

## **EHDC - Conservation Section**

**Comment Date: Tue 02 Jul 2013**

CONSERVATION OFFICER When considering renewable's (principally solar thermal and photovoltaic panels) on listed buildings and within conservation areas it is a case of achieving a suitable balance. That is equating the benefits of increasing energy from other sources, whilst also protecting the fragile rich architectural and historic environment that makes East Hampshire special. The local planning authority has a duty in conservation areas, to ensure any development preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area. Renewables are one of a spectrum of different measures that can be taken to improve thermal efficiency and will not be applicable in all cases. I have previously advised the Alton Group, behind this application of our approach. I think it fair to say that the retrofitting of renewable's rarely, if ever, can be seen as a visual enhancement, but can be mitigated by the choice of location. The approach in conservation areas and similar sensitive sites has been to embrace the technology where possible through the choice of locations which have little impact on the public realm. The chosen site is on the prominent highly visible street elevation. I have viewed on site and disagree with the analysis in the Design & Access Statement. The roofscape is widely visible from the car park (even with the trees in leaf) and from the street. The design is more considered than in many cases but it will still have a strong negative visual impact in my opinion. I accept that the townscape is of mixed quality but as sites come forward the quality of design is being gradually raised. On the land immediately adjacent (to the rear of the library) there was considerable discussion on the location of the solar thermal units. A compromise was reached siting on a section of flat roof which would not visually impact on the conservation area. To allow panels in the prominent position shown would be inconsistent with the stance taken on this site and elsewhere as well as setting an undesirable precedent for the future. On balance therefore I am unable to support this proposal and must recommend refusal. Reason: The proposed photovoltaic panels will have a marked detrimental visual impact on the roofscape of this prominent corner building. As such the development fails to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area and therefore fails both national policy set out in the NPPF (and associated Practice Guide to PPS.5) and Local Plan policy HE.5.