



Planning and Environmental Statement

Ballydonagh Solar Farm (amendment application)

28/11/2025



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Planning and Environment Statement (PES) forms part of an amendment Planning Application submitted to Galway County Council as Local Planning Authority on behalf of Ballydonagh Solar Limited for a proposed amendment to a previously consented solar farm (Planning Reference: 2361049) with associated infrastructure on lands at Ballydonagh Cloonineen Skecoor Kiltormer East and Graveshill County Galway. The centre point of the Application Site can be found at Irish National Grid Reference ITM X 583549 Y 720440.
- 1.2. The Proposed Amendment will consist of several minor amendments to the previously consented development under Planning Reference 2361049. The amendments comprise the following; re alignment of the main entrance and access gate; re alignment and widening of internal access tracks; alteration of the boundary fence at the main entrance and at the northeast corner of the site; removal of the consented 38 kV substation in Field 22 to facilitate the Gortnalug Loop in and out 110 kV substation and associated grid connection; combined central inverters and MV transformers are replaced by separate string inverters and central MV transformers; reduction in the size of related hardstanding areas; updated table layout to accommodate the 110 kV substation and grid cable including a reduction in PV table numbers from 3209 to 3120; new overhead line separation areas to reflect that a section of the existing 110 kV overhead line will be removed to facilitate the substation grid connection; inclusion of an additional badger sett buffer and extension the operational lifetime of the solar farm from 35 years to 40 years.
- 1.3. These alterations are considered minor in nature and do not alter the overall design intent or scale of the consented solar development.

Background

- 1.4. The Application Site was initially deemed an acceptable location for solar development in 2024 when Galway County Council granted permission for a solar PV development proposed by the Applicant on 81.9 hectares of land in the townlands of Ballydonagh, Cloonineen, Skecoor, Kiltormer East and Graveshill.
- 1.5. The original development under Planning Reference 2361049 was granted permission on 7/10/2024 following a comprehensive planning and environmental assessment process. The consented scheme comprised the following;

'Planning permission for a period of 10 years to construct & complete a Solar PV Energy development with a total site area of circa 81.9 hectares, to include, solar PV panels ground mounted on support structures, electrical transformer & inverter station modules, a substation, temporary construction compounds, internal access tracks, watercourse crossing infrastructure, security fencing, electrical cabling & ducting, interconnection cabling, CCTV & other ancillary infrastructure, drainage, additional landscaping & habitat enhancement as

required & associated site development works. The solar farm would be operational for 35 years. A Natura Impact Statement will be submitted with this application'

- 1.6. The site and its immediate surroundings remain as previously assessed. The environmental visual and technical context of the site has not significantly changed (save for specific updates appropriate to the scope of the amendments proposed) and the conclusions of the original application's assessments remain valid for the purposes of this amendment.
- 1.7. The purpose of this Statement is to set out the planning merit of the Proposed Amendment having regard to best practice guidance, relevant legislation and the applicable national and county planning policy framework. It should be read in conjunction with the documentation submitted as part of this amendment application. The application comprises the following;
- **Application Forms & Notices**
 - Press Advert
 - Site Notice
 - Landowner Consent Letters
 - **Volume 1**
 - Natura Impact Statement (updated)
 - **Volume 2**
 - Infrastructural Drawings
 - **Volume 3**
 - TA2: Ecological Appraisal
 - Appendix 2D: Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP)
 - TA4: Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment
 - TA6: Glint and Glare Assessment
 - TA7: Assessment of Acoustic Impact
 - Revised Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The Proposed Development is located in the townlands of Ballydonagh, Cloonineen, Skecoor, Kiltormer East and Graveshill within a relatively rural setting, approximately 9.5km south of Ballinasloe, 33km east of Athenry and 21km northeast of Loughrea. Comprising 26 fields of agricultural land primarily used for pastoral farming and bound by trees, hedgerows and post and-wire fencing. It lies at an elevation of approximately 71-96m AOD and covers a total area of c. 81.9 hectares across 2 sections of land.
- 2.2. The centre point of the development can be found at approximate Irish National Grid Reference (ITM) X 583549 Y 720440. Access to both parcels of land will be gained from existing access points off the L4301 which dissects the site.

Planning History

- 2.3. A review of Galway County Council's on-line planning records reveals that the planning history in the area relates primarily to established residential development located along the rural, road network, consisting mainly of one-off houses and agricultural related development.
- 2.4. As set out above under Planning Reference 2361049 was granted permission on 7/10/2024 for the Ballydonagh Solar Farm.
- 2.5. A further extension to Ballydonagh Solar Farm was consented on 08/07/2025 under Planning Reference 24/61749.

Surrounding Context

- 2.6. The surrounding context is predominately agriculture with pockets of forestry and peatland and punctuated by individual properties, farmsteads and ribbon development associated with the minor and regional road network. Fields are typically small to medium in scale and similar in character to the Application Site lands.
- 2.7. Settlements within the study area include Kiltormer, a small-town village circa 1.3km to the west, and Laurencetown situated c. 3.5km east of the Proposed Development. The Kilcrow River is located 1.7km southwest of the Application Site.
- 2.8. The local population are well served by a mix of national to local graded roads throughout the study area, including the M6, N65, R355, L84081, L4301 and other named and unnamed local roads.

3. THE PROPOSAL

3.1. The Proposed Development consists of an amendment to the previously consented solar farm (Planning Reference: 2361049). The proposed amendment seeks minor modifications to the Consented Development and are outlined below;

- Re alignment of the main entrance and access gate and the re alignment and widening of internal access tracks;
- Alteration of the boundary fence at the main entrance and at the northeast corner of the site, southern boundary;
- Removal of the consented 38 kV substation in Field 22 to facilitate the Gortnalug Loop in and out 110 kV substation and associated grid connection (110kV substation and grid connection will be a separate Strategic Infrastructure Development planning application);
- Updated PV table layout to accommodate the 110 kV substation and grid cable resulting in a reduction in PV table numbers from 3209 to 3120;
- Combined central inverters and MV transformers are replaced by separate string inverters and central MV transformers;
- Reduction of new overhead line separation areas arising from the removal of a section of the 110 kV overhead line to facilitate the substation grid connection;
- Inclusion of an additional badger sett buffer following the identification of a new sett during the updated Fossitt Habitat Survey; and
- Amendment of Condition Number 3a to extend the operational lifetime from 35 years to 40 years.

3.2. A minor update to the Ecological Assessment (EcA) Updated Glint and Glare Assessment (G&G), Assessment of Acoustic Impact (AAI), updated LEMP, updated Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with this application as standalone documents.

3.3. The proposed design (as amended) reflects a modest refinement of the previously consented scheme and is based on informed assumptions regarding the most likely configuration of panels and associated infrastructure.

3.4. It should be noted that with all solar technology, PV systems continue to evolve and improve in efficiency. While details are set out in this amendment application, it is anticipated that the

final infrastructure specifications will reflect the most efficient and commercially available technology at the time of construction. Any variations in configuration including adjustments to panel spacing angles or equipment arrangement will remain within the overall development envelope established by the extant permission and will not give rise to any materially different environmental or planning effects. To ensure Council approval of the final detailed design layout and elevations of non-substantive elements prior to construction, the applicant proposes the following pre- commencement condition:

“Prior to commencement of the development, full details of the final locations, design and materials to be used for the solar arrays, string inverters and central transformer shall be submitted to the local planning authority for agreement in writing.”

4. PLANNING POLICY AND CONSIDERATIONS

National & legislative framework

- 4.1. It should be noted in the first instance, the principle of solar development at Ballydonagh has already been established by virtue of the extant permission granted in 2024 (Planning Reference: 2361049). This amendment application does not revisit the principle of development but instead seeks approval for a number of minor design and operational refinements (as outlined in section 3).
- 4.2. The overarching planning policy framework that applied at the time of the original decision remains relevant and in the assessment of this application. There have been no material changes to regional or national renewable energy policy that would alter the acceptability of the development, and the core strategic direction at national level continues to support the delivery of solar energy infrastructure as part of Ireland's transition to a low carbon and secure energy system.
- 4.3. It should be noted however that at national and EU level there have been recent legislative updates since the original grant, notably the recent amendments to the Planning and Development Act and the transposition of elements of the revised Renewable Energy Directive RED III. These updates strengthen the policy support for renewable energy development.
- 4.4. The amendments to the Planning and Development Act introduce measures intended to streamline consenting processes for renewable infrastructure and reinforce the need for timely delivery of projects that contribute to climate and energy security objectives. RED III establishes increased binding renewable energy targets for 2030 and designates renewable energy projects and associated grid infrastructure as being in the overriding public interest. It also requires Member States to accelerate plan led and project level decision making for renewable energy developments.
- 4.5. In this regard, the Proposed Amendment aligns with these provisions and is further supported by the updated legislative framework introduced by RED III and the recent amendments to the Planning and Development Act. The amendment application qualifies as a RED III application and will be subject to the completeness check and accelerated decision-making procedures now required for renewable energy projects.
- 4.6. In this regard, the scope of the amendment is clearly defined, and all necessary supporting information has been provided to ensure that the application meets the completeness requirements.
- 4.7. The updated advertisements and notice requirements for this amendment application have been fully satisfied in accordance with the RED III Directive. The development description associated with the site notice clearly identifies the proposal as a RED III amendment to an

existing solar permission, ensuring transparency across public notices and press advertisements.

Local Policy Context

- 4.8. In the context of County Galway, the applicable local planning policy framework has not changed since the original grant of permission. The Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028 remains the operative plan and continues to provide strong support for appropriately sited renewable energy projects including solar energy developments. The strategic emphasis on decarbonisation, climate resilience, rural diversification and increased renewable energy output remains unchanged. The Proposed Amendment is therefore in accordance with the local policy framework and does not give rise to any new or additional policy considerations beyond those already assessed and accepted under the extant permission.
- 4.9. Given the limited and minor nature of the amendments now proposed, and in the absence of any substantive change in the planning policy context, it is not necessary to revisit the full suite of regional national or local policy considerations assessed previously. The Proposed Amendment does not conflict with any current policy provisions and remains aligned with the established policy support for renewable energy generation as determined in the extant permission. The refinement of internal design elements does not alter the overall scale or intent of the consented development and continues to align with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

5. PLANNING MERIT

- 5.1. This section of the PES will seek to evaluate the Planning Merit and potential impacts associated with the Proposed Amendment in respect of the key planning considerations and relevant planning policy contained within the Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028.

Principle of Development

- 5.2. As stated above, the Local Planning Authority has already accepted the principle of Solar development at this location by virtue of the extant permission Ref: 2361049. This proposal seeks permission for minor modifications which are not considered to alter the overall scheme. These minor design amendments introduce no new or significant negative impacts from the originally permitted development.
- 5.3. The original grant of planning permission (Ref: 2361049), as detailed in the Decision Notice dated 7/10/2024 and its associated conditions, remains in place with the exception of particular conditions to which this Proposed Amendment relates.

Condition No. 3(a)

- 5.4. As part of this amendment application the applicant seeks to regularise the operational lifespan of the solar farm to 40 years. This reflects both the design life of the updated technology proposed and the operational period that was previously accepted during the assessment of the original application.
- 5.5. It is understood that a procedural discrepancy occurred at the decision stage whereby the Notification of Decision issued on 27 August 2024, and the Planner's Report dated 26 August 2024 both referred to a 40-year operational period, while the Final Grant of Permission dated 7 October 2024 incorrectly inserted a 35-year period under Condition 3(a). This inconsistency appears to be an administrative error in the Council's processing of the decision. The amendment now sought therefore seeks to reinstate the period that was intended and assessed as acceptable under the original decision. It is understood however that the description of development both at submission and RFI stage remained at 35 years.
- 5.6. A 40-year lifespan is consistent with contemporary solar technology and reflects standard industry expectations for modern PV infrastructure. In this context the requested correction does not give rise to any material change in environmental or planning effects and we respectfully request that Condition 3(a) be amended to specify an operational period of 40 years as part of any future decision notice.

Natura Impact Statement

- 5.7. A Stage 2 Natura Impact Statement had previously been undertaken for the consented Ballydonagh Solar Farm and has now been updated to consider the Proposed Amendment. The updated NIS provides a full assessment of the potential for the amended design to affect the integrity of European sites within 15km of the Application Site, having regard to their conservation objectives and their ecological structure and function. The updated assessment confirms that baseline conditions on the site have not materially changed since the earlier surveys and that the same European sites remain relevant for consideration.
- 5.8. The Application Site is not located within or directly adjacent to any European designated site. Within the 15km Zone of Influence there are seven European sites, comprising four Special Areas of Conservation and three Special Protection Areas as detailed below;
- River Shannon Callows SAC;
 - Glenloughaun Esker SAC;
 - Redwood Bog SAC, Ardgraique Bog SAC;
 - River Suck Callows SPA;
 - River Little Brosna Callows SPA; and
 - Middle Shannon Callows SPA.
- 5.9. Having regard to the above, ecological or ornithological connectivity has only been identified with four sites: River Shannon Callows SAC, River Suck Callows SPA, River Little Brosna Callows SPA and Middle Shannon Callows SPA. No hydrological connectivity exists with any European site. The remaining three SACs have been screened out on the basis that they contain terrestrial qualifying habitats with no functional linkage to the Application Site.
- 5.10. The updated NIS concludes that, although pathways for potential ornithological connectivity exist with the three SPAs and ecological connectivity may exist for otter associated with the River Shannon Callows SAC, the characteristics of the Application Site, the nature of the Proposed Amendment, the distance to the sites and the absence of suitable habitats mean that no significant effects will arise for any qualifying features. This conclusion is reached in the absence of mitigation and reflects the scientific evidence presented regarding the core foraging ranges, habitat preferences and sensitivity of relevant bird species, as well as the absence of hydrological pathways to the SAC.
- 5.11. The NIS also confirms that, with the inclusion of the integral design measures and standard construction best practice already incorporated into the consented development, the amended layout and associated works will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. No Stage 3 Appropriate Assessment is therefore required.

- 5.12. It is noted that condition 6(a) of the extant permission states;

'All Mitigation Measures identified within the Natura Impact Statement and the Construction Environmental Management Plan as received by the planning authority on the 5th September 2023 shall be implemented in full'.

- 5.13. In the context of this amendment application and the updated NIS now submitted, it may be appropriate that a similar condition be attached to any forthcoming grant of permission.

Ecological Impact Assessment

- 5.14. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) had previously been undertaken for the consented Ballydonagh Solar Farm and has now been updated to consider the Proposed Amendment. The updated EclA provides a full assessment of the potential for the amended design to affect the integrity of European sites within 15km of the Application Site, having regard to their conservation objectives and their ecological structure and function. It also assesses if the Proposed Amendment would have any significant effects for local wildlife.
- 5.15. An updated Fossitt Habitat survey was undertaken in October and November 2025 which was in accordance with Fossitt habitat survey guidance. The number of habitats identified remained the same as the 2023 survey.
- 5.16. The updated assessment confirms that baseline conditions on the site have not materially changed since the earlier surveys and that the same European sites remain relevant for consideration.
- 5.17. In addition to the SPA's and SAC's which are mentioned in the NIS section above, there are also three Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and one proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) located within 5km of the Application Site. When considering the terrestrial nature of the sites and that they are all over 2.5km from the Application Site, no connectivity exists. In conclusions, the Proposed Amendment will have no adverse effects on any of the features of the identified pNHA and the three NHAs.
- 5.18. It was found that baseline conditions had not deviated significantly from previous conducted in 2022; therefore, further surveys recommended as part of the relevant mitigation measures are provided within this report and have not been altered specifically.
- 5.19. It is considered that the short-term disturbance from the Proposed Amendment **will not be significant on any ecological features** if the best practice and recommended mitigation are implemented. With the implementation of the Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP), **the potential of the site to support local wildlife will increase.**

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.20. The original application is supported by an LVIA which provides an assessment of the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development on the existing landscape and visual amenity within a 5km radius study area of the Application Site.
- 5.21. The landscape within the 5km study area falls within County Galway. Galway County Council has undertaken an updated landscape character assessment in June 2022. The Galway Landscape Character Assessment has classified the landscape of the County into Landscape Regions further sub-divided into Landscape Character Types and finally Landscape Character Units (LCU's). The study has also identified landscape character rating, landscape value rating and landscape sensitivity of these LCT's.
- 5.22. The Application Site and most of the study area falls within the **Central Galway Complex Landscape LCT 6**.
- 5.23. With regards to the issue of 'Landscape', the previously submitted LVIA confirms:

*"The Proposed Development will introduce a new renewable energy feature into a small portion of the rural landscape of the Central Galway Complex Landscape LCT 06... This will result in very localised **Moderate adverse** effects on the characteristics of the immediate LCT reducing to **Minor adverse** across the wider extent of this LCT as the Proposed Development becomes contained within the surrounding landscape."*

(Paragraph 1.159 of Technical Appendix 1, Volume 3 – LVIA).

- 5.24. With regards to 'Visual Impact', the LVIA confirms:

"Given its scale, the Proposed Development's potential visibility across the study area was found to be largely limited to those receptors within the immediate area (2km). Several factors contribute to the limited visibility of the Proposed Development including the relatively low-lying lands of the Application Site, presence of mature tree cover and hedgerow and surrounding agricultural lands within the immediate landscape...The potential visual effects of the Proposed Development upon these assessed viewpoint receptors range from Major to Major/Moderate to Moderate (High-Medium) and Major/Moderate to Moderate (Medium) and Moderate to Moderate/Minor (Low) and None with some of these slightly reducing as the mitigation planting becomes established by Years 5-10."

(Paragraphs 1.234 and 1.238 of Technical Appendix 1, Volume 3 - LVIA)

- 5.25. It is understood that following the assessment of the extant permission the case officer report states the following;

'The Planning Authority having considered the submitted LVIA in conjunction with the submitted plans/photomontages etc. and having carried out a site inspection are satisfied that the proposed development would not unduly impact on the receiving landscape'

- 5.26. Having regard to the extent of the amendments proposed which do not fundamentally alter the visual perception of the solar farm it is considered that the conclusions and recommendations proposed as part of the accepted landscape and visual impact assessment remain relevant in the assessment of this amendment application.
- 5.27. The Landscape and Environmental Management Plan (Figure 1.11a-e) was updated to reflect the revised layout and has been submitted as part of this amendment application.

Archaeology and Architectural Heritage

- 5.28. In relation to Archaeology and Architectural Heritage, it is considered that the Proposed Amendment is modest in nature and does not alter the footprint, extent, or character of ground disturbance previously assessed under the Archaeology and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AAHIA) submitted with the extant permission. The AAHIA confirmed no recorded sites within the RMP, RPS or NIAH fall within the application site and confirmed that no direct impacts on known archaeological or architectural heritage features would arise.
- 5.29. The AAHIA also concluded that the site carries a moderate potential for sub surface remains, which required a pre-construction archaeological programme which is required under no. Condition 5. The updated AAHIA submitted at further information stage for the extant permission reassessed intervisibility, cartographic sources and test trenching results. The Local Authority accepted its findings subject to the agreed conditions. This is reflected in the CO report as stated below;

'The Planning Authority note the details as submitted and the detailed report received from the Archaeology section of the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage and subject to conditions would be satisfied that the applicant has adequately addressed item 1 of the further information request'

- 5.30. Given that the current proposal does not introduce any new areas of excavation, does not increase the depth or extent of groundworks, and does not intensify development beyond that already permitted, it is concluded that the amendment would not give rise to any change in archaeological or architectural heritage effects. The conclusions and mitigations outlined in the approved AAHIA remain valid. The further information submission as part of the extant permission addressed matters associated with conditions 5(I) to 5(III) through the updated Archaeological Impact Assessment, additional cartographic review and test trenching report. These works allowed the Department and Local Authority to fully consider the archaeological potential of the site and to recommend appropriate pre-development archaeological requirements.

Access to the Site

- 5.31. It is considered that the Proposed Amendment does not materially alter the overall access strategy previously approved under Planning Reference 2361049. Two existing access points on the L4301 will continue to serve the development, and the surrounding road network

remains unchanged. The amendments relate only to the realignment of the main entrance and access gate and widening of internal access tracks and boundary fencing at the entrance and northeast corner. These amendments are localised in nature and do not introduce any new access points or materially alter construction or operational traffic movements.

- 5.32. The CTMP submitted as part of the extant permission confirms that the L4301 is a rural single carriageway road with a typical width of approximately 3.2 metres, no pedestrian facilities, no public lighting. These baseline conditions remain unchanged. Minor temporary works are required to maintain safe access for construction vehicles. At Site 1 this includes limited hedgerow realignment and trimming and the relocation of 3 telephone poles to achieve compliant visibility splays of 160m x 2.4m as already accepted under the extant permission.
- 5.33. A pre and post construction condition survey of the L4301 between Site Access 2 and the L8408 will be undertaken, and any construction related damage will be repaired. This approach formed part of the accepted mitigation for the extant permission and remains appropriate for the amended development.
- 5.34. The applicant acknowledges conditions 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the extant permission, including submission of an updated Traffic Management Plan and Construction Waste and Demolition Management Plan, maintenance of sightlines, management of construction hours and ensuring adjoining roads remain free of debris.
- 5.35. Internal access tracks will be realigned in places to reflect the updated panel layout and inverter strategy. Track design and construction remain unchanged, with unpaved tracks in compacted crushed rock retained throughout. These tracks will continue to serve construction, operational access and eventual decommissioning. No new areas of excavation beyond those already permitted are introduced.
- 5.36. Construction is still anticipated over a 9-month period, with HGV and staff movements unchanged from the original assessment. Peak construction traffic remains within the parameters previously assessed and accepted, and mitigation measures, including restricted delivery hours and coordinated scheduling, continue to apply. Routine operational traffic is considered to be negligible.
- 5.37. In summary, the Proposed Amendment does not materially alter access arrangements, traffic volumes or road safety considerations. All works fall within the scope of the extant assessment, and the existing CTMP framework and planning conditions remain valid.

Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (OCEMP)

- 5.38. An Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan was previously submitted and assessed as part of the extant permission. That OCEMP established the construction-phase framework for environmental management, including archaeological and cultural heritage protection. Condition 5 of the existing permission requires that the final CEMP identifies all archaeological and cultural heritage constraints and sets out the predicted impacts and required mitigation to be implemented throughout site preparation and construction.

- 5.39. The Proposed Amendment does not create any additional ground disturbance, do not expand the permitted development footprint and do not alter the nature or depth of excavation already assessed. The applicant acknowledges the requirement under condition 5 in respect of the final CEMP to identify all known constraints and setting out the agreed protection, monitoring and mitigation measures to be applied throughout site preparation and construction.

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment

- 5.40. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment (FRA-DIA) had been carried out for the extant permission, and it has since been updated to take account of the revised layout as part of the Proposed Amendment.
- 5.41. The FRA-DIA identifies the baseline geological and hydrological conditions of the site and surrounding area, to assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases, to identify the risk of flooding at the proposed Application Site and to recommend mitigation measures where appropriate.
- 5.42. The PFRA flood map present areas within the Application Site identified as being at risk of fluvial flooding events along the West Kiltormer Stream and where the East Loughturk Watercourse converges with the West Kiltormer Stream. These areas are classed as Flood Zone A and B, however the majority of the Application Site is within Flood Zone C.
- 5.43. Only the 'Water Compatible Development' infrastructure has been located in areas that are shown on the PFRA map to be within Flood Zones A and B. The panels will be pile driven and have a minimum height of at least 0.8m above ground level (AGL).
- 5.44. In addition to fluvial and coastal flood risk, the PFRA map also indicates areas of flood risk due to pluvial sources. This indicated a number of locations where surface water flooding was predicted, with panels only located in these areas. However, on examination of the topographical survey, the majority is only minimal ponding of up to approximately 0.3m, however the eastern section of Field 22 (north east) that will have ponding up to approximately 1.7m deep. Where pluvial flooding is possible, only solar panels and access tracks have been proposed. The panels will be pile driven and raised above ground level by a minimum height of 0.8m (2.0m in the eastern section of Field 22) and therefore any ponding will occur below the panels with a sufficient freeboard.
- 5.45. It is proposed to construct multiple infiltration drains/soakaways with a total storage volume of approximately 66.9m³ within the Application Site.. This is greater than the volume of additional runoff generated as a result of the impermeable buildings (19.0m³). It is therefore considered that this not only adequately mitigates the increase in flow rates as a result of the minor increase in impermeable area but provides a minor improvement.
- 5.46. The SuDS features will be implemented during the construction phase of the Proposed Amendment, and the swales will be planted with vegetation to protect against soil erosion.

They will be maintained throughout the lifespan of the Proposed Amendment, generally in accordance with the recommendations in the appropriate guidance

- 5.47. The FRA and DIA has therefore demonstrated that the Proposed Amendment will **not increase flood risk** from the Application Site during the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases. The Proposed Amendment is therefore considered to be acceptable in planning policy terms.

Glint and Glare Assessment

- 5.48. A Glint and Glare Assessment had previously been produced for the extant permission which has now been updated to consider the Proposed Amendment. The assessment considers impact on ground-based receptors such as roads and residential dwellings.
- 5.49. A 1km survey area around the Application Site is considered adequate for the assessment of ground-based receptors, whilst a 30km study area is chosen for aviation receptors. Within 1km of the Application Site, there are 63 residential receptors, including one residential area, and 59 road receptors which were considered.
- 5.50. Nine residential receptors and 11 road receptors were dismissed as they are located within the no reflection zones and therefore, will not be impacted upon by the Proposed Amendment. There are two aerodromes within 30km of the Proposed Amendment, none of which require a detailed assessment due to their size and orientation in relation to the Proposed Amendment.
- 5.51. Following an initial assessment, rail receptors were scoped out as assets that will be impacted upon from the Proposed Amendment as no rail receptors fell within the 1km study area. The assessment concludes that glint and glare impacts were high in two residential receptors and four road receptors, medium in one residential receptors, low in five residential receptors and in one road receptors.
- 5.52. Mitigation is required in order to screen the impacts views into the Proposed Amendment from residential and road receptors. The mitigation measures include native hedgerow to be planted / infilled and subsequently maintained to a height of at least 3m as shown on the LEMP submitted within this application.
- 5.53.
- 5.54. The effects of glint and glare and their impact on local receptors has been analysed in detail and there is predicted to be **Low** and **None** impacts, and therefore **No Significant Effects**.

Acoustic Impact Assessment

- 5.55. An Acoustic Impact Assessment had previously been undertaken for the consented Ballydonagh Solar Farm and has now been updated to consider the Proposed Amendment. The report provides an acoustic assessment of the amended site layout of the consented

Ballydonagh Solar Farm (Planning Ref: 23/61049) in terms of operational and construction impacts. It also considered a cumulative setting with the neighbouring revised Ballydonagh Extension Solar farm and proposed Gortnalug Substation

- 5.56. The conclusion remains the same as the consented Ballydonagh Solar Farm in that the results show that overall predicted sound levels, individually and cumulatively, will meet proposed daytime, evening and night-time limits determined from relevant guidance,

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1. The Proposed Amendment represents a refinement of the consented solar farm and does not materially alter the previously assessed environmental effects of the extant permission. The technical updates submitted with this application confirm that the minor design changes do not give rise to adverse impacts and remain fully within the parameters already accepted under the extant permission. All established mitigation and management measures continue to apply save for minor updates the LEMP to ecological baseline which have been fully considered as part of this amendment application.
- 6.2. The technical review undertaken confirms that these minor internal layout adjustments do not give rise to any new or different environmental, landscape, traffic, heritage, ecological or hydrological effects beyond those already assessed and accepted as part of the original permission. All previously approved mitigation and management measures remain fully applicable and ensure that the development continues to operate within the parameters established under the parent consent.
- 6.3. The extension of the operational life to 40 years reflects standard industry practice for contemporary solar infrastructure and ensures that the permitted scheme can operate for its full technical and economic lifespan. As the amendment introduces no adverse effects and preserves the overall form, scale and benefits of the permitted development, it remains fully aligned with the national, regional and local policy support for renewable energy.



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