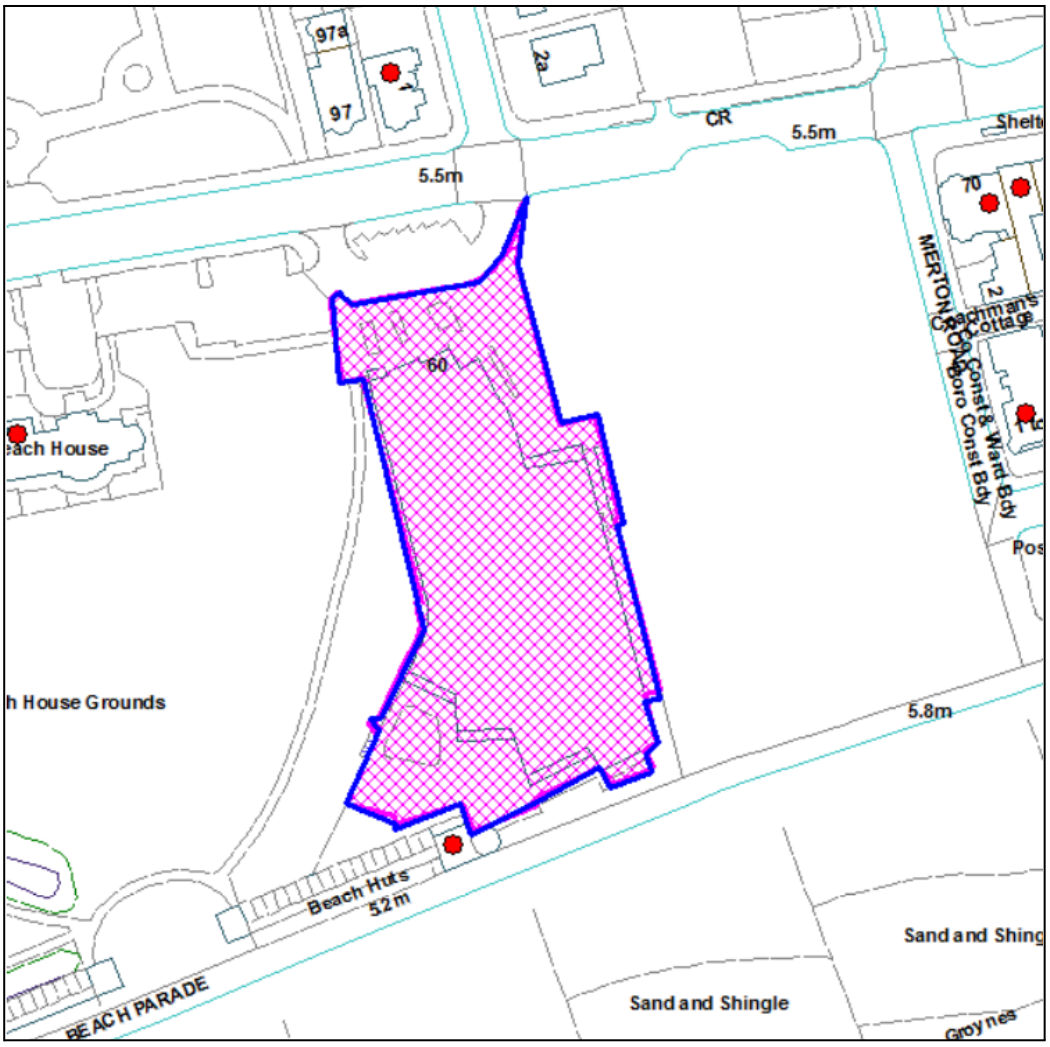
Application Number:	**AWDM/0744/24**	**Recommendation - APPROVE**
Site:	**Splashpoint Leisure Centre, 60 Brighton Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 2EN**	
Proposal:	**Installation of solar photovoltaic (pv) panels on west-facing sloping roofs at splashpoint leisure centre to extend existing pv installations**	
Applicant:	Tavis Russell, Adur and Worthing Councils	Ward: Central
Agent:	NA	
Case Officer:	Louise Prew	



Not to Scale

Reproduced from OS Mapping with the permission of HMSO © Crown Copyright Licence number LA100024321

Site and Surroundings

The application site is the Splashpoint Leisure Centre located on the south side of Brighton Road and adjacent to Beach House and Beach House Gardens to the west. Beach House is a Grade II* Listed Building and is located to the west of the site. The Leisure Centre incorporating a gym, café and swimming pool, fronts Worthing seafront. To the north is Farncombe Road Conservation Area and to the west Steyne Gardens Conservation Area. To the east is a new development of apartments, café, retail and basement parking.

The Leisure Centre is owned by the Council but operated by South Downs Leisure Trust which has a 25 year Lease.

Proposal

The application proposes the installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels on the main west facing roof slope which faces Beach House Gardens.

The PV array would be mounted at least 1 metre away from the edges of the roof and would be installed on standing seam mounting clips ensuring that the 30 mm thick panels are fitted as closely as possible to the existing roof plane. The installation would normally benefit from permitted development rights but a condition was imposed on the original planning permission removing these rights for any subsequent alteration/extension of the building.

The applicants have provided the following supporting statement:

“Leisure Centres, particularly those with swimming pools, have very large energy demands and can emit huge amounts of carbon emissions annually. This is the case with Splashpoint and the installation of additional photovoltaic panels would help to further improve the energy and carbon performance of Splashpoint, particularly as the heating technology at the site (the ground source heat pump) relies on electricity to run the pump. The current application is to install 148 No 435-Watt Hi-MO 6 Explorer solar photo voltaic (PV) panels on existing west-facing standing seam metal roof slopes to extend the existing solar panel arrays. The proposal is a relatively small scale PV installation, mounted on the asset's existing roofs and planned sensitively not to compromise the visual aspect of the surrounding landscape and local amenities.”

The agent has clarified that the panels to be installed are the Longi X6 model rather than the 6 as mentioned above. The colour and finish of the panels has not been specified in the documents so this will be clarified prior to the committee meeting.

In an email to the planning officer further justification is provided about the impact the panels would have on the financial cost to the leisure centre stating

“In relation to the public benefits; Our solar contractor has advised us that the annual return is anticipated at just under £19k. This annual saving would allow the centre to enhance the existing leisure services to the public, e.g. by using the savings to provide better equipment and facilities, maintain the building or contribute towards staffing costs and allow the public leisure centre to continue operating the same

hours and public service. With operating costs increasing this is particularly important."

Relevant Planning History

AWDM/1759/19: Application under Regulation 4 of Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for installation of 100kwp PV array on the flat roof and on sloping roof. Permitted 24 Dec 2019

Planning permission was granted for the new Leisure Centre in 2010 under reference WB/10/0489/WBR3. At the time Historic England was concerned at the potential adverse impact on the setting of Beach House and the application for the new Leisure Centre was amended to incorporate new walling and railings in front of Beach House to enhance its setting.

Consultations

Adur & Worthing Councils:

Conservation architect: When originally considering solar PV panels for the roof of this building, a large number were accommodated without impinging on the design aesthetics of the building. Although solar PVs were deemed acceptable over much of the buildings hidden roof scape, along the roof slope of the prominent western elevation of the building which acts as a backdrop to the Grade II* Listed, Beach House, the roof form and and weathered copper finish were kept free of visual clutter as originally conceived.

In the circumstances it is important to think very carefully about the current proposals as they would entail a level of visual harm. Not only would this affect the setting of Beach House, but it would also affect the setting of the adjacent conservation area. Although the harm to these heritage assets would be less than substantial, and at the lower end of the scale, the visual harm to the international award winning design (World Architecture Festival, winner of the sports category), also needs to be considered when weighing up the perceived public benefits.

Worthing Society: The building is now located adjacent to the recently extended boundary of the Steyne Gardens Conservation Area. This extension has been approved since the Planning Application was submitted and, in our opinion, this change will be a relevant consideration. The Splashpoint Leisure Centre is also within the visual 'setting' of the proximate Grade II* Listed Beach House and associated Beach House Grounds.

We understand this contemporary building was given an architectural design award which recognised the roof as a significant feature. It is the extensive west-facing elevation of the roof which is the proposed installation area for the photovoltaic panels. Given the number and scale of the panels, we consider this will detract from the roofline. The installation of these panels would be rather over-dominant. In our view, this change would not be aesthetically pleasing and therefore detrimental to the host building.

Additionally, we consider the large number of panels would make the roofline more prominent resulting in a negative impact on the 'setting' of Beach House, a Grade II

Listed Regency villa now within the Steyne Gardens CA. Bearing this in mind, the changes to the Splashpoint Leisure Centre would not, in our opinion, be consistent with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

We appreciate the current climate concerns which relate to the preference for reducing emissions. However, we note that this building already has a ground source heating supply. In addition, perhaps consideration could be given to connecting this landmark commercial building to the upcoming Worthing Heat Network system.

In summary and for the reasons identified, the Society objects to this Planning Application.

English Heritage: Historic England provides advice when our engagement can add most value. In this case we are not offering advice. This should not be interpreted as comment on the merits of the application. We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers. You may also find it helpful to refer to our published advice at https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/find/

Representations

One representation was received from Beach House Residents Association Ltd

This is already a grotesque looking building matching the tower block behind, the leisure centre looks over a beautiful leisure area which is a asset (sic) to the area, the PVs will detract from the beauty of the area. The building already has a heat pump system all to which I would have thought was more than adequate to obtain zero emissions. To conclude I/we object to the installation.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)
Planning Practice Guidance
Worthing Local Plan 2020-2036: SP1, SP2, SP3, DM5, DM6, DM7, DM8, DM16, DM17, DM23, DM24
Steyne Gardens Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2024, incorporating boundary review

Relevant Legislation

The Committee should consider the planning application in accordance with:

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provides that the application may be granted either unconditionally or subject to relevant conditions or refused. Regard shall be given to relevant development plan policies, any relevant local finance considerations, and other material considerations.

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the decision to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Section 73A and also Section 72 Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which require the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the appearance of the Conservation Area.

Planning Assessment

Principle

Policy SP2 of the Worthing Local Plan sets out that a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing climate change will be taken. This is the second of three overarching strategic principles which underpins the Local Plan. The policy goes on to state that development proposals are expected to reduce the amount of energy used in construction and operation of buildings and improve energy efficiency, including retrofitting existing properties, to contribute to achieving zero carbon emissions. Policies DM16 and DM17 promote sustainable design and the use of low carbon technologies as part of new development.

In the previous committee report for the existing PV panels the Council's sustainability officer made the following comments:

"Splashpoint Leisure Centre has been built to high standards of sustainable design, and includes a ground source heat pump which provides renewable heat to the swimming pool and building. However, Leisure Centres, particularly those with swimming pools, have massive energy demands and therefore emit massive amounts of carbon emissions annually. This is the case with Splashpoint. The installation of photovoltaic panels would substantially improve the energy and carbon performance of Splashpoint, particularly as the heating technology at the site (a ground source heat pump) relies on electricity to run the pump.

In July 2019, Worthing Borough Councils declared Climate Emergency and committed to work towards being carbon neutral by 2030. As part of this the Council committed to produce a Carbon Reduction Plan: the Draft Plan was approved on 3rd December 2019 at Adur & Worthing Joint Strategic Committee. This identifies that the Council has a total carbon footprint of circa 3,000 tonnes emissions a year but that if Splashpoint and Worthing Leisure Centre were included it would increase to circa 4,000 tonnes of carbon a year. This illustrates the scale of emissions associated with the local Leisure Centres.

In January 2019, Worthing Borough Council committed to work towards 100% clean energy by 2050 for the area (UK100 Cities Pledge) and have committed to work with partners across the County and region to deliver this goal. Approval of the photovoltaic array for Splashpoint whilst meeting SO1, and Policies 17 and 18 of Worthing Core Strategy, will go a considerable way towards offsetting the emissions from Splashpoint, providing renewable energy for the next two decades, and reducing the carbon footprint of Splashpoint and Worthing."

The planning statement for the current application has provided the following justification for the photovoltaic panels.

"In terms of the benefit to Adur & Worthing Councils and South Downs Leisure from installing these additional PV panels on Splashpoint, the additional carbon savings that have been estimated are as follows:

• *The annual energy production the proposed PV array at Splashpoint will generate would be 63.24 MWh.*

• The annual CO2 emission saved from the proposed PV array would be 12.23 t.

• This equates to an equivalent trees planted annually of 562.

If successful, the outcome of the project will deliver 148 No 435-Watt solar PV panels which once operational will provide up to 30% more energy and offer a significant saving against the facilities electricity usage. In a swimming facility that is relatively new and has many of the traditional energy saving methodologies and equipment already installed, the introduction of a further 148 No solar PV panels will offer the greatest outcomes both in terms of efficiencies through energy creation but also in appeasing the financial burden that current utility costs are creating.

As with all capital interventions, to operate the equipment will require power however the gains of the PV panels will translate to a carbon neutral operation and offer a significant reduction on the facilities overall carbon footprint. The technical specifications for the panels are included alongside the providers' report with this application, which detail the definitive benefits and positive outcomes that the intervention would offer."

It is considered that the sustainability credentials of PV panels are clear and that the provision of these would be in accordance with local policies regarding climate change. However, consideration needs to be made as to the impact of the PV panels on the building itself and whether any harm to heritage assets is outweighed by public benefits.

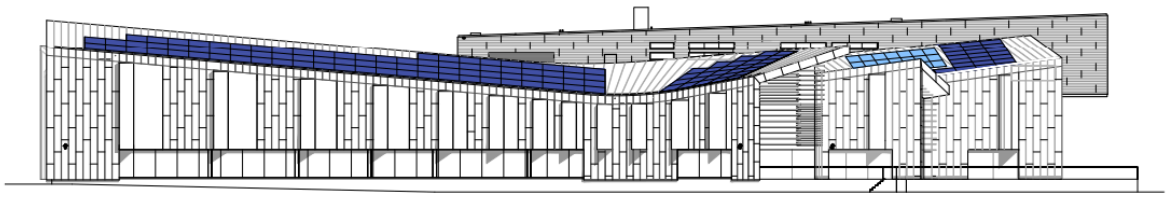
Visual amenity and impact on heritage assets

Policy DM5 of the current Worthing Local Plan (2023) requires developments to be of a high architectural and design quality and respect and enhance the character of the site and the prevailing character of the area. Policy DM24 sets out that development should not adversely affect heritage assets or its setting.

Splashpoint Leisure Centre was granted permission in 2010. A condition was included on the decision notice to restrict the alteration of the building using permitted development rights. This has necessitated this application and allows the Local Planning Authority to assess the impact of the proposed photovoltaic panels on this landmark building. Previous panels have been approved and installed but these are located on roof slopes which are largely hidden from views at street level. This proposal would include panels on the main west roofslope which faces Beach House, a Grade II* listed building and Beach House Grounds, which have both been recently included in the updated Steyne Gardens Conservation Area.

Built in 1820 Beach House was originally Marino Mansion and is a two storey with attic and basement stucco building. The gardens, located to the south of the site are open to the public and lie adjacent to Splashpoint leisure centre. The house and gardens have been included in the recently extended Steyne Gardens Conservation Area. It is considered that the proposals cause some harm to the setting of both the listed building and conservation area. However, this is at the low end of the scale.

West Elevation:



The main concern as set out above is the impact of the panels on the leisure centre building itself. Splashpoint Leisure Centre won the Sport award at the World Architecture Festival 2013 where the following text is provided describing the building:

"*The dynamic, fragmented shape of the new leisure centre is arranged to respond to the surrounding mix of built forms and landscape. The fluid form reflects the fluid nature of the pools and the sea beyond, created by meandering extruded forms. The building's dramatic sawtooth roof, with its ranks of sinuous ridges, recalls a series of dunes that curve and twist towards the coast. This shape reduces the visual mass of the buildings and mediates the change in scale from the terraced houses that line the coastal road to the expansiveness of the open sea*".

As noted by the Council's conservation architect, the previously approved PV panels were deemed acceptable over much of the building's hidden roof scape. That application kept the most visible sweeping roof form and weathered copper finish free of the additional visual clutter which comes with the PV panels. The landmark design qualities of this roof form will be detrimentally affected by the installation of PV panels as the form of the roof will be obscured by the industrial looking flat panels.

As with the previous panels they would be located a minimum of 1 metre from the edges of the roofslope. Additional details have also been provided to illustrate how the panels would attach to the roof. These indicate that the panels will be installed parallel with the roof meaning they will integrate to some degree with the sweeping roof form. However, they are not likely to be able to replicate the curves of the roof. The proposal does not involve PV panels over the deepest element of the curve.

Residential amenity

Policy DM5 states that all new development should not have an unacceptable impact on the occupiers of adjacent properties, particularly of residential dwellings, including unacceptable loss of privacy, daylight/sunlight, outlook, an unacceptable increase in noise giving rise in significant adverse impacts, or vehicular movements resulting in severe cumulative impacts on the road network, or loss of important open space of public value.

Given the nature of the PV panels, it is not considered the development would affect residential amenity in the ways outlined above. However, it has been noted in the

planning statement that there is often concern about the potential reflection and glare from solar panels. They have stated that " solar PV is designed to absorb as much light as possible, so glare is minimal. In a report, prepared for Nottinghamshire County Council, the conclusion was that solar PV has the same reflectivity as that of water and solar panels have less reflectance than many other materials such as wood shingles or vegetation". It is noted that PV panels can be installed using permitted development where reflection and glare are not considerations.

It is considered that the development would not adversely affect residential amenity and is therefore in accordance with policy DM5 of the Worthing Local Plan (2023).

Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the adjacent listed building and conservation area. However, the public benefits of the proposal in terms of the low carbon technology and savings for the operation of the leisure centre are considered to outweigh this harm.

The main concern lies with the impact the PV panels will have on the Splashpoint building itself. The committee is required to make a determination as to whether the harm to the appearance of the leisure centre as set out in the report is overcome by the benefits of the proposal. Officers consider that it is a marginal call but are recommending approval in this instance given the climate change emergency and environmental benefits associated with the proposal.

Recommendation

APPROVE

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Approved Plans.

2. Standard time limit.

3. The PV array hereby approved shall be installed in accordance with the submitted details and shall be positioned at least one metre away from the edge of the roof and positioned parallel with the roof.