

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 9th July 2026
Application Ref: SMD/2026/0256
Site Address: Plum Tree Cottage, Foxt Road, Foxt
Proposal: Installation of solar panels

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	Foxt Conservation Area
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would involve alterations in Foxt Conservation Area, which was designated for its origins as a medieval farming settlement, overlaid with 17th to 19th century buildings. Buildings are typically 2-storeys, constructed in pink gritstone or bricks with tiled pitched roofs. The layout of the Conservation Area is characterised by sporadic arrangement of detached buildings often enclosed by a low drystone wall. The overriding impression of Foxt is the traditional and vernacular construction of buildings with some polite architectural influence. The development site is a modern bungalow which is constructed in stone and tiled roof, the building makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal would involve installation of 18 solar panels on the front elevation roofslope. Solar panels have a typically engineered appearance which starkly contrasts with the traditional palette of materials that characterise the Conservation Area. Whilst it is acknowledged that the building is of no historic or architectural value, the panels would be quite prominent on the front elevation of the building and may visually detract from the surrounding traditional built heritage. This harm would be very minor and, on balance, would likely be outweighed by the public benefits of energy efficiency and increase in renewable energy. Nevertheless, we would still recommend that the panels are black framed (rather than silver framed) and any battery storage is sited discreetly to the rear or side elevations so as to minimise the visual prominence further.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (s.72).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

In determining applications, local authorities should take account of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

Where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (par.215).

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) – DC2 The Historic Environment
- Foxt Conservation Area Appraisal (2018)

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would result in very minor degree of harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This would fail to satisfy the provisions of s.72 of the Act. With reference to the planning policies, this would be ‘less than substantial harm’ to the designated heritage asset (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework), but at the lower end of scale of harm. There is clear and convincing justification for this level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) and the proposal would deliver public benefits which would balance and outweigh this very minor degree of harm (par.215 of NPPF). There are no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

For any consent granted, we would suggest the following condition:

- The solar panels hereby permitted shall be black framed and installed with low-rise brackets.

Reason: To preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson