



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2025 by M Long BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/24/3350695

48 Park Lane, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 1LN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Michael Solomons against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/2024/02038.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 5 solar panels on the south (Park Lane Road facing) side of the property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matters

3. In the banner heading I have included the description of development used in the decision notice, which is shortened from the description used in the application form, as it more concisely describes the proposal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Chippenham Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The CA covers a large, mixed-use area in central Chippenham that is characterised by its high-quality built form and fine historic buildings. Within the CA, the site is located in Character Area 2: Park Lane, a primarily residential area which partly derives significance from its historic evolution alongside the growth of the railway and industry in the town, as well as its attractive terraces facing the street, behind small front gardens.
6. The appeal dwelling sits in a terrace designed with a great deal of uniformity and consistency. The terraced houses share commonalities in terms of their scale, short set back from the highway, fenestration patterns, roof forms, tall chimneys, materials and architectural details, which includes an impressive two-storey bay window to the front elevation. I noted some alterations to the front of the terrace, such as the loss of boundary treatments, changes to fenestration and the

introduction of rooflights. However, these were not so pronounced that they detracted from the appreciation of the original form of the terrace. The Chippenham Conservation Area Appraisal (2007) identifies that this long terrace creates a strong linear statement and is an important part of the character of the street.

7. Despite their low profile, the cumulative large scale of the solar panels would cover a substantial proportion of the front roof slope and so would have a prominent appearance. Their arrangement in both horizontal and vertical orientations, would appear random and irregular, particularly when combined with the existing rooflights. In addition, the use of modern materials would lead to the panels appearing alien and incongruous against the traditional character of the terrace.
8. While their elevated position would ensure they would not be highly perceptible from the pavement in front of the terrace, the solar panels would still be visible from the opposite side of the highway, as well as in long distance views from each end of Park Lane. In these views the introduction of multiple solar panels to the middle of the terrace's largely uninterrupted front roof slope would detract from the uniformity and consistency that characterises it.
9. Park Lane has evolved over time to accommodate increased traffic, modern infrastructure and contemporary residential and commercial development. Nevertheless, the front of the appeal terrace largely retains its original character, and this contributes positively to the street scene. Therefore, these contemporary changes, some of which have been identified as detrimental to local character within the CA Appraisal, do not justify further alterations that would harm the character of the appeal terrace and wider CA.
10. There may be solar panels on properties elsewhere in the CA, however, in this context, the proposal would be an anomalous addition to the terrace. Furthermore, I do not have full details of the planning background to any other examples in order to give them significant weight in this appeal, which I have in any event determined on its own individual planning merits. Even if, as has been suggested, a condition was used to ensure the removal of the solar panels at the end of their life, this would not mitigate the harm that would arise whilst they were in situ.
11. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of CAs. For the reasons given above, the proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Due to the scale of the proposal, the harm would be relatively localised and it would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. Even giving significant weight to the proposed energy efficiency improvements in line with Paragraph 167 of the Framework, and the potential to reduce some of the peak demand on the grid, which could benefit neighbours on the same electrical phase, such public benefits would be modest in the context of solar panels to a single dwelling. In this particular instance, they do not outweigh the harm identified to the character and appearance of the CA, and I apply great weight to the conservation of the CA in line with Paragraph 212 of the Framework.
13. I conclude that the proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. It would be contrary to the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015)

specifically Core Policy 57 (Ensuring high quality design and place shaping) and Core Policy 58 (Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment) which together seek that proposals make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings, and which protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment. It would also be contrary to Policy TC4 (Development within Chippenham Conservation Area) of the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan (2024) which permits development within the CA where it is of high-quality design that makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Other Matters

14. I acknowledge that the planning application was submitted as part of a Council-led solar scheme at cost to the appellant. However, this matter does not relate to the land use planning merits of the appeal, which must be the focus of my recommendation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

15. The proposal would be contrary to the development plan. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Long

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

16. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

A M Nilsson

INSPECTOR