HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Burnthouse Lane, Cowfold
DESCRIPTION:	Solar Photovoltaic Farm
REFERENCE:	DC/23/2172 – amended plans
RECOMMENDATION:	~~Advice / No Objection /~~ Objection ~~/ More Information / Modification / Refusal~~

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

See below

MAIN COMMENTS:

Amended Plans

The indicative layout plan has been amended to reduce part of the array to the south of the A272 and reduce the array to the west of Northlands Cottages. It is considered that these changes would lessen the harm to the significance of St Hugh's Monastery.

With regards to the Clock House the original Heritage Assessment identifies that the Clock House would be 70 metres to the east of the site, however from looking at our mapping system the boundaries adjoin, and the principle listed building is less than 50 metres away. The proposed development would introduce linear structures, utilitarian in appearance into the currently open rural landscape which adjoins the garden of the listed building.

It is acknowledged that the setting of heritage assets will and do change overtime, and although setting is often referred to in visual terms the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places (Historic England Good Practice in Planning Note 3 (Second Addition)). As noted in para 5.49 of the Heritage Statement the "largely agricultural landscape does make a contribution towards its (*The Clock House*) significance as it reflects the rural location of the house." In assessing the impact on The Clock House para 5.57 of the Heritage Assessment identifies "the retention and improvement of the hedgerow boundaries, the grassland buffer proposed and additional planting, ensure that the Site will be seen and understood as part of the fieldscape within the agricultural hinterland of the asset." From the plans submitted to date the grassland buffer is not clear with only a small space being placed between the site boundary, and the security fencing/ CCTV cameras. There would therefore be a change in character of the surroundings from open agricultural land to land containing solar arrays and the experience of the approach to the asset would alter due to the proximity of the solar arrays, fencing, and CCTV cameras on poles. This would cause harm to the setting and therefore the significance of the listed building. It would be considered that this would result in less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale.

As set out in Para 208 of the NPPF where a development proposal would 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.

Original Comments

The Heritage Statement submitted with the application identifies the heritage assets within the influence of the application site. Of these heritage assets it would be considered that the properties of The Clock House, St Hugh's Monastery, Bowshots, Trenchmore and Little Patches would be most sensitive to changes in their setting. In terms of the remaining assets, it is considered that whilst these buildings all have clear architectural and historic interest and their wider rural setting contributes to an understanding of their significance, it would be considered that the location of the solar farm would not detract from this understanding.

The Clock House which was designed by architect Barry Parker in 1913-14 incorporates within its fabric an earlier building relocated from fields close by. It would be suggested that the Clock House's significance relates primarily to the historic fabric of the building and its architectural interest. It is welcomed that the field to the south is not proposed for panels but there would be a concern about the field to the west particularly as the building is visible from the public footpath. It maybe that the Clock House did not have a functional relationship with the land, but it would be suggested that overtime the perception of the heritage asset as a country house is understood by its setting with the open fields to the south and west. The importance of this element of its significance is further underlined by the impact of the A272. The busyness of the road has undermined part of this significance resulting in noise, and disturbance which has reduced the appreciation of the building's connection with its surroundings. Consequently, the agricultural land could be considered to have become more important in balancing this understanding. It would be suggested that the introduction of the solar panels and associated infrastructure would result in less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale to The Clock House.

St Hugh's is a grade 2* listed building and is the only Carthusian Monastery within England. Its site was chosen for its isolation and tranquillity. There are clear views of St Hugh's from public ROW 1757/1 where it runs towards Northstone Cottages. Due to the significance of St Hugh's and the importance of the focal point of the spire, it would be considered that the panels to the south of the footpath should be removed. As it stands it would be suggested that they would result in less than substantial harm to the middle of the scale.

In terms of Bowshots the A272 provides a visual and aural constraint to the fields to the south detracting from the appreciation of the building particularly from the footpath 1824_1/1 and lessening its connection with the fields to the south. The size and distribution of the panels would change the wider setting of the listed building and reinforce this disconnection. The reduction in the expanse of panels within the field to the south would be supported.

Little Patches and Trenchmore are both grade 2 listed buildings with Little Patches to the south of the A272 and Trenchmore to the north of the A272. Whilst these buildings have clear architectural and historic interest and their rural setting contributes to an understanding of their significance, it would be considered that the location of the solar farm would not detract from this understanding. The proposed solar array will impact on the wider setting of these listed buildings, but it is not considered that this impact would result in harm. The opportunity will remain to understand and appreciate the significance of the listed buildings and their setting.

Therefore, in conclusion I would raise an objection to the scheme as submitted and would suggest that the proposal would result in in less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale to The

Clock House, and less than substantial harm in the middle of the scale to St Hugh's Monastery; through harm to their setting. If the application was amended through the removal of the panels located in the fields outlined above, this would lessen the harm identified. As set out in Para 208 of the NPPF where a development proposal would 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.
ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

NAME:	Nicola Mason
DEPARTMENT:	Strategic Planning
DATE:	09.02.2024 10.04.2024