HERITAGE, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

relating to

APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

for

PROPOSED PAIR OF NEW METAL HANDRAILS TO FRONT ENTRANCE STEPS

at

37 LONG STREET, DEVIZES, WILTSHIRE SN10 1NT

Ref: 4126.HDAS

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Location and Description -

The property is in central Devizes, on the west side of Long Street. It is Listed Grade II and within the town Conservation Area, wherein many other listed buildings are present.

The property is of 18th century origin. The building comprises a two-storey main block directly adjoining Long Street plus offshoots to the rear. The roof areas are of slate. The walls are of brick with stone dressings.

The area is of attractive appearance due to the traditional forms and materials present.

For reference, the Historic England listing details for the property are as follows:

> Late C18. 2 storeys and basement. Brick on stone plinth with narrow stone strings at ground and 1st floor sill levels. Moulded stone cornice. Brick parapet with stone coping. Slate roof. 5 windows, 4 panes wide, with rendered surrounds and stone sills on 1st floor. 4 windows, 4 panes wide, with semi-circular heads, radiating glazing pattern, in stone architrave surrounds with raised springers and keystones on ground floor and 6-panel central door, flush type with top panels glazed, with arched radiating fanlight, in stone reveal under stone Doric porch with 2 fluted columns and wall pilasters, entablature with triglyph frieze and modillioned cornice, with blocking course. Interior may be of interest.
>
> Nos 31 to 42 (consec) form a group.

This statement and assessment concentrates on the effects that the proposals might have on the context, including the significance of the listed structure.

The application concerns the proposed installation of a new pair of handrails to the front entrance steps.

Planning History

Details obtained from the Wiltshire Planning Explorer website include the following:

- 11/983/FUL: Log store, studio & fence (approved)
- E/2011/0956/TCA: Felling of Ash tree (approved)
- E/09/0405/TPO: Works to yew tree (approved)
- E/09/0449/TCA: Assorted tree works (approved)
- E/09/0912/TCA: Works to 2 No. hawthorns (approved)
- E/09/0274/TCA: Assorted tree works (approved)
- K/38025/T: Works to 2 No. ash trees (approved)
- K/44400/T: Assorted tree works (approved)
- K/76/0556: Kitchen extension to rear (approved)
- K/39310/L: Restoration works to frontage (approved)

The Proposal

The proposed handrails are a practical necessity for safe access to the principal entrance of the property, particularly for those who are less ambulant. Currently no handrails are present and the level difference between the entrance door threshold and the pavement exceeds 0.9m (which would dictate the provision of handrails under modern Building Regulations).

Considering the historic setting, there is a desire to avoid interference with the existing historic fabric as far as possible. The envisaged works have therefore been carefully crafted to achieve this and there will be minimal material disturbance to original fabric or visual appeal. The result will be considerably safer.

Understanding the property

The property is a fine example of an elegant town house of the period. The architectural quality of the frontage is noteworthy. The urban setting also means that its value is reinforced through association with other historic buildings that are located nearby.

Heritage significance of the premises -

Heritage value can be assessed in several ways, including aesthetic, communal, historic, archaeological, architectural, artistic and evidential terms.

The building concerned represents a surviving example of a genteel townhouse of later Georgian date. The significance of the house and other nearby historic structures lies separately in each as well as in the wider context through association over time and, as noted in the Historic England listing details, represent a contextual group.

The proposal and impact on significance -

The envisaged works to install the new handrails are a practical necessity for safe access to the principal entrance of the property.

As the years pass for the applicants and some members of their wider family and friends, the lack of handrails (as would provide ambulatory assistance and reassurance) means that some are effectively denied use of the main entrance. This is clearly unacceptable where a simple and easily achievable solution exists.

The design of the envisaged handrails aims to have as little impact on the existing appearance and fabric as possible. The black coloured fine metal handrails are intended to recede against the background of the existing building, while the detailing represents a “light touch” in terms of intrusion into the historic fabric for fixing purposes.

It is also noted that the proposed works are reversible in that the handrails could be removed at a later date if so wished, without any significant evidence of their presence being left.

Avoiding, minimising and mitigating any impact -

An important factor in reducing overall impact is the retention of historic fabric and character. In this instance, the expected effect on the existing steps and walling is confined to the provision of fixings. Only a few small diameter drilled sockets will be required to accommodate the necessary resin fixed standard stems and bolt fixings.

The changes proposed will have very little impact on the listed context or wider setting. But just as important, all elements of the proposal are truly reversible if desired at any point in the future. Since no historic fabric will be at danger of being lost or inappropriately affected due to the proposed works and the visual impact of the changes very limited, it is considered that there will be no material harm caused to the significance of the historic asset or wider context.

Overall, the changes are regarded as being appropriate and justifiable in the context. Careful consideration has been given to the details of the changes concerned and proposals put forward based on appropriate appearance, functional need and concern to avoid harm to the listed building and context.

Access Statement -

The proposal will serve to greatly enhance the ease of use of the principal entrance to the house. This will be a significant improvement in terms of safety and convenience for all.

Therefore, the implications of the envisaged works will be entirely positive. There are no implications as regards the wider site or locality.

Conclusion -

The proposal represents a carefully considered scheme. It will do no demonstrable harm to the historic building or to the wider locality. The envisaged works will help to keep the property viable into the future and suited to the domestic residential usage (which is consistent with relevant conservation aims).















