

APPLICATION FOR FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/00419
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Sherston Scout Headquarters, Green Lane, Sherston, Malmesbury, SN16 0NP
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Proposed installation of Solar PV panels
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

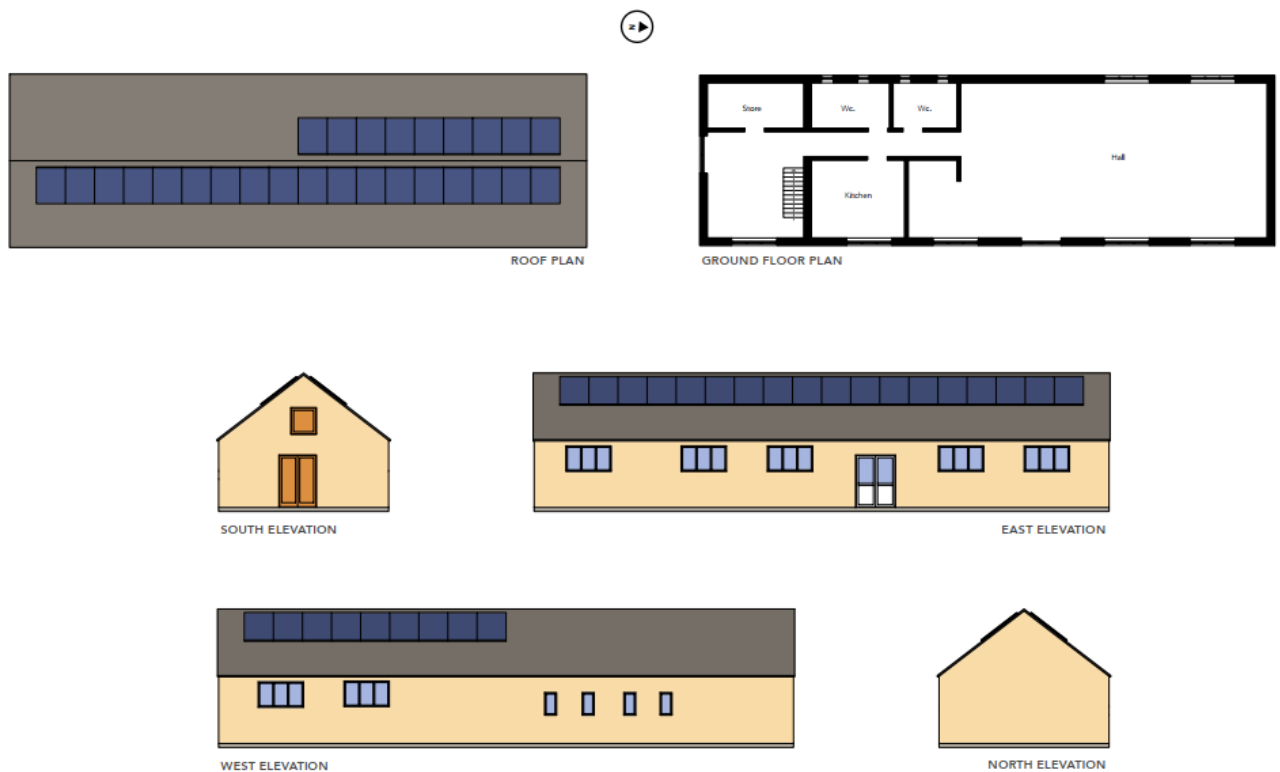
PROPOSAL

This application seeks permission to install a solar array on the roof of Sherston Scout Headquarters. There would be 27no. panels, comprising:

- 18 no. panels (each measuring 1134 x 1762mm) on the east-facing roof slope
- 9 no. panels (each measuring 1134 x 1762mm) on the west-facing roof slope

The panels would be mounted flush with the roof plane, following the existing roof pitch, and would not alter the roof form. The submitted planning statements advises *“the panels will be dark, non-reflective units, reducing glare and visual contrast”*. No other external alterations are proposed. The solar PV system would provide renewable electricity to support the ongoing use of the Scout Hut as a community facility, reducing energy costs and carbon emissions.

The following proposed plans and elevations have been submitted:



SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The application site comprises an existing, single-storey Scout Hut building located within the village of Sherston on the southern side of Green Lane. The site is indicated with the red pin on the plan and aerial photograph below:



The building is a modest, utilitarian structure typical of mid-late 20th century community facilities. It has a pitched concrete tiled roof over Bradstone block walls with white uPVC windows and doors – see images below:

Below: East Elevation



Below: North Elevation



Below: West Elevation



The building is not listed, although it is within the Sherston Conservation Area and the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). The surrounding area comprises a mix of residential properties, community buildings, and open spaces typical of a rural village setting. There are no listed buildings in the vicinity.

PLANNING HISTORY

None that is relevant to this application

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- National Design Guide

Development Plan:

The development plan for Wiltshire comprises the *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)* (adopted January 2015) and any made neighbourhood plans, which remains the principal statutory planning document guiding development across the county. In line with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Though the development plan is considered as a whole, those parts deemed to be particularly relevant to this application are listed below:

The adopted *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)*, with particular regard to:

- Core Policy 1 Settlement Strategy;
- Core Policy 2 Delivery Strategy;
- Core Policy 13 Spatial Strategy Malmesbury Community Area
- Core Policy 41 Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;
- Core Policy 58 Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment;

Sherston Neighbourhood Plan – Made May 2019

Objective 2: Conserve and Enhance Sherston's Heritage Assets

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)

ISSUES

The main issues that need to be addressed in this case include:

- Whether the development is acceptable in principle (CP 1 and 2)
- Whether the scheme constitutes high quality design (CP 57)

- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable impact upon the reasonable living conditions of the adjoining occupants (CP 57)
- Whether the scheme would preserve or enhance the historic environment (CP 58)
- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable landscape impact (CP 51)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WC Conservation: No objection:

"The impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is neutral to low impact. The public benefits of the 10 kw solar energy is sufficient to outweigh any minor level of visual harm."

Sherston Parish Council:

"No objection."

REPRESENTATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), the application was publicised by way of:

- Neighbour notification letters sent to adjoining and nearby properties;
- A site notice displayed near the site;

These methods were used to inform interested parties and provide a period of 21 days for comments to be submitted. No representations had been received at the time of writing.

ASSESSMENT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

In accordance with this statutory requirement, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Development Plan, including the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and, where applicable, any made Neighbourhood Plans. Consideration has also been given to the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a material consideration in the assessment.

Principle of Development

Policy Context

Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy of the WCS establishes a hierarchy of settlements to guide where development should be focused. The policy prioritises growth in:

- Principal Settlements (e.g., Salisbury, Chippenham, Trowbridge) – main focus for strategic growth.

- Market Towns – support local services and employment; suitable for sustainable development.
- Local Service Centres – smaller towns and villages with a range of services; limited development supported.
- Large and Small Villages – development should be limited and respond to local needs.
- Outside the defined settlements – development is strictly controlled and generally not supported unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy of the WCS sets out how development will be distributed and delivered across Wiltshire. The policy emphasises:

- Sustainable patterns of growth, reducing the need to travel and supporting local services.
- Development should be plan-led, aligning with the settlement strategy and supported by infrastructure.
- Windfall development (not allocated in plans) must still comply with the principles of sustainable development.
- Development outside settlement boundaries is generally not permitted, unless it meets specific policy exceptions (as set out in paragraph 4.25 of the WCS).

Together, CP1 and CP2 ensure that new development is strategically located, sustainable, and supports the character and function of Wiltshire's communities.

Conclusion

The site lies within the settlement boundary of Sherston, identified as a Large Village within the Malmesbury Community Area and as such the principle of development is accepted subject to the details discussed below.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

Policy Context

Core Policy 57 of the WCS requires high-quality design that:

- Enhances local character.
- Responds to the natural, historic, and built environment.
- Retains important features (e.g., trees, hedges).
- Supports sustainable construction and compatibility with surrounding uses.
- Creates safe, legible, and accessible spaces.

Section 12 of the NPPF emphasises design that is:

- Visually attractive.
- Functionally effective.
- Contributes to the quality of the built environment.

The Wiltshire Design Guide encourages sensitivity to local character, materials, and architectural styles and supports modern living standards while maintaining aesthetic and functional quality.

Building for a Healthy Life Framework promotes healthy, inclusive, and sustainable places.

WCS Core Policy 41 encourages retrofitting measures to improve the energy performance of existing buildings.

Assessment

The proposal relates to the installation of 27 solar panels on the east- and west-facing roof slopes of an existing single-storey Scout Hut. The panels would be mounted flush with the existing roof plane and would follow the established roof pitch. There would be no alteration to the height, scale, or form of the building.

The host building is a modest, utilitarian structure of limited architectural merit, constructed in concrete tiles and blockwork with uPVC fenestration. It does not make a strong positive contribution to the immediate street scene and is typical of mid-to-late 20th century community buildings. In this context, the introduction of solar panels would not disrupt any notable architectural detailing or erode distinctive design features.

The panels would be dark, non-reflective units, and by being mounted flush with the roof slope would sit closely against the existing roof covering. Whilst the panels would be visible from certain vantage points within the village, they would read as a contemporary addition to an otherwise simple roof form. Given the functional nature of the building and the absence of decorative roof features, the visual impact would be limited.

The proposal would not introduce visual clutter or incongruous extensions to the building envelope.

Core Policy 57 seeks high-quality design that responds positively to its context. In this case, the proposal represents a modest and proportionate intervention to an existing building, retaining its overall form and character. Furthermore, Core Policy 41 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy actively encourages measures to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. The proposal aligns with this objective through the retrofitting of renewable energy infrastructure to an existing community facility.

Overall, the design approach is functional and appropriate to the character of the host building. While clearly visible as a modern intervention, the panels would not result in unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the area.

Conclusion

The proposals submitted are for improvements to an established community recreational facility set within the heart of the village.

The proposed solar installation would be a discreet, flush-mounted addition to an existing utilitarian building. It would not alter the scale, form, or defining characteristics of the Scout Hut and would have a limited visual impact within the wider village context.

The scheme is therefore considered to accord with Core Policy 57 and Core Policy 41 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, as well as the design principles set out within Section 12 of the NPPF and the Wiltshire Design Guide.

Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy Context

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 72(1) of the Act 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 for planning. Chapter 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. In particular:

Paragraph 208 requires LPAs should “avoid or minimise any conflict” between the heritage asset’s conservation (which includes achieving its optimum viable use) and any aspect of a proposal.

Paragraph 210 requires local planning authorities to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable new uses and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraphs 212 requires “great weight” to be given to an asset’s conservation “irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

Paragraph 213 advises that harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should require “clear and convincing justification”.

The 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 and non-designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance and encourages proposals which improve the condition of heritage assets at risk.

The Council’s Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. The policy requires applicants to “demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through (amongst other things) responding to the value of the natural and historic environment and being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and landscapes. Development is required to respond positively to the existing in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

Assessment

The application site lies at the northern edge of the Sherston Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Appraisal notes that this part of the area is largely defined by its historical association with the recreation ground rather than by the architectural quality of the buildings themselves. The appraisal observes that the adjacent recreation ground has been altered

significantly over time, including the loss of former earthworks and some historic boundary features, resulting in an open, windswept character. Existing built elements such as the Scout Hut, concrete steps, chain-link fencing, and terraces of 20th century housing contribute little to the area's historic character.

The proposed solar panels would be mounted flush on the roof of the Scout Hut and would not alter its scale, form, or historic fabric. The building itself is of modest architectural value and does not make a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area. The panels would be visible in some views from the recreation ground and surrounding streets, but given their dark, non-reflective finish and the functional appearance of the host building, the visual impact would be limited.

The Conservation Officer has assessed the proposal and considers that the impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be neutral to low. In line with the NPPF any minor level of harm is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme, including the generation of renewable energy to support ongoing community use of the Scout Hut.

Overall, the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, with only a minor, low-end impact on its significance.

Conclusion

The proposed installation of solar panels on the Scout Hut would result in a very limited visual impact on the Sherston Conservation Area. The building itself is of modest architectural value and the panels would not detract from the area's defining features.

Given the low level of harm identified and the clear public benefits in terms of renewable energy and sustainable operation of a community facility, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Policy 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the heritage protection aims of the NPPF. The development would therefore preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Amenity

Policy Context

Core Policy 57 (Point vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to respect the amenity of existing occupants and ensure appropriate amenity levels for future residents.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Paragraph 135, reinforces the need for development to provide a high standard of amenity for both existing and future users.

These policies guide the assessment of amenity impacts, which will be considered in detail under the below headings.

Assessment

The proposed solar panels would be installed on the roof of the existing single-storey Scout Hut and would not alter the building's scale, height, or position relative to neighbouring properties. The panels are non-reflective and would not generate noise, shadow flicker, or other impacts affecting adjacent residents.

Given the orientation, height, and nature of the development, there would be no adverse effects on the outlook, privacy, or general living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

Conclusion

The proposal would not result in any material impact on the amenity of adjoining properties and is therefore considered acceptable in accordance with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Policy Context

Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to:

- Protect, conserve, and enhance landscape character and quality.
- Respect local distinctiveness, key views, and visual receptors.
- Give particular weight to impacts on National Landscapes and locally valued landscapes.

The Wiltshire Design Guide SPD (2024) promotes a context-led approach, encouraging integration with natural features and settlement patterns while avoiding visual intrusion.

The NPPF emphasises the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes, particularly those with scenic, historic, or ecological significance. Planning decisions should:

- Recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- Safeguard key views, local distinctiveness, and landscape settings.
- Ensure development is well-integrated into its surroundings and avoids visual intrusion, especially in sensitive or designated areas.

Landscape impact must be considered alongside biodiversity, heritage, and green infrastructure objectives, with mitigation measures encouraged where harm cannot be avoided.

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

Under Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, LPAs and other relevant authorities must now “seek to further” the statutory purposes of National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), replacing the previous duty to merely “have regard to” them.

This is an active duty, requiring authorities to take reasonable and proportionate steps to support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, special qualities, and key characteristics of these designated areas when exercising any function that affects them.

Assessment

The application site lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). Core Policy 51 seeks to ensure that development conserves and enhances landscape character, with particular

regard to the distinctive qualities of the CNL, including its rural village settings, open spaces, and visual amenity.

The proposed solar panels would be dark, non-reflective units mounted flush with the roof plane of an existing single-storey Scout Hut in the centre of Sherston village. The panels would follow the existing roof pitch and would not alter the building's form, scale, or silhouette. Given their subdued appearance and the limited architectural value of the host building, the panels would integrate unobtrusively into the immediate streetscene.

Views of the roof from public vantage points are limited by surrounding buildings and the enclosed nature of the village streets. While some visibility would occur from the adjacent recreation ground, the non-reflective finish and low height of the building ensure that the panels would not introduce prominent or jarring visual elements into the village landscape. The proposal would therefore avoid significant intrusion into the character and setting of the CNL.

Furthermore, the panels would support renewable energy generation for a community facility, aligning with sustainable development objectives promoted by Core Policy 41. This benefit reinforces the minor nature of the visual impact on the local landscape.

Conclusion

The proposed solar installation represents a modest, low-visibility intervention within the heart of Sherston village. The non-reflective, flush-mounted panels would integrate with the host building without altering its form or scale and would not adversely affect the character, appearance, or visual amenity of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

On balance, the development is considered to comply with Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the relevant principles of the NPPF, conserving the distinctive qualities of the National Landscape while providing clear environmental benefits.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The proposed installation of 27 flush-mounted, dark, non-reflective solar panels on the Scout Hut is a modest and proportionate intervention. The development would not alter the scale, form, or defining characteristics of the building, nor would it affect the reasonable living conditions of neighbouring properties.

The panels would integrate unobtrusively into the streetscene and would have only a very limited impact on the character and appearance of the Sherston Conservation Area. Any minor level of heritage harm is outweighed by the clear public benefits of renewable energy provision for a community facility. Similarly, the proposal would have a negligible effect on the Cotswolds National Landscape, conserving the village's rural character while supporting sustainable energy objectives.

Overall, the scheme is considered to accord with the relevant provisions of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Core Policies 41, 51, 57, and 58), the Sherston Neighbourhood Plan, and the design and heritage aims of the NPPF. The development is acceptable in planning terms.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions:

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:

Planning, Heritage, Design and Statement received 21 January 2026

Proposed Floor and Elevation Plans received 21 January 2026

Solar Panel Details received 26 January 2026

Location and Site Plan received 28 January 2026

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