

DELEGATED FULL PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Coley Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0439

Address: 16, Spire Dunedin Hospital, Bath Road, Reading, RG1 6NS

Proposals: The instalment of 20no PV panels to the south facing roof of the Vicarage Building located within the site of Spire Dunedin Hospital. The works also comprise of the replacement of the existing pitched roof, with new brown clay pantiles as on the existing, and new uPVC fascias, gutters, and rainwater downpipes. To avoid overshadowing of the PV panels 2no existing redundant chimneys will be demolished.

Case Officer: Mishga Marshall

Applicant: Ricky Ho Chan

Date received (valid from): 25/03/2025

Target Decision date: 20/05/2025

EOT Agreed date: 24/09/2025

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is the Vicarage Building located within the site of Spire Dunedin Hospital and is accessed from Downshire Square. It consists of a main two-storey building with a pitched roof, and two single-storey areas with a flat roof. The pitched roof has brown clay pantiles, with two brick chimneys, one on each pitched section. The lower sections have a flat standing seam roof which is to be retained. It is not a listed building but does fall within the Downshire Square Conservation Area. The surrounding area is residential, no trees will be affected by the proposed development.

Site visit date: 16/04/2025

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal seeks planning permission for the stripping of the pitched roof and reinstatement with new felt, battens and interlocking brown clay pantiles, along with 20 PV panels to the south facing side of the roof. As well as the removal of two chimneys, which have been stated to be redundant and to be demolished. The existing timber fascias and soffits to the pitched roof are to be stripped off as part of the works and replaced with new white uPVC fascias and soffits. The existing timber fascias to the 2no lower roofs are to be retained and receive a white uPVC overlay as the existing fascia cannot be removed while the roof is retained. The existing uPVC gutters and downpipes will be removed and replaced with new black uPVC units. The uPVC items have been selected because of their low maintenance and high level of robustness.

Plans considered [Received by the LPA 21st March 2025]:

5845 10-04001 Spire Dunedin Vicarage Design Statement

5845-HMA-SDV-RF-DR-A-00101_P1 - Existing Roof Plan

5845-HMA-SDV-XX-DR-A-00001_P1 - Site Plan

~~5845-HMA-SDV-ZZ-DR-A-00250_P1 - Proposed Elevations~~

5845-HMA-SDV-RF-DR-A-00201_P1 - Proposed Roof Plan

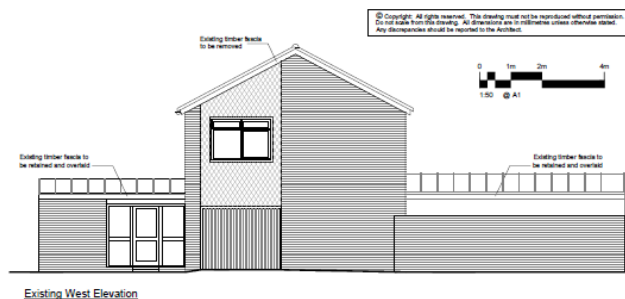
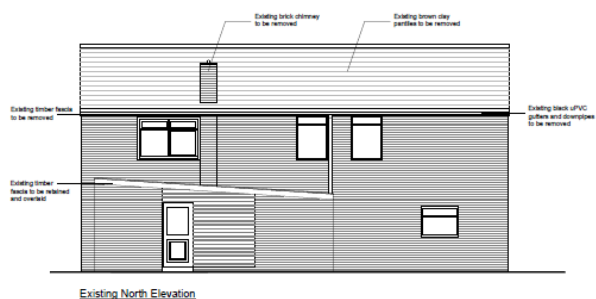
5845-HMA-SDV-ZZ-DR-A-00150_P1 - Existing Elevations

Plans considered [Received by the LPA 8th August 2025]:

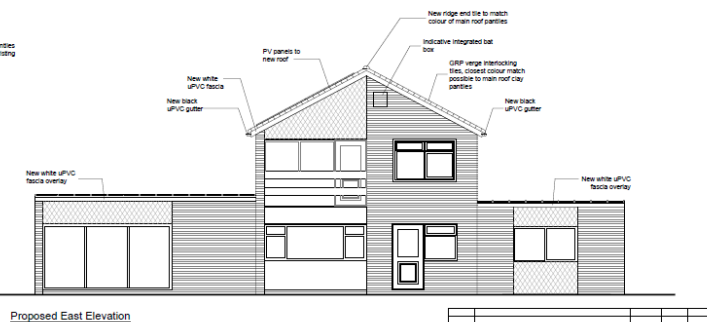
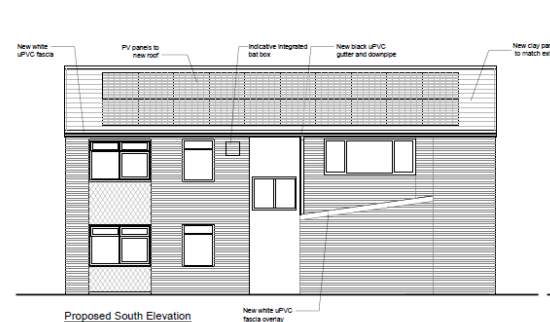
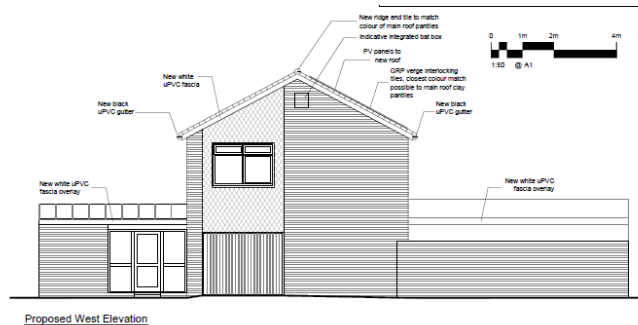
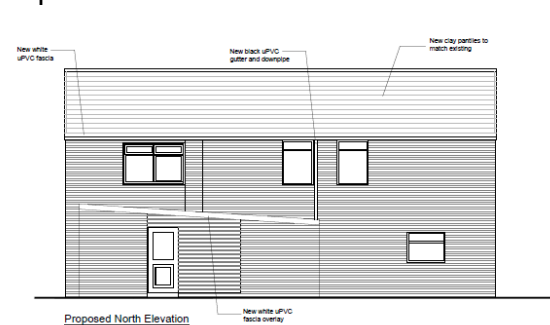
5845-HMA-SDV-ZZ-DR-A-00250_P2 - Proposed Elevations

Former Vicarage, Spire Dunedin Hospital Bat Survey_Planning issue

Existing Plans



Proposed Plans



PC	Integrated soil boxes added in south, east and west elevation in line with soil survey.	07-08-25	JC	08
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3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

N/A

4. CONSULTATIONS

Site notice displayed on 16/04/2025.

Consultee	Comments
Public Consultation	No letters of representation have been received.
RBC Conservation	The proposed PV panels would have a minimal and negligible impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area, given the existing tree screening, setback location, and the roof slope's relationship with the street and historic buildings within the area. The replacement tiles would match the existing, and the uPVC fascia, soffit, gutters, and downpipes would not be ideal, but would not have a direct harmful impact on the significance of the conservation area. Therefore, no objection
Environmental Protection	No objection.
RBC Ecology	No objection, subject to condition.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC3: ADAPTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS
EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

Other Guidance

Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal 2009

6. APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The principle of installing renewable energy infrastructure such as PV panels is strongly supported at both national and local policy levels. The proposal aligns with the NPPF's objectives of supporting a transition to a low carbon future and enabling renewable energy generation where impacts are acceptable.

Reading's Local planning policies similarly promote sustainability measures within existing buildings. Given the modest and site-contained nature of the works, the principle of development is acceptable subject to an assessment of detailed considerations.

Character and Appearance

Policy CC7 requires that all development must of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.

The PV panels would be installed on the south-facing roof slope, flush with the existing roof profile, minimising their visual prominence. The south-facing elevation is partially screened within the hospital site and not prominently visible from public viewpoints.

The replacement of the existing pitched roof with new brown clay pantiles will preserve the existing roof's character. The proposed uPVC fascias, gutters, and downpipes, though modern in material, are discreet elements which would not detract from the building's appearance.

The removal of two redundant chimneys, which no longer serve a functional purpose, is necessary to avoid overshadowing the PV panels. Their removal will have a minimal visual impact and will enhance the building's energy efficiency.

Overall, the proposals are sympathetic to the host building and would preserve its visual character within the hospital grounds. Therefore, the development is considered visually acceptable, in compliance with CC7.

Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations

The proposed installation of PV panels will contribute to on-site renewable energy generation, reducing the building's reliance on grid-supplied, carbon-intensive electricity.

The removal of redundant chimneys avoids overshadowing of the panels, maximising their efficiency, while also reducing heat loss pathways and improving the building's thermal performance.

Collectively, the measures will enhance the sustainability of the building in line with the objectives of the NPPF and local policies addressing climate change mitigation.

Ecology and Biodiversity

A bat survey was undertaken as part of the application submission to assess the potential for roosting bats within the building, particularly in relation to the existing chimneys and roof structure.

The report concludes that the building hosts a minimum of three bat roosts and as such it is very likely that the proposed works will disturb or harm roosting bats. As such, a licence for development works affecting bats will need to be obtained from Natural England - for derogation

from the provisions of the Habitat Regulations - before works which could impact upon the roost can commence.

Section 5 of the report provides a simple mitigation plan to ensure that bats are not harmed and that replacement roosting sites are provided and if it is implemented the favourable conservation status of bats will be maintained.

Planning Authorities have statutory duties under The Habitat Regulations. It needs to be satisfied that a licence for development works affecting bats is likely to be granted by Natural England.

In this case it is considered that as long as a mitigation plan such as that given in the bat survey report is provided the proposed works would pass the three tests of The Habitat Regulations, and as such receive from Natural England a licence, because:

1. The development is for an imperative reason of overriding public interest of an economic nature as the development will contribute to a social and economic need of the local community for better housing (this is assuming that it is in compliance with other planning policy) - therefore Regulation 55(2)(e) can be met
2. There is no satisfactory alternative to the development as without carrying out the works the aforementioned need would not be met - therefore Regulation 55(9)(a) can be met
3. Appropriate mitigation can be provided which will ensure that there will not be a detrimental impact to the favourable conservation status of the bat species concerned - therefore Regulation 55(9)(b) can be met

To conclude, two bat surveys were carried out, both of which recorded signs of bat activity within the roof space. In response, the applicant has updated the proposals to include the provision of bat roosting features (bat boxes/bat tiles) to compensate for any potential disturbance. Reading Borough Council's Ecology Officer has raised no objection to the scheme subject to conditions requiring a Natural England bat licence and adherence to the submitted mitigation measures.

The site itself comprises a well-maintained hospital building with no features of significant ecological interest, and the proposed works involve no land-take, vegetation clearance, or alterations to natural habitats.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would have no adverse impact on local biodiversity and complies with relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and local planning policies in relation to ecology and biodiversity.

Heritage Impact

The application site lies within a designated Conservation Area, and as such, careful consideration has been given to the potential impact of the proposed works on its character and appearance.

The proposal has been reviewed by the Council's Conservation Officer, who raised no objection to the scheme.

The proposed PV panels would be installed on a south-facing, inward-looking roof slope within the hospital site, largely screened from public view by existing mature trees and neighbouring hospital buildings. As such, their presence would not disrupt key views, roofscapes, or the prevailing character of the conservation area.

The replacement of the existing clay pantiles with new tiles to match ensures that the building's historic roof form and materials are preserved. While the use of uPVC for fascias, soffits, gutters, and downpipes is not traditionally ideal within conservation areas, the Conservation Officer confirmed that these elements would not cause direct harm to the conservation area's significance given their discreet location and limited visual presence.

As such, the proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and complies with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework, and relevant local policies relating to heritage protection.

Highway and Access Considerations

The proposal does not involve any changes to access, parking, or site circulation. No additional vehicle movements would arise as a result of the works, aside from temporary construction-related traffic, which would be managed under standard site procedures.

There are no highway safety concerns.

Residential Amenity

Policy CC8 states development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties.

The proposed development is not considered to cause a loss of sunlight and daylight or be overbearing to the neighbouring residential properties given its nature, distance from the site boundary and the location of the application building in relation to neighbouring properties.

Therefore, the development is considered to have an acceptable impact on the amenity of all adjoining neighbours, complying with Policies CC8.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development will facilitate the generation of renewable energy, upgrade the roof fabric of the Vicarage Building, and provide minor associated alterations. The works are acceptable in terms of design, visual impact, amenity, and ecology. The removal of redundant chimneys is justified and will not detract from the character of the building. Subject to appropriate conditions, the proposal accords with the relevant provisions of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Recommended Conditions:

Time Limit

Approved Plans

Materials (as specified)

Bat Licence