



**Titanic**

**Low Westwood Lane**

**Linthwaite**

## Introduction

This statement has been prepared by AKPlanning in support of an application planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the installation of solar panels on the roof of Titanic Mill, Low Westwood Lane, Linthwaite. It will focus on the main issue of heritage impact and should be read as a Heritage Impact Assessment as well as covering main planning policy.

## Site Location and Description

Titanic Mill is located in the bottom of the Colne Valley near to the river and canal. It is significant building in the landscape with its scale and simple functional architecture dominating its setting. It is shown on the aerial view below.



The current use of the building is mixed with a destination spa on the ground floor and a mix of apartments and hotel rooms on the upper floors.

## Listing

The mill is Grade II Listed, the listing states the following: -

*Circa 1911. Massive woollen mill. Hammer dressed stone. Triple, hipped slate roof. 6 storeys. 26 bays by 6 bays of industry casements. Corner bays of paned round arched windows, break forward slightly and are surmounted by parapet. Other casements have shallow segmental head. On north west elevation, central 7 bays break forward slightly and are surmounted by ashlar parapet with dies. Near central square stair tower on south east side, which rises above eaves level and has triple round arched windows and is surmounted by bracketed cornice and parapet.*

## Site History

Having been constructed in 1911, when woollen mills were starting to decline, the building was never fully occupied for its intended textile purpose. Throughout its history it was occupied by many different uses but fell empty around 1980. The smaller surrounding buildings remained in use but the main building was vacant until the early 2000's when the mill was converted to the current use of spa on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floors. Indeed, the spa has been so successful that it now utilises many of the apartments as hotel rooms for weekend stays for spa customers.

The smaller ancillary buildings were demolished at the same time as the conversion.

It is not known where the name Titanic came from, it is popularly believed that it is



either a reference to the sheer size of the building or that the opening date coincided with the launch of The Titanic ocean liner.

This photo shows the main mill, ancillary buildings and mill pond over the road circa 1930.

The building is an important local landmark and economic driver.

## Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states the following regarding applications that effect heritage assets: -

*194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

*195. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

*202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

The Kirklees Local Plan contains the following policy.

### Policy LP35

#### *Historic environment*

*1. Development proposals affecting a designated heritage asset (or an archaeological site of national importance) should preserve or enhance the significance of the asset. In cases likely to result in substantial harm or loss, development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposals would bring substantial public benefits that clearly outweigh the harm, or all of the following are met:*

*a. the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;*

*b. no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;*

*c. conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*

*d. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

*2. Proposals which would remove, harm or undermine the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, or its contribution to the character of a place will be permitted only where benefits of the development outweigh the harm having regard to the scale of the harm and the significance of the heritage asset. In the case of developments affecting archaeological sites of less than national importance where development affecting such sites is acceptable in principle, mitigation of damage will be ensured through preservation of the remains in situ as a preferred solution. When in situ preservation is not justified, the developer will be required to make adequate provision for excavation and recording before or during development.*

*3. Proposals should retain those elements of the historic environment which contribute to the distinct identity of the Kirklees area and ensure they are appropriately conserved, to the extent warranted by their significance, also having regard to the wider benefits of development. Consideration should be given to the need to:*

*a. ensure that proposals maintain and reinforce local distinctiveness and conserve the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets;*

*b. ensure that proposals within Conservation Areas conserve those elements which contribute to their significance;*

*c. secure a sustainable future for heritage assets at risk and those associated with the local textile industry, historic farm buildings, places of worship and civic and institutional buildings constructed on the back of the wealth created by the textile industry as expressions of local civic pride and identity;*

*d. identify opportunities, including use of new technologies, to mitigate, and adapt to, the effects of climate change in ways that do not harm the significance of heritage assets and, where conflict is unavoidable, to balance the public benefit of climate change mitigation measures with the harm caused to the heritage assets' significance;*

*e. accommodate innovative design where this does not prejudice the significance of heritage assets;*

*f. preserve the setting of Castle Hill where appropriate and proposals which detrimentally impact on the setting of Castle Hill will not be permitted*

The Local Plan also states the following on climate change: -

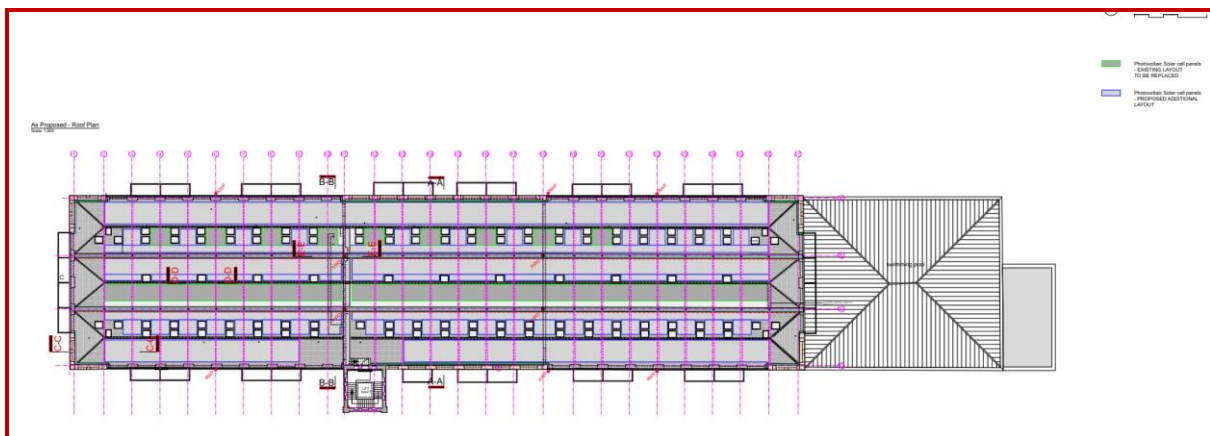
*12.7 The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) provides further clarity, stating that policies should be set to promote renewable and low carbon technologies, and these should be based on evidence that considers the opportunities for different types of technologies, the possible opportunities for district heat networks and consideration of the landscape impacts of these technologies.*

*12.8 The council has considered the potential low carbon and renewable technologies that can be developed within the district. The Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study, Maslen (September 2010) addresses Kirklees specifically. The Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Capacity in Yorkshire and Humber, Aecom (March 2011) also considers the potential for different technologies in Kirklees within the Yorkshire and Humber Region context.*

*12.9 Within the district there are opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy development using a range of technologies including: Wind; solar photovoltaic (PV); solar thermal; heat pumps (ground source, air source, water source); hydro; biomass combustion; biomass anaerobic digestion; district heat networks.*

## The Proposal

It is proposed to replace the existing solar panels on the roof and increase the number over other roof planes. Full plans are submitted with the application, the extract below shows the location of the panels.



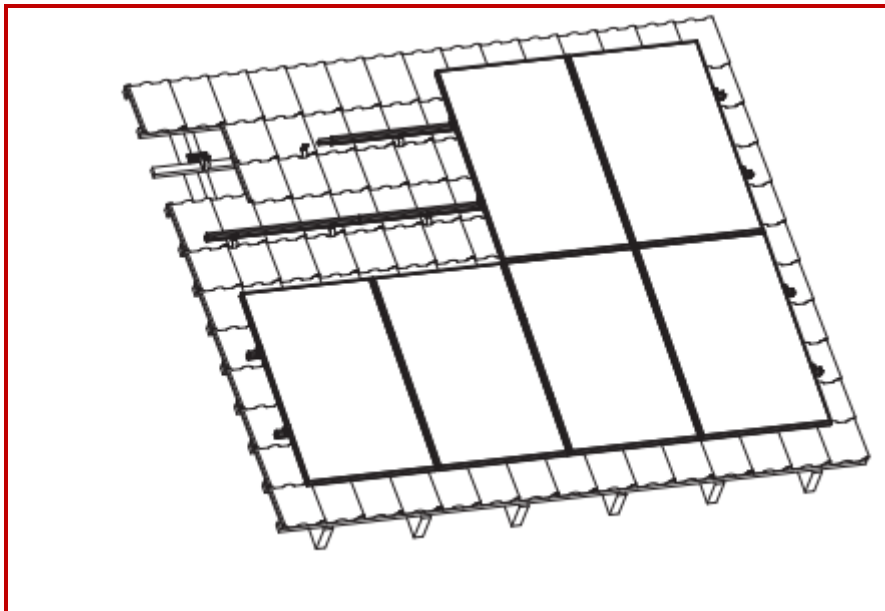
## Assessment of Impact on The Heritage Asset

The proposal is to install panels on all of the roof excepting the end (east and west) hipped elements. When the building was converted solar panels were installed on the inner valleys, these panels will be replaced and new panels will be installed on all the other roof planes.

The existing materials are blue slate.

### Fabric of the building

All of the new solar panels will be placed on top of the existing slates which will remain in situ. The detail below shows how this works.



We believe that by mounting the roof solar panels with this construction system there will be minimal effect on the fabric of the building. The slates will remain in situ and if the panels are removed at a future date they will be revealed undamaged.

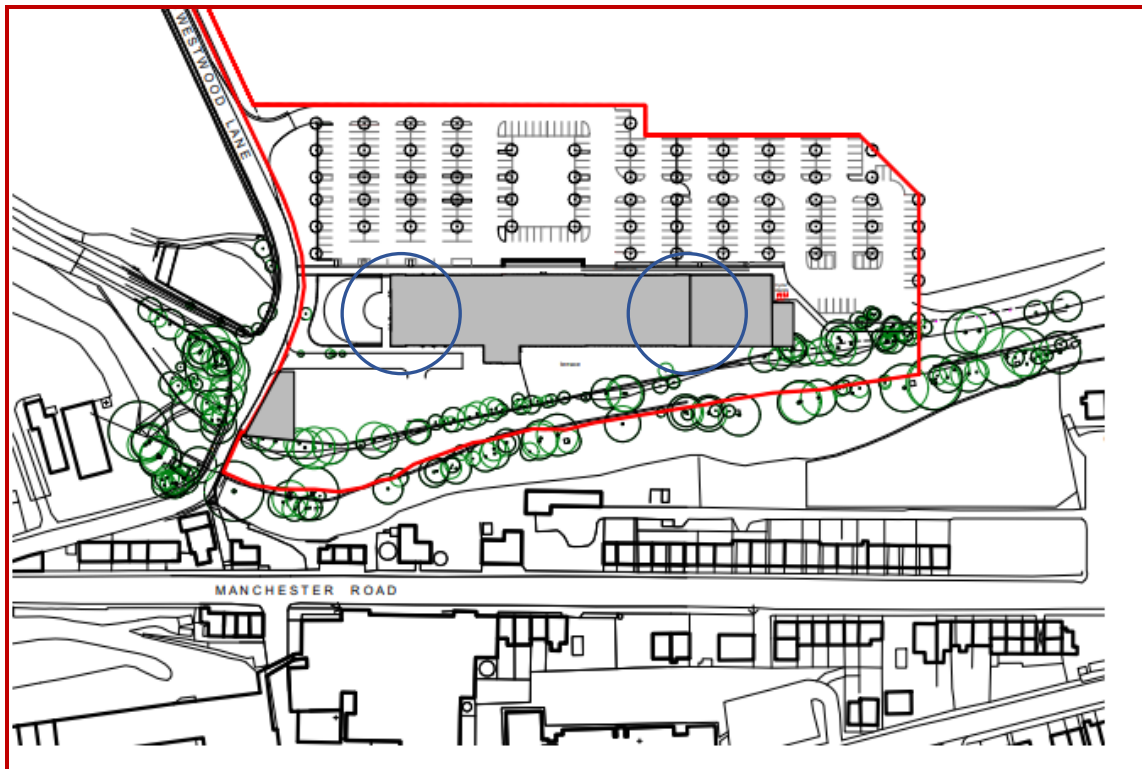
Our opinion is that the effect on the fabric of the building is less than substantial.

## Visual Impact

Titanic mill sits in the valley bottom, it is a tall building being five storeys high. When viewed from ground level the roof is not noticeable and does not form a significant feature of the architecture of the building. The photograph below illustrates this.



The two hipped roof ends (circled blue below) of the mill remain as they are now, blue slate. Views from the east and west, along the valley bottom, will therefore be unaffected as the appearance of the building is unchanged.





Being in the valley bottom there are some limited long distance views of the mill from the valley sides (north and south).

Views from Manchester Road (south) are largely obscured by existing buildings that flank the road.

There are some views of the roof from the north along Low Westwood Lane and into Wellhouse. The new panels on the northern roof elevation will be visible from these areas. The impact is mitigated by the distance and the appearance of the panels which are dark in colour similar to the existing roof.

It is our opinion that the impact of the proposals on the appearance of the building is less than significant.

The solar panels will have a less than significant impact on the heritage asset.

Local Plan Policy states: -

*Proposals should retain those elements of the historic environment which contribute to the distinct identity of the Kirklees area and ensure they are appropriately conserved, to the extent warranted by their significance, also having regard to the wider benefits of development. Consideration should be given to the need to:*

*c. secure a sustainable future for heritage assets at risk and those associated with the local textile industry, historic farm buildings, places of worship and civic and institutional buildings constructed on the back of the wealth created by the textile industry as expressions of local civic pride and identity;*

*d. identify opportunities, including use of new technologies, to mitigate, and adapt to, the effects of climate change in ways that do not harm the significance of heritage assets and, where conflict is unavoidable, to balance the public benefit of climate change mitigation measures with the harm caused to the heritage assets' significance;*

This proposal helps secure the future of this building (part c) and is an opportunity to mitigate climate change (part d)

The NPPF states: -

**202.** *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

There are two reasons to install the new solar panels; firstly climate change mitigation; secondly economic, the price of electricity has significantly increased to such an extent that the viability of the spa is threatened. The NPPF requires that

any harm to the heritage asset is weighed against the public benefit. In support of this application the applicants have stated the following: -

*Titanic Mill along with and promoted by Kirklees Council represented the UK in the SunCities European Union project in the early 2000s, in close collaboration with Holland and Germany, to promote understanding of the technical aspects of solar panels and to seek ways of reducing their purchase costs. The project culminated in the installation of solar panels on two of the roof pitches of the Mill in circa 2005.*

*The Mill comprises of 139 apartments on the upper floors and Titanic Spa on ground floor. As a further drive towards carbon efficiency, all the central heating and hot water provisions for the apartments and Titanic Spa were established on a communal heat network system. Titanic Mill is regarded nationally as one of the forerunners and beacons of sustainability and Titanic Spa itself has achieved one of the top world industry awards, becoming winner of the Global Eco Spa category of the World Luxury Spa Awards in 2022 and on two previous occasions.*

*Electricity is supplied to the Mill on a private wire connection to the grid and this fact will enable it to take advantage of several measures to reduce its energy consumption. Titanic Mill is one of the largest listed buildings in Kirklees and has for example half a mile of communal corridors and accesses. It has previously consumed amongst all users over one million kilowatt hours of electricity annually and the intention is to support the Government initiative to reduce main grid non-renewable energy consumption nationally, as well as for the large number of apartment residents, leaseholders and the Titanic Spa business and employees.*

*The war in Ukraine has imposed huge increases on electricity tariffs and these are destined to be unlikely to ever return down to the levels enjoyed over the last many years. In addition, the Government energy support for businesses, including those like ours on private wire systems, is set to be drastically reduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. The application proposes to replace the existing solar panels on the roof for modern ones, the efficiency of which has increased fourfold over the intervening 17-year period. Additionally, these, combined with new solar panels on the remaining roof areas, will reduce the national grid electricity by circa 30%, which in tandem with other communal energy saving measures is intended to reduce total annual consumption by in excess of 40%. The solar panels will provide renewable electricity at a cost-effective price over the long term.*

It is our considered opinion that the public benefit to climate change (as supported by policy LP 35) and the long term economic benefits to the local area by ensuring the long term viability of the spa outweigh the less than significant impact to the character of the heritage asset.

## Conclusion

The installation of new solar panels and replacement of the existing solar panels will ensure the long-term viability of the spa and the upkeep of the listed building. The only identified impact is to the appearance of the roof when viewed from a distance particular to the north. This less than significant impact is more than mitigated by the public benefit to climate change and the economic benefits of the retention of the spa.

It is our conclusion that this proposal is supported by local and national policy and can be granted planning permission and Listed Building Consent.

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