HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In respect of:

REPLACEMENT OF GARAGE DOORS WITHIN THE STABLES

At:

TRAFALGAR PARK, STANDLYNCH, DOWNTON, SP5 3QG

On behalf of:

Mr B & Mrs S Jones

Date:

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ELAINE MILTON
HERITAGE & PLANNING LIMITED
t: 07979 942042
e: emilton@emhp.co.uk
w: www.emhp.co.uk

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Trafalgar Park is a Grade I listed 18th century country house located within a Grade II registered parkland. The stables, which are separately listed at Grade II, are located within a dip in the landscape to the north-east of the house. They comprise two matching sets of parallel two-storey late 18th century stable blocks and attached walls, aligned approximately east-west and surrounded by vegetation. Access to the stables is from the east, via a spur off the main drive to the house.

1.2 The house has recently changed hands and the new owner is implementing a comprehensive scheme of repair and restoration, including for the stables. The buildings have been altered in the recent past, particularly the South Block when modified to accommodate offices at first-floor level.

1.3 The garage doors the subject of the current application are described in detail in the supporting Design and Access statement (DAS). They comprise four pairs of side-hung softwood timber ledged-and-braced plank doors on the inward-facing elevations of the eastern coach house ranges. They are all in very poor condition as explained within the DAS.



Stable blocks as seen from the east

1.4 The report describes the impact of the replacement of the garage doors to fulfil the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, revised July 2021), and to meet the council's local validation checklist for applications affecting heritage assets.

1.5 A Heritage Assessment (statement of significance) was produced for the stable blocks in June 2023, and this has been drawn upon to inform the application proposals. That document should be read in conjunction with the current report.

1.6 The Assessment concluded that the stables consist of a high-quality pair of 18th century mirrored stables blocks associated with the highly significant Grade I listed house. In addition, the stables contribute to the ensemble of buildings within the Grade II listed parkland.

1.7 The stables have suffered from a lack of investment over many years prior to the applicants' ownership, and plans for their repair and restoration already include the replacement of the damaged roof covering in Welsh slate, repair of the dilapidated timber windows and removal of unsympathetic lean-to structures.

1.8 At the time of writing, applications for planning permission and listed building consent were currently pending determination for the partial change of use of the south stable block from office to residential and various repairs and alterations to the north and south stable blocks (references PL/2023/08142 & 07806).

2.0 Proposals

2.1 The doors in both stable blocks are badly rotten, damaged and are ill-fitting, as illustrated on p7 of the DAS.

2.2 The south-facing doors on the North Block have suffered due to exposure to the weather. Ply panels have been added to the bases of all the doors in the past as ad hoc repairs, which have actually aggravated the issue by increasing the water ingress.



North stable block, south elevation

2.3 The doors in the South Block have fared better from the weather but many of the joints are warped and there is substantial rot at the base of the doors resulting from the poor water run-off from the Tarmac that has been laid. The two left-hand sets of doors have had ply panels fixed to the bases; the panels are now gone from the set furthest left.



South stable block, north elevation

2.4 Permission is sought for the complete replacement of the doors with Douglas fir doors to matching design and detail.

2.5 The existing ironmongery - wrought iron locks, catches and hinges – are to be salvaged and refitted where possible.

3.0 Significance

Stables - General

3.1 The significance of the Grade II listed stables derives mainly from their unusual layout, symmetry, proportions and composition. They form an important element of the ensemble of ancillary structures associated with the Grade I listed house. Despite recent alteration and partial conversion to offices, the stables retain a good survival of fabric from the late 18th century.

Garage Doors

3.2 The garage doors are believed to be the original late 18th century coach house doors and are thus of historic value for their fabric and function of the eastern elements of the stables. The ironmongery is of value for its historic fabric and industrial technological interest.

3.3 The softwood doors have not been adequately maintained and this, along with the change in context, such as installation of Tarmac externally and the ad hoc repairs, has resulted in dilapidation and an unsightly appearance. The doors are ill-fitting and offer poor levels of security, making the buildings and their contents vulnerable to theft.

4.0 Policy

Primary Legislation

4.1 Statutory duties exist under **sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** ('the Act') for the local planning authority in considering whether to grant listed building consent or planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting 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.

Development Plan Policies

4.2 The statutory duties are reflected in the **Wiltshire Core Strategy** (WCS), which was adopted by Wiltshire Council on 20 January 2015. **Core Policy 57** of the WCS seeks to ensure high quality design and place shaping. **Core Policy 58** of the WCS seeks to promote the conservation and, where possible, enhancement of the county's historic environment.

National Policy Advice

4.3 National planning policy relating to the historic environment is provided within **section 16 of the NPPF (revised July 2021)**. It advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

4.4 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF advises 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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Any harm or loss to a heritage asset's significance should require clear and convincing justification and needs to be weighed against identifiable public benefits. Substantial harm or loss of a Grade II listed building should be exceptional.

4.5 Paragraph 201 of the NPPF advises where proposals would lead to substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the proposals should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to

achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of four listed criteria therein apply.

4.6 Paragraph 202 advises that where proposals would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

4.7 Paragraph 206 of the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas or the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

National Guidance

4.8 It is advisable that proposals for repair, restoration and alteration should follow the guidance within the ***Historic England Advice Note 2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets*** (HEAN2, February 2016). The document acknowledges (paragraph 3) that the best way to conserve a building is to keep it in use, and that a *'reasonable and proportionate approach to owner's needs is therefore essential'*.

4.9 As a general principle for adaptation, HEAN2 advises as much of the historic fabric and plan form that contributes to the significance of a heritage asset should be retained as possible, with new work ideally being reversible. Harm to significance may be justified on grounds of overriding public benefit that may accrue including maintaining the building in its optimum viable use.

4.10 Section 1 of HEAN2 advises that repairs should follow good conservation practice and consideration should be given to: the loss of historic fabric being minimised and proportionate to the nature of the works; original materials only being replaced where they have failed in their purpose or are beyond economic repair; repairs carried out using materials to match the original in substance, texture, quality and colour; and the use of sympathetic and traditional methods of repair.

4.11 Section 2 of HEAN2 advises that restoration works are those that reveal or recover something of significance that has been eroded, obscured or previously removed. It says, where it is proposed to remove more modern coverings and finishes that are harmful to the significance or the integrity of the building, appropriate materials should be introduced in their place.

5.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

5.1 The garage doors are of softwood, which has a limited lifespan. While they may be technically capable of repair, the specialist advice is that only a small proportion of the original fabric is capable of being salvaged. Moreover, due to the extent of the repairs that would be required the cost of repair would be approximately twice as much as replacement. Taking into account the wider repair programme that is being implemented for the house and stables, the garage doors are considered to be beyond economic repair.

5.2 Complete replacement of the doors would result in the loss of original materials, which would be harmful; However, it would:

- Offer long-term protection to the stables in conjunction with the other repairs and restoration works being implemented
- Be of sympathetic design and detailing with facsimile doors that match the existing
- Maintain the integrity and overall composition of the stables by having a uniform set of doors constructed in Douglas fir that would age similarly and have a harmonious appearance
- Provide better fitting and secure doors
- Involve materials that match in substance, texture, quality and colour
- Involve the reuse of ironmongery where possible, thus preserving that element of the historic fabric and maintaining the authenticity of the 'functional' elements of the doors

5.3 The proposed works would ultimately help secure the long-term conservation of the stables as advocated by HEAN2, resulting in a substantial benefit to the heritage asset, setting of the house and group value of the structures within the park.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Trafalgar Park is a highly significant Grade I listed 18th century country house. The two sets of stable blocks to the south-east of the house are separately listed at Grade II because of their age, historic function and aesthetic interest. They contribute to the ensemble of historic structures within the park.

6.2 The softwood garage doors within the eastern ranges of the stable blocks are in poor condition, are no longer fit for purpose and detract from the appearance of the stables. The repair of the doors is not economically viable.

6.3 The current application seeks permission to completely replace the garage doors on a like-for-like basis with doors made of Douglas fir, reusing the originally ironmongery where salvageable.

6.4 The proposals would result in harm to significance from the loss of the original coach house doors equating to 'less than substantial harm' to the heritage asset under the terms of the NPPF.

6.5 As advised by paragraph 202 of the NPPF, the less than substantial harm should be balanced against the public benefits, including heritage benefits, accruing from the proposals.

6.6 In this case, there would be heritage benefits from the restoration of the overall architectural composition of the unusual mirrored stable blocks and the long-term conservation of the buildings.

6.7 The proposals represent a pragmatic approach to maintaining the ancillary buildings, allowing investment to be focused on the Grade I listed house. The overall heritage benefits would outweigh the harm to significance.