

Application Number

P/2012/0630

Site AddressWestella
Tor Vale
Torquay
Devon
TQ1 4EB**Case Officer**

Miss Alix Cathcart

Ward

Tormohun

Description

Erection of 16no. 250W Solar Pv panels on A-Frames on residential garage roof of Westella.

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

The installation of solar panels is supported by Local Plan policy. The panels would be in the public view. It is considered that the impact of the proposal on the neighbouring property and on the wider public would not result in material detriment to amenity, sufficient to justify refusal of the proposal.

Recommendation:

Approval.

Site Details:

Semi detached Victorian villa on east side of Tor Vale, which is a cul de sac ending in Clarendon Close. The site of the application proposal is the flat roof of a double garage which has been constructed at the side of the property at its north west corner.

A site review meeting was held on 5 November 2012, attended by Councillor Excell, where the outcome was that the application should be determined under delegated powers, provided that screening, such as a parapet, was fixed at the side of the garage roof, to screen the panels from view from the objector's side. The applicant has declined to make this revision to the scheme, with the following response:

“Erecting screening is likely to cause shadowing to the panels late in the afternoons/evenings and reduce the productivity of the panels (which is why they are being raised in the first place.

“A Parapet is likely to be caught by the wind, unless a more solid parapet is installed which is likely to add significant cost the Applicant's project.

“We feel that the main views from Clarendon are at the front and rear of the property and not at the side where there are bedroom views towards the proposal.

“As per Peter Robert's letter dated 5th November 2012 he considers the visual impact of raising the panels to be "limited", as do we.

“The Applicant feels that the request for screening to be erected in an area which is not a Greenbelt, Conservation Area, AONB or on or within the curtilage of a listed building is unreasonable and not a standard/expected mitigating measure for applications of this type outside of sensitive areas. In addition there are other solar panel installations on nearby properties and are therefore not completely alien to the area.”

The application is therefore being referred to the Development Management Committee for decision.

Detailed Proposals:

The fixing of solar panels at a raised, elevated, angle facing towards the south west. The solar panels have already been installed with the benefit of Permitted Development Rights, lying flat on the garage roof. Planning permission is required to raise them above 200mm from the surface of the roof. The submitted plan shows that the maximum height of each panel would be 0.72 of a metre.

Additional details have been provided by the applicant confirming the glare reducing properties of the cells which make up the panels.

Consultation Responses:

No comments.

Representations:

One letter of objection has been received from 5 Clarendon Close, the neighbouring property to the north. Points raise include:

- The panels, as installed, result in glare and an unsightly view.
- The panels will spoil the area
- Alternative siting possible
- Loss of value

This has been re-produced at Page T.207.

Relevant Planning History:

2012/0490 Installation of 16 250w Solar PV panels on flat roof and all associated works. Withdrawn, due to inaccurate plans.

Key Issues/Material Considerations:

The installation of solar panels is supported in principle by Policy EP2 Renewable Energy of the Local Plan. The main issues in this case are the impact of the development on residential amenity and on the character of the area.

It is acknowledged that the panels have an ungainly appearance and that their appearance from neighbouring houses, particularly to the north, would be unattractive. The issue is whether their size, siting and design is such that planning permission ought to be refused.

It is accepted that the panels need to be sited at an angle in order to perform their function, so requiring them to be laid flat is not considered to be a realistic option.

The panels are not considered to have an overbearing impact, the main issue is their ungainly appearance. While it is accepted that they would be in the public view, the number of neighbouring properties with views from their properties or on travelling along Tor Vale and Clarendon Close for the purposes of access would be relatively limited due to the cul de sac location.

Response to points raised by the objector:

The objections raised by the neighbouring occupier are understood. It is noted that their house is occupied as a single dwelling house, where the principal outlook is to front and rear with smaller windows facing to the side. While the objector considers that there may be potential for an alternative siting, the application falls to be determined as submitted. Loss of value is not a material planning consideration.

Section 106/CIL:

Not applicable.

Conclusions:

While concern of the objector regarding the visual appearance of the installation is acknowledged, there is a strong policy context supporting the installation of renewable energy systems. Given the relatively secluded location of the proposal, not on a main thoroughfare, it is considered that the harm to visual amenity is not so great as to warrant refusal of the proposal.

The applicant's reasons for not wishing to include a side screen in the scheme are considered to be reasonable and the proposal is supported as submitted.

Accordingly, the application is considered to reflect Local Plan policy criteria and is recommended for approval.

Condition(s)/Reason(s)

01. The PV panels hereby approved shall be removed when no longer required for the purpose for which they were installed.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and in accordance with the objectives of Policy H15 of the Saved Adopted Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011.

Informative(s)

01. Summary of reasons for the grant of permission: This proposal meets Local Plan policy criteria because of its size, siting and design. The scheme is appropriate in respect of its appearance and its impact on nearby residential occupiers.

Relevant Policies

EP2 Renewable energy
H15 House extensions