

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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(South/West)

Officer's Name: Joe Richardson
Officer's Title: Senior Planning Officer

Application No: PL/2025/09845
Fives Court, Angel Lane, Mere, Warminster, BA12 6DH
The partial deconstruction, extension, refurbishment and change of use of an unlisted former care home (C2) to 20no. Affordable Housing independent living apartments (C3) for older people, with communal facilities

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

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.

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 (designated heritage assets).

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."

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:

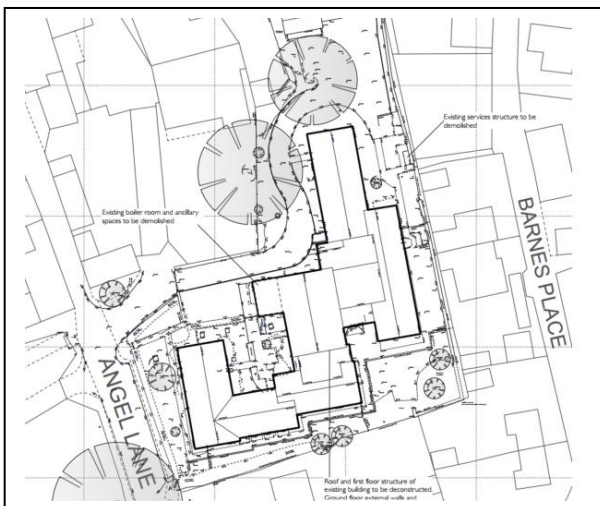
The existing nursing home is a modern 20th century development of no particular interest.

The site is within the Mere conservation area, for which there is no adopted heritage appraisal, only an early draft which was done in 2006.

As part of that review, amendments to the boundary of the conservation area were recommended (but have not been actioned). In respect of Fives Court, the draft appraisal says:

'This late twentieth century complex bears little relation to the scale and grain of the established historic town to the north. The buildings do not make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area at present, due to their scale, materials, detailed design, layout and relationship to the town and it is considered appropriate to recommend their removal'.

Proposal:



The existing site plan is annotated: 'Roof and first floor structure of existing building to be deconstructed. Ground floor external walls and concrete slab to be retained and re-used'.

In terms of the proposed ground floor plan, there is a new bin store near the lane, the first floor cantilevers over the ground floor.

In terms of the roofplan, there are a series of pitched roofs linked I am not sure how, with solar arrays on both slopes.

There is also a flat roofed first floor U shaped corridor (supported on stilts) within the development.

Proposed materials:

Relevant planning history

ENQ/2024/00810

My colleague responded:

'The current site does not contribute positively to the conservation area and redevelopment of the site is welcomed subject to a suitable design. The proposal is to provide an upper floor to the existing building. The vertical extension element of the works involves adding one storey to the existing single storey elements across the site such that the final development is two storeys high for the whole footprint of the building. The increase in storey height can result in a more positive scheme. The detail provided is limited and has been primarily based on a fixed floor plan with limited elevations. It is recommended that the scheme is developed to show full elevations and views along Angel Lane. The design should take into account the setting of the designated and non-designated assets. At present the storey height is uniform and the conservation area has a variety of roof heights – as the design develops it is worth considering some variety of storey/roof height'.

Issues: 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 "Heritage Statement". The document considers the impact on below ground archaeology and the designated heritage assets in the vicinity, except there is no assessment of the impact of the proposed new development **on the character of this part of the Mere conservation area** (the document says at 7.1 that *'the site is not covered by either statutory or local protection, although it lies within the Mere Conservation Area'*. A conservation area is a statutory protection).

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:

Angel Lane is a narrow lane lined with stone buildings of a simple character reflecting their largely ancillary use. Particularly attractive is the stone barn on the corner of the plot to the north, as well as the range of single-storey stone buildings on the west side of Angel Lane. The views from The Square along Angel Lane to the rural hinterland, and the corresponding view back along the lane to The George Inn on The Square, are views of significance.



The draft heritage appraisal considers the existing building to make a negative contribution to the character of the conservation area. However, there appear to be some attractive historic walls surrounding the site and within the site.

The existing building, however, is single-storey (adjacent to Angel Lane) and traditional in appearance. It is let down by a shallow pitched concrete tiled roof and faux stone elevations. The arrangement within the plot is at odds with historic development. The harm is mitigated by its low form and the presence of some attractive trees as well as a hedge along the Angel Lane boundary.

The proposed development is of a distinct contemporary character. Of particular concern is the two-storey element adjacent to Angel Lane. I would like to see Visualisation 3 formalised (ie as for visualisations 1 and 2) as well as a visualisation of the development as viewed from Angel Lane.

The proposals include retention of the existing ground floor faux stone walls and the addition of first floor including external corridors. The proposals add considerable bulk to the existing buildings.

In terms of the treatment of the building facing Angel Lane, I have reservations about the scale and massing. The existing single-storey building is reflective of the historic buildings along the lane. However, I note that my colleague did not raise a concern in respect of the pre-application enquiry (which proposed a two-storey element).

It appears that the hedge is replaced with metal fencing with planting behind. The current hedge contributes to the rural character of the lane and provides a screen in front of the building. The proposed arrangement is more suburban in character. I would recommend that this is reconsidered.

Design of the bin store: can't see any images.

The stone walls across the site should be retained, as should the hedge along Angel Lane.

Assessment:

The current building makes a neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area. Whilst it is not special, it is at least modest in its scale and massing, with a semi-traditional character (particularly the catslide roof with large chimney).

The proposed development adds height to the current arrangement. The form of the roofs, materials palette and external balconies/walkways, result in a much more contemporary-looking building. As such, the design and detailing, as well as the landscaping (soft and hard) need to be carefully considered to ensure a high quality development. I would recommend the Urban Design Team are consulted.

Section 72 of the Planning LBCA Act 1990 requires works to **preserve or enhance** the character of the CA. It is my view that the proposals would cause harm as a result of the scale of the development (being at odds with the traditional form in the locality). In view of the current building, I would consider that harm to be 'less than substantial' using current NPPF terminology. As such, paragraph 215 is engaged.