

DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

Removal of existing gas heating/cooling system to be replaced with new electrified heating/cooling system. External works to include new air handling unit, condenser units, air source heat pump and pipework. Internal works to include new fan coil units, radiators, ceiling swirl diffusers, roof void boarding out, lighting and pipework

at

Chippenham Town Hall and Neeld Hall



May 2026

Rev 1

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Statement Parameters:

This Design, Access and Heritage statement has been prepared to accompany an application for planning permission and listed building consent for internal and external alterations connected to the proposed replacement of the existing heating/cooling system with new electrified heating/cooling system within Chippenham Town Hall and the Neeld Hall, which is a Grade II listed building located at the heart of Chippenham Conservation Area. The purposes of this statement are to provide an assessment of the significance of the designated heritage assets and to assess the impacts of the proposals upon the significance of these assets and their setting.

1. Proposal

Existing Heating/Cooling System

- 1.1 The Town Hall is currently heated using a gas fired warm air system. There is an air handling unit at roof level which has a direct fired gas heat exchanger distributing warm air to ceiling mounted diffusers in the council chamber. Return passes through extract grilles in the ceiling and is ducted back to the enclosure housing the air handling unit. There are motorised dampers to allow the system to operate in recirculation mode or introduce fresh air for ventilation. Currently the system is not operational as it has ceased functioning. Instead of repairing it, it has been decided to use temporary electric heaters in the Hall.
- 1.2 Cooling to the council chamber is provided using three large fan coil units located in the roof void of the Town Hall. They are ducted to supply grilles in the ceiling of the chamber, and return air is ducted from another grille to the fan coil units. They operate independently of the heating/ventilation system. Air distribution to the room is via a number of existing ceiling penetrations incorporated into the ceiling roses.
- 1.3 The existing heating/cooling system in The Neeld relies on a gas fired Low Temperature Hot Water (LTHW) system which serves radiators in the Neeld Hall, some adjacent stores and the WCs/kitchen. The zone serving the WCs/kitchen is currently not operational due to issues with valves. Two boilers are located within a boiler room at second floor level within the Cheese Hall, one of which requires repair. There is a feed and expansion tank located in the loft above pressurising the system. There is a constant temperature circuit serving all radiators, and a variable temperature circuit serving underfloor heating in the Foyer. The underfloor heating system was decommissioned as part of the recent Neeld Foyer

refurbishment and pump turned off as it is redundant. A record drawing on the plant room wall indicates that the system dates from 1996. It was also designed for a future phase, and for heating the first and second floors of the Cheese Hall (currently not heated with any radiators).

Rationale for Replacement Electrified Heating/Cooling System

- 1.4 As explained above, the current gas-powered heating/cooling system is not energy efficient and does not function properly. Its replacement is therefore required to maintain comfort levels for building users and visitors.
- 1.5 In 2019 the Town Council declared a climate emergency, publicly committing to becoming a net zero organisation by 2030 and maintaining net zero thereafter. In assessing options for a replacement heating/cooling system the Town Council have opted for an electrified system which is more energy efficient and results in much lower carbon emissions than traditional gas fired heating systems.
- 1.6 E3 Consulting Engineers were appointed by the Town Council to carry out a feasibility study into options for decarbonising the heating systems for the Town Hall and the Neeld.
- 1.7 Alternative options put forward by E3 for the Town Hall were:
 - a) direct electrical heating via high level radiant panels - discounted due to being visually intrusive, affecting the significance of the listed building's architecture, given the panels would need to hang from the ceiling/be wall mounted. This option would also have provided poor thermal comfort and had high energy consumption during use
 - b) direct electrical heating via low level electric panels - discounted due to being visually intrusive, affecting the significance of the listed building's architecture, given the panels would need to be mounted on the timber panelling around the room and would require wiring to be installed around the room on top of/behind the timber panelling. This option would have higher energy costs than the radiant panels option.
 - c) an air-to-air heat pump utilising an air handling unit - discounted because it would have required a larger air handling unit to be installed on the Town Hall roof

- d) an air-to-water heat pump with radiators and an air handling unit with heating/chilled water coils - discounted because it would be significantly more complex than the chosen option with increased maintenance requirements

1.8 Alternative options put forward for the Neeld were:

- a) additional low level fan coil units - discounted due to concerns over noise levels during performances and also does not provide a solution for the toilets
- b) additional electric boilers - discounted due to significant long-term running costs and the likelihood that incoming electrical supply would need upgrading to meet the load required

1.9 Given that seating in the Neeld Hall is tiered and retractable to maximise use of the space, it would not have been possible to integrate any new heating element below seating.

1.10 For both spaces, these alternative options were reviewed and discounted for the reasons given above. The proposed systems were chosen because they resulted in least visual impact, least impact on the fabric of the listed building, and were most suitable and feasible from an energy efficiency/mechanical perspective.

General Description of Proposed Heating/Cooling System

1.11 In the Town Hall, a new multi-split system is proposed to be installed which will provide both heating and cooling. Ducted fan coil units are to be located within the roof void. New outdoor units are to be located on the roof.

1.12 Air distribution is to be via swirl diffusers incorporated into the existing ceiling penetrations in the council chamber. Swirl diffusers are to have thermal actuators to direct air downwards in heating mode, and in a swirl pattern in cooling mode.

1.13 The fan coil unit system serving the bar would also be replaced, including all pipework and the external condensing unit.

1.14 The gas supply would be decommissioned and all pipework removed.

1.15 In terms of mechanical ventilation, a new air handling unit is proposed to be installed on the Town Hall roof and would provide supply and extract ventilation with heat recovery. Supply to the council chamber would be via swirl diffusers incorporated into the existing ceiling penetrations. Extract is to be via a plenum duct, combined with the return air circulation for the fan coil units. The existing air handling unit is to be disconnected and removed.

- 1.16 In The Neeld, a low-pressure hot water (LPHW) heating system is proposed to be installed to serve radiators throughout the Hall, WCs, kitchen and associated circulation - all the areas currently served by the boilers.
- 1.17 A low-temperature ASHP system is proposed to be provided in the bar courtyard, with a single unit serving an internal buffer vessel located in the Cheese Hall plantroom. The existing feed and expansion tank system is to be decommissioned and removed, and a new pressurisation unit and expansion vessel to be installed. As a baseline, existing pipework between the plantroom and the radiators is to be retained. The pipes are believed to be sufficient for the new system. All radiators are to be replaced with larger radiators due to the lower system temperature proposed for the heat pump system.
- 1.18 There are no proposals to install a mechanical ventilation system to serve the Neeld Hall.

Specific Works Proposed

- 1.19 The proposal is best understood by setting out the proposed works as they relate to the different areas of the building:

Town Hall Rooftop

- Removal of structure (and equipment inside) accommodating the old gas exchange to facilitate the siting of a new air handling unit in this location. Please refer to Drawing No. CTH-E3CE-TH-R0-D-M-9010 Rev T04 for further details. Structure to be removed is shown in Photograph 1



Photograph 1

- New air handling unit (AHU) including 400mm diameter pipework connecting into the roof void via existing apertures. Includes two attenuators. The AHU would measure 2.29m x 1.09 x 1.02m. It would have a steel finish. Please refer to Drawing No. SK11.
- Removal of existing condenser units and replacement with 2 no. new condensing units. Condenser Unit 1 (CU1) would measure 1.1m x 0.46m x 0.87m. Condenser Unit 2 (CU2) would measure 0.87m x 0.55m x 0.34m. Please refer to Drawing No. CTH-E3CE-TH-R0-D-M-9010 Rev T04.
- New permanent non-penetrative metal guardrail system which is weighted. This would run around the perimeter of the roof, set back from the roof edge by 0.5m and allowing any works to be safely carried out within the proximity. The non-penetrative system avoids any fixing concerns and has a height of 1.1m. Please refer to Drawing Nos. CTH-E3CE-TH-R0-D-M-9010 Rev T04, Weighted System for Lead Roofs 1 and Weighted System for Lead Roofs 2.

Town Hall Roof Void

- Stripping out of redundant pipework and ductwork as shown in Photograph 2



Photograph 2

- Installation of 3no. fan coil units and associated ductwork and pipework. Each fan coil unit would measure 0.9m x 0.7m x 0.25m. Please refer to Drawing No. CTH-E3CE-TH-R0-D-M-9010 Rev T04 for further details.
- New walkway access to be installed, aligned with existing loft hatch and to enable safe maintenance of new equipment. Walkway to be built off existing ceiling joists using timber spreaders with a ply/OSB/chipboard deck. Includes

access steps to avoid principal trusses. 0.9m high timber balustrades (including handrail) to be installed on either side of the walkway. Please refer to Drawing Nos. S30 Rev B, S02 Rev E and CTH-E3CE-TH-R0-D-M-9010 Rev T04 for further details.

- New lighting. Please refer to Drawing No CTH-E3CE-TH-R0-D-E-9010 Rev T03 for further details.

Town Hall Ceiling

- 9no. existing ceiling air extract/intake apertures within ceiling roses to be fitted with 400mm diameter swirl diffusers. The diffusers would be finished in black. Please refer to Drawing No. 4887 SK03 Rev 2.
- 2no. existing smoke detectors within central row of ceiling roses to be removed and replaced with a motorised reflective optical beam smoke detector and reflector with low level control. Please refer to Drawing No CTH-E3CE-TH-01-D-E-9010 Rev T03 for further details.
- 2no. luminaires within ceiling roses (central ceiling rose on west and east sides of the Hall respectively) to be removed and not replaced. Please refer to Drawing No CTH-E3CE-TH-01-D-E-9010 Rev T03 for further details.

Please refer to Photographs 3-5 showing existing luminaires and perforated grilles in ceiling rose apertures.



Photographs 3-5

- Room temperature sensor to be fitted on wall adjacent to cupboard in north-west corner of Hall and room temperature sensors and new controllers to be fitted on walls within bar/kitchen. 2 no. beam detector transmitters (to be located at high level on the wall). Please refer to Drawing No. CTH-E3CE-TH-01-D-E-9010 Rev T03 for further details.
- Replacement of 2no. existing fan coil units in bar with new units in the same position, each measuring 0.79m x 0.7m x 0.2m as shown on Drawing No. CTH-E3CE-TH-01-D-M-9010 Rev T03.

Cheese Hall Second Floor

- Existing boilers and decommissioned water heater to be stripped out in boiler room, including feed and expansion tank and associated pipework in loft above. See Photograph 6



Photograph 6

- Two pumps and a pressurisation unit (measuring 0.75m x 0.75m x 1.71m) to be installed within boiler room as shown on Drawing No. TH-E3CE-NH-02-D-M-9010 Rev T03.

Neeld Hall Courtyard

- Installation of new air source heat pump (ASHP) measuring 1.75m in length, 0.74m in width and 1.71m in height. To be sited on a concrete slab. Exhaust to be ducted to eaves level from the top of the ASHP. Further details are shown on Drawing No. SK10 Rev P05.
- Removal of existing fence across courtyard and erection of new 1.8m high timber fencing (with gate) to create extended compound. Further details are shown on Drawing No. SK10 Rev P05. Existing fence shown in Photograph 7 to be removed and new fencing to be positioned further forward at mid-point of curved wall (right).



Photograph 7

- New pipework to be installed from AHSP around perimeter of courtyard at mid-level and new aperture created in wall to feed pipework through to Neeld Foyer Bar as shown on Drawing No. SK10 Rev P05.

Neeld Hall

- Installation of 19no. new wall mounted, steel radiators, painted white to replace existing radiators in situ. 15no. to be located in Neeld Hall and 4no. to be located in toilets, kitchen and corridor respectively. The proposed radiators would be Hudevad, types T33, T22 and T33V. Please refer to Drawing No. SK13 Rev T04 for further details on the location and dimensions of individual radiators. Existing radiators and radiator covers in Neeld Hall to be removed are shown in Photographs 8-10.



Photographs 8 & 9

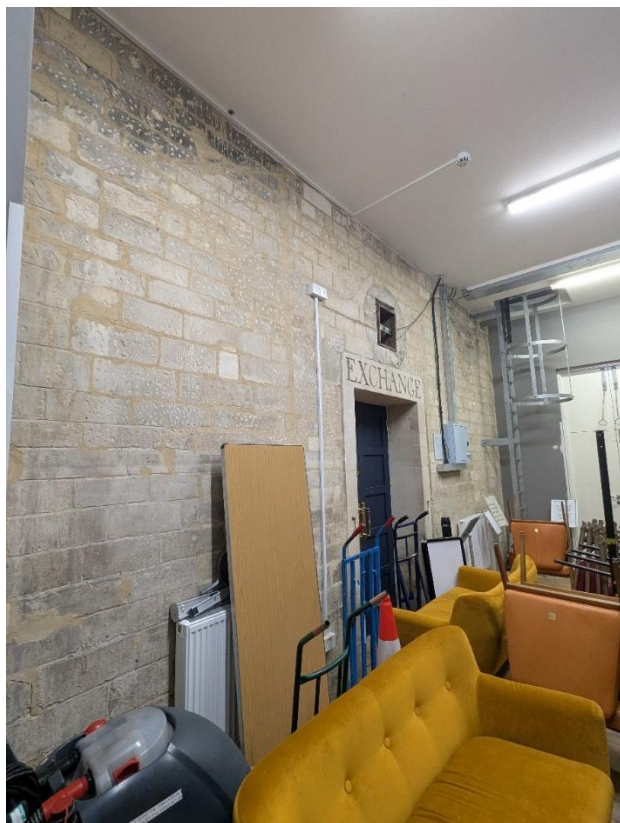


Photograph 10

- New pipework to be installed at high level running from Neeld Foyer Bar through to Cheese Hall. Pipework would enter from the Neeld Foyer Bar in the boxed in corner of the stone wall shown in Photograph 11 and would continue, following the line of existing pipework along the floor of the mezzanine tech. room into the Cheese Hall. Pipework would not be visible from within the Neeld Hall (as shown in Photographs 11 and 12) unless sitting/standing within the mezzanine tech. room. For further details please refer to Drawing Nos. CTH-E3CE-NH-00-D-M-9010 rev T04 and CTH-E3CE-NH-01-D-M-9010 Rev T02.



Photograph 11



Photograph 12

2. Description of Heritage Assets & Setting

- 2.1 The Town Hall was erected in 1834, to the neoclassical design of J. Thompson at the expense of Joseph Neeld MP upon Chippenham's status as a municipal borough in 1835. The building was extended to the rear in 1850 to provide a Cheese Market, with the small extension to the south forming a Corn Exchange. Plans from 1876-1877 (Figure 1) show the Cheese Market and Market Yard, with proposals for enlargement of the facilities.

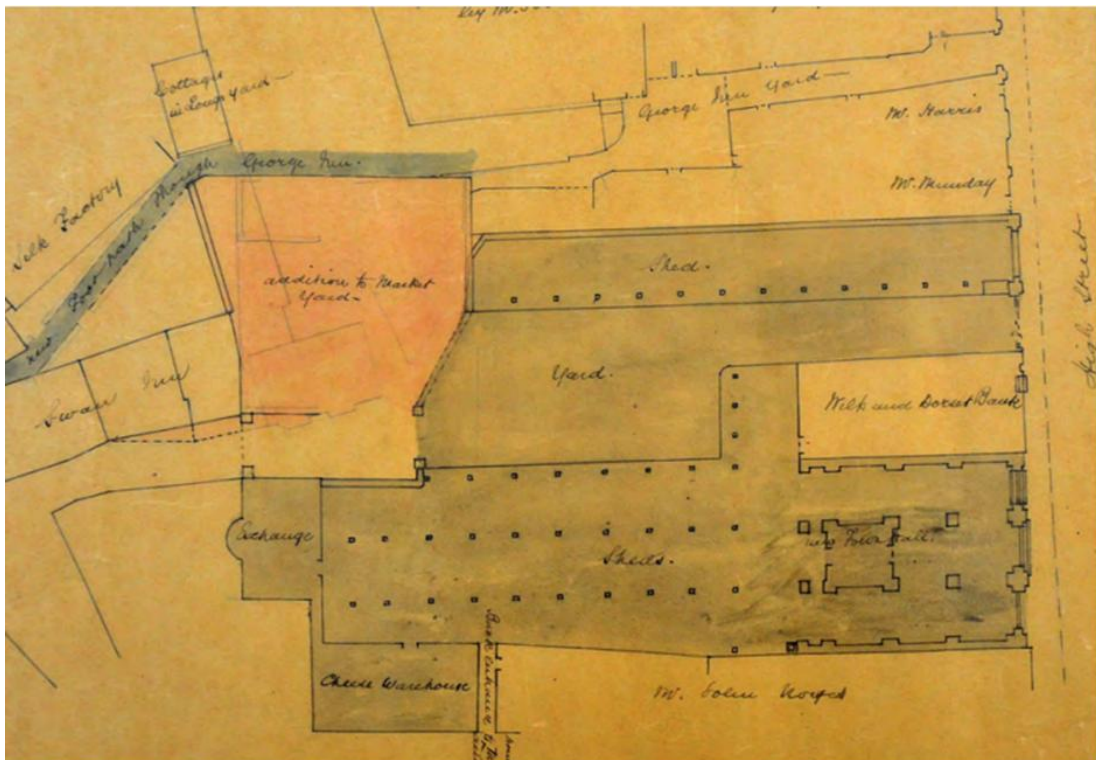


Figure 1: The Town Hall with its largely open vaulted ground floor and the sheds housing the market to the rear. The area in pink is the 1870's extension. The corn exchange with its apsidal end wall is on the left, as is the two storey Cheese Hall.

- 2.2 The Cheese Market was in decline by the end of the 19th century and closed in 1910. During WWI it was converted, along with the Town Hall, for use as a military hospital. The market building structure was substantially altered in the early 1920s to form the Neeld Hall as seen in Figure 2.

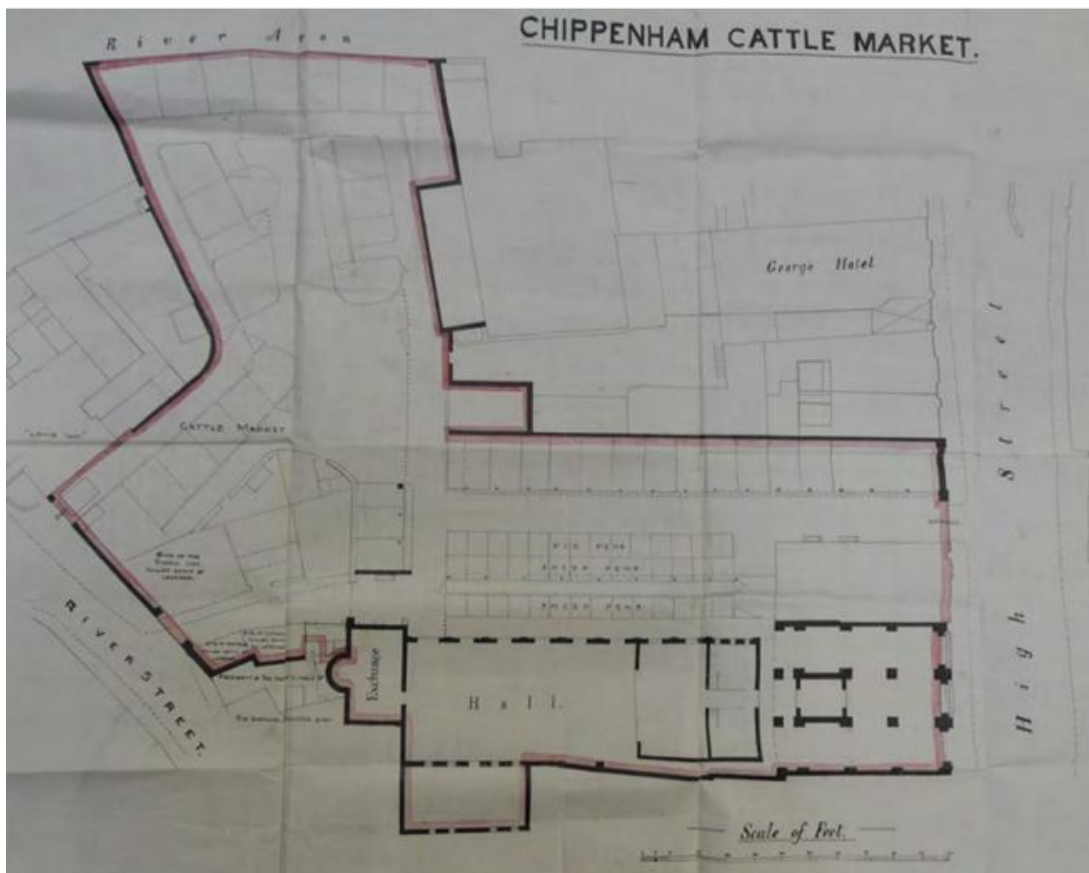


Figure 2: The plan attached to the 1924 lease, showing the alterations to the Neeld Hall

- 2.3 This initial conversion of the early 1920's retained the corridors within the newly formed Neeld Hall as open passages, with a door leading from the west passage into the main hall. The rest of the open market was subsequently enclosed, with a flat roof supported on concrete beams as part of works in the 1950's.
- 2.4 The Town Hall and Neeld Hall have both been the subject of further alterations throughout the 20th and 21st Centuries, to sustain their use as a multi-purpose public building and Town Council staff offices, most notably:
- A flat roofed extension infilling the yard to the rear of No 6 High Street and the south-west range previously forming part of No. 8 (Baby Boots)
 - Alterations to the ground floor of the Town Hall as part of works to improve disabled access and formation of a separate retail unit (now the Pasty Cove) in the front part of the east bay
 - 1990s conservatory-style extension to the southern end of the Neeld Hall, which accommodated an independently run café up until 2018, and the 'Meeting Place' multi-use space thereafter
 - In 2015 the ground floor interior of the Town Hall was altered further to a more flexible open-plan arrangement and a retractable tiered seating system

and chair store was installed in the Neeld Hall along with new stage and hall lighting and an upgraded sound system

- In 2023 the refurbishment of the 1990s 'Meeting Place' removed the conservatory-style glazing, replacing it with solid roof/wall, and re-purposed the space to become the Neeld Foyer and new main entrance to the Neeld Hall. A seating area formed in the Neeld courtyard

2.5 Whilst the date of installation of the current heating/cooling system in the building is unknown, it is a modern intervention. It is known that air conditioning was installed to the Town Hall bar and function rooms (which immediately adjoin the main hall) in 2002 under Listed building Consent N/02/01875/LBC. Existing wall mounted interior condenser units and interior extract fans in the Neeld Hall, and condenser units located externally in the Neeld courtyard, were installed under Planning Permission 15/07159/FUL as part of the 2015 refurbishment works in the Neeld Hall.

2.6 The listing entry for the Town Hall and Neeld Hall is:

ST9273SW HIGH STREET 930-1/10/55 (South side) 25/04/50 New Town Hall and Neeld Hall

GV II

Town hall. 1848 by J Thompson at the expense of Joseph Neeld, MP. Limestone ashlar front, rubblestone right return, slate roof with stacks to rear. PLAN: double-depth plan with market hall to the rear. EXTERIOR: 2 storeys; 4-bay front. The 3 bays to the left are symmetrical, the bay to the right is stepped forward and is 3 storeys, (described later). Simple cornice and blocking course with plain bands below, and at 1st-floor sill level. Semicircular arches to each light of 3-light small-paned sash windows with off-set sills over wide semicircular arches to a loggia. Plain pilasters on plinths flank the facade; those to the central bay, which is stepped forward, rise above to blocking course to support a parapet and elaborate carved Neeld Arms. Below the cornice a panel states, "The Corporation of Chippenham erected the Arms of Joseph Neeld Esq, the founder of this Hall and Market Place in acknowledgement of his private munificence 1851". The bay to the right, probably earlier, has a balustraded parapet and moulded cornice; a 2-light sash window in a raised mullioned surround to the 2nd floor; platband; a full-height tripartite window under a cornice on consoles; sill band over a tripartite plate-glass sash window with a cornice and a blocked doorway to the right with a shallow hood on brackets. The right return has various C19 sash windows in C19 surrounds and door in plain ashlar surrounds. INTERIOR: the loggia has a stone vaulted ceiling. A fine facade, the plain, heavy pilasters contributing to a rather severe Classical style. Thompson was employed by Neeld on other projects, including Grittleton House, Grittleton CP.

- 2.7 The Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (HER) has been checked and there are no known archaeological sites, monuments and finds related to the site itself.

3. Relevant Policies

National Policy and Guidance:

- 3.1 Under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 there is a requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Under Section 72 of the Act there is also a requirement to pay special attention to the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the surrounding Conservation Area.
- 3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning approach to the historic environment at Chapter 16. Paragraphs 212-213 require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 Paragraph 215 requires that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 3.5 Paragraph 164 states:

'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings...'

- 3.6 Historic England advice and technical guidance of relevance to this application is:
- Installing Heat Pumps in Historic Buildings (technical guidance)
 - Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency - Historic England Advice Note 18 (2024)

Development Plan Policies:

- 3.7 Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 (Ensuring high quality design and place shaping) requires a high standard of design 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.

- 3.8 Wiltshire 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.'*
- 3.9 Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan Policy TC4 (Development in Chippenham Conservation Area) requires that full regard be given to the relevant character area analysis in the Chippenham Conservation Area Character Appraisal (as updated 2024), and that development within the Conservation Area will be permitted where it preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area amongst other things.

4. Assessment

- 4.1 This Section discusses the impact of the proposal on the significance of the listed buildings and its conformity with the guidance and policies described earlier in Section 3.

Significance

- 4.2 Of the two Grade II listed buildings, the Town Hall is considered to have greatest significance because of the overall quality of its architecture, particularly the front elevation. Seen within the context of the neighbouring properties, this makes a particularly valuable contribution to the streetscene and the character of this part of the Conservation Area.
- 4.3 Internally, the room with most architectural and historic significance is the council chamber, the size and grandeur of the space, with its double height, and architectural detailing reflecting its civic and municipal importance as the seat of local government. The ceiling roses and three chandeliers currently hanging from the ceiling, which are not original, make a positive contribution to architectural significance. Also of historic significance, the building was converted into an auxiliary war hospital for wounded soldiers operated by the local Voluntary Aid Detachment during the First World War as can be seen in Photograph 13 below



Photograph 13 - Council chamber used as a hospital during the First World War

- 4.4 It is accepted that some minor harm to the significance of the Town Hall has resulted from the previous enclosure of ground floor spaces and external alterations to improve disabled access into the building. The significance of the rear elevations is low because they are largely concealed from public view.
- 4.5 The roof construction, internal partitions and most of the east wall of the Neeld Hall all date from the early 1920's and although well detailed architecturally, this building has less significance than the Town Hall; and being largely concealed from view it makes a very small contribution to the significance of this part of the Conservation Area.
- 4.6 Culturally the Neeld Hall has significance because of its municipal role, its historic focus for the agricultural market throughout much of the 19th century, and particularly as the principal market for the sale of locally produced cheese. Although the cheese was not considered to be of the highest quality, its commercial success increased in the 19th century after the railway improved Chippenham's connections to more distant markets. The early 20th century adaptation of the Neeld Hall to provide a much-valued leisure facility within the centre of the town continues and sustains this cultural value to the community. In the 1960s, the Neeld Hall was regularly used as an events venue: performers hosting concerts included rock bands The Kinks in 1964 and The Who in 1965.

Impact of Town Hall Rooftop Works on Significance

- 4.7 The proposed removal of the existing rooftop structure accommodating the old gas exchange would have a minor positive impact on the architectural significance of the building, this being a modern structure which currently obscures views of the original roof fabric when stood on the roof. However, this positive impact would be balanced out by the proposed installation of a new AHU and guardrail system in this location. Photographs 14-17 demonstrate that the existing rooftop structure and the location for replacement AHU and guardrail system would be concealed from any surrounding public viewpoints either by the building itself or other buildings. Notwithstanding, the proposed AHU and guardrail system would be finished in grey to match the leadwork of the existing flat roof.



Photograph 14 - View from Borough Parade. Location of existing rooftop structure/proposed AHU/proposed guardrail system (indicated by blue arrow) hidden behind existing gable of Borough Parade unit (highlighted yellow)



Photograph 15 - View from Borough Parade Car Park. Existing rooftop structure/location of proposed AHU/proposed guardrail system indicated by blue arrow demonstrating it is not/would not be visible. Note a small existing chimney is visible, below which currently sits the existing rooftop structure



Photograph 16 - View from northern end of High St. Location of existing rooftop structure/proposed AHU/proposed guardrail system indicated by blue arrow, demonstrating that it is/would be hidden by Town Hall gable



Photograph 17 - Similar view to Photograph 16 but taken from longer distance on Town Bridge. Demonstrates that the existing rooftop structure/proposed AHU/proposed guardrail system is/would still be hidden from view

- 4.8 The proposed AHU pipework, connecting into the roof void, would use the existing pipework apertures and no new apertures would be created in the building fabric. The removal of existing condenser units and replacement with new condenser units would, again, not be visible from any public vantage points.
- 4.9 Given the proposed rooftop works would not result in the loss of any historic fabric or adversely affect the setting of the listed building there would be a neutral impact on the significance of the listed building. The proposed rooftop works would not be visible from public viewpoints and would therefore have a neutral impact on the significance of Chippenham Conservation Area.

Impact of Town Hall Roof Void Works on Significance

- 4.10 The removal of existing equipment and replacement with the proposed fan coil units and walkway for maintenance within the roof void of the Town Hall would not result in the loss of any historic fabric. The roof void is not publicly or easily accessible and would remain that way. The impact of the proposed roof void works on the significance of the listed building would therefore be neutral.

Impact of Town Hall Ceiling Works on Significance

- 4.11 As discussed previously, the ceiling in the council chamber makes a positive contribution to the significance of the listed building through its ceiling roses and chandeliers.
- 4.12 The above features would remain unaffected but the removal of ceiling grilles and installation of proposed ceiling diffusers may result in some harm to the significance of the listed building in terms of being more visible when active and moving. However, swirl diffusers would be finished in black to blend in with the dark background of the aperture. Overall these works are considered to result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed Town Hall, because the public benefits of having an energy efficient heating/cooling system and increased comfort for the building's users and visitors would outweigh any harm.

Impact of Cheese Hall Works on Significance

- 4.13 Given that the proposed works in the Cheese Hall would be confined to the replacement of existing boilers and water heaters with new pumps and pressurisation unit in the second-floor boiler room, the impact on the significance of the listed building would be neutral.

Impact of Neeld Courtyard Works on Significance

- 4.14 In relation to proposed heating systems and pumps in historic buildings, Paragraph 94 of Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency - Historic England Advice Note 18 (2024) advises:

Changing boilers, heating and hot water systems to low carbon alternatives, such as heat pumps, will generally be acceptable

- *Having an effective low carbon heating system is one of the best ways of enhancing an historic building's energy efficiency. In the majority of cases, replacement of existing systems will not cause harm to special interest. There may be very rare exceptions where the existing heating system, or components of it, has architectural or historic significance (for example, original cast-iron radiators) and remains functional.*
 - *The impact of heat pumps can generally be minimised through careful siting, design and screening. Routing pipework may damage historic fabric, with additional archaeological considerations in some sites.*
 - *The opportunity should be taken to remove unsightly plant equipment made redundant by the heat pump, for instance oil tanks. This can sometimes offset any harmful impact of installing a pump.*
- 4.15 In the context of the current guidance from Historic England quoted above, the proposed new air source heat pump would comply with guidance in terms of being located in an external area with low public visibility, where existing plant/machinery is already sited, and would be screened by timber fencing.

- 4.16 There would be ‘less than substantial harm’ on the significance of the listed building as a result of a greater proportion of the courtyard being used to accommodate the new ASHP and the resulting dissection of this external space and repositioning of a timber fence (running out from the mid-point of the apsidal wall of the Corn Exchange thereby obscuring this attractive feature). However, such harm would be outweighed by the public benefits of having an energy efficient heating/cooling system and increasing comfort for the building’s users and visitors ensuring the continued viability of the building.
- 4.17 The proposed works in the Neeld courtyard would have a negligible impact on the character and appearance of Chippenham Conservation Area, the courtyard being hidden from any public vantage points.

Impact of Neeld Hall Works on Significance

- 4.18 New pipework would follow the line of existing pipework and use existing openings within the building fabric. New pipework would not be visible within the main Neeld Hall. Existing modern radiators would be replaced with marginally taller radiators in similar locations and with the same white colour finish as existing. These works are considered not to result in any harm to the significance of the Neeld Hall.

Conclusion

- 4.19 In conclusion, the proposals are considered to preserve the special interest of the listed building, its appearance and setting, with any harm to its significance being ‘less than substantial’ and outweighed by the public benefits of securing a more energy efficient building, increasing comfort for building users, and securing the continued long term viability of the building, and that of Chippenham Conservation Area, in accordance with the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, development plan policies CP57 and CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, TC4 of the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan and advice from Historic England.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Wiltshire Council's Conservation Officer visited the site to offer pre-application advice in connection with the proposal in August 2025. Whilst he did not raise any concerns with the initial proposals, he requested that the rationale for the new heating/cooling system, including chosen options, be fully explained and justified.

6. Access

- 6.1 The proposed development would not result in any changes in public access to the Town Hall or Neeld Hall.