Planning Statement

Site: Land at MoD Sealand, Green Lane East, Deeside, CH5 2LS

Client: EMCOR Ltd

Document reference: J251173-GCL-XX-XX-T-L-0810

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Author	Sarah Brooks CMLI PIEMA *Principal Landscape Architect, Ground Control* Ground Control Limited, Kingfisher House, Radford Way, Billericay, Essex, CM12 0EQ E: sarah.brooks@ground-control.co.uk			
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1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Ground Control Ltd on behalf of EMCOR Ltd (the Applicant) to support a full planning application for the proposed development of a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating scheme on land at MoD Sealand, Green Lane East, Deeside (the Application Site).

1.1.2 Renewable energy generated on-site by the solar PV scheme will support businesses on the wider MoD Sealand site and contribute to national and local environmental targets, directly reducing carbon and greenhouse gas emissions associated with burning fossil fuels and ensuring a secure and economically beneficial energy supply.

1.1.3 The full description of the proposed development is as follows:

> *'Installation of ground mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar arrays to provide 3MW generation capacity with ancillary infrastructure including inverters, HV / LV connection, cabling, internal access track and access gates.'*

1.1.4 The planning application is accompanied by the following supporting information and technical reports:

- Planning Statement (this document);
- Design and Access Statement;
- Pre-Application Public Consultation Report (this will be completed prior to submission of the planning application);
- Planning Application drawings;
- Green Infrastructure Statement;
- Flood Consequences Assessment including drainage strategy;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report and Biodiversity Enhancement strategy;
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal.

1.1.5 The remaining sections of the Statement provide further information as follows:

- Section 1.2: the location and of proposed development;
- Section 1.3: the planning history of the Application Site;
- Section 1.4: the planning policy context relevant to the Application Site and proposed development;
- Section 1.5: a description of the proposed development;
- Section 1.6: a planning appraisal of the proposed development;
- Section 1.7: Conclusions

1.2 Location of Proposed Development

The Application Site

1.2.1 The site location is shown on Figure J251173-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0101 within the supporting documents and the context of the Application Site is shown in the map extract below.

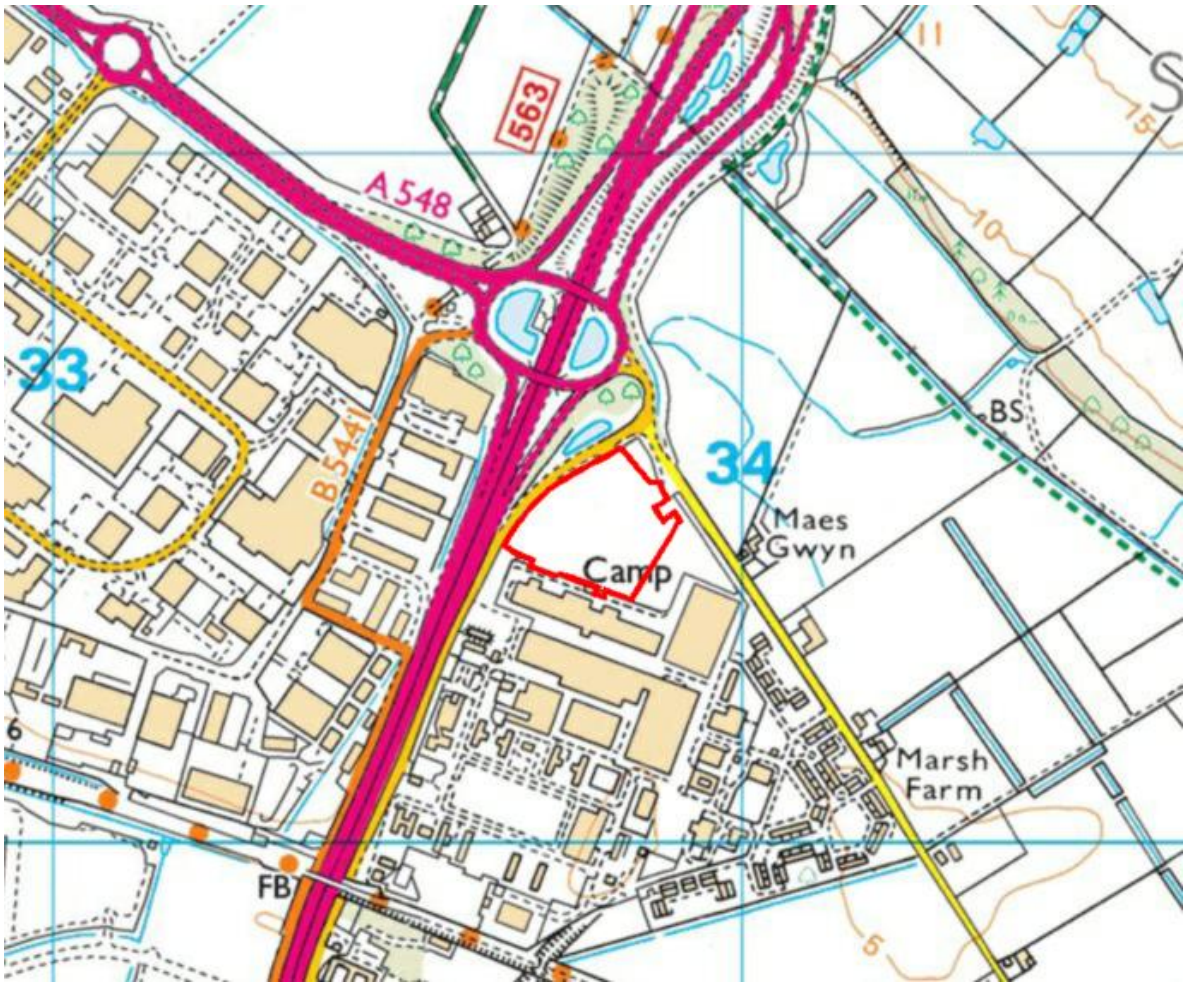

Figure A Site Location (not to scale, grid square = 1km)

1.2.2 The Application Site covers 3.2 hectares (ha) of 'brownfield' land comprising a disused playing field located in the northern part of the wider MoD Sealand site and centred on national grid reference 333794,370472. The planning application boundary sits within the perimeter fencing of the MoD Sealand site which is bordered in the north and west by the A548, to the north-east by Green Lane East and to the east and south by operational areas of the MoD site.

1.2.3 Existing security fencing defines a large part of the planning application boundary and includes existing gated access points along the north-eastern side onto the MoD site access road off Green Lane East. A display area around a stationary jet plane protrudes into the Application Site and parking is available on the site access opposite for casual visitors to this feature. A security building to the east on the site access road marks the formal entrance to the MoD site. Operational buildings, workshops, external service areas and car parking within the wider MoD site are located to the south of the Application Site.

1.2.4 The former playing field is laid to grass which is mown regularly and there are no trees or areas of established woody vegetation within the Application Site. Scattered individual trees are located beyond the western and south-western boundaries of the Application Site and belts of established mixed woodland are located beyond the northern and eastern boundaries. Existing trees and woodland would not be affected by the proposed development. There is no surface water on the Application Site which is generally flat at approx. 4.7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the south-west rising to approx. 5.0m aOD in the east. The Application Site sits at a lower elevation than the A548 to the north.

Surrounding Area

1.2.5 The road corridor to the west of the Application Site is a wide, six-lane trunk road comprising the A494 Welsh Road flanked by the A548 to the east bordering the site and the B5441 in the west providing access to the Deeside Industrial Park. The Deeside Industrial Park is an extensive area of industrial and commercial warehousing and land uses including the location of a small 3.8MW ground-mounted solar PV scheme associated with the Toyota Manufacturing plant approx. 1.8km to the west of the Application Site. The large 45.7MW Shotwick Solar Park is located to the north of the A548 Weighbridge Road approx. 1.5km to the north-west of the Application Site.

1.2.6 To the north of the Application Site lies the junction of the A548 and the A494 with Green Lane East providing access to MoD Sealand off the A548. Land to the east of Green Lane East comprises open agricultural land and scattered isolated dwellings. The detached residential property Maes Gwyn Farm is located on Green Lane East opposite the MoD Sealand entrance and screened from the Application Site by the intervening vegetation.

Designations

1.2.7 The Application Site and immediate vicinity are not covered by statutory or non-statutory environmental designations. Areas within 1km of the Application Site are locally designated as follows:

- Land to the east of Green Lane East is designated in local planning policy as a Green Wedge which seeks to maintain the openness of the countryside.
- Several Public Rights of Way (PRoW) cross the agricultural land to the north-east and east of the Application Site and Green Lane East is also designated as a bridleway.
- The site of Shotwick Castle approx. 1km to the east of the Application Site is a Scheduled Monument. It is screened from the wider landscape by mature trees.

1.2.8 The wider area includes a range of statutorily designated features which reflect Deeside's importance for the natural environment. These features are at some distance from the Application Site and would not be affected by the proposed solar PV scheme. They include the following:

- The River Dee approx. 2.2km to the south of the Application Site and the estuary to the south-west is designated as a Special Area of Conservation, and the river and estuary and linked Shotton Lagoons and Reedbeds are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for a range of aquatic habitats;
- Further downstream to the south-west the Dee Estuary is also designated as a Special Protection Area for its populations of overwintering birds.

1.3 Planning and Site History

Site History

1.3.1 Historic mapping and aerial photography suggest that the MoD Sealand site post-dates World War Two and the aerodrome to the west of Welsh Road (now the A494). The Application Site is identified as a playing field at this time along with built development on Green Lane East along the north-east side of MoD Sealand which was subsequently removed and now supports established woodland beyond the Application Site boundary.

Planning History

1.3.2 A search of the LPA's planning portal confirms that the Application Site has not been the subject of a previous planning application for development.

1.3.3 In the early 2020s the Advanced Technology Research Centre (ATRC) was a collaborative venture between the MoD Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) and Defence and Electronics Components Agency (DECA), regional defence supply chain businesses and the Welsh Government. The ATRC was promoted for development at the Application Site accompanied by the allocation of significant financial support by the Welsh Government for its implementation. In February 2023 the LPA issued a Screening Opinion (reference SCR/000406/22) under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 confirming that EIA would not be required for proposals on the site described as 'new industrial units'. The land comprising the current Application Site was also described in the Screening Opinion as being 'brownfield land with existing industrial uses'.

1.3.4 However, no application for the development was made due to design constraints which rendered the proposals for staffed buildings unfeasible. In particular, the provision of foul drainage to support the use of the buildings was not possible due to restrictions on any non-MoD connection to the existing MoD Sealand drainage system. Furthermore, the scale of the engineering requirements to achieve a suitable connection to the west across multiple lanes of highway to the Deeside Industrial Estate system was considered impractical. This situation continues and will preclude the development of the Application Site for similar commercial and industrial uses for the foreseeable future.

1.3.5 Pre-planning application advice (reference PRE/00199/24) was received from the LPA in October 2024 in relation to proposals for a ground-mounted solar PV scheme with a 0.9MW generating capacity on the Application Site. This information has informed the revised, larger proposal as it continues to provide relevant context for the current application. The advice is included in Appendix 1.

1.3.6 An application for heat source pumps on land to the south-east of the Application Site was recently approved in December 2025 (reference FUL/000958/25) and will include acoustic fencing and native hedgerow planting.

1.4 Planning Policy Context

Introduction

1.4.1 This section of the Statement summarises the policy context relating to the Application Site and the proposed development whilst the section on Planning Assessment addresses the issues raised.

Legal Context

1.4.2 The UK is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 100% of 1990 levels by 2050 under the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. This is reflected in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and secondary legislation which sets out interim targets for reduction in the form of five-year carbon budgets. Carbon Budget 2 requiring a reduction of 37% from 1990 levels for the period 2021-25 is on course to be met once data has been finalised whilst the current Carbon Budget 3 for the period 2026-2030 has an interim target reduction of 58%. Most recently the Climate Change (Carbon Budget) (Wales) Regulations 2025 have set out an interim target for Carbon Budget 4 of 73% reduction from 1990 levels by 2035. Achieving the jump of 21% between budgets 2 and 3 is challenging and will be more reliant on a step-change in decarbonisation of the economy including an increase in the rate of transition to renewable energy over the next five years.

Development Plan

1.4.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.4.4 The development plan for the Application Site comprises the following documents:

- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (Welsh Government, February 2021)
- Flintshire Local Development Plan 2015-2030 (Flintshire County Council, adopted January 2023)

1.4.5 Relevant policy and guidance include the following:

- Planning Policy Wales 12 (edition 12, Welsh Government, February 2024)
- Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales (Design Commission for Wales, November 2023)
- Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning, September 2009
- Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood Risk, February 2024
- Technical Advice Note 23 Economic Development, February 2014

1.4.6 Other material considerations include the following:

- Employment Land Review (BE Group for Wrexham CBC and Flintshire CC, October 2015)
- Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment (AECOM for Flintshire County Council, July 2019)
- Flintshire Local Area Energy Plan (Flintshire CC, 2024)
- British Energy Security Strategy (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2022)
- DE&S2025: Defence Equipment & Support Environmental Strategy (MoD, 2021)

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (Welsh Government, February 2021)

1.4.7 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 is the national development framework for Wales and forms the upper tier of the statutory development plan for the Application Site. Its purpose is to ensure that all tiers of the planning system are consistent with and support the delivery of Welsh Government strategic aims and policies.

1.4.8 Policy 17 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure' states the Welsh Government's support for the development of renewable energy technologies at all scales. It confirms that 'In determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy development, decision-makers must give significant weight to the need to meet Wales' international commitments and our target to generate 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030 in order to combat the climate emergency'. Proposals 'should demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment' and should 'describe the net benefits the scheme will bring in terms of social, economic, environmental and cultural improvements to local communities.'

1.4.9 Policy 24 'North-West Wales and Energy' confirms that 'New energy-related development in the region should support local and regional communities; provide jobs and investment in training and skills; and work with universities and businesses across the region and the North-West of England to co-ordinate and maximise new investment to support the wider region'.

Flintshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2015-2030 (Flintshire County Council, adopted January 2023)

1.4.10 The Vision within the LDP defines its main purpose and states that 'The LDP is about people and places. It seeks to achieve a sustainable and lasting balance between the economic, social, and environmental needs of Flintshire and its residents, through realising its unique position as a regional gateway and area for economic investment, whilst protecting its strong historic cultural heritage and natural environment'.

1.4.11 The plan's strategy is focused on the delivery of employment supported by housing and it confirms an adequate supply of land and a range of options for both. In addition, the LDP Vision is articulated through a number strategic objectives which provide 'clear statements of intent' and in relation to the proposed development the following are particularly relevant.

1.4.12 In relation to the theme of 'Delivering Growth and Prosperity' the plan includes Strategic Objectives to:

> 8. Facilitate growth and diversification of the local economy and an increase in skilled high value employment in key sectors.
>
> 9. Support development that positions Flintshire as an economically competitive place and an economic driver for the sub-region.

1.4.13 And in relation to the theme of 'Safeguarding the Environment' Strategic Objectives include:

> 15. Minimise the causes and impacts of climate change and pollution.
>
> 16. Conserve and enhance Flintshire's high quality environmental assets including landscape, cultural heritage and natural and built environments.
>
> 17. Maintain and enhance green infrastructure networks.

18. Promote good design that is locally distinct, innovative and sensitive to location.

19. Support the safeguarding and sustainable use of natural resources such as water and promote the development of brownfield land.

1.4.14 Strategic Policies of relevance to the proposals within the plan include the following:

Table 1 – Local Development Plan - Strategic Policies

Reference	Policy
STR2: The Location of Development	Confirms that new development will be focused on allocated sites, Principal Employment Areas (as detailed in policy PE2) and sustainable settlements as defined in the policy's settlement hierarchy.
STR4: Principles of Sustainable Development, Design and Placemaking	States that 'all development will be designed to a high standard in line with the sustainable placemaking design principles and should achieve local distinctiveness, be inclusive and accessible, and mitigate and adapt to climate change'.
STR7: Economic Development, Enterprise and Employment	Identifies Deeside as a strategic employment site and confirms that a range of general employment sites will be provided within the plan as well as recognising the importance of 'high-value' manufacturing employment at Deeside Industrial Park.
STR8: Employment Land Provision	Confirms that 'Economic development will be guided to the most appropriate locations by providing a range and choice of sites in terms of location, quality, type and size' and includes 'undeveloped land and existing premises within Principal Employment Areas'. The policy also confirms that development will be guided to 'the safeguarding of existing employment sites and premises, where they play an important role in meeting future economic needs'
STR13: Natural and Built Environment, Green Networks & Infrastructure	Confirms that 'development should identify, respect, protect, enhance and connect Flintshire's environmental assets'
STR14: Climate Change and Environmental Protection	Confirms that Flintshire CC will 'seek to mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure appropriate environmental protection in the County through: ii. Encouraging the use and development of appropriate or suitable brownfield land;' iv. … assessing the implications of development in areas at risk of flooding and ensuring that new development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; v. Encouraging … environmentally acceptable renewable … energy generation; vi. Ensuring that new development has regard to the protection of the environment …;

1.4.15 The LDP includes a range of development management policies which are applicable across strategic policy areas. The following are of relevance to the Application Site and proposed development:

Table 2 – Local Development Plan – Development Management Policies

Reference	Policy
Policy PC2: General Requirements for Development	This policy 'provides a comprehensive set of development considerations that can generally be applied to all development proposals'. It confirms that all development should: a. harmonise with or enhance the character, local distinctiveness and appearance of the site, existing building(s) and surrounding landscape/ townscape; b. not have a significant adverse impact on the safety and living conditions of nearby residents, other users of nearby land/property, or the community in general, through increased activity, disturbance, noise, dust, vibration, hazard, or the adverse effects of pollution; e. not have an unacceptable effect on the highway network or highway safety as a result of problems arising from traffic generation, inadequate and poorly located parking spaces, servicing and manoeuvring; f. not result in or be susceptible to problems related to foul and surface water drainage, land stability, contamination, flooding, or pollution of light, air and water, either on or off site.'
Policy PC3: Design	States that 'All new development should: a. be of a high quality, distinctive and inclusive design which respects and enhances the site and its surroundings in terms of its siting, layout, scale, height, design, density, use of materials and landscaping, and creates a sense of place; b. retain existing landscape and nature conservation features and incorporate opportunities to enhance biodiversity and ecological connectivity; g. incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes to bring about multiple benefits as an integral part of the development; h. protect the living conditions of nearby occupiers from any harmful effects of new development including overlooking, harm to outlook, increased activity/disturbance/noise.
PE2: Principal Employment Areas	Deeside Industrial Park and DECA Sealand are listed as PEA site PE2.11. The policy states that 'Within principal employment areas, as defined on the proposals map and listed below, the following types of employment development will be permitted: a. B1 business use; b. B2 general industry;

Reference	Policy
	c. B8 storage and distribution provided that the proposal is of an appropriate type and scale for both the site and its surroundings and satisfies other Plan policies. Within these areas, development must also avoid adverse effects on European Sites. Any development proposals on sites that may be located within a flood risk zone causing constraint will require further investigation in terms of firstly, avoidance of flood risk through layout and design measures and secondly, through a detailed site specific FCA at the development management stage'.
Policy PE6: Protection of Employment Land	Confirms that 'The loss of existing, designated, or allocated employment land and buildings to other uses will only be permitted if: a. no other suitable site is available for the development proposed; and b. the site or building is no longer considered to be suitable for employment purposes; and c. it would not result in an unacceptable reduction in the supply and range of employment sites in the area;
EN2: Green Infrastructure	Development proposals will be required to protect, maintain and enhance the extent, quality and connectivity of the green infrastructure network
EN4: Landscape Character	New development, either individually or cumulatively, must not have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the landscape. Landscaping and other mitigation measures should seek to reduce landscape impact and where possible bring about enhancement.
EN6: Sites of Biodiversity and Geodiversity Importance	Development will not be permitted that would result in an adverse effect on the integrity of sites of international nature conservation importance. …. Development that results in the restoration, enhancement and creation of habitats will be supported especially where this promotes the resilience of ecosystems.
EN11: Green Wedges	Land to the east of Green Lane East is designated as a Green Wedge under the reference 15 - Sealand – Cheshire Border (N of R. Dee). The policy states that 'Within the designated green wedges development will only be permitted for: b. ….uses of land which maintain the openness of the green wedge and which do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it;
EN13: Renewable & Low Carbon Energy Development	Renewable or low carbon energy generation development may be permitted for: b. small scale and/or community-based proposals (less than 5MW) for wind, solar, biomass, energy from waste, anaerobic digestion and hydropower in appropriate locations; subject to satisfying the relevant policy tests below. All renewable or low carbon energy proposals will be permitted provided that: ii. the siting, design, layout, type of installation and materials used do not have a significant adverse effect on the character and features of the proposed location;

Reference	Policy
	iii. there would not be unacceptable loss of public amenity or accessibility to the area; iv. the impact of the development upon agriculture, forestry, recreation and other land uses is minimised to permit existing uses to continue unhindered; vi. any associated ancillary buildings or structures are sensitively sited and designed to minimize their impact on the character and quality of the locality; viii. adequate provision has been made in the scheme for the restoration and aftercare of the site on the cessation of use.
EN14: Flood Risk	In order to avoid the risk of flooding, development will not be permitted: a. in areas at risk of fluvial, pluvial, coastal and reservoir flooding, unless it can be demonstrated that the development can be justified in line with national guidance and is supported by a technical assessment that verifies that the new development is designed to alleviate the threat and consequences of flooding; b. where it would lead to an increase in the risk of flooding on the site or elsewhere from fluvial, pluvial, coastal or increased surface water run-off from the site;

1.4.16 The Development Plan is informed by a range of studies and policy guidance which is briefly covered below.

Planning Policy Wales 12 (edition 12, Welsh Government, February 2024)

1.4.17 Planning Policy Wales 12 (PPW12) sets out the Welsh Government's land use planning objectives and how these should be achieved through the development plan. Paragraph 1.2 states that 'The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015'. It also confirms that 'where appropriate, PPW translates wider Welsh Government objectives, strategies and policy into land use planning policy' (paragraph 1.7).

1.4.18 Section 2 'People and Places' of PPW12 describes how well-being will be achieved through placemaking. Figure 4 sets out the Key Planning Principle of 'achieving the right development in the right place' and in terms of making the best use of resources states that 'The efficient use of resources, including land, underpins sustainable development. The planning system has a vital role to play in making development resilient to climate change, decarbonising society and developing a circular economy for the benefit of both the built and natural environments and to contribute to the achievement of the well-being goals. The proximity principle must be applied to ensure problems are solved locally rather than passing them on to other places or future generations. This will ensure the use of land and other resources is sustainable in the long term'.

1.4.19 Section 3 'Strategic and Spatial Choices' focuses on placemaking and the importance of good design based on site analysis and including the efficient use and protection of natural resources, enhancing biodiversity, designing for change, and supporting decarbonisation & clean growth.

1.4.20 Paragraphs 3.31-32 reinforce the importance of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which sets a legal target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the interim targets required by successive Carbon Budgets (described below). Paragraph 3.55 confirms that brownfield land 'should, wherever possible, be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development.'

1.4.21 The 'Productive and Enterprising' theme covers the economic components of placemaking including economic development, physical infrastructure, energy and the efficient use of resources.

1.4.22 Key issues include the following:

- 'ensuring that there is sufficient employment land to meet the needs and requirements of a range of future employment scenarios …. whilst ensuring that an over-supply of employment land does not prevent the release of land for other uses'
- 'encouraging policies and proposals which promote low carbon developments and sites for renewable energy, manufacturing, research and development close to areas of deployment of renewable energy'

1.4.23 Section 5.4 'Economic Development' confirms that for planning purposes the Welsh Government defines economic development as the development of land and buildings for activities that generate sustainable long term prosperity, jobs and incomes and includes not only traditional employment land uses (B1, B2 and B8 uses) but also energy development. It also recognises that 'growth in innovative, emerging technology and high value-added sectors such as advanced engineering, renewable and low-carbon energy … sectors are also strongly supported' (para 5.4.2).

1.4.24 Paragraphs 5.4.3 – 5.4.7 cover the allocation and protection of employment land as identified through Employment Land Reviews which underpin adopted local land use policy. Paragraph 5.4.13 confirms that planning authorities should aim to 'promote the re-use of previously developed, vacant and underused land' and 'control and manage the release of unwanted employment sites to other uses'.

1.4.25 In relation to 'business clusters' comprising businesses from the same or similar industry such as those at MoD Sealand PPW12 confirms at paragraph 5.4.18 that 'Planning authorities should also look favourably on any renewable and low carbon energy generation proposals designed to serve clusters'.

1.4.26 Section 5.7 covers 'Energy' and paragraph 5.7.7 confirms 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'. PPW12 goes on to confirm that the planning system should 'maximise renewable and low carbon energy generation' and paragraph 5.7.13 highlights the 'Energy Hierarchy for Planning' which is shown in Figure 10 with reduced demand, efficient use, and renewable energy generation occupying tiers one, two and three respectively.

1.4.27 Section 5.9 of PPW 12 covers 'Renewable and Low-Carbon Energy' and paragraph 5.9.1 confirms that local authorities 'should seek to ensure their area's full potential for renewable and low carbon energy generation is maximised and renewable energy targets are achieved'. An evidence base should be developed in accordance with 'Practice Guidance: Planning for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy – A Toolkit for Planners' (although this is focused on schemes of 5MW or greater generating capacity) and may include Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP). Paragraph 5.9.7 confirms that 'The local balance of the energy

network will be a crucial consideration … planning authorities should consider the best places for local renewable energy generation to help improve the resilience of the grid in the future'.

1.4.28 Paragraph 5.9.15 of PPW12 confirms that 'outside identified areas [for renewable and low-carbon energy generation], planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy developments should be determined based on the merits of the individual proposal. The local need for a particular scheme is not a material consideration, as energy generation is of national significance and there is a recognised need to optimise renewable and low carbon energy generation. Planning authorities should seek to ensure their area's renewable and low carbon energy potential is achieved and have policies with the criteria against which planning applications outside of identified areas will be determined'.

1.4.29 Paragraph 5.9.21 confirms that 'Prior to an application being submitted, developers for renewable and low carbon energy developments should, wherever possible, consider how to avoid, or otherwise minimise, adverse impacts through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures'.

1.4.30 Section 6 'Distinctive and Natural Places' covers the environmental and cultural components of placemaking including their special characteristic and environmental qualities and paragraph 6.02 confirms that 'The special and unique characteristics and intrinsic qualities of the natural and built environment must be protected in their own right, for historic, scenic, aesthetic and nature conservation reasons'.

1.4.31 The theme of 'Distinctive and Natural Trends' recognises the key issues of

- 'Long term and chronic decline of biodiversity and habitat loss'
- 'The need for Adaptation to the effects of climate change' and
- Recognising and addressing the factors influencing landscape change

1.4.32 Green Infrastructure (GI) is defined in Section 6.2 as the 'the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places', and paragraph 6.2.12 requires applications for development to be supported by a GI Statement describing how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. The use of LANDMAP data sets in landscape character appraisal is suggested.

1.4.33 Section 6.4 Biodiversity and Ecological Networks reinforces the importance of the enhanced Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Section 6 duty on local authorities to protect biodiversity and the principles of the DECCA framework in establishing ecosystem resilience.

1.4.34 Section 6.6 covers 'Water and Flood Risk' and paragraph 6.6.12 confirms that 'The capacity of existing infrastructure and the need for additional facilities require early identification when locating future development. Planning authorities should encourage the use of sites where existing water supply and/or sewerage and drainage provision problems can be solved and seek to avoid the use of sites where adequate provision is unlikely to be achieved'.

Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales (Design Commission for Wales, November 2023)

1.4.35 The Design Commission for Wales is the national advisory body for design quality in the built and natural environment and in relation to the proposed development its guidance supports Policy 17 for renewable

energy in Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. Section 6.0 confirms that solar PV schemes should 'be designed in a manner that complements the qualities of existing landscapes' and it identifies the design issues which should be addressed including location, layout and response to landscape scale, perimeter screening in relation to unacceptable local impacts, colour, reflection, and potential to provide nature conservation and biodiversity enhancement.

Technical Advice Notes

1.4.36 Technical Advice Notes (TAN) are published by the Welsh Government and provide additional guidance on a range of subject-specific issues covered in national planning policy.

TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning, September 2009

1.4.37 Chapter 4 addresses nature conservation in development control procedures. Paragraph 1.6.1 suggests that 'small scale opportunities for habitat creation and enhancement can be significant'. The guidance confirms that information submitted with a planning application should be proportionate to the likelihood and significance of potential effects. Proposals for enhancement of nature conservation interests should also be included at the planning application stage while details may be covered by planning conditions to ensure that the positive benefits of a scheme are delivered.

TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk, February 2024

1.4.38 TAN 15 requires applications for proposed development located in or near to flood zones 2 and 3 to be accompanied by a risk-based Flood Consequences Assessment based on the vulnerability of the proposals and potential effects of the proposals on flooding. A Drainage Statement is also required to describe how sustainable drainage proposals are integrated into the scheme. The TAN confirms at Paragraph 10.10 that development sites 'should be selected to support the overarching ambitions of the Development Plan' and at paragraph 10.17 in relation to flood defended zones it states that 'on brownfield sites redevelopment proposals should not over intensify use neither should they reduce the area's ability to absorb flood water nor cause problems with flooding elsewhere'.

TAN 23 Economic Development, February 2014

1.4.39 TAN 23 confirms that employment sites should only be retained if they are viable and deliverable. Paragraph 4.5.2 confirms that 'Land provision targets may be higher than anticipated demand, to allow for the chance that the assessments are too low and to ensure that no opportunities are missed. They should also allow for flexibility, competition and choice. However, persistent oversupply of employment land may cause harm where the planned land supply exceeds demand, so that allocated employment sites remain vacant for long periods and frustrate development for other land uses.' Paragraph 4.5.5 goes on to suggest that 'The qualitative features of sites identified for employment should match current and future market requirements. Sites that do not have a reasonable prospect of being taken up for an employment use should not be identified for such use.'

Employment Land Review (BE Group for Wrexham CBC and Flintshire CC, October 2015)

1.4.40 Within the Employment Land Review MoD Sealand comprising both the Application Site and the non-residential buildings and service areas on the wider base is noted as having 18.5ha of high-quality employment land under reference EM2.2 DARA Site, Sealand.

1.4.41 Section 6 of the review considers the characteristics of the existing portfolio of potential employment land including its suitability and viability for development and in Table 56 Flintshire Land Supply Scenarios notes that in relation to site EM2.2 DARA 'Further assessment [is] needed to identify the real developable area here. The viability/deliverability of land here should also be explored'.

1.4.42 Paragraph 11.32 of the ELR lists employment sites for retention and release and states 'this study has identified a number of sites which are unlikely to ever be developed for B1/B2/B8 uses. These are:

- EM2.2 DARA Site, Sealand (18.5ha) – Site comprises a complex of buildings, much of which appears to be in use. Further assessment needed to identify the real developable area here. The viability/deliverability of land here should also be explored. It is considered likely that such a review will show that the majority of this land is not viable for development'.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment (AECOM for Flintshire County Council, July 2019)

1.4.43 The Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment published by AECOM in July 2019 is a strategic study which informed relevant policies within the LDP regarding the potential for renewable energy generation at different scales and locations across the county. Using high-level GIS mapping data for physical, environmental and policy constraints it identified suitable locations for solar farms with a generating capacity of between 5MW and 25MW. The assessment concludes on page 43 that the maximum solar PV energy resource (of schemes greater than 5MW) is 632MW which could be further reduced following assessment of landscape and cumulative effects.

Flintshire Local Area Energy Plan (Flintshire CC, 2024)

1.4.44 Locally, FCC is the lead partner in the preparation of a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) (Flintshire CC, 2024) which sets out the change required to transition the local authority's area energy system to Net Zero by 2050. This includes an eight-fold increase in ground-mounted solar PV generation across the county from the currently installed 80MW to 645MW by 2050 (greater than the 632MW identified in the AECOM study) starting with a near three-fold increase to 228MW by 2030 (Figure 3.0.7).

Energy Security

1.4.45 The UK Government's 'British Energy Security Strategy' (DfBEIS, 2022) also emphasises the importance of domestically generated renewable energy to ensure a high level of resilience against global energy markets. As a government agency the DE&S DECA, which operates MoD Sealand, shares this objective as set out in its 'DE&S2025: Defence Equipment & Support Environmental Strategy' (MoD, 2021). Delivering an estimated 70MW of renewable energy generation capacity across the Defence estate by 2035 is a core component of 'DE&S 2025' and specifically a commitment under Net Zero Goals 4A and 4B of the strategy.

1.5 Proposed Development

1.5.1 The proposed development involves the construction and operation of a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) scheme with a generating capacity of 3MW. As a 'private-wire' scheme which will distribute electricity directly to the existing 11kV grid within MoD Sealand there is no need for a connection to the national grid although such a facility could be added to the scheme at a later date.

1.5.2 The solar PV scheme is anticipated to be operational for at least 40 years after which the components of the proposed development could be decommissioned, dismantled and removed and the land restored or a further application may be submitted for renewing or 're-powering' the system. The Application Site extends to 3.2 hectares comprising a former playing field within the existing secured grounds of MoD Sealand. The layout of the proposed development is shown on Figure J251173-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0102 within the planning drawings.

Design Objectives

1.5.3 The design of the proposed solar PV scheme has been driven by the following objectives:

- The need to secure a reliable source of clean energy for support research and development activities on the MoD Sealand site.
- The opportunities for development which environmentally unconstrained and under-utilised open space within the MoD estate offers.
- The environmental and physical requirements for a solar PV scheme.
- The feasibility of adapting the existing 11kV site energy network to be able to receive solar PV generated electricity as a 'private-wire' connection with no need for connection to the national grid.
- The need to avoid or minimise adverse environmental effects and to achieve a Net Benefit for Biodiversity.

Access and Layout

1.5.4 The scheme is shown on Figure J251173-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0102 Proposed Solar PV Array Layout.

1.5.5 The physical characteristics of the site, which is flat and open with no environmental restrictions, support a scheme design which maximises use of the available space to achieve an efficient layout. Solar panels will be mounted on metal frames to form rows or arrays which will extend across the site from east to west either side of a stone access track which will run south to north between two sides of the scheme and along the south-west boundary of the site to the location of the HV / LV connection.

1.5.6 Access to the site will be from the private MoD Sealand service road off Green Lane East. The scheme layout incorporates the potential for site access via existing vehicle gates along the east side of the security perimeter fence onto Green Lane East. New gates will be added to the southern boundary perimeter fencing to allow direct vehicular access from the existing service area to the maintenance track.

Components

1.5.7 The proposed solar PV scheme will comprise a range of components which are illustrated on Figure J251173-GCL-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0103 Proposed Solar PV Array Components and described below:

- Solar PV panels to a height of approx. 2.8-3.0m above ground level (agl) set on metal frames and tilted at approx. 20 - 25 degrees from the horizontal with an orientation to the south to maximise solar gain. The panels will have a clearance of approx. 0.8m agl along their southern edges. Rows of panels or 'arrays' will be spaced at intervals of approx. 7.5m from south to north with approx. 3.0m between the front edge of one row and the rear edge of the next row.
- The ground-mount frames will comprise high-strength steel and will have up to two posts (in section) which will extend into the ground to provide a foundation for the structure. The type and depth of foundation will be determined following further ground investigation.
- Cabling from the solar panels will be collected via pairs of string combiners and inverters mounted on metal posts or the mounting frame and from these underground cables in trenches alongside the site access track will run to the HV / LV containerised connection.
- A containerised HV / LV connection point with an internal LV Distribution Board will be located in the south-west corner of the site to connect with the existing wider site's 11kV grid and site network. The dimensions of the container will be up to approx. H2635mm x L6055mm x D2435mm, and its colour will be either light grey or dark green.
- A new site access track formed from free-draining crushed aggregate will be constructed through the centre of the array and along the south-west boundary to provide a surfaced route for maintenance vehicles.
- New vehicle access gates up to approx. 2.4m high will be installed in the existing metal mesh and chainlink security fencelines. These currently comprise fencing to a height of approx. 2.1 – 2.4m with barbed wire / razor wire along the top.
- The Application Site is additionally secured with existing CCTV coverage which will continue to be used.
- No additional lighting is proposed.
- Retained grassland, which currently has a low value for biodiversity, will be enhanced through the introduction of a locally appropriate range of wildflower species across a minimum area of 0.25ha and artificial habitats will be introduced to support insect and small mammal populations. Long-term management including more sympathetic seasonal cutting of all retained grassland will support its diversification to secure a Net Benefit for Biodiversity.

1.6 Planning Appraisal

1.6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The focus of the planning appraisal is therefore whether the proposed development of a ground-mounted solar PV scheme on the application site is in accordance with the development plan as a whole and the extent to which material considerations are relevant to the determination of the planning application.

1.6.2 The principal of development is firstly addressed followed by consideration of relevant policy areas and the findings of technical studies which accompany the planning application. The following key areas are considered:

- Principle of development
- Existing site allocation PE2: Principal Employment Areas
- Renewable energy
- Energy security
- Site selection and design
- Flood risk and drainage
- Nature conservation and biodiversity
- Landscape character and visual amenity
- Green infrastructure
- Construction effects
- Environmental mitigation
- Benefits of the proposed development

Principle of Development

1.6.3 The development plan comprising both national and local planning policy is overwhelmingly in favour of renewable energy as a means of meeting the nation's legal obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and secondary legislation. With the onset of Carbon Budget 3 which requires a 58% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990levels by 2030 there is now an absolute imperative to facilitate renewable energy development at all scales and this is reinforced by Policy 17 of Future Wales: The National Plan which also requires 70% of consumed electricity to be generated by renewable means by 2030. PPW12 recognises the value of Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) as a means of focusing on energy and decarbonisation targets. The Flintshire LAEP confirms that electricity generation from ground-mounted solar PV sources is expected to increase to 228MW by 2030.

1.6.4 As a 'private-wire' renewable energy scheme i.e. not requiring connection to the national grid, the proposed solar PV scheme will provide MoD Sealand and its associated on-site business partners with its own electricity supply through an existing 11kV network thereby also reducing demand on the wider national grid (the first principle of the Energy Hierarchy for planning) and supporting its resilience as the national network is reinforced.

1.6.5 The proposed development can contribute to both national and local objectives for renewable energy generation, and specifically ground-mounted solar PV generation, within a very short time frame. The proposed development is therefore considered acceptable in principle and necessary to help to meet targets for renewable energy generation both locally and nationally.

Existing Site Allocation

1.6.6 The Application Site is identified under Policy PE2: Principal Employment Areas as being part of area PE2.11 'Deeside Industrial Park and DECA Sealand' where land uses falling under classes B1 business use, B2 general industry and B8 storage and distribution would be permitted subject to type, scale and acceptability under other plan policies. The proposed solar PV scheme would not accord with Policy PE2 and would therefore be a departure from the LDP and it is anticipated that the planning application for the solar PV scheme will be advertised as such by the LPA.

1.6.7 Policy PE6 of the LDP recognises that alternative uses of allocated employment land can be considered where no other suitable site is available for the development proposed, where the site is no longer considered suitable for employment purposes and where development would not result in an unacceptable reduction in the supply and range of employment sites in the area.

1.6.8 The Application Site and existing 11kV grid within the secure, fenced boundary of MoD Sealand is an ideal location for a 'private-wire' solar PV scheme which will provide 3MW of electricity for direct use by existing business and operational activities on the MoD Sealand site. No other part of the base can accommodate the solar PV infrastructure required to efficiently generate this amount of electricity and a location outside the base would require a grid connection. The site is physically constrained to the west and north by the wide highway corridor of the A494 / A548 and to the east agricultural land is undeveloped and covered by a Green Wedge policy which seeks to maintain the openness of land. Development of this land (assuming its availability) would have an adverse effect on the environment, landscape character and the amenity of the public and local residents on Green Lane East. There is no other suitable site for the proposed 'private-wire' solar PV scheme other than the existing former playing field at MoD Sealand.

1.6.9 The Application Site is not suitable for the types of land uses originally envisaged in Policy PE2 and this is evidenced by the absence of any planning application for B1, B2 or B8 uses on the site despite its prominence as a gateway location within a high-profile employment zone and proximity to the trunk road network. The Advanced Technology Research Centre (ATRC) scheme promoted in the early 2020s did not progress to a planning submission due to constraints to development despite strong support from MoD agencies, regional defence supply chain businesses and the Welsh Government. National and local policy and guidance recognises that where an employment allocation is unlikely to be taken up alternative uses should be considered.

1.6.10 Existing highly skilled employment uses on the MoD Sealand site form a 'business cluster' which is recognised in the LDP as a draw for similar types of business and there is capacity within the wider site to accommodate employment uses of an appropriate scale where necessary. A key aspect of the proposed solar PV scheme is therefore to provide support for existing employment uses at MoD Sealand and PPW12 confirms that planning authorities should consider solar PV schemes which are specifically designed to serve business clusters.

1.6.11 The development of the Application Site for solar PV electricity generation would not result in an unacceptable reduction in the supply and range of employment sites in the area. Within the LDP the Application Site is effectively a small extension of the Principal Employment Area allocation at the Deeside Industrial Park (which lies to the west of the A494 corridor) and benefits from the positive assessment of the Park within the supporting Employment Land Review (ELR) for B class land uses. As a stand-alone site the ELR suggests that most of the MoD Sealand is not viable for development or should be allocated for another use. National and local policy and guidance also confirms that employment sites should only be retained if they are viable and deliverable.

Renewable Energy

1.6.12 The Flintshire LAEP identifies a need for an three-fold increase in ground mounted solar PV capacity from the currently installed 80MW to an estimated 228MW by 2030 and an eight-fold increase to 645MW capacity by 2050. The plan suggests that Flintshire CC will identify and explore opportunities for the development of renewables on public sector owned land and also commit to implementing LAEP through the development management process and the determination of planning applications. Legally binding Carbon Budgets require a 21% increase in renewable energy generation by 2030 yet there is a shortfall of c.13MW between the estimated generation capacity identified in the Council's 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment' and the target in the LAEP. Small-scale solar PV schemes like the proposed development at MoD Sealand have an important role in making up the shortfall.

Energy Security

1.6.13 Security of energy supply in a time of volatile energy pricing is a key issue given the national importance of activities at MoD Sealand and the need to retain and support defence-related businesses and a highly skilled local workforce. The proposed 'private-wire' solar PV scheme will provide both a more economic source of electricity for the businesses and activities at MoD Sealand and help to achieve the goal of implementing 70MW of renewable energy generation capacity across the Defence estate by 2035.

Site Selection and Design

1.6.14 PPW12 confirms that local authorities should seek to maximise the use of renewable energy in their areas to ensure renewable energy targets are achieved alongside a consideration of the resilience of the existing grid to accept and distribute increases in electricity as new schemes come forward. Studies undertaken by Flintshire CC to identify the locations of potential solar PV sites across the county are focused on sites with a generating capacity of 5MW or more and assume that a grid connection is required. As a consequence the potential of smaller-scale schemes such as the proposed development which will generate 3MW of 'private-wire' electricity at a specific site for a specific end-user are not identified.

1.6.15 PPW12 recognises the potential for this and confirms that outside of areas of search planning applications for renewable energy developments should be determined based on the merits of the individual proposal as determined through the planning application process.

1.6.16 Whilst there is no alternative location to the Application Site (because no other site can provide a 'private-wire' connection) it still remains for it to be considered in respect of guidance for the design of solar PV schemes in

'Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales' and development control criteria. The Application Site meets all the operational requirements for a solar PV scheme as follows:

- The site is generally flat and / or south-facing and free from overshadowing by trees and buildings so that sunlight intensity levels will be optimised
- The site is of a suitable size and shape to accommodate a 3MW scheme in an efficient arrangement
- The site is available, currently underutilised and additionally offers an existing 'private-wire' connection
- The site can be accessed by vehicles by the private means of access off the public highway to the MoD Sealand site
- The site is not covered by any statutory environmental designations and has minimal environmental constraints
- There are few nearby residents and these are screened from the site by existing buildings and trees
- Habitats on the Application Site can be enhanced to deliver a net benefit for biodiversity
- The site is available for the anticipated 40-year lifetime of the scheme

1.6.17 The scheme's conformity to the criteria set out in LDP policy EN13 for small-scale (less than 5MW) renewable energy generation is set out below.

Siting, design, layout, type of installation and materials

1.6.18 The character of the Application Site is that of a former playing field enclosed by security fencing and classified as brownfield land. It is surrounded by large-scale industrial development comprising the workshops of MoD Sealand to the east and south, a wide, lit highway corridor to the west and earthworks to the north which are uncharacteristic of the surrounding flat landscape of the River Dee floodplain. There is limited established woodland planting associated with the road junction to the north and a belt of trees to the east of the site which physically and visually separates the site from the open, agricultural land to the east. The siting of the proposed solar PV scheme is appropriate for the location and its design, layout, scale and materials will not have an adverse effect on the character and features of the site and adjacent areas.

Public Amenity and Access

1.6.19 There is no public access to the Application Site. Visitors to the static display on the eastern edge of the site will be familiar with its industrial context and there will be no loss of amenity. The site provides some visual relief from the public footway to the north and west but these locations are dominated by the negative influence of the road corridor and existing amenity is low. The proposed solar PV scheme at up to approx. 3.0m in height will be low-lying and will not affect the amenity of the footways next to the A494 corridor. Green Lane East and the bridleway along it are separated from the site by a service road and a belt of trees which filter views of the site and the higher amenity of public footpaths across the open countryside to the east would be unaffected.

Existing Land Use

1.6.20 The proposed development will have no impact on existing land uses as it will be contained solely within the site which is currently unused.

Ancillary Buildings and Structures

1.6.21 A HV / LV containerised connection would be made between the solar PV arrays and the existing 11kV cable in the south-west corner of the site. Containerised switchgear / connection points are a standard component of ground-mounted solar PV schemes and its location on the south side of the site nearest to the workshops and existing small outbuildings will be in keeping with the character and quality of the location.

Restoration and Aftercare

1.6.22 The lifespan of the proposed solar PV scheme is anticipated to be c.40 years after which it could be removed and the land restored to its previous use or a further application may be submitted for renewing or 're-powering' the system. Importantly, soils lifted prior to construction of the site access track and any excess from cable trenching will be stored on the MoD Sealand site and managed appropriately for the lifetime of the scheme so that they remain in a good condition and will be suitable for re-use during restoration. Aftercare of the restored site will also ensure that biodiversity gains achieved during its operation are retained and managed.

1.6.23 The proposed ground-mounted solar PV scheme will satisfy the requirements of LDP policy EN13: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development.

1.6.24 Policy 17 in Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 requires proposed renewable development to demonstrate that there will be no unacceptable adverse impact on the environment and several LDP policies are also focused on controlling the effects of development including policies STR13, STR14. PC2, PC3, EN2, EN4, EN6, and EN14. The site is classed as 'brownfield' land by the LPA and should be developed in preference to undeveloped or 'greenfield' locations. Open countryside to the east of Green Lane East covered by Policy EN11: Green Wedges will be unaffected.

1.6.25 Guidance in PPW12 has also been applied to an understanding of the site and adjacent areas, and the effects of the proposed solar PV scheme. Key issues are summarised below.

Flood Risk and Drainage

1.6.26 A Flood Consequences Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with PPW12 and TAN15 'Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion' and the proposed ground-mounted solar PV scheme is classified as 'less vulnerable development' in respect of flooding. The Application Site is located in Flood Zone 2 for river flooding and Flood Zone 3 for sea flooding. However, it is also within a defended zone for sea flooding, mitigating the risk from this type of flooding, whilst the flood defences remain in good condition. The site is at a low risk of flooding from other sources such as groundwater and surface water. Although the solar PV scheme will involve a small amount of new impermeable surface associated with the HV / LV container location the access track will be formed from permeable materi als and which will be free-draining. Runoff from the panel surfaces will infiltrate into the existing ground. As such no additional provision for controlled drainage is required. The requirements of LDP policy EN14: Flood Risk are met.

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

1.6.27 The design of the biodiversity enhancement proposals for the proposed development has been informed by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), habitat survey and biodiversity impact assessment. The existing habitat on the site is restricted to modified grassland dominated by Rye grass with a range of common forb species such as Buttercup. It is generally of limited botanical interest and poor species diversity. There are few records of protected species in the wider area but none for the site which does not provide suitable habitat for species such as Bat, Badger, Great Crested Newt etc, although its potential use by small mammals such as Hedgehog is likely. The study concluded that there would be no impacts to any statutory or non-statutory designated sites due to a lack of connectivity with surrounding areas and the contained nature of the proposed development which is surrounded by existing built development. The proposed development includes components of the DECCA framework principles where feasible including enhancement of the existing grass sward by increasing the diversity of species supported by a more sympathetic cutting regime. This will provide a Net Benefit for Biodiversity and the proposals will therefore benefit from the support provided by LDP policy EN6: Sites of Biodiversity and Geodiversity Importance.

Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

1.6.28 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been undertaken to understand the potential effects of the proposals on landscape character, views and visual amenity. Zone of Theoretical Visibility modelling has been undertaken to estimate the potential intervisibility between the proposed solar PV scheme and locations in the surrounding area and specific locations have been visited to check its likely visibility. Due to the high level of visual screening provided by existing adjacent buildings, changes in landform around the A548 junction to the north and intervening vegetation the proposals are unlikely to be visible from the main areas of population in the surrounding area. Views from Maes Gwyn Farm on Green Lane East will be screened by the mature tree belts between the property and the Application Site. LANDMAP data sets have been used to explore local landscape character supported by a site visit. The large-scale of adjacent land uses such as the A494 / A548 road corridor and adjacent industrial character of the Deeside Industrial Park and MoD Sealand provide a suitable context for development of the solar PV scheme. The character of the area will remain unchanged and there will be a limited change in views of the site. There are no proposals for additional visual screening of the solar PV scheme. Net Benefit for Biodiversity gains from the enhancement of the site's currently species-poor grassland will also enhance the landscape character of the Application Site and therefore benefit from the support provided by LDP policy EN4: Landscape Character.

Green Infrastructure

1.6.29 The Application Site does not support any notable Green Infrastructure assets such as trees or open water and the existing open space has no public access and is not used by site personnel. Tree belts associated with the A494 highway junction to the north of the site and along Green Lane East and the Chester Millenium Greenway south of MoD Sealand are small-scale components. Opportunities to improve the extent and quality of Green Infrastructure components within the site have been incorporated into the proposed solar PV scheme by enhancing the species diversity and structure of the existing improved grassland to provide a Net Benefit for Biodiversity thereby supporting LDP policy EN2: Green Infrastructure.

Construction Effects

1.6.30 Construction of the proposed solar PV scheme is anticipated to take around four months. Construction effects are anticipated to be short-term in duration, limited in scale and confined to the application site and locations immediately adjacent to it. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be developed to manage the natural resources on the site and control the environmental effects anticipated during construction. Construction activity will be controlled in accordance with relevant health, safety, environment and waste management requirements under relevant legislation or approved through the planning process via the CEMP.

1.6.31 Working hours will be limited in agreement with the LPA but are anticipated to take advantage of existing nature and location of the site and the absence of nearby residents. The site is not located near extensive areas of population and construction of the proposed development will have minimal disturbance on surrounding areas. Deliveries of materials to the Application Site are anticipated to be infrequent as the majority of the components required for the solar PV scheme are currently in storage on the wider MOD Sealand site. In addition, workforce requirements are also small and construction traffic is anticipated to be low.

1.6.32 There is no requirement for vegetation clearance other than specific areas of existing mown grassland prior to soil stripping. Use of the site by small mammals such as Hedgehog is likely and a Precautionary Method of Working will be adopted to ensure that adverse effects on mobile animal species are avoided. Measures will include trench safety and inspections of pits and pipes to avoid small animals being trapped in the works and a comprehensive wildlife management protocol will be included in the CEMP.

1.6.33 Soils within the footprint of the new access track will be lifted and kept separated where distinct soil types are found and stored within the planning application boundary where feasible or on the wider MoD Sealand estate (defined on the Location Plan as Other land under the control of the Applicant) for future use / restoration of the site. Material unsuitable for reuse and other construction waste will be managed and disposed of in accordance with a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP).

Environmental Mitigation

1.6.34 No requirement for additional mitigation for environmental effects has been identified.

Benefits of the Proposed Development

1.6.35 The proposed ground mounted solar PV scheme will provide a range of benefits which are summarised below in accordance with Policy 17 of Future Wales: The National Plan 2040:

- The proposed ground-mounted solar PV scheme will directly support national and local obligations to increase renewable energy generation helping to meet the Carbon Budget 3 interim target reduction of 58% of greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels and Flintshire's LAEP target generating capacity of 228MW by 2030.
- The 'private-wire' connection to the wider 11kV MoD Sealand network will reduce demand for electricity from the national grid which is the first requirement of the Energy Hierarchy.

- The solar PV scheme will provide a more economic and secure electricity supply to the businesses and activities at MoD Sealand helping to support local employment and potentially growth.
- The proposed development will re-use brownfield land which is currently unused and has not attracted development for employment uses despite its gateway location adjacent to the A494 and allocation as a Principal Employment Area.
- The existing species-poor grassland habitat will be enhanced to provide a Net Benefit to Biodiversity and the site's contribution as a component of the wider area's Green Infrastructure will be increased.

Pre-Application Consultation Report

1.6.36 Local community and statutory consultees are currently being consulted about the proposed development and draft planning application documents in accordance with the requirement for Pre-Application Consultation for major development under Part 1A of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 as amended.

1.6.37 A Pre-Application Consultation Report will be prepared following the consultation and prior to the planning application being submitted. The Report will describe the consultation process and the outcome and highlight any changes made to the proposed development as a consequence.

1.7 Conclusions

1.7.1 This Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application by EMCOR UK for permission for a ground-mounted solar PV electricity generating scheme with a generating capacity of 3MW on land at MoD Sealand to the west of Green Lane East in Deeside.

1.7.2 The Application Site is a derelict playing field without public access, which is classed by the LPA as brownfield land, and for which there is no previous or current planning application for employment uses. The proposed solar PV scheme represents a departure from the LDP employment allocation for the Application Site which is part of the Principal Employment Area covering the Deeside Industrial Park.

1.7.3 The proposed development will provide a 'private-wire' electricity supply from a renewable energy source. This will directly support existing businesses and activities at MoD Sealand in an increasingly challenging economic and energy-security environment and reduce demand on the existing national distribution network. The solar PV scheme will also directly support national and local obligations to increase renewable energy generation helping to meet the Carbon Budget 3 interim target reduction of 58% of greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels and Flintshire's LAEP target renewable generating capacity of 228MW by 2030.

1.7.4 The design of the proposed development has been informed by technical studies to identify constraints and opportunities associated with the site and the characteristics of the surrounding area. Following construction which would be complete within approx. four months the site would operate without any notable adverse effects on the environment, residential areas or public amenity. Enhancement through species diversification and appropriate management of the grassland habitat on the site will result in a Net Benefit for Biodiversity.

1.7.5 The proposed solar PV scheme has been informed by pre-planning application advice from the LPA and pre-application public consultation is ongoing involving local people, community and specialist consultees.

1.7.6 Through the planning appraisal in this statement the scheme has been assessed against the development plan and material considerations have been highlighted. The national and local importance of renewable energy generation has been established, and development of the solar PV scheme represents a viable alternative land use for the Application Site which would directly support existing and future employment on the wider MoD Sealand site.

1.7.7 There are no adverse effects arising from the proposed development which would significantly outweigh the inherent benefits of the scheme and it is requested that planning permission is granted without delay.

Appendix 1

Pre-Planning Application Advice ref PRE/00199/24

PRE- PLANNING APPLICATION ADVICE REPORT

Ref No: PRE/00199/24 **Case Officer:** Claire Morter

Proposal: Installation of a solar array on land formally used as a sports field adj. to the existing main entrance to the site.

Location: DARA SEALAND, Marsh Farm Road, Sealand, Deeside, CH5 2LS

Applicant: **Simon Mason**

Agent Name:

Date Received: 22-Oct-2024

Constraints identified

Constraint Type
Air Safeguarding Consult BAE Birdstrike Hazard
Air Safeguarding Lpool Airport Structures 90m+
Air Safeguarding Consult BAE Structures 45m+
Noise Reduction TAN11 Noise Class 60.0-64.9
Noise Reduction TAN11 Noise Class 65.0-69.9
Noise Reduction TAN11 Noise Class 70.0-74.9
Existing TrunkroadSafeguarding A494
Development Control North Team
Noise Reduction TAN11 Noise Class 55.0-59.9
County Boundary Flintshire Unitary Authority County Boundary
Windfarm Consultation Area Consult National Air Traffic Services.
Existing Waste Management Site Consult Environmental Health
Areas of Advertisement Control
Flood Risk TAN15 Zone C1

Site History

No relevant planning history

Relevant Policies

Policy STR2: The Location of Development
Policy STR4: Principles of Sustainable Development, Design and Placemaking
Policy STR5: Transport and Accessibility
Policy STR7: Economic Development, Enterprise and Employment
Policy STR8: Employment Land Provision
Policy STR13: Natural and Built Environment, Green Networks and Infrastructure
Policy STR14: Climate Change and Environmental Protection

Ty Dewi Sant, St David's Park, Ewloe, CH5 3FF www.flintshire.gov.uk
Ty Dewi Sant, Parc Dewi Sant, Ewlo, CH5 3FF
www.siryfflint.gov.uk

Policy PC1: The Relationship of Development to Settlement Boundaries
Policy PC2: General Requirements for Development
Policy PC3: Design
Policy PC4: Sustainability and Resilience of New Development
Policy PC5: Transport and Accessibility
Policy PE2: Principal Employment Areas
Policy PE6: Protection of Employment Land
Policy EN8: Built Historic Environment and Listed Buildings
Policy EN13: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development
Policy EN14: Flood Risk

National Planning Policy
Planning Policy Wales Edition 12
TAN15: Flood Risk and New Development
Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

Consultation & Responses (If Required)
See main body of report

Appraisal:

Site Description
The site is located at the DE&S DECA Sealand site, covering an area of approximately 2.7 hectares. The land is currently designated as brownfield land and is situated within the DE&S DECA Sealand site facility. The surrounding area consists of a mix of residential, commercial, agricultural land. The site is close to the A494.

Proposed Development
The proposed solar farm will consist of approximately 5214 solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, which are expected to generate 0.9 MW of electricity. The development will also include:
- Inverters to convert DC electricity to AC electricity.
- Access tracks for maintenance and operation.
- A new transformer to connect the solar farm to the sites HV grid.

Principle of Development
The application site is located outside of any defined settlement boundary but within the boundaries of the formerly developed site. The site is however located within the Principle Employment Area as identified by the Flintshire Local Development Plan.

Policy PE2 of the FLDP states:
Within principal employment areas, as defined on the proposals map and listed below, the following types of employment development will be permitted:

a. B1 business use;
b. B2 general industry;
c. B8 storage and distribution
provided that the proposal is of an appropriate type and scale for both the site and its surroundings and satisfies other Plan policies. Within these areas, development must also avoid adverse effects on European Sites. Any development proposals on sites that may be located within a flood risk zone causing constraint will require further investigation in terms of firstly, avoidance of flood risk through layout and design measures and secondly, through a detailed site specific FCA at the development management stage

The application as submitted proposes the use of the land for a solar farm and does therefore not fall within the criteria of employment led development.

Policy PE6 of the FLDP seeks to protect employment land and states:
The loss of existing, designated, or allocated employment land and buildings to other uses will only be permitted if:
a. no other suitable site is available for the development proposed; and
b. the site or building is no longer considered to be suitable for employment purposes; and
c. it would not result in an unacceptable reduction in the supply and range of employment sites in the area; or
d. the proposal would bring about the removal or satisfactory relocation of a non-conforming or potentially polluting use from the site or building.

The application as submitted does not evidence how any of the above criteria (particularly a and b) of policy PE6 can be met. Any formal application would need to demonstrate why, there are no other suitable sites within the County and outside of the Principle Employment Area that would facilitate the development. Additionally, evidence of why the site is not suitable for employment development will also be required.

The planning statement outlines the importance of providing renewable forms of energy and whilst this is supported by both local and national planning policy this does not outweigh the economic harm which would be caused by the loss of 2.7 hectares of developable employment land. The principle of development is therefore not supported in principle.

<u>Highway Safety</u>
No formal response has been received by the Highways Officer in relation to the current pre-application enquiry. The applicant may wish to contact the Councils Officer directly.

<u>Ecological Implications</u>
In line with WG policy changes to PPW12 a Green Infrastructure Statement is required with all applications.

The aim of the green infrastructure statement is to describe how green infrastructure – eg existing trees and shrubs/hedges - has been incorporated into the proposal. While there is currently no specific guidance, the Green Infrastructure Statement is seen as an overarching or summary document that pulls together relevant reports including trees, landscape, drainage, into one document to:

- demonstrate how the "step wise" approach (namely Avoid, Minimise, Mitigate, Compensate and Enhance) has been followed to establish Net Benefit for Biodiversity.
- take into account connectivity with the surrounding landscape and impacts of future lighting,
- include the relevant green infrastructure and/or landscape proposals to demonstrate biodiversity net benefit; and
- The assessment should be proportionate to the scale of development.

Summary

This report provides pre-application advice regarding the proposed development of land at DECA Sealand as a solar farm. Ordinarily the provision of renewable energy development would be supported by both local and national planning policy, however, the application site is within the identified Principle Employment Area in the FLDP. No quantifiable evidence has been provided to demonstrate why the site is no longer viable for employment led re-development and also why there are no other suitable sites in the County for the development of a solar farm. For those reasons the principle of development is not supported in principle.

Pre-application advice is provided at officer level only and is not binding on any future decision of the LPA.

Ty Dewi Sant, St David's Park, Ewloe, CH5 3FF www.flintshire.gov.uk
Ty Dewi Sant, Parc Dewi Sant, Ewlo, CH5 3FF
www.siryfflint.gov.uk

Ground Control Limited
Kingfisher House
Radford Way
Billericay
EssexCM12 0EQ

T: 01277 650 697
E: info@ground-control.co.uk

www.ground-control.co.uk