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| **Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.** |
| **Signed:** | **Officer:** | BT | **Date:** | 23/7/24 | **Manager:** | **LH** | **Date:** | **25/7/24** |
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| **Application Ref:** | 3/2024/0377 |  |
| **Date Inspected:** | 13/6/24 | **Site Notice:** | 13/6/24 |
| **Officer:** |  |
| **DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:**  | **APPROVAL** |
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| **Development Description:** | Proposed installation of 40 photovoltaic panels on the front roof slopes |
| **Site Address/Location:** | Recreation Ground, Sawley Road, Grindleton, BB7 4QS. |
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| **CONSULTATIONS:**  | **Parish/Town Council** |
| **Grindleton Parish Council:** | Consulted 4/6/24 – no response received. |
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| **CONSULTATIONS:**  | **Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies** |
| **RVBC Countryside:**  | No objection subject to condition. |
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| **RVBC Environmental Health:** | No objections. |
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| **CONSULTATIONS:**  | **Additional Representations.** |
| Twenty nine letters of support have been received in relation to the application. |
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| **RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:** |
| **Ribble Valley Core Strategy:**Key Statement DS1: Development StrategyKey Statement DS2: Sustainable DevelopmentKey Statement EN2: LandscapeKey Statement EN5: Heritage AssetsKey Statement EC2: Development of Retail, Shops and Community FacilitiesPolicy DMG1: General ConsiderationsPolicy DMG2: Strategic ConsiderationsPolicy DME3: Site and Species Protection and ConservationPolicy DME4: Protecting Heritage AssetsPolicy DME5: Renewable EnergyPlanning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 72National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) |
| **Relevant Planning History:****3/2018/0692:**Variation of condition 10 (hours of operation) and 11 (window closing time restriction) from planning permission 3/2011/0558 to allow opening hours to change to Sunday to Thursday (inclusive) 08.00 to 23.00 and 0800 to 00.00 on Fridays and Saturdays. Doors to the west facing elevation shall remain closed after 21.00 hours and windows on the west facing elevation of the building to be closed at 22.30hrs (Approved)**3/2012/0240:**Application for a non-material amendment to planning permission 3/2011/0558P, to allow the modification of window facing South East to Sawley Road from glazing up to the roof line to an arch top lintel (Approved)**3/2012/0239:**Application to discharge condition no. 3 (materials) condition no.4 (trees) condition no.5 (hedge) condition of.6 (car parking) and condition no.12 (changing room detail) of planning permission 3/2011/0558P (Approved)**3/2011/0558:**Re-submission for changes to the approved consent 3/2011/0001P of the building for a new community hall with changing facility, kitchen, storage etc. Demolition of the existing changing facilities (Approved)**3/2011/0335:**Groundsman's store to house grass cutters and general maintenance equipment (Approved)**3/2011/0001:**Proposed new Pavilion and Community Room on the site of the existing changing facility and car parking. New access and egress and change of use of land from agricultural to recreational ground (marked area A) (Approved) |
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| **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:** |
| **Site Description and Surrounding Area:**The application relates to a community hall in Grindleton. The application building comprises a single storey structure with a T-shaped footprint and cross gabled roof, with the building’s projecting gable orientated towards Sawley Road. The exterior of the building consists of stone, render and slate roof tiles. Access to the application site is from Sawley Road with the South-eastern corner of the site proving a designated parking area. A playground area and MUGA encompass the South-western and North-western sides of the community hall respectively, with playing fields adjoining the North-eastern side of the building. The application site lies within the Forest Of Bowland National Landscape with the Eastern extents of the Grindleton Conservation Area abutting the application site’s South-eastern perimeter. |
| **Proposed Development for which consent is sought:**Planning consent is sought for the installation of solar panels to the South-eastern and South-western roof slopes of the application building.  |
| **Principle of Development:**Paragraph 164 of the NPPF states:*‘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 (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights). Where the proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings or other relevant designated heritage assets, local planning authorities should also apply the policies set out in chapter 16 of this Framework.’*In a similar vein, Policy DME5 of the Core Strategy seeks to support the use of renewable energy schemes, subject to an assessment of the visual impact of the proposal, including design, colour, scale and impact upon the surrounding landscape, with a greater degree of scrutiny to be applied to proposals for renewable energy schemes within or close to the Forest Of Bowland National Landscape.In this instance, the proposed development relates to the installation of solar panels on a community facility with the intention of reducing energy consumption and in turn improving the environmental credentials of the existing facility, both of which would align with the general intentions of Paragraph 164 of the NPPF and Policy DME5 of the Core Strategy. Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle, subject to an assessment of additional material planning considerations. |
| **Impact upon Character/appearance of Conservation Area:**The South-eastern perimeter of the application site abuts the Eastern extents of the Grindleton Conservation Area. Having regard to proposals for development with the potential to impact upon Conservation Areas, Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that: *“...special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”* This guidance is reiterated in Key Statement EN5 of the Ribble Borough Valley Core Strategy which stipulates that all development proposals should respect and safeguard the character, appearance and significance of all Conservation Areas. The *Grindleton* *Conservation Area Appraisal (2005)* identifies the following elements as contributing to the Conservation Area’s special interest:* Visibility of Grindleton within surrounding National Landscape
* The survival of the village’s medieval street plan
* Numerous historic buildings
* Local details such as wells, farmhouses and barns, a pinfold, stone field boundaries and other reminders of the agricultural history of the village
* The close proximity of relatively wild moorland and open fields, which provide a rural setting to the village
* Panoramic views to Chatburn, on the opposite side of the River Ribble, and to the shoulder and scarp of Pendle Hill

The Conservation Area’s key views are listed as the panoramic views of Pendle Hill from the upper end of the Main Street, Sawley Road and the Methodist Chapel. Threats to the Conservation Area are listed as the continuing loss of original architectural details and use of inappropriate modern materials or details.The proposed solar panels would be viewable from within the Eastern portion of the Conservation Area when facing Northwards from Sawley Road and the open space to the South of Sawley Road however Northwards views towards the application building are not identified as significant within the Grindleton Conservation Area Appraisal or on the Grindleton Conservation Area Townscape Appraisal Map. Furthermore, the proposed development would be sited in close proximity to the village’s more modern development (residential properties on Valley View and Meadowside) away from the historic built form in and around Main Street and the solar panel array would not be read in concert with any of the area’s Listed Buildings, Buildings Of Townscape Merit or other elements of special interest referenced above. Accordingly, whilst the proposed development would introduce modern features into the setting of the Conservation Area, the impact of these features upon the historic significance of the area would be largely neutral therefore it is not considered that the proposed development would detract from or result in any harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As such, the proposed development would satisfy the requirements of Key Statement EN5 and Policy DME4 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. |
| **Impact Upon Residential Amenity:**The proposed development raises no concerns with respect to impacts upon neighbouring amenity. |
| **Visual Amenity/External Appearance:** Paragraph 135 (c) of the NPPF states:*‘Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting’.*Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy provides additional general design guidance as follows: *‘All development must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing and style…particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character.’*With respect to development within National Landscapes, Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states:*‘Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty…development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.’*Key Statement EN2 of the Core Strategy provides similar guidance: *‘The landscape and character of those areas that contribute to the setting and character of the Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected and conserved and wherever possible enhanced. As a principle the Council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials.’*Policy DME5 of the Core Strategy seeks to support the use of renewable energy schemes, subject to assessment of the visual impact of the proposal, including design, colour, scale and impact upon the surrounding landscape, with a greater degree of scrutiny to be applied to proposals for renewable energy schemes within or close to the Forest Of Bowland National Landscape.In this instance, the proposed development would involve the addition of forty solar panels to the roof of the application building with the proposed panels being distributed between the South-eastern and South-western roof slopes of the application building. The large majority of solar panels would be sited within the building’s South-eastern roof slope, albeit in a somewhat asymmetrical configuration. As such, the applicant was advised to incorporate a reconfigured layout of the panels within the building’s South-eastern roof slope through relocating two solar panels to the void between the upper row of panels, so as to achieve a more symmetrical layout. Notwithstanding the above, the applicant has since conveyed that reconfiguring the proposed solar panel array as recommended would fail to meet the spatial requirements of the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) which in turn would have implications for warranties, insurance and grant funding therefore the applicant has stated preference for retaining the originally proposed solar panel configuration. Whilst the Council considers this to be a less than desirable outcome in terms of design, on balance this asymmetrical arrangement is not considered to justify a refusal of planning permission. Furthermore, following negotiation the applicant has agreed to omit a previously proposed Solaskirt feature which, if implemented, would likely have exacerbated the prominence of the solar panel array above the roof slope of the application building. As such, whilst the amended scheme of development proposed under the current application is not considered to be optimal in terms of its design, it is nonetheless considered to be acceptable.Having regard to the development’s visual impact, whilst the proposed solar panels would be viewable within the public realm, their impact within the existing street scene would be lessened by virtue of the application building being set back from Sawley Road (approximately 25 – 30 metres). In addition, the proposed solar panels and mounting framework would comprise a pure matt black detailing which would further reduce the visual impact of the proposed development which, in any case, would be predominantly read in the context of the surrounding modern residential development fronting Sawley Road (No. 7 – 10 Valley View) as opposed to in concert with the wider open countryside to the periphery of the application site. Taking account of all of the above, it is not considered that the proposed development would be harmful to the visual amenities of the immediate area or character and appearance of the wider National Landscape. Accordingly, the proposed development would satisfy the requirements of Paragraph 135 (c) and 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Key Statement EN2 and Policy DMG1 and DME5 of the Core Strategy. |
| **Highways and Parking:**The proposed development raises no concerns with respect to impacts upon highway safety. |
| **Landscape/Ecology:**Installation of the proposed solar panels would require the temporary removal of roof slates which in turn could potentially result in disturbance to protected species. As such, a bat survey of the application building has been undertaken however, the application building, when assessed in combination with location and surrounding habitat, was observed to have a negligible level of bat roost potential, with the presence of a significant or low conservation value bat roost being deemed as unlikely. As such, no further survey work has been recommended however the application’s Bat Survey Report and Method Statement provides a number of recommended working practices and precautionary measures to be undertaken and adhered to during implementation of the proposed development so as to avoid and mitigate for any potential disturbances to protected species. Adherence with the recommended working practices and precautionary measures has been secured by way of a planning condition. No other ecological constraints were identified in relation to the proposed development. |
| **Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:**Proposals for the adoption of renewable energy are supported in principle in both local and national planning legislation and in this instance it is not considered that the proposed development would have any undue impacts upon the visual amenities of the area or historic character of the Grindleton Conservation Area.As such, for the above reasons and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised that the application is recommended for approval. |
| **RECOMMENDATION**: | That planning consent be granted subject to the imposition of conditions. |