



For Immediate Release – 28/04/2015

LOCAL COMPANIES CRITICISE NORTH STREET QUARTER ENERGY PROPOSALS AS 'MAJOR LOW CARBON OPPORTUNITY MISSED'

Three local energy companies today criticised the developer Santon for its Energy 'Sustainability' proposals in the controversial North Street Quarter (NSQ) development in Lewes. A fourth company has argued that natural gas be excluded from the site to avoid “the developer dropping the heat pump system after approval is given”. The local companies, who all work in the sustainable energy sector, argue in their formal objections to the Santon development Plan that:

- * The current proposals for heating the site are not low carbon and only 22% better than standard gas heating technology
- * Three of the four heating 'solutions' proposed are based on natural gas, which should be excluded from the planning application
- * The river-based heat pump proposal by Santon is a new technology for the UK, with no data provided on costs and technical performance
- * The heat pump system requires significant power to produce the heat; currently this will come via dirty brown power from the National Grid
- * The ample solar PV potential for the site is largely ignored and left to voluntary adoption by house buyers
- * Two tried and tested low-carbon heating options - modern wood heating and solar water heating - are completely ignored in the Santon Plan
- * While the energy efficiency targets for buildings are better than current Building Regulations, they could go much further

The companies: South East Wood Fuels (SEWF), Southern Solar and DH Solar Engineering, have a proven track record of delivering low-carbon heat and power in the area, including the Harvey's brewery solar PV system, wood heating for Lewes Prison and Ringmer Community College, and the Big Park solar thermal and biomass project in Peacehaven. A fourth local company – OVESCO – has also criticised the proposals and argued that natural gas should be left off the site.

Stewart Boyle of SEWF said on behalf of the companies: "superficially Santon try to claim 'sustainability' credentials for this development. In truth the Santon Plan is neither sustainable nor low carbon and significant opportunities have been missed. It will generate big carbon emissions for the next hundred years and beyond. The Plan should exclude natural gas from the site and aim for a 'zero carbon' status that such a big development needs. It can do this through a better mix of renewable technologies, committing to a big rooftop solar PV system, and higher efficiency standards. The current Plan should be rejected".

Howard Johns, MD of Southern Solar, argues that: “the potential for rooftop solar PV in the NSQ is at least a few hundreds of kW and possibly higher. To leave this as a ‘voluntary option’ for house buyers is a big opportunity missed and will condemn the site to generating carbon emissions for the next hundred years.”

Max Machin of DH Solar states that: “any renewable energy option utilised on the NSQ site will not bring economic benefits to local companies. Santon have admitted to us that they will use existing suppliers from outside the area rather than local expertise”.

Meanwhile, Nick Rouse, Technical Director of OVESCO, who is generally supportive of the heat pump technology proposed, has argued that: “by allowing the installation of a gas supply and not mandating the use of the heat pump scheme, this innovative scheme will be used to aid acceptance of the development, but will be dropped after approval is obtained on the ground that no ESCO can be found to take it on as its long term viability is questionable. There is a depressing history of such behaviour by developers.”

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