

4.6.28 In terms of cumulative visual effects under Scenario A, including upon the national park, there would be no significant effects. This is due to the separation distance, lack of intervisibility and the perspective of the views.

Scenario B

4.6.29 For Scenario B, whilst significant cumulative landscape effects and visual effects are identified, the assessment points out that significant cumulative effects would arise as a result of other wind farms proposed in the area, with or without the Proposed Development. Put another way, the Proposed Development is not the main scheme or key contributing factor that leads to the creation of significant cumulative effects. It does not tip the balance. Significant effects would arise anyway from the other schemes in the pipeline, regardless of the introduction of the Proposed Development.

4.6.30 In addition, whilst significant adverse cumulative landscape and visual effects are identified in a situation in which all schemes currently in planning and scoping are approved, which in reality may not occur as not all schemes may progress, progress in the form currently understood or may not be granted consent, it is considered that the overwhelming need to reduce carbon and GHG emissions, meet climate targets, and increase renewable energy outweighs the harm. This is clearly supported by the Welsh Government including recent policy updates, in particular Future Wales: Policy 17

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Development, which sets out clear and compelling support for renewable technologies to meet future energy needs.

4.6.31 Furthermore whilst it is accepted that Future Wales: Policy 18 gives clear recognition to the importance of protecting the landscape setting of national parks, the significant effects generated under Scenario B would be limited to the locations from which the Site is visible, and only in views directed towards the Proposed Development. Moreover, the change to the rural setting would be nominal when the special qualities of the BBNP are considered in the round. As a result, the Proposed Development would not affect the special qualities of the Brecon Beacons National Park to the extent that such effects could be considered unacceptable.

Policy 18 Criteria

4.6.32 Policy 18 sets out a range of criteria for DNS applications which inform consideration of impacts. The majority of the criteria (2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9) refer to 'unacceptable adverse impacts' which implies that a planning judgement has to be made to determine acceptability (or otherwise) of any adverse impacts.

4.6.33 As demonstrated in **Table 4.1,** when taken as a whole, and the planning merits weighed, the Proposed Development accords with the criteria in Policy 18. (Criteria 1 has been considered above).

Table 4.1 Assessment against Future Wales Policy 18 requirements

Policy 18 criteria	Compliance
2. There are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individuals;	Draft ES **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact** assesses the likely visual impacts of the Proposed Development. The LVIA assessment finds that there are likely significant visual effects on a range of receptors categorised as residential, communications links and recreational. The site is located on high ground with a number of relatively small, often linear settlements in the valleys which bound it. Areas within the following settlements could experience significant visual effects during the operational phase depending upon local topography, screening and orientation: • Pontypool; • Abersychan; • Crumlin; • Pen-twyn/Trinant; • Swffryd; and • Abertillery. Appendix 6M of draft ES **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact** has considered the visual amenity effect on residential receptors. It identifies that one property will experience significant adverse effects: Blaen Nant y Caws Farm, Pontnewynydd. This property is approximately 300metres from the nearest turbine (turbine 6). Whilst this property will be affected it is financially involved in the Proposed Development and will therefore benefit from the windfarm gaining consent and coming into operation. On balance, it is therefore considered this outweighs the negative effects on this property, particularly when taking into account the wider positive benefits that the project brings in terms of reducing carbon emissions and increasing the renewable energy capacity.

Policy 18 criteria	Compliance
	The draft chapter has considered the effects on a number of national Promoted Routes (national trails and long-distance footpaths) and the National Cycle Network. It concludes that there would be not significant effects on these routes/networks. The effects on Country Parks and Historic Parks and Gardens has been assessed. The draft chapter concludes that effects would not be significant. Significant effects on Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) and OALS have been identified from within the site ranging to 15km from the site. The same applies to Transport Routes (Motorways, A and B roads) albeit significant effects have only been identified up to 5km from the site and such effects would be transitory as the viewer travels along the highway. Wind farms by their nature create visual effects and the role of the decision maker is to consider the extent to which these effects outweigh the positive benefits of the project such that the application could be considered unacceptable. Recognition should also be given to the fact that the ES assessment commonly considers views of wind turbines to be negative when the experience of the individual may often be more nuanced. Future Wales call for significant weight to be attached to the positive benefits of onshore wind. The significant effects identified within the Draft ES are those which could be anticipated as arising from a development of this kind and are not so significant or widespread as to outweigh the benefits which would derive from its operation.
3. There are no adverse effects on the integrity of Internationally designated sites (including National Site Network sites and Ramsar sites) and the features; for which they have been designated (unless there are no alternative solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and appropriate compensatory measures have been secured);	Draft ES **Chapter 8: Biodiversity** examines the likely effects on internationally designated sites. It lists the designations that will need consideration and then identifies the international designations that have the potential to be affected by the development of which there is only one; the Usk Bat Sites SAC. That site supports roosts for lesser horseshoe bat and a number of important hibernacula within the cave systems. Given the distance from the site it is concluded that significant effects arising from the Proposed Development could not occur and the site is scoped out form further assessment. Draft ES **Chapter 9: Ornithology** identifies international sites designated for their ornithological value. There is only one site within 20km of the site; the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area and Severn Estuary Ramsar Site. The draft chapter concludes that the Proposed Development will not result in any likely significant adverse effects on the integrity of the lesser black-backed gull population supported by the Severn Estuary Ramsar/SPA or Flat Holm and Steep Holm SSSI, as the Proposed Development does not provide functional habitat for the gulls, the recording of this species is largely restricted to birds flying over the Survey Boundary with only limited foraging and resting, and collision risk to these species is not of sufficient magnitude to have a significant adverse effect on the breeding population of this species.
4. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on national statutory designated sites for nature conservation (and the features for which they have been designated),	Draft ES **Chapter 8: Biodiversity** considers the impacts on nationally protected habitats and sites. Two statutory designated biodiversity site of national importance is are considered to have potential to be affected by the development: Siambre Ddu SSSI and Mynydd Llangattock SSSI (encompassing Craig Y Cilau NNR). The former is situated circa 8km north of the Site and the latter 9km north-west of the Site. Both form components SSSI of the Usk Bat Sites (an internationally designated site, as identified above against criterion 3 of Policy 18). Given the distance from the site it is concluded

Policy 18 criteria	Compliance
protected habitats and species;	that significant effects arising from the Proposed Development could not occur and both sites are scoped out form further assessment. Draft ES **Chapter 9: Ornithology** records that there are no national statutory designated sites (i.e. SSSIs or NNRs) that list ornithological features within 2km of the Site. Consideration of effects upon individual species, and the identification of any significant effects is provided in the assessment of policy compliance with TAN5 below.
5. The proposal includes biodiversity enhancement measures to provide a net benefit for biodiversity;	The Applicant is committed to preparing a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) which will set out the objectives for biodiversity protection, mitigation, monitoring and habitat enhancement measures (where applicable). This will be developed in consultation with TCBC and BLGCBC and an outline document prepared to accompany the submission of the application. The Plan will aim to mitigate habitat loss within the SINC's on site (as identified in draft **ES Chapter 8: Biodiversity)** and it will set out long-term habitat management and monitoring focussing on key habitats.
6. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on statutorily protected built heritage assets;	Draft ES **Chapter 7: Historic Environment** identifies the locations of historic assets in the vicinity of the site. The draft chapter confirms that the site does not contain any listed buildings, scheduled monuments, historic parks and gardens, nor is it part of any area designation such as a conservation area, Registered Historic or Outstanding Landscape or World Heritage Site. Beyond the site, the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS) is located 3.75km to the south of the nearest turbine. The draft chapter concludes that the sub stations, grid connection cable and road widening will be on a very small scale or have only a below-ground or ground level impact and not visible from the WHS. As such they are discounted from the remit of the assessment. In terms of the turbines, the draft chapter acknowledges that whilst the Proposed Development would result in a single impact upon the BILWHS comprising a Moderate Adverse significance of effect to one of its values, namely its Aesthetic and Visual Value, the assessment concludes that owing to the distant nature of the development and the absence of any change to the setting of the WHS's core areas of heritage interest in the town of Blaenavon and valley bottom, the effect would not translate into a loss of any of the WHS's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) or its integrity and authenticity. The Blaenavon Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest (BLOHI) is also located beyond the site. The nearest Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCA) that makes up the BLOHI is 2.75km to the north of the site. The draft chapter concludes that the proposed development would not result in any adverse effect on the BLOHI. The draft chapter identifies that: • two scheduled monuments would be affected by the Proposed Development (Cwmbyrgwm Colliery and St Illtyd's Castle Mound). • Three listed buildings: St Illtyd's Church (Grade II*), Hafod-arthen (Grade II) and Ty-llwyd (Grade II), • one Registered Park and Garden (Grade II* Pontypool Park). In all cases the draft chapter concludes that that Proposed Development would not result in any adverse effect on their heritage value and there would be no significance of effect.

Policy 18 criteria	Compliance
	There are also several non-designated historic assets on the Site and beyond the site. In all cases the draft chapter concludes that Proposed Development would not result in any adverse effect on their heritage value and there would be no significance of effect.
7. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts by way of shadow flicker, noise, reflected light, air quality or electromagnetic disturbance;	Draft ES **Chapter 15: Shadow Flicker** assesses the likely impacts by way of shadow flicker. Twenty receptors comprising individual properties or groups of properties, have been identified as having the potential to experience shadow flicker for which modelling was undertaken. The modelling demonstrated that shadow flicker could significantly affect 9 of these receptors with a further 11 experiencing non-significant effects. With the ability to implement a control system to shut down wind turbines the resulting conclusion of the draft ES is that effects would not be significant. Draft ES **Chapter 13: Noise assesses** the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development with respect to noise. Consideration of the potential for significant effects focuses upon whether accepted noise standards in the form of ETSU-R-97 could be breached as a result of wind farm operation. Attention is focused upon those residential receptors closest to the Proposed Development. The initial noise assessment reported within the Draft Chapter concludes that there is the potential for a significant effect at properties noted as R4 to R8 and R10 to R15 during the daytime and at receptors R7, R8, R10 to R13 and R15 during the night-time. The assessment is worse case, i.e. it does not factor in directivity, and further analysis will therefore be undertaken. Ultimately the Applicant has the opportunity to reduce the operating modes for the six turbines which create the exceedance (turbines 3 to 8 inclusive), such that residual effects are considered to be not significant. However, at R10 to R13, contributions from the proposed turbines at Mynydd Maen Wind Farm are dominant or significant contributors. Assuming an application for Mynydd Maen Wind Farm is submitted (and subsequently consented), and subject to confirmation of the layout and turbine type at the proposed Mynydd Maen Wind Farm, it may be necessary to balance reduced power operating modes for specific turbines within the Proposed Development and at Mynydd Maen Wind Farm to ensure that turbine noise limits are not exceeded. This could be achieved via planning conditions requiring that cumulative turbine noise levels do not exceed the ETSU-R-97 derived noise limits. With regards to electromagnetic disturbance Draft ES **Chapter 14: Aviation and Telecommunications** identifies that degradation of signals is possible as a result of consultation with stakeholders. However, the Applicant is prepared to resolve such matters and discussions are ongoing to agree a technical solution which may result in a planning condition to any DNS consent which requires the Applicant to address any localised interference issues arising during operation. Impacts on air quality were scoped out of the EIA.
8. There are no unacceptable impacts on the operations of defence facilities and	Chapter 14 of the Draft ES explores the likely effects on aviation and telecommunications. With regard to military aviation and radar the independent aviation consultant appointed by the Applicant to consider such matters concluded that there would be no MoD ATC, Air defence of Met Office

Policy 18 criteria	Compliance
operations (including aviation and radar) or the Mid Wales Low Flying Tactical Training Area (TTA-7T);	radar affected -+whilst the site's location is a 'Green' area where MoD low flying objections are extremely unlikely. Whilst accepting that the criterion does not reference civilian aviation consultation with NATs has indicated that the Proposed Development could have an unacceptable impact upon operations at Cardiff Airport and NATS Enroute radar at Clee Hill. However, a review undertaken by the Applicant's aviation consultant has suggested that mitigation options are available and that further discussions are underway with NATs/Cardiff Airport to agree these which could be the subject of a planning condition to the DNS.
9. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the transport network through the transportation of components or source fuels during its construction and/or ongoing operation;	Draft ES **Chapter 12: Transport** examines the potential effects on the transport network and assess the B4246 (Talywain), A40043 (Pontnewynydd) and A472 (Pontypool) roads. The site would be accessed from the existing tarmacked road called British Road / Farm Road off the B4246 to the east of the Site, albeit this access would be upgraded and widened to accommodate construction traffic and material and turbine deliveries. The existing Farm Road track up to the Site will additionally require upgrade works at certain points to allow sufficient space for larger construction and transport vehicles to reach the Site All construction materials such as aggregate and concrete will be sourced from local quarries. The assessment assumes worse case scenario of all construction materials arriving from two sources (Trefil Quarry (Tredegar) to the north or Hafod Quarry (Abercarn) to the south and it identifies two routes for consideration. Separately an AIL study has been undertaken to consider the potential route for the delivery of turbine components from Swansea docks (Draft ES Appendix 12A). Based on the construction programme the approximate peak of 77 HGV movements per day two-way is predicted. This number represents between 1.4% and 0.3% of total vehicle movements along the three roads assessed and exceeds only a 30% increase in HGVs along the B4246 (Talywain), A40043 (Pontnewynydd) roads. The A472 (Pontypool) road is therefore scoped out of further assessment. Whilst it is acknowledged the number of HGV's on the B4246 would increase by 241% as a result of the Proposed Development, this is only due to the fact that the existing number of HGV movements only this road is low (32 compared to the 77 for the Proposed Development), which explains the rise. This would be a temporary increase during the construction phase and the road is capable of accommodating this increase. The assessment for the B4246 (Talywain), A40043 (Pontnewynydd) roads considers the effects on severance, driver delay, pedestrian delay and amenity, fear and intimidation (of pedestrians and cyclists), accidents and safety and concludes that they would be not significant. Overall, the draft chapter concludes that effects on the transport network would not be significant. A Draft Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has also been prepared (Draft ES Appendix 12B). This sets out the management of daily delivery profiles and controls construction vehicle movements and routeing of HGVs to/from the site.
10. The proposal includes consideration of the	The Proposed Development has been designed so as to minimise the materials needed during construction. The materials required include stone,

Policy 18 criteria	Compliance
materials needed or generated by the development to ensure the sustainable use and management of resources;	which is anticipated to come from local quarries (see Chapter 4 of the Draft ES). Draft **ES Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** sets out the land subject to the Proposed Development is classified as mainly Agricultural Land Classification Grade 5 (very poor quality land). No land that is classed as the best and most versatile (Grades 1, 2, 3a) is therefore lost by the development. The maximum area of soil loss is expected to be around 11.5ha which is not assessed as significant. Embedded measures will ensure that soil is reused on site where possible and low ground pressure machinery will be used where possible to minimised soil impaction. Al construction activities will be informed by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which will be secured by condition. The CEMP will include measures to manage (inter alia) waste during construction. No materials will be generated or removed from site during operation of the windfarm.
11. there are acceptable provisions relating to the decommissioning of the development at the end of its lifetime, including the removal of infrastructure and effective restoration.	Draft ES Chapter 4 sets out the likely approach to decommissioning. The options for the end of the 30 year lifespan are to apply for continuation of existing wind turbines, to repower the site using new turbines or for decommissioning and reinstatement of the site. For the purposes of the ES assessment decommissioning is assumed. The design allows for decommissioning and recycling/reuse of materials where appropriate to do so. No stone would be removed from site. Stone laid tracks would be left in situ and could be repurposed for other uses by the landowner or support recreational use.
12. The cumulative impacts of existing and consented renewable energy schemes should also be considered.	The Draft ES sets out an assessment of the cumulative effects of the Proposed Development in combination with existing and consented renewable energy schemes within the topic-related specific chapters (Chapters 6 to 16). Chapter 2 of the Draft ES outlines the approach to the assessment. Overall, whilst the cumulative assessment identifies significant effects will occur it is considered that the overwhelming need to reduce carbon and GHG emissions, meet climate targets, and increase renewable energy outweighs the harm.

4.6.34 **Section 4.3** sets out the TAN considered relevant to the Proposed Development. The performance of the Proposed Development against the TANs is set out within **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2 Compliance with Technical Advice Notes

Technical Advice Note	Assessment of Proposed Development
Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (1996)	The Draft ES does not identify significant effects on ecological receptors or ornithological receptors.
Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2000)	The Proposed Development would comply with the TAN as the provision of renewable energy developments is considered likely to be an appropriate use at farm locations.

Technical Advice Note	Assessment of Proposed Development
Technical Advice Note 11: Noise (1997)	Draft ES **Chapter 13: Noise** assesses noise in line with the relevant ETSU guidance. The Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to significant daytime effects at several properties as a result of the Proposed Development. Further baseline modelling using a full height met mast and consideration of directivity will be undertaken. Should results still indicate a potential for significance, the turbines can have their power outputs reduced. The Applicant is therefore confident that the effects resulting from noise will not be significant.
Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2016)	The Proposed Development is designed to make the most effective use of the land for wind power generation with effects mitigated as far as is possible for development of this type. The Draft DAS provides further detail about the site context and character, movement and access arrangements and considerations, and community safety. The Proposed Development complies with the requirements of TAN 12.
Technical Advice Note 19: Telecommunications (2002)	The Draft ES concludes that there could be interference with Cardiff Airport operations and NATS Enroute radar at Clee Hill but recognises that discussions are ongoing with both the Airport and NATS to identify suitable mitigation. With regard to military aviation, no significant effects upon operations are identified. There is the potential for effects upon telecommunications however the Applicant is committed to continue discussion with the relevant service providers with the aim of identifying technical solutions to ensure that signals are not degraded.
Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development (2014)	The Proposed Development would lead to investment in the local and regional economy and the provision of employment in the construction and operational phase. The draft ES **Chapter 16: Socio economics** sets out further consideration of the effects.
Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)	The Draft ES concludes that there would be no significant effects upon sites, buildings and areas designated for their historical significance, including the BILWHS. The potential for effects upon unknown archaeology as a result of construction would be addressed via archaeological recording secured by a condition to the DNS consent.

Assessment of compliance with Local Development Plan

4.6.35 **Table 4.3** summarises the development's performance against what are considered to be the key policy criteria set out on a topic basis in the TCBC LDP. **Table 4.4** summarises the development's performance against what are considered to be the key policy criteria set out on a topic basis in the BGCBC LDP. The conclusion of the assessment in **Table 4.3 and 4.4** is that the proposed wind farm is compliant with both the TCBC LDP and the BGCBC LDP.

TCBC

4.6.36 The TCBC LDP is 'time expired' due to the lifetime of the plan having ended in 2021. Future Wales is the up-to-date development plan document for the site and therefore where policies conflict or provide criteria incompatible with Future Wales then weight attached to the policy is necessarily diminished when assessing the Proposed Development against the provisions.

BGCBC

4.6.37 The BGCBC LDP is 'time expired' due to the lifetime of the plan having ended in 2021. Future Wales is the up-to-date development plan document for the site and therefore where policies conflict or provide criteria incompatible with Future Wales then weight attached to the policy is necessarily diminished when assessing the Proposed Development against the provisions.

Table 4.3 Torfaen County Borough Council Local Development Plan policies

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
S3 Climate Change	The policy seeks to mitigate the causes of further climate change and adapt to the current and future effects of climate changes. It includes (at criteria d) utilising renewable and low or zero carbon energy technologies to generate heat and electricity requirements.	The Proposed Development is for a windfarm which is a renewable energy technology. It therefore directly complies with this policy.
S4 Place Making / Good Design	Sets out a range of criteria for good design in new development including having full regard to the context of the local natural and built environment.	The Draft DAS and Draft ES **Chapter 4: Development Description** provides further information on the design of the Proposed Development and the approach undertaken to inform the design. This has included consideration of the site context and character. The Proposed Development would support effective design of a wind farm that takes into account the environmental impacts.
S7 Conservation of the Natural and Historic Environment	Seeks to ensure that development proposals ensure the conservation and enhancement of the Natural, Built & Historic Environment of Torfaen, in particular a) Biodiversity resources; b) Geodiversity resources; c) Water environment; d) Landscape setting; e) Character of the built environment; and f) Historic assets.	Draft ES **Chapter 8: Biodiversity** and **Chapter 9: Ornithology** conclude that there would be no adverse effects on biodiversity resources. The Proposed Development seeks to utilise an existing access track running roughly north to south through a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) (The Canyon, which is the former Llanhilleth Quarry ("Tir Pentwys")). Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** confirms that the use of this track will not result in an adverse impact on this RIGS Draft ES **Chapter 10: Water Environment** assess the effects on the water environment including flood risk. It concludes there would be no adverse significant effects during both construction and operation. Draft ES **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual** Amenity identified significant overall landscape effects on one SLA in TBCB; the Torfaen CBC SLA H - Western Uplands.

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
		The Proposed Development has been designed so as to minimise the effects on these local landscape designations through the use of non-reflective pale grey on the rotor blades and upper towers. It is not considered that the presence of the turbines would exceed the capacity of landscape to accommodate the development Whilst significant effects have been identified, these are inherent given the type of development proposed (ref: NPS EN-1). The majority of PAAs include land designated as SLAs such that it is clear that Welsh Government does not see such local designations as being a barrier to large-scale wind farm development. Whilst a matter to be included within the planning balance, the presence of significant effects upon local landscape designations is not considered to be fundamental to the consideration of the application. Drat ES **Chapter 7: Historic Environment** concluded that the Proposed Development would not result in significant effects sites, buildings and areas designated for their historical significance, including the BILWHS. Direct effects on existing known archaeology will be mitigated through archaeological recording such as an excavation or watching brief in any areas of impact.
BW1 General Policy – Development Proposals	Sets out general criteria development proposals need to comply with. In relation to developments that affect the Natural Environment the criteria include avoiding unacceptable adverse effects in respect of land contamination, instability or subsidence, air, heat, noise or light pollution; landfill gas; water pollution; or flooding, from or to the proposal, and does not result in significant effects on designated biodiversity sites, the landscape, and the water environment. The policy also seeks to ensure that the development does not compromise highway safety.	Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** has considered the effects from land contamination. It concludes that with the embedded measures in place (which include ground investigation pre-construction, including soil, groundwater and gas monitoring, and during construction, as well as measures set out in the CEMP) the effects of the Project on human health receptors during the operation phase are considered to be not significant. In terms of instability or subsidence, Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** confirms that the potential for unstable ground conditions arising from former coal mining activity will be dealt with through the embedded measures. The measures include geohazard and mining hazard assessments completed to date (Phase 1 Geoenvironmental Desk Study and Coal

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
		Mining Risk Assessment in Appendix 11A), and intrusive ground investigation, to be completed during the pre-construction phase. The ground investigation will inform the development of a remediation strategy if one is needed. With these embedded measures, the basis of the structural design for the Proposed Development will be completed in general accordance with design standards and land instability is not considered to required further assessment in the ES. In terms of air, heat or light pollution, given the nature of the project the Proposed Development will not emit any fumes, air pollution, heat or light pollution. Draft ES **Chapter 13: Noise** assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development with respect to noise. It concludes that there is the potential for a significant effect at properties noted as R4 to R8 and R10 to R15 during the daytime and at receptors R7, R8, R10 to R13 and R15 during the night-time. This can be mitigated through reduce the operating modes at the Proposed Development and potentially at Mynydd Maen Wind Farm if deemed necessary following further assessment of that scheme. Such mitigation could be achieved via planning conditions requiring that cumulative turbine noise levels do not exceed the ETSU-R-97 derived noise limits. Draft ES **Chapter 10: Water Environment** assesses the effects on the water environment including flood risk. It concludes there would be no adverse significant effects during both construction and operation. Draft ES **Chapter 8: Biodiversity** confirms the Proposed Development would not have an adverse effect on biodiversity. Whilst Draft ES **Chapter: 6 Landscape and Visual Amenity** does identify that significant effects on SLA's will occur**,** these are inherent given the type of development proposed (ref: NPS EN-1). The majority of PAAs include land designated as SLAs such that it is clear that Welsh Government does not see such local designations as being a barrier to large-scale wind farm development. Whilst a matter to be included within the planning balance, the presence of significant effects upon local landscape designations is

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
		not considered to be fundamental to the consideration of the application. Draft ES **Chapter 12: Transport** examines the potential effects on the transport network and concludes that effects would not be significant.
SAA5 The British SAA, Talywain, Pontypool	The policy confirms that land is allocated at the British Strategic Action Area, Talywain for a major land reclamation scheme. The land reclamation scheme will prepare the land required for future redevelopment as part of a long term regeneration scheme and make safe the surrounding land	The Proposed Development will not prevent the regeneration of this Strategic Action Area, which is currently a derelict brownfield site. Rather, it has the potential to facilitate the development of the strategic site through the delivery of an improved junction access from the B4246 in Talywain. The junction will be used to access the windfarm and could serve as the potential access point into the Strategic Action Area. The details of the access have been discussed and agreed with the Torfaen County Borough Council.
M1 Minerals Safeguarding	Seeks to protect mineral resources and prevent permanent sterilisation.	An assessment of the effect of the development on Tir Pentwys Tip are set out under consideration of Policy M3 immediately below.
M3 Tir Pentwys Preferred Area for Aggregates	Land at Tir Pentwys (near Pontypool) is allocated as a Preferred Area for Aggregates as shown on the Proposals Map, within which proposals for the extraction of 7.2 million tonnes of aggregates may be permitted.	The site falls partly in the Tir Pentwys Tip, Llanhilleth (200 metre buffer). The proposal includes built development within the buffer zone of the Preferred Area. However, there are no known mineral extraction proposals at the site. The Proposed Development would not impact on the allocation. Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** scopes out minerals from further assessment.
M4 Mineral Sites Buffer Zones	This policy explains that any development that would prejudice the extraction of the mineral or operation of a permitted mineral site will be refused.	An assessment of the effect of the development on Tir Pentwys Tip are set out under consideration of Policy M3 immediately above.
C2 Special Landscape Areas	This policy development explains that development proposals that could impact on these designations will be expected to conform to high standards of design and environmental protection which is appropriate to the LANDMAP character of the area.	Draft ES **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Amenity** identified significant overall landscape effects on one SLA in TBCB; the Torfaen CBC SLA H - Western Uplands. The Proposed Development has been designed so as to minimise the effects on these local landscape designations through the use of non-reflective pale grey on the rotor blades and upper towers. It is not considered that the presence of the turbines would exceed the capacity of landscape to accommodate the development

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
		Whilst significant effects have been identified, these are inherent given the type of development proposed (ref: NPS EN-1). The majority of PAAs include land designated as SLAs such that it is clear that Welsh Government does not see such local designations as being a barrier to large-scale wind farm development. Whilst a matter to be included within the planning balance, the presence of significant effects upon local landscape designations is not considered to be fundamental to the consideration of the application.
BG1 Locally Designated Sites for Biodiversity and Geodiversity	This policy seeks to avoid adverse impacts on local nature conservation designated sites (including the features of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserves, or Regionally Important Geological Sites).	The Proposed Development seeks to utilise an existing access track running roughly north to south through a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) (The Canyon, which is the former Llanhilleth Quarry ("Tir Pentwys")). The use of this track will not result in an adverse impact on this RIGS. Draft ES **Chapter 8: Biodiversity** has considered the effects of the Proposed Development on SINCs and Local Nature Reserves. It concludes there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of these sites.
HE1 Buildings and Structures of Local Importance	Seeks to ensure that development proposals affecting buildings and structures of local importance which make a valuable contribution to the character and interest of the local area will not be permitted where the distinctive appearance, architectural integrity or their settings would be significantly adversely affected, unless the benefits of the proposal would outweigh such adverse effects.	Drat ES **Chapter 7: Historic Environment** concluded that the Proposed Development would not result in significant effects sites, buildings and areas designated for their historical significance, including the BILWHS. Direct effects on existing known archaeology will be mitigated through archaeological recording such as an excavation or watching brief in any areas of impact.

Table 4.4 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Local Development Plan policies

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
SP7 Climate Change	The policy sets out overall approach to address climate change and reduce energy demand and includes (at criteria (1a)) encouraging	The Proposed Development would see the creation of renewable energy which would provide the potential to power the equivalent of 21,392 homes (based on turbines at

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
	renewable/low/zero carbon electricity and heat generation.	4.2MW each). This would support the achievement of the policy's aims to encourage renewable energy schemes in BGCBC.
SP9 Active and Health Communities	This policy promotes the delivery of active and healthy communities including protecting and enhancing accessibility to natural greenspaces.	The Draft ES assesses the impacts on recreational users and identifies a range of mitigation measures to address the effects on Public Rights of Way (PRoW). There will be no effects on accessibility.
SP10 Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment	Seeks to protect and, where possible, enhance natural environment and provides criteria through which this will be achieve within Blaenau Gwent related landscapes, green infrastructure, biodiversity and nature conservation.	The Draft ES sets out the range of considerations for the criteria in this policy related to landscape, biodiversity and nature conservation. The Draft ES includes a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) (Chapter 8 Appendix 8F) which sets out a range of enhancement and management prescriptions for SINCs which would be impacted as a result of the Proposed Development.
SP11 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment	Seeks to protect, preserve and enhance the historic environment through safeguarding nationally designated sites and protecting locally designated buildings and conservation areas, enhancing sites of historic/archaeological value and promoting heritage tourism.	Drat ES **Chapter 7: Historic Environment** concluded that the Proposed Development would not result in significant effects sites, buildings and areas designated for their historical significance, including the BILWHS. Direct effects on existing known archaeology will be mitigated through archaeological recording such as an excavation or watching brief in any areas of impact.
DM1 New Development	Sets out a range of criteria for good design in new development: • Sustainable design including energy efficiency, effective use of resources, minimisation of construction waste, and no net loss of biodiversity; • Amenity including consideration of compatibility with other uses in the locality, adverse visual impacts, adverse impacts on the water environment, health, and land stability; and • Accessibility including the provision of safe, effective and efficient access and parking, servicing and operational space.	The Draft DAS and Draft ES Chapter 4 provides further information on the design of the Proposed Development and the approach undertaken to inform the design. The Proposed Development would help to meet the need to generate renewable energy targets supporting the policy's aims to increase energy efficiency and effective use of resources. The Proposed Development includes a range of measures including application of a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan that would improve biodiversity assets and a Draft Construction Traffic Management Plan to secure effective access provisions during construction whilst operation impacts would be minimal. The Draft ES **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Amenity** sets out an assessment of visual impacts on residential and recreational receptors.

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
		Draft ES **Chapter 10: Water Environment** assess the effects on the water environment including flood risk. It concludes there would be no adverse significant effects during both construction and operation. In terms of land stability, the Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** confirms that the potential for unstable ground conditions arising from former coal mining activity will be dealt with through the embedded measures. The measures include geohazard and mining hazard assessments completed to date (Phase 1 Geoenvironmental Desk Study and Coal Mining Risk Assessment in Appendix 11A), and intrusive ground investigation, to be completed during the pre-construction phase, which will inform the development of a remediation strategy if needed. With these embedded measures, the basis of the structural design for the Proposed Development will be completed in general accordance with design standards to minimise the risk of future structural or geotechnical instability.
DM2 Design and Placemaking	Sets out a range of criteria to including ensuring development proposals are appropriate to the local context in form, scale and mix; are of a good design which reinforces local character and distinctiveness and responds to the area's context.	The Draft DAS and Draft ES **Chapter 4: Description of Development** provides further information on the design of the Proposed Development and the approach undertaken to inform the design. This has included consideration of the site context and character. The Proposed Development would support effective design of a wind farm that takes into account the environmental impacts.
DM4 Low and Zero Carbon Energy	The policy provides criteria against which low and zero carbon development, such as onshore wind will be considered. The criteria covers a range of issues including landscape impacts, archaeology, noise and amenity, electro-magnetic fields, and removal of infrastructure.	The Proposed Development is supported by a Draft ES which addresses the various criteria included in this policy. The considerations are identified in this statement.
DM14 Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement	Projects within 10km of Usk Bat Sites SAC that would have impacts on connectivity or cause direct/indirect effects to be subject to HRA. Proposals close to or within SINCs or LNR or affect ecological corridors of Priority Habitats and Species will only be permitted subject to a)	Whilst the USK Bat Site lies circa 8km from this SAC, the draft ES considers no adverse impacts either alone or in combination with any other plans of projects upon this SAC are considered likely to arise, such that a project HRA is not deemed necessary. As a result, no significant adverse construction or operational effects upon the Usk Bat Sites SAC or its constituent SSSIs are considered

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
	maintaining or enhancing the importance of the designation or b) the need for the development outweighs the importance of the site and the development cannot be reasonably located elsewhere.	likely to arise as a result of the Proposed Development. There are several SINCs which are partly present within the Site itself. The assessment in Draft ES **Chapter 8: Biodiversity** shows that no adverse effects on the integrity of these sites. The overall proposal helps to meet a national need for renewable energy and the attendant reduction in the use of fossil fuels and rises in GHG emissions.
DM16 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerow Protection	Requires that development proposals not give rise to unacceptable harm to trees, woodlands and hedgerows that have natural heritage value or contribute to the character or amenity of a particular locality.	Whilst hedgerow loss has been kept to a minimum in the design, draft **ES Chapter: 7 Historic Environment** confirms that part of a hedgerow would be lost within a preserved post-medieval landscape at Craig Du to accommodate turbine 5 and its associated infrastructure. However, the change would be localised and of little relevance to the wider historic environment. As such, it is assessed as not comprising a significant effect. Draft **ES Chapter 8: Biodiversity** identifies no significant effects on biodiversity assets
DM19 Mineral Safeguarding	Seeks to protect mineral resources and prevent permanent sterilisation.	The Proposed Development would take up a small area and would be a temporary use (albeit over a 30 year lifespan). The Proposed Development would not permanently sterilise mineral resources within the site location. Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** scopes out minerals from further assessment.
ENV2 Special Landscape Areas	Lists the eight SLAs that have been identified within the area administered by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council using a regionally agreed methodology. Development within the defined SLAs will be expected to conform to the highest standards of design, siting, layout and materials appropriate to the character of the area.	Draft ES **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Amenity** identified significant overall landscape effects on the following three SLAs: Blaenau Gwent CBC SLA D; Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James and SLA E; St Illtyd Plateau and Ebbw Eastern Sides; and Torfaen CBC SLA H - Western Uplands. The Proposed Development has been designed so as to minimise the effects on these local landscape designations through the use of non-reflective pale grey on the rotor blades and upper towers. It is not considered that the presence of the turbines would exceed the capacity of landscape to accommodate the development Whilst significant effects have been identified, these are inherent given the type of

Adopted LDP policy	Policy summary	Compliance with policy
		development proposed (ref: NPS EN-1). The majority of PAAs include land designated as SLAs such that it is clear that Welsh Government does not see such local designations as being a barrier to large-scale wind farm development. Whilst a matter to be included within the planning balance, the presence of significant effects upon local landscape designations is not considered to be fundamental to the consideration of the application.
ENV3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation	The policy lists the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). There are 26 SINCs within 2km of the Site.	Consideration of the impacts on sites listed in this policy are set out under consideration of Policy DM14 above.
M1 Safeguarding of Minerals	Safeguards mineral resources to avoid sterilisation.	Part of the site is within an area safeguarded for aggregates and also safeguarded for coal. The Proposed Development would take up a small area and would be a temporary use (albeit over a 30 year lifespan). The Proposed Development would not permanently sterilise mineral resources within the site location. Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** scopes out minerals from further assessment.
M2 Mineral Buffer Zones	The policy seeks to (a) avoid development that prejudices the extraction of mineral or operation of sites whilst (b) no new mineral extraction will be permitted except in exceptional circumstances.	The site is within the buffer zone. The Proposed Development would take up a small area of the overall site and would be a temporary use (albeit over a 30 year lifespan). There are no known mineral extraction proposals at the site. The Proposed Development would not prejudice future extraction. Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** scopes out minerals from further assessment.
M4 Preferred Areas	The policy identifies Preferred Areas and buffer zones with some commercial potential.	The site falls partly in the Tir Pentwys Tip, Llanhilleth (200 metre buffer). The proposal includes built development within the buffer zone of the Preferred Area. However, there are no known mineral extraction proposals at the site. The Proposed Development would not impact on the allocation. Draft ES **Chapter 11: Ground Conditions** scopes out minerals from further assessment.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Planning Balance

5.1.1 Future Wales is clear that decision makers must give significant weight to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and to generate 70% of energy used from renewable sources by 2030. The Applicant is seeking to consent a wind farm of up to 34MW and based on indicative, smaller capacity turbines of 4.2MW, the Proposed Development would see the generation of 33.6MW of renewable energy which would support the electricity needs of around 21,392 homes (based on turbines at 4.2MW each).

5.1.2 Additionally, the Proposed Development would support investment in the economy and employment with approximately 41 FTE (full time equivalent) jobs during construction and 4 FTE during operation. It is estimated that the expenditure in Wales associated with the construction phase would total £9.6m whilst the operation phase would equate to £0.7m per annum. The Proposed Development would also be locally owned with the Pennant Walters and its parent company the Walters Grouped headquartered within RCT. Such benefits in terms of contributing to energy targets and economic benefit have to be balanced against the adverse impacts.

5.1.3 Part of the Proposed Development is within a PAA, and the turbines are on the immediately adjacent land to the east of the PAA. Future Wales Policy 18 is clear that there remains a positive policy framework in favour of onshore wind development. The purpose of the PAAs is to identify land where a high-level consideration of impacts upon the landscape has concluded that onshore wind can be accommodated acceptably. This does not mean that other areas cannot also accommodate a wind farm, subject to detailed consideration of potential landscape effects. The Draft ES accompanying this Draft Planning Statement includes such an assessment and this records that significant landscape effects would be restricted to three host SLA and one nearby SLAs although the level of effect would not be universal with parts of each SLA experiencing effects considered to be less than significant.

5.1.4 Onshore wind farms by their nature give rise to localised landscape (and visual) effects but the level of effect must be balanced with the benefits of the development and for this application, viewed against the significant weight to be afforded to need to generate energy from renewable resources as set out within Future Wales, referenced above. SLAs are local designations commonly designated at a national level as appropriate for onshore wind as evidenced in the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind, and prior to Future Wales, by TAN8's SSAs. Significant effects upon them should therefore be afforded limited weight when compared with the wider project benefits.

5.1.5 In terms of cumulative effects, for Scenario A (the Proposed Development, plus Operational and Consented Schemes) significant landscape effects are identified but limited to just one LCA. However, as the consented schemes are at a considerable distance from the Proposed Development, and for operational windfarms, the pattern and distribution of these schemes is largely dispersed and removed from the Site the actual cumulative change is not material and minor.

5.1.6 For scenario B (Proposed Development in addition to Operational and Consented plus Schemes in Planning and in Scoping), whilst the cumulative assessment identifies significant landscape and visual effects, these would arise as a result of other wind farms proposed in the area, with or without the Proposed Development. Put another way, the Proposed Development is not the main scheme or key contributing factor that leads to the

creation of significant cumulative effects. It does not tip the balance. In addition, the significant effects generated under Scenario B would be limited to the locations from which the Site is visible, and only in views directed towards the Proposed Development. In reality not all the schemed identified in Scenario B may not occur as not all schemes may progress, progress in the form currently understood or may not be granted consent. Moreover, the change to the rural setting would be nominal when the special qualities of the BBNP are considered in the round. As a result, the Proposed Development would not affect the special qualities of the Brecon Beacons National Park to the extent that such effects could be considered unacceptable. Furthermore, it is considered that the overwhelming need to reduce carbon and GHG emissions, meet climate targets, and increase renewable energy outweighs the limited cumulative effects identified.

5.1.7 The LVIA identifies that one property will experience significant adverse effects: Blaen Nant y Caws Farm, Pontnewynydd. This property is approximately 300metres from the nearest turbine (turbine 6). Whilst this property will be affected it is financially involved in the Proposed Development and will therefore benefit from the windfarm gaining consent and coming into operation. On balance, it is therefore considered this outweighs the negative effects on this property, particularly when taking into account the wider positive benefits that the project brings in terms of reducing carbon emissions and increasing the renewable energy capacity.

5.1.8 With regards to biodiversity, the Draft ES assesses that there are no unacceptable impacts on the integrity of internationally designated sites, nor upon those designated at a national level. Nor are there unacceptable effects on ornithology. The applicant proposes to enhance the quality of habitats at the site through a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (secured through a conditions of the DNS).

5.1.9 With regards to the historic environment no significant effects on statutorily protected built heritage assets have been identified in the Draft ES for the Proposed Development whilst effects from shadow flicker, noise light can be mitigated with air quality and electromagnetic disturbance scoped from assessment.

5.1.10 Consultation has concluded that the Proposed Development will not have an unacceptable impact upon defence facilities or operations whilst the transport assessment presented within the Draft ES does not identify any significant effects arising from the construction of the Proposed Development. Materials will be sourced locally wherever possible whilst construction of the Proposed Development will be led by Pennant Walters as part of the Walters Group, a locally owned and headquartered company. Decommissioning will be secured via condition to any DNS approval.

5.1.11 Overall, the Proposed Development is considered to accord with Policy 18 of Future Wales in that the environmental effects arising from its construction and operation are not considered to be significant when weighed against the benefits that it would deliver by supporting Welsh Governments aims of generating 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030 (consistent with Policy 17). Compliance is also identified against the relevant TANs and policies of the local development plan.

5.1.12 Whilst effects upon the landscape have been identified as being potentially significant the positive policy framework in favour of onshore wind referenced within Future Wales indicates that consent for the Proposed Development should be forthcoming.

wsp.com