

Solar photovoltaics (PV), planning and building regulations in conservation areas or on listed buildings

A guide produced by Suffolk's local authorities to support homeowners in conservation areas or in listed buildings wishing to install a roof mounted solar PV system.

Planning

Placing solar panels on the roof of your house or flat, or a building within the grounds of your house or flat, is considered in most cases 'permitted development', whether this is in a conservation area or otherwise. This means that in general there is no need to seek planning permission from your local planning authority (LPA) to proceed, subject to certain conditions.

These conditions are that the solar panels:

- a. will not project from the wall or roof slope by more than 20cm
- b. will not be positioned so that they are higher than the main ridge line of the roof, or higher than the highest flat roof where roofs on the building are flat. Please note chimneys, firewalls, parapet walls and other protrusions above the main roof ridge line or flat roof cannot be counted when considering the height of the highest part of the roof of the existing house or flat
- c. will so far as practicable, be sited to minimise their effect on the external appearance of the building
- d. will so far as practicable, be sited to minimise their effect on the amenity (attractiveness) of the area
- e. are removed as soon as reasonably practicable when they are no longer needed

In addition, solar panels cannot be installed without planning permission:

- f. within a conservation area or World Heritage Site on a wall which faces the road
- g. on a site designated as a scheduled monument, or on a building that is within the grounds of a listed building

If there is any doubt regarding compliance 'with a to g above', it is recommended that you apply to your LPA for pre application planning advice or a lawful development certificate (LDC) before starting works.

'Where conditions a to g cannot be met, or where your LPA has issued an 'Article 4' direction covering the area in which your property is located, an application for planning permission may be required.

Article 4 directions are made when the character of an area of acknowledged importance would be threatened. They are most common in conservation areas. You will probably know if your property is affected by such a direction, but you can check with the LPA if you are unsure.

Listed building consent

Listed building consent will be required if you wish to place solar panels on a listed building (this includes buildings within the curtilage of the listed building which pre-date July 1948). An application for this will need to be made to, and determined by, your LPA.

Note that there is a general presumption against siting the panels on listed buildings unless they are completely hidden from view. In some cases, a ground mounted array may be a suitable alternative. This would require planning permission within the curtilage of a listed building.

Building regulations

If you wish to install solar panels on your roof, building regulations will normally apply. The ability of the existing roof to carry the load (weight) of the panels will need to be checked and proven. Some strengthening work may be needed. Building regulations also apply to other aspects of the work such as electrical installation.

Installers who are members of a relevant competent person scheme can self certify certain types of building work, including the installation of solar PV, avoiding the need to seek separate building regulations approval. You are advised to check your installer is a member of a scheme covering the work they will be undertaking.

More information

For more information on planning matters, including pre application planning advice and LDC's, please visit your LPA webpages and the Planning Portal.

Historic England have produced a useful guide to the installation of solar panels on historic buildings: [Historic England - Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Solar Electric \(Photovoltaics\)](#)

This guidance relates to: [Legislation.gov.uk - The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#)

Information and links on competent person schemes can be found at: [GOV.UK – Competent persons schemes](#)