Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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

Officer's Name: Joe Leesam
Officer's Title: Planning Officer

Application No: **PL/2023/0610**
Proposed External Wheelchair Access (Front Garden)
1 WELL MEADOW, BURBAGE, MARLBOROUGH, SN8 3AD

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

Recommendations:

	No Comment
	Support
	Support subject to conditions (please set out below)
X	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 modern bungalow located within Burbage Conservation Area. It is located within the setting of a number of Grade II listed buildings.

Proposal: The proposal seeks to create a wheel chair case in the front garden of the property

Relevant planning history: N/A

Issues: Impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area; impact on the setting of the listed buildings.

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, this application is not accompanied by any "Heritage Statement" and fails to provide any objective assessment of the impact of the proposals on the designated heritage assets, and as a result, it fails to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

However, paragraph 195 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

The property is a corner building at the junction of High Street and Well Meadow. The building is in a prominent position due to the high bank that it is positioned on. High banks are a landscape feature of the conservation area. The majority of the Well Meadow development is located outside the conservation area due to its modern twentieth century design having a marked contrast with the historic village. The property is at the entrance to this suburban street which impinges most notably upon the traditional appearance of the High Street due to the large, open visibility splays at the road junction.

The proposed development due to the high hedge bank would need to snake up the topography of the site frontage in a series of three concrete ramps. These ramps would have retaining brick walls with hand rails. In an effort to try and soften the hard landscaped nature of the proposal, narrow low hedge planting is proposed on the walls of the ramps.

In heritage terms, the masonry heavy walls and concrete ramps would be a further intrusive suburban feature baring little relation to the local historic architectural and landscape character and instead would stand out in stark contrast. This harsh conflict between old and new would further erode the village and further reduce the unity and cohesion of the village. This would further add to the already large visibility splay and pavements at the entrance to the junction with High Street, creating an imbalance between hard and soft surfaces – more suited to suburban rather than a rural location.

Whilst I have sympathy with the need for a wheelchair ramp, unfortunately this proposed development would represent an insensitive and uncharacteristic development within the conservation area and would intrude into the grassy hedge bank which is a landscape feature. Given the prominent corner nature of the site, I also consider that the proposal would have some harm to the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

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 proposals will result in harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area due to its prominent harsh suburban form having a detrimental impact on the traditional village form and the hedge bank which is a landscape feature. The proposal involves only part of the conservation area and could therefore be considered as causing 'less than substantial harm' for the purposes of interpreting the NPPF. Whilst paragraph 202 allows that a level of harm may be offset by public benefits, which could include conservation benefits, in this case no objective justification has been provided for the works and the proposals are articulated as being primarily for the convenience of the occupants i.e. a private benefit. As a result, the proposals fail to meet with the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance and I therefore recommend refusal.