Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Officer's Title: Planning Officer

Application No: **PL/2023/08776 and PL/2023/09206**
Proposed refurbishment of existing garden building to create a new garden room and store
399 The Spa, Bowerhill, Melksham, Wilts, SN12 6QL

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

Recommendations:

X	Comment (see comments set out below)
	Support
	Support subject to conditions (please set out below)
	Object (for reasons set out below)
	No objections

As the NPPF states, heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and it is important to conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. Further information and/or amendments are therefore required.

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.

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.

The Council's Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. Proposals are required to "demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through:

i. enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development
ii. the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features
iii. responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

Site: The listed building is a pair of Grade II attached houses, early C19 with ashlar front and sides and rubblestone to rear under a Welsh slate hipped roof.

Proposal: the proposal seeks the refurbishment of an existing garden building to create a new garden room and store.

Relevant planning history: N/A

Issues: the impact on the setting of listed buildings.

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 applications are accompanied by a "Design, Access and Heritage Statement" which provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposals and is proportionate to their scope. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

The existing single-storey garden building is situated to the rear and side boundaries to the right-hand side of the garden when viewed from a number of levels from the rear windows of the main house. The remainder of the garden has been newly planted to a semi-formal pattern with beds containing bushes, trees and flowers intermingled with both fruit and vegetable plants providing a variety of garden produce.

The existing building sits in the extreme northeast corner of the rear garden, with the north and east walls defining the north and east boundaries. Walls are in local rubble stone with some quoin dressings and copings. A mineral felt, mono-pitched roof falls to the north, and drains to black plastics rainwater goods. The south façade is divided into three distinct rectangles. In the centre a pair of wide, timber sliding doors, with horizontal, waney-edge boarding over, separates two masonry 'bookends,' the left of which includes a vertically boarded personnel door, the right has no openings. The west gable has a small window. The north/rear wall has two pairs of timber framed, obscure glazed windows with horizontal waney-edge boarding over within a local rubble stone wall. The rear wall forms the boundary to neighbouring land, which is not in the ownership of the

applicant. It is difficult to date the building, but it is clear that the treatment to the openings is relatively contemporary.

The proposed works include the asymmetrical division of the internal space to provide a Garden Room and separate Store/Potting Shed, the making of a new opening in the south façade to provide access to the store, and the repositioning and enlargement of the window to the west gable, the replacement of the windows and waney-edged boarding to the north façade with insulated solid panels finished with stained, horizontal machined timber boarding, the installation of four 'Velux' type roof windows and the unification of the glazing to all openings using horizontally divided 'Crittall' type metal framed windows and doors. Additional insulation will be added to the roof, which in turn will be finished in standing seam metal sheet roofing in a colour to match the roof windows, which is a dark grey/green, which may also be the colour for the replacement windows and doors.

In heritage terms there is no objection in principle to the refurbishment of the existing garden building to create a new garden room and store, subject to a sensitive design. Whilst it is difficult to give an age to the existing out building, a building is shown in this location on the 1st Edition OS Map, however clearly the existing building has undergone changes over the years. The proposal would maintain the form of the existing building albeit with a new door opening to the proposed store, a larger front glazed opening and a new window in the north west elevation. I would however question the need for such a tall front glazed opening given that it would be beneficial to maintain as much of the outbuilding character, the need for a glazed door to the store, the need for an additional window in the north west elevation and the need for so many large roof lights. In essence a less suburban design is sought, which maintains more of the simple character of the outbuilding.

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.

As such design amendments are therefore requested as discussed above.