Wiltshire Council

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

Application No: PL/2023/07433 (LBC) & PL/2023/07365 (PP)
Address: The Old Rectory, Manningford Abbots
Case Officer: Lucy Rutter-Dowd

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

Recommendations:

	No Comment
	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.

National Policy and Guidance:
Section 16 & 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) outlines government policy, including the historic environment (Section 16). National Planning Policy Guidance provides guidance on making changes to Heritage Assets.

Historic England's *Advice Note 2 – Making Changes to Heritage Assets* is also relevant guidance for applying the policies within the NPPF.

Historic England's "Conservation Principles" provides policy and guidance for the "sustainable management of the historic environment". Additional guidance is also contained within their publications:

- *Historic Environment Good Practice Planning Advice Note 2 – Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*
- *Historic Environment Good Practice Planning Advice Note 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd edition)*

Historic England's Selection Guides (2017):

- *Domestic 3: Suburban and Country Houses*

Local Policy:
Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

Site:
The Old Rectory, Manningford Abbots is a grade II listed building dating from the late Georgian period, although it is understood to contain timber frame elements of a much earlier dwelling on the site (although this is difficult to establish without invasive investigation). The earliest part of the building is the front portion, now a double fronted Classical façade with central bow entrance rising two storeys, with window above the entrance door. The house is a fine example of a principally late Georgian building and internally is relatively unaltered, being an excellent example of a multi-functional dwelling that separates formal spaces from service areas of the house. The profession of the inhabitant meant that the building had to provide living and working spaces, being the seat of the Rector, and therefore being his office and home. The sub-division of space within the different areas of the house evidence a hierarchy of the social conventions of its period.

Attached to the main house is a coach house, which, at ground floor level, was the original tack room, stables and carriage house. The hay loft above has been converted into residential accommodation (approved in 1999), which now accessed from the first floor of the main house. Some horse stalls (altered), the loft ladder and feed shoot survive within the stables.

The list description states, for means of identification purposes only, the following:

> *Rectory, now private house. 1812-1827 for Rev. Francis Astley, incorporating fragments of timber framed building of c1636. Brick with slate roofs. Two storeys, facade of 5 bays, the centre bay with 2-storey bow containing entrance. Twelve-pane sashes with finely gauged brick lintels. Dentilled cornice and parapet. Return long facade on south side, 5 bays, extended by further 2 slightly set back. All sashes with dentilled cornice. Roofs hipped. The earlier building had a 2-bay lobby entry plan. Interior not seen. Panelled shutters to windows.*

Proposal:
'Internal and external alterations'. The description listed is rather vague and does not give any indication of the works proposed to the house and site as a whole.

The works proposed are, cumulatively, extensive and include various internal and external proposals in very part of the house, on both ground and first floors: these works include changes to and within the main house and its attached converted stable/coach house/service wing. External changes include the creation of new window openings on both the main house and stable block. Changes independent of the buildings include a new access track to the south and west of the house, along the residential boundary, within established farmland.

Issues:
Impact upon the preservation of the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural and/or historic interest.

Assessment:
Pre-application advice was given in May 2023 following a site meeting with the Agent to discuss various proposals at the site: comments given as part of the pre-application response may be replicated below.

<u>Main house</u>
Ground Floor:

- Kitchen & scullery – the alteration to these two rooms, to remove internal walls to create an enlarged kitchen was discussed at pre-application stage and the advice given did not support the proposed alterations to the historic plan form, as the changes were considered to cause harm to the building's significance. Whilst the proposal has been tweaked slightly since pre-

application plans were provided for comment, essentially the proposals remains the same: to remove historic internal partition walls to create an enlarged kitchen.

A stated at pre-application stage, the service area this listed building is a fine unaltered example of the subdivision of spaces and functions within the running of such a house – this listed building is essentially a miniature country house estate, having been designed and managed as such. The Historic England listing selection criteria has the following on such ecclesiastical-related dwellings:

> *In the later eighteenth century many existing parsonages (the very name conjuring up Parson Woodforde's Diary and the excesses and failings of the Georgian church) were old, incommodious, and sometimes strongly vernacular in character. Especially where livings were wealthy, these were sometimes replaced in the Regency period by detached houses of polite character. Far more rectories and vicarages were rebuilt in the 1840s and later under the influence of the reforming Oxford Movement, which placed great emphasis on the dignity of worship and of the clergy. These, typically with gothic detailing inside and out, were designed not only to provide living accommodation of a suitable standard for someone who, with the squire, provided parishioners with a moral and theological figurehead, but also a place of work... Most, like their predecessors, stood close to the church, but in some wealthy livings the opportunity was taken to build on a new and more private site. In such cases the incumbent's new house was typically a generous detached house set in pleasure grounds and serviced by a coach house, stables, and sometimes a walled garden, producing a country estate in miniature. Wherever their location, such houses were normally orientated so that visitors approaching up the drive were met by an imposing façade. Those who were allowed entry on business would probably gain access only to a study immediately beyond the front door. Otherwise the planning and decoration of these houses resembled those of the laity.*

The proposed changes see the removal of the scullery and passage entrance into the main kitchen. These are specific designed areas of the building's service area, providing a specific function to the day-to-day running of the house in its period.

The planform is an important part of this building's significance and the alterations in this part of the listed building are considered to cause harm to this significance. Therefore these proposals are considered to be unacceptable changes to the building's historic planform, which is a key part of the significance of this listed building. There is no public benefit that might otherwise outweigh the harm, and therefore the proposals are unacceptable alterations to this listed building.

- South elevation – creation of new external doorway – Comments at pre-application stage on this proposed alteration were as follows: '*The south elevation is an understated yet fine Georgian elevation, with a strong rhythm of sash window openings flanked by 'blind' windows on either end, yet the actual appearance is unbalanced by the lack of an opening in the location proposed for the new door opening. Whilst the alteration has an impact on both fabric and appearance, the loss of the fabric is less of a concern in this instance as the appearance will be enhanced by the symmetry of the elevation gained by the new opening. The style of door as proposed is a sensitive design to reflect the existing full height sashes and the traditional higher sill level on the right-hand side. Joinery details will be required, and the new opening shall be correctly formed i.e. using whole bricks and closers, rather than leaving cut brick ends exposed'.*
  To confirm, there are no objections to the creation of a new doorway within the south elevation. Joinery details have been provided (ref. 4285_21_P), and whilst there are no traditional doors on this elevation to mirror in detail, the glazed door (which reflects the full

height traditional sash windows) with timber panel with gun-stock detailing, is an appropriately-detailed door for this location.

First Floor:
These works are as follows:

- New opening between landing and bow window – the following was stated at pre-application stage: *Altering this arrangement at first floor, to allow a 'through view' to the front of the house, similar to that at ground floor level, seems a reasonable alteration in this instance. As the landing is so formal, one would almost expect the view to be carried through to the front of the house. The works to achieve this, by opening up the wall at the back of the cupboard, should not have a harmful impact on the building. As discussed on site, consideration is required over the form/appearance of the new opening, to mirror that of the archway approach from the main landing. Internal elevations will be required to confirm this detail.*
  Additional details have been provided to confirm the appearance and details of the alterations, which are considered appropriate to retain the character of this space, and are therefore acceptable.
- Creation of two jib-doors between existing bedrooms – there were no objections to the creation of two new door openings in the proposed locations (DO3 & DO4) and the details are acceptable.
- Conversion of bedroom to bathroom – whilst a sink already exists in this room, the proposal is to convert the whole room to provide ensuite facilities for the master bedroom. These works have not been commented on within the heritage statement, and although there are no objections to the principle (which was confirmed at pre-application stage), details of plumbing and soil vent stack will be required.
- Blocking of door to ensuite (bath 2) – the door is to be retained in situ and sealed shut from the landing side, whilst being boxed on the inside to provide a flush surface for bathroom fittings: this will not harm the building's special interest and could be fully reversed in the future.
- Bath 5 door location adjustment – the door is to be resited slightly along the same internal wall, yet to provide more space within the room to allow for a bathtub. The existing door and architrave will be reused, and as there is not symmetry or designed rhythm of the openings on the part of the landing, being more of an off-shoot of the main landing area, the change will not cause harm to the character and significance of this space.

<u>Service wing/stables/former coach house building:</u>
Ground floor
Boiler room – some minor changes are proposed here, including a new toilet, to which there are no objections. The main reason for these changes is to relocate the oil tank from within the building to outside, in relation to fire safety.

Proposed utility – this is within the room historically used as a tack/harness room – any surviving wainscotting and fixings should be retained within this room, so that its original function is still evident.

Stables – some historic stalling and kick-boards survive, along with a feed chute. Some of the timber to the stalls has been replaced, along with stable doors, so not all of the fabric is historic, but it is in the line of historic stable partitioning within this part of the building. On the west elevation there are two blind windows – these are as originally designed, as the timber kick-boarding extends above these on the inside, yet the intention is to open these windows to install joinery to provide natural light and use the room as a games room. The intention, as confirmed within the design and access statement, is to overboard the historic floor with a floating timber floor, and retain the kick-boarding whilst adjusting it around the window openings: this will retain some of the character of the space, which is important in the hierarchy of the building and its original function and relationship to the main house. It was discussed at pre-application stage that the feed chute and loft ladder are to be retained – this is confirmed in the DAS, but they are not shown on the proposed plans, implying that they are being removed.

First floor
The main change is to sub-divide the existing music room to provide two additional bedrooms and a bathroom. Comments at pre-application stage were as follows:

> *The alterations to this part of the original coach house, to provide ancillary accommodation to the main house, was approved in 1999. To further subdivide this area to create two bedrooms and a bathroom is unlikely to harm the overall special interest of the building, although the change to plan form and introduction of services will require listed building consent. It is understood that the existing service routes, plumbing etc on the ground floor can be utilised, but information confirming how this will be installed will be required with any application.*

Unfortunately the DAS does not confirm how the plumbing will be installed, or if additional external down/soil pipes are proposed.

The other works are this level include an escape door between the snooker room and studio, formed between existing structural timbers, and a replacement rooflight: there are no objections to these.

<u>Outside/curtilage</u>
Relocated oil tank – no objections.

Greenhouse – there are no objections to the demolition/removal of this later 20th century greenhouse on the west side of the listed building.

Access track – a new access track is proposed within existing agricultural land to the south and west of the site, to provide parking to the west of the listed building. Part of the track to the south is understood to have been present historically, and is shown on historic maps, and it is proposed as a 'reinstatement' of an earlier track. In saying this, I am not convinced by the assumption that there was indeed an access track to the church to the west of the house – yes historic maps show various footpaths, and I agree that there was a field access from the farm to the south, but claim that there was definitely a permanent track to the west is rather inconclusive to use as a strong argument for the provision of an access here. I therefore do not support the proposed access track in so far is it services the house. It is appreciated that some access may be required for the fields and their agricultural use, but this should not be extended to access the rear of the listed building.

Summary & Conclusion:
The majority of the works are considered acceptable as they are not considered to cause harm to the designated heritage asset, and therefore preserve its special interest. Concerns over the proposed internal alterations to the kitchen/scullery area, and the access track were raised at pre-application stage and these concerns remain despite the slight alteration to the proposals: these should be addressed before full support of the proposals can be given.

Pippa Card
Senior Conservation Officer
Wiltshire Council Planning

Date: 13/11/2023