PLANNING STATEMENT

in connection with

THE GROUND MOUNT INSTALLATION OF PHOTOVOLTAIC MODULES (SOLAR PANELS)

at

No 1

Staples Hill

Freshford

BA2 7WL

for

Dr Jonelle Daniels

Project Ref: Staples028 BA2

Document: Planning Statement P1a

Date: 2nd December 2023

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8 minute energy

Another project by 8 Minute Energy Limited

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1. Site location

1.1. The site is at 1 Staples Hill, Freshford BA2 7WL and is shown on the Location plan attached to the Application.

1.2. The Property straddles the Wilstshire and BANES LPA boundary however, the proposed installation is wholly within Wiltshire.

1.3. The proposal is for 122 square metres of modules on a grassed bank to the south of the dwelling within the domestic curtilage.

1.4. The site is within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding National Beauty and also Green Belt.

2. Proposal

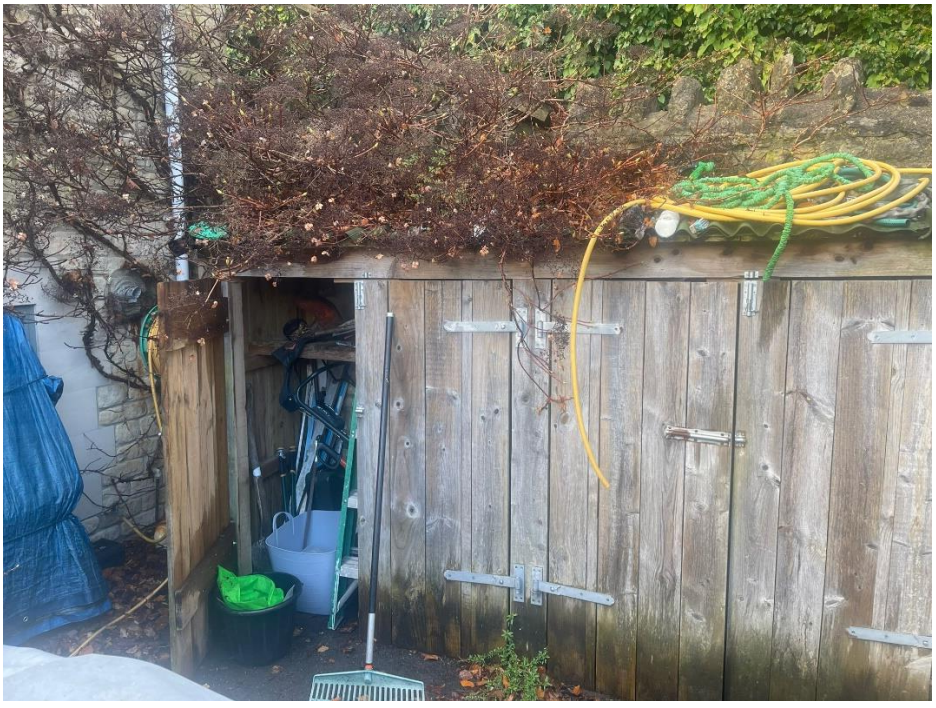
2.1. The applicant is keen to reduce the carbon footprint of her property and produce carbon free electricity using Photovoltaic (PV) Modules (Solar Panels).

2.2. The proposal is to install 51 photovoltaic (PV) units onto two twin post galvanised steel framework tables, supported on Spirafix Ground Anchors.

2.3. The proposed capacity of the whole installation is 25.755 kWp.

2.4. The system is designed to produce clean electricity that will provide power for the existing dwelling. It is anticipated that most of the electricity generated will be utilised on site with any surplus exported to the National Grid.

2.5. There will be two hybrid Inverters and three Battery units which will be sited, in the existing ventilated shed, modified to suit, adjacent to the dwelling. Photograph below.



3. Electrical Infrastructure

3.1. The property is connected to the grid and that will enable any surplus energy to be exported using the existing mains cabling.

3.2. The existing transformer is just outside the application boundary and is adequate to deal with any surplus electricity generated.

3.3. The hybrid Inverter/ Battery units sited in a modified shed adjacent to the existing house from where they will be connected into the distribution board. There will be no requirement for any additional overhead cables.

3.4. The required switchgear will be located within the dwelling adjacent to the existing consumer unit.

4. Equipment

4.1. Data sheets are attached showing typical Modules, Inverters and Batteries.

4.2. It should be noted that these items are continually being improved, as technology advances and therefore the precise manufacturer and models will be selected nearer the installation date to enable the most efficient reliable models available at the time to be used.

4.3. Notwithstanding 4.2 the Modules will be matt black within black integrated frames.

5. Landscape/Visual Impact Assessment

5.1. The sloping bank is an ideal position for the modules as the existing hedge to the south provides effective screening for the views across the valley and it proposed to plant a new hedge to the north of the panels to provide screening for the house.

5.2. The new hedging will be similar to existing using native species as noted on the Block Plan.

5.3. The proposed position has been sensitively selected to avoid affecting or being affected by the existing trees. The nearby silver birch, which are within falling distance of the array, were surveyed in September 2023 and found to be in good condition.

5.4. To gain maximum screening from the existing hedge it is proposed to site the modules just a minimum of 400 mm above the ground. There will be a geotextile membrane fixed below the modules to avoid weed growth. While this will reduce biodiversity marginally it will be more than compensated by the additional hedging.

5.5. The photographs 1 – 5 on the following pages illustrate the screening that exists.

5.6. For the above reasons no adverse landscape or visual impact is envisaged from the proposed installation.



Photo 1: View from Site towards Staples Hill



Photo 2: View from Site to the South



Photo 3: View from Site towards the North-west



Photo 4: View towards the dwelling from field below. - Installation on steep slope behind hedge



Photo 5: View towards the site from south - Installation on steep slope behind hedge

6. Development in AONB

6.1. The site is within The Cotswolds AONB and Policy NE2 of the Local Plan is designed to protect that area. Respecting that policy has influenced the choice for siting the PV installation as it benefits from substantial natural screening by the existing hedging which will remain undisturbed.

6.2. As it is behind existing native hedge, the installation will be effectively screened from public paths and highways.

6.3. The Government's stated policy is to encourage renewable energy projects and has set demanding targets on the delivery of sustainable development. Tackling climate change is a key Government priority for the planning system.

6.4. It is considered that the proposal falls within the guidelines of policy of acceptable development within an AONB.

7. Development in Green Belt

7.1. The site is within Green Belt and Policy CP8 of the Local Plan is designed to protect that area.

7.2. Respecting the policy CP8 has influenced the choice for siting the PV installation by keeping it within the domestic curtilage as it benefits from substantial natural screening by the existing hedging which will remain undisturbed.

7.3. It is considered that the proposal falls within the guidelines of policy of acceptable development within Green Belt.

8. Footpaths

8.2. There is one Footpath WW0021 and one Bridleway WW0020 near the property as illustrated on the Footpath map extract overleaf.

8.3. The installation will be screened by existing dwellings and substantial hedges and trees and therefore it is unlikely that footpath users will have views of the proposed installation even during the winter.

8.4. It is concluded that there will be no adverse impact upon the public paths.



Screenshot showing nearest Public Footpath.

9. Ecological Impact

9.1. The installation site is currently a lawned bank as illustrated by the photographs in Section 5.

9.2. There is no evidence of badgers, reptiles, ground nesting birds or other protected species on or near the installation site.

9.3. The property at present has the benefit of native hedging that provides significant habitat for wildlife and these will remain unaffected by the installation.

9.4. No additional fencing is proposed and any existing runs for wildlife will be unaffected.

9.5. The proposed screen planting between the applicant's property and the array will increase biodiversity by providing additional habitat for wildlife including nesting opportunities for birds.

9.6. The cable run to the house has been carefully routed to avoid adverse impact upon the trees and planting.

10. Flood Risk

10.1. A search of the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning, confirms that the whole site is within Zone 1 and not at risk from flooding from any source. Screenshot of Flood map is shown below.



Screenshot showing extract from Flood Map for Planning

10. Public Benefit

10.1. It is estimated that some 27000 kWh of electricity will be generated during an average year which would otherwise be produced using fossil fuels and is perhaps equivalent of that consumed by 7 or 8 new homes.

10.2. As older coal fired generating stations are being shut down the carbon saving is reducing but using current estimates it is anticipated that the carbon saving will be over 6000 kg each year.

10.3. Wiltshire has declared a climate emergency and is committed to working towards making the Council and the area as a whole carbon neutral by 2030. This installation will contribute towards meeting that aim.

12. Drainage

12.1. The applicant being aware that an adopted sewer crosses her land commissioned a survey of the drainage by Maintain-A-Drain of Hengrove Bristol to determine the depth and line of the drains.

12.2. The path of the adopted drains is indicated on the Block Plan.

12.3. It is not possible to provide the usual 3 metre buffer to these drains and therefore.

12.3.1. Screw foundations will be used on which to mount the frames and these will be positioned to keep clear of the drains.

12.3.2. The applicant is prepared to accept a condition whereby, should the installation be a hindrance to any repairs or replacement that become necessary to the adopted drain, the offending section will be temporarily dismantled in a timely manner and re-erected following completion of the works at her cost.

13. Access

13.1. The application property currently has pedestrian and vehicular accesses direct off the public highway known as Staples Hill.

13.2. The existing entrance is to remain unaltered and it is considered will provide safe access and egress for all construction traffic.

13.3. Delivery vehicles and plant for the installation will be no heavier or larger than the traffic that uses or has used that entrance.

13.4. Delivery vehicles are not expected to leave the hard surfaces, but wheel washing facilities will be available as required to ensure that no mud or debris is deposited on the road.

13.5. Any surplus output of the PV installation will be transported by way of the Electricity Grid and therefore no additional traffic is required for this.

13.6. Apart from cleaning of the photovoltaic panels, usually carried out on an annual basis, very little maintenance is required and therefore following construction, additional traffic movements into and out of the site will be minimal making no material change to road safety.