

Muskerry Solar Farm

Planning Permit Applications PA2202005 and PA2302025

Use and development of a solar energy facility and utility installation (battery and powerline), display of business identification signage and removal of native vegetation



Officer Assessment Report
Development Approvals & Urban Design

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Summary

Key information	Details
Application Numbers	PA2202005 (Campaspe) PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo)
Received:	21 December 2022 (PA2202005 Campaspe) 16 January 2023 (PA2302025 Greater Bendigo)
Applicant:	Edify Energy Pty Ltd c/- Mr Tim Doolan NGH Consulting
Planning Scheme:	Campaspe (PA2202005) and Greater Bendigo (PA2302025)
Land Address:	Various land parcels in Muskerry, generally located off Dwyer Lane and Muskerry East School Road
Project Name:	Muskerry Solar Power Station
Project Description:	<p>Use and development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 megawatt (MW) solar energy facility • 200MW/800MWh battery energy storage system (BESS) • Transmission line connection into the existing 220kV power distribution network that crosses through the Campaspe side of the site • Site office and car park • Access and entry tracks • Buildings including operations and maintenance • High voltage substation • 2.5m high chain link fencing around the perimeter of the facility • Site access established from Tooleen Angle Road and Dwyer Lane • 8.828ha native vegetation removal (total): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Campaspe: 6.797ha including 41 large trees ○ Greater Bendigo: 2.029ha including 4 large trees
Development value:	\$844,983,000 (PA2202005 Campaspe) \$844,983,000 (PA2302025 Greater Bendigo)
Zone:	Farming Zone (FZ and FZ1)
Overlays:	Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO1) Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO3)
Particular Provisions:	Clause 52.05 - Signs Clause 52.06 – Car Parking Clause 52.17 – Native Vegetation Clause 53.13 - Renewable Energy Facility (Other than wind energy facility)
Why is a permit required?	<p>Clause 35.07 – Farming Zone:</p> <p>35.07-1 – Use of land for a renewable energy facility (other than Wind energy facility) (PA2202005 and PA2302025).</p> <p>35.07-1 – Use of land for a Utility installation (PA2202005).</p> <p>35.07-4 – Construct a building or construct or carry out works associated with a Section 2 use of Clause 35.07-1 (PA2202005 and PA2302025).</p> <p>Clause 42.01 – Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 1</p> <p>Clause 42.01 – Construct a building or carry out works (PA2302025).</p> <p>Clause 52.05 – Signs:</p>



Key information	Details
	<p>52.05-14 – Display of business identification signage (PA2202005 and PA2302025).</p> <p>Clause 52.17 – Native Vegetation</p> <p>Clause 52.17 - A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead native vegetation (PA2202005 and PA2302025).</p>
Responsible Authority:	<p>Under Clause 72.01-1, the Minister for Planning is the responsible authority for a planning permit application for the use or development of land associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy generation facility with an installed capacity of 1 megawatt or greater • Utility installation used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transmit or distribute electricity ○ Store electricity if the installed capacity is 1 megawatt or greater
Referral authorities/ Notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause 66.02-2 - Secretary to DEECA (Recommending referral authority) (PA2202005 and PA2302025). • Clause 66.02-4 – AusNet (Determining referral authority) (PA2202005 and PA2302025). • Clause 66.04 – Catchment Management Authority (Recommending referral authority) and Secretary to DEECA (Determining) (PA2302025). • Clause 66.04 – Secretary to DEECA (Determining referral authority) (PA2302025). • 66.02-7 – WorkSafe (Determining Referral Authority) (PA2202005).
Notice Requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owners and occupiers of land within 1km of the subject site • Campaspe Shire Council • Greater Bendigo Council • Environment Protection Authority (EPA) • Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) • Country Fire Authority (CFA) • First Peoples - State Relations • Emergency Management Victoria • Taungurung Land and Waters Corporation (TLaWC)
Submissions:	Three (3): GMW, EPA and CFA
Objections:	<p>Seven (7) total:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PA2202005 (Campaspe) – 3 objections ○ PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) – 4 objections
CHMP	CHMP 17383
Delegation	26 March 2024

Table 1. Summary of application details

Background

1. The key milestones in the process of the application were as follows:

Milestone	Date
Pre-application meeting (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and NHG Consulting)	24 November 2020
Application lodgement	21 December 2022 (PA2202005 Campaspe) 16 January 2023 (PA2302025 Greater Bendigo)
Further information requested	23 January 2023 (PA2202005 Campaspe) None (PA2302025 Greater Bendigo)
Further information received	8 March 2023 (PA2202005 Campaspe)
Public notice period	At least 14 days. The statutory declaration was provided on 02 November 2023.
Section 57A amendment received	24 January 2024
Decision Plans	PA2202005 (Campaspe): Advertised plans prepared by NGH Consulting and Terra Solutions, titled “Edify Energy - Muskerry Solar Farm” and dated 16/12/2022. PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) – Advertised plans prepared by NGH Consulting and Terra Solutions, titled “Edify Energy - Muskerry Solar Farm” and dated 16/12/2022.

Table 2. Application milestones

2. The subject of this report is the decision plans.
3. The assessment was informed by consultant reports including:
- Planning Report, version 1.1, prepared by NGH and dated 8 March 2023.
 - Noise Impact and Constraint Assessment, R2, prepared by Spectrum Acoustics dated 14 January 2022.
 - Bushfire Assessment and Management Plan, version 1.1, prepared by NGH Consulting and dated 17 October 2022.
 - Ecological Assessment, version 2.4, prepared by NGH Consulting, dated January 2024.
 - Glint and Glare Assessment, version 2 prepared by Accent Environmental and dated 21 November 2022.
 - Flood Impact Assessment prepared by Alluvium dated 6 January 2022.
 - Traffic Impact Assessment prepared by Amber Traffic & Transportation Direction dated 28 October 2022.
 - Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Accent Environmental dated 3 June 2022.
 - Bushfire Assessment and Management Plan, version 1.1 prepared by NGH Consulting and dated 17 October 2022.



Site Description

4. The subject site is located north of the Axedale-Toolleen Road, approximately 33 kilometres (km) east of Bendigo, in the localities of Muskerry and Toolleen, Victoria. Refer to Figure 1 below.
5. The site is approximately a 496.21 hectare (ha) in size and is split over two local government areas (LGA) as follows:
 - Campaspe Shire Council LGA (north of Dwyer Lane)
 - Greater Bendigo City Council LGA (south of Dwyer Lane)
 - Refer to Figure 2 below.
6. The site has road frontages to Axedale-Toolleen Road, Murphy's Lane, Muskerry East School Road, and Toolleen Angle Road.
7. The site has a gently undulating topography and consists of agricultural land which is currently used for sheep grazing. The site contains dams, patches of native vegetation and scattered trees. There are two small creeks flowing through the site: Burke Creek and Back Creek.
8. The northern side of the site (Campaspe) intersects an AusNet easement containing an existing 220kV transmission line which will be the point of connection for the proposed utility installation.
9. The relevant parcels of land are:
 - 5~D\PP3243
 - 1\LP113736
 - 8~D\PP3243
 - 2\TP120975
 - 1\TP120975
 - 4\TP120975
 - 12D~D\PP3243
 - 12C~D\PP3243
 - 2~2\PP3801
 - 1~2\PP3801
 - 4~2\PP3801
 - 2\PS704656
 - 7B~D\PP3243
 - 1\TP892631
10. There are various electricity and water easements on title, however no works are proposed over the easements.
11. There is a Section 173 agreement registered on title 2\PS704656 (Greater Bendigo). The s173 agreement restricts:
 - the subdivision of Lots 1 and 2 of PS704656W; and
 - the use of Lot 2 of PS704656W as a dwelling.
12. The proposed solar power station does not conflict with the s173 agreement.
13. The subject site is located within an area of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity. Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) 19941 has been approved for the construction of the solar farm.

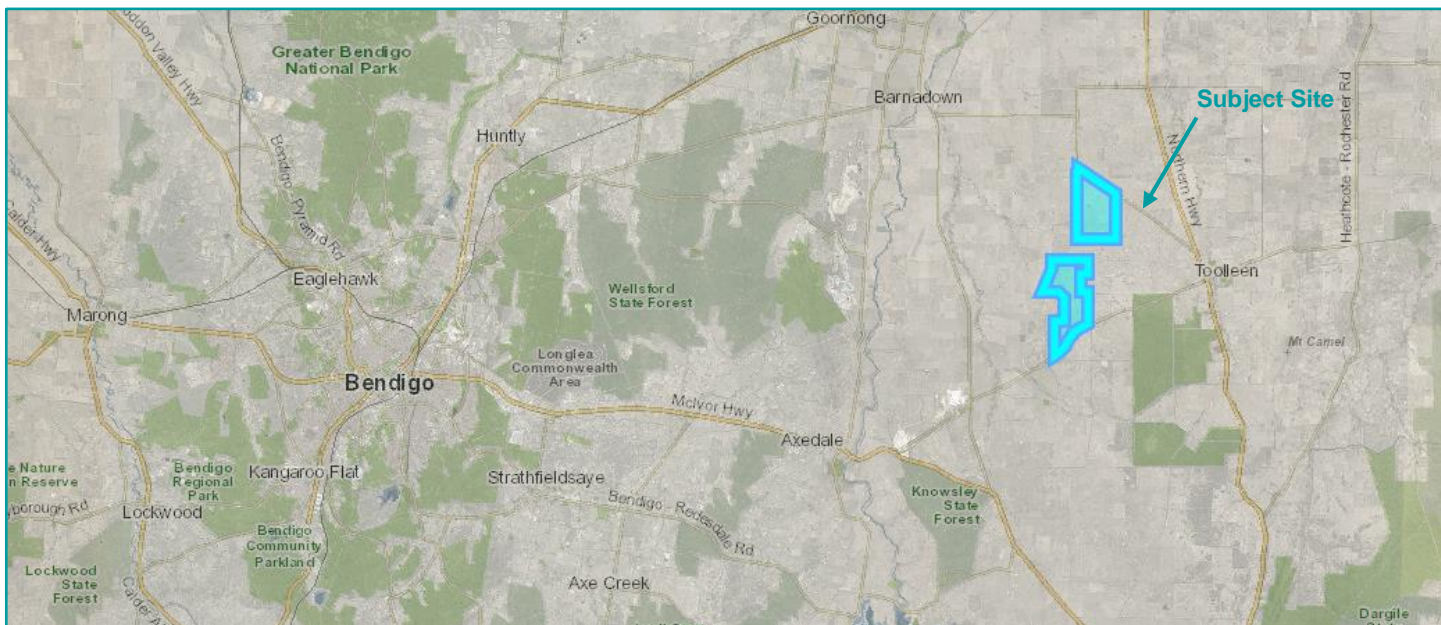


Figure 1: Subject site and broader surroundings

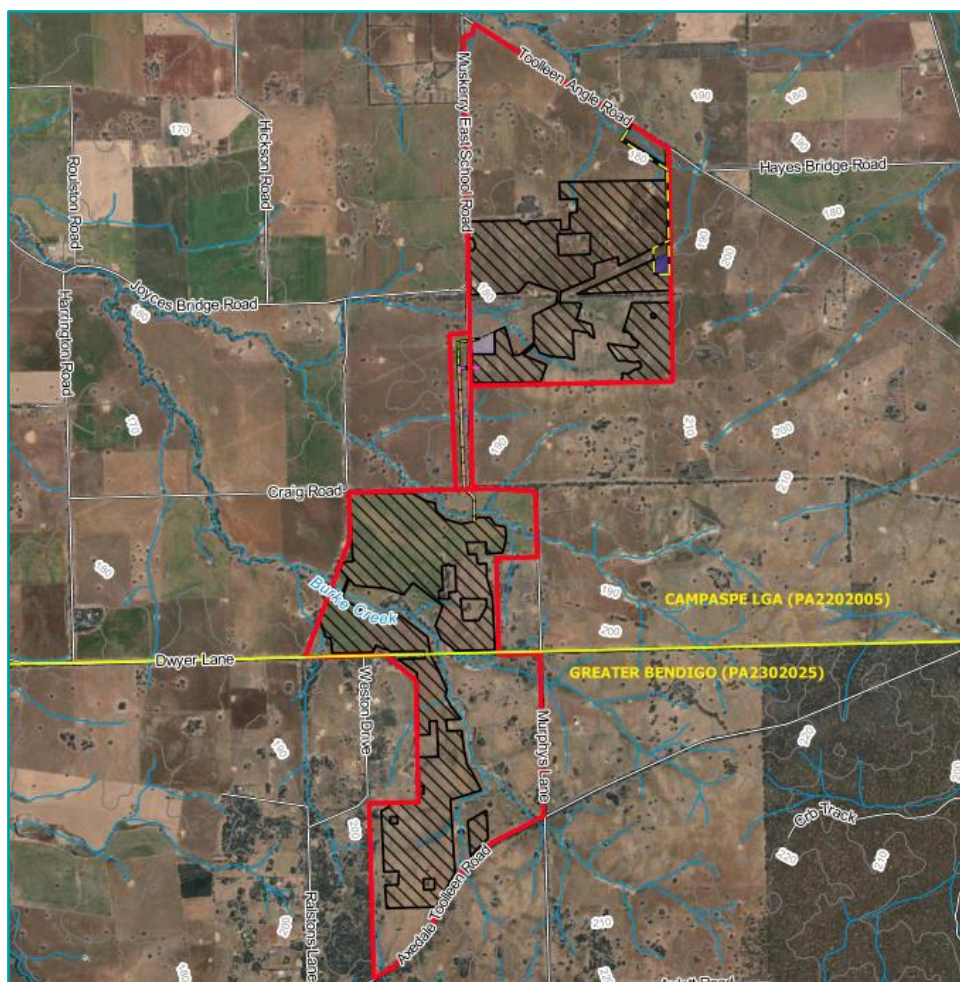


Figure 2: Subject site showing LGA boundaries.

Site Surrounds

14. The subject site is located approximately 33km east of Bendigo in central Victoria.
15. The surrounding land is mostly used for agriculture including scattered dwellings. The surrounding area is located in the Farming Zone (FZ).
16. There are a number of dwellings and sensitive receivers within a 5km radius of the proposed solar power station. These dwellings are shown on Figure 3 below.

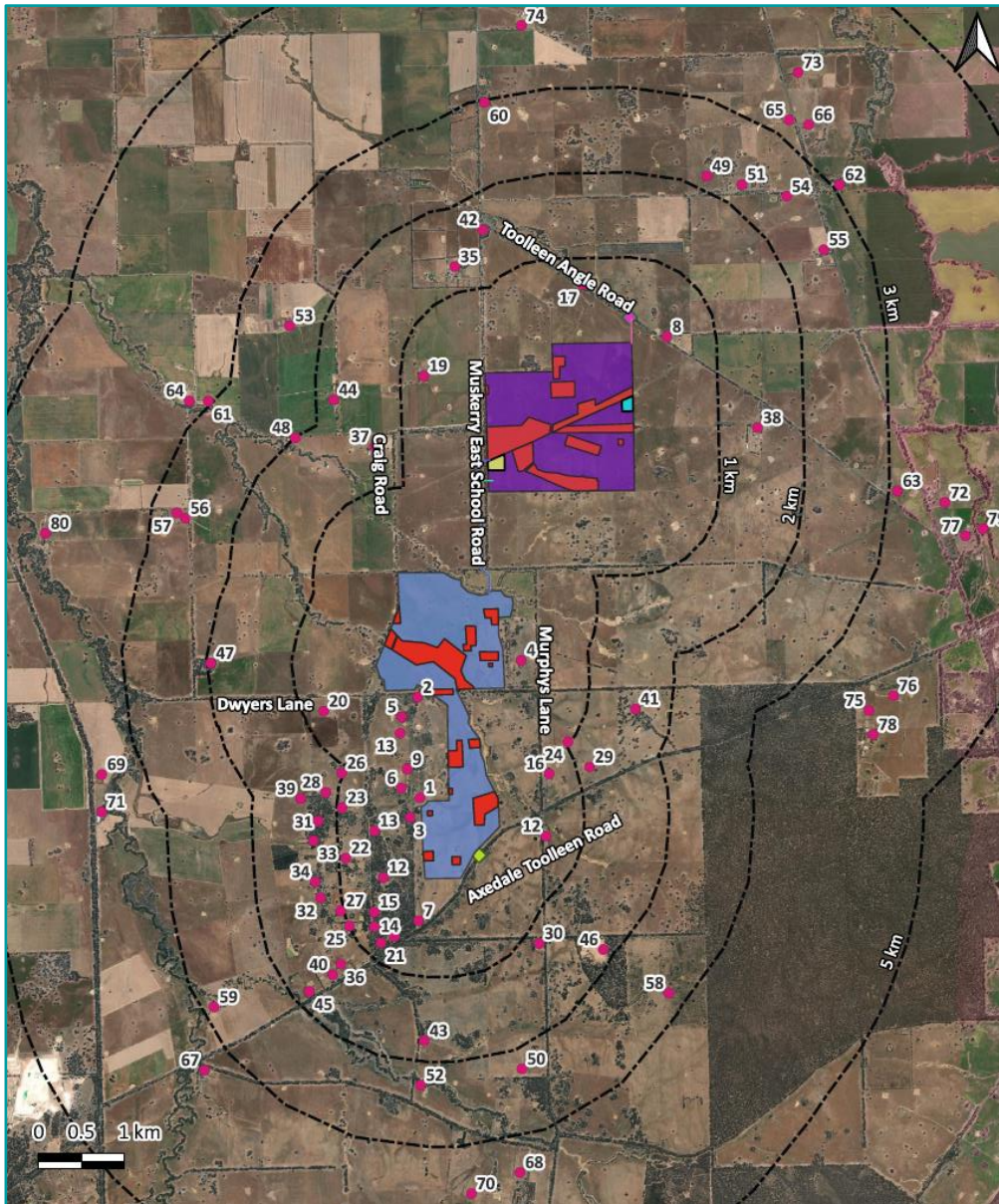


Figure 3: Location of dwellings within 5km of the site

17. Planning application PA2202005 (Campaspe) seeks planning approval for the use and development of a solar energy facility and utility installation (battery and powerline), display of business identification signage and the removal of native vegetation.
18. Planning application PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) seeks planning approval for the use and development of a solar energy facility, display of business identification signage and the removal of native vegetation.
19. The proposed solar power station features the following components:
 - 250MW solar energy facility:
 - Array blocks typically 3MVA and 6MVA
 - Panels mounted on tilt trackers (tilt from -55 to +55 degrees) to collect and convert solar energy into electricity
 - Installed on piles to sit above ground level
 - Battery Energy Storage System (BESS):
 - Electricity storage capacity of up to 800MWh (i.e., 200MW power output for four hours)
 - Lithium-ion batteries in modular enclosures or shipping container style enclosures (approximately 12m in length each)
 - The final battery arrangement will be determined by the technology chosen
 - High voltage substation
 - Substation footprint approximately 100m x 100m
 - Safety fencing to separate it from the solar arrays
 - Final location to be determined with detailed design
 - Connection into the existing AusNet 200kV network
 - Business identification signage of approximately 3 square metres at the site entry.
 - Site office and car park
 - Access and perimeter tracks
 - Buildings including operations and maintenance
 - Removal of 8.828 of native vegetation. Broken down by application:
 - Greater Bendigo (PA2302025): 2.029ha including 4 large trees
 - Campaspe (PA2202005): 6.797ha including 41 large trees
 - Roadworks (site entry, road and intersection upgrades)
 - Associated buildings and works:
 - Operations buildings
 - Creek crossings
 - Fencing and landscaping
 - Lighting and CCTV
 - Security gates
20. An overview of the project elevations are shown in Figures 4 to 7.

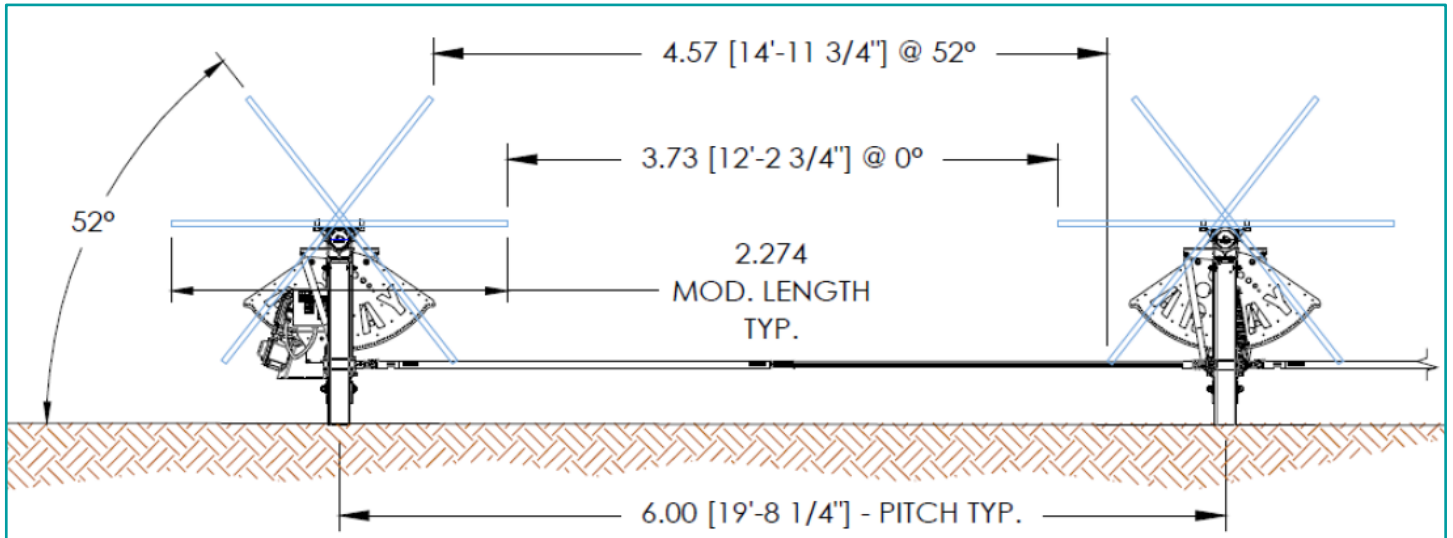


Figure 4: Elevation of the solar arrays

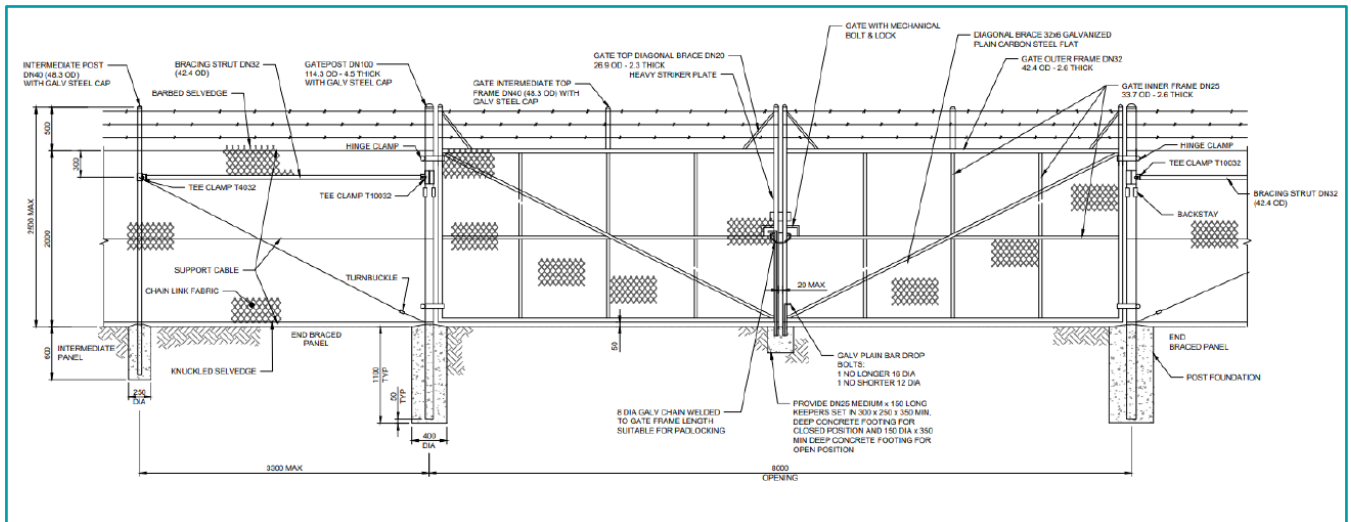


Figure 5: Elevation of the security gates

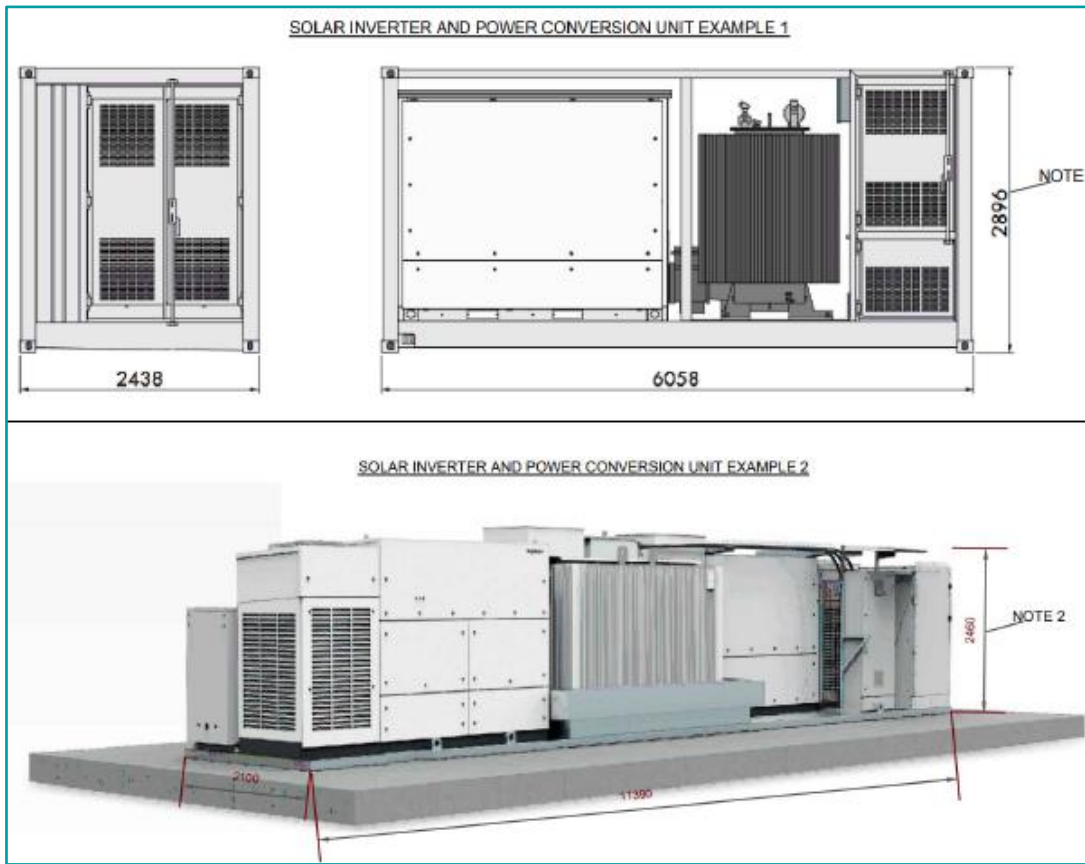


Figure 6: Elevation of the two solar inverter and conversion unit types

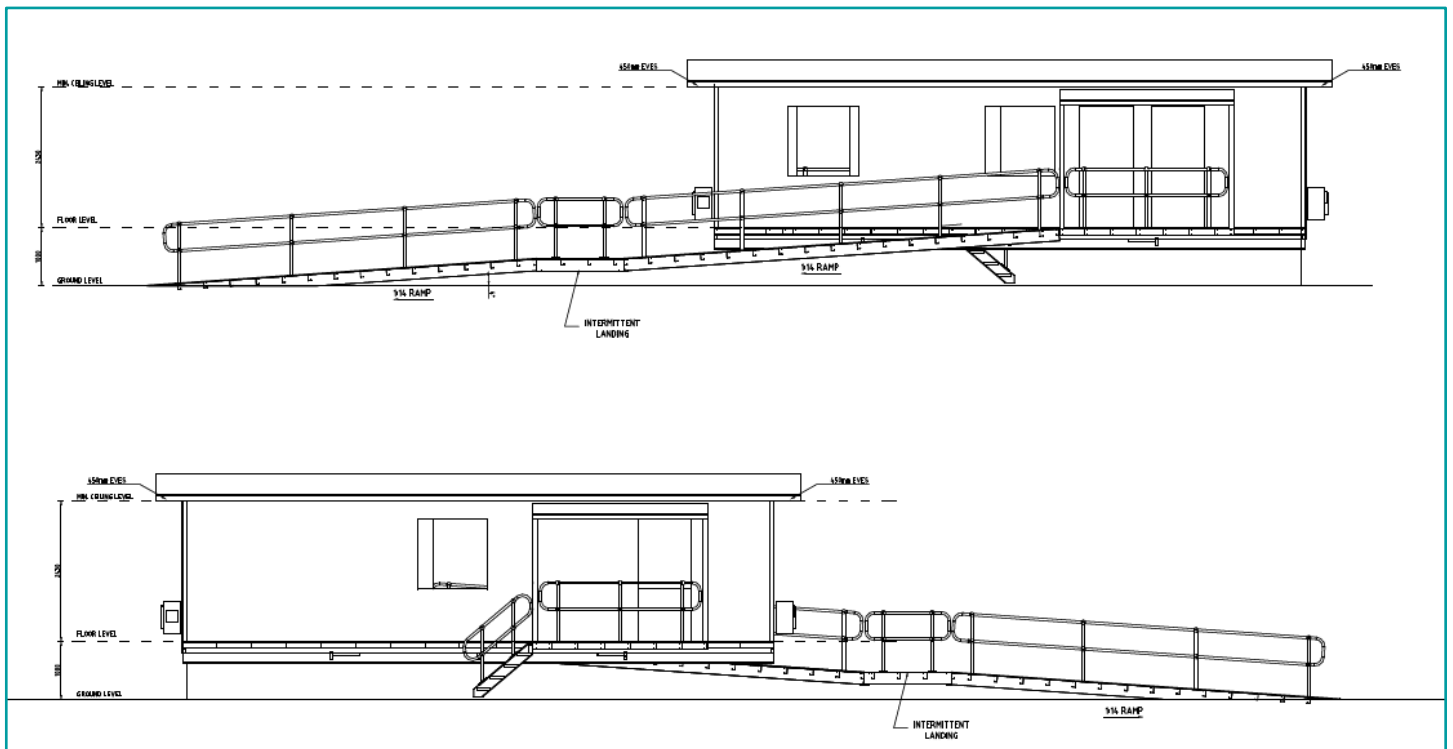


Figure 7: Elevations of the control office



Planning Policy Framework

21. The Planning Policy Framework (PPF) provides the broad policy direction within the Victoria Planning Provisions. The planning principles set out under the PPF are to be used to guide decision making on planning proposals across the state. The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

- Clause 12 – Environmental and Landscape Values
 - Clause 12.01-1S – Protection of Biodiversity
 - Clause 12.01-1L - Protection of Biodiversity – Greater Bendigo (PA2302025 Greater Bendigo only)
 - Clause 12.01-2S – Native Vegetation Management
 - Clause 12.05-1S – Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Clause 13 – Environmental Risks and Amenity
 - Clause 13.01-1S - Natural Hazards and Climate Change
 - Clause 13.01-1L – Carbon Storage in Campaspe (PA2202005 Campaspe only)
 - Clause 13.02-1S – Bushfire Planning
 - Clause 13.05-1S – Noise Management
 - Clause 13.07-1S – Land Use Compatibility
- Clause 14 – Natural Resource Management
 - Clause 14.01-1S – Protection of Agricultural Land
 - Clause 14.01-1L-03 – Non-agricultural Land Use in Campaspe (PA2202005 Campaspe only)
 - Clause 14.01-2S – Sustainable Agricultural Land Use
 - Clause 14.01-2L - Sustainable Agricultural Land Use in Campaspe (PA2202005 Campaspe only)
 - Clause 14.02-1S – Catchment Planning and Management
 - Clause 14.02-2S – Water Quality
- Clause 15 – Built Environment and Heritage
 - Clause 15.01-6S – Design for Rural Areas
 - Clause 15.01-1L-01 – Landscaping Greater Bendigo (PA2302025 Greater Bendigo only)
 - Clause 15.01-1L-03 – Signs (PA2302025 Greater Bendigo only)
- Clause 17 – Economic Development
 - Clause 17.01-1S – Diversified economy
 - Clause 17.01-1R – Diversified Economy – Loddon Mallee North
 - Clause 17.01-1L – Diversified Economy – Greater Bendigo (PA2302025 Greater Bendigo only)
- Clause 18 – Transport
 - Clause 18.01-1S – Land Use and Transport Integration
 - Clause 18.02-4S – Roads
- Clause 19 – Infrastructure
 - Clause 19.01-1S – Energy Supply
 - Clause 19.01-2S – Renewable Energy
 - Clause 19.01-2R – Renewable Energy – Loddon Mallee North

Permit Triggers

A planning permit is triggered by the following clauses of the Greater Bendigo and Campaspe Planning Schemes:

Clause	Permit Trigger	Campaspe (PA2202005)	Greater Bendigo (PA2302025)
Farming Zone and Farming Zone (Schedule 1)			
Clause 35.07-1	Use of the land for the purpose of a Renewable energy facility (other than a Wind energy facility).	✓	✓
Clause 35.07-1	Use of land for the purpose of a utility installation (other than Minor utility installation and Telecommunications facility).	✓	✓
Clause 35.07-4	Construct a building or construct or carry out works associated with Section 2 use. Earthworks which change the rate of flow or the discharge point of water across a property boundary.	✓	✓
Environmental Significance Overlay (Schedule 1)			
Clause 42.01-2	Construct a building or construct or carry out works.	N/A	✓
Particular Provisions			
Clause 52.05-14	Display of a business identification sign less than 3m ² .	✓	✓
Clause 52.17-1	Remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.	✓	✓

Other Relevant Controls

Clause 44.06 – Bushfire Management Overlay

22. The southwestern part of the subject site for application PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) is subject to the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO). However, there is no permit trigger under the provisions of Clause 44.06-2, for the proposed use and development.

Clause 42.02 – Vegetation Protection Overlay

23. The southern boundary of the site for application PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) is affected by the Vegetation Protection Overlay Schedule 3- Roadside Remnant Vegetation (VPO3). The application proposes to utilise an existing farm access for emergency access which is located within the VPO3. However, there are no proposed impacts to vegetation within the VPO3, and therefore a permit is not triggered.

Clause 52.06 – Car Parking

24. Pursuant to Clause 52.06-6, car parking must be provided to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

Clause 53.13 – Renewable Energy Facility (other than Wind Energy Facility)

25. Pursuant to Clause 53.13-1, an application under any provision of the planning scheme to use or develop land for a renewable energy facility (other than a wind energy facility), must meet the requirements, as appropriate, contained in Clause 53.13-2.

Other Planning and Environmental Approvals

26. It is the proponent's responsibility to ensure all relevant approvals outside of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* are in place. However, comment is made on the following relevant legislation:

Environment Protection Act 2017 (EP Act)

27. The EP Act is a legislative framework for protecting the environment in Victoria from pollution and waste. At the centre of the EP Act is the 'general environmental duty', which requires any person in Victoria engaging in an activity that may risk harming human health and the environment from pollution and waste to minimise those risks, so far as reasonably practicable.

28. The applicant has advised that the proposed solar power station is not a scheduled activity under the EP Act and does not require works approval.

29. Additionally, preventative measures to reduce risks as far as reasonably practicable will be included within the Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to be prepared for the project. This will include a detailed risk assessment of likelihood and consequence for all activities on site. A condition to this effect has been included within the recommendations.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)

30. Under the EPBC Act, an action that has, will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on matters of national environmental significance, including nationally or internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities, and heritage places, must be referred to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment.

31. The submitted Ecological Assessment prepared by NGH Consulting, dated 27 February 2023 determined that no EPBC referral is required as impacts to EPBC ecological communities and habitat for threatened species are avoided.

Environment Effects Act 1978 (EE Act)

32. The *Ministerial Guidelines for Assessment of Environmental Effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978 (DSE 2006)* outlines the triggers for referral of a project to the Victorian Minister for Planning who will determine if an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) is required.

33. The submitted Ecological Assessment prepared by NGH Consulting, dated 27 February 2023 has outlined that the project does not trigger a referral under the EE Act. Thus, the proponent has not referred the project.

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act)

34. Under the FFG Act a permit is required to take, kill, injure, disturb or collect threatened species or protected flora species from public land.

35. The Ecological Assessment prepared by NGH Consulting, dated 27 February 2023 confirms that no threatened FFG communities are present on site.



Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (AH Act)

- 36. The AH Act seeks to avoid adverse effects to Aboriginal cultural heritage values as far as reasonably practicable. Where adverse effects cannot be avoided, measures must be implemented to minimise and mitigate adverse effects.
- 37. CHMP 17383 has been prepared for the project and was approved by the Taungurung Land and Waters Council on 13 December 2021.

Referrals and Notice

38. The application was referred to the following groups:

Referral/ Notice	Provision/ Clause	Organisation	Response Received (date)	Applies to Application No.
<i>Section 55 Referral - Recommending</i>	Clause 66.02-2 - To remove, destroy or lop native vegetation in the Detailed Assessment Pathway as defined in the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation.	Secretary to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action – Loddon Mallee Region	21 April 2023 and 21 February 2024	PA2202005 and PA2302025
<i>Section 55 Referral- Determining</i>	Clause 66.02-4 – To construct a building or construct or carry out works on land within 60 metres of a major electricity transmission line (220 Kilovolts or more) or an electricity transmission easement.	The relevant electricity transmission authority (AusNet)	No response received	PA2202005 (Campaspe)
<i>Section 55 Referral- Determining</i>	Clause 66.02-7 – To use land for an industry, utility installation or warehouse where a fire protection quantity is exceeded under the Dangerous Goods (Storage and Handling) Regulations 2012.	The Victorian WorkCover Authority (WorkSafe)	3 April 2023 (PA2302025) 11 April 2023 (PA2202005)	PA2202005 and PA2302025
<i>Section 55 Referral- Recommending</i>	Schedule to Clause 66.04 – Referral of permit applications under local provisions - Schedule section 5.0 of Schedule 1 to Clause 42.01 (ESO)	Catchment Management Authority	12 April 2023	PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo)
<i>Section 55 Referral- Determining</i>	Schedule to Clause 66.04 – Referral of permit applications under local provisions - Schedule section 5.0 of Schedule 1 to Clause 42.01 (ESO)	Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	21 April 2023 and 21 February 2024	PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo)



Secretary to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action – C/- Loddon Mallee Region

39. Pursuant to Clause 66.02-2 (Native Vegetation) of the Greater Bendigo and Campaspe Planning Schemes, any application “*To remove, destroy or lop native vegetation in the Detailed Assessment Pathway as defined in the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP, 2017)*” must be referred to the Secretary to the DEECA.
40. Pursuant to the schedule to Clause 66.04 (Referral of permit applications under local provisions) all applications pursuant to Schedule section 5.0 of Schedule 1 to Clause 42.01 (ESO) must be referred to the Secretary to DEECA.
41. The proposed 2.029ha (Greater Bendigo) and 6.797ha (Campaspe) and of vegetation removal triggers the Detailed Assessment Pathway as defined in the Guidelines (*DELWP, 2017*).
42. The Secretary to DEECA was referred the applications on 27 March 2023. Under delegation from the Secretary, the DEECA Loddon Mallee Region requested further information on 21 April 2023 as the applications did not adequately address the information requirements of Clause 52.17 (Native Vegetation).
43. On 24 January 2024 the applicant provided updated material addressing DEECA Loddon Mallee’s further information request, via a Section 57A amendment to the application. This included changes to the amount of vegetation to be removed, and additional clarification in the form of an amended Ecological Assessment.
44. DEECA Loddon Mallee provided conditional support on 21 February 2024. The conditions relate to:
 - Notification of permit conditions
 - Protection of native vegetation to be retained
 - Native vegetation offsets
 - Construction Environment Management Plan

These conditions have been included in the recommendations.

The Victorian Workcover Authority (WorkSafe)

45. Pursuant to Clause 66.02-7 (Industry, Utility Installation or Warehouse) of the Greater Bendigo and Campaspe Planning Schemes, an application to use land for an industry, utility installation or warehouse where a fire protection quantity is exceeded under the Dangerous Goods (Storage and Handling) Regulations 2012 must be referred to the Victorian WorkCover Authority (WorkSafe).
46. WorkSafe was referred the applications on 27 March 2023.
47. On 3 April 2023 and 11 April 2023, WorkSafe advised that they do not object to the granting of a permit for either application.

Catchment Management Authority (North Central Catchment Management Authority)

48. Pursuant to the schedule to Clause 66.04 (Referral of permit applications under local provisions), all applications pursuant to Schedule section 5.0 of Schedule 1 to Clause 42.01 (ESO) must be referred to the Catchment Management Authority.
49. North Central Catchment Management Authority was referred application PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) on 27 March 2023.
50. On 12 April 2023, the North Central Catchment Management Authority advised that they do not object to application PA2302025, subject to conditions relating to:
 - Buildings and works being set back 30m from all waterways
 - Maintaining existing flow paths on site
 - Erosion Management Plan
 - Infrastructure to be constructed 300mm above the applicable 1% AEP flood level
 - Open style fencing allowing the passage of water through the site

Conditions to this effect have been included in the recommendation for application PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo).

Notice

51. In accordance with Section 52(1) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (P&E Act), notice of the application was given for a period of 14 days by letter and/or email to:

- Section 52(1)(a) of the P&E Act:
 - Owners and occupiers of land with 1km of the subject site
- Section 52(1)(b) of the P&E Act:
 - Greater Bendigo Council
 - Campaspe Shire Council
- Section 52(1)(d) of the P&E Act:
 - Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
 - First Peoples - State Relations
 - Emergency Management Victoria
 - Country Fire Authority (CFA)
 - Taungurung Land and Waters Corporation (TLaWC)
 - North Central Catchment Management Authority
 - Goulburn Murray Water

Objections and Submissions

52. The applications received a total of 6 objections and 5 submissions:

- PA2202005 (Campaspe): 3 objections and 5 submissions
- PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo): 4 objections and 2 submissions

The submissions and objections are summarised in the table below:

Application	Objection/ Submission	Name/ Organisation	Concerns/Issues Raised
PA2202005 (Campaspe)	Objection	[REDACTED]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No net community benefit • Loss of agricultural land • Visual impact and neighbourhood character • Flora and fauna impacts • Glint and glare
PA2202005 (Campaspe)	Objection	[REDACTED]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate community consultation • Does not benefit local labor market • Loss of agricultural land • Impacts on cultural heritage • Impacts on mental health
PA2202005 (Campaspe)	Submission	Campaspe Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No objection, subject to a condition requiring the existing road network being maintained/renewed
PA2202005 (Campaspe)	Submission	Goulburn-Murray Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No objection, subject to conditions relating to construction techniques for sediment control, construction within 30m of waterways and wastewater generation.



Application	Objection/ Submission	Name/ Organisation	Concerns/Issues Raised
PA2202005 (Campaspe)	Submission	North Central CMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection, subject to the same conditions mentioned above in their s55 referral for PA2302025.
PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo)	Objection	[REDACTED]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity impacts Removal of trees and vegetation Visual impact Glare Property values
PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo)	Objection	[REDACTED]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic implications to narrow roads Effectiveness of the vegetation screening and whether it will be maintained for the life of the project
PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) and PA2202005 (Campaspe)	Objection	[REDACTED]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual impact Property values
PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo)	Objection	[REDACTED]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property values Traffic and associated noise and dust Visual impact Glare Impacts to flora and fauna
PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) and PA2202005 (Campaspe)	Submission	EPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection
PA2302025 (Greater Bendigo) and PA2202005 (Campaspe)	Submission	CFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection, subject to conditions

DTP Officer Response to Objections

53. An officer assessment relating to matters of consultation, traffic, visual impact, glint and glare, vegetation and biodiversity impacts and impacts on agricultural land is detailed in later sections of this report. All other matters raised by the objectors are considered below:

Property Values

54. Consideration of property values is not included within the decision guidelines of the Schemes and as such, cannot be considered in the assessment and determination of the project.

Net Community Benefit

55. As explained throughout this report, it is considered that the proposed solar power station will benefit the long-term interest of all Victorians by:

- Producing clean energy, offsetting approximately 521,000 tonnes of carbon emissions per year;
- Aiding peak energy needs, which are critical to the Victorian power system's security;
- Diversify income and increase revenue to ancillary services such as food, lodging and tourism for the local area during construction;



- Create jobs and employment opportunities, both during the construction and operation of the facility;
in accordance with the purpose of Clause 53.13 (Renewable Energy Facility (Other than Wind Energy Facility)).
56. Overall, DTP submits that the matters raised in the objections and submissions which are relevant to the planning assessment are suitably addressed by the application, subject to the recommended conditions.



Key Policy Issues

Planning Policies

57. The planning scheme contains policies and controls that guide the assessment of solar energy facilities. These are found in the state and local planning policies, the relevant zone and overlays, and other relevant provisions. The assessment below addresses the relevant sections of the planning scheme while having regard to the matters which must be considered in accordance with section 60 of the Act.
58. The key issues for assessment are:
- Policy context
 - Amenity impacts in terms of noise and vibration, light spill, glint and glare, and electromagnetic interference
 - Landscape character and visual amenity
 - Traffic and transport
 - Environment and biodiversity
 - Economic impact on agricultural land
 - Signs

Policy Context

59. The proposal is consistent with the relevant planning policies which supports the transition and provision of renewable energy, diversification of service industries for future economic growth, supports the creation of jobs and skilled workforce while protecting the environment and agricultural land.

Municipal Planning Strategy


60. Clause 02.02 outlines the Campaspe Shire Council's vision as contained within their Council Plan is to be a "...*strong, supportive, vibrant and sustainable community*". The Council Plan seeks to achieve this vision by addressing key themes relating to strong and engaged communities, resilient economy, healthy environment, balanced services and infrastructure and responsible management. The Council Plan also seeks to support its land use objective of "*Sustainable use of land, which encourages population growth whilst ensuring the viability of farming and industry, and development which consolidates and respects the historical built environment*". The proposal would be consistent with the vision and objective for the Shire.
61. Clause 02.02 outlines the Greater Bendigo's Council's vision to be the *World's Most Liveable Community*. The proposal is consistent with the following aims of Council:
- *Effectively respond to new and emerging issues including adaptation to climate change.*
 - *Be increasingly self-sufficient in energy generation, food and water production, and generally have a lighter impact on the environment.*
 - *Have a strong economy that supports job growth, attracts visitors, and is diversified.*
 - *Plan and facilitate development and infrastructure projects that increase liveability and pride of place.*

Planning Policy Framework

62. Clause 12 (Environmental and Landscape Values) focuses on the protection of ecological systems, native vegetation, biodiversity, and identified environments or landscapes. The applications support the objectives of Clause 12 by:
- Where possible, infrastructure has been sited to avoid impacts to native vegetation. This includes the retention of trees in unmade road reserves and on roadsides as much as possible for canopy connection for the Brush-tailed Phascogale (Clause 12.01-1L).
 - The proposed footprint has avoided habitat zones in Muskerry South on Axedale-Toolleen Road, Habitat Zone 5.



- The application is supported by an avoid and minimise statement. Offsets will be secured for the native vegetation that is proposed to be removed (Clause 12.01-2S).
 - The proposal avoids impacts to waterways, riparian flora and fauna and wetlands, by providing a 30m buffer to all creeks (Clause 12.01-1L).
63. Clause 13 (Environmental Risks and Amenity) seeks to:
- Strengthen the resilience and safety of communities by adopting a best practice environmental management and risk management approach.
 - Identify, prevent and minimise the risk of harm to the environment, human health, and amenity.
 - Identify and manage the potential for the environment and environmental changes to impact on the economic, environmental or social wellbeing of society.
 - Prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change (emphasis added).
64. The proposed solar farm appropriately responds to environmental risks and protects amenities. The site has been developed in accordance with the CFA's Guidelines for Renewable Energy Facilities (CFA 2023 (the CFA Guidelines) to appropriately respond to bushfire risks (Clause 13.02-1S). Noise requirements in accordance with the EPA Noise Protocol have been met (Clause 13.05-1S) and offsite impacts have been avoided (Clause 13.07-1S) (discussed in sections below).
65. Clause 14 (Natural Resource Management) seeks to "assist in the conservation and wise use of natural resources including energy, water, land, stone and minerals to support both environmental quality and sustainable development" and "ensure agricultural land is managed sustainably, while acknowledging the economic importance of agricultural production".
66. The subject site is located on agricultural land that is currently used for grazing. The applicant has advised that the proposed solar farm will have limited impacts on the agricultural viability of the land due to the proposed construction measures and there will be continued growth of pasture after the construction of the solar farm is completed. Additionally, the proposed solar farm will have no impact on the ability of surrounding property owners to operate, nor will it impact on the agricultural sector in the wider region.
67. The applicant has advised that when the solar farm is decommissioned, there would be no likely adverse impact on the agricultural potential of the land and that measures to manage any decline in soil fertility would need to be addressed as part of the future site rehabilitation. Conditions have been included in the recommendations requiring the rehabilitation of the land back to its prior condition after the solar farm ceases operations.
68. Clause 15 (Built Environment and Heritage) states that the role of planning is to "recognise the role of urban design, building design, heritage and energy and resource efficiency in delivering liveable and sustainable cities, towns and neighbourhoods." The proposed facility supports this statement by providing essential energy resources to support Victoria's net zero emissions target by 2050.
69. Clause 17 (Economic Development) seeks to provide for a strong and innovative economy, where all sectors are critical to economic prosperity, by:
- Improving access to jobs closer to where people live; and,
 - Supporting rural economies to grow and diversify.
70. The proposal solar energy facility meets the objectives of Clause 17 by creating up to 350 jobs during construction and 10 during the operation of the facility.
71. Clause 19 (Infrastructure) seeks to:
- *To facilitate appropriate development of energy supply infrastructure*
 - *Support the development of energy facilities in appropriate locations where they take advantage of existing infrastructure and provide benefits to industry and the community.*
 - *Support transition to a low-carbon economy with renewable energy and greenhouse emission reductions including geothermal, clean coal processing and carbon capture and storage.*
 - *Facilitate renewable energy development in appropriate locations.*

- 
72. The proposed solar energy facility will provide benefits to the broader community and is estimated to generate approximately 612,000 MWh in the first year, the equivalent to supplying over 93,000 households with renewable electricity. The proposed BESS will assist the delivery of power during peak times to the network to meet community demand for energy needs.
73. Therefore, the proposal is consistent with state, regional and local planning policies that contributes to Victoria's transition to a low carbon economy through the development of renewable energy facilities.

Farming Zone

74. Clause 35.07 (Farming Zone (FZ)) seeks to provide for the use of land for agricultural purposes and for non-agricultural uses that do not adversely affect the use of the land for agriculture, encourages the retention of productive agricultural land and promotes the retention of rural employment to support rural communities.
75. Having regard to the relevant decision guidelines at Clause 35.07-6, the proposed use and development is an appropriate outcome in the FZ as follows:
- The facility is situated near the existing 220kV power distribution network located within the existing electrical transmission easement that crosses through the northern section of the subject site. This minimises impacts on existing agricultural uses and makes use of existing infrastructure.
 - The proposal has considered agricultural land use in the surrounding area, within the site and in the future. It will not impede agricultural production to surrounding farmers as a solar energy facility is a relatively low-impact use. Further, considering the site's agricultural potential, while conducive to limited agricultural pursuits including the potential for a sheep grazing enterprise to continue under the solar, it is not deemed highly productive. The design of the facility is such that decommissioning of the facility will ensure there will be no detrimental impact on the agricultural productivity of the site.
 - The proposed use and development of the site has considered potential fire hazards by siting the project area away from vegetation and incorporating fire safety design recommended by CFA guidelines such as 10m fire breaks, site access and appropriate separation.
 - The solar farm and ancillary infrastructure are appropriate for the site. The built form will be sufficiently setback from adjoining properties and will be mostly screened from view by existing vegetation on each boundary of the subject site. Furthermore, there is to be additional screen planting incorporated around the boundary of the subject land where there is limited native vegetation existing.
 - As stated in the application's Traffic Impact Assessment, during the operation, the facility is expected to generate 10 vehicle movements per day during the operational phase of development.

Environmental Significance Overlay

76. Clause 42.01-6 (Environmental Significance Overlay schedule 01) affects part of the subject land within the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme, where there is an existing creek line running through the land. A planning permit is required under this overlay for buildings and works within the overlay. There is no vegetation to be removed within the land affected by the overlay.
77. Schedule 01 to the ESO refers Waterway Protection, with the environmental objectives to be achieved include:
- *To protect and enhance Greater Bendigo's waterways and the land adjacent to them.*
78. The relevant decision guidelines for schedule 01 of the ESO include:
- Whether the development will have an effect on the quality and quantity of water.
 - Whether the development will prevent or reduce the concentration of the diversion of floodwater or stormwater.
 - Whether buildings that are not connected to sewer will increase wastewater generation.
 - Whether chemical contamination of soil and water may occur from the proposed development.
 - Whether the development assists in the protection of soils and prevention of erosion.

- Whether the development assists in the conservation of natural habitats and the preservation of native fauna, fish and other aquatic life.
- Whether the siting of buildings may create a future demand for tree lopping or removal.

79. The application is supported by an ecological assessment and a flood impact assessment which both included details of how the construction and operation of the proposed solar farm project will impact on the native environment, including water bodies and creeks.
80. There are no significant earthworks proposed as part of the proposal, and all stormwater runoff from the panels will be managed through an erosion management plan required through conditions on any permit issued. The risk of erosion or soil contamination associated with the project is considered low, due to the nature of the development being mainly prefabricated structures being installed on site. Minimal earth disturbance is required for the installation of the panels and associated infrastructure.
81. To ensure that all impacts on the native environment are appropriately managed, an environmental management plan (EMP) will be required through conditions on any permit issued, prior to the commencement of the development.
82. Overall, the proposed development which will be partially located within the ESO schedule 1 is considered to meet the guidelines of the overlay and will not have a detrimental impact on the waterway which is protected through the overlay.

Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) & Natural Hazard Management

83. Clause 44.06 (BMO) seeks to protect human life and strengthen community resilience to bushfire. Clause 13.02-1 Bushfire Planning sets out policy objectives and strategies for managing bushfire risk in Victoria.
84. The proposal's bushfire risk is acceptable subject to the implementation of recommendations from CFA including the preparation of a Fire Management Plan (included as a condition of the recommendation).
85. The majority of the subject site aside from a small section within the south-western portion of the site is not affected by the BMO.
86. The land affected by the BMO will include solar arrays, however a permit is not triggered for the proposed use and development of a utility installation within the BMO in accordance with Clauses 53.02-4 (Bushfire protection objectives) and 44.06-2. The entire site is within a bushfire prone area pursuant to Clause 13.02-1S.
87. The development has incorporated several fire safety design parameters including;
- Providing emergency vehicle access, including diagonal located access points.
 - Including a firefighting water supply with a required static supply to be provided near the BESS.
 - Including a fire break of 10 metres around the entire perimeter of the BESS.
88. The CFA was notified of the applications, and they did not object to the grant of a permit subject to conditions regarding fire safety including the preparation of a risk management plan, emergency management plan, fire management plan and the inclusion of emergency vehicle access and fire detection and suppression equipment.
89. DTP accepts the conditions offered by CFA and therefore it is recommended that these be included on any permit that is issued.
90. It is considered that, subject to conditions, the proposal's response to fire and bushfire safety will be appropriate.

Signage

91. The application proposes the display of a 3 square metre business identification sign, fixed to the frontage at the vehicle entry from Muskerry East School Road.

The signage is considered acceptable as it will be small, functional, and appropriately located to provide practical information to visitors. The sign will not cause undue impacts to visual amenity of the area or adjacent roads.

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Amenity Impacts

Noise and Vibration

The proposed solar energy facility is not expected to result in any unreasonable impacts due to noise or vibration while operating at full capacity.

92. The application is supported by an acoustic assessment prepared by Spectrum and dated January 2022 in line with EPA Publication 1826.4 Noise limit and assessment protocol for the control of noise from commercial, industrial and trade premises and entertainment venues, (previously the Noise from Industry in Regional Victoria).
93. The major noise emissions of the project are expected to be from the power conversion units (PCU's). required for the installation of the solar and battery.
94. The acoustic assessment identified 51 sensitive receptors within 3.5 km of the site, as depicted below in Figure 8 below.

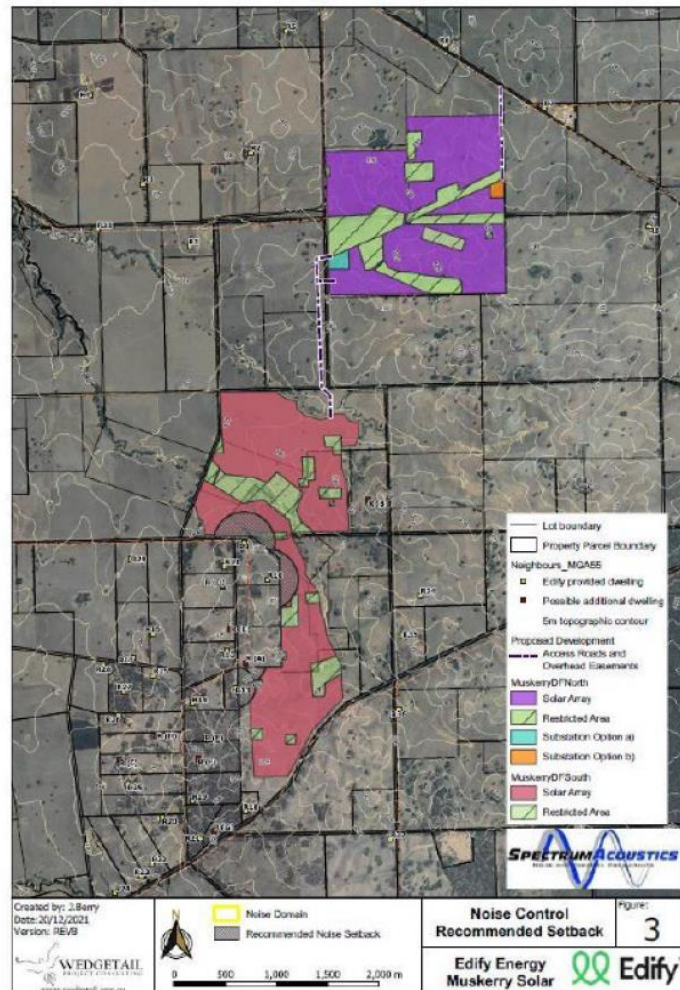
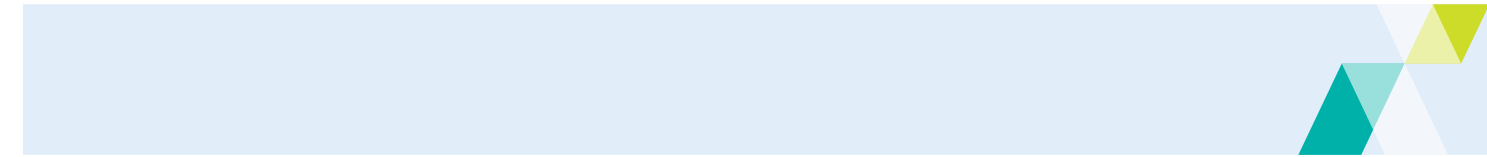


Figure 8 - Sensitive receptors mapped around the subject site.

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95. The relevant noise limits for each time period is as follows:
- Day 45 dB(A), Leq
 - Evening 37 dB(A), Leq
 - Night 32 dB(A), Leq
96. The acoustic assessment includes two layout options, one with a centralised battery and the other with a decentralised battery. The results for the two options have been included in the assessment with the results shown in Figures 1 and 2 of Appendix B.
97. The centralised battery option has been predicted to have a maximum noise level, of 20 dB(A) at all receptors and therefore meets the criteria.
98. However the decentralised option has shown there may be potential for noncompliance at receptors R9, R10, R12 and R51 under certain wind conditions.
99. To ameliorate the potential for this on compliance, the report has modelled setbacks for the decentralised battery by which case there would be no battery containers placed within the setbacks (approximately 240 m for R51 and R12 and 325m for R9 and R10). These setbacks are shown at Figure 3 of Appendix B of the acoustic report.
100. The final noise limits will be determined by the final layout and design, and can meet the noise criteria provided the setbacks are met.
101. It is noted that operational noise impacts will continue to be regulated by the EPA in accordance with EPA Publication 1826.4.
102. Officers recommend a permit condition to require the facility to always comply with the relevant noise guidelines and for an updated Predictive Noise Assessment to be provided with the final detailed plans in accordance with condition 3 (development plans).

Glint and Glare

103. The Solar Guideline requires the assessment of potential impacts to dwellings and roads within 1km of a proposed facility and any aviation infrastructure near a facility, including air traffic control towers or runway approaches.
104. The application includes a glint and glare assessment prepared by Accent Environmental, 2022a. The assessment found that there are:
- 80 potential point receptors up to a maximum distance of 4.169 km from the site (referred to within GlareGauge as observation points (OPs)) during the visual impact assessment (Accent 2022) of these receptors.
 - 15 route receptors (roads both made and unmade surrounding the development footprint)
 - One flight path (this was added as a precaution due to a small flight school at Knowsley Airfield, approximately 5 km south of the development footprint).
105. In summary and based on the report findings, the potential for the proposed solar farm array to cause glare to be experienced by observers on selected locations is considered as “No Glare” at all receptors.
106. Therefore no additional mitigation measures are required to be included as part of any decision issued for the application.

Heat Island effect

107. The Solar Guidelines state that where a solar farm is proposed adjacent to existing horticulture or cropping activities, a minimum 30m separation is appropriate, measured from the property boundary to any part of the panel array. The guidelines note that there is potential temperature increase by 3 to 4 degrees Celsius at solar energy facilities.
108. The proposal supporting documentation has included a justification as to why the sites context and location does not warrant a 30m setback between the boundaries, including that there are no orchards on adjacent or nearby properties and the arrays are setback a minimum 100 m from any nearby dwelling.
109. As such the proposal complies with the intent of the heat island guideline and no additional measures are required to be implemented through the decision.

Light spill

110. It is considered that the proposal will not cause unreasonable off-site amenity impacts from lighting. Where lighting would be considered necessary (winter or low light), lighting would be committed to the substation area and directed downwards to minimise light spill. Any permit that is issued should include a condition that requires light to not cause offsite impacts.

Smell

111. The proposed solar farm will not emit odour and will have a negligible amenity impacts in this regard. This outcome can be secured through the requirements of an Environment Management Plan prior to the use commencing.

Electromagnetic interference

112. It is considered that no unreasonable electromagnetic interference impacts will occur. Appropriate plans would be prepared prior to construction, showing measures to manage impacts associated with electrical equipment and all construction would be undertaken by appropriately qualified and licenced persons.

Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

112. The application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared Accent Environmental Pty Ltd and dated June 2022. The purpose of the LVIA is to assess the proposal against Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline (DELWP, 2019), in relation to the visual impact of a solar energy facility.

113. There is no part of the subject land which sits within a Significant Landscape Overlay.

114. The LVIA has concluded the following:

- The landscape is an undesignated landscape with few distinctive landscape characteristics.
- The landscape has a moderate ability to absorb change due to the existing catechistic such as powerlines and energy infrastructure.
- The magnitude of the landscape effects due to the proposal has been determined as **Medium**.
- There are 98 non-associated residences located within 5 km of the project site, 45 of the residences (R1-43, R45 and R47) were identified receivers requiring detailed visual assessment.
- The proposal site is visible from the nearest roads (Toolleen Angle Road and Axedale Toolleen Road and several smaller local roads). These roads are therefore also classified as visual receivers, requiring a detailed visual assessment. Roads in the vicinity of the project site are used for functional purposes (e.g., movement to a major highway, or access to farmland via local roads).
- The viewpoints for potential montages were chosen based on modelling of potential views based on topography and design of the proposal. 6 viewpoints (VP1-VP6) for analysis and photomontage. 14 additional viewpoints (VP7-VP20) were analysed but montages were not required.
- Visual impact ratings for the 6 viewpoints were:
 - VP1 had a visual impact rating of Moderate/High (representing a view from a residence).
 - VP2a had a visual impact rating of Moderate/High (representing a view from a residence).
 - VP2b had a visual impact rating of Low (representing a view from a road and residence).
 - VP3 had a visual impact rating of Moderate (representing a view from a residence).
 - VP4 had a visual impact rating of Moderate (representing a view from a road and residence).
 - VP5 had a visual impact rating of Very Low (representing a view from a residence).
 - VP6 had a visual impact rating of Low (representing a view from a residence).
 - All other viewpoints rated as Low/Moderate, Low, Very low or No impact.
- A minor/negligible amount of light spill from the proposal may be visible from residences, between the winter construction period between approximately 5 pm and 6pm (particularly R1, R2, R3, R7 and R8). There are no likely lighting impacts for roads or aircraft.



115. Based on the above findings, mitigation measures, including the reduction to the footprint of the solar farm and additional landscape screening were included in the final design of the project. The results for the post mitigation measures for each receptor have been included in sections 5.1 onwards of the LVIA.
116. Following the implementation of the mitigation measures all ratings were at Low/Moderate.
117. It is considered that the proposal will not result in any unreasonable visual impacts from private or public land subject to the mitigation measures in the LVIA be implemented in the final detailed design of the project. It is therefore recommended that a condition of the permit requiring the assessment and endorsement of a landscaping plan to confirm the proposed screen planting and future maintenance is included in the decision for the two applications.

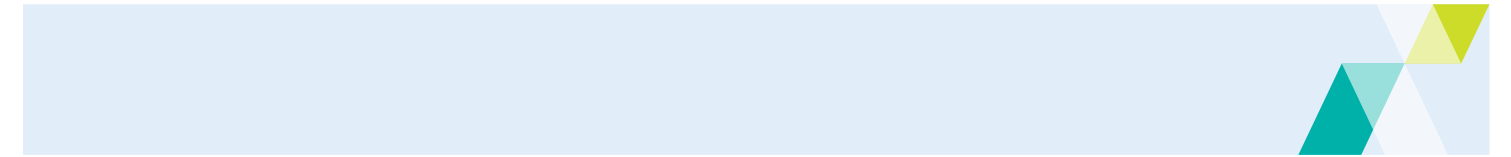
Traffic and Transport

118. The application is supported by a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) prepared by Amber Organisation Pty Ltd and dated 2022. The assessment considers the impacts of the proposed use and indicative design on local roads, traffic during construction and operation and the facility's anticipated car parking demand.
119. The TIA has concluded the following:
- o The site will generate up to 134 vehicle movements per day during peak construction times, including 70 truck movements and 64 light vehicle movements;
 - o The road network is able to accommodate the traffic generated by the development during the construction, operation and decommissioning stages. Further, the cumulative impacts of the site traffic with nearby developments are expected to be minimal;
 - o The intersection of Northern Highway and Toolleen-Angle Road is proposed to be provided with a Basic Right Turn and Basic Left Turn treatment to allow for safe vehicle movement from the arterial road network;
 - o Toolleen-Angle Road is proposed to be widened to a minimum width of 6.5 metres between Northern Highway and the site access to allow for simultaneous two-way vehicle movement;
 - o Some oversize and over mass vehicles will be required to deliver larger plant to the site. The vehicles are subject to specific road permits that will be applied for by the contractor once the dimensions of the load and the specific delivery vehicle are known; and
 - o In order to mitigate the impacts of the development during construction a CTMP will be prepared which should include the recommendations provided within the TIA.
 - o During the operation phase of the facility, there will be 10 full time staff on, which would equate to approximately 10 vehicle trips to and from the site each day.
120. DTP officers recommend that a permit condition be included requiring a TMP to be prepared and endorsed before the use and development commences. The TMP should identify the final access arrangements for the construction and operation phases of the development. This should be done to the satisfaction of the responsible authority in consultation with the council and DoT.
121. The proposed vehicle access, parking and traffic will be acceptable subject to conditions and the preparation of a TMP.

Environment and Biodiversity

Native Vegetation

122. The application is supported by an Ecological Assessment, prepared by NGH Consulting dated January 2024, which is version 2.4 of original document. The application proposal and amounts of native vegetation to be removed, was amended in January 2024 to address in principle concerns from DEECA.
123. The final vegetation amounts to be removed under each permit is as follows:
- o Greater Bendigo (PA2302025): 2.029ha including 4 large trees;
 - o Campaspe (PA2202005): 6.797ha including 41 large trees;
- With a total amount to be removed for the project being removal of **8.828** of native vegetation.



124. The proponent has made appropriate efforts to avoid and minimise the removal of native vegetation during the planning phase. The proponent's assessment of the avoid and minimise steps include:

- No native vegetation removal will occur in creek lines and erosion gullies.
- Trees in unmade road reserves and on roadsides will be retained as much as possible for canopy connection for the Brush tailed Phascogale.
- Roadside vegetation would be impacted on Muskerry East School Road (habitat zones 10b and 10c) for a width of 10 metres to connect Muskerry North and South. There are two options proposed (Option A and Option B) and these areas have been appropriately offset.
- The site entrance will be from Toolleen Angle Road. This will encroach into the tree protection zone of two large trees, although these trees may not be removed. There will be removal of 0.083 hectares of EVC 175_61 Grassy Woodland on the road reserve.
- Large and small scattered trees and patches of native vegetation on boundaries will be avoided. The tree protection zones have been applied to ensure these trees have been avoided.
- The development footprint has avoided habitat zones in Muskerry South on Axedale-Toolleen Road, Habitat Zone 5, and the southwest corner (Axedale-Toolleen Road and Murphys Lane).
- The development footprint has been reduced in Muskerry North to retain the large, scattered trees.
- A 30-metre buffer has been applied to the creeks.
- Large patches of native vegetation or scattered trees have been retained to maintain the steppingstones within the landscape to ensure habitat connectivity. This includes Habitat Zones 1, 4, 6 and 8.
- Habitat Zones with higher quality vegetation (Habitat Zones 7 and 9) have been retained.
- The bioregional conservation status of each EVC has been given further consideration and impacts have been avoided as much as possible. The habitat zones impacted are modified low condition vegetation.
- All overhanging trees from the road reserve have a 15-metre buffer applied.
- Only the large trees impacted by the Solar Power Station development footprint are proposed to be removed. These trees will be appropriately offset within the site or as close to the site as possible.

125. Pursuant to section 55 of the PE Act and Clause 66.02-2 of the Campaspe and Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme, DEECA Gippsland region were referred the application. After consultation between the proponent and the region, they responded on 21 February 2024 with conditional approval.

126. Their conditions recommend preparing a Construction Environment Management Plan, measures to protect retained native vegetation and securing native vegetation offsets. These conditions will be included on the permit.

Impact on Agricultural Land

127. The proposed development is to occupy approximately 419ha of the 1056ha property that is currently used for cropping and grazing. The subject site has no direct strategic importance and is not within an irrigation district. The Agricultural assessment notes that the subject site is not fundamentally valuable, and the proposal will not have any significant impact on agricultural capabilities for the property or surrounding properties. The soil is not inherently capable of intensive soil-based agriculture.

128. Co-location, sheep grazing, within the solar array may be a future agricultural option depending on operational management constraints and animal welfare.

129. When the proposal is decommissioned, in accordance with the recommended condition, there would be no residual detrimental impact on the productivity of the site with any decline in soil fertility easily corrected.

130. Overall, the proposal does not unreasonably impact the potential of agricultural land and therefore is considered consistent with Clause 14.01-1S – Protection of agricultural land.

Conclusion

131. It is recommended that the delegate of the Minister for Planning:

- Issue a Notice of Decision to Grant Planning Permit PA2205005 (Campaspe) for the *Use and development of a solar energy facility and utility installation, native vegetation removal and display of business identification signage* subject to conditions.
- Issue a Notice of Decision to Grant Planning Permit PA2302005 (Greater Bendigo) for the *Use and development of a solar energy facility, native vegetation removal and display of business identification signage* subject to conditions.

Prepared by: [REDACTED]

I have considered whether there is a conflict of interest in assessing this amendment and I have determined that I have:

No Conflict

Conflict and have therefore undertaken the following actions:

- Completed the State Planning Services declaration of Conflict/Interest form.
- Attached the State Planning Services declaration of Conflict/Interest form on to the hardcopy file.
- Attached the State Planning Services declaration of Conflict/Interest form into the relevant electronic workspace.

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Reviewed by: [REDACTED]

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Approved by: [REDACTED]

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