

# Planning Statement

## Submission to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Proposal: The installation and operation of 27 roof-mounted solar panels for domestic use on the Hay Barn, Stonecastle Farm, Whetsted Road, TN12 6SE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared to support an application to install 27 roof-mounted solar panels at "The Hay Barn, Stonecastle Farm, Whetsted Road, Five Oak Green, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 6SE" (hereafter referred to as the "Site"), as shown on the accompanying Site Location Plan. The barn conversion on the Site was approved under 20/01649/PNQCLA. A householder application has been submitted, as advised by the TWBC Planning technical team, as with a Class Q prior approval application there is no facility for amendment.

### 2. PROPOSAL

The description of development is as follows:

***"The installation and operation of 27 roof-mounted solar panels for domestic use on the Hay Barn, Stonecastle Farm, Whetsted Road, TN12 6SE"***

- 2.1 The solar panels are part of the owner's plan to reduce their carbon footprint. The successful installation of solar panels and accompanying battery, would complement the existing installation of an air source heat pump, and other low-energy technologies, demonstrating a real intent and commitment, to reduce and manage carbon emissions, making the property a real sustainable home.
- 2.2 The solar PV equipment will be sited on the south-facing aspect of the standing seam roof, as shown on the accompanying elevation plans. The roof has a shallow pitch (<15 degrees), and as such, the solar panels will not appear prominent, minimising the effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area.
- 2.3 In recognition of potential concerns regarding glare from the proposed solar panel installation, the selected solar panels will have anti-reflective coatings, which significantly reduce the reflection of sunlight, thereby minimising glare. This technology is designed to absorb more sunlight and convert it into energy rather than reflecting it into the surrounding environment. This, combined with the low-profile design of the installation on a shallow pitched roof, will ensure that the solar panels harmonise with the surrounding environment while adhering to the principles of sustainable and considerate development.
- 2.4 The proposed development will comprise a panel array of 27 roof-mounted solar panels, with a height above the roof level of less than 0.2m.
- 2.5 Each of the panels will provide clean renewable electricity which is to be used by The Hay Barn. 27 panels are the necessary amount required to meet the electricity needs of the property. The panels are laid out in a uniform manner as per the elevation drawings attached to this proposal. This uniform appearance across the roof slope will also act to reduce the visual prominence of the panels.
- 2.6 Energy generated will be used by the dwelling and any excess released back to the grid.
- 2.7 The image below shows the layout of the solar panels and the results of the simulation showing the amount of energy that can be harnessed with the design.



### 3. SITE

#### Site Context

##### Immediate

The application relates to an existing wider farm complex which includes the main farmhouse, a converted oast house and another converted farm building known as the Granary. The farmhouse and the oast house are separated grade II listed.

The complex is accessed via an existing tarmac drive off Whetsted Road. As detailed in the Class Q application, it was considered that the Site is not considered to be curtilage listed.

There are a number of agricultural buildings surrounding the Site. The application relates to a modern barn conversion – subject of a Class Q consent (Ref: 20/01649/PNQCLA). The conversion includes a simple facade of windows evenly arranged with cladding and facing brickwork.

##### Surrounding

The Site falls within both Flood Zone 2 and Flood Risk Zone 3 as designated by the Environmental Agency (EA). The Site lies within Agricultural Land Grade 3 and falls within the Metropolitan Greenbelt MGB1 - Metropolitan Greenbelt.

The Site lies Outside the Limits to built development and in the countryside. The Site lies within a Strategic Flood Risk Area Level 1 Flood Zone 2, 3A and 3B and is located within the administrative area of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

### 4. HISTORY

A review of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website identifies the following relevant planning history:

- 4.1 22/03496/FULL | Change of use and incorporation of land into domestic curtilage | **Approved**
- 4.2 22/03421/FULL | Change of use of land to form domestic curtilage and the erection of a detached two bay garage with store | **Approved**
- 4.3 20/01649/PNQCLA | Prior Notification for the change of use of a building and land within its curtilage from an agricultural use to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouse) and building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building For its prior approval to: -Transport and highways impacts; - Noise impacts; - Contamination risk; - Flooding risks; -Whether location or siting makes it impractical or undesirable; - Design or external appearance | **Approved**

## 5. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.
- 5.2 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.
- 5.3 Paragraph 157 of the NPPF states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. 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, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 5.4 Paragraph 164 of the framework states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should 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 the 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 14 of this Framework.

### Tunbridge Wells Submission Local Plan

- 5.5 TWBC's submission Local Plan has finished its Stage 2 examination sessions. Given that the Submission Local Plan is at advanced stages the policies hold weight in the planning balance and are considered as part of the determination of the application. The relevant policies are outlined below.
- 5.6 Policy STR 7 Climate Change: All development within the borough will recognise the Climate Emergency and be supportive of the Council's ultimate target to achieve net zero emissions across the borough by 2030. This will be achieved by: Implementing proactive policy on climate change mitigation: a proactive policy for low carbon design and construction will be implemented that follows the energy hierarchy and supports the delivery of appropriate renewable energy generation.
- 5.7 Policy EN 3 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Subject to all other material considerations, proposals for zero carbon and low emission development, as well as development that allows communities, infrastructure, businesses and the natural environment to adapt to the impacts of climate change, will be strongly supported. Renewable energy-generating technology include photovoltaics, solar hot water, air/ground source heat pumps, wind turbines, hydropower, and biomass boilers.

### **Other material considerations**

5.8 TWBC declared a climate change emergency in July 2019 which set out TWBC's commitment to be operationally carbon neutral by 2030. The Council have subsequently devised a climate change action plan looking at how the Council can reduce its emission but also how it can influence business, organisations and individuals to do the same.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The proposed installation of 27 roof-mounted solar panels at "The Hay Barn, Stonecastle Farm", is a conscientious effort to align with both local and national sustainability objectives, particularly in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation. This initiative is not only a response to the urgent call for renewable energy solutions as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF2023), but also a testament to the property's commitment towards a sustainable and energy-efficient future.
- 6.2 The impact of the development on the immediate setting is considered minimal and won't compromise the aesthetic and historical significance of the surrounding rural landscape. The chosen configuration of panels, maximizes energy production while ensuring a minimal visual impact, respecting the character and setting of the local environment.
- 6.3 There are no other material considerations that indicate that permission should be withheld.
- 6.4 It is therefore requested that planning permission is granted without delay.