CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2024/00346
Application Type:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
Site Inspection:	
Consultation ends:	14 February 2024
Case officer:	Fiona Webb

Site Address:	Deans Orchard, Church Street, Mere, Warminster, BA12 6DS
Proposal:	Create a doorway to Dining Room from Kitchen through partially opened Service Hatch to side of Range and the removal of a 20th century staircase'
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." 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.

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and

changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

Site and assets considered: The building is a Grade II listed building located within Mere Conservation Area. The building is set amongst an important grouping of ecclesiastical heritage assets, which all contribute to the setting of the Grade I Church of St Michael. The rear of Deans Orchard forms an important boundary to the Graveyard, continuing the enclosure from the boundary wall to the Chantry, and also joining up with the boundary wall to the stable block of the chantry.

Proposal: The proposal seeks to create a doorway to the dining room from the kitchen through a partially opened service hatch to the side of a Range and the removal of a 20th century staircase.

Relevant planning history: None

Issues: impact on the significance of the listed building, 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 accompanied by a “Heritage Statement (including Design & Access)” 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.

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 listed building lies largely with its historic fabric and architecture - its form, layout and architectural expression/detailing and use of vernacular materials which have aesthetic and architectural and historic interest.

Assessment: The proposed works involve creating a doorway between the kitchen and dinning room, using existing aperture. This proposed opening between the kitchen and dining room, would allow better access between the two rooms. As the fabric of the wall has already been substantially removed for the service hatch, there will be minimum impact on any historic fabric. There may be structural implications by removing the dividing wall in the kitchen, so the benefit of opening this aperture will create easier access to the dining room from the kitchen. Presently it is reached via the service wing.

In regard to the proposed removal of the 20th century staircase, this is modern fabric and the loss of the staircase would improve the room space and circulation of the building.

In conclusion there would be some slight harm to the floor plan through the creation of the door opening, however as the wall already has an opening in the proposed door position, this harm is considered less than substantial. And the benefit of being able to easily access the kitchen from the dining room, for circulation is considered to outweigh this slight harm.

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:
Mere Town Council – Support

REPRESENTATIONS:
None

RECOMMENDATION:
Consent

REASON FOR GRANTING ~~PERMISSION/~~CONSENT/~~REFUSAL~~:
The works as carried out preserve the special historic interest of the heritage assets in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 and NPPF section 16, because these works are considered an appropriate material and detailing.

Conditions: (2)

1 The works hereby granted consent shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents: Location Plan – dated 15/01/2024 Existing Floor Plan – dated 15/01/2024 Existing Elevations and Window Schedule (North and East) – dated 15/01/2024 Existing Elevations and Window Schedule (South and West) – dated 15/01/2024 Proposed Block Plan - dated 15/01/2024 Proposed New Doorway Section Drawing – dated 15/01/2024 Ground Floor (Flu Liner) – dated 28/02/2024 Proposed North Elevation – dated 28/02/2024 Proposed Floor Plan – dated 6/03/2024 REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the

interests of the significance of the heritage assets and their setting.

2 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.