

Heritage and design statement

A structure for the supporting statement that accompanies a planning application for solar panels in a conservation area — with a worked example of each section alongside the prompts, so you can see what a persuasive answer looks like rather than guessing.

WHY THE AUTHORITY HAS TO ENGAGE WITH THIS

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that, in exercising planning functions for buildings or land in a conservation area, **“special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”**.

That duty cuts both ways. It is why appearance matters — and it is why a proposal that demonstrably preserves character is one the authority has a duty to take seriously, rather than a favour you are asking for.

CHECK THIS FIRST — YOU MAY NOT NEED TO APPLY

A conservation area does **not** by itself remove permitted development rights for solar. The restriction in Class A applies to a wall which fronts a highway, not to roofs.

You need this document if an **Article 4 direction** applies, if the installation is on a wall fronting a highway, if the building is listed, or if the proposal falls outside the Class A limits for another reason. Check before you spend time on it:
solar.org.uk/planning/

1. The applicant and the property

Identifies the site and the designation engaging s.72

Applicant name _____

Property address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Conservation area name _____

Is the building listed? _____ Grade (if so) _____ Article 4 direction applies? _____

If the building is listed you also need **listed building consent**, which is a separate application under a separate regime. See solar.org.uk/planning/listed-buildings/

2. The proposal, described precisely

An officer cannot assess what is not described

Number of panels _____ Total capacity _____ kWp Roof plane(s) used _____

Orientation of that plane _____ Pitch _____ ° Mounting type (on-roof / in-roof) _____

Height of the assembly above the roof surface _____ mm

Frame and module colour _____

Is any part visible from a public highway or footpath? _____

WORKED EXAMPLE

The proposal is for eight photovoltaic modules totalling 3.2 kWp on the rear (north-east facing) roof slope of the main range. The panels would be on-roof mounted, lying parallel to the existing slope, standing approximately 140 mm proud of the tile surface at their outermost face. Modules are full-black with black frames and black mounting rails.

The rear slope is not visible from Church Street. It is partially visible from the public footpath running along the rear boundary, at a distance of approximately 40 metres and filtered by an existing mature hedge.

3. What gives the area its character

s.72 protects character or appearance
– so name it

Take this from the authority's own conservation area appraisal if one exists. Quoting their document back to them is more persuasive than describing the area yourself.

Appraisal document and date _____

WORKED EXAMPLE

The Church Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2019) identifies the area's significance as deriving principally from the coherent nineteenth-century street frontage, the consistent use of local red brick and clay pantile, and the rhythm of gabled front elevations addressing the street. The appraisal notes at paragraph 4.7 that rear elevations are "of markedly lower sensitivity, having been subject to extensive twentieth-century alteration".

4. The effect of the proposal on that character

NPPF ¶212: great weight to the asset's
conservation

Be honest here. A statement claiming no effect at all is less credible than one that identifies a limited effect and explains why it is acceptable.

WORKED EXAMPLE

The proposal would introduce a modern element to a rear roof slope. It would have no effect on the Church Street frontage, which the appraisal identifies as the primary source of the area's significance, and no effect on the rhythm of gabled elevations.

The effect on the wider area is limited to a partial and filtered view from the rear footpath. Given the distance, the intervening hedge, the recessive colour of the proposed modules and their alignment with the existing roof plane, the character and appearance of the conservation area would be preserved.

5. Alternatives considered, and why they were rejected

The section that most often changes the outcome

Officers are used to applicants presenting one option as though no others existed. Showing that you considered less prominent locations, and explaining what was wrong with them, is the strongest thing in most statements.

Option considered	Why rejected

WORKED EXAMPLE

The front (south-west facing) roof slope would generate materially more electricity but addresses Church Street directly and would affect the coherent frontage the appraisal identifies as the area's principal significance. It has been discounted despite the generation penalty.

A ground-mounted array was considered. The rear garden is 8 metres wide, so no position satisfies the five-metre setback that permitted development would require, and a free-standing array would be more prominent from the rear footpath than the roof proposal.

The garage roof was considered and rejected: it is heavily overshadowed by the neighbouring boundary trees for most of the day.

6. Design measures reducing the effect

Evidence of mitigation, not assertion

- ☐ Panels laid parallel to the roof plane, not tilted off it
- ☐ All-black modules, frames and mounting rails
- ☐ Array set in from the eaves, verge and ridge, leaving a margin of tile
- ☐ Rectangular array footprint rather than a stepped or irregular outline
- ☐ Cabling internal, with no external conduit on visible elevations
- ☐ No new penetrations through visible elevations
- ☐ Reversible fixings; roof covering can be reinstated
- ☐ Other _____

7. Public benefits

NPPF ¶215: harm weighed against public benefits

Where a proposal causes less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, national policy requires that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. So state the benefits — with figures, not adjectives.

Estimated annual generation _____ kWh Source of that estimate _____

WORKED EXAMPLE

The array would generate approximately 1,790 kWh a year, modelled from the European Commission's PVGIS at this location, pitch and orientation. That is around 70% of the 2,500 kWh a typical medium household uses in a year.

The figure is lower than the same array would achieve on the front slope. That reduction is the direct consequence of siting the panels where they do not affect the Church Street frontage, and it is accepted for that reason.

The benefit is not solely private. Displacing grid electricity contributes to the national decarbonisation objectives the development plan and the Framework both support, and the council's own declared climate commitment of 2019 is engaged.

DO NOT OVERSTATE THIS

If your honest assessment is that the proposal preserves the character of the area, say so — the public benefits section is then supporting material rather than the argument. Reaching for the harm-versus-benefits balance when you have not conceded harm can read as though you expect to be refused.

8. Drawings and documents enclosed

Applications are most often delayed by omissions

- ☐ Location plan, scaled and with the site outlined in red
- ☐ Existing and proposed elevations of the affected roof slope
- ☐ Existing and proposed roof plan showing the array footprint and margins
- ☐ Photographs of the affected elevation from each public vantage point
- ☐ Manufacturer's datasheet showing module colour and dimensions
- ☐ Mounting system datasheet showing the height above the roof surface
- ☐ This heritage and design statement

Before you send it

- **Ask for pre-application advice** if the authority offers it. A scheme shaped by a conversation with the conservation officer is a different proposition from one presented cold.
- **Check whether a fee is payable.** Where an application is required only because permitted development rights were withdrawn by an Article 4 direction, no fee is payable. Say so when you apply.
- **Keep it short.** Two to four pages of statement, answering the questions above, beats twenty pages of general material about renewable energy.
- **Name the appraisal.** If the authority has published a conservation area appraisal and you have engaged with it, that is immediately obvious to the officer reading your statement.

WHAT THIS TEMPLATE IS, AND WHAT IT IS NOT

This is **information, not advice**, and it is not a legal document. It is a structure and a worked example, to help you write a statement that addresses the questions an officer has to answer.

The worked example describes a fictional property. The figures in it are illustrative and the appraisal quoted does not exist. Replace all of it with your own facts.

It covers **England**. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate planning systems. It does not cover listed building consent, which is a separate application under a separate regime.

Sources. Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s.72 · National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 (amended 7 February 2025), paragraphs 212 and 215 · Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 14. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

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