



Officer Report

Application Number:	HGY/2023/1198
Application Type:	Full planning permission
Address:	Princess Elizabeth House, 18 Winchester Place, Hornsey, London, N6 5BQ
Proposal:	Installation of PV solar panels to different elements of building roof.
Case Officer:	Roland Sheldon
Valid Date:	03/05/2023
Applicant:	JMS EStates (IOM) Ltd Robert Newell
Agent:	Dr. Bob Newell

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

1. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The subject site contains Princess Elizabeth House, a four-storey (with roof accommodation) student hostel, located at the south-western end of Winchester Place, N6. The surrounding uses are mixed, with the playing fields and buildings of Channing School for girls located to the immediate west of the site.

The two-storey terraced properties on Cromwell Avenue are located to the east, with the mix of commercial and residential buildings located further to the south on The Bank/Highgate Hill. The site is located within Highgate Conservation Area, within the 'Archway Road' sub-area as identified within the Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2013. The building itself is Grade II listed.

2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application scheme seeks to install an array of 51 solar PV panels on different roof planes of the building.

3. CONSULTATION

Highgate CAAC: A 'fabric first' approach must be taken, with listed building consent required for each area of work. Following this, a review of fixed items should take place such as replacement of boilers with renewables, upgrading radiators and replacement of electrical fittings. Following this review, installation of solar PVs may not be necessary to gain EPC certification. The heritage statement outlines that Princess Elizabeth House (PEH) needs to be assessed as a curtilage property to Grade I listed Cromwell House, which is not included in the submission.

Highgate Neighbourhood Forum: No comment received.

Highgate Society: No comment received.

LBH Haringey Conservation Officer: The proposed Installation of PV Solar Panels at roof level seems to form part of an overarching energy efficiency upgrade strategy for the site, as per D&A statement at page 2. This strategy does not form part of the submitted application, and no assessment of the decay conditions of the listed building informs this application. It is therefore not possible to understand if fundamental repairs, maintenance and retrofitting of the listed building have been so far considered as the first step to ensure the optimal energy efficiency of the building as part of that same strategy that apparently includes the proposed PVs installation. The proposed works are not clearly and convincingly justified.

The heritage statement does not provide sufficient information and detail about the proposed PV panels, size, method of fixing. No evidence has been submitted about the impact of the proposed works on the character and significance of the host building: those views towards the listed building from its grounds, from Cromwell house and from the back gardens of properties fronting Cromwell Avenue are not tested in the application. Also, the impact on the setting of surrounding heritage assets such as grade I listed Cromwell House, and the Conservation Area is not assessed in the submitted application.

The proposed installation of PV solar panels to prominent roof slopes of Princess Elizabeth House raises concerns that this uncharacteristic addition will detract from the appearance and aesthetic value of the listed building and that the proposed works will unnecessarily harm the historic fabric of the building; the application does not provide sufficient information to soundly assess the impact of the proposed works on the significance of the listed building, and the application cannot be supported as it stands.

Local Consultation

A notice was placed in the local press as part of the local consultation, in addition to a site notice being placed outside the building. Letters of consultation were also sent to neighbouring properties. No comments were received during the statutory consultation period.

4. ASSESSMENT

This application raises two related main issues. Firstly, the effect of the works upon the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building of Princess Elizabeth House. Secondly, the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of Highgate Conservation Area.

Energy Efficiency and the benefits of the external wall insulation

The proposal is not a major development, and therefore the energy hierarchy as set out in the London Plan 2021 is not applicable. However, policy DM21 of the Development Management, Development Plan Document 2017 supports appropriate measures to sustainably retrofit existing homes, recognising the opportunity to improve the environmental performance of existing buildings.

This policy sees to encourage proposals for minor and householder development to incorporate energy efficient measures, including external wall insulation, providing any such treatment is sympathetic to the character and historic significance of the existing building and surrounding area and, where having regard to other Local Plan policies (DM1 Delivering High Quality Design and DM9 Management of the Historic Environment).

The installation of the solar PV panels are proposed in association with the aim of the owner to ensure their portfolio of properties are more energy efficient. The addition of the solar PV panels would serve to reduce the need for non-renewable energy to heat and power the building. As such, the development is acceptable with regards to energy and sustainability considerations.

Design & heritage

Notwithstanding the above, the proposal to improve the energy efficiency of the building needs to be considered in conjunction with the heritage considerations of installing a solar PV array onto a Grade II listed building within a conservation area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 emphasises the importance of ensuring that local planning authorities should:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 208 sets out that 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.

London Plan policy HC1 requires development proposals to conserve the significance and be sympathetic to the significance of heritage assets. DM policy DM1 sets out that proposals should relate positively to their locality, having regard to distinctive architectural styles, detailing and materials. DM policy DM9 sets out development that conserves and enhances the significance of a heritage asset and its setting will be supported.

Policy DH2 of the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan (2017) requires proposals to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Highgate's conservation areas and respect the setting of its listed buildings/assets.

Princess Elizabeth House is a grade II listed building, and was built in 1930 in a neo-Georgian style to the design of Richardson and Gill. It served as an annexe to Cromwell House, occupied at that time by the Mothercraft Society which trained mothers and healthcare workers in ways to reduce infant mortality. It is four-storeys high (with four accommodation), in red brick, designed on butterfly plan with sun verandas. It was listed at Grade II in 2005 when it faced demolition, it was subsequently converted into student accommodation.

The proposed solar panels would be primarily positioned on the single storey and three-storey flat roof elements of the building, and would be largely concealed from view from the public realm. However, there are also a number of panels proposed to be installed on the main roof of the building, mainly on the internal (southern) roof plane, but also northern roof plane, adjacent to the modern extended building of Channing School for Girls.

Limited information is provided with regards to the proposed method of fixings to the existing external fabric of the roof. The roof plans are annotated to indicate that panels on the flat roof parts of the building would be placed on a 10 degree angle bracket, whilst the panels on the dual-pitch roof would not project more than 150mm from the roof plane.

In this instance, there is an absence of a detailed energy strategy and an analysis of the decay conditions of the listed building to fully consider if fundamental repairs, maintenance and retrofitting of the listed building have been considered as the first step to ensure the optimal energy efficiency of the building. The proposed works are not clearly and convincingly justified.

The heritage statement does not provide sufficient information and detail about the proposed PV panels, size, or method of fixing. No evidence has been submitted about the impact of the proposed works on the character and significance of the host building: those views towards the listed building from its grounds, from Cromwell house and from the back gardens of properties fronting Cromwell Avenue are not tested in the application.

Also, the impact on the setting of surrounding heritage assets such as grade I listed Cromwell House, and the Conservation Area is not assessed in the submitted application.

The proposed installation of PV solar panels to prominent roof slopes of Princess Elizabeth House raises concerns that this uncharacteristic addition will detract from the appearance and aesthetic value of the listed building and that the proposed works will unnecessarily harm the historic fabric of the building; the application does not provide sufficient information to soundly assess the impact of the proposed works on the significance of the listed building, and the application cannot be supported as it stands.

As such, the proposal is unacceptable with regards to heritage considerations, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), policy HC1 of the London Plan (2021), policy SP12 of the Haringey Local Plan (2017), policies DM1 and DM9 of the Haringey Development Management Plan DPD (2017) and policy DH2 of the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan (2017).

5. RECOMMENDATION

The application is recommended for refusal for the following reason(s):

Refusal Reasons:

The proposal fails to adequately consider the necessity for the works and soundly assess their impact on the significance of the listed building and surrounding heritage assets. The proposal is therefore unacceptable with regards to heritage considerations, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), policy HC1 of the London Plan (2021), policy SP12 of the Haringey Local Plan (2017), policies DM1 and DM9 of the Haringey Development Management Plan DPD (2017) and policy DH2 of the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan (2017).