

Styford Hall, Bywell
Heritage Statement
June 2022



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Prepared in relation to a proposed application for planning permission at Styford Hall, Bywell



Styford Hall – Installation of photovoltaic panels within walled garden

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared in relation to proposed ground mounted photovoltaic panels at Styford Hall, Bywell.

1.2 Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that *“In determining applications, 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.”*

1.3 Styford Hall is a Grade II listed building (List Entry Number: 1370523), listed 8th May 1988. The list entry can be viewed at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1370523> and describes it as a “Country House, c.1800; rear wings reduced in height and other alterations c.1965. Stone, pebble dashed, with rusticated quoins and raised tooled-and-margined dressings; Welsh slate roof. Rectangular block with rear wings flanking yard..[.]”.

1.4 The walled garden – which is the location of this proposal – is separately listed at Grade II. It’s list entry can be viewed here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1044801>

and it describes the listing thus: "Garden walls, c.1800, slightly reduced in height c.1980. Brick in English Garden Wall Bond 3:1, except for centre and north face of north wall which are coursed rubble with tooled-and-margined quoins; stone coping. Rectangular walled garden with side walls extended slightly beyond south wall to end in square piers. Tall walls with hollow-chamfered coping, ramped down twice on each side. Boarded doorways under elliptical arches at centre of south wall and north of centre inside walls. Rear elevation of north wall shows battered buttresses, and bricked-up vents for heating flues. Pent outbuilding with asbestos roof is not of interest."

1.5 The adjacent stable block is separately listed, also at Grade II.

1.6 The proposed works are the installation of two banks of photovoltaic (PV) panels in the north east corner of the walled garden. These are freestanding and not fixed to the listed structure, so only planning permission is required. The works are part of a strategy by the owners of Styford Hall to reduce the carbon footprint of the building, and follow on from a successful installation of an air source heat pump. The proposed works are confined to the walled garden save for shallow excavations for cable runs to the house.



Figure 1 The southern elevation of Styford Hall, with the stable block visible behind, and the walled garden distantly visible between the two



Figure 2 The view from the rear courtyard of the Hall looking north to the stable block and walled garden beyond



Figure 3 The walled garden south doorway and southern wall

2.0 Context

2.1 The 2015 application – reference 15/04105/LBC ‘Listed Building Consent: Internal refurbishment and changes to internal layout to include minor works to main house including east and west wings to the rear’ included a Historic Building Assessment prepared by Peter Ryder. It outlined the history of the buildings including stable block and walled garden. It noted the location of the Hall on the north bank of the River Tyne, 3km above Bywell and directly north of Riding Mill. The quiet lane from which the Hall is now accessed was previously the route to a ford, crossing the Tyne into the village street of Broomhaugh, where workers at the Styford Estate lived.

2.2 The Grade II Hall is U shaped in plan, but this is a recent arrangement and until the mid 1960s it featured an enclosed courtyard to the north, linked to the stable block. Following a period of neglect and dry rot outbreak, this northern service wing was demolished, the two flanking wings reduced in height and the house severed from the stable block, which now stands separate. The Hall looks southward on an open aspect across farmland in the same ownership, separated by a ha-ha ditch.

2.3 The Grade II stable block is a u-shaped composition facing south, and like the house is roughcast with ashlar quoins. The centre of the block features a pediment with an ashlar cupola with clock set behind.

2.4 The walled garden stands north / north west of the stable block and is rectangular in plan, with walls in English Garden Wall Bond. The taller rear wall of the walled garden was originally heated, and features a lean-to outbuilding on its northern face.



Figure 4 View from walled garden looking south towards Hall



Figure 5 View within walled garden looking east towards site

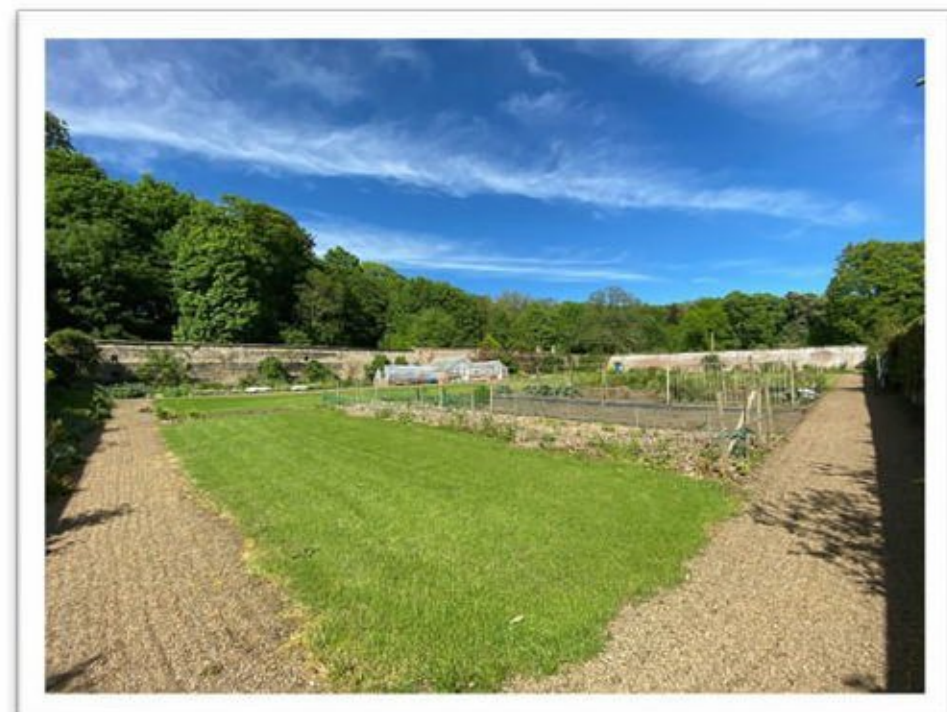


Figure 6 Further view to site in north east corner of walled garden

3.0 Heritage Context & Significance

3.1 The 2015 Ryder report indicates that the three principal elements of the site - Hall, stable block and walled gardens – arise in their present form from c1810. Prior to this the Hall was a smaller two storey, 3 bay arrangement. An 1840 lithograph dates from 1840 shows the 3 storey elevation of the Hall as it stands today, and historic mapping shows stable block and walled garden. A more extensive greenhouse than the present C20 structure is shown to the west of the application site.

3.2 Figure 9 shows the Hall, stable block and walled garden prior to their radical remodelling in 1965 when the northern range of outbuildings and service stores to the Hall was demolished, along with the lowering of the flanking wings from three to a single storey, and the severing of the stable block from the hall. It also shows the site of the proposed works within the walled garden as cultivated border. The extensive vegetable gardens shown in this image reflect a time when necessary labour was in greater supply than at present, which has seen the walled garden laid substantially to lawns.

3.3 Figure 8 shows designated heritage assets within 100m of the application site – these being walled garden stable block and Hall. There is no conservation area designation in the area, nor any scheduled monuments. Heritage assets south of the site at Riding Mill are unaffected by the proposed works, whose visibility is very limited due to their location behind high boundary walls.

3.4 The range of structures is significant and the importance of the walled garden is underlined by its separate listing. This significance has informed the development of the scheme, with more conventional rooftop locations being discounted in order to avoid harm to the significance of the main Hall, or stable block. The opportunity afforded by the extensive walled garden provides south facing

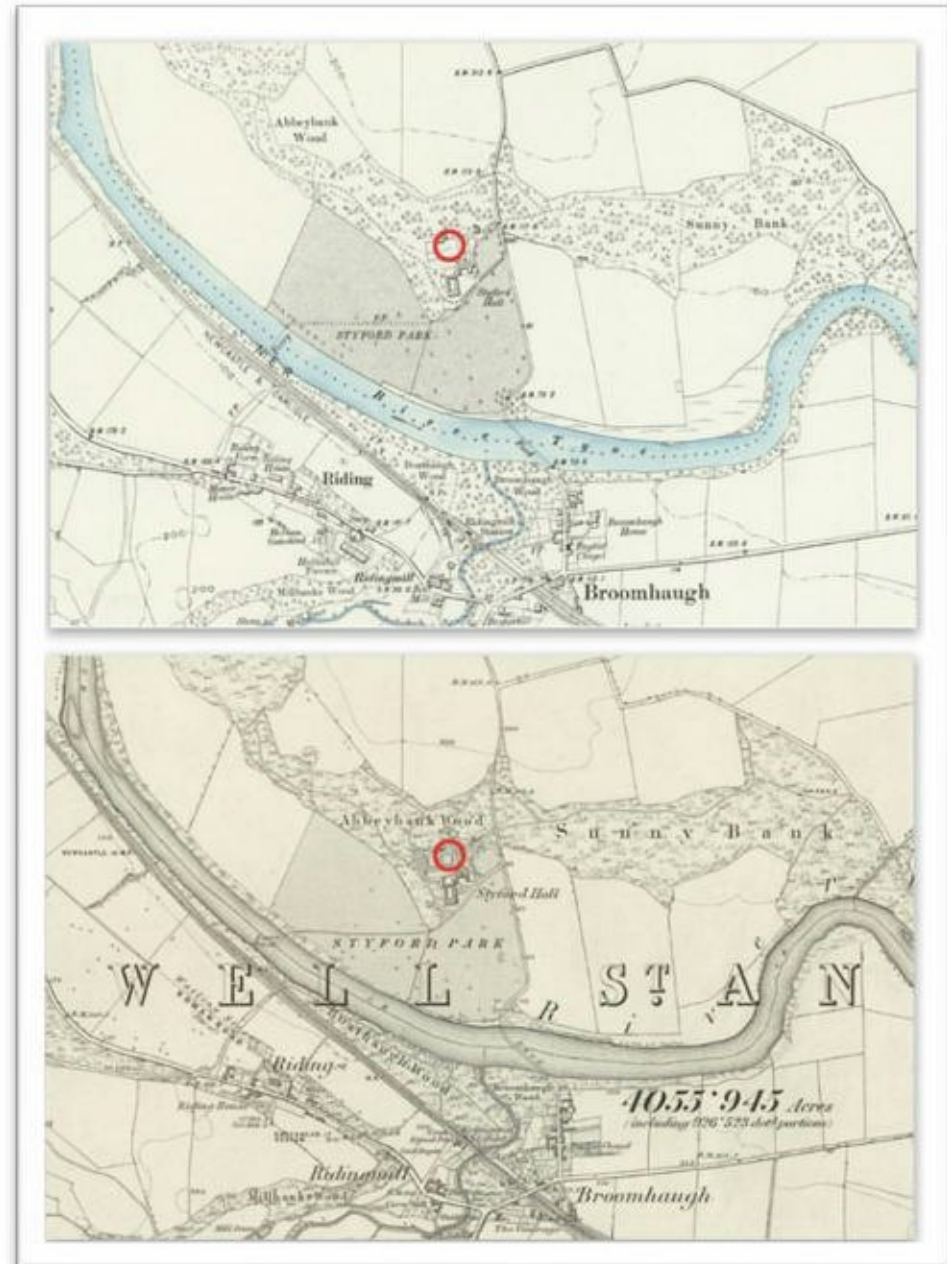


Figure 7 1865 and 1898 1st and 2nd Edition (top) Ordnance Survey mapping showing the Hall and site ringed in red



Figure 8 Historic England mapping showing designated heritage assets within 100m of the site

space which is uniquely sheltered from general view, and whose open aspect does not risk the overshadowing generated by the extensive tree planting in adjacent areas.

3.5 Historic England guidance on renewable energy (Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings Solar Electric (Photovoltaics) 2018) states that “If it is not desirable to have arrays fixed to the roof, or if the roof is not suitable, an alternative is to locate them on the ground or on an outbuilding¹”.

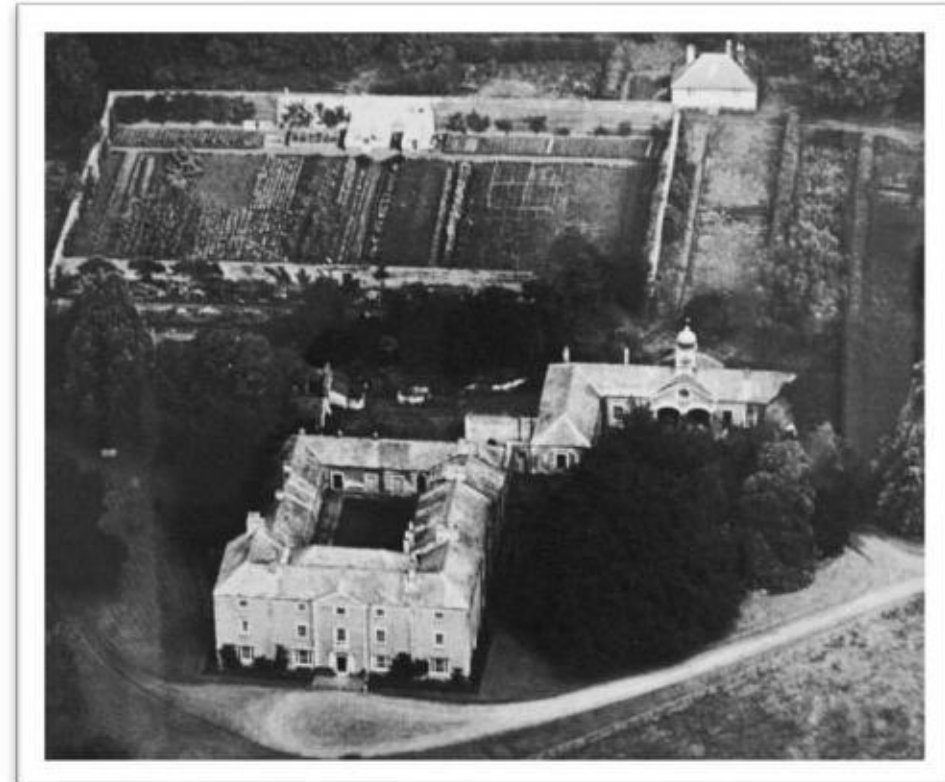
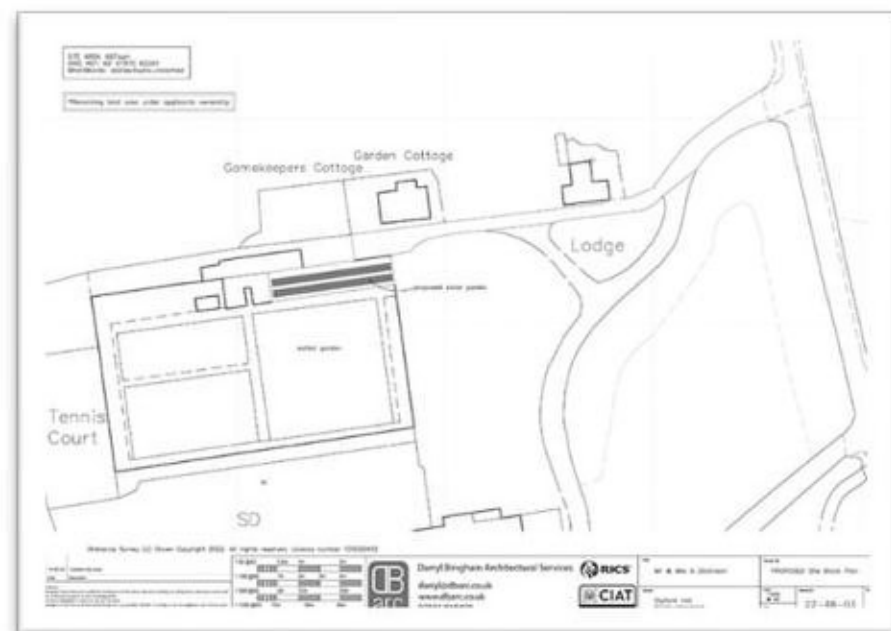
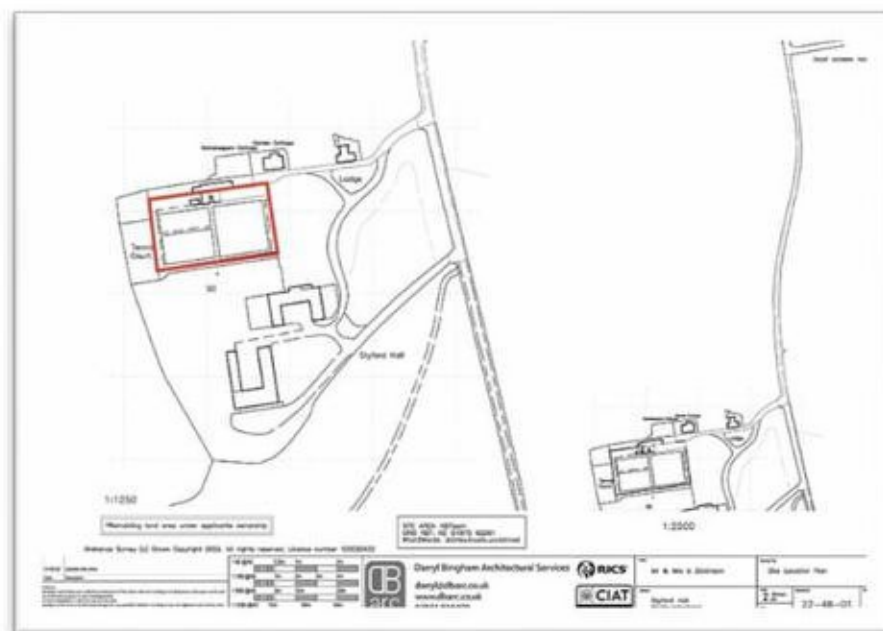


Figure 9 The Hall prior to 1960s remodelling and demolition

4.0 Proposal

4.1 The proposed works are the installation of x2 rows of photovoltaic panels in the north east corner of the walled garden. These will be freestanding structures whose installation will not impact on the fabric of the walls. The configuration would be 2 x rows of 28 panels in one array - 29.20 metres long. The panels would be black in colour of 365w each. Peak power output would be 20.44 KW.

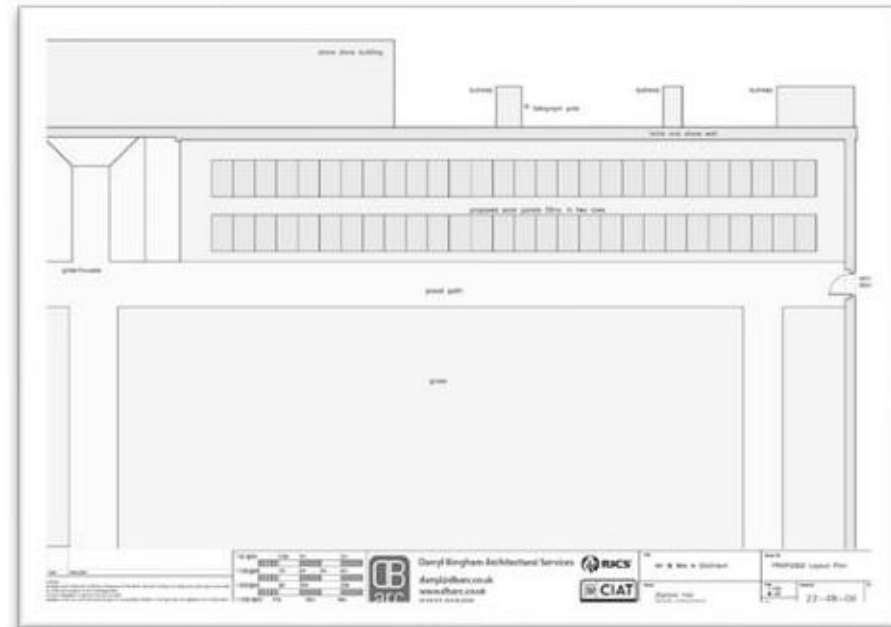
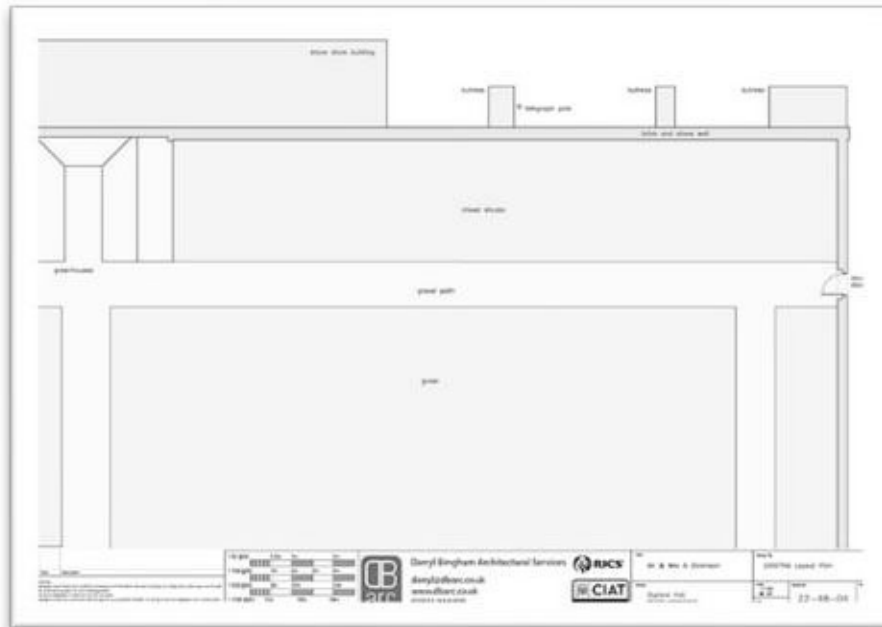
4.2 The legs are installed using a ground core device therefore minimum ground disturbance.



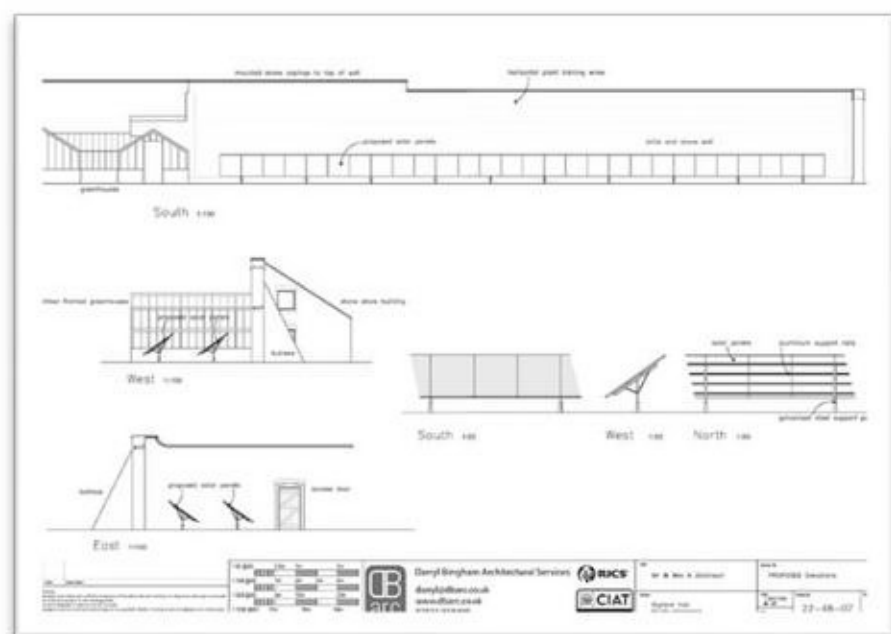
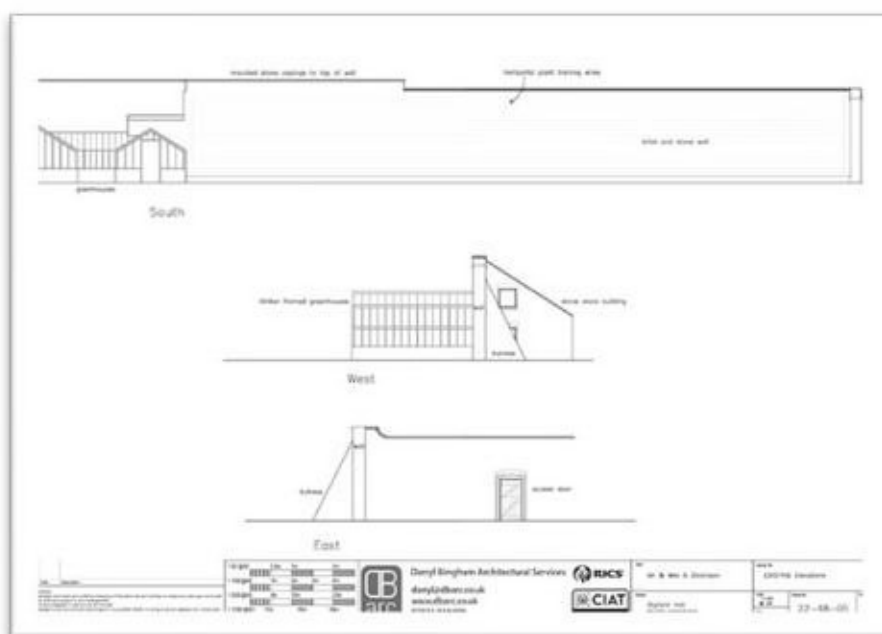
Figures 10 and 11 showing location plan and proposed block plan

4.3 The installations would not be visible from any public vantage points save from within the walled garden, where they would occupy a very limited proportion of the overall area. Mounted on galvanised steel support posts the array would be fixed to aluminium support frames, with an overall height lower than the eaves level of the existing greenhouse.

¹ Historic England ‘Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings Solar Electric (Photovoltaics)’ 2018 p11



Figures 12 and 13 showing existing and proposed site plans



Figures 14 and 15 showing existing and proposed elevations

5.0 Policy Context

5.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) states in Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) Paragraph 194, that “In determining applications, 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.”

5.1.2 Paragraph 197 advises that “in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.

5.1.3 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is

irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance”.

5.1.4 Paragraph 200 states that “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification”.

5.1.5 Paragraph 201 states that “Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss..[...]”.

5.1.6 Paragraph 202 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”.

5.2 The Town and Country Planning (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) Act 1990

5.2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) Act 1990 sets out the wider legislative framework in which development which affects listed buildings and conservation areas must be considered. Section 66 of the 1990 Act requires that “In considering whether to grant planning permission [F1or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State 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.”

5.3 Local Policy Context

5.3.1 Northumberland Local Plan – 2016-2036 (March 2022)

Policy STP 3 Principles of sustainable development (strategic policy)
Policy STP 4 Climate change mitigation and adaptation (strategic policy)
Policy QOP Sustainable design and construction
Policy ENV7 Historic environment and heritage assets
Policy REN1 Renewable and low carbon energy and associated energy storage

5.4 Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance (English Heritage 2008)

5.4.1 Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance (English Heritage 2008) is intended as a guide to conservation thinking and practice. It defines conservation as the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage value and recognises that change in the historic environment is inevitable, whether this is caused by natural processes, wear and tear, or responses to technological, social or economic change.

5.4.2 The heritage values set out in the English Heritage document Conservation Principles: Policies and guidance are:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.

- Aesthetic value: the ways people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

5.4.3 There are six commonly accepted levels of significance. These are:

Outstanding level of significance: Exceptional levels of architectural and decorative preservation – corresponding to the NPPF advice that harm would be ‘wholly exceptional’ e.g. according to the highest level of protection and special interest afforded to a grade I or grade II* listing.

High Level of significance: A nationally and regionally important asset e.g. Grade II building to which substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.

Medium level of significance: May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category to be retained where possible although there is usually scope for adaptation.

Low level of significance: Undesignated assets that may make a positive contribution at a local level. There is usually scope for adaptation.

No interest: Historically unimportant but a category above intrusive or negative impact. Adaptation or removal would usually be acceptable.

Intrusive: Historically unimportant and having a negative impact on the setting or significance of other assets. Could be removed with beneficial effect.

5.5 Historic England’s 2019 Advice Note 12 ‘**Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets** Historic England Advice Note 12’ provides information on the analysis and assessment of heritage significance in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It advises a staged approach to decision-making and the development of proposals for change to heritage assets. It states that “A staged approach would usually embrace the following stages, informed by the scope of the proposal:

1. Understand the form, materials and history of the affected heritage asset(s), and/or the nature and extent of archaeological deposits
2. Understand the significance of the asset(s)

These two stages fulfil the requirement in paragraph 189 of the NPPF and are undertaken by the applicant.

3. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance

This stage fulfils the requirement in paragraph 190 of the NPPF and is undertaken by the LPA.

However, the applicant needs to be aware of impacts so that the analysis of significance submitted to the LPA, under paragraph 189, is sufficient in its level of detail.

4. Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF

5. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance

These two stages are addressed by the assessment of impact by the LPA but may also be addressed by the applicant in reaching a decision on the scope and design of a proposal. Indeed, assessment of these three latter stages by the applicant prior to application may assist a positive assessment of impact by the LPA, thus leading to better outcomes for applicants, reducing both abortive work and delays.”

5.6 Historic England has set out a number of guidance documents regarding climate change and the role of historic buildings to address and mitigate this threat. The guidance 'Low and Zero Carbon Technologies' Updated 17 March 2021 refers to 'Low and zero carbon (LZC) technologies generate energy from renewable or low carbon sources and emit low or no carbon dioxide emissions' and notes that 'In 2019 the UK Government announced a target of net zero for UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. Reaching net zero requires reduction of emissions across the whole of the country including historic properties whether businesses or households. Low or zero carbon technologies that generate electricity or heat or both with low or no carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions are vital to meeting this target'

5.6.1 It refers to Photovoltaics (PV) stating 'The visual impact of PV panels is particularly important for heritage buildings, their settings and landscapes, and specialist advice must be sought for installation of externally visible equipment. For historic buildings siting is crucial, both in terms of energy generation and heritage preservation. It is important to recognise that PV panel area may need to be large, and it is important to assess how visual damage to the building can be prevented through screens or barriers'.

5.6.2 The Historic England Guidance 'Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings Solar Electric (Photovoltaics) 2018 states that 'For historic buildings a balance needs to be achieved between generating your own energy and avoiding damage both to the significance of the building and its fabric'. It discusses ground mounted arrays, noting that 'If it is not desirable to have arrays fixed to the roof, or if the roof is not suitable, an alternative is to locate them on the ground or on an outbuilding'²(p11).

5.6.3 Under 'Impact on building fabric and landscape' it notes that 'a PV system consists of the array outside of the building and the electrical equipment and cabling inside the building. The impact of the installation (and potential later removal) of the system should be considered for all component parts' emphasising that 'great care must be taken when planning the installation to think about the 'reversibility' and the 'physical impact' an installation can have on a building' (p14) and that 'the impact of some ground-mounted PV arrays can be reduced by screening. For example in a rural location, hazel or willow panels may be appropriate screening for a small-scale installation' (p15)

² Historic England 'Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings Solar Electric (Photovoltaics) 2018

6.0 Assessing the impact of the proposal

6.1 Styford Hall and its associated listed buildings the stable block and the walled gardens are significant heritage assets which represent a period of early nineteenth century wealth and expansion of rural estates in Northumberland and a blossoming of country houses and associated support buildings. Although the Hall suffered some demolition and truncation in the 1960s, it survives largely intact and remains a family residence of great character and historic interest. The detached stable block retains a flavour of its original function, being now used for garaging. The detached walled garden still serves the house, providing produce but also laid to extensive lawns, reflecting the reduced ability to staff it in the intensive manner for which it was originally conceived.

6.2 Recognising the large carbon footprint of such substantial buildings the present owners wish to reduce the carbon footprint as part of a strategy which has already seen the installation of an air source heat pump. This new project – requiring planning permission only - seeks to install a free standing solar array within the walled garden.

6.3 Historic England guidance recognises the importance of meeting the challenges of reducing the carbon impact of historic buildings, and advises that impact on fabric, visibility and reversibility are important considerations. Having discounted apparatus fixed to either the main Hall or the stable block, the walled garden offers a unique opportunity for a substantially concealed location which preserves the setting of Hall and stable block, and which makes use of the south-facing aspect for which the garden was designed, in order to house the pv units.

6.4 Using the levels of heritage value described above the walled garden's value is principally evidential, historic and aesthetic. While certainly a modern intervention, the impacts of the array on the fabric are negligible, and given the expanse of space within the walled garden, its primary function as a site for cultivation is not impaired.

6.5 Using the levels of significance set out in paragraph 5.4.3 above, the area of land within the garden has a medium level of significance. No impacts on the built fabric would result from the works and there is usually scope for adaption where this is the case.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 It is respectfully asserted that the proposals would cause no harm to the fabric of heritage assets on the site, and the benefits of using this uniquely suitable space to complement the carbon reduction objectives of the site owners outweighs any minor harm to the setting of the walled garden as experienced from within its walls.

Sources

Department for Communities and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework (London, DCLG July 2021)

Historic England Advice Note 12. (Swindon. Historic England, 2019)

English Heritage. Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (London: English Heritage, April 2008)

Northumberland County Council 'Heritage Statement Guidance' (Development Services, Northumberland County Council, April 2015)

Ryder PF Styford Hall Hall Statement of Significance (2015)

Historic England Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Solar Electric (Photovoltaics) (Swindon Historic England 2018)

Listed Building mapping information taken from <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search>

1865 and 1898 Ordnance Survey

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/infrastructure/renewable-energy/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/energy-efficiency-and-historic-buildings/low-and-zero-carbon-technologies/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/eehb-solar-electric/>

APPENDIX 1 Designated Heritage Assets within 100m of the application site

GARDEN WALLS 60 METRES NORTH OF STYFORD HALL

- Heritage Category: Listing
- Grade: II
- List Entry Number: 1044801

STABLE BLOCK 30 METRES NORTH-EAST OF STYFORD HALL

- Heritage Category: Listing
- Grade: II
- List Entry Number: 1154646

STYFORD HALL

- Heritage Category: Listing
- Grade: II
- List Entry Number: 1370523