



<b>Planning Committee Date</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> November 2023
<b>Report to</b>	South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Committee
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
<b>Reference</b>	23/03174/HFUL
<b>Site</b>	86 High Street, Great Abington
<b>Ward / Parish</b>	Linton
<b>Proposal</b>	Enlargement of previously permitted photovoltaic array on barn roof
<b>Applicant</b>	Mr Zimmern
<b>Presenting Officer</b>	Tom Chenery
<b>Reason Reported to Committee</b>	Called-in by Cllr Batchelor  Application raises special planning policy or other considerations
<b>Member Site Visit Date</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2023
<b>Key Issues</b>	1. Impact on the designated Heritage Asset 2. Impact on the character and appearance of the area 3. Sustainability
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>REFUSE</b>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The application seeks permission to install 60 Solar Photovoltaic Panels on the roof slope of the existing southern barn outrigger which is curtilage listed.
- 1.2 The proposal is considered to be harmful to the character and significance of the curtilage listed barn, the setting of the principle listed building as well as the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The sustainability benefits put forward do not outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets.
- 1.4 The proposal is not considered to cause undue harm to the amenity or living conditions of neighbouring occupiers
- 1.5 The proposal would not have any significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway and would not result in any undue highways safety implications
- 1.6 Officers recommend that the Planning Committee REFUSE the application.

## 2.0 Site Description and Context

None relevant		Tree Preservation Order	
Conservation Area	X	Local Nature Reserve	
Listed Building	X	Flood Zone 1	X
Building of Local Interest		Green Belt	
Historic Park and Garden		Protected Open Space	
Scheduled Ancient Monument		Controlled Parking Zone	
Local Neighbourhood and District Centre		Article 4 Direction	

\*X indicates relevance

- 2.1 The application site comprises a two storey Grade II Listed residential dwellinghouse known as 86 High Street (Hall Farmhouse), Great Abington. The property benefits from a single storey outrigger which was originally used as an agricultural barn/shed that links to the host dwelling via a modern single storey flat roof extension.
- 2.2 The dwellinghouse is an old farmhouse located in and amongst several other residential dwellings that were previously associated with the farmhouse. The site is located within the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area with the Grade II\* Listed Church known as the Parish Church of St Mary to the North of the site.

### 3.0 The Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal seeks the enlargement of previously permitted photovoltaic array on barn roof.
- 3.2 The application site benefitted from planning permission under reference 22/01602/HFUL which sought to add Solar Photovoltaic panels to the roof of the existing garage to the southeast of the site, the pool house, to the northeast of the site and 36 panels to the roof of the existing southern outrigger/barn.
- 3.3 The proposal seeks to increase the number of solar panels on the roof of the existing outrigger/barn, to 60 panels. These panels would encompass the entire roof slope on both sides with a gap at the northern end.

### 4.0 Relevant Site History

Reference	Description	Outcome
22/01602/HFUL	Energy refurbishment of Hall Farmhouse including insulation, replacement/upgrading of windows, upgrading of building services to include an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP), Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR) systems and PV arrays to barn, garage and pool house.	Approved
22/01603/LBC	Energy refurbishment of Hall Farmhouse including insulation, replacement/upgrading of windows, upgrading of building services to include an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP), Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR) systems and PV arrays to barn, garage and pool house.	Approved
22/01603/CONDA	Submission of details required by condition 3 a, b, c, d, e (Materials) of planning permission 22/01603/LBC	Discharged in Full
23/01989/HFUL	Enlargement of previously permitted photovoltaic array on barn roof.	Refused

23/01990/LBC            Enlargement of previously permitted    Refused  
                                         photovoltaic array on barn  
                                         roof.

- 4.1      Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent (References 22/01602/HFUL and 22/01603/LBC) was approved for Solar Photovoltaic panels on the roof of the southern outrigger/barn which would form 6 different groups of 6 solar panels. These panels are sporadically located on the roof slope with a significant gap from the northern edge of the roof slope towards the first block of solar panels.
- 4.2      This planning permission also approved the use of solar panels on the entire roof slopes of the garage roof and pool house roof.
- 4.3      A subsequent planning application was submitted under reference 23/01989/HFUL and 23/01990/LBC which sought to erect Solar PV panels on the entirety of the eastern and western roof slopes of the southern barn/outrigger and was refused on the grounds that due to the scale, location, proportions, materials and relative character, the proposed roof panels would dominate the roof of the prominent and historic front projection and would cause harm to the historic rural character and listed building.
- 4.4      The proposal as submitted within the previously refused application is identical to that within this application.

## **5.0      Policy**

### **5.1      National**

National Planning Policy Framework 2023  
National Planning Practice Guidance  
National Design Guide 2021  
Environment Act 2021  
Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.  
Equalities Act 2010  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004  
Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) Cycle Infrastructure Design  
Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)  
ODPM Circular 06/2005 – Protected Species  
Circular 11/95 (Conditions, Annex A)

### **5.2      South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018**

S/2 – Objectives of the Local Plan  
S/3 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
S/7 – Development Frameworks

CC/1 – Mitigation and Adaption to Climate Change  
CC/3 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy in New Developments  
HQ/1 – Design Principles  
NH/14 – Heritage Assets  
NH/15 – Heritage Assets and Adapting to Climate Change

### **5.3 Supplementary Planning Documents**

Biodiversity SPD – Adopted February 2022  
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD – Adopted January 2020  
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD – Adopted November 2016

- 5.4 The following SPDs were adopted to provide guidance to support previously adopted Development Plan Documents that have now been superseded by the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. These documents are still material considerations when making planning decisions, with the weight in decision making to be determined on a case-by-case basis:

Development affecting Conservation Areas SPD – Adopted 2009  
District Design Guide SPD – Adopted March 2010  
Listed Buildings SPD – Adopted 2009

### **6.0 Consultations**

#### **6.1 Great Abington Parish Council – Neither Object to nor Support application**

- 6.2 Agreed to leave the decision concerning this application to SCDC officer. Noted sustainability issues with approved scheme as well the concerns by the Conservation Officer.

#### **6.3 Conservation Officer – Objection**

- 6.4 The proposal would result in harm to the setting and significance of the listed building and would result in harm to the significance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.5 The proposal would cover the majority of its extents on both sides and is considered to dominate and obscure the roof to an unacceptable degree. The form and the appearance of the roof would alter from traditional to an unbroken expanse of alien black glass panels.
- 6.6 The public benefits do not outweigh the harm the proposal would have on the conservation of historic assets, which itself is given great weight.

#### **6.7 Tree Officer – No Objection**

6.8 Defer to Conservation Officers Comments

## **7.0 Third Party Representations**

7.1 No Third-Party representations have been received.

## **8.0 Member Representations**

8.1 Cllr Batchelor has made a representation supporting the application on the following grounds:

- The benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm identified by the Conservation Officer
- More weight should be given to the sustainability benefits over the perceived Conservation harm which isn't visible from the public highway
- More weight should be given to the 'Green to out core principles' of the Council.

## **9.0 Assessment**

### **9.1 Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area and Impact on Designated Heritage Assets**

#### *Impact upon the Designated Heritage Assets*

9.2 The application site comprises a Grade II Listed residential dwelling known as 86 High Street (Hall Farmhouse), Great Abington and is located within the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area. To the north of the site is a Grade II\* Listed Church known as the Parish Church of St Mary.

9.3 Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

9.4 Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

9.5 Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that Local Planning Authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

- 9.6 Paragraph 195 states that LPAs should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 9.7 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a designated heritage asset great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.
- 9.8 Paragraph 200 states that any harm to, loss of, the significance of the designated heritage assets should require clear and convincing justification.
- 9.9 Paragraph 202 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 9.10 Local Plan policies HQ/1 and NH/14 align with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice. Policy NH/15 permits renewable energy development where the heritage significance would be sufficiently safeguarded,
- 9.11 The application seeks to install 60 solar photovoltaic panels on the eastern and western roof slopes on the southern barn which itself is curtilage listed. The proposed panels would encompass almost the entirety of the roof slope apart from a section on the northern portion of the barn which connects to the single storey lean to extension.
- 9.12 Under planning references 22/01602/HFUL and 22/01603/LBC planning permission and listed building consent was granted for Solar Photovoltaic panels on the roof of the southern outrigger/barn which would form 6 different groups of 6 solar panels. These panels are sporadically located on the roof slope with a significant gap from the northern edge of the roof slope towards the first block of solar panels.
- 9.13 This previous planning permission and Listed Building Consent also approved the use of solar panels on the entire roof slopes of the garage and pool house.
- 9.14 These were consented as it was considered that they would ensure that the appearance and the character of the pantile roof was not overwhelmed

and the generous spacing allowed for an appreciation of the form and appearance of the historic roof.

- 9.15 Within the applicant's Design and Access statement submitted with the current application, it states that the originally consented scheme relied on the assumption that the fabric of the building could be improved in order to reduce energy efficiency required. The applicant also states that the existing solar panels do not provide significant energy to support a net carbon zero property. As a result, the proposal needs to be expanded to the entire roof slope.
- 9.16 The Council's Conservation Officer has been consulted on the current scheme and has objected on the grounds that the proposal would cover the majority of the barn roof and as such would dominate and obscure the roof to an unacceptable degree. They also go on to state that the form and appearance of the roof would be wholly altered visibly from one of a traditionally, locally appropriate material, to large unbroken expanses of alien black glass panel with only minimal relief at the edges.
- 9.17 They conclude that this would be harmful to the character and significance of the curtilage listed barn, the setting of the principle listed building as well as the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. They have also concluded that the proposed public benefits do not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the identified designated heritage assets.
- 9.18 The Farmhouse and barn sit in and amongst several other dwellings which are all set back significantly from High St, Great Abington. As a result, they are not visible from the streetscene/public highway on the High Street. The applicant's heritage statement indicates that these buildings were once all part of one farm although these adjacent dwellings and their associated outbuildings are not considered to be curtilage listed. There is no other information available to the Council to dispute the status of these buildings.
- 9.19 However, although they are not visible from High St, Great Abington, there is a public footpath that leads to the Grade II\* Listed Church known as the Parish Church of St Mary and as such partial views may be visible from this footpath which is within the Conservation Area.
- 9.20 The host listed building, including the curtilage listed southern barn, as well as the adjacent buildings surrounding the farmhouse all benefit from clay pantile roofs. Other properties within High St, Great Abington, also benefit from clay pantile roofs and as such this form part of the character of the Conservation Area.
- 9.21 Given that the pantile roof of the southern barn would be completely encompassed by the solar panels under this proposal, it is considered the



extent of the proposed number of solar panels would dominate the roof of the prominent barn extension and remove its rural farmhouse character, detracting from the appreciation of the whole building's historic appearance and this character. The justification submitted is considered insufficient to overrule the less than significant harm generated by the panels' domination of the prominent barn extension, which would detract from rather than preserving or enhancing the listed building, its setting and features of significance.

- 9.22 In line with Paragraph 202 of the NPPF, as the proposal is identified to cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset it is necessary to assess whether the proposed public benefits of the scheme would outweigh the harm.
- 9.23 No specific detail has been provided by the applicant indicating what the public benefits of the scheme would be, however, it is assumed that the continued maintenance and upkeep of the Listed Building as well as the sustainability benefits of the proposal which would reduce the reliance of the dwelling on fossil fuels.
- 9.24 Although these are considered to be public benefits, these public benefits are largely limited to the owners and occupiers of the host dwelling and do not provide significant benefit to the wider public and community. No additional detail has been provided as to why fabric improvements envisaged previously have not been possible, nor any assessment of any other potential sustainability measures that have been considered which potentially would not dominate the roof and detract from the existing character of the Listed Building, such as ground based solar panels.
- 9.25 As a result of the limited information provided, the sustainability benefits can only be given limited weight and as set out in Para 199 of the NPPF, great weight should be given to the heritage assets conservation.
- 9.26 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development, due to the harm caused by virtue of its dominating impact on the roof of the existing curtilage listed southern barn, would cause less than substantial harm to the character and significance of the curtilage listed barn, the setting of the principle listed building as well as the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This harm is not outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme which are only afforded limited weight.
- 9.27 The proposal would therefore conflict with policies NH/14 and HQ/1 with regard to policy NH/15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and with section 16 (particularly paragraphs 195, 197, 198, 199 and 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 and with the guidance of the Listed Building SPD.

*Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area*

- 9.28 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that all new development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area as well as always seeking to secure high quality design and maintain a strong sense of place using the sites surrounding streetscape.
- 9.29 Paragraph 134 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.
- 9.30 Policy S/2 of the Local Plan states that the vision for the Local Plan will be secured through the achievement of the following key objectives: “b. To protect the character of South Cambridgeshire, including its built and natural heritage, as well as protecting the Cambridge Green Belt. New development should enhance the area and protect and enhance biodiversity.”; and (d) To deliver new developments that are high quality and well-designed with distinctive character that reflects their location, and which responds robustly to the challenges of climate change.”
- 9.31 Policy HQ/1 ‘Design Principles’ provides a comprehensive list of criteria by which development proposals must adhere to, requiring that all new development must be of high-quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context.
- 9.32 As indicated, the proposed development would seek to encompass almost the entire roof slope of the curtilage listed southern barn and may be visible from public viewpoints within the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area.
- 9.33 The site currently benefits from a clay pantile roof which is typical of a rural dwellinghouse within the immediate area. In addition to this, the immediately adjacent surrounding properties also benefit from clay pantile roofs and as such this feature forms part of the established character and appearance of the area.
- 9.34 Due to their domestic and urban material and angular modern appearance, and by covering the vast majority of the roof planes on both sides the proposed panels would dominate the roof and completely change the appearance of the rural building.
- 9.35 The previously approved panels would, due to their broken-up spacing, appear particularly modest and a reasonable subservient addition that on balance would be of some minimal harm to the distinctive and important character of the whole building and the setting of most significant historic

farmhouse. The roof is in a conspicuous location and is roofed in prominent, orange-coloured pantile which, whilst not historic fabric, are significant in their character relating well to the historic farmhouse.

9.36 In completely dominating the appearance of the roof the proposal would significantly detract from the historic character of the site and so would not be appropriate to their location; would not contribute to the context and would be incompatible with its location in terms of proportions and materials in the historic context, therefore failing to constitute good design.

9.37 The proposal is therefore non-compliant with Local Plan policies S/2, HQ/1 and NPPF paragraphs 126, 130 and 134.

### **9.38 Carbon Reduction and Sustainable Design**

9.39 The Councils' Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2020) sets out a framework for proposals to demonstrate they have been designed to minimise their carbon footprint, energy and water consumption and to ensure they are capable of responding to climate change as required by policy CC/1.

9.40 Policy CC/2 of the Local Plan states that Planning permissions for proposals to generate energy from renewable and low carbon sources will be permitted provided they comply with certain criteria.

9.41 The proposed development relates to an existing Listed Building and as such Policy NH/15 is relevant. This policy supports proposals for energy efficient and renewable energy measures for historic buildings which adequately safeguard their heritage significance.

9.42 The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Heritage Statement and Solar Panel Data Sheet.

9.43 Within the Design and Access Statement it highlights that in 2020, South Cambridgeshire District Council acknowledged a climate catastrophe within their 'Zero Carbon Strategy'.

9.44 The dwelling is seeking to achieve an all-electric installation, which the applicant deems necessary in a zero-carbon strategy. Planning permission was originally granted for 36 solar panels, set in 6 banks of 6 panels on the eastern and western roof slope of the existing barn. This, coupled with solar panels on the entire roof slope of the pool house and garage buildings generated 20,645kWh of energy.

9.45 The previously approved scheme was considered an appropriate level of energy generation as it was assumed energy reduction was achievable through improvements to the fabric of the building. The statement

indicates that this has not been the case and that the permission has consequently increased the energy demand. The statement goes on to indicate that the building at present will require an estimated 23,500kWh of energy and the permissions at present would result in a shortfall and therefore the property will not be all electric. No detail has been provided regarding why improvements to the fabric have not been possible nor has any calculations or other evidence been provided confirming that the energy required by the dwelling would not be met by the currently approved scheme.

9.46 It is agreed that the installation of solar panels enable the development to achieve a more sustainable dwelling which, as indicted within the applicant's statement, would allow for the dwelling to wholly rely on the energy generation of the Solar Panels to provide all of the required energy to the existing dwellinghouse.

9.47 The use of solar panels is considered to be an acceptable form of renewable energy generation which would enable the proposal to be compliant with Local Plan policies CC/1 and CC/2 and the Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2020.

#### **9.48 Amenity**

9.49 No objections have been received from neighbouring occupiers. It was considered that a larger scale of solar panel development on the site would not unduly impact upon neighbouring properties.

9.50 A site visit has been undertaken. Given the adjacent context, location, size, and design of the proposal it is unlikely to give rise to any significant amenity impacts in terms of overlooking, loss of daylight, enclosure or other environmental impacts. The proposal is compliant with Local Plan policy HQ/1.

#### **9.51 Planning Balance**

9.52 Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

#### **9.53 *Summary of harm***

9.54 The proposal would result in solar PV panels that would encompass the entire roof form of the southern barn, which is curtilage listed and attached to a Grade II Listed Building and is also within the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area. The proposal is considered to dominate the existing roof of the prominent barn extension and remove its rural farmhouse character, detracting from the appreciation of the whole building's historic appearance and this character. The justification submitted is considered insufficient to overrule the less than significant

harm generated by the panels' domination of the prominent barn extension and would detract from rather than preserving or enhancing the listed building, its setting and features of significance.

9.55 The proposal is considered to be harmful to the character and significance of the curtilage listed barn, the setting of the principle listed building as well as the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As a result, the proposal would conflict with policies S/2, HQ/1 and NH/14 with regard to policy NH/15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and with section 12 and 16 (particularly paragraphs 126, 130, 134, 195, 197, 198, 199 and 200) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 and with the guidance of the Listed Building SPD.

9.56 *Summary of benefits*

9.57 The proposal would increase the number of solar panels on the roof slope which would result in an increase in the output of approximately 61% from the existing approved arrays of the barn and would provide a surplus of energy generation that would allow for the property to be self-reliant and be able to achieve an all-electric installation.

9.58 *Conclusion*

9.59 In line with paragraph 200 and 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework regarding the impact development would have on the designated heritage assets which in this instance is the principal listed building, its setting and the Great and Little Abington Conservation Area, it is considered the proposal would result in less than substantial harm which would need to be justified and weighed against the public benefits.

9.60 In this instance, the public benefits are assumed to be the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the Listed Building as well as the sustainability benefits and renewable energy generation.

9.61 As indicated, the applicant has not provided any detail regarding these public benefits and are only able to be considered on the basis of this limited information.

9.62 In addition to this, limited information has been provided regarding the evidence base of the requirements for the extent of solar panels and why an increase is required. It would be expected that justification and additional information clearly outlining the requirement of the dwelling's energy need through an assessment would be submitted.

- 9.63 It would also be expected that an assessment of other options of sustainable development that causes less harm to the designated heritage assets would be provided.
- 9.64 In the absence of this information and given that great weight is attributed to the asset's conservation, the proposed benefits of the scheme are limited and do not outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets.
- 9.65 Therefore, having taken into account the provisions of the development plan, NPPF and NPPG guidance, the statutory requirements of section 66(1) and section 72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the views of statutory consultees and wider stakeholders, as well as all other material planning considerations, the proposed development is recommended for Refusal.

## **10.0 Recommendation**

### **10.1 Refuse** for the following reasons:

1. Due to their materials, scale, location, proportions, and relative character the proposed roof panels would dominate the roof of the prominent and historic front projection in a manner that would dominate the building and significantly detract from the historic rural character and appreciation of the building and particularly the adjacent farmhouse. No justification given is considered sufficient to outweigh the less-than significant harm generated by the panels' domination of the prominent barn extension and the works would detract from rather than preserving or enhancing the listed building, its setting and features of significance and would therefore conflict with policies NH/14 and HQ/1 with regard to policy NH/15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and with section 16 (particularly paragraphs 195, 197, 198, 199 and 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and with the guidance of the Listed Building SPD and as such would fail to constitute good design appropriate to the character and context of the location contrary with policies S/2 and HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 and paragraphs 126, 130 and 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.