CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/09269
Application Type:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
Site Inspection:	
Consultation ends:	15 December 2023
Case officer:	Fiona Webb

Site Address:	The Roundhouse, Prince of Wales Gardens, Church Street, Melksham, Wilts
Proposal:	Urgent pointing work and stabilisation to maintain the historic appearance and integrity
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 or enhancing 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 207-9 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 203 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.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

The 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."

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for PP and LBC.

Site and assets considered: The structure is a Grade II listed building located within Melksham Conservation Area

Proposal: The proposal seeks urgent pointing work and stabilisation to maintain the historic appearance and integrity of the listed building

Relevant planning history: ENQ/2022/00357 – Various works to listed building. W/82/00424/LBC – To repair and renovate the Roundhouse, open up existing windows and form new window to match existing. Form staircase and half floor. (Approved).
Issues: impact on the listed building, impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, impact on the conservation area.

Information considered/provided: Paragraph 200 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 Statement" which provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposals and is proportionate to the scope. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

However, paragraph 201 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

Significance of assets and contribution of setting (as appropriate): The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological**, **architectural**, **artistic** or **historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

In this case the significance of the building lies largely with its historic fabric and architecture - its form, layout and architectural expression and use of high-quality design materials which have aesthetic and architectural interest and which also contribute to the character of the conservation area.

The exterior of the building has, however, been compromised hard cement mortar repointing in some areas which detracts from the significance of the structure.
Assessment: Repairs to the building are proposed, with specific focus on the masonry and pointing. These are set out below and assessed:

Lime mortar and stone degradation - Poor mortar joints are concentrated particularly at low level up to approximately 1 metre above the ground. This is likely to have been caused by splashback from rain coming off the roof and hitting the footpath adjacent to the building. The water has slowly dissolved the mortar which has been accelerated by freeze/thaw action. It is therefore proposed to rake out areas of degraded mortar and areas of joints previously repaired using a cementitious mortar and repoint with a traditional lime mortar. This includes the window surrounds.

Slumping of the masonry structure – This defect has been assessed by a structural engineer and a stone mason. The bowing of the wall is most likely being caused by the rubble/lime core between the external stone and internal brick slumping or settling over time. The slumping is

caused by ingress of damp and this exerts additional lateral pressure on the ‘back’ of the wall causing the observed bowing. The proposed work is to introduce lateral restraint ties installed by drilling and inserting stainless steel ‘bars’ through the wall to effectively connect inner brickwork and outer stonework together; this is the most unobtrusive remedial measure to prevent further bowing. These are minimally invasive and can be finished so that they are not visible from either side.

Damp - There are signs of damp both ingress from outside and rising up from the ground; no damp proofing would have been incorporated into the building during its original construction. The walls have ‘bulged’, particularly to the lower elevations and this is likely to have been caused by the damp ingress causing slumping of the rubble/line sandwich between the outer stone and inner brickwork combined with the lack of ties through the wall (as described above). Damp in buildings is typically caused by rising damp and/or penetrating damp. Regarding the penetrating damp, it is proposed that all mortar joints and cracks are dealt with as described above. The damp can then effectively be dealt with via good ventilation and low level heating of the building internally.

Entrance lintel and keystone – Deterioration of the entrance door lintel and keystone shows sign of movement, possibly in recent. It is therefore proposed to introduce a stitch repair using stainless steel bars and resin. The repair would then be repointed using a traditional lime mortar.

Window surrounds (internal and external) and Internal brick elevations – There is missing and inappropriate cementitious mortar on the window surrounds with some larger areas defective. The stonemason has been matched to the exact specification of the existing lime mortar using lime mortar samples from Rose of Jericho the test patches have been specifically formulated for the roundhouse.

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:
Melksham Town Council – No comments recieved

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 cleaning technique.

Conditions: (3)

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 works hereby granted consent shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents: Location Plan – dated 26/10/2023 Building Survey – dated 26/10/2023 Sandridge Stone Quote – dated 26/10/2023 Investigation Report – dated 13/11/2023 Stone Restoration Details – dated 2/01/2024 REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of the significance of the heritage assets and their setting.

3 No works to repoint the external stonework shall be undertaken until:

a) A sample panel not less than 1/2 metre square to show the proposed mortar composition and colour, and the method of pointing, has been prepared on site, inspected and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The works shall thereafter be carried out to match the approved sample.

REASON: In the interests of preserving the character and appearance of the listed building and its setting.