
2024/0485

Mr K Sweeny

Installation of solar panels on roof of school building (Prior Notification)

Meadstead Academy, Meadstead Drive, Royston, Barnsley, S71 4JS

Site Location and Description

The site consists of a rectangular shaped single storey school building. The building is centrally positioned within the site, with school fields to the south of the site, car park to the west and associated playgrounds and further parking to the north. The school grounds also include two dwelling like outbuildings, one in the north-eastern corner and another to the south-east. Other ancillary shed buildings are dotted around the school grounds. The site is bound by palisade fencing, though hedging and large trees along the boundary screen the site from direct view.

The site is located to the south of Meadstead Drive and to the east of Doles Avenue. Pedestrian and vehicular access into the site is provided off both roads. The wider area is primarily residential in nature. The gardens of semi-detached dwellings adjoin the western boundary of the site and a residential care home borders to the south.

An Aldi supermarket is located to the north-east of the site. Due to changes in levels, the school building and grounds can be viewed from the associated supermarket car park.



Planning History

2023/0490 - Installation 56no PV solar panels on roof top with a maximum output of 21.56 kWp (Application to determine if prior approval is required), PRIOR APPROVAL REFUSED, 6/7/2003

Reason: The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the impact of glare from the proposed solar

panels would not cause significant harm to the occupiers of neighbourhood land and in particular the three storey extra care home to the south of the proposal. The proposal therefore does not accord with condition J.4 (2) of Class J, Part 14, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)

2018/0244 - Alterations to elevations including installation of new doors and windows, infill panels render and paint finish, GRANTED, 18/4/2018

2009/0995 - Erection of a new roof to school, GRANTED, 21/10/2009

2006/0584 - Erection of 2.4 m high boundary fencing, formation of car park and re-locate play equipment store. DEEMED GRANTED, 23/5/2006

2005/1504 - Formation of allweather playing surface, erection of 4.5 metres high fence and 4 no. 10 metre high lighting columns, GRANTED, 25/11/2005

B/05/0454/RO - Erection of extensions and alterations to school to form Surestart Centre, GRANTED, 19/4/2005

B/03/0657/RO - Alterations to vehicle access and car parking and erection of security fencing, UNKNOWN DECISION, 24/6/2003

B/88/0032/RO - Erection of 30 place Nursery Unit, UNKNOWN DECISION, 26/2/1998

Proposed Development

This application seeks confirmation whether prior approval is required in accordance with the conditions set out in Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPD). Class J relates to the installation or alteration etc of solar equipment on non-domestic premises.

The development hereby proposed includes 56 solar PV modules mounted upon the southern part of the school building roof. The total area of roof to be covered by the panels is 106sqm.

Publicity/Representations

Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J Paragraph J.4(6) requires Local Planning Authorities to give notice of the proposed development by either site notice or serving notice on any adjoining owner or occupier.

In this instance, both a site notice and neighbours letters were used to publicise the development. No neighbour representations have been received in response to the publicity.

Consultations

Highways DC – No objection subject to condition relating to the submission of a Construction Method Statement.

Pollution Control – No response

Planning Assessment

Planning regulations relating to this prior notification are set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J of the order allows for development consisting of:

The installation, alteration or replacement of—

- (a) microgeneration solar thermal equipment on a building;
- (b) microgeneration solar PV equipment on a building; or
- (c) other solar PV equipment on the roof of a building, other than a dwellinghouse or a block of flats.

The proposed development falls within the definition of Part C above by constituting solar PV equipment which is to be installed upon the roof of a non-residential building. Paragraph J.1 sets out the criteria for permitted development which is assessed as follows:

- (a) The submitted roof plan drawing indicates that the panels would protrude beyond the roof plane by 13.6cm, thus less than the 0.2m maximum.
- (b) The panels would not be installed on a flat part of the roof.
- (c) The roof plan drawing indicates that the panels would be set away from the edge of the roof by 10m and 7m to either side and 1.25m below, therefore exceeding the 1m requirement.
- (d) *Paragraph deleted in regs.*
- (e) The site is not a scheduled monument.
- (f) The building is not listed nor within the curtilage of a listed building.

Paragraph J.4 sets out the relevant conditions as follows:

- (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.

Class J(c) development is permitted subject to the condition that before beginning the development the developer must apply 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.

It is noted that a similar prior notification application was refused in July 2023 due to potential harm upon neighbouring occupiers (with particular reference to the care home to the south) by virtue of glare introduced by the panels. The previous application did not include sufficient supporting information in this regard.

This current submission has been supported by a Glare and Glint study (report dated: March 2024) which concludes that only one nearby dwelling (labelled as receptor 2) would be impacted by the development in terms of glare, however this impact would be restricted to less than 60 mins per day. The report also identifies that existing vegetation screening removes any harm at ground floor level, meaning the only impact upon be at the upper floor level but would coincide with direct sunlight which is considered to be a more prominent source of light.

The Environmental Health Officer has not provided comments but it is noted that there was no objection to the previous application in regard to impact upon amenity. Additionally, no neighbour representations have been received in response to the publicity.

The impact upon one dwelling for a very limited period of the day is not considered to be detrimental to the occupier's amenity to constitute as a reason for refusal. All the residential properties are situated a generous distance from the school building, and therefore there would be no substantial impact upon outlook or appearance as a result of the solar panels. The solar panels are limited to a small section of the school building roof and as such it is considered that the development accords with conditions set out in J.4 in terms of appearance and amenity and prior approval is not required.

Conclusion

Based on the information submitted within this application, it is considered that the development would comply with the legislation of Schedule 2 Part 14 Class J (c) of the GDPO 2015 (as amended) and prior approval is not required.

Recommendation

Prior Approval Granted – subject to conditions.