Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Wiltshire Council Conservation (Central)

Officer's Name: Jemma Foster
Officer's Title: Planning Officer

Application No: **PL/2023/05351**
Change of use and conversion of former bank to provide flats
1 High Street, Melksham, SN12 6JS

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

Recommendations:

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

This is my third consultation response and follows on from the submission of revised plans.

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 National Planning Policy Framework NPPF Feb 2019 outlines government policy towards the historic environment. Section 16 "Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment" sets out an overall aspiration for conserving heritage assets. In particular paragraph *193 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). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy C58 relates to Ensuring the Conservation of the historic environment. And states that *designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved.*

Site: The property is an unlisted building located within Melksham Conservation Area. The building is considered a Non Designated Heritage Asset. The site also affects the setting of numerous listed buildings, including the adjacent gate piers at the entrance to Place Road at properties opposite.

Proposal: The proposal seeks the change of use and conversion of former bank to provide flats

Relevant planning history: None

Issues: Impact on significance of NDHA, impact on character and appearance of the conservation area, impact on the setting of listed buildings.

Assessment: The property is an imposing stone building which has been used throughout it's life time as a local Bank; it was vacated in March 2022.

The proposal is to convert the existing building into 7 self-contained flats. In principle there is no objection subject to a high quality scheme.

In heritage terms I have the following comments in regards to the amended drawings:

- Windows in main building – As previously stated, it is unclear as to what is proposed – this needs either to be shown on the drawings or alternatively I am happy to accept a windows schedule. The lattice design is not shown in any of the windows and this is unacceptable. Are new windows only proposed in certain elements? Method of opening is also requested for any new windows.
- Historic A/C units are still shown on the building, yet smaller more refined systems are now on the market and would be more sympathetic. Any units will need to be coloured to the stone and be sited in non-prominent locations – again this needs to be confirmed
- Details of the proposed bin store – extending the existing panel fence height is not considered acceptable either to the host building or the character and appearance of the conservation area. As previously stated, the opportunity should be taken to enhance the existing boarded fencing to the boundary wall facing High Street since this detract from the heritage assets and the main building.

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 further information and amendments are required before this proposal can be fully assessed.