

ELWY SOLAR ENERGY FARM, ST ASAPH, DENBIGHSHIRE

# SCREENING DIRECTION REQUEST



P19-2023 | FEBRUARY 2020  
ON BEHALF OF SOLARCENTURY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of Solarcentury (the Applicant), to support a request for a Screening Direction in respect of Elwy Solar Energy Farm, St Asaph, Denbighshire.
- 1.2 This report is submitted as part of a request for a Screening Direction from The Planning Inspectorate.
- 1.3 This report sets out background to the proposed development and assesses the likely environmental effects of the proposed development.
- 1.4 In accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 Regulation 31 (e), this request is made in relation to a development of national significance for the purposes of section 62D of the 1990 Act.
- 1.5 This report is supported by a 'Site Location Plan', 'Environmental Designations Plan' and 'Proposed Development' drawings which detail the proposed development area as well as the nearby context within which the proposed development sites (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.6 In accordance with Regulation 31 of the 2017 EIA Regulations '*requests for screening directions of the Welsh Ministers*', this request for a Screening Direction sets out the following information:
  - Chapter 2 – Provides details of the location of the development;
  - Chapter 3 – Outlines the development proposals;
  - Chapter 4 – Sets out the relevant sections of the 2017 EIA Regulations;
  - Chapter 5 to Chapter 16 – Review the likely significant effects of the following topics in turn:
    - Natural Resources
    - Pollution and Nuisances
    - Population and Human Health
    - Water Resources
    - Biodiversity (Species and Habitats)

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- Landscape and Visual
  - Cultural Heritage/Archaeology
  - Transport and Access
  - Land Use
  - Land Stability and Climate
  - Cumulative Effects
  - Transboundary Effects
  - Chapter 17 – Provides a conclusion.

## 2. LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The site comprises 117.47ha of agricultural land near to the city of St Asaph, c.2km east of Bodelwyddan and c.2.5km south of Rhuddlan.
- 2.2 The site is located within the administrative boundary of Denbighshire County Council. The southern portion of this site lies within the boundary of St Asaph City Council and the northern section of this site lies within the area of Bodelwyddan Town Council.
- 2.3 The parcel of land is located to the north of the A55 and to the west of the A525.
- 2.4 A number of trees and hedgerows are present across the site along with several ponds. An area of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland is located within the site to the north-west of Gwernigron Farm House.
- 2.5 Apart from a series of Public Rights of Way which intersect the site, the site is not subject to any statutory designations relating to its environmental or historic value. However, the Grade II Listed Gwernigron Farmhouse and its Grade II\* Listed Dovecote is excluded from, but surrounded by the application site.
- 2.6 A review of the Denbighshire County Council adopted Local Development Plan has been undertaken. The proposed application site is located outside of the defined Development Boundary for St Asaph, being in open countryside in planning terms, and none of the land is allocated in the Local Plan for development. The site is located within a Mineral safeguarded Area (Sand and Gravel).
- 2.7 Denbighshire County Council has published a list of additional candidate sites for the replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033. Consultation on the additional candidate sites is being undertaken between 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The site is identified for solar PV development within the additional candidate sites document.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

3.1 The development proposals comprise the Elwy Solar Energy Farm.

3.2 The likely Description of Development for the planning application will be:

**“Construction of a solar farm and energy storage hybrid park, together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure.”**

3.3 The total developable area for the solar panels, energy storage facility and associated equipment across the site is shown within **Appendix 1**.

3.4 It is anticipated the delivered capacity of the proposed development would be up to 62MW, offering significant CO<sub>2</sub> savings during the operational life of the development.

3.5 The ‘solar areas’ of the development will likely include the following equipment:

- Photovoltaic (PV) arrays (fixed panels or tracker panels to be determined);
- A number of inverter and transformer blocks at various locations around the arrays;
- Battery Storage Facility, comprising either a single compound or multiple smaller battery installations spread across the solar areas;
- Boundary fencing (e.g. deer fencing);
- A CCTV system, either pole or fence-mounted, located at strategic points around the site;
- Associated access tracks connecting inverter/transformer units;
- Storage container(s) for spare parts etc.;
- Relevant communications and monitoring equipment;
- Creation or improvement of vehicular accesses for construction, operation and decommissioning. The main site access will be into the south-eastern boundary of the site from St Asaph Road (A525). An additional access has been proposed into the north-eastern site

boundary, this access is intended for use during the construction phase only.

- 3.6 The photovoltaic (PV) arrays will either be fixed or tracker panels. Fixed panels are positioned at a 'fixed' tilt and orientation, while tracker panels automatically adjust the positions of the PV arrays so that the panels track the sun throughout the day.
- 3.7 The energy storage facility involves large battery cells, which convert electricity into electrochemical energy that is then stored, within a solid electrolyte before being converted back to electricity for exporting into the local network.
- 3.8 The batteries proposed may be charged during periods of lower electricity demand, typically during the day when the full capacity of the solar farm is not required by demand on the network. The stored energy can be discharged during periods of high or peak demand, which is typically in the early evening. The batteries may also be charged by taking excess electricity from the grid at periods of very low demand, typically overnight from energy sources other than the proposed solar farm, to be released at times of higher demand, this provides a management service to the network.
- 3.9 In terms of the Grid Connection for this site, Bodelwyddan substation is a Tee off the Deeside to Pentir 400kV overhead line which forms part of the national network. Supergrid transformers convert the 400kV voltage down to 132kV for use on the local, Distribution Network Operators (DNO) network.
- 3.10 It is anticipated that the grid connection route will be included as part of the planning application. This will require underground cabling to connect the site to the substation. The cable route will involve horizontal directional drilling under the A55 to enable connection from the site to the substation.

#### 4. EIA REGULATIONS

- 4.1 Regulation 31 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 sets out the criteria for requests for screening directions of the Welsh Ministers. In accordance with the 2017 Regulations this request provides the information required.
- 4.2 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 states that EIA development is either '*(a) Schedule 1 development; or (b) Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.*'
- 4.3 The proposed development does not fall within any of the descriptions of development defined in Schedule 1 of the 2017 EIA Regulations.
- 4.4 The proposed development falls within Schedule 2 (3 a) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 which refers to industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1) and the area of development exceeds 0.5 hectares.
- 4.5 The proposed development has a site area of more than 0.5 hectares and therefore exceeds the applicable threshold in the relevant section of Schedule 2.
- 4.6 Development proposals described under Schedule 2 require an EIA if they are considered to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as nature, size or location. Given that the proposed development exceeds the screening threshold in Schedule 2 (3 a), it is appropriate to request a Screening Direction from Welsh Ministers to determine if there are significant effects likely to arise from the proposals.
- 4.7 The below table sets out the selection criteria for Screening Schedule 2 development as set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017. This report assesses the proposed development against the selection criteria to determine if there are any significant effects likely to arise from the proposals.

Criteria	Explanation	Is a Significant Effect Likely?
<b>1. NATURAL RESOURCES</b>		
Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	The proposed development may involve some minor earthworks.	No
Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources above or below ground such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy which are non-renewable or in short supply?	The proposed development will involve materials and energy usage during construction, however, this will be temporary in nature.	No
Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, e.g. forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?	The site comprises Grade 3b and Grade 3a agricultural land which will be developed for the production of renewable energy. Subject to agreement with landowners, the site is capable of be able to be used for sheep grazing during the operational life to continue an agricultural use of the site. The agricultural potential of the site can be fully restored following the decommissioning and removal of the proposed development.	No
<b>2. WASTE</b>		

<p>Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?</p>	<p>During construction some waste will be produced, however, this will be appropriately managed.</p> <p>Once developed the proposals will not produce solid wastes. The scheme will be largely unmanned other than visits for maintenance and inspection purposes.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>3. POLLUTION AND NUISANCES</b></p>		
<p>Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?</p>	<p>During the construction phase there would be some potential for minor pollution or nuisance consistent with construction works e.g. dust, noise and lighting from construction processes and construction vehicles. Construction activities will be appropriately controlled to an acceptable level through the adoption of construction best practice and appropriate safety measures. External lights may be installed on the inverters and storage containers, external lighting would only be used during maintenance periods. Once operational, maintenance will normally take place during daylight hours, therefore, reducing the need for external lighting to be utilised.</p>	<p>A significant effect is unlikely - the effect will be limited to the temporary construction period only and will be controlled through appropriate safety measures. During operation, effects associated with external lighting would be unlikely to cause significant effects.</p>

	Inverters and other associated infrastructure has the potential to emit noise during operation. These items will be located away from noise sensitive receptors such as any residential properties and provided with appropriate insulation to ensure noise is minimised.	
Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	No	No
Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage, e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	No	No
<b>4. POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH</b>		
Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?	No – the development relies on well-established, safe modern technology.	No
Will the project present a risk to the population	During construction there may be some potential for minor	Significant effects unlikely –

<p>(having regard to population density) and their human health during construction, operation or decommissioning?</p>	<p>pollution associated with the construction processes. However, these will be short term and managed through construction best practice measures.</p> <p>During operation there would be no unusual risk to human health.</p>	<p>some effect likely during construction which will be managed appropriately.</p>
<p><b>5. WATER RESOURCES</b></p>		
<p>Are there any water resources including surface waters, e.g. rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?</p>	<p>Development will be set back from watercourses within the site. River Elwy is located approximately 150m east from the eastern site boundary.</p> <p>The site lies within flood zones A-C1. The proposed development is not likely to give rise to flooding elsewhere.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>6. BIODIVERSITY (SPECIES AND HABITATS)</b></p>		
<p>Are there any protected areas which are designated or classified for their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, or any non-designated / non-classified areas which are important or sensitive for reasons of their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, located on or around the location and which could be affected by the project? (e.g.</p>	<p>The site does not lie within or adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation.</p> <p>The following designated sites are in close proximity and will be considered in the ecological impact assessment: Elwy Woods SSSI/SAC, Liverpool Bay SPA, the Dee Estuary SSSI/Ramsar/SPA/SAC and Coedydd ac ogofau</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>wetlands, watercourses or other water-bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, undesignated nature reserves or parks. (Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local)).</p>	<p>Elwy a meirchion SSSI. An area of Ancient Woodland is located within the redline boundary.</p> <p>Trees and Hedgerows will be retained.</p> <p>During construction any potential effects will be mitigated through the implementation of best practice measures.</p>	
<p>Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?</p>	<p>A Phase 1 ecological survey of the site has been undertaken and the Site is not located within any statutory designated site for nature conservation. Coed Cord Local Wildlife Site, is within 200m of the Application Site.</p> <p>The site comprises agricultural land, trees and hedgerows, which will be retained withing the development.</p> <p>Through the use of appropriate construction management techniques sensitive species and habitats will be safeguarded from significant effects.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>7. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL</b></p>		
<p>Are there any areas or features on or around the location which are protected for their landscape and scenic value, and/or any non-designated / non-classified areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could</p>	<p>Trees and Hedgerows will be retained.</p> <p>The proposed development is not located within any international or national statutory or non-statutory</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>be affected by the project? Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).</p>	<p>landscape designations.</p> <p>Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is located approximately 3.5km to the east of the site however significant effects are unlikely owing to the distance between the site and AONB.</p>	
<p>Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?</p>	<p>The following properties/areas may have views of the proposed development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gwernigrn Farm House is positioned outside the application site, the proposed development surrounds this property.</li> <li>- A number of properties and a hotel located to the south-east.</li> <li>- Isolated properties along the western boundary on Nant-Y-Faenol Road.</li> <li>- Properties adjacent to the north eastern corner of the site.</li> <li>- Properties within Pengwern, located to the north-west of the site.</li> </ul> <p>However, views of the proposal are likely to be limited and additional planting will be provided to screen views.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>8. CULTURAL HERITAGE / ARCHAEOLOGY</b></p>		

<p>Are there any areas or features which are protected for their cultural heritage or archaeological value, or any non-designated / classified areas and/or features of cultural heritage or archaeological importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project (including potential impacts on setting, and views to, from and within)? Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).</p>	<p>Three historical assets are recorded within the proposed development area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cropmarks of a possible medieval field system in the north-eastern corner;</li> <li>- Possible location of a First World War temporary tented camp in the south-western area;</li> <li>- A Royal Observer Corps monitoring post in the southwestern area.</li> </ul> <p>A number of Grade II and Grade II* Listed Buildings are located in close proximity to the proposed application site. These properties are excluded from the development site and the application is set back from these properties.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>9. TRANSPORT AND ACCESS</b></p>		
<p>Are there any routes on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Two sections of the site are intersected by Public Rights of Way. It is intended that an application will be made to re-route these footpaths. Temporary effects during construction are likely.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be</p>	<p>The A55 runs along the southern site boundary and the A525 is located in close proximity to the eastern boundary. During construction there will be site access into the south-eastern boundary of the site from St Asaph</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>affected by the project?</p>	<p>Road (A525) this access will involve expanding the existing entrance. An additional temporary access has been proposed into the north-eastern site boundary where a new entrance will be created (it is currently an agricultural access point). This access is intended for use during the construction phase only. A temporary speed restriction will be put in place during the construction period.</p>	
<p><b>10. LAND USE</b></p>		
<p>Are there existing land uses or community facilities on or around the location which could be affected by the project? E.g. housing, densely populated areas, industry / commerce, farm/agricultural holdings, forestry, tourism, mining, quarrying, facilities relating to health, education, places of worship, leisure /sports / recreation.</p>	<p>A number of isolated properties around the site. Gwernigrn Farm House positioned centrally but outside Talardy Hotel St Asaph is located in close proximity to the south-eastern corner of the site.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Part of the site lies within a Mineral Safeguarding Area (Sand and Gravel), the development would not have a significant impact on the viability of the mineral being worked.</p> <p>Bodelwyddan Key Strategic Site is located in close</p>	<p>No</p>

	<p>proximity to the west of the site.</p> <p>To the south-west of the A55 and the site there is an area allocated for employment uses (PSE2).</p>	
<b>11. LAND STABILITY AND CLIMATE</b>		
<p>Is the location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?</p>	No	No
<b>12. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS</b>		
<p>Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?</p>	<p>Research of Denbighshire County Council website indicates that there are a number of relatively small-scale applications as well as some applications relating to underground cabling associated with the Gwynt Y Mor and the Burbo Bank extension offshore windfarms. It is unlikely that these applications would result in a cumulation of impacts with the proposed development.</p>	No
<b>13. TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS</b>		

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Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No – the site is not located in close proximity to the boundary of any neighbouring authority areas.	No
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## 5. NATURAL RESOURCES

- 5.1 The construction, operation or decommissioning of this project will not involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area.
- 5.2 The site is located entirely on agricultural land. An Agricultural Land Classification Survey has been undertaken at the site, the survey determined that the site comprises Grade 3b and Grade 3a agricultural land.
- 5.3 The proposed development is temporary and is a reversible feature, once decommissioned the site's former agricultural use can be restored, with no likely significant lasting adverse effects on the quality of the soil. Considering the nature of the construction and operation of a solar farm, the development would lead to only a limited loss of natural resources, thus significant effects are not anticipated.

### Conclusion

- 5.4 Overall, the effects of the development on natural resources and arable agricultural land will be temporary. The development would lead to a limited loss of natural resources, thus significant effects are not anticipated on natural resources.

## 6. POLLUTION AND NUISANCES

6.1 The proposed development itself will not release pollutants or other hazardous/toxic/noxious substances to the air. In addition, the proposed development will not lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants into the ground or surface waters.

### Construction

6.2 During the construction phase there would be some potential for minor pollution or nuisance consistent with construction works e.g. dust, noise and lighting from construction processes and construction vehicles. The effects associated with the construction period will be relatively short-term (approximately 6 months). Construction activities will be appropriately controlled to an acceptable level through the adoption of construction best practice and appropriate safety measures secured through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

### Potential Operational Impact

6.3 Once operational the site will not give rise to significant noise pollution or air pollution. The effects associated with the development will be relatively benign given the site characteristics and relationship with the wider environment.

### Summary

6.4 During construction there is likely potential for some short-term minor pollution or nuisance consistent with construction works. The potential effects during the construction period will be controlled through appropriate safety measures. Once operational the potential effects will be reduced.

6.5 Overall, it is considered that where potential effects have been identified in relation to pollution and nuisances it is unlikely that the proposed development would cause a significant effect as appropriate management measures are proposed.

## 7. POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

### Population

- 7.1 During construction, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will result in a significant change in population as workers are unlikely to relocate to the area on a permanent basis. The construction will have a temporary effect on employment provision through the creation of construction jobs. A minor beneficial effect is therefore anticipated.
- 7.2 The proposed development does not provide any permanent residential accommodation and accordingly will not have a significant effect on population.
- 7.3 Once operational, the solar farm will be operated remotely and require approximately 10-20 visits per year for maintenance and cleaning of the panels. The vehicle movements associated with the operational site will be from the occasional maintenance vehicle visiting the site, this would have negligible influence on the surrounding population.

### Human Health

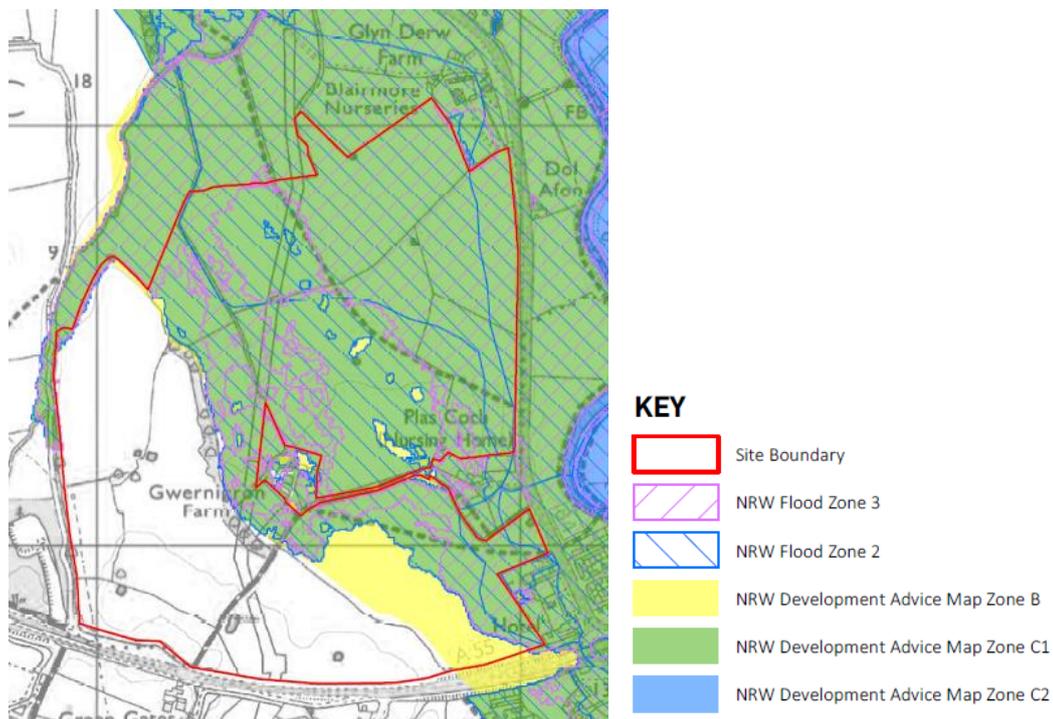
- 7.4 During construction there may be some potential for minor pollution associated with the construction processes. Construction activities will be managed through appropriate best practice measures.
- 7.5 Once operational, correct Health and Safety signage will be displayed on the site to inform of the potential risk from working near electrical equipment and there would be suitable fencing to discourage trespass.
- 7.6 The development relies on well-established safe modern technology and on that basis, there would be no unusual risk to human health.

### Summary

- 7.7 There would be no unusual risk to human health as a result of the proposed development. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would not cause a significant effect on the surrounding population or human health.

## 8. WATER RESOURCES

- 8.1 The River Elwy is located approximately 150m east from the eastern site boundary.
- 8.2 Natural Resources Wales (NRW) flood map indicates that the site lies within Flood Zones A-C1. Solar Farms are classified as less vulnerable development and will be subject to a justification test as portions of the site lie within Zone C1, which incorporates Flood Zones 2 and 3.



- 8.3 The majority of the site is not at risk of flooding, however, there are some areas at risk of flooding. A number of design features will be incorporated into the site design to help mitigate any potential effects.
- 8.4 Consultation is currently being undertaken with Natural Resources Wales (NRW). In accordance with advice received from NRW, panels and critical electrical infrastructure will be kept 300mm above the breach water level.
- 8.5 The installation of SUDS features will protect drainage and minimise sediment run off.
- 8.6 Constructing and maintaining the site without compacting the earth will help mitigate the potential impact on the soil's capacity to store and infiltrate water.

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Using vehicles with low pressure tyres would also contribute towards addressing this.

Conclusion

- 8.7 During construction mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce the potential impact on the soil's capacity to store and infiltrate water and therefore reduce the potential effects of the development.

## 9. BIODIVERSITY (SPECIES AND HABITATS)

### Biodiversity Features

- 9.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (**Appendix 2**) of the site has been undertaken. The site does not lie within or adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation.
- 9.2 There are several designated sites in the area which will require consideration, including: Elwy Woods SSSI/SAC, Liverpool Bay SPA, the Dee Estuary SSSI/Ramsar/SPA/SAC and Coedydd ac ogofau Elwy a meirchion SSSI.
- 9.3 There are records for great crested newt (GCN) in close proximity to the proposed grid connection route, including within St Asaph Business Park. Seven ponds are present on site which may support great crested newts.
- 9.4 Due to the proximity of the site to internationally important areas of the Dee Estuary and Liverpool Bay, a series of wintering bird surveys are being undertaken until March 2020. Based on the results to date of the ongoing bird surveys it is considered that the Site (and surrounding land) does not provide an important foraging and roosting resource (functionally linked land) for species associated with any of the internationally designated sites (SPA and Ramsar) or associated SSSIs.

### Potential Effect

- 9.5 The construction impacts will be temporary in nature and any potential clearance works will be undertaken outside of sensitive nesting/hibernation periods in accordance with the Biodiversity Mitigation Plan.

### Enhancement

- 9.6 The design of the site will consider the opportunities and constraints of the site.
- 9.7 Existing features will be retained and new features will be incorporated into the site to mitigate any potential adverse effects of the proposed development on habitats and species including:
- Bat and bird boxes
  - Maintaining and protecting mature trees and hedgerows; and

- Improved grassland around the panels.

### Conclusion

- 9.8 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would have some effect on the surrounding biodiversity features. During construction potential effects will be mitigated through the implementation of best practice measures. Appropriate best practice measures will be followed during the construction phase to reduce potential effect on biodiversity and existing habitats.
- 9.9 Once operational, it is considered that through the implementation of appropriate measures potential effects can be managed. The location of the proposed solar array provides an opportunity to enhance biodiversity and strengthen ecological networks, particularly in relation to onsite grassland. The following biodiversity improvements are likely to be incorporated into the design: improved grassland, maintaining and protecting mature trees/hedgerows, and incorporating bird and bat boxes around the site.

## 10. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

10.1 The proposed development is likely to be visible from some properties within the vicinity of the site. The following properties and areas are likely to have views of the proposed development:

- Gwernigron Farm House is located outside the redline boundary, however, the proposed development surrounds this property.
- A number of properties and a hotel are located to the south-east of the site.
- Relatively isolated properties are located along the western boundary on Nant-Y-Faenol Road.
- Some properties are also located adjacent to the north eastern corner of the site.
- A series of properties within Pengwern, located to the north-west of the site.

10.2 Additionally, existing vegetation on site as well as proposed mitigation planting will reduce the significance of views from nearby sensitive receptors. A preliminary landscape and visual appraisal is provided at **Appendix 3**.

### Conclusion

10.3 Overall, it is anticipated that there will be some change in the appearance and character of the area. Additionally, there will be some views onto the site from some of the surrounding receptors. The existing and proposed mitigation planting around the site will limit the potential for significant effects.

## 11. CULTURAL HERITAGE

- 11.1 A heritage appraisal has been undertaken to identify any sensitive heritage assets within the proximity of the site (**Appendix 4**).
- 11.2 The following three historical assets are recorded within the proposed development area:
- Cropmarks of a possible medieval field system in the north-eastern corner;
  - Possible location of a First World War temporary tented camp in the south-western area;
  - A Royal Observer Corps monitoring post in the southwestern area.
- 11.3 Two designated historic assets are located within a 'cut-out' of the site boundary, at its approximate centre: the Grade II Listed Gwernigron Farmhouse and the Grade II\* Listed Gwernigron Dovecote. Four Grade II Listed Buildings lie outside the eastern boundary of the site: Plas Coch, and the Talardy Hotel and the walls and greenhouse of its historic garden.
- 11.4 A total of 110 other Listed Buildings lie within a 2km radius of the site. Of these, 40 lie within St Asaph Conservation Area, the north-western boundary of which is located c.400m south-east of the site; 23 lie within Bodelwyddan Conservation Area; 5 lie within that part of Rhuddlan Conservation Area that falls within the 2km radius; 5 lie within the non-designated Bodelwyddan Park, which outlies the Grade II\* Listed Bodelwyddan Castle.
- 11.5 Rhuddlan Conservation Area also encompasses three Scheduled Monuments: Twthill Norman Castle, the Norman Borough, and Rhuddlan Castle. Bodelwyddan Park also includes a Scheduled Monument of First World War practice trenches.

### Conclusion

- 11.6 During construction and operation some effects are likely in terms of the setting of nearby heritage assets. Seven assets are potentially sensitive to changes in their setting arising from the proposed development. Although none of these are likely to be considered a significant effect.

## 12. TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

### Access

- 12.1 During construction the development will be served by two vehicular access points located along the eastern site boundary. The main site access will be into the south-eastern boundary of the site from St Asaph Road (A525) this access will involve expanding the existing entrance.
- 12.2 An additional temporary access has been proposed into the north-eastern site boundary where a new entrance will be created (it is currently an agricultural access point). This access is intended for use during the construction phase only. A temporary speed restriction will be put in place during the construction period.
- 12.3 Access to the highway will be sought under Section 248 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as a secondary consent. This order includes the provision of new or improved highways where these form part of the planning permission.
- 12.4 The components which are required to construct the solar farm will arrive in 40ft (12.2m) ISO containers on 15.4m long articulated vehicles. Assuming all deliveries arrive within a 25 week period (Monday to Saturday), on average there will be around 9 deliveries (18 movements) per day. The largest items expected to be transported to the site are the battery storage containers, the battery storage containers will be transported individually to divide their weight and as such will contribute towards additional deliveries to the site. These components will be delivered on side (self) loading trailers or offloaded by crane.
- 12.5 Traffic management measures will be implemented during the construction phase to minimise any potential impacts.
- 12.6 Once operational the site will generate relatively few vehicular trips, the maintenance/cleaning of the proposed development typically requires 10-20 visits per year. The vehicle movements associated with the operational site would have negligible influence on the surrounding population and highway network.

### Public Rights of Way

- 12.7 Two sections of the site are intersected by Public Rights of Way. It is intended that an application will be made to re-route these footpaths. Therefore, this diversion will result in some effect on the Public Rights of Way. A new section of

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permissive footpath is proposed to link one footpath which currently terminates at the side of the dual carriageway with another footpath, allowing safer passage.

Summary

- 12.8 During construction, appropriate best practice and mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure no significant effects arise as a result of the construction period.
- 12.9 Once operational the site would have negligible vehicle movements and therefore no significant effect is likely.

### 13. LAND USE

- 13.1 The site is currently in agricultural use and much of the surrounding land uses are agricultural.
- 13.2 In close proximity to the site there are a number of relatively isolated properties, including Gwernigron Farm House which is positioned centrally but outside of the redline boundary. Additionally, Talardy Hotel St Asaph is located in close proximity to the south-eastern corner of the site.
- 13.3 The proposed application site is located outside of the defined Development Boundary for St Asaph, being in open countryside in planning terms, and none of the land is allocated in the Local Plan for development. To the west of the site there is a large area designated as Bodelwyddan Key Strategic Site in the Local Plan. Additionally, to the south-west of the A55 and the site there is an area allocated for employment uses (PSE2).
- 13.4 Part of the site lies within a Mineral Safeguarding Area (Sand and Gravel), policy PSE15 of the Local Development Plan related to 'safeguarding minerals'. Although part of the site lies within a Mineral Safeguarding Area (Sand and Gravel) it is considered that Policy PSE15 would not preclude the proposed development at this site as the development would not have a significant impact on the viability of the mineral being worked in the future.

#### Conclusion

- 13.5 The proposed solar farm is a temporary development, once decommissioned the site's former agricultural use can be restored, with no likely significant lasting adverse impacts on the site.
- 13.6 The site is not currently allocated for any specific type of development in the Local Plan. Nant-Y-Faenol Road runs between the application site and Bodelwyddan Key Strategic Site. Additionally, the A55 separates the allocated employment area to the south-west of the site from the proposed solar farm development. There is clear separation between the allocated sites and the proposed solar farm.
- 13.7 Once operational there will be limited impacts due to the relatively benign nature of solar farms. On this basis, the proposed development is unlikely to have any significant effect on development allocations in the Local Plan.

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## 14. LAND STABILITY AND CLIMATE

14.1 The application site forms relatively flat agricultural land. The site is not located in an area susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme/adverse climatic conditions. On this basis there will be no adverse effects in relation to land stability and climate.

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## 15. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 15.1 The proposed development does not form part of a wider development proposal and as such it is considered unlikely that there will be any significant cumulative effects.
- 15.2 Research of Denbighshire County Council's website indicates that there are no '*existing and/or approved development*' as stated in the 2017 EIA Regulations that are considered to have likely significant effects on the Proposed Development.
- 15.3 The proposed development is not expected to have any adverse cumulative impacts in combination with any consented developments.

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## 16. TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS

- 16.1 The site is not located in close proximity to neighbouring authorities, therefore, this project is not expected to lead to any significant transboundary effects.

## 17. CONCLUSION

- 17.1 This report supports a Screening Direction request to determine the requirement for an Environmental Statement to accompany a planning application. It is considered that this report provides sufficient information to determine this request under the 2017 EIA Regulations.
- 17.2 It is considered that the proposals fall within Schedule 2 (3 a) of the EIA Regulations 2017 which refers to industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1) and the area of development exceeds 0.5 hectares.
- 17.3 Development proposals described under Schedule 2 require an EIA if they are considered *'likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as nature, size or location'*. Given that the proposed development exceeds the screening threshold in Schedule 2 (3 a) of 0.5 hectares, it is appropriate to screen the proposals to determine if there are significant effects likely to arise from the proposals.
- 17.4 Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations 2017 provides selection criteria for Screening Schedule 2 development, which includes broad categories for consideration including: the characteristics of the development; the environmental sensitivity of the location; and the characteristics of the potential effects.
- 17.5 Given the nature of the development proposals, it is considered that whilst there may be some effects upon the environment as a consequence of the proposed development, these effects could be appropriately managed through the design of the site and with the adoption of best practice measures and accordingly the proposed development does not constitute EIA Development.

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DESIGN



ENVIRONMENT



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ECONOMICS



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