



Design Principles

Solar Panels



In Letchworth Garden City

Revised May 2026

**Letchworth
Garden City**
Heritage Foundation

Introduction

In order to ensure that Letchworth Garden City remains true to its founding principles as the world's first Garden City, we seek to maintain the unique character and quality of its buildings and environment.

Letchworth Garden City has a Scheme of Management (the Scheme), under which most dwellings in the town require our prior written consent for external alterations. Leaseholders also require our consent under the covenants contained in their lease.

This document forms part of our Design Principles and sets out the requirements for the installation of solar panels (solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and solar thermal collectors). It applies to all proposals for solar panels, including installations on roofs, walls and outbuildings, as well as free-standing arrays within the curtilage of a property. It also applies to associated equipment, such as battery storage units and other ancillary infrastructure, which also require consent.

The Design Principles divide dwellings in the town into two Character Areas: the Heritage Character Area, which includes Homes of Special Interest, and the Modern Character Area. As the approach to solar installations differs between these areas, this document contains separate sections for each. Homeowners should refer to the section relevant to their property.

Please Note: The requirements under the Scheme and leases are separate from any permissions that may be required from the Local Planning Authority or other regulatory bodies.

Contact

The Heritage and Stewardship (HAS) team provides free pre-application advice to homeowners and leaseholders considering the installation of solar panels. Early engagement can help ensure that proposals accord with the relevant Design Principles.

For pre-application advice, please contact the HAS team at:

home@letchworth.com or **01462 530335**.

To submit an application for external alterations to your property, including the installation of solar panels, please apply online at:

letchworth.com/your-home/online-application-portal/

Submission requirements

Applications for the installation of solar panels should be accompanied by the following information:

- A marked photograph or scaled drawing, preferably an aerial view or roof plan, showing the extent and position of the proposed installation. Solar panels should be shown at their correct size and scale relative to the roof
- A specification of the solar panels, including their size, colour and type
- Details of any associated equipment, such as batteries, inverters and cabling, including their location

Heritage Character Area

Design Principles

We support and encourage residents to adapt their dwellings in ways that help mitigate climate change. However, the need to reduce reliance on unsustainable energy sources must be balanced with the historic and architectural quality and distinctiveness of buildings within the Heritage Character Area.

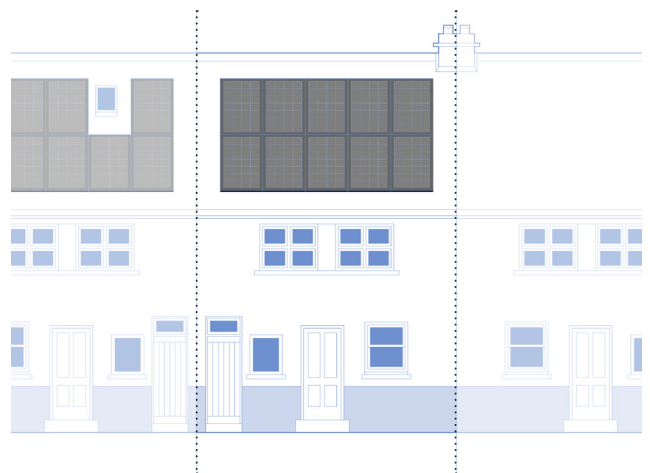
The design and siting of solar panels should be carefully considered to ensure they are integrated sensitively into the building and its wider context. The visual and physical impact of an installation should be minimised through careful planning of the location, quantity and layout of panels. This is especially important within the Heritage Character Area, where the collective appearance and character of buildings, streets and spaces contribute to the identity of Letchworth Garden City and are particularly sensitive to change.

Design requirements

Within the Heritage Character Area, proposals for the installation of solar panels are likely to be acceptable where they accord with the following requirements:

- Solar panels must be located on rear elevations and not visible from the public realm
- Solar panels must not be located on any street-facing elevation of a building or be visible from the public realm
- Solar panels to side elevations must not be visible from the public realm
- Solar panels should be arranged in a logical and orderly layout. A simple rectangular array is preferred. Where this is not possible, panels should **either** be arranged in a staggered formation to follow the form of the roof, such as the angle of a hipped roof or a projecting gable, **or** around an existing feature such as a chimney or rooflight, but not both

- Solar panels should be grouped together, preferably as a single array, rather than dispersed across the roof, to create a neat and orderly arrangement and reduce visual clutter
- Solar panels should all be the same size and orientation, aligned with neighbouring panels and set in from the edges of the roof (not overhanging). They should preferably be black, including the frames
- Care must be taken with the siting of external ancillary equipment such as batteries, inverters, connectors and switches. These elements must not be visible from the public realm. Cabling must also be run discreetly across the property, utilising existing cable and pipe runs wherever possible



An example of a balanced, rectangular solar panel array positioned on the rear elevation of a terraced property.

Heritage Character Area

Suggestions of array designs

In the Heritage Character Area, solar panels should be limited to the rear elevations of the building.

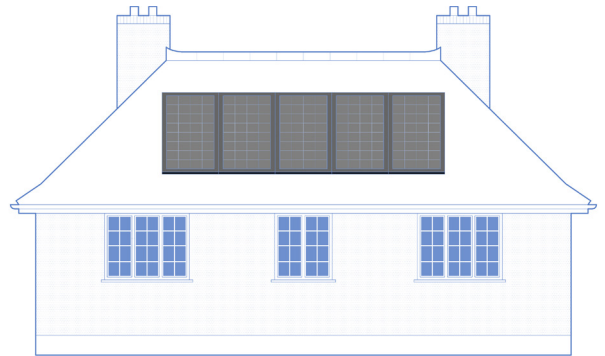
Where there are existing elements on the roof, such as rooflights, chimneys and dormer windows, the solar panels should be positioned around these as neatly as possible and the array should be overall rectangular in form. In these instances, a staggered array is not acceptable.



An example of an orderly solar panel array arranged in a staggered formation to follow the form of the roof.



An example of an orderly solar panel array arranged around an existing rooflight. Note that the overall shape of the array remains rectangular.

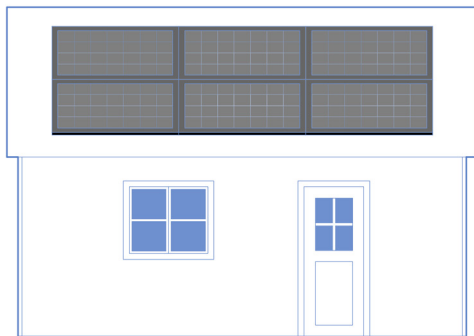


An example of a balanced, rectangular solar panel array positioned on the rear elevation.

Heritage Character Area

Detached garages, sheds and outbuildings

Solar panels may be more acceptable if placed on detached garages, sheds or outbuildings within the rear garden of a property. The Design Principles set out above will still apply. The size and positioning of panels should be proportionate to the scale of the building and should not dominate its appearance.



Example of a solar panel array on the roof of a detached garage.

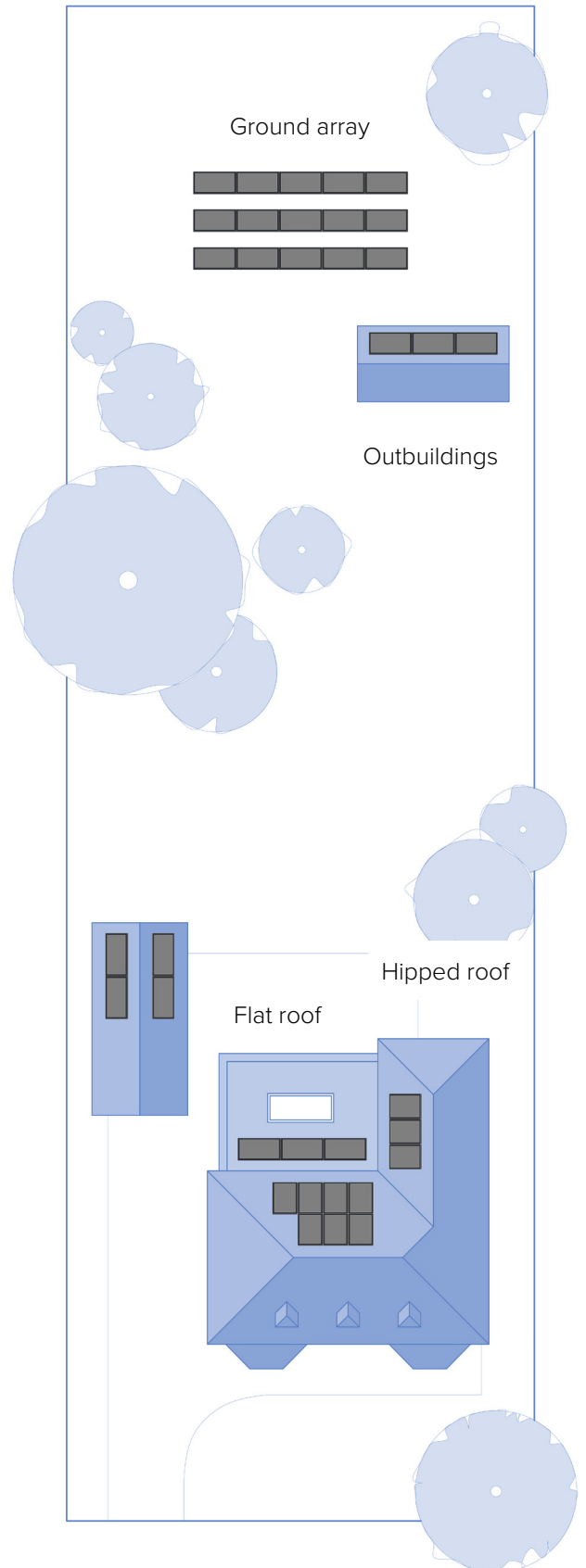
Other garden structures and free-standing arrays

Solar panels may be incorporated into other rear garden structures, such as pergolas. The Design Principles will continue to apply to these structures.

Solar panels may also be installed as a free-standing array within rear gardens. Care should be taken to avoid shaded locations and to ensure that any associated cable runs do not damage tree roots.

Integrated solar panels

Where solar panels are proposed as part of a wider re-roofing project or the construction of a new extension, integrated solar panels may be an appropriate option. By sitting flush with the roof covering, these can provide a more seamless appearance than conventional mounted panels. Any such installation must still accord with the Design Principles.



Block plan demonstrating a number of possible locations for solar panels within a typical site in the Heritage Character Area.

Modern Character Area

Design Principles

We support and encourage residents to adapt their dwellings in ways that help mitigate climate change. However, the need to reduce reliance on unsustainable energy sources must be balanced with the character, appearance and quality of buildings and the wider environment within the Modern Character Area.

The design and siting of solar panels should be carefully considered to ensure they are integrated sensitively into the building and its wider context. The visual and physical impact of an installation should be minimised through careful planning of the location, quantity and layout of panels.

Design requirements

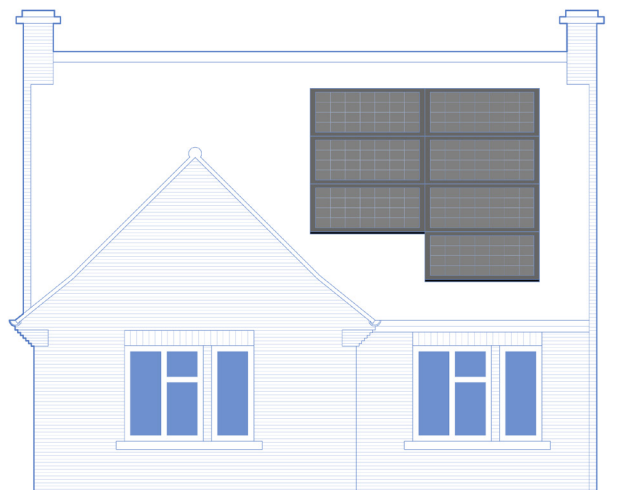
Within the Modern Character Area, proposals for the installation of solar panels are likely to be acceptable where they accord with the following requirements:

- Solar panels are acceptable on any roof slope, provided they accord with all other requirements
- Solar panels should be arranged in a logical and orderly layout. A simple rectangular array is preferred. Where this is not possible, panels should **either** be arranged in a staggered formation to follow the form of the roof, such as the angle of a hipped roof or a projecting gable, **or** around an existing feature such as a chimney or rooflight, but not both
- Solar panels should be grouped together, preferably as a single array, rather than dispersed across the roof, to create a neat and orderly arrangement and reduce visual clutter

- Solar panels should all be the same size and orientation, aligned with neighbouring panels and set in from the edges of the roof (not overhanging). They should preferably be black, including the frames.
- Care must be taken with the siting of external ancillary equipment such as batteries, inverters, connectors and switches. These elements must not be visible from the public realm. Cabling must also be run discreetly across the property, utilising existing cable and pipe runs wherever possible



An example of a balanced, rectangular solar panel array positioned on the front elevation.



An example of an orderly solar panel array arranged in a staggered formation to follow the form of the roof.

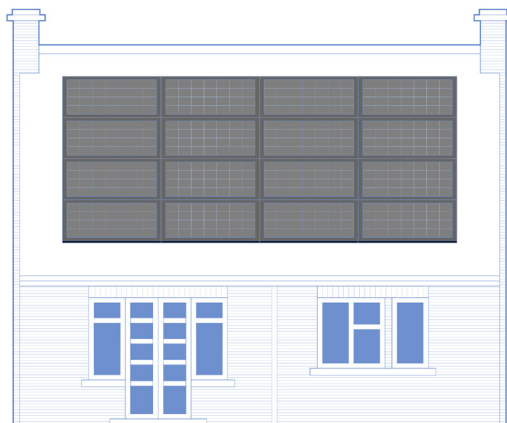
Modern Character Area

Suggestions of array designs

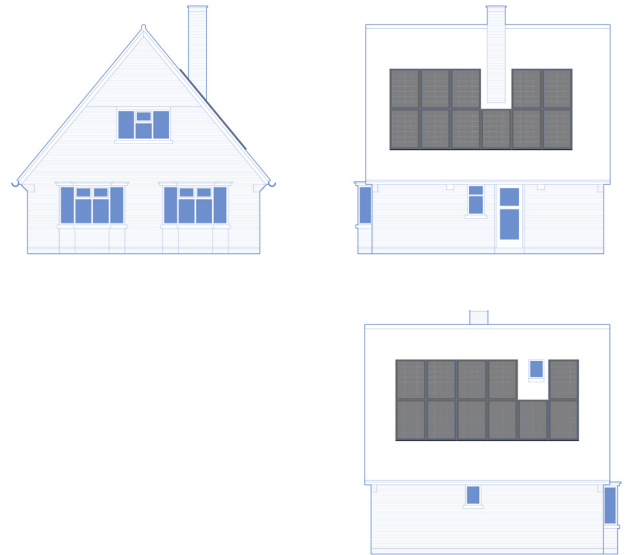
In the Modern Character Area, it is preferable that solar panels be limited to the rear elevations of the building wherever possible, and in a balanced, rectangular array.

Where there are existing elements on the roof, such as rooflights, chimneys and dormer windows, the solar panels should be positioned around these as neatly as possible and the array should be overall rectangular in form. In these instances, a staggered array is not acceptable.

Solar panels can often be installed on the roofs of existing flat-roofed garages or extensions where there is a suitable parapet or upstand to obscure visibility of the panels from view.



Examples of balanced, rectangular solar panel arrays positioned on the rear elevation.



Examples of orderly solar panel arrays on side elevations, arranged around an existing chimney and rooflight. Note that the overall shape of each array remains rectangular.



Example of a solar panel array on the front elevation as well as an array on the flat-roofed garage

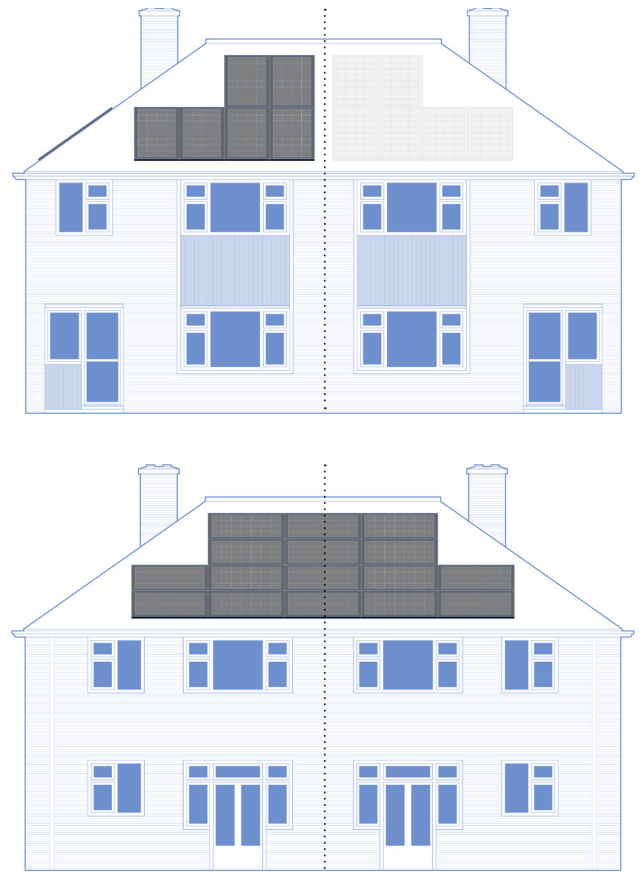
Modern Character Area

Suggestions of array designs

There may be scope to introduce a staggered array of solar panels on a hipped roof to maximise the number of panels. However, these should still all be the same size and orientation, aligned with neighbouring panels and set in from the edges of the roof.

Where one property in a semi has already installed solar panels we would expect to see the same arrangement mirrored in order to preserve the symmetry of the pair, provided that the adjoining array conforms to our current Design Principles.

Where possible, it would be beneficial for semi-detached properties to work with adjoining neighbours on a single, symmetrical array, which would maximise the number of solar panels and create a more balanced and tidy layout.



Examples of a semi-detached property with symmetrical solar panel arrays in a staggered formation to follow the form of the roof. In the bottom example, the two properties have installed a single, cohesive solar panel array.

Modern Character Area

Detached garages, sheds and outbuildings

Solar panels may be more acceptable if placed on detached garages, sheds or outbuildings within the rear garden of a property. The Design Principles set out above will still apply. The size and positioning of panels should be proportionate to the scale of the building and should not dominate its appearance.

Other garden structures and free-standing arrays

Solar panels may be incorporated into other rear garden structures, such as pergolas. The Design Principles will continue to apply to these structures.

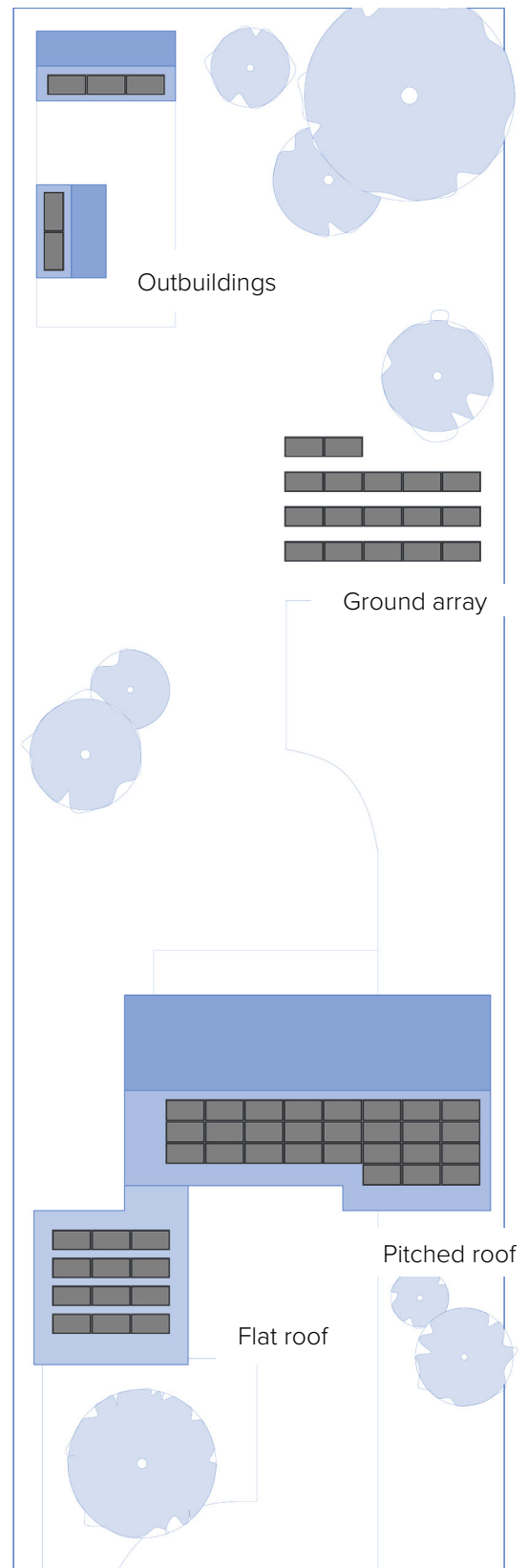
Solar panels may also be installed as a free-standing array within rear gardens. Care should be taken to avoid shaded locations and to ensure that any associated cable runs do not damage tree roots.

Integrated solar panels

Where solar panels are proposed as part of a wider re-roofing project or the construction of a new extension, integrated solar panels may be an appropriate option. By sitting flush with the roof covering, these can provide a more seamless appearance than conventional mounted panels. Any such installation must still accord with the Design Principles.



Example of a solar panel array on the roof of a covered verandah at the rear of the property.



Block plan demonstrating a number of possible locations for solar panels within a typical site in the Modern Character Area.

Contemplating changes?

We're here to help, call us now on: 01462 530335

Planning home alterations can be complex and stressful. The Heritage and Stewardship (**HAS**) team are happy to provide pre-application advice to develop a scheme that meets your needs, is sympathetic to your home, and complies with the Design Principles.

Once your application is submitted, it will be assigned to a team member who will be your consistent point of contact until the conclusion.

All advice is free unless the works have been carried out without Consent, in which case a fee is charged for administering the retrospective application.

Glossary

Curtilage

The land associated with a property, including gardens and driveways, and other areas within the property boundary.

Public realm

Roads, footways, public open spaces and other areas that are publicly accessible or visible to the public.

Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels

Solar panels that convert sunlight into electricity for use within a property.

Solar thermal collectors

Solar panels that use energy from the sun to heat water for domestic use.