

REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE

17 November 2011

REPORT

Subject Heading:	P1419.11 – Chafford School, Lambs Lane South, Rainham Installation of electricity producing solar photovoltaic panels on the roof of the main school building (Application received 20th September 2011)
Report Author and contact details:	Helen Oakerbee (Planning Control Manager) 01708 432800
Policy context:	Local Development Framework
Financial summary:	None

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	[]
Championing education and learning for all	[x]
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	[]
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	[x]
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	[]

SUMMARY

This application is for the installation of electricity producing solar photovoltaic panels on the roof of the main school building. The planning issues are set out in the report below, which focuses on the impact on the Green Belt, the impact on the streetscene and the impact on amenity. Staff are of the view that the proposal is acceptable and it is recommended that permission be granted subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit – The development to which this permission relates must be commenced not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Accordance with plans - The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved plans, particulars and specifications.

Reason: The Local Planning Authority consider it essential that the whole of the development is carried out and that no departure whatsoever is made from the details approved, since the development would not necessarily be acceptable if partly carried out or carried out differently in any degree from the details submitted. Also, in order that the development accords with Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

INFORMATIVES

1. Reason for Approval:

It is considered that the proposal satisfies the relevant criteria of Policies DC29, DC45, DC50 and DC61 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Site Description

- 1.1 The application site is Chafford School, which is located on the junction of Wennington Road and Lambs Lane South. The site is bounded by Brady Primary School to the south west. The application site is located within a predominantly residential area and is joined on two sides by two storey housing. The site is located in Green Belt.

2. Description of Proposal

- 2.1 This application is for the installation of 210 electricity producing solar photovoltaic panels on two sections of flat roof of the main school building. The area of each panel is 0.99m by 1.65m, which equates to 1.6 square metres. The

mounting frames would be angled at 10 degrees. The solar panels would be predominately visible on the south east elevation of the main school building. The solar PV panels would have a maximum energy output of under 50kW, which is the approximate energy usage of 12-15 dwelling houses in the UK. The installation will take approximately 1-2 weeks to complete, with approximately 1 vehicle to deliver 60 panels per day.

3. Relevant History

P1366.06 – Proposed classroom block – Approved.

P2069.03 – Single storey detached building providing 3 no. additional classrooms, store cupboards and staff workroom in new I.T. suite – Approved.

4. Consultations/Representations

- 4.1 Neighbour notification letters have been sent to 88 local addresses. No letters of representation have been received.

5. Staff Comments

- 5.1 This proposal is put before the Committee owing to the land being Council owned and the proposal is contrary to Green Belt policy. The issues arising from this application are the impact on the Green Belt, the impact on the streetscene, the impact on amenity and parking and highways considerations. Policies DC29 (Education Premises), DC45 (Green Belt), DC50 (Renewable Energy) and DC61 (Urban Design) of the LDF Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document as well as PPS1 (Sustainable Development) and PPS22 (Renewable Energy) are relevant to the determination of the application. Policies 3.18 (Education Facilities) and 5.7 (Renewable Energy) of the London Plan 2011 are relevant.

6. Principle of development

- 6.1 Policy DC45 of the LDF states a presumption against new development unless it is for one of a range of uses specified by the Policy as appropriate. The proposed development does not fall within one of the range of uses identified by Policy DC45 as acceptable in principle within the Green Belt.
- 6.2 PPG2 (Green Belts) also states a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt, both in respect of "in principle" harm and any other resultant harm to the character and openness of the Green Belt. PPG2 provides that where inappropriate development is proposed within the Green Belt planning permission should not be granted unless the applicant can demonstrate very special circumstances exist that outweigh the harm resulting from the development. It therefore falls to be considered whether such very special circumstances exist in respect of this application, failing which it should be refused.

7. Impact on open character of Green Belt

7.1 It is considered that the solar panels would not adversely affect the open character of the green belt, as they would be located on the flat roof of the main school building.

8. Design/Street scene

8.1 It is considered that the solar panels would not appear visually intrusive in the streetscene, as they would project approximately 0.2 metres above the flat roof of the main school building. Furthermore, the main school building is set back between approximately 35 and 40 metres from Lambs Lane South, which minimises its prominence in the streetscene. In addition, there are trees adjacent to the south eastern boundary, which provide some screening. Also, the solar panels would be located towards the south eastern end of the main school building, which is approximately 145 metres from neighbouring properties in Wennington Road.

9. Impact on Amenity

9.1 It is considered that the solar panels would not result in adverse glint and glare effects to neighbouring properties, as they are designed to absorb as much daylight as possible and therefore, have a low level of reflectivity when compared to surfaces such as window glass. Less than 9% of total incident visible light is reflected by solar panels, whereas normal glass reflects about 17%. In addition, there would be a separation distance of approximately 35 to 40 metres between the main school building and neighbouring properties in Lambs Lane South. Also, the solar panels would be located towards the south eastern end of the main school building, which is approximately 145 metres from neighbouring properties in Wennington Road.

10. Highway/Parking

10.1 The installation will take approximately 1-2 weeks to complete, with approximately 1 vehicle to deliver 60 panels per day. It is considered that the proposal would not create any highway or parking issues.

11. Case for very special circumstances

11.1 The very special circumstances case in this instance comprises the sustainability credentials of the proposal. The proposal would be beneficial as it would generate renewable energy. The solar PV panels would have a maximum energy output of under 50kW, which is the approximate energy usage of 12-15 dwelling houses in the UK. Given the limited visual impact of the panels, it is considered that the benefit arising from them is sufficient to outweigh the in-principle inappropriateness.

12. Conclusion

12.1 Staff are of the view that the proposal would not adversely affect the open character and appearance of the Green Belt, the streetscene or residential

amenity. It is considered that the proposal would not create any highway or parking issues. It is recommended that planning permission is granted, subject to conditions.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None.

Legal implications and risks:

This application is considered on its own merits and independently from the Council's interest as owner of the site.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None.

Equalities implications and risks:

The Council's planning policies are implemented with regard to Equalities and Diversity.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Application form and plans received on 20th September 2011.