

Non-Material Amendment Application – Green Switch Developments

Land at Rookery Farm, Flansham, West Sussex

**Design and Access Statement in support of Non-Material
Amendment Application regarding application Y/14/14 to Arun
District Council**

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1 Introduction

This report has been produced by Green Switch Solutions on behalf of Green Switch Developments, to accompany the application for a non-material amendment to the development of a solar park on land at Rookery Farm near Flansham in West Sussex. The non-material amendment is for permission to install a storage container onsite for the duration of the solar parks operational life.

This statement is submitted in support of the application and sets out background information regarding the previous proposal and details of the requested amendment.

2 The Application

The application for a non-material amendment is regarding the development of a solar park on land at Rookery Farm, Flansham.

The general location of the application site is shown below and is centred on OS grid reference SU971013. The site lies within 0.7km of the nearest settlement, Flansham. The exact location of the site is identified in Figure 1, below:

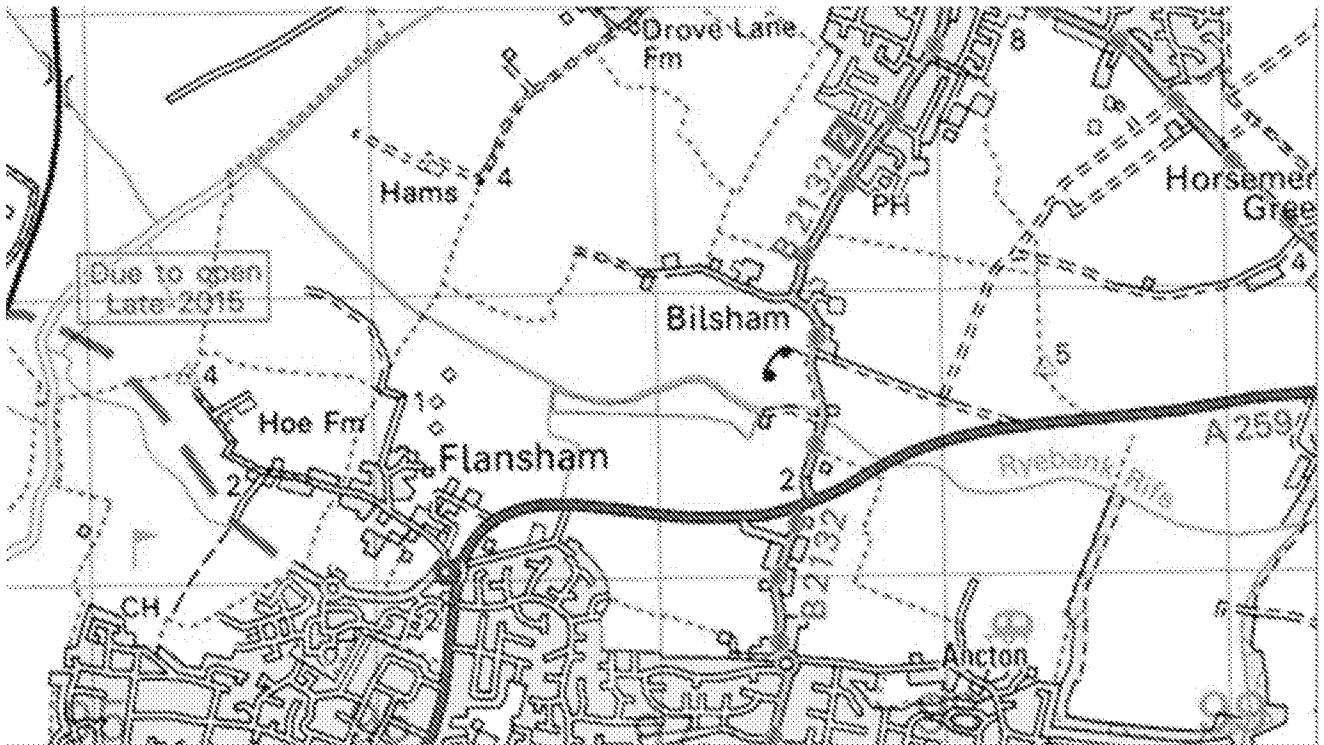


Figure 1: Site Location Plan – application site in red (Google Earth accessed September 2015)

This proposals involves seeking permission to amend the previously published planning permission to incorporate the inclusion of an on-site storage container. This storage container will be used to limit the need for maintenance visits by storing spare parts and equipment on site. It is proposed the container will be kept on site for the lifespan of the solar park.

The operational life of the solar park is 25 years, after which it can be removed, or the lifetime extended subject to further planning controls.

2.1 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

This non-material amendment application is supported by a number of additional plans and documents.

These are as follows:

- Application form;
- Cover letter;
- Location Plan;
- Elevations Drawing;
- Amended PV Layout (incorporating the Storage Container).

2.2 PLANNING HISTORY

The submission of this NMA application follows the approval of a previous application for a solar park development which was given the reference number Y/14/14. The original planning application was submitted in February 2014 and a decision was received on the 29th of May of the same year. Following the approval a previous non-material amendment was submitted which looked to amend the following:

- Change to position of the substation buildings;
- Very minor changes to the layout/positioning of the solar modules;
- Removal of the three large centralised inverter cabins and replacement with string inverters (small boxes located under the panels, as shown in attached image), and three small transformer boxes situated adjacent to the substation. The impact of this method of construction is much lower due to the removal of the container based inverters;
- The crushed hardcore access track to the solar park will be extended slightly to reach the substation.

This NMA was approved in December 2014. A second NMA was submitted in June 2015 requesting a very minor variation on the position of a small section of panels and access, reverting back to original inverter design and amending the height of the CCTV poles. With the exception of the latter this NMA was also approved.

3 Site Appraisal

3.1 PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The approved solar site is located on the outskirts of White Houses and 2.7km from the town of Retford in Nottinghamshire. The OS grid reference for the centre of the site is SK721789.

The site is set within a relatively flat, landscape. The site encompasses one entire field and large proportions of a further 2 surrounded by Hedgerows and a stream to the north with an area of approximately 15 acres. The area surrounding the site is rural in nature, consisting of arable fields. The archaeological, agricultural, ecological and landscape and visual context of the site were assessed as part of the application and the site was determined as being suitable for the development by Arun District Council.

The site is currently accessed via the farm, to the south of the site, the farm track enters at the south portion of the field not used in the development.

The site is not located within any statutory environmental or landscape designations, nor is it within close proximity of a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It has been identified that there are no scheduled monuments within a 2km radius of the site, the nearest being approximately 3.1km to the northeast of the proposed development site. The nearest residential property is 240m from the site.

3.2 SOCIAL CONTEXT

The proposed amendment to incorporate a storage container would aid in the production of renewable energy for export to the Local Electricity Distribution Network.

The introduction of such a unit would not result in significant levels of pollution, noise or odour and, therefore, would not have a significant effect on amenity or the quality of life of nearby residents or constitute a material deviation from the original planning decision.

4 Planning Policy Context

The principal policy document within the Arun District Local Development Framework (LDF) is the Arun District Local Plan 2003, which provides the local planning policies against which this amendment shall be determined. Within it the two most relevant policies are outlined below:

POLICY DEV6 Agricultural Buildings

This is perhaps the most relevant policy. It outlines that new structures associated to agricultural land should be located and of a scale and design that minimises their visual impact on Landscape. Additionally the policy states “new buildings are grouped with any existing buildings in order to minimise impact on the landscape”. By locating the container unit alongside the other on-site structures the addition of it to the solar park does not induce additional visual/safety impacts nor would be seen as inappropriate in the context of the surrounding development.

POLICY GEN21 Renewable Energy

This policy has been put in place to ensure all development of large scale renewable energy is appropriately located by adhering to the following:

- there is no significant harmful environmental effect on the quality of the natural and built environments;
- there is no unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents;
- there is no adverse effect on public safety;
- development will make a contribution to meeting need on a local, regional or national basis and the reduction in emissions of damaging greenhouse gases.

The initial application for the solar park development was determined as abiding by this policy and as such it is not thought the minor amendment to include the proposed unit will have any notable implications on the impact of the development.

The container will be in-keeping with the solar development and will not further detract from the local character and distinctiveness. It will be coloured green to ensure it fits the rural surround and supports the development in providing adequate storage and efficient maintenance.

5 Location

The solar park is anticipated to have a life span of 25 years in which the solar PV panels will operate continually. Locating a storage container on site will increase the efficiency of the project maintenance by allowing for commonly required tools and spare parts to be stored on site.

The storage container will be located within the perimeter of the solar park development, alongside the other built elements, the substations and transformers and remain there for the operational life of the project.

Whilst a plan showing the location of the container in the context of the solar scheme is included separately the below images outline the proposed location within the development field:

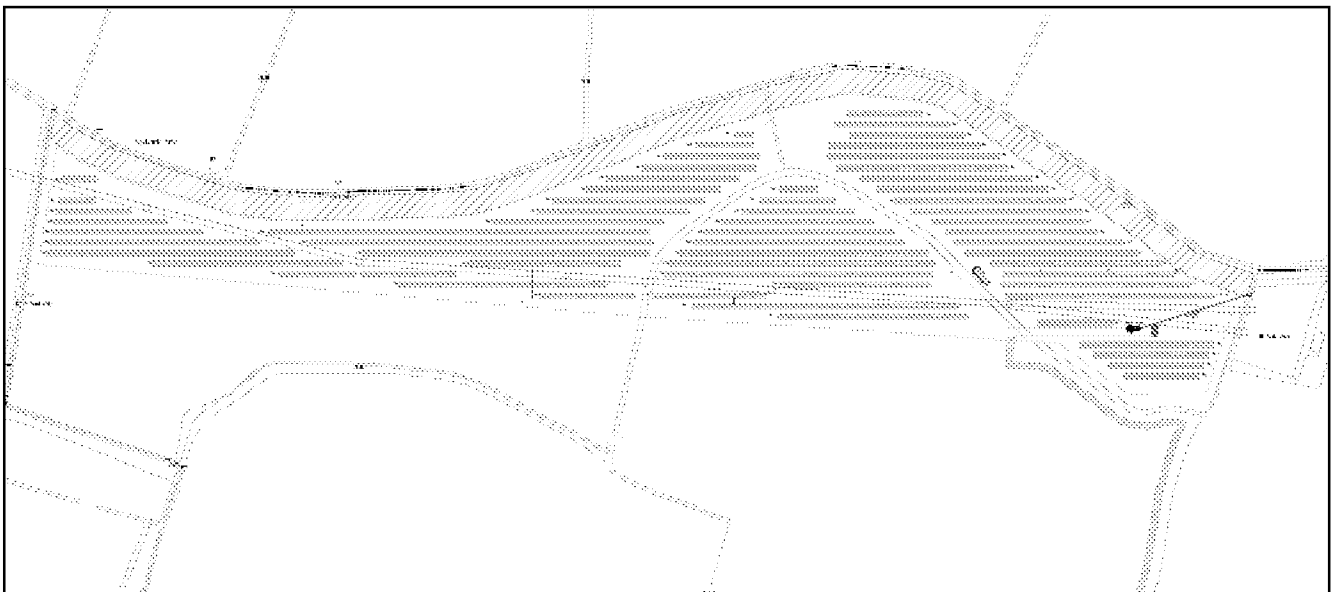


Figure 2: Solar PV Site with proposed storage container shown in purple.

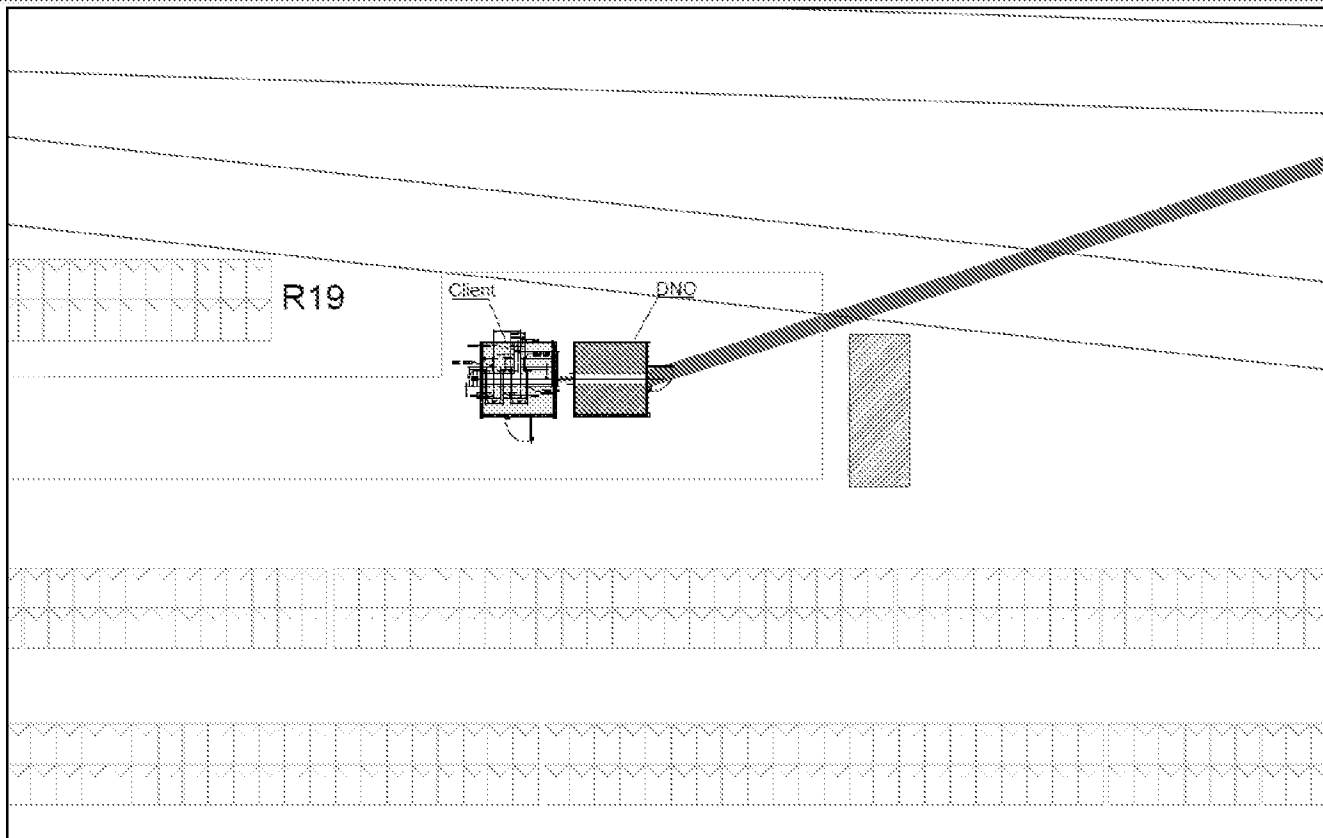


Figure 3: Zoomed in image of the Storage Container (purple) in the context of the other built elements of the project

6 Design

This section of the report will focus on the scale, layout, appearance and access considerations, as is standard for a Design and Access Statement.

6.1 SCALE

The proposed container will be in line with standard storage/shipping containers. The external and internal dimensions, as well as weight are shown below:

External dimensions-

- Length – 6058mm
- Width – 2438mm
- Height – 2591mm

Internal dimensions-

- Length – 5898mm
- Width – 2350mm
- Height – 2390mm

The weight of the container unladen would be approximately 2155kg. A plan has been included separately further detailing the elevations and appearance of the unit.

6.2 APPEARANCE

The container would be in line with standard 20 foot metal storage containers. The unit will also be painted green to ensure it fits within the landscape and does not appear incongruous. The container is also positioned sympathetically next to other infrastructure, this ensures views of the container would be negligible or not available in the context of the surrounding development.

The below image details an example as to what the container should look like:



Figure 4: Example storage container.

7 Access

7.1 SITE ACCESS

Delivery of the storage container shall be made directly to its proposed location situated within the solar park site itself. The delivery vehicle will travel along the local road network before exiting joining the A259, this road becomes Worms Lane as you get close to the site. The vehicle will approach the site on Worms Lane, before turning onto the site via the pre-existing site access. After this the vehicle will traverse the site to deliver the container to its position within the development.



Figure 5: Access Map – Route Shown in Yellow (Google Earth accessed September 2015)

7.2 INCLUSIVE ACCESS

The site will not be open to the public and therefore it is considered that the requirements of inclusive access for the public is not considered relevant to the project.

8 Installation

The construction of the container is undertaken prior to its installation on site, therefore it is estimated that only one delivery would be necessary to bring and install the container and any associated infrastructure. This would entail the following elements:

1. Delivery vehicle arrives at site;
2. The lorry will utilise the layout of the installed solar PV farm and navigate the site to the position the container is to be installed;
3. Using the vehicles crane the container will be lifted into place and mounted on railway sleepers;
4. Vehicle leaves site;
5. Removal of any other associated delivery materials.

The proposed storage container will be transported on a Hi-ab lorry. Such a vehicle is not only suitable to safely carry the unit but with the lorry having its own crane it limits the required delivery vehicles. A picture of a standard Hi-ab lorry is shown below:



Figure 6: Image of a Hi-ab lorry.

9 Conclusion

The scale, location, layout and appearance of the proposed amendment have been outlined and assessed against the details of the originally approved application and previous NMAs. Section 96A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 refers to the LPA being “*satisfied that the change is not material*”. The assessment outlined in this document and accompanying plans, conclude that in the context of the approved development the proposed amendments would not lead to further impacts being generated or significant alterations to the approved scheme. The proposed amendment would facilitate an efficient maintenance process without enforcing distinguishable change from the approved planning application and subsequent NMAs.

It is our understanding that the judgment on “materiality” is one of fact and degree, taking into account the likely impacts of the amendment. The benchmark for forming the judgment on materiality is the original planning permission. We trust that the minor changes described above can be considered non-material when assessed against the approved development as a whole.