

**Sports Building, Merchant Taylors' Prep School,  
Moor Farm Bungalow, Sandy Lodge Road, Rickmansworth,  
WD3 1LW**

**Planning, Design, Access and Sustainability Statement**

**April 2024**

**SOLVE**  
planning



# Contents

---

Section 1 Introduction.....	1
Section 2 Site and Surrounding Area.....	2
Section 3 Proposals .....	6
Section 4 Planning Policy Context .....	8
Section 5 Planning Considerations.....	11
Section 6 Conclusion .....	16



# Section 1

## Introduction

---

- 1.1. This document has been prepared in support of a planning application on behalf of Merchant Taylors' Prep School for the installation of photovoltaic panels on the roof of the existing sports building. The application seeks permission for:

*Installation of 88 photovoltaic panels on the roof of the existing sports building at Merchant Taylors' Prep School.*

- 1.2. This report presents the proposals in the context of the key relevant planning and policy considerations and is set out under the following headings:

- ▣ Site and Surrounding Area
- ▣ Proposals
- ▣ Planning Policy Context
- ▣ Planning Considerations
- ▣ Conclusions

- 1.3. This report should be read in conjunction with the other supporting technical reports which include:

- ▣ Heritage Statement – Prepared by Asset Heritage Consulting
- ▣ Proposed Elevations
- ▣ Solar Panel Roof Load Check – Prepared by OCE
- ▣ Sports Building Designer Report - Prepared by Power Core
- ▣ Solar Panel Technical Data Sheets
- ▣ Schletter Modular Clamp specification
- ▣ Schletter panel clamp details
- ▣ Schletter Slate mount details
- ▣ Pigeon Protection details

- 1.4. This Planning Statement considers the scheme in its wider planning context and the appropriate planning balance for the consideration of these proposals.



## Section 2

# Site and Surrounding Area

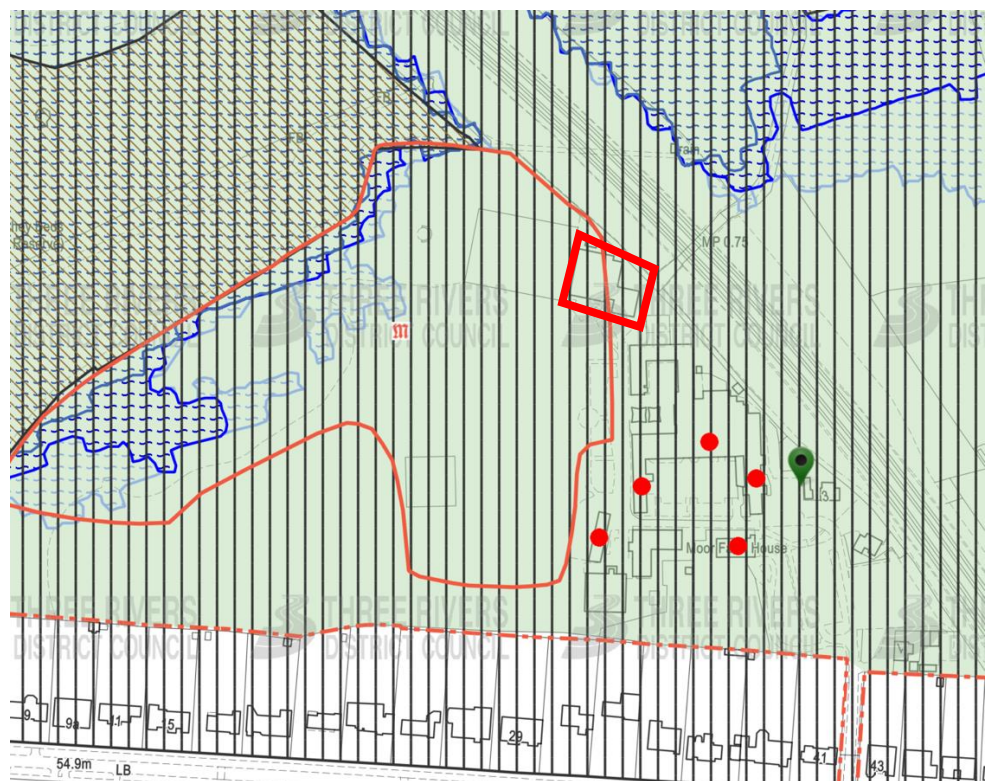
- 2.1. Merchant Taylors' Prep School is a boy's independent school located adjacent to the Merchant Taylors' School, close to Rickmansworth and Watford. The Prep School lies to the west of the main school site beyond the railway line. It is bounded to the east / northeast by the railway line, west / northwest by The Whitney Beds LNR and the south by residential properties within the Moor Park Estate fronting on to Sandy Lodge Road.
- 2.2. The school comprises a number of separate buildings of varying ages including a number of listed buildings located in the main centre of the site and which were originally part of the farmstead buildings associated with the former More Farm. The significance of these buildings is discussed further within the heritage Statement accompanying this application.
- 2.3. The sports building which is the subject of this application comprises a simple timber weather board and brick building with pitched roofs located to the north of the site, adjacent to the railway line. There is also an astro turf sports pitch located to the west of the sports building.

**Figure 1:** Site Location in the context of the wider school grounds



- 2.4. The Sports Building was built in 1995 and does not hold any historic significance, confirmed within the Heritage Statement prepared by Asset Heritage.
- 2.5. The listed buildings of relevance for consideration in relation to these proposals are as follows:
- ▣ Former Farmstead Buildings
  - ▣ The Manor of the More Scheduled Monument
- 2.6. The Moor Park Conservation Area lies to the south of the school site.
- 2.7. The image below (Figure 2) is an extract from the Proposals Map, this shows the designations of the application site in the context of wider designations for the school itself.

**Figure 2: Proposals Map Extract**



- 2.8. The site lies in the Metropolitan Green Belt, an area of archaeological potential and adjacent to a scheduled monument (The Manor of the More).

### Planning History

- 2.9. The school has been actively seeking to improve buildings and provision on the site in recent years with a number of planning applications for improvements to the classrooms and facilities have been granted across the site, table 1 sets out the key planning decisions granted on the site.

<b>Planning Ref</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date and Decision</b>
95/0015	Use of staff accommodation for educational purposes and single storey extension to rear	Approved 4 May 1995
95/0578	Erection of new sports hall	Approved 16 Nov 1995
98/0241	Installation of non-illuminated signs	Approved 30 July 1998
98/0238	Single storey extension to kitchen	Approved 30 July 1998
99/0062	Erection of science and technology block	Approved 5 May 1999
01/01059/FUL	Redevelopment of barn into performing arts facility	Refused 28 Jan 2002
01/00320/FUL	Alterations to science and technology block to enable use of roof space	Approved 14 June 2001
01/00647/CLED	Certificate of lawfulness proposed use: Erection of two buildings	Approved 9 July 2001
02/00483/LBC	Listed Building Consent: Alterations to sports pavilion to accommodate music rooms, including removal of ramp and re-positioning of doors	Withdrawn
02/00457/LBC	Listed Building Consent for internal and external alterations to facilitate conversion of pavillion into music rooms	Approved 20 August 2002
02/00454/FUL	Redevelopment of barn for performing arts facility, extension to existing sports hall to provide changing rooms and alterations to Pavillion to facilitate conversion into music rooms	Refused 30 August 2002
03/1823/FUL	Retrospective application: Car parking lighting and erection of gazebo	Refused 19 Feb 2004
05/1681/ADV	Retrospective Advert Consent: Signage	Approved 27 Jan 2006
05/0428/FUL	Installation of replacement car park lighting fittings to Bollard type	Approved 24 May 2005
05/0785/FUL	Erection of new music block and extension to sports building	Appeal allowed
06/1344/FUL	Change of use: Pavillion building from changing rooms to music use, external alterations to pavillion building and erection of detached air conditioning unit enclosure for music block	Approved 23 October 2006
08/0201/FUL	Revision of planning permission 06/1344/FUL - Change of use of pavilion building from changing rooms to music use and external alterations to pavilion building. Alterations to approved scheme include reduction of length of proposed ramp and alterations to fenestration detail on east elevation, omission of air intake grilles from brick	Approved 3 April 2008

	plinth and provision of air conditioning unit concealed by a close boarded fence and planting to west of building	
8/128/79	Change of use of land from agricultural to educational use access and site for extension	Refused 19 June 1979
8/581/85	Change of use of land from agricultural to educational use: alteration to existing access; and change of use of two dwellings from occupation by agricultural workers to occupation by staff entrance	Approved 19 September 1985
08/0202/LBC	Listed Building Consent: Revision of planning permission 02/00457/LBC - Change of use of pavilion building from changing rooms to music use and external alterations to pavilion building. Alterations to approved scheme include reduction of length of proposed ramp and alterations to fenestration detail on east elevation, omission of air intake grilles from brick plinth and provision of air conditioning unit concealed by a close boarded fence and planting to west of building	Approved 3 April 2008
12/0245/FUL	Erection of dining hall link building between Junior and Senior schools and alterations to existing Listed dining hall building	Approved 24 April 2012
14/2094/RSP	Part Retrospective: Refurbished wooden shed for grounds, plant/machinery/tools	Approved 27 Jan 2015

- 2.10. The sports building that is the subject of this application was originally approved in 1995, an extension to the building was approved at appeal in 2005.





## Section 3 Proposals

---

3.1. The proposal is for the following:

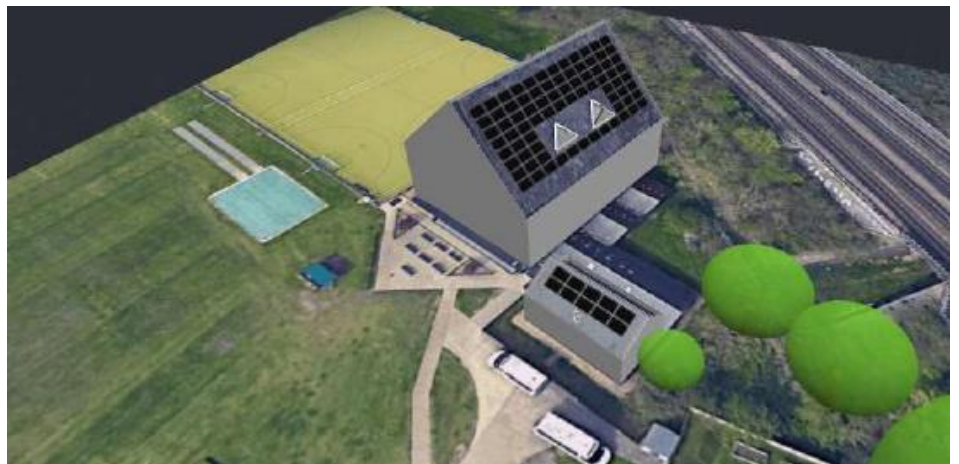
*Installation of 88 photovoltaic panels on the roof of the existing sports building at Merchant Taylors' Prep School.*

3.2. Specifically, the proposals comprise the following:

- ❑ Installation of 88 photovoltaic panels that will sit flush to the sports building's roof.
- ❑ Panels will be all black monocrystalline silicon panels which have the greatest efficiency in electricity generation for the lowest visual impact including ensuring reduced potential for glare.

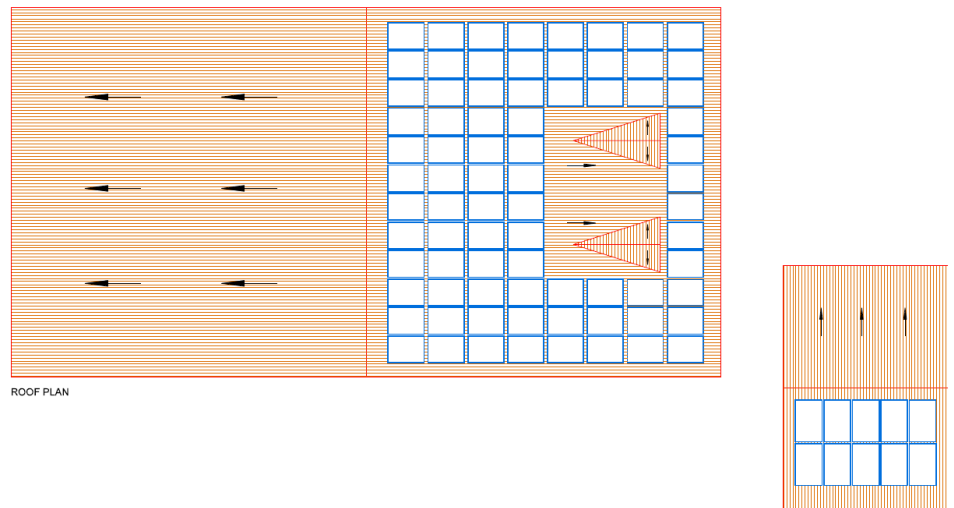
3.3. Whilst the panels will be visible on the roof of the sports building, they have been chosen to ensure they are the least visible whilst providing high levels of efficiency. Figures 3 and 4 below show the location of the panels and how they will appear on the roof.

**Figure 3:** Proposed Image





**Figure 4: Proposed Roof Plan**





## Section 4

# Planning Policy Context

---

- 4.1. This section considers the relevant planning policy context of the application.

### National Planning Policy

---

- 4.2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2023.
- 4.3. Paragraph 2 of the NPPF confirms that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 4.4. Section 2 (Achieving Sustainable Development) establishes that while planning decisions should be taken in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, they should also be made in the context of a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is at the heart of the Framework (paragraph 10). Sustainable development is identified as having a social, economic and environmental aspect (paragraph 8).
- 4.5. Paragraph 11 states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking this means:
- ❑ Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay...
  - ❑ Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
  - ❑ The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas of assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or;
  - ❑ Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

- 4.6. Section 13 (Protecting Green Belt) sets out that *“The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”*.
- 4.7. Section 14 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change) outlines that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. Paragraph 163 outlines that in determining applications for renewable and low carbon development, LPA’s should recognise that even small scale projects provide valuable contribution to significant cutting greenhouse gas emissions and should approve applications should impacts be acceptable.
- 4.8. Section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) sets out the importance that is placed on the protection of heritage assets. Paragraph 200 outlines that *“in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”*.

#### Local Planning Policy

---

- 4.9. The development plan for the application comprises:
- ▣ Three Rivers Core Strategy 2011 - 2026
  - ▣ Site Allocations Local Development Document
  - ▣ Development Management Policies
  - ▣ Croxley Green Neighbourhood Plan
  - ▣ Chorleywood Neighbourhood Plan
  - ▣ The Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 and Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2011-2026
  - ▣ Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011-2026.
- 4.10. Of the documents that make up the Development Plan, the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies are relevant to this application. The following are the relevant policies in these documents.
- ▣ Core Strategy
    - PSP3: Development in Secondary Centres
    - CP1: Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development
    - CP11: Green Belt
    - CP12: Design of Development

#### Development Management Policies

- DM2: Green Belt
- DM3: The Historic Built Environment
- DM4: Carbon Dioxide Emissions and On-site Renewable Energy
- DM5: Renewable Energy Developments
- DM7 Landscape Character



## Section 5

# Planning Considerations

---

5.1. This section assesses the planning considerations for the redevelopment of this site under the following headings:

- ▣ Principle of development in the Green Belt
- ▣ Policy DM5
- ▣ Sustainability Statement

### **Principle of Development in Green Belt Location**

---

- 5.2. Green Belt policy set out within the NPPF and local planning policy documents make it very clear what is classed as inappropriate development in Green Belt terms. The proposed development does not propose the erection of or extension to any buildings that lie within the Green Belt. The development solely proposes the installation of a number of solar panels on the roof of the existing sports building at the school. There will be no additional structures erected on the site and the panels are designed to sit flush on the roof so as not to result in additional bulk being added to the building. As such, the proposed development would not result in urban sprawl and would not result in any impact upon the Green Belts openness or its permanence. As such, the proposals are not considered inappropriate in the Green Belt location.
- 5.3. Section 14 of the NPPF provides clear support for the provision of renewable infrastructure, outlining that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. Policy CP1 of the Three Rivers Core Strategy outlines that all development in Three Rivers will contribute to sustainability including by taking account of renewable energy systems.
- 5.4. As such, it is considered the principal of the proposed development in this location is acceptable.

### **Policy DM5 – Renewable Energy Developments**

---

- 5.5. Policy DM5 of the Three Rivers Development Management Policies Plan sets out the following in relation to micro-renewables:

*“In considering proposals for micro-renewables (such as, but not limited to, micro-wind turbines and solar panels), assessment will be take into account the following potential impacts on:*

- i) Residential/workplace amenity*
- ii) The character and visual amenity of the local area.*
- iii) The natural, built and historic environment*
- iv) The openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt*
- v) Other site constraints.”*

5.6. The requirements of Policy DM5 are taken in turn below.

*Residential/workplace amenity*

5.7. The proposed development is for the installation of a solar array on the roof of the existing sports building at the site. The installation will be relatively quick and as such, there are not anticipated to be any significant impacts during construction.

5.8. The development proposal will not generate noise pollution. It has no moving parts and does not therefore generate any safety concerns in operation. It will not generate any electromagnetic interference and will not cause glare issues.

5.9. Once installed, the solar array will not result in any impacts upon the amenity of site users.

*The character and visual amenity of the local area.*

5.10. Whilst the solar array will alter the design of the existing sports building, this would be very minimal. The panels will sit flush on the roof and as such, will not be particularly visually obtrusive. They are proposed to be all black monocrystalline silicon panels which have the greatest efficiency in electricity generation for the lowest visual impact including ensuring reduced potential for glare. Significant and far-reaching views are not afforded into the site and as such, views of the panels will be very limited. They will be viewed in the context of the existing sports building and as such, the character and visual amenity of the local area will not be significantly impacted.

*The natural, built and historic environment*

5.11. Paragraph 3.9 of the Heritage Statement emphasises the fact that the group of listed buildings at the southern end of the school site are well separated from



the sports hall by distance and intervening modern school buildings. While listed buildings have clear group value and remain legible as a former farmstead yard, the area of modern school buildings to the north, which falls outside the historic farmstead yard, does not make any meaningful contribution to its setting.

- 5.12. It continues at paragraph 3.12 to discuss the proximity of the Moor Park Conservation Area and states that this is also well separated from the application site with its only interface being a filtered, distance view most likely blocked when trees are in leaf. The statement continues to conclude that as these do not comprise any of the important views within or out of the conservation area, there would be no impact on the characteristics of the conservation area as a result of the minor changes proposed to install the photovoltaic panels. In addition, the proposals as a whole are not considered to result in any harm to the heritage assets.

#### *The openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt*

- 5.13. As discussed above, the proposed development will not result in the erection of or the extension to any buildings in the Green Belt. The proposed solar array will sit upon the roof of the existing sports building and therefore will not result in the encroachment of built form onto Green Belt land. The panels will sit flush on the roof of the building and would be viewed within the context of the existing building. As outlined above, they are proposed to be all black monocrystalline silicon panels which have the greatest efficiency in electricity generation for the lowest visual impact including ensuring reduced potential for glare.
- 5.14. As such, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in impacts to the openness or visual amenity of the green belt.

#### *Other site constraints*

- 5.15. Given the limited scale of the proposal, there are limited other constraints on the site that would result in impacts from the proposed development.

### **Sustainability Statement**

---

- 5.16. The proposed development is limited in scale, however, there is a considerable need for the proposed development at the school and it is considered that the proposals would result in significant benefits to both the school and in meeting local and national policy objectives.
- 5.17. Section 14 of the NPPF is clearly supportive of proposals for renewable energy provision. Paragraph 157 outlines that *“the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of*

*flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure”.*

5.18. Paragraph 163 and 164 outline the following:

*“163. When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:*

*a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to significant cutting greenhouse gas emissions;*

*b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas; and*

*c) in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site, and approve the proposal if its impacts are or can be made acceptable.*

*164. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights). Where the proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings or other relevant designated heritage assets, local planning authorities should also apply the policies set out in chapter 16 of this Framework.”*

5.19. Merchant Taylors School and Preparatory School are committed to reduce their carbon footprint and are actively seeking ways to do this. The proposed development will assist the school in offsetting some of the schools energy usage whilst providing a signal to the students, staff and parents alike of the schools commitment to reducing its carbon footprint. The development will also assist in meeting the nationally outlined renewable energy objectives.

5.20. A detailed technical data sheet forms part of this application providing details on annual electricity produced by the development. The proposal therefore supports both Energy Security and Climate change considerations.

5.21. As part of a wider plan, it is proposed to fix arrays of 342 PV panels to 3 buildings across the two school sites as follows:

- 175 panels to the South West Elevation of the Sports Hall on Merchant Taylors Site. The total potential output (peak) is 34.37 kWp. The annual PV Output is 32541 KWh/yr
- 79 panels to the South West Elevation of the Grounds Sheds on Merchant Taylors Site. The total potential output (peak) is 76.13 kWp. The annual PV Output is 68136 KWh/yr
- 88 panels to the grounds Sports Hall building Merchant Taylors Prep (this application). The total potential output (peak) is 38.28 kWp. The annual PV Output is 31708 KWh/yr

5.22. Whilst viability and payback calculations suggest beneficial payback, the Schools business case for the installation is primarily based on non-financial goals such as achieving Net-Zero targets.

5.23. Due to the scale and nature of the proposed project, the significant benefits of the proposals would be realised relatively quickly, creating carbon savings and suitability benefits almost instantly. Beyond the wishes for carbon neutrality across the schools two sites, renewable generation has critical relevance in decreasing costs associated with importing electricity and supporting capacity and resilience in the transition to a smart grid.



## Section 6

# Conclusion

---

- 6.1. This Statement is submitted in support of the following development:

*Installation of 88 photovoltaic panels on the roof of the existing sports building at Merchant Taylors' Prep School.*

- 6.2. The proposals are small in scale and as such, the potential for significant impacts on the surrounding area are limited. The placement of the panels on the roof of the existing sports building ensures that the proposals do not encroach upon Green Belt land. The panels will be all black monocrystalline silicon panels, that sit flush upon the roof. These will provide greatest efficiency in electricity generation, whilst reducing potential for visual impact. There is also very limited potential for glare. As such, it is considered that the proposals will not have any impact on Green Belt openness and are appropriate in this location.
- 6.3. A detailed Heritage Statement has been prepared by Asset Heritage to support the planning application. This statement considers the significance of the heritage within the wider setting of the application site and concludes that the proposals will result in no harm to any heritage assets and would be compliant with both local and national policy on the conservation and enhancement of the built environment including guidance set out in the NPPF.
- 6.4. Merchant Taylors School and Preparatory School are committed to reducing their carbon footprint. The proposed development will provide significant savings in offsetting the schools carbon emissions. Local and National Planning Policy support the development of schemes that support carbon neutrality and tackling climate change. The NPPF specifically highlights the importance of small scale projects such as the proposed in cutting carbon emissions.
- 6.5. This statement has shown that the proposed development will not result in significant negative impacts on or adjacent to the site and will result in significant benefits in relation to assisting in meeting carbon neutrality targets and improving the carbon footprint of the school.
- 6.6. The proposed development is in accordance with national and local policy and it is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is granted in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Solve Planning  
Sentinel House  
Ancells Business Park  
Harvest Crescent  
Fleet  
Hampshire  
01252 419978  
info@solveplanning.co.uk

	Initials	Date
Prepared By	HR	22/03/2024
Checked By	RGr	09/04/2024