

**Proposed development: Prior Approval - Solar Panels Non-domestic Buildings  
for Installation of Solar Photo Voltaic (SPV) arrays to roof of the building**

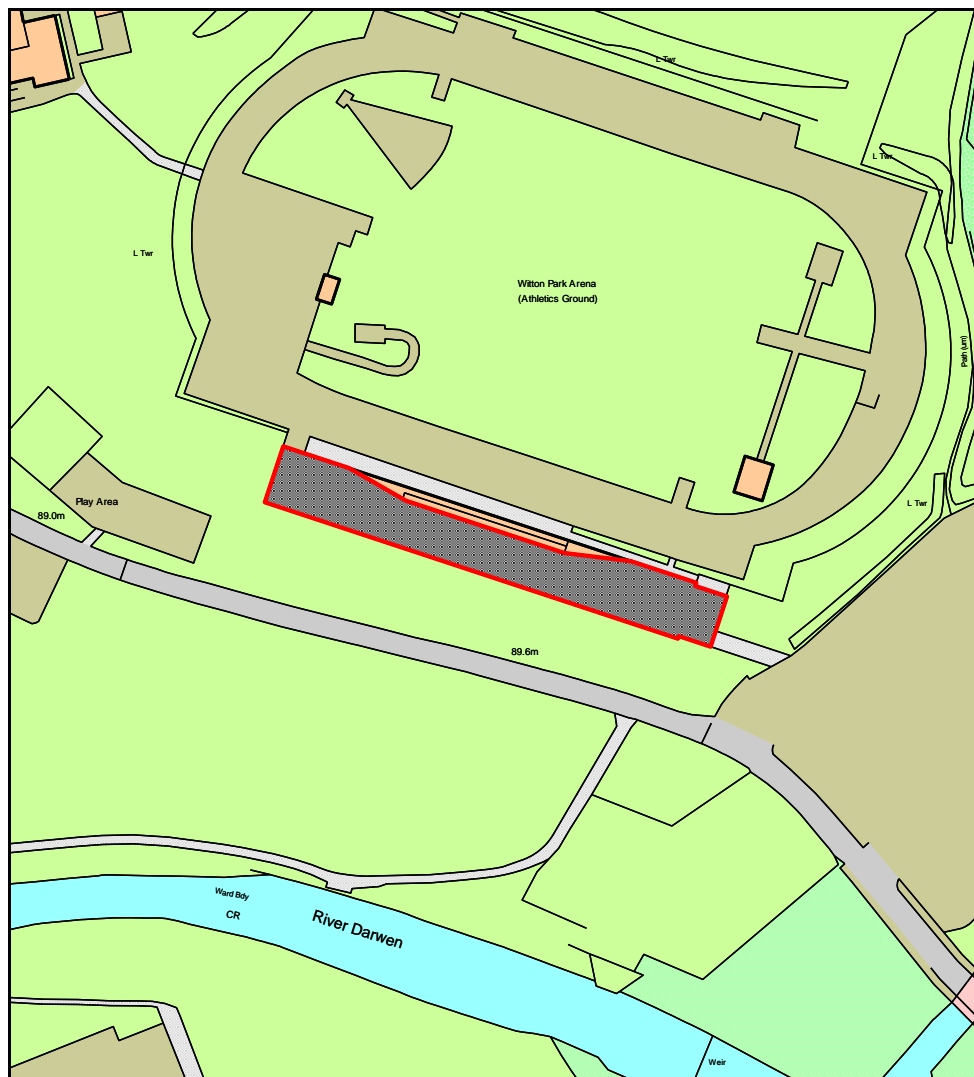
**Site address:**

**Witton Sports Arena  
Witton Country Park  
Preston Old Road  
Blackburn  
BB2 2TP**

**Applicant: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council**

**Ward: Billinge & Beardwood**

**Councillors: Cllr Jackie Floyd  
Cllr Mohammed Irfan  
Cllr Tasleem Fazal**



## **1.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION**

### **1.0.1 PRIOR APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED**

## **2.0 KEY ISSUES/SUMMARY OF PLANNING BALANCE**

- 2.1.1 The Council is seeking prior approval for the installation of a roof mounted solar pv system under Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 on Blackburn Leisure Centre, a Council owned building.
- 2.1.2 The only planning matters that the Authority are to consider in the determination as to whether prior approval is required are the design or external appearance of the development, including the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land. No other matters are material and cannot be considered as part of this application for prior approval.
- 2.1.3 The reasons for installing the solar PV arrays are to reduce the building's reliance on grid electricity to save money and to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide. This will contribute towards the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- 2.1.4 The proposal is Permitted Development as it conforms to the requirements of Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Due to the panels being set behind the parapet roof of the building both glare and the design and visual impacts of the proposals are considered to be acceptable. Officers are therefore of the opinion that the scheme complies with parts J.1, J.3 and J.4 in this instance and thus it is therefore considered that prior approval is not required.

## **3.0 RATIONALE**

### **3.1 Site and Surroundings**

- 3.1.1 The application site relates to the roof of Witton Park Sports Arena located within the grounds of Witton Park.
- 3.1.2 Witton Park is located within the boroughs Green Belt, as defined by the Proposals Map associated with the Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan Part 2, and a Minerals and Waste Safeguarding Area.

### **3.2 Proposed Development**

- 3.2.1 The Council, the applicant, is seeking prior approval for the installation of a roof mounted solar pv system. The reasons for installing the solar PV arrays are to reduce the building's reliance on grid electricity to save money and to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide. This will contribute towards the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3.2.2 Technical information has been provided in respect of the design and capacity of the proposals. The solar panels proposed are Trina Vertex S Backsheet Monocrystalline Modules. The panels will be fitted to a support framework that

angles the solar panels at 20° from the flat roof. In total there will be 102 Trina Solar VERTEX S TSM-395-DE09.08 panels, all panels will be facing south. When fixed, all panels will be below the height of the perimeter parapet.

- 3.2.3 The panels will be inset from the parapet by a minimum of 1 metre to allow access.
- 3.2.4 Electricity generated will be 40.29kWp over a PV generator surface of 196.1m<sup>2</sup>
- 3.2.5 Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 relates to '*Installation or alteration of solar equipment on nondomestic properties*' and part J(c) permits the installation of other solar PV equipment on the roof of a building.
- 3.2.6 In determining the application, the Local Planning Authority must make a judgement on the criteria set out in Class J.4 (2) of Part 14 of the GPDO which states that:
- 3.2.7 *Class J(c) development is permitted subject to the condition that before beginning the development the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether prior approval of the authority will be required as to the design or external appearance of the development, in particular the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land.*

### **3.3 Development Plan**

- 3.3.1 Local policy is provided by the Council's Core Strategy, Development Management policies within the Local Plan Part 2 and the Council's Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance, as such the following policy and guidance is considered most relevant:

#### **3.3.2 Core Strategy (2011)**

Policy CS1: A Targeted Growth Strategy  
Policy CS16: Form and Design of New Development

#### **3.3.3 Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Document (2015)**

Policy 7: Sustainable Development  
Policy 8: Development and People  
Policy 11: Development and the Environment  
Policy 14: Primary Employment Area  
Policy 36: Climate Change

#### **3.3.4 National**

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPF) (2019)  
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

### **3.4 Assessment**

3.4.1 The proposals constitute 'permitted development' under Class J of part 14 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) subject to the condition that before beginning the development the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the design or external appearance of the development, and in particular the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land. In addition to this assessment, the following conditions must also be met:

3.4.2 **J.1 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 NOT 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;***

3.4.3 Not applicable – The solar PVs proposed are to be installed on flat roofs with parapets.

3.4.4 ***(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 1m above the highest part of the roof (excluding any chimney)***

3.4.5 The equipment that would be located on a flat roof behind parapets and therefore would not be higher than 1m above the highest part of the roof.

3.4.6 ***(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;***

3.4.7 The application form confirms the panels will not be installed within 1m from the external edge of the roof.

3.4.8 ***(d) in the case of a building on article 2(3) land (includes land which is a national park, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a conservation area, The Broads, or a World Heritage Site), the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a roof slope which fronts a highway***

3.4.9 The site is not located on article 2(3) land.

3.4.10 ***(e) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a site designated as a scheduled monument***

3.4.11 The site does not comprise a scheduled monument.

3.4.12 ***(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***

3.4.13 The site does not comprise a Listed Building or a building within the curtilage of a Listed Building.

3.4.14 **J.2 Development is not permitted by Class J(a) or (b) if—**

3.4.15 ***(a) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a wall and would protrude more than 0.2 metres beyond the plane of the wall when measured from the perpendicular with the external surface of the wall;***

3.4.16 Not applicable.

3.4.17 ***(b) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a wall and within 1 metre of a junction of that wall with another wall or with the roof of the building; or***

3.4.18 Not applicable.

3.4.19 ***(c) in the case of a building on article 2(3) land, the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a wall which fronts a highway.***

3.4.20 Not applicable.

3.4.21 ***J.3 Development is not permitted by Class J(c) if the capacity of the solar PV equipment installed (together with any solar PV equipment installed under class J(b)) to generate electricity exceeds 1 megawatt***

3.4.22 The application is accompanied with the application form and technical data that indicates that the panels cumulatively would not exceed this threshold with the stated maximum combined output being 40.29KW.

3.4.23 ***J.4 (1): Class J development is permitted subject to the following conditions:***

3.4.24 ***(a) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment must, so far as practicable, be sited so as to minimize its effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area; and***

3.4.25 The equipment is considered to be located in the only practicable position considered viably possible without significant effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area.

3.4.26 ***(b) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment is removed as soon as reasonably practicable when no longer needed.***

3.4.27 It is advised that this condition be added as an informative to the Decision Notice.

3.4.28 ***J.4(2): Whether prior approval of the authority will be required as to the design or external appearance of the development, in particular the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land.***

3.4.29 The roof of the building has a parapet roof. The solar panels will therefore be shielded from public view by the parapet surrounding the roof. It is considered that the proposal by virtue of its design or external appearance would not be harmful to the visual amenities of the locality. The proposals are thus in accordance with Policies 8 i.) and 11 of the Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan Part 2.

3.4.30 In relation to the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land, the nature of solar panels is to absorb as much light as possible, and glare would mean they are ineffective. As technology of solar panels advances, glare is further reduced. Glare tends to occur when a neighbouring property or land is set above solar panels. In this case, as the panels will be positioned behind the parapet roof the proposals will only be seen when flying over the site. Accordingly the proposals will not cause any glare issues.

3.4.31 Based on the above, it is considered that the proposed solar PV equipment would accord with the conditions set out in Class J.1 a-f, J.2 a-c, and J.3 of Part 14. In addition, Officers considers that prior approval is not required for the proposals as set out within Class J.4, Part 14 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended).

#### 3.4.32 **Other Matters**

##### 3.4.33 Ground Stability

3.4.34 Paragraphs 178 and 179 of the NPPF are relevant which seek to ensure that a site is suitable for its new use taking account of ground conditions and land instability.

3.4.35 The application site lies within a Coal Authority High Risk Area. Given the nature of the proposed development, it is not considered necessary to require the applicants to submit a Coal Mining Risk Assessment, nor is it necessary to consult the Coal Authority.

3.4.36 Given that works will be at roof level and internal only there is no need to attach the Coal Authority standard informative as part of any approval

##### 3.4.37 Air Quality and Climate Change

3.4.38 Local Plan Part 2, Policy 8 iv) requires development within designated Air Quality Management Areas, or result in the declaration of a new AQMA, to be controlled to ensure that air quality is not made worse.

3.4.39 Local Plan Part 2, Policy 36 states:

*“All development must demonstrate how it has been designed to minimise its contribution to carbon emissions and climate change, both directly from the development and indirectly arising from factors such as travel to and from the development.”*

3.4.40 The application site does not lie within an Air Quality Management Area.

3.4.41 Given the scale and nature of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposal will have the potential to make a positive impact on air quality by introducing a renewable energy source and thus reducing the Council's reliance on fossil fuel generated energy. The proposed development supports the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, as required by the NPPF. This will contribute towards the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration to be carbon neutral by 2030. In line with Policy 9 (2) of Local Plan Part 2: 'Development and the Environment', the proposal will cut emissions of carbon dioxide and so help to mitigate climate change. The proposal constitutes a small-scale renewable energy scheme, in keeping with Policy 36: 'Climate Change', of BwD Local Plan Part 2.

#### 3.4.42 **CONCLUSION**

3.4.43 The Council is seeking prior approval for the installation of a roof mounted solar pv system under Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. As the proposals accord with the criteria set out under Class J, the only planning matters that the Authority are able to consider in the determination as to whether prior approval is required are the design or external appearance of the development, and the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land. No other matters are material and thus cannot be considered as part of this application for prior approval.

3.4.44 The proposal is Permitted Development as it conforms to the requirements of Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Officers are of the opinion that the scheme complies with parts J.1, J.3 and J.4 in this instance. It is therefore considered that prior approval is not required.

### 4.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 PRIOR APPROVAL IS NOT REQUIRED

### 5.0 **PLANNING HISTORY**

5.1 There is no relevant planning history associated with this site which is considered directly relevant to the determination of this case.

### 6.0 **CONSULTATIONS**

6.1 In accordance with Condition J.4(6) of Class J, the Council, the Local Planning Authority, has given notice of the proposed development by Site Notice.

6.2 No representations have been received as a result of this Site Notice.

7.0 **CONTACT OFFICER:** Claire Booth MRTPI, Senior Planning Officer

8.0 **DATE PREPARED:** 06 August 2021

