

Symondbury Parish Council Planning Committee

Tuesday 02nd November 2021, 1700 – 17:35

Meeting in Person

Held at Eype Church

Minutes

Attendees:

Committee Members

Pelham Allen PA Chairman

Jenifer Roddy JR

Steve Ralph SR

Paul Hartmann PH

In Attendance:

Public: There were no public or press in attendance.

Summary of Action Points arising

No	Item	Action
1	6.1	PH to generate planning reports.

1. Welcome and apologies:

1.1 The Chairman opened the meeting and thanked attendees for coming. There were no apologies received.

2. Declarations of interest:

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Approval of the minutes of the October Meeting:

3.1 The minutes of the October 5th 2021 meeting were confirmed as accurate notes of the meeting and were approved.

4. Correspondence List (previously circulated)

4.1 There were no correspondence items.

5. DEMOCRATIC HALF HOUR during which members of the public are invited to raise general matters of interest.

5.1 There were no public present to raise general matters.

6.0 Planning Applications and to consider any other planning/enforcement issues: (public verbal comments limited to 3 minutes per representation prior to Committee consideration).

6.1 P/FUL/2021/03942 and P/LBC/2021/03943 Location: Symondsburry Primary School, Mill Lane, Symondsburry, DT6 6HD – Application for the installation of roof mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and associated infrastructure.

The Chairman asked PH to outline the applications and the considerations.

6.1.1 Application and considerations: PH commented that both the applications appeared to be identical except for the title reference with one having an FUL (Full Planning) designation and the other an LBC (Listed Building Consent) designation. It was suggested and agreed that as the application information was the same, they would be considered together.

PH described the application to the meeting being the engineering installation of 84 photovoltaic units set out on flat roof elements and pitched roof elements of the school buildings to maximise the southerly (with one west facing roof slope) orientation. There was no description of where the inverter would be fixed or the route of the cable connecting the equipment to the main building electrical incoming distribution board.

The Chairman asked Jenifer Roddy (JR), the councillor for the Symondsburry Village area if she had been contacted by local people on the application or had spoken to residents about the same. JR commented that she had undertaken limited discussions with local residents who had not recognised that the application had been made and did not pass any real opinion.

PH commented that any application of this nature, within a an AONB and very sensitive conservation area containing grade 1 and grade 2 listed buildings, is a balance of its effect on the immediate/distant environs together with neighbours and visitors and the overall benefits to the community. The application needed to be considered against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (BANP) and the Local Plan (currently under review/consultation). The application addressed many of the considerations required by these policies. The following provides explanation of the key points that needed to be considered.

NPPF: The following NPPF points are relevant for the councillors.

Paragraph 130(c)states that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and

landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. The installation of roof mounted solar panels is not sympathetic to local character, history or setting.

Paragraph 158 states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. The impacts are considered to be substantially detrimental.

Paragraph 174 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); and (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is clear the proposals do not contribute to the local environment or recognise the intrinsic character of the area.

Paragraph 176 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. It adds that the scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited. The proposals detract from the setting and beauty of this traditional rural Dorset village.

Paragraph 202 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. It is absolutely clear the proposals will lead to a substantial harm.

BANP: The following BANP points are relevant for the councillors.

Policy HT2 (Public Realm Proposals) states that proposals that will result in a negative impact or “harm” to the qualities of the public realm, as identified in the Neighbourhood Characteristics of the plan, will not be supported. It is clear the proposals will create Harm to the setting of the village and public realm.

L2 – Biodiversity: this subject was not addressed in any detail in the proposals and any possible concerns were unacceptably dismissed by the applicant.

West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local plan 2015 and local plan in consultation: The following points are relevant for the councillors.

Policy COM11 (Renewable Energy Development) states that permission will only be granted provided:

- any adverse impacts on the local landscape, townscape or areas of historical interest can be satisfactorily assimilated.
- adverse impacts upon designated wildlife sites, nature conservation interests, and biodiversity are satisfactorily mitigated.

It is clear the proposals cannot be assimilated or satisfactorily mitigated.

Policy ENV12 (The Design and Positioning of Buildings) states that any alterations to buildings should be well related to, and not overpower, the original building or neighbouring properties. It is clear the alien dark planar materials on the pitched roof do not relate well to the material context of the village.

Policy ENV4 (Heritage Assets) The impact of development on a designated or non-designated heritage asset and its setting must be thoroughly assessed against the significance of the asset. Development should conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance. It is clear the proposals do not conserve or enhance the significance. This point applies to items i. to v. of the policy.

It is clear from the above and from consideration of the application text that substantial or more than substantial harm would be created by the proposals. Further within the lengthy proposals descriptive text it identified the proposals did cause damage to the appearance of the listed school building, its relationship to the surrounding listed buildings and the village setting itself.

The Chairman raised the matter of a written comment from a person who listed their address as the Dorset Council offices concerning bats in and around the school buildings. PH commented that there was no mention of a biodiversity survey in the proposals and any effect of the proposals on biodiversity, (birds, bats etc), was not addressed.

As such, the key issue is how detrimental are the proposals in affecting the listed building itself, the relationship with the surrounding listed buildings, the village setting and the conservation area within the AONB.

It is clear the panels placed on the pitched roof (the flat roof areas are considered less damaging) substantially disrupt the detailed textural context of the materials by introducing large dark planar areas. This substantially disrupts the visual harmony of the building make up and its relationship to the surrounding listed buildings, village setting and conservation area. This added to the disruption to the biodiversity of the building (bats, birds etc) identifies a more than substantial harm in relation to the guiding principles of the NPPF, The Neighbourhood Plan, and the Local Plan.

Conclusion:

The Committee decision was unanimous. The Chairman proposed, with the agreement of the Committee, that due to the considerable detrimental effect of the application proposals, the decision would be to Object.

Note: The Planning Committee did realise that the key area of concern was the panels on the pitched roof areas and not the flat roof. It is strongly suggested that the applicants consider installing a ground level solar panel array adjacent to the south elevation of the school in the vicinity of the step change in level by the playing area. This would only require the relocation of the timber store shed and the installation of a small fence and importantly would cause less than substantial harm in planning terms. It would not be detrimental to the play area and would also be cheaper to install and maintain.

Conclusion: Object

7.0 Projects: All reports to be submitted to the clerk in writing at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

7.1.1 There were no Projects reported.

8.0 Vearse Farm:

8.1 It was confirmed by the Chairman that the latest Design Code application for approval was lodged on the 29th October 2021. In addition, he commented that he had been in verbal and email contact with a representative of National Highways (formerly Highways England) who confirmed that they were still awaiting details from the developer of the Miles Cross highway works. Further it was not National Highways who would be undertaking the works as it was clearly the responsibility of the developer. National Highways role is limited to approving and supervising the works. It is now clear there will be a considerable delay to the development compared to the initial programme outlined by the developers earlier in the year.

9.0 Items for inclusion at the next meeting.

9.1 PH commented that an application had been received concerning the felling of an oak tree within the curtilage of a property in Symondsbury village. He pointed out that the rationale for felling was not appropriate, however it would be discussed at the next meeting. JR commented that the tree was actually within her property although it was her neighbour who had made the application and she did not agree with the proposal. She would declare an interest at the next meeting.

10.0 AOB

10.1 There was no AOB.

12.0 Next Meeting

12.1 The next Planning Committee meeting will be at 7 pm on the 7th December 2021 at . The venue will be Eype Church.