

Delegated Decision

Sign off Sheet

Ref. No:	DM/26/0794	Case Officer:	Andrew Watt
Application Type:	Full Application		
Proposal:	Proposed installation of 250 solar panels to the roof of the Carriage Storage Shed.		
Site:	Bluebell Railway, Carriage Works, Horsted Keynes Station, Station Approach, Horsted Keynes, West Sussex, ,		
Validation Date	1 Apr 2026	Overall Expiry Date:	8 May 2026
Pre-Commencement Conditions Required:		Pre-Com Conditions Date Agreed:	
Recommendation:	Permission	Recommendation Date:	26 May 2026
Target Date:	27 May 2026	Recommending Officer Signature:	Andrew Watt

Date Legal Agreement Completed: (if applicable)		No of Representations:	0
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Signed and Agreed By:	Steven King	Date:	26 May 2026
Comments:			

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

DM/26/0794

**Bluebell Railway, Carriage Works, Horsted Keynes Station, Station Approach, Horsted Keynes, West Sussex,
Proposed installation of 250 solar panels to the roof of the Carriage Storage Shed.
Mr Roger Kelly**

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

None.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTEES

MSDC Conservation Officer

No objection.

TOWN / PARISH COUNCIL OBSERVATIONS

Support this application.

INTRODUCTION

Full planning permission is sought for the proposed installation of 250 solar panels to the roof of the Carriage Storage Shed.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

In June 2013, planning permission was granted for a lecture room and toilet block extension to the north end of the existing carriage shed (13/01341/FUL).

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The red-lined site is tightly drawn on the inner valley roofs of a pair of train carriage storage sheds at Horsted Keynes Station, part of the Bluebell Railway. Both pitches have on them a series of rooflights, similar to the outer roofslopes. Elevations are coloured yellow, edged in green.

The site is located within the countryside and within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also within the setting of several Grade II listed buildings. It is designated as a Great Crested Newt - Impact Risk Zone (Red).

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning permission is sought for the proposed installation of 250 solar panels to the roof of the Carriage Storage Shed. They will be interspersed with the existing rooflights on both the inner roof slopes of the double dual-pitched roof building and set a minimum of 1m away from the eaves. Dimensions for each panel will be approximately 1.76m in height by 1.13m in width. The finish is shown as black.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LIST OF POLICIES

Planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Using this as the starting point, the development plan for this part of Mid Sussex consists of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan.

National policy (which is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance) does not form part of the development plan, but is an important material consideration.

Mid Sussex District Plan (Mar 2018)

The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 was adopted at Full Council on 28 March 2018.

Relevant policies:

Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
Policy DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy DP26: Character and Design
Policy DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
Policy DP38: Biodiversity
Policy DP40: Renewable Energy Schemes

Site Allocations DPD

The SADPD was adopted on 29 June 2022. It allocates sufficient housing and employment land to meet identified needs to 2031.

There are no relevant policies.

Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan (May 2023)

Mid Sussex District Council formally 'made' the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan part of the Local Development Plan for the Parish of Horsted Keynes as of 25 May 2023. The policies contained therein carry full weight as part of the Development Plan for planning decisions within Horsted Keynes

Relevant policies:

Policy HK4: Maintaining Local Character and Good Quality Design
Policy HK6: Conserving Local Heritage
Policy HK9: The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy HK11: Low Carbon Design and Renewable Energy Schemes

Other Legislation

Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Other Material Considerations

Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 - Submission Draft (Regulation 19)

The District Council is reviewing and updating the District Plan. Upon adoption, the new District Plan 2021 - 2039 will replace the current District Plan 2014-2031 and its policies will have full weight. In accordance with the NPPF, Local Planning Authorities may give weight to relevant policies of the emerging plan according to the stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies; and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF. The draft District Plan 2021-2039 (Regulation 19) is currently at Examination and hearings were concluded on 19 March 2026. The District Plan remains at Examination until the Inspector has

published his report, until that time only minimal weight can be given to the Plan and this planning application has been assessed against the policies of the adopted District Plan.

Relevant policies:

DPS3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes
DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery
DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain
DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DPB1: Character and Design
DPB2: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets

Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (Nov 2020)

The Council has adopted a 'Mid Sussex Design Guide' SPD that aims to help deliver high quality development across the district that responds appropriately to its context and is inclusive and sustainable. The Design Guide was adopted by Council on 4 November 2020 as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications. The SPD is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Relevant design principles include:

Principle DG11: Respond to the existing townscape, heritage assets and historic landscape

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Dec 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 is a material consideration and paragraphs 8 (overarching objectives), 11 (presumption in favour of sustainable development), 12 (status of development plan), 39 (decision-making), 48 (determining applications), 131 and 135 (design), 166, 167 and 168 (sustainability), 187 (conserving and enhancing the natural environment), 189 (National Parks and National Landscapes), 193 (biodiversity and ancient woodland) and 202-221 (heritage assets) are considered to be relevant to this application.

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide

Published in 2021, the National Design Guide illustrates how the government considers well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

Paragraph 134 of the NPPF sets out that this national document, along with the National Model Design Code, should be used to guide decisions on application in the absence of locally design guides or design codes.

High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 (2024)

This Plan has been prepared by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (including representatives from 15 local authorities, including Mid Sussex District Council) and sets out the long-term objectives for conserving this nationally important landscape.

ASSESSMENT

Principle

As noted above, planning legislation holds that the determination of a planning application shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In terms of policy designations, the starting point for this assessment is that the application site falls outside of the built-up area of Horsted Keynes as defined by the District Plan. As such the site is located within the defined Countryside.

Policy DP12 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

- *it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- *it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.'*

The application site is located in designated countryside for which no special justification of the proposal exists and is therefore considered contrary to the first criterion of this policy. The second criterion is engaged by Policy DP40 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, which states (in part):

'Proposals for new renewable and low carbon energy projects (other than wind energy development - see below), including community-led schemes, will be permitted provided that any adverse local impacts can be made acceptable, with particular regard to:

- o Landscape and visual impacts, including cumulative impacts, such as on the setting of the South Downs National Park and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the appearance of existing buildings;*
 - o Ecology and biodiversity, including protected species, and designated and non-designated wildlife sites;*
 - o Residential amenity including visual intrusion, air, dust, noise, odour, traffic generation, recreation and access.*
- Assessment of impacts will need to be based on the best available evidence, including landscape capacity studies.'*

The second criterion of Policy DP12 is also engaged by Policy HK11 of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan, which states:

'As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should be 'zero carbon ready' by design to minimise the amount of energy needed to heat and cool buildings through landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping. Consideration should be given to resource efficiency at the outset and whether existing buildings can be re-used as part of the scheme to capture their embodied carbon. Residential design proposals that include low energy and renewable technologies will be strongly supported.

The development of renewable and low carbon energy facilities, including community-led schemes, will be supported, provided that any adverse impacts (for example landscape and visual impacts, and impacts on biodiversity and amenity) can be managed and mitigated to an acceptable level.'

The proposed development is therefore considered acceptable in principle, in accordance with Policies DP12 and DP40 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Policy HK11 of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan.

Impact on the setting of the Listed Building(s)

The site is located within the setting of a number of Grade II listed buildings (heritage assets) within the station complex, notably the station itself (to the north), signal box and engine house (to the north-west).

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that:

'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'

Policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan states (in part):

'Development will be required to protect listed buildings and their settings. This will be achieved by ensuring that:

- A thorough understanding of the significance of the listed building and its setting has been demonstrated. This will be proportionate to the importance of the building and potential impact of the proposal;*
- Alterations or extensions to a listed building respect its historic form, scale, setting, significance and fabric. Proposals for the conversion or change of use of a listed building retain its significance and character whilst ensuring that the building remains in a viable use;*
- Traditional building materials and construction techniques are normally used. The installation of uPVC windows and doors will not be acceptable;*
- Satellite antennae, solar panels or other renewable energy installations are not sited in a prominent location, and where possible within the curtilage rather than on the building itself;*
- Special regard is given to protecting the setting of a listed building;*
- Where the historic fabric of a building may be affected by alterations or other proposals, the applicant is expected to fund the recording or exploratory opening up of historic fabric.'*

Policy HK6 of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan states (in part):

'Development proposals should ... preserve or enhance the special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings and their settings, and will be assessed against policies DP34 and DP35 of the Mid Sussex District Plan.

All planning applications which affect a heritage asset or its setting, should be accompanied by a Heritage Statement, which demonstrates a clear understanding of the heritage significance of the assets affected and which then informs the development of sensitive proposals which meet the statutory requirements for their preservation and enhancement.'

Design Principle 11 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD seeks to ensure that heritage assets are enhanced and preserved where appropriate.

Paragraphs 207, 208, 210, 212 and 215 of the NPPF are relevant, as follows:

207. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

208. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

210. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

212. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

215. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The Council's Conservation Officer has made the following comments:

'The application site is the carriage shed at Horsted Keynes Railway Station, which is part of the Bluebell Railway. There a number of Grade II listed buildings within the station complex, including the station itself (with booking hall, station master's house, canopies, waiting rooms etc.), signal box, and engine house, all of which date from c.1882. The carriage shed, however, is a modern structure, located a short distance to the south of the station, and to the east of the signal box and engine shed. It would not be regarded as curtilage listed, but is within the close setting of the listed buildings. It is a substantial building with double parallel pitched roofs.

The current proposal, which follows on from pre-application advice, is for the installation of solar PV array to the inward facing roofslopes of the shed. It is an extensive array, but the location of the panels has been carefully considered to reduce its visual impact, including in setting back the outermost panels from the eaves of the building so that they will not be visible from ground level. As such, the impact on views from and of the listed buildings will be minimal, and given the context of the modern carriage shed the effect on the character of the settings of these buildings and the contribution which these make to their special interests is considered to be limited and acceptable.

The proposal is therefore considered to meet the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34 and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.'

These views are supported. On this basis, the proposed works will comply with Policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policy HK6 of the Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF, in particular paragraph 210.

Impact on the character of the area and High Weald AONB

The site is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The legal framework for AONBs (also known as National Landscapes) in England and Wales is provided by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) which at Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Section 84 of the CRoW Act requires Local Planning Authorities to *'take all such action as appears to them expedient for accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'*. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023) amended Section 85 of the CRoW Act, to create a new duty on relevant authorities to *'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area when discharging their functions in AONBs'*. A similar ethos is found within The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan which is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the AONB.

Policy DP16 of the Mid Sussex District Plan aims to conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the AONB, as does Policy HK9 of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan aims to ensure that all development is well designed and reflects the distinctive character of towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. Policy

HK4 of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that all development maintains distinct local character and demonstrates good quality design.

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that:

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on the designated areas.'

The proposed PV panels are proposed to be sited on the inner roofslopes of a substantial building, and has been carefully designed to reduce their impact from ground level, by siting them away from the eaves. The site is otherwise relatively enclosed with limited prospect of long views from above (other than at the car park to the north, which is part of the station complex). Accordingly, it is not considered that the proposal would detract from the visual quality of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and therefore the above policies and guidance would be met.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to ensure that development does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants. However, whilst the nearest dwelling (Station House) is part of the station complex, immediately to the north, it is not considered that residents will be affected by the proposal once installed. An informative is recommended during construction works, however, and there is not considered to be any conflict with the above policy.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain this application comprises development below the de-minimis threshold meaning that this development is exempt from providing biodiversity net gain.

Other matters

The site is located within a designated Great Crested Newt - Impact Risk Zone (Red). However, having regard to the nature of the application, it is unlikely to have an impact on newts and accordingly there would be no conflict with biodiversity legislation, policy and guidance.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The application proposal is supported in principle. It is deemed to be of an appropriate siting and design in relation to the existing building and surrounding street scene, with no harm to the landscape character of the High Weald AONB or to the setting of nearby heritage assets. It would not cause detriment to surrounding residents. There would be no harm to biodiversity. Accordingly it is considered that the proposed development would comply with Policies DP12, DP16, DP26, DP34, DP38 and DP40 of the Mid Sussex District Plan, Policies HK4, HK6, HK9 and HK11 of the Horsted Keynes Neighbourhood Plan, the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD and the NPPF and is therefore considered acceptable.

Decision: Permission

Case Officer: Andrew Watt