

22/00799/01B

PLANNING STATEMENT
PROPOSED GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR PANELS
AT GILLBECK FARM, BEWERELY
HARROGATE HG3 5JF

CASE NUMBER: 22/00799/HPC

Introduction

This is a planning application to erect a ground array of 30 solar panels within the field to the rear of our property Gillbeck Farm which is set back from Peat Lane in Beverley.

This application has been prepared in accordance with advice and guidance issued by Harrogate Borough Council and in reference to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design and access assessment

Gillbeck Farm is one of a cluster of three residential properties set back to the North from Peat Lane in Beverley.

The application site is a field located immediately to the North of Gillbeck Farm at the rear of the property. The field forms one of three parcels of agricultural land in our ownership. The field is separated from the back garden of our property by a grassed public footpath that is maintained by ourselves and our neighbours at Croft House.

The field is surrounded to the north, west and east by agricultural land.

Access

There is an existing field gate which provides pedestrian access into the field where the proposal will be sited.

The field gate will be accessed from our rear garden and across the footpath. This will provide access for installation and maintenance of the solar ground array.

Siting of the proposal

The thirty 340W Eurenor Zebra All Black Half-Cut Mono solar PV panels are to be ground mounted in rows in an area measuring approximately 4m x 25m. The rows will be south facing in the field to maximise energy capture. The siting takes into account the presence of the field gate.

The configuration of the panels and the distance between the rows has been informed by the distance and orientation requirements of the photovoltaic (PV) system. The siting aims to maximise energy generation by evading overshadowing and facing directly south.

Design

The rows of solar panels are to sit on Renusol frames which will position the panels at a pitch of 30 degrees. This pitch is required in order to maximise energy output and to enable self-cleaning.

The solar panels will be black in colour within an aluminium frame to minimise glare and visual impact.

Scale of the Proposal

The 30 panels will provide 10kWp of electricity. The scale is appropriate for the size of the six bedroom property which now generates all heating and hot water from an air source heat pump,

following recent removal of the old heating oil boiler. In addition, electricity is used to charge the electric vehicle used by the owner.

Views of the proposal

Views of the panels will be limited to the immediate area. This is because of the topography of the land, presence of existing development immediately to the south, and limited vantage points from public rights of way. In addition, new hedging is to be planted to specifically limit views of the panels from the footpath immediately to the south of the field. There will be limited views of the panels from Peat Lane but again they will be shielded from view in large part by the properties in front of them, hedging and topography of the surrounding land. In addition, the panels are only approximately 60cm from ground height (at an angle of 15°) and for a large part of the year will be surrounded by meadow grass.

The upper edge of the panels will be barely visible from the upstairs windows of the neighbouring property during winter months. During summer months the panels will be completely obscured from view in time by mature hedging. Please note that the proposal is fully supported by our neighbours who have also recently transferred to sustainable energy sources for their heating and hot water.

National strategy and local policies are supportive of the installation of solar arrays for the generation of renewable energy.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts. Recent rapid and unsustainable increases in the costs of gas and electricity mean that alternative renewable energy sources are now a major priority.

Paragraph 155 of the framework 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, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (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 (in line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008)
- c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers (particularly pertinent for isolated or rural communities that often rely entirely on electricity or heating oil for heating and hot water).

At paragraph 156 the guidance states that local planning authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside areas identified in local plans or other strategic policies that are being taken forward through neighbourhood planning.

At paragraph 158, the guidance states that 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
- b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

At paragraph 174, in relation to conservation areas, the guidance states that Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality.

Draft Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1), September 2021

At paragraph 3.3.21 the policy states that wind and solar are the lowest cost ways of generating electricity, helping reduce costs and providing a clean and secure source of electricity supply (as they are not reliant on fuel for generation). Government analysis shows that a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar.

At paragraph 3.3.22 it states that the government has committed to the sustained growth in the capacity of solar in the next decade.

Yorkshire and Humber Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy to 2026)

The Region will maximise improvements to energy efficiency and increases in renewable energy capacity. Plans, strategies, investment decisions and programmes should reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency and maximise the efficient use of power sources requiring the orientation and layout of development to maximise passive solar heating.

Harrogate District Local Plan (2014-2035)

Policy CC3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

The policy sets out that renewable and low carbon energy projects, including incorporating small-scale renewable and low carbon energy generation into the design of new developments where appropriate, feasible and viable, will be supported provided that:

- a) The proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape, the natural environment, biodiversity, the cultural environment, the historic environment, adjoining land uses and residential amenity
- b) Appropriate mitigation measures would be taken to minimise and, where possible, address adverse impacts
- c) The proposal avoids unacceptable cumulative landscape and visual impacts.

Background:

The approach of tackling climate change by reducing carbon emissions is well established. In 1992, through the Kyoto Protocol, many industrialised countries, including the UK, committed to cutting their greenhouse gas emissions in order to help prevent dangerous interference with the climate system. More recently, the Paris Climate Agreement saw an even greater number of countries sign-up to more ambitious emissions reduction targets to limit the extent of climate change.

In the UK the Climate Change Act (2008) sets a legal framework to deliver an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2050. In response the Harrogate Borough Council Carbon Reduction Strategy identifies that the district should make a proportional contribution to reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and sets a local target to reduce emissions by 57% by 2030, which is in line with the UK Carbon Budget.

Around two thirds of the district's carbon dioxide emissions are associated with energy use in domestic and industrial or commercial settings. As a result, reducing emissions related to energy use is imperative in order to meet wider local targets, national legislation and international agreements. Energy policy CC4 identifies priorities for action in order to develop sustainable energy systems.

Renewable energy technologies produce energy from natural resources that will not run out, they include energy from wind (wind turbines), energy from the sun (photovoltaic and/or thermal panels) and energy from water (hydro-electricity).

Paragraph 94 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires planning authorities to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change in line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008. Paragraph 93 identifies that planning plays a key role in supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure, and paragraph 97 requires planning authorities to recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources. It goes on to say that the authorities should have a positive strategy to promote renewable and low carbon energy and policies to maximise this kind of development whilst ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily.

In recognition of the important contribution that renewable and low carbon energy is required to play in meeting commitments to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and mitigate climate change, this policy seeks to support, in principal, schemes to generate energy from renewable and low carbon sources where any adverse impacts, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts, can be satisfactorily addressed.

The Harrogate District Planning and Climate Change Study (2011), produced by consultants AECOM, concluded that there were significant potential for renewable and low carbon energy in the district.

Proposals within the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) should respect the natural beauty and special qualities of the area and will be determined in line with policy GS6: Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Nevertheless it is recognised that climate change is itself a significant long-term threat to landscapes across the country. **Many renewable energy technologies, particularly smaller-scale applications, including in connection with new**

developments, are capable of being accommodated within the Nidderdale AONB without causing unacceptable adverse effects.

Material planning considerations

In terms of solar photovoltaic panels, there is considerable support for micro-generation within the NPPF. The instillation of solar panels is a desirable development in the Harrogate Borough for the following reasons:

- a) It helps deliver on the Government's ambition for a low carbon economy where everyone needs to play a part
- b) It helps to meet ambitious Government targets of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050
- c) It reduces dependency on the national grid and the use of limited natural resources.

The Council has previously made it clear that ground mounted solar panels are appropriate development within the AONB as there is limited adverse impact.

Visual impact

Solar panels are being more commonplace but careful placement is still necessary in order to respect wider considerations such as AONB. Under permitted development rights, we could have chosen to mount the panels on the south facing roof of our property, meaning that the panels could be viewed from the wider AONB, particularly Peat Lane. However, we rejected this option for two reasons:

- a) In order to reduce the visual impact of the solar panels
- b) It would necessitate the replacement of the traditional Yorkshire slate roof of the property as solar PV panels cannot be mounted on to this material without damaging it
- c) The 3.4kWh roof instillation would not be adequate to supply meaningful amounts of renewable energy for a six bedroom family property (including an elderly relative) that relies solely on electricity for domestic central heating and hot water, but also to charge an electric vehicle (EV).

Residential amenity

We consider that there is no impact upon the amenity of the neighbouring properties which fully support the proposal. The panels are low lying and cannot be seen from the garden or the ground floor windows of the neighbouring property. During winter months the top of the panels would be barely visible from the upstairs windows. In summer months they would be completely obscured by mature hedging and meadow grass. The panels will in no way overshadow or block views from the neighbouring properties.

Conclusions

We believe that the proposal is in accordance with both national strategy and local policies that promote the deployment of renewable energy technologies, and suggest that ground array are appropriate within the AONB.

The solar panels would be shielded from public visibility by the existing properties, topography of the surrounding landscape, seasonal meadow grass and in time, mature hedging on the boundary of the proposed field sight. There will be no damage to protected flora or fauna (please note that the same site was previously approved by Harrogate BC for installation of ground source heating coils).

There will be very limited views from the first floor windows of our neighbour's property during winter months. In time, the arrays will be completely obscured from view from both the neighbouring property and the adjacent public footpath by mature hedging.

It is therefore anticipated that the proposal complies with all relevant development plan policies and we sincerely hope that you will be able to support it.

Thank you for your consideration.

John and Kate Adams

Gillbeck Farm

Bewerley

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