

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Application No: **PL/2026/00170 (PP)**
Retrospective installation of a raised platform to use as storage.
Albany Palace, Park Road, Trowbridge

Please find following comments in respect of the amended details for this application(s).

Recommendations:

☐	No Comment
☐	Support
☐	Support subject to conditions (please 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 66 (PP) requires that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving 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 12 'Achieving well-designed places' seeks to achieve good design and Section 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' set out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 214-216 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 'Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and where possible enhanced.

Site: The application relates to the grade II building listed as MILL BUILDING AT REAR OF NO 3, SILVER STREET and attached buildings (now the Albany Palace PH) including the modern addition fronting on to Park Road and the adjacent Park House which dates from the C18 or C19.

The list description appears to be incorrect and there is no evidence that the building was constructed, or functioned as, a mill building. The Heritage statement notes that it was “built in 1867 by PL Hill, then owner of an ironmongers shop located at the 3 Silver Street frontage, as a public meeting hall. It played host to many of the town’s larger public gatherings until the town hall was opened in 1887.” Following this it had a chequered history, becoming an roller-skating rink in late nineteenth/early twentieth century prior to conversion to a cinema for a brief period from 1910. Subsequently it became a department store. Until, in 2002, it was converted to a café/nightclub venue (Chicago Rock Cafe) at which time the street frontage element of the present public house was built following demolition of the building that previously stood there. In 2009 the former Chicago Rock was converted to a public House by J D Wetherspoon. The Heritage Statement report that “While the exterior of Hill’s Hall retains many original elements, as a result of the numerous changes of use its interior has been stripped of historic features.”

Paragraph 207 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The listed building consent application is accompanied a Heritage Statement. I have no particular argument with this statement which provides a reasonable assessment of the site and surroundings. 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.

The list description is inaccurate in describing Hill’s Hall as a mill building but the description of the exterior remains relevant:

2. Mid C19. 2 storeys red brick with stone quoins and dressings including impost stones. 10 windows. 1st floor windows round headed with raised surrounds and keys. 3 similar, blocked windows to south. East side has gutter brackets and wall buttresses interrupting cill band. Hipped double roman tile roof with terra cotta cresting and occasional ornament.

The significance of the building is focused in the remaining historic building which forms the rear of the public house - this building remains an interesting example of a building constructed for leisure purposes but (presumably in view of the required scale and proportions) in the style of the high-quality mill construction in the town. It is agreed that the front of the building is, however, much compromised by the modern buildings attached.

Proposals: the current proposals are for the retention of a raised storage area which has been installed over the stone sett surface to the rear of the public house within an existing service area. Although currently a private area, this narrow courtyard area lies between two historic buildings and retains a good deal of character. The majority of the courtyard retains traditional stone sett flooring.

On this occasion, as the platform is merely constructed over the existing surface without any direct impact on its fabric, listed building consent is not required.

Issues: impact on the listed building, impact on the settings of the adjacent listed buildings, impact on the conservation area.

Assessment: The addition of this further modern construction is an unwelcome intrusion which involves a modest additional level of harm to the setting of the listed building. However, it is understood that the area was already lawfully used for the ad hoc storage of beer kegs and bins and cages etc. in connection with the public house. This is an established use and it is understood that there are operational requirements associated with successful running of the business and that this is the only accessible and relatively private location available. In addition to obscuring much of the view of the cobbles, use of the area for storage of this type will almost certainly have contributed to significant wear and damage to the cobbled surface.

The works to create the platform have been carried out in a reversible manner with the existing setts isolated and protected under a membrane prior to the siting of the adjustable surface mounted pedestals which support a series of metal grating panels. The design levels the area, avoids the direct impact on the cobbles from the kegs etc. and should also allow the loads from the storage to be distributed across the surface rather than being focussed on individual areas. As a result, whilst there will be some adverse visual impact from the platform, which is of a modern functional/industrial character, this will be temporary and reversible in nature and will assist in protecting the historic surface materials from further damage from the storage use of the area.

Summary and conclusion: the storage use of the area is understood to be a requirement of the established lawful use of the building. Whilst the modern industrial character of the structure has resulted in some visual harm within this area, it will also assist in preserving the fabric of the less robust historic surface finish beneath from the heavy wear from the storage use. The works are temporary and reversible in nature and the surface will be preserved. As a result, the heritage impacts are considered to be offset by a similar level of heritage benefit such that the overall impact will be largely neutral. On this basis no specific justification is required however it is also considered the works will assist in retaining the ongoing viable use of the building in support of its long-term conservation. The requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance are considered to be met and there is therefore no objection to the application from a conservation perspective.