HDC Planning Dept

By email to: Saffron Loasby
CC: Amanda Mc Sherry (HDC), Shaun Robson (HDC, Iian Downer(ClassQ)

16th Feb 2006

Planning Application Ref: 25/00017/FUL

Thank you for your call of Thursday last and your intent to recommend, for approval, our application. It was however disappointing to hear of the apparent requirement to have to submit our application to planning committee for a final decision. I set out below, along with background information, several reasons, as to why I believe this is not necessary.

Background

Our retrospective application relates to CO2 reduction via cooling of computer equipment, (installed within our Data Centre), by using water sourced from natural sources (rain & ground). Solar panels form part of the application and provide power to all the equipment and also feed power back to the grid (export). April 2025 we were selected as the most appropriate site to host the regional Sustainability Summit as organised by Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce - HDC were present. October 2025 we were awarded **Business of the Year for Green Innovation**.

Our net zero target date is Q3 2026. To achieve, we have investment to make and works to carryout. Required equipment is on a 12 week lead time. The works have to be done during cooler periods (max outside air temp of 12c). Missing this window will mean no choice but to redirect investment into refrigerant (chemical) based cooling (essentially we have to increase cooling, one way or another, before summer arrives). Using these type of coolers will effect an increase in our C02 emissions and a significant setback for net zero attainment; the latter will not be by months but years. Hence, it is VERY IMPORANT we mitigate further delays in our application.

Objections

The Parish Council have objected to our application on the basis of our solar panels being a "danger to aircraft" due to glint/glare. The objection quotes no expertise or aviation knowledge as to what stage of flight may be affected, nor provides any evidence. I am a pilot of 34 years with 1000's of flying hours and also the designer of the systems related to this application. My personal expertise/knowledge has been used in the risk assessment of any possible issue with flight/aircraft safety that could be related to adjacent Sibson airfield. It can be noted that our solar panels **are positioned so as to direct reflections (if any) away from the airfield** and have been in place, for in excess of 2 years with no reported "glint or glare" incidents.

Related Evidence and Supplemental Information

Enclosed are satellite images of:

1. **Birmingham International Airport**. CAA Licenced Airport. 12,000 solar panels sited facing toward the runway.

2. **Edinburgh International Airport**. CAA Licenced Airport. Similar to above – Just under 15,000 solar panels.
3. **Little Staughton Airfield**. Unlicenced. Thousands of solar panels around the perimeter and either side of the runway. Note these were approved, in recent years by HDC planning authority. The case officer, in her report, refers to (and sheds light) why solar panels (sited next to runways) do not cause danger to aircraft – *"it is concluded that any solar reflections towards pilots approaching the runways will be outside of the pilot's primary field-of-view and is therefore in accordance with industry best practice".* A further statement within this same report concludes: *" there is no evidence that glint and glare from solar farms results in significant impairment on aircraft safety"* and *"is therefore considered to accord with policies LP15 and LP16 and will not result in harm to safety from glint and glare"*
4. **Sibson Airfield.** All 350 solar panels are positioned, with their face, 180 degrees in the opposite direction to the runway. It follows that they **cannot possibly reflect any glint or glare toward the runway/pilot** and thus also, **cannot possibly pose any danger to aircraft**.

You intimated during our call that a 'glint and study' may be required. Surely (and hopefully) it can be understood that there is no value in commissioning such study when there is clearly and obviously **no physical possibility of 'glint or glare' causing an issue.**

<u>Airfield Safety</u>

The interested parties are:

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)
Ministry of Defence (MOD)
Airfield Owner/ Operator

The CAA & MOD have little interest in unlicenced airfields (Sibson is unlicenced).

The exception is if the unlicenced airfield is listed as being "safeguarded" (Sibson is not).

The responsibility for airfield safety thereafter falls to the owner/operator.

We have provided HDC PA with statements from both parties:
Stuart Shelton (owner) has stated "no objection".
Steve Lockton (operator), whom is also a pilot of 30+years, chief flying instructor & examiner, has further stated that he considers our solar panels not to be a "danger to aircraft".

Conclusion

As the matter, in regard to approving our application, seems to relate solely to safety, and safety is the legal responsibility of the operator, and the operator has stated no issue, then there would appear to be no reason why this application needs to be further delayed by passing to committee for determination.

I respectively request you reconsider and if required I can be available at short notice for a meeting.

Thank you

Mike Richardson
CEO
[redacted]