

F/YR12/0106/F
9 February 2012

Applicant : Mr R Green
Lark Energy Ltd

Agent : Mr A Woodward

Land West Of 160 Ramsey Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire

Erection of ground mounted photovoltaic solar panels

This application is before the Planning Committee due to the number of objections received.

This application is a 'Minor'

1. **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The application site is located on the southern side of Daw's Drove and forms part of the farm holding at 160 Ramsey Road. The site is currently scrub land although it is classified as grade 2 agricultural land. The site lies between a bungalow and a collection of agricultural buildings. The land is bound by high landscaping to the west and is open on all other boundaries.

2. **HISTORY**

No relevant site history

3. **CONSULTATIONS**

Parish/Town Council:

Recommend refusal, the proposal exceeds the requirements for permitted development for standalone solar installation, the proposal is nearly 4 times greater than the current permitted development making this an industrial sized development that would be positioned only 15m from a neighbouring property.

Ramblers:

Not received at time of report

CCC Countryside Access:

Not received at time of report

Environment Agency:

No objections

Middle Level Commissioners:

Not received at time of report

CCC Highways:

If the access is via Blackbush Farm then no objections to the proposal however the site area edged in red should be amended. If this is not the case a further plan should be obtained clearly indicating the location of the access.

FDC Environment and Health Services: No objections

Huntingdonshire District Council: Not received at time of report

Safer Fenland Manager: No apparent crime and disorder issues

Neighbours: 11 letters of objection and 1 petition with 8 signatures received. Concerns regarding:

- the scale of the development
- the choice of site
- the effect of the proposed development on the nearby business given the potential glare
- impact on nearby residents
- incorrect information relating to the purpose of the site
- no pre-consultation prior to the submission of the application
- the development is 4 times larger than the guidelines for permitted development for standalone solar panels
- health implications on local residents
- the distance from neighbouring residential properties
- impact on local wildlife and biodiversity

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

FDWLP Policy	E1	- To resist development likely to detract from the Fenland landscape. New development should meet certain criteria.
	E8	- Proposals for new development should: -allow for protection of site features; -be of a design compatible with their surroundings; -have regard to the amenities of adjoining properties; -provide adequate access
East of England Plan	SS1	- Achieving Sustainable Development
	ENG1	- Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Energy Performance
	ENG2	- Renewable Energy Targets
	ENV7	- Quality in the Built Environment

Planning Guidance (PPGs and PPSs)	Policy	PPS1	-	Delivering Sustainable Development
		PPS7	-	Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
		PPS22	-	Renewable Energy

5. ASSESSMENT

Nature of Application

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of ground mounted photovoltaic solar panels. The application is considered to raise the following key issues;

- Principle and policy implications
- Design and Layout
- Other matters

Principle and policy implications

The application involves the erection of a collection of ground mounted solar panels. The nature of the proposal complies in principle with Planning Policy Statement 22 which seeks to reduce the harmful effects of climate change by increasing the amount of electricity which is generated by renewable energy sources.

SS1, ENG1 and ENG2 of the East of England Plan encourage sustainable development and seek to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by setting targets for the region. The proposal, therefore, complies in principle to policies at a regional level. Notwithstanding the above, the submission does not include how much electricity the proposal is likely to generate nor where the electricity will be exported to.

Locally, the Fenland District Wide Local Plan seeks to ensure that new development does not detract from the unique open character of the Fenland landscape and does not have a harmful impact on neighbouring residents, highway safety or visual amenities in general. The above is set out in Policies E1 and E8 respectively and will be discussed in more detail in the 'Design and Layout' section of the report.

Design and Layout

The 202 solar panels will have an area of 1815m² and will be set out in 12 rows. The maximum height will be 2.4metres and they will be tilted 30° southwards. Officers are unable to assess the impact of the proposal on the open countryside or on neighbouring properties as an accurate scaled plan showing the position of the panels in relation to their surroundings has not been provided.

It is acknowledged that the landscaping on the western boundary is taller than the panels and, therefore, impact on the adjoining property is not likely to be significant. However, as the landscaping has not been shown on the plan and the position of the panels cannot be properly ascertained, Officers cannot confirm whether or not the proposal is likely to result in a harmful impact on the neighbouring amenities.

Access to the site is proposed via Daw's Drove, however, as this also has not been shown on an accurate scaled plan, Officers are unable to ascertain whether or not it is acceptable.

Concerns are raised with regard to the finish of the panels. The submission states that the panels will have a matt finish, however, the brochure details included within the application states that the panels will be finished in glass. Given that it is not possible to measure the distance between the panels and adjoining and the finish of the panels is not clear, the impact on the surroundings in terms of glare cannot be assessed.

Other matters

The site has been confirmed as grade 2 agricultural land. PPS7 requires the retention of top grade agricultural land, however, as the site area is only marginally over 1 hectare (1.035ha), it is considered that the amount of high grade land lost as a result of the proposal would not be sufficient enough to be of detriment to the agricultural economy nor would it be sufficient enough to justify a reason for refusal.

Several letters of representation have been received from the public objecting to the proposal for various reasons. One of which includes the proposal being 'four times greater than the current PDR for standalone solar installations'. These comments have been noted and it is acknowledged that the proposal exceeds the Permitted Development Rights (PDR) for standalone solar installations, hence the requirement for the current planning application.

Comments relating to the choice of site have been noted, however, as the Local Planning Authority can only assess the scheme which is before them, Officers are unable to substantiate the objection. Comments received with regard to the impact on adjoining properties, health implications and the impact on wildlife have also been noted and have been addressed previously within this report.

Conclusion

The principle of the proposal is supported in policy terms. However, despite requesting the required information, the submission fails to include accurate scaled drawings which show the position of the proposal within its surroundings, existing and proposed landscaping and access to the site. As such it is not possible to assess the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties, businesses, highway safety, or the area in general. It is, therefore, recommended that the application is refused.

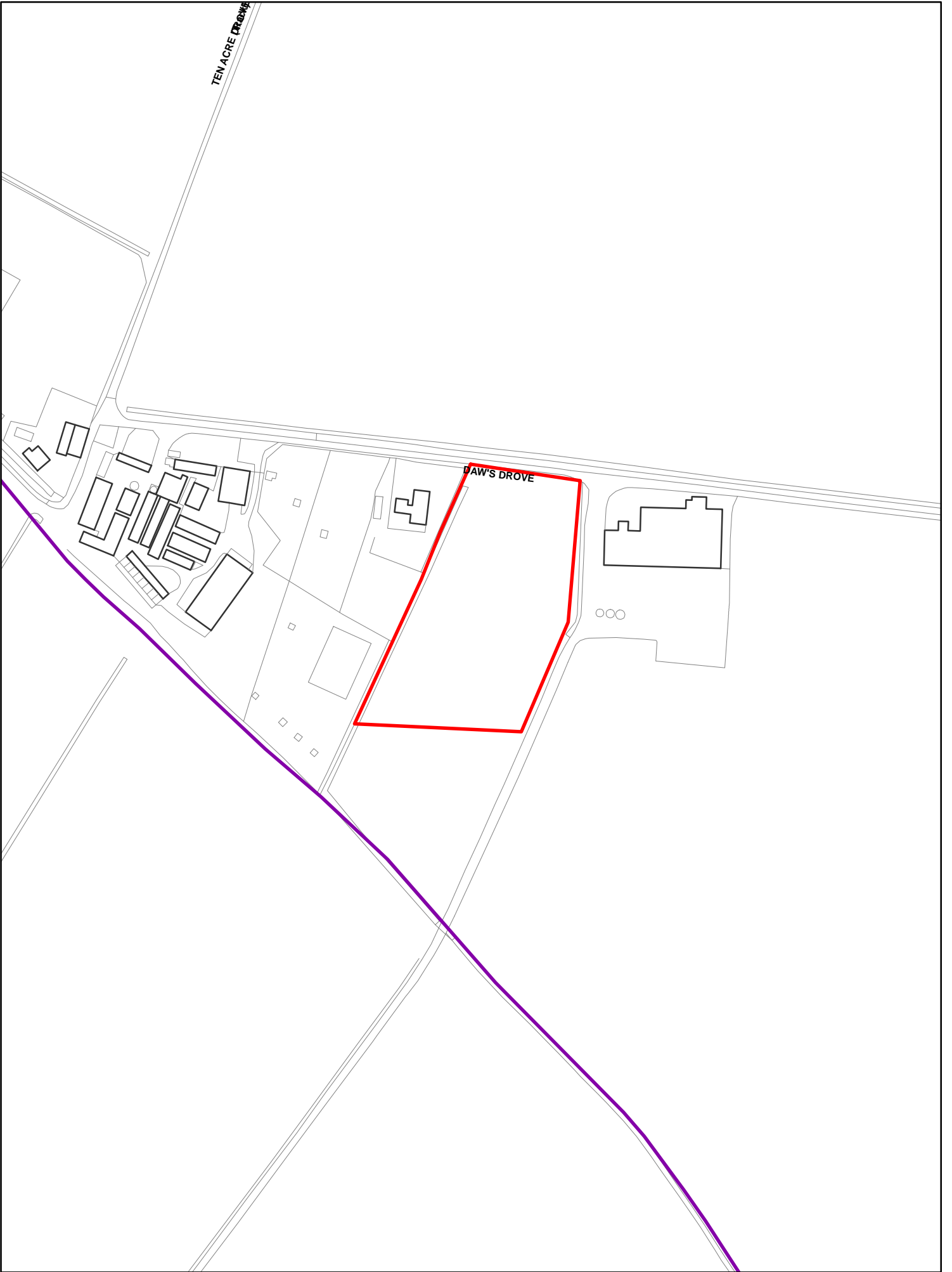
6. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

- 1. By virtue of the lack of information contained within the application, the proposal fails to address the impact on the character of the area and has no regard to neighbouring amenities, highway safety or the locality in general, contrary to E1 and E8 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan, SS1, ENG2 and ENV7 of the East of England Plan, Planning Policy Statement 1, Planning Policy Statement 7 and Planning Policy Statement 22.**

TEN ACRE DRIVE

DAW'S DROVE



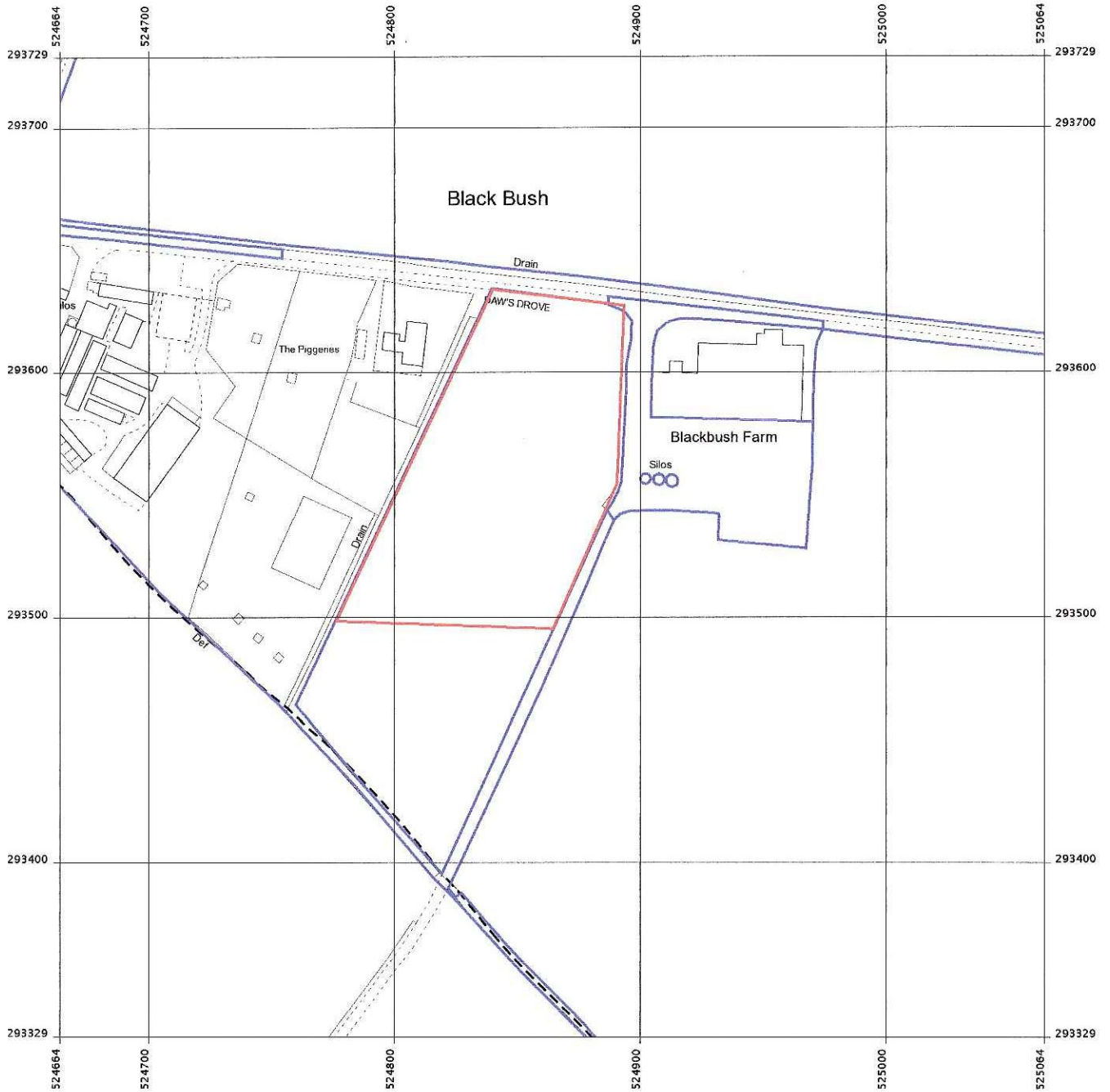
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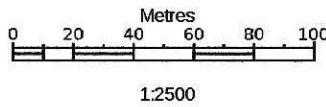




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PETERBOROUGH
PE7 2LS

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 Reference: O1366210
 Centre coordinates: 524864 293529