



Heritage Impact Assessment

September 2026 | Project Ref 12419



Championing a sustainable
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Project Number: 12419

File Origin: Erleigh Road Reading NHS/2026.09.28_25 Erleigh Road HIA HCUK.docx

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by HCUK Group on behalf of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in relation to proposals for roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels and permanent roof edge protection at 25 Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LR.
- 1.2** The site lies within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area. The building is not included on the National Heritage List for England, although it is specifically identified in the Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal in connection with the former Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses. The Reading branch of the organisation was founded in 1897, although it did not occupy 25 Erleigh Road until 1937. The building is therefore of local historic and townscape interest within the conservation area.
- 1.3** The proposals have been reviewed following HCUK's site visit and with reference to the drawings, specifications and conservation area appraisal listed in Appendix 1. This report considers the significance of the relevant heritage assets, the contribution made by the application site to that significance, and the likely effect of the proposed works.

Key Considerations

- The site is located within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area and forms part of the Erleigh Road/Alexandra Road townscape context.
- The building comprises an earlier late 19th-century street-facing house together with a plainer three-storey extension dating from the 1930s, associated with its adaptation for institutional use.
- The proposed PV panels and roof edge protection would be located on the flat roof, rather than on the principal pitched roofs of the earlier building.
- The principal heritage issue is the potential visibility of the 1100mm roof edge protection. The PV panels themselves are low-level, with the proposed roof plan identifying a maximum height of 500mm above the roof surface.

- A recessive, non-reflective finish to the railings and mounting system is recommended. A safety-yellow finish would be more visually prominent and is not recommended in this conservation area context.

2. Relevant Planning Policy Framework

Legislation

2.1 The decision maker is required by section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, when considering development which affects a listed building or its setting.

2.2 Section 72(1) of the Act requires the decision maker to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area when exercising planning functions relating to land within that area. These statutory duties are relevant to the assessment of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area and the nearby listed buildings considered within this report.¹

Harm

2.3 For the purposes of this assessment, preservation equates to an absence of harm. Harm is defined in Historic England's Conservation Principles as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset. The assessment therefore considers the effect of the proposals on heritage significance, rather than simply the extent or visibility of physical change.²

National Planning Policy Framework

2.4 Chapter 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2026) sets out the policy objectives to conserve and enhance the historic environment acknowledging that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource.

¹ Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited v East Northamptonshire District Council and others [2014] EWCA Civ 137. This principle has recently been confirmed, albeit in a lower court, in R (Wyeth-Price) v Guildford Borough Council.

² Conservation Principles, 2008, paragraph 84.

- 2.5** The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as deriving from its architectural, historic, archaeological or artistic interest. The assessment of heritage significance and impact within this report is made with reference to these interests, including where the setting of an asset contributes to its significance.

Policy HE 4

- 2.6** Policy HE 4 requires development proposals to avoid (or minimise) harm to the significance of heritage assets and instead conserve the significance. Proposals which affect significance should maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation, taking into account the importance of maintaining the assets, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities including local economies, and the positive contribution they can make to local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.7** HE 4 (2) states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (including from development within its setting) should have a clear and convincing justification.

Policy HE 5

- 2.8** In assessing the effects on heritage assets (both designated and non-designated) the NPPF Policy HE 5 requires applicants to identify whether proposals would be likely to:
- Have a positive effect, which is where a heritage asset would be enhanced, or its significance better revealed; or
 - Have no effect on the significance of the asset; or
 - Result in harm to the significance of the heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or
 - Cause the total loss of the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.9** The Scale of Effect on heritage assets is tabulated in Appendix 2.

- 2.10** In making this assessment it is the effect on an asset's significance rather than the scale of the development which should be considered.

Policy HE 6

- 2.11** Policy HE6 requires substantial weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, with the weight increasing with the importance of the asset. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on a designated heritage asset should be supported.
- 2.12** Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset, that effect should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. The policy expressly recognises that important public benefits can include enabling energy-efficiency and low-carbon heating measures.
- 2.13** Where substantial harm or total loss would arise, consent should be refused unless the tests set out within Policy HE6 are met.

Policy HE 7

- 2.14** Policy HE 7 of the NPPF notes that where proposals would have a positive effect on non-designated heritage assets they should be supported. It then goes on to provide two different balancing exercises where harm to significance would be incurred as follows:

Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal and a balanced judgement made, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, it should only be supported where the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal, having regard to the scale of the harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

Policy HE 9

- 2.15** Policy HE9 relates specifically to conservation areas. It requires development proposals within, or affecting the significance of, a conservation area to retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to its character or appearance where possible, and to take account of the area's special architectural or historic interest in the design of development.
- 2.16** The policy also recognises that not every element within a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Where development would affect an element which does contribute positively, its relative significance and contribution to the conservation area as a whole should inform the assessment of effect.

Sustainable Development

- 2.17** The NPPF also provides specific support for measures which improve the environmental performance of existing buildings. Policy CC2 states that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings and drawing energy from renewable and low-carbon sources, including through the installation of solar panels where planning permission is required. This is directly relevant to the present proposals

Local Planning Policy

- 2.18** The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and remains the adopted development plan while the Local Plan Partial Update progresses through examination. Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6 are of particular relevance to the assessment.
- 2.19** Policy EN1 seeks the protection and, where possible, enhancement of historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings. It expects proposals to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets, their settings, historic character and local distinctiveness, and to avoid harm in the first instance.
- 2.20** Policy EN3 relates to conservation areas. It expects the special interest, character and architecture of conservation areas to be conserved and enhanced, with

development proposals making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

- 2.21** Policy EN6 requires the historic environment to inform and shape new development in areas characterised by heritage assets. It refers to scale, height, mass, proportion, materials, significant views and open space, together with sensitivity to historic context.
- 2.22** Reading Borough Council is currently progressing a Partial Update of the Local Plan, which remains under examination. Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6, which are relevant to the heritage assessment of the proposals, are not within the scope of the Partial Update. The adopted 2019 policies therefore remain the relevant local heritage policies for the purposes of this assessment.

Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal

- 2.23** The Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal describes the area's special interest and provides the most relevant local evidence base for assessing the proposal. It identifies the conservation area's 19th-century street pattern, cohesive late 19th-century architectural development, Alexandra Road's avenue of trees and Victorian buildings, distinctive local details, front boundaries, front gardens, trees and listed buildings as key elements of special interest.
- 2.24** The appraisal identifies 25 Erleigh Road in connection with the former Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses and records that the Reading branch was founded in 1897. More detailed historical evidence indicates that the organisation moved to 25 Erleigh Road in 1937, when the property was adapted and extended for its institutional use. The site therefore forms part of the historical narrative of the conservation area, both as an earlier private residence and through its later association with district nursing in Reading.
- 2.25** The appraisal also demonstrates a general sensitivity to alterations which affect the appearance of buildings and roofscapes when experienced from the public realm. Its recommendations for additional Article 4 controls were principally directed towards family houses and do not directly apply to the present institutional building. They nevertheless provide useful context in understanding the importance placed upon avoiding conspicuous or poorly detailed alterations within the conservation area.

3. Site and Development Proposals

- 3.1** The application site occupies a corner position at the junction of Erleigh Road and Alexandra Road. The building comprises a late 19th-century house fronting the street together with later additions, including a plainer three-storey rear extension dating from the 1930s. The proposed solar panels and roof edge protection would be located on the flat roof of this extension, rather than on the pitched roofs of the original building.
- 3.2** The immediate setting is characterised by the junction of Erleigh Road and Alexandra Road, street trees, late 19th-century residential and institutional buildings, and the relationship between the former Nurses Institute and the surrounding conservation area.

Historic Development

- 3.3** The Reading branch of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses was founded in 1897 as part of the development of organised district nursing in the town. Although the plaque on the building at 25 Erleigh Road records the foundation date of 1897, the organisation did not initially occupy this site. Its early premises were elsewhere in Reading and, from 1906, it was based at Abbot's Walk.
- 3.4** 25 Erleigh Road originated as a substantial late 19th-century private residence, consistent with the wider residential development of the Alexandra Road area during this period.
- 3.5** The district nursing association moved to 25 Erleigh Road in 1937 following the compulsory acquisition of its earlier premises at Abbot's Walk. The Erleigh Road property was adapted and extended to accommodate the new institutional use. The three-storey rear extension appears to belong to this phase of development and therefore forms part of the building's history as a nurses' institute, although architecturally it is considerably plainer than the original house.
- 3.6** The creation of the National Health Service in 1948 altered the organisation and funding of district nursing. The voluntary committee continued to administer the service for a period, although its agreement with Reading Borough Council was not

renewed in 1955. This marks the end of its earlier administrative role in the provision of district nursing, rather than necessarily the date at which occupation of 25 Erleigh Road ceased.

Nearby Listed Buildings

3.7 St Luke's Church and St Luke's Church Hall are Grade II listed buildings within the conservation area. Both form part of the late 19th-century development of Erleigh Road and contribute to its more institutional and ecclesiastical character.

3.8 The application site lies within their wider urban surroundings. Their setting is principally defined by their relationship with Erleigh Road, the surrounding late Victorian development and their immediate townscape context. Their significance is considered further below.

Description of Proposals

3.9 The proposals comprise the installation of roof-mounted solar PV panels on the flat roof, together with permanent roof edge protection. The proposed roof plan identifies solar PV panels with a maximum elevation height of 500mm from the roof surface and 1100mm permanent roof edge protection railings.

3.10 The safety rail system information indicates a free-standing, non-penetrating system using weighted base plates and steel guardrails. The system is therefore capable of being installed without drilling into the roof structure and is reversible in principle. The specification identifies hot-dipped galvanised and safety yellow as standard finishes, with custom RAL colour options also available. From a heritage perspective, a muted grey or dark recessive finish should be secured, and a safety-yellow finish should be avoided.

4. Statement of Significance

Alexandra Road Conservation Area

- 4.1** The significance of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area is principally architectural and historic. It derives from its late 19th-century planned street pattern, its cohesive stock of detached and semi-detached Victorian houses and institutional buildings, its mature street trees and front gardens, and its range of characteristic materials and details, including red and polychromatic brickwork, Welsh slate, clay tiles, timber windows, chimneys, walls, railings and stone kerbs.
- 4.2** Erleigh Road contributes to the architectural, historic and townscape interest of the conservation area. Its character includes a mixture of late 19th-century residential development together with institutional and ecclesiastical buildings, including St Luke's Church and Church Hall. 25 Erleigh Road forms part of this historic development and occupies a prominent position at the junction with Alexandra Road.

25 Erleigh Road

- 4.3** The historic interest of 25 Erleigh Road derives from two main phases. It originated as a substantial late 19th-century private residence forming part of the wider development of the Alexandra Road area. In 1937 it was adapted and extended for occupation by the Reading district nursing association associated with the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses. Although the organisation had been founded in Reading in 1897, it did not occupy the site until 1937. This later phase gives the building additional historic interest through its association with the development of district nursing and community healthcare in Reading.
- 4.4** Architecturally, the building contributes to the conservation area principally through its surviving late 19th-century fabric, traditional materials, pitched roofscape, chimneys and its composition as experienced from Erleigh Road and Alexandra Road. These elements retain the legibility of the building's original domestic character despite its subsequent adaptation to institutional use.
- 4.5** The three-storey flat-roofed rear extension dates from the 1930s and appears to be associated with the adaptation of the property for institutional use. It therefore has

some historic interest as part of this phase in the building's development. Architecturally, however, it is considerably plainer and more functional than the original late 19th-century house and makes a more limited contribution to the architectural interest of the conservation area. This distinction is relevant to the assessment of the proposed roof-mounted solar panels and edge protection.

- 4.6** Overall, 25 Erleigh Road makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area. This derives principally from the architectural character and townscape presence of the late 19th-century house, together with the historical interest arising from its later association with district nursing in Reading. The 1930s rear extension forms part of that historical development but is of lesser architectural interest.

Nearby Listed Buildings

- 4.7** St Luke's Church and St Luke's Church Hall are Grade II listed buildings. Their significance derives from their architectural and historic interest as late 19th-century ecclesiastical buildings, together with their townscape presence on Erleigh Road. The application site forms part of their wider urban setting but does not make an important contribution to the significance of either listed building.

5. Heritage Impact Assessment

Direct Physical Impact

- 5.1** The proposals would be confined to the flat roof and would not involve alteration to the principal street-facing elevations, historic pitched roofs, chimneys, windows, front boundary walls, railings, trees or other street-level features which make a positive contribution to the conservation area.
- 5.2** The edge protection system would be non-penetrating and free-standing. This is a positive aspect of the proposal because it reduces the risk of physical harm to the building fabric and makes the intervention reversible in principle.

Visual Impact of the PV Panels

- 5.3** The PV panels would have a maximum height of 500mm above the roof surface and would be positioned within the flat roof of the 1930s extension. Their low profile, dark finish and location away from the principal pitched roofscape would limit their prominence in public views.
- 5.4** Where visible, the panels would be understood as low-level roof-mounted equipment on the plainer rear part of the building. They would not obscure or alter the principal architectural features through which the historic building contributes to the conservation area. The proposed PV panels would therefore have no effect on the significance of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area.

Visual Impact of the Roof Edge Protection

- 5.5** The roof edge protection is the more visually sensitive element of the proposals. At 1100mm high, it would extend above the existing roof edge and would be visible in some local views, particularly where seen against the sky.
- 5.6** The proposed railings would, however, comprise a lightweight open structure rather than a solid enclosure. They would be located on the flat roof of the plainer 1930s extension and would remain visually separate from the pitched roofscape and

principal elevations of the original house. Their effect would therefore be limited to a relatively small and less architecturally sensitive part of the building.

- 5.7** The finish of the railings will be important in limiting their prominence. A bright safety-yellow finish would introduce an unnecessarily conspicuous element into the conservation area and should be avoided. A muted grey or dark grey matt or low-sheen finish should instead be selected, together with similarly recessive finishes for associated fixings and equipment.

Effect on the Alexandra Road Conservation Area

- 5.8** The proposals would not affect the conservation area's street pattern, plot structure, front gardens, street trees, historic boundary walls, principal elevations, traditional roof materials, chimneys or characteristic late 19th-century architectural detailing. They would also avoid alteration to the pitched roofs and principal elevations of the original house.
- 5.9** The roof edge protection would introduce a visible modern element, but visual change does not in itself amount to harm to heritage significance. In this case the change would be limited in extent, lightweight in form and located on the less architecturally sensitive 1930s rear extension. Subject to the use of a recessive finish, it would not erode the architectural or historic interest from which the conservation area derives its significance. The character and appearance of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area would therefore be preserved and no heritage harm is identified.

Effect on Other Heritage Assets

- 5.10** The proposals would not affect the fabric of St Luke's Church or St Luke's Church Hall and would result in only a minor change within their wider urban surroundings. The principal relationships through which the significance of the listed buildings is experienced, including their presence on Erleigh Road and their relationship with the surrounding late Victorian townscape, would remain unchanged. The proposals would therefore have no effect on the significance of either listed building through change within their setting.

Planning Considerations

- 5.11** The wider planning case for the development, including the sustainability and renewable-energy benefits of the proposed PV installation and the relevant planning balance, is set out in the accompanying Planning Statement.
- 5.12** For the purposes of this Heritage Impact Assessment, no harm is identified to the significance of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area or to the significance of the nearby listed buildings through change within their settings.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1** 25 Erleigh Road makes a positive contribution to the Alexandra Road Conservation Area. Its significance derives principally from the surviving late 19th-century house and its townscape presence, together with the historical interest arising from its adaptation for use by the district nursing association from 1937. The three-storey rear extension also dates from this institutional phase, but is considerably plainer and of lesser architectural interest.
- 6.2** The proposed PV panels and roof edge protection would be located on the flat roof of this 1930s extension. The panels would be low profile and would not materially affect the appreciation of the historic building. The edge protection would be more visible but would comprise a lightweight and reversible intervention on a less architecturally sensitive part of the site.
- 6.3** Subject to the use of a muted, non-reflective finish to the roof edge protection and associated equipment, the proposals would preserve the character and appearance of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area. No harm is identified to the significance of the conservation area or to the significance of the nearby listed buildings through change within their settings.
- 6.4** The wider planning merits of the proposals, including the sustainability benefits associated with renewable energy generation, are considered separately within the accompanying Planning Statement.

Appendix 1

Figures

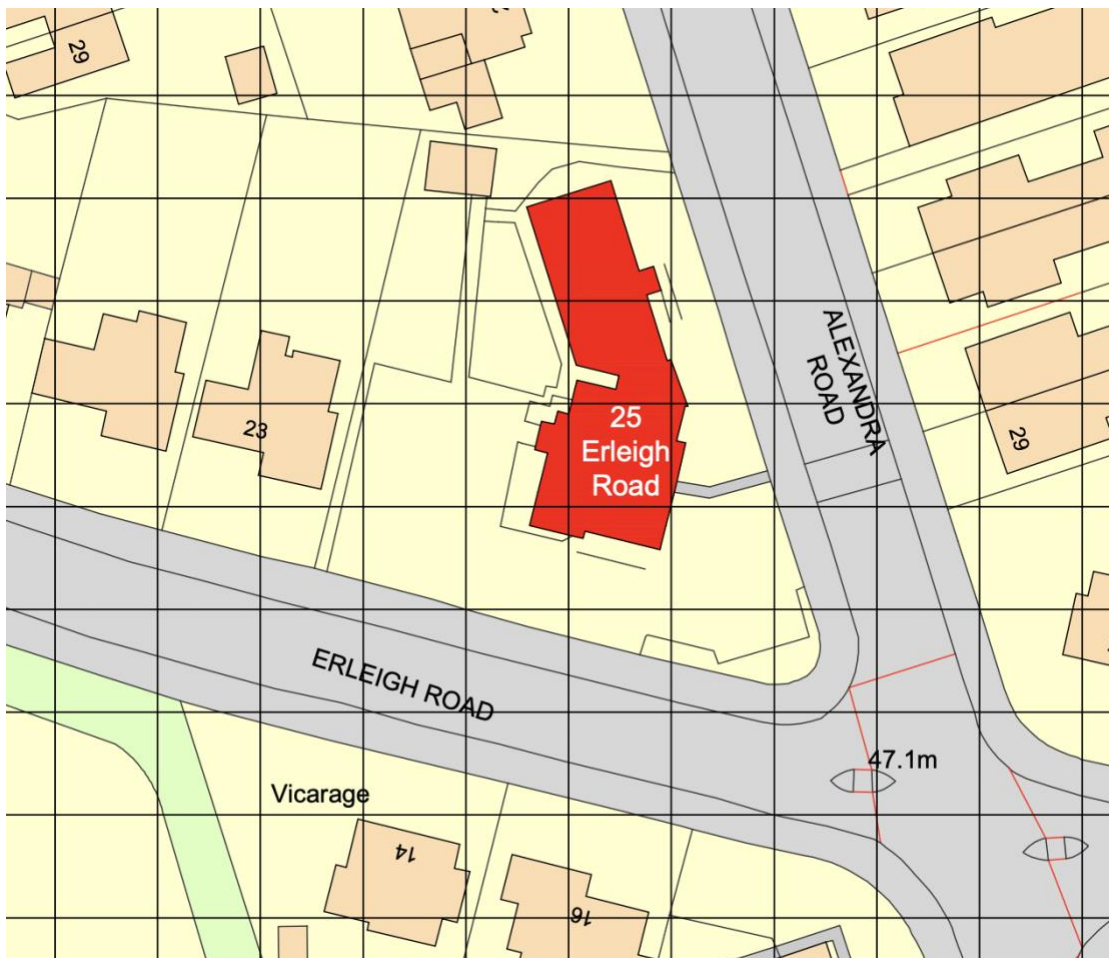


Figure 1: Site location map



Figure 2: The site from Erleigh Road



Figure 3: The site from Erleigh Road and dating plaque for rear block



Figure 4: The site from Erleigh Road



Figure 5: The two blocks at 25 Erleigh Road – the older 19th-century house at the front of the site and the 1939 block as a rear extension to this older structure



Figure 6: The two blocks at 25 Erleigh Road – the older 19th-century house at the front of the site and the 1939 block as a rear extension to this older structure



Figure 7: The two blocks as visible from Alexandra Road



Figure 8: The two blocks as visible from Alexandra Road



Figure 9: The two blocks as visible from Alexandra Road



Figure 10: The two blocks as visible from Alexandra Road



Figure 11: The rear block as visible from Alexandra Road



Figure 12: The rear block as visible from Alexandra Road



Figure 13: Proposed elevations

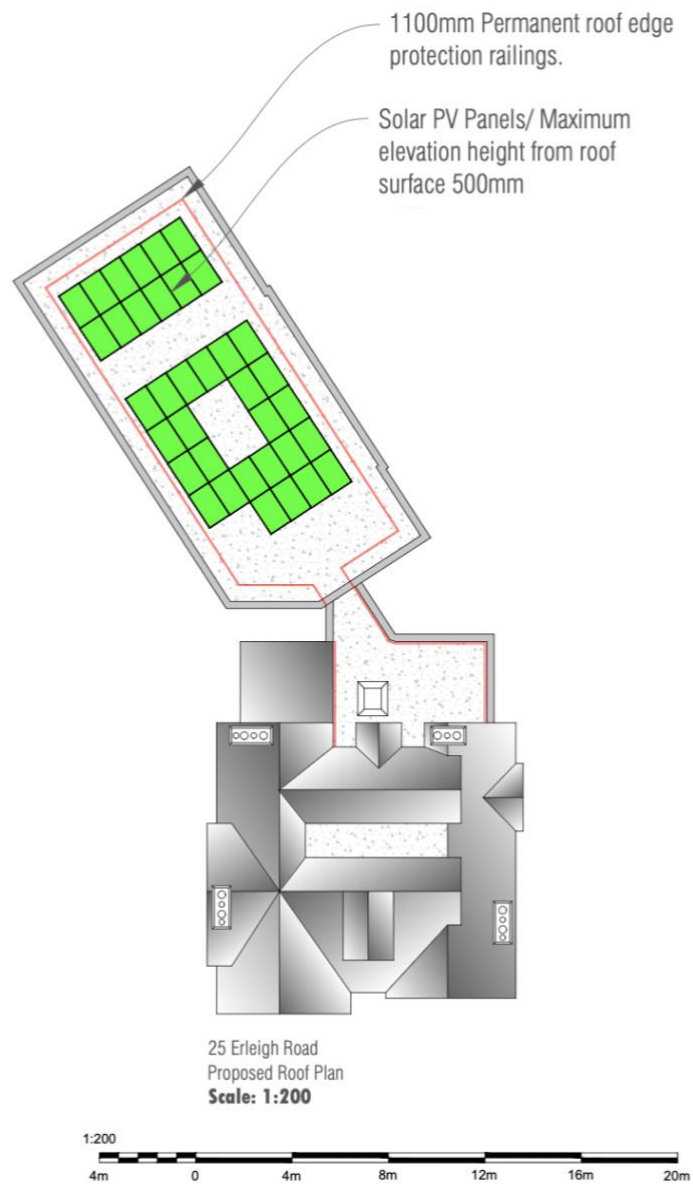


Figure 14: Proposed location of PV panels



Figure 15: Reference image showing suggested appearance of roof edge protection rails



Figure 16: Reference image showing suggested appearance of PV panels

Appendix 2

Documents Reviewed

Reference	Document	Source / Date
26007-T-001	Site Map	EDTS, September 2026
26007-T-002	Existing Layout / Existing Roof Plan	EDTS, September 2026
26007-T-003	Existing Ground Floor Plan	EDTS, September 2026
26007-T-004	Existing Elevations	EDTS, September 2026
26007-T-005	Proposed Roof Plan	EDTS, September 2026
26007-T-006	Proposed Elevations	EDTS, September 2026
Attachment 1	360 Mobile Safety Rail System specification	EDGE Fall Protection
Attachment 2	JA Solar JAM54D30 400-425/GB series module information	JA Solar
Solar Opportunity Assessment	Rooftop Solar Solutions: 25 Erleigh Road	LASER / Zero Carbon Future, 04/09/2025
Conservation Area Appraisal	Alexandra Road Conservation Area, Reading	The Conservation Studio, 15 March 2005

Appendix 3

Scale of Effect (HCUK, 2026)

The table below has been developed by HCUK Group (2026) based on current national policy and guidance. It is intended as a simple and effective way to better define effect and the implications of that finding on heritage significance. It reflects the need to be clear about the categories of harm, and the degree of harm within those categories, to designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Scale of Effect	
Positive Effect	Where a development proposal has an enhancing effect on the significance of the heritage asset.
No Effect	No effect on the significance of the heritage asset.
Harm	Harm to the significance of a heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified as: • Substantial harm (where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset’s significance) • High level harm • Medium level harm • Low level harm High, medium and low level harm would previously have fallen within the ‘less than substantial’ harm bracket.
Total Loss	Total removal of the significance of the heritage asset.