



Historic England

Ms Maya Cullen
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
BB7 2RA

Direct Dial: +447990339949

Our ref: L01599358

5 November 2025

Dear Ms Cullen

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021
& T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**STONYHURST COLLEGE, AVENUE ROAD, HURST GREEN, BB7 9PZ
Application Nos 3/2025/0747 & 3/2025/0749**

Thank you for your letters of 9 October 2025 regarding the above applications for listed building consent and planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the applications.

Historic England Advice

Significance

Stonyhurst College comprises a highly significant collection of historic buildings sitting within a historic designed landscape. The oldest parts of the college complex are known as the Old Quadrangle, which originated as a late 16th century courtyard plan house built for notable recusant Lancashire Catholic family the Shireburns. The Old Quadrangle buildings are listed at grade I for their exceptional significance, and include a remarkable four-storey gatehouse in the centre of the west range. The gatehouse, along with the south range and east hall range, date to 1592-5. The north side of the quadrangle was rebuilt in a similar style in the mid 19th century.

Stonyhurst had always been associated with Catholicism and became the home of the Society of Jesus in the late 18th century after it moved there from a temporary school in Liege in France to escape persecution. The Society was reestablished at Stonyhurst and continued to provide private Catholic education for school boys and training for Jesuit Priests. The buildings were developed and extended from the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century to provide accommodation and facilities for the



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school; including a library, laboratories, infirmary, dormitories and chapel, resulting in a complex that reflects centuries of architectural styles and the evolving confidence of the Catholic Church in England.

The extensive South Front and Boys Chapel are significant examples of late-19th-century Renaissance Revival architecture and are listed at grade II* along with the 1790s Georgian Shirk. The 1830s Early Perpendicular style Church of St Peter is listed at grade I. The Old Infirmary, Shireburn Quadrangle, Ambulacrum and former Laboratories are listed at grade II. The setting for the listed buildings comprises formal gardens and pleasure grounds with parkland beyond, designed by Nicholas Shireburn in the 1700s. The main approach to the college is via a long avenue flanked by rectangular ponds leading to a forecourt on the west front of the gatehouse. The grounds of Stonyhurst are a designated registered park and garden, listed at grade II*, and contain several individually listed gate piers, walls, statues and garden ornaments.

Impacts

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. The roofs of St Mary's Sports Centre and the swimming pool would be almost entirely covered with PV panels, and there would be a section of panels on the south-facing side of the New Refectory roof. 12 blocks of panels are proposed for 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.

We do not have specific concerns over the proposals to install PV panels on the roofs of the swimming pool, New Refectory or St Mary's Sports Centre. These are all 20th century additions to the college complex and are subordinate to the listed buildings. Panels on the roofs of these buildings would be partially visible from some areas within the grounds and parkland and from the listed buildings, however their low profile means the visual impact would be minimal, and we do not anticipate harm to the setting of the listed buildings or the registered park and garden.

The proposed locations of the PV panels on the listed structures are on areas of recently re-covered bitumen flat roof, and panels have been positioned in a way that avoids visual impact or harm to the special interest of the listed buildings. The panels would be positioned at a low angle and hidden behind a parapet wall and not visible from ground level. The submitted Glint and Glare Assessment (Arthian, August 2025) states that there will be low or no impact from reflection from the PV panels on the



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listed buildings.

We have some concerns however, over the information provided on the capability of the historic roofs to take the structural load of the panels plus the ballast. A ballast system can be useful as it avoids the need to anchor the panels through the roof into the rafters, which can create a route for moisture ingress. However PV panels plus ballast can significantly increase the overall static load and could risk causing harm to the historic fabric of the building. We advise that a structural engineering report should be provided to justify the types of fixing proposed and confirm that the roof structure is capable of taking the additional load.

Information can be found in our technical guidance on installing solar panels: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/building-services-engineering/installing-photovoltaics/> and in our Advice Note 18 - Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/>

Policy

National policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is articulated in section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024). These policies state that assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (para. 202) and that applicants should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting, to a level sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance (para. 207).

When considering the impact of a proposed development, great weight should be given to an asset's conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be (para. 212). Paragraph 219 of the NPPF states that new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets should look for opportunities to enhance or better reveal significance. Any harm to significance requires clear and convincing justification (para. 213).

In practice that means that less harmful alternative solutions should be explored through the pre-application and application processes. Para. 215 instructs that the Council should eventually weigh harm against the public benefits of proposals in judging the planning balance.

Position



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Historic England welcomes the intentions of Stonyhurst College to reduce carbon emissions and adapt its buildings to mitigate climate change. It is evident that the proposed locations of the PV panels have been carefully determined to maximise space on the less significant buildings at the college. Where they are proposed for listed buildings, their location would not result in negative visual impacts on the special character of the highly graded listed buildings. We therefore support the principle of the installation of PV panels.

We recommend, however, that prior to determination of the application structural information should be provided 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.

Details and the location of electrical distribution equipment, cabling and inverters should also be submitted to give assurance that there would not be an impact from these on the historic fabric of the listed buildings or risk of fire.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the applications on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the applications to meet the requirements of paragraphs 202, 207, 212 and 213 of the NPPF.

In determining these applications you should bear in mind the statutory duty of sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

Louise Davies
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas



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