

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

Application Reference Number	14NP0087
Description / Site Address	Installation of 16 photovoltaic ground mounted panels to generate electricity at Allerdene Farm, Thropton, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 7NG
Consultation Expiry	29 October 2014
Last date for decision	24 November 2014

Details of Proposal

The proposal is to install 16 ground-mounted photovoltaic panels, with a maximum height of around 2.5 metres, close to Allerdene Farm, a farmstead that lies within Whitton & Tosson Parish. The panels will be located relatively close to the existing development at the site, around 30 to 40 metres to the south west of the main cluster of farm buildings at Allerdene Farm. The panels are located to the south of a woodland area that lies between the site of the proposed development and the minor road which serves Allerdene Farm and other properties, which runs just to the north.

Planning Policy

- *NNPA Core Strategy and Development Policies Document (Core Strategy)*
Policies 1, 2, 3, 17, 18, 19, 20
- *NNPA Building Design Guide SPD*
- *NNPA Landscape SPD*
- *National Planning Policy Framework*

Relevant Planning History:

Nil

Summary of Consultations/Representations

NNPA Ecologist: No objections.

NNPA Access and Recreation Officer: No objection. There are no Public Rights of Way in the vicinity that are likely to be affected and the proposals are not likely to impact on existing public access within the area.

NNPA Landscape Officer: No objection. There will be no significant effect upon the landscape character or views of this part of the National Park.

No comments were received in response to consultations sent to Whitton and Tosson Parish Council, NCC Development Management, NNPA Historic Environment Officer or NNPA Farming Officer.

Site Notice/Neighbour Consultations: No representations were received in response to neighbour notifications.

Assessment

The key material planning considerations are;

- Principle, location and sustainability of the development;
- Renewable energy and climate change;
- Design, impact on landscape, tranquility & amenity;
- Impact on ecology & protected species;
- Heritage impacts

Principle of Development

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of decision-taking. Policy 1 of the NNPA Core Strategy seeks to ensure that development proposals will conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park. Policy 1 also states that applications should demonstrate a reduced impact on climate change by maximising renewable energy generation.

The proposal will not have an adverse impact on the Park's special qualities. The design and the location of the array are such that an adverse impact will be avoided, in terms of the design and location within the surrounding landscape.

The panels are proposed with the intention of generating renewable energy to serve the cluster of buildings at Allerdene Farm.

It is considered that the proposed development meets the criteria set out in Policy 1 and therefore the principle of development is established.

Impact on Renewable Energy and Climate Change

Policy 2 of the Core Strategy & Development Policies Document states that the National Park Authority will facilitate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by supporting proposals which increase small scale renewable energy. Policy 1 also states that to deliver sustainable development, proposals should reduce climate change by maximising renewable energy generation.

The Planning Statement provides a calculation to demonstrate that the expected performance of the solar panels would provide an annual carbon emission saving of 1.87 tonnes. This is a positive material consideration in favour of the proposal.

The development is acceptable in terms of Policy 2 of the Core Strategy, which is supportive of small scale renewable energy development. The proposal also accords with NPPF paragraphs 94 – 98. However, it is also essential that this benefit is not outweighed by any detrimental impacts that a proposal may have, including, but not limited to, on the landscape and special qualities of the National Park, scale, design and the relationship with the surroundings and biodiversity and tranquility within the National Park.

Design, Impact on Landscape, Tranquility & Amenity

NNPA's Landscape Officer does not object to the development and has not deemed that this proposed development will have a detrimental impact upon the special landscape character of the National Park. The nearest publicly accessible receptor site is the Hepple to Tosson minor county road that passes approximately 100 metres to the north of this proposed development site. The site is largely hidden from view from the road, as it is largely screened by an existing woodland shelterbelt and the buildings located at Allerdene.

The design and location of the solar array would not have an adverse impacts upon visual or neighbouring residential amenity. There is also not considered to be any detrimental impact on the tranquility of the National Park. The development accords with Core Strategy Policies 3, 19 and 20 and NPPF paragraphs 56 and 115.

Impact on Ecology/Biodiversity

There are not considered to be any adverse ecological impacts and the development accords with Core Strategy Policy 17 and NPPF paragraph 118.

Impact on Cultural Heritage

There are not considered to be any direct or indirect impacts upon any heritage assets. The development accords with Core Strategy Policy 18 and NPPF Chapter 12.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed solar array achieves a positive renewable energy benefit, has an appropriate size and scale, and is in a location that ensures that the development will relate well with existing structures, with a negligible landscape impact when viewed from key public receptor sites. The proposed development, by virtue of the size, location and design avoids any harmful negative impact on the wider landscape and special natural qualities of the National Park. The application is therefore considered to accord with Policies 1, 2, 3, 17, 18, 19 and 20 of the Northumberland National Park Local Development Framework Core Strategy and the NPPF.

Recommendation

Grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby approved shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority retains the right to review unimplemented permissions and to comply with Section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

- Application Form received on 24th September 2014
- Block Plan & Isometric Drawing received on 24th September 2014

- Corbin Solar System H Technical Data received on 24th September 2014
- Rene Sola Virtus II Specification received on 24th September 2014
- Planning Statement received on 24th September 2014
- Location Plan received on 24th September 2014

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt, to enable the LPA to adequately control the development and to conform with Policies 1, 2, 3, 17, 18, 19 and 20 of the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy & Development Policies Document and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. If the photovoltaic solar panel array ceases to operate for a continuous period of six months (unless such cessation is due to the turbine being under repair or replacement) then, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, within three months of the end of that period a scheme shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its approval in writing which sets out the following:

- Proposed details for the decommissioning and removal of that array and any ancillary equipment and structures relating solely to that array;
- A restoration scheme for the land where the array and any associated ancillary equipment and structures was removed from; and
- Proposals for the management and timing of the works.

The approved scheme shall be implemented within 12 months of the date of its approval by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the arrays provide a source of renewable energy generation whilst in situ, to ensure they are removed from the land if they cease to function, and to ensure that the land is reinstated in an acceptable manner in the interests of visual amenity and the landscape character of the National Park and for the development to accord with Policies 1, 3, and 20 of the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy & Development Policies Document and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. All cabling associated with the development shall be located underground.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity and for the development to accord with Policies 1 and 3 of the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy & Development Policies Document and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informative Notes

1. This planning permission is granted in strict accordance with the approved plans. It should be noted however that:

(a) Any variation from the approved plans following commencement of the development, irrespective of the degree of variation, will constitute unauthorised development and may be liable to enforcement action.

(b) You or your agent or any other person responsible for implementing this permission should inform the local planning authority immediately of any proposed variation from the approved plans and ask to be advised as to the best method to resolve the matter. Most proposals for variation to the approved plans will require the submission of a new planning application.

2. This consent is granted subject to conditions and it is the owner and the person responsible for the implementation of the development who will be fully responsible for their compliance throughout the development and beyond. If there is a condition that requires work to be carried out or details to be approved prior to the commencement of the

development this is called a "condition precedent". The following should be noted with regards to conditions precedent:

(a) If a condition precedent is not complied with, the whole of the development will be unauthorised and you may be liable to enforcement action.

(b) In addition if a condition precedent is breached, the development is unauthorised and the only way to rectify the development is the submission of a new application. If any other type of condition is breached then you will be liable to a breach of condition notice.

	Signature	Date
Planning Officer		
Development Manager		
National Park Officer		