



The Bar Council

Guidance on installing solar panels on chambers

September 2026

Purpose:	To encourage chambers to consider installing solar panels as an efficient and cost-effective means to reduce your carbon footprint and save on business energy costs.
Scope of application:	All practising barristers.
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Introduction

This document is intended to encourage chambers to consider installing solar panels as an efficient and cost-effective means to reduce your carbon footprint and save on business energy costs.

It includes a case study, led by Ben Cooper KC of the Nature and Climate Panel, following the experience of installing solar panels on 4 of Doughty Street Chambers' buildings.

Below are listed practical steps which will help you obtain approval to solar power for your chambers. The financial case is very strong, from substantial utility bill cost savings which are quickly followed by your own renewable energy profits. A solar system can pay for itself within a c.6-year period, alongside achieving carbon savings.

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Practical steps check

Feasibility assessment

Do you have a suitable roof space?

- Preferably a roof facing south or west
- Is the roof space unshaded – mostly free from large obstructions such as chimneys and trees?

TIP: Most companies conduct a free feasibility online roof survey using Google Maps. If you provide the address of your chambers site, they can provide a basic quote to use for a grant application (if needed) or chambers budget proposal.

Preliminary assessment of planning permission prospects

- Will you need, and will you get, planning permission?
- Will you need, and will you get, listed building or conservation area consent?
- Instruct an architect to prepare your planning application (a good architect can be very cost effective), or the solar company may include that service as part of its quote

TIP: Chambers based in Camden (which covers Gray's Inn and Lincolns Inn) can rely on Camden Doughty Street precedent for this.

- We can share contacts at the Camden Planning Office, please email aturnock@barcouncil.org.uk for further information
- Use the free planning advice for Camden Climate Fund projects: <https://camdenclimatefund.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/pre-application-advice?step=step1>

Think about ways of obtaining external funding

- If in Camden, apply for Camden Climate Alliance Camden Climate Fund¹ for a local business grant to help with costs – will pay up to 50% of cost capped
- If in the city, join the London Business Mayor Challenge

Narrow down or choose specifications of the system:

- Decide on optimizer² or microinverter by seeking a quote for each – this could be important if dealing with shading or multiple rooftops. These devices are standard and will help maximize solar generation and cost savings.
- Max power panels – check efficiency percentage of the panels you choose and output (400KW panels are now standard) and warranty duration, and consider ethical sourcing of panels
- Export tariff or batteries for storage – calculate usage by assessment of time of use. The advantage of solar at work is that we use the power during the working day, maximizing usage and cost savings
- Solar IBoost can divert excess solar to heat hot water if you use a hot water tank for heating or hot water, thereby maximizing your energy efficiency and reducing gas costs and associated carbon from gas usage

References

¹ The Business Fund aims to support small to medium enterprises to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings and adopt low carbon heat technologies. There are two grant tiers available: Tier A: Up to £5,000 (no match-funding required) for small to micro entities (with fewer than 50 staff and a turnover of less than £10m) to install energy efficiency works, and Tier B: Up to £15,000 to cover up to 50% of the cost of energy efficiency works for SMEs (companies with no more than 250 employees and a turnover of less than £25m).

² A solar optimizer, or power optimizer, is a device that maximizes the energy output of individual solar panels, particularly in situations where some panels are shaded or have different orientations. It does this by using Maximum Power Point Tracking (MPPT) technology to ensure each panel operates at its peak efficiency, even if other panels in the system are underperforming.

Check the position on needing a licence:

You may require a licence to alter premises if you are in a listed building – it also depends on who owns your building (some landlords may require this)

Roof structural engineer assessment

Is the roof strong enough for panels?

TIP: Your installation company can provide this as part of their service. I can otherwise recommend the people we used.

To connect solar panels to the grid

You must get distribution network operator (DNO) sign-off. The process depends on the size of your system's inverter:

- Small systems (up to 3.68 KW per phase typical of domestic set ups): Governed by G98 regulations. Your installer can simply connect the system and notify your local DNO within 28 days
- Larger systems (over 3.68 KW per phase more typical for offices): Governed by G99 regulations. You must apply to the DNO and receive pre-approval before installation begins

Your installer typically handles this paperwork, submitting the application on your behalf via the [National Grid](#) or your local DNO. Once approved, you will receive a G98/G99 confirmation letter, which is essential for accessing grid export payments like the smart export guarantee (SEG).

Consider the potential for exporting electricity to the grid

- Export tariff payments from your energy provider for any surplus. Good Energy offers this service
- Install a smart meter

- Required for export
- Helpful efficiency for reporting carbon and seeing how much solar power is used and so how much cost saved
- Aftercare
 - Sometimes an optimizer will need replacing – this will likely come under warranty but will need a visit to replace

TIP: There are low-cost margins for the installer, so chambers may receive a better aftercare service and quotes for installation if they shared the same trusted installer.

Solar in the Inns

Chambers situated in the Inns of Court will need to engage with the Inn, as they are unlikely to have their roof space included within their demised³ area as tenants. They will therefore need to work with the Inn and may need support with any planning application.

Chambers in the City may also wish to support the City of London's Climate Action Strategy and Local Area Energy Plan, aiming for net zero by 2040 and maximising rooftop solar deployment on non-City owned, non-domestic buildings, by encouraging Inner and Middle Temple to participate.

Contacts

The following are the points of contact at each Inn (as of June 2026):

- Gray's Inn

References

³ Part of a property that is leased to a tenant under the lease.

- List of contacts: [Contact - graysinn.org.uk](https://graysinn.org.uk)
- Lincoln's Inn
 - Estate Helpdesk: estateshelpdesk@lincolnsinn.org.uk
- Inner Temple
 - List of contacts: [Contact | The Inner Temple](#)
- Middle Temple
 - Estate helpdesk: estates@middletemple.org.uk

Doughty Street Chambers case study

This case study is intended to assist barristers and employees in other chambers by passing on lessons learned.

The system consists of 96 panels over 4 Georgian terraces, as follows:

House No	Panel size	No of Panels	Peak output
10	410wP	21	8.61kW
11	410wP	21	8.61kW
53	410wP	21	8.61kW
54	410wP	33	13.53kW
		Totals	39.36kW

Actual generation figures from first two years (November 2023 to November 2025):

- No. 10: 8 MWh
- No. 11: 8 MWh
- Nos. 53 and 54: 26 MWh
- Total power generation in two years: 42 MWh

Annual generation estimated at 21 MWh (carbon saving estimate: 2.6 to 4.7 tons for UK Grid)

- The price of a KWh of electricity fluctuates - over the first three years from 60 pence per KWh to 28 pence per KWh – which is relevant to cost savings.

Financial benefits – savings to chambers. Taking the unit cost for Doughty Street at a conservative mean of 30 pence for 19,500 KWh solar generation consumed, we would have saved a minimum of £5,850 per year from our annual electricity bills and received a small sum of £250 for electricity exported.

- Solar generation exported with smart meter (as surplus to our maximum use):
 - 10-11 Doughty Street: Exported 1.09 MWh back to grid until 23/9/25
 - 53-54 Doughty Street: Exported 1.8 MWh until 23/9/25

The smart meter exports surplus electricity not consumed for Chambers. Therefore, we used 39 MWh and exported 3 KWh over the first two years

- Annual figures: consumed 19.5MWh and exported 1.5KWh
- The smart meter exports demonstrate that we are using almost all of the electricity generated on ASHPs, lighting, servers, computers et cetera. Solar is

more cost effective and the returns greater for offices, as the power generated in the daytime is used during the daytime when the office space is most busy

- Export rates fluctuate – paid at about 7-10 pence per kwh for business premises – but this is higher for domestic

Cost of installation and associated expenses

- Each expenditure itemised:
 - Installation and equipment total cost: £46,093.53
 - Architect: £900 (+VAT recoverable)
 - License to alter premises with panels additions to roof: £2,938 including VAT (This is required by SIPP but may not always be necessary)
 - Structural impact survey of roofs for 4 buildings: £600
- Total cost: **£50,531.53** across the four Doughty Street buildings
- However, Doughty Street Chambers received reductions of £21,300 made up of:
 - £11,000 No. 10 Doughty Street paid for entirely by landlord we rent building from
 - £10,000 grant from Camden Climate Alliance
 - £300 (50% of cost of roof survey shared with No. 10 landlord)
- Therefore, the total spend by Chambers: **£29,231.53**

Broader sustainability benefits

Next door neighbours at No. 52 Doughty Street immediately relied on our planning precedent to install solar next door and new applications being made, creating a positive ripple effect.

The Bar Council's Nature and Climate Panel
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Important Notice

This document has been prepared by the Bar Council to assist barristers on matters of professional conduct and ethics. It is not "guidance" for the purposes of the BSB Handbook I6.4, and neither the BSB nor a disciplinary tribunal nor the Legal Ombudsman is bound by any views or advice expressed in it. It does not comprise - and cannot be relied on as giving - legal advice. It has been prepared in good faith, but neither the Bar Council nor any of the individuals responsible for or involved in its preparation accept any responsibility or liability for anything done in reliance on it. For fuller information as to the status and effect of this document, please see [here](#).