CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/05367
Application Type:	Full planning permission
Consultation ends:	11 August 2023
Case officer:	Russell Brown
Site Address:	Leighton House, Warminster Road, Westbury, Wilts.
Proposal:	Upgrades to fire precautions, including erection of an external steel fire escape staircase and landings to the first and second floors, forming new exit door openings in existing wall, replacement and upgrading to existing internal doors, erection of internal partitions to form new escape routes, replacement of existing glazed partitions, fire stopping existing voids and upgrading to fire alarm and emergency lighting system.
Recommendation:	Approve with Conditions

POLICIES

Wiltshire Core Strategy Policies CP57, CP58
National Planning Policy Framework

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Town Council – No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

No letters have been received from members of the public.

ASSESSMENT

Above the various tiers of planning policy and guidance is the over-arching statutory requirement under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to give special regard to the "desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses" (s16 and s66).

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states 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. … This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance."

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states that "Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification."

Paragraph 202 of the NPPF states that “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal...”

Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy states: “A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions… Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality. Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through… being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings”

Core Policy 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy echoes the above national policy in seeking the protection, conservation and, where possible, enhancement of heritage assets.

Site and Proposal

The site is the Grade II Leighton House in Westbury. The building is used for military purposes and has been found to be in a poor state of compliance as regards to fire safety.

The proposal is for internal works (which will be detailed in the sister listed building consent application) and for an external fire escape.

This fire escape requires planning permission as well as listed building consent. The fire escape is the subject of this report for the planning application.

Impact on character of the listed building

The fire escape would be a black powder coated spiral staircase with metal decks leading into the upper floors of the building. This is a common treatment for large listed buildings in non-residential use.

The location to the rear of the building has been chosen to be as visually recessive as possible whilst still giving access where it is needed. Therefore the impact on the character of the listed building is minimised and the staircase would not visually overwhelm the listed building, which would remain the dominant feature of the site.

The staircase would be fully reversible – it could be removed from the building without causing harm if and when the use of the building changes at some future time.

CONCLUSION

There would be some less than substantial harm to the character of the listed building. However, this harm is considered to be at the very low end of the scale and has been justified by the increased fire safety of the wider listed building.

RECOMMENDATION
Approve

Conditions: (3)

1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

Application Forms, Design, Access and Heritage Statement, Drawing Nos. 23-2734-3-E06-T2, 016P2, 013P1, 011P4, 012P2, 23-2734-3-E05-T2, 010P4, 23-2734-3-E01-T2, 004P5, 23-2734-3-M03-T2, 005P1, 23-2734-3-E07-T2, 23-2734-3-E04-T2, 009P3, 23-2734-3-M02-T2, 007P1, 015P2, 006P2, 001P2, 017P2, 23-2734-3-M01-T2, 014P2, 003P5, 008P1, 002P2, 23-2734-3-E03-T2, 23-2734-3-E02-T2 received on 3rd July 2023

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3 The development hereby permitted shall not be first brought into use until the external metal staircase, platforms and railings shown on the approved plans have been installed and painted black. The railings shall be retained in accordance with the approved details thereafter, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and to protect the character of the listed building.