

70110 – 89-91 Holcombe Old Road, Ramsbottom.

Installation of solar panels onto roof.

The application site is not a listed building or a Non-Designated Heritage Asset but is sited within Holcombe conservation area.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities in the exercise of their planning functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that 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 208 of the NPPF 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.

Holcombe Conservation Area Appraisal describes the general character of the area:

The Conservation Area is rural in character and comprises of a series of scattered hamlets on the steep eastern slope of Holcombe Hill. Many buildings date back to the 17th and 18th centuries with few 20th century structures. The settlements comprise farm settlements, more substantial houses and their ancillary buildings and small cottages, often in small rows. The main foci of historic development were along Holcombe Old Road, Cross Lane and Moor Road (an old packhorse route, known as Holcombe Ancient Highway) which runs north-south through the area and the junction of the Holcombe Old Road (the northern section is now Cross Lane/Moor Road) with the Elton and Blackburn Turnpike (now Helmshore Road). The area is dominated and overlooked by Holcombe Hill to the West while offering wonderful long-distance views to the north-east of Shuttleworth Pike, and to the Peak District, Alderley Edge and the Cheshire sandstone ridge to the south. The widely dispersed individual settlements are separated by green fields (pasture) and small areas of woodland and are mainly connected by narrow roads and steep footpaths with stone walls either side. Only fairly recently have pavements and curbs been added to some of the roads, which were previously completely rural in character.

Furthermore it can be added that the architectural grain along Holcombe Old Road is characterised by the vernacular form and materials of the two storey cottages with a simple, functional plan form and constructed from local stone. These buildings make a strong contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and are inherent to its designation.

The proposed solar panels would occupy parts of the western and eastern roof slopes of the building and would have visibility from Holcombe Old Road and some limited visibility from Lumb Carr Road. There would also be longer range

visibility from up to approximately 350 metres away from public rights of way that crisscross the eastern shoulder of Holcombe Hill.

The proposal relates to a single private dwellinghouse and is very small in scale, however the panels would be visible from various vantage points representing an incongruous and urbanising feature in what is otherwise a rural conservation area with no 20th or 21st century development in the immediate area of that part of the conservation area.

The proposed solar panels would neither preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of that part of the conservation area and it is not considered that a reduction in the size of the solar panels or their omission from one of the roof slopes would mitigate the harm identified and as such would represent less than substantial harm to it. In representing less than substantial harm it is required to weigh any public benefits of the proposal against the harm identified that would be caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The applicant has not provided evidence of any public benefit or provided any evidence to support the need for the proposal to secure the buildings' optimum viable use.

It is accepted that the generation of power through renewable sources would lead to lower carbon energy production. The scale of the proposal and therefore its benefits are very minor in scale and not on a far reaching public level and as such are not considered to outweigh the harm identified, to any tangible amount, that would be caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The proposal would not therefore be acceptable in heritage conservation terms as it would either not comply with or be contrary to Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, paragraphs 205 and 208 of the NPPF and adopted UDP policies EN1/1 – Visual Amenity, EN1/2 – Townscape and Built Design, EN2/1 – Character of Conservation Areas and EN2/2 – Conservation Area Control.

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Conservation Officer

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