



Planning Statement

DHL Express Manchester: roof-mounted Solar PV System

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Applicant is Aberla Energy (hereafter referred to as “the Applicant”) , a company specialising in the design and delivery of sustainable energy solutions including commercial solar PV, battery storage and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- 1.2. The Applicant is making an application for prior approval for the following proposed development:

“Installation of roof-mounted solar photovoltaic system”
- 1.3. Accordingly, this Statement accompanies an application for Prior Approval under Schedule 2, Part 14 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.
- 1.4. The project will be delivered for a private client on the roof of their commercial building to reduce energy costs and carbon footprint by generating green, renewable, energy.

2. Site & Surrounding Area

- 2.1.** DHL Express Manchester is a commercial building set within the 'World Logistics Hub' site, south-west of Manchester City Airport. The World Logistic Hub planning application originally comprised "B8 logistic space with ancillary B1 office (131,000 m²) with ancillary amenity/retail space and landscaping and ecology mitigation area".
- 2.2.** The facility is strategically located off Sunbank Lane within the Manchester Airport City Enterprise Zone, in the southern region of Greater Manchester. The location provides efficient connectivity to Manchester Airport and key regional transport routes.
- 2.3.** Access to the site is mainly via the M56 motorway, offering excellent road links to Greater Manchester, the wider Northwest region, and beyond. This location is particularly advantageous for logistics operations due to its proximity to the airport, making it ideal for time-sensitive and high-volume freight services.
- 2.4.** The building is a purpose-built commercial property with a design suited to high-velocity parcel and freight handling. The building is a typical modern commercial facility, featuring extensive warehousing and office space, optimised for DHL Express's operational requirements.
- 2.5.** The architectural style emphasises functionality with high clearance loading bays, large vehicle manoeuvring areas, and secured perimeter fencing.
- 2.6.** Sunbank Lane and its surrounding areas comprise a mixture of commercial and greenfield spaces, as well as areas earmarked for ongoing development within the Manchester Airport City framework. Adjacent to other major logistics and distribution centres, the site's location enhances its role within a growing logistics cluster that is central to the regional and national supply chain.
- 2.7.** The area around Sunbank Lane is characterised by ongoing investment, aimed at fostering economic growth and enhancing infrastructure, making it attractive for businesses in the logistics, distribution, and aviation-support sectors.

3. Planning History

3.1. The planning history considered relevant to the application is noted below.

- **100263/00/2012/S2**|Outline planning application for a World Logistic Hub comprising B8 logistic space with ancillary B1 office (131,000 m²) with ancillary amenity/retail space and landscaping and ecology mitigation area

4. Proposed Development

4.1. Benefits of the proposed development

4.1.1. The proposed development will bring about benefits for the end user and the wider public. The main benefits are listed below.

- **Reduction in Carbon Emissions:** Significantly lowers the building's carbon footprint, contributing to local and global efforts to combat climate change.
- **Energy Cost Savings:** Decreases energy costs for the building by generating a portion of its own electricity, providing financial savings over time.
- **Energy Independence:** Enhances energy security and independence by reducing reliance on the grid and external energy sources.
- **Support for Local Environmental Goals:** Aligns with Manchester's environmental strategies and the Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan to promote renewable energy and achieve carbon neutrality.
- **Community Leadership:** Sets a positive example for other businesses and organisations in the area, potentially encouraging wider adoption of sustainable practices.
- **Increase in Property Value:** Potentially increases the value and attractiveness of the building as a modern, sustainable commercial property.
- **Support for Local Economy:** Involvement of local businesses in the installation process can stimulate the local economy and support local jobs.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** Prepares the building for future regulatory changes that might require improved energy efficiencies or reduced emissions.
- **Public Relations Benefits:** Enhances the public image of the tenants and owners of the building by demonstrating a commitment to sustainable practices.
- **Long-term Sustainability:** Contributes to the long-term sustainability of the building by integrating green technology, which can lead to sustained operational benefits.

4.2. Design and Access

Design

4.2.1. The proposed development comprises the installation of a 290.97kWp roof-mounted PV solar installation. The installation will decarbonise the client's operations and increase energy security.

4.2.2. The design comprises the installation of 556 Longi 530W PV modules, affixed to the building utilising a proprietary trapezoidal roof sheet mounting system.

- 4.2.3. The roof upon which the PV modules will be installed has a typical trapezoidal profile, with four elevations, all of which will facilitate solar PV. PV panels have been designed to sit between roof skylights which will be protected during installation to prevent trips or falls.
- 4.2.4. The array converts DC electrical power to AC electrical power via two Solis DC/AC inverters, sized at 110kW.
- 4.2.5. DC electrical cabling will route on the internal façade of the building and exit into the new switchroom extension via a cable bridge and fire sealed letterbox. On the inside of the parapet on the roof automatic DC isolators will be installed, which will be linked to a fire fighter emergency power off button located in the main reception of the building. This system allows easy isolation of both AC and DC systems entering the building in the event of an emergency and will also be linked to the fire alarm and suppression system so that if the fire alarm is raised the system is automatically isolated.
- 4.2.6. Inverters will be located in the newly extended switchroom on a 'Unistrut and big feet' system braced to the walls of the enclosure.
- 4.2.7. The array is expected to generate more than 245,000kWh of renewable energy, saving over 40,000kg of carbon per annum.

Access

- 4.2.8. Access for construction will be via a Haki scaffold access staircase and scaffolding loading bay.
- 4.2.9. Vehicle access will be via the main entrance and vans/plant will be parked in a designated contractor compound within the DHL site fencing.
- 4.2.10. Equipment will be loaded to the roof via a telehandler.

5. Planning Policy Appraisal

5.1. The Development Plan

- 5.1.1.** The 'Places for Everyone Plan' is a joint development plan document for nine Greater Manchester districts - Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. It took effect and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the nine districts on March 21, 2024.
- 5.1.2.** In accordance with the Places for Everyone Plan, particularly Objective 7 and other relevant sections about addressing climate change and energy, the proposed roof-mounted solar PV system installation strongly supports regional initiatives and directives focused on achieving a resilient and carbon-neutral city region by 2038.

Objective 7: Enhancing Resilience and Achieving Carbon Neutrality

- 5.1.3.** Carbon Neutrality by 2028 for New Developments: The proposed development contributes directly to the carbon neutrality of the building, aligning with the aim to make all new developments carbon-neutral by 2028 as per local policy directives.
- 5.1.4.** Promoting Sustainable Development: The installation minimises the need for external energy sources, which is in line with promoting sustainable development patterns that reduce travel needs and contribute to cleaner air, fulfilling the local policy of reducing car dependency and enhancing energy efficiency.

Addressing Climate Change Section 5.5 and 5.6

- 5.1.5.** Up-scaling Solar Photovoltaic Energy: The proposal directly supports Greater Manchester's vision to upscale solar PV energy as part of its comprehensive approach to reduce carbon emissions across the city-region, which is crucial to meeting the 2038 carbon neutrality target.

Supporting Environmental Policy Modifications (5.8 - 5.10)

- 5.1.6.** Although the modifications post-2023 do not account for the latest standards, the proposed solar PV installation is a proactive measure that supports the overarching goal of reducing future energy demands through sustainable growth and energy-efficient developments.

Carbon and Energy Considerations (5.12 - 5.17)

- 5.1.7.** Net Zero Carbon Development: The proposal is designed to meet the 'net zero carbon in operation' requirements set to take effect by 2028, ensuring that both operational and, eventually, construction emissions are minimised.
- 5.1.8.** Local Area Energy Plans: By integrating solar PV technology, the development aligns with the strategies laid out in the Local Area Energy Plans, promoting renewable energy infrastructure as a viable and necessary investment for the city-region's energy future.

Additional Policy Points

5.1.9. Infrastructure for Cleaner Vehicles and Energy Efficiency: While the main focus of the proposal is on solar energy, it inherently supports infrastructure for cleaner energy which includes facilitating cleaner vehicles through reduced overall energy demand.

5.1.10. Promotion of Renewable Energy Initiatives: The installation encourages community engagement in renewable energy solutions and is in line with the push towards significantly increased use of photovoltaic technology as outlined in Greater Manchester's 5 Year Environment Plan.

Summary

5.1.11. The proposal for the roof-mounted solar PV system installation is not only a strategic response to local and national sustainability goals but also a practical implementation of policy-supported environmental initiatives. It plays a crucial role in pushing the region towards its ambitious 2038 carbon neutrality goal while setting a precedent for integrating renewable energy solutions in urban development projects. This proactive approach ensures that the development contributes to a sustainable future, complying with both current and upcoming regulatory frameworks aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions across Greater Manchester.

The proposed development seeks prior approval for the installation of a roof-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) system building that isn't listed, is not within a conservation area, and not within close proximity to any listed buildings.

5.2. Accordance with the National Policy Planning Policy Framework

Support for Renewable Energy:

5.2.1. Paragraph 154: The NPPF encourages planning policies and decisions to support renewable and low-carbon energy solutions. This project directly contributes to increasing the supply of renewable energy, aligning with national goals for sustainable energy production. The installation's non-visible, efficient design minimises aesthetic concerns while maximising environmental benefits.

Visual Impact and Design:

5.2.2. Paragraph 127: The framework mandates good design, stipulating that developments should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Although the solar panels are technically an addition to the building, their placement below the parapet ensures that they do not affect the external appearance of the building, thus adhering to the principles of good design and preserving the visual character of the area.

5.2.3. Paragraph 130: It states that development should integrate into its surroundings. By installing the system out of sight, this proposal maintains the existing streetscape and skyline, thereby complying with this directive.

Sustainable Development:

5.2.4. Paragraph 8: The NPPF defines sustainable development objectives which include supporting economic growth and improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel, and take leisure. This solar PV installation promotes environmental sustainability by

reducing dependence on non-renewable energy sources and minimising carbon emissions, which aligns with these broader sustainable development goals.

Additional Material Considerations:

- 5.2.5.** Building Regulations: Compliance with building safety standards ensures that the installation does not compromise the structural integrity of the building or pose any safety risks.
- 5.2.6.** Community Engagement: Although the installation will not alter the visual environment, engagement with the local community can be undertaken (if deemed to be required) over the course of the application determination period to ensure transparency and address any unforeseen concerns, reinforcing community relations and support.

Summary

- 5.2.7.** This proposal aligns with several key objectives of the NPPF, particularly those related to promoting sustainable energy and ensuring high-quality design, without compromising visual amenities or historic values. The system's design and placement provide no substantive grounds for refusal (or prior approval not to be granted) under the planning policies set out in the NPPF. Given the strong policy support for renewable energy and the non-intrusive nature of the proposed installation, it presents a robust case for approval.

5.3. Manchester City Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2020 – 2025 (Refreshed plan 2022 –2025)

- 5.3.1.** Manchester City Council published its Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) in 2020, setting out its five-year plan to respond to the Climate Emergency, tackle climate change and work towards becoming a zero carbon organisation by 2038 at the latest.
- 5.3.2.** The CCAP aims to be in accordance with the Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25.

Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25

- 5.3.3.** The Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 aims to establish Manchester as a zero-carbon, climate-resilient city by 2038, aligning with the city's commitment to the Paris Agreement.
- 5.3.4.** The framework sets an ambitious target of a 50% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2025 compared to 2018 levels. This involves reducing energy consumption, transitioning to renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency across buildings, transport, and infrastructure.
- 5.3.5.** Manchester aims to adapt to the impacts of climate change, including risks from flooding, extreme weather, and heatwaves. The policies focus on building resilient infrastructure and green spaces that can withstand and mitigate the effects of climate change, enhancing the city's capacity to cope with environmental stresses.

- 5.3.6. A shift toward sustainable, low-carbon transportation is central to the framework. This includes promoting walking, cycling, and public transportation over car use, as well as encouraging the adoption of electric vehicles and supporting the development of necessary infrastructure, like EV charging points.
- 5.3.7. Protecting and enhancing the city's natural environment, including parks, green roofs, and water bodies, is a priority. These areas contribute to carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and climate resilience, creating a healthier environment for residents.
- 5.3.8. The framework emphasises partnership across communities, businesses, and local authorities, calling for collective action to achieve Manchester's climate goals. Public engagement is a key policy, aiming to educate and involve residents in climate-friendly behaviours and practices.
- 5.3.9. Manchester supports climate innovation and seeks investment in clean technology, energy-efficient infrastructure, and green jobs. The framework encourages businesses to adopt sustainable practices and invest in solutions that align with the city's zero-carbon ambition.

5.4. Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan (Greater Manchester Combined Authority)

Commitment to Carbon Neutrality:

- 5.4.1. The Environment Plan sets an ambitious target for the region to become carbon neutral by 2038. Your solar PV installation directly contributes to this goal by reducing dependency on non-renewable energy sources and lowering carbon emissions, which is in line with the plan's priority to accelerate the shift towards renewable energy.

Promotion of Renewable Energy:

- 5.4.2. The plan emphasises the significant upscaling of renewable energy technologies, including solar photovoltaics. By installing a rooftop solar PV system, your proposal actively supports the expansion of renewable energy capacity within the region, which is a crucial step towards meeting the plan's renewable energy targets.

Sustainable Urban Development:

- 5.4.3. The plan advocates for sustainable urban development practices that reduce environmental impact and improve energy efficiency. The solar PV system reduces the overall energy consumption of the building, promoting a sustainable pattern of development that aligns with the plan's objectives.

Improvement of Energy Efficiency:

- 5.4.4. Implementing the solar PV system improves the energy efficiency of the building, directly supporting the plan's focus on increasing energy efficiency across all sectors to meet energy demands sustainably.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement:

- 5.4.5. The proposal not only involves the installation of renewable technology but also offers an opportunity to engage and educate the community and stakeholders about the benefits of

renewable energy, fostering greater public support for similar initiatives, which is encouraged under the plan.

Policy and Strategic Alignment:

- 5.4.6.** The installation supports broader environmental goals and policy objectives laid out in both local and national frameworks, thereby reinforcing the strategic alignment necessary for integrated regional planning as envisaged by the Environment Plan.

Summary

- 5.4.7.** The proposed development strongly aligned with the Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan. It advances the goals of reducing carbon emissions, enhancing energy efficiency, and scaling up renewable energy generation. This proposal not only contributes directly to the environmental targets set forth in the plan but also sets a precedent for sustainable development practices within the region.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1.** In conclusion, the proposal to install a roof-mounted solar PV system at DHL Express Manchester, Sunbank Lane, Altrincham, represents a highly beneficial project, aligning seamlessly with local, regional, and national policy frameworks committed to sustainability and carbon reduction.
- 6.2.** The project is consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which promotes the use of renewable energy and sustainable development. It directly supports the Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan's commitment to achieving a carbon-neutral city-region by 2038 and aligns with the Manchester City Council's Climate Change Action Plan, which emphasises the importance of renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions.
- 6.3.** Further, the installation is set to enhance the environmental profile of DHL Express Manchester without detracting from its architectural integrity, given its non-invasive, rooftop positioning.
- 6.4.** It offers substantial benefits, including reduced operational costs, enhanced energy efficiency, and a robust response to the pressing need for sustainable energy solutions. These advantages extend beyond the immediate fiscal gains, fostering a positive public and corporate image, and potentially stimulating further environmental initiatives within the community.
- 6.5.** The proposed development not only meets planning requirements that should be afforded prior approval but also sets a precedent for future developments within the broader Greater Manchester area. By integrating state-of-the-art solar technology, DHL Express Manchester will contribute actively to the region's environmental targets, demonstrating leadership in sustainability and compliance with evolving policy demands.
- 6.6.** The application for the proposed development under Schedule 2, Part 14 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 meets the requirements stipulated and should therefore be granted prior approval.