



To: Planning and Property Policy Board

On: 15 March 2016

Report by: Director of Development and Housing Services

Heading: Solar Farm Development Planning Advice Note

1. Summary

- 1.1. At the Planning and Property Board meeting on the 26 January 2016, the Board authorised the Director of Development and Housing Services to prepare a Planning Advice Note relating specifically to the development of Solar Farms. This has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 1 for the Board's consideration.
 - 1.2. The need for the preparation of the Solar Farm Planning Advice Note is due to the Council experiencing an increased interest from developers seeking to take forward new development sites for Solar Farm proposals. To guide Solar Farm developments to the most appropriate locations in Renfrewshire, a criteria based Planning Advice Note relating to Solar Farms has been prepared.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:
 - (i) Approves the Solar Farm Development Planning Advice Note.

3. Background

- 3.1. Scottish Government has set an ambitious target of generating the equivalent of 100% of Scotland's electricity demand from renewable resources by 2020.
 - 3.2. The Adopted Renfrewshire Local Development Plan supports in principle the development of all types of renewable and low carbon energy generating technologies. The policy framework is intended to allow for consideration of all renewable technology types. It does not provide specific detail relating to the development of any one particular type of renewable technology, including Solar Farms.
 - 3.3. The Council have experienced an increase in the number of enquiries relating to the development of Solar Farms across Renfrewshire. The increase in the scale and volume of interest in the potential development of Solar Farms over a short period of time was not anticipated when the policy was developed in the Local Development Plan. To ensure appropriate consideration of various proposals, a specific criteria based Planning Advice Note relating to the development of Solar Farms has been prepared.
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4. Next Steps

- 4.1. The Solar Farms Development Planning Advice Note will be put on the Council's website at <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/webcontent/home/services/planning+and+building+standards/development+planning/pt-lm-renfrewshireddevelopmentplanningguidance> and will be used by the Council to allow a full and appropriate consideration of the particular issues relating to Solar Farm developments.
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Appendix 1

Solar Farm Development Planning Advice Note.

List of Background Papers

- (a) None
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Implications of the Report

- 1. **Financial** - None
- 2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
- 3. **Community Planning**

Empowering our Communities –

Greener – The development of energy from Solar Farms provides a sustainable, renewable source.

4. **Legal** - None
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - None
9. **Procurement** – None
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** - None

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Planning Advice Note

Solar Farm Developments in Renfrewshire

This Planning Advice Note provides additional guidance in relation to Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (LDP) Policy I6 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments, with a specific focus on large scale ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) installations.

Renfrewshire Council encourage developers to engage early with the Council's Development Management Section to discuss any development proposal for a Solar PV Farm.

Planning Considerations

The following key planning considerations should be taken into account when preparing any development proposal for a Solar PV Farm within Renfrewshire:

Existing Land Use

Previously developed land, industrial land and agricultural land that is not of prime quality are the most appropriate locations for solar farm developments within Renfrewshire, although in each instance proposals will be assessed against the relevant policies in the Renfrewshire LDP.

Where a proposal is proposed on prime quality agricultural land¹, on land with an environmental designation, or of historical significance, applicants must provide sufficient information on the potential impact on this existing land use and the mitigation that will be provided.

Landscape / visual impact

The landscape / visual impact of a Solar PV Farm is likely to be one of the most significant potential impacts of such a development within Renfrewshire. As such development should be sited so as to minimise the visual effect on landscapes and provisions will be made to screen the development using natural features such as hedges and/or trees.

Planning applications should include an analysis of the landscape impact of the development proposal. This should indicate where the site can be seen from and demonstrate the potential visual impact using computer modelling or photo montages.

Lighting and security fencing should be kept to a minimum. Natural features should be used where possible to assist in site security and screen security fencing. Planning applications

¹ Agricultural land identified as being Class 1, 2 or 3.1 in the land capability classification for agriculture developed by Macaulay Land Use Research Institute (now the James Hutton Institute)

should contain full details and specifications of all security and lighting measures in order to enable a full assessment of their impact to be made.

Site Levelling Works

Any site levelling works that are required should be discussed at pre-application stage with Renfrewshire Council's Development Management officers and will be fully detailed within any subsequent planning application.

Construction Compound

Any construction compound needed to enable the development of the Solar PV Farms should be located in a way that minimises its environmental and amenity impact. Details of the size and location of the site office, machinery, plant and construction materials should be detailed within the planning application.

Access Tracks

Access tracks to the solar farm should be kept to a minimum to better enable the site to be returned to its previous condition.

Ground Anchors

Foundations which enable the ground to be returned to its previous use will be preferred. Trenching and foundations should be kept to a minimum.

Ground Maintenance

Arrangements will need to be in place for the management of vegetation which may continue to grow beneath the Solar Farm. It is recommended that the Solar Farms are designed to enable management through grazing by small livestock, such as sheep, chickens or geese.

This would require panels to be positioned at least 70cm above ground level and cabling to be suitably protected. Renfrewshire Council will insist that an appropriate ground maintenance programme is in place through the use of planning conditions attached to any planning consent.

Glint and Glare

The potential impact of glint and glare on landscape/visual amenity, aircraft, rail and road safety should be considered in the preparation of development proposals for Solar PV Farms. In some cases a Glint and Glare Assessment will be required as part of a planning application, this may be important if tracking panels are proposed.

Airport Safety

Renfrewshire Council has a statutory duty to consult the Ministry of Defence, the National Air Traffic Services, and certain civil Airport Operators about proposed development which could affect aviation sites of national importance. Early engagement with these consultees is important when preparing development proposals for Solar PV Farms.

Post Construction Road Survey

On completion of the construction works, a Post Construction Road Survey will require to be undertaken by the applicant and any remediation works required will be agreed in writing with Renfrewshire Council. Planning conditions or legal agreements accompanying any planning consent will be considered by Renfrewshire Council to secure the required remediation works and this work will require to be funded by the applicant.

Decommissioning

Restoration of sites to their previous use should be possible if low impact foundations are used. Renfrewshire Council will seek to secure the required decommissioning works, restoring the land to its previous use, through planning conditions or legal agreements attached to any consent and this work will require to be funded by the applicant.

Duration of Planning Permission

Solar PV Farms are considered as a temporary use of land and Renfrewshire Council will look to limit the duration of the project should planning permission be granted. Proposals for the extension of a project by replacing the original PV units will require planning consent and will be assessed on their own merits.

Planning Applications - Supporting Information

Early pre-application discussions with Renfrewshire Council's Development Management officers will clarify which of the information listed below will be required in support of a planning application for Solar PV Farms:

- A location plan (1:1250 metric scale)
- A site/block plan (1:500 metric scale)
- Elevations
- Design and access statement
- A supporting statement
- Fencing specification and details (where applicable)
- Details of connection to electrical grid
- Details of any ancillary works or buildings proposed, including elevations
- A landscape/visual assessment

- An Environment Impact Assessment, an ecological assessment, historic environment statement where applicable
- Flood Risk Assessment where applicable
- Post Construction Road Survey
- Maintenance and Management Statements
- Glint and Glare Assessment

Contact us

Should you wish to discuss any of the information contained in this Planning Advice Note or would like to arrange a pre-application discussion with a Development Management officer, please contact:

email: dc@renfrewshire.gov.uk

phone: 0300 300 0144

fax: 0141 618 7935

visit or write to us at:

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