



Our ref: 0023

3rd May 2015

Mr Stephen Cantwell
Public Service Plaza
Civic Centre Road
Havant
Hampshire
PO9 2AX

Dear Stephen,

Application Number: APP/14/01164

Site Address: Manor Farm, Manor Road, Hayling Island

Proposal: Solar installation comprising ground-mounted solar panels, associated switch room building and landscaping.

This letter has been prepared in order to discharge the relevant components of conditions 5, 6 and 7 of the above planning application. Further information has been provided below in relation to each of the conditions.

Condition 5

Notwithstanding any information contained in the current application, the development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until a detailed soft landscaping scheme for all open parts of the site, including the surrounding field (coloured blue in the application) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, this shall include new planting to assist in minimising the visual impact of the array of solar panels and which is mindful of the recommendations in the report: Wader Habitat Enhancement Plan, Manor Farm, Haying Island Ecology 7270 Issue 01, which was prepared by Davog McCloskey and John Simper and dated November 2014. Planting shall also enhance the biodiversity value of the site, and a written explanation of the biodiversity benefits shall be submitted with the landscaping scheme. The scheme shall specify the distribution and species of new and existing planting and the planting sizes of the trees and shrubs to be planted and/or retained, and timing provisions for completion of the implementation of all such landscaping works. The implementation of all such approved landscaping shall be completed in full accordance with such approved timing provisions. Any tree or shrub planted or retained as part of such approved landscaping scheme which dies or is otherwise removed within the first 5 years shall be replaced with another of the same species and size in the same position during the first available planting season.

Reason: *In the interests of landscape and neighbouring amenities and having due regard to policies CS16 and DM8 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011 and the interests*

A landscape plan has been provided in **Appendix A** which sets out the location of the hedgerow planting which is the only planting associated with the proposals. The hedgerow planting was undertaken in March 2015 prior to the erection of the solar panels (which took place in April 2015) in order to get the plants established at the most appropriate time of year, before the onset of drier and warmer weather in spring. Leaving the planting until later than March would've risked the plants dying, and waiting until the next suitable planting season would've further set back any screening and biodiversity benefits of the proposals.

The aims of the landscape plan were to:

- Enhance the biodiversity of the site and local area;
- Screen the solar panels from visual receptors including nearby roads and neighbours as requested by the Landscape comments (**Appendix B**); and
- Avoid any adverse impacts on waders that would be attracted to the newly created scrapes provided as part of the Wader Enhancement Plan, prepared by Davog McCloskey and John Simper (PV Ecology, 2014)

The hedgerow consisted of a double row of whips, planted 30cm apart, of native species including hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, hazel, spindle and guelder rose. These were planted in locations shown in Appendix A. The whips were approximately 50-60cm in height and had rabbit guards protecting them. In the long term (approximately 10 years) the hedge will screen the site from the A3023 to the north-east (**Photo 1**) and West Lane to the south-west (**Photo 2**), and neighbours immediately to the west.



Photo 1 – New hedgerow planting to the north-east of the site



Photo 2 – New hedgerow planting along West Lane

The hedgerows will be managed in line with the surrounding hedgerows, allowing them to be maintained at a height of 2.0 – 2.5m as shown in **Photo 3**. The hedgerows will receive minimal management in the first 3 years although cutting new growth back by approximately 1/3 in winter will thicken the hedge up increasing lateral growth. The hedgerow should be mulched at the base once a year also to encourage growth. Although the preferred time to cut and maintain hedgerows in line with best practice for biodiversity is February, it is recommended that future maintenance takes the presence of Waders and Brent Geese in nearby fields into account - a brief inspection to check for these birds in the fields or scrape prior to hedgerow cutting and choosing a cutting time to avoid when the birds are present will limit disturbance. Birds are more likely to be found inland during high tide so cutting the hedges at low tide is recommended.



Photo 3 – Existing hedgerow managed to a height of 2- 2.5m

The primary function of the hedgerows is for screening, however they will have notable benefits for biodiversity. The newly planted hedgerows will maintain connectivity where they are planted as infill planting, adding to wildlife and commuting corridors for bats, birds, reptiles, mammals and invertebrates. The hedgerows will also increase the available area of foraging habitat for these species by providing more structure and diversity on site and locally.

Hedgerows in the wrong location, can reduce the likelihood of habitats being used by Waders and Brent Geese. It is considered that this is due to the birds preferring more open habitats where oncoming predators are easier to spot. A site with ideal opportunities for Waders and Brent Geese may not be used if it is surrounded by hedgerows that could conceal a fox. For this reason hedgerow planting has only taken place away from the scrapes, around the northern and north-west section of the solar panels, and further afield (**Appendix C**). No hedgerow screening has taken place along the western flank of the solar panels, between the panels and the scrapes. Fox proof fencing was also erected externally round the hedgerow (**Photo 4**) to further impede any foxes considering using the hedgerow as cover to predate a bird using the scrape habitat.

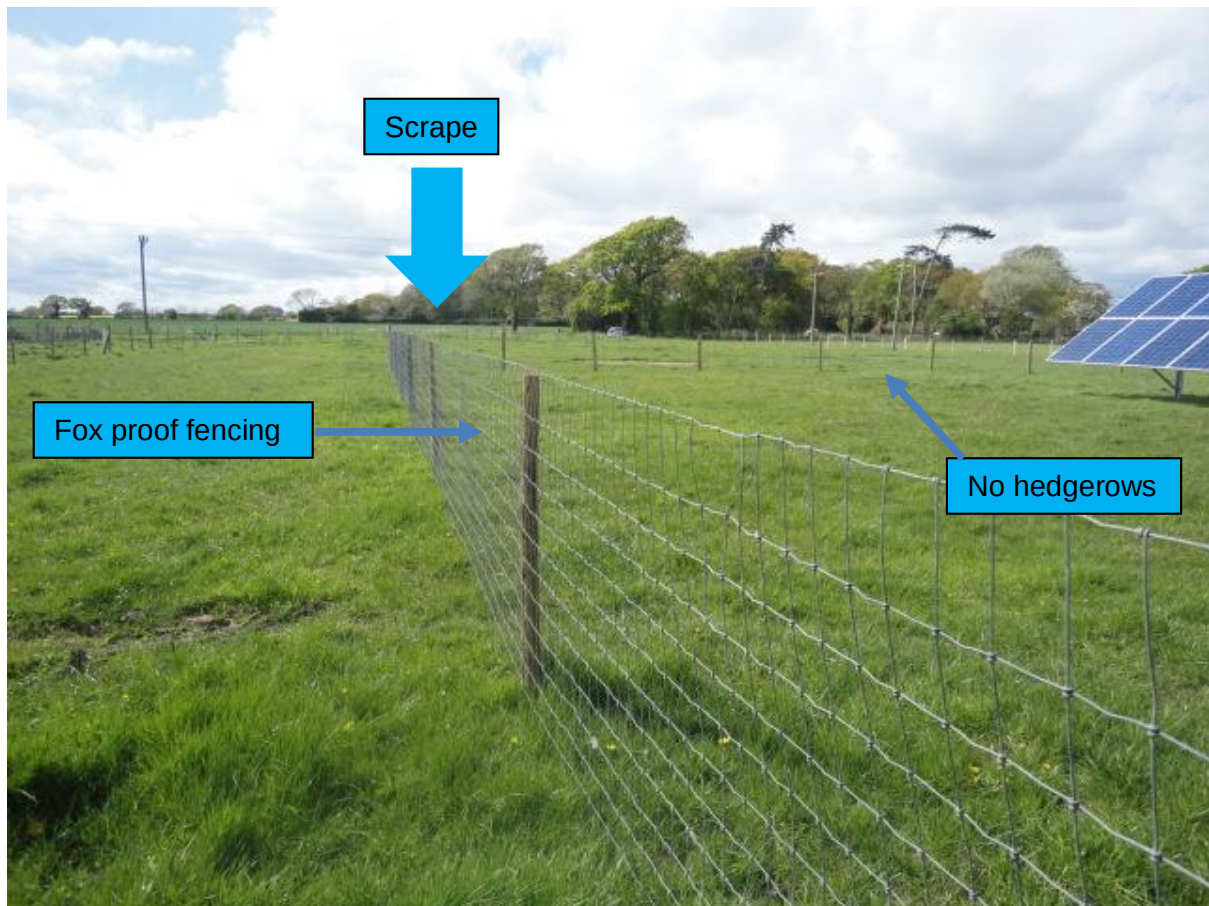


Photo 4 – No hedgerow has been planted along the western side of the panels

The scrapes were dug in December 2014 and were successful in holding water in the first year (**Photo 5**) although they were dry during a visit in April 2015 due to the dry weather in the previous months (**Photo 6**). The newly planted hedgerows are approximately 30m to the north-east of the nearest scrape and are not considered to have an adverse effect on the use of the scrape by Waders. The scrapes now form a continuation and enhancement of the habitat present in the large field to the south, identified as H49G in the Solent Wader and Brent Goose Mitigation Strategy, a field that has shown usage by Geese and Waders. Although no formal monitoring has been recommended Mr Walters has volunteered to forward any information on birds using the newly created habitats to the appropriate records centre.



Photo 5 – Scrape holding water in January 2015



Photo 6 – Three scrapes after they have dried out (photo taken in May 2015)

Condition 6

a) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and maintained in full accordance with the recommendations in the report: Wader Habitat Enhancement Plan, Manor Farm, Hayling Island Ecology 7270 Issue 01, which was prepared by Davog McCloskey and John Simper and dated November 2014.

b) The ongoing timetable and schedule of works set out in table 3 of the report referred to in a) above, shall be fully adhered to, including the ongoing carrying out of the specified actions for each of the 25 years set out in the table. (NB the Year 1 - 28th February activity shall comprise: Remove electric fencing from the scrape)

c) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, an ecological watching brief shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development works shall only be carried out in accordance with the watching brief thereby approved.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and having due regard to policy DM8 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011 and policy DM23 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations Document) 2014 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Prior to the commencement of development an ecological watching brief was not submitted, it is now being submitted retrospectively. The ecological watching brief was recommended for the trench works required to lay the cable through the area of rough grassland and hedgerow between the solar panels and farmyard (**Figure 1**) in order to ensure there were no impact on reptiles.



Figure 1 – plan showing location of trench for cable

Beyond this point until the cable reached the switch room to the south it would be above ground contained in a protective case. At the construction stage it could be confirmed that the trench would only be approximately 200mm wide and 600mm deep, with minimal ecological impact on the hedge and reptile habitat and therefore it was decided by the applicant that having an ecologist on site was not necessary to protect reptiles. The 10-15m trench was dug by hand in April 2015 and once installed the cable was covered over with the soil as shown in Photo 7.



Photo 7 – Cable trench route through grassland and hedge

Condition 7

No development hereby permitted nor any related site clearance shall commence until a specification of measures to be undertaken to prevent damage to existing trees and hedgerows on the site throughout the period of development works, (in the form of an arboricultural method statement) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development works shall adhere to any recommendations as approved by the local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the tree is not adversely affected by the construction of the development and having due regard to policies CS11 and CS16 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

As the proposals could be designed in a way to avoid any impacts to trees the arboricultural method statement was not prepared. The two large oak trees to the north of the switch room would not be impacted as the cable was put in a protective case and laid above ground and attached to buildings where necessary, as shown in **figure 2**.

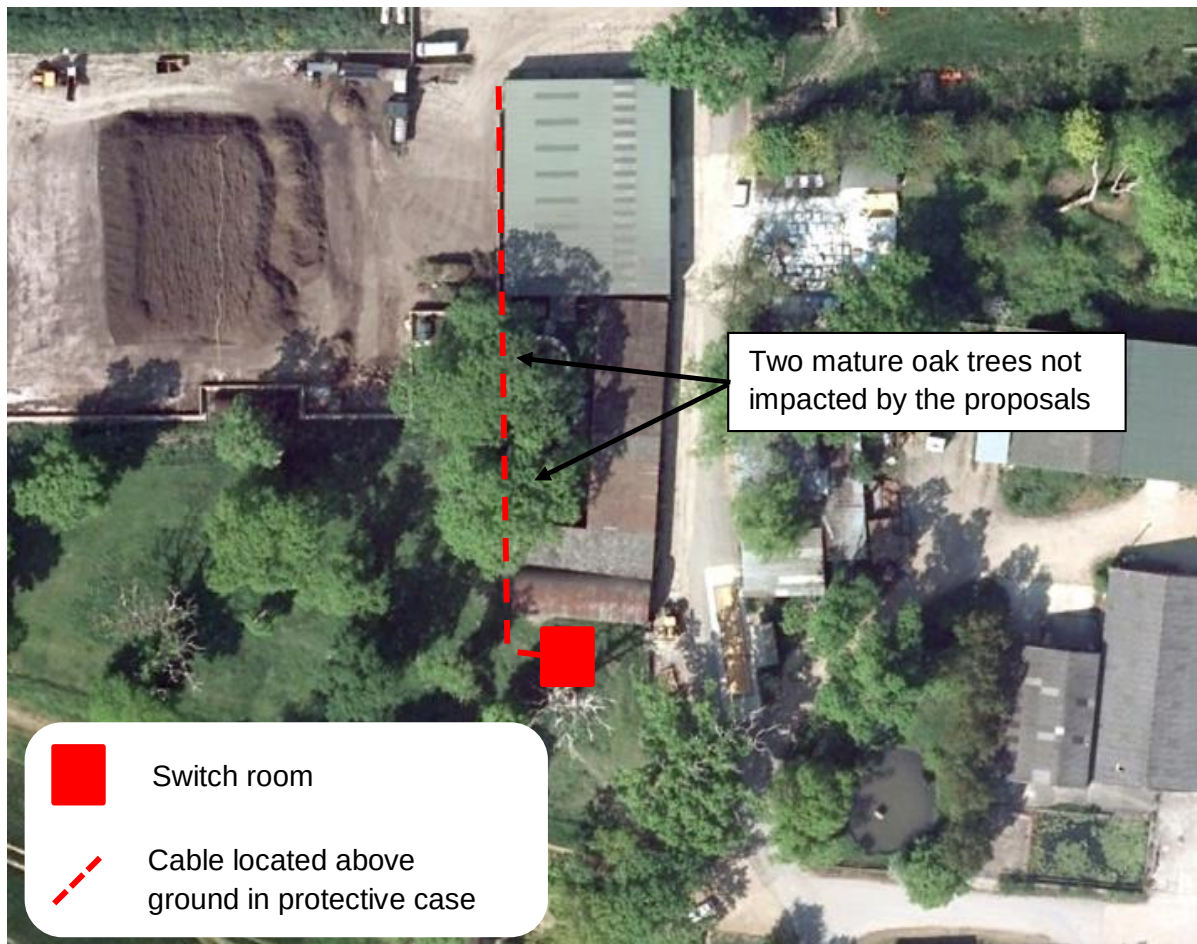


Figure 2 – plan showing location of above ground cable

If you require any additional information please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

Davog McCloskey MCIEEM
DIRECTOR

Cc Simon Walter, Manor Farm
Tristan Norton, Hampshire County Council

Appendix A – Landscape plan of open parts of the site



Hedgerow management timetable

Timing	Activity
March 2015	Plant hedgerow and mulch at base
Autumn 2016 – Autumn 2021	Mulch base of hedgerow
February 2018	Check for geese and waders in scrapes and nearby fields making sure they are absent before operating any machinery to cut hedgerow Cut new growth back to a third of height
Winter 2019 – solar panels are removed	Check for geese and waders in scrapes and nearby fields before operating any machinery to cut hedgerow, maintaining it at 2-2.5m

Appendix B – Landscape comments

The site sits within LCA 31 Central Haling plain which is noted for its **predominantly flat landscape**. I refer to relevant sections below:

Specific local key issues

- Poor edge treatment with ancillary facilities often exposed to open adjacent landscape

Landscape and built form strategy and guidelines

The landscape strategy is to *conserve* and *enhance* the local landscape character. The following guidelines apply:

Built form and development

- Reduce visual impact of A3023 through hedgerow planting. Restrict development of the built form along the A3032 to maintain open rural character
- Any redevelopment of the existing farmsteads and properties along West Lane **must avoid additional visual intrusion of the built form on the adjacent open landscape**. Also important trees within these sites must be managed and protected
- Further development along Manor Road to the west of its junction with Church Road should be avoided in order to preserve the setting of the important group of listed and historic buildings at Manor House.

In order to respond to the guidelines I have considered the proposal and have the following requirements.

I note in the visual appraisal in the planning statement that photo 11 shows a significant gap in hedging adjacent properties to the west. Supplementary planting should be considered here.

Photos 4,5 & 6 show the site clearly and where the proposed new planting will be implemented – however the planting will take some time to reach suitable maturity to provide significant screening. In line with the Landscape Character Assessments guidelines to conserve and enhance, I would propose that the hedging be implemented with supplementary field maples (*Acer campestre*) of a larger, more significant size – small trees - be planted at intervals to create some more instant screening. This should be implemented in a suitable planting season before the cells are constructed.

Therefore more details to show this are required.

I would also recommend replacing part of the proposed hedgerow mix with some evergreen and therefore year round planting screening/cover.

Kind Regards

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Appendix C – Soft landscape plan detail around the solar panels

