CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/08495
Application Type:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
Site Inspection:	
Consultation ends:	09 November 2023
Case officer:	Fiona Webb

Site Address:	37 Long Street, Devizes, SN10 1NT
Proposal:	Proposed pair or new metal handrails to front entrance steps
Recommendation:	Approve with Conditions

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.

Site: The property is a Grade II listed building located within Devizes Conservation Area.

Proposal: The proposal seeks the erection of a pair of new metal handrails to front entrance steps

Relevant planning history: N/A

Issues: Impact on the significance of the listed building; impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings; impact on the character and appearance of the 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 “Heritage, Design & 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.

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 in central Devizes, on the west side of Long Street. It is a Grade II listed building and is also located within Devizes 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 application concerns the proposed installation of a new pair of handrails to the front entrance steps. Currently no handrails are present and the level difference between the entrance door threshold and the pavement exceeds 0.9m.

The design of the proposed 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. The proposed works are also reversible in that the handrails could be removed at a later date without any significant evidence of their presence being left.

The impact on the existing steps and walling would be confined to the provision of fixings. Only a few small diameter drilled sockets would be required to accommodate the necessary resin fixed stems and bolt fixings.

The changes would have very little impact on the significance of the listed building or the wider setting. The proposal would enhance the ease of use of the principal entrance to the house and are justified for this reason.

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.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES:
Devizes Town Council – No objections

REPRESENTATIONS:
None

RECOMMENDATION:
Consent

REASON FOR GRANTING ~~PERMISSION~~/CONSENT/~~REFUSAL~~:
The proposed works would preserve the special historic interest of the heritage assets in accordance with Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 and NPPF section 16, because these works would have no detrimental impact on the historic fabric and would be of an appropriate material and detailing.

Conditions: (2)

1 The works for which Listed Building Consent is hereby granted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) 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: [insert plan numbers, including any revision number and date]

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