Inverclyde
council

Report To:	**The Planning Board**	**Date:**	**7th December 2011**
Report By:	**Head of Regeneration and Planning**	**Report No:**	**11/0283/IC** **Plan 11/12** **Local Application Development**
Contact Officer:	**James McColl**	**Contact No:**	**01475 712462**
Subject:	**Change of use of agricultural ground to domestic ground together with the installation of free standing domestic solar panels at** **West Kilbride Farm, Auchenbothie Road, Kilmacolm**		

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to a section of agricultural field immediately to the south of the West Kilbride Farm steading, Kilmacolm. The ground is bound by agricultural fields, the cycle path and the curtilage of the farmhouse. The area extends to approximately 400 square metres.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed to encompass part of an agricultural field into the domestic curtilage of the farmhouse and install two sets of free standing domestic solar panels. Each set of panels will be 7.6 metres in length and 800 mm in width. The panels will be set at a 35 degree angle and be 1.8 metres high at the highest point. Each set of panels will have an area of approximately 12.5 square metres.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy DS8 - Green Belt

There is a presumption against development in the designated Green Belt, as identified on the Proposals Map. Proposals will only be considered favourably in exceptional or mitigating circumstances and where the criteria for development in Policy DS10 for the 'Countryside' can be satisfied.

Local Plan Policy DS10 - Countryside

Development within the countryside (including the Green Belt) will be permitted only where it can be supported with reference to the following criteria:

(a)   it is required for the purposes of agriculture and forestry;
(b)   it is a recreation, leisure or tourism proposal which is appropriate for the countryside and contributes to the social and economic development of the area;
(c)   there is a specific locational requirement for the use and it cannot be accommodated on an alternative site;

(d)   it entails appropriate re-use of vacant buildings which it would be desirable to retain for their historic or architectural character; or

(e)   it forms part of an establishment or institution standing in extensive grounds; and

(f)   it does not adversely impact on the landscape character;

(g)   it does not adversely impact on the natural heritage resource;

(h)   it does not adversely affect the visual amenity of the area and is capable of satisfactory mitigation;

(i)   there is a need for additional land for development purposes, provided it takes account of the requirements of the Structure Plan; and

(j)   it complies with other relevant Local Plan policies.

Local Plan Policy UT6 - Renewable Energy Infrastructure

In assessing proposals for renewable energy infrastructure, Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will have regard to the impact on:

(a)   the natural environment and built heritage of the locality;

(b)   the landscape, particularly when viewed from major transport corridors;

(c)   residential amenity;

(d)   tourism and leisure resources, particularly if within the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park; and

(e)   the operation of aircraft and telecommunications equipment.

CONSULTATIONS

None required.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 21st October 2011 as it is contrary to the development plan.

SITE NOTICES

The nature of the proposal did not require a site notice.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The application was subject of a press advertisement. No representations were received.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in the assessment of this application are the Inverclyde Local Plan and the visual impact of the proposal.

The application site is located within the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Belt. Policy DS8 advises on the presumption against development within the Green Belt with Policy DS10 providing the detailed criteria against which any development proposals in the Green Belt should be assessed. These policies are designed to prevent the spread of the urban area and inappropriate development in the countryside. While contrary to Policy DS8, Policy DS 10 allows for exception to policy in mitigating circumstances.

The overall impact of the alteration to the field boundary to incorporate the section of ground into the curtilage of the neighbouring farm house on the wider Green Belt is minimal. I do not consider that it will lead to the inappropriate spread of the urban area into the countryside and the agricultural viability of the Farm will not be compromised.

While the panels are located adjacent to the cycle path and they will be clearly visible to walkers and cyclists they will not be visually prominent within the wider landscape due to their limited size and the positioning adjacent to the farmhouse. I am therefore satisfied that, overall, the panels would have an acceptable impact on the wider landscape and not detract from the character and appearance of the countryside. Indeed, Policy UT6 advises on the provision of renewable energy infrastructure and encourages development where there are no adverse landscape, natural environment and landscape impacts. Policy DS10 allows exception to Green Belt policy in such circumstances.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted subject to conditions

Conditions

1. In the event that the equipment becomes obsolete or redundant, it must be removed and the site reinstated within 2 months, to the satisfaction of the planning authority.
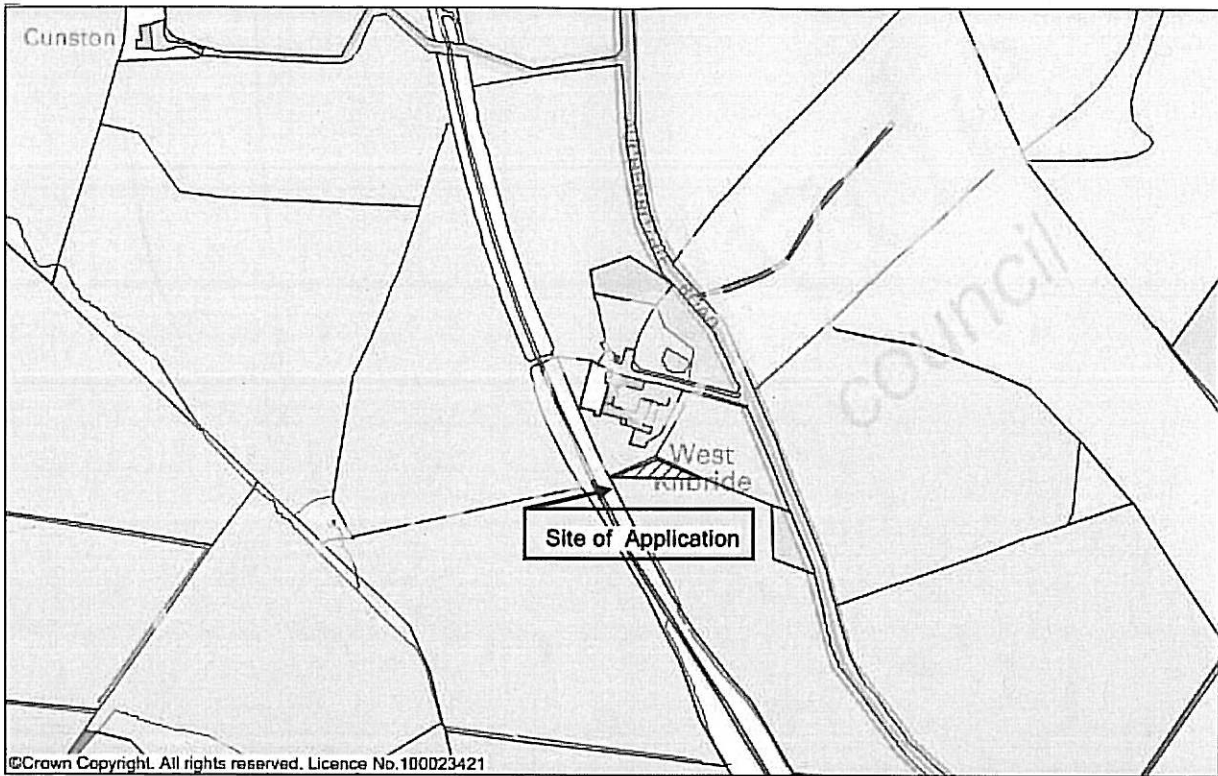
Reasons

1. To minimise the visual effect on the locality and to ensure reinstatement works are of a satisfactory standard

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form
2. Plans
3. Inverclyde Local Plan

Cunston

West Kilbride

Site of Application

Application Number	11/0283/IC
Location	West Kilbride Farm Auchenbothie Road Kilmacolm PA13 4SN
Proposal	Change of use of agricultural ground to domestic ground together with the installation of free standing domestic solar panels

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