

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION

CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/01785
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Cricklade Manor Prep, Calcutt Street, Cricklade, Swindon, SN6 6BB
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Provision of roof mounted solar panels
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The application site relates to Cricklade Manor Prep School, located on Calcutt Street within the settlement of Cricklade. The site comprises an established educational campus characterised by a mix of historic and more modern school buildings set within landscaped grounds.

The site lies within the Cricklade Conservation Area and contains within its wider extent a Grade II listed building known as The Manor (List Entry: 1356093). The Manor is situated separately from the buildings subject to this application to the front of the site. The application buildings are not listed, nor are they physically attached or directly associated with the listed building.

The surrounding area is predominantly composed of residential properties, community uses, and historic buildings typical of a small market town. The school site forms part of the built-up area and is not isolated in the landscape.

The buildings subject to this proposal are existing school structures with pitched roofs. The immediate context is one of built form and associated school activity, rather than open countryside. The site is located on the eastern edge of Cricklade.

There are no other significant planning constraints affecting the application site beyond its location within the Conservation Area and the presence of the listed building within the wider site.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the installation of 98 roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels across two existing school buildings within the Cricklade Manor Prep School site.

The development comprises:

- Installation of 33 panels on one and 65 panels on a second building
- Panels positioned on south-facing roof slopes
- Each panel measures approximately 1.134m by 1.954m with a capacity of 510W

The panels would be mounted using a rail system fixed directly to the roof rafters beneath the existing tiles. This mounting method allows the panels to sit close to the roof plane, projecting approximately 130mm above the roof surface, resulting in a low-profile installation.

No alterations are proposed to the height, footprint, or overall form of the buildings themselves. The works are limited to the addition of the solar panels and associated mounting equipment. The development is intended to support the school's energy needs through on-site renewable energy generation, reducing reliance on non-renewable energy sources and contributing to carbon reduction objectives.

PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
No history that directly pertains to the buildings.

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 41 Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy;
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;
- Core Policy 58 Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment;

Draft Wiltshire Local Plan Policies [delete/insert above as appropriate]

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:

Cricklade Neighbourhood Plan 2026- Made March 2018

- Policy LAF8: Community Facilities

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 there would be any harmful impacts upon protected species or priority habitats (CP 50)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WC Conservation: No comment received.

WC Public Protection: No comment.

Cricklade Town 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.

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 within the built-up area of Cricklade, which is identified within the settlement hierarchy as a sustainable location where development that supports the role and function of the area is generally acceptable in principle.

The proposal does not constitute new built form or an expansion of the site, but rather relates to the retrofitting of existing buildings within an established educational use. As such, the development aligns with the spatial strategy set out in Core Policies 1 and 2, as it supports an existing community facility within a sustainable location and does not give rise to additional land take or unsustainable patterns of development.

The proposal is also strongly supported by Core Policy 41, which seeks to encourage the use of renewable and low-carbon energy technologies. The installation of solar panels represents a form of sustainable development through the on-site generation of renewable energy, contributing towards reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and supporting wider climate change objectives.

At the national level, the NPPF is a significant material consideration and provides clear support for proposals that facilitate the transition to a low-carbon future, including the retrofitting of existing buildings with renewable energy technologies. The development is therefore consistent with the overarching presumption in favour of sustainable development. No conflict with other policies of principle has been identified, and the proposal does not result in inappropriate development in spatial terms.

Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle. It accords with the spatial strategy set out in Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and is strongly supported by Core Policy 41 in respect of renewable energy generation. The proposal also aligns with the objectives of the NPPF in supporting the transition to a low-carbon future.

Accordingly, subject to compliance with other relevant planning considerations, the principle of development is supported.

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 proposed development relates to the installation of solar panels on the roof slopes of two existing school buildings within an established educational site. The proposal does not involve alterations to the footprint, scale, or overall form of the buildings, and therefore maintains the existing built character of the site.

In design terms, the solar panels are modest in profile, projecting approximately 130mm above the roof surface. They would be mounted flush with the roof plane, ensuring they appear as a discreet addition rather than a prominent or visually intrusive feature. The positioning of the panels on south-facing roof slopes reflects a functional requirement for energy generation and is consistent with typical solar installations.

The application site sits within a developed context characterised by a mix of historic and more modern buildings associated with the school and surrounding townscape. In this context, the installation of roof-mounted solar panels is not considered to appear incongruous, noting the growing prevalence of such features in response to low-carbon energy objectives.

Given the siting on existing roof slopes and the low-profile mounting system, the visual impact of the panels will be limited. They will be largely perceived as part of the existing roofscape and will not materially alter key views, the overall composition of the buildings, or the wider character of the area. There are no important landscape features affected by the proposal. The scheme also reflects the sustainable design principles encouraged by Core Policy 57 and the NPPF, incorporating renewable energy technology into existing built form without adverse visual harm.

Conclusion

The proposal is considered to be of an appropriate design that responds positively to its context. It would not result in harm to the character or appearance of the site or surrounding area and is consistent with the design principles set out in Core Policy 57, the NPPF, and the Wiltshire Design Guide. Accordingly, the development is acceptable in terms of design and visual impact.

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 16 (Listed Building Consent)/Section 66 (Planning Permission) requires that special regard be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Paragraph 58B of the Planning Act 1990 requires that in considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for the development of land in England which affects a registered park and garden, the LPA must have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the asset or its setting.

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 should 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”.

Paragraphs 213-215(214-216) require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved.

Paragraph 220 advises that not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm or less than substantial harm as appropriate.

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 within the Cricklade Conservation Area and the wider school grounds include a Grade II listed building known as The Manor. The proposals, however, relate solely to two existing, non-listed school buildings which are physically separate from the listed building.

In assessing impact, it is necessary to consider whether the proposed development would affect the significance of the listed building or its setting, as well as the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The proposed solar panels would be installed on existing roof slopes of modern school buildings and would not involve any alterations to the listed building itself.

In terms of setting, the solar panels would be located at a distance from the listed building and, due to their siting and orientation, would not be readily visible within key views of the asset. There is no meaningful intervisibility between the panels and the listed building from publicly accessible vantage points. As such, the proposal would not affect the way in which the significance of the listed building is experienced or appreciated. The statutory duty under Section 66(1) is therefore met, with the setting of the listed building preserved.

With regard to the Cricklade Conservation Area, the proposal involves minor alterations to existing roofscapes within a developed school site. The panels are low profile and would sit flush with the roof slopes, limiting their visual prominence. They would be viewed in the context of an established built environment rather than forming part of a cohesive historic roofscape of particular significance.

The development would not result in the loss of any features that contribute positively to the Conservation Area, nor would it disrupt important views or the overall character of the historic environment. The proposal is therefore considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, in accordance with the duty under Section 72(1).

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal would result in no harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets.

Conclusion

The proposal would preserve the significance of the Grade II listed building and its setting, and would preserve the character and appearance of the Cricklade Conservation Area. The development therefore complies with the statutory duties set out in Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The proposal accords with the relevant policies of the NPPF and Core Policy 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Accordingly, the development is acceptable in heritage terms.

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 proposal relates solely to the installation of solar panels on existing roof slopes and does not include the introduction of new windows, balconies, or other features that could give rise to overlooking. As such, there would be no impact on privacy for neighbouring occupiers.

Loss of light / overshadowing

The development does not involve any increase in building height, massing, or footprint. The solar panels would be mounted flush with the existing roof slopes, projecting only approximately 130mm above the roof surface. This minimal addition would not give rise to any measurable loss of light or overshadowing to neighbouring properties.

Overbearing Impact / Overall sense of enclosure

Given the limited scale and low-profile nature of the panels, along with their placement on existing buildings, the proposal would not appear overbearing or result in any increased sense of enclosure for nearby occupiers. The form and scale of the buildings remain unchanged.

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 development does not involve ground works, changes to land use, or the removal of vegetation, and therefore would not result in the loss or fragmentation of habitats.

The works are confined to the built fabric of the existing structures and are unlikely to affect ecological networks or green and blue infrastructure within or surrounding the site. There is no evidence to suggest the buildings affected support protected species, such as bats or nesting birds, and given the nature of the works, the potential for disturbance is considered low.

In respect of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the proposal is considered to fall within one of the exemptions set out under the Environment Act 2021 and subsequent regulations. The development comprises works solely to the fabric of existing buildings and does not involve development of land or impacts on on-site habitats. As such, it is not considered to meet the threshold for development requiring BNG assessment.

Furthermore, as the proposal would not result in any measurable biodiversity loss, the submission of a biodiversity metric calculation is not necessary in this instance.

The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the mitigation hierarchy set out in Core Policy 50, in that it avoids harm to ecological assets.

Conclusion

The proposed development would not give rise to adverse impacts on protected species, habitats, or ecological networks. The nature and scale of the proposal are such that it avoids ecological harm and does not result in any loss of biodiversity.

The development is considered to be exempt from the requirement to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), as it relates solely to works to existing buildings and does not involve development of land or impact on habitats. As such, no BNG assessment or metric calculation is required.

Accordingly, the proposal complies with Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and is acceptable in ecological and biodiversity terms.

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.

Assessment

The application site is located within the built-up area of Cricklade and does not fall within a National Landscape (AONB) or any locally designated landscape of particular sensitivity. The site forms part of an established school campus characterised by existing buildings, hardstanding, and managed outdoor spaces.

The proposed development is limited to the installation of solar panels on the roof slopes of two existing buildings. As such, there are no changes to the site's footprint, topography, or wider landscape features. The proposal would not result in the loss of vegetation, trees, or other natural landscape elements.

In visual terms, the panels would be mounted flush with the existing roof slopes and would project only approximately 130mm above the roof surface. This low-profile design minimises visual intrusion and ensures that the panels are perceived as part of the existing built form. The panels would be visible only in the context of the school buildings and would not form a prominent feature in wider views or the surrounding townscape.

Given the urban context of the site, the proposal would not affect the intrinsic character or beauty of the countryside, nor would it impact important landscape views or visual receptors. The introduction of solar panels within built-up areas is increasingly common and is not considered incongruous within this setting.

The proposal would not conflict with the objectives of Core Policy 51, as it preserves the existing landscape character and does not introduce elements that would detract from local distinctiveness or visual amenity.

Conclusion

The proposed development would not result in any adverse landscape or visual impacts. It is appropriately sited within an established built environment and has been designed to minimise visual intrusion.

Accordingly, the proposal complies with Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Wiltshire Design Guide, and the provisions of the NPPF, and is acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

CONCLUSION

Having regard to the Development Plan as a whole, along with all other material considerations, the proposed development is considered to represent an appropriate and sustainable form of development within this location.

The scheme supports the transition to low-carbon energy through the retrofitting of existing buildings, without giving rise to any unacceptable impacts that would outweigh these benefits. The proposal has been carefully considered against all relevant planning matters and is found to comply with the key policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the guidance set out within the NPPF.

In the absence of any overriding adverse impacts, and with no objections raised during the consultation process, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and is recommended for approval.

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 and documents:
 - Location Plan; Received 21 April 2026
 - Solar Details; Received 24 April 2026
 - Planning Statement; Received 17 March 2026
 - Proposed Roof Plan and Elevations; DWG No. PL01 A; Received 22 April 2026
 - Roof Dimensions; Received 17 March 2026
 - 3D Roof Image (roof elevations); Received 17 March 2026
 - 3D Roof Image (labelled roof); Received 17 March 2026
 - Renusol Pitched Roof Mounting Data Sheet; Received 17 March 2026
 - Application Form; Received 17 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. The solar photovoltaic panels hereby approved shall be retained, maintained and kept in good working order for the operational lifetime of the development. Any panels, equipment or associated infrastructure which become redundant, cease to be operational for a continuous period of 12 months, or are no longer required, shall be removed from the site and the land reinstated to its former condition within six months of their redundancy.

REASON: To ensure the development remains operational and to safeguard the character and appearance of the area in accordance with the aims of the Development Plan.