

Proposed Solar Panels, The Old Ride, High Hatch Lane, Hurstpierpoint, BN6 9LH

Planning, Biodiversity, Design and Access Statement

Introduction/Proposal

To reduce their imported energy consumption and carbon footprint the applicants have the space and would like to install 13 ground mounted solar panels in their rear garden. The panels will be screened by the existing boundary hedges around the applicants' property.

The panels require planning permission due to their proximity to the boundary of the curtilage of the property.

Legislation and Climate Change targets

The UK's Climate Change Act 2008 states that the UK is required to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 when compared to 1990 emissions levels. In 2019 this target was increased to net zero by 2050.

Government Response to the Climate Change Committee October 2025 adaption progress report.

The Committee has advised that the impacts of climate change are accelerating and the need to strengthen the UK's resilience is more urgent than ever. Further action is needed to meet the scale of the challenge. The Warm Homes Plan seeks to help people find ways to save money on heating bills and transform our aging building stock into comfortable, low carbon, homes that are also resilient to climate change.

Current targets

The UK Government announced new climate goals at COP29 (December 2024), reducing emissions by 81% on 1990 levels by 2035. Whilst more recently there is talk about reducing some climate change targets for economic reasons, the Government has stated it remains committed to reducing carbon emissions.

West Sussex Climate & Adaption Plan Strategy 2020-2030

This document sets out West Sussex County Council's target to be carbon neutral by 2030.
West Sussex Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (Framework)

The overall planning policies of relevance to this application have been set out in the Framework. The Framework seeks to achieve sustainable development and states that Local Planning Authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. The Core principles of the Framework are to adopt a pro-active approach.

The Framework actively promotes measures that help mitigate the impact of climate change. It states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future and help shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases. Planning should support the use of existing resources and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Paragraph 161 states that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change.

Paragraph 162 states that plans should take a pro-active approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking account of the risk to biodiversity, landscapes and overheating from rising temperatures.

Paragraph 163 states that the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change should be considered in assessing planning applications, taking into account the full range of potential climate change impacts.

Paragraph 165 states that to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:

- a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);
- b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and
- c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for colocating potential heat customers and suppliers.

Paragraph 166 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:

- a) comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and
- b) take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.

Paragraph 167 states:

Local planning authorities should also 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 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 16 of this Framework.

Paragraph 168 states: When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should:

- a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future; 7
- b) recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;
- c) in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site.

Concerning design, the Framework states that new development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area; establish a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site and reflect the identity of local surroundings, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. Planning decisions should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative. Regarding the countryside proposals should respect their rural surroundings and not have an adverse impact on biodiversity.

Draft Revised National Planning Policy Framework 2025

Policy CC2 2. States that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings and/or drawing energy from renewable and low carbon sources.

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

The PPG confirms the Government's commitment to increasing the amount of renewable energy and low carbon technologies in the UK. It clearly states that addressing climate change is one of the core land use planning principles and that planning policies and decisions should positively support proposals for renewable energy. It also reflects the requirements set out in the Framework relating to listed buildings, design, landscape and biodiversity. The Framework supports sustainable forms of development and promotes measures that help mitigate the impact of climate change. It states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future and help shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases. Planning should support the use of existing resources and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Also, that so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Mid Sussex Local Plan 2013 – 2031 (LP)

On page 95 the LP states:

"The Mid Sussex Sustainable Energy Study (2014) assessed the potential for renewable energy schemes in Mid Sussex and concluded that the level of technical and capacity constraints in the District were likely to prevent major new renewable energy schemes from coming forward over the Plan period. Renewable energy schemes were likely to be relatively small-scale and the local community could have a key role through Neighbourhood Plans or other local initiatives. Such projects could help support energy security, respond to fuel poverty, reduce carbon emissions and provide a longer term financial return for communities."

With this in mind Policy DP40 states:

"Strategic Objectives: 1) To promote development that makes the best use of resources and increases the sustainability of communities within Mid Sussex, and its ability to adapt to climate change. Evidence Base: Gatwick Sub Region Water Cycle Study; Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study; Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study; Mid Sussex Sustainable Energy Study; West Sussex Sustainable Energy Study. 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:

- *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;*

- *Ecology and biodiversity, including protected species, and designated and non-designated wildlife sites;*
- *Residential amenity including visual intrusion, air, dust, noise, odour, traffic generation, recreation and access.”*

MiD Sussex New Local Plan 2021 - 2039

This Plan has reached an advanced stage, although changes are required to comply with emerging Government policy.

The emerging Local Plan Places greater emphasis on addressing climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions. Policy DPS1 2, states that The Council will support renewable and low carbon energy schemes in line with the requirements set out in Policy DPS3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Schemes. Policy DPS3 states:

“Taking account of the Mid Sussex Sustainable Energy Study (2014) Figure A.8, the Council will support proposals for solar energy generation providing they are in conformity with this policy and other policies in the District Plan. For standalone solar panel arrays and associated grid connection, it is expected that applications must address all of the following:

- 1. Mitigate landscape and visual impacts, including glare and glint and cumulative impacts, such as on the setting of the south Downs National Park and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and any designated heritage asset.*
- 2. Where necessary, the site will be screened (wherever possible with coppice, hedges or trees) and measures taken to mitigate harm to visual amenity.*
- 3. Demonstrate the mitigation hierarchy has been applied in relation to ecology and biodiversity and deliver necessary mitigation.*
- 4. Demonstrate development will not adversely affect the use of the best and most versatile agricultural land.*
- 5. Demonstrate Aerodrome Safeguarding Requirements have been met and it can be demonstrated that there will be no impact on air safety.”*

Planning merits

The proposal fully complies with the above proposals and policies for the reasons set out below.

The property is located within the countryside, in an area which is characterised by irregular⁵ shaped fields enclosed by hedges, pockets of woodland and a nature reserve. The area is not within a conservation area, South Downs National Park or an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Old Ride comprises a large older, traditionally designed

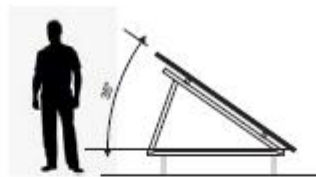
detached dwelling with generous sized gardens. The rear garden is fully screened from High Hatch Lane by the dwelling and mature hedging.

The proposed solar panels would be sited within the enclosed rear section of the garden on an area currently used for a mowed lawn. The 13 individual panels will each measure 1.95 metres x 1.13 metres x 3cm in depth and will be placed in a continuous row. The panel surfaces will comprise 3.2mm black tempered glass and their frames will comprise black anodized aluminium.

The solar panels will be ground mounted on black anodized aluminium frames that will be held in place by spikes in the ground. At their tallest point the panels will project 1.4 metres above ground level. The associated electricity cable will run a metre inside the boundary hedge, just below ground level. (The turf will be dug up and replaced once the cable is in place).

This method of installation means that the entire lawn will be retained. No soft landscaping, grass areas, etc. will be removed.

Below are an illustration and photograph of the type of solar panels and associated mounts.



East elevation



The panels would be fully screened from the road by the dwelling and hedges. Any views of the proposed panels from nearby dwellings would be restricted to oblique glimpses from upper windows. This is apparent from the site plan and photographs below.

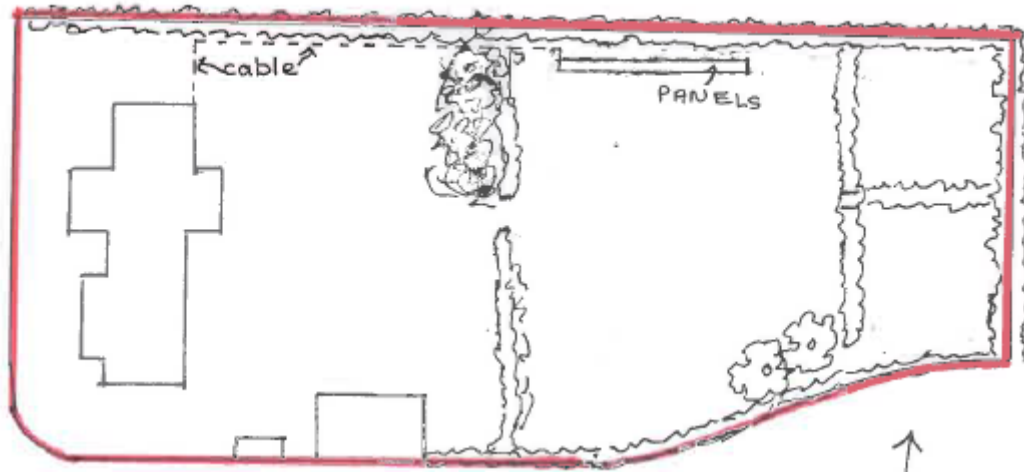


Photo 1

Photo 2



Solar panel position

Photo 3



Solar panel position

Photo 4



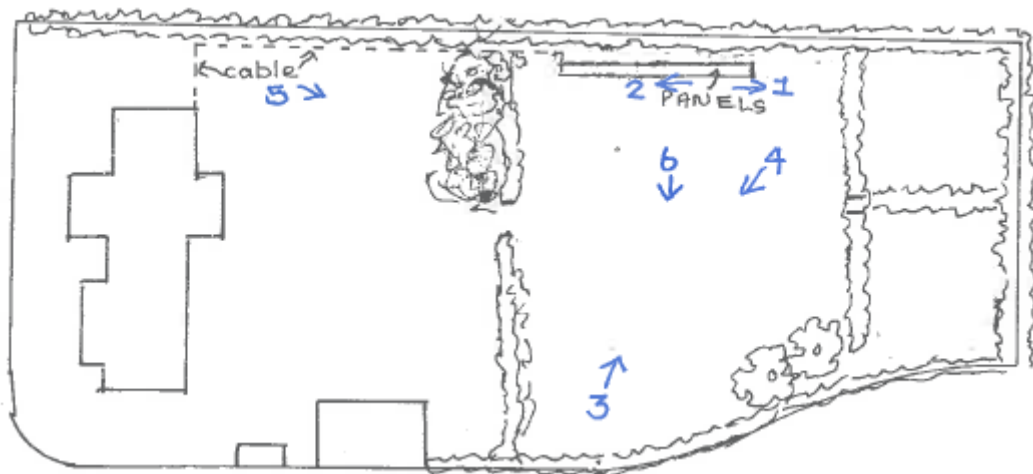
Photo 5



Photo 6



The plan below shows the positions from where the photographs were taken.



Finally, the only reason the panels are not being placed on the roof of the host dwelling is because it has a very attractive roof and the panels would detract from the character and appearance of both the dwelling and the local area.

Trees

No trees within the application site or the surrounding area will be affected by the proposed solar panels. They are referred to on the application form because they help provide a strong screen around the application property.

Biodiversity and BNG

Due to its location within the countryside there will be protected species in the area. However, due to their method of installation the proposed solar panels will not result in the removal of any vegetation.

Accordingly, the proposal will have no impact whatsoever on biodiversity and is exempt from BNG.

Irrespective of this, the applicants propose to introduce a wild flower meadow under and the proposed panels, which will enhance biodiversity. The wild flower mix is designed for shady areas. The mix by Meadowmania includes 18 shade-loving wildflower species, including some bulbs. The mix will be sown in accordance with the manufacturers instructions. The mixture will include:

Agrimony	Agrimonia eupatoria
Betony	Betonica officinalis

Bluebell	Hyacinthoides non-scripta
Foxglove	Digitalis purpurea
Garlic Mustard	Alliaria petiolata
Hedge Bedstraw	Galium mollugo
Hedge Woundwort	Stachys sylvatica
Herb Bennet	Geum urbanum
Nettle-leaved Bellflower	Campanula trachelium
Ragged Robin	Silene flos-cuculi
Red Campion	Silene dioica
Selfheal	Prunella vulgaris
Square-stalked St John's Wort	Hypericum Tetrapterum
Sweet Cicely	Myrrhis odorata
Welsh Poppy	Meconopsis cambrica
White Campion	Silene latifolia
Wild Angelica	Angelica sylvestris
Wood Sage	Teucrium scorodonia

The proposed solar panels will also reduce greenhouse gases, which will benefit wildlife and their habitats.

Accordingly, the proposal will benefit biodiversity.

Solar panel specification

This is set out in the Neostar 2S Mono-Glass Module specification document submitted with the application.

Conclusion

For these reasons the proposed solar panels will accord with current and emerging environmental policies and legislation.

The proposal complies with the three objectives of sustainable development in the following ways:

- Economic – employment during the installation and manufacture of the parts.
- Social – reducing CO2 levels.
- Environmental – helping to mitigate the impact of climate change; and enhancing BNG.

Overall, the proposal accords fully with the relevant policies set out in the Framework and the Mid Sussex Local Plan, as well as the objectives and policies of the emerging Local Plan, the Draft National Planning Policy Framework, the Climate Change Act and West Sussex Climate Change Strategy.

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