

Addendum to Planning, Design and Access Statement

2 Market Place, Chippenham (Planning Application ref: PL/2025/09951)

4th March 2026

This addendum responds to comments raised by Chippenham Town Council regarding the proposed removal of the internal physical link to the former safe area and the creation of a self-contained ground floor unit accessed via a new courtyard.

The Town Council express concern that the arrangement could harm the significance of the non-designated heritage asset and the character and appearance of the Chippenham Conservation Area.

Planning and Heritage Response

The rear projection containing the former bank vault is a later addition, constructed with reinforced concrete walls and roof for security purposes rather than architectural or historic value (as set out in Section 3 and 7 of the submitted Planning Statement).

The concrete roof structure bridging between the vault and the main building is not original fabric and does not contribute positively to the building's significance.

Its partial removal does not result in the loss of any historic fabric and allows the reinstatement of the original rear building line.

The formation of a modest courtyard provides the following benefits:

- Improved natural light to the rear of the ground floor;
- Enhanced functionality and circulation;
- Removal of visually and historically incongruous concrete structures;
- Improved long-term adaptability of the building.

Paragraph 206 of the NPPF encourages opportunities within Conservation Areas to enhance and better reveal significance. In this case, the removal of non-original banking interventions and reinstatement of a simpler rear form better reflects the building's historic evolution as a commercial premises rather than a bank.

The courtyard is not visible in key public views from the Market Place and therefore does not affect the primary elevation identified within the Conservation Area Character Appraisal as making a positive contribution.

Commercial Flexibility

The ground floor will remain in lawful Class E use. The proposed reconfiguration introduces a degree of flexibility that is appropriate in the current commercial climate. The layout is capable of functioning either as a single, unified commercial unit with the main ground floor or, alternatively, as two separate units should market conditions favour subdivision. This adaptability enhances the building's long-term viability without compromising its role within the town centre or the character of the Conservation Area.

In the current town centre context, flexibility is essential to securing occupation. A configuration that is reliant upon internal access through a primary retail unit could deter potential occupiers due to reduced commercial attractiveness.

Paragraph 202 of the NPPF requires that less than substantial harm (if any) be weighed against public benefits, including securing optimal viable use. Ensuring adaptability and reducing vacancy risk is a clear public benefit in heritage terms.

Vacancy of prominent town centre buildings can lead to deterioration and harm to Conservation Area character. By contrast, a viable and adaptable configuration supports active use and continued occupation.

Planning Policy Position

The Development Plan policies referenced by the Town Council (Core Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Policies TC4 and TC6 of the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan) seek to ensure that development preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and proposes high quality design and materials.

There is no specific requirement within the Development Plan that mandates the retention of an internal physical link between commercial spaces. In this context, the removal of that link and the formation of the courtyard do not give rise to policy conflict. Rather, the proposals are consistent with the objectives of the NPPF in ensuring a continued contribution to the character and vitality of the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

The proposed removal of the internal link and formation of a modest courtyard relate solely to later, non-original banking additions and do not result in the loss of historic fabric. The works rationalise the rear elevation, improve natural light and functionality, and are not visible in key public views from the Market Place.

The ground floor remains in lawful Class E use, and the reconfiguration introduces appropriate commercial flexibility, enabling occupation either as a single unit or as two units if required.

This adaptability reduces the risk of vacancy, which represents a clear public benefit in heritage terms.

There is no Development Plan requirement to retain an internal physical link between commercial spaces. The proposals therefore preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and accord with the relevant Development Plan policies and the objectives of the NPPF.