Planning Statement for Domestic Ground-Mounted Solar Array

This planning statement supports a domestic planning application for the installation of a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) array at Nut Knowle Cottages in Woodmancote, BN5 9SS, in accordance with national and local planning policies promoting renewable energy and sustainability.

1. Proposal Overview

The proposal involves the installation of a ground-mounted solar PV array within the curtilage of a private residential property. The array will consist of 20 panels arranged in 4 rows, mounted on a low-profile frame with a maximum height of approximately 0.87 metres. The total installed capacity will be approximately 8.8 kW, sufficient to meet the majority of the household's electricity needs and reduce reliance on grid-supplied energy and enabling the removal of the LPG fuelled boiler.

2. Site Context

The site is located within a semi-rural residential setting at the junction of the A281 (Brighton Road) and Blackstone Lane in Woodmancote, with the proposed array to be sited in the garden, about 45 metres from the A281. The land is relatively flat and not subject to any environmental or heritage designations such as Green Belt, Conservation Area, or Listed Building status. There are no public rights of way crossing or adjacent to the site.

3. Design and Visual Impact

The design of the array has been carefully considered to minimise visual and landscape impact. The panels will be mounted at a low angle and finished in non-reflective materials to reduce glare. The array will be positioned to avoid overshadowing neighbouring properties and will not result in the loss of any trees or significant vegetation. The array will be mounted on timber sleepers at ground level, back-filled with bark chippings. The installation is reversible and will not result in permanent alteration to the land. When deciding where to locate the solar array, it was considered preferable to ground mount the solar array, thereby avoiding attaching any solar panels to the roof of the house in a way that might affect it's character. Although the property is neither listed nor in a Conservation Area, it was felt to be important to maintain the integrity of the building's appearance.

4. Environmental and Sustainability Benefits

The proposed development aligns with the UK Government's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The solar array will generate clean, renewable electricity, reducing the household's carbon footprint by an estimated 7.9 tonnes of CO_2 annually, assuming an average of 0.9 tonnes of CO_2 saved per kWp. The system will also contribute to local energy resilience and reduce pressure on the national grid.

5. Access and Construction

Construction access will be via the existing driveway, with no need for alterations to highways or public infrastructure. Installation will be carried out by a certified contractor and is expected to take no more than 10 including the enabling groundworks. There will be minimal disruption to neighbours, and no heavy machinery or excavation is required.

6. Planning Policy Compliance

The proposal complies with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which encourages the transition to a low-carbon future and supports renewable energy developments. It also aligns with the Horsham District Local Plan 2023–2040 policy which supports renewable energy development, including solar installations. Horsham District Council has made a commitment to tackling climate change, reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable development. Renewable energy generation is identified as a key component of the district's transition to net zero. The Local Plan supports small-scale renewable energy projects, including domestic solar panels, provided they do not cause significant harm to the landscape, heritage assets, or residential amenity.

7. Consultation

Informal discussion with both the only next-door neighbour and a member of the Parish Council has indicated that there would be support for the installation of a ground mounted solar array in principle.

8. Conclusion

This modest and sensitively designed solar installation will deliver significant environmental benefits with negligible impact on the character or amenity of the area. It represents a positive step towards sustainable living and energy independence. We respectfully request that planning permission be granted.