

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20240773

Location: Little Gables Wrangling Lane Luddesdown Gravesend

Description: Installation of solar panels to rear flat roof.

Applicant: Pickerings Lifts

Site Visit Date: Desktop Assessment

Submitted Documents/Plans

Planning Application Form;
Manufacturers Details;
Photo;
Photo of Flat Roof;
Solar Panel Details;
Drawing – Location Plan;
Drawing – Proposed Solar Panels – Elevations; and
Drawing – Proposed Solar Panels – Roof Plan.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20130659	Demolition of existing extension and erection of a single storey rear extension to form two bedrooms, kitchen/dining room and utility room and erection of a detached double garage.	Permitted	30.08.2013

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development and Design Principles

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2023) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to

meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- KCC Solar Policy Position Statement (August 2014)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Planning Practice Guidance Green Belt (2019)
- SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020)
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Renewable Energy Position Statement (last updated 2011)
- The Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2021-2026

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Kent Downs National Landscape

In determining the application, the local planning authority has a new statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Kent Downs National Landscape. The Kent Downs National Landscape Team recommends that to help fulfil the new statutory duty, the Local Planning Authority should ensure that the decision is consistent with relevant national and local planning policy and takes into account the aims, objectives and principles set out in the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and its associated guidance documents.

Luddesdown Parish Council

No comments received.

Neighbouring properties

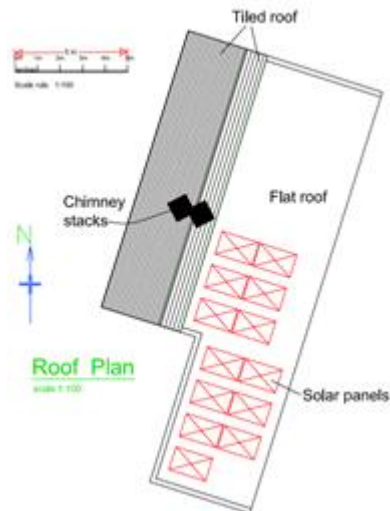
The application has been advertised by individual neighbour letters to 3 properties and on site. The overall consultation period expired on 15 October 2024. No comments have been received.

Local Ward Councillors were also consulted, and no responses were received.

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application is for the installation of solar panels to the rear flat roof. The property has an existing side/rear flat roof extension with parapet wall. The proposal includes the installation of 13 solar panel pv array. The panels would be mounted on elevation blocks at a 10° inclination.



Principle Issues

The site comprises a large, detached single storey dwelling on a generous plot, with Sallow Farm to the west, with generous spacing between surrounding properties. The property is accessible from its own private track off Wrangling Lane. Due to dense vegetation, it is not highly visible from surrounding public vantage points.

Site Location Plan



Current Google Earth Image:



The site lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL – formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), the Green Belt, in the Luddesdown Landscape Character Area and in the Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones. Taking these considerations into account, the main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are as follows:

- Principle of development in the Green Belt
- Impact on landscape character
- Residential amenity

Principle of Development in the Green Belt

Green Belts are of great importance. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by preserving the open and permanent characteristics of Green Belts (paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2023). Paragraph 152 of the NPPF 2023 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy 2014.

With regards to renewable energy projects, such this proposal, paragraph 156 of the NPPF 2023 is relevant, and this states that elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

Conversely, the newly introduced NPPF paragraph 164 (as of December 2023) requires local authorities to give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements through adaption of buildings. This represents strong in-principle policy support for energy efficiency.

Paragraph 156 of the NPPF 2023 is not specific about which elements of renewable energy projects would comprise inappropriate development. The application proposal is a small-scale array for a single residential property. In this respect, it is relevant to consider the impact of the proposal on openness, which is the main focus of Green Belt policy.

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2023 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Paragraph 001 of the Planning Practice Guidance 2019 on Green Belts looks to assess the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt by taking into account the spatial and visual aspects of a development, its duration and remediability, and the activity levels generated.

The application site comprises a residential curtilage, and the solar panels would be located on the roof of the existing dwellinghouse, Little Gables. The nature of the proposal is such that the openness of the Green Belt would not be affected. In addition to this, the proposal offers environmental benefits through the production of energy through a renewable source, and significant weight should be assigned to this in accordance with paragraph 164.

On this basis, as there would be no harm to the openness of the Green Belt and as the proposal supports energy efficiency and low carbon heating, the proposal is not considered to be inappropriate development, but would regardless be considered acceptable in terms of there being no impact on openness and as a result of the environmental benefits the proposal would provide. The proposal would accord with the requirements of paragraphs 156 and 164 of the NPPF 2023.

Landscape Character

With regard to the impact on the landscape, paragraph 180 of the NPPF 2023 aims for development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The site lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL - formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Reflective of paragraph 182 of the NPPF 2023, Policy SD2 of the Management Plan 2021-2026 recognises the need to conserve and enhance the local character, qualities, distinctiveness and natural resources of the KDNL. Policy SD5 states that local renewable and sustainable energy initiatives will be pursued where they help to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape character of the KDNL and bring environmental, social and economic benefits to local people.

Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 is relevant to this application, relating to green infrastructure. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (GLCA) 2009 will be

taken into account in determining applications. The site is located within the Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Area and Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone.

As the proposed solar panels would be on the roof of an existing residential property, obscured by mature landscaping, the visual impact of the proposal would be limited and localised, and it will not have any adverse impact on the wider landscape character of the area.

Character and Appearance of Conservation Area

Section 12 of the NPPF 2023 relates to achieving well-designed places and sets out the Government's requirements in relation to design issues. Paragraph 131 emphasises the importance of achieving high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2023 seeks to ensure that development will add to the quality of an area, be visually attractive, and sympathetic to local character and history. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects these aims and requires that new development is well designed and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The application property sits within its own plot sounding by woodland, accessed from a private track off Wrangling Lane. Whilst the proposed solar panels would be located on the side/rear extension, due to the parapet wall of the extension and the dense and mature landscaping surrounding the property, the majority of views would be obscured from 'outside' view".

On this basis, the proposal would respect the character and appearance of the area and would comply with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Residential Amenity

The NPPF 2023 states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users (paragraph 135f). The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria within Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, which states that new development should be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants, and those of neighbouring properties and land, and avoid adverse environmental impacts.

Future Occupiers

As the proposal is for solar panels, there are no conflicts with the requirements of paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF 2023 and Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy in respect of the living conditions for future occupants.

Neighbouring Properties

Due to the nature of the proposal, it would not cause harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties in terms of privacy, daylight and sunlight. As such, the proposal would comply with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF 2023.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The proposed solar panels are considered to be acceptable in terms of the impact on the Green Belt, on landscape character, on the Kent Downs National Landscape, and with regards to residential amenity and highways matters. The proposal would therefore comply with the requirements of Policies CS11, CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and Sections 12, 13 and 15 of the NPPF 2023.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision.)

Case Officer:	Ms Amanda Cue	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:	<i>A Cue</i>	Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	15th November 2024	Dated:	18th November 2024