

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252190
Site Address:	St Crispins School, London Road, Wokingham, RG40 1SS
Expiry Date:	6 March 2026
Site Visit Date:	14 October 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed installation of solar panels.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM15 - Site History
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation CE8 – Protecting renewable energy generation C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way NE7 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

App No.	Description	Decision/Date
TP 284	Erection of school	Approved 18 May 1951
S/5/1960	Unit for 20 children	Approved 13 July 1960
S/20/1970	Eight class junior school	Approved 26 November

		1970
S/4/1971	Erection of 7 unit and 4-unit terrapins	Approved 14 May 1971
S/17/1972	Addition of teaching lab	Approved 3 January 1973
S/8/1973	3 holder classrooms	Approved 22 June 1973
S/10/1973	Temporary access from London Road	Approved 16 August 1973
01967	Caravan for careers interviews (temp)	Approved 20 February 1975
03157	Sports complex (outline)	Approved 5 December 1975
03188	Extensions to school buildings (outline)	Unknown
03776	Science and maths block	Approved 2 July 1976
04278	Sports complex	Approved 15 April 1976
07680	Caravan for careers interviews (temp)	Approved 16 February 1978
08638	Playground at sports centre (temp)	Approved 6 July 1978
09371	Caravan for careers interviews (temp)	Approved 26 October 1978
10665	Covered playground area	Approved 4 May 1979
11667	Floodlights for hardcourt area for commercial use	Approved 27 September 1979
14726	Mobile home for caretaker during building operations	Approved 15 January 1981
15965	Playground at sports centre (temp)	Approved 30 July 1981
17701	Roof over storage area of sports complex	Approved 1 July 1982
19968	Non illuminated signage	Approved 25 August 1983
21761	Extension to sports centre	Approved 28 June 1984
29155	Extension to day centre and parking	Approved 22 March 1988
36226	Skateboard ramps (temp)	Approved 1 August 1992
43226	Skateboard ramps	Approved 12 September 1994
FP/1995/3750	Refurbishment of shower areas	Approved 8 August 1995
A/1996/63386	School signage	Approved 30 April 1996
LA/1996/ 63973	Replacement of school signage	Approved 10 July 1996
FP/1999/8872	Refurbishment and conversion of squash court area	Approved 26 July 1999
A/1999/70776	Wall mounted illuminated signage	Approved 25 January 2000
F/2001/4707	Air conditioning plant	Approved 12 January 2004
LB/2001/5207	Three single storey classrooms, toilets and link to main building	Approved 30 January 2002
F/2001/5208		Approved 30 January 2002
LB/2002/8264	New building with four classrooms	Approved 16 January 2004
F/2002/8265	Sixth form block with classrooms and toilets	Approved 12 November 2003
F/2005/4340	Demolition of 65 Seaford Road and erection of three flat buildings comprising a total of 25 flats	Approved 29 June 2005
F/2007/1158	Changes to parking, widening of access and cycle storage	Approved 20 June 2007
F/2008/0198	Marquee shelter to dining hall	Approved 16 May 2008
LB/2008/1501	Widen access door and internal fire works to tower building	Approved 18 August 2008
LB/2009/1352	Window replacements of tower building	Refused 25 August 2008
F/2009/2313	Modular classroom (temp for 5 years)	Approved 4 February 2010
LB/2010/0430	Window replacements of tower building	Approved 13 April 2010

F/2011/1920	Two storey science building	Approved 4 January 2012
NMT/2012/1072	Nonmaterial amendment to F/2011/1920 to allow flues and relocation of solar panels	Approved 6 June 2012
VAR/2012/1553	Variation of F/2011/1920 to extend hours of use of MUGA pitch	Approved 21 November 2012
VAR/2012/ 0271	Variation of F/2011/1920 to vary location of MUGA pitch	Approved 18 April 2012
LB/2013/1893	Heritage blue plaque to building	Approved 5 November 2013
F/2015/1257	Photovoltaics to roof of science block	Approved 16 August 2015
160421	Two storey sixth form block, new staff parking area, new MUGA and use of existing sixth form building as autism unit	Approved 26 May 2016
162717	Nonmaterial amendment to 160421 (relocation of building by 3m)	Approved 21 October 2016
163330	Nonmaterial amendment to 160421 (change of discharge of conditions)	Approved 23 December 2016
170375	Nonmaterial amendment to 160421 (changes to fenestration)	Approved 4 April 2017
211098	Tensile canopy to sixth form wellbeing area (CLE)	Refused 25 May 2021
212664	Temporary retention of modular classroom for 5 years (retrospective)	Approved 3 August 2022
220570	Two storey modular classroom comprising four classrooms and offices	Approved 13 May 2022
220678	Two storey modular unit for changing facilities (temporary for two years)	Approved 3 May 2022
223603	Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey extension to the existing dining hall and a two storey extension to the existing Sixth Form block to provide 8 no. new classrooms, plus a new canopy to the front entrance and a services and bin store, following demolition of the existing services and bin store.	Approved 01/03/2023

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Built Heritage Officer – No comments required.
WBC Ecology – No objection.

External

None.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received.

Neighbours	No comments received.
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site relates to St Crispin's School located on the southern side of London Road, Wokingham. The site includes the Grade II Listed Building named 'St Crispins' School' which was recognised by Historic England in 1993 for its steel frame with precast concrete panels. This application does not relate to any part of the Listed Building.

The site is surrounded by residential development to all sides.

Proposal:

This application seeks approval for the installation of solar panels on the main roofs of four separate buildings across the school site.

The panels would be mounted and ballasted onto the flat roofs.

Note:

Due to structural reasons, the proposed siting of the solar panels was amended during the application process. The revised plans relocated the solar panels away from the roof of the Listed Building and on to four separate buildings numbered 1 to 4 on submitted plan numbered 'P25431-BA-A1-00-DR-A-3100'.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy (CS). Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

The principle of renewable energy development is strongly supported by national and local planning policy, which seeks to increase the generation of energy from renewable and low-carbon sources and support the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Policy CC05 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals for renewable energy and decentralised energy networks must demonstrate that:

- a) They are appropriate in scale, location and technology type;
- b) Are compatible with the surrounding area, including the impact of noise and odour;
- c) Do not have a damaging impact on the local topography and landscape;

- d) There is no significant impact upon heritage assets, including views important to their setting;
- e) In the case of wind turbines, take account of their cumulative effect and properly reflect their increasing impact on the landscape and on local amenity.

MDD Local Plan Policy CC05 takes forward the council's commitment to renewable technologies and to exceed the national standards, as set out in policy CP1 of the CS.

The relocated siting of the solar panels is considered appropriate in terms of location on the flat roofs of buildings that are not Listed or within the Listed Building Buffer Zone. The low profile of the solar panels is also considered acceptable to ensure little impact in terms of visual change to the buildings.

In summary, the proposal represents a renewable energy scheme associated with an existing educational use and is considered acceptable in principle, subject to assessment of design, visual impact and neighbouring amenity.

Character of the Area:

The proposal includes the installation of solar panels to the roofs of four separate buildings across the school site. Building 1 is set back from and to the side of the existing leisure centre and set back from the road. Buildings 2 to 4 are located towards the rear of the site.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states planning permission will be granted if development is 'of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life'.

The solar panels have been carefully selected on buildings that are away from the Listed main building and the main entrance. The panels would have a low profile and would be mounted at an angle. Each panel would measure approximately 2.3m in length and 1.1m in width.

CS Policy CC05 takes forward the council's commitment to renewable technologies. Criteria 1 states that local opportunities to contribute towards decentralised energy supply from renewable and low-carbon technologies will be encouraged. The proposed location of the solar panels away from the listed building and listed building buffer zone means there would be no significant impact to the setting of the designated heritage asset. In addition, the panels are proposed on the existing flat roofs of four buildings and would be set in from the sides to limit the visual impact when viewed from ground level. The panels would be proportionate in scale when compared to the size of the buildings and the wider site.

In addition, due to the existing solar panels on the newer buildings across the site, the installation of additional panels would be sufficiently in-keeping with the existing technology found on roofs around the school.

Overall, given the siting and limited visibility of the solar panels, the proposal would not materially alter the character or appearance of the host buildings or wider heritage

setting. There would be no harmful impact on the street scene or wider area. The development is therefore considered to comply with CS Policies CP1 and CP3 requiring high-quality design and the protection of visual amenity.

Sustainability:

The installation of the solar panels would enable the school to generate renewable electricity on site, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and contributing towards carbon emission reductions. This would support national objectives to address climate change. Paragraph 165 of the NPPF encourages the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat and supports identifying opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems.

As well as reducing the school's operational carbon footprint, the installation of the solar panels would also provide long-term educational benefits by demonstrating sustainable practices to pupils.

In summary, the proposed solar panels would be relatively modest in scale, sensitively sited on flat roof areas, with only limited views of the panels from the public realm. As such, they would not harm the character or appearance of the buildings or the wider school site.

When weighed against the clear environmental and sustainability benefits associated with renewable energy generation, the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development and compliant with CS policies CP1 and CP3, and MDD Local Plan policy CC05.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking, Loss of Light & Overbearing:

The proposed solar panels would be mounted on the roofs of four buildings across the school site. The closest residential properties to any of the panels would be the apartment block on Jeffery Close which would be more than 6m to the west.

The panels would be mounted on flat roofs, and each panel would have a low profile.

Due to their location on flat roofs away from residential properties and limited visibility, the panels would not result in overlooking, loss of privacy, overshadowing, noise, or disturbance to neighbouring occupiers. Glint and glare impacts are not anticipated to be significant given the orientation of the arrays.

The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of residential amenity.

Ecology:

The application site is located in an area suitable for bat roosts. The proposal is for solar panels that would be mounted on top of the flat roofs, as such, the existing fabric of the flat roofs would remain in situ. Therefore, the installation of the solar panel units should not detrimentally impact the protected species. However, as the site is in an area that is known to support bat roosts, an Informative will be attached to any grant of approval in the unlikely event that any bats are found.

Conclusion:

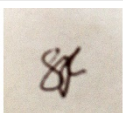
For the reasons set out above, the proposal is acceptable as it accords with local plan policy and guidance, subject to conditions.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	2 March 2026
Earliest date for decision:	6 March 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	5.3.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location

Listed Building – Grade II Listed St Crispin's School

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability

Westcott Ward

Wokingham Parish

London Road Green Route