



Solar PV Buyer's Guide

Thinking of installing solar panels? Here's what homeowners around Greater Manchester often want to know before taking the step.

“Solar power is the energy of the future. It's free, it's clean and its abundant”

THOMAS EDISON

1. Does solar work well in our region?

- Yes — solar PV works from daylight, not just direct sun.
 - In Greater Manchester you can expect ~ 850–1,000 kWh per year per kWp installed.
 - A 4 kWp system can produce ~ 3,200–3,800 kWh annually — covering a significant portion of household electricity demand.
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2. What are the costs and possible savings?

- A typical home installation (3–4 kWp) costs £5,000–£7,000 (depending on roof shape, equipment quality, etc.).
 - Annual bill savings: £400–£600 (or more, if much of your consumption is during daylight hours).
 - Adding a battery saves more by letting you store excess energy for evenings or at night.
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3. Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) — getting paid for excess power

- With SEG, your energy supplier pays you for electricity your system exports back to the grid when you don't use it.
 - Rates vary by supplier — typically 2p–15p per kWh.
 - To benefit from SEG, your installer must be MCS-certified, which ensures your installation meets required standards (we are MCS certified).
 - SEG eligibility also depends on metering: you'll need an export-capable meter or smart meter.
 - Not all energy suppliers offer the same rates, so it pays to shop around.
 - For a detailed breakdown, see:
 - [Which? Smart Export Guarantee Explained](#)
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4. Planning permission — do I need it?

- Generally no — domestic solar PV is covered under Permitted Development rules.
 - Exceptions apply if your property is listed, in a conservation area, or if your roof is flat (in which case local authority checks may be needed).
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5. What makes a roof suitable?

- Orientation: south-facing is optimal, but east- or west-facing roofs still perform well.
 - Shade: minimal shading from trees, chimneys, tall buildings.
 - Condition: roof should be structurally sound (no imminent re-roofing needed).
 - Space: a typical 3–4 kWp system needs ~ 15–20 m² of usable roof area.
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6. Lifespan & maintenance

- Solar panels often have a 25+ year lifespan, with many warranties of 20–25 years.
- The inverter (which converts DC to AC) typically lasts 10–15 years and may need replacement mid-life.
- Maintenance is low: occasional cleaning (rain often does most of it) and periodic inspections.

7. Financial support and incentives

- While there are no direct nationwide grants for solar PV in England, many mortgage providers now offer “Green Mortgages” or cashback incentives for energy-efficient home improvements, including solar PV.
- These may include:
 - Lower interest rates if your home achieves a higher EPC rating.
 - One-off cashback payments when you install approved renewable technologies like solar panels.
- Always check with your lender — incentives vary widely and may significantly improve the overall return on your investment.

8. Payback period

- Expected payback: 8–12 years under typical usage and electricity prices.
- With rising energy costs, SEG income, or adding a battery, payback may be quicker.



Local tip for Stockport / Greater Manchester areas

Because of our geography in the North West, shading from hills, trees or nearby taller buildings can be more significant than in flatter regions. Always make sure a shading / solar yield survey is including from your installer before proceeding.



For more information, visit solarus.co.uk