

Heritage Statement

Furze Hall, Blackmore Road, Fryerning CM4 0PB

Installation of 120 ground mounted solar panels

October 2023



Real8Group 37 Potash Road Billericay Essex CM11 1DL

email enquire@real8group.co.uk

www.real8group.co.uk

REA: REA:
INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES LTD
PLANNING LTD

CONTENTS

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION**
- 2.0 HERITAGE PLANNING POLICY**
- 3.0 HERITAGE ASSET – FURZE HALL**
- 4.0 POTENTIAL IMPACTS UPON HERITAGE ASSET**
- 5.0 CONCLUSION**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the installation of a solar panel array comprising 120 ground mounted solar panels on land to the south west of Furze Hall, Blackmore Road, Fryerning (herein after referred to as ‘the site’). Full details of the scheme can be found within the Planning Letter and all other relevant documents, and these are not repeated within this Heritage Statement.
- 1.2 The site is not located within a conservation area however, Furze Hall is a Grade II Listed Building with established outbuildings on site used for storage and associated agricultural use. The property grounds extend to approximately 20 acres all of which falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt. This statement therefore seeks to identify the setting and significance of Furze Hall and analyses the effect the proposed development would have on its significance by a change to its setting.
- 1.3 This Statement has been produced in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), National Planning Policy Guidance, and the Historic England Good Practice and Advice Notes “Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment” and “The setting of Heritage Assets” published in July 2015. These require applicants to make an assessment of the significance of Heritage Assets and their settings in relation to proposed development and make an assessment of the impact of their proposals upon them.
- 1.4 The site was visited by the author of this statement on numerous occasions, where observations were made on the character of the site and its immediate surroundings and important views into and out from the site across the surrounding countryside and into and the listed building.
- 1.5 Desk-based research has also been undertaken and this, together with the observations made on site, has helped to inform the following assessment.

2.0 HERITAGE PLANNING POLICY

2.1 Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 'Act') places a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The decision maker must also give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building.

National Policy

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework), the Historic England 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' and the Historic England Good Practice Advice documents (advice notes 2 and 3) are relevant to the content of this report and the consideration of the application. The government objective is that heritage assets (which includes listed buildings and their settings) should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

2.3 Chapter 16 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' of the Framework states that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

2.4 Paragraph 194 states that when 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 that significance.

2.5 Paragraph 202 states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

- 2.6 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides advice on enhancing and conserving the historic environment in accordance with the Framework.
- 2.7 The PPG states that ‘A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.’ It further explains that the ‘Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage’ (Reference ID: 18a-013-20140306).
- 2.8 In relation to harm the guidance states (Reference ID: 18a-017-20140306):

“Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.”

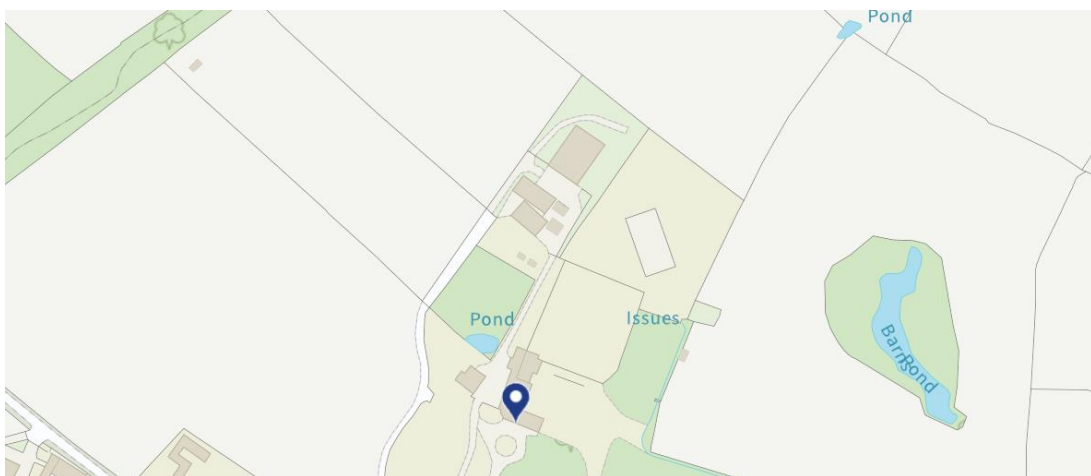
- 2.9 In the same paragraph, the guidance also states that ‘works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all’, although it is acknowledged that even minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm.

Local Policy

- 2.10 Local Plan Policy BE16: Conservation And Enhancement Of Historic Environment, in summary, requires preservation of a designated heritage asset and its setting.

3.0 HERITAGE ASSET – FURZE HALL

- 3.1 This section will assess the significance of Furze Hall only as it is considered that this is the only designated heritage asset likely to be affected by the proposed development on the site.
- 3.2 Furze Hall is located on the opposite side of Blackmore Road (see Map 1 below) and approximately 80m to the south-east of the site proposed solar panels. It is significantly set back from the solar panels with dense tree planting screen the solar panels from Furze Hall itself including an orchard.



Map 1¹

- 3.3 The list description for Furze Hall reads as follows:

'Il House. C17, altered in C15, C19 and C20. Timber-framed with facade of red brick. in-Flemish bond, remainder plastered and weatherboarded, roofed with slate and handmade red clay tiles. Main range facing SW with axial stack at right end in front of axis; 2 storeys with attics. C20 single-storey extension to right, with flat roof. C17 2-bay extension beyond, with 3 internal stacks; 2 storeys. Single-storey extension to left, with slate roof. Late C19 2-storey range to right of right wing, separated from main range, and indoor swimming-pool to rear. 3-window range of early C19 tripartite sashes of 4+12+4 lights, with much handmade glass. 3 late C19 sashes in gabled dormers. Central early C19 half-glazed door, with plain overlight, early C19

¹ Map taken from Historic England's List Entry Summary – Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900

doorcase with Gothic moulded pilasters, flush panelled jambs and soffit, cornice with fret dentils. Dentilled cornice, plain parapet, hipped gambrel roof of C1S/early C19 hand-cut grey slates. In the left return of the main range is a 2-storey splayed bay of sashes. In the rear elevation, near the right end is an early C19 sash of 6+6 lights on the ground floor, and on the first floor a mid-C1S sash of 4+4 lights, both with crown glass. In the left elevation of the rear wing is an early C19 sash of 20+20 lights. This wing and the extension to the rear is roofed with handmade red clay tiles, the parallel wing with machine-cut slates. INTERIOR: the entrance hall has much C17 oak panelling, much of it re-sited, painted white. The interior is greatly altered. Some exposed timber-framing on the first floor, at the left end, is not structurally connected to the building, and has been moved from elsewhere.”

- 3.4 Furze Hall has been extended and altered since it was first built in the 16th Century reflecting the design of each era and the needs of the residents at that time. The solar panels being provided within the Furze Hall area, although not adjacent to the listed building, also reflects a period in time for sustainable energy generation.
- 3.5 The main view of Furze Hall and its principle views out looking to the east and north remain unaffected and the solar panels would not be visible within its setting.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 4.1 In line with the Framework and PPG, this section summarises the information researched in relation to the significance of the designated heritage asset before assessing any impact the proposed development may have. The documents examined include the, planning history, national and local records, historic maps, the Heritage Gateway and other statutory sources.
- 4.2 The inclusion of solar panels is considered to have a neutral impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset.
- 4.3 This neutral impact is as a result of the existing and proposed soft landscape features along the boundaries of the site, combined with the nature of the proposed development and its limited scale. It is considered that the proposal would preserve the significance of the nearby listed buildings and their setting and would amount to less than substantial harm and therefore accord with the aims of the Framework. The less than substantial harm caused by the proposed development would be offset by the separation distance to the heritage assets, the existing and proposed intervening soft landscape features along the site's boundaries and the limited scale of the proposed development, combined with the economic benefit of the proposed solar panels. It would therefore also comply with Local Plan Policy BE16, which requires proposed development within the setting of a listed building to not adversely affect its significance, including views to and from the building.
- 4.4 The proposed solar panels, by virtue of its distance and sympathetic siting will have a neutral impact on the appearance of the Furze Hall. In addition, the temporary nature of the solar panels being sought for a time period of 40 years only limits the neutral impact made as the solar panels would be removed after this period of time and therefore have a neutral impact on the setting of Furze Hall.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Planning Letter supporting this application sets out the proposed development in detail however, in summary, 120 panels would be arranged in two rows of 60 panels. Each individual panel would measure 1.143 metres in width and 1.762 metres in length and would be mounted on a frame measuring 1.1 metre in height. The proposed development would be located on an underused area of land that is currently laid to grass, would be set back from the access road leading to Furze Hall and includes the planting of new hedging along the south eastern boundary of the site (which runs parallel to the access road).
- 5.2 The solar panels would be located on an area of land that is surrounded by open fields which are owned by the applicant. Existing mature soft landscape features screen the site from wider views along its northern and southern boundaries. The proposed solar panels are therefore relatively well screened from public views and any impact on the surrounding area would be localised. There is also a significant distance to Furze Hall to the south east of the site which would help reduce any potential impact upon its setting.
- 5.3 The proposed solar arrays are relatively modest and are well screened from public views, thus reducing the overall scale of the development. The solar panels are proposed to be in place for a temporary 40-year period. They would then be fully demounted, and the land returned to its former condition at the end of its use. As such, the proposed development is not a permanent form of development.
- 5.4 As noted in section 4 of this statement, the inclusion of solar panels is considered to have a neutral impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset given the panels' distance, temporary nature and location away from Furze Hall. It would therefore amount to less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset which is clearly and demonstrably outweighed by the economic benefits the proposed solar panel would bring with them.
- 5.5 It is therefore concluded that the significance of the listed building will be preserved by the proposed development for the purposes of Sections 16 and

66 of the Act. No harm is identified and the proposal is therefore in compliance with the merits of the Framework and Local Plan Policy BE16.

8