

Planning Department
Mid Sussex District Council
Oaklands
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

RE: Householder Planning Application PP-14262567 at Park House, Twineham Lane, Twineham, West Sussex, RH17 5NP | Installation of a ground mounted domestic solar array

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write with reference to approved application DM/23/1578 (and subsequent variation application DM/27/0777). Within the scope of these successful applications, it was stated that the applicants would complement the existing renewable energy solutions with similar technologies for the new pool house and billiard room. An Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) has been installed for the pool house; this complements the existing Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) which is already in place and serves the main house.

It is proposed to expand the existing solar array – approved within application 12/02673/FUL – for a solution that will continue to reduce the environmental impact of the property and move toward enhanced on-site renewable energy generation, supporting a more sustainable and resilient energy strategy and contributing to a low-carbon, energy-efficiency future for the property.

Relevant Applications

Park House

- DM/23/1578 & DM/27/0777 | Approved, works completed
- 12/02673/FUL | Approved, works completed

Park Farm Barns

- DM/23/2197 | Approved, works commenced

Park Farm

- DM/25/1623 | Under consideration at time of submission

Scope and Supporting Documents

The existing solar array continues to perform well but are an older technology and much less efficient than newer panels. At just 10KW, the current array makes a small difference to the overall demand for a large property like Park House and the new pool house.

The new array will consist of 100 new panels delivering a total of 65kw and will be accompanied by battery storage of 62kwh (within the garage, along with the existing GSHP and other plant). Additionally, a electric vehicle charger will also be installed.

Many homeowners want some solar, but don't necessarily aim for 'off grid'. The applicants have set a goal to achieving as close to that as is possible, with the vision of reducing the environmental impact of the property to the best of their ability and within an affordable capital investment.

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The new solution has been sized against the total electrical consumption, taking into account the new and existing buildings. The applicants are also aiming to mitigate ongoing risks from electricity failure – which regularly happens in the countryside, and could be damaging to some of the sensitive equipment installed.

The application is supported by the following documents:

- 480 – Covering Letter & Planning Statement (this document)
- 480.SP.01 – Location Plan
- 480.SP.02 – Site and Block Plan
- 2829-23 – Plan View
- 2829-23 – East & West Sections
- 2829-23 – East & West Elevations
- 2829-23 – North & South Elevations
- Solarport Specification Brochure
- AIKO Stellar Specification Brochure

Environment & Ecological Impact Assessment (EEIA)

Within DM/23/1578 a comprehensive approach to addressing the potential environmental and ecological impacts was provided. In this application, it is the same, with the following considerations:

- The area of the new array has previously had significant ground disturbance in that the existing array is present, along with the significant disturbance caused by the installation of the GSHP pipework. The new array will sit alongside and be positioned above the GSHP pipework.
- The original trenches will be reopened and used for the cabling associated with the new array, terminating within the same area as the existing (within the garage building). As reference before in 12/02673/FUL this keeps cabling to a minimum and close to the incoming power supply.
- A more modern, and sympathetic ground spike mounting system is being used to support the panels. This'll have a negligible impact on wildlife. Whilst this part of the field is not actively farmed (due to the existing array and GSHP), the scheme will enable the land to be maintained in a similar fashion to that which currently exists.
- EEIA formed part of the contractor selection process, and the installation company are well known in the area. The contractors are experienced in protecting wildlife during the installation and for using minimal impact ground mount systems (such as the Solarport spikes proposed) across the district.
- The location of the existing and new array has no adverse visual impact on any immediate neighbours or anyone else in Twineham and beyond.
- In the time since the last application, the clients have purchased further land surrounding the site and own most fields adjacent to the proposed panels (with the exception of the direct neighbours at Park Farm and Park Farm Barns, each of whom have their own applications/approvals for arrays also).
- The client works closely with the local farmer who rents the land under a 'hand in glove' arrangement, ensuring a collaborative and carefully managed approach to allow the land to flourish for farming and other environmental benefits, e.g. those within Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- There will be no arboricultural impact from the proposal as the array sits further north into the field, meaning that ongoing tree maintenance is focused on the existing array and general best practice in estate/grounds care.

In addition to the EEIA considerations above – and in relation to Great Crested Newts specifically – the response from Jennie Shea (District Licensing Officer for West Sussex) within application DM/25/1623 (Park Farm) is noted as follows:

“There is a low risk that great crested newts (GCN) may be present at the application site. Mid Sussex District Council considers it to be unreasonable to require the applicant to submit a survey because this could be considered disproportionate to the scale and the likely impacts of the development. However, the application site lies in the red impact zone as per the modelled district licence map, which indicates that there is highly suitable habitat for GCN within the area surrounding the application site.

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Therefore, anyone undertaking this development should be aware that GCN and their resting places are protected at all times by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation or substitute the need to obtain a protected species licence if an offence is likely. If a GCN is discovered during site preparation, enabling or construction phases, then all works must stop until the advice of a professional/suitably qualified ecologist and Natural England is obtained, including the need for a licence.

The following recommendations are provided to further reduce the likelihood of impacts on this species:

- *Any trenches left overnight should be covered or provided with ramps to prevent GCN from becoming trapped.*
- *Any building materials such as bricks, stone etc. should be stored on pallets to discourage GCN from using them as shelter.*
- *Any demolition materials should be stored in skips or similar containers rather than in piles on ground."*

Having completed the research and prevention activity in the last application for GCN activity, we would welcome a similar condition/informative be applied to any approval.

Biodiversity Net Gain

While this is a Full Planning Application, we note the precedent set by application DM/24/0814 for a similar domestic installation at Portways House, where – despite the full application route – the proposal was deemed to fall within the scope of a Householder Application due to its domestic scale and lack of adverse impact on established vegetation. In that case, the LPA did not require submission of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculations.

Given the comparable nature of this proposal, and its minimal ecological footprint, we trust the LPA will adopt a similarly pragmatic approach and confirm that a formal BNG assessment is not necessary.

Conclusion

The application seeks to build upon the property's existing commitment to renewable energy by expanding the existing solar array in a manner that is environmentally sensitive, technically sound, and visually unobtrusive.

The proposed installation aligns with previous planning approvals and complements the low-carbon technologies already in place, including the ASHP and GSHP systems.

The ecological considerations outlined – particularly those relating to ground disturbance, wildlife protection, and visual impact – demonstrate a continued dedication to responsible land stewardship and sustainable development.

We trust that the enclosed documentation provides sufficient clarity and assurance and welcome the positive determination of this application.

Yours faithfully,

Courtney Darby
Darby Architectural Limited

18.08.2025