Report to District Development Control Committee

Date of meeting: 14 December 2011

Epping Forest District Council

Subject: Planning application EPF1758/11 – Pine Lodge, Lippitts Hill, Waltham Abbey – Provision of roof mounted solar array on existing equestrian building.

Officer contact for further information: Lindsay Trevillian Ext 4337
Committee Secretary: S Hill Ext 4249

Recommendation:

The planning application EPF/1758/11 be granted subject to the following condition:

(1) The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Report Detail

1. This application is brought before committee as the proposal if for a development on Cllr Stavrou residence.

Planning Issues

Description of Proposal:

2. The applicant seeks planning permission for the installation of 150 solar panels on the south facing slope of the existing indoor riding building. The panels will be mounted 50mm above the roof and would comprise of 5 rows of 30 columns. Each solar panel would measure 9991mm by 1665mm. The solar panels would provide a renewable source of energy to the subject site.

Description of Site:

3. The subject site is located on the western side of Lippitts Hill just south of the Police Training Camp on the outskirts of High Beech. A complex of equestrian buildings is located beyond a residential dwelling that fronts onto Lippitts Hill. The site is well screened by mature vegetation located on the front boundary. The site and the surrounding area are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Open fields comprising of agricultural buildings surround the site.

Relevant History:

4. There have been a number of planning applications submitted over the years however none of them are relevant to this proposal.

Policies Applied:

5. Local Plan policies relevant to this application are:

- CP1 Achieving Sustainable Development Objectives
- CP2 – Protecting the Quality of the Rural and Built Environment
- CP4 – Energy Conservation
- CP10 – Renewable Energy Schemes
- DBE1 – Design of New Buildings
- DBE2 – Effects to Adjoining Properties
- DBE4 – Development within the Green Belt
- DBE9 – Loss of Amenity
- GB2A – Development within the Green Belt
- HC12 – Setting of a Listed Building

Summary of Representations

6. Two neighbouring properties were notified by mail and a site noticed placed on site. No representations were received.

7. TOWN COUNCIL: - No comment as Deputy Leader of the Council is the applicant.

Issues and Considerations:

8. The main issues to be addressed are:

- Design and Appearance
- Green Belt
- Neighbouring amenities

Design and appearance:

9. Each solar panel is relatively small in terms of their size. However as a whole they would comprise of an area of 20.4 metres by 7.3 metres and would take up the majority of the south facing roof slope of the building.

10. The proposed panels are to be coated in an anti reflecting coating in order to reduce any glare and reflection. They would also only project 50mm from the roof slope and as such they would hardly be noticed.

11 They existing building is set well back from the highway and the cumulative effect of the panels would not result in an unnecessarily visual harm to the existing building.

12. The character and appearance of the building would still respect the wider landscape setting of the rural area. The flat profile of the panels will ensure that it appears little more than a conventional roof covering.

13. The proposal to mount 150 solar panels on the roof slope of an existing building would not result in a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Green Belt:

14. No visual harm will be caused to the open character of the Green Belt. Although the solar panels would take up the majority of the south facing roof slope, they would not add to the overall building footprint of the existing building.

Neighbouring amenities:

15. Given the distance the existing building is set away from adjoining dwellings and that the panel themselves would be coated in non-reflective coating to reduce glare and reflection, the proposed development would not cause a detrimental harm to the amenities enjoyed by adjoining occupiers.

Other issues:

16. The panels would not result in harm to adjacent listed buildings.

17. Policy CP10 state that proposals for renewable energy schemes will be permitted provided there is no significantly adverse effect upon existing land uses from loss of visual amenity, noise, pollution, upon the safety of the local highway network, or upon flight paths for aircraft and radar installations and sites of natural conservation.

18. It should be noted that the Metropolitan Police Cadet Training Camp is located approximately 150-200 metres north of the building in which the solar panels are to be mounted. Given that the Metropolitan Polices Air Support Unit operates from these grounds the application was referred to them for comments regarding whether the proposed solar panels would be harmful to the safety of flight paths of the Air Support Units. At the time of writing this report, no comments were received from the Metropolitan Police but if received, they will be verbally reported. As stated above, the panels will be ant-reflective, so it is not anticipated that there will an issue of glare to the operators of the aircraft.

19. Both PPS1 and PPS22 promote and encourage the development and use of renewable energy schemes particularly small scale schemes such as the proposed in order to fight against climate change and the delivery of sustainable forms of development.

Conclusion:

20. In conclusion, the proposal to mount 150 solar panels on the south facing roof slope of the existing building is appropriate in terms of design and appearance and that it would not result tin a harmful impact upon the openness of the Green Belt or upon neighbouring users or neighbours. The proposed development is in accordance with national and local policies and therefore it is recommended that the application be granted permission subject to suggested conditions.