

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/23/96049

Site Address: High Wood Reservoir, Allington Lane, Southampton, SO30 3HQ

Case Officer: Rebecca Altman

Description: Installation of 52 Solar Panels to reservoir roof.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Within countryside • Surface water flood risk • Aviation safeguarding • Minerals safeguarding area • Amber great crested newts zone • Within European protected sites buffers • Adjacent ancient woodland		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
F/12/70171 – Construction of building to enclose existing reservoir - permitted 14/03/2012		
Z/18128/001/00 – reservoir – permitted 30/05/1979		
Z/18128/000/00 – proposed reservoir – outline permission 25/07/1976		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☒
Representations:	None received.		
Parish Council:	No comments received.		
Southampton City Council:	No comments to make.		
Ecologist:	There is some vegetation around the existing structure. Works should be carried out outside of bird nesting season (February to August) to avoid disturbance to nesting birds. The roof areas should be accessed from areas where vegetation will not be affected and this should be shown on a plan. All reasonable efforts must be made to control noise generated by the installation process. These points can be secured through a CEMP. Biodiversity enhancements can also be conditioned.		
Southampton Airport:	No objection subject to a condition to secure a Bird Hazard Management Plan.		
Highway Authority:	Further comments following receipt of vehicle tracking plans: No objection subject to vehicle management measures being included in the CEMP condition. Original comments: No objection, subject to receipt of vehicle tracking diagram. The access track appears sufficient for the type and level of traffic required to access it. A Construction Management Plan is needed to ensure vehicle movements are managed to avoid conflicts.		

	Recommend consulting Hampshire Countryside Service regarding bridleway crossing the access track.
Hampshire Countryside Service:	No objection. Advice provided for the applicants attention (to be added as informative to decision).
Landscape Officer:	No objection. The landscape and visual impact demonstrated is low.

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 29 November 2023 – photographs on file.		

Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance Development Plan: The <u>Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036</u> The most relevant policies are S1, S5, DM1, DM3, DM4, DM11, and DM13.

Assessment:
Site and proposal High Wood Reservoir lies to the north of Allington Lane, adjacent to Itchen Valley Country Park. The reservoir is enclosed by a low curved roof structure of green cladding and the site is accessed via a single track road from Allington Lane. The site lies within the countryside and is surrounded by trees on all sides. The site is publicly accessible with footpaths leading into the adjacent country park. Planning permission is sought for the installation of solar panels to the roof of the reservoir enclosure. The panels would be installed flat to the roof, and would cover the majority of the roofspace. Principle of development Policy DM3 of the Local Plan states that all new development should be designed to adapt to predicted climate change impacts, and Policy DM4 specifically supports proposals for zero or low carbon energy subject to: meeting general development criteria; not adversely impacting on landscape, biodiversity or heritage assets; and not resulting in the loss of public recreational land or best and most versatile agricultural land. The proposal is for solar panels to be installed on the roof of an existing structure, thereby not resulting in any loss of land in either recreation or agricultural use, and there are no nearby heritage assets that would be impacted by the development. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle, subject to no adverse impact on the landscape or biodiversity. Design and landscape impact The solar panels would be installed flat to the roof with very minimal projection, and would not be visually prominent when viewed from ground level. The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Statement, which considers the context of the site and the potential impact of the solar panels on the wider landscape. The assessment concludes that due to the location of the reservoir, surrounded by woodland, views of it from the wider surrounding area are limited and the solar panels would not have an adverse impact on the landscape character of the area. The Council's Landscape Officer has reviewed the Statement and concurs with this conclusion.

The application is also supported by a Glint and Glare study, which confirms that the solar panels would not result in significant glare or impact on the safety of aircraft from Southampton Airport. Southampton Airport has confirmed no objection subject to a condition for a bird management plan.

Nature conservation

The Council's Ecologist has noted that there is the potential for nesting birds on the site and has recommended that works are undertaken outside of the bird nesting season to avoid impacts. It is also recommended that a Construction Environmental Management Plan is prepared to set out measures to protect vegetation and birds during the construction period, and for details of biodiversity enhancements to be agreed. These matters can be addressed by condition and will ensure that the development will not have an adverse impact on nature conservation.

Access

The site is accessed via a single track road from Allington Lane, and the Highway Officer has requested a tracking plan to demonstrate that the largest vehicles needed during construction can safely enter the site without causing obstruction on the highway. The development will not result in any long term increase in traffic to the site, but will result in a temporary increase in vehicle movements during the construction period. The applicants have provided some tracking plans and have stated that vehicle movements during this time would be managed through measures such as time slots and use of a banksman to ensure no conflicts between vehicles on the narrow track. The Highway Authority is satisfied with the proposal, subject to vehicle management measures being included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan condition.

There is a bridleway that crosses the access track and the reservoir site is publicly accessible. The Countryside Service was therefore consulted on the application and they have provided advice for the applicants attention with regard to protecting rights of way. This advice will be added as an informative to the decision notice.

Climate Change:

In July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Change and Environmental Emergency. In doing so it agreed, among other things, to: (a) put in place measures to ensure the Council's own operations and functions achieve carbon neutrality by 2025; (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030; (c) ensure that the Council's procurement policy recognises carbon neutrality as one of its primary considerations; and (d) recognise the urgency of action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in every decision taken by the Council. This is underpinned by the Climate and Environment Emergency Strategy 2020–2030 and the supporting Climate and Environmental Emergency Action Plan – Update June 2020.

The declaration of the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency demonstrates a strong commitment from the Council to achieve net zero. The NPPF, development plan and adopted local plan policy do not set this as a specific target, but it is a material consideration to be considered alongside all other material considerations. In any case addressing climate change is a core part of the NPPF and local plan policy. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted local plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.

This application is for the installation of solar panels to provide a renewable source of energy, which fully accords with climate change objectives and policy.

Equalities Implications:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:

- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When making policy decisions, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups. It is considered that this application does not raise any equality implications.

Conclusion: The proposed installation of solar panels would accord with policy objectives for adapting to impacts of climate change and would not have an adverse impact on the landscape character of the area or biodiversity. The proposal complies with relevant local and national policy.

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐

The development hereby permitted shall start no later than three years from the date of this decision.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the following plans numbered: 2495-110 P1 (Location Plan); 13/23-007-004 Rev A (Solar/Roof layout – existing); 13/23-007-001 Rev B (Solar/Roof layout – Proposed); 13/23-0207-005 Rev A (Solar/Roof elevations – existing); and 13/23-007-002 Rev B (Solar/Roof elevations – proposed).

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

No development shall start on site until a Bird Hazard Management Plan, to comply with Advice Note 3: [Microsoft Word - AN 03 Wildlife Hazards Around Aerodromes - 2016.docx \(aoa.org.uk\)](https://www.aoa.org.uk/aoa/03%20Wildlife%20Hazards%20Around%20Aerodromes%20-%202016.docx), has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Bird Hazard Management Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and remain in force for the life of the development. No alterations to the plan shall be made unless first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To minimise the attractiveness of the development to birds to avoid endangering the safe movement of aircraft and operation of Southampton Airport.

No development shall start on site until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, which shall include:

- a) A programme of construction work;
- b) The provision of facilities for contractor parking;
- c) Access and egress arrangements for vehicles, plant and machinery, including timings;
- d) The arrangements for managing vehicle, plant and machinery access and egress and deliveries to avoid conflicts on the access road and entrance (e.g. use of banksman, timing of deliveries, restrictions on vehicle size, numbers etc);

- e) Vehicle tracking plan for lengths of Allington Lane to be utilised for access;
- f) Protection of pedestrian routes (bridleways and footpaths) during construction;
- g) Location of temporary site buildings, compounds, construction material and plant storage areas;
- h) Measures for the control of dust and particulate matter;
- i) Measures to mitigate noise and vibration;
- j) Details of lighting;
- k) Restrictions on installation work to avoid bird nesting season;
- l) Measures to protect existing vegetation.

Construction work shall only take place in accordance with the approved CEMP.

Reason: In order that the Local Planning authority can properly consider the effect of works on the amenity of the locality and to protect nesting birds, in accordance with Policies DM1, DM11 and DM13 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036).

No development shall start on site until details of measures to enhance biodiversity have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The biodiversity enhancement measures shall thereafter be installed / carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To enhance biodiversity in accordance with Policy DM11 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036).