HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed Installation of Solar Photovoltaic Panels

Poplar House, Madeira Hill, Wrexham, LL13 7HD

Grade II Listed Building (Cadw Reference 1796)

Prepared in Support of Listed Building Consent and Planning Application

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of an application for Listed Building Consent and associated planning permission for the installation of photovoltaic solar panels at Poplar House, Madeira Hill, Wrexham, LL13 7HD.

The proposal comprises the installation of twenty-four photovoltaic panels, each rated at 500W, providing a total generating capacity of approximately 12kW. The panels are proposed as black-framed, black-glass modules mounted flush with the existing roof coverings, with sixteen panels located on the principal (front) roof slope and eight panels located on the rear roof slope.

Poplar House is a Grade II listed building recorded by Cadw under Reference Number 1796. The property is located within Salisbury Park Conservation Area.

This statement assesses the significance of the heritage asset and evaluates the impact of the proposed development upon its special architectural and historic interest.

2. Site and Heritage Asset Description

Poplar House is a detached early nineteenth-century dwelling situated on Madeira Hill, Wrexham. Originally known as "Poplar Cottage", the property was constructed between approximately 1817 and 1824 and is listed at Grade II by Cadw under Reference Number 1796 in recognition of its special architectural and historic interest.

The building derives significance from:

- Its survival as an early nineteenth-century detached dwelling.
- Its architectural character, form and proportions.
- The retention of its historic fabric and roofscape.
- Its contribution to the historic development of Wrexham.
- Its evidential value as a surviving historic domestic building.

The roof forms an important component of the building's character and contributes to its historic appearance and silhouette. However, the significance of the building derives principally from its overall form, architectural composition, age and historic survival rather than from any particularly elaborate roof detailing.

In addition to its designation as a Grade II listed building, Poplar House is located within the Salisbury Park Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is characterised by a collection of nineteenth and early twentieth-century residential properties set within a mature landscaped environment. The area's significance derives from the quality of its historic buildings, traditional materials, tree-lined streets, historic street pattern and views across Wrexham.

Poplar House makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area through its historic architectural character, traditional materials, prominent position on Madeira Hill and its contribution to the varied historic roofscape that defines the area.

3. Description of Proposed Works

The proposed works comprise:

- Installation of 16 black-framed, black-glass photovoltaic panels on the front roof slope.
- Installation of 8 matching photovoltaic panels on the rear roof slope.
- Associated mounting rails and fixings.
- Internal inverter equipment and associated electrical connections.
- Routing of cabling internally wherever practicable.

The panels will be mounted parallel to the roof plane and will not project significantly above the existing roof covering.

No alterations are proposed to:

- The roof structure.
- Chimneys.
- Eaves details.
- Ridge lines.
- Historic windows or doors.
- Internal historic fabric.

The proposal has been designed to maximise renewable energy generation while minimising visual impact.

Unsure whether work has been carried out to the roof structure in the past. The internal roof looks to be more modern than I would have expected.

Rafters and felt look to be of more modern construction which would aid the proposal in respect of impact to the Historic Fabric.

No trace of any planning/building regs applications relating to work on the roof.

Se image of internal roof structure on the following page.



4. Assessment of Significance

Cadw guidance recognises that significance may derive from architectural, historic, communal and evidential values.



Full Report for Listed Buildings

Cadw

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The list description is not intended to be a complete inventory of what is listed: it is principally intended to aid identification. By law, the definition of a listed building includes the entire building (i) and any structure or object that is fixed to the said building and ancillary to it and (ii) any other structure or object that forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948, and was within the curtilage of the building, and ancillary to it, on the date on which said building was first included in the list, or on 1 January 1969, whichever was later.

Summary Description

Reference Number 1796
Building Number
Grade II
Status Designated
Date of Designation 19/04/1989
Date of Amendment 29/10/2020
Name of Property Poplar House
Address

Location

Unitary Authority Wrexham
Community Offa
Town

Locality
Easting 333487
Northing 349857
Street Side NW
Location In open ground adjoining Saint Giles School and close to junction of Madeira Hill and Poplar Road.

Description

Broad Class Domestic
Period
History Detached early C19 house. Originally known as 'Poplar Cottage', and according to Palmer, built between 1817-1824.

Exterior
Brick with rubble rear wall and slate roof. 3 storeys, symmetrical 3-window range entrance front with central doorway. Doorcase with pediment carried on brackets, and overlight to door. Flanking windows have painted stone flat arched heads, apparently sashes but boarded over. Window to left of doorway has been partially blocked and widenened. Similar windows on upper storeys, with 8-pane sashes to attic storey. Dentilled eaves cornice. End wallstacks, truncated. Brick rear wing is a latter addition.



Architectural Value

Poplar House possesses architectural value as a surviving early nineteenth-century detached residence. Its simple domestic form, traditional materials and historic proportions contribute to its significance.

Historic Value

The building illustrates residential development in Wrexham during the early nineteenth century and contributes to understanding the area's historic growth.

Evidential Value

The building retains historic fabric and construction methods characteristic of its period.

Setting

The building occupies a visible position on Madeira Hill and contributes positively to the character of the surrounding Salisbury Park Conservation Area. It remains a designated heritage asset whose significance is appreciated both through close inspection and wider public views.

5. Impact Assessment

Impact on Historic Fabric

The installation requires limited physical intervention through fixing points associated with the photovoltaic mounting system.

The proposal does not involve the removal of significant historic structural elements and no alterations are proposed to the roof structure, chimneys, eaves, ridges, windows or other important architectural features.

The works are substantially reversible. Should the photovoltaic panels be removed in the future, the roof could be reinstated with minimal evidence of intervention.

The impact upon historic fabric is therefore considered to be minor.

Impact on the Appearance of the Listed Building

The principal heritage impact arises from the visibility of the proposed photovoltaic panels on the roof slopes.

The front roof slope forms part of the principal elevation and is visible from public viewpoints along Madeira Hill and surrounding streets within the Conservation Area. The installation of sixteen photovoltaic panels on this elevation will introduce a contemporary element into the historic roofscape and will alter the visual appearance of the building.

However, a number of factors serve to minimise this impact:

- The panels are black-framed with black glass, reducing visual contrast with the existing slate roof covering.
- The panels will be mounted parallel with the roof slope and will not project significantly above the roof surface.
- The panel arrangement follows the geometry and proportions of the roof.
- The existing roof form, ridgeline and architectural composition remain unchanged.
- No historic decorative features or architectural details will be removed or obscured.
- The installation avoids interference with chimneys, eaves and other prominent roof features.

The eight panels proposed on the rear roof slope will have a considerably lower visual impact due to their reduced visibility from public viewpoints.

While the proposal will result in a degree of visual change, the overall architectural character, scale, form and legibility of the listed building will remain intact.

Impact on the Salisbury Park Conservation Area

The proposal has also been assessed in relation to its impact upon the character and appearance of the Salisbury Park Conservation Area.

The front roof slope contributes to the wider roofscape that is visible from Madeira Hill and surrounding streets. As a result, the proposed photovoltaic panels will be visible within the Conservation Area and will introduce a contemporary feature into views of the building.

Nevertheless, the proposal has been designed to minimise its visual impact through the use of all-black photovoltaic panels, flush mounting and a simple, ordered layout that respects the geometry of the existing roof.

The proposal will not alter the building's scale, massing, architectural form or relationship with neighbouring historic buildings. Nor will it affect important views, mature landscaping, street pattern or other elements that contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area.

Although the panels will be perceptible in public views, the historic character of the building and the wider Conservation Area will continue to be readily understood and appreciated.

The impact on the character and appearance of the Salisbury Park Conservation Area is therefore considered to be limited and less than substantial.

Overall Heritage Impact

The proposal will result in a degree of harm to the significance of the listed building and Conservation Area through visual alteration of the historic roofscape.

However:

- The harm is confined primarily to visual change.
- Historic fabric loss is minimal.

- The works are reversible.
- The architectural form and character of the building are preserved.
- The wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area are retained.

The resulting impact is considered to amount to less than substantial harm at the lower end of the spectrum.

6. Public Benefits

The proposal delivers significant environmental and sustainability benefits, including:

- Generation of approximately 12kW of renewable electricity.
- Reduction in operational carbon emissions.
- Reduced dependence on fossil-fuel-derived energy sources.
- Improved environmental performance of a historic building.
- Contribution towards Welsh Government and UK Government decarbonisation objectives.
- Support for the continued occupation, maintenance and long-term viability of the listed building.

National planning policy and Cadw guidance recognise the need for historic buildings to adapt to contemporary environmental challenges where this can be achieved without causing unacceptable harm to heritage significance.

The proposed installation represents a carefully considered balance between the conservation of heritage significance and the need to improve environmental sustainability. The proposal has been designed to minimise impacts upon both the listed building and the Salisbury Park Conservation Area whilst delivering meaningful renewable energy generation.

The continued sustainable use of historic buildings is a key component of their long-term conservation. By reducing energy costs and improving environmental performance, the proposal will assist in securing the future maintenance and stewardship of Poplar House as a designated heritage asset.

When weighed against the limited and reversible heritage impacts identified above, these public benefits are considered sufficient to justify the proposal.

7. Mitigation Measures

The following measures are proposed to minimise heritage impacts:

- Use of black-framed, black-glass photovoltaic panels.
- Panels mounted parallel to the roof pitch.
- Alignment of panels with roof geometry.

- Concealment of cabling wherever practicable.
- Retention of existing historic roofing materials wherever possible.
- Avoidance of unnecessary disturbance to historic fabric.
- Reversible installation methodology.

8. Conclusion

Poplar House is a Grade II listed early nineteenth-century dwelling of recognised architectural and historic significance.

The proposed installation of twenty-four photovoltaic panels will introduce a modern element to the building's roofscape, particularly on the front elevation. However, the scheme has been carefully designed using black-framed panels arranged to minimise visual intrusion and avoid unnecessary loss of historic fabric.

The proposal results in limited and reversible harm to the significance of the listed building and does not affect its fundamental architectural character, historic form or setting.

When balanced against the significant public benefits arising from renewable energy generation, carbon reduction and the sustainable long-term use of the heritage asset, the proposal represents an appropriate and proportionate intervention.

It is therefore concluded that the works preserve the special interest of the listed building to the greatest extent practicable while enabling meaningful environmental improvements and should be considered acceptable in heritage terms.

The proposal will result in a modest degree of visual change to both the Grade II listed building and the Salisbury Park Conservation Area. The impact arises principally from the visibility of the photovoltaic panels on the principal roof slope. However, the proposal avoids significant loss of historic fabric, preserves the building's form and architectural character, and is substantially reversible.

The level of harm is considered to be at the lower end of the "less than substantial harm" spectrum. This limited harm is outweighed by the substantial public benefits associated with renewable energy generation, carbon reduction and the sustainable long-term conservation of the heritage asset. The proposal is therefore considered to preserve the historic interest of Poplar House and to preserve the character and appearance of the Salisbury Park Conservation Area.