

2022/0485

Mr Chris Beck

Erection of solar panels in two locations

Woolgreaves Farm, South Lane, Cawthorne, Barnsley

Background

2016/1360 - Construction of an agricultural barn – Approved with conditions

2015/0308 - Change of use from agricultural/grazing to equestrian and erection of detached stable building with enclosed paddock for private use – approved with conditions

2015/0307 - Alterations to Grade II listed farm house and detached garage including external staircase to garage, roof lights to garage, alteration to external window and internal alterations (Listed Building Consent) – approved with conditions

2003/1296 and 2003/1060 (LBC) – Conversion of barn to form extension to dwelling and erection of garage – approved with conditions

2017/0648 (Planning Application) 2017/0668 (Listed Building Consent) - Erection of pool house and access tunnel from existing house - approved with conditions

Description

Woolgreaves Farm house is a collection of Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings which have been converted to form one dwelling, which enclose an open sided courtyard sheltered from the highway. The farm is situated on South Lane, Cawthorne and sits to the south west of Cawthorne village centre, close to the villages of Hoylandswaine and Silkstone. Within the courtyard is a treble garage block and a parking area, situated to the east of the complex.

The property has previously been altered and the attached barn converted into part of the dwelling with the erection of a garage, following the approval of the above planning permission and Listed Building Consent in 2003. The property has a large curtilage, with two large side garden areas which are clearly defined by historic dry stone walls and can be seen on the historic OS Plans. The property also has a pool house building set to the west of the dwelling and stables set to the south.







Proposed Development

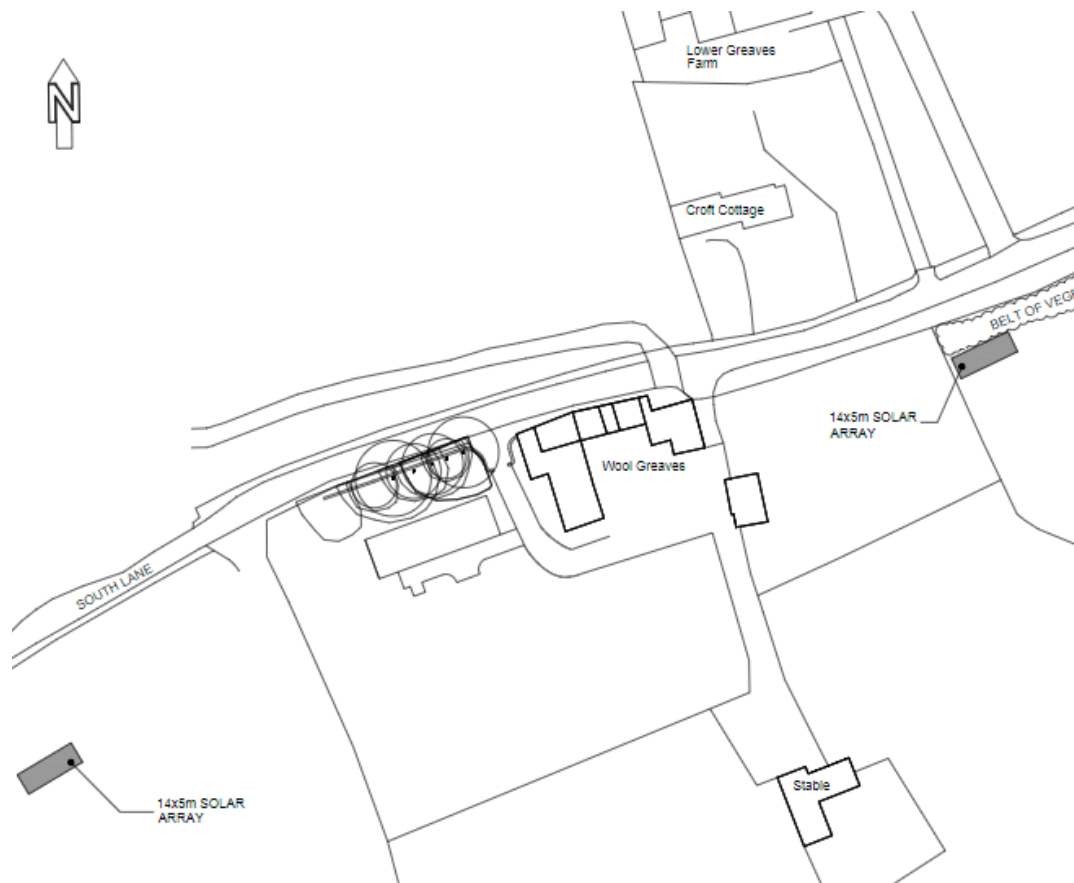
The proposal involves the erection of solar panels in two locations adjacent to Woolgreaves Farm. The panels are situated within agricultural fields owned by the applicant to the east and to the west of the property. The plans show two separate arrays of 16 (12kw in total) panels, mounted on ground brackets, 14m wide by 5m and 2.2m in height. The panels would be angled so that they face towards the south.

In support of the scheme the applicant has stated that:-

'The scheme in total generates about 55% of our energy use and is much smaller than we would like but this is down to the volume northern power grid would allow us to generate

The location to the west runs to electricity meter points to the west of the property and the cable runs required to reach the main dwelling are too far from this location to be able to connect the main house which is the reason for the split locations.'

In support of the application, the applicant has submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, an Enhancement to Biodiversity Statement and a Precautionary Working Method Statement.



PROPOSAL

PLANNING

Progressive Design & Build

Site Plan

Scale: 1:200

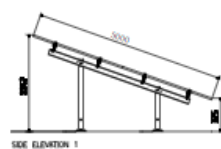
Sheet: 1 of 1

Client: Wool Greaves Farm

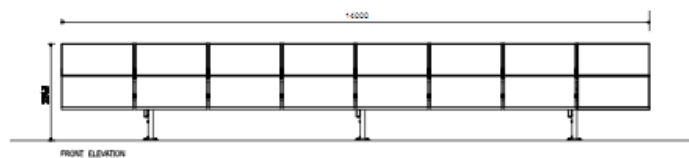
Project: Solar Farm

Scale: 1:200

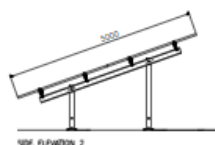
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SIDE ELEVATION 1



FRONT ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION 2



REAR ELEVATION

PROPOSAL

PLANNING

Progressive Design & Build

Site Plan

Scale: 1:200

Sheet: 1 of 1

Client: Wool Greaves Farm

Project: Solar Farm

Scale: 1:200

Sheet: 1 of 1

Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

The Local Plan was adopted by the Council in January 2019 along with a series of Supplementary Planning Documents.

The site is set within the Green Belt as shown on the Proposals Map of the Adopted Local Plan

Adopted Local Plan 2019

Policy GD1 General Development

Policy T4 New Development and Transport Safety

Policy D1 High Quality Design and Place Making

Policy HE1 The Historic Environment

Policy HE3 Developments affecting Historic Buildings

Policy GB1 Protection of Green Belt

Policy RE1 Low Carbon and Renewable Energy

Policy BIO1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Cawthorne Neighbourhood Development Plan

Policy C1 Protecting Local Landscape Character

Policy C2 Protecting Local Wildlife

Policy C3 Renewable Energy - Proposals which have an unacceptable adverse impact on the Registered Park and Garden of Cannon Hall will be resisted. Proposals for solar panels and solar voltaic schemes should be designed and sited sensitively so that they do not have an adverse visual impact on the conservation area and other nearby heritage assets.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the development plan is absent, silent, or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole; or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted or unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In respect of this application, relevant policies include:

14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Para 158. When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should :a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

9: Protecting Green Belt Land – The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances

Para 147. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Para 148. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. '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.

Para 149. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:– not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or– not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

Para 150. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

- a) mineral extraction;
- b) engineering operations;
- c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
- e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

f) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Para 151. When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

Para 158. When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and

b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.

Consultations

Cawthorne Parish Council – Cawthorne Parish Council has no objection to this planning application but make the following comments

- the application does not indicate which way the panels will be facing
- the Planning and Heritage Statement and the Solar Dimensions documents both state that the maximum height of the panels will be 1.2m but the elevations plan shows the height as 2.247m

Conservation Officer – No objections

English Heritage - We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers

Ecology Officer – No objection subject to condition

Highways – No objection subject to condition

Ward Councillors – No comments received

Representations

A site notice was posted adjacent to the site and neighbour letters have been sent to surrounding properties. No comments have been received.

Assessment

Principle of Development

The site is set within the Green Belt and set adjacent to the Grade II* Woolgreaves Hall.

As the site is located in the Green Belt as defined on the Local Plan Proposals map, Local Plan Policy GB1 is of relevance. GB1 protects the Green Belt from inappropriate development in accordance with National Planning Policy. Inappropriate development is, by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (para.147).

When considering applications, substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. '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 (para.148).

The proposed solar panels do not fall under any of the developments permitted under paragraphs 149 and 150 of the NPPF and are therefore inappropriate development and very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated. The proposal involves the erection of two separate solar arrays to be used in order to generate power to Woolgreaves Hall, which is a domestic residential dwelling. The dwelling has a number of outbuildings including a garage, separate pool building and stables which also require power.

The applicant has stated that the scheme in total generates about 55% of the energy used at Woolgreaves Farm which is the maximum volume allowed that Northern Power Grid would allow the applicant to generate. Whilst the solar panels are a small-scale proposal, the NPPF states that Local Authorities must 'recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.' The proposal would include wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources as supported within paras.151 and 158 of the NPPF.

In addition the siting of the panels has been dictated by the need to protect the historic character and significance of the listed buildings as being placed on or next to the building would have a significant impact on its historic setting

Given the above, the installation of the solar panels are considered to be justified in their position due to the environmental benefits and energy production of the scheme (which will be used for the applicant's property) in line with Local Plan Policy RE1 and Cawthorne Neighbourhood Plan Policy C3. As such, in principal, they would meet the requirements of the NPPF and the relevant policies. However, this is subject to the impact of the proposal upon the setting of the Listed Building and the Visual amenity of the Green Belt, highway safety, ecology and residential amenity. These material considerations are assessed below.

Residential Amenity

The proposals will not have a significant impact upon the amenity of adjacent residents due to the panels being well screened from South Lane and they are set away from other dwellings so should not cause any significant impact in terms of glare or overbearing impact.

Visual Amenity/Impact on Listed Building

The site is set within the Green Belt and set on land owned by the applicant and adjacent to the Grade II* Woolgreaves Hall. Policy C3 of the Cawthorne Neighbourhood Development Plan states that Renewable Energy 'Proposals for solar panels and solar voltaic schemes should be designed and sited sensitively so that they do not have an adverse visual impact on the conservation area and other nearby heritage assets.' As the site is set within the Green Belt, the proposal panels must not harm the openness of the Green Belt.

Impact on Listed Building

Given the location of the panels adjacent to the Grade II* Woolgreaves Hall, the Conservation Officer has been consulted and has provided the following comments:-

'This application proposes two solar arrays to the east and west of Woolgreaves Farm which includes the Grade II* farmhouse and its accompanying barn. The barn has been extensively altered during conversion and the setting. I've had a look on the ground and the eastern array is located close to where the drystone wall ends and is 55m from Woolgreaves Farmhouse. The western array is approximately 122m west of the long barn. In terms of the proposed locations, I'd suggest these are well screened and physically well separated areas that contribute only very marginally in terms of the wider agrarian landscape setting. Intervisibility is extremely limited and views of the grade II* and grade II buildings in context with the proposal are not possible from any public areas. Some glimpsed views may be possible of the listed building and its roof from the eastern array but that would be from immediate adjacent to the array itself. However, the opposing view from the east or south aspect / setting of the grade II* farmhouse would have no view of the array due to its low-lying nature. The western array will be completely invisible from the southern or western setting of the barn due to screening of trees and the presence of the recently erected pool building. Consequently, I see little harm to the setting that contributes the most to the heritage significance of the listed buildings and raise no objections or further detailed comments.'

Impact on Green Belt

In terms of the impact upon the setting of Woolgreaves Hall, the Conservation Officer does not raise any concerns in accordance with policy HE1 and HE3 of the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan Policy C3. In terms of the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, the panels will be hidden behind screening vegetation along the boundaries and will be set behind existing dry stone walls. The panels are not overly large and would not be overly prominent from public vantage points. The panels themselves could easily be removed or replaced when they come to the end of their life and if required, the land could be restored to its original use.

The panels are situated within agricultural fields owned by the applicant to the east and to the west of the property. The plans show two separate arrays of 16 (12kw in total) panels, mounted on ground brackets, 14m wide by 5m and 2.2m in height. The panels would be angled so that they face towards the south. Concerns were initially raised with regard to the panels being split within two locations and if the applicant had considered only one array. In response, the applicant has stated that 'the location to the west runs to electricity meter points to the west of the property and the cable runs required to reach the main dwelling are too far from this location to be able to connect the main house which is the reason for the split locations.' The Heritage Statement submitted with the application also states that 'the proposal is based on locating the Solar PV in two locations which eliminates the needs for any penetrations to the listed building and provides discreet locations that do not create an adverse visual impact on any parties' which is acceptable and justified given the sensitivity of the building.

On balance the proposed panels are considered acceptable in terms of their size, design, location and their impact upon the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt, in accordance with policy GB1 of the Local Plan.

Ecology

The applicant has provided a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, an Enhancement to Biodiversity Statement and a Precautionary Working Method Statement. The Ecology Officer

has been consulted and has assessed the submitted reports and has no objections to the proposal put forward. The Precautionary Working Method Statement for birds and small mammals and the scheme for the enhancement of habitats have been submitted up front and are acceptable in accordance with Policy BIO1 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

The Highways Officer has been consulted and has no objections to the scheme. The proposals involves the erection of two separate arrays of solar panels, one towards the eastern extent of the site and one towards the west. The site has numerous existing vehicular access points and it is evident that the closest access to each array will be utilised during the construction process. Both of these access points lead to areas that can provide sufficient space for the parking and turning of construction vehicles and both accesses are currently used by agricultural vehicles that are comparable in size to the type of large vehicles that would visit the site during construction.

The proposals are therefore considered to have minimal highway implications and there are no objections on highways development control grounds subject to an informative in relation to the prevention of mud being deposited on the highway from contractors vehicles.

Recommendation

Grant subject to conditions