

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Planning Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 4 January 2022 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Bell (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Martin, M McKeon, B Moist, E Peeke (Substitute), I Roberts, S Wilson and S Zair

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hunt, Jopling, Marshall, Molloy, Richardson and Shaw.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor E Peeke as substitute Member for Councillor Jopling.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021 were confirmed by the Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Applications to be determined

a DM/21/02468/FPA - Former LG Philips Site, Belmont Industrial Estate, Durham

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for the erection of 9 B2/B8 blocks together with associated car parking spaces and service areas on the former LG Philips Site, Belmont Industrial Estate, Durham (for copy see file of Minutes).

H Jones, Principal Planning Officer provided a detailed presentation which included a site location plan, aerial photograph of the site, site photographs, site layout and typical elevations.

David Marjoram of ELG Planning addressed the Committee in support of the application. Mr Marjoram fully endorsed the recommendation of the planning officer to approve the application. The application was for the same uses as the most recent permission and the floor space had reduced from 21,073 square metres to 20,425 square metres because some of the larger format sheds had been replaced by hybrid units which had been very popular with smaller businesses and start-ups. There were no objections from any technical consultees and on the matter of drainage the applicant had worked to resolve the matter up front so that compliance conditions could be attached as opposed to conditions to discharge. The design of the units had already been approved on the southern part of the site. The addition of a substation was required by Northern Powergrid.

Councillor Martin considered this to be a straightforward application. The County needed more smaller, modern industrial units and Councillor Martin welcomed the developers move towards the provision of these. Councillor Martin moved that the application be approved. This was seconded by Councillor McKeon.

Resolved:

That the application be approved subject to the Conditions contained in the report.

b DM/21/02336/FPA - Hulam Farm, Hutton Henry, Hartlepool

The Committee considered a report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding an application for the construction of underground electricity cables and associated infrastructure to connect Hulam Solar Farm to the existing substation near Hart in Hartlepool at Hulam Farm, Hutton Henry (for copy see file of Minutes).

C Shields, Senior Planning Officer provided a detailed presentation which included a site location plan, aerial photograph of the site and site layout.

Jack Osgerby of The Pegasus Group addressed the Committee in support of the application. Lightsource BP was a major national and international leader in the funding, development and long-term management of large-scale solar projects with many years of experience. In 2018 Durham County Council declared a Climate Emergency with a pledge to make the County carbon neutral. Following the granting of permission for the solar farm at Hutton Farm on 17 June 2020 this application sought consent for the provision of underground cables to connect the approved solar farm to the

Hart substation and as such the application was entirely necessary to facilitate the connection and the operation of the approved solar farm and deliver important renewable energy benefits. Once operational the solar farm would generate enough electricity to power approximately 13,397 typical homes and save approximately 16,865 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per annum. This was the equivalent of removing around 3,588 standard cars from the roads each year. The application would help to meet national commitments and obligations on net zero carbon reduction including those set out by the government in its net zero strategy. The generation of solar power was one of the main initiatives that would play an important role in meeting the government's target that by 2035 all electricity would need to come from low carbon sources. Since submission of the application discussions had taken place with Council officers which had resulted in the removal of the proposed substation on the recommendation of the Landscape Officer. Local Plan Policy 10 confirmed that essential infrastructure was supported where a need could be demonstrated for the location. In this case such need existed to connect the approved solar farm to the grid network.

Councillor Wilson considered this to be a significant project and a positive for the area to bring in a renewable energy source and was a big step going towards being carbon neutral. Councillor Wilson moved approval of the application. Councillor McKeon informed the Committee that this was an important piece of infrastructure to support the already approved solar farm and seconded approval of the application.

Resolved:

That the application be approved subject to the Conditions contained in the report.