

**Cambridge City Council Micro-Renewable Energy Guidance
For Householders
July 2010**

Introduction

Cambridge City Council is keen to promote the uptake of domestic scale renewable energy around the City. These are generally known as 'micro-renewables' and include solar thermal hot water panels, photovoltaic (pv) panels for electricity, micro wind turbines, heat pumps (ground source, water source and air source) and biomass (wood) heating. The scope for such technologies to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change is potentially significant and they are an important part of moving to a low carbon future.

The aim of this guidance is to clarify what permissions and consents are currently required in order to install these technologies. Recent changes to the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) in 2008 mean that in many cases, planning permission may no longer be required, although exceptions to this do apply. You can obtain informal officer advice from the Council's Development Control section prior to installation to make sure that it is 'permitted development'. If you require a formal determination that the works are 'permitted development' you can apply for a 'Lawful Development Certificate', a document that may be useful to you if you decide to sell your house, in order to demonstrate that any installations are lawful. Where an application for a Lawful Development Certificate is made prior to installation, which is the recommended approach, the application will cost £75. A retrospective application (i.e. after the technology has been installed) will cost £150 and is a more risky approach, particularly where advice has not previously been sought as to whether or not the installation is permitted development. An application for a Lawful Development Certificate normally takes 8 weeks from receipt of your application.

Please see the table below for a summary of the consents currently required for different types of micro-renewables. The table sets out whether you need planning permission or some other form of consent for what you intend to do. It also gives advice on any environmental health issues that may be relevant. You are advised to seek the advice of relevant officers as soon as possible when considering installing one of these technologies, as they will be best placed to advise you of whether permission is required and how best to proceed, as well as providing early warning if permission is unlikely to be granted.

Separate guidance is available for applications involving major developments where, in line with Policy 8/16 of the Cambridge Local Plan, at least 10% of the development's total predicted energy requirements will be expected to be provided on-site, from renewable energy sources. This guidance is contained within the Council's [Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document](#), which was adopted in 2007.

Planning Permission

Where planning permission is required, applicants can either submit an application for the renewable system alone, or as part of a wider application for other works to be done to the property. The fee for a planning application for householder development is currently £150 and normally takes up to 8 weeks to determine. During this time a site visit will be carried out by the development control case officer and letters will be sent to neighbouring properties giving them an opportunity to make comments on the application if they want to. It is advisable for you to discuss your proposals with your neighbours prior to submitting your planning application, as this can help to avoid any unnecessary objections.

As part of your application, you will be asked to complete a standard planning application form, provide a site plan with the property marked on, and also provide information on the particular technology you wish to install including drawings or other illustrative material to indicate what the visual impact on the house and the surrounding area is likely to be. For further information about how to apply for planning permission where required, please see our web pages on [how to make a planning application](#).

Listed Buildings, Buildings in Conservation Areas and Buildings of Local Interest

If the property is listed, due to its architectural or historic importance, then Listed Building consent will be required. A sensitive design approach will be required in relation to Listed Buildings, buildings in Conservation Areas and Buildings of Local Interest. Officers will be keen to ensure that the incorporation of any of these technologies does not compromise the quality of the historic environment or its landscape setting. You are strongly advised to consult one of the Council's Conservation Officers before submitting an application for Listed Building Consent if the building is listed. They may be able to suggest a more appropriate solution or advise on a more appropriate siting of the technology, if they feel this is necessary. Some Listed Buildings may not be suitable for installation of micro-renewables but other energy conservation measures may be more suitable.

While not statutorily listed, Buildings of Local Interest merit protection due to their importance to the locality or the City's history and architectural development. Likewise, Conservation Areas are those areas of the City that have special architectural or historic interest that makes them worth protecting. Again, you are strongly advised to consult one of the Council's Conservation Officers if you are considering the installation of micro-renewables on a Building of Local Interest or on a building in a Conservation Area. If your property is adjacent to a Listed Building or a Conservation Area you will need to show that the proposed works do not have an adverse impact on either. Officers can advise you about this.

Building Regulations

Building Regulations differ from planning permission and in certain instances one or both may apply. Building Regulations seek to ensure that buildings are well constructed and meet health and safety requirements for people using them or visiting them. The regulations also include requirements for the conservation of fuel and power and reduction of carbon emissions from buildings are reduced. For more information, please see the [Building Control](#) section of our website.

The role of Energy Efficiency

Another important area to consider when looking to reduce your home's carbon emissions, is the role that improving the energy efficiency of the building fabric itself can play, prior to the installation of micro-renewables. Upgrading insulation, ensuring adequate draught exclusion and/or better controls on heating/cooling requirements and other efficiency measures should be considered first as this can significantly reduce the energy required to heat/cool your home. Further information about energy efficiency and energy conservation can be found on the [Energy Savings Trust website](#). Information about grants for energy efficiency improvements can also be found on this website.

Summary of Required Consents for Micro-Renewables

Technology	Planning Requirements	Building Regulations	Other Considerations
Solar Thermal & Solar PV (roof mounted)	<p>Likely to be considered to be permitted development subject to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Panels should not be installed above the ridgeline and should project no more than 200mm from the roof or wall surface; - If your property is a Listed Building, Listed Building consent will be required and you are advised to contact officers in the Conservation team; - Planning permission will also be required if your property is in a Conservation Area and the panels are to be fitted on the principal or side elevation walls and they are visible from the highway. If panels are to be fitted to a building in the garden or grounds, they should not be visible from a highway. 	<p>Building Regulation consent is normally required. The adequacy of the roof structure to carry the weight of the panel will need to be checked and shown to be suitable. Some strengthening work may be required. Approval may be required for other elements of the work such as electrical installation (Part P).</p>	<p>All solar panels are subject to the following conditions under the planning regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Panels on a building should be sited, as far as is practicable, to minimise the effect on the appearance of the building; - They should be sited, so far as is practicable, to minimise the effect on the amenity of the area; - When no longer needed for microgeneration they should be removed as soon as possible.

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Solar Thermal & Solar PV (stand alone)	<p>The installation of stand alone panels is likely to be permitted development unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is more than 4m in height; - It is installed less than 5 metres away from any boundary; - The area of array is greater than 9 m²; - Only one stand alone solar installation is allowed; - If your property is a Listed Building, Listed Building consent will be required and you are advised to contact officers in the Conservation team; - Planning permission will also be required if your property is in a Conservation Area and the system is visible from a highway. 	<p>Consent will be required for work such as electrical installation (Part P).</p>	<p>All solar panels are subject to the following conditions under the planning regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They should be sited, so far as is practicable, to minimise the effect on the amenity of the area; - When no longer needed for microgeneration they should be removed as soon as possible.
Small Scale Wind (either building mounted or stand alone)	<p>Planning permission for small scale turbines is still currently required, although this may change in the near future. If your property is a Listed Building, you will need to apply for Listed Building consent as well as planning permission.</p>	<p>If attached to the building, consent would normally be required. Will need to comply with requirements for structural integrity (Part A). Consent may also be required for electrical installation (Part P).</p>	<p>Currently, there is little noise and vibration data available for these units. It is essential that the equipment does not give rise to noise nuisance to immediate neighbours. The applicant should contact the Council's Environmental Health section for further advice.</p> <p>You will also need to consider the wind speeds in your area – wind turbines tend to be inappropriate in urban settings because of a lack of reliable winds at sufficiently high speeds.</p>

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Ground Source Heat Pumps	The installation of a ground source heat pump within the curtilage of dwelling house is permitted development. However, if your property is a Listed Building, consent may be required and you are advised to contact officers in the Conservation team.	Building Regulations consent will be required (Part L Conservation of fuel and power requirements). Consent may also be required for electrical installation (Part P).	Environment Agency consent is required for open loop systems. It is essential that this equipment does not give rise to noise nuisance to immediate neighbours. It is recommended that the applicant contact the Council's Environmental Health section for further advice.
Air Source Heat Pumps	Planning permission for air source heat pumps is still currently required. If your property is a Listed Building, then you will need to apply for Listed Building Consent as well as planning permission.	Building Regulations consent will be required (Part L Conservation of fuel and power requirements). Consent may also be required for electrical installation (Part P).	It is essential that this equipment does not give rise to noise nuisance to immediate neighbours. It is recommended that the applicant contact the Council's Environmental Health section for further advice.

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Biomass Heating	<p>Planning permission is not normally required, and the installation of flues for non-listed buildings not in a Conservation Area is permitted development unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The height of the flue would exceed the highest part of the roof by one metre or more <p>If your property is a Listed Building, consent will be required and you are advised to contact officers in the Conservation team. If you live in a Conservation Area, planning permission for a flue will be required if it is to be installed on a wall or roof slope forming the principal or side elevation of the dwelling house and would be visible from a highway.</p>	<p>Regulations Approval will be required. Must comply with Part J (Combustion appliances and Fuel Storage Systems) and Part L (Conservation of fuel and power requirements).</p>	<p>You will need to check whether you are in or close to a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and consult with the Council's Environmental Health section. You will also need to check whether you are in the Smoke Control Area on the following map: http://cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment-and-recycling/pollution-noise-and-nuisance/air-pollution/smoke-pollution.en</p> <p>If you do live within the Smoke Control Area, your appliance must be approved for use. Even if you are outside the area, the Council encourages the use of approved appliances, which can be considered to be smoke free in their operation. If you live in an AQMA, applications related to biomass installations are unlikely to be supported by the City Council. Further guidance can be found at: http://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/biomass/</p>

Grants and Advice

For renewable electricity technologies such as solar pv, a scheme called the Feed in Tariff was introduced in April 2010. Under this scheme, energy suppliers make regular payments to householders and communities who generate their own electricity. The scheme guarantees a minimum payment for all the electricity generated by the system, as well as a separate payment for any electricity exported to the grid. These payments are in addition to the bill savings made by using electricity that you have generated yourself. **For further information, please contact the Energy Savings Trust on 0800 512 012 or visit <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generate-your-own-energy/Sell-your-own-energy/Feed-in-Tariff-Clean-Energy-Cashback-scheme>**

For up to date information about the availability of grants for thermal microgeneration such as biomass heating and solar hot water, please see the [Energy Savings Trust website](#), or call 0800 512 012.

Contact Details

The main contact number for the City Council's Customer Service Centre is 01223 457000. This number can be used to speak to one of the following departments about your micro-renewables installation:

Development Control Officers* – to find out whether your installation is permitted development or whether planning consent will be required. Officers will also be able to give you general planning advice about the likely acceptability of your proposal.

Conservation Officers – if your installation will affect a Listed Building, Building of Local Interest or a building in a Conservation Area.

Building Control Officers – to find out what Building Regulations Requirements your installation will need to comply with.

Environmental Health Officers – to find out whether there are any Air Quality or Noise issues related to your installation.

You can also use this number to contact the City Council's Senior Sustainability Officer, who deals with sustainable design and construction should you have any general enquiries about micro-renewables.

* If you have any queries about the planning application process, or wish to check whether your proposal requires planning permission, you can also contact the Council's Duty Planning Officer, who is available 10.30am – 3pm Monday to Friday via the Customer Service Centre number above.