North Yorkshire Council

Environment Executive Members

25 July 2025

Response to the Government call for evidence on solar car parks and electric vehicle charging

Report of the Assistant Director – Environment and Transport

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide the Corporate Director, Environment Services and Executive Member for Managing our Environment with the proposed response to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and Department for Transport's call for evidence on solar car parks and electric vehicle (EV) charging, and to seek any further views and approval to submit the response.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The government is seeking evidence on a proposal to mandate the installation of solar canopies on new outdoor car parks, subject to some exemptions, as well as views around current planning policy relating to EV charging infrastructure.

2.2 This report outlines the council's proposed response to the consultation. Once approved, the response will be submitted to the relevant government departments.

3.0 CALL FOR EVIDENCE

3.1 The focus of the consultation is on the implementation of solar canopies in car parks like those illustrated in Appendix A (Photo 1). In their consultation document, the government notes that the potential for solar canopies on car parks lies in leveraging their significant under-utilised surface area to contribute meaningfully to the UK's renewable energy generation capacity. By being situated close to existing centres of electricity use, car parks have the potential to reduce the grid electricity demand (and bills) of those who host them. Solar canopies offer a dual use of the land and can provide additional revenue through the sale of any electricity not used on-site.

3.2 Government policy is in a very formative stage, and we do not have any firm details yet about how it would be designed and implemented. The idea is that new car parks will be required to install solar canopies, subject to some specific exclusions (which are currently undefined). And the potential for requiring this in existing car parks is also being considered, but again, there are no firm proposals about how this would be done. The call for evidence is intended to inform this policy development.

3.3 The response has been written collaboratively by council officers in various teams including parking, property, EV & infrastructure, and climate change. The response can be found in Appendix A.

3.4 The overall officer view supports the principle of maximising the use of car park space with solar canopies, as this will contribute directly to our carbon reduction targets and could result in long term cost savings. Any mandatory requirements should be cost-neutral overall to us as a local authority, so schemes should only be mandated where they are known to be feasible and where a strong business case can be applied, and if necessary financial support (e.g. grant funding) should be made available to enable the delivery of new government policy.

3.5 The second part of the consultation relates to electric vehicle charging infrastructure and planning. The call for evidence is seeking insight into planning and permitting changes required to support continued acceleration in relation to charge point deployment. The officer response identifies several barriers to action, especially for householders, and provides some suggestions for improvement including how to streamline the process for installing cross-pavement charging.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

4.1 Not reviewing and agreeing to the submission is rejected because it would prevent the council's opinions from being considered as part of national policy development.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications arising as a result of responding to this consultation. Any financial implications that arise from the government's future policies will be dealt with in future reports in line with the Councils financial governance process.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Submitting the response will have no immediate legal implications, but following the outcome of the call for evidence, there may be legal implications for the council arising from changes to government policy, which will be dealt with as required in future reports.

7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 An equalities impact assessment (EIA) screening has been carried out. Approving and submitting this consultation response will not have an impact on people with protected characteristics, so a full EIA is not required. (Appendix B)

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A climate change impact assessment (CCIA) screening has been carried out. Approving and submitting this consultation response will not have a climate change impact, so a full CCIA is not required. (Appendix C)

9.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

9.1 Officers have produced a response to the call for evidence, which is attached as Appendix A. Any further views are now being sought from the Corporate Director and Executive Member, along with approval to submit the response.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

10.1 Subject to any comments received, it is recommended that the Corporate Director for Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Managing our Environment agrees to submit the proposed response (Appendix A) to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and Department for Transport.

APPENDICES:
Appendix A – Call for evidence response questionnaire.
Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment screening
Appendix C – Climate Change Impact Assessment screening

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

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