Application Number: ADC/0413/08 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: **Adur Outdoor Activity Centre, Brighton Road Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 5LT**

Proposal: **Extension to plant room on north side; installation of groundsource heat pump with 8 boreholes & pipework beneath adjacent grassed area; 36 photovoltaic solar panels and 5 hotwater solar collectors on roof of main building**

The Application

The application relates to the Adur Outdoor Activity Centre, located in the eastern corner of Adur Recreation Ground, within a 0.7 hectare site. The Centre is adjacent to, and has access to the River Adur a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The Centre comprises of a two-storey flat-roofed building dating from the 1970's and an attached two-storey pitched roof extension (indoor climbing wall) permitted in 1998, plus an entrance porch and ancillary storage of equipment and boats within the grounds.

Permission is sought for the refurbishment of the Centre including the upgrading of many of the services so they are powered by sustainable means. The sustainable energy microgeneration would consist of the addition of 36 photovoltaic electricity generating solar panels and 5 solar water heater panels to the top of the flat-roofed building (as amended); a ground source heat pump (GSHP) including 8 boreholes (each 91m deep and 0.12m in diameter), located to the north west of the main buildings; and a new flood-safe plantroom which would be 4.5m wide, by 6.7m deep, by 3.9m in height to where the sloping tiled roof would meet the existing building. The plantroom would house all the pumping equipment, underground power tanks and electrical services for the GSHP, and would leave space for a future additional technologies such as a biomass boiler.

The applicant has submitted a Design and Access statement in which they state that:-
"The Adur Outdoor Activity Centre (AOAC) offers a wide range of outdoor and adventure activities for young people from school, college and youth groups. Adult groups and individuals can use the centres climbing wall and boating facilities. Within the courses provided staff put a large emphasis on educating patrons about ecology, and the necessity to protect and maintain our natural surroundings. After the refurbishment it is intended that aspects of the buildings sustainable services will be taught to students alongside the existing environmental surroundings education."

"The plant room's proposed location is to the rear of the main buildings and is located in order to minimize noise disturbance and visual intrusion and shall not adversely affect the wildlife interests of the SSSI".
The GSHP has been proposed for the project due to its high seasonal efficiency over the conventional oil-fired boilers. Combined with the Solar Hot Water panels the system will provide 100% of the heating and hot water load of the building via renewable sources. Once the boreholes and pipe work has been installed they will refilled so that the

appearance of the grass area will appear exactly as it is at present. The boreholes require no maintenance and have a lifespan of 20 years.
The installation of 36 PV solar panels and 5 solar hot water panels will provide the full hot water load of the building and additionally will provide up to a maximum of 6kW of electrical power to the facility. The panels will be inclined at an angle of 35 degrees so they will not protrude above the roof line by more than 1 metre. The low protrusion height will significantly reduce the visual impact on the landscape."

An additional Method Statement for the drilling of the boreholes has been submitted which has been compiled in consultation with the Environment Agency. It sets out the method of drilling and remedial protection that will be introduced to prevent surface contamination of the SSSI; machinery to be used; hours of work and the expected length of time of the installation.

Consultations and Representations

Environment Agency: No objection provided a condition is imposed stating:- "Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods shall not be permitted other than with the express written consent of the LPA, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with these approved details."

Obj withdrawn - owed condition 5

Adur District Council: The Council's Environmental Health Officer objects because the drilling of 8 boreholes (91m in depth, as proposed) has the potential to drive landfill waste and mobilise contaminants into the aquifer (chalk).
Environmental Health records show that this part of Adur Recreation Ground was used as an uncontrolled tip for approximately 50 years. It is thought to be filled with approximately 120,000m³ of waste; ⅔ household waste and ⅓ inert waste and is unlikely to have had any form of controlled compaction.
Any contamination present at this site will originate from the infill material and could include heavy metals such as Cadmium, Chromium, Copper, Lead, Nickel and Zinc; semi-metals such as Arsenic, inorganic chemicals such as Sulphur, possibly asbestos and several other key contaminants such as oil/fuel hydrocarbons, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, chlorinated aliphatic hydrocarbons, chlorinated aromatic hydrocarbons, polychlorinated biphenols, dioxin and furans. As this landfill has been filled with household waste it is also likely that putresible material was deposited here. Landfill gases are generated during the natural process of bacterial decomposition of organic material contained in landfills, so there is a possibility that landfill gas may be present at this site. However, as landfill ages, the production of gas reduces.

Natural England: ~~To be reported~~ No obj.

Third Parties: No comments received.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005) (saved policies): LOC2, NE11-12, CH3, ERA2, ERA5, DEV1
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AC1, AC4, AR1, AR15, AR17

PPS 1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (ODPM 2005) and Supplement 'Planning and Climate Change'
PPS17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' (ODPM 2002)
PPS22 'Renewable Energy' (ODPM 2004)
PPS23 'Planning and Pollution Control' (ODPM 2004)
PPS25 'Planning and Flood Risk' (ODPM 2006) & Circular 04/07

Planning Assessment

Policies

The Adur Recreation Ground, including this site, is specifically subject to policy AR17 of the Adur District Local Plan which states that permission will be granted for extensions and alterations to existing water-based club facilities providing the siting, form, scale, design and construction is appropriate to the local environment; the facilities do not adversely affect the wildlife interests of the SSSI; and subject to satisfactory traffic and parking considerations. The application site and recreation ground lie within the Strategic Gap of countryside separating the built-up areas of Shoreham and Lancing. Policy AC4 states that development within the Gap will only be allowed in 'compelling circumstances' such as 'to take advantage of valuable opportunity to meet a need for recreation.'
Structure Plan recreation and countryside policies state that only small-scale development associated with 'quiet informal recreation' will normally be acceptable in the countryside (NE11-12); and that they seek to protect and where possible enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area, requiring high standards of design, layout and construction (LOC2, DEV1).

The recent Supplement 'Planning and Climate Change' to PPS1 highlights the importance attached by the Government to tackling global climate change through encouragement of sustainable forms of development, including decentralised renewable or low-carbon energy supply. PPS22 'Renewable Energy' states that local planning authorities should consider the opportunity for incorporating renewable energy projects in all new developments. Small-scale renewable energy schemes utilising technologies such as solar panels, biomass heating, small-scale wind turbines, photovoltaic cells and combined heat and power schemes can be incorporated both into new development and some existing buildings. 'Permitted development rights' have just been increased to allow, without making a planning application, small solar photovoltaics and solar thermal installations on dwellings, plus ground and water source heat pumps and flues for biomass boilers and combined heat & power units.

Sustainable and resource efficient buildings

In accordance with Government policy objectives, as a necessary response to global climate change, the need to encourage sustainable energy has to be given sufficient weight when it is balanced against other factors such as visual impact and potential noise disturbance. Cumulatively, small scale renewable energy schemes have a role to play in reducing carbon dioxide emissions and thereby tackling climate change which ultimately protects the wider environment. Whilst individual microgeneration units would only produce a small amount of electricity compared to the demands of an area, the approval of such schemes could set an example for similar ones to follow more widely, which is what would be required for there to be any significant effect on reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Overall, it is considered that the sustainable energy benefits amount to compelling circumstances sufficient, in principle, to justify this development in the strategic gap.

Visual amenity

As stated above, the Activity Centre is located within the 'strategic gap' outside the built-up area. It has a prominent position adjacent to the Norfolk Bridge and facing the Ropetackle development on the opposite side of the river.

The Activity Centre buildings comprise two distinct elements, with the large number of solar panels proposed to be sited on the original flat-roofed building, with the more recent taller pyramid-roofed addition on its south-west side. The latter, together with a tree, would screen the solar panels from view when approaching along the A259 from the south west. However, from the elevated position of the Norfolk Bridge or from a greater distance away on the opposite side of the river and from the north west, the panels would be visible on top of the flat roof of the building behind the proposed safety balustrade. From natural ground level beside the building itself, the angle of view would be too acute, so only the surrounding balustrade would be seen (the panels being inset a minimum of 1.2m from the northern edge of the building and 2.6m from the eastern edge which faces Brighton Road). The number of photovoltaic and solar water heater panels proposed has been revised and reduced in number (now 41 in total, as compared to 59 as originally submitted).

Whilst the view from the Norfolk Bridge, to the east, would be affected, and there is concern about adding unattractive clutter to the roof, it is considered that the overall visual effect would not be so adverse as to warrant refusal. Moreover, the visibility of the panels would send a positive message about the Centre, and the 'sustainable' manner in which it is dealing with upgrading of services.

The proposed plant room extension would project out from the building by 6.7m to the north west. It would be seen from within the Adur Recreation Ground and car park but a grassed mound at the entrance to the car park would reduce its effect. It would also be seen from parts of the opposite side of the riverbank at Ropetackle but, as the distance is some 170m away, it would not have a significant effect.

The plant room extension will screen from view a number of the stored boats which cover much of the outside area to the north of the existing building and it is not considered that the extension would appear out of keeping or incongruous.

Residential amenity

The nearest residential properties to the site are the houses and flats on the opposite side of the river in Broad Reach, Ropetackle, 170m or more away. The applicants Method Statement for drilling of the boreholes states that site work will take approximately 3 weeks and the working hours will be 7.30am–6pm (Monday to Friday) and 8am–12 noon on Saturdays. Given the distance between the flats/houses and the site and the short amount of time to drill the boreholes and install the GSHP, it is not considered that there would be a loss of residential amenity.

Flood Risk

The site lies within Flood Risk Zone 3 and as such the plantroom has been designed in consultation with the Environment Agency. Floor levels within it will be set 300mm above the known AOD of 4.9m with a raised entry threshold of 0.5m above ground level. The room will be tanked with all equipment raised above the flood level.

Ground contamination

As stated by the Council's Environmental Health Officer, the site comprises part of a former landfill site and the proposed drilling of 8 boreholes (each 91m deep) has the potential to cause contaminants to enter groundwater (chalk aquifer). The Environment Agency have not raised an objection provided a condition is imposed requiring details to be submitted which demonstrate there will be no unacceptable risk of pollution of groundwater. However, the Council's EHO has raised an objection and, in response, the applicants have now submitted a Method Statement which covers the process of the drilling and installation of the GSHP coils. Environmental Health comments on this statement are awaited and will be reported at the Committee meeting.

Effect on the Adur Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest

It is improbable that the proposals would have an adverse effect on the natural habitat of the SSSI but the comments of Natural England are awaited.

Recommendation

Subject to the Council's Environmental Health Officer withdrawing his objection and to any comments received from Natural England, APPROVE for the reason that:-

The proposal is a sustainable form of development that would help reduce carbon dioxide emissions as set out in Government policy in PPS1 (and the Supplement 'Planning and Climate Change') and PPS22, without having unacceptable detriment to the Site of Special Scientific Interest or the visual amenities of the surrounding area. It would consequently not conflict with the policies LOC2, NE11-12, CH3, ERA2, ERA5, DEV1 of the West Sussex Structure Plan and AG1, AC4, AR1, AR15, AR17 of the Adur District Local Plan.

Subject to:-

1. C1Ci (Standard time limit)
2. C12Ai (External materials for walls & roof of plant room and rooftop balustrade to be approved)
3. C14Aii (Permission relates to amended plans) + North elev.
4. C9N (Temporary provision for contractors' vehicles, materials, etc. on the site)
5. Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods shall not be permitted other than with the express written consent of the LPA, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with these approved details. [illegible] raised by the EA in their email of 16 October 2008.