Donald Insall Associates
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

Alexandra Palace, Alexandra Palace Way, London, N22 7AY

Boathouse PV Panels Installation Proposal - Heritage Statement

ALX.BLB.01-RP-7001

For Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust

Contact Information

Jason Lai
(Associate)
E: Jason.Lai@insall-architects.co.uk
T: 020 7245 9888

London Office
12 Devonshire Street
London, W1G 7AB
www.donaldinsallassociates.co.uk

Project ref:	ALA.BLB.01
Revision:	00
Issue date:	27.06.25
Prepared by:	JKL
Checked by:	AXT

This report and all intellectual property rights in it and arising from it are the property of or are under licence to Donald Insall Associates Limited. Neither the whole nor any part of this report, nor any drawing, plan, photograph, other document or any information contained within it may be reproduced in any form, including online, without the prior written consent of Donald Insall Associates Limited. All material in which the intellectual property rights have been licensed to Donald Insall Associates Limited, and such rights belong to third parties, may not be published or reproduced at all in any form, and any request for consent to the use of such material for publication or reproduction should be made directly to the owner of the intellectual property rights concerned.

Contents

1.0	Introduction	4
2.0	Understanding the heritage asset and significance	5
3.0	Proposals	6
4.0	Potential impacts on significance; minimisation and mitigation of harm	7
5.0	Conclusion	8

1.0 Introduction

This heritage statement has been written on behalf of Alexandra Palace to assist in the pre-application submission for the proposals to install photovoltaic (PV) panels on the flat roof of the Boathouse which forms one of the three interconnected Lakeside buildings adjacent to the historic Boating Lake at Alexandra Palace.

Alexandra Palace including its park and gardens is registered as a Grade II listed building, and the entire site is listed as a Grade II listed Park and Garden signifying the significance of its historic landscape. It is located in between Wood Green and Muswell Hill in the London Borough of Haringey. Alexandra Park is included in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

The Boating Lake building comprises the Boathouse, Lakeside Café and public lavatories at Alexandra Palace Boating Lake. While the Boathouse itself is not a listed structure, nor is it individually listed as curtilage listed, it is located within the Grade II listed Park and Garden site, it is also within the Alexandra Palace and Park Conservation Area in Haringey.

It is proposed to install photovoltaic (PV) panels onto the flat roof of the Boathouse building to generate electricity for the use of the café and the Boathouse itself as a sustainable source of energy. The intention is to make use of the existing structure and flat roof layout of the Boathouse to minimise structural interventions, and to offset the PV panels away from the perimeter of the existing roof to minimise the visual impact on the building and its surrounding setting.

This heritage statement has been written to support a pre-application. It describes the works, and discusses the potential impacts on the heritage values of the building and its surrounding setting, showing how the proposal has been designed to minimise harm to them. It has been informed by Historic England's guidance on statements of heritage significance, that the level of detail given is proportionate to the impact of the proposal. [1]

Boathouse southwest facing frontage

Aerial view of Boating Lake Complex (Photo Credit: Microsoft Bing)

1 *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets, Historic England Advice Note 12, October 2019.*

2.0 Understanding the heritage asset and significance

The Boating Lake complex, situated along the eastern edge of the historic boating lake, comprising three interlinked structures dating from the 20th and 21st centuries, occupies a key location within the significant lakeside area of Alexandra Park. This location, bordering the lake, holds a significant place within the history of Alexandra Park, having served as a backdrop for a wide array of the Palace's outdoor events since its opening. While the present buildings are not historically significant in themselves, their presence and function in this location contribute to the overall character and understanding of the Victorian parkland landscape.

Historical imagery suggests the consistent presence of the earlier boating-related buildings. Photographs from the late 1960s depict a set of buildings along the lake's edge, different from the current complex, although similar in scale and arrangement.

The architectural character of the present Boating Lake complex reflects different phases of the 20th century design. The southernmost building, housing the Lakeside Café and public lavatories, constructed in 1972, consciously adopts a late Victorian vernacular style. Its features, including banded brickwork, a pitched slate roof, and an open veranda framed by painted timber, demonstrate a clear design intent to echo a late Victorian parkland architectural styles prevalent in other London parks and within Alexandra Park itself (e.g., the Gas House). This mimicry, through form, scale, and detailing, contributes to the aesthetic coherence of the lakeside area and reinforces the visual language of the original Victorian design. Its presence helps to maintain the historic character of this area.

In contrast, the Boathouse and the 21st century link structure show no attempt to acknowledge or integrate with the established Victorian parkland. While these structures adequately serve their purposes, their design does not contribute to the heritage value of the lakeside and introduces a discordant modern element.

The Boathouse locates approximately 20 meters to the north of the Lakeside Café, embodies a mid-century utilitarian style. This bulky, flat-roofed blockwork structure is devoid of ornamentation, with its lakeside elevation dominated by two large concertina shutters, prioritizing functionality over aesthetic integration with the Victorian parkland setting. The exact construction date and whether it was contemporaneous with the café remain uncertain.

It is understood that the latest phase in the complex's development occurred in 2006, which included extensive refurbishment of the Lakeside Café, with extension to the existing Boathouse for the kitchen. A steel-framed curved roof linking the Lakeside Café and the Boathouse was inserted in between, which was subsequently enclosed with glazed panels, providing a covered dining space. Timber-clad extensions were constructed either side of the Boathouse, providing expanded kitchen facilities and storage.

Considering the above, the Boating Lake complex as a whole can be assessed as having a neutral significance from a direct historical or architectural merit perspective. However, its location within a significant historic landscape, coupled with the Lakeside Café building's deliberate referencing of Victorian architectural styles, lends the site a contextual significance. The complex, therefore, plays a role in shaping the visual and experiential qualities of the lakeside, a key feature contributing to the overall significance of Alexandra Park.

While the existing non-historic elements may not warrant retention based on their own merit, any interventions should be carefully considered for their impact on the surrounding historic landscape and strive to enhance the Victorian parkland character that the Lakeside Café building currently attempts to embody.

Refurbishment of Boathouse and Lakeside Cafe in 2006

3.0 Proposals

It is proposed to install photovoltaic (PV) panels onto the flat roof of the Boathouse building to generate electricity for the use of the café and the Boat House itself as a sustainable source of energy.

The existing flat roof of the Boathouse is finished with Bitumen roofing felt, there are low parapet upstands varies between approximately 100mm and 200mm along the perimeter of the building. There are six individual roof lights on the existing flat roof in various locations, and a set of linear sloped roof light spanning the entire length of the northeast edge sitting above the northeast elevation.

The proposed PV panels are to be installed onto the flat roof of the Boathouse using the existing structure of the building, it is understood that the existing Boathouse building is robustly built, as such, the existing structure is expected to be sufficient in supporting the additional loading from the PV panels. A structural assessment will be arranged and carried out to ascertain if the existing structure is suitable to support the proposed PV panels without any structural alteration and/or modification.

The proposed arrangement of the PV panels is expected to be offset away from the low parapets of the Boathouse to minimise any visual impact on the building and its surrounding setting.

It is assumed that roof spreader feet would be required for any necessary height adjustment of the installation, and the panels are expected to be set at angles in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. Professional advice from the manufacturer and installers will be sought prior to installation.

The intention of installing PV panels is for the benefit of the Lakeside Café and the Boathouse, allowing it to continue serving the community and general public as a place for leisure and recreational activities for general public while enjoying the benefit of the self-generated sustainable energy.

Boathouse interior

Flat roof of Boathouse for proposed PV penal installation as highlighted (Photo Credit: Microsoft Bing)

Existing flat roof of bitumen roofing felt

4.0 Potential impacts on significance; minimisation and mitigation of harm

The proposal to install photovoltaic (PV) panels on the flat roof of the Boathouse has been carefully developed to minimise harm to the heritage significance of Alexandra Park and the visual coherence of the lakeside setting.

4.1 Impact on the Boathouse Built Fabric

As outlined in Section 2, the Boathouse is of utilitarian mid-century design, lacking architectural detailing or intentional reference to the established Victorian character of Alexandra Park. It is not listed, nor curtilage listed, and its heritage value is limited. The proposed installation will involve surface-mounting of PV panels on the flat roof. The installation will be fully reversible.

The design intention is to position the photovoltaic panels away from the low parapet upstands that define the perimeter of the Boathouse roof. The panels will be visually contained within the existing roofscape and will not project above the building profile in a manner that would increase their visibility from ground level. The use of ballast or spreader feet for fixing, subject to the outcome of a structural assessment, will ensure that the installation remains both discreet and fully reversible.

4.2 Visual Impact within the Historic Landscape

Although the Boathouse itself is not a heritage asset, it forms part of a wider ensemble within the Grade II registered park and garden, and its setting must therefore be considered. The proposed PV panels will not be visible from key vistas across the park or from the Palace itself due to the low profile of the Boathouse, the flat nature of the roof, and the surrounding topography and vegetation.

Where visible in closer proximity, the panels will be seen in the context of an existing modern structure of neutral heritage value. Their installation on a flat roof ensures they do not materially alter the silhouette of the building, and they do not detract from any features of special interest. Consequently, the visual impact on the wider setting is considered to be minor and entirely reversible.

4.3 Cumulative and Contextual Impact

While the Lakeside Café contributes modestly to the heritage character of the lakeside area through its late Victorian vernacular design references, the Boathouse and adjoining structures do not share this architectural language. As such, the installation of PV panels on the Boathouse will not disrupt or detract from any cohesive visual unity or group value.

Furthermore, the functional nature of the Boathouse, and its clear visual and material separation from the historic core of the Alexandra Palace, ensures that there is no cumulative harm to the park's architectural character. The proposals do not introduce visual clutter or set a precedent for inappropriate alterations elsewhere within the historic park.

4.4 Contribution to Long-Term Sustainability

In line with national and local policy guidance (notably paragraph 164 of the NPPF), the proposal supports long-term sustainability and energy efficiency in a manner that is sensitive to local character and historic significance. The PV panels will provide a renewable energy source for the café and Boathouse, supporting their continued community use while aligning with Alexandra Palace's wider environmental goals.

The intervention is demonstrably low-impact, reversible, and proportionate. It reflects an appropriate response to the climate emergency that does not undermine the significance of the heritage asset or its setting.

Utilitarian mid-century design style of the Boathouse

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels on the flat roof of the 1970's Boathouse at Alexandra Palace has been developed with careful consideration of the site's heritage context, including its location within the Grade II registered park and garden and the Alexandra Palace and Park Conservation Area.

The Boathouse, while not a designated heritage asset in its own right, is situated within a highly significant historic landscape. Its architectural contribution is limited, and the proposed works will not affect any historic fabric. The installation is fully reversible, visually discreet, and has been designed to mitigate negative impact on key views, building profiles, or the wider parkland character.

The proposals align with Sections 66(1) and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 by preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area and avoiding harm to the significance of the registered park and garden. Furthermore, the scheme supports national planning policy, particularly the aims set out in paragraphs 164 of the National Planning Policy Framework, by promoting sustainable development in a manner that conserves heritage significance.

In summary, the proposals represent a sensitive and proportionate intervention that will enable Alexandra Palace to improve its environmental performance without compromising the heritage values of the site. The installation is considered to be acceptable in heritage terms.

View looking towards southwest

Donald Insall Associates