

DESIGN AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Offley Place, Kings Walden Road,
Great Offley, Hertfordshire SG5 3DX



February 2025



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Design and Heritage Statement has been prepared by INTOUCH PLANNING LTD, on behalf of the applicant, to support an application for planning and listed building consent for installation of solar panels to the roofs of the function room building and the former stables building. The site address is Offley Place, Kings Walden Road, Great Offley, SG5 3DX.
- 1.2 The Statement provides an assessment of the planning policy framework relevant to the proposal, as well as other relevant material considerations and explains the design process and principles based on a contextual understanding of the site and the locality.

2. Site description

- 2.1 The application site comprises a large detached main building and ancillary buildings, set across a private estate, operating as a hotel and events venue. This is a grade II listed building and the site is located within the Great Offley Conservation Area. Access is from Kings Walden Road.
- 2.2 The subject buildings are the linked function suite building and the detached former stables building. The following photographs show the subject buildings.





Figure 1 – Front elevation of function suite building



Figure 2 – Site elevation of function suite building





Figure 3 – Front elevation of stables building



Figure 4 – Rear elevation of stables building



3. Planning history

- 3.1 The relevant planning history for the site is as follows for the function suite building, which has been built for several years.
- 3.2 16/01391/1LB - Single storey function suite extension linked to existing building following demolition of existing conference facility – Listed building consent granted.
- 3.3 16/01038/1 - Minor material amendment to planning permission reference 14/01843/1 granted 30/09/2014 for a single storey function suite extension linked to existing building following demolition of existing conference facility.

4. The proposal

- 4.1 The application is for planning permission and listed building consent for the installation of solar panels to the roofs of the function room building and the former stables building, which is now as storage use for functions of Offley Place.
- 4.2 The solar panels to the function room roof would be set at a slight angle upstand for efficiency, placed on the flat roof surrounding the central glazed roof lantern. The solar panels to the stables building are proposed to the front and rear roofslopes, to be of flush angle to the roofslopes. Each panel 'module' has dimensions of 1134mm in width and 1762mm in length, with all being black in colour. An image of the solar panel individual module is as follows.



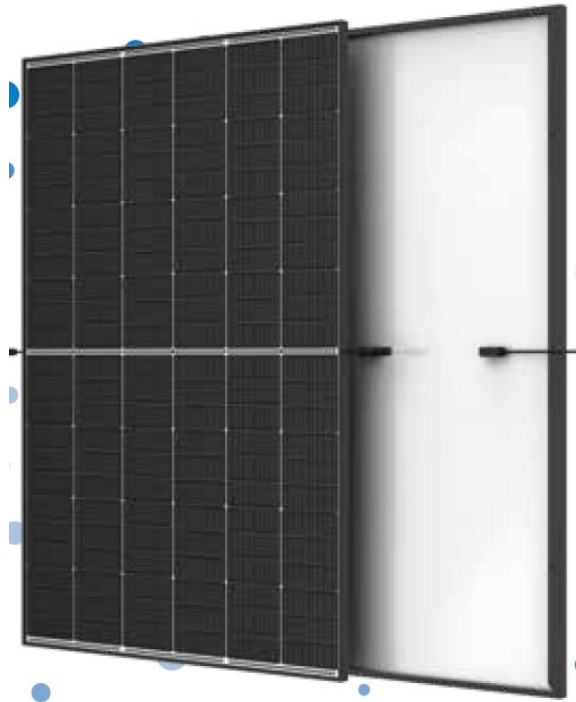


Figure 5 – View of solar panel module from Specification document

- 4.3 The following images are extracts from the proposed drawings, with superimposed aerial view of the roofs of the two buildings. The first elevation below is of the function suite building, with blue lines denoting the profile of the solar panels set behind the parapet roof.



Figure 6 - Proposed side elevation - Function suite building





Figure 7 – Proposed front elevation – stables building

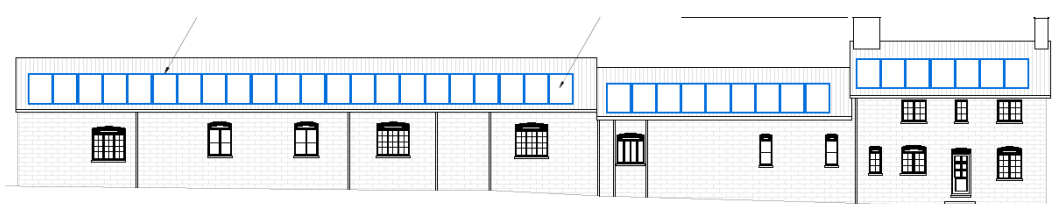


Figure 8 – Proposed rear elevation – stables building

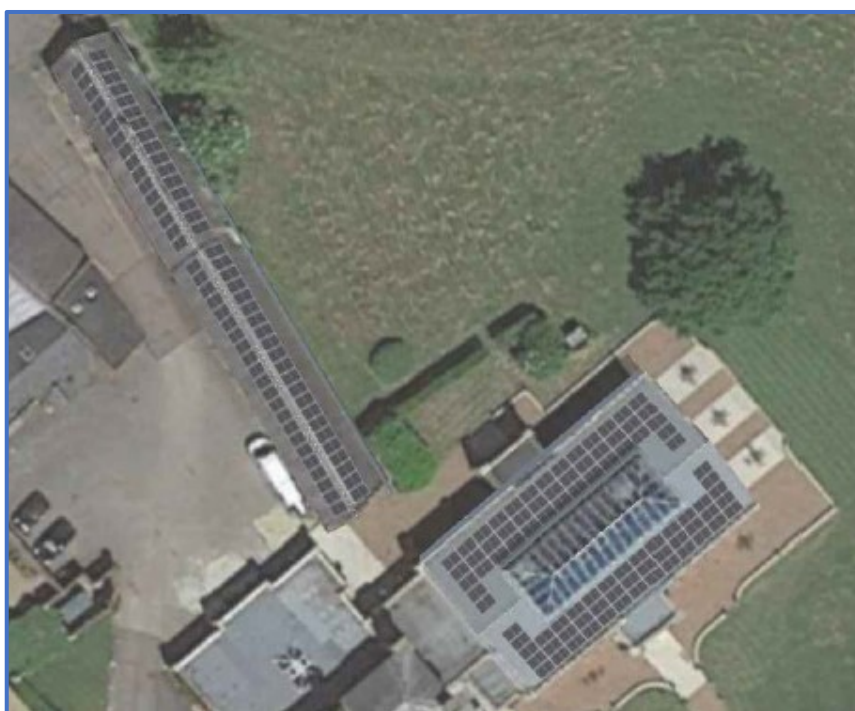


Figure 9 – Superimposed aerial view of the solar panels on the two buildings

5. Relevant planning policy



- 5.1 North Herts District Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031
Policy HE1 – Heritage assets
- 5.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

6. Heritage Statement

- 6.1 The following section addresses the impact upon the heritage assets of the scheme. In this case these are the listed building of Offley Place as the main building, the curtilage listed subject building of the former stables, the listed wall and iron gates of the walled garden and, the Great Offley Conservation Area, all being designated Heritage Assets. The function suite building is not listed, being a modern construction but does link to the main building of Offley Place. The list entry for the main listed building of Offley Place reads as follows:

“Country house, now in educational use. 1806-10 by Sir Robert Smirke for Rev Lynch Salusbury incorporating C17 E wing of manor house of Offley St Ledgers (recased), stair tower reduced to general height 1929 for Colonel Acland. Used for educational purposes since 1943. Red brick in Flemish-bond with white brick dressings, front range stuccoed in later C19. Hipped slate roofs. A tall symmetrical Gothick 3-storeys house facing W set in parkland to N of parish church, and formerly with a higher square central crenelated stair tower with 3 clearstorey windows in each face reminiscent of Wyatt's design for Ashridge. Diagonal buttresses to angles (paired corner buttresses added to 3-storeys old E wing). 5 windows wide W front has narrow projecting central bay, gabled, with diagonal buttresses and projecting Gothick porch with pointed archway and rib-vaulted ceiling. 2-light mullioned and transomed windows, smaller windows to 2nd floor. These windows have wooden sliding sashes. Neale engraving shows twin canted single-storey crenelated bay windows on S end, now gone. E face of this S end still in original brickwork with tall pointed niche



with gauged brick vaulted head. Rectangular 2-storeys service wing to N has square corner turrets with pointed slits. 2 linking contemporary single-storey ranges with disproportionately large painted corbels below eaves. Original interior arrangement had Drawing Room on S of entrance with Dining Room to rear of it: Breakfast Room on N of entrance with small Parlour to rear. Lofty ground floor of older E wing was the Library. Entrance into wide stone paved hall by glazed timber Gothick screen, archway to square central stair hall with three pointed windows in sides and lay-light under a lantern. Single stair up sides of tower and stone steps down to library. Copper Arts and Crafts chandelier hanging central. Heavy pointed double doors with narrow panels with cusped heads. SW room has C18 white marble classical fire surround. Upper floors have 6-panels moulded divided doors. Former library has 4-centred stone fireplace and twin coved niches on W wall with shaped shelves. (RCHM (1911)161: Pevsner (1977)265: RCHM Typescript)".

- 6.2 The listing description for the listed walls and gates of the walled garden is as follows:

"Walls and gates to walled garden. C18 or early C19, gates c.1777 former chancel screen from parish church. Red brick in Flemish-bond, wrought iron gates. Walls forming a large polygonal enclosure, about 3M high on S but about 4M high alongside road on W. S side has pilasters to W part but large buttresses with 2 offsets, to E part. Moulded brick coping. Iron screen and double gates in S wall near E end. Gothick pattern with side panels, overthrow with scrolled cresting to each part with quatrefoils. Elaborate similar bottom panels with lozenge and quatrefoil shapes in lock rails. Clustered columns as standards for hanging gates with scrolled stays to ground behind. Detail similar to remaining altar rail in church (q.v.). (Pevsner (1977)265)".

- 6.3 In regard to policy context, the NPPF sets out the Government's most up to date planning policy for conserving and enhancing the historic environment, along with Local Plan Policy HE1. The impacts upon the heritage assets are discussed below.



Impact upon significance of the host listed building and walls of walled garden

- 6.4 The significance of the host listed building is that it is a historic large country house, set within its own spacious grounds and verdant setting, as a landmark building within the village of Great Offley.
- 6.5 The solar panels are considered to have no harmful impact upon the special character or setting of the host subject buildings, nor the main building of Offley Place, or the walled garden walls and gates. This is because the solar panels on the function suite building would not be seen from ground level. They would be level with the top of the surrounding parapet wall, which is then not seen from ground level, even when at distance from the building. This building is of modern construction and is not listed with Offley Place although being linked to the building.
- 6.6 The solar panels to the former stables building would be seen, as they would be to the front and rear roofslopes of this gable ended linear building. However, although visible, the panels would be sited flush to the roofslopes, would be of black colour to blend very well with the black slate tiled roof.
- 6.7 Moreover, being set behind the principal elevation of Offley Place and being of some distance from this main listed building, the siting of solar panels to this ancillary, former stables building, is considered the most appropriate of any visible roofslopes, on which to install solar panels.

Impact upon the Great Offley Conservation Area

- 6.8 In this regard, the works are considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Great Offley Conservation Area. This is due to the secluded nature of the buildings within the overall site of Offley Place. The panels would have no public views or any visible impact from the main core of the Conservation Area, further along Kings Walden Road.



- 6.9 Overall, the sensitive siting of the proposed solar panels, would cause no harm to the significance or setting of the host buildings, nearby listed buildings and features of Offley Place. Nor would they cause any harm to the character or appearance of the Great Offley Conservation Area.
- 6.10 Should it be considered that less than substantial harm would be incurred from the proposals, it is suggested this level harm would be of the lowest degree. It is strongly asserted that any such low level of harm would be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme. This being to provide renewable energy for the building, with substantially less reliance upon the national grid electricity network.
- 6.11 A battery storage facility will be included with the installation, to be housed in the storage areas of the former stables building. This will store surplus electricity, with even less reliance upon the grid for the supply of power to the buildings of Offley Place.
- 6.12 Hertfordshire County Council have declared a climate emergency across the county and all measures for renewable forms of energy should be given substantial weight in decision making. This solar installation is proposed in the most sensitive way possible, in order to provide the required solar power output for these substantial sized buildings and their function. Therefore, any harm identified from the proposals, is considered to be substantially outweighed by the benefits of providing this renewable energy for the site.
- 6.13 The scheme is therefore considered to satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(1), 66(1) and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and, Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031, along with the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF.

