

CHRIST CHURCH, MALVERN ROAD, CHELTENHAM

Improvements and Additions to the Existing Solar PV Array Located on the Attached Church Halls

Design and Access Statement

January 2024

This statement has been prepared as part of the supporting documentation for submission with the application for Full Planning Consent for works to the exterior of the church comprising the rebuilding of the Chancel south access steps to improved details, raising and regrading of the existing south access pathway to form a level access into the South Porch south entrance, a stone paved area to the southwest of the Nave and the provision of handrail and guarding to potential areas of fall risk.

The proposed works are subject to Ecclesiastical Exemption under provisions of “The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Order 2010”.

1.0 Existing Building and Site

- 1.1 A full statement of Heritage Significance by Holland Heritage supports this application and is included as part of this application for Full Planning Permission. The statement can be summarised as follows with respect to the existing building and site:
- 1.2 Christ Church is situated at National Grid Reference SO 93982 22277, at the junction of Christ Church Road and Malvern Road and with a side elevation to Overton Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.
- 1.3 Christ Church together with the adjacent (and attached) Church Halls is listed Grade II* (Historic England reference 1103838), designated on 12th March 1955.
- 1.4 Christ Church is within the Cheltenham Central Area Conservation Area, close to its western boundary and in the Lansdown Character Area (Area 4). The area was designated in May 1973 and enlarged in August 1987.

2.0 The Proposed Works

- 2.1 The proposed works are to install 44 no. additional solar photovoltaic (PV) panels to the existing roof areas of the church halls. Also, the existing array of 16 no. solar PV panels (installed in 2011/12 under CBC ref. 11/01839/FUL) to the southeast slope of the Harwood Hall will be replaced with 16 no. higher performance solar PV panels.
- 2.2 The solar PV panels will be installed to the following roof areas:
- Flat roof area above offices – 20 no. panels facing south
 - Lansdown Hall roof area – 10 no. panels facing southeast
 - Harwood Hall roof area – 8 no. panels on reverse slope facing southeast
 - Harwood Hall roof area – 6 no. panels facing southwest
 - Harwood Hall roof area – replacement of 16 no. panels to southeast elevation.
- 2.3 The installation of the additional 44 no. panels will be to flat roof areas and roof slopes with limited visibility from the adjacent public roads and properties to minimise the visual impact on the setting of the church building.
- 2.4 The panels will have an average output of 400W – 420W each, in optimal circumstances and have an approximate dimensions of 2100 mm long x 1000 mm wide, with a finished thickness of 35mm.
- 2.5 Where the panels are mounted on slate covered roof slopes they will be fixed with Sun Fixings Ltd roof hooks, clamps and frames to suit the specific location.

3.0 Heritage Significance

- 3.1 A full “Statement of Heritage Significance” by Holland Heritage supports this application and is included as part of this application for Full Planning Permission. The statement can be summarised as follows with respect to the existing buildings and site:
- 3.2 Christ Church was built 1837-40 to the designs of the local architects Robert Willam Jearrad (1783-1861) and his brother Charles. The builder was Thomas Newton and the foundation stone was laid on 10th October 1837. The church was intended to be a focal point in the planned Lansdown development and the church had been positioned to dominate the junction between Malvern Road and Christ Church Road. Indeed, it is aligned specifically to face down the slope of Christ Church Road rather than being on a true East/West alignment as was more typical for churches.
- 3.3 Christ Church was the last of five churches to be built in the period 1822 to 1837 to serve the rapidly growing town which had started the 19th century with a population of 3000 but had risen to 36,000 by 1840. Christ Church was consecrated on 22nd January 1840 and provided seats for 2075, 485 of which were free. It had cost the vast sum of £18,111.
- 3.4 In 1967 a single-storey flat-roofed block was built along the south side of the nave to provide a Parish Office and Choir Vestry.
- 3.5 A multi-purpose church hall known as the Harwood Hall was built in 2000 and won a Civic Trust Award in 2002. Other formerly detached church rooms to the south were joined to the church in 2006 by the creation of a covered area between the two.
- 3.6 An existing solar PV array of 16no. panels was installed in 2012 on the Harwood Hall southeast roof slope; planning permission ref. 11/01839/FUL.

4.0 Heritage Impact

- 4.1 The existing installation of Solar PV panels has a neutral to low impact on the historic southeast elevation of the church buildings and can only be seen from a single location to the southeast of the church.
- 4.2 The proposed installation of 44no. additional solar PV panels on the various low and hidden roof slopes will continue to have a neutral or low impact from surrounding locations.
- 4.3 The additional panels to the southeast roof slope will be visible from the adjacent property; the panels may also be visible from parts of Malvern Road (approaching from the south) during the winter-time when the leaves have fallen from the adjacent trees. However, their visual impact on the setting of the southeast elevation of the church will be negligible. The proposed replacement panels will be a similar design to the existing approved units.

- 4.4 The solar PV panels proposed to the northwest slope of the Harwood Hall will be partially visible from the private development to the northeast of the church building but will not impact on the northeast elevation of the church building.
- 4.5 The solar PV panels proposed to the southwest slope of the Harwood Hall will be partially visible from the adjacent southeast property; the panels may also be visible from parts of Malvern Road (approaching from the south) during the winter-time when the leaves have fallen from the adjacent trees. However, their visual impact on the setting of the southeast elevation of the church will again be negligible.
- 4.6 The proposed south facing solar PV panels to the flat roof area will not be visible from ground level from any location and will have no impact on the church.
- 4.7 The cable routes from the various proposed arrays will be via the least conspicuous locations and not necessarily the shortest routes. Also, cabling routes will be so located as to avoid historic fabric. If cables must be located on historic fabric, the cables will be neatly clipped or drilled through mortar joints only. No carved or dressed masonry will be drilled or chased.
- 4.8 Pre-application advice sought prior to the commencement of the project development confirmed that solar PV panels to the southeast roofs of the church building would not be granted.

5.0 Access Statement

- 5.1 Restricted access for authorised personnel will be via the existing access position to the north of the main halls. This comprises ladder access from external ground level the flat roof level.
- 5.2 The solar PV array on the flat roof areas will be so positioned as to allow access to the west, east and south areas of the installation, as well as maintaining existing access routes from the flat roof to the adjacent pitched roof areas.
- 5.3 The roof areas will not be accessible to members of the public.

6.0 Summary

- 6.1 The church and attached adjacent halls are Grade II* listed and are within a Conservation Area. The church is Ecclesiastical Exempt from Listed Building Consent and will require Church of England (Gloucester Diocese) Granting of Faculty before any works can commence (and subject to granting of Planning Permission).
- 6.2 The existing low height halls and associated roof slopes to the southeast of the church building have several suitable roofs areas which can accommodate solar PV panels, and an existing array of 16no. units is present on the Harwood Hall southeast roof slope. Planning permission for this array was granted in 2012.

- 6.3 The replacement of the existing 16no. solar PV panels with improved capacity units is a “like-for-like” installation.
- 6.4 The installation of additional arrays on the adjacent roof slopes will have a neutral or low impact on existing church building and the installations will only be visible from a very limited number of locations, mainly during the winter months.
- 6.5 The installation on the flat roof area will not be visible from outside the site.
- 6.6 Cable routes will be carefully considered and will not necessarily be the shortest route. Historic fabric will not be damaged and any fixings or holes for cables through walls will be through mortar joints only.

7.0 Planning and Other Guidance

- 7.1 The following planning guidance and policies have been considered for this proposal and the potential impact on the historic church building
 - 7.1.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2021), with specific reference to Section 16 “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment”
 - 7.1.2 The Historic Environment in Local Plans, Historic England (July 2015)
 - 7.1.3 Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic England (March 2015)
 - 7.1.4 The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic England (December 2017)
- 7.2 Church of England “Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030”

“The Routemap is the action plan required by Synod and is one part of a wide-ranging Environment Programme. Its purpose is to set out what is needed if we [The Church of England] are to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.”

- 7.3 Cheltenham Borough Council “The Carbon Neutral Cheltenham” report

The Carbon Neutral Cheltenham report sets out a roadmap for eliminating Cheltenham borough’s carbon footprint and proposes a programme of activities and initiatives encompassing leadership, engagement, energy, transport and buildings to enable Cheltenham to achieve this goal.

8.0 Supporting Documents

- 8.1 This Heritage Impact and Design and Access Statement is to be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents:

- 8.1.1 Holland Heritage “Statement of Heritage Significance”, dated November 2023
- 8.1.2 Arnold Bartosch Ltd’s drawings nos.:
 - 3206/01 “Parish Halls: Existing Roof Plan Including PV Array Installation
 - 3206/02A “Parish Halls: Proposed Roof Plan Including PV Array Installation
 - 3206/03 “Church and Parish Halls: Roof Plan As Existing
 - 3206/04 “Church and Parish Halls: Southeast Elevation As Existing
 - 3206/05 “Church and Parish Halls: Roof Plan As Proposed
 - 3206/06 “Church and Parish Halls: Southeast Elevation As Proposed
- 8.1.3 Carbon Control supplied documentation:
 - Christ Church, Cheltenham – Revised lower roof areas solar PV scheme
 - Canadian Solar Inc (May 2020) – Solar PV Panel information
 - Sunfixings - Roof fixing and frame details for pitched roofs
 - Sunfixings – Flat roof fixing frames (ballasted)
 - Genius Roof Solutions – “Solar Flash” installation information
- 8.1.4 Listed Building Schedule

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 01
General view of southwest elevation from
Christchurch Road (December 2023)



Photo 02
General view of southeast elevation from Malvern
Road (December 2023)



Photo 03
General view of northeast elevation from Overton
Road (December 2023)



Photo 04
Specific view of northeast slope of Harwood Hall
from Abbeyholme, Overton Road (December 2023)



Photo 05
General view of Hall elevation from Malvern Road
(September 2023)



Photo 06
General view of southeast elevation from
Malvern Road (September 2023)

CHRIST CHURCH, MALVERN ROAD, CHELTENHAM – SOLAR PV INSTALLATION