DELEGATED REPORT

Recommendation Made: 30 September 2011

Reference:- 11/00629/FUL **Parish:- Bagworth Parish Council**

Applicant:- Mr Andrew Pickup
Linton Farm
Merrylees Road
Thornton
Leicestershire

Location:- Linton Farm Merrylees Road Thornton Leicestershire

Proposal:- INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PV PANELS ON EXISTING SLURRY STORE

Introduction:-

This planning application seeks full planning permission for the installation of 200 x 50kWp solar photovoltaic aluminium framed panels onto the two south facing roof slopes of an existing agricultural building. The photovoltaic panels measure 1.65 metres x 1 metre x 0.45 metres and are to be mounted in rows on aluminium rails bolted through the cement fibre roof sheets and attached to the roof purlins. The roof pitch is 15 degrees and the panels will project less than 200mm from the ridge.

Planning permission for the erection of the general purpose, open, steel portal framed agricultural building with timber weather boarding and cement fibre corrugated sheet roofing on a double pitched roof over an existing livestock slurry lagoon was granted in 2009. The slurry lagoon is constructed of earth walls with concrete panels which sit into the ground.

The farm complex at Linton Farm is located immediately to the west of the existing farm access off Merrylees Road and comprises of a number of large agricultural buildings (incorporating a small number of stables). Linton Farm itself covers an area of approximately 37 hectares of undulating land located in the countryside to the south and southwest of Thornton on the west side of Merrylees Road and within the National Forest. There are isolated farmhouses and associated buildings to the east, further residential properties to the southernmost point of the landholding, Merrylees Industrial Estate to the southwest and brickworks to the west.

The Design and Access Statement submitted to support the application estimates that the carbon reduction achieved by the installation will be 60 tonnes per annum.

An amended plan has been submitted to address minor discrepancies between plans.

History:-

No relevant planning history.

Consultations:-

No objection has been received from Head of Community Services (Land Drainage)

No comments have been received at the time of writing this report from:-

Bagworth and Thornton Parish Council
Ward Members
Site Notice
Neighbours

Development Plan Policies:-

National Planning Guidance:-

Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development
Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
Planning Policy Statement 22 (PPS22): Renewable Energy

Adopted Core Strategy (2009):-

Policy 21: National Forest
Policy 24: Sustainable Design and Technology

Adopted Local Plan (2001):-

BE1: Design and Siting of Development
NE5: Development in the Countryside

Supplementary Planning Document: Sustainable Design (2008)

Appraisal:-

The main considerations with regards to this application are the principle of development, impact on the countryside and impact on neighbours and highway safety.

Principle of Development

Whilst both national planning guidance in Planning Policy Statement 7 and policy NE5 of the adopted Local Plan seek to protect the character and appearance of the countryside for its own sake and from unnecessary development, it is recognised that certain forms of development, including those in connection with agricultural land based activities which require a countryside location, can be generally acceptable in principle. In addition, Planning Policy Statements 1 and 22 support sustainable development and renewable energy technologies and the proposed development indicates that the applicant is committed to sustainable energy and the reduction of carbon emissions from the operation of the farm. Therefore the principle of siting solar photovoltaic panels on the roof of an existing agricultural building within the countryside is considered to be acceptable. The existing farm is well established and the proposed photovoltaic panels will support existing operations at the site by providing a renewable on site energy resource.

Impact on the Countryside

Whilst the site is located in the countryside and the National Forest and there will be limited locations outside the farm where some of the solar panels will be visible and as a result of the topography of the land from long distance views from the south, it is considered that the low roof pitch of the building and the presence of the existing hedgerow screening to the boundaries of the landholding will result in minimal impact upon the surrounding countryside and the National Forest.

As the site is located within the National Forest policy 21 of the adopted Core Strategy requires landscaping proposals to accompany new developments. However, as a result of the height and siting of existing landscaping around the boundaries of the landholding (mature hedgerows) and within it to the south of the agricultural building on which they are to be mounted (sapling tree planting) it is considered that the proposed development will be effectively screened and that no further landscaping proposals are required as part of this proposed development.

Impact on Neighbours

The nearest residential properties are Barnhills Farm approximately 150 metres to the south east of the building onto which the proposed photovoltaic panels are to be mounted, Church Farm approximately 260 metres to the south east of the building and ‘Hasland’ on Merrylees Road approximately 360 metres to the south of the building. Due to the low pitch of the roof of the building on which the proposed photovoltaic panels

are to be mounted and the significant separation distances from any residential properties, it is considered that there will be no adverse impact on residential amenity through the effects of unnecessary glare.

Impact on Highway Safety

It is considered that as a result of the low roof pitch of the building onto which the proposed photovoltaic panels are to be mounted and the presence of the existing hedgerow screening to the boundaries of the landholding adjacent to the highway (Merrylees Road) there will be no adverse impact on highway safety from the effects of unnecessary glare.

Conclusion

The proposed installation of the solar photovoltaic panels will result in the production of renewable energy to support existing agricultural operations on the site and a reduction in carbon emissions. By virtue of their siting on the low pitched, south facing roof slopes of the agricultural building and taking into account the existing screening along the boundaries of the site and tree planting within it, the proposed development is not considered to result in any adverse impact on the character or appearance of the surrounding countryside, the National Forest, residential amenity or highway safety and is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:- Permit subject to the following conditions:-

Summary of Reasons for Recommendation and Relevant Development Plan Policies :

Having regard to the pattern of existing development in the area, representations received and relevant provisions of the development plan, as summarised below, it is considered that subject to compliance with the conditions attached to this permission, the proposed development would be in accordance with the development plan as it would provide a renewable energy source for the existing agricultural operations on the site and as a result of the low pitch of the roof, the existing hedgerow screening to the site boundaries and the separation distances to residential properties and the highway would not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the countryside, the National Forest, residential amenity or highway safety.

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan (2001) :- Policies BE1, NE5

Hinckley & Bosworth Adopted Core Strategy (2009):- Policy 21

1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

2 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the submitted application details, as follows: Site Location Plan at 1:5000 scale; Plan Drawing PH/AP/2000 received by the local planning authority on 11 August 2011 and Elevations Drawing PH/AP/3000 Rev A received by the local planning authority on 6 October 2011.

Reasons :-

1 To comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Notes to Applicant:-

1 Bats, nesting birds, great crested newts and certain other species are protected by law. If any such species are discovered before or during the works the works must be suspended and the local office of Natural England contacted for advice.

2 This permission does not grant approval under the Building Act 1984 and the Building Regulations 2000 (as amended) for which a separate application may be required. You are advised to contact the Building Control Section.

3 As from 6 April 2008 this Authority are charging for the discharge of conditions in accordance with revised fee regulations which came into force on that date. Application forms to discharge conditions and further information can be found on the planning portal web site www.planningportal.gov.uk.

Contact Officer:- Richard Wright Ext 5894