

DILHAM – PF/25/0610: Installation of 36kW ground mounted solar PV arrays at Dilham Hall Honing Road, Dilham for Cllr L Paterson

Minor Development

Target Date: 28 May 2025

Extension of Time:

Case Officer: Rob Arguile

Full Planning Permission

RELEVANT CONSTRAINTS

Countryside LDF

Landscape Character Assessment (Low Plains Farmland)

Areas Susceptible to Groundwater SFRA

EA Risk Surface Water Flooding + CC SFRA

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

No planning history.

THE APPLICATION

The application seeks planning permission to install 36kW ground mounted solar PV arrays.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE:

The applicant is a ward councillor

CONSULTATIONS

Dilham Parish Council - No Comment

Landscape NNDC - No Objection. The site is situated within the Low Plains Farmland Type and is characterised by a flat or gently undulating open landscape with long, uninterrupted views, predominantly arable land use and dispersed rural settlements.

The need for renewable energy is listed as a potential detractor for this landscape type, however, the established field boundaries of native broadleaf hedgerows will be able to adequately contain the solar array and maintain the traditional farmland character.

In order to preserve the local and wider landscape it should be conditioned that the surrounding boundary hedge be retained at a minimum of 1.5m height and that all works be carried out to NJUG: Volume 4, Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees (Issue 2) standards.

Climate and Environment Officer – Support. Ground solar has been seen to improve biodiversity coupled with the retention of farm animals to be able graze. Benefits to decarbonising, even in small scale examples like this.

REPRESENTATIONS:

None received.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the proposed development may raise issues relevant to

Article 8: The Right to respect for private and family life.

Article 1 of the First Protocol: The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions.

Having considered the likely impact on an individual's Human Rights, and the general interest of the public, approval of this application as recommended is considered to be justified, proportionate and in accordance with planning law.

CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 - SECTION 17

The application raises no significant crime and disorder issues.

LOCAL FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Under Chapter 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the council is required when determining planning applications to have regard to any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application. Local finance considerations are not considered to be material to this case.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

North Norfolk Core Strategy (September 2008)

Policy SS 1 - Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk

Policy SS 2 - Development in the Countryside

Policy SS 4 - Environment

Policy EN 2 - Protection and Enhancement of Landscape and Settlement Character

Policy EN 4 - Design

Policy EN 7 - Renewable Energy

Policy EN 9 - Biodiversity & Geology

Material considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2025)

Chapter 2: Achieving sustainable development

Chapter 4: Decision-making

Chapter 12: Achieving well designed places

Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (December 2008)

North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment (2021)

OFFICER ASSESSMENT:

MAIN ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Principle
2. Landscape
3. Amenity
4. Design
5. Biodiversity
6. Environment
7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

1. Principle

This planning application seeks the installation of install of 36kW ground mounted solar PV arrays. The site lies on the edge of the village of Dilham, within the grounds of Dilham Hall. The wider site is an active farm with the proposal site used for grazing of animals.

Section 38 (6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for this area includes the North Norfolk Core Strategy.

The site is located within the area designated as Countryside under Core Strategy (CS) Policy SS 1 for planning purposes. Within land designated as countryside, Policy SS2 seeks to limit development other than that in accordance with a list of exceptions. Such exceptions include development for renewable energy projects and proposals for '*extensions to existing businesses*'.

CS Policy EN 7 indicates that renewable energy proposals will be supported and considered in the context of sustainable development and climate change, considering the wide environmental, social, and economic benefits of renewable energy. It states that: "*Proposals for renewable energy technology, associated infrastructure and integration of renewable technology on existing or proposed structures will be permitted where individually, or cumulatively, there are no significant adverse effects on:*

- *the surrounding landscape, townscape and historical features/areas, or;*
- *residential amenities (noise, fumes, odour, shadow flicker, traffic, broadcast interference), and*
- *specific highway safety and designated nature conservation or biodiversity considerations*".

CS Policy SS 4 requires that "*all developments to contribute to the delivery of sustainable development, ensure protection and enhancement of natural and built environmental assets and geodiversity, and be located and designed so as to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate and adapt to future climate change*".

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts. It should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

NPPF paragraph 168 states that when determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low-carbon development, local planning authorities should, amongst other things,

“not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable and 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”.

On the basis that the proposal is seeking the installation of renewable energy generating structures as part of an existing rural business, the principle is considered acceptable and would comply with the aims of Core Strategy Policies SS 1, SS 2 and SS 4. Further assessment of the proposal against Policy EN 7 will be set out below.

2. Landscape

Policy EN 2 requires that proposals for development should be informed by, and be sympathetic to, the distinctive character areas identified in the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment and features identified in relevant settlement character studies. Development proposals should demonstrate that their location, scale, design and materials will protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance.

The proposal site lies within the ‘Low Plains Farmland’ character type, of which ‘*renewable energy development*’ is listed as a force for change/detractor. Despite this however, the proposal is modest in nature. Furthermore, ‘*woodlands, hedgerows and hedgerow trees*’ are given as valued features and qualities of this type - ‘*hedgerows and hedgerow trees contribute to the habitat network as well as contributing to visual amenity*’. Following consultation with the Landscape Officer, it is acknowledged that the established field boundaries of native broadleaf hedgerows will be able to adequately contain the solar array and maintain the traditional farmland character.

With this in mind it is considered that subject to conditions ensuring the works be carried out per National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) standards and the hedgerows to be retained at a minimum 1.5m in height, this would enable the development to protect and conserve wider landscape.

On balance, the impact on the landscape is considered acceptable under Core Strategy Policy EN 2.

3. Amenity

Policy EN 4 requires that development proposals should not have a significantly detrimental effect on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers and new dwellings should provide an acceptable level of residential amenity.

As the site is not located in close proximity to residential properties, Officers consider that the proposal is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the residential amenity of the area, making it acceptable under Core Strategy Policy EN 4.

4. Design

Policy EN 4 states that all development will be designed to a high quality, reinforcing local distinctiveness. Innovative and energy efficient design will be particularly encouraged. Design which fails to have regard to local context and does not preserve or enhance the character and quality of an area will not be acceptable.

The design of the proposal takes the form of three solar PV panel systems on raised structures measuring 2.8m in height. The design allows for the land underneath to be retained as grazing land and the animals to pass underneath.

Given their practical design, siting and energy efficient design, is it considered that the proposal preserves the character of the area and complies with the aims of Core Strategy Policy EN 4.

5. Biodiversity

Under Policy EN 9 proposals should: protect the biodiversity value of land and buildings and minimise fragmentation of habitats; maximise opportunities for restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats; and incorporate beneficial biodiversity conservation features where appropriate.

The scale of the proposal is not considered to have a detrimental impact upon biodiversity. Subject to the landscaping condition, this will conserve the hedgerow as a suitable habitat for biodiversity additionally to its function in the wider landscape.

With regard to Biodiversity Net Gain, the proposal is considered exempt under the *de minimis* grounds on the basis that:

- The De Minimis exemption considers the area of habitat impacted/lost as a result of development, as opposed to the size of the site itself;
- The proposal, is unlikely to result in impacts to the grassland due to the height at which the arrays are to be installed with space to allow grazing to continue beneath;
- The position of the arrays, being set apart, in addition to the height of the installation, results in a significant reduction to the degree of shading that would be typical of a large uninterrupted area of ground mounted panels

Accordingly, the proposal is acceptable under Core Strategy Policy EN 9.

6. Environment

Policy EN 7 requires that renewable energy proposals will be supported and considered in the context of sustainable development and climate change. They also must take account of the wide environmental, social and economic benefits of renewable energy gain and their contribution to overcoming energy supply problems in parts of the District. Proposals for renewable energy technology, associated infrastructure and integration of renewable technology on existing or proposed structures will be permitted where individually, or cumulatively, there are no significant adverse effects on; the surrounding landscape, townscape and historical features/areas; residential amenity (noise, fumes, odour, shadow flicker, traffic, broadcast interference); and specific highway safety, designated nature conservation or biodiversity considerations.

Under para 168(a) of the NPPF it states that '*significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future*' Para 168(b) also states that '*small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions*'.

With the previous considerations being acceptable, no adverse effects are expected from the landscape, amenity nor conservation matters. As such, the proposal is considered to be compliant with Core Strategy Policy EN 7.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

In conclusion the proposal would allow for an increase in renewable energy provision for Dilham Hall, located in a suitable parcel of land within the farm, with no design or amenity concerns and with no wider impact upon the surrounding landscape. The proposal would accord with the aims of Development Plan Policy.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVAL subject to conditions relating to the following matters:

- Time limit – 3 years
- Accordance with approved Plans
- Retention of existing boundary hedgerow at a minimum height of 1.5m
- Compliance with NJUG standards during installation.
- Removal of panels if no longer required for the generation of electricity.

Final wording of conditions and any other considered necessary to be delegated to the Assistant Director – Planning