

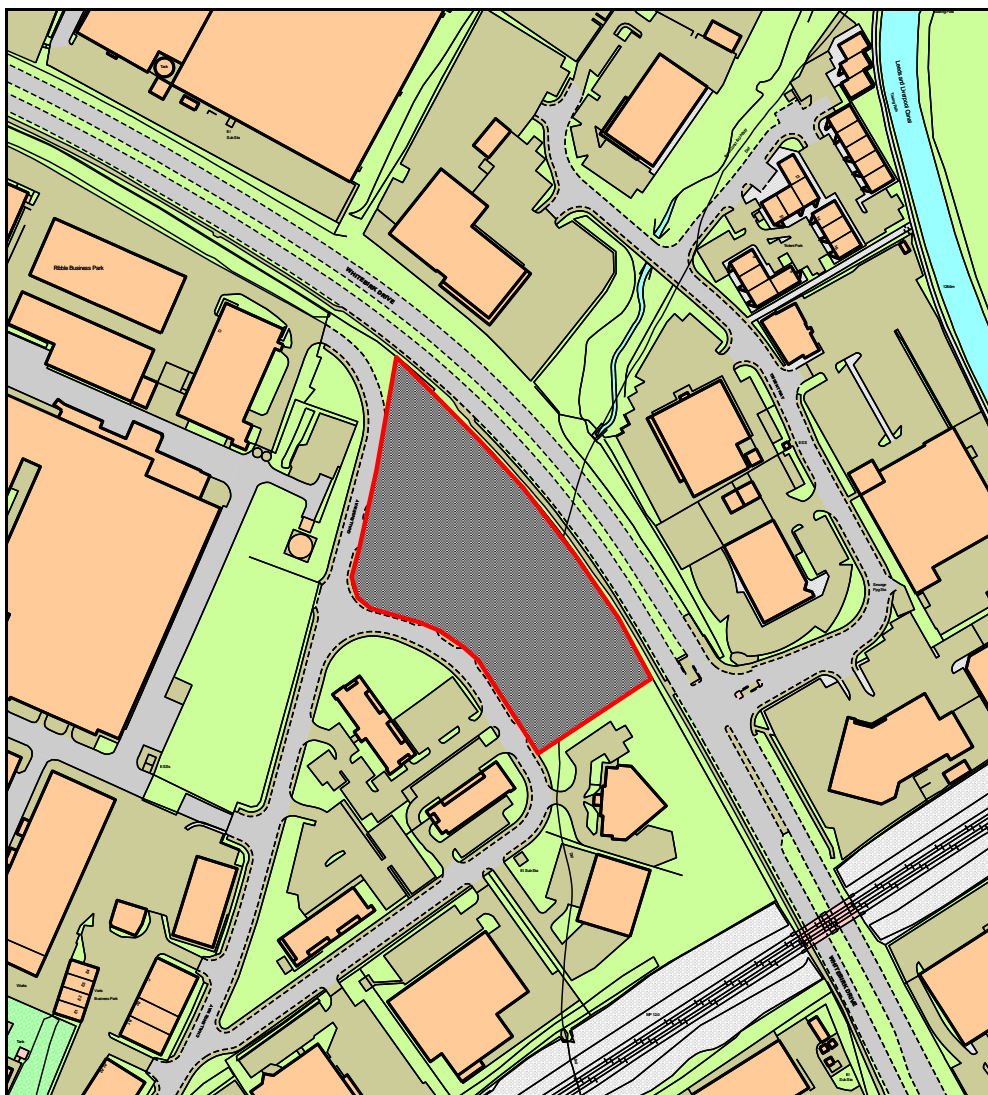
**Proposed development: Prior Approval - Solar Panels Non-domestic Buildings
for Installation of Solar Photo Voltaic (SPV) arrays to South facing roof slope**

**Site address:
Blackburn Technology Management Centre
2 Challenge Way
Blackburn
BB1 5QB**

Applicant: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Ward: Little Harwood & Whitebirk

**Councillor Abdul Patel
Councillor Mustafa Ali Desai
Councillor Pat McFall**



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 Blackburn Technology Management Centre located on the corner of Challenge Way and Whitebirk Drive, an industrial/commercial building unit containing a number of businesses.
- 3.1.2 The site is accessed from Challenge Way. Whitebirk Drive exists to the north with other industrial/ business units existing to the south, east and west
- 3.1.3 The surrounding area is a commercial area which is well landscaped.
- 3.1.4 The application site is within an allocated Primary Employment Area, as defined on the Proposals Map forming part of the Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan Part 2.
- 3.1.5 Part of the application site is within the borough of Hyndburn and thus they have been consulted about the proposals. No comments or representations have been received from this neighbouring authority.

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.
- 3.2.2 Technical information has been provided in respect of the design and capacity of the proposals. The proposed development would see the installation of 128 individual solar modules facing south. The panels will be fitted to a support framework that angles the solar panels at 10° from the roof (15° from horizontal in total).
- 3.2.3 The panels will be no higher than 200mm above the roof slope at the highest point. The panels will be set from the roof edge no less than: 6m from the east side, 6m from the west side, 2m from the south side (eaves).
- 3.2.4 Electricity generated will be 50.56kWp over a PV generator surface of 246.1m²
- 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:

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 Allocation and Development Plan Policies

- 3.3.1 The application site is located within a Primary Employment Area and is allocated as a Minerals and Waste site.
- 3.3.2 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:
- 3.3.3 **Core Strategy (2011)**
Policy CS1: A Targeted Growth Strategy
Policy CS16: Form and Design of New Development
- 3.3.4 **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

3.3.5 **National**

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

3.4 **Other Material Planning Considerations**

3.4.1 Class J, Part 14 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended)

3.5 **Assessment**

3.5.1 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 subject to the condition that before beginning the development the developer must apply to the local planning authority. In addition, the following conditions must also be met:

3.5.2 **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;

3.5.3 The solar PVs proposed to be installed on pitched roofs would not protrude more than 200mm beyond the plane when measured from the perpendicular with the external surface of the roof slope with the documentation supplied detailing that the protrusion would be 190mm.

3.5.4 ***(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)***

3.5.5 The equipment that would be located on a flat roof would not be higher than 1m above the highest part of the roof. They would protrude by 190mm.

3.5.6 ***(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;***

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

3.5.8 ***(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

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

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

3.5.11 The site does not comprise a scheduled monument.

3.5.12 ***(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***

3.5.13 The site does not comprise a Listed Building.

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

(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;

3.5.15 Not applicable.

3.5.16 ***(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***

3.5.17 Not applicable.

3.5.18 ***(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.***

3.5.19 Not applicable.

3.5.20 ***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***

3.5.21 The application is accompanied with the application form and technical data which indicates that the panels cumulatively would not exceed this threshold with the stated maximum combined output being 50.56kWp.

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

3.5.23 ***(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***

3.5.24 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.

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

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

3.5.27 ***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.***

3.5.28 The roof of the building has a shallow pitch or a flat roof and is located within a commercial industrial area. It is unlikely that the panels would give rise to adverse glare for these businesses given the height of the roof from ground level. There are no nearby dwellinghouses to consider.

3.5.29 Given the separation distances, positioning of the panels, intervening built-form and the context of the site within a commercial/ industrial setting, it is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the visual amenities of the locality by virtue of design or external appearance in accordance with Policies 8 i.) and 11 of the Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan Part 2.

3.5.30 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 reduced.

3.5.31 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, the LPA considers that prior approval is not required for the proposals as set out within the submission in accordance with Class J.4 of Part 14 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015.

3.5.32 **Other Matters**

3.5.33 Ground Stability

3.5.34 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.

3.5.35 The application site lies within a Coal Authority Referral Area. Given the scale and 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.

3.5.36 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.

3.5.37 Air Quality

3.5.38 Local Plan Part 2, Policy 36 requires development within designated Air Quality Management Areas to be controlled to ensure that air quality is not made worse.

3.5.39 The application site lies within an Air Quality Management Area. 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 operators reliance on fossil fuel generated energy.

3.5.40 **CONCLUSION**

3.5.41 The applicant 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. 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. 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, though this does not negate the need for the applicant to comply with other legislation. It is therefore considered that prior approval is not required.

4.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

4.01 PRIOR APPROVAL IS NOT REQUIRED

5.0 **PLANNING HISTORY**

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

6.0 **CONSULTATIONS**

6.0.1 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.

6.0.2 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: 05 August 2021