


Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Signed:	Officer:	MC	Date:	14/04/2026	Manager:	LH	Date:	16/4/26
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Application Ref:	3/2025/0747			 <p>Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</p>
Date Inspected:	Previously visited for pre-application enquiry 03/04/2025	Site Notice:	06/11/2025	
Officer:	MC			
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:				APPROVAL

Development Description:	Listed Building Consent for installation of solar photovoltaic panels on existing roofs across the college. Panels to be located on the South Fronts roofs, and West Fronts roof.
Site Address/Location:	Stonyhurst College, Avenue Road, Hurst Green, BB7 9PZ

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
No objection	

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
Growth Lancashire:	<p>The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the Grade II* South Fronts, the setting of surrounding listed buildings and the Grade II* Registered Park and Garden by way of introducing an alien feature. The LPA should assess the public benefits of the scheme.</p> <p>Growth Lancashire's comments remain the same following a re-consultation on the amended documents which includes reference to the Grade I element.</p>
Historic England:	<p>Historic England originally raised concerns on heritage grounds and recommended the submission of structural information prior to determination to confirm that the very significant historic roof structures on the South Front and on the south range of the West Front can take the additional loads of the panels plus the associated ballast. In addition, details and the location of electrical distribution equipment, cabling and inverters should be submitted to give assurance that there would be no impact on the historic fabric of the listed buildings.</p> <p>Following the submission of additional information, Historic England raise no objections to the proposal on heritage grounds. The description has been subsequently amended to include reference to the Grade I listed element. However Historic England does not wish to comment specifically on this.</p>
The Victorian Society:	<p>The Victorian Society require the Council see that the maintenance of the panels is ensured prior to permission being granted.</p> <p>No further comments have been received following the submission of additional information and the description change.</p>

Gardens Trust:	The Gardens Trust does not wish to provide comments.
CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
No additional representations received.	

RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:

Ribble Valley Core Strategy:

Relevant Core Strategy Policies:

- Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets
- Policy DMG1: General considerations
- Policy DME4: Protecting Heritage Assets
- Policy DME5: Renewable Energy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, Section 66 & 72

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Relevant Planning History:

3/2025/0749

Planning Permission for installation of solar photovoltaic panels on existing roofs across the college. Panels to be located on the South Fronts roofs, the Refectory, the Swimming Pool and St Mary's Sports Hall.
Pending Consideration

3/2024/0849

Listed Building Consent for refurbishment of the WC and shower rooms in the eastern part of the Shireburn Quad and the adjoining service building, to include the removal of existing and insertion of new partition walls.
Approved with Conditions

3/2021/1018

Listed Building Consent for the interior refurbishment of the ground floor of the north and east ranges of the Shireburn Quad into an improved school health centre. Accommodation will consist of a GP room, a treatment room, waiting area, three isolation rooms, two ward rooms, three staff beds, a staff lounge, staff bathroom and staff kitchen, three stores, sluice, an office room and WC.
Approved with Conditions

3/2017/1148

Certificate of Lawfulness to repair and replace certain windows in Shireburn Quad
Approved No Conditions

3/2014/0736

Restoring the opening between Arundell Library and the former Rhetoric Common Room
Approved with Conditions

3/2013/0300

Application to discharge condition no. 4 (specification of phased works) of planning permission 3/2011/1047P. Phase 5.
Approved No Conditions

3/2013/0299

Application to discharge condition no. 4 (specification of phased works) of planning permission 3/2011/1047P. Phase 4.

Approved No Conditions

3/2013/0298

Application to discharge condition no. 4 (specification of phased works) of planning permission 3/2011/1047P. Phase 3.

Approved No Conditions

3/2011/1047

Proposed essential fire prevention works throughout the college.

Approved No Conditions

3/2005/0242

Conversion and refurbishment of the ground, first and second floors including "Bridge of Sighs" to provide living accommodation for both staff and boarders, including new sanitary accommodation and associated ancillary areas.

Approved with Conditions

3/2000/0031

Conversion and refurb of ground, 1st and 2nd floors including 'bridge of sighs' to provide living accommodation for staff and boarders including new sanitary accomm & assoc. ancillary areas

Approved with Conditions

3/1997/0484

Conversion of the bursary to accommodate the infirmary (listed building consent)

Approved with Conditions

3/1991/0441

Forming a new window opening and providing a new window to match existing windows in building no 29 (listed building application)

Approved with Conditions

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:**Site Description and Surrounding Area:**

Stonyhurst College was founded on the Stonyhurst Estate in the late C18 and consists of a series of buildings built around a courtyard plan house originating from the late C16. The site comprises a Roman Catholic boarding school consisting of dormitories, libraries, chapels, collection display rooms, classrooms, communal and circulation areas, archives, offices and later additions of sports facilities. The buildings are largely built of sandstone ashlar with extensive stone details in Elizabethan, Jacobean, Baroque and Elizabethan revival style. Many of the buildings are listed, including Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II.

To the North-West of the site are several C20/C21 additions and additional buildings and this area also facilitates the service areas for the site. The site is set within a 1000 acre semi-rural site with ornamental lakes and gardens alongside sports pitches and parking areas. To the North-East of the site is a separate, substantial C19 building of a plainer style, St Marys Hall the preparatory school, with C20 buildings to the rear.

The site is located within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, located to the north of the village of Hurst Green. The site is also located within the Stonyhurst College Grade II* Registered Park and Garden.

There are a number of Public Rights of Way which run through the site and around the perimeter of the wider college site.

There are a number of listed buildings which form part of the college and that are located within the setting of the listed buildings that form part of this application. These are set out below:

Stonyhurst College itself is made up of the following designated buildings:

Grade I: Stonyhurst College, Old Quadrangle

Grade I: Stonyhurst College, Church of St Peter (RC)

Grade II: Stonyhurst College, South Front, Boys' Chapel and Shirk*

Grade II: Stonyhurst College, Old Infirmary and attached passage

Grade II: Stonyhurst College, Shireburn Quadrangle, Ambulacrum and former Laboratories

The following are designated structures within the above Park and Garden and will be assessed on the impact to their setting:

Grade I: THE GARDEN PAVILIONS AND CONNECTING WALL

Grade II: GATE PIERS 50 METRES SOUTH OF OBSERVATORY

Grade II: THE OBSERVATORY 100 METRES SOUTH-EAST OF POND

Grade II: GARDEN STEPS WALLS AND PIERS 12 METRES SOUTH-WEST OF OBSERVATORY POND

Grade II: RETAINING WALL AND STATUES AND OBSERVATORY POND

Grade II: GARDEN STEPS WALLS AND PIERS 12 METRES NORTH-EAST OF OBSERVATORY POND

Grade II: FORMER FONT 450 METRES NORTH-EAST OF OBSERVATORY POND

Grade II: STATUE OF ST JEROME 250 METRES NORTH-WEST OF OBSERVATORY POND

Grade II: STATUE OF ST MARY MAGDALENE 250 METRES NORTH OF OBSERVATORY POND

Grade II: GATE PIERS OPPOSITE SOUTH FRONT 40 METRES NORTH OF OBSERVATORY POND

Grade II: WALL AND GATEWAY DOOR BEGINNING 20 METRES SOUTH-EAST OF CHURCH OF ST PETER AND RUNNING 130 METRES SOUTH-EAST OF CHURCH OF ST PETER

Grade II: WALL ON NORTH-EAST SIDE OF PLAYING FIELD RETURNING 70 METRES ON SOUTH-EAST SIDE AND INCLUDING A PAIR OF GATE PIERS

Grade II: 2 GATE PIERS AND WALL FROM SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF INFIRMARY RUNNING SOUTH-EAST RETURNING NORTH-EAST IN FRONT OF CHURCH OF ST PETER AND CONTAINING 2 GATEPIERS

The following Grade II listed buildings are not within the listed park and garden, and will be assessed in relation to impact on their setting due to their proximity:

To the SW: THE MILL

To the NE: ST MARYS HALL

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

The proposed development is for the introduction of solar PV panels on a number of existing roofs at Stonyhurst College. This includes PV array attached to the roof of the three unlisted buildings (the new refectory (PV8), swimming pool (PV9 and PV10), St Mary's school sports hall (PV11 and PV12) and to the South Fronts (Grade II* listed) and a small part of the West Fronts (Grade I listed Old Quadrangle) (PVs 107).

The proposal would use a ballasted system and the panels would have a low profile (maximum 350mm in height). Both the rails and panels would have a matte black finish to minimise any visual impact/glare.

Prior to the determination of the application, additional information has been provided by the agent for the application in response to consultation responses. This includes, updated elevations and roof plans showing the location of the GRP enclosure and cabling, as well as loading appraisals for each building that is to have solar panels installed to ensure that the buildings can withstand the weight of the solar panels.

Impact upon Listed Building:

In assessing the proposal, regard must be given to the statutory duties imposed on the authority in respect of the preservation and enhancement of such assets. In this respect, at a local level, Key Statement EN5 and Policy DME4 are primarily, but not solely, engaged for the purposes of assessing likely impacts upon designated heritage assets resultant from the proposed development (that being the Grade I West Fronts roof and the Grade II* South Front).

Key Statement EN5 states that:

“There will be a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of the significance of heritage assets and their settings. The Historic Environment and its Heritage Assets and their settings will be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance for their heritage value; their important contribution to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place; and to wider social, cultural and environmental benefits.

This will be achieved through:

- *Recognising that the best way of ensuring the long term protection of heritage assets is to ensure a viable use that optimises opportunities for sustaining and enhancing its significance.*
- *Keeping Conservation Area Appraisals under review to ensure that any development proposals respect and safeguard the character, appearance and significance of the area.*
- *Considering any development proposals which may impact on a heritage asset or their setting through seeking benefits that conserve and enhance their significance and avoids any substantial harm to the heritage asset.*
- *Requiring all development proposals to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness/sense of place.*
- *The consideration of Article 4 Directions to restrict permitted development rights where the exercise of such rights would harm the historic environment.”*

With Policy DME4 stating, in respect of development within conservation areas or those affecting the listed buildings or their setting, that development will be assessed on the following basis:

“Alterations or extensions to listed buildings or buildings of local heritage interest, or development proposals on sites within their setting which cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset will not be supported. Any proposals involving the demolition or loss of important historic fabric from listed buildings will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist.”

Policy DME5 relates to renewable energy and states that:

“Development proposals within or close to the AONB, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, notable habitats and species, local nature reserves, biological heritage sites or designated heritage assets and their setting will not be allowed unless:

- 1. The proposals cannot be located outside such statutory designated areas*
- 2. It can be demonstrated that the objectives of the designation of the area or site will not be compromised by the development*
- 3. Any adverse environmental impacts as far as practicable have been mitigated”*

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Given the proposal relates to a Grade II Designated Heritage Asset, special regard must also be given to the statutory duties imposed on the authority, pursuant to national legislation, particularly in respect of the preservation and enhancement of such assets.

The principle statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended by s.58B (1) of Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) is to preserve or enhance the special character of heritage assets, including their setting. As such, in determining applications that affect designated heritage assets, the authority must consider the duties contained within the principle Act which states the following;

Listed buildings - Section 16 (2) (as amended by s.58B of Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023):

In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works to a listed building the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the building. Under s.58B (2) this includes preserving or enhancing any feature, quality or characteristic of the asset or setting that contributes to the significance of the asset.

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024):

The National planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out further duties in respect of determining proposals that affect heritage assets stating 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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation’.

The Framework sets out further duties in respect of considering potential impacts upon designated heritage assets with Paragraphs 212 – 221 reading as follows:

212: When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

213: Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

214: Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

215: Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated

heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

216: The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

217: Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

218: Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

219: Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

221: Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.

Assessment

The proposals seek to install solar photovoltaic (PV) panels across various roofs of the college, including the grade II* South Front and a small portion of the grade I Old Quadrangle on the West Front roof.

There would be 12 blocks of panels proposed to the roofs of the South Front, with the south-western most of these extending to within the listed area of the Grade I Old Quadrangle.

Historic England has provided comments on the scheme and they note that the proposed locations of the PV panels on the listed structures would be on areas of recently re-covered bitumen flat roof. Historic England requested that details and the location of electrical distribution equipment, cabling and inverters are provided to give assurance that there would not be an impact from these on the historic fabric. A structural engineering report was also requested to demonstrate that the very significant historic roof structures on the South Front and on the south range of the West Front can take the additional loads of the panels plus the associated ballast.

The Victorian Society have also raised some concerns in relation to the maintenance of the panels.

As such, updated elevations and roof plans showing the location of the GRP enclosure and cabling have been submitted, as well as loading appraisals for each building that is to have solar panels installed to ensure that the buildings can withstand the weight of the solar panels. The loading appraisals confirm the loadings of the solar panels are acceptable and the proposed solar panels can safely be installed onto the existing roof structure with no strengthening works being required.

Whilst the Victorian Society have not commented further on the additional information, Historic England raise no objection on heritage grounds to the scheme and are satisfied that the historic roofs can take the additional loading.

With regards to the visual impact on the listed buildings, Historic England note that the panels have been positioned in a way that avoids visual impact or harm to the special interest of the listed building. The

Heritage and Conservation Officer at Growth Lancashire also considers that upon viewing the FlatFix Fusion Project Plan and Technical Manual, and conformation from the project architect that the installation of the ballasted system will not penetrate the historic fabric, in terms of potential visual intrusion caused by the installed units, they are satisfied that the PV arrays that are to be set behind the parapets will likely be adequately screened (this includes PV1, PV4, PV5 and parts of PV7).

Previous concerns were raised at the pre-application stage by the Heritage and Conservation Officer in relation to the left and right extremities of the roof that do not have a parapet border and may be visible from across the raised ornamental gardens to the SE and the square section directly behind the Boy's Chapel which is potentially visible when approaching the college from the SW main driveway and across the ground north of the ponds. They note that the Landscape and Visual Assessment provides a comprehensive evaluation on the areas raised above and they are satisfied that the panels PV3 and PV6 would be set back and at a height that will not be visible anywhere from the grounds to the SE. Whilst the panels PV2 would be somewhat exposed and potentially visible when approaching along the main drive from the SW, the Heritage and Conservation Officer accepts that any visibility will be barely discernible due to the distance and then completely out of view at a distance where they may be discernible.

In terms of the potential reflection/glare, they note that the submitted Glint & Glare Assessment considered that there would be no chance of glint/glare impact from the installation on the South Front, PV1-7 to any of the OPs relative to those identified from my site visit, OP1-4). From OP5, which is a viewpoint on an elevated garden area to the west, some impact was considered due to the west facing orientation of the panels. However, within the further review, section 6.2, it is considered that impact will be low given the 'east facing' panels will coincide with sunrise only. The Heritage and Conservation Officer considers this latter assessment is in error, as OP5 is to the west, and therefore can only view the west facing panels which would be relative to sunset. Nonetheless, they accept that the impact would be low overall.

They conclude that whilst the visual impact has been suitably addressed and will be low to none overall, by virtue of the installation of the 'alien' feature of PV panels to the Grade I listed Old Quadrangle and the Grade II* listed South Front, the harm to its significance is a low level of less than substantial.

Historic England conclude that the location of the solar PV panels would not result in negative visual impacts on the special character of the highly graded listed buildings and therefore support the principle of the installation of PV panels.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

NPPF requires that less than substantial harm be weighed against any public benefits and any harm be clearly and convincingly justified. Based on the secured amendments and additional information and having regard to the duty at section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, in giving 'great weight' to the conservation of the designated heritage asset and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and positively contributing to local character and distinctiveness, the proposal accords with the relevant Policies Ribble Valley Core Strategy Key Statement and the NPPF.

The proposals would introduce an 'alien' feature to the Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings which would result in a low level of less than substantial harm. The submitted information has identified that any views of the solar panels would be minimal/negligible and there are environmental benefits to the scheme as the installation of solar PV panels would provide a sustainable and economic energy source. These benefits are given significant weight.

As such, on balance, the environmental benefits of installing solar PV panels and providing a form of renewable energy is considered to outweigh the low level of less than substantial harm identified above and the proposal accords with the relevant Policies Ribble Valley Core Strategy Key Statement and the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION:	That planning permission be granted subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.
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