

FORMAL OBJECTION TO RETROSPECTIVE PLANNING APPLICATION DM/26/2269

Date 1.10.2026

Application: DM/26/2269

Site: Brightlands, Lewes Road, Horsted Keynes RH17 7DP

[REDACTED] Hamsey Cottage, Lewes Road, Horsted Keynes RH17 7DP

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to submit a **strong objection** to the granting of retrospective planning permission for the solar panel installation and associated battery storage at Brightlands under application **DM/26/2269**.

I fully recognise the importance of renewable energy and the planning policy support for improving the energy performance of residential properties. However, that general policy support does not remove the requirement for a particular installation to comply with the development plan or to avoid unacceptable visual, landscape and residential amenity impacts.

My objection is therefore not to renewable energy in principle. It is to the **location, appearance, scale and cumulative impact of the particular installation at Brightlands**, particularly the panels installed on the side elevation and flat roof in close proximity to Hamsey Cottage, a total of 12 panels, 6 panels located on the SW side wall and 6 panels on a flat roof adjacent Hamsey Cottage.

1. Retrospective nature of the application

This is a retrospective application. The development has already been carried out, and the Council is therefore being asked to regularise the installation as constructed.

I respectfully ask the Council to assess the development **as it actually exists**, rather than considering whether a solar installation might have been acceptable if it had originally been designed and positioned differently.

The retrospective nature of the application is particularly relevant because the visual and residential amenity effects can now be considered in the context of the actual relationship between Brightlands and Hamsey Cottage.

2. The complete installation must be considered cumulatively

The application concerns a total of **22 solar panels**, comprising panels on the principal pitched roof together with panels installed on the SW side elevation and flat roof, as well as associated battery storage.

Brightlands also has **10 solar panels on the main pitched roof**.

I respectfully ask the Council not to consider the side-elevation and flat-roof panels in isolation. The planning assessment should consider the **combined visual effect of the installation**, including the cumulative effect when viewed from Hamsey Cottage and its surrounding areas.

The existence of the ten panels on the principal roof is relevant to the overall planning balance. The Council should consider whether the additional side-elevation and flat-roof installations, in their particular locations, introduce additional visual and residential amenity impacts which could reasonably have been avoided through alternative siting or design. The 10 panels located on the pitched slate roof should be adequate.

3. Visual appearance and siting of the side-elevation and flat-roof panels

I strongly object to the appearance and siting of the panels on the side elevation and flat roof.

These panels are visually prominent in their particular relationship to Hamsey Cottage and do not, in my view, achieve an appropriately integrated or sympathetic appearance. They are not sufficiently toned down or visually recessive in their setting. See images provided

The issue is not whether solar panels can ever be acceptable. It is whether **these panels, in these locations and in this configuration**, respect the character of the existing building Hamsey Cottage and their surroundings.

The Council should therefore consider:

- their position on the side elevation;
- their position on the flat roof;
- their visibility from Hamsey Cottage; internal living areas and external seating areas affected. Photos provided
- their relationship to the existing buildings; Hamsey Cottage dated Circa 1900
- their combined appearance with the other panels at Brightlands;
- whether the installation appropriately responds to the character and appearance of this part of the High Weald National Landscape.

4. Relationship between Brightlands and Hamsey Cottage

The relationship between the two properties is particularly important.

Brightlands and Hamsey Cottage are in very close proximity, and the side-elevation and flat-roof panels are positioned in a location where their visual presence has a direct relationship with Hamsey Cottage both from internal living areas (my sons living area and kitchen / dining area) along with outside seating on patio area. Images provided

Hamsey Cottage is a character property dating from approximately 1900, and the Council should have regard to its existing character and setting when assessing the effect of the solar panel installation.

I am also concerned that the submitted drawings do not adequately demonstrate all of the relevant separation distances between the flat-roof installation and Hamsey Cottage. No measurements provided showing distance between wooden/slate roof structure and side wall of Hamsey Cottage –measurements/ images provided – see separate document

I therefore respectfully request that the Council **verify the actual distances and relationship between the flat roof panels and Hamsey Cottage**, rather than relying upon incomplete or assumed dimensions.

5. Impact upon outlook and residential amenity

The impact upon the outlook from Hamsey Cottage is a significant concern – see all images provided.

The issue is not simply whether the panels can technically be seen. The Council should consider the **nature, prominence and cumulative visual effect** of the installation as experienced from the neighbouring property – Hamsey Cottage.

The side-elevation and flat-roof panels alter the visual environment immediately adjoining Hamsey Cottage. Their presence should therefore be assessed in terms of their effect upon the outlook and residential amenity enjoyed by the occupants of Hamsey Cottage. The solar panels are huge black TV-LIKE structures – see images provided of Brightlands prior to solar panel installation.

This is particularly relevant to **Mid Sussex District Plan Policy DP26**, which requires development to respond appropriately to its surroundings and have regard to the amenities of existing nearby residents, including matters such as outlook, visually intrusive, unsightly, prominent, privacy, daylight and sunlight. See all provided images

6. Mid Sussex District Plan Policy DP26 – Character and Design

Policy DP26 is directly relevant to this application.

The Council should consider whether the installation, as constructed, represents the character, scale and appearance of the surrounding house, Hamsey Cottage.

The Council should also consider whether the solar panel installation causes significant harm to the amenities of Hamsey Cottage.

In this case, the particular concern is the combined effect of the side-elevation and flat-roof panels upon: see all images provided

- visual appearance;
- the relationship between the two properties; - Significant fire risk
- the outlook from internal living areas and external patio at Hamsey Cottage;
- the established character of the area; and
- the residential amenity of the occupants of Hamsey Cottage.

I therefore ask the Council to undertake a specific assessment of the development against **Policy DP26**, rather than relying solely upon the general policy support for renewable energy.

7. Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Policy HK4

Policy HK4 is also relevant because it seeks development which respects and responds appropriately to the distinctive character of Horsted Keynes and the surrounding built and landscape environment.

The side-elevation and flat-roof panels should therefore be assessed in the context of the existing buildings, their scale and character, and their relationship with Hamsey Cottage – images provided

I respectfully submit that the particular siting and appearance of these panels do not adequately respond to that context.

8. Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Policy HK5 – Amenity of adjoining residents

Policy HK5 is particularly relevant to the relationship between Brightlands and Hamsey Cottage.

The policy requires consideration of the potential effect of the installation upon adjoining residents, including matters such as **privacy, daylight, sunlight and outlook**. - see all images provided

The Council should therefore expressly consider the effect of the side-elevation and flat-roof installations upon the outlook and residential amenity of Hamsey Cottage.

This assessment should be based upon the actual relationship between the properties and the installation as constructed.

9. Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Policy HK11 – Renewable Energy

I recognise that **Policy HK11 provides positive support for renewable and low-carbon energy technologies**.

However, that support is not unconditional. The policy also requires adverse visual and amenity impacts associated with renewable-energy installations to be appropriately managed and mitigated to an acceptable level – currently they are NOT acceptable.

I respectfully contend that the side-elevation and flat-roof panels have not demonstrated an acceptable response to those impacts.

10. Mid Sussex Design Guide

The Council's Mid Sussex Design Guide is also relevant to the assessment of the relationship between installation and neighbouring residential properties.

The Guide recognises the importance of protecting residential amenity and addressing issues including privacy, daylight, sunlight and the relationship between buildings.

I therefore ask the Council to assess the installation against the relevant residential amenity and design principles within the Design Guide, particularly having regard to the close relationship between Brightlands and Hamsey Cottage.

11. High Weald National Landscape

The application site is within the **High Weald National Landscape**, and the sensitivity of this landscape should be properly considered.

The visual appearance of development within this landscape is an important consideration. The Council should therefore assess whether the cumulative arrangement of solar panels on the side elevation and flat roof conserves the character and appearance of this part of the High Weald.

The fact that the panels generate renewable energy does not remove the need for appropriate siting and design within a sensitive landscape and direct neighbouring property, Hamsey Cottage.

12. Comments made by the residents of Brightlands

I have noted the comments made by the residents of Brightlands to the effect that:

“yes, it is change, yes, it is different, and to my mind, and my wife’s mind, it is smart and it is not unsightly.”

I respectfully disagree with that assessment.

I strongly contest the relevance of this opinion to the planning assessment of the application.

Whether the residents of Brightlands consider the installation to be “smart” or “not unsightly” is a matter of personal opinion. It cannot, in itself, establish that the installation is acceptable in terms of its visual impact, character or effect upon neighbouring property Hamsey Cottage.

More importantly, the side-elevation and flat-roof installations are **not being viewed from the same perspective as the residents of Hamsey Cottage , the residents of Brightlands do not view the installations on the SW side wall elevation and flat roof.**

The relevant planning consideration is the effect of the installation in its **surrounding context and neighbouring property** Hamsey Cottage.

I therefore strongly contest any suggestion that the personal opinion of the Brightlands residents that the installation is “smart” or “not unsightly” should carry significant weight in determining this application. Their view is necessarily subjective and does not address the specific planning concerns arising from the **SW side wall elevation and flat-roof panels as experienced from Hamsey Cottage.**

The Council should instead make its own objective assessment of the installation.

References to expenditure on carbon reduction and electric vehicles

I also note the reference in the Brightlands submission to expenditure of approximately **£40,000 on carbon-reduction measures, acquisitions and previous or future electric vehicles.**

I do not dispute that such measures may demonstrate a commitment to reducing carbon emissions.

However, those matters do not establish that the particular installation subject to this retrospective planning application complies with the relevant planning policies.

The Council must determine DM/26/2269 on the planning merits of the solar panel installation, or which permission is sought, including its **visual, landscape, design and residential amenity impacts**, - and **direct impact on Hamsey Cottage**.

The applicant's wider expenditure on carbon reduction should therefore not be treated as a substitute for demonstrating that the particular side-elevation and flat-roof installations are acceptable in planning terms.

The fact that the panels have already been installed should not prevent the Council from considering whether a materially less harmful arrangement could reasonably have been used.

In particular, consideration should be given to whether the renewable-energy objective can be achieved through a configuration which:

- removes the prominence of the panels;
- improves their relationship with Hamsey Cottage
- reduces their visual impact upon Hamsey Cottage;
- better respects the character of the area;
- reduces the cumulative visual impact of the 22-panel installation; 10 roof top panels should be adequate
- better satisfies the requirements of DP26, HK4, HK5, HK11 and the Mid Sussex Design Guide.

Request for determination

For the reasons set out above, I respectfully request that **Mid Sussex District Council refuse retrospective planning permission for DM/26/2269**.

In reaching its decision, I ask the Council to ensure that the officer's report and decision expressly address:

1. The retrospective nature of the application;
2. The complete installation and its cumulative visual impact;
3. The visual impact of the side-elevation solar panels;
4. The visual impact of the flat-roof solar panels; and associated fire risks
5. The relationship and separation between Brightlands and Hamsey Cottage;
6. The effect upon the outlook from Hamsey Cottage; internal living areas and external patio seating area
7. The effect upon the residential amenity of Hamsey Cottage and its occupants;
8. The accuracy and completeness of the submitted measurements and plans; flat roof panels are not 1M distance away from Hamsey Cottage.
9. Compliance with **Mid Sussex District Plan Policy DP26**;
10. Compliance with **Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Policy HK4**;
11. Compliance with **Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Policy HK5**;
12. Compliance with **Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Policy HK11**;
13. The relevant requirements of the **Mid Sussex Design Guide**;

14. The character and appearance of this part of the **High Weald National Landscape**; and
15. Whether the identified visual and residential amenity impacts could reasonably be reduced through removal of SW side wall / elevation and flat roof installation

Conclusion

I fully acknowledge the importance of renewable energy and the policy support for reducing carbon emissions.

However, the existence of a renewable-energy objective cannot mean that every installation is automatically acceptable irrespective of its location, appearance or effect upon neighbouring properties, Hamsey Cottage.

In this case, I strongly object to the **retrospective planning of the side-elevation and flat-roof solar panels** because I consider that their particular siting and appearance give rise to significant concerns regarding visual impact, residential amenity, outlook, design and the character of this sensitive part of the High Weald and Hamsey Cottage.

The planning assessment should be based upon the **actual installation as constructed**, its cumulative effect and its relationship with Hamsey Cottage, rather than the general principle that renewable energy is desirable.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that **retrospective planning permission for DM/26/2269 be refused**.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Photos provided in separate documents