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<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	P11/W1541/DC
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	MINOR
<b>REGISTERED</b>	4.10.2011
<b>PARISH</b>	Didcot
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Mr Terry Joslin Mrs Margaret Turner
<b>APPLICANT</b>	South Oxfordshire District Council
<b>SITE</b>	Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Installation of solar panels
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	None
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	452692/190052
<b>OFFICER</b>	Miss S Green

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee as the applicant is South Oxfordshire District Council.
- 1.2 The application site is the Cornerstone Arts Centre, which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A. The centre is located within Didcot town centre, adjacent to the Market Place and the newer developments of the Orchard Shopping Centre, the cinema and the Town Square. The Arts Centre was built in 2007.

**2.0 PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 This application seeks permission for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of the centre. Thames Valley Energy Agency have assessed the site for its suitability and confirmed that, considering factors such as orientation, pitch of roof and shading, the property provides a good opportunity for installing solar PV. The proposed elevation and roof plans are **attached** at Appendix B. A full copy of the application documents can be found on the website at [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk).
- 2.2 The proposal is to install a solar PV system of 16.6 kilowatt peak in size which is equivalent to an area of panels of 320 square metres. It is estimated that 98 panels will be needed to cover this area (the exact number is dependant on the final supplier chosen and the size of panel), with an expected output of 13,707 kWh per year.
- 2.3 The project presents a long term investment for the council due to the Government top up payments through the “feed in tariff” scheme.
- 2.4 It is proposed to use the electricity on site which will save on energy costs for the Arts centre. When the electricity cannot be used on site, it will be exported to the national grid in return for which the council will receive an export payment. In addition the proposal would contribute the council’s corporate objective to reduce its own energy consumption.

**3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 The following comments have been received in relation to this proposal.

**Didcot Town Council** – Recommend the application should be approved

**Neighbours** – No responses

**4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 P08/W0579/DAD – Approved (14/07/2008)  
Two illuminated signs to be fixed to the new arts centre.
- 4.2 P04/W1357 – Approved (01/06/2005)  
Construction of a new Arts centre.

**5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE**

**5.1 PPS1 Supplement - Planning and Climate Change  
PPS22 – Renewable Energy**

**5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policies 2011**

G2 – protection and enhancement of the environment  
D9 – Renewable energy

**5.3 South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008**

Section 4.5 – Small scale renewable energy systems

**6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 The main planning issue in relation to this proposal is the impact on the character and appearance of the building and surrounding area.

**6.2 Impact on the area**

Renewable sources of energy have an important role to play in reducing the consumption of finite resources and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. The district council encourages renewable technologies and policy D9 of SOLP is supportive of new renewable energy developments subject to them not having a significant adverse impact on the local and wider environment. Policy G2 seeks to protect the district from adverse developments, and seeks opportunities to enhance the environment wherever possible.

- 6.3 Cornerstone Arts Centre is a striking building of contemporary design. Fundamental to its design are the clean straight lines of its elevations and rooflines. The solar panels are proposed to be mounted on a framework at an angle of between 10-15 degrees, towards a southerly direction. This position will optimise the performance of the panels whilst minimising wind load. The maximum height of the panels when mounted on the framework will be 0.3m. The applicant has confirmed that the roof of the centre has a parapet of 1.2m high all the way round. Therefore the majority of the panels will be masked by this parapet and will not be visible from the surrounding area. The only area the plans indicate some panels would be visible are from the west elevation, from Market Place. However due to the proximity of surrounding buildings, this elevation can only be viewed at close range, and given the angle of perspective this part of the elevation would likely be viewed from, I consider that any panels would not be highly noticeable from street level. This elevation is also not the principal elevation of the building or the main public frontage, which is on the other side. In my view the proposal would not adversely affect the appearance or character of the building or the surrounding area. The proposal therefore accords with policies D9 and G2.

**6.4 Other considerations**

The centre is located within the town centre and the surrounding buildings are either offices or retail. Given the building is one of the highest buildings in the centre, and that the panels would be hidden by the parapet, it would not have any impact upon any surrounding occupiers, even at the upper floor levels.

6.5 The government has made it clear that tackling climate change and moving to a low-carbon economy is a key priority. The PPS1 supplement on climate change sets out how the planning system should contribute to reducing emissions and encourage renewable and low-carbon energy generation. Similarly PPS22 encourages the use of small scale renewable energy schemes in both new development and existing buildings. Such developments are key to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. This proposal, whilst small in scale, will help contribute to the Government’s target of reducing carbon emissions, and this is a material consideration in favour of the proposal.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 This application is recommended for approval as it complies with the relevant Development Plan policies. The siting of solar PV panels on the roof of the centre is acceptable and would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the building or the streetscene.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **That planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Commencement of development – 3 years**
2. **Approved plans**

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