



LP PLANNING
CHARTERED PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT



Planning, Design and Access Statement

Project: 'Internal and external alterations to hotel, to include demolition of single storey toilets and associated works.'

Address: The Bell House, Sutton Benger, SN15 4RH

Applicant: OneTwoEightCo

Date: March 2026

LP Planning, 31 Market Place, Chippenham, SN15 3HZ

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 LP Planning Consultants have been instructed by OneTwoEight Co to prepare a Planning, Design and Access Statement to accompany a planning application for full planning and listed building consent for the *‘Proposed internal and external alterations to hotel to include demolition of single storey annex and internal alterations to provide disabled toilet facilities’* at The Bell House, Sutton Benger.
- 1.2 The proposed development is not “major” within the terms of Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning [Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015, nevertheless this statement sets out in full the planning issues in support of the application.
- 1.3 The Bell House closed in October 2025 and is now under new ownership. The intention is to re-open the hotel following refurbishment, part of which requires the need to submit this planning application and associated listed building consent.
- 1.4 The new owners wish to re-open the premises as soon as possible, to serve the local community as well as tourists, to start making an income from the site. This proposal will allow the hotel to be upgraded and the ancillary bar/restaurant to re-open at the front of the building, with the café relocated to the main building. The existing 14 hotel bedrooms rooms will also be upgraded and refurbished to provide just 7 rooms including family suites plus provision of new manager’s accommodation. The existing office/reception area is to be relocated into the former post office/cafe area of the site.

2. Description of Site and Context

- 2.1 The site area comprises the existing hotel building, car parking area, along with the former post office and café areas.



Figure 1: The Bell House Hotel

- 2.2 The site is accessed via the High Street, along the boundary to the south. To the north, on the opposite side of the High St is the Grade II* Listed Church and Grade II Listed Old Rectory. The site is within the Sutton Benger Conservation Area and the hotel itself is also Grade II Listed. Existing residential properties are to the north and east.

3. Planning History

3.1 The table below summarises the planning history available on Wiltshire Council's website. Works to trees applications have been excluded from this list:

Application No.	Description	Decision
PL/2025/02544 & PL/2025/02788	Proposed partial demolition of existing hotel to form new dwelling along with the erection of 3 new dwellings with associated landscaping.	Withdrawn
PL/2024/02644 & PL/2024/02340	Proposed partial demolition of existing hotel to form new dwelling along with the erection of 4 new dwellings with associated landscaping.	Withdrawn
PL/2023/00979	Proposed partial demolition of existing hotel to form tourist accommodation.	Withdrawn
N/12/00195/LBC & N/12/00196/FUL	Erection of new village shop, associated residential accommodation incorporating existing outbuilding, associated access & servicing arrangements.	Approved 3/07/2012
N/08/00241/FUL & N/8/00240/LBC	Install new kitchen extract system in new location and house flue in new dormer.	Withdrawn prior to determination

4. Description of Development

4.1 The description of development for this full planning application and Listed Building Consent is:

“Proposed internal and external alterations to hotel to include demolition of single storey toilets and associated works”.

4.2 The proposal involves no change of use but involves various alterations that will help to contribute to the long-term viable use of the building (and crucially to allow the swift re-opening of the premises).

4.3 A full schedule of works is as follows. Although some of these elements do not require planning or listed building consent. They are included to show the nature of the refurbishment and to evidence the level of works and investment the owners are undertaking to reopen the premises:

Ground Floor

Restaurant/Bar

- Replace side door to car park
- Door to side entrance to be rehung and swing into bar
- Cellar wall to move back to allow entrance to toilets
- Fireplace to side of bar to be replaced
- Flue to both fireplaces to be installed
- Rotten timber floorboards and joists in east section of bar to be replaced
- Cracked glazing to be replaced like for like

Dining area

- Freestanding bar to be installed in dining area

Toilets (existing entrance)

- Existing entrance and office to be replaced by toilets

Courtyard (existing toilets)

- Existing flat roof toilets to be demolished and replace with courtyard
- Existing stairway to be removed
- Build external wall to male toilets under existing lintel

Rear flat roof extension

- Demolished
- Entrance to courtyard created

Kitchen

- Erect wall in rear store cupboard to create walkway from alleyway to back garden. Window to be replaced by door.

Plant room (existing rear store cupboard)

- Water tanks to be relocated from first floor to new plant room

Ground floor room

- Two hotel bedrooms to be combined into 1 space

Staff toilet (existing toilet and store cupboard)

- Door to replace window
- Toilet to be repositioned

Rear staircase

- New staircase installed in rear corridor
- Door staircase installed

Store

- Store created under new rear staircase
- Door fitted
- Wall erected to entrance to courtyard to enclose store

Office (existing café/ former post office)

- Repair water damage to walls and floor
- Install small kitchenette
- Replace suspended tile ceiling with plasterboard and skim finish

*First Floor***Front 4 hotel bedrooms**

- Secondary glazing to be installed
- New bathroom layouts
- Extractor fans fitted to each bathroom
- Modern doors to be replace with fire doors
- New lighting and electrical layouts

Communal corridor

- Panelling on walls

- New lighting layouts

Landlord flat (existing rear rooms of main hotel)

- Landlords flat to be created from the 3 rooms at rear of main hotel
- Front door to be installed in corridor
- Modern studwork of rear room and corridor to be removed to create living, kitchen and dining space
- Door to be reinstated to door frame
- Rear fire escape door to be replaced with window
- Install kitchen

Rear 3 hotel rooms

- 5 rooms to be altered into 3 rooms. Two of these will be family sized suites to have living, kitchen and dining areas attached.
- Stud wall erected to create internal corridor
- Fireboard to be installed onto ceilings with skim finish

*External***Front garden**

- Remove raised concrete triangle and repair any damage to stone wall
- Plant Beech hedge alongside temporary post and wire fence

Rear Garden

- Erect fence next to gas tanks
- Ground level of existing rear patio to be reduced, to stop water ingress to proposed office. Then patio to be relaid.

Car park

- Plant Beech hedge alongside temporary post and wire fence
- Ramp to bar side door

Windows

- All white timber single glazed windows on rear modern section (except new office front windows) to be replaced with heritage style, aluminium double-glazed windows. Proposed colour RAL 7032. The existing timber windows in the side alley way and the internal courtyard windows will be repaired or replaced with timber double glazing and painted RAL colour to match others. Full sections and details to follow.

4.4 The currently closed café will be relocated and re-opened in the southern rear portion of the L-shaped plan. Additionally, a larger ancillary office will be relocated in the former post-office area of the building, providing an improved separate workspace for staff.

5. Background Purpose of the Application

5.1 The previous owners operated the 14 bedroom hotel providing tourism accommodation, with bed and breakfast rooms in the main section of the building. This business also offered meals as a restaurant in the evenings and weekends, but had seen trade diminish greatly since the COVID pandemic and hence the recent closure.

5.2 The lawful use class is presently a hotel with café/retail, as this was the last use of the site. The last use of the post office/cafe was on 23rd September 2023 when the Post

office closed due to poor income levels which could not be sustained, as the costs were greater than the revenue stream.

5.3 The cafe/post office element previously consisted of a small cafe area with a post office area run from the ground floor section of the easterly end of the building.

5.4 The previous owners saw the gradual down trend of the businesses over the years of ownership and took the decision to offer the property for sale on 27th April 2023 and then subsequent closure of the elements of the business that were costing more to run than generating income.

5.5 The new owners intend to re-open as soon as possible with a new commercial operation involving the bar/restaurant at the front of the building, café to the rear and refurbished hotel/tourist accommodation above. The proposal to restore and adapt the current building will ensure it can be preserved whilst facilitating a modern commercial operation. There will also be opportunities for employment of local people within the village. Five full time staff and two part time staff are anticipated to be needed to operate as per the opening hours below:

Café - 08:00-17:00 Monday - Sunday

Bar & Restaurant - 12:00 - 23:00 Monday - Sunday

5.6 The local community are aware of the intention to re-open and the Facebook Group suggests their support is welcomed.

5.7 The post office will not be re-opened and from discussions with the Parish Council the applicants understand there is no longer a licence to operate from this location. The Post Office use is not feasible. The previous applications at the site have not contested its loss. It was accepted that the Post Office was unviable in this location.

6 Planning Policies

6.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the provisions of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The Development Plan in this case comprises the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2011-2026 (January 2015) (the WCS). The following policies are relevant to this application:

Policy CP40: Hotels, Bed and Breakfasts, Guest Houses and Conference Facilities

Policy CP49: Protection of Rural Services and Community Facilities

Policy CP57: High Quality Design and Place Shaping

Policy CP58: Conserving the Historic Environment

6.3 The Development Plan also comprises saved policies of the former North Wiltshire Local Plan which have been 'saved'. There is also a Neighbourhood Plan in force which was adopted in 2025.

6.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) is a significant material consideration in the determination of the application, and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) also provides relevant advice. In particular, it promotes sustainable development and seeks to make effective use of land and buildings.

6.5 The relevance of the above policies is set out in the detailed planning assessment below.

7 Planning Assessment

7.1 When assessing the proposed development against the relevant planning policies, the key issues in this case are as follows:

- The acceptability of the principle of development;
- The impact upon the character and appearance of the area;
- Impact upon heritage assets;
- Residential amenity;
- Ecology; and
- Highways

Principle of Development

7.2 Wiltshire Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP2 set out the strategy for delivering sustainable development across Wiltshire. Sutton Benger is designated as a large village.

7.3 The proposal involves no change of use and the works are required to allow the reopening of a bar/restaurant a café and hotel rooms above. CP40 specifically states that upgrading of tourist accommodation will be supported.

7.4 The addition of a manager's flat is deemed essential to allowing this commercial operation to be successful.

7.5 The post office, which closed in 2023 will not re-open. There is no longer a licence for a Post Office to be on site, and this is not a straightforward commercial venture to re-open. However, the new owners aspire to the site becoming a community hub once again and having regard to the aims and objectives of Neighbourhood Plan Policy SB16, the site is currently closed providing no benefit to the local community, whereas the café will be an improved offering for residents to use on a daily basis. The hospitality climate is currently extremely challenging and it is hoped that the local community will fully support the re-opening of the bar and restaurant, as a community facility within the heart of the village.

7.6 Similarly, Core Policy 49 has regard to the protection of rural services and community facilities. Where there is a proposal involving the loss of a community service which cannot be made economically viable, the preference is to ensure the building remains a mixed use, which still includes a substantial portion of the community facility/service. In this case, the site has historically had a mixture of community facilities. The post office closed 3 years ago and this part of the site was not operational when the new owners bought it in 2025. As mentioned above, it can no longer operate from the premises as there is no licence. All other previous uses on the site will re-open and the proposal therefore complies with CP49.

7.7 Given the uses of the building shown on the proposed floorplans (café, restaurant, hotel rooms) are already lawful, the principle of the alterations are acceptable subject to compliance with other policies set out below.

Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Area

7.8 Planning policies CP51, CP57 and chapter 12 of the NPPF more generally seek to ensure high quality design in new developments whilst also protecting, conserving and where

possible, enhancing landscape character. In terms of the site's location and any applicable sensitivities, it includes a listed building and is within a Conservation Area.

7.9 The physical changes to the building are set out in full above but the majority of these are internal works. The only external elements will all improve and enhance the existing appearance of the building which has not been renovated for some time. For example, removing incongruous additions or repairing existing features of the building (masonry and windows) will ensure the building makes a positive contribution to the area. There are no new build elements or additional floorspace that could detract from the character or appearance of the area. Extracts of the site plans (existing and proposed) are shown below to highlight the fact that works are limited to the building itself, and demolition is contained within the middle of the site, creating a courtyard area.



Figure 2: Existing site plan



Figure 3: Proposed site plan

Impact upon Heritage

7.10 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires 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.

7.11 Paragraph 210 of the NPPF says, *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness”*. In considering potential impacts in respect of the historic environment, the NPPF says at paragraph 213, *“any harm to... the significant of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development with its setting), should require clear and convincing justification”*.

7.12 The Heritage Statement submitted with the application (prepared by HPS) sets out how conservation of original historic fabric is central to the approach being taken with the proposed alterations. Paragraph 8.4 states,

“The strategy also recognises the need to accommodate modern use while respecting heritage value. To achieve this, new interventions, such as café facilities, accessibility improvements, and other contemporary requirements are intentionally concentrated in secondary or newly formed spaces. This approach mitigates the visual and physical impact on the most sensitive parts of the building, enabling a controlled and compatible evolution that aligns with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework. In doing so, the scheme sustains the asset’s significance while allowing continued viable use”.

7.13 The Statement confirms that the approach is a sympathetic and proportionate approach to change, conserving the historic core with the operational needs of a modern mixed use building complex.

Residential Amenity

7.14 Core Policy 57 sets out the general principles for the design of development, including impacts on neighbours:

“vii. Having regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants, and ensuring that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself, including the consideration of privacy, overshadowing, vibration and pollution”.

7.15 As the proposal does not involve a change of use, or any additional windows there are no impacts to the nearest neighbours. Ventilation points for the café and restaurant kitchen are as existing.

Ecology

7.16 The application involves no works to the grassed area on site and there are no works to the roof of the building (which has previously been established to be a bat roost). The previous ecology survey has been submitted as part of this application for further details on this but the Ecologist has advised no further surveys are necessary to support this specific application.

- 7.17 As the application proposes demolition of existing parts of the building and there is no change of use of existing floorspace, the site is below the minimum threshold criteria for BNG and is therefore exempt.

Highways

- 7.18 The application makes no change to the existing access arrangements. The parking is improved, with 3 dedicated disabled parking spaces, closer to the building. A total of 24 parking spaces are proposed that meet the required measurements for a space (2.4 x 4.8m).
- 7.19 Given no additional floorspace is proposed on site the parking is considered acceptable and improved compared to the current arrangement.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The application seeks permission for the alterations (internal and external) to the Bell House Hotel building which will allow it to re-open in 2026. The changes are necessary to bring the building up to modern standards and allow a successful commercial operation.
- 8.2 The application is accompanied by a thorough Heritage Impact Assessment which has concluded that the proposals have been designed sympathetically to ensure the modern operational needs can be met.
- 8.3 No change of use is proposed, the building will operate as a restaurant, café and rooms above (including new family suites) to improve the overall offering and appeal to a wider market.
- 8.4 Given the site is currently closed and providing no employment or income, it is requested that Wiltshire Council approve this proposal without delay.