

Lichfield District Council Planning Department,

District Council House, Frog Lane,

Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6YU

<By Planning Portal>

23rd January 2024

Dear Sir / Madam,

23-30: Householder Planning & Listed Building Consent for PV (Solar) panels within domestic curtilage of: Hamstall Hall, Hamstall Ridware

1.0 Description of the Proposals & Analysis

- 1.1 The proposals relate to planning application submitted for renewable energy measures / micro-generation within the garden curtilage of Hamstall Hall owned by Mr C. Shore. The site is located within the Local Authority boundary of Lichfield District Council, hereafter referred to as 'LDC'.
- 1.2 Hamstall Hall is a Grade II* listed building making it within the top 8.3% of all British buildings from a historic perspective. A listed building is one of special architectural or historic interest considered to be of national importance and therefore worth protecting. 91.7% of listed buildings are Grade II. Grade II* is a step higher in significance; these are "buildings of more than special interest" and 5.8% of listed buildings are Grade II*. Finally, the most significant is Grade I listed buildings which "are of exceptional interest"; these amount to 2.5% of all listed buildings. (See submitted Heritage Statement for more details).
- 1.3 The site is within a 'Rural' settlement of Lichfield District; known as Hamstall Ridware, in the Hamstall Ridware Conservation Area. There are several surrounding Listed Buildings, structures, and monuments of 'heritage value'. As such, care must be taken to integrate the proposals into the site in a sensitive manner.
- 1.4 Ultimately, the principle of 'renewables / micro generation' is supported by LDC, however, to be acceptable in this instance the proposal would need to not affect the significance of the site, or where harm does occur this would need to be offset by other material considerations / benefits as planning policies advocate.
- 1.5 Given that the host property uses a dual-pitched roof throughout anything beyond a small number of Roof-mounted PVs would cause a reduction in the 'aesthetics' of a highly significant building. Furthermore, the South Elevation holds particularly high significance. As result, it is the applicants / agents preference that the Solar Panels should be Ground Mounted.
- 1.6 The proposals look to provide free-standing Photo Voltaic (PV) /Solar Panels to the West side of Hamstall Hall's curtilage, these will be approximately 69m from the house. The proposals comprise an arrangement of 28 No. of Black JA SOLAR PV panels orientated in a Portrait arrangement with an individual rating of 400W per panel. This equates to a 11.2KW installation.
- 1.7 The land owned by the applicant equates to approximately 8,508m² whilst the proposed PV installation occupies a small fraction of this land using approximately 85m² when including the separation area between the two rows. This means that only 1% of the land will receive PV (Solar) Panels / development.

- 1.8 The PV's will be arranged with 100% of the panels facing South parallel to the boundary and Blithbury Road. This means the bias is 35° from true-south slightly favouring the East (slight bias to morning-afternoon energy yield). The panels will be installed on a 20° angle and ground mounted frames will be auger driven in situ to ensure minimal disruption to the below ground environment. The overall height of the proposals at 1.4m height, mean the proposals would not be seen from Hamstall Hall or outside the Walls of the 'front area' of the 'side garden'.
- 1.9 Several options for the position of the PV's have been appraised around the site and the submitted Heritage Statement provides further details on 'Strategic Options' which were considered.



Figure 1: Extract from 'Proposed Context Plan' by the Agent; B3 Architectural. See Drawing Reference: 23-30-b3-XX-XX-DR-A-0103.

2.0 Planning Policy Background & Discussion

- 2.1 Section 38(6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.
- 2.2 In LDC, local policy is in the form of the 'Adopted Local Plan' which was adopted on 17th February 2015. This sets out the council's vision and strategy for the district until 2029.
- 2.3 National guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) underpin the general strategy for development with which all development plans must be in broad conformity.
- 2.4 The following policies are relevant to the proposals, and these will be appraised in the following section of this report:

3.0 Adopted Local Plan

- 3.1 The Adopted Local Plan sets out how LDC would like to see the district develop by 2029.
- 3.2 Section 3 of the Local Plan sets out the 'Strategic Priorities' for LDC. One of these is to combat 'Climate Change'. The objective states LDC will support development which "*meets the needs of our communities whilst minimising its impact on the environment and helps the District to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change*".
- 3.3 Section 5 of the Local Plan sets out the 'Sustainable Communities'. Paragraph 5.1 states "Climate change is recognised as the most urgent environmental challenge", and as result, LDC have a 'Carbon Reduction Plan'. 5.1 goes on to state "*planning has a key role to play in ensuring that development minimises its impact on the environment, helps to mitigate and adapt to adverse effects of climate change and reduces carbon emissions, including providing for renewable energy generation, in a sensitive way*".
- 3.4 Core Policy 3 relates to 'Delivering Sustainable Development'. This policy sees renewable energy as the prudent use of resources which will reduce carbon emissions. As result, renewables are looked at favourably as a component of sustainable development. However, CP3 adds that any proposal for renewables should be of an appropriate scale and nature for its locality.
- 3.5 Policy SC2 relates to 'Renewable Energy'. Policy states opportunities for renewable energy developments will be assessed on the following basis:
 - *the degree to which the scale and nature of the proposal reflects the capacity and sensitivity of the landscape or townscape to accommodate the development;*
 - *the impact on local amenity, including residential amenity;*
 - *the impact of the proposal on sites of biodiversity value, ancient woodland and veteran trees;*
 - *the impact on the historic environment, including the effect on the significance of heritage assets and their setting and important views associated with valued landscapes and townscapes;*
 - *and the proximity to, and impact on, transport infrastructure and the local highway network.*

4.0 National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF)

- 4.1 Chapter 14 of the NPPF relates to 'Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change'.
- 4.2 Paragraph 157 expects local authorities to "*support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure*".
- 4.3 Paragraph 163 states local authorities should "*not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions*".
- 4.4 Paragraph 164 states "*In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights). Where the proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings or other relevant designated heritage assets, local planning authorities should also apply the policies set out in chapter 16 of this Framework.*"
- 4.5 Chapter 16 of the NPPF relates to 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.
- 4.6 Paragraph 195 outlines how 'heritage assets' can range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites. The policy states that all heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and 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. This is ultimately the purpose of 'Conservation'.
- 4.7 Paragraph 200 requires that where a proposal affects a heritage asset the applicant must "*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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*"
- 4.8 When considering the potential impacts of a proposal the NPPF provides additional guidance. Paragraph 205 states: "*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.*"
- 4.9 Paragraph 208 advocates 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.*"

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The proposals will reduce the applicant's dependence on non-renewable energy sources and will make the site more self-sufficient. This accords with LDC Spatial Objectives. By improving the existing efficiency of a large traditional building, Policy CP3 is also met. Although the proposals are domestic in scale, they will still have a worthwhile impact by making a significant Grade II* Listed Building more sustainable, preventing the need for more invasive energy efficiency measures. This should be supported by LDC as Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states.
- 5.2 The applicant has carefully considered their options on the site, as is expected by Policy SC2 and NPPF Paragraph 164, 205 and 208. The proposed location for a compact arrangement of 28 ground mounted Solar Panels is inobtrusive. The panels are 69m to the Southwest of Hamstall Hall meaning that they do not affect the setting or significance of the Grade II* listed building, whilst at the same time being close enough to be economically viable to install. Alternative positions for PV's including on the building, or elsewhere on the site were either not possible from a conservation perspective, were more visually intrusive, or would be shaded by other landscape features/the dwelling itself.
- 5.3 The Proposed Layout for the PV's, low to the ground, following the line of the boundary, in two compact 14.7m rows, would accord with Policies CP3, SC2 and the NPPF policies.
- 5.4 Going forwards an increase in national grid energy costs will result in more dwellings turning to sustainable energy generation in Lichfield, across the UK and worldwide. These shifts will meet the aims of Chapter 14 of the NPPF.
- 5.5 With regard to Paragraph 208 of the NPPF the impact of the proposals on the Grade II* Hamstall Hall is completely benign. They do neither remove / alter fabric, nor affect the setting of the building due to high separation distance. The biggest impact from the proposals is a possible slight reduction in the setting of the Grade II listed garden walls. Again, the proposals do not actually affect the walls, rather they are nearby. As result, the effect of the proposals is either 'Imperceptible' or 'Low-level Adverse' effect. The garden walls hold relatively low overall heritage value. This is clearly offset by enhanced internal conditions, reduced running costs / increased viability as a single dwelling, and these measures will safeguard against the need for other interior or exterior energy efficiency measures at the Medium-High significance Hamstall Hall.
- 5.6 For the reasons rehearsed above it is respectfully suggested that the application should be recommended for **approval.**

Yours Faithfully,



Bruce Johnson BSc (1st Hons), PGDip, MSc

on behalf of the applicant: Mr C. Shore