

Planning Supporting Statement of Case

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This Planning Supporting Statement accompanies a formal planning application to Ribble Valley Borough Council for the retention of 10 solar panels on the south east facing roof-slope of Rushton House, Lower Chapel Lane, Grindleton. BB7 4QT. This application is a retrospective and amended submission of application 3/2023/0973.

1 Site Location

1.1 The application site comprises a substantial detached dwelling set within private grounds; the dwelling is located on Main Street, Grindleton and lies within the Conservation Area. The overall property is well screened from public view and that part of the roof to which this application relates is only visible when standing on Main Street by the bus stop. There are no long distance views into the site from any public vantage point.

2 Recent Planning History

2.1 Application 3/2023/0297 was refused on 29 September 2023. That application comprised the addition of solar panels on the south east facing roof slope. The application was refused for reasons relating to impact upon the Conservation Area; impact upon the AONB; Impact upon protected Species.

2.2 Application 3/23/0973 was a retrospective planning application submission for retention of 14 solar panels and was refused permission on the 18 March 2024. A subsequent appeal, APP/T/D/24/3344365, was dismissed on 6 January 2025.

3 Application Proposal

3.1 In light of the decisions as set out above [section 2], the application detail has been significantly and materially amended; the proposal now relates to the reduction and retention of 10 solar panels these are set into the roof-space as opposed to being fastened above the slates. The application is also accompanied by an Independent heritage Assessment and a protected Species Assessment. It is considered that the amended application as now submitted addresses the area of concern raised in the appeal decision. For the avoidance of doubt, the solar panels remain in place.

4 The Development Plan

Impact upon the Conservation Area-Key Statement EN5; Policy DME4 The Amended Proposal

- 4.1 The LPA previously argued that such a proposal as the installation of solar panels on part of, and within an existing roof-space would demonstrably cause harm to a heritage asset, the conservation area. In this regard, the Inspector in his letter of decision took a similar and narrow-minded view. However, this was clearly a subjective view as no evidence was presented by the planning authority that they had consistently refused or challenged any applications for the installation of solar panels either within conservation area or the wider AONB. An independent and professional heritage assessment has been commissioned and is submitted as part of the revised application. The assessment has been written having full regard to the requirements of key statement EN5 and policy DME4; the assessment is a material consideration in the determination of the application. It is not a purpose of this planning supporting statement to reiterate the content and conclusion of the heritage assessment. Suffice to say that there is no evidence to support the planning authority's view that harm is caused to the heritage asset sufficient to outweigh the very clear planning policy support for the development.

Impact upon the AONB-Key Statement EN2; policies DMG1/DME5 The Amended Proposal

- 4.2 key statement EN2 relates to safeguarding and the landscape character of the AONB and that is accepted. However, this key statement must be read in conjunction with other policies which clearly and demonstrably support development within the AONB that are designed to make a positive contribution to tackling the very serious issues raised by climate change/carbon footprint issues. In dealing with this specific matter, one only has to review the heritage assessment that accompanies this application; the clear view taken is that the proposal to place a reduced number of solar panels within part of an existing roof-space that is not visually intrusive from the wider perspective or public vantage points, cannot suddenly become so incongruous as to cause significant and material harm to the wider AONB. Further, the LPA offers no tangible evidence that within the wider AONB, let alone Grindleton, the whole of which sits within the AONB, they have consistently applied any of the policies referenced above because they either independently or cumulatively outweigh the overall policies at both local and national level that seek to address issues relevant to climate change/carbon footprint. Whilst in itself, the provision of a small number of solar panels to reduce demand upon energy supplies and thus improve climate change requirements, may be a small drop in the ocean, it is nevertheless a drop and if everybody else made some similar contribution it may be that the

grave issue of climate change can be tackled to the benefit of all. Further, such a proposal allows the applicant to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on external sources of energy supply.

- 4.3 Further, it is noted that policy DME5 specifically states that the Borough Council will support the development of renewable energy schemes providing that it can be shown that such development would not cause unacceptable harm to the local environment or local amenity. This proposal does not cause any unacceptable harm to the local environment, indeed the opposite is the case.
- 4.4 The application site lies within the AONB; indeed it is the case that the whole of Grindleton lies within the AONB. It was noted in the delegated report relevant to the previous refusal that the LPA had no adverse comments to the proposal from any interested party be that consultee or 3rd party. It is assumed that one such interested consultee must surely have been the AONB Management Board. In any event, it is understood that no such representations would have arisen for a small scale “householder” development of the type proposed. Other reports that accompany this planning submission clearly state that no harm is caused to any policy interest of material importance and consideration. Any forthcoming consent will not prejudice the Core Strategy and the implementation thereof. In this specific regard, the applicant, through his solicitor, has independently consulted all residents within the Grindleton Conservation Area; a significant number formerly responded to the consultation and the results are appended to this report. Suffice to say that most respondents support the proposal.

***Impact upon Protected Species-policy DME3
The Amended Proposal***

- 4.5 A stand-alone protected species assessment was included with the original application and subsequent appeal. No issues were raised in the context of this very specific matter nor were the conclusions challenged. The proposal complies with the requirements of policy DME3. This report is submitted with the amended application. There is no requirement, in this instance, to have any factors contained, altered, amended or reviewed; this is because the application, though for retention of solar panels in the roof space, is actually for a reduction in number from the current 14 down to 10. This requirement has been achieved following discussions with the planning department.

5 National Planning Policy Framework The Amended Proposal

- 5.1 It is considered that the most relevant current policy is set out in chapter 14 of the NPPF; this chapter relates to meeting the challenge of climate change, Flooding and Coastal Change. Paragraph 152 states: The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. 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.
- 5.2 Paragraph 153 states: Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
- 5.3 Whilst it is accepted that the Framework is not a *carte blanche* free for all in putting climate change measures anywhere and everywhere, it is reasonable to conclude that there must be tacit support for a proposal that is extremely low key, essentially for private domestic use and will, as a matter of fact; contribute to the battle against climate change
- 5.4 Further, the requirements of chapters 15 and 16 of the NPPF are met as the supporting assessments conclude.

Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to National Planning Policy General Comment

- 5.5 The Planning Authority will be aware that the revised and amended National Planning Policy Framework covers a range of planning focused issues not least of all policies related specifically to tackling climate change. It indicates that Better environmental outcomes: Planning can make an important contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural environment, and the vitally important task of mitigating and adapting to climate change. We committed in the government's Net Zero Strategy, published in October 2021, to review the National Planning Policy Framework to make sure it contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation as fully as possible. In advance of next year's wider review, which will consider the issue further,

we are exploring how to do more through planning to measure and reduce emissions in the built environment. We also propose to do more to support environmental enhancement, nature recovery and climate change adaptation; to mitigate the effects of pollution; and to embed the important reforms introduced by the Environment Act.

Leaving the environment in a better state and tackling climate change are two of the greatest long-term challenges facing the world today. The government is committed to ensuring that the town and country planning and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regimes contribute to addressing both of these challenges. The planning system should, as a whole, reflect the government's ambition to help business and communities protect and enhance the environment for future generations, build a net zero carbon future, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. National planning policies and guidance, spatial development strategies and local plans should all contribute to this core objective of planning.

The National Planning Policy Framework already places environmental objectives at the heart of the planning system, making clear that planning should protect and enhance our natural environment, mitigate and adapt to climate change, support the transition to a low carbon future and take full account of flood risk and coastal change. The Environment Act has further strengthened the role of the planning system, through mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies, setting the foundations for planning to have a more proactive role in promoting nature's recovery. Government is setting targets under the Environment Act, which will also drive action across government including through the proposed changes to the planning system to deliver environmental improvement. The changes we have committed to are designed to support more holistic place making – through application of the National Design Guide, National Model Design Code and local design codes – will also contribute to these objectives.

- 5.6 With the emphasis very clearly focusing on climate change issues, it is considered that what is being proposed in this application is entirely in accord with the aims and objectives of national policy.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The details contained in the application submission relate to the provision of PV solar panels. The reduction in number, down from 14 panels to 10, is a material and substantial reduction and will significantly lessen any considered and adverse impact upon the character of the conservation area. The panels are for purely private and domestic use and form an integral part of the applicant's intentions to invest in the overall drive to become carbon neutral and to contribute, in some small way, to the overall Government initiatives in tackling climate change.

6.2 It is considered that planning policies at the national and local level, in light of the significant reduction in the number of solar panels now proposed, would now lend support to the proposal.

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