

Briefing on London Assembly Plenary Session

Motion 1 – Solar Panels on listed buildings

Context

This motion notes the steps taken by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) in becoming the first local authority in the country to allow solar panels to be installed on both Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings. This was achieved through a Local Listed Building Consent Order for Solar Panels. It is further noted that the consultation process received very positive feedback, with residents, local conservation groups, residents' associations, and the Historic Houses Association praising the initiative.

This means that clean energy can be generated while reducing the workload of heritage officers and other council staff, as they no longer need to spend as much time approving or rejecting proposals. A new mechanism for reporting will be established via an annual monitoring report.

This motion calls on other boroughs to replicate the scheme and for the Mayor of London to create a London Plan Guidance document to assist boroughs in encouraging uptake, as well as collecting data from each borough's annual monitoring reports to assess the impact.

Hounslow Perspective

The commitment to achieve net zero by 2030 has meant that **Hounslow Council is actively pursuing a variety of methods of achieving that goal**. In principle, a scheme such as the one at RBKC could assist in this aim, however, there are several considerations that should be taken into account before such a plan could be implemented in Hounslow.

- Whilst officers understand and support RBKC's approach on this, in practice, the benefit would be very limited in the context of Hounslow, given that we have far fewer listed buildings (**they have 4,000, we have 540**) and because we have a long-standing proactive approach which usually results in appropriate locations for solar panels being found with applicants.
- It is worth noting that RBKC's Listed Buildings Consent Order does not apply to all Listed Buildings and also includes very specific conditions that need to be met - otherwise Listed Building Consent is still required.
- Bringing forward an Order like RBKC **would be very resource intensive**, with requirements for public consultation. This would have to be balanced against the intended benefits as well as existing capacities. Over the next 12-24 months, the Spatial Planning Service will have to prioritise the Local Plan, as well as progress other work which the team has committed to, including the Local List project for non-designated heritage assets and work on Conservation Areas.
- In the context of Hounslow, officers' experience is that our current proactive approach is **working well and is manageable, and that a blanket borough-wide approach for Listed Buildings would not be the most effective way forward**.
- Therefore, whilst there is full support in relation to the principle of encouraging uptake of renewable energy and solar panels in particular, at this point in time, **it wouldn't be seen as the most effective way of focussing our limited resources**.
- It would also be prudent to wait and see what the new government may do in terms of planning reform and how this may affect how energy-efficiency adaptations to existing buildings and historic homes are affected.

