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Your ref: PA2402920
Our ref: 12579414

02 August 2024

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Belinda Casic
Planner, Development Approvals and Design
Department of Transport and Planning
GPO Box 2392
Melbourne VIC 3001

Response to Department of Transport – Request for further information – Application for a planning permit PA2402920

Dear Belinda,

Introduction

I refer to your Request for Further Information (RFI) regarding the above-mentioned application for a planning permit for a solar energy facility at 190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour.

GHD Pty Ltd (GHD) continues to act on behalf of the applicant, Goulburn Valley Water (GVW). This letter has been prepared by GHD in response to this request from the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). We look forward to engaging with DTP to satisfy the requests for further information as soon as possible.

The following attachments are included in the letter:

- Attachment 1: Ecology Report
- Attachment 2: Native Vegetation Removal Report (NVR)
- Attachment 3: Development Plans
- Attachment 4: Noise Assessment

Response to the request for further information

The matters outlined in your letter have been addressed below:

Amended Application Form

1. **Provide an amended application form to include all permit triggers, and all land proposed to be used and developed as part of the proposal including:**
 - a. **The use and development of a utility installation (powerline connected to an energy generation facility).**

The project is wholly located within the Public Use Zone (PUZ1). The Project will rely on existing overhead electrical lines and poles, the point of connection is located within the land title that the solar farm is proposed to be situated in. Therefore, no additional permit triggers or land is proposed to be used and developed as part of the Project.

Amended Set of Plans and Elevations

1. **Provide an updated set of plans and elevations to scale to show the following:**
 - a. **Powerline to connect the facility to the network, including the location of any new poles.**

See updated drawing CI-00020 and CI-00200 in Attachment 3 for the indicative electrical connection point via an existing AusNet power pole. No new poles are proposed as part of the works.
 - b. **All existing native vegetation within 15 metres of works proposed to be retained and removed clearly shown on plans.**

See updated drawing CI-00021 in Attachment 3.
 - c. **Setbacks of all proposed infrastructure from title boundaries and any other significant features (e.g., dams and ephemeral drainage lines, existing gas pipeline, native vegetation to be retained etc.).**

See updated drawing CI-00200 in Attachment 3.
 - d. **Elevations of the proposed:**
 - **Powerline to connect the facility to the grid distribution network, including the location of any proposed powerlines**

See updated drawing CI-00020 and CI-00200 in Attachment 3.
 - **All ancillary infrastructure (Inverters, switch room, transformer etc.)**

See updated drawing CI-00200 in Attachment 3.
 - **Operations/ maintenance building**

See updated drawing CI-00200 in Attachment 3.
 - e. **Dimensions of the proposed admin building, switch room etc.**

See updated drawing CI-00205 in Attachment 3.
 - f. **Detail the maximum voltages of any existing and proposed powerlines on all plans.**

See updated drawing CI-00200 in Attachment 3.
 - g. **Title details of the lots comprising the site.**

See updated drawing CI-00020 in Attachment 3.
 - h. **Location of primary and secondary access points.**

See updated drawing CI-00200 in Attachment 3.
 - i. **The location of any dams and ephemeral drainage lines shown and annotated as well as setbacks from the proposed solar panels.**

See updated drawing CI-00200 in Attachment 3.
 - j. **Dwellings and other sensitive land uses within 1km from the site, with labels to match the numbering in the Glare Report.**

See updated drawing CL-00022 in Attachment 3.

Landscaping plan

2. **A landscaping plan, a typical elevation, if landscaping is proposed showing details and location of planting (including species, density, size at planting, expected time to reach maturity, and separation).**

The LVIA report has included a recommendation of landscaping to be completed during the development of the project. However, currently no landscaping is proposed as part of the layout but if DTP consider it is required it can be included as a condition on any approval given.

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Updated Planning Report

3. Updated planning report to:

- a. **Clarification of the proposed use and development of a utility installation (power line to connect facility to the grid) under Clause 35.07-1.**

The project is wholly located within the Public Use Zone (PUZ1). Clause 35.07-1 is not relevant to the Project as the development is not subject to clause 35.07 – Farming Zone. The Project will rely on existing overhead electrical lines and poles, the point of connection is located within the land title that the solar farm is proposed to be situated in, therefore no response to clause 35.07-1 is required for the Project.

- b. **Clarifications as to how the panels will be tracked.**

The proposed panels will be a 'Fixed tilt or Single Axis Tracking system'. This has been discussed in section 2.2 - proposed works of the submitted planning report.

A single axis tracking system means that the panels will track the sun east to west as it travels through the sky and a fixed tilt system is where the panels are mounted at a fixed angle and don't move. Note that the Glint and Glare Assessment considers the worst-case glint and glare for the proposed system.

- c. **Confirm if additional vegetation, including native vegetation, is being impacted/ removed to improve sight lines as recommended in the Traffic Impact Assessment.**

We have re-reviewed our proposal to trim native vegetation to improve sight lines along Back Mountain Road. While sight triangles measuring 2m along Back Mountain Road and 2.5m parallel to the accessway will need to be clear of vegetation more than 900m in height, no other vegetation will be trimmed. Instead, to manage both impacts to native vegetation and road safety we propose to reduce the speed limit on Back Mountain Road to 40km/h during the construction phase. This will increase the time drivers have to respond to an oncoming vehicle and will greatly improve safety along the length of the road, as opposed to just at the site access.

Final Version of the Native Vegetation Removal Report (NVRR)

4. **Please provide the final version of the NVRR without the scenario test. The submitted NVRR is a scenario test, which will not be accepted.**

The final version of the Native Vegetation Removal Report is provided at Attachment 2.

Updated Ecology Assessment

5. Updated Ecology Assessment to include:

- a. **The amount of vegetation in hectares proposed to be removed under the regrowth exemption found in Clause 42.02-3 and Clause 52.17-7 of the Mitchell Planning Scheme**

The number of hectares to be removed is 0.179 hectares as outlined in our application for a planning permit. The total impacts to native vegetation have not changed.

- b. **A copy of the following documents referenced in section 5.2 of the Ecology Assessment to clarify the use of the regrowth exemption including:**

- **The Forest Property Agreement (Appendix G)**

The Forest Property Agreement has been included as Appendix G of the Ecology Report provided at Attachment 1.

- **The Reuse Irrigated Private Plantations Project – Planting and Infrastructure Agreement**

The draft Reuse Irrigated Private Plantations Project – Planting and Infrastructure Agreement has been included as Appendix H of the Ecology Report provided at Attachment 1.

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Updated Glare Assessment

6. Updated Glare Assessment to include:

a. Potential glint on aviation infrastructure including any air traffic control tower or runway approach path close to the proposed facility

Glint is typically defined as a momentary flash of bright light, often caused by a reflection off a moving source. A typical example of glint is a momentary solar reflection from a moving car or wind turbine. Glare is defined as a continuous source of bright light. Glare is generally associated with stationary objects or objects with very limited movement, which, due to the slow relative movement of the sun, reflect sun for a longer duration.

For solar farms, the hazard is glare and not glint because of arrays large area and relatively stationary nature hence glint impact of a solar farm is close to zero for observers (ACTC, Approach path etc). A 2-Mile approach path is modelled within the tool for Glare assessment and no impact is found. Additionally, there is no Air Traffic Control Tower at the Puckapunyal Airport.

b. Dwellings and other sensitive land uses must be identified in Table 6 under Section 4.4

All dwellings within the vicinity of the solar farm are identified in the report. Any sensitive use shown as OP 3, OP 4, OP5, OP6, OP7, OP9, OP10, OP11, OP17, OP18, OP19, OP26, OP27, OP28 and OP29 being closest to the proposed solar farm (within 1 km) are within the report.

c. Potential glint impacts on nearby dwellings and road users (within 1km)

Glint is typically defined as a momentary flash of bright light, often caused by a reflection off a moving source. A typical example of glint is a momentary solar reflection from a moving car or wind turbine. Glare is defined as a continuous source of bright light. Glare is generally associated with stationary objects or objects with very limited movement, which, due to the slow relative movement of the sun, reflect sun for a longer duration.

For solar farms, the hazard is glare and not glint because of arrays large area and relatively stationary nature. Hence, the glint impact for the solar farm is close to zero for observers including nearby dwellings and road users.

d. Explanation of any 'assumptions' which have resulted in predicted glint and glare impacts, for example:

i. Does the assessment consider the lands topography, and existing or proposed vegetation?

ForgeSolar is the industry leading tool for Solar Glare assessment, and it will predict the worst-case glare impact. It will consider the lands topography and model glare impact without any vegetation or screening as this will provide the worst-case scenario and impact of proposed solar farm. The existing vegetation and structures will only reduce the glare detected by an observer.

ii. Does the assessment take into consideration the panel's maximum tilt angle?

Yes. ForgeSolar will consider solar arrays maximum tilt angle and rotation. Please refer to the Appendix C Component Data section of the Glare Assessment for details.

iii. What is the proposed tracking behaviour, and how will this be ensured to mitigate any potential glint/glare impacts? For example, at what time/s of day do the panels enter full tilt and then revert to flat (0 degrees) tilt? DTP understands that if panels sit flat early in the morning or late in the day (whilst the sun is rising/setting), there are typically potential glint/glare impacts at this time of day, particularly to road users and nearby dwellings.

Modelled SAT will track sun from East-West with a maximum tilt angle of 60degrees to represent worse case impacts. ForgeSolar tool is used for the assessment, and it is assumed that trackers will be resting at an angle of 0 degrees hence the model represent the worst-case scenario that is also provided as an input the ForgeSolar modelling.

Please refer to the Appendix C – Component Data section of the Glare Assessment for details.

Noise Impact Assessment

7. A Noise Impact Assessment, prepared by a suitably qualified professional, to include:

A Noise Impact Assessment has been provided at Attachment 4.

a. Identify all sensitive receptors within 1km.

Please see Figure 1 of Attachment 4: Noise Assessment, which shows the sensitive receptors within 1.5 km.

b. Noise modelling to consider the noise output from the entire solar farm, including any inverters.

Please see section 4 of Attachment 4: Noise Assessment for details of the noise modelling.

c. Assessment against the EPA's Publication 1826 Noise limit and assessment protocol for the control of noise from commercial, industrial and trade premises and entertainment venues (the Noise Protocol) and confirm whether the proposal complies with the noise limits in the publication.

Please see section 3.2.2 of Attachment 4: Noise Assessment for an assessment against the Noise Protocol.

d. Any recommendations and mitigation measures to reduce the noise emitted from the proposal to meet the Noise Protocol. These measures should be shown on the development plans and elevations (as appropriate).

Please see section 6 of Attachment 4: Noise Assessment. No mitigation measures are required.

General comments

- a. Please ensure that all application documents are consistent, and that any updates/amendments made to the plans in response to the above are consistent with the relevant assessments (e.g., ensure the infrastructure assessed in the noise report is the same as that which is shown on the plans proposed in the photomontages; etc.).

We have updated all the application details to ensure that they are consistent with amendments made to the plans and relevant assessments.

- b. If it is simpler than adding all addresses to the application form, a list of all lots and road reserves impacted by the proposal can be included in a cover letter, and the application form can state 'refer to attached letter'.

No additional lots or road reserves will be impacted by the proposal. All the proposed works including the point of connection will occur at 190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour and within lot 18\PP3613.

Conclusion

We trust this response will satisfy all requests for further information and look forward to your approval of planning application PA2402920. We hope that this application is proceeding and being facilitated under the clause 53.22 – Significant Economic Development pathway. Should you have any further queries in relation to this matter please do not hesitate to contact me at the information below.

Regards



Kelly Nelson

Senior Planner – Planning and approvals

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Attachments:

Attachment 1 - Ecology Report

Attachment 2 - Native Vegetation Removal Report (NVR)

Attachment 3 - Development Plans

Attachment 4 - Noise Assessment

Attachments

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