

CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2025/08233
Application Type:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
Consultation ends:	20 February 2026
Case officer:	Fiona Webb

Site Address:	Grange Farm, 61 Lower Road, Bratton, Westbury, BA13 4RQ
Proposal:	Installation of 16 solar panels on the rear gable-end roofs of main property
Recommendation:	Refuse

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 16 requires that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 214-216 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 210 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for PP and LBC.

Site and assets considered: The property is a Grade II listed building located in Bratton Conservation Area. The property also affects the setting of numerous other listed buildings in the locality, including the nearby Court House which is Grade II*.

Proposal: The proposal seeks the installation of 16 solar panels on the rear gable-end roofs of main property.

Relevant planning history: W/95/00015/FUL - Replacement two storey extension and alterations (approved); W/95/00032/LBC - Demolition of rear single storey extension replacement two storey extension and alterations (approved); PL/2021/05837 - Proposed internal and external alterations together with reinstatement of Greenhouse and addition of Garage to rear Garden (approved); PL/2021/07447 - Proposed internal and external alterations together with reinstatement of Greenhouse and addition of Garage to rear Garden (approved).

Issues: impact on the listed building, impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, impact on the conservation area.

Information considered/provided: Paragraph 207 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the

significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. In this case, whilst the applications are accompanied by a "Design & Access Statement" the document provides limited information about the building and fails to provide any proper objective assessment of the impact of the proposal and, as a result, it fails to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

However, paragraph 208 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

Significance of assets and contribution of setting: The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

In this case the significance of the building lies largely with its historic fabric and architecture - its form, layout and architectural expression/detailing and use of high-quality design materials which have significant aesthetic and architectural interest and which contribute to the character of the conservation area.

The rear of the building has, however, been compromised by extension and alteration during the modern period and is of lesser interest.

Assessment: The property is a Grade II listed building located in Bratton Conservation Area. The site affects the setting of a number of listed buildings in the locality including the Court House which is listed Grade II*.

The farmhouse dates from the 17th Century with mid-18th Century alterations. It is built of Flemish

brick bond under a tiled roof with a hip to the left and brick chimney stacks. The rear of the building was extended in 1995 with a two storey gable ended extension.

The proposal seeks four large PV panels on each of the gable ended roof slopes on the rear modern elevation of the building.

Paragraph 167 of the NPPF is relevant in this application. Paragraph 167 states 'Local planning authorities should also give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights). Where the proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings or other relevant designated heritage assets, local planning authorities should also apply the policies set out in chapter 16 of this Framework'

Historic England's Guidance Note 18 'Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency' provides clear guidance for the installation of photovoltaic panels. The guidance notes that photovoltaic panels 'have the potential to be visually incongruous and harm a building's architectural qualities. Care is required, especially in considering the aesthetic impact of panels on significant views of the building.' The guidance provides a series of specific circumstances to take into account when considering proposals:

- Installation of panels will generally be acceptable if hidden from view. Locations which will normally have very minimal or no impact include valley roofs and behind parapets on flat or low-pitched roofs.
- Installation of panels will generally not be acceptable on principal roof slopes, if they would be visible and would detract from the building's special interest. Steps should be taken to reduce the visual impact of panels in these locations as far as is possible.
- Mounting panels on outbuildings or land associated with a listed building, provided they are not of greater prominence, will generally be preferable to installation on the main building.

Due to lack of a detailed Heritage Statement to accompany this application, a staged process of assessment has not taken place to assess various options for these work and to arrive at the least harmful and least intrusive solution to the heritage assets.

Due to the height and prominence of the gable ends at the rear of the property the solar panels would be clearly seen in both closer and longer distance views of the listed building particularly looking south along Trowbridge Road.

In addition the solar panels would also be seen from the upper floor of the Court House and would be a prominent intrusive feature in the setting of this Grade II* listed building.

The preferred location for the panels would be ground mounted on the land to the rear of the host building. No justification has been given as to why this option could not be satisfactorily achieved. Ground mounted panels would be unlikely to cause harm to the setting of the host building or any of listed buildings in the locality or the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Historic England's guidance makes it clear that 'Where an installation can be made away from the listed building, and would cause no, or less, harm to its special interest, there will be less justification to install panels on the building itself. Consideration should be given to reducing the visual impact of ground mounted panels in the setting of listed buildings, for instance using hedges to screen them and designing unobtrusive security measures.'

As such in the first instance consideration needs to be given for the panel's to be ground mounted in order to minimise the harmful impact on the significance of the heritage assets. If however a ground mounted array is not possible (and this would need to be clearly justified as why this is not possible), the panels on the more discreet elevations between the two rear wings may potentially be acceptable, but this would also need to be assessed for impact.

In regard to the requirement of Para 167 of the NPPF, whilst I note the weight required to this need, the potential benefits of the proposed PV panels would not outweigh the harm identified to the designated heritage assets.

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

In the first instance an assessment needs to be made of the various options for installing the PV's panel. This should be as part of a Heritage Statement that complies with the requirements of Para 207 of the NPPF in order to accompany any future planning application. In all cases prioritisation should be given to reducing the visual impact of the panels and minimising the visual impact of the panels on the heritage assets significance.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES:

Bratton Parish Council – no comments received

REPRESENTATIONS:

None

RECOMMENDATION:

Refusal

REASON FOR GRANTING PERMISSION/CONSENT/REFUSAL:

The proposal works would harm the character and significance of the listed building by being visually incongruous in views of the listed building, harming its architectural qualities. No objective justification has been provided that demonstrates that the PV's could not be sited in a less prominent location and that the objectives for increasing energy efficiency could not be achieved in an alternative way which avoids harm to the buildings' significance in line with the NPPF requirements. The harm, although less than substantial, is therefore not outweighed by any public benefits, including securing the heritage asset's optimum viable use. The proposal is contrary to Section 16(2) and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; chapter 16 of the NPPF (paras 212, 213 and 215) and policy CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015).

Refusal Reason(s)

- 1 The proposal works would harm the character and significance of the listed building by being visually incongruous in views of the listed building, harming its architectural qualities. No objective justification has been provided that demonstrates that the PV's could not be sited in a less prominent location and that the objectives for increasing energy efficiency could not be achieved in an alternative way which avoids harm to the buildings' significance in line with the NPPF requirements. The harm, although less than substantial, is therefore not outweighed by any public benefits, including securing the heritage asset's optimum viable use. The proposal is contrary to Section 16(2) and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; chapter 16 of the NPPF (paras 212, 213 and 215) and policy CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015).

Location Plan – dated 14/10/2025

Location and Site Plan – dated 14/11/2025

Roof Layout 14/10/2025

Aerial Roof Photo Showing Panel Layout – 14/10/2025

Proposed Elevations – 14 November 2025

Existing Elevations – 14 November 2025

Existing Second Floor Plan – 14 November 2025

Proposed Second Floor Plan – 14 November 2025