Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

10 November 2023

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Application No: **PL/2023/08890**
MANOR FARM, GREEN ROAD, CODFORD, WARMINSTER, BA12 0NP
Change of use of allotment area for siting of 36 panel domestic ground mounted solar array

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

x	~~No~~ comment
	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
	Object (for reasons set out below)
	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 (LBC) and 66 (PP) require that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 201-3 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 197 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance." It is also required that distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced.

Site and assets considered:

Manor Farm is a grade II listed building. The listing description is as follows:

'Manor Farmhouse GV II Farmhouse. Circa 1840. Limestone ashlar with chamfered quoins, Welsh slate hipped roof with ashlar stacks with moulded cappings. L-plan. Two-storey, 3-window south front. Central Doric portico with inserted glazing, 4-panelled inner door, tripartite 12-pane sash either side. Three 16-pane sashes to first floor. Right return has two tripartite sashes to ground floor and two 16-pane to first. Left return with attached 2-storey service wing; 2-light flush mullioned casements, sashes and planked doors. Rear has canted bay with sashes to left, glazed door to right, sashes to first floor. Interior retains original fittings; stairs with stick balusters, 4-panelled doors in panelled reveals and moulded architraves. Kitchen in wing with large open fireplace with chamfered stone jambs and depressed arched lintel, flagstone floor.'



To the rear (north) of the farmhouse is a U-shaped arrangement of listed farmbuildings surrounding a courtyard. They are separately listed at grade II.

Proposal:

The proposal is for a ground-mounted solar array sited to the south of Manor Farmhouse. The south being the principal elevation of the house, approach by a curved drive.

The array would be mounted in an area of the extended garden which is given over to vegetables (judging from the greenhouse/polytunnel seen on google aerial view) and which is separated from the garden via a hedge. The site is also bounded by a hedge on all sides.



Issues: impact on the setting of the listed building.

Information considered/provided: Paragraph 194 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected**, including any contribution made by their setting**. In this particular case, the application is accompanied by a planning statement. The planning statement notes that

'*the proposed site has a stronger affinity to the domestic curtilage of Manor Farmhouse than the open countryside beyond'* (6.1)

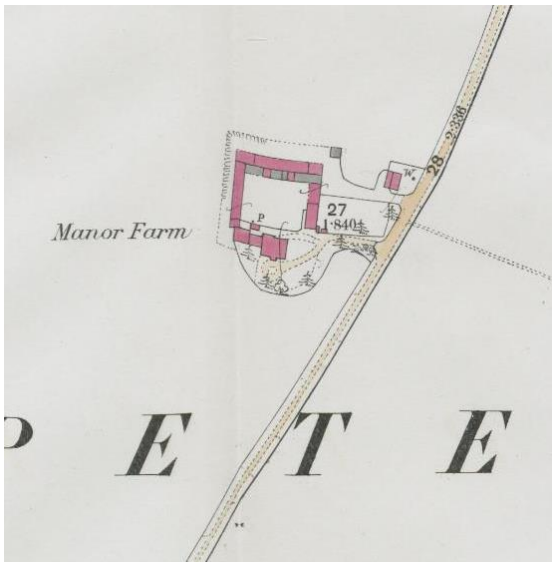
And

'*The proposed array is situated at a significant distance from the listed buildings and within a well screened and discrete location. Views are particularly limited from wider viewpoints and from the listed property itself. Given the separation distance between the proposed arrays and the listed building, as well as the lack of visual connectivity between them, it is considered that the setting of the listed buildings will no be adversely affected by the proposed development'* (7.2).

Notwithstanding this, paragraph 195 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

Assessment:

The proposed location is sited to the south of the principal elevation and outside the historic curtilage of the farmhouse. (That is not to say though, that the site is not within the setting of the farmhouse).



The land to the south of the house is open farmland with, one assumes, some public footpaths. That said, views out from the lane to the countryside, are inhibited by a thick hedge, and views to the site, from the countryside, by the hedge which encircles the site.

The farmhouse is an elegant building with a degree of grandeur. The siting of the farm-buildings to the north was presumably conscious decision to separate the domestic polite architecture within its garden setting, from the working farmyard and ancillary buildings.

So whilst the array may not be visible from the farmhouse, nor indeed the wider landscape in view of the hedges (including that which encircles the site) it would introduce a utilitarian piece of infrastructure in front of the house where currently there is none. As such, it would change the character of the space.

As such, I identify a **slight** degree of harm on the 'less than substantial' scale (NPPF terminology), triggering paragraph 202 (possible public benefits of the project).

Summary & conclusion:

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 requires that *'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*.'

I consider the open fields and garden to contribute to the setting of the principal aspect of the listed building. As such, I consider the introduction of contemporary infrastructure to have a slight harmful impact in this particular location. I consider the harm to be at the lower end of the 'less than substantial' scale.