

Planning Support Statement

Hammonds Furniture Ltd, Nutts Lane, Hinckley

Planning application for siting of ground
mounted solar array for renewable energy
generation

Job No: 22/L/061

Version: 1.0

Client: TBC

Prepared by: Stuart Booth MRTPI

Contents

- 1 | Introduction
- 2 | Site Characteristics
- 3 | Application Proposal
- 4 | Planning Policy and Considerations
- 5 | Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Support Statement has been prepared by JWPC Chartered Town Planners in support of a planning application for the siting of a 1.5 gigawatt solar array on land within the industrial compound of Hammonds Furniture Limited, Nutts Lane, Hinckley. The Statement details an assessment of the application and planning matters relevant to a determination by the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.2. This Statement should be read alongside the submitted documentation that form the planning application, which includes the plans and specifications of the ground mounted solar panels.
- 1.3. The installation of solar panels in the grounds of a non-domestic building is classified as permitted development for small scale operations, with planning consent being required for large schemes. The proposal relates to vacant unused land within the fenced boundary of Hammonds Furniture on Nutts Lane, Hinckley, which forms part of an industrial area close to the national grid site to the south. The proposal will generate energy for the business, with surplus feeding back to the grid and providing 1.5 gigawatt per annum overall.
- 1.4. This Statement sets out the details of the site and the proposals subject to the application, and discusses the planning policy relevant to the site and the wider district in regard to schemes for renewable energy.
- 1.5. Bearing in mind the LPA's duty under Paragraph 38 of the NPPF it is requested that the Agents (JWPC Chartered Town Planners) are contacted in the first instance if any further information is required to enable a positive determination. The Applicants request that any proposed conditions can also be reviewed prior to the release of a decision.

2. Site Characteristics

- 2.1. The site forming the subject of this planning application is a 1.3 hectare site that currently forms a vacant piece of land within the fenced compound of Hammonds Furniture Limited. The ground of the site is partially obscured from view from Hammonds Way to the south by the palisade boundary fence and slight raised bunding around the edges of the site, and lies behind the E-On industrial compound along Nutts Lane to the west.
- 2.2. Hammonds Furniture Ltd industrial complex includes five main buildings to the north and east of the site, with access to the buildings and the application site coming from the same road from Nutts Lane. Access is only possible to the site through the gated security entrance to Hammonds Furniture and the entire complex is protected by a 1.8 metre security fence. No public access is provided into this site.



Views from Hammonds Way and Nutts Lane

- 2.3. The views above show Hammonds Ways on the left hand side and the southern part of Nutts Lane on the Right Hand Side. The view below shows the E-on site which obscure views of the land from the western side of Nutts Lane. Residential properties lies behind this view, but have no line of site into the land.



View towards site from western side of Nutts Lane, obscured by E-on site buildings

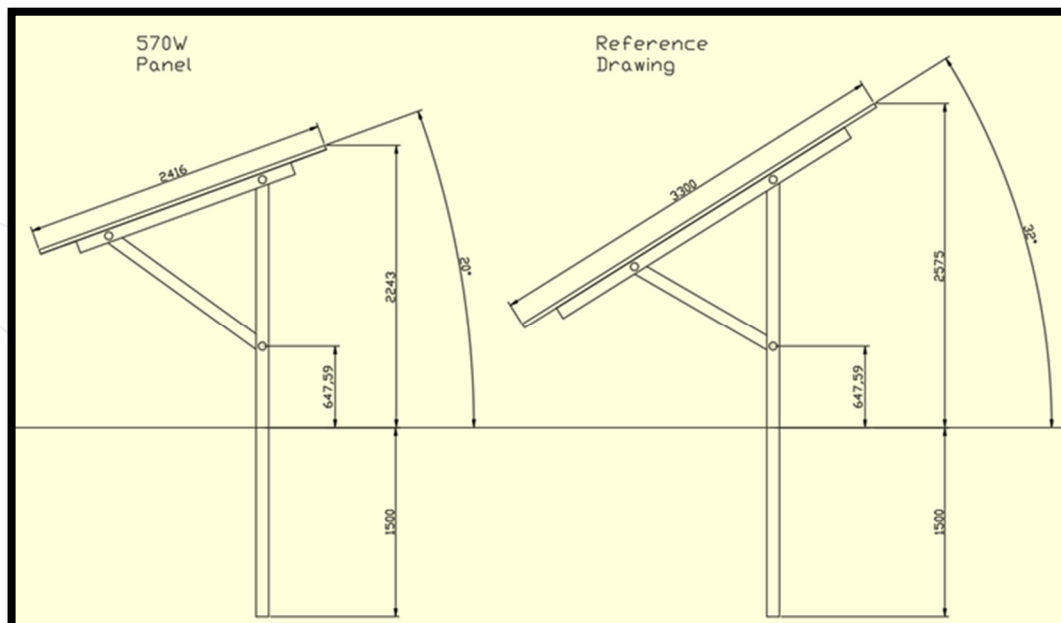
- 2.4. Along with the existing buildings, parking and hardstanding areas that form the bulk of the industrial complex of Hammonds Furniture, the complex also includes a vacant area that is not used by the business and has been identified as an area suitable for use for renewable energy generation by siting solar arrays across the site.
- 2.5. Immediately opposite the Hammonds site to the south is the site of the National Grid, operated by Western Power. The Hammonds site itself was a former national grid site.

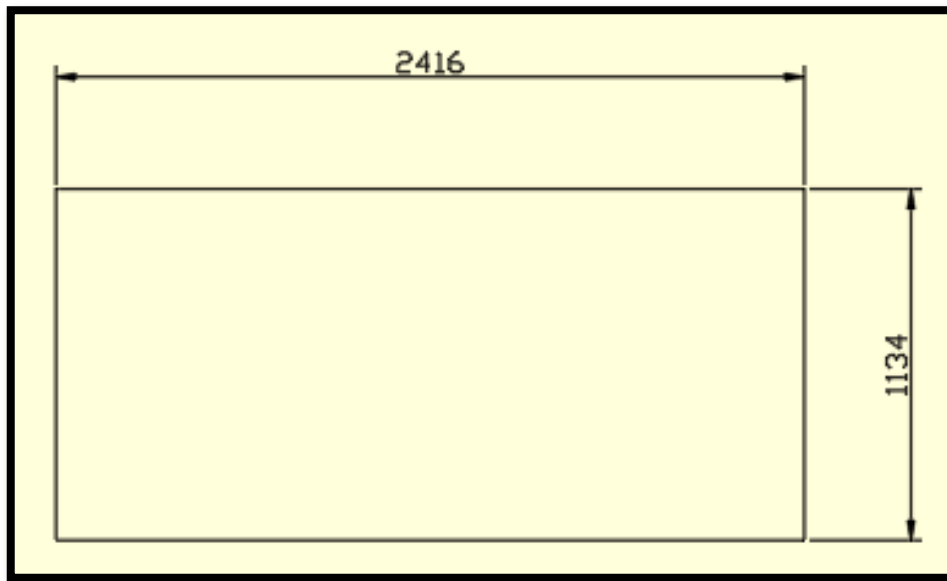


Figure 2 – Plan of Site Boundary

3. Application Proposal

- 3.1 The submitted application seeks planning consent for the ground mounted installation of a solar array for energy generation. The proposal will include the mounting of Q.Peak Duo XL-GL11.3 solar panels across the site, providing 6,876.6 sqm of PV generator surface, mounted on steel frames. The scheme will save 294 tonnes of carbon.
- 3.3 The submitted specification information of the panels and mountings provides detail of the panels dimensions and height above the ground upon installation.
- 3.4 The plans below show the dimensions of the panels on their ground mounting system, showing the maximum height of the panels across the site at 2.5 metres above ground level. Each panels measures 2.4x1.1 metres.





- 3.5 Although there are some residential properties close to the site, the few properties to the south have an existing view of the high palisade fence around the site and the bund behind, which will remain in place. Properties to the west cannot view the site due to the E-on energy site between the application site and those properties. In addition, the solar panels as viewed from ground level are not solid structures, being arranged at a low angle from the ground. Views of the panels will be limited to those outside of the Hammonds Furniture Compound.

4. Planning Policy and Considerations

Development Plan

- 4.1 The Development Plan for the district is the Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan, made up of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (CS) adopted in 2009 and the Site Allocations & Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (SADM) adopted in 2016. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications be determined in accordance with this document unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Local Plan Designation Policies

- 4.2 The site lies within the industrial compound of Hammonds Furniture Ltd, identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map as part of the HIN122 designation for Nutts Lane Industrial Estate/EME Site, which are Existing Employment Sites defined under Policy DM19, which further defines Category A sites as Key/Flagship employment areas to be retained. Policy states that the Council will seek to retain these Category A sites in their entirety for B1, B2 and B8 employment uses. The development of non B Class uses will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. It also states that proposals must demonstrate why they would not have a significant adverse impact on surrounding employment uses.
- 4.3 The undeveloped part of the site, on which the proposals seek planning consent for the installation of a solar array is designated as Site HIN45 in the Local Plan, encircled by the Category A employment site designation. This site is described in the plan as Hammonds Sports Pitch – and outdoor sports facility, designated within Policy DM8 of the Local Plan.
- 4.4 Policy DM8 is titled Safeguarding Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities and states that planning permission will not be granted for proposals resulting in the loss of land or buildings in recreational or sporting use and areas of open space, as identified in the most recent Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Study, except where:

- a) a replacement of an equivalent typology is provided, as defined by the most recent Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Study, in an appropriate location serving the local community; or
- b) it is demonstrated that there is a surplus of recreational land, facilities or open space of the same typology exceeding the needs of the local community; or
- c) the development of a small part of a larger site in recreational use would result in the enhancement of recreational facilities on the remainder of the site, or on a nearby site serving the same community.

4.5 This policy was defined in the 2016 Local Plan using evidence from the Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Study from July 2011, which is now almost 12 years old. The Policy as written was clearly intended to allow decisions to be based on up-to-date information, with an updated Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Study expected to be prepared at some stage during the Plan period. No update has been prepared by the Council.

4.6 The site is not in use as a sports pitch and will not be used in this way as it forms part of the Hammonds Furniture Industrial site, being fully within the fenced compound. There is no public access to the vacant site. There is no sports team associated with the site and it has not been used in any capacity for more than six years, due to security concerns regarding its location within the Hammonds Furniture industrial compound.

4.7 There is no requirement for this site to be safeguarded from development by policy DM8 as its use is surplus to requirement. Therefore, the proposed siting of solar panels would be consistent with criteria b) of said policy. The policy support in the area for industrial uses, as adjacent the site, should be supportive of uses such as that proposed, which provide renewable energy for the wider site and connection back to the power grid.

Renewable Energy Policies

- 4.8 The Local Plan includes a Core Objective on Climate Change and Resource Efficiency, which includes a Key Performance Target of delivering at least 14% of the Borough's energy consumption through renewable energy generation by 2026. This objective and Key Performance Target were to be achieved through policy in the Local Plan, which includes Policy DM2: Delivering Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Development.
- 4.9 Policy DM2 details the Borough Council's support for appropriately designed and sited renewable energy development at domestic, community and commercial scales where reasonable steps have been taken to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts relating to landscape, noise, visual or cumulative impacts.
- 4.10 The latest Annual Monitoring Report, dated 2020, states Target 12d is to deliver at least 14% of the Borough's energy consumption based on 2010 levels through renewable energy by 2026. The latest returned information was just 1% as at December 2014, provided by the Hinckley and Bosworth Renewable Energy Capacity Study.
- 4.11 Further to this, Hinckley & Bosworth District Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' in 2019, pledging to take local action to contribute to national carbon neutral targets through the development of practices and policies, with the aim to being carbon neutral in the Borough by 2030. However, the Council is yet to publish its Action Plan designed to outline how it will address this emergency.
- 4.12 There is a clear presumption in favour of renewable energy proposals, supported by local policies and a commitment by the Council to carbon neutral targets. The principle of the proposed development for a renewable energy scheme is therefore considered to be acceptable.
- 4.13 A new draft Local Plan to the year 2040 is emerging, which reaffirms a policy approach to supporting renewable energy proposals.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.14 The most up-to-date iteration of the Framework (July 2021) sets out national planning policies and is confirmed as a material consideration in planning decisions. The Framework confirms that the planning system should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure projects.
- 4.15 It states that Local Plans should increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy by providing a strategy and identifying opportunities for schemes. In addition, paragraph 156 states that local planning authorities should “support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside areas identified in local plans”.
- 4.16 Paragraph 158 of the NPPF further states that:
- “when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development; local planning authorities should:
- Not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and
 - Approve the application if its impact are (or can be made) acceptable.
- 4.17 The national and local planning policies, and local authority policies and priorities in general, are supportive of schemes for renewable energy. The Council has supported recent proposals for renewable energy and this proposal seeks consent that should be likewise supported on an undeveloped site within the urban area, close to existing energy sites.
- 4.18 The need for renewable energy schemes is a high priority for the Council and the safeguarding of the site for a use that the site is no longer used for, nor will be due to the ownership and location within an existing industrial compound, is no longer required. The planning balance in this decision is one that should support renewable energy generation on this vacant site, saving 294 tonnes of carbon.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The application seeks consent for the erection of a 1.5 gigawatt per annum solar array on existing vacant land within an industrial compound. The site lies within an existing industrial area that is protected for industrial type uses and whilst the site itself is protected from development, this seeks to protect an existing use that does not occur on the site and has not done for more than six years.
- 6.2 The Local Authority has declared a Climate Emergency and the renewable energy proposal submitted seeks consent for a renewable energy scheme that will save 294 tonnes of carbon in the first year.
- 6.3 The Local Planning Authority should support this renewable energy scheme, which is supported by national policy and the local plan.



JWPC Ltd

1B Waterview, White Cross
Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 4XS

Tel: 01524 599980

enquiries@jwpc.co.uk www.jwpc.co.uk

