

**Hampshire County Council  
Director of Economy, Transport & Environment**

**Applicant: Hampshire County Council**

**Installation of solar photovoltaic panels on the roof of Alton Library at Hampshire County Council, Hampshire County Library, Vicarage Hill, Alton Hampshire GU34 1HT (No. 30653/008 )**

**(Received: 18 June 2013)**

## **General**

Alton library is a substantial modern detached building located within the settlement policy boundary and Conservation Area of Alton. The existing developments within the wider surrounding area are primarily of a mix of modern and historical residential and retail uses. To the south of the site is a public car park and to the north, east and west are residential developments which are modern in design. Alton Library is not a listed building.

Planning permission is sought for the installation of a solar photovoltaic system. The development would comprise of 40 mono-crystalline solar photovoltaic panels mounted on the south sloping roof, the front elevation. The southern elevation is required to enable maximum efficiency of the panels. Plans AV-PV-03 and AV-PV-02 appropriately detail the location of the panels on the roof of the two storey building.

## **Planning History**

Planning permission was granted in 2012 by East Hampshire District Council for the installation of photovoltaic panels on a smaller area of the southern roof of the library (30653/007). The photovoltaic panels have not yet been installed.

## **Development Plan**

The appropriate development plan document for consideration is the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review. The relevant saved policies for consideration are HE1 (Design), HE5 (Alterations to a Building in a Conservation Area) and E1 (Conservation of Energy).

The Alton Town Design Statement is a non statutory planning guidance document that has been the subject of public consultation. This is a material planning consideration.

Alton 202 Town Plan 2005 is also a material consideration.

The National Planning Policy Statement (sections 10 and 12) is a material consideration.

## Consultations

Councillor Joy	Supports the initiative which seeks to educate, save energy and generate revenue.
Alton Town Council	Raise no objection to the proposal.
East Hampshire District Council	Raise no objection to the proposal subject to the inclusion of conditions.
Highway Authority	Have been consulted, officer raised no concerns raised.
Conservation Officer - East Hampshire District Council	On balance is unable to support the proposal due to the proposed photovoltaic panels will have a marked detrimental visual impact on the roofscape of this prominent corner building. As such the development fails to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area and therefore fails both national policy set out in the NPPF and Local Plan policy HE5.

## Representations

One letter of support has been received on the following grounds:

- Little visual impact on the immediate setting of the building;
- Positive benefits with regard to solar power generation.

Two letters of objection have been received on the following grounds:

- Economic case for the development;
- Undesirable precedent set within the Conservation Area, and
- Negative visual Impact.

## Commentary

The proposed development seeks to contribute towards the Government's targets of reducing the impact of climate change and therefore the proposal is supported in principle by East Hampshire District's Local Plan Saved Policy E1 and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), section 10. Whilst there are concerns surrounding the economic case and the amount of energy to be generated by the proposal, the NPPF para 98, Section 10 states that it should be recognised that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The environmental benefits of the proposal, as noted above, should be weighed against all other relevant factors. Therefore consideration should be given to the visual impact of the proposal with regard being given to the location of the development within the Alton Conservation Area.

The setting of the building within the Conservation Area is of importance and the reasons for the objection from the Conservation Officer are noted. When considering policy HE5 emphasis is given to preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the building or conservation area. Due to the building being of a modern two storey design, the character of the existing building will not be significantly altered. The building is

located within a Conservation Area where there are areas of significant historical and architectural importance, however when considering the immediate location of the proposed building it is an area which contributes less to the Conservation Area's reason for designation because of the mixture of modern buildings and proximity to a public car park. Therefore whilst there will be public views of the library's roof it is screened from many public viewpoints by existing trees and the height of the roof on which the panels are proposed to sit is such that views from immediate footways would be limited. As a result it is considered that whilst the proposal may not enhance the character of the Conservation Area, the siting of the panels on the roof of a high two storey modern building will not be intrusive upon the surrounding area and therefore will not significantly detract from the character of the Conservation Area.

Taking the above into consideration, it is considered that on balance the visual impact of the proposal and the impact on the character of the Conservation Area will be minimal and the potential harm is outweighed by the benefit of the proposal due to its contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions through improving the energy efficiency of the building.

## **Recommendation**

That permission be granted subject to the following reason for approval and conditions:

## **Reason for Approval**

1. It is considered that the proposal would be in accordance with the development plan (summary attached) it would improve the energy efficiency of the building and contribute to cutting greenhouse gas emissions (saved policy E1) and would not have substantial negative impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (saved policies HE1 and HE5).

## **Conditions**

### **Time Limits**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date on which this planning permission was granted.

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

Plans and Particulars

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and completed strictly in accordance with the approved plans, specifications and written particulars identified within the decision notice.

Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Advice Note

1. In determining this planning application, the Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner in accordance with the requirement in the NPPF, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No.2) Order 2012.

**Case Officer** .....  
**Kristina King**

**Date**.....09/08/2013.....

**Authorised on behalf of the Director of the Economy, Transport & Environment**

.....L McCulloch.....

**Date**.....09/08/2013.....

Annexe to Reasons for Conditions  
(as required by Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning  
(Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010)

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## **East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review**

### **Saved Policy HE1 – Design**

New development should be of a high design standard and should make a worthwhile contribution towards maintaining or improving the quality of the environment of the District. Development will not be permitted unless it:

- a) harmonises with the townscape and general character of the town or village in which it is set, or, in the countryside, it is easily assimilated into the landscape or is well related to a group of buildings;
- b) has a layout, scale, height, mass and design which respects the pattern of development and architectural characteristics of nearby properties and the surrounding area, using materials appropriate to the locality;
- c) respects the appearance and treatment of the spaces between and around buildings that are important to the quality and character of the local environment while retaining important open space, natural and/or historic features; and, where possible, creates new landscaping and open space as an integral part of the design;
- d) retains the character of prominent ridge lines or other important topographical or landscape features;
- e) incorporates appropriate crime prevention measures; and
- f) incorporates, where appropriate, areas where containers for refuse and recyclable materials can be stored conveniently without being intrusive upon the surrounding area.

### **Saved Policy HE5 – Alterations to a Building in a Conservation Area**

An alteration or extension of an unlisted building in a Conservation Area will not be permitted unless it would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the building and the Conservation Area by:

- a) reflecting the scale, design, finishes and landscaping of the building;
- b) retaining and, where necessary, restoring traditional features such as shop fronts, boundary walls, paved surfaces and street furniture;
- c) where appropriate, using materials traditionally characteristic of the area; and
- d) improving the condition of the building and ensuring its continued siting.

### **Saved Policy E1 – Conservation of Energy**

Development will only be permitted if:

- a) it promotes the conservation of energy by seeking the highest practicable degree of energy efficiency through appropriate location, orientation, layout and design; and
- b) it allows future energy saving techniques to be accommodated.