

Planning Service
Sandwell Borough Council,
Regeneration & Growth
PO Box 2374. Council House
Oldbury. B69 3DE

**Application for determination of permission to install solar panels at
Lightwoods Early Years School**

17 November 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Application for planning permission for the installation of Photovoltaics (PV) equipment on the roofs of Lightwoods Early Years School, 100 Lent Road, Oldbury B68 9ER

Please find attached our Planning Application for the installation of solar panels on the roofs of The Lightwoods Early Years School, 100 Clent Rd, Oldbury B68 9ER.

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.

The criteria have been considered and whilst the proposed development of solar panels meets some of them it fails to meet one of these conditions, so we are seeking full planning consent for the installation.

Below we have addressed the following:

- To show that the proposed installation does constitute permitted development in terms of much of its design.
- To highlight why planning permission is being sought and
- To illustrate how the proposed installation meets with the national policy to encourage decarbonisation but maintains the integrity of the area.

To assist in the planning approval process, this application is also accompanied by supporting documents, including:

- 00 Application for Planning Permission
- 01 Design and Access supporting statements
- 02 Proposed site layout design
- 03 Site location plan
- 04 Scaled Map
- 05 Roof cross section
- 06 Supporting images of the school, school site and surroundings showing panel design

Location of the building:

Lightwoods Early Years school is located on a site that is close to main roads. Much of the site is tree lined and these trees shield the school from the roads. There are some breaks in the trees and roofs that will accommodate the solar panels can be seen from Wolverhampton Road. The roof on the building off Clent road is easily seen to those passing by.

Neither the school building, nor its curtilage, are in a Conservation Area, National Park, AONB, the Broads or a World Heritage site. The Lightwoods Early Years school building 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 155 panels with a total capacity to generate around 65 kWp 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.

National policy for decarbonisation

The proposed installation is in keeping with the school's ambition to install solar panels which will deliver zero-carbon electricity and an energy literacy educational programme. This is in line with the government's drive to encourage public sector decarbonisation and the installation of solar panels to publicly owned buildings.

Description of the proposed development

The development proposal is for 155 solar photovoltaic panels on the pitched and flat roof areas of the building with a total capacity of 65kWp (see attachment 02). To meet government targets for decarbonisation and to maximise the ambitions of the school to generate as much zero-carbon solar electricity as possible, the proposed development of panels are as close to the edges as is possible.

Under permitted development criteria on a non-residential building there is a requirement for a 1m margin. This requirement does not exist for residential properties with similar pitched roofs as the school. The proposed development therefore follows permitted development criteria for residential properties with panels that go less than one metre to the edges of the pitched plane to design a system that maximises the opportunity for the school on the pitched south, east and west facing roofs (See attachment 05, 06).

How the development would fit with Permitted Development:

The solar panels which will be installed on the school's pitched roofs (Scaled Map 04), 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". In terms of design, the arrangement of the panels meet with most of the criteria for permitted development.

On the pitched roofs, the panels will be mounted on roof hooks to fasten a series of rails to the roof, with panels then being mounted on to these rails. As shown on the (Roof Cross Section Drawing 05), the panels of the proposed installation will not protrude more than 0.2 metres beyond the plane of the existing pitched roof slope when measured from the perpendicular with the external surface of the roof, so Part 14 (J.1.) (a) will be complied with.

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Why Planning Permission is required:

To comply with permitted development and therefore only require prior notice, the layout of the panels on the pitched roof areas would need to be spatially arranged in such a way that the solar panels would be offset by at least 1 metre from the external edge of the roofs (Attachments 05, 06) to comply with Part (c) and with no equipment within 1m of a roof junction for Part 14 (J.2.) (b) to be complied with and this is where the design fails to meet the criteria for permitted development on a non-domestic building.

The proposed panels on The Lightwoods Early Years Schools pitched and flat roofs will not have the 1m margin to a roof junction or edge. The pitched roofs of the school are being treated like a residential property solar installation under permitted development where there is no 1m-margin rule. So, like a residential property, the maximum roof area possible can be used for the benefit of the residents of the building in this case the school. The reason for this is that whilst there are other pitched areas of the school roof, there is a lot of shading from the trees that surround much of the school site. So given that this is a non-domestic property, we are seeking planning approval for the installation. The exact number of the panels and total capacity will depend on the panels and their wattage at the time of installation, but the project will involve the roof areas indicated in the Scaled Map (04). Any changes from this proposal will be 'de minimus' i.e. of a such a small scale to not be materially different to this planning application.

Design and Appearance

The solar panels are of standard design and are proposed to run in rows, positioned on the roof on rails (sloped sections) and on frames on the flat roof. The locations for the panels will front the public highways and, like residential properties, be able to be seen. But they will not adversely affect the look of the area for local residents or land users (see 05,06) as the proposed development is considered to be complementary to character of the school as a centre for teaching and learning and given the size of the array on the building which can be seen, any glint or glare is minimal if at all. The visual appearance of the solar panels is considered appropriate for the school building 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 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.

Adding positively to the school's image:

The panels will provide a sustainable and "green" future that the school community wishes to adopt. The panels enable the school to start on its decarbonisation journey, including teaching and learning about living more sustainably. It is therefore considered that the panels would have a positive impact on the school's image and its goals.

Impact on Neighbouring Land uses:

The size of the installation on the pitched area that faces on to the street and which can be seen is around 9 kWp. This is a relatively small installation for a non-residential property and the impact of glint and glare from the proposed solar arrays on the occupiers of residential properties surrounding the school would be negligible, as it is similar to many residential homes (see Supporting Images 06) which are around 4.5kWp and do not require planning permission. If any glint were to occur, it

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would be at such a small scale to be no different from what is experienced from the Sun daily and therefore does not change adversely affect local residents or visitors.

Summary:

In summary, the proposed scheme of installation with a total of around 155 solar panels on the roof of The Lightwoods Early Years School meets most of the criteria for permitted development under Part 14 Class J (c) of the Town and County (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, except there is no 1m margin on the pitched main school roofs (just like residential solar power permitted development so the potential to generate solar electricity can be realised) or on the flat roof towards the back of the school site. So given the design of the panels planning permission for the installation is being sought. Any glint or glare from the panels will be negligible given the size of the arrays and the anti-glare protection of the panels so the proposed installation will not adversely affect residents or other land users.

In terms of the design and appearance of the solar panels to be installed on sloped roof areas of the buildings and one flat area. The panels are of standard design; they will have no adverse impact on either the character of the surrounding area or residents; nor on the amenities of the occupiers of adjacent properties to the site (neighbouring land uses).

In addition, the installation would be in keeping with the character and goals of the school, helping build its ambitions as a centre of learning, beacon of sustainability and student wellbeing and helping decarbonise its activities by reducing its carbon impact.

We would be grateful for your written confirmation that the proposed installation could be granted planning permission so the panels can start to generate low-carbon electricity for the school, which in addition to cutting carbon, is supported by an energy literacy programme for students.

Yours sincerely

Ann Flaherty
Project Manager
Solar Options for Schools Limited

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