Advice from Climate Team to Planning

Reference: PL/2024/00317
Address: Land Adjacent to Arminger House, Parkers Lane, Kingston Langley SN15 5PH
Proposal: Change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian. Installation of a horse arena in the south-west corner of the paddock north of the property and an installation of a ground-based 10kW domestic solar array in this paddock, north of the horse arena.

Overall: Support without conditions.

Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the relevant policies of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (ref: Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). Section 19 of this Act places a legal duty on development plan documents, taken as a whole, to include policies designed to secure development that contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Development Plan:

At paragraph 1.3 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) key principles that underpin the strategy to help build more resilient communities are identified including:

- *"Working towards lowering Wiltshire's carbon footprint through the appropriate location of development, and through renewable energy and sustainable construction."*

Paragraph 1.10 states: *"**The overarching priorities are to help build and protect resilient communities through….. tackling the causes and effects of climate change**"*

Paragraph 2.10 states: *"**Climate change is a central issue to be addressed by the WCS**….. The basis of this strategy is to achieve sustainable patterns of development in order to reduce carbon emissions."*

The WCS sets out that addressing climate change as a strategic objective stating at paragraph 3.5 that: ***"Climate change is possibly the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today."***

Core Policy 41 seeks to help to reduce Wiltshire's contribution to climate change through improved design and construction methods. The policy states that: *"New development, building conversions, refurbishments and extensions will be encouraged to incorporate design measures to reduce energy demand. Development will be well insulated and designed to take advantage of natural light and heat from the sun and use natural air movement for ventilation, whilst maximising cooling in the summer."*

Furthermore, the policy encourages retrofitting measures to improve the energy performance of existing buildings.

Core Policy 42 sets out that the principle of stand alone renewable energy projects is acceptable.

Other material considerations:

The Council is carrying out a **Local Plan Review**. Whilst this is advancing towards examination towards the end of 2024 the weight being afforded it is currently limited. However, the direction of travel is reflective of wider strategic policy already adopted by Wiltshire Council, such as the **Wiltshire Climate Strategy, adopted February 2022**. This

builds on the Council's February 2019 resolution to acknowledge a **climate emergency and subsequent commitment to also make Wiltshire Council carbon neutral by 2030**.

To further underline this the **Climate change act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019** raised the **duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline** (previously 80%).

The **National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)** (NPPF) sets out the UK government's position on planning in England.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states: *"The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development"* and paragraph 8 makes it clear that **mitigating and adapting to climate change is a core planning objective**.

Paragraph 157 states: *"The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate…. It should **help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions**, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure."*

When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development paragraph 163 is clear:

- developers are not required to demonstrate the overall need and shall **recognize that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to significant cutting of greenhouse gas emissions**; and
- Approve the application if its impacts are or can be made acceptable.

Paragraph 164 is a new insertion into the NPPF at the end of 2023. This states that: *"In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give **significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings**, both domestic and non-domestic".*

In terms of the future national direction of travel the **10 Point Plan**, **Net Zero Strategy**, **Heat and Buildings Strategy**, the **Sixth Carbon Budget** and **Powering Up Britain** are very clear. The intentions include:

- More renewable energy and storage technologies.

Comments on the submission:

It is important to recognize that the Council has adopted its Climate Strategy, acknowledged a climate emergency, and has committed to seek to make the county carbon neutral by 2030. The council has direct control of only 2% of carbon emissions in Wiltshire and influence over around a third. It is therefore imperative that the council uses every mechanism at its disposal to help address climate change. This includes its regulatory roles (like planning). Planning decisions require the exercise of judgement and balancing sometimes conflicting issues. Addressing the acknowledged climate emergency should be afforded considerable weight.

The development plan reflects that the generation of renewable energy is positive climate action with CP42 setting out support for renewable energy schemes. Furthermore, this proposal is about providing a source of renewable energy to a domestic home. As such, this can be considered a form of retrofitting for the dwelling akin to a roof-mounted solar array. This is a form of sustainable construction that the development plan clearly supports and encourages under CP41.

The NPPF is also positive and supports the radical reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Central to achieving this is the shift to renewable energy which in a location such as Wiltshire currently means significant solar PV development. We do not have significant capacity for other forms of renewables. Furthermore, the government has aims for a five-fold increase in solar PV capacity by 2035.

Additionally, the latest version of the NPPF has inserted a new paragraph 164. This is clear that significant weight needs to be afforded to supporting energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings. The application sets out that this is a proposal to "meet the (energy) needs of Arminger House". Solar installations are an excellent means of providing renewable energy and represent a relatively unobtrusive means of making buildings less reliant on the grid and/or fossil fuels. As such, significant weight needs to be afforded to this as an energy efficiency project.

Whilst the solar development is modest and the benefits are proportionate, this is positive climate action. Given it's a modest array, the potential impacts on wider planning interests are similarly proportionate. In particular it is important to recognise that the solar arrays are less than a metre above ground level and located in a maturely landscaped setting. As such they will have very little visual impact beyond the very immediate setting. If there is any concern I would suggest that this can be addressed through a modest landscaping proposal – which would also provide biodiversity betterment.

It is noted that there are two listed buildings to the south-east. However, the significance of these assets will not be impacted. Their setting and relationship to the development area is not significant due to the distance and existing intervening landscape features. The site does sit on the rural periphery of the village which forms an important part of the character and appearance of the village's conservation area. However, given the scale and height of the arrays the impact would be nominal. If any harm is identified here, it would clearly be at the lower end of less than substantial harm. In such circumstances this would be clearly outweighed by the public benefit of providing renewable energy which addresses the impacts of climate change through reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There would also be co-benefits that can also form public benefits such as supporting the transition to a green economy and improving air quality by reducing the need to burn fossil fuels (whether at Arminger House with a boiler or at power stations).

Climate change is a central issue to be addressed by the development plan. The direction of travel since its adoption in 2015 is very clear with the Council's adopted Climate Strategy in 2022 setting a framework for reducing carbon emissions in Wiltshire. Furthermore, the NPPF states that planning needs to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

I support the proposed solar panels.

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