

Appendix 2 Summary of applicants supporting information

Pre-application Consultation Report

The report sets out the public consultation activity which was carried out in relation to the proposal. This included a consultation website and information hub, and virtual public consultation sessions were held on 24 May 2022. The report sets out the feedback which was received from the public attending those sessions and the response to those matters. It indicates that no objections were raised by local residents in response to the proposal, but useful considerations and feedback was provided and has been taken account of.

Planning Design and Statement

The statement indicates that planning permission is sought for a solar farm and battery storage for a period of 40 years, after which the site would be decommissioned and the land reinstated to agriculture.

It indicates that the applicant is seeking flexibility on whether to use tracking or fixed solar panels so that the optimum generating capacity and site efficiency can be secured. Fixed solar panels sit slightly higher (2.8m) than tracking panels (2.4m). Fixed panels sit at one angle, whereas tracking panel pivot east to west to gradually follow the sun. Tracking panels are described as being inaudible during the process of the panels moving. Battery storage is also included in this scheme to allow the energy generated by the development to be released to the grid in the evening when it is needed. That element of the proposal would involve 28 no. 40 foot containers. The battery storage equipment would contain fire detection and fire prevention equipment and will be designed to meet international standards. The site would be surrounded by 2m mesh fencing. It is indicated that the development would connect to the national grid via underground cable to the Lunanhead Grid Supply Point.

This statement indicates that the site was chosen as it has a sufficient area of flat open ground, is very well-screened, has few neighbouring receptors, a good level of solar irradiance, and is free from constraints such as statutory environmental designations and overshadowing. The landowner had also confirmed an interest in hosting a solar farm with battery storage on their landholding. The statement indicates that the owner of Montreathmont Moor House has been made aware of, and is supportive of, the proposed development.

The agricultural land capability/classification of the site was assessed as part of the previous proposal and indicated that the site was made up of 8.2HA of class 3.1 (prime quality), 48.6HA of class 3.2 (sub-prime); and 21.8HA of Class 4.1 (sub-prime).

The statement indicates that the project would generate enough electricity to power 12,000 homes annually. It suggests that the project would provide valuable inward investment to the local community via local clean energy production, ecological enhancement measures, and increase local economic activity from construction and maintenance workers.

It is indicated that the assessment undertaken demonstrates that there would be no unacceptable detrimental effects as a result of the proposed development in terms of ecology, noise, glint and glare, flood risk and drainage. The assessments carried out for the previously approved solar farm on site relating to built heritage, agricultural land, traffic, landscape and visual impacts remain relevant given the similarity of the proposed development to what was approved as part of that application.

The statement contends that the proposal is in accordance with the development plan and national policy, and would support Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy.

Glint Report

The report considers the possible effects that reflected sunlight from a proposed solar farm would have on receptors in the vicinity. These receptors include residential properties, road, rail, air traffic and national trails. The methodology considers ground receptors that have potential to receive glint, a zone of theoretical visibility to identify whether local topography screens those receptors and a computer model to determine the times, dates and duration that glint may theoretically be visible. It includes a discussion of existing and proposed screening which may mitigate potential effects.

The assessment indicates that the overall potential for glint at receptors within the vicinity of the site is low. It indicates that for solar panels with tracking, no properties have the potential to receive glint. For fixed panels, Montreathmont Moor House is assessed as being affected during 0.6% of daylight hours and having regard to screening, the conditions are not considered to have a material impact on that property. After consideration of screening, provided by vegetation and woodland, and of appropriate mitigation through additional planting, the issue of glint is not considered to be significant.

Noise Assessment

The assessment considers potential noise associated with the proposed development at the nearest existing noise sensitive receptors. It indicates that the construction phase activities associated with the proposed development have the potential to generate short term increases in noise levels during the construction period which will be relatively short and is expected to last approximately 24 weeks. Details of 'best practice' management and control measures are recommended to ensure that any potential noise impacts are minimised during the six-month construction phase.

An assessment of the noise generated by the operational phase of the proposed development has been carried out in accordance with the Scottish Government advice and guidance. Potential sources of noise include cooling fans on the solar inverters, and heating ventilation and air conditioning units associated with the battery containers. These are described as approximately 200m from the nearest sensitive receptor. The assessment indicates that the noise associated with the proposal would not have an adverse impact on sensitive receptors during the daytime. During the more sensitive evening and night-time periods, it finds that sound from the development would meet the internal NR20 criteria from BS8233 with an assumption of open windows, and would only be up to 17dB(A) inside bedrooms of the closest property. At this level the specific sound from the development is significantly below the 30dB(A) internal criteria of WHO 1999 and BS8233 and is unlikely to be audible to the residents. Therefore, the potential noise impact from the development is low, and no noise mitigation measures are anticipated to be required.

Flood Risk Assessment

The FRA indicates that SEPA flood maps do not show any areas of fluvial (river) flooding associated with the Lunan Den Burn, the Battle Burn or the Rough Moss Burn and these watercourses are therefore not considered a flood risk to the development.

It indicates that SEPA flood maps indicate some small areas of low, medium, and high risk pluvial (surface water) flooding on the site. However, these are isolated pockets and are considered to be associated with local undulations in topography and, in general, the solar PV arrays, BESS units and ancillary apparatus have been sited away from these areas. Therefore pluvial flooding is not considered to be a risk to the development.

SEPA flood maps do not show any indication of groundwater flooding, nor do they identify groundwater flooding as a contributing factor to flooding on or near the site. Solar PV arrays and BESS units will be installed above existing ground, effectively mitigating any potential groundwater issues.

No tidal flooding, flooding from public sewers or flooding from other artificial sources is expected given the site's location.

The solar PV arrays are proposed to be on raised stilts and the BESS units (and ancillary apparatus) are to be kept away from topographical low points and areas of inundation which, alongside the use of permeable, free draining access roads for maintenance, will effectively mitigate any flood risk to the site.

The proposed development is not predicted to increase flows or flooding off-site, and as such will not have any unacceptable adverse impacts in terms of flood risk.

Ecological Appraisal

The desk study and field study confirmed that the site has potential to support badgers, red squirrel and nesting birds. The study recommends a further transect survey may be required for red squirrel prior to construction works if the woodland on-site will be impacted by the proposed development. It recommends pre-construction checks be undertaken for badgers and, if vegetation clearance is required between March - August, nesting birds.

A series of recommendations are provided to outline the avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures that should be considered as part of the proposal. By following these recommendations, the proposed solar farm and battery energy storage system development will not result in the loss of, or serious damage to any significant ecological features and will not have a negative impact on ecological diversity. The proposals will result in a biodiversity net gain through the implementation of measures including the installation of bat and bird boxes, bee banks, and reptile hibernacula across the site, which it suggests should be secured via a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) as a condition of planning permission.

Habitat Regulations Appraisal

This report considers that whether the proposed solar array and battery storage development may affect the protected features or habitats contained within sites designated under European law, including Montrose Basin SPA and RAMSAR site located around 8.5km east of the site.

The report considers potential pathways for development on the site to affect the SPA but concluded that the development would be unlikely to have a significant affect on that site, either alone or in combination.

Red Squirrel Technical Note

The red squirrel survey undertaken of the site did not identify the presence of red squirrel in the woodlands surrounding the site. The areas outwith the survey area provide higher optimal feeding and nesting resources for red squirrels than those on-site. The report recommends that prior to construction a further walkover survey should be conducted, by a qualified ecologist, within a 50m buffer zone in the woodlands surrounding the site.