

Summary Proof: Heritage

Hilfield Solar Farm and Battery Storage Facility

Appeal By: Elstree Green Limited

Date: 22/09/2022 | Pegasus Ref: P21-3101

LPA Ref: 21/0050/FULEI

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- 1.1. My name is Gail Stoten. I am an Executive Director at Pegasus Planning Group. I am a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA). I have been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. I have a First Class Honours degree in Archaeology and I have been a heritage professional for 22 years. I am a Trustee of Painswick Rococo Gardens.
- 1.2. My evidence considers matters relating to Heritage.
- 1.3. Some limited harm will occur to the heritage significance of Slades Farmhouse, through the placement of panels in historically associated land, with which the asset has intervisibility and co-visibility. However, this can only be considered to be less than substantial and at the low end of the spectrum as the landholding fluctuated historically and the legibility of the origins of the asset is through the formerly associated farm buildings, rather than any particular area of land. Nevertheless, panels will not be placed in the land immediately to the south-west, which the house historically was reorientated to overlook, in the area of the now-removed lane. Also, the character of the complex as a whole is greatly changed, no longer having that of a farm, but of an industrial and commercial complex. As part of the Green Belt Legacy, the legibility of part of the lane which the building was reorientated to face will be re-established, and this enhancement will remain following the lifetime of the solar farm.
- 1.4. With regards to Penne's Place Scheduled Moated site, it is clear that the setting of the asset has radically changed as its function has changed. Once a settlement site with a possible degree of separation, it was taken into private and secluded parkland associated with Aldenham House to the south for private recreational purposes in the mid to late 19th century. The functional use of the wider grounds, for the high-status house then school, overtook the asset in the 20th century, with a roadway constructed through it, car parking constructed on part of it, and adventure play equipment now within it. It is now severed from the site by the road, with only glimpsed intervisibility. The proposed development is set back from the asset. It will cause no harm to its heritage significance through changes in setting.
- 1.5. No harm is anticipated to the heritage significance of assets at Aldenham Park. The Grade II* Listed house and stables have no intervisibility with the site, and change within the area will not alter the way they are appreciated and understood. With regards to the Grade II Registered Park and Garden, the historic development of the area has been carefully considered, and it is clear that the heritage significance of the asset is very largely derived from the features within its boundaries. The site lies away from the area of early parkland, closer to but beyond the limits of the expanded 19th-century park, whose boundaries in proximity to the moat appear to have purposefully screened the then recreational moat area, although there is some very limited visual permeability through the later northern entrance and gaps in the vegetation. However, it is clear that designed views out to wider land were confined to those along the wide elm avenue, with purposeful boundary treatment facilitating this on the south-western side of the park, whereas this treatment is absent from the northern boundary which the site lies beyond. Furthermore, expansion of the woodland and vegetation flanking Butterfly Lane has resulted in the visibility of the site now being very much further reduced to glimpses from the gaps, such as where the north-west entrance and a gateway in the opposite hedgerow coincide. Here and elsewhere along the southern edge of the site, the set back of the panels will ensure no harm to the heritage significance of the RPG will occur.



- 1.6. With regards to Hilfield Castle, Gatehouse and Lodge, a detailed analysis of the development and survival of the surrounds of the assets has been completed. Land to the west of Hilfield Lane appears to have been given a parkland treatment a short time after the house was constructed, after initial landscaping works and as a secondary area beyond the road, with scattered trees originating as part of hedgerows, the lower vegetation of which was removed, rather than originating as contemporary planting. This area now lies beyond the now secluded setting of the Castle and Lodge which are surrounded by vegetation and the bund of the reservoir. Mitigation is proposed which will enhance the legibility of the western and northern areas of former parkland as the trees mature, and panels are set back from the south-western drive entrance and the northern boundary of the grounds.
- 1.7. A low level of harm to the significance of the Castle and Lodge would be caused through the placement of panels in areas which were once wider parkland and with filtered visibility and co-visibility with the assets, albeit beyond the key immediate secluded setting of the Castle, and with intervening filtering vegetation and set backs of development in relation to the assets. The harm will be less than substantial and at the low end of the spectrum. Following the end of the lifetime of the scheme, only the enhancements to the legibility of the former parkland areas will remain. No harm is anticipated to the heritage significance of the Gatehouse.
- 1.8. The expanded case of the Combined Objectors Group which now asserts harm to several more assets is without merit. The additional Statement of Case makes reference to some buildings which are not on the Local List for Hertsmere and which the LPA have not considered to be heritage assets. Another 'asset' appears to have been confused with another Listed structure in proximity, although it is unclear which. Where harm to a building which *is* an asset is asserted, the asset does not draw any level of heritage significance from the site and change that will result from the proposed development will not be harmful.
- 1.9. The impacts identified above to Slade Farmhouse, Hilfield Castle and Hilfield Castle Lodge are temporary impacts, for the 35 year lifetime of the proposals, and are wholly reversible.
- 1.10. In line with paragraph 202 of the NPPF, this harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed scheme. The judgement in 'Mordue'¹ has clarified that, with regards to the setting of Listed Buildings, where the principles of the NPPF are applied, this is in keeping with the requirements of the 1990 Act. The weighing of harm against benefits is carried out in the evidence of Mr Paul Burrell.

¹ Core Document CD-ADAP2

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