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Planning Department
Council Offices
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FAO Ben Taylor

BY EMAIL: planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk

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Dear Ben

RE: Consultation on planning application 3/2023/0297 - Rushton House, Lower Chapel Lane, Grindleton BB7 4QT

I write in my capacity as Clerk to Grindleton Parish Council. As a statutory consultee, the Parish Council always seeks to balance any proposed residential development against the wider amenity of the village of Grindleton, and ensure that it is in keeping with its rural heritage. The above application has been circulated for comment around members of the Parish Council and, as a result, I have been asked to submit the following observations on members' behalf.

1) Background

There are a number of specific reasons why Grindleton Parish Council has taken particular care in setting out its thoughts on this application and is keen to ensure that the application is subject to appropriate scrutiny. These reasons are set out in detail below:

a) Location in the village

The Parish Council is aware that the proposed development is situated in a prime, elevated and prominent location within the village, directly adjacent to the main thoroughfare of Main Street.

Members note that the Heritage Statement submitted with the application describes the property's position as follows:

"The elevation which the solar panels are proposed to be fit is only visible from one location on main street which is approximately 100m down (south) main street."
[sic]

The photograph below (from Google Maps, July 2023) would suggest that – whilst visibility of the roofline is indeed restricted to a small section of Main St – when viewed from the roadside the solar panels would still be clearly in the line of sight for pedestrians.



Roofline viewed from Main St

b) Planning policies

The location of the proposed development location sits within both the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (FBAONB) and the Grindleton Conservation Area (GCA).

With regard to the former, the FBAONB's own website confirms that the National Planning Policy Framework provides specific planning guidance for (i) development planning and (ii) decision-making in relation to AONBs. It states that:

“...great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty, and that AONBs have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. AONBs and their management plans are material considerations in planning. The ‘great weight test’ is significant and it is one of the most stringent legal tests that can be applied under planning law.”

Further detail can be found via the following address:

<https://www.forestofbowland.com/National-Planning-Policy-Framework-and-AONBs>

With regard to the latter, the GCA Area Appraisal cites section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This statutory provision specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. The Appraisal document goes on to note that:

“The historic buildings of Grindleton are....attractive because of the homogeneity of the stone walls built from local gritstone and roofs of sandstone or slate.....Today most roofs in the conservation area are of slate”.

Grindleton Parish Council is very supportive of the green agenda and would wish to promote ecological benefits to the local community. However, as is apparent from the policies relating to both the FBAONB and GCA cited above, this must not be at the expense of the village’s traditional rural appearance.

c) Precedent

Members of the Parish Council note that – given the current cost of living and climate crises – the number of applications for roof-mounted solar panels in the village may well increase. This application is therefore something of a test case, and may result in the setting of a precedent for applications to come.

2) Planning application 3/2023/0297

The application seeks consent for the erection of “16 x 395kw solar panels on the south east facing roofslope”.

According to the application, the solar panels are of the type HiKu6 (All-Black) manufactured under the trading name of Canadian Solar. It is understood that this type of panel is installed on a frame that fits onto the roof tiles, and relies on the roof to be in good condition. This method of fitting means that the panels will sit proud of the roofline; this can lead to problems arising from lack of maintenance, or from pigeons utilising the space between the gap of the tile and the frame to shelter.

In members’ opinion, this type of panel (and its required fixing) are not in keeping with the traditional slate roofs found elsewhere in the village; they look out of place in the FBAONB; and are aesthetically displeasing.

Members also note that the proposed HiKu6 panels come with a 25-year manufacturer’s warranty. Given the extended lifespan of this product, and the rapid pace of technological change, it is possible that the proposed panels could very quickly be superseded by a more aesthetically pleasing product.

For these reasons, the proposed use of frame-mounted solar panels in the FNAONB and GCA is opposed.

However, as stated above, members are - in general terms - supportive of measures to reduce greenhouse emissions and protect the environment. They are aware that solar panel technology is developing at a rapid pace, and with this in mind would wish to make some general comments on the types of tiles which (moving forward) they would feel more able to support. Members are, for instance, aware that integrated solar panels are designed to be embedded in the roof line so as to be flush with it. Alternatively, solar tiles are manufactured in the same shape, size and colour as traditional tiles, and look exactly the

same. Members acknowledge that both these options may be more expensive than the one proposed in this application, but believe that the use of either integrated solar panels or solar tiles would be more in keeping with the FBAONB and GCA.

3) Conclusion

Grindleton Parish Council is a strong advocate for environmental protection and measures to combat climate change. However, it also takes seriously its role as a guardian of the village's heritage. This application falls at the very boundary of these two notions.

For the avoidance of doubt, members would wish to support *in principle* the application for the installation of solar panels, but would strongly prefer them to be sympathetic to the current surroundings. As such, members cannot support the use of the frame-mounted panels proposed by the applicant in this instance. In the spirit of co-operation, the Parish Council has identified alternative types of solar panel which it would view as more in keeping with the village location.

Members of Grindleton Parish Council would be grateful if their comments above could be considered when Planning Application 3/2023/0297 is determined.