
Ref 2022/0373 – Planning Application

Applicant: Mr Pavandeep Panesar

Proposal: Electric Vehicle Charging Station comprising 8no. EV charging spaces and ancillary development including a covered roof canopy with solar glass, substation and LV switchboard.

Address: Car park of the Hotel Ibis Styles, Whinby Road, Dodworth, Barnsley

Planning History

2005/1636 – erection of four-storey 117 bed hotel and a two-storey PH and restaurant, with associated works and car parking spaces.

Site Description

The application relates to the car park to the Ibis Styles Hotel, off Whinby Road. The application site is immediately adjacent to the highway verge/embankment to Whinby Road, to the west of the hotel.



Proposed Development

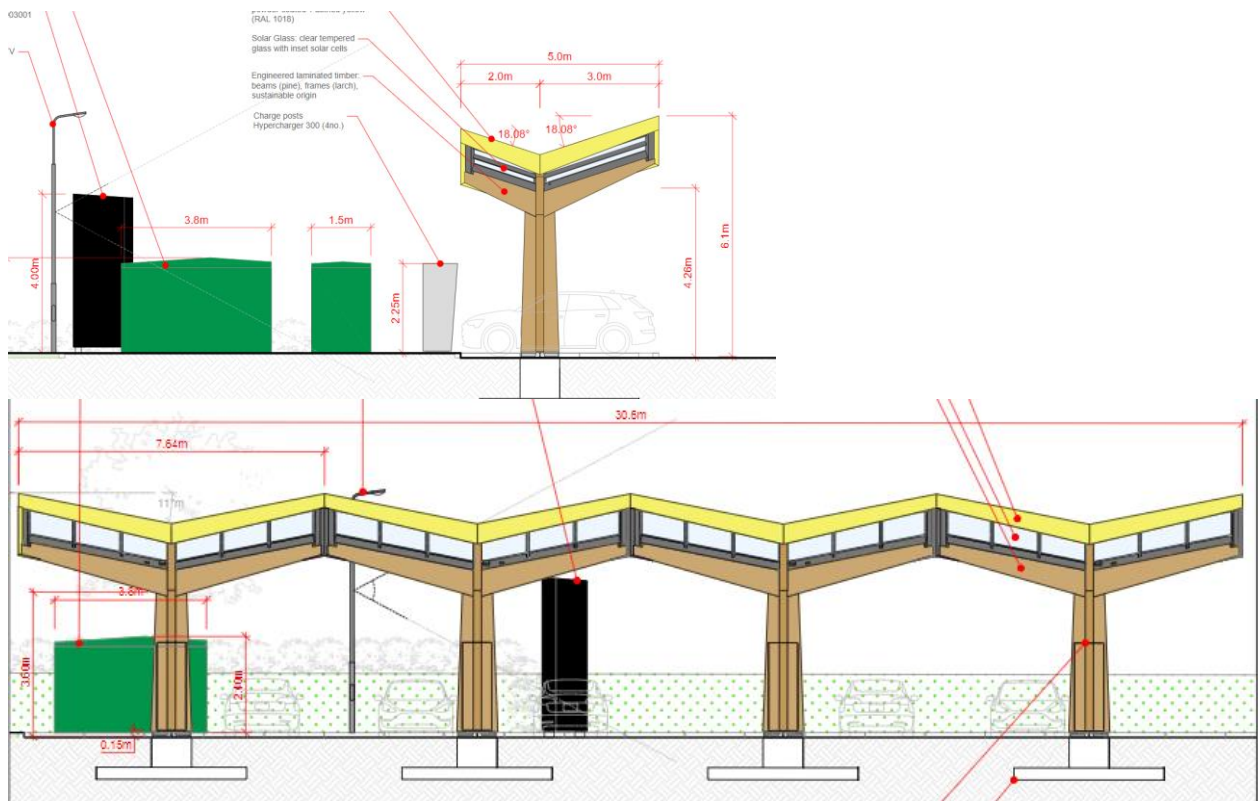
The applicant seeks permission to install an electric vehicle charging point station with a roof canopy with solar glass, a substation and an LV switchboard.

The proposal will result in an area that currently accommodates 19 car parking spaces being redesigned such that it would only accommodate 8 parking spaces.

The proposal includes a six metre high roof canopy in a timber and yellow finish with a steel framed solar glass roof and a range of charging posts and equipment/substation cabinets around 2.5 metre high. The proposed 8 charging bays would allow vehicles to receive a rapid charge (approx. 15-20 minutes).

The proposal is supported by a Planning, Design and Access Statement and a Response to Queries document that set out the context of the project and the planning policy context, explain the choice of location on the site and respond to the representations from the local councillor and local resident. The application has been amended to include a fully detailed landscaping scheme.

Proposed elevations:



Example of a Fastned installation



Proposed landscaping scheme – six new silver birch in the highway and replacement prunus hedge



Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

The Local Plan was adopted by the Council in January 2019. The Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents which are other material considerations.

The Local Plan review was approved at the full Council meeting held 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering its objectives. This means no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review. The next review is due to take place in 2027 or earlier if circumstances require it.

The National Planning Policy Framework represents up-to-date government planning policy and is a material consideration that must be taken into account where it is relevant to a planning application

Local Plan

The application site is an area designated as Urban Fabric in the Local Plan. The following policies are relevant:

Policy GD1 General Development – Development will be approved subject to consideration of criteria relating to the impact and quality of the proposal.

Policy D1 High Quality Design and Place Making – Development is expected to be of a high quality design and will be expected to respect, take advantage of and reinforce the distinctive, local character and other features of Barnsley.

Policy T4 New development and Transport Safety – expects new development to be designed and built to provide safe secure and convenient access and to not cause or add to problems of highway safety or efficiency.

Policy CC1 – Climate Change – indicates that we will seek to reduce the causes of and adapt to the future impacts of climate change by a range of measures (including promoting and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy).

RE1 - Low Carbon and Renewable Energy – all developments will be expected to incorporate initially appropriate design measures and thereafter decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy sources in order to reduce carbon emissions and should at least achieve carbon

compliance targets set out in Building Regulations. Also sets out criteria for consideration of renewable energy producing development.

Policy Poll1 Pollution Control and Protection – sets criteria to ensure that new development does not unacceptably affect or cause nuisance to the natural and built environment or to people; or suffer from unacceptable levels of pollution.

Other planning guidance

Barnsley MBC Air Quality and Emissions Good Practice Planning Guidance

NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole; or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted or unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF advises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities

It includes policies on sustainable transport and the requirement for local parking standards and applications for development to take into account the need to ensure adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in vehicles

In addition, the NPPF also includes advice in a number of areas on the importance of public safety, albeit none of them relating specifically to the type of proposal dealt with here.

Consultations

Highways Development Control: The area proposed for the 8no. EV charging bays and associated equipment currently provides 19 car parking spaces, the proposals thereby resulting in the loss of 11 spaces. However, the car park does not often operate close to capacity and as such the proposals should not lead to problems in terms of parking provision.

As such, the proposals are considered to have minimal highway implications and there are no objections on highways development control grounds

Revised comments in relation to proposed planting in the highway: there is an existing planting licence in place which can be used to allow the proposed trees to be planted, subject to consent from the licensee.

Pollution Control: In line with Barnsley MBC Air Quality and Emissions Good Practice Planning Guidance, we would suggest the provision of rapid charging points dependent on the nature of the site use. This proposal is for 'four rapid charge units, each capable of serving two cars simultaneously, resulting in 8no. charging bays, above the minimum specification we suggest in the above guidance. As such we support this development proposal.

In line with Barnsley MBC Air Quality and Emissions Good Practice Planning Guidance, we provide the following advice with regards to electrical safety.

5. Electrical Safety Standards

The applicant shall conform with all electrical and safety standards / regulations etc required for the installation of EVCPs. Future liability for conforming with these requirements will be the responsibility of the applicant. The applicant shall determine which electrical safety standards are appropriate.

Thus whilst we appreciate concerns about the proposed proposal, we are not qualified to comment on this issue.

Sustainability: no response

Ward Councillors – One response from former Councillor Fielding at the time he was a sitting ward member stated: Whilst I fully support the general increase of EV charging points, I am aware of real concerns about safety around such installations so would be grateful if assurances were sought independently around the adequacy of safety precautions at this installation, given the number of charging points in one location. I am particularly concerned about the risk associated with thermal runaway events and vapour explosions connected with large Lithium batteries. Further information on these risks can be viewed here (provides link to You tube video)

Representations

The application was advertised by way of a site notice (4-25 May) and consultation letters which were sent to units/properties near to the proposal site. Two comments have been received making the following points

- The application should be rejected on safety grounds. There have been numerous incidents of uncontrolled battery fires all round the world including one in a car park in Liverpool (provides link to BBC News article and two You tube videos). The installation as proposed could result in multiple unquenchable fires, releasing toxic fumes close to a busy junction, hotel, restaurant and housing.
- I have referred this to my MP for consideration. It should be an issue addressed at national level by fire and safety experts and new rules developed accordingly.

Assessment

Principle

The principle of infrastructure for drivers in a car park is acceptable in principle. Consideration is given to matters of detail below.

Visual Amenity

The proposed structures required for the charging station are located in a prominent position adjacent to the highway boundary, albeit screened to a small extent by the shallow highway verge/embankment. It is clear that, like for example petrol stations, the proposed charging station requires a location adjacent to a busy highway; a canopy sheltering users from the weather; and a location with a degree of natural surveillance given that the site is not staffed. As such, although the proposed canopy with its somewhat bright corporate colour is an uncommon addition to the street scene, together with the charging units and battery storage cabinets, the proposal reflects the demand for the emerging technology (fast car charging) and seeks to contribute towards the decarbonisation of transport. The applicant has submitted a fully detailed landscaping scheme with six new silver birch trees and a replacement prunus hedge. It has been established that the landscaping in the highway can take place under the terms of an existing planting licence and agreement from the licensee has been secured. The proposed landscaping goes some way to mitigate the impact of the proposed development and it is concluded therefore that the proposed development is acceptable in appearance in this largely commercial setting.

Highway Safety

The Highways Officer has advised that the proposed charging station will result in the loss of parking spaces but that this will not lead to problems in terms of parking provision. The proposal will have minimal highway implications and there are no objections on highway safety grounds.

Fire Safety

The concerns raised by a Councillor and local resident relating to fire safety have been addressed by the applicant and pollution control. The applicant confirms that Fastned stations conform to all relevant safety regulations and have been operating for over a decade with a 12th station recently completed here in the UK (with in excess of 200 charging stations across Europe). The substation will be adopted by the Distribution Network Operators, who have stringent regulations for substation design. The chargers are manufactured by Alpitroic in Italy who are leaders in their field and used by many other leading EV charging companies around the world. There are no large lithium batteries on site other than those in the cars that arrive to be charged. It is concluded that given the applicant's commitment to conform to all relevant safety regulations, the site is expected to operate within current guidance. It is recommended that the advice in the BMBC Air Quality and Emissions Good Practice Planning Guidance advising the applicant to conform with all electrical and safety standards/regulations for the installation of EVCPs is included as an informative on the decision notice.

Other matters

The proposed development will contribute towards the NPPF and Local Plan policy objectives of promoting and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the significant benefits of the securing the provision of an EV charging station providing eight fast charging points together with the proposed landscaping scheme outweighs any concerns in relation to the visual impact of the proposal, and of the safety of the proposal, given the context that the applicant commits to conforming with all relevant safety regulations.

Recommendation

Grant subject to conditions