



**Land North of Little Cheveney Farm  
Sheephurst Lane  
Marden  
Kent**

*Summary Proof of Evidence – Rob Sutton: Heritage*

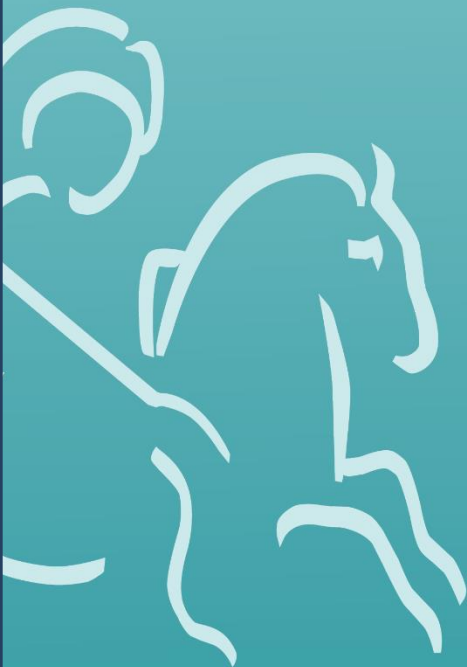


*Report prepared for:*  
Statkraft UK Ltd

PINs ref.: APP/U2235/W/23/3321094

Application ref.: 22/501335/FULL

December 2023



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## 1. SUMMARY

### *Introduction*

- 1.1. My name is Robert Sutton. I am the Director of Heritage Consultancy at Cotswold Archaeology. I am a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA), and Cotswold Archaeology is a Registered Organisation with the Institute.
- 1.2. I have authored or provided the technical review of over 250 Cultural Heritage chapters of Environmental Statements and many hundreds of heritage assessments for planning applications. I have prepared over 50 expert witness statements for Public Inquiries, Hearings, Written Representations and planning committee meetings. I have appeared as an Expert Witness at NSIP examinations and planning and listed building appeal hearings and inquiries. I provide heritage advice to LPAs, developers, government agencies and interested third parties. I am at the forefront of developing best practice and industry for the sector.
- 1.3. My evidence has been drafted as a response to the third Reason for Refusal (hereafter referred to as the 'RfR') of the application ref. 22/501335/FULL which is as follows:

*3. The proposed development, by virtue of its scale, proximity and character results in less than substantial harm to the settings of Heritage Assets being Grade II listed buildings of Little Long End and Little Cheveney Farm as views from and to listed buildings close to the site would be possible. The harm to the significance of the heritage assets would be less than substantial. The application is therefore contrary to policies DM4 and DM24 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017 and the NPPF.*

### *Little Long End*

- 1.4. Little Long End is situated just to the north of the Appeal Site boundary, from which it is separated by the hedge-lined Burtons Lane. Originally constructed as a three-bay barn in the
- 1.5. The heritage significance of Little Long End, a 17th or early 18th century barn, converted to a cottage in the mid-19th century, is derived from the architectural value embodied in its physical form and fabric, as well as its historical (illustrative) value relating to the development of the local landscape in the post-medieval and early modern period.

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- 1.6. Little Long End is situated within an enclosed garden, with Burtons Lane to the south and the railway line to the north. The principal elevation can be viewed looking north, from the Lane. The wider surrounds of Little Long End are representative of a rural landscape setting broadly consistent with that within which the building was originally constructed and functioned. However, this character is not dependent on any specific land-use (i.e., arable farming), but simply relates to the rural context.
- 1.7. Little Long End is best experienced from within its garden and from occasional locations on the Lane (to the south) where the historic and architectural qualities of the building can be appreciated. Tall vegetation either side of the Lane and surrounding the garden obscures longer-distance views of the building. Although the Appeal Site forms part of the wider rural landscape surrounding Little Long End, it has no known functional or historical associations with the building.

#### *The impact of the Appeal Scheme on heritage significance*

- 1.8. The part of the Appeal Scheme which lies closest to Little Long End will comprise a biodiversity area, formed of a mixture of native tree species. The nearest solar panels will be located over 200m to the east of the building.
- 1.9. Mature garden and roadside hedgerows obscure any views of the Appeal Site. Equally, the building is not visible from within the Appeal Site. Furthermore, there are no other locations in the wider landscape where the building and the Appeal Scheme can be perceived together. Thus, the Appeal Scheme will not be discernible within any experience of Little Long End.
- 1.10. The Appeal Site will retain a rural character, and as the specific land-use (within the realms of what can be described as rural) is not critical to the heritage significance of the building this change (from arable to solar) will not bring about any harm. Thus, there would be no harm to the significance of the Grade II Little Long End.

#### *Little Cheveney Farm*

- 1.11. The Listed Buildings at Little Cheveney Farm are located c.230m to the south of the Appeal Site. The farmhouse is a two-storey, timber-framed building of late 16th century date, with late-18th or early-19th century additions and 1930s restoration. The barn c.15m south-west of the farmhouse is of 17th century date, with later additions and alterations. The two 19th or early 20th century oasthouses, now converted for residential use, are located c.15m south-east and c.50m north of the farmhouse.

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- 1.12. The heritage significance of the Listed Buildings at Little Cheveney Farm stems from their physical form and fabric, which retain evidential and architectural values relating to their construction and phases of use, as well as historical illustrative values as surviving elements of the local post-medieval and early modern landscape.
- 1.13. As is often the case, but is specifically the case here, the buildings will be best experienced from up close, from within the private gardens. From these locations the architectural and historic interest of the buildings can be experienced. The group value can be enjoyed from these locations too.
- 1.14. The rural character of the wider setting contributes to the historic narrative of the farmstead, although the relative importance of this aspect of setting been somewhat reduced by the conversion of the oasthouses, for instance, to residential use.
- 1.15. This landscape has experienced considerable change throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. There are new residential developments on Sheephurst Lane, large agricultural barns and electricity pylons; and the very large industrial buildings to the north and west of Marden can be seen from within this landscape too. In addition, many of the large, regular fields present within the existing landscape, including the Appeal Site, are derived from the 20th century amalgamation of medieval and post-medieval field systems. It is the overall rural character, rather than specific land-use (i.e., arable farming) that is of relevance to the significance of the farm buildings.
- 1.16. The oasthouses to the north are the most prominent buildings within the complex, and can be seen from further afield, from several locations to their east and north but specifically from along the footpath. If one is located further east, along the footpath, the buildings are far less visible or disappear from view completely. These views illustrate the buildings within their wider rural setting but are too distant to experience the historic or architectural qualities of the buildings.

*The impact of the Appeal Scheme on heritage significance*

- 1.17. The Appeal Scheme would introduce solar panels into the wider rural setting to the north-east and north-west of the farm. The nearest solar panel will be located c.270m north of the farmhouse and c.150m of the northernmost oasthouse.
- 1.18. None of the views that allow the architectural and historical values of the buildings to be experienced would be in anyway changed. From (and along) the footpath to the east of the farm, at locations where the buildings can be seen (i.e., travelling west,

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towards them) the Appeal Scheme would be outside any views (lying to the north and to the right of an observer). From further afield still i.e., to the north of the Appeal Site the oasthouses appear and disappear as one moves through landscape, hidden then revealed between gaps in the vegetation (notable during winter months, perhaps completely absent during summer months). With the introduction of Appeal Scheme this characterisation of the building appearing and disappearing, would be unchanged.

- 1.19. While part of the land within the Appeal Site has historic associations with the farm, this association will not be lost, this part of the historic relationship of the landscape and buildings will remain.
- 1.20. The Appeal Site will retain a rural character, and as the specific land-use (within the realms of what can be described as rural) is not critical to the heritage significance of the building this change (from arable to solar) will not bring about any harm. Thus, there would be no harm to the significance of any of the Grade II Listed buildings at Little Cheveney Farm.

***Response to the reasons for refusal and the Council's Statement of Case***

- 1.21. The Heritage and Design consultation response raises an objection to the application, citing impacts on the Grade II Listed Buildings at Little Long End and Little Cheveney Farm. Regarding Little Long End, the consultation response agrees with the DBA that the wider rural landscape surrounding the building makes only a minor contribution to its significance, but goes on to state that '*nevertheless, the construction of a considerable number of solar panels, even with the trees will reduce the rural setting of the site*'.
- 1.22. The Appeal Scheme will not feature within any important or material experiences (including views) of the buildings in question. I do not accept that the Appeal Scheme would result in the diminution of rural setting and / or the industrialisation of the arable context as alleged. With the Appeal Scheme in place the Appeal Site will retain a rural character. To the matter of the specific land-use, a suggestion that in this specific case changing from arable to this, different, land-use would cause harm is wholly without merit.

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### **Conclusion**

- 1.23. The RfR draws from the consultation response and Planning Committee Report in finding 'less than substantial harm' to the Grade II Listed Buildings at Little Long End and Little Cheveney Farm, triggering an allegation of conflict with Local Plan Policy DM4 and NPPF paragraph 202 (when insufficient public benefits are acknowledged). As presented above, I find no such harm to these designated heritage assets.



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