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# DESIGN, ACCESS & PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING NOISE

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## Proposed (Additional) Ground Mount PV Arrays

Exton Park, Allens Farm Lane,  
Exton, Hampshire, SO32 3NW

Ref: 1|5038

May 2022



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## INTRODUCTION

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The application seeks full planning consent for the installation of approximately 250 ground mounted photovoltaic panels at Exton Park.

The existing installation to the north-west of the proposed, currently consists of approximately 306 panels in a double row of two panels (in portrait). Those arrays were structured by two separate planning consents (as noted by this statement). The total existing capacity generated is around 100kWh. The proposed panels will be located to the south east of the existing panels in two parallel lengths of double mounted panels. The proposed location is a grassed area between the vines and existing agricultural buildings, running an equal length to the nearest adjacent buildings.

The proposal will enable Exton Park to increase its supply of renewable energy to help offset the energy demands used by the existing business and to ensure the business is as environmentally friendly as possible and to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

## LOCATION & SITE CHARACTERISTICS

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Exton Park is located within the rural village of Exton in south central Hampshire and within the South Downs National Park. The site is located at the end of a private driveway, characterised by single track and country lanes with well-maintained hedgerows. The site is bounded by mature tree to the south and west. There are vines to the east, which also mitigate long range views. The topography and vinery building mitigate any views upon the site to the north.

The site contains a number of buildings and includes various vineyard buildings, a 5-bay steel portal framed agricultural building and timber ancillary outbuilding. It also contains a tied agricultural worker dwelling, which is a 1.5 storey rendered and clay tile traditional cottage.

The site is within the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDILCA) identifies the site as being within the Meon Valley, although very close to the South Winchester Downland Mosaic character area.

Within the planning officer's justification for the previous granted planning consent (SDNP/15/05151/FUL), it was confirmed that the sensitive siting of the solar installation was appropriate to the setting; stating *"the proposal is not considered harmful to either Landscape Character or Visual Amenity."* This same justification was used within the officer's justification for consent to an addition array following broadly the same layout and configuration

(SDNP/20/00986/FUL). We therefore see no reason that the additional arrays proposed should be considered any differently.

Previous determination concluded that *“Photovoltaic panels, by their nature, are temporary, and although any permission granted would be permanent, the way in which PV panels are installed means that they could easily be dismantled in the future, and the land returned to agricultural use, and therefore the change of use from agricultural to energy generation does not represent a change in landscape character that is of significant concern. The nature of the site, despite the presence of PV panels, would remain associated with a rural, agricultural business, and the proposals are of a scale that would ensure this association remains. In terms of visual amenity, the area is criss-crossed with Public Rights of Way and permissive tracks, but the proposed site benefits from a high degree of enclosure, as a result of landform and vegetation, and is not visible from any PROW or other tracks in the locality, or from public highways.”*

With the latest determination stating that *“The proposed site is screened by an existing hedgerow, landscape features, buildings and vines. Therefore, there would be little to no visual impact on the wider landscape, in accordance with policy SD51.”* We feel this point to be relevant to the proposal where buildings form a barrier in front of the proposed site area, shielding the additional panels from view from the farm track.

The previous determinations (SDNP/15/05141/FUL & SDNP/20/00986/FUL) are both implemented and supports the Government’s targets to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels and increase renewable energy production. The current proposal (as defined by details within this statement) increases renewable energy production by adding further arrays which is proven to be successful in terms of its location.



Figure 1: Existing implemented arrays on site

## PLANNING HISTORY

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- SDNP/12/02588/FUL - 3no. windows and reduction of extension size and roof form previously approved under application 08/02486/APN (RETROSPECTIVE) STATUS: APP 19th December 2012.
- SDNP/14/01916/FUL - Erection of 1 no. detached two-storey dwelling with basement together with associated access, car parking and landscaping for use as a winemaker's dwelling and wine promotional premises STATUS: REF 11th June 2014.
- SDNP/15/01505/FUL - Erection of a detached two-storey building with a part basement together with associated access, car parking and landscaping for use as wine promotional premises. STATUS: REF 24th July 2015.
- SDNP/15/05149/HOUS - Conversion of attic space to bedrooms, with the addition of dormer windows and rooflights STATUS: APP 23rd December 2015.
- SDNP/15/05007/FUL - Erection of a part underground, single storey building with associated landscaping for use as a wine promotional premise. STATUS: PCO.
- SDNP/15/05141/FUL - Installation of a 40.6KWP Ground Mount Solar Installation. STATUS: APP 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016.
- SDNP/16/01555/FUL - The conversion of an existing building to provide 1 No. dwelling. STATUS: REF 8th December 2016. Appeal dismissed- 8th November 2017.
- SDNP/16/02369/DCOND - Discharge of Conditions 4 5 7 8 in relation to SDNP/15/05007/FUL. STATUS: APP 21st June 2016.
- SDNP/16/05570/PRE - Two storey development above approved basement. STATUS: PRE 19th January 2017.
- SDNP/17/05199/FUL - Two storey development above approved basement for wine promotional purposes. STATUS: APP 04.07.2018.
- SDNP/19/00016/APNB - Proposed Agricultural Storage Building. STATUS: APP 11.02.2019.
- SDNP/19/03326/DCOND - Discharge of conditions 4, 5, 6, 8 of approved planning permission SDNP/17/05199/FUL. STATUS: APP 12.09.2019.
- SDNP/19/03336/CND - Variation of condition 7 of approved planning permission SDNP/17/05199/FUL. STATUS: APP 17.09.2019.

- SDNP/20/00986/FUL - Proposed (Additional) Ground Mount PV Arrays STATUS: APP 29/04/2020

The installation of 156 panels was approved (SDNP/15/05141/FUL) in January 2016, with the latest application for additional panels also approved in April 2020, to support the site's energy requirements and to continue to be as 'environmentally friendly' and sustainable as possible. With growing recognition of the need for renewable energy, further additional solar panels are desired to help with future energy demands and to encapsulate the vision of the business and its sustainable future. By future proofing its energy requirements, the business will also be contributing towards the UK's Net Zero Strategy to 'Build Back Greener' and decarbonise power systems by 2035.

## PLANNING POLICY

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The National Planning Policy Framework is explicit in its aim to deliver sustainable development; within Section 14 'Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change' it states:

*"The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate... It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources...and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure."*

Of particular relevance to this application is paragraph 154 that states:

*"When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:*

*a) 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*

*b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable area*

The South Downs Local Plan has set a number of objectives for a sustainable future. Of particular relevance to this proposal are objectives 6 and 9.

### Local Plan Objectives

The following Local Plan objectives are considered most relevant for this section:

**Objective 4:** To achieve a sustainable use of ecosystem services thus enhancing natural capital across the landscapes of the National Park and contributing to wealth and human health and wellbeing

**Objective 6:** To adapt well to and mitigate against the impacts of climate change and other pressures

**Objective 7:** To conserve and enhance the villages and market towns of the National Park as thriving centres for residents, visitors and businesses

**Objective 8:** To protect and provide for the social and economic wellbeing of National Park communities supporting local jobs, affordable homes and local facilities

**Objective 9:** To protect and provide for local businesses including farming, forestry and tourism that are broadly compatible with and relate to the landscapes and special qualities of the National Park.

All development proposals that accord with relevant policies in this Local Plan and with the National Park purposes, the Authority will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

### Core Policy SD1: Sustainable Development

1. When considering development proposals that accord with relevant policies in this Local Plan and with National Park purposes, the Authority will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It will work with applicants to find solutions to ensure that those development proposals can be approved without delay, unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.
2. The National Park purposes are i) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and ii) to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public. Where it appears that there is a conflict between the National Park purposes, greater weight will be attached to the first of those purposes. In pursuit of the purposes, the National Park Authority will pay due regard to its duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park.
3. When determining any planning application, the Authority will consider the cumulative impacts of development.
4. Planning permission will be refused where development proposals fail to conserve the landscape, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park unless, exceptionally:
  - a) The benefits of the proposals demonstrably outweigh the great weight to be attached to those interests; and
  - b) There is substantial compliance with other relevant policies in the development plan.



All development proposals will be permitted where they have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services.

#### Core Policy SD2: Ecosystem Services

1. Development proposals will be permitted where they have an overall positive impact on the ability of the natural environment to contribute goods and services. This will be achieved through the use of high quality design, and by delivering all opportunities to:

- a) Sustainably manage land and water environments;
  - b) Protect and provide more, better and joined up natural habitats;
  - c) Conserve water resources and improve water quality;
  - d) Manage and mitigate the risk of flooding;
  - e) Improve the National Park's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change;
  - f) Increase the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means;
  - g) Conserve and enhance soils, use soils sustainably and protect the best and most versatile agricultural land;
  - h) Support the sustainable production and use of food, forestry and raw materials;
  - i) Reduce levels of pollution;
  - j) Improve opportunities for peoples' health and wellbeing; and
  - k) Provide opportunities for access to the natural and cultural resources which contribute to the special qualities.
2. Development proposals must be supported by a statement that sets out how the development proposal impacts, both positively and negatively, on ecosystem services.

#### Strategic Policy SD42: Infrastructure

1. Development proposals for new, improved or supporting infrastructure will only be permitted where:
  - a) It represents the least environmentally harmful option reasonably available, also having regard to the operational requirements and technical limitations of the proposed infrastructure; and
  - b) The design minimises the impact on the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park and the general amenity of local communities.
2. Development proposals will only be permitted where appropriate, necessary and reasonable infrastructure investment has been secured either in the form of suitable on-site or off-site works, and/or financial contributions to mitigate its impact.
3. Infrastructure delivery should be integrated with development phasing to ensure timely provision. Financial contributions towards future infrastructure maintenance will, where necessary, be secured by means of a legal agreement.



All planning applications for new or improved infrastructure will need to provide evidence that the works proposed are the least environmentally harmful option. The preparation of this evidence should be proportionate to the impact of the development on the special qualities of the National Park.

#### Strategic Policy SD45: Green Infrastructure

1. Development proposals will be permitted where they demonstrate that they:
  - a) Maintain or enhance GI assets, GI links and the overall GI network; and
  - b) Provide new GI, or improvements to existing green assets and green linkages, which are integrated into the development design, that meets the needs of communities both within and beyond the site's boundaries.
2. GI proposals must contribute to multifunctional landscapes which:
  - a) Strengthen connectivity and resilience of ecological networks;
  - b) Incorporate GI measures that are appropriate to the type and context of the development proposal as part of an overall landscape design;
  - c) Maximise opportunities to mitigate, adapt and improve resilience to climate change;
  - d) Maximise opportunities for cycling and walking, including multi user routes and, where possible, facilitate circular routes; and
  - e) Support health and wellbeing and improve opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of the National Park and its special qualities.
3. Development proposals that will harm the GI network must incorporate measures that sufficiently mitigate or offset their effects.
4. Where appropriate, the Authority will seek to secure via planning condition or legal agreement provision for the future management and/or maintenance of GI.

Within policy SD45; 7.270 *The use of renewable energy rather than fossil fuels will help to reduce carbon emissions and thus reduce climate change. Renewable energy offers a more sustainable use of natural capital and therefore is an important ecosystem service. However, the landscape character of the National Park is a finite and precious resource that the National Park Authority is charged with conserving and enhancing. Development of renewable energy, therefore needs to be suitably constrained so as not to compromise the special qualities.*

### Development Management Policy SD51: Renewable Energy

1. Development proposals for renewable energy schemes, except those specifically addressed in Criterion 2, that contribute towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and moving towards a carbon neutral National Park will be permitted where it is demonstrated through suitable site specific analysis that the proposal:
  - a) Makes provision for the removal of the facilities and reinstatement of the site, should it cease to be operational;
  - b) Ensures existing public access is not impeded; and
  - c) Does not result in the loss in use of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land.
2. Development proposals for small-scale individual wind turbines and freestanding solar arrays serving individual properties or small groups of properties will be permitted where:
  - a) They are suitably sited and screened and clearly associated with the buildings or properties that they are intended to serve;
  - b) They are appropriate in scale to the property being served; and
  - c) There is no unacceptable adverse impact on local amenity or conflict with public safety

*“7.305 Proposals for multiple ground-mounted solar arrays – or ‘solar farms’ that are sited in isolation away from existing built forms are likely to have significant impacts on landscape character and visual amenity and are unlikely to be appropriate within the National Park. Small scale freestanding solar arrays that are well screened in enclosed gardens or closely linked to existing buildings with no or minimal visual impact may be acceptable. There may also be some circumstances where ground mounted solar arrays to serve groups of properties, community buildings, such as village halls, agricultural properties or other businesses are acceptable, where these are well screened within existing building complexes or by other landscape features such as hedgerows, walls or trees, and do not detract from any architectural or historic interest. However, freestanding arrays should be sensitively sited to avoid impacts on wildlife and land of high ecological interest.’*

The proposal complies with all relevant policies.

### SCALE, MASS & DESIGN

The installation will consist of 2 x arrays of 125 panels each, in a double row of two panels (in portrait); hence totalling 250 panels. They will measure 1000mm x 1670mm and be set onto a supporting framework. The panels will be approximately 1m off the ground. Within the context of the field and surrounding site, the panels do not diminish the landscape or its setting, nor would the addition of further panels result in any harm. The location has been chosen to maximise the potential of the sun’s path without being affected by any constraint. The slope provides effective base angles for the mounts

meaning the panels will mimic the line of the ground beneath. The proposal will fit well within the existing context of the vineyard being nestled between agricultural buildings and vine plantation.

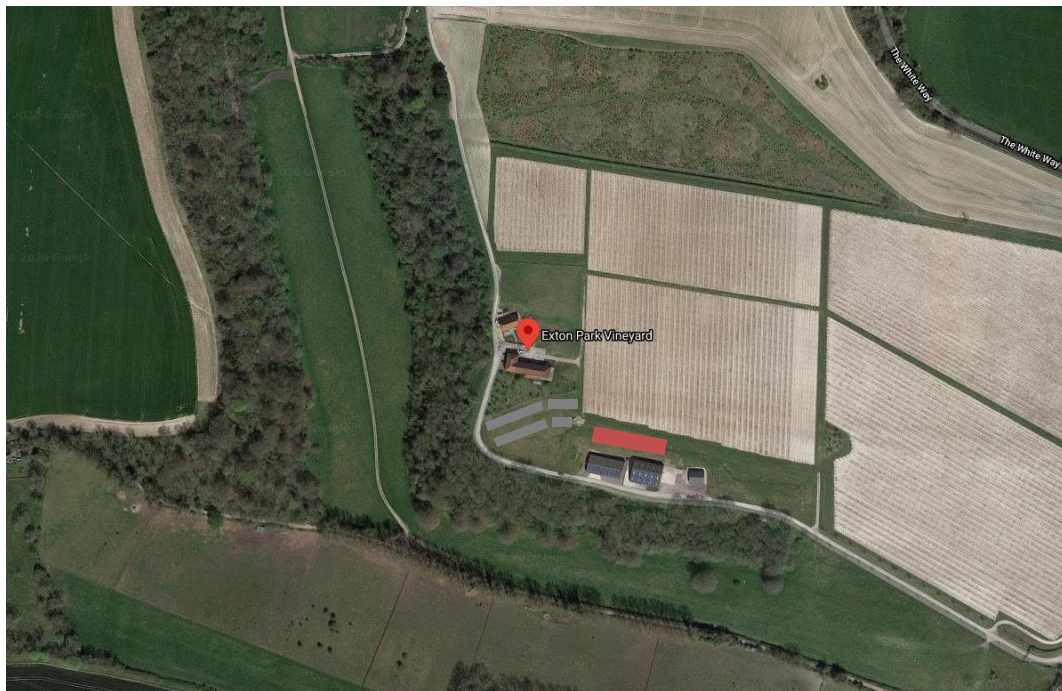


Figure 2: illustrative site location in red, to the south east of the existing PV arrays (in grey)



Figure 3: Sloping area of ground between agricultural buildings and area planted with vines

“Exton Village Design Statement does not mention renewable energy specifically, but it does require that “development should not obscure the fine views of the immediate countryside from the village, especially those towards Old Winchester Hill and Beacon Hill.”

Due to the extent of the curtilage, topography, vegetation and vines, the photovoltaic panels are not visible from outside the wider estate of Exton Park. As part of the officer’s justification for decision of the previous application for additional panels, it was determined that as the proposal was “adjacent to existing solar panels and set away from other neighbouring properties, so the proposal is not considered to have a detrimental impact on neighbours.”

## **NOISE**

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'1 App' Guidelines state that a noise impact assessment should be submitted if a full planning application is made. A noise impact assessment is not material in respect of this application as the OV panels are static frames which do not generate noise emissions and so further need for assessment has been discounted, unless informed otherwise.

## **CONCLUSION**

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The proposal seeks an additional 250 solar panels in order to meet energy requirements for the site, with the use solar energy; proving an efficient and sustainable source of power. The siting of the existing and proposed solar panels are sensitive to the surroundings. The proposal is compliant with NPPF and local adopted policies, SD1, SD2, SD42, SD45, SD48 and SD51.

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