

# APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION

## CASE OFFICER REPORT

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| <b>APPLICATION REFERENCE:</b>   | PL/2026/01758                                                       |
| <b>APPLICATION TYPE:</b>        | Full planning permission                                            |
| <b>SITE ADDRESS:</b>            | Copper Beech, Marston Hill, Meysey Hampton,<br>Cirencester, GL7 5LH |
| <b>DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:</b> | Install 6 solar panels at ground level                              |
| <b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>          | Approve with Conditions                                             |

### SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

Copper Beech is a detached residential dwelling located 960m east of Meysey Hampton. The property occupies a spacious rural plot set back from the highway and is characterised by extensive garden areas and established landscaping, including mature trees and hedgerows along parts of the site boundaries. The dwelling is domestic in appearance and is surrounded by open countryside.

Access to the site is gained from Marston Hill via an existing private driveway. The surrounding area comprises a mix of residential properties interspersed with agricultural land and open fields.

The application site lies within the countryside beyond any defined settlement boundary and is not subject to any specific landscape or heritage designations that are directly relevant to the proposed development.

### PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the installation of six additional ground-mounted solar photovoltaic panels on land adjacent to Copper Beech. The panels would be located on agricultural land associated with the property; however, the application does not seek permission for a change of use of the land and is solely for the siting of the solar array. The electricity generated would be used to serve the domestic energy needs of the dwelling known as Copper Beech.

The proposed development comprises six photovoltaic panels, each measuring approximately 2.01m in length and 1.10m in width. The panels would be mounted at a pitch of approximately 15 degrees. The proposed array would have a total length of approximately 16.12m and would project to a maximum height of approximately 0.37m above ground level.

The site already benefits from planning permission under reference PL/2022/01702 for the installation of eight ground-mounted solar photovoltaic panels. Those approved panels occupy an area of approximately 12m by 1m and have a height of slightly less than 0.5m. This application seeks permission for six additional panels to supplement the existing approved solar installation.

### PLANNING HISTORY

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| <b>Proposal / Summary</b>                                                                                                                                            |
| PL/2022/01702 – Full Planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 18/07/2022 – Installation of 8 solar panels mounted on ballast-weighted ‘sun tubs’ |
| PL/2025/08510 - Householder planning permission Decision - Withdrawn by Applicant Date: 2/3/2026 – Install 4 solar panels at ground level                            |

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

### Statutory Legislation:

#### 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 42 Standalone Renewable Energy Installations;
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;

#### Draft Wiltshire Local Plan Policies

At Full Council on 19 May, the elected members of Wiltshire Council agreed to withdraw the emerging WLP. It will now be subject to a legal process to finalise its withdrawal - which is likely to happen in July or August (2026). The said Plan has no material weight for the purposes of the application.

#### Neighbourhood Plan:

No neighbourhood Plan.

#### 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 have an acceptable landscape impact (CP 51)
- Whether there would be any harmful impacts upon protected species or priority habitats (CP 50)

## **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

WC Public Protection: No objection.

Marston Meysey Parish Council: No comments received.

## **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.

Below is a summary of the representations received during the consultation period. Only material planning considerations have been taken into account in the assessment of this application. Non-material issues, such as property values or private legal disputes, cannot be considered in the determination process.

No comments received.

## **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.

### *Assessment*

The application site is located outside any defined settlement boundary and therefore lies within the open countryside. As such, the proposal falls to be considered against the restrictive approach to development set out within Core Policies 1 and 2.

Notwithstanding its countryside location, the proposal does not involve the erection of a new dwelling, commercial building or other form of built development that would conflict with the settlement strategy. Rather, the application seeks permission for six additional ground-mounted solar photovoltaic panels associated with an existing residential property.

The proposal would supplement a previously approved solar installation on the site, granted under planning permission PL/2022/01702, and would provide additional renewable energy generation for the domestic needs of Copper Beech. The development therefore contributes towards national and local objectives to increase renewable energy generation and reduce carbon emissions.

Core Policy 42 specifically supports renewable energy developments where any adverse impacts can be made acceptable. Given the modest scale of the proposal, its low-profile design, and its relationship with the existing dwelling and approved solar installation, the principle of providing additional domestic-scale renewable energy infrastructure in this location is considered acceptable.

The proposal would not result in the loss of any significant area of agricultural land, nor would it materially alter the character or function of the site. As no change of use of the land is proposed, the development would remain ancillary to the existing residential use of Copper Beech.

### *Conclusion*

Whilst the site lies within the countryside, the proposal represents a small-scale renewable energy development associated with an existing dwelling and is supported in principle by Core Policy 42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Subject to consideration of the detailed impacts discussed below, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle and compliant with Core Policies 1, 2 and 42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the objectives of the NPPF.

## **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. The document encourages:

- Walkability.
- Access to green space.
- Active design principles for well-being.

### *Assessment*

The proposal relates to the installation of six additional ground-mounted solar photovoltaic panels on land adjacent to Copper Beech. The panels would be positioned at ground level with a maximum height of approximately 0.37m above ground level.

The proposed development is modest in scale and low in profile. Due to the limited height of the panels and their siting adjacent to the existing dwelling and previously approved solar array, the development would appear as a small-scale domestic renewable energy installation rather than a prominent or intrusive feature within the wider landscape.

The panels would be located on land associated with Copper Beech and would be viewed in the context of the existing dwelling, surrounding garden areas and the approved solar

installation permitted under application PL/2022/01702. Their appearance would be consistent with the existing solar panels on the site and would not introduce an incongruous form of development into the locality.

Furthermore, the proposal would not require the removal of any significant landscape features, trees or hedgerows. Given the non-permanent nature of the mounting system, which relies on ballast rather than ground fixings, the proposal would result in minimal physical alteration to the site.

The development would support the generation of renewable energy for the domestic property whilst maintaining the rural character of the area. Having regard to its scale, design and siting, the proposal would not give rise to any significant harm to the character or appearance of the site or the surrounding countryside.

### *Conclusion*

The proposed solar panels are considered to be appropriately designed and proportioned for their intended purpose. By virtue of their limited scale, low height and siting adjacent to the existing dwelling and approved solar installation, the development would not result in any unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the area. The proposal therefore accords with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the design objectives of Section 12 of the NPPF, and the guidance contained within the Wiltshire Design Guide.

### **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.

#### *Overlooking / loss of privacy*

The proposed development comprises six ground-mounted solar panels with a maximum height of approximately 0.37m above ground level. The proposal does not include any habitable accommodation, windows, elevated platforms, or other features that could result in overlooking or a loss of privacy to neighbouring properties.

Accordingly, the proposal would not have any adverse impact on neighbouring residential privacy.

#### *Loss of light / overshadowing*

Given the modest scale of the proposed development and its very limited height above ground level, the solar panels would not result in any material loss of daylight or sunlight to neighbouring properties. The development is not of a scale capable of creating significant shadowing effects and therefore would not adversely affect the living conditions of nearby occupants.

### *Overbearing Impact / Overall sense of enclosure*

The proposed solar panels would be low-profile structures projecting no more than 0.37m above ground level. As such, they would not appear dominant or imposing when viewed from neighbouring land or properties. The development would not create any undue sense of enclosure or result in an overbearing form of development.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this regard.

### *Conclusion*

By virtue of its limited scale, low height, and nature as a small-scale renewable energy installation, the proposal would not result in any unacceptable impacts upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers or future users of the site. The development is therefore considered to accord with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

## **Ecology and Biodiversity**

### *Policy Context*

The ecological impact of development is a key planning consideration, especially for larger schemes. Proposals must assess and address potential effects on:

- Protected species
- Priority habitats
- Ecological networks
- Green and blue infrastructure

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to:

- Avoid harm to ecological assets.
- Deliver measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), in line with the Environment Act 2021.
- Support habitat restoration and connectivity.
- Integrate biodiversity into site design.

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022–2030) promotes nature recovery, ecosystem services, and habitat connectivity through development.

Unless exempt, National policy requires a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for major developments, demonstrated via:

- Biodiversity Metric calculations
- Ecological assessments (e.g. PEAs, Phase 1 surveys, protected species surveys)

### *Assessment*

The proposed panels would be mounted and do not require excavation or permanent foundations, thereby limiting disturbance to the ground and any habitats present.

Given the modest scale of the development, its low-profile design and the limited area of land affected, the proposal is not considered likely to result in significant harm to ecological

interests, protected species, habitats or ecological networks. The site comprises agricultural land associated with an existing residential property and there is no evidence before the Local Planning Authority to indicate that the proposal would adversely affect any designated ecological sites or protected species.

The development would occupy only a small area of land and would not necessitate the removal of trees, hedgerows or other important natural features. As such, habitat loss resulting from the proposal would be negligible.

In respect of Biodiversity Net Gain, the proposal is considered to fall within one of the exemptions from the mandatory BNG requirements due to its very small scale and minimal habitat impact. Consequently, the submission of a Biodiversity Gain Plan and Biodiversity Metric calculation is not required in this instance.

Notwithstanding the exemption, the proposal would contribute towards wider environmental objectives through the generation of renewable energy, supporting the transition to a low-carbon future and helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with domestic energy consumption.

### *Conclusion*

The proposed development would not result in any unacceptable impacts upon biodiversity, protected species, priority habitats or ecological networks. The limited scale and nature of the proposal, together with the absence of any significant habitat loss, lead to the conclusion that the development is acceptable from an ecological perspective. The proposal therefore accords with Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the objectives of national planning policy relating to biodiversity conservation and environmental enhancement.

## **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 (formerly AONBs) 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 Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022–2030) supports landscape protection through green infrastructure, habitat connectivity, and nature-based solutions.

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.

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*

Whilst the panels would be located on agricultural land, they would be viewed in the context of the existing dwelling, associated domestic curtilage and the previously approved solar array. The proposal therefore represents a modest extension to an existing renewable energy installation rather than the introduction of a substantial new feature within the landscape.

The proposed panels would have a maximum height of approximately 0.37m above ground level. Due to their very low profile, the panels would remain largely unobtrusive when viewed from surrounding land and public vantage points. Their limited height would significantly reduce their visibility within the wider landscape and ensure that they do not appear as a prominent feature.

The proposal would not require the removal of trees, hedgerows or other landscape features which contribute to the character of the area. Furthermore, the siting and scale of the development would ensure that it does not interrupt important views or materially affect the visual amenities of the locality.

The proposal would contribute towards the generation of renewable energy in accordance with local and national objectives whilst maintaining the rural character of the surrounding countryside. Given the modest scale of the development and its relationship with the existing dwelling and approved solar installation, any effects on landscape character and visual amenity are considered to be negligible.

### *Conclusion*

The proposed development is modest in scale and low in profile and would be seen in the context of the existing dwelling and approved solar installation. As such, it would not result in any unacceptable harm to the character, appearance or visual amenities of the surrounding landscape. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Wiltshire Design Guide SPD and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed development represents a modest addition to an existing domestic renewable energy installation and would support the generation of low-carbon energy for the dwelling at

Copper Beech. Having regard to the scale, siting and design of the proposal, it is considered that the development would not give rise to any unacceptable planning impacts.

The proposal has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Development Plan and all other material considerations. No technical objections have been raised by consultees and no representations have been received in response to the publicity undertaken.

For the reasons set out within this report, the proposal is considered to accord with the relevant provisions of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out below.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to:**

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:
  - Location and Site Plan; DWG No. CS-24009 21 PL1; Received 16 March 2026
  - Proposed Site Plan; DWG No. CS-24009 22 PL2; Received 23 April 2026
  - Proposed Floor Plan; DWG No. CS-24009 23 PL1; Received 16 March 2026
  - Solar Panel Datasheet; Received 16 March 2026
  - System Datasheet; Received 16 March 2026
  - Application Form; Received 16 March 2026
  - Biodiversity self-assessment form; Received 16 March 2026

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

3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match in material, colour and texture those used in the existing building unless otherwise stated on the approved plans.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

4. If within a period of 10 years from the date of this permission the solar panels hereby approved permanently cease to be used for domestic power generation, the panels, mountings, and any associated paraphernalia shall, within a period of three calendar months of the permanent cessation, be removed and the land on which it sits shall be restored to a condition indistinguishable from its immediate surroundings.

REASON: In line with Core Policy 42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, to manage impacts on the landscape and agricultural land in the event that the installation fails to serve a useful purpose.