Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Wiltshire Council Conservation (Central)

Officer's Name: Clare Wood
Officer's Title: Planning Officer

Application No: **PL/2023/11090**
Installation of 4 new "Velux" roof lights in west-facing pitched roof, each measuring 78mm tall by 55mm wide
1 Manor Farmyard, Urchfont, Devizes, SN10 4BA

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

Recommendations:

X	Comment (for reasons set out below)
	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
	Object (for reasons set out below)
	No objections

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." 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 (amongst other things) "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" and "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 and assets considered: The property is a modern new build having the design appearance of a 'barn conversion'. The property is located in the heart of the village conservation area and affects the setting of a number of listed buildings. The site is highly sensitive and unspoilt having the essence of an English village.

Proposal: The proposal seeks the insertion of four roof lights in the front elevation of the building which overlooks the duck pond and green.

Relevant planning history: E/2012/0147/FUL

Issues: Impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, impact on the character and appearance of 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 not accompanied by a "Heritage Statement" and as such it fails to provide any objective assessment of the impact of the proposal and, as a result, it fails to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

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: 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 site lies largely with quintessential rural village character with ‘Pond Green’ one of the most cherished places in the council area.

Assessment: The proposal would introduce 4 roof lights to the front roof elevation of the property and this would provide light to two ensuite bathrooms, a hallway and bedroom 1. The applicant is seeking these additional windows as they consider that the house is unduly dark internally.

The existing building, together with neighbouring properties are seen in public views across Pond Green. The buildings all maintain a simple uncluttered roofscape which is a key feature of traditional farm building.

The roofs of buildings over looking Pond Green are highly visible in the landscape/townscape and represent a very significant aspect of their character. The buildings are often characterised by unbroken roof profiles. It is vital to the character and appearance to be sensitive to this dominant characteristic which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

I am highly concerned at the proposed roof lights since these would pepperpot glazed openings in the front roofslope of the building. Whilst I accept this is a modern building, the redevelopment of Manor Farm yard was carried out to a very high standard of design and materaisls in order to be in keeping with Pond Green. Looking back through the planning history of this case, roof lights were not allowed and a key requirement was uncluttered roof slopes in order to create simple roof profiles.

I am therefore concerned with any rooflights in this elevation as it is imperative that this is kept clutter free. It is not just the openings themselves but also the reflective nature of the glazing which would not maintain the simple unbroken roofscape and the village setting.

It is unclear from the application whether the applicant has explored other options to assist in provide additional light within the building. It is also unclear why such a large number of rooflights are sought when existing windows are present in the rooms/spaces.

Looking at the size of windows to bedroom 1, I do not consider that additional glazing is required since this room already has a triple window at the rear and two small windows in the gable end. The hallway also has a triple window at the rear. I can however understand that the applicant would wish to have some natural light in the ensuite bathrooms, although this is not a habitable room in itself. With the ensuite bathrooms, I do wonder whether a sun pipe would be a less intrusive option, particularly if this could be achieved with the opening in the pitch of the rear roof slope.

I would also point out that the size of roof light openings is incorrect in the description of works and drawing since I believe this should be in centimetres (not millimetres).

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 proposals will result in harm character of the conservation area and the setting of nearby listed buildings via the introduction of multiple roof openings and glazing which would disrupt the simple uncluttered roofscape which is a key feature of this form of traditional farm building. Whilst this proposal would be considered as causing ‘less than substantial harm’ for the purposes of interpreting the NPPF, this location is one of the most sensitive in the conservation area with its largely quintessential rural village character with ‘Pond Green’ one of the most cherished places in the council area.

Whilst paragraph 208 allows that a level of harm may be offset by public benefits, which could include conservation benefits, in this case no objective justification has been provided for the works and the proposals are articulated as being primarily for the convenience of the occupants i.e. a private benefit. As a result, the proposals fail to meet with the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance and I therefore recommend refusal.