

Heritage Impact Statement

Roof Mounted Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Panels System

Ashurst C of E Primary School, Ashurst BN44 3AY

July 2026

1.0 Introduction

This Statement supports a Listed Building Consent application and proposals for a roof mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panel system at the school.

The statement provides the evidence used to assess the significance of the heritage assets (a Grade II listed building), and the potential threat to their significance and special interest. This follows guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which requires applicants for heritage and other consents *'... to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'* (para. 200)

The proposals are described in detail within the accompanying Design & Access Statement.

2.0 Statutory Listing

The former schoolmaster's house at the School was Grade II listed in May 1980 (List Entry Number: 1191869. The statutory listing describes is as:

"C18. Two storeys. Three windows. Now faced with cement. Stringcourse. hipped tiled roof. Casement windows. Two storeys. Three windows. This was originally the Schoolmaster's house but has been since incorporated into the school. The main school itself is C19 and is not of special interest."

3.0 Planning and Conservation Policy and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act

The legislative framework for listed buildings and conservation areas is contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended. Under sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act, decision-makers shall have:

a) pay special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings and any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess;

and,

b) pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

National Planning Policy Framework

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) in Section 16 places great weight on the conservation of heritage assets. Paragraph 203 states:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- d) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- e) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- f) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- g) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place'*

Paragraph 212 states 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".

The test that applies to proposals that cause 'less than substantial harm' to a listed building is set out in paragraph 215 which 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.'

Historic England's Advice Note: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency

Historic England has produced this Advice Note to provide clarity on key considerations and to support consistent decision making around the issue of mitigating climate change and conserving historic buildings.

Local Development Framework – Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) and the Horsham District Local Plan (HDLP) (2023-40) (Regulation 19)

Heritage policies within the Development Plan (2015) follow those of the legislative and national planning policy requirement to preserve listed buildings.

4.0 Principle of Development

Whilst the main school building is curtilage listed by way of attachment to the former Schoolmaster's House, the Listing Description states that it has **no special interest in itself**.

The proposed photovoltaic panels would be mounted on the later, south-facing main school building roof, rather than on the principal historic roof slopes of the former Schoolmaster's House. The panels will not obscure or remove architectural features identified as contributing to the building's special interest and will not require alteration to historic roof timbers or other significant historic fabric.

The design seeks to ensure minimal impact. The panels would be black and non-reflective. The risk of glint and glare is minimal due to roof orientation and panel specification. The system is designed to minimise impact on neighbouring properties.

The installation will utilise proprietary roof fixings designed to minimise intervention in the existing roof structure. The installation can be removed in the future without permanent loss of historic fabric, allowing the roof to be reinstated to its existing appearance.

Alternative locations for the photovoltaic panels were considered, including ground-mounted installations and other roof slopes. The selected south-facing roof provides the optimum solar performance whilst avoiding installation on the principal historic roof slopes and minimising intervention to the listed fabric. The proposal therefore represents the least harmful option capable of delivering the required renewable energy generation.

As such, the proposal is considered to result in no harm, or at most very low levels of less than substantial harm, to the significance of the designated heritage asset.

In this instance, the alterations can be justified as there is public interest in assisting the school to achieve net zero by 2030. The solar PV project is part of a wider scheme to decarbonise Ashurst CoE Primary School. In 2025, a 16 kW air source heat pump system was installed to supply heating and hot water to the school, replacing oil-fired boilers and multiple point of use water heaters. Loft insulation was installed in early 2026 in the School Master's House to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

As a result of the heating upgrades, improved insulation and installation of solar PV panels, Ashurst CoE Primary School will be more energy efficient, and operating costs resulting from energy use will decrease. The combined effect of these measures will make the school more resilient to the closures seen elsewhere in the region due to its lower running costs. Lower operating costs will also allow the school to place more financial resources back into education and general maintenance.

The proposed solar panels are expected to reduce the school's grid purchased power by 5,850 kWh per annum based on historic energy consumption.

The total savings over a 20-year period (the expected lifetime) for the combined heat pump and solar PV system is circa £34,000.

Total carbon emissions will be reduced from 191 to 13 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) over a 20-year period (the expected lifetime) for the combined heat pump and solar PV system.

Overall, the proposed works are considered to have achieved a balance between the interests of conservation and the ongoing needs and viability of the school.

The existing school makes a positive contribution to the character of conservation area and this will be remain unaffected by the proposed development.

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed addition of the solar panels would result in no harm, or at worst less than substantial harm, to the significance of the designated heritage asset. Any harm caused would be at the lower end of the scale.

In accordance with paragraph 215 of the NPPF, this limited harm should be weighed against the substantial public benefits that the development delivers which are:

- supporting the long-term viability of a rural primary school which is an important community asset;
- reducing operational carbon emissions;
- improving resilience against rising energy costs;
- reducing demand on the electricity grid;
- supporting national and local climate change objectives;
- enabling more resources to be directed towards education and building maintenance.

The statutory List Description confirms that the nineteenth-century school building is not of special architectural or historic interest, with the significance of the designation residing principally in the eighteenth-century former Schoolmaster's House. The proposed photovoltaic panels are confined to the south-facing main school roof and have been carefully designed to minimise visual impact through the use of flush-mounted, black, non-reflective panels. The proposals are fully reversible and do not involve the loss of historic fabric.

The development will preserve the architectural and historic significance of the Grade II listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area. Any limited visual impact arising from the installation is clearly outweighed by the substantial public benefits associated with decarbonising the school, reducing operational costs, improving the long-term sustainability of an important community facility and supporting national and local climate change objectives. The proposal therefore accords with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), and relevant Development Plan policies.