

North York Moors National Park Authority

Parish: Snainton

App No: NYM/2020/0884/FL

Proposal: installation of ground mounted solar array

Location: Hern Head House, Snainton

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Barrett, Hern Head House, Snainton, Scarborough, YO13 9PS

Agent: Bramhall Blenkarn Ltd, fao: Mr Mark Bramhall, Unit 13 The Maltings, Malton, YO177DP

Date for Decision: 04/01/2021

Extended to: 25/01/2021

Director of Planning's Recommendation

Approval subject to the following condition(s):

1.	TIME01	The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.												
2.	PLAN01	<p>The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out other than in strict accordance with the following documents:</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Document Description</th><th>Document No.</th><th>Date Received</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Site Plan</td><td>1273_AR20_01A</td><td>14 Jan 2021</td></tr><tr><td>Location Plan</td><td>1273_EX10_01A</td><td>14 Jan 2021</td></tr><tr><td>Panel Table General Assembly</td><td>S4.1 SP GA 4L11 22</td><td>2 Nov 2020</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>or in accordance with any minor variation thereof that may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.</p>	Document Description	Document No.	Date Received	Site Plan	1273_AR20_01A	14 Jan 2021	Location Plan	1273_EX10_01A	14 Jan 2021	Panel Table General Assembly	S4.1 SP GA 4L11 22	2 Nov 2020
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Panel Table General Assembly	S4.1 SP GA 4L11 22	2 Nov 2020												
3.	MATS00	The solar panels hereby approved shall have black frames and thereafter be so maintained.												
4.	MISC14	If the use of the solar PV equipment hereby approved permanently ceases, it shall be removed from the site within one month of that cessation and the land shall, as far as practical, be restored to its condition before development took place.												

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Reason(s) for Condition(s)

1.	TIME01	To ensure compliance with Sections 91 to 94 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.
2.	PLAN00	For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the details of the development comply with the provisions of NYM Strategic Policies A and C which seek to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the NYM National Park.
3.	MATS00	For the avoidance of doubt and in order to comply with the provisions of NYM Strategic Policies A and C which seek to ensure that the appearance of the development is compatible with the character of the locality and that the special qualities of the National Park are safeguarded.
4.	MISC00	In order to return the land to its former condition and comply with the provisions of Strategic Policy A of the North York Moors Local Plan which seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape of the National Park.

Consultations**Parish –****Environment Agency –**

Forestry Commission – Raises concern in respect of the close proximity of the proposed solar array to the boundary of the adjacent Forestry England Plantation, which is only 5m due north of the application site. The trees in the plantation (largely conifers planted in 1972) may be expected to reach 40 meters in height and currently the degree of risk to an adjacent landowner's agricultural/pasture land is moderate in respect of the proximity of these types of trees. Siting an electrical generation plant however so close to the forest may be considered an unacceptable and unnecessary risk which could be avoided by the applicant re-siting the solar panels some 40m further from the boundary within the same field.

(Comments made on original plans; the solar array has now been relocated some 150 metres away from the boundary)

Site Notice Expiry Date – 14 December 2020

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Background

Hern Head house is located on the north side of the valley of Troutsdale, some 4 km to the north of Snainton and comprises the farmhouse and a range of traditional and modern farm buildings.

The proposal is for the installation of 132 no. 310Wp solar PV panels in a ground mounted array of 3 banks of 44 modules to produce a supply of renewable electricity for domestic lighting and power. The mounting framework will be a combination of galvanized steel piles and alloy cross rails, with the typical projection above the ground being 2.6m at its tallest point and the total width of the array extending to 18.4 metres. The array will provide a total installed capacity of 40.92kWp and the total yield of electricity in the first year of operation is calculated at 31.14kWh.

As originally submitted the array was to be sited at the northern limits of the field to the rear of the property where the land rises to meet the Forestry Commission boundary some 200 meters from the buildings. However amended plans have been received which have positioned the array closer to the property (some 45 metres to the rear), on the lower slopes of the field).

In support of the application the agent advises that the scale of this proposal has been governed by both the site's requirement for electricity and the local electricity grid's ability to receive exported surplus generation. Hern Head House has an annual requirement for approximately 62400kWh of electricity. However, due to both the site's seasonal use of electricity and nature of solar generation, an array larger than the one proposed here would deliver a surplus of electricity during the summer months that the local electricity grid network would not be able to take back. The proposal is an optimum size to satisfy as much of the site's needs as possible whilst avoiding disproportionate export to the grid and its associated upgrade costs.

The agent has also advised that an assessment of the existing buildings at Hern Head House for roof mounted solar highlighted excess shading, inappropriate orientation and inadequate structural stability for solar PV. This assessment led to the proposal being for a ground mounted array. Ground mounted solar has additional benefits over roof mounted by way of ease of access for maintenance and optimal pitch and orientation for electrical yield.

Main Issues

The relevant NYM Local Plan policies to consider with this application are Strategic Policy A (Achieving National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development), Strategic Policy F (Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation) and Policy ENV8 (Renewable Energy).

Strategic Policy A states that a positive approach to new development within the Park will be taken in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development and where decisions are consistent with National Park Statutory Purposes (applying the Sandford Principle if necessary). Development will be supported where it: is a high quality of design which respects the local landscape and built heritage; supports the function and vitality of

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communities; protects or enhances natural capital and ecosystem services; maintains and enhances geodiversity and biodiversity through conservation; builds resilience to climate change; makes sustainable use of resources and; does not reduce the quality of soil, air and water in and around the National Park.

Strategic Policy F expects new development to be resilient to and mitigate the effects of climate change and will be supportive of new development which reduces the need for and makes efficient use of energy; uses renewable energy; and incorporates sustainable design and construction.

Policy ENV8 permits development proposals for the generation of renewable energy where it is of a scale and design appropriate to the locality and contributes to meeting energy needs within the Park; where it respects the landscape character; where it does not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the special qualities of the National Park; it provides environmental enhancement or community benefits where possible and it makes provision for the removal of equipment and the reinstatement of the land should it cease to be operational. In the justification to the policy it advises that small-scale renewable energy developments which contribute towards meeting domestic, community or business needs within the National Park will be supported where there is no significant environmental harm to the area and the objectives of National Park designation will not be compromised.

The main issues to be considered are whether the proposed solar PV array is of a size and scale which is commensurate with the site and whether it is in an acceptable position in terms of landscape impact.

The proposal is for a substantial ground mounted array of 3 banks of 44 panels however it has been identified that the output will contribute to meeting the energy needs of the host property whilst avoiding disproportionate export to the grid during the summer when usage would be lower. It is not anticipated that the array is not designed to generate significant energy surplus to the site's requirements to export to the national grid and as such the proposal will meet the energy needs within the Park as required by Policy ENV8.

As original submitted the proposed solar array was to be prominently sited on the hillside above Hern Head House, separated from the existing built development in the valley by some 200 metres, in a landscape largely devoid of such man-made features. It was considered that it would constitute a visually obtrusive structure in the open countryside which would be seriously harmful to the character and appearance of the landscape of this part of the National Park contrary to Policy ENV8 of the Local Plan.

The amended plans submitted by the agent have not reduced the size of the array as this is considered the optimum to meet much of the energy needs of the site but have repositioned it much further to the south so that it will be located closer to the existing buildings at Hern Head House on the lower slopes of the field where it will be largely screened from public view by the existing buildings and the wooded valley. In this location it is not considered that the proposal would have an adverse impact on the special qualities of the National Park however it is considered necessary to ensure the solar panels have a black frame to further reduce their impact.

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The equipment will be mounted on a relatively lightweight framework with minimal ground work required. It is considered that the land can easily be restored to its existing condition in the event the equipment is no longer needed.

In view of the above, it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with adopted policies and approval is recommended subject to conditions.

Explanation of how the Authority has Worked Positively with the Applicant/Agent

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.