Cornwall Planning Department

New County Hall,

Treyew Road,

Truro,

TR1 3AY

Valley Environmental Consulting
Creative Solutions for the Built & Natural Environment

23/02/2024

Our Ref-VEC491

Submitted Via The Planning Portal

Dear Sir/Madam

Installation of Solar Panels Array at Land at Highfield Farm, A394, Penryn, TR10 9EG

I write to seek planning permission for a solar array comprising 24 panels to be situated in paddock land at Highfield Farm, near Edgecumbe, Penryn.

The panels would be used to provide domestic renewable energy to the applicants property allowing greater use of renewable energy and reduced reliance on the national grid. The panels would be situated south facing on a paddock unused for agriculture, along with a small amount of internal battery storage and would have an expected output of 9685 kwh.

The panels would be supported by a solaredge 10kw inverter which is rated at less than 40db which is also to be positioned with the solar panels.

The panels would be ground mounted and would consist of an elevation no more than 0.6m in height and therefore would be very low lying in the landscape. Each panel measures 1.7 x1.14 m in size and would be Perlight Black Module Solar panels with high absorbency and efficiency.

The relevant Planning Policies at a National and Local scale appear to be the following:

Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030 (Adopted 22nd November 2016)

Policy 1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
Policy 2 Spatial Strategy
Policy 2a key targets
Policy 3 Role and function of places
Policy 4 Shopping, services and community facilities
Policy 5 Business and Tourism
Policy 12 Design
Policy 13 Development standards
Policy 14 Renewable Energy
Policy 16 Health and wellbeing
Policy 21 Best use of land and existing buildings

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Policy 23 Natural environment
Policy 24 Historic environment
Policy 25 Green infrastructure
Policy 28 Infrastructure

Climate Emergency Development Plan Document February 2023

Policy C1 - Climate Change Principles
Policy G1 - Green Infrastructure Design and Maintenance
Policy AG1 - Rural Development and Diversification
Policy AL1 - Regenerative and Low Impact Development
Policy RE1 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
Policy SEC1 - Sustainable Energy and Construction

National Planning Policy Framework 2023
Section 1. Introduction
Section 2. Achieving sustainable development
Section 3. Plan-making
Section 4. Decision-making
Section 5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Section 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
Section 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
Section 11. Making effective use of land
Section 12. Achieving well-designed places
Section 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Planning Practice Guidance
Cornwall Design Guide 2021

The most operative policy from the Cornwall Local Plan is Policy 14 relating to the new use of renewable energy,

Policy 14: Renewable and low carbon energy

1. To increase use and production of renewable and low carbon energy generation development proposals will be supported that:

a. maximise the use of the available resource by deploying installations with the greatest energy output practicable taking into account the provisions of this Plan;
b. make use, or offer genuine potential for use, of any waste heat produced; and
c. in the case of wind turbines, they are within an area allocated by Neighbourhood Plans for wind power and avoid, or adequately mitigate shadow flicker, noise and adverse impact on air traffic operations, radar and air navigational installations; and
d. do not have an overshadowing or overbearing effect on nearby habitations.
e. in the case of **solar development, noise, glint and glare is mitigated adequately**.

2. Support will be given to renewable and low carbon energy generation developments that:

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a**. are led by, or meet the needs of local communities**; and
b. create opportunities for colocation of energy producers with energy users, in particular heat, and facilitate renewable and low carbon energy innovation.
3. When considering such proposals, regard will be given to the wider benefits of providing energy from renewable sources, as well as the potential effects on the local environment; including any cumulative impact of these proposals.

4. In and within the setting of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and undeveloped coast, developments will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and should generally be very small scale in order that the natural beauty of these areas may be conserved.

5. When considering proposals for renewables that impact upon the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting and / or the World Heritage Site or other historic assets and their settings, applicants should apply other relevant policies in the Plan.

There is no specific relevant planning history to the property nor has any renewable energy been deployed in the immediate vicinity of the Highfield Farm properties.

The planning application should be assessed against the Development Plan policies
and any other material considerations.

The key issues that require addressing in the determination of this application include;

o Principle
o Impact on the character and appearance of the area
o Impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers

The arrays are proposed in an undeveloped agricultural field in four banks, each measuring approximately 10m in length by 1.4 m width, being screwed into the ground via ground mounts.

No boundary treatment is proposed to separate the solar array from the remainder of the agricultural field. In relation to Biodiversity Net Gain it is considered that the site does not decrease the biodiversity of the site or the issue could be dealt with by a the general biodiversity gain planning condition.

The likelihood regards power generation is that all of the properties energy needs are to be generated at peak times and it is understood the applicant is keen to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and reduce energy running costs which complies with policies within the CEDPD

Policy RE1 of the CEDPD provides support the solar energy development. Specifically, "Standalone ground mounted installations and extensions or repowering of solar installations will be supported where they are focussed on previously developed land and away from best and most versatile agricultural land unless exceptionally justified".

In this case, the agricultural field is indicated as Grade 4, as shown on the DEFRA MAGIC Map.

Policy SEC 1 . 3 and 4 regarding existing buildings advises "Significant weight will be given to the benefits of development resulting in considerable improvements to the energy efficiency and reduction in carbon emissions in existing buildings".

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Additionally, Policy 21 of the CLP is regarding the best use of land and buildings and states "Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, poor quality land should be used in preference to that of higher quality."
Whilst the development is proposed in an undeveloped agricultural field, that is not previously developed land and the specific grading of the agricultural land is at Grade 4 or Poor, the proposal is not considered to be significant development of agricultural land and will only take up a small section of the field, according with Policy 21 of the CLP.

Additionally, policy SEC 1.3 advises significant weight should be given to improvements to the energy efficiency and reduction in carbon emissions in existing buildings.

Overall, on balance the principle of the development is considered acceptable, aiding an existing property to reduce their carbon emissions and running costs.

The array takes up a small area of the field which is reasonably distant from housing and the site is not within an area of high landscape value. The field is typical of paddock land near to homes and aside from the area of trees to the south west of the proposed array the field is devoid of any landscape features that would be impacted by the proposal.

Whilst there will be a localised impact from the development, given the scale of the development the visual impact is considered acceptable from nearby residential properties and glint and glare will be minimal due to the distance from properties as well as the almost flat angle the panels will be orientated at within the field.

The Solar inverter proposed would also be situated within the paddock at less than 40db, and which is located sufficiently far away from residential properties to pose no noise issue or adverse residential amenity problem and therefore the proposal is not considered to impact neighbour residential amenity in any other regard and the proposal is compliant with Policy 12 of the CLP.

Taking these factors into account, on balance it is considered that the proposal is acceptable, subject to assessment by the Local Authority, however we believe the application should be approved without delay.

Yours Sincerely,

[redacted]

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