

Maidstone Borough Council

Heritage and Design Consultation Response

Application No	22/501335/FULL
Case Officer	Marion Geary
Address of Site	Land North Of Little Cheveney Farm, Sheephurst Lane, Marden Kent
Proposal	Installation of a renewable energy led generating station comprising of ground-mounted solar arrays, associated electricity generation infrastructure and other ancillary equipment comprising of storage containers, access tracks, fencing, gates and CCTV together with the creation of woodland and biodiversity enhancements.

<input type="checkbox"/> Major Application	<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Listing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Listed Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Designated Heritage Asset	<input type="checkbox"/> Design Advice
<input type="checkbox"/> Listed Building Curtilage	<input type="checkbox"/> Scheduled Ancient Monument	<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal
<input type="checkbox"/> Listed Building Setting	<input type="checkbox"/> Registered Park/Garden	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Context

The application site is located near to the following heritage assets:

- Little Cheveney Farm - Grade II
- Barn south-west of Cheveney Farm House – Grade II
- Oasthouse south-east of Little Cheveney Farm House – Grade II
- Oasthouse north of Great Sheephurst Farmhouse – Grade II
- Great Sheephurst Farmhouse – Grade II

The above sites were formerly in or associated with the agricultural industry and the land of the site was as is shown on the historic maps from the 19th century, was a mix of woodland and fields and the site has remained largely undeveloped since the 19th century. The earliest maps and a map of 1797 shows the above buildings albeit in limited detail. The site is in an agricultural landscape in rural central Kent. Historic map regression has shown the site has remained in agricultural use throughout the post-medieval and modern periods, and the region continues to be rural in character. The rural setting contributes to the significance of the listed buildings.

Comments

The main consideration in this instance is the impact on the setting of the heritage assets. Setting as stated in the NPPF Glossary is defined as: *"The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral"*

The heritage assessment follows the staged approach to understand the setting of the listed buildings and the impact of the development on that setting and is sufficient. The existing site has a mix of mature hedges and trees which would partially view the solar panels, however, there will be some intervisibility between some of the listed buildings and the proposed site. The contribution of setting to the significance of a heritage asset is often expressed by reference to views, either long or short views to and from a historic asset can in some cases contribute to its significance. In this case, there are limited views of some of the listed buildings from the site, however, due to the low level of the solar panels they are unlikely to harm the views to and from the heritage assets. Views are only one part of setting, however, and as mentioned above the rural character of the landscape has remained undeveloped and this allows for a better appreciation of the listed buildings.

Little Long End

The heritage statement acknowledges with reference to the setting of Little Long End that *'Whilst the wider rural setting which includes the Site also makes some contribution, this is minor, and does not contribute to the understanding of the building'* Whilst I agree it is minor, nevertheless, the construction of a considerable number of solar panels, even with the trees will reduce the rural setting of the site.

Little Cheveney Farm

The oasts at Little Cheveney Farm are noticeable from miles around and are visible reminders of the hop industry in Kent, the short distance views of this asset from the site in particular the roundels and cowl are important and will be impacted by the proposed development somewhat, however it is the rural setting that will be diminished and will result in some minor harm to the setting of the listed building. This is acknowledged in the heritage statement *"It is principally the rural qualities of the setting which inform our experience and appreciation of the oasthouses significance. This experience would be impacted slightly by the proposed development, as these assets and Site would be visible within the same view"*

Great Sheephurst and Turkey Farm House Farmhouse

There would be a substantial separation distance between the site and both listed buildings and therefore it is unlikely the development would harm the setting of these heritage assets as they will continue to be surrounded by meadows and fields.

Longends Farmhouse

Longends Farmhouse is surrounded by private gardens to the south and east, and by the driveway to the north and is separated from the site by the railway, due to the level of separation there would be no harm to the significance of the Listed Building.

The heritage statement states *"It was established that, on account of intervening development, vegetation, and topography, the proposals would not result in any harm to the significance of any of the Listed Buildings in the study area."* While it is true the development would not impact the setting of Longends Farmhouse,

Great Sheephurst and Turkey Farm House, the erosion of the rural setting will diminish the rural setting of Little Long End and Little Cheveney Farm somewhat at least initially. In line with the NPPF it is necessary to consider the harm. The harm would be minor and at the at the lower end of less than substantial.

Recommendation

I raise an objection to this application on heritage grounds.

Response by

Jeremy Fazzalano

Date

10/08/2022