

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

**CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FROM AGRICULTURAL TO RESIDENTIAL
AND ERECTION OF A SOLAR ARRAY ON LAND AT ARCHES FARM,
ARCHES LANE, MALMESBURY, SN16 0EJ**

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Prepared by

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Our Reference: DJD.LPC5803

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

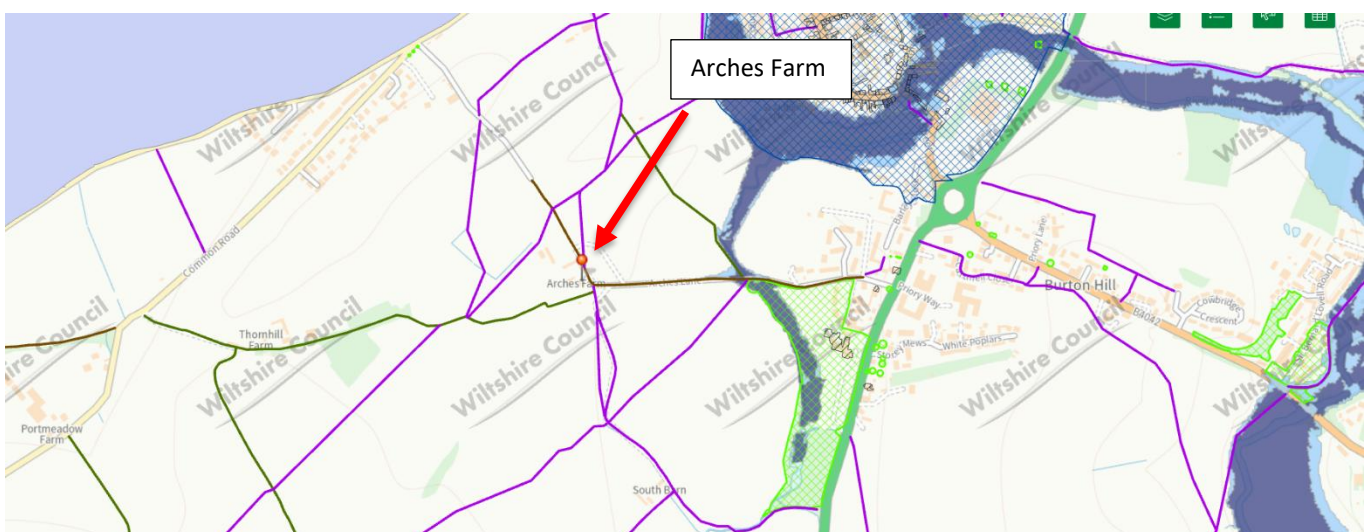
- 1.1 LPC (Trull) Ltd have been instructed by Mr & Mrs Noon to prepare a supporting Planning Design & Access Statement to accompany a full planning application for the change of use of land from agricultural to residential and erection of a solar array on land at Arches Farm, Arches Lane, Malmesbury.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Statement is to identify the site and describe the proposals before going on to identify the relevant Development Plan policies for the application and the main planning considerations. This will include identifying the main issues and material planning considerations that are relevant to this application, describing their significance, and assessing the impacts of the proposed development.

2.0 APPLICATION SITE & RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 Arches Farm is a detached two storey farmhouse of rough coursed Cotswold stone elevations and Cotswold stone slates to the roof. It has a double fronted principal elevation facing south with a gabled front porch to the centre, two gabled dormers to the front roof slope. There are rear single storey extensions (north) and a recently constructed single storey extension to the west side. The driveway parking is to the front; the gardens extend to the west side and rear. It is understood that the house dates back to at least 1830, but some parts of it could be older.
- 2.2 The property lies to the south of the town of Malmesbury in the open countryside. The entrance to the property is to the east and it is accessed from Arches Lane to the east which serves neighbouring property and continues towards the main road south of Malmesbury approximately half a mile to the east. The public right of way no. MALW86 lies to the southern boundary of the site, it follows a route west from Malmesbury to Arches Farm, heading west to meet with Common Road, west of Malmesbury. There are a number of PROWs which run close to the site and meet with MALW86, MALW28 approaches from the south and MALW87 is parallel to the west boundary of the site and meets MALW86 close to the entrance of the property.
- 2.3 As mentioned, the property is set in open countryside approximately 500 metres west of the town of Malmesbury, falling within the St Paul Malmesbury without Parish. Neighbouring properties are of converted barn/outbuildings to the farm and are set to the north of the house. Arches Farm, being the original dwelling to the farm, has some outbuildings associated with it to the north and west boundaries. There are fields to the south and a ménage to the east within the ownership of the applicant. There are no listed buildings within the setting of the site, the nearest listed building is approximately 500 metres to the west at Burton Hill. The Malmesbury Conservation Area is approximately 500 metres to the northwest of the site.



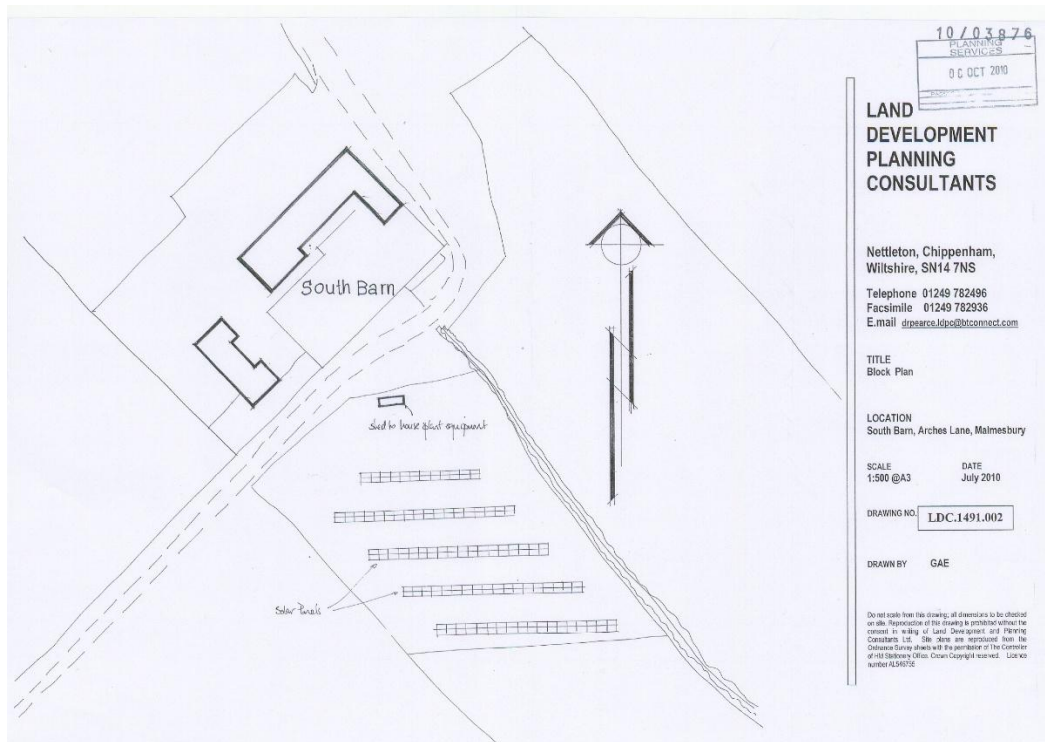
2.4 An extract from the Council's Explorer Map for Planning is provided below. As can be seen, the site lies outside of the Malmesbury Development Boundary, and outside the Conservation Area and National Landscape. It does not lie in an area at risk from flooding and there are no Listed Buildings in the vicinity. Several public footpaths converge nearby.



2.5 Additionally, to the south of Arches Farm is the property known as ‘South Barn’ where a small solar farm has been erected in a paddock area to the south of the dwelling comprising seven separate ground mounted solar arrays. Planning Permission was granted for this solar installation under the reference N/10/03876/FUL. This is shown in relation to Arches Farm below:



The approved drawing for application N/10/03876/FUL together with recent photographs of this solar farm are inserted below:



3.0 APPLICATION PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The proposed development comprises a small-scale ground-mounted Solar PV and battery energy storage system. The system has been designed to provide renewable electricity for use at the property, reducing reliance on electricity imported from the national grid and increasing the proportion of the site's energy demand met through on-site generation.
- 3.2 The proposed installation comprises a 10kWp Solar PV array consisting of 20 panels, mounted on a low-profile ground-mounted structure at an indicative 25-degree tilt and 162-degree orientation. The proposal also incorporates a 38.4kWh LiFePO4 battery storage system and hybrid inverter. The battery will store surplus electricity generated by the PV array during periods of higher generation, allowing it to be used when solar generation is lower and thereby maximising on-site consumption of renewable energy.
- 3.3 The system has been sized having regard to the existing electricity demand at Arches Farm, which is approximately 20,118kWh per annum. Performance modelling indicates that the array could generate approximately 10,030kWh of electricity annually, with approximately 99.9% of this generation expected to be used on site. The modelling indicates a potential reduction in grid electricity imports of approximately 48.5%, together with an estimated annual saving of 1.2 tonnes of CO2.
- 3.4 The array has been positioned facing south on a paddock area located to the south of the main house on the other side of the footpath. This siting is intended to maximise solar exposure whilst maintaining separation from existing buildings and site features. The design seeks to maintain a compact footprint and minimise visual impact, with a low-profile mounting arrangement and the retention of existing vegetation and landscaping where practicable. The mounting system is also intended to minimise ground disturbance. It would comprise of a simple concrete base for the solar panels, avoiding extensive excavation and allowing the area to be reinstated if required..



Proposed Solar Array

- 3.5 The proposal has therefore been designed as a practical, small-scale renewable energy installation which responds directly to the electricity requirements of Arches Farm. It would provide a significant proportion of the property's electricity requirements from renewable generation, reduce reliance on imported grid electricity and deliver associated carbon savings, while incorporating measures to minimise its physical and visual impact within the rural setting.

4.0 RELEVANT POLICY CONTEXT & GUIDANCE

Development Plan

- 4.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that all applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant Development Plan policies applicable to the assessment of these proposals comprises the Adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015). The relevant policies to this application are considered to be as follows: -

Wiltshire Core Strategy

- Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy
- Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy
- Core Policy 13: Spatial Strategy for the Malmesbury Community Area
- Core Policy 41: Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy
- Core Policy 42: Standalone Renewable Energy Installations
- Core Policy 48: Supporting Rural Life
- 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

National Guidance

- 4.2 Documents that do not have the weight of the Development Plan, but which are material considerations to which differing weight is attached include:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Significant weight is attached to this document,
 - National Planning Practice guidance (NPPG).
- 4.3 Policy CC12 of the NPPF states that:

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.

- 4.4 Policy W3 Renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure also states that :

Renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure

1. *In considering proposals for renewable and low-carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure, substantial weight should be given to:*
 - a. *The benefits for improving energy security, supporting economic development and/or the transition to a net zero future.*
 - b. *In the case of applications for the re-powering and life-extension of existing sites, the additional benefit of utilising an established site for this purpose; and*
 - c. *The contribution that small-scale and community-led renewable and low carbon energy projects can make to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, along with their associated economic and social benefits.*
2. *Applicants should not be required to demonstrate the need for renewable or low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure. Where proposals for this form of development come forward outside areas which have been identified as suitable for them in the development plan, their acceptability should be assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework, taken as a whole.*

3. *Where development is expected to be time-limited, applications should be accompanied by proposals for decommissioning and site restoration, including details of how these measures are expected to be implemented.*

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

5.1 In light of the context of the site and relevant national and local planning policies the key material planning considerations are considered to be as follows: -

- Principle of development
- Impact on heritage assets
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Residential Amenity
- Biodiversity and Trees

Principle of development

5.2 In policy terms, Core Policies CP1 and CP2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seek to ensure that development is sustainably located and responds positively to the character and function of Wiltshire's settlements and countryside. Core Policy CP42 also supports appropriate development within the countryside where it conserves landscape character, while Core Policy CP41 positively supports the delivery of renewable and low-carbon energy infrastructure, including the retrofitting of existing buildings to improve their energy performance. This is of course supported by policies CC12 and W3 of the new NPPF (2026).

5.3 In this case, the proposed solar array would be positioned within the adjoining agricultural land rather than the established residential curtilage of Arches Farm. Although this requires the use of a small area of land for a purpose ancillary to the main dwelling, the array is closely related to the existing house, is modest in scale, and is solely intended to provide renewable electricity for the property. The proposal therefore comprises both small scale operational development and a material change of use of a limited area of land to an incidental domestic use.

5.4 Therefore, given the small extent of land affected, the retention of the field's open character, and the minimal physical intervention proposed, the development would not result in unacceptable harm to the character or

appearance of the countryside. Furthermore, it would deliver clear sustainability benefits through the generation of renewable energy, consistent with the objectives of Core Policy CP41 and national planning policy CC12 and W3 supporting the transition to a low-carbon future. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle and accords with Core Policies CP1, CP2, CP41 and CP42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

- 5.5 In this context it is also very relevant to point out that Wiltshire Council acknowledged a Climate Emergency in February 2019 and has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 through its Climate Strategy and associated delivery plans. The Council recognises that increasing renewable energy generation and improving the energy performance of buildings are fundamental to reducing carbon emissions and supporting a resilient, low-carbon future. In this context, the proposed ground-mounted solar array would make a positive contribution towards the Council's climate objectives by generating clean renewable electricity.

Impact on Heritage Assets

- 5.6 In this case, the relevant identified heritage asset would be the Malmesbury Conservation Area located to the northeast. However, there will be no physical alteration to the heritage asset and whilst it could be argued that the development would lie within the 'setting' of the Conservation Area, there would be very little visual change or other environmental effects. Apart from the solar array itself, there would be very little physical infrastructure associated with it. Consequently, it is considered that the development proposals will succeed in preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 5.7 Historic England Advice Note 18 supports the sensitive integration of renewable energy technologies into the historic environment and advises that the siting of solar panels should seek to minimise harm. The guidance identifies that, where sufficient land is available, locating solar panels on associated land or less sensitive structures is often preferable to fixing them directly to the principal roofs. A carefully sited and appropriately screened ground-mounted solar array therefore represents a heritage-led solution that

enables low-carbon energy generation whilst conserving the significance of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, the roof of the main house in this case can be seen from long range views from within Malmesbury whereas a ground mounted array in the location proposed cannot be seen apart the immediate surroundings. Therefore, this is by far the better option from a visual and heritage-related perspective.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.8 In terms of the relevant policy context for this issue, Core Policy 51 requires that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.
- 5.9 Core Policy 57 also makes clear that applications should make a positive contribution, having regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses. A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Proposals should respond positively to the existing townscape and landscape features 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.
- 5.10 As part of this Statement, the following visual assessment of the site has been undertaken showing the location of photographic viewpoints. These demonstrate the limited and modest nature of the proposals and that views will be localised to the immediate paddock area only, and in particular that views will be very limited.



Satellite Image showing photograph locations and direction



Photo Viewpoint 1 – Facing northeast towards the location of the proposed solar array. Arches Farmhouse is located in the background to the north.



Photo Viewpoint 2 – Facing east towards the location of the solar array from the public right of way – views of the solar array will be very localised from the wider landscape beyond due landscape topography



Photo Viewpoint 3 – View facing directly east closer to the location of proposed solar array. Views from the surrounding landscape will view the solar array against the backdrop of the existing hedgerow.

Additionally, as can clearly be seen from **Photo Viewpoints 1, 2 3 and 4** the Applicant has already planted several young native trees along the inner side of the public bridleway to act as a visual screen from views of the proposed solar array when these trees mature. The Applicant has also planted a significant number of trees around the entire area within their ownership. This is to improve the appearance of the entire site.



Photo Viewpoint 4 – View facing west towards the site of the solar array, which will be seen against the backdrop of mature hedgerows and other vegetation.



Photo Viewpoint 5 – From the public footpath facing west towards the location of the proposed solar arrays which will be framed by the existing fence and hedgerow.



Photo Viewpoint 6 – Facing north towards the site of the solar array from the public footpath. Arches Farmhouse is in the background. The solar array will be viewed against the backdrop of the hedgerow and will not appear out of place or discordant, particularly given the presence of the solar farm at South Barn.



Photo Viewpoint 7 – View from the public footpath to the west of the site, facing eastwards. Views of the proposed solar array would be completely obscured by existing hedgerows and mature trees.



Photo Viewpoint 8 – View from the footpath approach to Arches Farm from the northeast of the site. Views are completely obscured by the lower topography of the land and by high hedges.

- 5.11 In summary, the proposed development will be located within a small paddock immediately south of the established Arches Farm complex. Although the paddock is presently open in character, it is not an isolated or visually remote parcel of agricultural land. It forms an integral part of the immediate setting of the existing farmhouse and associated farm buildings, with the site enclosed and visually contained to a significant degree by established hedgerows, mature trees, fencing and other vegetation. The proposed array would consequently be experienced in the context of the existing farmstead rather than as an isolated or incongruous feature within the wider agricultural landscape.
- 5.12 The scale of the development is an important consideration. The proposal comprises only 20 photovoltaic panels arranged as a single compact array, with a low-profile mounting arrangement and an indicative 25-degree inclination. It therefore has a very limited vertical presence and would retain the prevailing open grassed character of the paddock around and beneath the panels. The physical intervention in the landscape would consequently be extremely limited.
- 5.13 The satellite image showing the location and direction of the eight photo viewpoints demonstrates the highly localised nature of the potential visual envelope. The array is positioned immediately south of the existing farmstead and close to established vegetation along the northern and western boundaries of the paddock. The arrangement takes advantage of this existing containment, whilst its location also ensures that the array is viewed principally against the backdrop of existing vegetation and the established buildings and structures associated with Arches Farm.
- 5.14 Viewpoint 1, looking northeast towards the proposed array, illustrates the immediate relationship between the paddock and Arches Farm. The farmhouse and associated mature vegetation provide a substantial built and vegetated backdrop to this part of the site. The proposed array would therefore be perceived as a small addition within the established farmstead landscape, rather than as development extending into an otherwise undeveloped rural horizon.

- 5.15 Viewpoint 2, taken from the public right of way and looking east towards the proposed location, demonstrates the contained nature of the site. The existing hedgerows and landform restrict views beyond the immediate paddock and prevent the site from forming part of a wider, expansive view across the surrounding countryside. Consequently, whilst the array may be perceptible at relatively close range from the footpath, the extent of the view and the visual influence of the development would remain highly localised.
- 5.16 Viewpoint 3 provides a similar view towards the proposed location of the array. Even from this more immediate position, the site is seen in conjunction with the existing hedgerow, fencing and mature vegetation. These features provide a strong visual framework within which the array would sit. The low height and compact footprint of the proposed installation would ensure that it would remain visually subordinate to the surrounding vegetation and established farm buildings.
- 5.17 Viewpoint 4, looking west towards the site, similarly demonstrates the contribution made by the existing mature hedgerows and vegetation. These features form an effective visual screen and provide a well-established landscape backdrop to the proposed development. The proposal would therefore not introduce a prominent new feature into the wider landscape when viewed from this direction.
- 5.18 Viewpoint 5, taken from the public footpath and looking west towards the proposed array, is particularly relevant in assessing the experience of public rights of way. The photograph shows that the proposed location is framed by the existing boundary fencing and hedgerow. The array would consequently be experienced as a small-scale addition within an already enclosed paddock environment. It would not obstruct the route, alter the character of the footpath itself, or introduce development that would dominate the experience of the surrounding countryside.
- 5.19 Viewpoint 6, looking north from the public footpath, provides a further important perspective. The existing Arches Farmhouse is visible in the background, whilst the proposed array would be located between the viewer and the established farmstead. In this context, the array would be seen

against an existing developed and vegetated backdrop rather than against an open rural skyline. The presence of the existing solar installation at South Barn is also relevant to the visual context, demonstrating that solar panels are already an established feature within the immediate locality. The proposed array would therefore not introduce an entirely unfamiliar form of development into this landscape.

- 5.20 Viewpoint 7, from the public footpath to the west of the site, demonstrates perhaps most clearly the effectiveness of the existing vegetation. Looking eastwards towards the proposed development, the array would be screened by the existing hedgerow and mature trees. From this location the proposed development would consequently have no visual presence.
- 5.21 Viewpoint 8, taken from the footpath approach to Arches Farm from the northeast, similarly confirms that the proposed array would not be exposed to significant wider views. The combination of the intervening lower landform and substantial existing hedgerows effectively prevents views towards the proposed development. This is particularly important because it demonstrates that the visual effects of the proposal do not extend along the wider approach to the farmstead.
- 5.22 Taken collectively, the eight viewpoints demonstrate that the visual effects of the proposal would be localised, contained and limited in extent. There are no identified long-distance views in which the proposed array would appear as a prominent or isolated feature. Instead, where it is visible, it would generally be viewed at close range and in conjunction with existing landscape features, including hedgerows, mature trees, fencing, the established farmstead and the existing solar installation at South Barn.
- 5.23 Whilst there would inevitably be some change to the immediate appearance of the paddock as a consequence of introducing solar panels onto the land, this change must be considered in the context of the very limited scale of the proposal and its highly contained location. The evidence from the photographic viewpoints does not indicate that the development would result in a material change to the character of the wider countryside or that it would

adversely affect important landscape views. Any visual effect is consequently confined principally to the immediate setting of the array.

- 5.24 Furthermore, the proposal delivers a clear environmental benefit through the generation of renewable electricity for use at Arches Farm. The installation has been specifically designed to respond to the property's existing energy demand, with the modelling indicating that approximately 99.9% of the electricity generated would be used on site. The development therefore provides a direct and tangible contribution towards reducing reliance upon imported grid electricity and supporting the transition to a lower-carbon energy supply. This benefit is achieved through a modest installation whose landscape and visual effects have been minimised through its siting and design.
- 5.25 Overall, the proposal would not cause unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the landscape. The limited change within the immediate paddock would be outweighed by the highly localised nature of the visual effects and the clear sustainability benefits associated with the generation and on-site use of renewable energy. The development would consequently accord with the objectives of Core Policy 51 in respect of protecting landscape character and mitigating potential visual effects, whilst also satisfying the high-quality design objectives of Core Policy 57.

Residential Amenity

- 5.26 Core Policy 57 (Point vii) of the Core Strategy requires development to respect the amenity of existing occupants and ensure appropriate amenity levels for future residents. Additionally, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2026), particularly 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.
- 5.27 In this case, due to the proposal's nature as the erection of a ground-level solar array sited away from any neighbouring properties, there is no risk of any overlooking, overshadowing, or overbearing impact arising as a result of the proposed works.

Biodiversity and trees

- 5.28 In terms of the relevant policy context, Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to protect and enhance ecological assets, deliver measurable improvements in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, support habitat restoration and ecological connectivity, and incorporate biodiversity into the design of development. These objectives are reinforced by the Wiltshire Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022–2030), which promotes nature recovery, resilient ecosystems and improved habitat connectivity through sustainable development.
- 5.29 In this case, a Preliminary Ecology Assessment has been undertaken including a site walkover and no further surveys or investigations are required.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This Planning Design & Access Statement has been prepared in support of the full planning application for the change of use of a limited area of agricultural land to an incidental residential use and the erection of a small-scale ground-mounted solar PV and battery energy storage system at Arches Farm, Arches Lane, Malmesbury.
- 6.2 The proposal has been carefully designed having regard to the character and circumstances of the site. It comprises a modest 10kWp solar array of 20 panels together with a 38.4kWh battery storage system, positioned within the paddock immediately south of the existing Arches Farm dwelling. The installation is intended primarily to meet the electricity requirements of the property, with modelling indicating that approximately 99.9% of the electricity generated would be used on site. The proposal would therefore make a meaningful contribution to reducing the property's reliance on imported grid electricity and reducing associated carbon emissions.
- 6.3 In policy terms, the proposal is supported by the renewable-energy objectives of Core Policy 41 and Core Policy 42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and by the national policy support for renewable and low-carbon energy development contained within the NPPF. In particular, national policy recognises the importance of renewable energy in supporting the transition to a net-zero future and states that substantial weight should be given to the benefits associated with renewable and low-carbon energy development.
- 6.4 Whilst the proposal involves the use of a small area of agricultural land outside the Malmesbury Development Boundary, it remains closely and functionally related to the established Arches Farm dwelling. The development would not result in the introduction of a new isolated built form or an unrelated commercial use within the countryside. The compact nature of the installation, its low-profile design and its immediate relationship with the existing farmstead ensure that the proposal represents a proportionate and appropriate use of the land.
- 6.5 The assessment has demonstrated that the proposal would not result in unacceptable landscape or visual effects. The array is modest in scale and

has been positioned to take advantage of the existing landscape structure. Established hedgerows, mature trees, fencing, intervening landform and the existing farmstead provide substantial visual containment. The photographic viewpoints demonstrate that views of the array would be principally confined to the immediate paddock and nearby public rights of way, with views from the wider surrounding landscape being substantially restricted or screened. The existing solar installation at South Barn also forms part of the established visual context of the locality.

- 6.6 The proposal would not adversely affect the setting or significance of the identified heritage assets. In particular, the limited scale, low profile and contained location of the array would ensure that there would be no material adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the Malmesbury Conservation Area. The proposal therefore provides an appropriate means of incorporating renewable-energy technology without requiring alterations to the historic fabric of the existing farmhouse or other heritage assets.
- 6.7 There would similarly be no unacceptable impact upon residential amenity. Given the nature, scale and location of the development, it would not give rise to overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing effects. The proposal would also retain the existing landscape features which contribute to the ecological and visual character of the site, with appropriate measures incorporated to protect biodiversity and existing vegetation.
- 6.8 Overall, the proposal represents a small-scale and appropriately designed renewable-energy installation which responds directly to the energy requirements of the existing property. It would generate a substantial proportion of the property's electricity demand from renewable sources, reduce reliance upon the national grid and provide a tangible contribution towards carbon reduction, whilst requiring only limited physical intervention and resulting in highly localised landscape and visual effects.
- 6.9 The development would therefore provide clear environmental and sustainability benefits without resulting in unacceptable harm to the countryside, landscape character, visual amenity, heritage assets, residential amenity or biodiversity. Having regard to the Development Plan as a whole

and the significant material considerations identified within this Statement; it is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development and accords with the relevant policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.