



Planning Committee Date	8 th November 2023
Report to	South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Committee
Lead Officer	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Reference	23/03175/LBC
Site	86 High Street, Great Abington
Ward / Parish	Linton
Proposal Applicant	Enlargement of previously permitted photovoltaic array on barn roof
Presenting Officer	Tom Chenery
Reason Reported to Committee	Called-in by Cllr Batchelor Third party representations Application raises special planning policy or other considerations
Member Site Visit Date	1st November 2023
Key Issues	1. Impact on the Fabric of the Listed Building 2. Sustainability
Recommendation	REFUSE

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 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 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 and 22/01603/LBC 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 photovoltaic array on barn roof. Refused

23/03174/HFUL	Enlargement of previously permitted photovoltaic array on barn roof	To Be Determined
---------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------

- 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 – Object / No Objection

6.8 No arboricultural objections to this planning application.

7.0 Third Party Representations

7.1 No 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 Fabric of the Listed Building

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 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.

- 9.5 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.
- 9.6 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.
- 9.7 Paragraph 200 states that any harm to, loss of, the significance of the designated heritage assets should require clear and convincing justification.
- 9.8 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.
- 9.9 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,
- 9.10 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.
- 9.11 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 outtrigger/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.
- 9.12 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.
- 9.13 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.

- 9.14 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.
- 9.15 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.
- 9.16 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.
- 9.17 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.
- 9.18 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.
- 9.19 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.
- 9.20 Given that the proposed pantile roof of the southern barn would be completely encompassed by the solar panels, 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.

- 9.21 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.
- 9.22 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.
- 9.23 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.
- 9.24 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.
- 9.25 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 and the setting of the principle listed building. This harm is not outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme which are only afforded limited weight.
- 9.26 Therefore, the proposal would 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.

9.27 Planning Balance

- 9.28 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).

9.29 *Summary of harm*

9.30 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 not considered sufficient 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.

9.31 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 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.

9.32 *Summary of benefits*

9.33 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 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.

Conclusion

9.34 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. It is considered the proposal would result in less than substantial harm which would need to be justified and weighed against the public benefits.

9.35 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.

9.36 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.

- 9.37 In addition to this, limited information has been provided regarding the evidence base of the requirements for the solar panel 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.
- 9.38 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.
- 9.39 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.
- 9.40 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 Policy NH/14 and NH/15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018, Section 16 of the NPPF (particularly paragraphs 195, 197, 198, 199 and 200), and with the guidance of the Listed Building SPD.