

47/14/0001

MR J WILLIAMS

INSTALLATION OF 16 NO. GROUND MOUNTED PV PANELS AND CREATION OF NATURE POND IN FIELD ADJACENT TO IVY COTTAGE, WEST HATCH

Location: IVY COTTAGE, BICKENHALL LANE, WEST HATCH, TAUNTON,
TA3 5RS

Grid Reference: 327377.119705

Full Planning Permission

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

(A4) Location Plan (revised)

(A4) Site Plan

(A2) DrNo 1402 001 Existing Site Plan and Elevations

(A2) DrNo 1402 002 Proposed Floor Plan and Elevations

(A2) DrNo 1402 003 Proposed Site Plan and Sections

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. (i) Before any part of the permitted development is commenced, a landscaping scheme, which shall include details of the species, siting and numbers to be planted, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- (ii) The scheme shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development, or as otherwise extended with the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority.
- (iii) For a period of five years after the completion of each landscaping scheme, the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained in a healthy weed free condition and any trees or shrubs that cease to grow shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species, or the

appropriate trees or shrubs as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

Notes to Applicant

1. The landscaping condition has been added as there are no submitted details.
2. The hedge should be allowed to grow up as indicated in the email dated 11/02/14.
3. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way and has imposed planning conditions to enable the grant of planning permission.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is the installation of 16 ground mounted PV panels and a nature pond within a field to the east of Ivy Cottage and Stockton Cottage. The array will be located adjacent to the existing hedge which is on the northern side of the field. The array will measure 16m in length. Each of the 16 panels will be 0.98m by 1.65m, which will be elevated such that the lowest point is approx. 0.7m above ground, the highest being 1.6m above the ground. The nature pond will be approximately 23m to the south west of the array, and be kidney shaped and approximately 11m by 5m. The plan shows some indicative native planting at locations at points around the pond.

The agent has recently advised that the existing roadside hedge has had its winter cut and so is at its lowest level, approx 1.6m, in the summer season it usually grows to an overall height of 2 - 2.2m. The applicant will allow the hedge to grow higher over the next few years. The excavated materials resulting from the formation of the pond will be used to grade the perimeter of the pond into the existing ground levels to create a more natural transition between the pond and the field.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The site is on the southern side of the road which leads from the RSPCA (West Hatch site) to The Farmers Arms PH. The road is set below the level of the adjacent fields, and the field itself slopes down from the area to the south of the applicant's dwelling down to the east by approximately 3m. There is a vehicular access from the field down to a junction with Grughay Lane. The nearest dwellings are Greenbanks, north of the road, and Stockton Cottage which is attached to Ivy Cottage, the application site.

There is no relevant Planning History.

This application comes before Committee as the applicant is a Councillor.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

WEST HATCH PARISH COUNCIL - re-PV panels and a nature pond, was considered and no objections were raised. The only matter of concern was impact on visual amenity but it was considered that the 16 PV panels would probably not be visible from the road or impact to any great extent on any neighbours.

If after construction the panels were visible from the highway running east from the site toward the RSPCA centre, we would recommend an evergreen bush be planted at the east end of the PV panel array.

WHPC has no objection to this proposal.

LANDSCAPE - subject to retention of the northern boundary hedgerow and maintenance of it at no lower than the installed panel height the proposals will have limited landscape impact. *Re additional information-* fine.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY - No reply.

BIODIVERSITY - It is good to see that the applicant is proposing to construct a wildlife pond, but is it located in the correct position on sloping ground? Will the excavated material be spread on site? The existing hedge should be allowed to grow up. *Re additional information-* good to hear that the hedge will be allowed to grow up and that the perimeter of the pond will be graded back to existing levels to achieve a more natural transition.

Representations

None received

PLANNING POLICIES

CP1 - TD CORE STRAT. CLIMATE CHANGE,
CP8 - CP 8 ENVIRONMENT,
DM1 - TD CORE STRATEGY - GENERAL REQUIREMENTS,
DM2 - TD CORE STRATEGY - DEV,

LOCAL FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Policies CP1, CP8, DM1 and DM2 are the most applicable to this proposal. Policy CP1 relates to Climate Change, and in relation to the issues covered, the proposal is not a "large scale" installation, but the overall implications will be similar. The proposed array will not harm the character of the area, there will be no overriding adverse impact on the amenity of the area in terms of noise, dust, odour and traffic generation; there will be no impact on the local community, economy, nature conservation or historic interests. The proposals meet the criteria within policy CP8, DM1 and DM2, without detriment to the character of the rural area.

The existing hedge alongside the road forms a significant visual boundary between the users of that road and any properties to the north. Given that the road is at a lower level than the field, the impact on visual amenity of any 'development' in the field is limited. The site is also screened by intervening hedges, trees and some buildings from other roads and public footpaths in the area. The proposal is such that it has little or no impact on the amenities of the residents in the area, and there is no impact on the character of the immediate or wider area.

The Landscape Officer and Biodiversity Officer consider that the hedge should be retained at the existing height or allowed to grow up to a higher level, which will more than ensure there will be no detrimental views of the array. The agent has now confirmed that the winter cut will gradually be lessened such that the eventual height of the hedge will be allowed to increase.

In respect of the provision of the new pond, Central Government's advice to Local Planning Authorities when considering applications for solar arrays is, inter alia, to consider brownfield sites for larger schemes and seek biodiversity and screening. In this case the proposal is small scale and acceptable on this greenfield site, and there is no need to provide additional hedging, and a nature pond with new landscaping should help in attracting wildlife to the area.

The proposal is considered to have no detrimental impact on visual amenities of the local residents or on the character of the area, and the recommendation is to approve, subject to the planting of the new landscaping in the vicinity of the pond.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: Ms K Marlow Tel: 01823 356460