Solar PV Proposals for Moredon Community Centre and John Moulton Hall

Committee: Finance & General Purposes Committee
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1. Purpose of Report

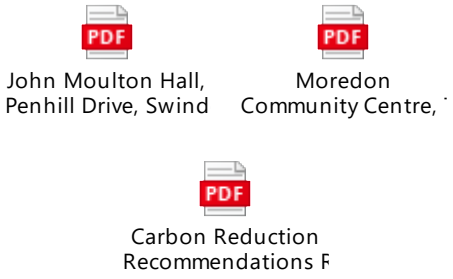
To present indicative solar photovoltaic (PV) proposals for Moredon Community Centre and John Moulton Hall, together with current site energy cost information, the impact of the confirmed decarbonisation scheme at John Moulton Hall, and wider delivery considerations, so that Members can determine whether both projects should proceed to the next stage of appraisal.

2. Background

Members previously approved review of solar energy opportunities as part of the Council's wider capital works programme.

Indicative solar PV proposals have now been received for two Council-owned sites:

- **Moredon Community Centre, The Street, Swindon, SN25 3ER**
- **John Moulton Hall, Penhill Drive, Swindon, SN2 5DU**



These proposals are indicative and remain subject to detailed site survey, structural assessment, electrical review, planning consideration where relevant and procurement compliance.

Since the original solar review was approved, two linked workstreams have become particularly relevant.

First, Moredon Community Centre has been awarded Sport England capital funding for refurbishment of the main hall and associated areas. The approved project includes hall refurbishment, roof repairs, mechanical and electrical upgrades, ventilation, air conditioning, accessibility works, AV and digital improvements, and associated professional fees and contingency. The award agreement states a total project cost of £118,500 and a Sport England award of £81,400.

Second, the Salix decarbonisation scheme at John Moulton Hall is proceeding. As part of that scheme, the existing gas heating system will be removed and replaced with electrically powered systems including air source heat pumps, air conditioning and electric heating panels. Only limited gas use is expected to remain for the cooker. This will materially change the building's energy profile and is relevant to the case for solar PV.

3. Current Energy Position

John Moulton Hall

A billed utility report for John Moulton Hall shows:

- annual electricity consumption of **14,432 kWh**
- annual electricity cost of **£3,517**
- annual gas consumption of **121,341 kWh**
- annual gas cost of **£7,381**.

This means that the site is currently incurring combined billed annual energy costs of approximately **£10,898**, with gas presently representing the larger element of overall annual spend.

Moredon Community Centre

A billed utility report for Moredon Community Centre shows:

- annual electricity consumption of **21,513 kWh**
- annual electricity cost of **£4,855**.

The report also confirms that the site incurs separate gas costs, although the decarbonisation-related financial review in this report is specific to John Moulton Hall.

Members should note that both utility reports state that they are based on billed consumption and there may be supplies not yet billed to date.

4. Wider Energy Cost Context

West Mercia Energy advises that, from April 2026, the non-energy elements of electricity charges are forecast to rise by as much as **27%**, meaning they could account for as much as **70% of a total electricity invoice**. It also advises that gas non-energy elements are forecast to rise by around **18%**, and states that reducing energy consumption and increasing self-generation are ways to help mitigate those rising pressures.

This is relevant because, as imported electricity costs rise, the financial value of electricity generated and used on site may also increase. That is particularly

important for John Moulton Hall as it moves away from gas heating and toward increased electrical demand.

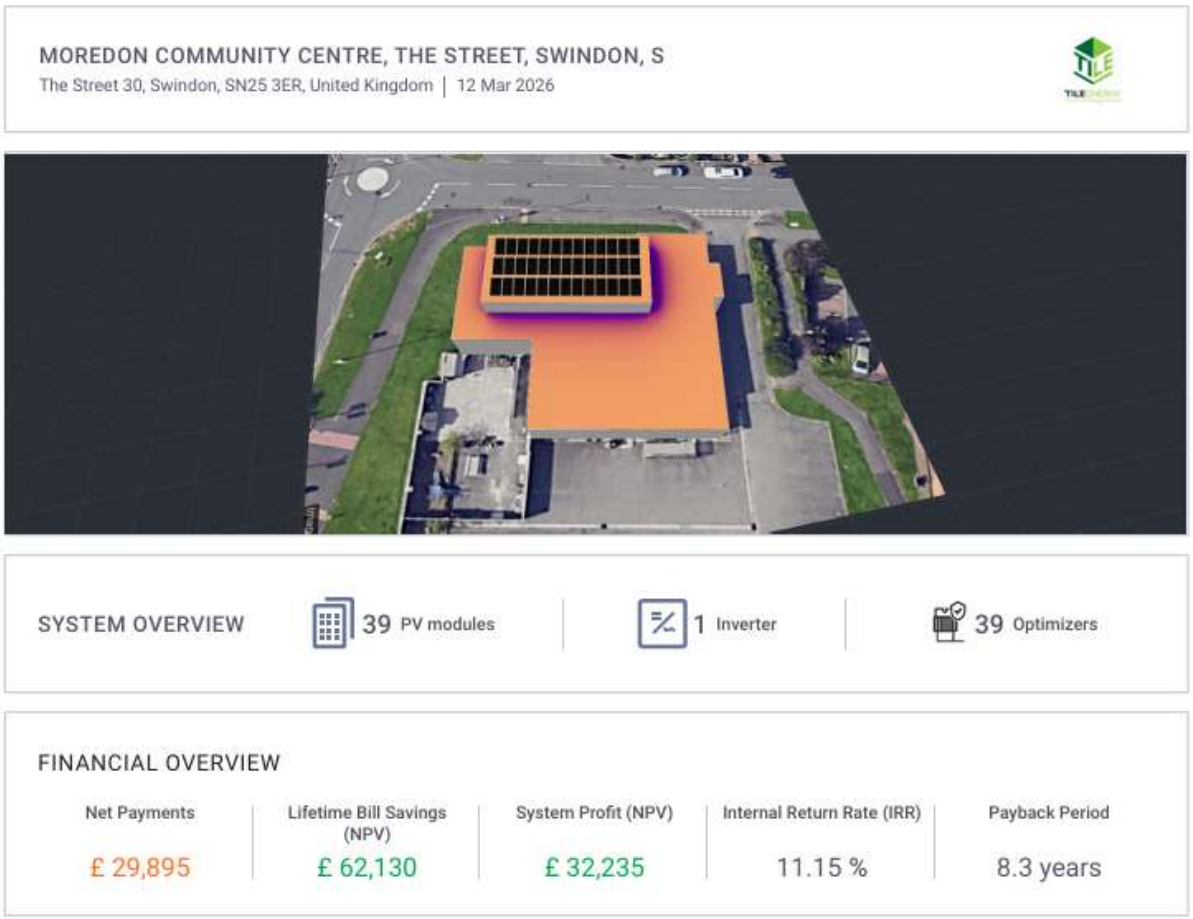
5. Indicative Solar Proposals

Moredon Community Centre

The indicative proposal for Moredon Community Centre is for:

- a **19.89 kWp** solar PV system
- estimated annual generation of **18,350 kWh**
- estimated on-site self-consumption of **10,170 kWh**
- estimated export of **8,180 kWh**
- indicative capital cost of **£29,895**
- estimated payback period of **8.3 years**

Using the site's current billed electricity position of £4,855 over 21,513 kWh, the current average electricity rate is approximately 22.6p/kWh. On that basis, the estimated annual direct value of the electricity used on site from the solar system is approximately **£2,296 per annum**, before any export income is taken into account.



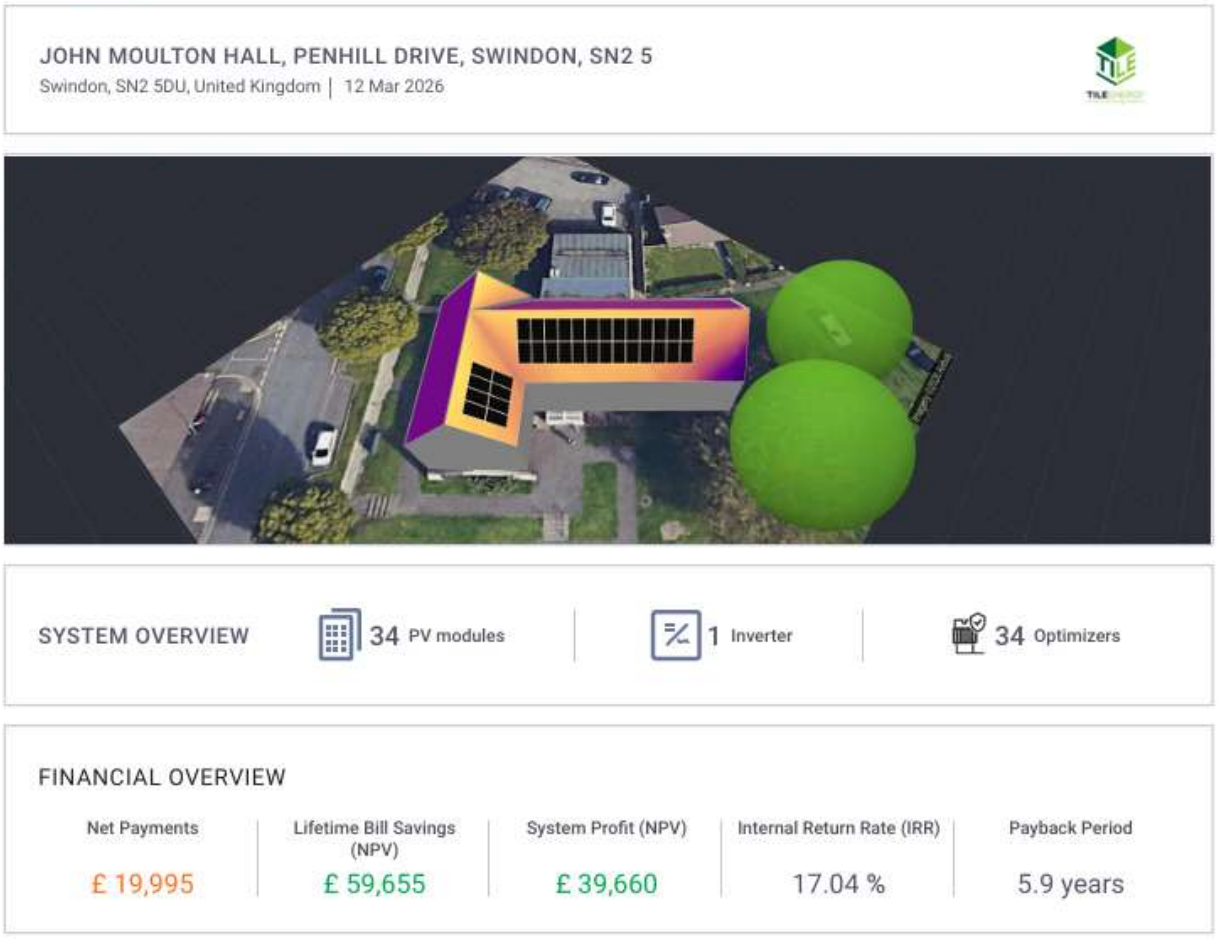
John Moulton Hall

The indicative proposal for John Moulton Hall is for:

- a **17.34 kWp** solar PV system
- estimated annual generation of **17,770 kWh**
- estimated on-site self-consumption of **8,290 kWh**
- estimated export of **9,480 kWh**
- indicative capital cost of **£19,995**
- estimated payback period of **5.9 years**

Using the site's current billed electricity position of £3,517 over 14,432 kWh, the current average electricity rate is approximately 24.4p/kWh. On that basis, the estimated annual direct value of the electricity used on site from the solar system is approximately **£2,020 per annum**, before any export income is taken into account.

These annual savings figures are baseline avoided-import estimates only. They do not include export income, maintenance, lifecycle replacement, degradation, financing costs, or any future tariff increases.



6. Financial Considerations

The Council has allocated of £50,000 of PWLB for solar projects. On the indicative costs currently provided, both proposed installations together would amount to £49,890 ex VAT, which is broadly within that allocation before allowing for VAT, surveys, planning-related costs, structural review or any unforeseen enabling works.

Members should therefore note:

- John Moulton Hall has the lower indicative capital cost and shorter payback period.
- Moredon Community Centre has the higher capital cost and longer payback, but progressing solar alongside the live Sport England-funded refurbishment may reduce future disruption and improve overall project coordination.
- The annual direct electricity savings presently identified are approximately £2,296 at Moredon Community Centre and £2,020 at John Moulton Hall.
- These figures do not include any export income, meaning actual annual benefit may be higher.
- In the case of John Moulton Hall, the Salix scheme will substantially reduce gas heating costs but increase electricity demand. While exact post-installation energy costs will depend on final operating patterns and retained gas use for the cooker, the site will become more reliant on electricity, which is likely to increase the usefulness of on-site solar generation.
- West Mercia Energy’s published advice suggests electricity cost pressure is likely to intensify from April 2026, strengthening the wider case for self-generation.

At this stage, however, the indicative costs exclude:

- structural surveys
- planning application costs if required
- any roof strengthening or electrical upgrade works
- procurement and professional fees beyond those already included in other live projects
- and any site-specific unforeseen works.

7. Planning Considerations

Members should note that the final planning position for each scheme has not yet been confirmed. Solar equipment on non-domestic buildings may in some circumstances benefit from permitted development rights, but this is subject to statutory limitations and conditions, and a prior approval or planning process may still be required depending on the final design and site context.

The Council should seek confirmation of the planning position before any final commitment is made. In addition, early engagement with the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) will be required to confirm connection arrangements, export

capacity, any network constraints and whether any upgrade or protection works are necessary.

8. Technical Matters

Before any final decision is taken, Members should be aware that further technical due diligence is required on both projects.

This should include:

- structural suitability of the roofs;
- electrical capacity and compatibility of the proposed systems;
- confirmation of optimum system size and design;
- confirmation of likely self-consumption and export assumptions;
- review of inverter, monitoring and maintenance arrangements;
- sequencing with Salix works at John Moulton Hall;
- and sequencing with refurbishment works at Moredon Community Centre.

At John Moulton Hall in particular, any final solar appraisal should be based on the building's expected post decarbonisation electrical load, because that will better reflect the likely operating case once the heating system has been electrified.

9. Options for Members

Members may wish to consider the following options:

Option 1 – No further action

This would avoid immediate project development work but would not progress the Council's previously agreed solar review.

Option 2 – Progress John Moulton Hall only

This would focus on the lower cost, shorter-payback option and align with the confirmed Salix decarbonisation works.

Option 3 – Progress Moredon Community Centre only

This would allow the Council to test whether solar can be coordinated with the current Sport England-funded refurbishment and avoid future disruption at the site.

Option 4 – Progress both projects to the next stage

This would allow the Council to take forward detailed site surveys, technical validation and refined financial appraisal for both sites, with a second report then brought back to Members before any final commitment is made.

10. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

1. **Note** the indicative solar PV proposals received for Moredon Community Centre and John Moulton Hall.
2. **Note** the current billed electricity and energy cost position set out in this report.
3. **Note** that a Public Works Loan allocation of £50,000 has been identified for solar projects within the Council's capital programme.
4. **Note** that the Council has secured Sport England capital funding for refurbishment works at Moredon Community Centre and that, if solar is to be considered at that site, there may be merit in reviewing it alongside those live works.
5. **Note** that the Salix decarbonisation scheme at John Moulton Hall is proceeding and will remove the existing gas heating system, replacing it with electrical technologies, with only limited residual gas use expected to remain for the cooker.
6. **Note** that this will substantially reduce gas costs at John Moulton Hall but is likely to increase electricity demand and cost, thereby strengthening the potential value of onsite solar generation.
7. **Agree** that both projects should be progressed to the next stage of review, including detailed site survey, technical validation and refined financial appraisal.
8. **Request** that officers bring back a further report to Members with full proposals, updated costings, procurement considerations, planning position and final recommendations before any formal commitment to installation is made.