

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

24 November 2025

Jocelyn Sage
Senior Conservation Officer
Wiltshire Council Conservation
(South/West)

Officer's Name: Steven Vellance
Officer's Title: Planning Officer

Application No: **PL/2025/08144 PP and /08364**

Alterations to interior of existing building, adaptation & extension of existing side extension, relaying of forecourt, general repairs & upgrades to fabric, provision of PV array to rear roof slopes & change of use to suit new leisure facility & cafe.
Dewey House, North Row, Warminster, BA12 9AD

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

Recommendations:

☒	No comment
☐	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

Summary

I welcome the proposals in that they are not for residential conversion and retain the building in a use where it will be publicly accessible.

The interior of the building is much altered such that little of historic interest survives- only the windows and the two decorative columns (which perhaps once supported a gallery?). Thus there is considerable scope for internal alterations that would not impact on fabric of historic interest.

The building however has considerable 'presence' and is a very attractive listed building with its mellow brick, old tiled roof and mullioned windows. The front wall and railings add considerably to its setting. The existing side extension is not of special interest.

I have no objection to a side extension, however, the proposal for a two-storey extension is tricky and needs to be of the highest design and detailing, to avoid an adverse impact on the host dwelling. I would suggest that it needs to be clearly contemporary.

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 214-16 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 210 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."

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:

Dewey House is a grade II listed building, added to the statutory list in March 1978 and listed as 'Former Girls' British School'. The list description reads as follows:

'Originally the "Old Meeting"¹. Built 1704, altered 1872 into girls school. An excellent plain building close in style to Lord Weymouth's School in Church Street (qv). 2 storeys, red brick on coursed and squared rubble base. Stone quoins and dressings to 2 light stone mullion windows. M-section hipped old tile roof with sprocket eaves. Band over ground floor. 5 windows on 1st floor, 4 on ground floor with brick flat arches. Projecting central gabled porch (circa 1872) with moulded footstones to coped verge and moulded entrance with 4 centred arch. 2 large cross stone mullions and transom windows to east and a blocked doorway. Roof

¹ Assume it means a Meeting House

supported by 2 polygonal timber columns of massive scantling. Dwarf wall in front with spearhead railings (circa 1872) the standards having 4 quills to caps.'

The building is also within the Warminster conservation area.

Proposal:

The Design, Access and Heritage statement lists the proposals as follows:

Change of use application

Internal alterations to the ground & first floor

Adaptation & extension of the existing side extension

Review & upgrades to the mechanical & electrical systems to include sustainable systems where possible

Provision of solar panels to the rear roof slopes

Works to WC's / bathrooms & provision of improved sanitary facilities

Remedial works to the exterior of the property

Repairs to the roof to include improved insulation

Relevant planning history:

Issues: impact on the listed building, impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, impact on the conservation area.

Information considered/provided:

Paragraph 207 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, whilst the applications are accompanied by a "Design, Access and Heritage Statement". The document only cites the list description, fails to mention that the building is in the Warminster conservation area, doesn't include any photos and does not assess the significance of the building. As a result, it fails to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

However, paragraph 208 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, I consider the significance of the building to be:

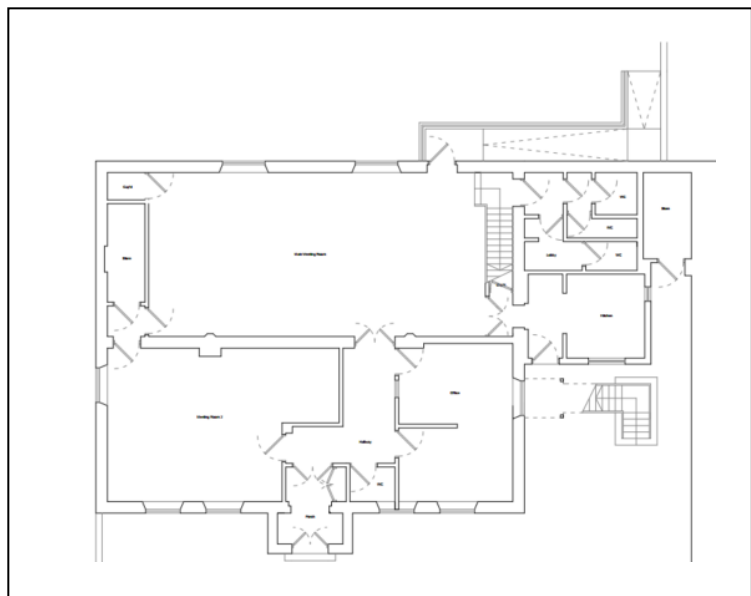
- That is a prominent landmark building by virtue of its use, particularly by the town council;
- That it is a building that has been largely in public/civic use;
- That it is on a narrow lane which is an important feature of the Warminster CA;
- Its architecture
- The railings and brick piers separating the private space from the lane;
- Its hipped roof covered in characterful clay tiles;
- The use of brick (in what bond?) and stone quoins;
- The stone mullioned windows;
- The porch;
- The double-height space internally (to the rear);
- The floorplan;
- Internally (aside from the double height space), the columns.
-

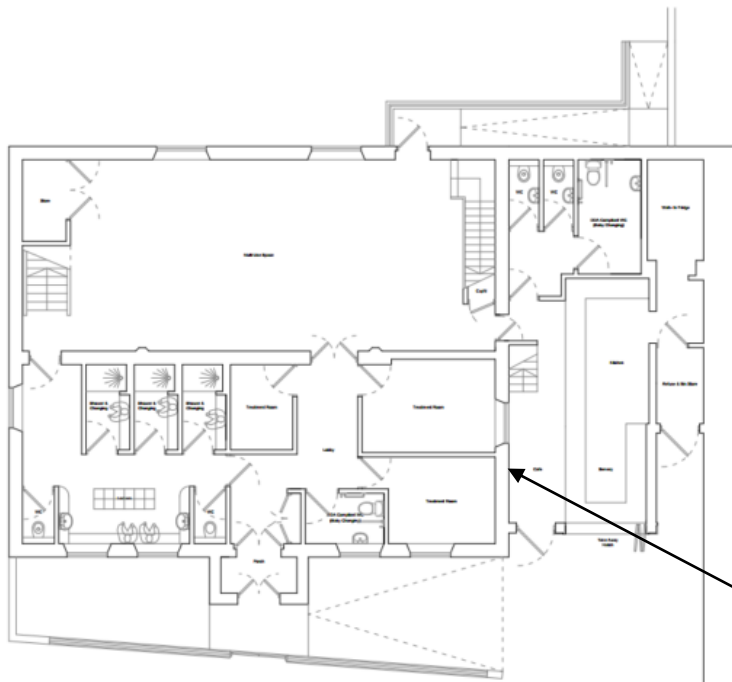
The later extension to the side is not of special interest.

Assessment: of proposals including their impact on the special interest of the building/conservation area and any harm which will occur via loss of historic fabric, scale, bulk (etc as appropriate). Also any benefits.

Adaptation & extension of the existing side extension

The existing extension is a single-storey extension constructed of red brick with a pitched roof of corrugated metal or asbestos. It is set back from the principal elevation and abuts the rear historic extension. It has Flemish bond brickwork so is presumably of some age. In front of it is a metal 'fire escape' staircase that accesses a door at first floor level on the side of Dewey House. The opening at first floor level is a modern opening.



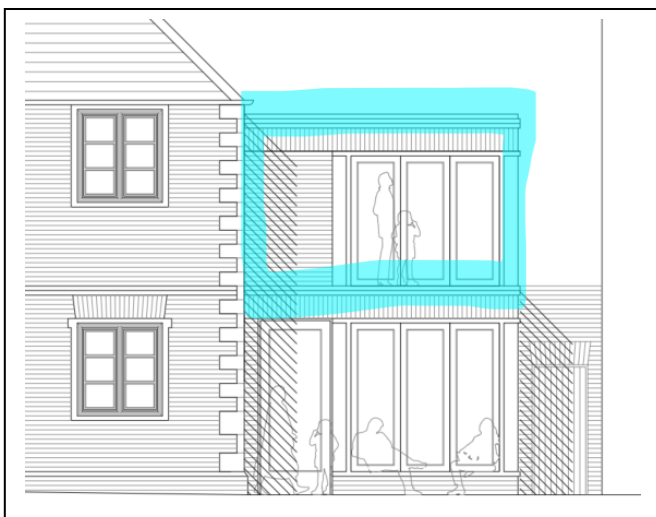


This wall should remain exposed ie a light touch

The purpose of the **new two-storey** structure is to provide a café and toilets to the rear. One assumes that the advantage of placing the café to the side means that it could function independently of Dewey House? The café operates over both floors with a seating area at first floor, as well as an external terrace.

It looks like some of the existing structure, to the rear, is retained and incorporated into the new/extended side extension. The new extension projects forward (although marginally set back from the principal elevation), covering the existing side elevation. It appears that the existing ground floor mullion window is retained.

A flat roof is proposed (mounted with flush? Roof lanterns). In terms of the handling of the front elevation, the drawing (insufficiently scaled for a listed building application) is largely glazed.



This element is set back. The drawings are somewhat misleading as presumably there would need to be a balustrade of some sort around the edge of the proposed terrace?

What is the impact on the side elevation (historic fabric)?

The current (altered) first floor door would remain to access the 'terrace'. The first floor window (rear side) would be concealed by the two-storey element – but it appears in the floorplans so retained and internalised presumably. Brickwork, stringcourse and stone quoins covered up by extension. At ground floor – blocking of rear side doorway and internalising a window.

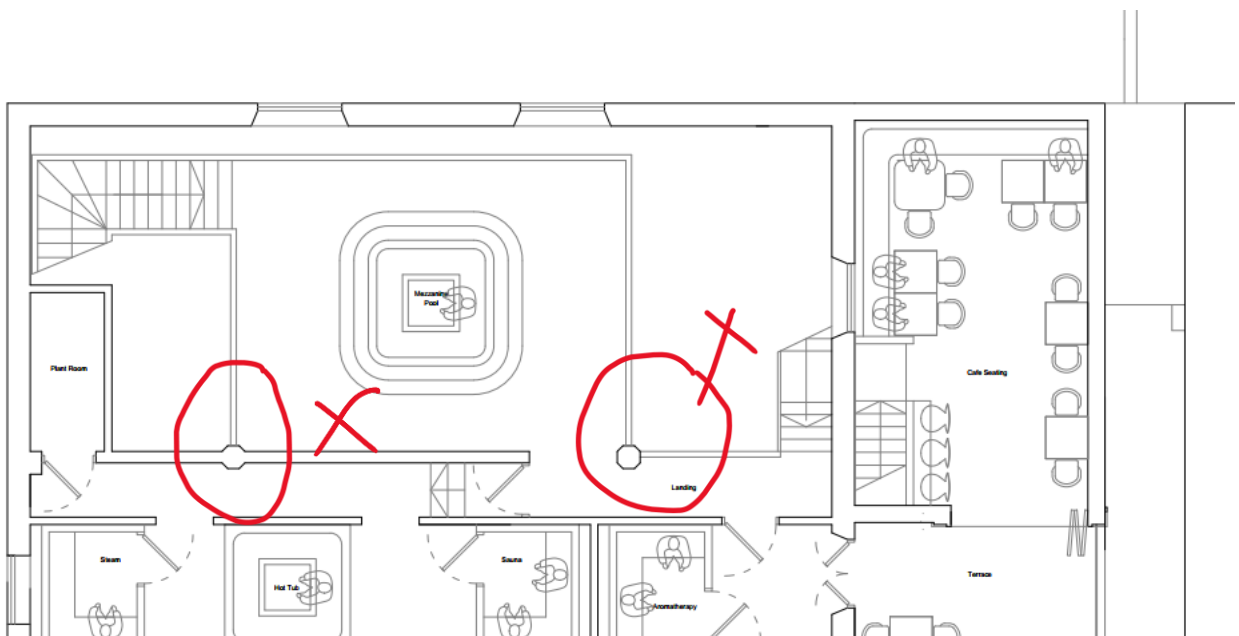
Comments

A two-storey linked extension is problematic because of the scale and impact but perhaps not impossible. I would strongly recommend that the extension is linked to the existing dwelling in a largely glazed way so that there is a clear visual separation between the host building and the extension. The new extension needs to be a 'wow' moment. I suggest also that the extension is set slightly further back than is shown.

In terms of the current proposals, I would avoid brick – given the existing building is brick. Much more information on the handling of abutment of the new and old is required, (ie there is a large downpipe in the middle of the wall – would this remain?) including section details. The existing side wall should remain unplastered (also there are remnants of render – what would happen here? Consolidation/repair or removal and if so, how?).

Internal alterations to the ground & first floor

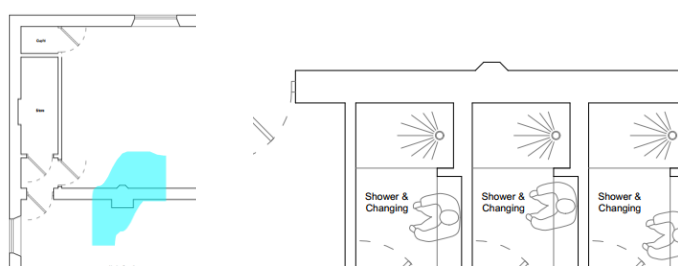
The existing main meeting room is retained as effectively open-plan (ie as is). A staircase is inserted at the north-west end to access the proposed mezzanine floor. We will need more detail about such elements (which should be contemporary in their treatment) but could be conditioned. **The issue I have is ensuring that the two columns are still exposed within the room.** The following is the proposed floor plan for the first floor. I would not support new partitions colliding with the upper levels of the column. I strongly recommend that the mezzanine is free-standing and set away from the walls (glass balustrading on all sides perhaps?).



Although the D, A and Heritage statement says: *'The new mezzanine structure within the main meeting hall will be constructed in isolation from the original historic fabric such as the rear windows & decorative columns so that it can be read as a separate phase of development.'*

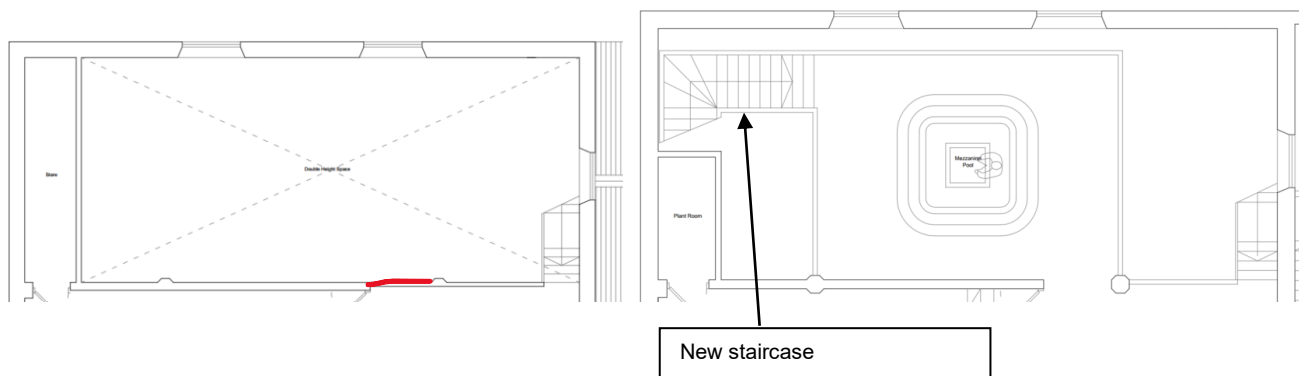
At ground floor in the earlier part of the building – three separate WCs are installed (where are the services coming from?), the second meeting room is divided up into 3 changing rooms and a treatment room.

What is that bit of masonry on the north wall which is proposed for removal? Presumably, if tall ceilings, the units like the changing rooms don't need to be full height (following the site visit, I understand that details such as this have yet to be worked out). One positive is removal of a partition that cuts across a window.



Forgot to check this at the site visit

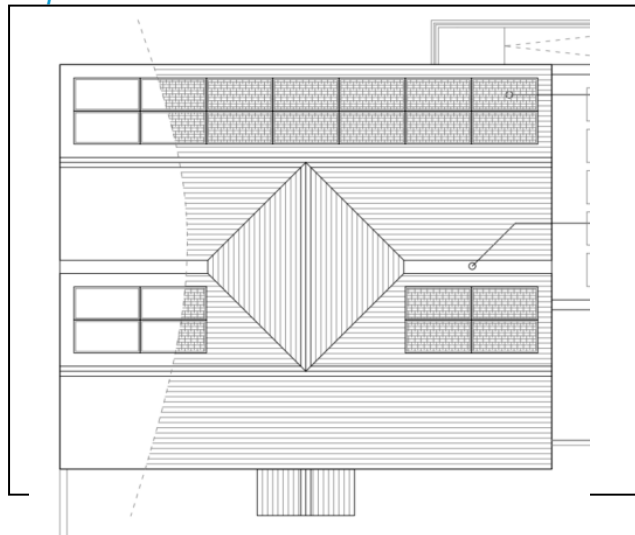
Proposed first floor – new staircase – no objection subject to acceptable details (see previous comments).



At the front of the building (the older core), there are two rooms – a corridor is formed: a cold plunge pool, a series of showers, steam rooms, saunas etc.

The D, A and Heritage statement says: *'New showers & specialist spa facilities will be constructed on new flooring plates which will be constructed over the existing floors so as to retain these features with new services easily able to pass in the newly created service zone thus minimising structural alterations & the subsequent loss of historic fabric. This approach also makes any repairs easier to execute & allows the works to be easily reversed in the future'.*

Provision of solar panels to the rear roof slopes



The panels would be facing in an easterly direction so not ideal. They would also be visible from the carpark area. As such, I have reservations.

Remedial works to the exterior of the property

Too vague. Would need more detail (perhaps agree by condition?).

Repairs to the roof to include improved insulation

Like-for-like roof repairs do not necessarily require consent, nor does insulation (if it is the blanket type laid over the floor joists). More information is required, however, I understand from the client that they have been told that the building was the subject of an extensive fire in the 1950s I think, and as such, there is little historic fabric. Photos of the roof structure would clarify this.

Works to WC's / bathrooms & provision of improved sanitary facilities

If non-structural, this does not require consent.

Review & upgrades to the mechanical & electrical systems to include sustainable systems where possible

Doesn't require consent.

Summary & conclusion:

I welcome the proposals in principle on the basis that the building will continue to be one that can be accessed by the public so will continue this tradition.

I have no objection to the side extension in principle but cannot properly assess the impact of the proposals on so little information. I would hope that the side extension could be more a free-standing element with a linking glazed element, so that the original form of Dewey House could be appreciated/read. More information on the architectural treatment and detailing of the extension is required. A materials palette, some CGIs and information on balustrading would help.

In terms of the proposed internal arrangements of Dewey House, I would like to better understand the structural implications of the proposed first floor uses on the existing building. I would also like more information on service runs etc.

In conclusion, I am currently unable to support the proposals **in their current form** although I am supportive in principle. More information to address issues I have raised would be welcomed. My recommendation would be for the agent to withdraw the current application and resubmit when they have all the necessary information.