

# North York Moors National Park Authority

## Delegated decision report

**Application reference number:** NYM/2023/0510

**Development description:** installation of ground mounted solar array (100 panels)

**Site address:** The Grainary, Keasbeck Hill, Harwood Dale,

**Parish:** Harwood Dale

**Case officer:** Mrs Hilary Saunders

**Applicant:** The Grainary Harwood Dale Ltd, The Grainary, Keasbeck Hill, Harwood Dale, YO13 0DT

**Agent:** Mick Paxton Architects Ltd, fao: Mick Paxton, Studio 302, Woodend Creative Centre, The Crescent, Scarborough, YO11 2HG

## Director of Planning's Recommendation

Refusal for the following reason

### Reason(s) for refusal

Refusal reason code	Refusal reason text
1	The proposed solar panel array, by reason of the number, surface area and visually isolated and prominent location, would constitute a visually obtrusive structure in the open countryside which would be seriously harmful to the character and appearance of this part of the National Park. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policy ENV8 of the North York Moors Local Plan which seeks to ensure that renewable energy installations are of a location, scale and design appropriate to the locality; respects and complements the existing landscape character; and does not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the special qualities of the National Park's protected landscape.

## Consultation responses

Parish

No objections

Third party responses

None received.

Publicity expiry

Advertisement/site notice expiry date – 12 September 2023

Zoomed in photo from Reasty Bank (across the valley) – panels would be in top of field to left of buildings.



Wider view across valley from Reasty Bank - showing open nature of landscape



View of site approaching from the west - panels would be at the top of the central field in photo



## Background

The Grainary, Keasbeck Hill, comprises a well-established tourism complex located off the main Harwood Dale road. The site previously comprised an established but diversified working farm, which also includes a bed and breakfast accommodation, and tea rooms and detached holiday accommodation, as well as walks around the farm, which are accessible for wheelchair users.

The business has recently been sold and the new owners have been undertaking a programme of refurbishment works to create a boutique hotel, along with modernising the tea room element.

This application seeks full planning permission to install 100 PV panels in the north-west corner of an open field, to the west of the main group of buildings. It is surrounded on the east and north boundaries by hedgerow but is open to the south and west.

The panels would be on ground mounted frameworks., with the array facing towards the south.

In support of the application the applicant's agent has stated the following: -

Since the applicant purchased the Grainary and made a number of alterations and improvements around bedroom facilities, restaurant and openair amenities, the Grainary has become a very popular visitor destination. Due to the success and its increased energy requirements and also the increasing cost of providing the required energy, the applicant has investigated the possibility of installing PV panels and battery storage.

This installation will provide electricity from the panels and storage batteries that will produce the energy required when its required and help cut down on energy costs.

## Main issues

### Local Plan

Policy ENV8 (Renewable Energy) sets out that proposals for the generation of renewable energy will only be permitted where it is of a scale and design appropriate to the locality and contributes to meeting energy needs within the National Park; respects and complements the existing landscape character; does not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the special qualities; provides environmental enhancement or community benefits wherever possible; and makes provision for the removal of the facilities and reinstatement of the site, should it cease to be operational.

## Supplementary Planning Documents

In order to provide applicants with good quality advice on how to resolve the potential conflicts between landscape conservation in a National Park and promote renewable energy generation, the Authority has produced and adopted, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on renewable energy. In respect of solar panels, the guide advises in Section 5.2 that because of their industrial look their siting should be carefully considered and that ground mounted panels should be sited to reduce their visual impact, possibly within a rear garden and away from important views.

### Material considerations

In this case, the proposed siting of this substantial array would be in part of a larger agricultural field, which whilst screened by hedging and trees from the road that leads through Harwood Dale to the north of the site; would be extremely prominent from wider views as you approach Harwood Dale from the west and from above, when looking down from Reasty Bank.

The applicant has been advised that there may be more suitable sites within their ownership (or use of the roofs of agricultural buildings) , that would be screened from wider views and therefore acceptable in landscape terms. However this has not been pursued.

It is considered that the substantial solar array would have a significant impact on the character and appearance of this part of the National Park. The result would be a prominent and incongruous man-made feature in this agricultural field. Visitors to the area would have their attention drawn to the array due to its location and reflective surface and the development would have a negative effect on the appearance and therefore enjoyment of this part of the National Park.

### Conclusion

It is not considered that the proposal can be satisfactorily accommodated within the landscape without resulting in an adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of this part of the National Park or having an adverse impact on the quiet enjoyment, peace and tranquillity of the Park. The proposal would therefore conflict with National Park purposes, and Policy ENV8 of the NYM Local Plan and as such, refusal is recommended.

### Public Sector Equality Duty imposed by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010

The proposal is not considered to unduly affect any people with protected characteristics.



## Pre-commencement conditions

N/A

## Explanation of how the Authority has worked positively with the applicant/agent

The Authority's Officers have appraised the scheme against the Development Plan and other material considerations and concluded that the scheme represents a form of development so far removed from the vision of the sustainable development supported in the Development Plan that no changes could be negotiated to render the scheme acceptable and thus no changes were requested.