

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: PN/25/98855

Site Address: HIGHFIELD COURT, TOLLGATE, CHANDLER'S FORD, EASTLEIGH,
SO53 3TY

Case Officer: Gary Osmond

Description: Prior Approval for the installation of Solar Photo Voltaic (SPV) arrays to the south-east and south-west facing roof slopes on a non-domestic office building

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
- Within the urban edge - Within an identified employment zone		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
F/24/97276 - Replacement of existing single storey enclosed entrance lobby with new open sided single storey canopy structure and over-cladding of existing architectural blockwork at second floor level to north-west, part south-west and north-east elevations – Approved June 2024		
Z/04513/083/00 – Construction of office block with car parking and landscaping with access off Tollgate – Approved Nov 1998		
Z/04513/050/00 – Outline: Development for offices, high tech / light industry and research – Granted July 1987		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	None received.		
Eastleigh Town Council:	No comments received.		

Site Visit:	Yes ☐	No ☒
Details: A site visit was not considered necessary given the nature of the proposals and availability of recent photographs via Google Street View (see separate photographs).		

Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) Schedule 2, Part 14 (Renewable energy), Class J (installation or alteration etc of solar equipment on non-domestic premises) Development Plan: The <u>Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036</u> The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1 and S2; and Development Management policies DM1, DM2, DM4 and DM11. Supplementary Planning Documents: Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; Character Area Appraisals.

Assessment:
Site & Area Context:

The application site is a three-storey purpose built office block of a typical 1990s design. Its footprint is 'T' shaped, with the lower two floors finished in red brick and the top floor in a buff block, all under a pitched roof. To the sides are a pair of external steel fire escape stairs, together with a pitched roof entrance porch to the front. The site is surrounded by car parking and landscaping and is generally flat and level.

The site sits within an identified employment site and is surrounded on three sides by other two, three and four storey office buildings of varying sizes. To the south-east is the M3 motorway.

Proposals:

The application seeks the LPA's view on the need for prior approval for the proposed installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels to the south facing roof slopes of the office block.

Legislation:

Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 states:

Development is not permitted by Class J if –

- (a) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a pitched roof and would protrude more than 0.2 metres beyond the plane of the roof slope when measured from the perpendicular with the external surface of the roof slope;
- (b) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a flat roof, where the highest part of the solar PV equipment would be higher than 1 metre above the highest part of the roof (excluding any chimney);
- (c) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a roof and within 1 metre of the external edge of that roof;
- (d) *Removed from legislation in December 2023*
- (e) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a site designated as a scheduled monument; or
- (f) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a listed building or on a building within the curtilage of a listed building.

In the case of Highfield Court, which is not designated as a listed building or scheduled monument or within a conservation area, the PV panels proposed would be no more than 0.2 metres above the roof slope and will be set in from the roof edge by a metre. As such, that proposed accords with these elements of the legislation and is permitted development.

There are however a number of conditions: firstly, that the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment must, so far as practicable, be sited so as to minimise its effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area; and that the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment is removed as soon as reasonably practicable when no longer needed.

As part of the prior approval process the LPA must assess the design and visual appearance of that proposed, together with assessing the potential for 'glint and glare' and the impact this may have on neighbouring land.

In terms of appearance, the proposed panels raise no concerns, being positioned at the rear of the building, thereby having no impact upon the street scene. PV panels by their nature are designed to absorb as much light as possible, meaning that there will be no issues in terms of glare.

Nature Conservation:

The proposals are not expected to have any adverse impact upon existing local habitat or biodiversity. They do, however, include some new landscape planting as part of the new

entrance area, including a sedum roof. With an appropriate selection of plant species, this will provide a modest biodiversity enhancement.

Due to the nature of that proposed and its minor scale, there is no requirement to achieve/secure any biodiversity net gain.

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.

When considering the impact of climate change, the proposed development is expected to be resilient to the potential effects of climate change and is expected to reduce/limit impacts on climate emissions as a result of the development or its use. Whilst the office block is not very old, its refurbishment, together with the new PV panels will help to ensure it remains fit for purpose and will contribute to the area's sustainability.

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:

Recommendation:	PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED AND GRANTED ☒	REFUSE ☐
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The proposal is considered to comply with the requirements of Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Prior approval is therefore required and granted, subject to conditions relating to approved drawings and timescale for removal of the panels should they no longer be required.