

Planning Application Fact Sheet

Solar Panels



Solar installations (both solar hot water systems and PV systems) provide the opportunity to save on electricity bills and reduce your carbon footprint. Hobsons Bay City Council is committed to the creation of a sustainable built environment and encourages the development and installation of renewable energy systems including photovoltaic panels.

However, the location of these installations can have a detrimental effect on the heritage value of some areas of Hobsons Bay. This factsheet provides information on when a planning permit is required to erect solar panels, and what information is required to be supplied.

Do I need a planning permit to put up solar panels?

A planning permit is required to erect solar panels attached to a building if your site is covered by a Heritage Overlay and the panels and supporting equipment are visible from a street (other than a lane) or public park. You can search the State Government's VicPlan website to find out if your property is covered by a heritage overlay.

Council's consideration of your application

The [Hobsons Bay Heritage Study](#) provides a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the extent and significance of heritage places throughout Hobsons Bay. The Study identifies three levels of significance – individually listed, contributory and non-contributory. The level of significance makes an important contributing factor when Council is considering an application, as identified below:

Individually listed building:

- ideally, solar installations should not be visible from the street and therefore not require a planning permit
- colours of materials and electrical fittings must match the roof colour

- solar installations must be easily detachable, and not result in the removal of existing heritage cladding or original fabric

Contributory dwelling:

- solar installations should be placed where they are least visible from the street whilst achieving satisfactory performance. They should not face the street
- a setback from the street frontage on a side roof may achieve satisfactory concealment
- if the only suitable location is visible from the street, then the water storage tank should not be mounted on the roof. Solar collector panels or PV cells are to be fixed parallel to, and close to the roof surface (brackets/frames not permitted)
- vegetation may provide or assist visibility screening
- significant features of the dwelling must be respected and the heritage fabric should not be removed

Non-contributory dwelling:

- solar installations should be placed where they are least visible from the street, however they can face the street if it provides the optimal performance

Other things to consider when installing your solar panels

To ensure your solar installation is operating optimally, you should consider the following:

- all panels should be positioned to avoid the overshadowing from nearby buildings, trees and power lines/poles
- the ideal placement of photovoltaic and solar hot water systems in Melbourne is an unshaded roof facing due north however an east-west arrangement can also be effective

Application Checklist:

- ensure that the system is installed by a qualified professional, accredited by the Clean Energy Council
- You should check with your installer to see if changes to the roof structure or building is required. If they are a Building Permit may also be required

What happens if my solar panels are overshadowed by future or proposed development?

In some instances the planning system does protect overshadowing of existing solar panels from new building works on adjoining land, however some overshadowing will be allowed which may affect performance. To ensure your new panels are protected from future development, you should consider the following:

- understand the current planning regulations for your area, this will provide you with an indication of the height of development that may be constructed near your installation
- wherever possible, set back the installation from property boundaries so they are not vulnerable to overshadowing

Applications for the construction or installation of solar panels attached to a dwelling in a heritage overlay are subject to the [VicSmart application process](#). VicSmart is a streamlined assessment process for straight forward planning permit applications and provides a different set of information that is required. Please check the Council website for further information.

Applications should be lodged through Council's [Greenlight Portal](#), and be accompanied by an electronic copy of the following information:

- a fully completed Application for Planning Permit form (no application form is required if lodging the application through Council's [Greenlight Portal](#))
- application fee: Identified as Class 7-8 depending on the estimated cost of works on Council's [Schedule of Fees](#)
- a recent full copy of title (less than 90 days old) and details of any restrictive covenant. A full copy of title can be obtained from the LANDATA website, <https://www.landata.vic.gov.au/>
- a plan drawn at an appropriate scale and fully dimensioned showing:
 - the location, shape and size of the site
 - the location of any existing buildings, including fences, and trees
 - the location, dimensions and design of the proposed solar installation including details of proposed materials
 - any required demolition or alteration to the building
- the proposed colour schedule and nature of any materials and finishes
- a photograph of the area affected by the proposal including any building, outbuilding, fence, or tree which may be affected by the proposal
- a photograph of the subject site and adjoining properties along the street frontage

Please note that applications not lodged through the Greenlight Portal must also be accompanied by a fully completed Application for Planning Permit form.

Further information may be required once an initial assessment of the application has occurred.

If you would like to find out more or speak to one of Council's planners, please call 9932 1000 or email townplanning@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

