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COUNCILLOR GEOFF BARRACLOUGH
Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic
Development

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Dear Mr Boff

London Assembly (Plenary) – 8 June 2023: Motion 1 – Solar Panels on listed buildings

Thank you for your letter of 12 June 2023 notifying the Leader of the Council of this motion. I am responding on his behalf as the lead Cabinet Member.

The importance of retrofitting existing buildings to improve their energy performance and to reduce carbon emissions is a high priority for Westminster City Council. In a city with over 11,000 listed buildings and 56 conservation areas, we are also acutely aware that retrofitting historic buildings can introduce added complexity.

To meet this challenge, we have set up a retrofit task force which aims to develop solutions to the challenges of retrofit, with particular reference to how this can be done to buildings which have some form of heritage protection. Amongst the workstreams identified by the task force is one to review planning processes, including to explore what opportunities existing mechanisms within the listed building consent / planning permission sphere are available to promote sensitive and effective retrofit.

Amongst these mechanisms is the use of Local Listed Building Consent Orders [LLBCOs]. We do believe that the use of such orders has the potential to support retrofit initiatives, while simplifying or removing any perceived burden of having to navigate the planning system. To that end, as part of the task force workstream programme we do intend to actively pursue the role LLBCOs can play in delivering good retrofit

However, we are also mindful of s.16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which imposes a statutory duty on local planning authorities whereby in considering whether to grant listed building consent for works, the authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features



of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Thus, in exploring the use of LLBCOs, particularly if they are applied to all listed buildings, we will need to be sure that we are abiding by this statutory duty. It is possible that a blanket order for all, or most, listed buildings work well for some authorities where there is considerable uniformity to the building types that are listed; whereas in other authorities, and Westminster is likely to be such an authority, where the sheer range of building types that are listed, make the serving of a blanket order more challenging. Nevertheless, we do intend to explore what is possible and will work closely with Historic England to establish what an LLBCO for solar panels might look like for Westminster.

We have also started to produce a series of [How-To Guides](#) to support typical retrofit measures, and these guides are targeted at householders. We have thus far produced guides on how to improve the performance of your windows; and how to install an air-source heat pump. A draft for the next guide about solar panels has recently been completed with the intention to be made available in the autumn. These guides, much like the use of LLBCOs, are intended to help homeowners make good decisions about retrofit and also to demystify and simplify the planning process where possible.

We would be very happy to update you further on the work of the task force and the production of the guide as and when appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Geoff Barraclough
Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development
Member for Maida Vale Ward