



Planning Statement

West Buckland, Camer Road, Meopham,
Gravesend, Kent DA13 0XP

Proposal: Installation of Solar PV Panels
and Associated Battery Storage System

Introduction

This Planning and Heritage Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application and listed building consent application for the installation of a solar photovoltaic (PV) system at West Buckland, a Grade II listed dwelling located within a rural setting in the parish of Luddesdown, within Gravesham Borough.

The proposal seeks to improve the energy efficiency and environmental performance of the property by installing renewable energy infrastructure in the form of 30 AIKO Neostar 2S Gen 2 all-black 460W solar panels, a Fox ESS 8kW inverter, and a Fox ESS EP11 10.4kWh battery storage system. All works are confined to the existing detached garage building, which lies within the curtilage of the listed property.

The scheme has been designed to be visually discreet, entirely reversible, and sympathetic to the special architectural and historic interest of the site. The application is supported by detailed layout and elevation drawings, alongside a specification prepared by the renewable energy installer.

Site Context

The dwelling is a Grade II listed building (List Entry No. 1350232), first listed in 1983. The designation describes the property as a C14 service end of a hall house, with flint-faced ground floor and timber weatherboarded upper storey, jettied east wall, and a later C19 red-brick wing under hipped tiled roofs. Internally, architectural features such as cambered tie beams, crown posts, and arched screen doorways remain.

The house sits within a spacious rural plot accessed from Camer Road and is bordered by mature vegetation and traditional boundary treatments. The application site lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Green Belt.

The proposed solar installation is entirely confined to the detached garage situated within the curtilage of the listed building. This garage was granted planning permission in 1994 and is not listed in its own right. As confirmed in a previous officer report (ref. 20201065), the garage is described as having the “appearance of a barn” and being physically separate from the listed house, reducing its sensitivity in heritage terms.

Proposal Details

The proposed development includes:

- 30 AIKO Neostar 2S Gen 2 all-black 460W solar PV panels mounted across the north- and south-facing roof pitches of the garage.
- Associated Fox ESS 8kW inverter and Fox ESS EP11 10.36kWh battery, located within the garage.
- Installation of all necessary wiring, isolators, and safety components, mounted internally or discretely on the rear elevation.
- All works to be fully reversible, with no disturbance to the historic fabric of the listed building or any original material within the curtilage.

The panels will be flush-mounted using the Renusol system, which is compatible with the existing tiled roof and provides a low-profile finish. The panels are matte black and non-reflective, helping to reduce their visibility and avoid visual discord with the existing building fabric.

Heritage and Visual Impact Assessment

The proposed installation is sited entirely on a modern, detached garage that does not form part of the listed building itself. The garage's barn-like appearance and siting—set away from the principal elevation of the house—significantly limit its prominence and contribution to the heritage significance of the site.

In a previous application (ref. 20201065), the Council found that alterations to the garage roof (including conservation-style rooflights and a balcony) were acceptable and would cause no harm to the setting of the listed building. The officer's report noted that "the building is not listed and this elevation faces away from the main house", and confirmed that the garage's appearance and position ensured that its modification would not impact the heritage asset adversely.

In comparison to those previously accepted alterations, the proposed PV panels—being flush-mounted, matte black, and entirely reversible—represent a less visually intrusive and more discreet form of development.

The installation is not visible from public vantage points, and the visual impact on the AONB and Green Belt is negligible due to the screening offered by mature hedgerows and the domestic character of the structure.

Policy Considerations

This proposal delivers clear environmental and energy resilience benefits—supporting national objectives for net-zero transition—and aligns with both national and local planning policies.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024)

- The revised NPPF places stronger emphasis on climate change mitigation and adaptation in Chapter 14. Under paragraphs 160–163, it supports renewable and low-carbon infrastructure—especially where impacts can be mitigated—and requires planning applications to address the full range of climate change considerations
- Paragraph 161 explicitly recognises the UK's legally binding net-zero target by 2050, indicating that designated heritage sites or protected landscapes do not automatically preclude renewable schemes, provided harm can be avoided or justified
- In paragraph 180, well-designed proposals that contribute to climate resilience and sustainable energy use are encouraged, particularly when they help meet local energy needs and reduce reliance on carbon-intensive sources

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- Policy CS18 (Climate Change) encourages on-site renewable energy generation where it is in keeping with local character and sustainable objectives.
- Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) calls for context-sensitive, high-quality design that respects heritage and landscape settings.
- Policy CS20 (Heritage and the Historic Environment) obliges developers to conserve or enhance heritage assets and their settings, in line with statutory duties.

Green Belt and AONB Considerations

- The proposed installation is confined to an existing garage within the curtilage. There is no enlargement of the building footprint or new built form, preserving the openness of the Green Belt.

- Within the Kent Downs AONB, the scope, scale, and location of the panels ensure negligible visual impact. The development complies with AONB principles by prioritising renewable energy aligned with the management plan and rural character.

Conclusion

This proposal represents a low-impact, high-benefit intervention that enhances the energy performance of Little Buckland without compromising the setting, character, or fabric of the listed building.

By locating the solar PV array on a detached, non-listed curtilage structure, and using sympathetic design principles (low-profile, matte black panels), the scheme ensures that no harm is caused to the special interest of the heritage asset, nor to the Green Belt or wider landscape. Given the clear sustainability benefits, heritage-neutral impact, and compliance with local and national policy, it is respectfully requested that planning permission and listed building consent be granted.