OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00018/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Installation of Solar PV Panels to the roofs on rear elevation.

Location: 24, 26, 28, 30, 32 And 34 Main Street Great Gidding

Applicant: Mr Ian Cushlow

Grid Ref: 511756 283135

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The site is located on the east side of Main Street in the village of Great Gidding. It accommodates three pairs of semi-detached hipped ended bungalows of similar design and appearance dating from the 1960s/1970s and constructed in brick and tile. Due to the lie of the land each pair of semis is at a slightly lower level going downhill in a southerly direction. The bungalows appear to have been built for more elderly occupants and no parking or vehicle access is provided to any of the 6 dwellings.

To the north the site borders a two-storey detached cottage with a thatched roof - Crown Cottage - which is listed Grade II.

To the west the site fronts the highway and separated by a small verge. To the south there is a neighbouring two-storey dwelling which is separated from the southernmost bungalow by a narrow field access to the rear. To the east the rear gardens of the application properties back onto open fields.

This application seeks permission for the installation of 6 no solar panels each measuring 1.76m x 1.13m covering a total roof area of 3.5m x 3.4m. and located on the east facing rear roof slopes of the bungalows.

The site lies within the wider Great Gidding Conservation Area.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social, and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It further states so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The NPPF also sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* Making effective use of land
* Achieving well-designed, beautiful, and safe places;

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
LP 11 Design Context
LP 12 Design Implementation
LP 14 Amenity
LP 34 Heritage Assets and their Settings

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:
Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017):
Place Making Principles - Parts 3.7 Building Form and 3.8 Building Detailing

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None relevant

CONSULTATIONS

Parish Council - No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

None received

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:

- Design and Visual Amenity
- Impact on Heritage Assets
- Residential Amenity
- Sustainable energy generation

*Design and Visual Amenity

Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan state, amongst other matters, that proposals will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context and has drawn inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings, including natural, historic and built environment, contributes positively to the character and identity of the area and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings, the routes and spaces between buildings, topography and landscape. The NPPF at Section 12 refers to design.

This application seeks permission for the installation of 6 no solar panels each measuring approximately 1.76m x 1.13m covering a total roof area of 3.5m x 3.4m. and located on the east facing rear roof slopes.

The proposed solar panels will be located on the rear elevations and cover approximately half of the roof slope and positioned centrally close to the central boundary between each semi-detached bungalow. They will not be visible from any public vantage points in Main Street.

As such, the proposal responds positively to its context or constraints, thereby being in accordance with policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan. The proposal therefore complies with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan.

*Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy LP34 states great weight and importance is given to the conservation of heritage assets and their settings. It also states a proposal within, affecting the setting of, or affecting views into or out of, a conservation area should preserve, and wherever possible enhance, features that contribute positively to the area's character, appearance and setting.

The NPPF at Section 12 refers to design. Section 16 relates to heritage with paragraph 212 stating When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance".

Paragraph 215 states "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".

Section 72 of the Planning Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The run of semi-detached cottages lie immediately to the south of Crown Cottage which is listed (Grade II). The listing description is set out below:

Cottage formerly a public house. C17 with C19 and C20 alterations. Timber-framed with roughcast plaster. Deep plinth of painted and plastered brick. Corrugated iron half hipped roof. One storey and attic three unit plan. Ridge stack to left of centre. C20 glazed door approached by steps; three ground floor casement windows. Two dormer windows with horizontal sliding sashes and sloping roofs.

The proposed solar panels will be located on the rear elevations and cover approximately half of the roof slope and positioned centrally close to the central boundary between each semi-detached bungalow. As such they do not directly face the listed building to the north they will have limited impact on the setting of the listed building.

The impact on the setting around the listed building is therefore considered to be less than substantial (at the minor end of this designation) and this is balanced against the positive benefits of reducing reliance on energy sources which rely on fossil fuels. Therefore, due to its location on the east facing roof slope some distance from the boundary with the curtilage of the listed building, any impact is minimal and the public benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh any identified harm.

The site is also located within the wider Great Gidding Conservation Area.

The application site also forms part of a more modern built intervention into the conservation area and is thus not therefore considered a typical example of the typology and layout of the more historic dwellings that form the core of the conservation area, although the bungalows would be visible from public vantage points. The solar panels themselves are located on the rear elevations of each dwelling would thus not be visible from any public viewpoints within the conservation area.

Again as this impact is therefore considered to be less than substantial (at the minor end of this designation), this is balanced against the positive benefits of reducing reliance on energy sources which rely on fossil fuels. In addition, due to its location, the proposal would not have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Therefore, given the above, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable (subject to conditions) and would unlikely result in significant harm upon the setting of Crown Cottage (listed -Grade II) or the character, appearance and significance of the Great Gidding Conservation Area.

Therefore, it is considered to accord with policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

*Residential Amenity

Policy LP14 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

Given the limited scale, nature and positioning of the solar panels and their relationship to all adjacent dwellings there are considered to be no concerns with regard to overbearing, overshadowing or loss of light impacts resulting from this proposal.

No objections have been received from neighbouring occupiers regarding the development and no unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions, and dust would result.

By reason of siting, scale, design and massing, the development would not result in harm to the occupiers of any neighbouring dwellings and is therefore in accordance with Policy LP14 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan.

*Sustainable energy generation

The NPPF supports the need for sustainable energy generation. Specifically paragraphs 165, 166, and 167, all have the intention that LPA's should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements, including solar panels, and recognise that even small scale proposals such as this provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Local Plan Policy LP35 also supports renewal energy generation, where all potential adverse impacts can be made acceptable.

Priority 2 of the Huntingdonshire Corporate Plan is also about creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations and as part of that lowering carbon emissions and improving housing.

The provision of Solar panels on the roofs of these houses to serve the domestic use of the dwellings is therefore considered to be acceptable, and in line with local and national planning policy and guidance.

*Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it:

* Is of an appropriate scale and design
* Would not have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation area;
* Would not have a harmful impact upon the designated heritage assets;
* Would not have any detrimental impacts upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Creates sustainable energy, to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

CONTACT OFFICER:
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