
Site Address:	Manor Farm, Manor Road, Hayling Island		
Proposal:	Solar installation comprising ground-mounted solar panels, associated switch room building and landscaping.		
Application No:	APP/14/01164	Expiry Date:	30/12/2014
Applicant:	Mr S Walter	Team:	Team 2
Agent:	Mr A Blaxland	Case Officer:	Stephen Cantwell
	Adam Hendry Consulting Ltd		
Ward:	Hayling West		

Recommendation: **GRANT PERMISSION**

1 Site Description

An area of 0.49ha within a larger field comprising a series of smaller strip-type paddocks defined by post and wire fences. The land is part of a tract of open agricultural land which is used variously as arable and pastureland, with hedgerows of approx 1.5m some 50m east and 90m north and 8m to the south (alongside the composting enclosure) with some trees and hedges in the further distance where there are a few houses 300m from the site..

Approximately 150m to the north west are two houses, which are partially screened by clusters of trees and hedges along much of their boundaries, there are filtered views towards the site. The tract of countryside is generally flat in each direction with no observable gradient. The site is around 100m to the north west of the cluster of agricultural buildings of 4-6m height and farmhouse at Manor Farm.

2 Planning History

None directly related but note that the southern edge of the site is 10m north of an area used for green waste composting, subject of a current planning permission issued by Hants CC

3 Proposal

A small scale solar power installation (250kw) comprising eight rows, each 63m long and 1.5m high. The panels would use low-reflective surfacing and galvanised steel frames and supports. They would face south, mounted at 30 degrees. An associated switch room of 3m height and 5.75sqm base to the south of the existing 4m high barn, some 100m to the south of the solar panel array, linked by a new ground cable which would be laid below ground across open areas but below ground behind the barn and green waste site. A slightly smaller transformer enclosure of 16m³ located alongside the switching room does not form part of this application, the applicant states that it is to be installed by the statutory undertaker as part of wider electricity improvements.

The panels are intended to generate 70% of the electricity needed by the farm.

4 Policy Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) March 2011

CS14	(Efficient Use of Resources)
CS16	(High Quality Design)
CS17	(Concentration and Distribution of Development within the Urban Areas)
DM8	(Conservation, Protection and Enhancement of Existing Natural Features)

Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations) July 2014

DM23	(Sites for Brent Geese and Waders)
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Listed Building Grade: Not applicable.

Conservation Area: Not applicable.

5 Statutory and Non Statutory Consultations

Environmental Health: i have no adverse comments to make.

Development Engineer - Highways: No objection

Crime Prevention: I have no comments with reference to crime prevention.

County Archaeologist: No objection:

No known archaeological sites currently recorded within the location. The proposed impact is small scale and dispersed ('pin cushion' for want of a better phrase).

HCC Ecologist: [See Natural England]

Southern Electric: No response

Conservation Officer: No objection

The solar array is a considerable distance from the historic (listed) farm buildings with intermediate screening. No material impact on the setting of the listed buildings.

Natural England:

Protected sites - Chichester and Langstone harbours: No objection, subject to conditions (control of percussive piling and heavy machinery). In terms of Habitat regulations the proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on any European site, and can therefore be screened out from any requirement for further assessment

Protected Species - standing advice applies [which is x-referred to the NPPG 2014 for wild birds and dormice this includes consideration of noise and the management of hedgerows]

Landscape Officer:

The landscape strategy guidelines are:

- *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 along West Lane must avoid additional visual intrusion of the built form on the adjacent open landscape.*
- *The setting of listed buildings at Manor Farm should be protected by avoiding further development along Manor Road to the west of its junction with Church Road*
- Important trees must be managed and protected.

In consideration of these I recommend:

Supplementary planting to gap up hedges to the west. All proposed hedge planting [e.g on each side of the proposed array of panels], should include field maples (*Acer campestre*) to create more instant screening, ideally before the panels are installed. Hedegrow mix should include some evergreen planting. For year-round screening.

Planning Policy:

National Planning Policy Guidance

- NPPG includes guidance on renewable energy, focusing large scale proposals, on previously developed and non agricultural land. If any agricultural is needed it should be shown that poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality. The proposal is for a small scale installation serving the farm, it is reasonably expected that the solar panels would be located close to the farm. Although the NPPG points towards previously developed and low grade land, the applicant has sought to address these issues at paragraphs 6.10 – 6.20 of their Planning Statement and it is considered that this adequately justifies this location for the development.
- impact on the setting of a heritage asset if close to a listed building.

Local Plan (Core Strategy)

Policy CS14.2 (Efficient Use of Resources) is supportive, the principle is therefore acceptable.

Policy CS17 seeks to concentrate development within the urban area. Development in the non-urban areas will only be permitted if it is consistent with the policies for the countryside set out in national policy.

Local Plan (Allocations)

Policy DM23 (Sites for Brent Geese and Waders) - where the site is identified as uncertain, appropriate surveys should be carried out. "in three consecutive years... ideally across the overwintering seasons"

Following discussion with HCC ecology the applicant's ecology report sets out mitigation measures to address the impact of the solar panels in this location. the advice of the County Ecologist and if necessary, English Nature should be sought regarding the adequacy of mitigation measures, else the proposal would be contrary to policy DM23.

Principle of development:

There is no objection to the principle of this development, subject to the requirements of DM23 being agreed by Hampshire County Council Ecology and/or English Nature.

6 Community Involvement

This application was publicised in accordance with the Council's Code of Practice for Publicity of Planning Applications approved at minute 207/6/92 (as amended), as a result of which the following publicity was undertaken:

Number of neighbour notification letters sent: 15

Number of site notices: One

Statutory advertisement: Not applicable.

Number of representations received: None

7 Planning Considerations

7.1 Having regard to the relevant policies of the development plan it is considered that the main issues arising from this application are:

- (i) Principle of development
- (ii) Impact on Agricultural land
- (iii) Impact on Ecology
- (iv) Impact upon Landscape and Residential Amenity
- (v) Other matters

(i) Principle of development

7.2 The application site is situated outside the built up area. As such it is important that consideration is given as to whether the development complies with national policies for the countryside. In this case the NPPF states a positive approach to sustainable new development in rural areas. It supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas and promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. Whilst in this case the proposal does not appear to concern further diversification (there is already an element of this in the form of green waste composting and presence of another small workshop business within a barn), it provides an important input (energy) to the business of the holding. The NPPF does not require an applicant to demonstrate need for renewable energy, although in this case the need is explained briefly as meeting 70% of the needs of the farm business as part of the national feed-in-tariff scheme.

(ii) Impact on Agricultural land

7.3 The location has been chosen following consideration of its proximity to the farm buildings and infrastructure which it is to serve and be linked to; that it is comparatively the lowest grade of land available and the land parcel the size and

shape of which limits its agricultural productivity, particularly the possibility of intensive production. There is no previously developed land in the vicinity. The alternative of roof mounted locations (on barns) has been considered, but rejected due to structural reasons, the need for roof strengthening and the presence of the listed barns at the southern side of the farm complex, whose appearance would be affected by this.

The proposed installation is intended to be temporary in nature, (a lifespan of 25 years), leaving the soil structure undisturbed and allowing for management and grazing of meadow grass between/below the panels. The proposal also includes opportunity for additional planting and meadowland planting at its fringes, albeit the original intention to plant entire hedgerows has been affected by the need to consider geese and waders (see Impact on Ecology, below). A planning condition can require removal of the panels, framework and cables when no longer needed, thus providing for reversion to agricultural use. The National Farmers Union has written in support of the proposal, based on the need and benefit, its temporary nature, potential for reversion and proposed biodiversity benefits (see Ecology below).

In summary, mindful of national policy, it is considered that the development is unlikely to harm agricultural interests of this modest area of land.

(iii) Impact on Ecology

7.4 An ecological survey and assessment has been submitted with the application. It notes the uncertain status for Brent Geese and Waders. It comments:

"The field is unsuitable for Brent Geese due to the habitat, lack of openness and fences which compartmentalise it. Additionally the composting facility adjacent to the field, to the south, produces a considerable amount of noise disturbance irregularly which is not conducive to foraging or roosting birds"

Despite this observation, the report also observes that there is some loss of habitat, albeit it appears the report does not suggest that this is significant. Mitigation is proposed in the form of:

- i) Three wader scrapes approximately 30m² each and 50cm deep are to be created in the field, adjacent to the proposed solar array.
- ii) Fencing of the area containing the scrapes during 1 November - 28th February, to exclude grazing livestock
- iii) Scrapes to be excavated on rotation every 3 - 5 years.
- iv) Hedging not to be included within the design, (it will discourage the use of scrapes by waders a)
- iv) A watching brief be used for the excavation of cable trench

The applicant has also referred to possible native wild-meadow planting around the array, which could be included within a landscaping scheme. A planning condition can require further details and adherence to the programme of maintenance over the lifetime of the solar installation. Natural England has considered these proposal and relevant nature conservation requirements, including the habitat regulations etc. 2010, and has confirmed that it has no objection provided that these are adhered to. The ecological impacts are not considered to be significant. No Environmental Impact Assessment has been required for the development in respect of this or other factors.

(iv) Impact upon Landscape and Residential Amenity

- 7.5 The site is remote from most public vantages, and the height of the array is such that it is unlikely to be visible within the wider landscape, as considered in the landscape assessment submitted with the application. Some new planting is proposed, albeit the design of this will now need to take into account the needs of geese and waders (i.e. limiting the amount of enclosure), in light of the ecologists recommendations. An alternative to continuous hedging beyond the south west and north/west sides of the array will need to be designed. Planting which can increase the filtering of views from the nearest dwellings to the north west will assist in minimising the impact on neighbouring outlooks, albeit that the height and orientation of the array already limits the visual impact here, along with the use of low-reflective surfaces for the panels and galvanised matt finish for the frames (dark painted matt would also be acceptable here). Lines of sight from the east and south east are blocked by existing farm buildings.

A planning condition is recommended to require appropriate landscape planting where possible to increase filtering of vantages to the south west and west/north west. Another condition to control materials, albeit it is not considered necessary to obtain final details of materials (e.g brick type) for the switching room and transformer enclosure, which are small and well concealed by the existing farm buildings.

(v) Other Matters

- 7.6 The highway engineer has raised no objection. In terms of flood risk, the site is located in Flood Zone 1, with low probability of flooding. Given the limited footprint of the array and the proposed switching room and transformer (which are also adjacent to porous ground) the assessment of flood risk is that it is unlikely to exceed the existing green field rate.

8 Conclusion

In summary, the proposal complies with policies for sustainable development and renewable energy. Landscape impacts are minor in this location, given the height and aspect of the panels; the provision of additional planting can assist. In terms of biodiversity, the proposal has met the requirements of Natural England and is not considered to harm the interests of the designated harbours site or protected species; the use of a planning condition to ensure the ongoing provision and management of the proposed scrapes, seasonal fencing and a watching brief will ensure that the recommendations of the ecological assessment are delivered for the period of operation. A condition will ensure removal of the development once it is no longer required, so that the long-term agricultural potential/use of the land and landscape interests are safeguarded.

The application is recommended for approval with these conditions.

9 **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Executive Head of Planning and Built Environment be authorised to **GRANT PERMISSION** for application APP/14/01164 subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3

years from the date on which this planning permission was granted.

Reason: To comply with Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 Unless otherwise approved in writing in advance by the Local Planning Authority, the external surfaces of all parts of the development hereby permitted shall be as stated in the current application for the duration of the development hereby approved, in particular the solar panels shall comprise a low-reflective surface and the support framework shall comprise a matt finish of galvanised steel (or similar material of unpainted matt appearance or dark painted matt finish).

Reason: To ensure the appearance of the development is satisfactory and minimises visual impact in the countryside having due regard to policy CS16 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

- 3 No percussive piling or works with heavy machinery (i.e. plant resulting in a noise level in excess of 69dbAmax – measured at the sensitive receptor) to be undertaken during the bird overwintering period (i.e. October to March inclusive).

Reason: To minimise the disturbance to Brent Geese and wading birds having due regard to policy DM23 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocation Document) 2014 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

- 4 The solar panels, all supporting framework and cabling shall be removed as soon as they are no longer needed for the purposes of energy generation.

Reason: To safeguard the character of the countryside and use of agricultural land in the long-term, and because the development hereby approved has been allowed solely for the purposes of energy generation and would not otherwise be supported in this location, in accordance with policies CS14, CS17 & DM8 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

- 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 of Brent Geese and Waders having due regard to policy DM23 of the Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations Document) 2014 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

- 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, Haying 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.

- 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.

- 8 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

SV/1250/SLP - Site Location Plan

SV/1250/PAA Revision A - Site Plan

SV/1250/PSL Revision A - Proposed Site Layout (NB Landscaping details are superseded by condition 5)

SV/MF/001 Rev 3 - Manor Farm Solar Array

SV/MF/002 Sheet 1 Rev 3 - Manor Farm Switch Room

SV/MF/002 Sheet 2 Rev 3 - Manor Farm Switch Room
SV/MF/002 Sheet 3 Rev 3 - Manor Farm Switch Room

Reason: - To ensure provision of a satisfactory development.