



Historic England

Mr Ben Glover
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Direct Dial: 01223 582721

Our ref: P01584741

26 November 2024

Dear Mr Glover

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**LAND OPPOSITE WYMONDLEY GRID STATION AND TO THE SOUTH OF
SPERBERRY HILL, ST IPPOLYTS, HERTFORDSHIRE
Application No. 24/02455/FP**

Thank you for your letter of 6 November 2024 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

This application proposes the development of a solar farm with associated battery storage and ancillary infrastructure on an area of undeveloped farmland to the south of the villages of St. Ippolyts and Redcoats Green. It is in essence a resubmission of application number 22/00709/FP on which we advised the Council in our letter of 5th April 2022. We would refer you to this letter in which we noted how the development could affect Redcoats Farm, which is listed at grade II*, Almshoe Bury (grade I) and at more distance from the site the parish church of St Ippolyt, all of which are within the remit of Historic England to advise the Council.

In our advice we considered that the establishment of a solar farm would fundamentally change the character and appearance of the wider historic setting of these heritage assets and detract from the way they are experienced and appreciated. We concluded that this would be likely to result in a level of harm in NPPF terms that we would judge to be less than substantial. We did accept, however, that it might be possible to mitigate the visual effects of the solar farm to some extent by way of appropriate planting/ augmentation of existing hedgerows to screen them from view.



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The Heritage Impact Assessment provided with the current application considers the impact on Redcoats Farm following the provision of additional landscaping and a 'buffer' area between the proposed solar panels and the complex in which the listed house and its listed barn sit. It concludes that the impact would be reduced but that there would still be some harm. We would accept that conclusion. The Assessment also confirms our view that there would be harm to the significance of Almshoe Bury and to the conservation areas at Wymondley, St Ippolyts (which includes the church) and Gosmore conservation areas. In terms of the NPPF, such impacts would constitute less than substantial harm which the Assessment considers would be at the lower end of the scale. We would broadly accept these conclusions, although given the proximity of Redcoats Farm the harm might be slightly higher, though still 'less than substantial'.

Policy context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes it clear that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (paragraph 189). The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development and that protection and enhancement of the historic environment is an overarching objective in this (paragraphs 7 and 8). The significance of listed buildings and conservation areas can be harmed or lost by development in their setting. The NPPF states that clear and convincing justification should be made for any such harm and that 'great weight' should be given to the conservation of listed buildings irrespective of the level of harm caused (paragraphs 199 and 200). Paragraph 206 also states that the Council should favour those proposals for development which preserve those elements of setting that make a positive contribution to the heritage asset or better reveal its significance.

We have considered the application in light of this policy and as set out above find that there would be harm to several designated heritage assets. As this would be in the nature of 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (paragraph 202). Given the nature of the proposals and the level of impact we do not wish to raise an objection on heritage grounds and therefore it will fall to your authority to carry out the balancing exercise of the NPPF and be satisfied that the proposal would deliver a level of public benefit that is sufficient to outweigh any harm to significance.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds due to the impact on several heritage assets, but do not wish to raise an objection on heritage grounds and therefore it will fall to your authority to carry out the balancing exercise of the NPPF and be satisfied that the proposal would deliver a level of public benefit that is sufficient to outweigh any harm to significance.

We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 7, 8, 199 and 200 of the NPPF. In determining this application you should bear in mind



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the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

David Eve
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