ELawrence
PLANNING

Proposed Solar Panels, Lackhams, Slinfold, RH13 0TD
Planning, Biodiversity, Design and Access Statement

Introduction/Proposal

To reduce their imported energy consumption and carbon footprint the applicants have the space and would like to install 40 ground mounted solar panels within the extensive grounds to their dwelling.

Legislation and Climate Change targets

The UK's Climate Change Act 2008 states that the UK is required to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 when compared to 1990 emissions levels. In 2019 this target was increased to net zero by 2050. Key interim milestones include a 68% reduction by 2030 and an 81% reduction by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

Government Response to the Climate Change Committee October 2025 adaption progress report.

The Committee has advised that the impacts of climate change are accelerating and the need to strengthen the UK's resilience is more urgent than ever. Further action is needed to meet the scale of the challenge. The Warm Homes Plan seeks to help people find ways to save money on heating bills and transform our aging building stock into comfortable, low carbon, homes that are also resilient to climate change.

Current targets

The UK Government announced new climate goals at COP29 (December 2024), reducing emissions by 81% on 1990 levels by 2035. Whilst more recently there is talk about reducing some climate change targets for economic reasons, the Government has stated it remains committed to reducing carbon emissions.

West Sussex Climate & Adaption Plan Strategy 2020-2030

This document sets out West Sussex County Council's target to be carbon neutral and climate resilient by 1930.

Horsham District Climate Action Strategy

Similarly, Horsham District Council aims to become a net-zero carbon council by 2023 and targets district-wide carbon neutrality. A significant proportion of greenhouse gases are generated by buildings. Not surprisingly the strategy promotes eco-homes and for all stakeholders to work towards reducing greenhouse gases. Planning is identified as having a key role in delivering this strategy.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (Framework)

The overall planning policies of relevance to this application have been set out in the Framework. The Framework seeks to achieve sustainable development and states that Local Planning Authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. The Core principles of the Framework are to adopt a pro-active approach.

The Framework actively promotes measures that help mitigate the impact of climate change. It states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future and help shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases. Planning should support the use of existing resources and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Paragraph 161 states that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change.

Paragraph 162 states that plans should take a pro-active approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking account of the risk to biodiversity, landscapes and over-heating from rising temperatures.

Paragraph 163 states that the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change should be considered in assessing planning applications, taking into account the full range of potential climate change impacts.

Paragraph 165 states that to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:

a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);
b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and
c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for collating potential heat customers and suppliers.

Paragraph 166 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:

a) comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and
b) take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.
Paragraph 167 states:
Local planning authorities should also give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights). Where the proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings or other relevant designated heritage assets, local planning authorities should also apply the policies set out in chapter 16 of this Framework.
Paragraph 168 states: When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should:
a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future; 7
b) recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;
c) in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site.

Concerning design, the Framework states that new development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area; establish a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site and reflect the identity of local surroundings, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. Planning decisions should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative. Regarding the countryside proposals should respect their rural surroundings and not have an adverse impact on biodiversity.

Draft Revised National Planning Policy Framework 2025

Policy CC2 2. States that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings and/or drawing energy from renewable and low carbon sources.

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

The PPG confirms the Government's commitment to increasing the amount of renewable energy and low carbon technologies in the UK. It clearly states that addressing climate change is one of the core land use planning principles and that planning policies and decisions should positively support proposals for renewable energy. It also reflects the requirements set out in the Framework relating to listed buildings, design, landscape and biodiversity. The Framework supports sustainable forms of development and promotes measures that help mitigate the impact of climate change. It states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future and help shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases. Planning should support the use of existing resources and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Also, that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Horsham District Planning Framework 2011 – 2031

Policy 1 deals with sustainable development and states that the Council will take a positive approach which reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development when dealing with planning applications.

Policy 24 seeks to protect the District's environment, which includes landscape, townscape, pollution and climate change.

Policies 25 and 26 seek to protect the natural environment, landscape and countryside from inappropriate development.

Policy 34 deals with the historic environment and reflects the requirements set out in the Framework.

Policy 35 deals with Climate Change. It states that development will be supported where it makes a clear contribution to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change and meeting the Districts' carbon reduction targets as set out in the Council's Acting Together on Climate Change Strategy 2009. It supports measures that mitigate the effects of climate change, including the use of renewable and low carbon energy supplies.

Policy 36 stares that the Council will permit schemes for renewable energy (eg solar) where they do not have a significant adverse effect on landscape and townscape character, biodiversity, heritage or cultural assets or amenity value.

Local Plan Review (Regulation 19) (Draft Local Plan)

The HDPF was adopted in November 2015 and had to be reviewed within five years as it did not identify sufficient housing land to accord with the identified housing need at that time.

Due to various factors, the Local plan Review has been subject to significant delays. The Council is currently preparing the Local Plan Review, which is now at an advanced stage and many of the policies in it can be given considerable weight.

The emerging Local Plan has similar objectives to the above policies, although more weight is given to climate change. Together policies 36, 37 and 38 provide active support for developments, which include measures that contribute to achieving net zero carbon emissions across the district by 2050. This includes through the use of renewable energy systems and retrofitting existing buildings to increase energy efficiency. Policies 13, 14, 19, 20 and 21 deal with the countryside, heritage assets and design. They reflect the requirements set out in the Framework.

Planning merits

The proposal fully complies with the above proposals and policies for the reasons set out below.

The property is located within the countryside, in an area which is characterised by irregular shaped fields enclosed by hedges, pockets of woodland and a nature reserve. The area is not within a conservation area, South Downs National Park or an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Lackhams a large country house sitting in an approximately five hectare plot comprises of formal and informal gardens and grassland. Much of the land sits to the front of the dwelling and the whole property is well screened from Lyons Road by a tall mature hedgerow.

The proposed solar panels would be sited within an enclosed area of grassland to the side of the host dwelling. The individual panels will each measure 1.762 metres wide, 1.134 metres deep and will be 30 cm thick. The panel surfaces will comprise black tempered glass and their frames will comprise black anodized aluminium. The panels will be mounted on ballast filled tubs which sit at an angle and do not exceed 0.39 metres in height. These tubs will be placed on top of a moveable sheets of weed stop membrane.

The solar panels will be placed at least two metres from the adjacent mature hedges to the southwest and northwest and a new native countryside hedge will be planed to the northeast and southeast of the panels. Not only will this mean the panels will be fully screened from both within and outside the property, the scheme will deliver biodiversity net gains.

The associated electricity cable will run directly under the adjacent hedge, shallow verge and driveway, just below ground level and the batteries and other associated infrastructure will be housed in the adjacent store room within the dwelling.

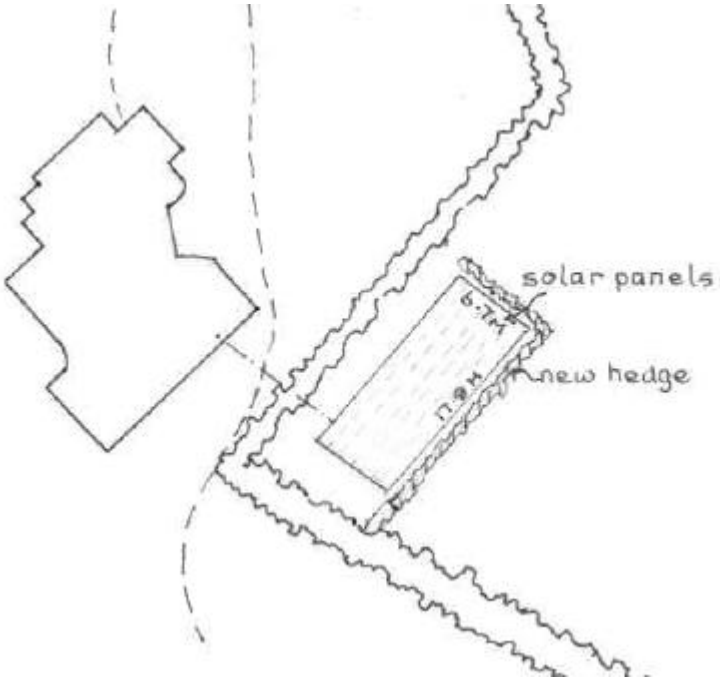
Below are an illustration and photograph of the type of solar panels and associated mounts.







The panels would be fully screened from the road and nearby properties by existing trees and hedges. This is apparent from the site plan and photographs below.



Photos 1 & 2



Photos 3, 4 & 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



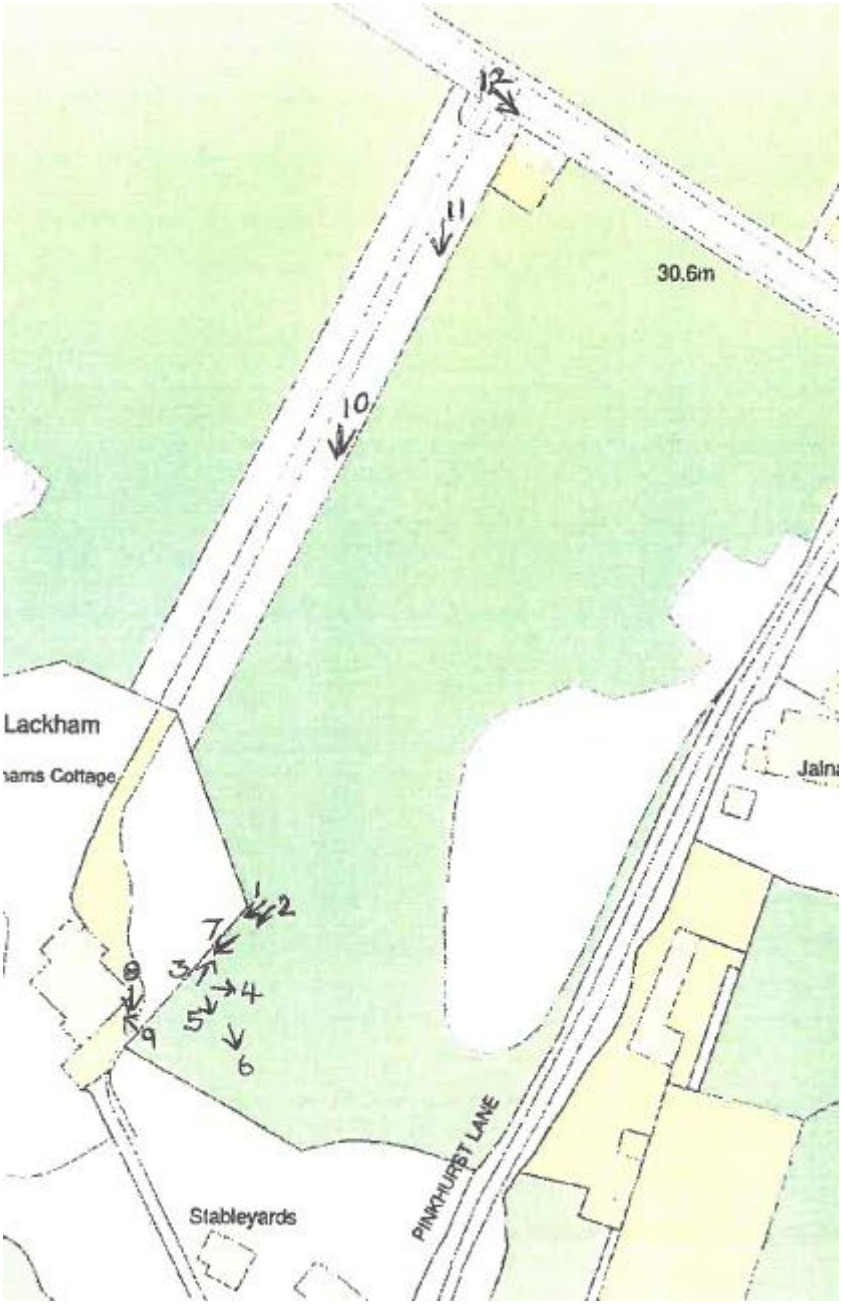
Photo 11



Photo 12



The plan below shows the positions from where the photographs were taken.



Trees and hedges

No trees or hedges within the application site or the surrounding area will be affected by the proposed solar panels. They are referred to on the application form because they help provide a strong screen around the application property.

Biodiiversity and BNG

The proposal is exempt from BNG. Notwithstanding this, the proposal includes a new hedge along two sides of the array of solar panels. This native countryside hedge will comprise a mix of Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Field Maple.

Accordingly, the proposal will have no impact whatsoever on biodiversity and is exempt from BNG.

The proposed solar panels will also reduce greenhouse gases, which will benefit wildlife and their habitats.

Accordingly, the proposal will benefit biodiversity.

Solar panel specification

This is set out in the DMEGC Solar Infinity RT specification document submitted with the application.

Conclusion

For these reasons the proposed solar panels will accord with current and emerging environmental policies and legislation.

The proposal complies with the three objectives of sustainable development in the following ways:

- Economic – employment during the installation and manufacture of the parts.
- Social – reducing CO2 levels.
- Environmental – helping to mitigate the impact of climate change; and enhancing biodiversity through the planting of a new hedgerow.

Overall, the proposal accords fully with the relevant policies set out in the Framework and the Horsham Local Plan, as well as the objectives and policies of the emerging Local Plan, the Draft National Planning Policy Framework, the Climate Change Act and West Sussex Climate Change Strategy.

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