

# IAN WIGHTMAN

HISTORIC BUILDING CONSULTANTS



## DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Bridgefoot  
Bridgefoot Lane  
Stedham  
West Sussex  
GU29 0PT

Client: Mr A. Gelbard & Mrs C. Harding-Gelbard

Project: Installation of a solar array in the grounds of Bridgefoot.

Date: January 2024

Heritage Consultant: Ian Wightman BA Hons MSc PhD IHBC

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Design Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a planning application submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority on behalf of Mr A. Gelbard & Mrs C. Harding-Gelbard.
- 1.2. The proposals seek to install a solar array in the grounds of Bridgefoot, which lies to the west of the house. The proposal has benefitted from pre-application advice which has been incorporated into this application.
- 1.3. Bridgefoot is a grade II listed building (LEN number 1217303) and was designated on 18 June 1959.
- 1.4. The building is within Stedham Conservation Area and the South Downs National Park and consequently the National Park's Dark Night Sky Reserve.



Aerial view of Bridgefoot to the west of Bridgefoot Lane, Stedham. ©Google

2. Description of the building and its setting

- 2.1. Bridgefoot is a detached two storey building situated on Bridgefoot Lane, within the village of Stedham. The house is accessed between stone walls overplanted with hedging formally clipped, leading into a courtyard with the main house ahead and outbuildings to the north. The garden either side of the entrance drive is planted with mature shrubs and trees.
- 2.2. The house is orientated north-south with the main entrance facing to the east. As with many buildings of this age, the house is made up of various ranges constructed over the centuries.
- 2.3. Bridgefoot is made up of stone laid to course with red brick quoins. The stone is Fittleworth stone, a sandstone with ironstone galletting within the lime mortar joints. The stone and jointing varies with the phase of the building, though is all good quality and largely undamaged.
- 2.4. The front elevation consists mainly of timber casement windows with leaded lights. The exception are the two sash windows on the ground floor either side of the entrance porch. This is also constructed from stone with brick quoins.

- 2.5. The house has a substantial chimney stack constructed in red brick and the roof is half-hipped and laid with traditional red clay tiles.



The east elevation of Bridgefoot. ©Google

- 2.6. To the south the house has been extended by being linked to a former outbuilding. This is of the same construction as the dwelling.
- 2.7. Internally, the main house has two large fireplaces with a brick inglenook laid in English bond. One ceiling has exposed timber beams which are higher than might be expected. Elsewhere there is timber-framing, some of which is historic, especially in the ground floor room to the north. This is a living room. The back wall here is box-framing whilst other beams and framing appear to have been added later. These would benefit from further assessment.



The interior of the ground floor

- 2.8. The rooms in the southern part of the house are modern in their finish, being rendered without any additional detailing. There is also a modern kitchen with Crittel windows to the rear.
- 2.9. To the north there are three outbuildings, all traditionally constructed in stone with clay tile roofs. A single storey barn with a fully hipped roof has been converted into accommodation and is now



known as Plane Tree Cottage. This faces into the front courtyard. Next to this is a two-storey barn with a half-hip roof that has garage/storage space on the ground floor and accommodation on the first floor. This has two separate garage doors (hinged double doors) and on the first floor, French doors leading onto a metal balcony. There is a further single-storey barn to the rear of the house with a half-hip roof that contains storage and an office. This has large double doors providing further garage/storage space. This building backs on to the rear garden.



**Outbuilding housing a double-garage viewed from the west and south-west.**



**The outbuilding to the rear which houses the office and machinery store.**

- 2.10. The front courtyard and area around to the north of the main house is laid to gavel. To the rear of the building a garden of formal planting, consisting of topiary is sheltered close to the house and adjacent barn. Beyond this the garden is laid to lawn and enclosed by hedging.
- 2.11. Further to the east the domestic garden finishes and there is pasture beyond. This leads down to the River Rother which snakes its way south and west of the property within a wooded river valley. Immediately south of the garden is a tennis court.



Aerial view of Bridgefoot and surrounding landscape viewed from the west. ©Google

### 3. Historic context

- 3.1. The settlement of Stedham dates back to the Anglo-Saxon period but by the time of Domesday in 1086 was held of Earl Roger by Robert (fitz Tetbald). Robert's estates later became the Honor of Petworth under the lordship of the Percies who are thought to have gifted Stedham to the hospital, 'God's House' in Portsmouth. Following the dissolution, the manor was retained by the Crown until 1557 when it was granted to William Denton of Cowdray. The manor was then exchanged numerous times through the centuries, including to Sir James Peachey in 1741; John Utterson in 1799 and Sir Charles William Taylor in 1808 and John Hawkshaw in 1866.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2. Within *A History of the County of Sussex: Volume 4, the rape of Chichester*, we are told that an estate within Stedham known as the manor of Hall was conveyed to an Edmund Ford in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century and in 1662 a Richard Stringer of Petworth bequeathed his son, 'the tenement known as the manor of Hall *alias* Bridgefoot Farm'.<sup>2</sup> The lands and the manor then changed hands several times during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with the last record showing them being conveyed by John Knight to William Pruett in 1788.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.3. The Stedham tithe map and its apportionments produced in 1846 tell us that Bridgefoot was occupied by a Thomas Knight, though was actually owned by a Mrs Jane Warren. The tithe apportionment also reveals that the apportionment numbered 116 was known as 'Bridge Foot Crouch House and Talbot Farms' (though Crouch House Farm is half a mile away to the north-west of Bridgefoot). The land immediately to the north numbered 115 was a stable field under the same ownership and occupier.

<sup>1</sup> 'Stedham', in *A History of the County of Sussex: Volume 4, the Rape of Chichester*, ed. L F Salzman (London, 1953), pp. 82-84. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/sussex/vol4/pp82-84> [accessed 9 February 2022].

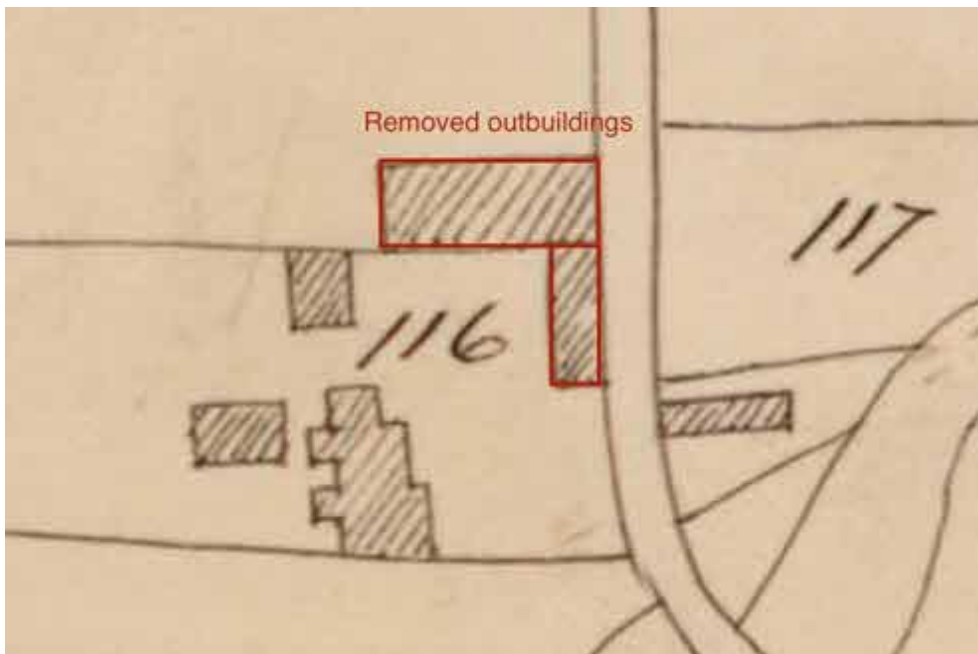
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*;

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*;



Portion of the Stedham Tithe map of 1846. (WSRO)

- 3.4. A Thomas Knight also co-occupied Great House Farm, numbered 121 on the tithe map as well as tenanted numerous fields, meadows and brick fields as well as a house and mill. Great House Farm, just north of the Church is now known as Stedham Hall and is believed to have dated from the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.5. Whilst tithe maps are at best schematic, the Stedham tithe is particularly basic compared to many others and the relationship of buildings to one-another, not particularly accurate. That said, the map does give us an idea of the farm's layout and includes at least two outbuildings that have since been removed. These are shown in red on the illustration below.



The Stedham Tithe map with the outbuildings removed shown in red. (WSRO)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.;

- 3.6. The First Edition OS map surveyed in 1874 and published in 1879 shows significant developments of the farm and its layout. The façade of the main house no longer steps out at its southern end, but is shown aligned. The outbuilding to the north is part of a larger barn orientated north-south. Three new buildings to the north of the front courtyard have been constructed, with one of them likely to be the converted barn now known as Plain Tree cottage. The outbuilding to the south of the main house appears for the first time.
- 3.7. The small outbuilding to the south-east of the main house and the pond next to it have since been lost.

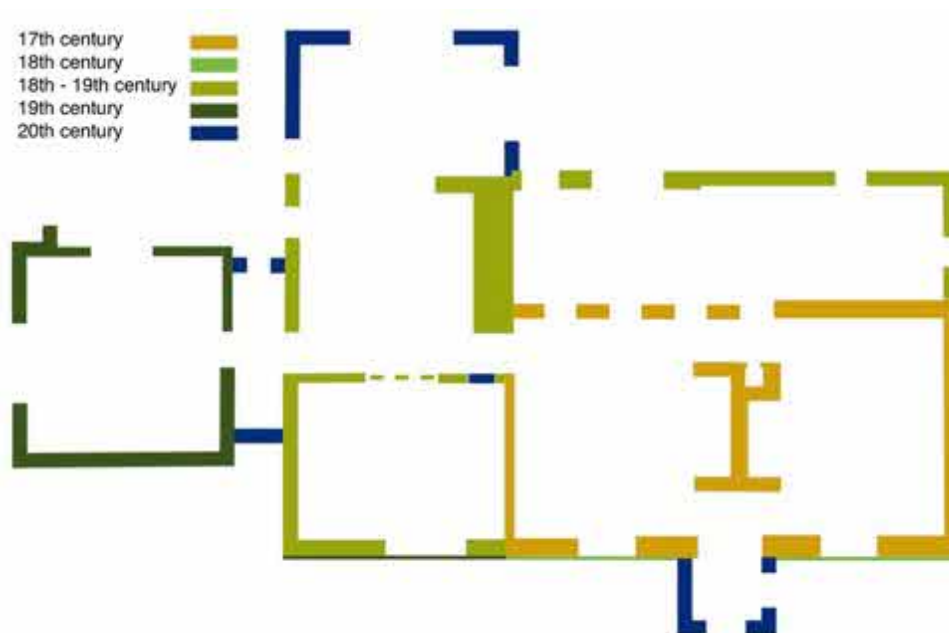


Bridgefoot Farm as recorded on OS mapping of 1879. Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland.

- 3.8. The barns to the north of the farmhouse are laid out in a loose courtyard plan which is the most common type in West Sussex and accounts for over 49% of all farm plans.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.9. The Second Edition OS map revised in 1895-6 and published in 1898 shows little change, though the building to the north-west of the main house (the current garage/office) is not visible. A building in this location does reappear however in the revised mapping of 1938. The omission of the building in the second edition could be an error, or the building could have been rebuilt or replaced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.10. Whilst tithe maps are schematic, the outline of the main house is significantly different in 1846 suggesting that the southern end and rear of the building has experienced some alteration. The building itself reinforces this with a clear distinction between the stonework on the facade.
- 3.11. The origins of the house are also more clearly visible in the interior of the building where boxed timber frame is still evident on the western back wall. This would suggest a date in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century which pre-dates the 18<sup>th</sup> century date attributed in the list description. The timber-framing represents an earlier phase of construction with the stonework being introduced later to replace, or reskin the building. This is likely to have occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>5</sup> Edwards, B., 'Historic Farmsteads & Landscape Character in West Sussex', English Heritage (2005), p. 37.





*A suggested phasing plan for Bridgefoot based on a non-intrusive assessment of the building.*

- 3.12. The oldest part of the house contains a baffle-entry plan with the front door opening into a small lobby to the side of the fireplace, either side of which is the main downstairs accommodation. This plan type originated with the adaptation of medieval hall houses to accommodate the development of chimneys, though here appears to have been constructed like this.
- 3.13. Access to upstairs was sometimes via a tight and steep staircase on the opposite side of the chimney, or via a stair within a rear outshot. Outshots were often a ground floor addition which was sometimes added on and where the kitchen was located or relocated if of earlier origin. This gives many farmhouses and cottages their characteristic catslide roof which is typical of West Sussex and is clearly exemplified in this example.



The façade of Bridgefoot showing the two phases with the earlier phase to the north.

- 3.14. The baffle-entry house also results in a symmetrical façade with a central doorway aligned with the chimneystack and windows either side. This is evident at Bridgefoot when you isolate the earlier phase from the addition to the south. Whilst this element could be earlier, or the site of an earlier building, the façade points towards this being rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.15. A further observation of the main building is the change in windows which appears to have occurred on the ground floor of the earlier phase. As can be seen in the photo above brick quoining has been used to infill a previous larger opening to allow sliding sashes to be inserted.
- 3.16. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century a small number of additions have been made to the main house. These include the front porch, a link to the outbuilding to the south, a two-storey addition to the rear and other alteration to the rear roof slope. The two-storey addition contains the kitchen with bedroom and bathroom above.
- 3.17. The outbuildings have also had some minor internal changes to create an office and provide some first-floor accommodation. The gardens meanwhile have been gentrified with formal planting and hedging.
4. Landscape context
- 4.1. Bridgefoot is situated within the South Downs National Park which is made up of many different landscape types and characters. These are described within the South Down's 'Integrated Landscape Character Assessment' undertaken in 2005 and updated in 2011 (prior to the formation of the National Park) and again in 2020.
- 4.2. Bridgefoot is located within two Landscape Character Type s: character type H – 'Wealden River Floodplains', of which it is within Landscape Character Area 'H1 - Rother Floodplain'; and character type N – 'Valley Farmland', of which it is partly within Landscape Character Area 'N1 - Rother Valley Farmland'.



Bridgefoot, partially within the LCA's H1 Rother Floodplain and N1 Rother Valley Farmland. (SDNPA)

4.3. The Wealden River Floodplains landscape character covers the floodplain of the Rivers Arun and Rother. This landscape type includes the following key characteristics:

- § Flat and expansive valley floors underlain mostly by river alluvium, giving rise to periodically waterlogged silty soils supporting permanent pasture.
- § The floodplain is etched by narrow channels ('wet fences') which divide pastures, as well as the meandering courses of rivers, sometimes flowing between artificial flood banks.
- § Groups of willows and alders occur sporadically alongside the river and drainage channels providing important visual and ecological features. Wooded islets, wet woodlands, reedbeds, fen, marsh and swamps are also features of visual and ecological interest.
- § Ditch systems and seasonally flooded water meadows ('brooks innings') have a particularly rich flora and are of high biodiversity interest, as well as supporting large numbers of birds.
- § General absence of settlement, with the exception of the occasional farm.
- § Historic stone bridges cross the rivers, sometimes with stone cottages at the bridgehead. Other historic features such as mills and weirs are associated with the rivers.
- § The low incidence of woodland and settlement results in a large scale, open landscape with extensive views across the floodplain.
- § Away from transport corridors the valleys retain an unspoilt and tranquil pastoral character.<sup>6</sup>

4.4. The floodplains are generally absent of settlement though where it does exist, it tends to be in the form of farmsteads and cottages centred on bridges and similar structures. Building materials tend to be sandstone, flint and red or yellow bricks, clay tile or thatch. This built character is exemplified at Bridgefoot, being a former farmhouse near a river crossing.<sup>7</sup>

4.5. The Valley Farmland landscape character is formed on the Lower Greensand formation which gives it its sandy arable landscape character. This landscape type includes the following key characteristics:

- § Gently undulating lowland sandstone landscape with well-drained, easily eroded sandy soils.
- § A simple, open arable landscape divided into large scale geometric fields representing 20<sup>th</sup> century re-organisation of the landscape. Fields are bounded by denuded hedgerows.
- § Remnant blocks of early and recent enclosure (15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively) hinting at the earlier landscapes which once existed here.
- § Mature standard oaks and ancient woodland remnants are key ecological and visual features in this predominantly arable landscape.
- § The River Rother and its associated floodplain habitats provide an important green corridor.

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<sup>6</sup> South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment: 'Landscape Character Type H: Wealden River Floodplains'. <<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/b6120985f1184c3bb3d1c5df317478b2?item=9>> (September 2020), accessed 16 February 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.;

- § Narrow eroded sunken lanes with sandy verges, bordered by bracken-clad hedgebanks, provide a sense of enclosure.
- § Small nucleated sandstone villages, usually of mid-late Saxon origin, comprising nucleated groups of former farmsteads situated around the church and manor house.
- § Historic parkland and estate cottages are characteristic features of this landscape.
- § The relatively low-lying nature of the landscape makes it a convenient route for road infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>

- 4.6. Within this landscape type settlement is characterised by small, nucleated settlements with isolated farmsteads interspersed. These will tend to be late medieval in origin. Settlements also tend to be of medieval origin with farmsteads focused on a church and manor house. These are still evident in the local villages and would have originally been situated within open common fields which were later enclosed.
- 4.7. As with the Wealden River Floodplains, building materials also consist of sandstone with red and yellow bricks, clay tiles and thatch.<sup>9</sup>

#### DARK NIGHT SKY ZONES AND TRANQUILITY

- 4.8. Bridgefoot is also naturally within the South Downs National Park International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) and located within the 2km buffer zone. This is the second highest level of darkness.
- 4.9. As part of its policies, the South Downs National Park Authority requires that development should 'conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of dark night skies and the integrity of the Dark Sky Core.'<sup>10</sup>



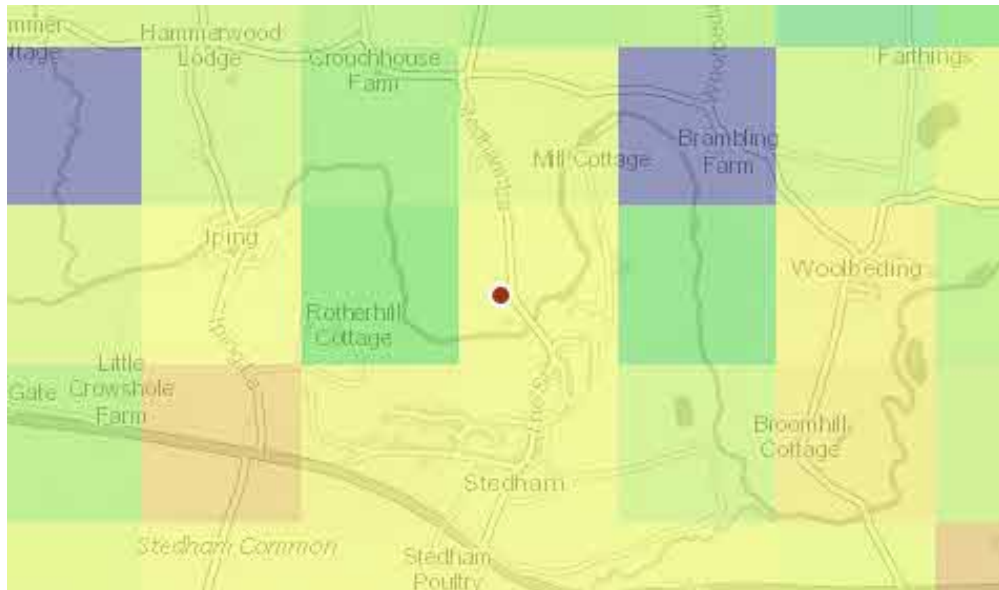
Bridgefoot is within the 2km buffer zone of the International Dark Sky Reserve. (SDNPA)

<sup>8</sup> South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment: 'Landscape Character Type N: Valley Farmland', <<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/b6120985f1184c3bb3d1c5df317478b2?item=15>> (September 2020), accessed 16 February 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.;

<sup>10</sup> 'South Downs Local Plan' adopted 2 July 2019 (2014-33), p.55. Accessed 26 November 2020 <[https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SD\\_LocalPlan\\_2019\\_17Wb.pdf#page=65](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SD_LocalPlan_2019_17Wb.pdf#page=65)>





Bridgefoot is not within the most tranquil area which is identified by blue and green squares. (SDNPA)

4.10. The sense of tranquility in the National Park is often aligned with the Dark Night Sky Zones, but also reflects a more general quietness and a sense of peace that might be felt at any time of the day. Tranquility is seen as an important feature of the landscape that provides health benefits and can improve our quality of life. As can be seen in the map above, Bridgefoot is in a yellow zone which is relatively tranquil but not as quiet as the green areas situated adjacently.

5. Conservation Area

- 5.1. Stedham Conservation Area was designated on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1984 and consists of the historic village core but also wraps around Bridgefoot and Bridgefoot Farm in the north-west.
- 5.2. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 stipulates that local planning authorities have a duty to ‘determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’<sup>11</sup>
- 5.3. Part of this process can also involve the production of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal which is used to help understand the special interest of the area and provide guidance on its protection and management. Unfortunately, an appraisal does not currently exist for Stedham.
- 5.4. As an historic building however, we do know that Bridgefoot and its associated outbuildings will contribute to the special interest of the conservation area. They reflect local distinctiveness in the materials and style of building and thus the local landscape character as described above.

<sup>11</sup> Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/69>> (accessed 14 January 2021).



Stedham Conservation Area with listed buildings identified and their building types. ©Google

6. Significance

- 6.1. Within Heritage protection, 'significance' is a term applied to heritage assets that describes a structure or feature's special interest. It is an interest that is understood in terms of values – evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. These can be applied to Bridgefoot as follows:
- 6.2. Evidential value: As a building with some fabric dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Bridgefoot has potential to reveal special interest with greater time depth in its core fabric. Its evidential value is therefore potentially good.
- 6.3. Historic value: Bridgefoot retains strong historic value as a former timber-frame building and an example of a 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse in an historic village setting. The house is also a fine example of historic stone construction, retaining a lot of its quality and character.
- 6.4. Aesthetic value: Bridgefoot has some aesthetic value in its contribution to the scene and character of the village. Whilst it is not somewhere that has been explored artistically, its architecture and quality contribute to the amenity and appreciation of the village.
- 6.5. Communal value: Bridgefoot is considered to have a low level of communal value, partly due to it being a private property.

DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSET

- 6.6. Bridgefoot is a grade II listed building and therefore a designated heritage asset. Designated assets are of national importance and an 'irreplaceable resource' that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local planning authorities must give 'great weight' to

the conservation of heritage assets with any proposals that might affect their significance in a harmful manner requiring 'clear and convincing justification'.

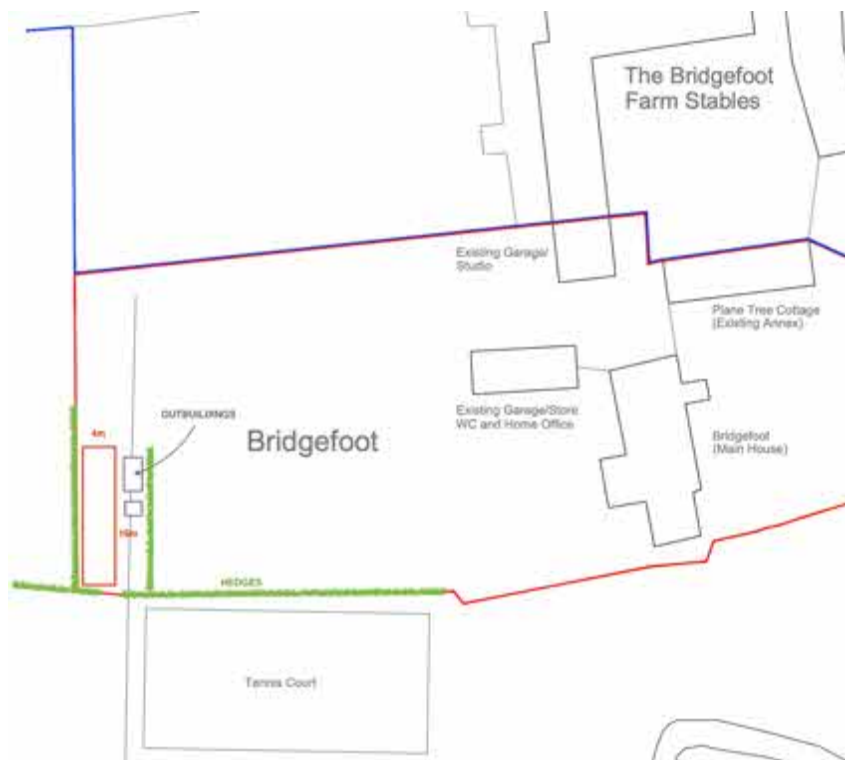
- 6.7. Local authorities should look for and support proposals that enhance or better reveal the significance of the listed building and its setting.
- 6.8. The building's primary significance is as a farmhouse potentially dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. The building also retains strong local character in its materials and construction.

#### SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

- 6.9. Bridgefoot also has significance as part of the South Downs National Park's cultural heritage. It contributes to the local landscape type in its use of vernacular materials such as local sandstone and thus to the local distinctiveness of this part of the Park. The National Park's first purpose is 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.'

#### 7. Proposed scheme and impacts

- 7.1. The proposed scheme seeks to install a solar array consisting of 21 ground-mounted panels. These would be arranged 3x7 and would take up an area 4m wide, 16m long and 1m high.
- 7.2. The solar array would be oriented north-south and have planting to the east, west and south in the form of hedging.
- 7.3. Impacts: the proposal is located where it is not easily intervisible with any heritage assets and especially the listed farmhouse. The proposal will therefore not harm the setting of the listed building. It would also not be visible from public areas of the conservation area and consequently will *preserve and enhance* the area.



The proposal located at the bottom of the garden and away from listed buildings.

8. Landscaping
  - 8.1. There is no proposed landscaping associated with these works beyond those described.
  
9. Access
  - 9.1. There is no change to vehicular access or within the main house.
  
10. Conclusion
  - 10.1. Bridgefoot is a grade II listed house which was formerly an historic farmhouse that dates back to at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century with earlier fabric evident. As historic mapping and the tithe apportionment have shown, the building has evolved over time with new additions to the south and west.
  - 10.2. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the building has been altered and added to, though retains a strong historic character, as do its outbuildings.
  - 10.3. The works proposed here are in the garden away from the listed building and where they are not easily intervisible. The proposal does not represent any physical harm to the listed building or its setting.
  - 10.4. Similarly, the scheme will *pre-serve and enhance* the conservation area and not constitute any harm to the cultural heritage of the South Downs National Park.