

Dear Ms Fitzherbert-Green

Objection to Planning Application Ref: 20/03403/FUL

Installation of Solar Farm

I am writing to object to the above application on the grounds that it will do substantial harm to the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Iron Age and Roman town of Silchester. The development comes within less than 0.5 miles, 1.0 km, of the edge of the scheduled area.

The Roman town of Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum) is one of only three comparable Roman towns in England preserved from modern development, the other two being Caistor-by-Norwich (Norfolk) and Wroxeter (Shropshire). However, Silchester has additional and remarkable distinctiveness in that it is the only one of the three which demonstrably overlies and develops out of a major Iron Age settlement, Calleva, the centre of the kingdom of the Atrebates. This puts the monument in a unique position in England. Neither the Roman town nor its late prehistoric predecessor existed in a vacuum, but their inhabitants interacted with and depended on the surrounding countryside: farming it for food, burying their dead, exploiting its woodland for fuel, building materials and so on. We know little enough about the Roman town, never mind its Iron Age predecessor, and still less about their interaction with the countryside around. This proposed development threatens our ability over the medium and longer term to advance our knowledge of the landscape context of the unique monument that is Iron Age and Roman Calleva. While the development itself may do less than substantial harm to the individual heritage assets which it may affect, its nature, and the very reasonable assumption that continued demand for energy generated in this way will continue for the foreseeable future, means that these assets are effectively lost to future research.

Given the proximity of the threatened heritage assets to a Scheduled Ancient Monument of such national importance, we should consider their collective heritage value - and the potential it has for advancing our knowledge of it - to be greater than their sum as individual undesignated assets. This takes us to the vital question of what constitutes the setting of the monument. The two Hampshire parishes which encapsulate the monument are Silchester and Mortimer West End and, like the land around Caistor and Wroxeter, they have, thankfully, remained largely untouched by modern development. The boundary of each parish describes an arc, Mortimer West End around the north of Calleva, Silchester around the south, which together form a circle whose centre is the Iron Age and Roman town. We have no idea of the age of this boundary, whether it is medieval, Roman or prehistoric in origin, but, whichever was the responsible authority, it implies a direct control over the land it encloses by the Iron Age/Roman/medieval settlement at the centre. This territory surely constitutes the starting point for determining setting, but there is strong case for extending the boundary into neighbouring parishes, for example to embrace important Iron Age and Roman heritage assets linked to Calleva, such as are located in the hamlets of Latchmere Green and Little London.

I therefore urge you to refuse this development which substantially harms the integrity of the setting of what is unquestionably, one of England's most important ancient monuments.

Yours faithfully

Professor Michael Fulford CBE