Heritage Statement

Date: 28 May 2026 **To:** Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Planning Department **Application Reference:** SMD/2026/0256 **Site:** Plum Tree Cottage, Foxt Road, Foxt, ST10 2HN **Proposal:** Installation of 18 solar photovoltaic (PV) panels.

1. Introduction

This statement is submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in support of a planning application by Octopus Energy Services on behalf of the homeowner at Plum Tree Cottage. The proposal seeks permission for the installation of 18 roof-mounted solar PV panels.

2. The Heritage Asset and its Significance

Plum Tree Cottage is a modern, detached residential property situated within the designated Foxt Conservation Area. The cottage is not a statutory Listed Building.

The cottage is constructed of textured, coursed natural sandstone under a pitched roof finished with dark grey concrete interlocking tiles. It features grey-framed windows and doors, presenting a clean, contemporary interpretation of the local vernacular.

The significance of the Foxt Conservation Area derives from its character as a historic, rural settlement in the Staffordshire Moorlands, defined by its traditional farmsteads and cottages constructed primarily from local red sandstone. Its setting is characterized by its dramatic position on the eastern ridge of the Churnet Valley, providing an organic and rustic street scene. As defined by the Adopted Core Strategy Policy DC2 (The Historic Environment), development must safeguard the heritage and distinctiveness of the area.

3. Proposed Development and Impact on the Heritage Asset

The proposal is for a low-profile solar PV array consisting of 18 panels on the main roof slope. As demonstrated by the submitted architectural elevations (Ref: Octopus Energy, Dwg No. 04), arranged sensitively in relation to the existing roof vents.

To assess the impact on the significance of the Foxt Conservation Area, the following points have been considered:

- **Minimised Visual Impact:** The installation is positioned on the principal southeast-facing roof slope. This is the front elevation of the property and is the primary elevation facing Foxt Road.
- **Design and Materials:** To ensure the installation integrates with the building's aesthetic, high-specification, all-black (monocrystalline) solar panels are proposed. These panels feature black frames and backing sheets, which blend effectively with the dark grey concrete roof tiles. The low-profile mounting system ensures the array sits close to the roof plane, minimizing its mass and silhouette. Standard silver-framed or blue-tinted panels have been rejected to uphold the area's visual distinctiveness.
- **Minimal and Reversible Intervention:** The installation requires minimal alteration to the building’s existing fabric. The panels are fixed to a lightweight rail system that respects the roof structure. The process is entirely reversible; should the panels be removed in the future, the roof tiles and stonework would remain unharmed, ensuring the long-term conservation of the property.

4. Summary of Benefits and Policy Compliance

The proposal represents a sustainable and forward-thinking addition to a residential property. The minimal and localized intervention offers significant benefits in the form of renewable energy generation for the home, aligning directly with national and local environmental sustainability goals.

By employing a sensitive, high-quality, all-black design on a non-principal roof slope, the proposal adheres to both National Planning Policy Framework guidance and Local Plan Policy DC2, successfully balancing modern environmental needs with the requirement to protect the area's heritage assets.

5. Conclusion

The proposed installation will have a negligible, or 'less than substantial,' impact on the character and appearance of the Foxt Conservation Area. As demonstrated by the submitted elevations, it represents a minor, high-quality, and reversible intervention that does not detract from the significance of the cottage or its setting.