



PINs Registration and Relevant Representation Form on behalf of Historic England

Section 56 Planning Act 2008

Response deadline: 12th September 2024

Our ref:

PL00792922

Project : Stonestreet Green Solar Farm

PINs Ref:

TR010032

stonestreetgreensolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Registration
ID

20035689

The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England is generally known as Historic England (HE). Historic England was established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and is the lead body for the heritage sector and the Government's principal adviser on the historic environment. We have a duty under statute to secure the preservation of, and to promote public understanding and enjoyment of, the historic environment. We are an executive Non-Departmental public body and we answer to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Historic England is a statutory consultee on all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

We have been notified by you of the acceptance of the DCO application and wish to Register as an Interested Party.

The Proposal

A solar farm of 192 hectares is proposed on agricultural land within the Upper Stour valley near Ashford (south of M20) in Kent. The proposal includes on-site energy storage, associated infrastructure, an underground cable connection to a nearby substation, screening through planting and a series of off-site landscape improvements.

Representation

We summarise our representation regarding this proposed project as follows. Further information and updates on any discussions will be provided as appropriate within our written representation at the appropriate deadline.

1. Introduction



Historic England, Cannon Bridge House, 25 Dowgate Hill, London, EC4R 2YA
HistoricEngland.org.uk

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.





The applicant has provided a full Environmental Statement, which includes Historic Environment Chapters, reports and appendices. We can confirm Historic England has not provided pre-application advice, but we did provide a response to the S.42 PEIR (Preliminary Environmental Information Report) consultation. We subsequently had a meeting and provided another updated response to the PEIR.

2. Historic Environment Assessment

The proposed development lies in a sensitive area for the historic environment and would impact upon a wide range of heritage receptors. Within the 5km study area, the Environmental Assessment identified three Grade I listed buildings, three Grade II* listed buildings, three Conservation Area, one Grade II Registered Park and two Scheduled Monuments. We have focused our advice on the assets we believe are most impacted by proposed development. Our response to the PEIR consultation noted that a detailed assessment of the impact upon the historic environment would be required and we are satisfied that this has been undertaken.

3. Impacts on designated heritage assets

Our primary consideration in relation to this scheme is the impact upon the significance of the Church of St Martin in Aldington, the Church of St John the Baptist in Mersham, Stonelees House and scheduled (and unscheduled) Bronze Age barrows through development within their setting. We would defer advice on grade II listed buildings and conservation areas to the local planning authority (Ashford Borough Council) but will comment on the assessment of the grade I and II* listed buildings and scheduled monuments.

Church of St Martin, Aldington

We have identified harm to the significance of the Church of St Martin, Aldington (Grade I: NHLE 1071208) a Saxo-Norman parish church listed on 10 August 1988. The church is set on a small hill with an architecturally exceptional medieval tower that acts as a landmark in the landscape. The open fields within the application site contribute positively to the significance of the church and add to historic value as the location of the church with its surrounding fields means it is at the heart of the agrarian community who built and worshipped there. This appreciation would be altered in a key view of the church from the west by the presence of solar panels. The fields (and footpath) also act as an important land buffer showing the historic separation between church and village and this landscape separation would be eroded to a small extent by the proposed development. We therefore consider that the proposal would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the church through this





development in the setting. We would welcome the opportunity to explore with the applicant the ability to avoid or minimise the low level of harm identified to significance. In particular we consider that there could be scope to avoid/minimise the harm to significance in relation to the St Martin's tower experienced from the west (view 28).

Church of St John the Baptist, Mersham

We have identified harm to the Church of St John the Baptist, Mersham (Grade I: NHLE 1276693), a twelfth century parish church from which was listed on 27 November 1957. It is situated on rising ground to the north of the site and can be seen from some views at the edge of Aldington Clap Hill Conservation Area (view 11). Whilst the tower is screened by some trees, the fields provide a countryside setting for the church which contributes to its significance as a rural place of worship and focal point in the landscape. This would be eroded to a small degree by the proposed development. We judge harm to be at the lower end of less than substantial.

Stonelees House

At the south-west corner of the site, the panels would cover fields which historically formed the estate of the Stonelees House, a medieval hall (Grade II*: NHLE 1233761). We have identified harm to the building's significance (because of a historic association). We would also encourage the applicant to explore opportunities to reduce harm to Stonelees, for example, by reducing the number of solar panels at the south ends of fields 3 and 7.

In relation to the scheduled monuments within the study area, we consider that the proposed development site contributes to the setting of the scheduled monuments in this area. This is particularly true for the scheduled (and unscheduled) Bronze Age barrows which are scattered across the landscape, creating a wider ritual space. However, we cannot fully appreciate the inter-relationship of this site with the surrounding landscape and heritage assets without a more comprehensive understanding of the archaeological remains which may be present, in the proposed development site. We wish to see further information on this point and will be liaising with the applicant about this in order to form a view on the likely impact.

