

Solar panels boost for East Lothian garden nursery

A garden nursery has been given a boost in its bid to reduce its dependence on the National Grid by up to 60% with its own solar panels.

Smeaton Nursery and Tearoom, at East Linton, in East Lothian has been granted planning permission to install more than 300 panels in an old section of its walled garden area to increase its independence.

The application from the nursery said it was keen to reduce its reliance on 'bought in power' and the panels would create more electricity than needed by the nursery.

It said by using battery storage and hot water switches to manage additional power it could see around 55% of energy generated used by its tea room business alone.

It said by utilising all the options available including an electric car the panels could allow the business to "possibly achieve 55-60% reduction of grid energy dependence".

The site of the new solar panels will require the demolition of long glasshouse beside the walled gardens on the estate.

The application argued that the black panels proposed would not look very different to the glasshouse when seen from the surrounding countryside.

It said: "The applicant is mindful of the setting and has

given serious thought to the positioning of solar panels .

“It could be argued that the appearance of the existing glass house has many similar characteristics to that of a solar array and when viewed from any vantage points in the wider landscape the appearance will not alter dramatically from what persons looking inward to that point would be seeing over distance.

“Also the existing glass will give off a glare on certain days and with light travelling at the glass and reflecting. This will cease as solar PV panels are manufactured with anti reflective coatings to the glass.”

Planners approved the application saying there had been no objections lodged and acknowledging the similarity between the panels impact and the existing glasshouse.

They said: “As the applicant’s agent alludes within their Design and Access Statement, there is a likeness between the solar panels proposed on their racks to the existing glazed greenhouse.

“The solar panels would be positioned some 58m southwest of Smeaton Farmhouse and this property forms as the applicant’s dwellinghouse. Proposals would not therefore harm the residential amenity of any neighbouring residential properties.

“Therefore, of the views into the site from the south, there would therefore be a negligible visual impact on the open countryside to the south as a result of the proposed the proposed solar panels.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter