

DESIGN, ACCESS & PLANNING STATEMENT

Full Planning Application
Proposed Installation of Ground Based Solar Photovoltaic Panels
to Generate Electricity & Associated Works
March 2024

Elmsdale House,
Ratcliffe Lane,
Sheepy Magna,
CV9 3QY

Introduction

This Full Planning Application relates to the installation of ground based solar photovoltaic panels [PV] to generate electricity and associated works on land to the rear of Elmsdale House, Ratcliffe Lanem Sheepy Magna. These will be installed to be utilised by the proposed new-build replacement dwelling at Elmsdale House [implemented & currently under construction]. The application site runs adjacent to [but outside of] the Settlement Boundary, to Sheepy Magna and so is located within the countryside. The site is well screened with mature hedges to the north and with the new Elmsdale House and associated garden to the west. The application site is located within arable fields owned by the applicants.

The total area of the application red-line boundary is 0.028 Hectares. The area maximum length is 33m shortening along the angled garden to Elmsdale House and then being 9.5m deep. The proposed PV panels will be in 2no. linear runs facing south. The PV panels will be mounted onto a simple metal framework set into a small concrete pad foundation. The PV Panels will have a maximum height of 1.1m installed at approximately 25-30 degrees from the horizontal. The PV panels will have a gap set between the front and rear to limit the overshadowing effect of the front panels when the sun is at a lower angle. The electricity that is generated via the PV panels will be used by the new-build Elmsdale House.

Policy

The Site Allocations & Development Management Policies [SADPD] [2016] outlines a presumption in favour of sustainable development [Policy DM1]. The other relevant policies will be Policy DM4: Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation & Policy DM10: Development & Design.

Other relevant documentation will be:

- NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework [2021]
- Planning Practice Guidance [PPG]
- HBBC's Landscape Character Assessment [2017]
- HBBC Landscape Character Sensitivity Study [2017]
- HBBC Employment Land & Premises Review 2020



Assessment

The proposed solar photovoltaic panels will need to be assessed against the strategic planning policies, design and impact upon the character of the area and impact on neighbouring residential amenity.

The NPPF states that applications for planning permissions must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise [Paragraph 2], with the development plan being the starting point for decision making [Paragraph 47]. For HBBC the development plan consists of the Core Strategy [2009] and the SADMP. Moreover within the Core Strategy, Spatial Objective 12: Climate Change and Resource Efficiency seeks to minimise the impact of climate change through the promotion of the prudent use of resources through the increased use of renewable energy technologies. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF outlines that the planning system should support the transition to low carbon future in a changing climate and support renewable and low-carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Paragraph 158 also states that planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable energy when they are determining applications for renewable and low carbon development.

In July 2019 Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council [HBBC] declared a 'climate emergency' whereby there is an aim by Councillors to contribute to the national carbon neutral targets with the aim of Hinckley & Bosworth being carbon neutral by 2030. Therefore there is a clear presumption in favour of renewable energy developments when supported by local and national policies as set out in the NPPF, Core Strategy & DPD.

Within the SADMP, Policy DM1 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The policy goes on to outline that proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Also, Policy DM2 [Delivering Renewable Energy & Low Carbon Development] sets out that the Council will support appropriately designed and sited renewable energy developments.

No land is specifically allocated by HBBC for the generation of renewable energy. The application site is located outside of the settlement boundary [albeit along the edge of the settlement boundary]. Policy DM4 [Safeguarding the Countryside & Settlement Separation] seeks to protect the beauty, open character and landscape character of the open countryside from unsustainable development. Development that is considered acceptable in the countryside as identified in Policy DM4 [d] is for the provision of stand-alone renewable energy developments in line with Policy DM2 as outlined above, as long as it accords with part i)-v) of Policy DM4. This relates to open countryside retention and limiting impact of development on rural character.

The proposed development would incorporate new build elements of electrical infrastructure on the land. The existing field boundary hedgerow would be retained and not altered and is in a small corner of the current field adjacent to the domestic curtilage boundary of Elmsdale House comprising of fencing. The proposed development would be enhanced on a the other boundaries with the introduction of new hedgerow planting. Given the location of the development to the corner of a current field and retention of existing boundaries, and enhanced landscaping, the proposal wouldn't be out-of-keeping with the adjacent built form. This area of the site has also been subject to several outbuildings/storage containers etc. that have been removed. These are shown on the accompanying drawings [outlined in dashed red-lines for reference]. Therefore, given the historic appearance of the site and limited impact of the proposals on the site surroundings the PV scheme would not have a 'significant adverse effect on the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character of the countryside' as required by Policy DM4 of the SADMP [2016].

Policy DM10 of the SADMP seeks to ensure that new development should complement or enhance the character of the surrounding area with regard to scale, layout, density, mass, design, materials & architectural features. The nearest residential dwelling are those to the west along Ratcliffe Lane [circa 120m away]; however there is the new-build Elmsdale House between these properties and the proposed site along with a tall dense mature hedgerow along the boundary frontage to Ratcliffe Lane. There are further houses to the south of the site circa 190m away; these properties are set behind existing mature tall boundaries also. There is a farm located directly to the north circa 63m away, however this is located behind the existing boundary hedgerow. Given that the proposed site is separated from residential development by existing field boundaries, proposed landscaping and new-build Elmsdale House, the development wouldn't have a detrimental impact on neighbouring properties. The development is low-scale and therefore wouldn't have any shadow or noise impact to surrounding properties. Therefore the proposal would accord with Policy DM10 of the SADMP.

Therefore it is considered that planning should be granted for the proposed development as set out above being in accordance with Policies DM2, DM4 & DM10 of the SADMP & as per the guidance set out within the NPPF.