

Application No: 12/2786N

Location: Bentley Motors Ltd, PYMS LANE, CREWE, CHESHIRE, CW1 3PL

Proposal: Installation of Roof Mounted Solar PV System

Applicant: Mr A Robertson

Expiry Date: 03-Oct-2012

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve with conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Design - Character and Appearance**
- **Impact on Amenity of Adjacent Properties**

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is to be determined by Southern Planning Committee as it is a proposal on a site area which exceeds 1ha.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

This application relates to the site of Bentley Motors, a large industrial site for the manufacturing of motor vehicles located within the settlement boundary for Crewe. The factory site consumes a significant area which is contained by Pym's Lane to the north, a railway to the south, Sunnybank Road to the west and an area of open space to the east. There are other areas outside of this area which are within the applicant's ownership for car parking and ancillary development. There are numerous large factory buildings within the site. The application site itself relates to six buildings within the site which vary in terms of their size. One of the buildings is the main frontage building on Pym's Lane which is Art Deco and is on the Council's Local List of Historic Buildings.

3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application proposes the installation of solar PV panels to be fixed to the south facing roofs of six buildings. These six buildings comprise of 3 brick built Art Deco buildings situated at the front of the site (G1, B1, C1) and 3 portal industrial buildings located in the far southeast corner of the site (A5, A6 and F1). The installation would achieve a potential annual output of 3MWp. The

proposals would generally be used to meet on site demands but on occasion would be fed into the National Grid. There would be a potential saving of 1980 tonnes of carbon per year.

4. RELEVANT HISTORY

There is an extensive history for the site. However, the only application of relevance is planning ref; 11/1042N, which was approved by the Southern Planning Committee in 2011. This granted planning permission for the installation of a similar roof mounted solar PV system, but involved the larger plant buildings occupying the remaining part of the site. This proposal seeks permission for an additional installation on some of the smaller buildings at the site.

5. POLICIES

Local Plan Policy

BE.13 (Buildings of Local Interest)
NE.19 (Renewable Energy)
BE.1 (Amenity)
BE.2 (Design Standards)
BE.3 (Accessing and Parking)

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

6. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Strategic Highways Manager – None received at time of writing report

Environmental Health – None received at time of writing report

Civil Aviation Authority – None received at time of writing report

7. VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

None

8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

None received at time of writing report

9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Design and Access Statement submitted, the salient points being:

- Located on existing south facing roofs
- Used to meet on site demand and on occasion fed into National Grid
- Would save 1380 tonnes of Carbon per year

- Site can be seen for some distance but site is consistent and tidy geometry to grid iron layout.
- Open fields to east with residential development beyond, to south is the Crewe to North Wales mainline railway and beyond that is residential development.
- Will be installed on buildings G1, B1, C1, A5, A6 and F1 and would be mechanically fixed to the roofs through a light-weight support framework.
- No generation of noise or increased traffic movements
- Output potential of 3MWp

10. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

Policy NE.19 of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan states that development which is for the generation of power from renewable energy sources will be permitted, subject to satisfying a number of criteria relating to impact on the character of the area, highway safety, the amenities of nearby properties and landscape considerations. The proposed development is for solar panels and is therefore acceptable in principle providing there is no significant harm to those areas identified.

Developments for renewable energy schemes which help to address climate change are encouraged in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Para 98 of the NPPF states that when considering planning applications, the Local Planning Authority should “not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy” and should “approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable”.

With regard to buildings which are locally listed, the NPPF seeks to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. Section 12 of the NPPF expands further stating that local authorities should take account of the desirability of new development. Where there is harm caused to the heritage asset this should be balanced against any public benefits of the scheme.

The main issues in this instance are whether the proposed development would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, the locally listed building, and the amenities of nearby properties. There are no landscape considerations due to the nature of the site and, as the proposals do not create additional floorspace and are contained within the site complex, there would be no highways implications.

Design - Character and Appearance

The application site is a large factory sited on the edge of Crewe. The scale of the site means that it is visible from a wide area. The proposed solar panels, would be sited entirely on the south facing roofs of six of the smaller buildings located on the Pym's Lane frontage and towards the rear south-east corner of the site. Views of the south facing roofs are available from nearby residential streets and properties. However, the impact would not be significantly greater than that which was approved by virtue of planning ref; 11/1042N and the proposal would not add significant bulk to the existing buildings.

The key consideration is the visual impact of the proposed installation on the front Art Deco buildings (B1, C1 and G1), which are the most significant parts of this complex. The visual impact

on B1 will be minimised by the presence of a parapet as it is flat roofed and as such the installation will be screened somewhat from Pym's Lane.

In the case of buildings C1 and G1, these have a dual pitched roof behind the parapet detail which would result in the south facing pv panels of the locally listed building being visible from parts of Pym's Lane when approaching from the side. In the case of these frontage buildings, the use of pv panels which are entirely black should be conditioned, to ensure that their visual impact is minimised in the presence of the locally listed building when viewed from the main road and approaches to the building from the side.

Whilst the proposal to use pv panels on the rear side building and on the adjacent rear buildings (A5, A6 and F1) will result in their introduction on buildings which form part of the curtilage to the complex, given their distance from the main road frontage of the locally listed building there would be no perceptible impacts and will tie in with the installation approved by virtue of planning ref 11/1042N.

Impact on the Amenity of adjacent properties

There are residential properties located to the north, east and south, the nearest of which is some 50m from the proposed development. The proposed development is a renewable energy source which does not generate any noise output and would not add significant bulk to the existing buildings. Due to the nature of the development there would be no amenity issues relating to disturbance, pollution, visual intrusion or traffic generation.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development is for a solar panel installation on the south facing roofs of Bentley Motors. The setting and nature of the site would mean that the proposed development would not cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area. There would be no amenity issues arising from the proposed development and would provide significant benefits through the reduction of carbon emissions, which would outweigh any harm in the change in character and appearance of the site. The proposed development is therefore considered to be in compliance with the relevant local plan policies and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

APPROVE with conditions

- 1) Standard time limit (3 years)**
- 2) Development to be carried out in accordance with approved plans**
- 3) Materials / colours as submitted for buildings A5, A6, and F1**
- 4) Materials / colours for buildings B1, C1 and G1 to be black unless other wise agreed)**

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