

Judith Williams

From: Matthew Phillips
Sent: 06 July 2015 15:14
To: planning_admin
Subject: FW: P/2015/0396 and P/2015/0397

Welsh Government response to both of the above planning applications

From: Lane, Jon (SF - NRF - Environment - LNF) [mailto:Jon.Lane@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK]
Sent: 06 July 2015 15:13
To: Matthew Phillips
Subject: RE: P/2015/0396 and P/2015/0397

Dear Matthew.

Thank you for your contacting the Land Use Planning Unit for technical ALC assistance in the context of TAN6, Annex B.6. Also, I thank you for your patience in awaiting my response. Please find below a summary of findings:

Documents considered:

1. An ALC field survey was carried out on 10 June 2014 by Will Weaver of Bateman North. The assessment includes both sites in one report. The report gives an opinion the site should be considered ALC Subgrade 3b.
2. The only approved system for grading agricultural land in England and Wales is the *Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land* (MAFF 1988). There is no evidence to suggest the survey by Will Weaver of Bateman North has been carried out according to these guidelines. As such the ALC survey cannot be validated at this time.

Technical Advice:

3. The Land Use Planning Unit have completed a desk assessment for the sites and determined that there is a low probability of BMV on both. Predicted subgrade 3b. The sites are located close to a site which was surveyed in accordance with the MAFF 1988 guidelines. This was identified as subgrade 3b and was on very similar soils to the sites subject of this enquiry.

BMV Policy:

Planning Policy Wales paragraph 4.10.1 states:

In the case of agricultural land, land of grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Agricultural Land Classification system (ALC) is the best and most versatile, and should be conserved as a finite resource for the future. In development plan policies and development management decisions considerable weight should be given to protecting such land from development, because of its special importance. Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a should only be developed if there is an overriding need for the development, and either previously developed land or

land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable, or available lower grade land has an environmental value recognised by a landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation which outweighs the agricultural considerations. If land in grades 1, 2 or 3a does need to be developed, and there is a choice between sites of different grades, development should be directed to land of the lowest grade.

I would be pleased to discuss this or clarify any part.

Kind regards

Jonathan Lane
Land Use & Minerals Advisor
Land Use Planning Unit
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From: Matthew Phillips [<mailto:Matthew.Phillips@wrexham.gov.uk>]

Sent: 23 June 2015 15:08

To: Lane, Jon (SF - NRF - Environment - LNF)

Subject: RE: P/2015/0396 and P/2015/0397

Jon,

Would 21 days be sufficient?

Yes it is the same report. No idea why they have submitted 2 applications, the only thing separating one site from the other is a hedge, but it wouldn't be unusual in a large solar farm scheme for hedges to bisect a site. It is the same applicant for both sites although they have served notice on different landowners so that may explain it.

Regards

Matthew

From: Lane, Jon (SF - NRF - Environment - LNF) [<mailto:Jon.Lane@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK>]

Sent: 23 June 2015 14:43

To: Matthew Phillips

Subject: RE: P/2015/0396 and P/2015/0397

Matthew.

Many thanks for sending these through.

We will need to undertake a full ALC desk assessment for the sites and also validate the ALC reports submitted.

Can I ask when you require a response by please? Also, is it the same applicant for both applications? Have you any idea why they have been submitted as 2 separate applications?

Regards

Jon

From: Matthew Phillips [<mailto:Matthew.Phillips@wrexham.gov.uk>]
Sent: 23 June 2015 14:32
To: Lane, Jon (SF - NRF - Environment - LNF)
Subject: FW: P/2015/0396 and P/2015/0397

Jon,

Apologies for not adding some attachments to my previous email – including site plans. There are two very brief agricultural land classification appraisals but they don't seem to go into a huge amount of detail.

Regards

Matthew

From: Matthew Phillips
Sent: 23 June 2015 14:09
To: 'Lane, Jon (SF - NRF - Environment - LNF)'
Subject: P/2015/0396 and P/2015/0397

Jon,

I am dealing with two applications for large solar farms on agricultural land in Wrexham. The sites adjoin each other and much of the supporting information submitted is common to both applications. The site areas of the applications are as follows: P/2015/0396 – 10.2ha and P/2015/0397 – 12.6 ha, giving a cumulative development area of 22.8ha.

The Planning Statements suggest the land is Grade 3b but there doesn't seem to be anything to support that. So my questions to you would be:

- i) Do you agree that the both sites a 3b;
- ii) If not, would a full appraisal be needed?
- iii) What would Welsh Government's position be regarding the loss of agricultural land for solar farms?

Regards

Matthew

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