CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/07668
Application Type:	Full planning permission
Site Inspection:	14 February 2024
Consultation ends:	22 February 2024
Case officer:	Helena Carney

Site Address:	APPLEGARTH, BROAD HINTON, SWINDON, SN4 9PF
Proposal:	Change of Use of Land to Domestic Use for the Siting of Proposed Ground Mounted Solar Panels
Recommendation:	Approve with Conditions

POLICIES

Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015):
Core Policy 41: Sustainable Construction and Low-carbon Energy
Core Policy 51: Landscape
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 residential amenity
- Design and visual and landscape impacts

REPRESENTATIONS

Broad Hinton Parish Council: no comment received at time of writing

Third party representations: none received at time of writing

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- E/11/0036/FUL - Two storey and single storey extensions, approved 02/03/2011
- E/2012/1215/FUL - Proposed alterations & extension to existing kitchen (Amendment to E/11/0036/FUL), approved 16/11/2012

ASSESSMENT

The application site relates to Applegarth, a residential property located within the parish of Broad Hinton. Access to the application site is taken directly from the A4361 onto a private driveway (to the west of the application site). A public house and associated car park lies to the south of the property and a residential property lies directly to the north.

The property benefits from a generous size rear garden, with open countryside beyond. The application site lies within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

Proposals:
This application is seeking planning permission for the installation of a ground mounted solar PV array comprising one row of 10 panels. The solar PV array will be sited adjacent to the northern boundary.

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 a ground mounted solar PV array which will be used to generate electricity for domestic use in the host dwelling. The solar PV array will be sited in the rear garden of the application site adjacent to the northern boundary. The Council is generally supportive of such technologies and they are permissible even in a countryside location subject to not creating any harm for surrounding residential or landscape amenities. These matters will therefore be assessed in more detail below but it is clear that the proposals are acceptable in principle.

Impact upon residential amenity:
The proposed development has the potential to impact the occupiers of the neighbouring property to the north (Broad Hinton Garage) as the solar PV array will be sited approximately 2.5m from their shared boundary.

The northern boundary treatment comprises a post and rail fence, which allows for direct views between the application site and neighbouring property. The neighbouring land beyond the northern boundary comprises a generous size garden area laid to lawn.

The solar panels will be ground mounted and will face south, into the application site. They will sit approximately 1.2m above ground level.

It is acknowledged that the solar PV array would be visible from the neighbouring property, due to the open nature of the sites. However, the solar PV array is considered relatively minor in nature and low level and as they face away from the neighbouring property to the north, they are unlikely to cause such harm to neighbour amenity to warrant a reason for refusal in this instance.

Design and visual and landscape impacts:
Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted January 2015 proposes that development should "protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures".

The solar PV array will sit approximately 1.2m above ground level and will be approximately 11.5m in length. The proposed development is therefore considered to be relatively minor in nature and the scale of the development is considered commensurate with the size of the application site.

The solar PV array will face south, into the rear garden of the application site and not towards open countryside to the east and will be read in context with the host dwelling and neighbouring property. Furthermore, being sited to the rear of the application site, the proposed development will not be readily visible from public vantage points.

Therefore, due to the position of the solar PV array within the site and the low level and minor nature of the proposals, it is considered that no significant harm will be caused to the landscape setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape as a result of the proposed development.

Conclusion:
The proposal is considered acceptable in the context of its surroundings and is 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 Product Data Sheet (CanadianSolar, TOPHiKu6), received 16/01/2024
Location and Block Plan, received 16/01/2024

Project reference LACE 5441 revision 02 Layout, received 16/01/2024

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

3 The solar PV array and associated equipment hereby approved shall, within two months of them becoming redundant, unusable, or no longer being needed for microgeneration purposes, be permanently removed from the site; and within two months of their removal, the ground upon which they are situated shall be taken back to its appearance at the time immediately before the solar PV array's installation.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity.