



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20240213

Location: Leywood Farm Leywood Road Meopham Gravesend

Description: Installation of solar panels.

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Sparks

Site Visit Date: 09.05.2024

Submitted Documents/Plans

- Application Form
- Drawing No: 101 (Existing Barn Roof and Elevations)
- Drawing No: 105 (Proposed Block Plan)
- Drawing No: 102 (Proposed Barn Roof and Elevations)
- Drawing No: 104 (Existing Barn Roof Block Plan)
- Drawing No: 103 (Site Location Map)
- Heritage Statement

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Outcome	Decision Date
20040031	Erection of two replacement storage sheds.	Permitted	14.04.2004

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

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

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

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 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- KCC Solar Policy Position Statement (August 2014)
- Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan (2021-2026)

As the site lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL), the adopted Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan is also relevant, particularly;

- *The local character, qualities, distinctiveness and natural resources of the Kent Downs AONB will be conserved and enhanced in the design, scale, siting, landscaping and materials of new development, redevelopment and infrastructure and will be pursued through the application of appropriate design guidance and position statements.*
- *New projects, proposals and programmes shall conserve and enhance tranquillity and where possible dark night skies.*
- *Ensure proposals, projects and programmes do not negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the Kent Downs AONB.*

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Luddesdown Parish Council

No comments received.

Kent Downs National Landscape Unit

No objections

Neighbouring properties

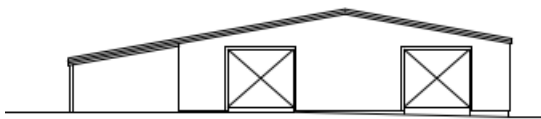
The application was advertised by way of site notice and a letter to a neighbouring property. The consultation period expired on 12.04.2024 and no comments were received.

Analysis

Proposal

The proposal seeks to install solar panels on a barn roof. The panels will be positioned on the south west elevation of a barn and will be black in colour so to blend in with the structure on which they will be installed.

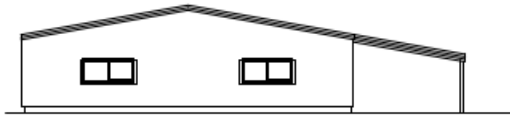
Existing



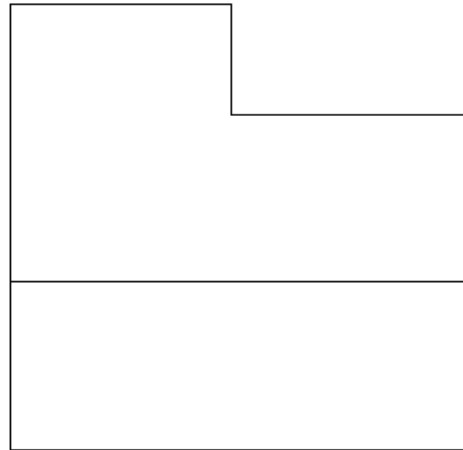
FRONT (NORTH-WEST) ELEVATION
(1:100)



SIDE (SOUTH-WEST) ELEVATION
(1:100)

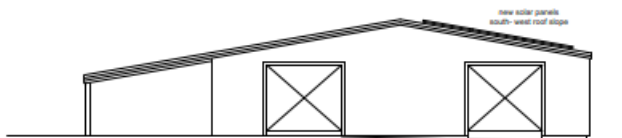


REAR (SOUTH-EST) ELEVATION
(1:100)

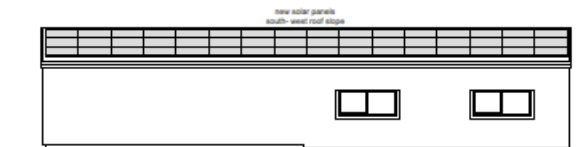


ROOF PLAN
(1:100)

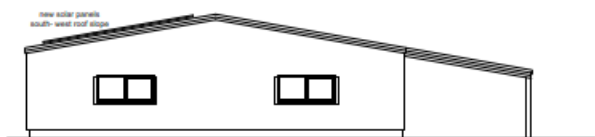
Proposed



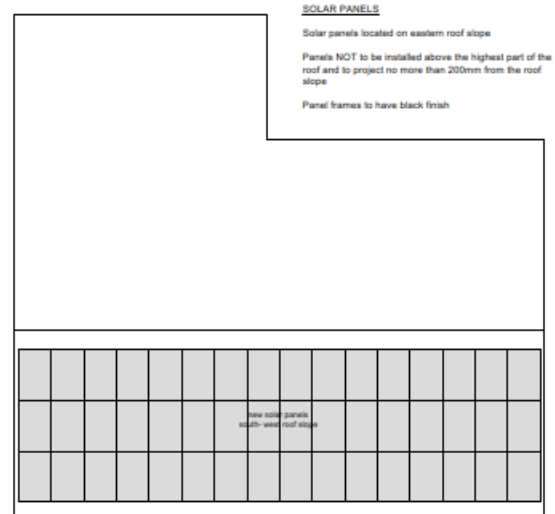
FRONT (NORTH-WEST) ELEVATION
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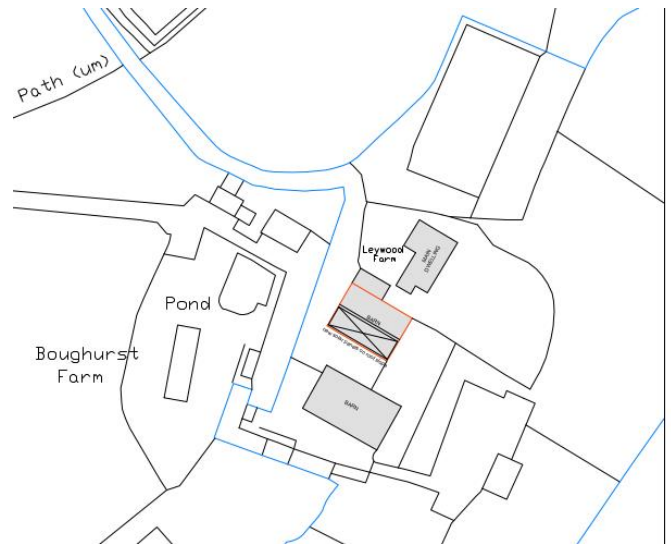
SIDE (SOUTH-WEST) ELEVATION
(1:100)



REAR (SOUTH-EST) ELEVATION
(1:100)



ROOF PLAN
(1:100)



Principle of Development in the Green Belt

The application site is located in the Green Belt. 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.

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.

With regards to renewable energy projects in the Green Belt, paragraph 156 of the NPPF 2023 is most relevant. This states that elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development, and this is the starting point for considering the application proposal. In such cases, developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed, which may include wider environmental benefits.

As the proposal comprises an inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the effect of the proposal on the openness of, and purposes of including the land within, the Green Belt must be considered.

Openness and Purposes

As stated above, 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 the following into account:

- openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;
- the duration of the development, and its remendability – taking into account any provisions to

return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and

- the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.

In this case, the application site would appear to be within the curtilage of Leywood Farm. The panels would be located on an existing barn. The installation of the panels on an existing structure will not reduce the current openness of the site and does not therefore represent encroachment into the countryside.

On this basis, there is no harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Character and Appearance

The application site comprises a farm which is situated within the Green belt, Kent Downs National Landscape and a Landscape Character Area. The site comprises various structures including barns, a bungalow and stables. The proposal only seeks to install panels on one barn which abuts the residential curtilage but not within it.

The site is set back some 120 meters from Leywood Road and is not highly visible from a public vantage point.



The proposed panels will be black in colour and will be within a black frame so to blend in with the existing structure.



The proposed solar panels would not harm the wider landscape and the visual impact of the proposal would be limited and localised. On this basis, the proposal satisfies the requirements of Policy CS12 and CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and para 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

Residential Amenity

Due to the nature of development, it is considered that the proposal will not impact existing residential amenity and comply with Para 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020) and Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Neighbouring Properties

Due to the siting and proximity of the development, it is considered that the proposal will not impact neighbouring amenity and would comply with Para 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020) and Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Parking and Highways

The parking requirements for the property would be unaffected as a result of the proposal. There would therefore be no conflict with KCC Parking Standards (2006) and Policy CS19 of the Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.

Other Material Planning Considerations

The site falls within the Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Area, it is important to consider the impact on the landscape, 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 (LCA) 2009 will be taken into account in determining applications.

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 site for the proposed solar panels sits within the farm curtilage and is obscured from wider views due to it being set away from the main road and being placed on the south western elevation and so there will not be any harm to the wider landscape character area or the natural beauty of the KDNL.

Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy 2014 also seeks to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the Borough, and supports stand-alone renewable energy development where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy.

KCC also produced a Solar Policy Position Statement in 2014 in relation to large-scale solar arrays. In summary, it is supportive in principle of the installation of renewable and low carbon energy generation technologies. In Section 13 (Green Belt), it states that very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated before such proposals can be supported, and arguments in favour will need to be weighed against the harm to the Green Belt.

In June 2019, this Council declared a climate emergency which commits the Council to taking a lead in achieving Carbon Neutral status. As acknowledged by the Council and its Climate Change strategy, Climate Change is a reality and over the course of the Over the course of the last 250 years, the actions of humanity have increased carbon dioxide emissions by more than 30%, resulting in higher temperatures and changing the world we live in. Without taking action now, the impact will be devastating.

Given the above policy support, the renewable energy benefits of the proposal should be given substantial weight.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposal is recommended for permission.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Sharon Sahota	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	23.05.2024	Dated:	24th May 2024