

Report of the Head of Planning, Sport and Green Spaces

Address 1 BARRINGTON DRIVE HAREFIELD
Development: Installation of ground mounted solar panels.
LBH Ref Nos: 62825/APP/2016/2328
Drawing Nos: Location Plan (1:1250)
Supporting Photographs
Photograph of Solar Panel

Date Plans Received: 15/06/2016 **Date(s) of Amendment(s):**
Date Application Valid: 11/08/2016

1. CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 Site and Locality

The application site adjoins a large modern detached property situated on the Western side of Barrington Drive. The property is on a corner plot and benefits from good sized gardens all around and an existing driveway providing parking for at least 2 cars. There is an embankment along the side boundary to the South West, which is the subject of this planning application. The land in the embankment slopes down from East to West with the entrances of the properties on the Eastern side of Barrington Drive at a raised level and accessed by steps. Opposite the site on the other side of Barrington Drive is a brick built retaining wall measuring just over 1m high and the entrance to the Drive is flanked with two brick pillars.

The street scene is residential in character and appearance comprising a mixture of detached and semi detached properties. There are no fences or walls enclosing the front gardens, although some have hedges, which are all maintained at a height of about 50-75cm.

The application site lies within the 'Developed Area' as identified in the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (November 2012) and located immediately adjacent to the Coppermill Lock Conservation Area.

1.2 Proposed Scheme

Planning permission is sought for installation of ground mounted solar panels to the existing embankment to the side of No.1 Barrington Drive and not to protrude more than 610mm above the ground.

1.3 Relevant Planning History

62825/APP/2014/2576 1 Barrington Drive Harefield
Installation of boundary wall with railings and gate to front

Decision Date: 21-10-2014 **Refused** **Appeal:**

62825/APP/2015/2834 Land Adjacent To 1 Barrington Drive Harefield

Engineering works to existing embankment to include removal of existing vegetation and the depositing of soil on the embankment to widen the gap between the existing fence and house, and new associated landscaping (Part Retrospective)

Decision Date: 03-11-2015 **Approved** **Appeal:**

Comment on Planning History

62825/APP/2014/2576 - Installation of boundary wall with railings and gate to front. Refused.

62825/APP/2015/2834 - Engineering works to existing embankment to include removal of existing vegetation and the depositing of soil on the embankment to widen the gap between the existing fence and house, and new associated landscaping (Part Retrospective). Approved.

The embankment was previously enclosed by a brick wall set in from the footpath at the side of Park Lane and then it contained maturing landscaping particularly including birch trees. Towards the top of the embankment was a panel fence at the side/rear garden to No. 1 Barrington Drive. All previous vegetation on the embankment was removed prior to the consideration and determination of 62825/APP/2015/2834 on 3 November 2015. Replacement planting has been partially provided.

2. Advertisement and Site Notice

2.1 Advertisement Expiry Date:- 26th October 2016

2.2 Site Notice Expiry Date:- Not applicable

3. Comments on Public Consultations

EXTERNAL:

33 neighbouring properties were notified of the proposed development on 12th August 2016 and a site notice was displayed adjacent to the site on 18th August 2016. The application was advertised in the 5th October 2016 edition of the Uxbridge Gazette and a Conservation Area site notice also displayed.

26 letters were received objecting to the application, summarised below:

1. There is a covenant for trees and shrubs.
2. The land is unstable previously resulting in the collapse of the wall on to the pavement. This could happen again with the weight of the solar panels.
3. The solar panels look unsightly and visually intrusive.
4. The bank should be landscaped.
5. Set a precedent for installation of solar panels in inappropriate locations.
6. The panel may cause dangerous reflections to drivers.
7. Solar panels can be easily damaged or vandalised in this location.
8. Applicant already in breach of planning application.
9. Impact on conservation area.
10. Highly visible from the highway and surrounding streets.

Officer comment: The above issues are addressed in the main body of the report.

INTERNAL:

SUSTAINABILITY COMMENTS:

I am slightly concerned that the current gradient may not be able to support the intended installation of the the PV panels. This may require further regrading works and additional support.

I would like to see a plan as to how they intend to fix the panels to the ground.

TREES AND LANDSCAPE COMMENTS:

This site is occupied by a steep earth slope situated above a retaining wall (back edge of footway) and the garden of 1 Barrington Drive.

The retaining wall and slope has been the subject of recent emergency work and planning enforcement following the removal of woodland from the area and the subsequent collapse of the retaining wall.

To date the landscape restoration has resulted in regrading the soil slope and hedge planting at the bottom and top of the slope.

Further planting/restoration is required to stabilise the slope and re-instate the visual amenity of the area.

COMMENT: The site lies immediately outside a Conservation Area and lies within the area covered by TPO 455.

The installation of ground mounted solar panels on these slopes will be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

Furthermore, the hedge planting and (awaited) woodland planting, necessary to stabilise the slope, will create overshadowing which will be incompatible with a solar array. The type of installation illustrated is designed to be set out on level ground, with the panels angled to catch the sun.

This system will not work on the existing 1:2/1:3 slope.

RECOMMENDATION: This application should be refused. It will be detrimental to the character and visual amenity of the area. Furthermore, the landscape restoration required to heal this visual scar is incomplete and incompatible with the current proposal.

CONSERVATION AND URBAN DESIGN OFFICER:

The proposal would be considered unacceptable and should be refused. The exposed nature, steep gradient and previous clearance of the site would lead to the proposed solar panels being highly visible from the streetscene along Park Lane and from within the Conservation Area. This part of Park Lane forms one of the principal gateways into the Conservation Area. The installation of Solar panels would be considered visually intrusive and would in turn detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as well as the surrounding setting and views towards the Listed Building.

CONCLUSION: Unacceptable.

4. UDP / LDF Designation and London Plan

The following UDP Policies are considered relevant to the application:-

Part 1 Policies:

PT1.BE1 (2012) Built Environment

PT1.HE1 (2012) Heritage

Part 2 Policies:

BE4 New development within or on the fringes of conservation areas

BE13 New development must harmonise with the existing street scene.

BE15 Alterations and extensions to existing buildings

BE19 New development must improve or complement the character of the area.

BE38 Retention of topographical and landscape features and provision of new planting and landscaping in development proposals.

LPP 5.3 (2016) Sustainable design and construction

5. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES

The main issues for consideration in determining this application relate to the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area (including the adjacent heritage assets of a Conservation Area and a Listed Building) and the impact on the trees and landscape.

VISUAL IMPACT

Policy BE4 of the Hillingdon Local Plan - Saved UDP Policies (November 2012), states that new development within or on the fringes of conservation areas will be expected to preserve or enhance those features which contribute to their special architectural and visual qualities; development should avoid the demolition or loss of such features. That policy reflects the relevant legal duties.

The site lies adjacent to the Black Jack's and Coppermill Lock Conservation Area and in close proximity to the Grade II Listed former Premises of Harefield Rubber Company Central Building. The property is a modest size detached house facing onto Barrington Drive, forming part of a modern planned estate. The front boundary treatments existing along the street comprise of low lying hedges. The land to the side of the property is now in the same ownership, as the host property and it is highly visible from Park Lane. The site levels vary dramatically with the property positioned a considerable distance higher than Park Lane. Planning application 62825/APP/2015/2834 conditioned a landscaping plan/maintenance plan for this land to the side.

When residents comments refer to a covenant, and that the bank should be landscaped, that reflects not only a desire to return to a previous appearance of the embankment, but also that the intention behind the aforementioned landscape condition was to return the embankment to a landscaped feature which includes tree planting. The provision of solar

panels might take the benefit that the embankment is orientated to the South West, but would appear to be a mutually exclusive proposition in that substantial tree planting in such a space would not be compatible with the solar arrays receiving adequate sunlight, or that the landscaping would be managed with that in mind, such that the previous appearance of this area would be lost.

Accordingly, the exposed nature, steep gradient and previous clearance of the site would lead to the proposed solar panels being highly visible from the street scene along Park Lane and from within the Conservation Area. This part of Park Lane forms one of the principal gateways into the Conservation Area. The installation of Solar panels would be considered visually intrusive and would in turn detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as well as the surrounding setting and views towards the Listed Building. The suggestion that the panels would not protrude more than a certain amount from ground level, is not considered to reduce their impact on this embankment; they would be seen in the "gap" between the top of the brick wall adjoining Park Lane and below the panel fence at the boundary of the side/rear garden to No 1 Barrington Drive which is particularly evident from the public realm.

LANDSCAPING

The overall street scene is very open in character, softened by greenery provided by small hedges and a number of semi-mature trees planted in gardens along the road. Two of these trees are in the garden of number 1 and are protected by a condition of the original permission. The retaining wall and slope has been the subject of recent emergency work and planning enforcement following the removal of woodland from the area and the subsequent collapse of the retaining wall. To date the landscape restoration has resulted in regrading the soil slope and hedge planting at the bottom and top of the slope. Further planting/restoration is required to stabilise the slope and re-instate the visual amenity of the area. This is being pursued separately.

The Tree and Landscape officer has advised that the hedge planting and woodland planting, necessary to stabilise the slope, will create overshadowing which will be incompatible with a solar array. The type of installation illustrated is designed to be set out on level ground, with the panels angled to catch the sun. It is not understood that this system will work on the existing 1:2/1:3 slope.

It is considered that, given the open character of the street, the principle of the ground mounted solar panels to the existing embankment is unacceptable and the proposal fails to harmonise with the open aspect of the street scene and is detrimental to the character and visual amenity of the area including the adjacent Conservation Area and Listed building. Furthermore, the landscape restoration required to heal what is presently seen as a visual scar is incomplete and incompatible with the current proposal. As such, the proposals fail to respect the requirements of Policies BE4, BE13, BE19 and BE38 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two - Saved UDP Policies (November 2012) and the adopted Supplementary Planning Document HDAS: Residential Extension.

AMENITY

The proposal is for works to an embankment adjacent to No.1 Barrington Drive and would be a sufficient distance from any nearby residential properties and thus would not result in any significant harm to the amenities of any adjoining occupier, in compliance with Policy BE20, BE21 and BE24 of the Hillingdon Local Plan (November 2012).

Parking would remain unaltered by the proposed works. As such, the proposal would not result in an increase in traffic or compromise pedestrian safety. The proposal would therefore be in compliance with Policies AM7 and AM14 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two - Saved UDP Policies (November 2012).

CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the above, the proposal is considered to have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, failing to preserve or enhance the setting of the conservation area and a listed building. It is therefore recommended for refusal.

6. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSAL for the following reasons:

1 NON2 Non Standard reason for refusal

The proposed installation of ground mounted solar panels, by reason of their position in a highly visible location adjacent to the highway and site coverage would be detrimental to the character, appearance and visual amenities of the application site, the street scene, the setting of the wider area including the adjacent Coppermill Lock Conservation Area, and the adjoining Listed Harefield Rubber Company Central Building. Therefore the proposal would be contrary to Policies BE1 and HE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (November 2012) and Policies BE4, BE13, BE15 and BE19 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two - Unitary Development Plan Saved Policies (November 2012).

INFORMATIVES

- 1 On this decision notice policies from the Councils Local Plan: Part 1 - Strategic Policies appear first, then relevant saved policies (referred to as policies from the Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan - Saved Policies September 2007), then London Plan Policies (2016). On the 8th November 2012 Hillingdon's Full Council agreed the adoption of the Councils Local Plan: Part 1 - Strategic Policies. Appendix 5 of this explains which saved policies from the old Unitary Development (which was subject to a direction from Secretary of State in September 2007 agreeing that the policies were 'saved') still apply for development control decisions.
- 2 In dealing with the application the Council has implemented the requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive way. We have made available detailed advice in the form of our statutory policies from the 'Saved' UDP 2007, Local Plan Part 1, Supplementary Planning Documents, Planning Briefs and other informal written guidance, as well as offering a full pre-application advice service.

Standard Informatives

- 1 The decision to REFUSE planning permission has been taken having regard to all relevant planning legislation, regulations, guidance, circulars and Council

policies, including The Human Rights Act (1998) (HRA 1998) which makes it unlawful for the Council to act incompatibly with Convention rights, specifically Article 6 (right to a fair hearing); Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life); Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination).

- 2 The decision to REFUSE planning permission has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals in the Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan Saved Policies (September 2007) as incorporated into the Hillingdon Local Plan (2012) set out below, including Supplementary Planning Guidance, and to all relevant material considerations, including the London Plan (July 2011) and national guidance.

Part 1 Policies:

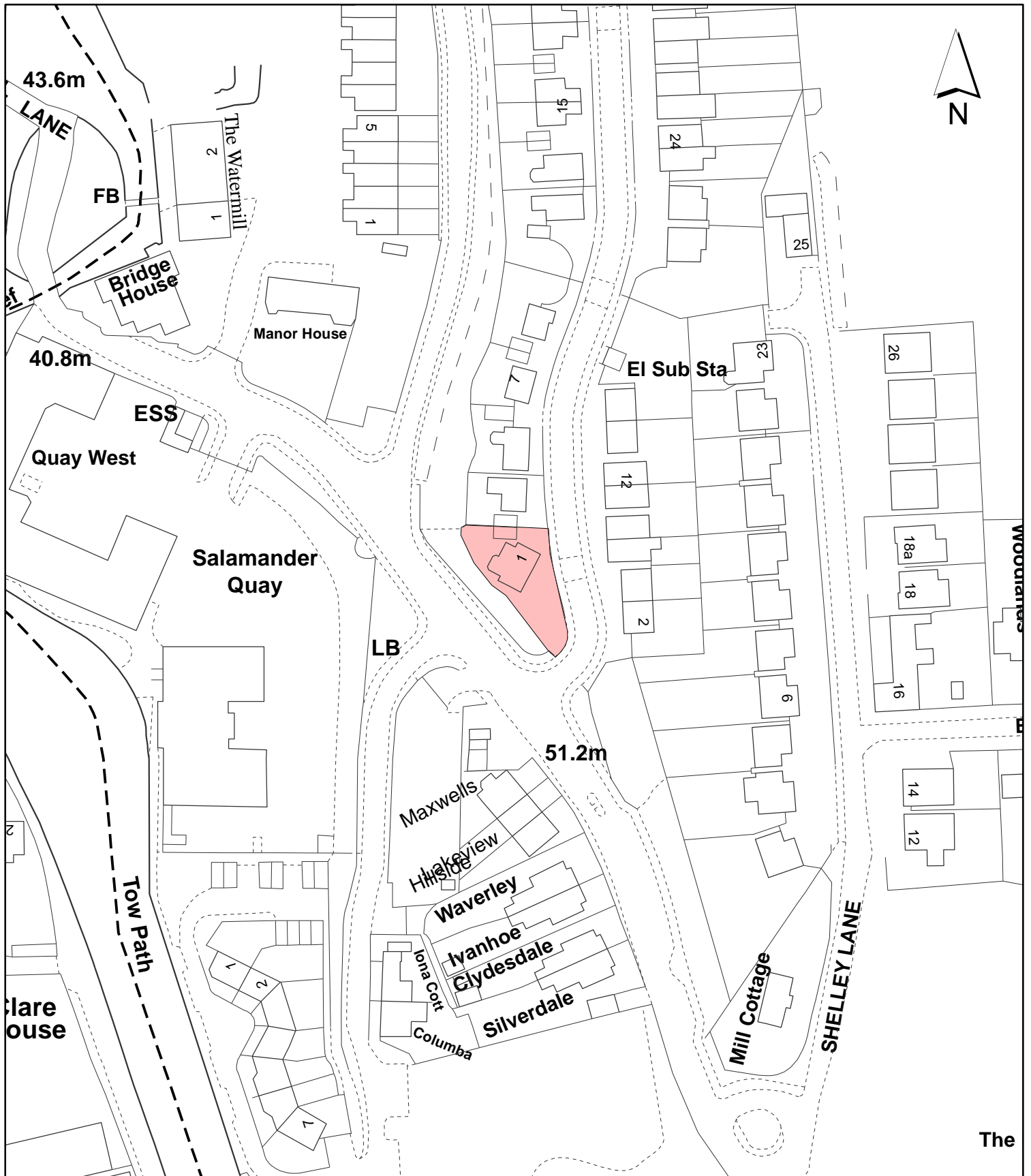
PT1.BE1	(2012) Built Environment
PT1.HE1	(2012) Heritage

Part 2 Policies:

BE4	New development within or on the fringes of conservation areas
BE13	New development must harmonise with the existing street scene.
BE15	Alterations and extensions to existing buildings
BE19	New development must improve or complement the character of the area.
BE38	Retention of topographical and landscape features and provision of new planting and landscaping in development proposals.
LPP 5.3	(2016) Sustainable design and construction

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Notes:

Site boundary

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Site Address:

**1 Barrington Drive
 Harefield**

**LONDON BOROUGH
 OF HILLINGDON**
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 Planning Section
 Civic Centre, Uxbridge, Middx. UB8 1UW
 Telephone No.: Uxbridge 250111

Planning Application Ref:
62825/APP/2016/2328

Scale:
1:1,250

Planning Committee:
North

Date:
November 2016



HILLINGDON
 LONDON