16th April 2024

Ms Lisa Morina
Planning Department
Durham County Council
County Hall
County Durham
DH1 5UL

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The Lumen,
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Dear Lisa,

Applicant: Durham University
Proposal: Prior Notification for the installation of solar panels on office building roof.
Address: Durham University, Boldon House, Pity Me, DH1 5FA.

On behalf of our client Durham University we hereby enclose a prior notification application for the installation of solar panels on the office building roof at Boldon House, Pity Me, Durham ("the Site"). The description of development as set out on the Application Form is as follows:

"Prior notification for the installation of solar panels on office building roof.

For information, the solar panels would generate up to 170kw which exceeds the 50kw microgeneration threshold. The panels are situated on western, eastern and southern external pitched roof elevations visible externally. Further panels are situated on the northern, eastern and western internal elevations where the pitched roof faces internally toward the courtyard and cannot be viewed from external receptors.

The imperative nature of this project can be clearly articulated in the wider approach to sustainability and Net Zero within the wider Boldon House project. The Boldon House strategy revolved around the use of Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) paired with Photovoltaics (PV) in addition to building fabric improvements. In combination this strategy provided both significant operational cost and carbon reductions over the lifetime of the building, whilst delivering a Fossil Fuel Free system. The project is predicted to save 130 tonnes of carbon a year through the upgrade of the building by Durham University. This project's aspirations have been further endorsed by the government itself, being a successful recipient of the Salix Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for direct investment within the sustainability measures which we are employing.

Permitted development – assessment against paragraph J1

Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J c) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) makes provision for the installation or alteration of solar equipment on non-domestic premises subject to prior notification procedure. This includes "*other solar PV equipment on the roof of a building*". As such an application is submitted to request confirmation as to whether prior approval is required and if so to provide sufficient information to enable approval. An assessment of the proposed development against the thresholds of applicability listed under paragraph J1 is set out below to demonstrate that the proposals do not exceed the thresholds which preclude permitted development:

a) *The solar PV equipment or thermal equipment would be installed on a pitched roof and would protrude more than 0.2 metres beyond the plane of the roof slope when measured from the perpendicular with the external surface of the roof.*

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The accompanying elevation plans demonstrate that the PV solar panels are to be installed on a pitched roof. The Boldon House PV Protrusion Detail Elevation Plan (plan no. GLE-PV Protrusion Elevation- Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1) demonstrates that the panels will protrude 0.05m (50mm) beyond the plane of the roof slope.

b) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a flat roof, where the highest part of the solar PV equipment would be higher than 1 metre above the highest part of the roof (excluding any chimney)

The proposed development is situated on a pitched roof and as such the flat roof requirement does not apply.

c) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a roof and within 1 metre of the external edge of that roof.

As shown on the Photovoltaic Layout Plan (plan no. GLE-PV Layout-Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1) the panels are located at least 2.1m from the edge of the roof.

e) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a site designated as a scheduled monument; or

The site is not located in a scheduled monument.

f) The solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on listed building or a building within the curtilage of a listed building.

Boldon House is not listed.

Having assessed the proposed development against the criteria listed in Part 14, Class J 1.(a) to (e), the proposals meet the definition of permitted development. J2 does not apply as there is no PV proposed on the wall of the premises.

Assessment against conditions and topics for prior approval – J4

Paragraph J.4(1) further states that Class J development is permitted subject to the following conditions which comprise the scope of considerations for the planning department for prior approval.

(a) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment must, so far as practicable, be sited so as to minimise its effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area; and
(b) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment is removed as soon as reasonably practicable when no longer needed.

A justification of the proposed development is set out below to demonstrate compliance with Class J in relation to these matters

The External Appearance of the Building and Amenity

No panels are proposed on the external northern elevation which is closest to Rotary Way and as such would not be visible from the main road or any glimpsed views between established tree planting when in the open countryside to the north. Where panels are proposed on the external elevations (west, south and east), given the height and angle of the roof (approximately 12m), the solar panels would be mainly hidden from view when stood directly outside the building at ground floor level. When further away from the building and approaching from the south or west the panels would be visible on the pitched roof elevations. Views from Oatlands Way to the east are limited due to the presence of housing which shields Boldon House from view more generally. A

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limited number of properties abutting Boldon House car park would be able to see the cells, however, the height, colour and design of the panels is similar to that of the existing roof and would not materially affect the appearance of the building or the amenity of the area. The applicant has sought to situate PV cells on the internal roof elevations to minimise some of the visual effects and has avoided the use of roof spaces at a lower level on the eastern elevation adjacent to existing properties.

The design of the solar panels are considered standard for a commercial building and crucial for meeting energy efficiency targets for the building. In this context the proposed development minimises the effect of the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area where appropriate resulting in a non material visual change.

Removal of the Equipment

The PV cells are a core element of ensuring a sustainable development and continued use of Boldon House. Nonetheless, in the future should the technology no longer be required of if an alternative is identified the solar panels would be capable of being removed and they are not designed as an irreversible fixture on the roof.

As such it is evident therefore that in meeting the definition of permitted development. the proposed development also meets the conditional requirements of Part J 4 (1) (a) and (b).

The final conditional requirement of the applicant is set out at Part J 4 (2) and (3) specifically for “other solar PV equipment on the roof of a building”. This requires a submission to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the design or external appearance of the development, in particular the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land.

Design, External Appearance

As stated above in relation to minimising the appearance of the PV cells, the image below from the PV spec demonstrates how the PV cells have been chosen and situated sympathetically and to match the colour of the roof.

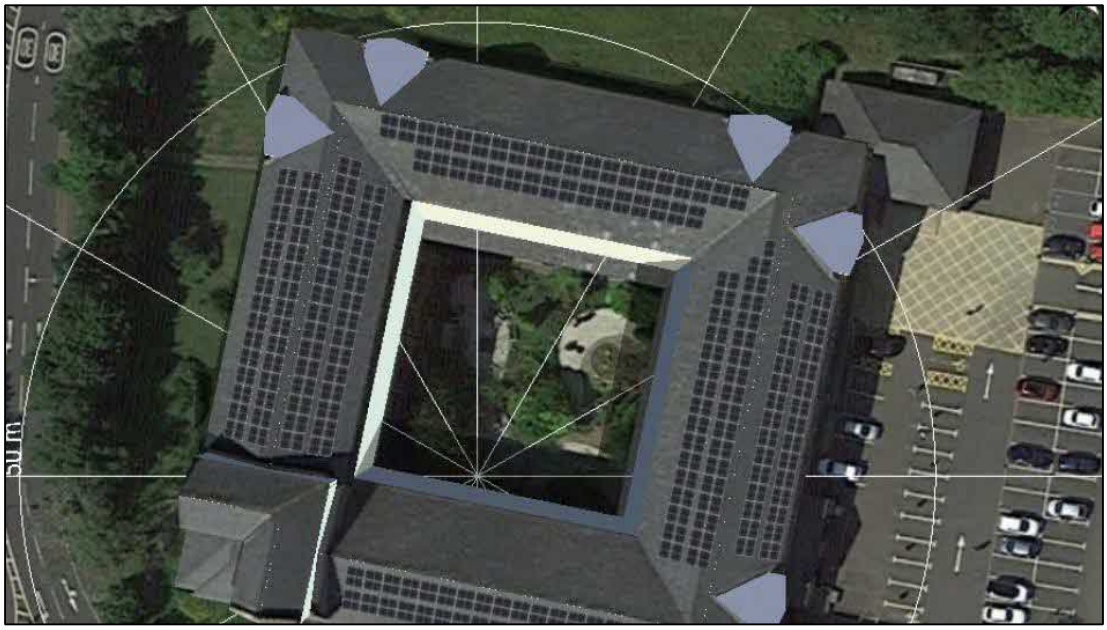

Figure 1 - Indicative image of proposed cells as contained in the PV spec within the submission.

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As required by J4 (3):

- A written description of the proposed development is included in this letter
- A plan indicating the site and showing the proposed development is appended to the wider submission a table of documents submitted is set out below. This includes technical specifications for the PV cells and electric schematics for information only.

Submitted Plan References
Site Location Plan (ref.DUBHR-COL-XX-XX-DR-L-1002)
Existing Roof Plan (ref. 21050-GT3-00-ZZ-DR-A-(27)0002 – Rev P1)
Existing Elevations Sheet 1 (ref. 21050-GT3-00-ZZ-DR-A-(08)9002 – Rev P1)
Existing Elevations Sheet 2 (ref. 21050-GT3-00-ZZ-DR-A-(08)9003 – Rev P1)
Boldon House Photovoltaic Layout (ref. GLE-PV Layout-Boldon House-Mix0DM-445-P1)
GLE East External Elevation PV (ref. GLE-East External Elevation-Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1)
GLE East Internal Elevation PV (ref. GLE-East Internal Elevation-Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1)
GLE North Internal Elevation PV (ref. GLE-North Internal Elevation-Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1)
GLE South External Elevation PV (ref. GLE-South External Elevation-Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1)
GLE West External Elevation PV (ref. GLE-West Elevation-Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1)
GLE West Internal Elevation PV (ref. GLE-West Elevation-Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1)
GLE PV protrusion detail – PD (ref. GLE-PV Protrusion Elevation-Boldon House-Mix-DM-445-P1)
GLE Tech Sub 440 P7
GLE Tech Sub 445 P7
Data Sheet Mono Facial Module
Data Sheet JAM54D41

- The developer comprises Bowmer and Kirkland on behalf of Durham University. As such the most applicable address for the developer comprises:

  Durham University
  Estates and Facilities Directorate
  Mountjoy Centre,
  Stockton Road,
  Durham,
  DH1 3LE

- Savills are acting as agent on behalf of the developer/Durham University as such the developer is not content to receive direct communications. There is a preference for contact to be made with martin.bonner@savills.com in the first instance who can respond on behalf of the applicant.

It is evident therefore that the proposed development complies with all of the criteria listed under Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order and as such, prior approval may not be deemed necessary. If prior approval is deemed necessary by Officers, the permitted development would be delivered in accordance with the submitted details which are available for confirmation of prior approval. We note the requirement for a response within 56 days, if not sooner.

The application has been submitted online via the Planning Portal (ref. PP-12979669). The Planning Application Fee of £120 (£190 with service charge) will be paid electronically by the applicant Durham University.

I trust the application is all in order, however please do contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Bonner MRTPI
Associate Director