

**5d 3/11/1286/FP - Solar Panels on the south and west facing pitches of 4no. agricultural buildings at Monks Green Farm, Monks Green Lane, Hertford, SG13 8QL for Mr William Ashley**

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**Date of Receipt:** 18.07.2011

**Type:** Full –Minor

**Parish:** BRICKENDON LIBERTY

**Ward:** HERTFORD HEATH

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. 3 Year time limit (1T14)
2. Approved plans (2E10) 'MGF1-2AP, MGF3+4AP, 1'

**Directive:**

1. Other legislation (010L)

**Summary of Reasons for Decision**

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan May 2008, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan and the saved policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies GBC1, SD3 and ENV1 and PPG2. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

\_\_\_\_\_(128611.LP)

**1.0 Background:**

1.1 The buildings the subject of this application are sited on the southern side of the farm complex of Monks Green Farm, being approximately 1 mile to the south of Hertford, as shown on the attached OS extract. The wider farm complex includes other dwellings at Long Croft, Monks Green Farm House, Rose Cottage and The Bungalow. The application seeks permission for photovoltaic solar panels to be erected on the south or west roof slope of 4 existing barns within the Monks Green Farm Complex.

1.2 The application is being reported to Committee as the applicant is Councillor William Ashley.

**2.0 Site History:**

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- 2.1 Building 2 had approval to be erected as a chicken shed under lpa 3/98/0762/FP.
- 2.2 Building 1 has been converted permission, under lpa 3/87/1882/FL, 3/89/1796/FR and 3/99/1951/FN to use as part B1 (light industrial/office) and part B8 (storage) use.
- 2.3 There is no recent planning permission relating to buildings 3 and 4.
- 2.4 Planning permission was granted under lpa 3/08/1739/FP and 3/11/0079/FP for the conversion, extension and alteration of existing sheds to provide 4 live work units to the 3 barns that run east-west on the Monks Green Farm site. These barns are not those that are subject to this planning application.

### **3.0 Consultation Responses:**

- 3.1 No consultation responses have been received at the time of writing this report.

### **4.0 Parish Council Representations:**

- 4.1 Brickendon Liberty Parish Council has made no comments.

### **5.0 Other Representations:**

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by way of a discretionary site notice.
- 5.2 No letters of representation have been received at the time of writing this report.

### **6.0 Policy:**

- 6.1 The relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies in this application include the following:

GBC1	Green Belt
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
SD3	Renewable Energy

6.2 In addition, the following National policy guidance is relevant:-

Planning Policy Guidance 2 – Green Belts  
Planning Policy Statement 22 – Renewable Energy

**7.0 Considerations:**

7.1 The main issues for consideration in this case are:

- The principle of the development
- The impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area especially in respect of its visual impact; and
- Neighbour amenity.

7.2 Turning first to the principle of development; under the provisions of Local Plan Policy GBC1 (Development in the Metropolitan Green Belt), permission will not normally be given for the construction of new buildings or changes of use, other than for those purposes listed under the policy as appropriate development. One such purpose is for agriculture and forestry. Whilst alterations to buildings, and the provision of solar panels, are not covered by the policy, the applicant states that the solar panels are proposed to provide renewable energy to supply the previously permitted live/work units proposed at the site and existing farm buildings. Any surplus electricity will be exported to the National Grid. Given that the electricity to be produced is to be used primarily for agricultural purposes, or other uses that are considered appropriate within this Green Belt location, I am satisfied that the proposed development complies with policy GBC1. Furthermore, policy SD3 supports the principle of harnessing renewable energy and particular emphasis is placed on promoting energy generation from solar power. This is consistent with national policy in PPS22 which encourages positive planning for increased development of renewable energy resources to facilitate the delivery of the Governments commitments on both climate change and renewable energy. I therefore consider the principle of development to be acceptable.

7.3 Turning to the visual impact the development may have on the area, Policy SD3, whilst supporting the provision of facilities for renewable energy in principle, states that proposals will be judged primarily on their visual impact, particularly where it effects listed buildings, Conservation Areas or other areas of particular visual quality or sensitivity. In this case the site is situated within open countryside and situated some distance from the public highway and the topography and landscaping is such that there are limited views of the existing building from public vantage points. The proposed solar panels are to

be sited on the south roof slope of buildings 1, 3 and 4 and the east roof slope of building 2. The panels to building 1 would measure 6 x 40 metres, to building 2 would measure 9 x 54 metres, to building 3 would measure 5 x 19 metres and building 4 would measure 8 x 19 metres and the panels cover almost the entire roof slopes to which they are proposed to be sited. Despite this, taking into account the form of the existing building which have very shallow slopes; the distance from public view points and the topography and landscaping of the surrounding area, the proposed solar panels would not, in my view, have an undue adverse visual impact upon either of the buildings themselves, the surrounding area or the Green Belt. The site lies outside of a Conservation Area, and the solar panels are to be sited on the roof slope facing away from the Listed Building of Monks Green Farmhouse. The proposal therefore complies with the requirements of policy SD3 and ENV1 of the Local Plan and PPG2: Green Belts.

7.4 Finally with regards to any impact the proposal may have on the amenities of neighbouring properties I am satisfied that due to the siting of the solar panels and the relationship with neighbours, no adverse neighbour impact would result.

## **8.0 Conclusion:**

8.1 To conclude, I consider that the principle of the proposal is acceptable and that no adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area would occur. There would be no adverse neighbour amenity to existing neighbours or for future occupiers of the live/work units.

8.2 The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan and East Herts Local Plan). The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that planning permission consent should be granted subject to the conditions set out at the commencement of this report.