

FOI number: **HBC\_FOI\_20210143**  
Date FOI Received: **8/03/2021**  
Department: **Other**  
Title: **Validation of Planning Applications**  
Description: **Validation of Planning Application 21/0050/FULEI**

**Request: (As Redacted sent by requestor)**

- 1) Can you please explain all the steps taken to "Validate" a planning application before accepting it as a valid application and adding it to the Planning database?
- 2) When is a Planning Officer allocated to a new planning application? Is it before or after Validation has been completed?
- 3) Can you confirm that Application Ref 21/0050/FULEI was received on Friday 8 January 2021 and validated on the same day as shown on your Planning Database?
- 4) Can you confirm that all the usual and appropriate validation steps were taken on Friday 8 January? Did this involve reading through all the 50 documents and noting contents to ensure they met validation criteria?
- 5) Can you confirm exactly who validated this application as the designated Planning Officer for this application **<REDACTED>** does not work on Fridays?
- 6) Can you confirm that Planning staff have sufficient information to be able to confirm that the installation proposed will have a generating capacity of under 49.9MW? How can they do this without information on the technical parameters of the solar panels to be used and the number of panels to be deployed?
- 7) . Have the Planning staff requested further information from the applicants? If so, will it be published on your Planning website as supplementary information and a further comment period be opened for public comments?

**Response: (Response as Redacted sent by service)**

- 1) Can you please explain all the steps taken to "Validate" a planning application before accepting it as a valid application and adding it to the Planning database?

Our Response: We validate using central government guidelines which is published on the GOV.UK website (link below).  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-an-application>

We check that the application is complete and that the correct application fee has been included. We check the constraints on the site, assess which neighbours and consultees should be consulted, whether press adverts and site notices are required, and plot the application on our database. These tasks are carried out by the Validation Team. If it is a

Major application a planning officer will advise the Validation Team as to which consultees should be notified of the application.

Please note.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and Lockdown, all Council staff (within the Planning Team) are working from home and following strict government guidance with regards to attending the office. This has meant that some administrative tasks such as printing documentation, checking documents and issuing letters has taken longer than usual.

2) When is a Planning Officer allocated to a new planning application? Is it before or after Validation has been completed?

Our Response: In general, a case officer is allocated once an application has been validated. If there has been a pre application advice application or a previous application(s) on the site (as in this case) the application will be allocated to that same case officer if at all possible.

3) Can you confirm that Application Ref 21/0050/FULEI was received on Friday 8 January 2021 and validated on the same day as shown on your Planning Database?

Our Response: Application ref 21/0050/FULEI was received on 8/1/2021 and the validation process was started on that day. Major applications, because of their complexity and the details and documents submitted take longer than one day to validate.

4) Can you confirm that all the usual and appropriate validation steps were taken on Friday 8 January? Did this involve reading through all the 50 documents and noting contents to ensure they met validation criteria?

Our Response: We confirm that the usual and appropriate validation steps were started on 8/1/2021. All applications with the exception of major applications are validated online. The first step for a major application is printing all submitted documentation and then to check that all documentation that is specified by the government guidelines have been received. If an application is complete and the appropriate fee was included on the same day, then that application must be regarded as having been "valid" from the day on which it was submitted. It can take several days for staff to check that an application is valid (the larger and more complicated an application, the longer it takes to check it) but the validation date is backdated to the date on which a valid application was received.

5) Can you confirm exactly who validated this application as the designated Planning Officer for this application, Max Sanders, does not work on Fridays?

Our Response: This application was validated jointly by the Validation Team and the case officer, <REDACTED>.

The Validation Team arranged for the documentation to be printed and then checked that the documentation, required by government guidelines, was received. The application was then passed to the case officer to check the initial validation and to complete the process. An application of this size and complexity takes in excess of one day to validate.

Please note that regardless of how long validation takes, if all the required documentation is received on the date of submission, the validation date is back dated to this date.

6) Can you confirm that Planning staff have sufficient information to be able to confirm that the installation proposed will have a generating capacity of under 49.9MW? How can they do

this without information on the technical parameters of the solar panels to be used and the number of panels to be deployed?

**Our Response:** The Council will be asking independent experts to review some technical aspects of the application, including the matter of whether the proposed figure of 49.9MW is a realistic estimate of the amount of energy that would be generated by a solar farm covering such an area.

7) . Have the Planning staff requested further information from the applicants? If so, will it be published on your Planning website as supplementary information and a further comment period be opened for public comments?

**Our Response:** The comments that have been received from statutory and partner consultees have been published on our website, and the applicants have taken note of some points of concern that have been raised by them. The applicants might decide to submit amended drawings or documents to address some of those concerns. Indeed they have done so this week (on 9<sup>th</sup> March) with the submission of a revised version (Revision 17A to replace the original Revision 16A) of the proposed site layout plan (Drawing HF2.0) and that has been published on our website as an amended plan. Thus far, that is the only revised or additional document to have been received. It shows an area adjacent to Slades Farm (to the NE) as no longer having solar panels proposed on it. In the same way, any further revised or additional plans or documents will be published on the website. Any revisions to the proposed development that might result in an increased impact would be consulted upon. In this instance, as the impact of the development would be lessened, there has been no need for a reconsultation.

If you have any queries about the processing of your request then please do not hesitate to contact me. Further information explaining the Council's process for responding to information requests together with a complaints/appeals procedure is available in our reception or via our website at:

<https://www.hertsmere.gov.uk/Your-Council/Official-Publications--Guides--Policies/Access-to-Information.aspx>

The Information Commissioner oversees the application of the Freedom of Information Act. You may contact the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioners Office  
Wycliffe House, Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF  
Telephone: 0303 123 1113  
Website: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

Please include the above reference number on all correspondence related to this request.

Thank you for your request.

Kind regards

Information Services

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