



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2025

by Timothy C King BA(Hons), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/Y/25/3370882

The Old Coach House, Pledgdon Green, Henham, Bishop's Stortford, CM22 6BN

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Andrew Bowie against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/25/1747/LB.
 - The works proposed are to install 10 solar panels to the west facing sloped roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for the installation of 10 solar panels to the west facing sloped roof at The Old Coach House, Pledgdon Green, Henham, Bishop's Stortford CM22 6BN in accordance with the terms of the application ref UTT/25/1747/LB and the plans and specifications submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works authorised by this consent shall commence not later than three years from the date of this consent.
 - 2) No development shall take place until full details of the solar panels' design, appearance and the method of installation including plans and elevations at scale 1:20, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

The site and preliminary matters

2. Located at the end of a lengthy driveway the Old Coach House has two distinct parts; the single-storey element, which the proposed works relate to, and also a two-storey section which was only added in the early 1990s. There is a small, low level, linkage between the sections, but the two-storey addition appears as a building in its own right and does not form part of the current application.
3. The two-storey extension also has a low-level physical link to Pledgdon Green farmhouse, which is the principal listed building, here. It is a Grade II listed, two-storey, timber-framed, plastered building.
4. Subsequent to my site visit the Council designated Pledgdon Green as a conservation area (PGCA). The significance of the PGCA derives from its architectural and historic interest as a small and distinct rural settlement whose historic buildings of traditional construction and materials make a positive contribution to its character and appearance. The appraisal which informs this designation identifies both the farmhouse and the Old Coach House as positive buildings within.

5. Also, in March 2026, the Council adopted its new development plan, the Uttlesford Local Plan (2021-2041).

Main Issues

6. The main issues are:

- 1) the effect of the proposal upon the significance of both the host building, and also the principally listed farmhouse; and
- 2) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, with particular regard to the conservation area location.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

7. Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCAA) requires the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
8. As mentioned, the Old Coach House is situated close to the Pledgdon Green farmhouse, which dates from the 16th/17th century. The Old Coach House would have previously served the farmhouse as an outbuilding, but it is no longer detached due to the relatively modern two-storey building which stands between. Despite the physical linkage referred to the Council terms the Old Coach House a curtilage listed building, confirmed by the reason for refusal on its decision notice.
9. The farmhouse has a plain clay-tiled hipped roof with a gablet at the eastern end (which is indicative of its origins as a house with a hall once open to the roof structure) and a prominent central chimney stack with attached rectangular shafts. The three buildings are similarly rendered with their roofing forming an uninterrupted tiled roofscape, although I observed that the appeal building has apparently been recently re-roofed with more modern red clay tiles, of a different style to those on the roof of the two-storey addition and the farmhouse. Modern fenestration has also been installed to both its front and rear.
10. The buildings front a wide, open courtyard. The farmhouse's flank wall faces towards the access driveway, and stands perpendicular to the Old Coach House's frontage at the far end of the courtyard. This single-storey building is partly obscured by a refurbished timber store, and its appearance has been recently altered with the new fenestration installed. Nonetheless, its frontage does form something of a visual backdrop to the farmhouse.
11. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that, when considering the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to that asset's conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration of the heritage asset and, in instances where harm is identified, the degree of such is a matter for the decision maker's assessment. Further, this must be given considerable weight, and requires convincing justification.
12. Notwithstanding modern additions and interventions, the significance of the farmhouse and the Old Coach House derives primarily from their age, and architectural interest as a rural vernacular dwelling of traditional materials and

construction, which was part of a historic farmstead. Important contributions in this regard are the use of traditional construction techniques and materials, along with surviving historic fabric.

13. As mentioned, though, save for the common render, modern alterations have changed the relationship between the farmhouse and the Old Coach House buildings and I find that the two-storey extension which sits between, and is linked to both buildings, now forms something of a buffer between the farmhouse and its once associated small outbuilding.

The effects on the listed buildings

14. The proposed works would involve installing ten solar panels on the rear roof slope of the Old Coach House. Due to its siting and orientation the farmhouse itself would not be directly impacted by these works but, as mentioned, with the buildings' physical arrangement I have described, their setting needs to be considered.
15. The setting of a listed building refers to the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, and alterations to curtilage buildings or structures can diminish the visual or functional relationship with the main building.
16. Any proposals within, adjacent to, or visible from the heritage assets, must ensure the listed building remains the focus of its setting. Here, the setting is essentially the grouping and arrangement of the buildings close to the site's entrance. Beyond the rear garden of the Old Coach House, which is essentially the limit of the site's curtilage, are a series of open fields with clusters of trees.
17. The visual backdrop relationship between the farmhouse and the Old Coach House would not be affected by the proposal, and would remain intact.
18. Although the solar panels would be installed on the rear roof plane they are contemporary features, at odds with the traditional architectural form and appearance of the Old Coach House. Direct harm to the historic environment or heritage assets cannot be concealed or limited to visibility from the public realm and, as such, this is not, in itself, a determining factor in considering whether they would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the building.
19. Nonetheless, although the introduction of the proposed dual glass, anodized, aluminium solar panels would constitute a modern addition to the building, the effect on its historic fabric would be limited given that this has already been altered with the said physical changes which has given the building a modern feel. Moreover, its significance has been somewhat blurred by the two-storey extension which sits between the building and the principally listed farmhouse. Taking these factors together I am satisfied that the historic fabric of the farmhouse would not be significantly affected by the proposed installation.

The effect on the PGCA

20. As mentioned, the Council's PGCA appraisal has identified both the farmhouse and the Old Coach House as 'positive' buildings within. However, in this context, the current proposal represents a minor addition to the building. In accordance with my statutory duty under s72(1) of the LBCAA I have also paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

21. Due to the physical relationship I have described and the modern alterations that have already taken place, I have concluded that the character and appearance of the PGCA would be preserved.

Public benefits and planning balance

22. Having had special regard to the preservation of the building and its setting in accordance with the LBCA, and the great weight that should be given to the asset's conservation in accordance with the Framework, I have found that the degree of harm from the solar panels would be limited.
23. With reference to paragraphs 214 and 215 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Given the extent of the works I find the harm to the significance of the heritage asset to be limited and thereby, for the purposes of the Framework 'less than substantial.' Nonetheless, it should still be given considerable importance and weight. In such circumstances, paragraph 215 advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.
24. Solar panel rooftop installations can provide public benefits that extend beyond the individual homeowner, encompassing environmental, economic, and grid-related advantages.
25. Whilst sustainability and energy efficiency are legitimate issues, where historic buildings are involved a balance must be achieved between the building generating its own energy and avoiding damage both to the significance of the building and its fabric, and the visual impact of a renewable installation on the character and appearance of the historic building or site.
26. In accordance with paragraph 167 of the Framework I give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings. The public benefit of installing the panels and enabling the building to generate its own electricity is sufficient in this case to outweigh the limited level of harm.
27. In summary, the principal listed building would be untouched and unaffected, and the Old Coach House, having been modernised and its historical features altered, would be subject to only limited harm, and this would be outweighed by public benefit.
28. Although development plan policies do not strictly apply to applications for listed building consent, the proposal would accord with the objectives of Core policies 61, 62 and 63 of the Uttlesford Local Plan.

Other consideration

29. The Council has mentioned that a ground level solar panel installation would be preferable to one which utilises the roof plane. I acknowledge the rationale here, although the appellant has indicated that there is insufficient space within the rear garden for such apparatus. Nonetheless, no such scheme is before me for consideration.

Conditions

30. The standard condition requiring that the works shall commence within the statutory three year period application is imposed. A further condition is added as the

submitted drawings are small scale and lack detail. In order to ensure the satisfactory preservation of the listed building it is required that detailed drawings, to a scale of 1:20, shall be submitted to the Council for subsequent written approval. The condition also stipulates that the installation be carried out, accordingly.

Conclusion

31. I conclude that the degree of harm from the proposal to the significance of both the farmhouse and the Old Coach House would be outweighed by the public benefits of sustainability and energy efficiency. Both the character and appearance of the PGCA would also be preserved.
32. For the reasons given above the appeal is allowed.

Timothy C King

INSPECTOR