

**Committee Report**

<b>Application No:</b>	<b>DC/23/00115/FUL</b>
<b>Case Officer</b>	<b>Tracy Long</b>
<b>Date Application Valid</b>	<b>17 February 2023</b>
<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Zestec Asset Management</b>
<b>Site:</b>	<b>Ncl1 Follingsby Lane Felling NE10 8YA</b>
<b>Ward:</b>	<b>Wardley And Leam Lane</b>
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Installation of PV System On The Roof of Amazon Warehouse NCL1 (plot A).</b>
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>GRANT</b>
<b>Application Type</b>	<b>Full Application</b>

**1.0 The Application:**

**1.1 THE APPLICATION SITE**

1.2 The application site comprises a very large, flat roof, warehouse building, occupied by Amazon, along the south side of Follingsby Lane.

1.3 The site is situated in an industrial / commercial area with other warehouse / commercial buildings to the north, within Follingsby Industrial Estate, another Amazon warehouse to the east, green infrastructure to support the Amazon warehouse to the south and the A194M to the west.

**1.4 THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL**

1.5 This planning application proposes to install a Photovoltaic (PV) system on the flat roof of the warehouse building, which measures around 22 metres in height.

1.6 Planning permission is not always necessary to install PV systems onto flat roof spaces of commercial and industrial buildings. However, given that this proposal will generate over 1 megawatt of energy planning permission is required in this instance.

1.7 The agent has explained that the solar panels will have an east-west orientation but due to the parapet wall elevation of the warehouse building being 1.18metres in height and the warehouse building measuring just over 20 metres in height, the PV panels on the roof of the building are unlikely to be visible.

1.8 The submitted planning statement states that at this stage, whether the clean energy that will be produced by the proposed PV system will be used directly by Amazon or sold back to the National Grid is unknown. However the

planning statement goes on to explain that given the sheer amount of energy that will be generated through this proposal (3.978MWp) it is highly likely that a great deal of this energy will be diverted into the National Grid.

- 1.9 This planning application has been submitted with an application form, scaled drawings of the roof and elevations of the building and a planning statement.
- 1.10 This planning application is being presented to Planning and Development Committee for determination as it is a major planning application, due to the red line application site being more than 1 hectare in size.
- 1.11 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**
- 1.12 There have been a number of planning applications at this site. The most relevant to the consideration of this current planning application (as they are the planning approvals that were implemented to provide the warehouse on the western side of the Amazon site) are listed below.
- 1.13 **DC/18/00574/FUL**  
Variation of condition 1 (approved drawings) of planning permission DC/18/00237/OUT to incorporate the adjacent South Follingsby Farm site into the wider Follingsby International Enterprise Park development area by extending the green infrastructure and built development zones further west and removing access 1 and repositioning accesses 2 -5 and the associated bus stops and crossing along Follingsby Lane (Submitted with a Supplementary Environmental Statement).  
APPROVED on 5 April 2019.
- 1.14 **DC/18/00573/COU**  
Demolition of farmhouse / barn buildings and change of use of land to provide extended green infrastructure and built development zones for the adjacent Follingsby International Enterprise Park including the closure of the existing vehicle access and the formation of a new vehicle access off Follingsby Lane to replace access 1 one of the 6 accesses approved under planning permission DC/18/00237/OUT (Submitted with a Supplementary Environmental Statement).  
APPROVED on 28 September 2018.
- 1.15 **DC/20/00021/REM**  
RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATION (relating to appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) for a storage and distribution unit (use class B8) with ancillary offices, car parking, servicing and landscaping on PLOT A (pursuant to OUTLINE APPLICATION DC/18/00574/FUL which was submitted with an ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT)(Amended Plans received 3 March 2020).  
APPROVED on 19 March 2020.

## **2.0 Consultation Responses:**

National Highways      No objection

Newcastle Airport      No objection

### **3.0 Representations:**

3.1 The Council sent neighbour letters to 9 surrounding businesses on 20 February 2023 as well as displaying 2 site notices adjacent the site on 24 February 2023. A notice also appeared in the Newcastle Journal on 22 March 2023.

3.2 No representations have been received.

### **4.0 Policies:**

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

NPPG National Planning Practice Guidance

CS13 Transport

CS14 Wellbeing and Health

CS15 Place Making

CS16 Climate Change

MSGP15 Transport Aspects of Design of Dev

MSGP17 Residential Amenity

MSGP24 Design Quality

MSGP28 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

4.1 The policies within the Council's Core Strategy (CS) and Making Spaces for Growing Places (MSGP) documents form part of the Local Plan for Gateshead (parts 1 and 3).

### **5.0 Assessment of the Proposal:**

5.1 MAIN ISSUES

5.2 The main planning considerations are considered to be climate change, visual impact and glint/glare.

5.3 CLIMATE CHANGE / PLANNING POLICY

5.4 The Climate Change Act 2008 requires that the UK reduces its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% (from the 1990 baseline) by 2050.

- 5.5 Part 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) relates to meeting the challenge of climate change. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, whilst also supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 5.6 Policy CS16 of the Council's Local Plan relates to climate change and states that weight will be given to the wider environmental, social and economic benefits of renewable and low carbon energy generation in considering proposals. This policy also states that developments should be sustainable, able to function effectively in a changing climate and address impacts on climate change emissions.
- 5.7 More specifically part 6 of policy CS16 of the Council's Local Plan looks to minimise reliance on non-renewable high carbon energy sources and maximise the use of decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy sources by requiring developments to optimise the use of local renewable or low carbon energy. Therefore, applications which look to increase the opportunity for new developments to receive energy from a source of renewable energy by increasing the local decentralised energy offer is considered by officers as contributing towards the Council's goals as laid out in this policy.
- 5.8 Policy MSGP28 of the Council's Local Plan relates to renewable and low carbon energy and states that renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be assessed taking full account of their wider environmental, economic and social benefits and also considering visual impact, impact upon airport and aircraft operation and impact of reflected light.
- 5.9 Gateshead Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030 and work with partners and agencies to assist in the whole of Gateshead being carbon neutral in the same timeframe. Working with partners and organisations to support projects that will help reduce Gateshead's carbon emissions could include negotiating acceptable planning permissions for innovative renewable or low carbon energy schemes, where appropriate.
- 5.10 The submitted planning statement states that if approved this proposal will not only minimise the applicants existing contribution to climate change, but also provides scope to further reduce the wider area's overall demand on the grid.
- 5.11 Council officers therefore support the principle of this proposal which meets the Council's climate change policies and goals.
- 5.12 VISUAL IMPACT
- 5.13 The submitted plans show that solar panels will be laid out across the flat roof of the warehouse building. Cables will run externally on the outside of the building from the roof down the side of the building to the invertors which sit at the base of the building.

- 5.14 The proposed PV system is unlikely to be visible from public view, due to the height of the building and its parapet wall, which would screen the solar panels on the roof from view. The planning statement explains that to minimise visual impact the cable which runs down the side of the building will be encased in a cable tray and the invertors will be enclosed by fencing.
- 5.15 The scale, design and position of the proposed external elements are considered to be appropriate from a design point of view, given that their scale is very small when compared and viewed against the size of the existing warehouse building.
- 5.16 The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable from a design point of view, as it is in keeping with the commercial nature of the site and surrounding area, and therefore accords with the design aims and objectives of the NPPF and policies CS15 and MSGP24 of the Council's Local Plan.
- 5.17 GLINT and GLARE
- 5.18 Glint and glare is normally one of the main considerations for proposals for PV systems. The submitted planning statement states that the site is of suitable distance from sensitive receptors so as to not require the commission of a glint and Glare Assessment – which Council officers agree with.
- 5.19 Newcastle Airport has been consulted and they have stated that they have no objections to the proposal. They state that the proposal has been assessed by the Aerodrome Safeguarding Team. Usually the Airport would request a Glint and Glare Assessment, however given the sites location (30km from the aerodrome) it is not considered that the proposal would result in any detriment to the safe operation of the airport.
- 5.20 National Highways have also been consulted as the A194(m) is positioned to the west of this site. National Highways have stated that they also have no objections to the proposal. They have stated that they are satisfied that safety on the adjacent strategic road network is not compromised by the proposal.
- 5.21 It is therefore considered by Council officers that a Glint and Glare Assessment is not necessary in this instance and that the proposal is acceptable from a glint and glare point of view.
- 5.22 TRANSPORT ISSUES
- 5.23 The proposal raises no transport issues, as the solar panels on the flat roof of the building are unlikely to be visible from motorists on the surrounding local roads. In addition, the proposal results in no changes to any of the existing access and parking arrangements at the site.
- 5.24 BENEFITS

- 5.25 The submitted planning statement explains that the proposal would have the following benefits.
- 5.26 Economic Benefits – the scheme will contribute towards the stimulation of economic activity in the area via the attraction of a workforce who will spend time and money in the area during installation of the PV system.
- 5.27 Environmental Benefits – this scheme represents a commitment from Amazon towards using its commercial warehouse buildings as an opportunity to produce clean, renewable energy both to power their operations and increase the share of renewable energy in the national grid.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Taking all the relevant issues into account, it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable from a planning point of view, and would accord with both national and local planning policies.
- 6.2 This proposal will reduce the carbon impact of Amazon and to increase the percentage of renewable energy in the National Grid.
- 6.3 It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the planning conditions below.

## **7.0 Recommendation:**

That permission be GRANTED subject to the following condition(s) and that the Service Director of Climate Change, Compliance, Planning and Transport be authorised to add, vary and amend the planning conditions as necessary

1

The development shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved plan(s) as detailed below –

Site location plan scale 1:2500 on A3

PV Roof Layout C4

Inverter Elevation East / West C2

Inverter Elevation North C2

Any material change to the approved plans will require a formal planning application to vary this condition and any non-material change to the plans will require the submission of details and the agreement in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any non-material change being made.

Reason

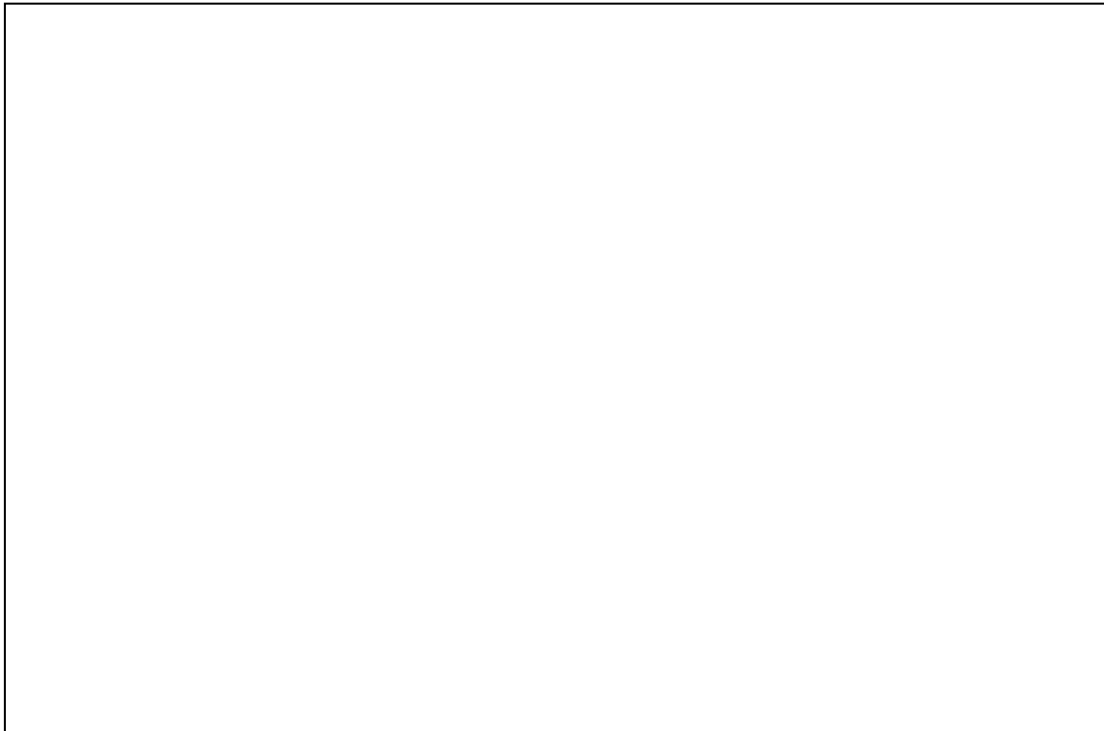
In order to ensure that the development is carried out in complete accordance with the approved plans and any material and non-material alterations to the scheme are properly considered.

2

The development to which this permission relates must be commenced not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.

**Reason**

To comply with section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.



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