

Chelmsford City Council

LOSF - 002

Written Summary of Comments made during ISH2 (Environmental Matters) Hearing 29th September 2022

Longfield Solar Farm

Written summary of comments made by Michael Hurst, Principal Heritage Officer for Chelmsford City Council (CCC).

Main discussion points

Ringers

Ringers is a highly significant grade I listed building. It has an extensive rural setting which contributes to its significance. The environmental statement grades the building as being of high significance and the magnitude of impact low, this results in a moderate impact (significant for EIA purposes), which is agreed. It is therefore desirable to introduce additional mitigation to limit these impacts. Larger buffers areas with no solar development have been suggested. Additional landscape buffers have also been suggested, whilst this is unlikely to reduce the impact in terms of the EIA matrix, it could reduce the impact compared to the current scheme by providing additional screening.

Stocks Farm

Stocks Farm is an early nineteenth or eighteenth century farmhouse. Because of its architectural and historic interest it is a non designated heritage asset. To the rear of the site there are also a group of farm buildings, including a traditional a barn, two outbuildings and a twentieth Dutch barn to the north east. The traditional farm buildings are also considered to be non designated heritage assets. This is a matter of agreement. The environmental statement grades the farmhouse as being of low significance and the magnitude of impact as low, resulting in a negligible impact.

It is considered the farmhouse and traditional farm buildings should be classed as being of medium significance for the following reasons:

- The framework for assessment (table 7-1 of the ES) for medium significance includes non designated heritage assets of regional research value. The East of England Research Framework by ALGAO (2011, updated 2019-20) defines post medieval farmsteads as a research priority.
- The listing survey for Chelmsford was undertaken in the mid 1970's, unlikely many other areas there was no accelerated resurvey undertaken in the 1980/90s. For this reason the listing coverage is no comprehensive. The buildings are potentially of listable value, as a group of pre-1840s structures relating to a well preserved farmstead.
- The environmental statement assessment does not assess the significance of group value of the

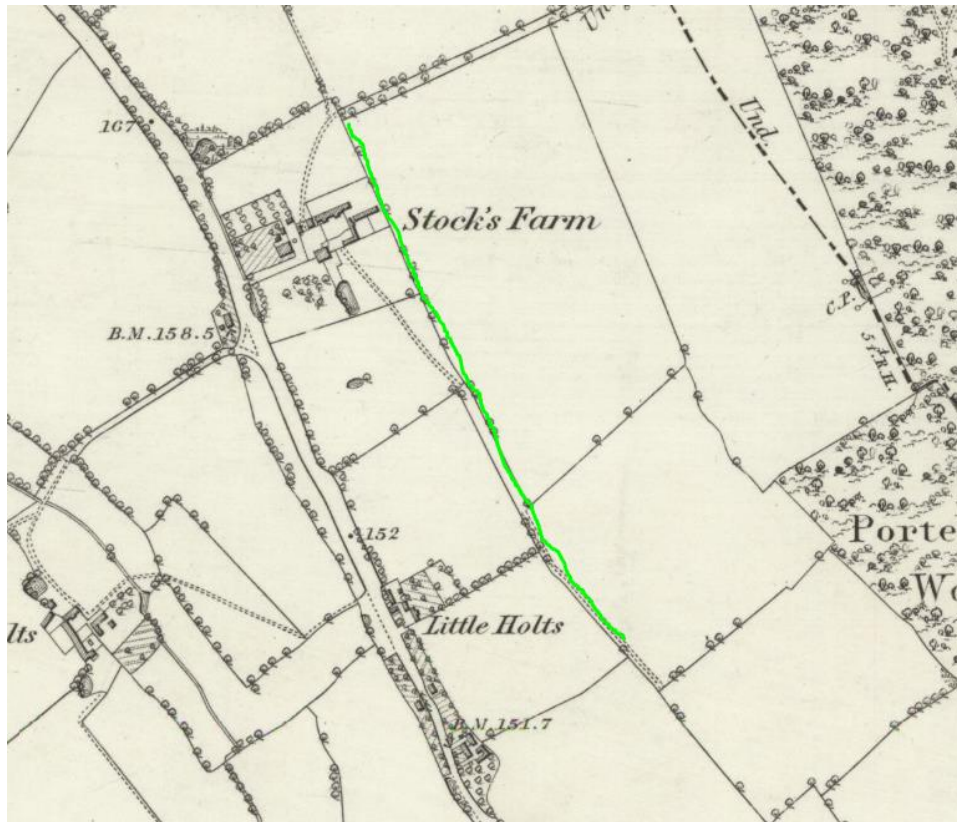
traditional farm buildings.

It is considered the magnitude of impact should be medium for the reasons below:

- The solar development would wrap around three sides of the site and introduce alien features into the rural landscape.
- The rural setting is important to how the heritage assets are experienced, which would be markedly changed.
- There is a group value with Stocks Cottages to the south (also a non designated heritage asset) which would be eroded.
- The environment statement assessment does not take account of the impact on the non designated heritage asset farm buildings and the close proximity of development to them.
- The setback of the panels on the western edge of PDA28, adjacent Waltham Road, appears contrived and unrelated to the context or any site features.
- Screening in winter months will be minimal.

A medium significance and medium impact would amount to a moderate environmental impact, significant for the purposes of the EIA. This indicates additional mitigation should be provided.

A suggested approach is to move the panels back on the western side of PDA28, to follow the now lost historic field boundary which ran north-south from the rear boundary of Stocks Farm, as indicated on the 1874 OS plan below:



This mitigation would likely reduce the impacts to low, resulting in a minor environment effect, not significance for the purposes of the EIA.

Little Holts

Little Holts is a seventeenth/eighteenth century timber frames cottage, grade II listed. The rural setting is important to how the heritage asses is experienced and contributes to its significance. The environmental statement grades the building as being of medium significance, which is agreed. The impact is graded as low. For the following reasons it is considered the impact should be graded as medium:

- The proposed development would wrap around the site on three sites and markedly alter how the heritage asset is experienced in the rural landscape.
- The impacts appears to be similar to Stocks Cottage immediately to the north, which are graded as having a medium impact within the environmental statement.

If the significance is medium and the magnitude of impact is medium, the resultant environmental impact is moderate, therefore significance for the purposes of the EIA. This indicates additional mitigation should be provided.

If the mitigation as outlined above were provided, the impacts on Little Holts would be reduced to minor, there reducing the environmental impact to minor and not significant for the purposes of the EIA.

Noakes Lane

Noakes Lane is a protected lane, therefore considered as a non designated heritage asset. It links the farmsteads at Noakes Farm (Barn of fourteenth century origins, grade II listed, also a moated site) and Birds Farm (farmhouse c.1500 or earlier, grade II listed), the lane is therefore of medieval origins or earlier origins. The environmental statement grades the lane as being of low significance and the magnitude of impact as low, resulting in a negligible impact.

It is considered the lane should be classed as being of medium significance for the following reasons:

- The framework for assessment (table 7-1 of the ES) for medium significance includes non designated heritage assets of regional research value. The East of England Research Framework by ALGAO (2011, updated 2019-20) defines medieval transport networks as a research priority.
- It forms part of a group with the adjacent designated and non designated heritage assets.

It is considered the magnitude of impact should be medium for the reasons below:

- The solar development would enclose the lane on both site for a notable part of its length (between PDA11 and PDA12).
- The rural setting is important to how the heritage assets are experienced, which would be markedly changed.
- The access track crosses the lane.
- Screening in winter months will be minimal.
- Whilst the criteria for selection use by ECC to designate the lane would not mean the lane would not meet the criteria post development, this does not mean the impact on setting is no significance. Similarly a listed building could be listed for its architectural quality, but would still have a setting and impacts could be considerable without physical harm to its keys features.

A medium significance and medium impact would amount to a moderate environmental impact, significant for the purposes of the EIA. This indicates additional mitigation should be provided.

The suggested mitigation is to setback PDA11 and or PDA12 to limit the impact of the development.