Cover Letter

St Mary the Virgin Primrose Hill – Installation of photovoltaic technology

- 1. The church of St Mary the Virgin Primrose Hill wishes to install photovoltaic (PV) panels on the south facing slope of the nave roof of St Mary the Virgin Primrose Hill church. The reason for the proposed installation is to provide the church with a green source of energy and help mitigate climate change as demanded by the Government and local authority, as well as the international political and scientific community at large, which now recognises the 'climate emergency'. Camden Council has taken the lead with action on climate change by recognising the emergency with its first Citizen's Assembly to debate mitigation strategies. The Church of England has its own sustainability objectives in order to safeguard God's creation.
- 2. Enclosed with the application are a design and access statement, statement of need and statement of significance. The design and access statement addresses planning considerations as well as design and access matters. It is designed to read as a self-contained document analysing all aspects of the proposals. There is no need for the applicant to submit statements of need and significance. The statement of need was drawn up to support a faculty application and an application for listed building consent. It was confirmed by Council officers in response to a previous application that listed building consent is not required as the Church benefits from the ecclesiastical exemption. Accordingly, these documents are provided for completeness only, and officers should note that they duplicate much of the information provided in the design and access statement.
- 3. The scheme would generate enough electricity to meet the energy needs of the church and help generate a financial income by supplying the grid with surplus sustainably generated electricity. The extra income would help the church with its mission and significant building maintenance programme to ensure the heritage asset will last for many generations to come.
- 4. Local authorities plan to phase out gas for heating purposes, which has left the church needing an alternative as it currently uses gas for heating throughout the church. The church hopes to use the generated electricity to power a new electricity-based heating system. After an initial planning application for 108 panels was rejected, pre-application advice was sought with the intention of submitting a scheme more agreeable, with respect to scale, to Camden Planning.
- 5. The Council's position has been seriously considered and acted upon. There have been three meetings between the Church and its professional advisers to explore alternative schemes, as suggested by officers, as well as pre-application advise sought from Kate Henry and Antonia Powell. The product of this process is that the Church has developed a reduced proposal, indicatively shown as 87 PV panels, on the south facing nave roof that will cause less visual harm. Other methods of generating renewable energy have been investigated such as solar slates, ground source heat pumps and wind turbines, which have all been found to be unfeasible.
- 6. The scheme has developed to address the two key concerns raised by officers. First, a reduced scale is sought on the indicative plans which addresses the need to distinguish the original slate fabric of the church with a new symmetrical, centrally located array of low contrasting PV panels. Second, the black panels will appear as a monolithic block. Whilst the new proposals may still be considered to cause less than substantial harm, the harm is minor following these changes and is significantly outweighed by the considerable benefits of the proposals.

- 7. The proposed scheme is supported by Camden Council's policies:
 - Camden Core strategy Policy CS13: Tackling Climate Change
 - Camden Core Strategy Policy CPG3: Sustainability
 - Camden Development Policy DP22: Promoting Sustainable Design and Construction

Leonard Hawkins 24th February 2020