CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/09282
Application Type:	Householder planning permission
Site Inspection:	27 November 2023
Consultation ends:	12 December 2023
Case officer:	Helena Carney

Site Address:	Chapel House, Marsh Lane, Rowde, Devizes, Wilts, SN10 2NP
Proposal:	Proposed solar panels to south facing roof on side of property
Recommendation:	Approve with Conditions

POLICIES

Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015):
Core Policy 41: Sustainable Construction and Low-carbon Energy
Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design & Place Shaping

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

ISSUES

- Principle of development
- Impact upon the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties
- Design and visual amenity

REPRESENTATIONS

Rowde Parish Council: no comment received at time of writing

Third party representations: none received at time of writing

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- K/79/0894 - Change of use of chapel to dwellinghouse, approved 20/12/1979
- K/80/0194 - Conversion of former chapel into a dwelling and new garage, approved 22/05/1980
- PL/2021/11580 - Replace deteriorated arched wood window with UPVC, approved 06/04/2022
- PL/2023/02163 - Replacement of 3 windows with additional structural enhancement consisting of 3 courses of matching brickwork at first floor, the replacement of 2 windows on South side, and the replacement of front door, approved 16/06/2023

ASSESSMENT

The application site comprises a historic Chapel which was converted to a residential dwelling following the granting of planning permission in 1980. The dwelling is located in a corner plot with the principal elevation fronting Marsh Lane. There are neighbouring residential properties located to the north, east, south and west.

Proposals:
This planning application is seeking planning permission for the installation of roof mounted solar panels. It is proposed to install 8no. panels on the south facing roof slope arranged in two rows of four.

Principle of Development:
Core Policy 41 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted January 2015, sets out the Council's policy for sustainable construction and low-carbon energy. Retrofitting measures to improve the performance of existing buildings is to be encouraged in accordance with the following hierarchy:

i. Reduce energy consumption through energy efficiency measures
ii. Use renewable or low-carbon energy from a local/district source
iii. Use building-integrated renewable or low-carbon technologies.

In February 2019, Wiltshire Council resolved to acknowledge a climate emergency, seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. Carbon reduction in the county is also a key theme of the Council in its recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This application involves the installation of solar panels which will be used to generate electricity for use in the host dwelling. The Council is generally supportive of such technologies subject to them not causing harm to residential amenity or visual amenity. These matters will therefore be assessed in more detail below but it is clear that the proposals are acceptable in principle.

Impact upon the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties:
The adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy CP 57 requires that development should ensure the impact on the amenities of existing occupants/neighbours is acceptable and ensure that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself.

By virtue of the proposed design, materials and positioning of the solar panels on the south facing roof slope, they are considered not to adversely impact upon the occupiers of neighbouring properties as a consequence of overshadowing, overbearing impact or overlooking, which are the key neighbour amenity considerations. The proposed solar panels are a visual amenity rather than a neighbour amenity consideration and this will be covered in the next section of the report.

Design and visual amenity:
The adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy CP 57 requires a high standard of design in any new developments including alterations or extensions to a dwelling. Development is to create a strong sense of place through drawing on local context and being complementary to the locality. The policy seeks for any new development to positively respond to the existing townscape and landscape and effectively integrate into its settings.

Whilst the host dwelling is a former Chapel, it is not a Listed Building, an identified significant unlisted building nor sited within a Conservation Area. The proposed solar panels will be installed on the south facing roof slope of the host dwelling and given that the property occupies a corner plot at the junction of Marsh Lane and Rowde Court Road, it is acknowledged that they will be visible from public vantage points.

However, as the proposed solar panels will be black and will be installed on a slate roof, they will integrate well and are therefore not considered to be so visually intrusive within the street scene or harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling to warrant a reason for refusal.

Conclusion:
In conclusion, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the general criteria set out in the aforementioned policies of the local development plan.

Conditions: (3)

1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

Application Form
Solar Panel Technical Details
Specification Sheet - Exiom 425W Mono All Black Module
Location Plan
Proposed Site Plan
Side elevation (south) - proposed solar panel layout
Front elevation (east) - proposed lay of solar panels

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3 The solar panels hereby approved shall be removed within 2 months of them no longer being needed for microgeneration purposes and within 2 months of their removal, the roof slopes and the surface of the building shall be made good to its appearance at the time immediately before the panels' first installation.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.