Support Statement on Behalf of the Appellant by Ward Councillors (HDC application reference DC/24/1653 & DC/24/1460)

We, as the elected Horsham District Councillors for Storrington & Washington ward, are writing in our capacity as ward councillors representing the interests of our resident — the appellant in this case — and **not** on behalf of Horsham District Council.

We wish to express our **strong support** for the appellant's case as set out comprehensively in their statement of case (which we have provided a summary of below). However, we would like to respectfully submit the following additional points for the Inspector's consideration:

1. Public Benefits of the Proposal

The national and local policy context makes clear the importance of supporting proposals that contribute to tackling climate change:

- Horsham District Council declared a **Climate and Ecological Emergency in June 2023**, committing to support measures that reduce carbon emissions and enhance ecological sustainability.
- The UK Government has made a **statutory commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050**.

The installation of solar panels directly supports both these aims by facilitating renewable energy generation at a local, residential scale. Such initiatives are essential to meeting the targets set at local and national levels. In our view, such initiatives should be encouraged, not discouraged.

2. Limited Impact on the Neighbouring Listed Building

The Coach House, where the solar panels are installed, is **not currently within the grounds** of the principal listed building, Rock House.
As such, any perceived harm to the heritage significance must be assessed as **less than substantial**, in line with national policy.

Moreover, the panels are appropriately sited on a secondary building, as encouraged by **Historic England's 2024 Guidance** and reflected in the officer's own delegated report.

3. Minimal Impact on the Appearance of a Heritage Building

The appeal site is **well-screened** from public vantage points:

- It is **set well back** from the public highway.
- It is **shrouded by mature trees** along the boundary, providing effective year-round screening.
- There is **no footpath** along the road at this point, further reducing public views.

In our view, the solar panels have a **negligible impact** on the visual character and setting of the heritage buildings, and the rural landscape would not be harmed by allowing this appeal.

4. Very Limited Public Objection

The application has attracted **only two objections**, both from a **single neighbouring property**.

Given the strong support nationally and locally for small-scale renewable energy developments, we consider the level of local objection to be **extremely low**, suggesting that the wider community does not perceive any significant harm arising from the development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as the Horsham District ward councillors for Storrington and Washington ward, we **strongly support** the appellant's appeal.

In our opinion, the appeal should be allowed for the following key reasons:

- The proposal delivers a **clear and substantial public benefit** through supporting renewable energy generation and tackling climate change.
- The visual impact on the landscape and the character of the surrounding area is **minimal**.
- The degree of any heritage harm is **less than substantial** and is significantly outweighed by the public benefits, as directed by national planning policy.

We respectfully request that the Inspector allows this appeal.

Signed,
[redacted]
(HDC Cllrs for Storrington and Washington ward)

The Coach House Appeal Summary - The appellant's statement of case relates to the Appeal against the refusal of an application for Householder Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent (the 'Application') by Horsham District Council ('HDC'). The HDC application reference is DC/24/1653 & DC/24/1460. The applications were refused under delegated officer powers on 18 December 2024 for the following reasons:

'The solar panels, by reason of their design, siting and extent, represent incongruous and unduly prominent features that draw undue attention when viewing the complex of buildings from The Hollow. The solar panels have a harmful impact on the special interest of the listed building and fail to preserve, reflect or enhance its special character and distinctiveness. The (*typo, should say There)* are no public benefits which would outweigh the identified harm. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies 32, 33 and 34 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework.'

HDC Conservation objected to the planning applications.
Washington PC made no comment.
2 public objections were received from one neighbouring dwelling.

However, the NPPF states:

Paragraph 215
“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.”

Paragraph 167
“Local planning authorities should also 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).”

Paragraph 168
“When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should: a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal’s contribution to a net zero future.”

The specific case supporting the appeal is:
Historic England’s guidance - ‘Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency’ (2024) which the planning officer refers to in their delegated report as follows: “with this advising that solar panels will be acceptable in some cases as they can often be designed in a way that avoids harm to the special interest of listed buildings. To achieve this the guidance notes that solar panels would generally be acceptable on roof slopes of less prominence or on subordinate parts of a complex building, even if they would be visible. The guidance also notes that mounting panels on land associated with a listed building is generally preferable to installation on the main building.”

The appellant’s case is that:

‘The solar panels are placed on a building associated with the main listed building and as such in line with the above guidance are placed on a roof slope of “less prominence or subordinate parts of a complex building”, being the former outbuilding which served ‘Rock House’ and is separate from the curtilage of the listed building.’

‘Relating to the visibility of the panels from The Hollow there are limited views of the solar panels from The Hollow. The boundary of the dwellings of Rock House, Rock House Cottage and the appeal site, which fronts the road has a line of mature trees, which provide a significant level of screening all year round. Additionally, any potential views of the appeal site from the road are on the crest of the hill on the bend, which is not an easy or safe viewpoint. As such, there are very limited opportunities to see the appeal site and is not an obvious focal point. Further, there is no footpath along either side of the road.’

The Officer states in their report: “The solar panels have resulted in less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset. Paragraph 208 of the NPPF sets out that where a 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.”

Paragraph 162 of the NPPF, states “Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal

change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures."

Whilst there is a private benefit from the solar panels, such as reduced energy costs, the main purpose of renewable energy solutions is the long term wider public benefit to reduce climate change.

Paragraph para 167 of the NPPF says "Local planning authorities should also give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings".

Therefore, there is an obvious public benefit with the installation of the solar panels, as defined in para 168 of the NPPF, which states:
"When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions".

Therefore, the installation of the solar panels would be considered to comply with Policies 34 & 35 of the HDPF and the NPPF.

The Appellant's statement concludes as follows:

"As explained above, the proposal complies fully with relevant national planning policies and local Development Plan policies that concern climate change, design and effects on the character of the listed building and the surrounding area.

The Appeal is considered to have addressed the Council's reason for refusal in detail and it is considered that the appeal proposal is appropriate in this location, which would not have a detrimental impact upon the listed building or the wider area, which seeks to address climate change issues.

In taking all matters into account, it is respectfully requested that the appeal is allowed."