DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2018/0493	**THE BARN**	**INSTALLATION OF 2 SOLAR**
Valid 29/10/2018	**OAKAMOOR ROAD**	**PANELS IN A PADDOCK**
	CHEADLE	**ADJACENT TO THE HOUSE**
		(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- design
- neighbour amenity
- heritage

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Secluded paddock occupying a level depression to the rear (south) of The Barn set down from and outwith the immediate garden and driveway parking. The west boundary of the site is a native hedgerow and about 1m below, in the neighbour's land alongside, is a manège. South of the site the land rises steeply in undulations to a ridge. Access to The Barn from Oakamoor Road loops in from the east.

To the east of The Barn is The Grange which is a Grade II Listed former farm house occupied as a private dwelling. Although the roof and some of the first floor level of the elevations of The Grange are visible from the site there is a strong sense of separation by way of a rise in levels and intervening walls and a character single storey brick and tile store.

The northerly boundary of the location is defined by a high brick, part retaining, wall behind which, at a higher level, is the courtyard garden of The Barn. There is a green house and small horticultural plot within the paddock of the application site alongside the retaining wall

PROPOSAL

Two rows of solar panels tilted at 30 degrees from horizontal, each row aligned at right angles with one alongside the south facing foot of the retaining wall and one aligned north-south along the westerly edge of the paddock and east-facing.

The lower edge of the run of panels would be at c.1m above ground level and the upper edge at 2m. A trio of strut supports each mounted on a concrete base pad – one at each end and one in the middle of each row – would serve to support the panels.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles

SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS6c Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
SD2 Renewable / Low-Carbon Energy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
R1 Rural Diversification
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

Local Plan Submission Version (February 2018)
SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
SD2 Renewable / Low-Carbon Energy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
E1 Rural Diversification
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework July 2018
Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;
Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 14 – Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS
None relevant

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity
Site Notice expiry date: 28th December 2018
Neighbour consultation period ends: 3rd December 2018
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments
None

Town / Parish Comments
Cheadle Town Council – no objections

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

General Approach

In accordance with policies SS1 and SS1a, the Council expects the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands. When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. This means that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy shall be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether: Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

Rural Diversification

Core Strategy Policy R1 expects a balanced consideration of the extent to which a proposal protects and benefits rural qualities and supports rural economic and community needs stating that "appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area".

Renewable and low-carbon energy

Policy SD2 is that the District will "strive" to meet part of its future energy demand by means of renewable or low-carbon energy sources. Small and large scale stand-alone renewable energy schemes are supported subject to consideration of: scale and nature of impact on landscape character; economic/social/environmental impacts; ecology; residents'' amenity; heritage and local evidence of feasibility.

From the emerging Local Plan policy SD2 is also explicitly relevant to solar panels and therefore this proposal and, as there were no representations of objection to this policy at the Local Plan consultation stage, 'significant' weight can be given to this policy in the determination of this proposal.

Emerging LP SD2 adds (over and above the CS policy SD2 which is carried forward) that: "in the case of solar energy proposals that are not affixed to buildings or structures, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have examined whether previously developed land is available before greenfield land. Where agricultural land is proposed, poorer quality land should be utilised before higher quality agricultural land." It must be accepted here that clearly this applicant does not have available to him any previously developed land.

NPPF 154 states: "When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

a) 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; and
b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable…"

Design
In design the proposed structures are highly utilitarian and may be considered to comprise the minimum structural form necessary to deliver their intended purpose and function. The materials and scale could be considered – in broad terms – not dissimilar to basic horticultural glass housing and thus not wholly out of place with the green house alongside.

Amenity
Aside from the possibility of some very limited visibility of the development from neighbouring residential property no adverse impacts for residential amenity are identified. The limited visibility which may arise would not be considered unduly harmful to residential amenity.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In principle this development is supported by policy SD2.

This is a small scale low profile development in a secluded location with no identified likelihood of public view. The limited scope for this development to be seen from either of the two neighbouring residential properties also avoids any unduly intrusive visual impact for neighbours.

Policy R1 expects a balancing assessment of benefits versus any harms in relation to the qualities of the rural countryside. Due to the low profile and publicly concealed location any harmful impacts are largely avoided.

The panels can be seen in conjunction with views of The Grange (Grade II Listed) but only to a very limited extent and, chiefly, only from the private garden and paddocks of The Barn and from the private farm land which overlooks from the south. Due to the low profile of the proposed structurers and their obvious separation from The Grange (see second paragraph of description above) it may reasonably be concluded that any impact on the setting of the Listed Building would be less than substantial and perhaps negligible. However, even if it is considered that there is some harm on setting (notwithstanding that this may only be evident from non-public locations) some public benefit should be acknowledged as arising from the proposed solar panels, given the words of the NPPF: "that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions", and noting that it is the Council's policy that: "The District will strive to meet part of its future energy demand through renewable or low-carbon energy sources".

Therefore the NPPF assessment required under NPPF 196 is met – that any less than substantial harm to the heritage asset – in this case by way of impact upon its

setting – is balanced by the public benefit (as established and set out in the CS and NPPF) of contributing to renewable energy.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : approve

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank
Recommendation Date: 4th January 2019

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Ben Haywood
On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council