

<b>APPLICATION NUMBER:</b>	LW/07/1109	<b>ITEM NUMBER:</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>APPLICANTS NAME(S):</b>	Mr A Mitchell	<b>PARISH / WARD:</b>	Lewes / Lewes Priory
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Planning Application for Solar panels to front roofslope and reinstate fire wall feature		
<b>SITE ADDRESS:</b>	113 Western Road, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1RS		
<b>GRID REF:</b>	TQ 4010		

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## 1. SITE DESCRIPTION / PROPOSAL

1.1 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a solar panel to the front elevation of 113 Western Road, Lewes. The property is an attractive mid terrace dwelling of a uniform appearance, located in a prominent position within the Lewes Conservation Area and Article 4 Area. The property fronts on to Western Road and the junction with Spital Road with clear views of the front of the property from the west, east and south east of the site.

1.2 The proposed solar panel would measure approximately 2.2 metres by 0.9 metres and raise above the roof by approximately 0.25 metres. It would be set 0.35 metres below the ridge of the roof and approximately 0.4 metres above an existing dormer window. Additional information submitted has suggested that the solar panel will have a life expectancy of approximately 25 years.

1.3 An identical application, LW/07/0689, was recently refused for the proposed scheme on the basis that the "proposed solar panels by virtue of their size and siting on the front elevation of the house forms part of an unaltered terrace of properties in a prominent location within the Lewes Conservation Area, will result in a visually intrusive development which will have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the Lewes Conservation Area".

## 2. RELEVANT POLICIES

**LDLP: – ST03** – Design, Form and Setting of Development

**LDLP: – H05** – Conservation Areas

**LDLP: – PPG15** – Planning & the Historic Environment

**LDLP: – PPS1** – Delivering Sustainable Development

## 3. PLANNING HISTORY

**PREAPP/06/0871** - Roof to be removed and other alterations -

**LW/07/0689** - Installation of two solar thermal panels to front pitched roof -  
**Refused**

**LW/07/0693** - First floor extension to rear & internal alterations - **Approved**

**LW/07/1109** - Solar panels to front roofslope and reinstate fire wall feature -

## 4. REPRESENTATIONS FROM STANDARD CONSULTEES

**Main Town Or Parish Council** – Members welcomed the environmental initiative.

**Design & Conservation Officer** – My comments on the previous application for solar panels still stand and again I recommend refusal for this application. The panels are sited in a highly visible location on the front roof slope of an

unspoilt terrace of houses which are highly prominent within the Conservation Area. I consider that by virtue of their size and reflective nature the panels would be detrimental to the appearance of the terrace and have a negative impact on the appearance and character of the Conservation Area.

Whilst sustainable issues are important I consider that the conservation implications must be taken into account and alternative methods of lessening environmental impact should be looked at which are not to the detriment of the Conservation Area. The Lewes Conservation Area is of sufficient architectural and historic importance to be worthy of an Article 4 Direction to ensure that all alterations are carried out sensitively and preserve and enhance the special character of the Conservation Area by using the correct materials and details.

I am also concerned that approving this application may set a precedent for similar applications elsewhere. It should be taken into consideration that cumulative alterations can have a huge impact on the character of an area, which the Article 4 Direction is in place to prevent.

## **5. REPRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS**

5.1 Five letters of support received from neighbouring properties. Support for the scheme made regarding: The application will only be a minor intrusion into the Conservation Area and sacrifices need to be made to support global warming issues. The house is of no architectural interest and the solar panel will not result in a loss of character. All properties which have the ability to erect solar panels should do so, regardless of their location, in order to help the planet. Local Government supports sustainable developments such as this and should promote them not refuse them. The solar panel would be located on a tall mid-terrace dwelling, located behind a dormer window and not in a prominent location. The importance of the Conservation Area should not outweigh the importance of the environment.

## **6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 It is considered that the main considerations in determination of this application are: Impact on Conservation Area, The Article 4 Direction and Sustainability & Policy.

### **Policy**

6.2 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development, while acknowledging the need for the promotion of sustainable measures also states that "planning policies should seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of...urban areas...a high level of protection should be given to the most valued townscapes". Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, states that "it is fundamental to the Government's policies for environmental stewardship that there should be effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment. The physical

survival of our past are to be valued and protected for their own sake...and are an irreplaceable record".

6.3 These two over-arching statements are backed up by Local Plan Policy H5: Development within or affecting Conservation Areas, which seeks to: (a) "conserve or enhance historic character of the area", (b) "use materials which are traditional to the area or are otherwise sympathetic" & (e) "respect any important traditional grouping of buildings which contribute to the character of the area". It is considered that the location of the proposed solar panel, on a prominent and unspoilt roofscape would be contrary to the above policy objectives. It would be constructed out of non-traditional materials and highly visible from within the Conservation Area.

### **Conservation Area**

6.4 A strong objection has also be raised to the proposal by the Design & Conservation Officer who has stated that "by virtue of their size and reflective nature the panels would be detrimental to the appearance of the terrace and have a negative impact on the appearance and character of the Conservation Area". The Lewes Conservation Area Appraisal, although not yet adopted, defines the terrace which 113 Western Road forms a part of as being "buildings of a townscape merit". The building forms part of a relatively attractive and uniform terrace that positively contributes to the Conservation Area. The panels will not conserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area or protect the wider historic environment and will have a detrimental visual impact on the Conservation Area.

### **Article 4 Direction**

6.5 The Design & Conservation Officer has also suggested that "Lewes Conservation Area is of sufficient architectural and historic importance to be worthy of an Article 4 Direction to ensure that all alterations are carried out sensitively and preserve and enhance the special character of the conservation area by using the correct materials and details". The location of 113 Western Road is prominent when looking west along Western Road, or eastwards from Spital Road. It would be clearly visible from the opposite side of Western Road and would introduce an incongruous and out-of-character development utilising non-traditional and reflective materials.

6.6 Although planning does not operate on a 'precedent basis', it is considered that were this application approved it could lead to a proliferation of similar developments. Currently along Western Road, there are no front facing solar panels which can be viewed from the public realm. It is considered that this protection should be maintained given the noted importance of the Conservation Area and Article 4 Direction.

### **Sustainability**

6.7 Sustainability is a key issue that currently underpins many planning objectives. It does not solely relate to energy issues, but conservation and

protection of important historical features for future generations. Conservation Areas are finite resources which once altered to their detriment cannot be recovered. Although it is important to reduce Carbon emissions and promote sustainable energy initiatives, it is considered that in this instance the protection of an important street scape and character and appearance of the Conservation Area should be given greater weight.

6.8 Issues such as embodied energy and lifespan can limit the positive benefits of solar panels and it is not considered that the potential energy benefits justify this out of character development. In appropriate locations the Council will always seek to promote sustainable initiative, but this is considered a poor location and one which will have a detrimental impact on the wider visual amenities of the Conservation Area.

## 7. RECOMMENDATION

That the application is refused.

### Reason(s) for Refusal:

1. The proposed solar panel by virtue of its size and siting on the front elevation of the house which forms part of an unaltered terrace of properties in a prominent location within the Lewes Conservation Area, will result in a visually intrusive development which will have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the Lewes Conservation Area contrary to Planning Policy Statement 1, Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 and Policies ST3 & H5 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

### This decision is based on the following submitted plans/documents:

<u>PLAN TYPE</u>	<u>DATE RECEIVED</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Design & Access Statement	11 September 2007	
Location Plan	21 August 2007	1:1250
Block Plans	21 August 2007	1:500
Existing Elevations	21 August 2007	0207 03
Proposed Elevations	21 August 2007	0207 20