Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Fiona Webb
Senior Conservation Officer (Consultant)
Wiltshire Council Conservation (Central)

Officer's Name: Selina Parker-Miles
Officer's Title: Planning Officer

Application No: **PL/2023/06760**
Partial deconstruction and rebuilding of leaning part of rear boundary retaining garden wall
THE LITTLE HOUSE, 20 ALFRED STREET, WESTBURY, BA13 3DY

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

	No Comment
	Support
X	Support subject to conditions (please set out below)
	Object (for reasons set out below)
	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 (LBC) and 66 (PP) require that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 201-3 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 197 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The Council's Core Strategy 'Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and where possible enhanced. It is also required that distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced.

The Council's Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. Proposals are required to "demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through:

i. enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development…
ii. the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features…
iii. responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

Site: The property is a Grade II listed building located within Westbury Conservation Area. The site also affects the setting of neighbouring listed buildings – Horse & Groom PH (Grade II) and the Bitham Mill complex (Grade II).

Proposal: The proposal seeks the partial deconstruction and rebuilding of a leaning part of the rear boundary retaining garden wall.

Relevant planning history: N/A

Issues: Impact on significance of curtilage listed wall, impact on setting of listed buildings, impact on character and appearance of conservation area

Assessment: Paragraph 194 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. In this case, the application is accompanied by a "Design and Access Statement" which provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposal and is proportionate to the scope. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

The host property is a Grade II Listed Building dated from early C19, with a stucco on brick facade facing the front garden. This front garden is long, with a dwarf wall and railings towards the road. Either side are red clay brick walls, topped with Bath-stone coping. The rear garden retaining wall is a clay brick wall with similar design to the front garden walls and is public facing.

Wallscape within Westbury Conservation Area is an important feature which makes a positive contribution the the character and appearance of this designated heritage asset.

The existing garden wall is approximately 2.2m high and about 17m in length and consists of the five stepped parts. The three closest to the house are similar, with Bath-stone coping, with the last two having on edge clay brick coping. The whole length of wall is made of two thicknesses, the lower approximately 328mm and the upper is 215mm. This step in height is topped by tile tilted fillets under the Bath-stone coping sections, or mortar tilted fillets under the on edge clay brick

coping. It is unknown if the wall was constructed in multiple stages, however the wall is all fully toothed into each part. The end of wall furthest from the property does not have a return, though is adjacent to another boundary wall. The retaining garden wall retains the soil from the garden, which is roughly level. Bitham Lane slopes down away from the property, with a difference of 1.2m between the path level and garden level at the end of the wall. The foundations of the wall are not visible, so the condition is unknown. Currently the wall leans towards the footpath, with the largest lean being at the unstrained end, approximately 220mm out of plumb. The significant lean extends from this point another 9m. It is believed that the lean is being caused by the retained material overturning the wall. Other defects along the wall are wide open mortar joints, loose and damaged tilted fillets and differential cracking in the masonry.

It has been agreed with the Conservation Team that the wall can be reduced in height temporarily for health and safety reason until the wall can be properly repaired/rebuilt.

It is proposed to sequentially deconstruct approximately 7m of the overall wall length, with another partial deconstruction of approximately 1.5m. The 7m will be the last two stepped sections with on edge brick coping, and the 1.4m from the adjacent section to allow for fully toothing in. Foundations are to be built up to create a suitable footing to build back the wall like for like. Mass concrete will be added behind the retaining wall, below ground level, to prevent the wall from overturning in the future. Weep-holes will be added below footpath level to reduce hydrostatic pressures.

In conclusion, the works proposed would remove and rebuild unsafe sections of the wall and introduce structural strength into the affected area of the wall, aiding future stability of the structure. The works would preserve as much as possible of the historic fabric and reuse the original materials.

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

The impact of the proposals on heritage assets will be neutral and the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance are considered to be met and there is therefore no objection to the approval of the application.

Please could the planning officer condition:

i) Any new bricks to match the existing in size, colour and texture
ii) Details of mortar mix and brickbond