Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC)

Planning Department

<By Planning Portal>

11th August 2023

Dear Sir / Madam,

23-23: Householder Planning for PV (Solar) panels within domestic curtilage at: Woodroyd, Longsdon

1.0 Description of the Proposals & Analysis

1.1 The proposals are associated with the property Woodroyd accessed via Denford Road in Longsdon within the local authority of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, hereafter abbreviated to SMDC. Woodroyd is a detached 2 storey house built using roughcast rendered masonry walls using a traditional pitched roof weathered in grey plain tiles with a pitched major and minor gable to the to the front and side. The property is of traditional origin, likely from early 20th century (between 1898-1922) although an exact date is irrelevant to the proposals.

1.2 The property is within a small ribbon of development / minor linear settlement within Longsdon. Longsdon is a parish that is entirely over-washed by Green Belt. As result, the siting of the PV's is proposed within an area of domestic curtilage where the householder would benefit from 'permitted development rights'. There are no nearby listed buildings, and the site is not within a conservation area (nearest nearby is the Caldon Canal circa 800m South).

1.3 The proposals look to provide 16 No. of free-standing Photo Voltaic / Solar Panels (PV) in a single row of Panels 16.8 x 1.9m, at 1.4m height from ground level. The purpose of these PV's to charge a battery located within the buildings which will provide electricity storage to supply the house. Any excess energy created, to export back to the grid at a rate of around 4- 5 pence per KW. However, the purpose of the proposals is to provide Woodroyd sustainable energy. The purpose is not for profit, and the feed-back tariff is irrelevant to the applicant.

1.4 Ground mounted PV's in the proposed location can face squarely South if desired, however, the applicant has elected to use an orientation 164° from 'True North', this is with a 14° bias towards the East rather than completely square to the South. When angled in this manner the proposals will reflect the angle of the Northern boundary. The proposals will be sited immediately beyond a vegetable patch which will be reduced in size. The existing planting will screen the PV's whilst by maintaining a separation from the boundary by 6.4 - 7.8m there will be no effect to the existing mature trees which border the site.

1.5 The PV's will use ground mounted frames which will be auger driven in situ to ensure minimal disruption to the below ground environment, at 1.4m height the PV's are shielded by existing boundary treatments and the vegetable patch. Using shallow auger fixings also ensures that no harm will occur to the nearby trees.



Figure 1: The proposals will use shall Ground Screws at a rate of approximately 1 screw every two panels. These are driven to circa 700mm depth and they have a diameter of circa 75mm. This completely eliminates any possibility of causing harm to nearby trees.



Figure 2: The Inverters are installed externally underneath the Solar Panels to provide some weather protection. The equipment emits no noise and there will be no loss of amenity / noise nuisance from the proposals.



Figure 3: The proposed panels are an "All Black" JA Solar product. 2000x1050mm in size. By installing the panels on a 20-30 degree tilt the overall height is minimised.



Figure 4: The PV's will reduce the size of the vegetable patch. This ensures that the PV's are screened from the house and also that they are 6.4m away from any trees to the right-hand side of this photo.

2.0 Planning Policy Background & Discussion

2.1 Section 38(6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

2.2 In Staffordshire Moorlands, 'The Local Plan' was adopted on 9th September 2020 and sets out the council's vision and strategy for the district until 2033.

2.3 National guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) underpin the general strategy for development with which all development plans must be in broad conformity.

2.4 The following policies are relevant to the proposals, and these will be appraised in the following section of this report:

3.1 Local Plan

3.1 The Local Plan sets out how SMDC would like to see the district develop by 2033. Section 5 sets out Spatial Aims and Spatial Objectives.

- Spatial Aim SA1 has the aspiration to create *"distinctive, sustainable, self-supporting settlements".*
- Spatial Aim SA2 outlines policy should meet *"the needs of our communities."*
- Spatial Objective SO8 looks to *"To promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the district."*
- Spatial Objective SO9 looks to *"To conserve and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, heritage, biodiversity and geological resources."*

3.2 Policy SD1 relates to 'Sustainable Use of Resources'. Policy states the council will support *"development that is located and designed to minimise energy needs and to take advantage of maximised orientation (subject to design and landscape policies) to achieve energy savings in line with Policy SD 3."* Paragraph 7.12 goes on to elaborate on this saying: *"the siting and design of all stand-alone renewables installations requires careful consideration, to protect the natural and built environment, and other amenities, without precluding the supply of any type of renewable energy".* In essence this policy states that efforts to generate renewable energy should be supported so long as the effect of the proposals does not have wider negative effects.

3.3 Policy SD2 relates to 'Renewable/Low-Carbon Energy. Policy states the council will *"support small- and large-scale standalone renewable or low-carbon energy schemes subject to the following considerations: in the case of solar energy proposals that are not affixed to buildings or structures, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have examined whether previously developed land is available before greenfield land. Where agricultural land is proposed, poorer quality land should be utilised before higher quality agricultural land."*

3.4 Policy SD3 relates to 'Sustainability Measures in Development'. Policy states *"The Council will support measures designed to improve the sustainability of existing buildings (such as improved thermal insulation, water conservation, or the installation of micro-renewables)."*

3.5 Policy DC3 relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' policy states the council will resist proposals which have a *"prominent intrusion into the countryside".*

4.0 National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF)

4.1 Chapter 14 of the NPPF relates to **'**Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change':

4.2 Paragraph 152 expects local authorities to *"support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure".*

4.3 Paragraph 158 states local authorities should *"recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions".*

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The proposals will reduce the applicants dependence on non-renewable energy sources; this will make the site more self-sufficient. This accords with Local Plan Spatial Aims SA1 and SA2. By improving the existing building efficiency, Policy SD3 is also met. Although the proposals are only small in scale, they will still have a worthwhile impact by making a larger, traditional dwelling more sustainable. This should be supported by SMDC as Chapter 14 of the NPPF states.

5.2 The applicant has carefully considered their options on the site, as is expected by Policy SD2. The proposed location for a small amount of ground mounted Solar Panels is in an inobtrusive area, circa 23-32m from the dwelling, views of these are shielded by the existing vegetable patch. Some alternative options on the building, or outside domestic curtilage would not be as suitable. On the roof, the building orientation does not allow sufficient area of PV's, and this would prevent future maintenance. Whilst outside domestic curtilage the Green Belt land status might cause the proposals to be unacceptable. In the proposed location this accords with Policies SD1, SD2 and DC3 and the development is 'acceptable in principle'.

5.3 The proposals do not affect the amenity of any neighbours of the site and there are spacious interface distances as is demonstrated on the 'Proposed Block Plan' by 'b3architectural', commissioned by the applicant.

5.4 Going forwards an increase in the cost of energy bills will result in more dwellings turning to methods of sustainable electricity generation in Staffordshire, across the UK and worldwide. These measures meet the aims of Chapter 14 of the NPPF.

5.5 For the reasons rehearsed above, it is respectfully suggested that the application should be recommended for **approval.**

Yours Faithfully,



Bruce Johnson BSc (1st Hons), PGDip, MSc
on behalf of applicant: Mr L. Clowes