

Braintree District Council,
Validation Team,
Development Management,
Braintree District Council,
Bocking End,
Essex
CM7 9HB

Application for determination of prior approval

9th June 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Notification for prior approval for the installation of Photovoltaics (PV) equipment on the roofs of Howbridge
Howbridge Church of England Junior School, Howbridge Road, Witham, Essex, CM8 1BZ**

Please find attached our Notification for Prior Approval for the installation of solar panels on the roofs of Howbridge Church of England Junior School, Howbridge Road, Witham, Essex, CM8 1BZ.

We are aware that whilst the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 under Part 14 Class J allows for permitted development of solar PV panels with a generating capacity of up to 1 megawatt on the roofs of non-domestic buildings, there are a number of restrictions, limitations and conditions. These have been considered and are addressed below:

- To show that the proposed installation does constitute permitted development and
- To assist in the prior approval process.

This notification is therefore accompanied by:

- 00 Prior Notification Approval
- 01 Design and Access supporting statement
- 02 Proposed Site Layout
- 03A Site location plan
- 03B Building location plan
- 04 Scaled Map
- 05 Images of the site and surrounding areas
- 06 Roof Cross section

Permitted development assessment:

Given that the solar panels would be installed on the flat roof buildings of the school (see proposed site layout drawing 02), the proposed development can be considered under Part 14, Class J (c,) as “the installation, alteration or replacement of other solar PV equipment on the roof of a building”.

Site & surroundings

Howbridge CofE Junior School has a large campus ranging over 5 acres in size. The school building is a standard 1970s construction, and sits immediately next door to the Infant School (already installed with solar) and is largely a single storey building (approx. 3 metres in height) with one quarter's worth of the school's total roof space standing as a two-storey building (approx. 5 metres in height). All roofs of the school are flat. The school has a huge playing field, taking up close to 3 acres to the east of the school. This playing field occupies just over half of the school's site footprint. The school can be accessed from the vehicular entrance shared with the Infants' School, on Dengie Close, to the north of the building.

Conservation Area

Neither the school building, nor its curtilage, are in a Conservation Area, National Park, AONB or a World Heritage site. Howbridge CofE Junior School is not a listed building, nor does it fall within the curtilage of a listed building or Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The proposal is for around 384 panels with a total capacity to generate nearly 157kWp of renewable electricity and so falls well within the 1 megawatt permitted under the legislation for a solar PV installation to be recognised as permitted development. Please note that the exact number and total capacity will depend on the panels and their wattage at the time of installation but the installation will only be on the roof areas indicated and any change will be 'de minimus' i.e. of a such a small scale to not be materially different to this prior notification.

Notification of Prior Approval

Although the installation is classed as permitted development, under Class J (c.) development requires Prior Approval from the Local Planning Authority and as such please find below details as to the design, external appearance of the development and in particular an assessment of the likely impact of glare and glint on occupiers of neighbouring land:

Description of the proposed development

The development proposal is for 384 solar photovoltaic panels on flat roofs on the buildings (see attachment 02 Proposed site layout drawing). The panels will be mounted on a ballasted frames that rest on padding to protect the underlying roof membrane at an angle of 10 degrees and the frames are set at least 1 metre back from any edge of the roofs, in some cases 3.6 metres from the edge. At no point are the panels higher than 1m above the highest point of the roof (excluding chimneys); in fact according to the proposed tilt of the panels they will be less than 0.3 metres high (see cross section Roof Detail)

As shown on the Roof Cross Section (06), the panels of the proposed installation will not protrude more than 0.27 metres beyond the plane of the existing flat roof when measured from the perpendicular with the external surface of the roof, so Part 14 (J.1.).

Design and Appearance

The solar panels would be of a standard design and appearance for this type of renewable energy technology. It is considered that the proposed solar panels would be complementary to the modern character of the buildings on which we're planning to install. The visual appearance of the solar panels on the roof area is considered appropriate for the school building, thereby enhancing the visionary appearance of the site as an up-to-date centre for learning, creating responsible citizens for tomorrow's world with an appreciation for their

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surroundings and a duty of care for the environment. It is considered that the panels could have a positive impact on the character of the building and no overall detrimental impact on the surrounding area.

Impact on Neighbouring Land uses

The neighbouring and residential properties will have minimal chance of seeing the proposed installation as the roofs considered are positioned well back from the roads. The nearest residential properties to the north and east on Howbridge Road and Dengie Close respectively are almost 40 metres away. Meanwhile, there are no residential properties within 100 metres directly to the south of the building, and the possibility of seeing the proposed installation is extremely unlikely or any occurrence of glint and glare affecting amenity of the area. As well as the distance of 100 metres to the direct south and 70 metres to the south west, the school site is well shielded in this direction by dense shrubs and fairly mature trees.

Summary

In summary, the proposed scheme to install 384 solar panels on the roofs of Howbridge CofE Junior School meets with the criteria for permitted development under Part 14 Class J (c) of the Town and County (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Class J (c) is subject to prior approval by the Local Planning Authority and the necessary information required for prior approval accompanies this notification: the design and appearance of the solar panels to be installed on the flat areas of the building would be in keeping with the character of school as a centre of learning for citizens of the future, and have no adverse impact on either the character of the surrounding area or local residents; nor would there be any detrimental impact on the amenities of the occupiers of adjacent properties to the site (neighbouring land uses).

We would be grateful for your written prior approval of the proposed installation.

Yours sincerely

Anna Hamond
Project Marketing Manager
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