



Heritage Statement

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Proposed Roof Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installation

Music School and Performing Arts Centre, Hurstpierpoint College, College Lane, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9JS

1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the installation of roof mounted solar photovoltaic equipment at the Music School and Performing Arts Centre, Hurstpierpoint College, College Lane, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9JS.

The proposed development comprises the installation of roof mounted solar photovoltaic units to the southern pitched roofs of the Music School and Performing Arts Centre, together with photovoltaic units to the eastern part of the flat roof of the Performing Arts Centre.

The purpose of this statement is to provide a proportionate heritage assessment of the proposal, having particular regard to the significance and setting of the Grade II listed Hurstpierpoint College buildings.

The application buildings are modern structures dating from after 1 July 1948. They are not themselves listed buildings and are not curtilage-listed structures. However, they are located within the curtilage and setting of the listed college buildings, and the proposal has therefore been assessed with regard to the statutory duty to give special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

2.0 Site Context

Hurstpierpoint College is a long-established educational campus containing a mixture of historic and modern buildings set within a landscaped institutional environment. The application site relates to the existing Music School and Performing Arts Centre, which are contemporary school buildings forming part of the wider operational college estate.

The proposal is confined to existing roof areas. It does not involve any extension to the building footprint, any demolition, or any direct alteration to historic fabric. In heritage terms, the proposal is therefore limited to a roofscape intervention on existing modern buildings.

The wider campus setting is not one of unaltered historic enclosure. It has evolved over time and includes later twentieth-century and twenty-first-century educational buildings which sit alongside the listed core of the college. The application buildings form part of that existing campus evolution.

3.0 Description of the Proposal

The proposal comprises a roof mounted solar photovoltaic installation with a total installed capacity of 80.08 kWp.

The submitted proposal confirms that the scheme comprises 176 no. Trina Solar 455W Vertex S+ photovoltaic modules, together with associated mounting rails, clamps, isolators, DC cabling, inverter equipment and ancillary works necessary for the operation of the system.

The submitted performance estimate identifies an estimated annual electricity production of approximately 83,630 kWh per annum.

The photovoltaic units to the pitched roofs are to be mounted parallel with the existing southern roof slopes. Additional photovoltaic units are proposed to the eastern part of the flat roof of the Performing Arts Centre. The flat roof units are set at a shallow inclination of approximately 22 degrees in order to optimise performance while remaining relatively low in profile.

4.0 Scope of Assessment and Relevant Policy

This statement has been prepared as a proportionate assessment of heritage impact, having regard to:

- Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- Policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 to 2031;
- Policy HurstC5 of the Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan; and
- Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the decision-maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan requires development to protect listed buildings and their settings, including through a thorough understanding of significance and by giving special regard to the protection of setting.

Policy HurstC5 of the Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan supports development within the environs of Hurstpierpoint College where it does not detract from the special architectural character and appearance of the existing collection of buildings and their setting in the landscape, conserves or enhances the character and appearance of listed buildings, and enhances the role of the College as a school and local employer.

At national level, Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and states that any harm to significance should require clear and convincing justification. Where a proposal leads to less than substantial harm, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

5.0 Heritage Asset and Significance

The principal designated heritage asset relevant to this proposal is the Grade II listed Hurstpierpoint College building group.

The significance of the listed college buildings derives from their architectural and historic interest as an established educational institution of special character, together with their group value, historic composition, materials, detailing and presence within the wider landscaped college setting.

That significance is experienced not only through the principal listed buildings themselves, but also through their relationship with the broader college campus. However, the setting is not static and does not derive its significance from the absence of later development. Rather, the listed buildings are experienced within an active and evolving institutional environment which has accommodated successive phases of educational development over time.

6.0 Existing Built Context and Planning History

The Music School and Performing Arts Centre are modern buildings and do not form part of the historic listed fabric. Their presence within the campus is therefore already part of the existing heritage baseline.

The previously approved Performing Arts Centre is of particular relevance. The earlier delegated assessment for that building recognised that the Performing Arts Centre would initially be partially hidden to the east by the existing Music School building and recorded that the relationship between the two formed part of the accepted campus arrangement. That earlier report also concluded that, given the distance of around 105 metres from the proposed building to the nearest part of the listed building, and the degree of screening by the existing Music School building, the setting of the listed building would not be affected.

The present proposal is materially less intrusive than that earlier built development. It does not involve a new building. It is confined to the roofs of modern structures already present within the campus setting.

7.0 Assessment of Impact on Significance and Setting

7.1 General heritage effect

The proposal does not affect the fabric of the listed building. It does not involve demolition, excavation, or any direct intervention to a structure of historic interest. The issue for consideration is therefore the extent to which the roof mounted photovoltaic installation would affect the significance of the listed college buildings through change within their setting.

In heritage terms, the proposal is modest. It is limited to the addition of dark photovoltaic panels on existing roofscapes of modern educational buildings. The principal visual change is therefore a functional sustainability upgrade to buildings that are already contemporary in character.

The photovoltaic units to the pitched roofs would sit flush with, and parallel to, the existing southern roof slopes. This contains the equipment within the established roof form and avoids unnecessary projection or visual clutter.

The flat roof photovoltaic units to the eastern side of the Performing Arts Centre have the greater potential for visibility in the setting of the listed building. However, that effect remains limited. The flat roof array would only be capable of being perceived in selected views, principally from the north-east side of the Senior School building. The separation distance between the listed building and the proposed flat roof photovoltaic units is in excess of 100 metres.

In addition, the flat roof photovoltaic units are set at a shallow inclination of approximately 22 degrees. This assists in keeping the array relatively low in profile in longer-distance views.

7.2 Visual relationship with the listed building

The significance of the listed college buildings is not dependent upon uninterrupted or wholly historic views across the campus. The wider setting already includes a range of later school buildings associated with the continued use and development of the estate.

Within that context, the proposed photovoltaic installation would be perceived as a modest operational adaptation to the existing Music School and Performing Arts Centre rather than as a competing architectural element. The panels would not rival the listed buildings in form, scale, detailing, material quality or architectural expression. Nor would they interrupt the appreciation of the listed buildings as the principal historic focus of the campus.

Where visible, the panels would be read against the backdrop of existing modern buildings and their roofscape. The resulting effect is therefore one of limited visual change within an already evolved institutional setting.

7.3 Degree of harm

Having regard to the limited extent of visibility, the separation distance, the modern character of the host buildings, and the low-profile arrangement of the proposed arrays, the proposal would result in only a very limited effect on the setting of the listed building.

That effect amounts to very limited less than substantial harm at the lower end of the spectrum.

8.0 Public Benefits

That limited heritage harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The proposal would deliver a substantial renewable energy installation with an installed capacity of 80.08 kWp and an estimated annual electricity production of approximately 83,630 kWh. It would make a meaningful contribution to reducing operational carbon emissions, lowering grid electricity demand and supporting the long-term environmental sustainability of the College estate.

The proposal would also contribute to reduced operating costs over the life of the system and improve resilience against future energy price increases. In addition, the scheme supports the continued enhancement of Hurstpierpoint College as an

established educational institution and local employer, consistent with the objectives of local planning policy.

These are clear and genuine public benefits which carry substantial weight.

9.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

The proposal does not affect listed fabric and does not introduce a new building into the setting of the listed college. It is confined to roof mounted photovoltaic equipment on existing modern buildings within an already evolved educational campus.

The likely visual effect on the setting of the Grade II listed Hurstpierpoint College buildings is limited. The greatest potential visibility arises from the flat roof array on the eastern side of the Performing Arts Centre, but even here the effect is constrained by the distance involved, the limited nature of the available views, and the shallow inclination of the panels.

Overall, the proposal is considered to give rise to very limited less than substantial harm to the setting of the listed building. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

On balance, the identified public benefits of carbon reduction, renewable energy generation, reduced operational energy demand, and the sustainable improvement of the College estate clearly outweigh the very limited heritage harm identified.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in heritage terms and it is respectfully submitted that planning permission should be granted.
