

APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT OFFICER DELGATED REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/00313
APPLICATION TYPE:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
SITE ADDRESS:	Devizes Castle, Castle Grounds, Devizes, SN10 1HL
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Essential repairs to Moat Bridge
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

Devizes Castle is a Grade I listed building (listing ref: 1249366) and a Scheduled Monument (listing ref: 1021375), located in the town of Devizes in Wiltshire. The site also contains the Grade II listed walls encircling the top of the Castle mound (listing ref. 1263774) and Grade II remains of the original Castle (listing ref. 1249362). The gatehouse of Devizes Castle is also Grade II listed (listing ref. 1249360). The areas under the current Applicant's ownership comprise the majority of northern portion of Devizes Castle, most of the grounds and more recently the Gatehouse. The South Tower and the Coach House are the only areas within the Inner Bailey outside of the Applicant's ownership. The whole lies within the Devizes Conservation Area.

Devizes Castle comprises a 19th-century building, which incorporates an 18th century windmill tower and some very limited fragments of medieval masonry, built atop the surviving earthworks (motte) of the medieval castle. The building was constructed in various phases in the 19th and early 20th centuries and was fundamentally the work of Valentine Leach and his son Robert Leach. On Robert Leach's death, the Castle was bought by Sir Charles Rich, who radically altered and extended the building. The 20th century saw the site fragmented and Castle harmed by successive piecemeal alterations of poor quality and decay through inadequate maintenance which are evident today.

Devizes Castle had reached a state of considerable disrepair, with substantial structural damage and unsympathetic repair and refurbishment works evident when a comprehensive repair programme was approved in 2023 for a new owner covering both the Castle itself and grounds.

The current application relates to the Ladies Gate, a C19 garden feature to the rear of the castle, which stands on the terrace, framing steps down into the garden. The Heritage Statement notes that "2.1 The precise date of the Ladies' Gate is unclear, but it is clearly depicted & named in the 1883 Sales Particulars. It is absent from the earliest photographs which also omit features such as the Oratory (Heritage Appraisal, figure 20), & it would thus appear to date from the final, & most elaborate phase of works for Robert Leach. All three of Robert Leach's phases have been identified in the Heritage Appraisal as of high significance.

2.2 The Ladies Gate, unlike some of the other gates, appears to be composed entirely of 19th-century, purpose-carved stone blockwork (whether decorative, or rock-faced rustication), & to contain no genuine Romanesque spolia."

The list entry for the Castle, for means of identification purposes only, provides the following description:

Devizes Castle including Glass House
and Garden Walls encircling west side of mound

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The original castle built by Bishop Roger of Salisbury in reign of Henry I has virtually disappeared. It was partly in ruins in the C16, but finally destroyed at the end of the Civil Wars by Order of Parliament. The site is a magnificent one with a great mound and moat. The mound falls steeply on 3 sides towards the undulating ground to the south-west. The rich parklands of the Old Park form with the Castle mound a fine piece of landscape, which should always be preserved. The plan of the town in the form of a fan with the Castle as the centre of the segment, seems to be too formal to be a haphazard growth. It is reasonably certain that the town grew after the building of the Castle, and it would be interesting to know how far the plan was dictated by the Bishopric of Salisbury, so closely connected with the Castle itself, as occurred at a slightly later date in the case of Salisbury city.

The existing structure was begun in 1842 by Goodridge of Bath. Highly asymmetrical. The ashlar faced keep and turret to the south are Goodridge with paired lights divided by colonettes in narrow openings. The rest to the north is a massive rock faced enlargement of 1860's, 70's and 80's. Crenellated parapet, buttresses, superimposed bays, oriel windows and large mullioned and transomed windows. The north tower however, is partly of C17 brick and was originally a windmill. It's rubble base may be part of the original castle. Around the north tower's base, facing west, is a bowed fernery with stone tiled roof, round interlaced arches forming pointed lights with Norman style shafts dividing. Adjoining the fernery to the north is a fine glass house with octagonal base and a stepped domical roof with crowning finial. The entrances are to the east and west: wooden gables with ornamented bargeboards supported by flanking paired colonettes with foliate capitals, on high pedestals.

A terrace surrounds the castle with a battlemented parapet. On the west side towards the centre are 2 short sections of arcaded wall, one incorporating in arch some original Norman stone work of zig zag pattern. The interior of the castle is designed in a mixture of neo-Norman, Gothic and C16 styles. The drawing room and bedroom in the northern section facing west have the partly original frames of C16 or early C17 ceilings inserted with carved and gilded bosses, small brackets and ribs, the whole completed in plaster.

PROPOSAL

The gate is unstable and leaning significantly which is placing stress on the fabric. All options have been considered and the least harmful, which is proposed, is for recording and dismantling the gate followed by re-erecting on new foundations.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
PL/2022/07526 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 11/11/2022 – Investigative and opening-up works to the historic building fabric of Devizes Castle and other associated works
ENQ/2023/00507 - Pre-Application enquiry Decision - Pre-App Response Date: 1/6/2023 – Sympathetic conservation repairs and partial restorations
PL/2023/07677 - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 15/12/2023 – External conservation repair and restoration works to the external fabric of Devizes Castle and other external alterations at roof level alongside other associated works.
PL/2023/07957 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 15/12/2023 – Internal alterations, reconfigurations, conservation repairs, restorations, refurbishment and redecoration works throughout the interior of Devizes Castle and other associated works.
PL/2024/01845 - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 7/5/2024 – Temporary dismantling of a section of the curtain wall and reinstatement on a like-for-like basis and other associated works
PL/2024/02249 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: – Temporary dismantling of a section of the curtain wall and reinstatement on a like-for-like basis and other associated works
PL/2024/09740 - Listed Building Discharge of Condition Decision - Approve Date: 19/12/2024 – Discharge of condition 5 (Programme of Works) of PL/2023/07957
PL/2025/01210 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 9/4/2025 – A series of conservation-led repairs and alterations to the interiors of Devizes Castle and associated works.
PL/2025/05956 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 9/9/2025 – Underpinning of the Fernery Arcade at Devizes Castle, and associated works.
PL/2026/00431 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) – Proposed works to renew the below-ground drainage systems
19/00480/TCA - Work to Trees in a Cons Area Decision - NOOBJECT Date: 26/2/2019 – T1 - Ash - Fell
PL/2026/00313 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) – Essential repairs to Moat Bridge

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Legislation

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 16 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.

National Policy and Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out government policy, including 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 213-215 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 to 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.

Section 14 of the NPPF addresses the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

Historic England Advice Note 2: Making changes to Heritage Assets, illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for LBC (and planning permission).

Wiltshire Core Strategy:

Whilst not directly relevant to listed building consent applications, the below policies give an indication of the Council's approach to development affecting heritage assets:

- Core Policy 57 '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.
- Core Policy 58 '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."

ISSUES

Impact upon the preservation of the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural and/or historic interest.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Historic England – a site visit was undertaken in the company of the Historic England Inspector and Structural Engineer. Following this they returned a ‘no comment’ response but advised taking the advice of the Council’s own internal specialist conservation advisors.

Devizes Town Council – no objection

REPRESENTATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of Section 5(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended) the application for listed building consent was publicised by way of:

- A site notice displayed near the site;
- An advertisement placed in the local press.

These methods were used to inform interested parties and to allow a statutory consultation period of **21 days** for representations to be submitted.

Below is a summary of the representations received during the consultation period. In accordance with the provisions of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, only matters relevant to the consideration of the building’s special architectural or historic interest have been taken into account in the assessment of this Listed Building Consent application.

Trust for Devizes - support

ASSESSMENT

In accordance with Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, special regard has been given to the significance of the listed building, including its architectural and historic interest, and the desirability of preserving both the building and its setting. Relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, have also been taken into account. These policies require that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset must be clearly justified and weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

In order to be acceptable, the application needs to be assessed against the following criteria:

Information considered/submitted

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.

The application is supported by an overall Heritage Assessment covering the whole of the property and a detailed addendum in respect of the Ladies Arch. Sufficient details have been submitted to allow understanding of the proposals and the justification for the proposed course of action.

Assessment of significance:

According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), significance is defined 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 further categorises significance into four key values:

- *Evidential* – the potential of the asset to yield evidence about past human activity.
- *Historic* – the ways in which the asset illustrates aspects of history.
- *Aesthetic* – the sensory and design qualities of the asset.
- *Communal* – the meanings and associations attached to the asset by people.

In this case the significance of the building lies with the highly decorative design and architecture of the structure itself and the historic interest surrounding its relationship with the historic site and C19 castle and its development.

Impact of proposals on the significance and setting of the building/structure:

Understanding the impact of proposed works on a listed building requires a careful and proportionate assessment of how those changes affect the asset’s heritage significance and its setting. This includes both the physical alterations to the building itself and any changes to its spatial or visual relationship with surrounding structures or spaces.

The significance of a heritage asset is not static; it is shaped by its architectural, historic, and communal values, and by how these are experienced in context. Therefore, any intervention must be considered in light of the asset’s identified significance, with attention given to both potential harm and benefits. Benefits may include repairs that support the long-term conservation of the building, improved energy performance, or enhanced public access and understanding.

This assessment is grounded in the statutory duty under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving the building and its features of special interest. It is also informed by national policy, particularly paragraphs 199–208 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and relevant local heritage policies and guidance.

The proposed works comprise recording prior to the dismantling and rebuilding of the arch. The arch is unstable and leaning significantly which is placing stress on the fabric. All alternative options have been considered by the applicant’s structural engineers including doing nothing, consolidating as found and jacking the arch up, however, the current proposal is considered to be the optimum and only feasible solution taking into account the practicalities of this constrained site at the top of a flight of poorly founded steps. Historic England’s structural engineer visited the site and is in agreement. The proposals will also allow for the structure to be rebuilt without the visually intrusive buttresses which have been added at some point in an attempt to shore the structure up.

The application includes a detailed methodology and there is no need for further details to be conditioned.

Impact on Ecology

While Sections 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 do not explicitly reference protected species, Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to consider potential impacts on protected species when determining applications. This responsibility arises from broader environmental legislation and national planning policy and must be taken into account where relevant.

		Y / N / NA
(a)	Does the site or proposed development possess/impact on any of the features where protected species are likely to be present (assessed against Natural England's standing advice) and where species are likely to be found?	N/A
(b)	If yes, has a protected species survey been submitted?	
(c)	If yes, does the survey show a detailed consideration of ecological impacts, wildlife mitigation and the creation, restoration and enhancement of wildlife corridors to preserve and enhance biodiversity in accordance with the standing advice?	

Comments (if any): not required.

CONCLUSION

The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

In this case, whilst the proposals are extreme, including the dismantling and rebuilding of the structure, they are understood to be the only feasible option taking into account all the circumstances and they will secure the future of the structure in good repair and ensure that their contribution to the character and significance of the overall heritage asset is maintained. Were the works not to be carried out, the structure would continue to be a danger to the users of the site until it failed and was lost. The proposals will therefore result in considerable heritage benefits by virtue of the proposed investment in repair which will help to secure the future/stability of the structure. In addition, there are also public benefits that derive from the removal of the visually intrusive later buttresses which have been added at some point in the C20 in an attempt to shore the structure.

Paragraph 215 allows that a level of harm may be offset by public benefits and in this case the benefits of rebuilding the structure and ensuring its future, and allowing the removal of the unsightly buttresses, significantly outweigh any harm that will result from the proposed works. The proposals therefore meet with the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance and are recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Listed Building Consent be GRANTED, subject to the following conditions:

- Standard time limit
- Plans list