

Our ref: SSD-10455

Andrew Mills

Chair

Independent Planning Commission

GPO Box 3415

Sydney NSW 2001

ipcn@ipcn.nsw.gov.au

16/08/2024

Subject: Middlebrook Solar Farm – Referral to the Independent Planning Commission

Dear Mr Mills,

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of the application for the Middlebrook Solar Farm (SSD-10455).

The application is referred to the Independent Planning Commission for determination as there were more than 50 unique submissions objecting to the proposal.

Middlebrook Solar Farm Pty Ltd as trustee for the MSF Project Trust (MSF) proposes to develop a new State significant solar farm located approximately 22 kilometres (km) south of Tamworth in the Tamworth Regional Local Government Area.

The project would have a generating capacity of approximately 320 megawatts (MW) and includes a 780 MW-hour battery energy storage system (BESS) and on-site substation. The project would connect to an existing 330 kilovolt (kV) transmission line, operated by Transgrid.

During the exhibition of the environmental impact statement (EIS) the Department received a total of 129 unique submissions (including four interest groups) from the community, in addition to advice from 10 government agencies and Tamworth Regional Council. Of the public submissions received during exhibition of the EIS, 120 objected to the project, five supported the project and four provided comments.

During the assessment process, MSF amended its application undertaking additional assessments and amending the project by strengthening proposed mitigation measures, providing an additional site access point and widening and sealing a portion of Middlebrook Road. Under the delegation from the consent authority (i.e. the Commission for this development), the Department accepted the

amended application for the reasons outlined in the Assessment Report. MSF also offered to enter into a voluntary planning agreement with Tamworth Regional Council to contribute \$3.74 million.

In assessing the merits of the project, the Department has considered the environmental, social and economic impacts of the project, submissions on the EIS, relevant environmental planning instruments, the suitability of the site, and the public interest, in accordance with the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

During the assessment process the Department visited the site, and consulted with local residents, Council and relevant government agencies. Based on this assessment, the Department considers that the project is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent.

I have attached a copy of the Department's assessment report and other relevant documents for the Commission's consideration.

If you have any questions, please contact Iwan Davies on [REDACTED] or via email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Iwan Davies

Director

Energy Assessments