

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

26 May 2026

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Application No: PL/2025/09476 & PL/2026/03078
Conversion and extension of outbuildings to form annex with hobbies workshop and sewing room.
69 High Street, West Lavington, Devizes, SN10 4JB

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

☐	No comment
☐	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
☐	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
☒	Object (for reasons set out below)
☐	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

These are additional comments following revised/ additional information and should be read in conjunction with the original comments. Whilst I did not comment on the proposals initially, the Conservation Officer who did no longer works for the Council, so I have taken the case on, and been involved in conversations with the case officer.

National Policy and guidance: 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. Sections 16 (LBC) and 66 (PP) require that **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.

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 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 214-16 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.

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for PP and LBC.

Historic England’s “Conservation Principles” provides policy and guidance for the “sustainable management of the historic environment”. Additional guidance is also contained within their publications:

- **Historic Environment Good Practice Planning Advice Note 2 – Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015)**
- **Historic Environment Good Practice Planning Advice Note 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd edition)**

The following points are taken from the Historic England document “The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3” (HE GPA3) that are considered to be particularly relevant:

HE GPA3 Part 1:

“The NPPF makes it clear that the setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset.”

“The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. ...views of or from an asset will play an important part...”

“While setting can be mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, it cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area or as lying within a set distance of a heritage asset. This is because the surroundings of a heritage asset will change over time.”

“The importance lies in what the setting contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance.”

Historic England Advice Note 18 – Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency provides specific advice relevant to development of this nature.

Local Policy: The 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.” It is also required that distinctive elements of Wiltshire’s historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced.

The Council’s Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. Proposals are required to “demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through (amongst other things) “enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development” and “responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.”

Proposal: Conversion and extension of outbuildings to form annex with hobbies workshop and sewing room.

Relevant planning history: None.

Issues: impact on the listed buildings, impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings, impact on the conservation area.

Information considered/provided: 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.

In this case, the initial application did not include a Heritage Statement, which has subsequently been provided. The Heritage Statement provides a summary of significance of each designated heritage asset, a limited assessment of the long building (to be converted and extended to form the annexe, called Building 1 under the Structural Engineers Report). This building has been recognised as curtilage listed within the Heritage Statement. No description of the 'garage' (Building 2 under the Structural Engineers Report) has been provided as this was not considered to be curtilage listed but a modern building. However, the information provided within the Structural Engineers Report and the historic maps would indicate that this structure is also curtilage listed.

The Heritage Statement acknowledges that there have been changes to Building 1 but the 'proposals retain the principal structural envelope, overall linear plan form and roof profile of the building, thereby preserving the primary elements through which its historic and architectural significance is understood' (para.6.5). As this is a curtilage listed building, any works should consider the significance of the asset which includes its fabric, form, function and relationship with the host dwelling, rather than just the principle structural envelope. The Heritage Statement continues to advise (and clarified again within 6.29) that the proposals would 'adapt the building within its existing footprint, avoiding significant extension or rebuilding of the historic range', whereas the proposed scheme is looking for extensions and significant alterations to both buildings, including replacement of external fabric.

Whilst the Heritage Statement complies with the requirements of the NPPF, 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.

Please note that this is a reconsult, and these comments are additional to the previous comments and relate to the additional information provided. The previous recommendation was for refusal, and this recommendation has not changed following the amended design and additional information provided.

Significance of assets and contribution of setting: The NPPF defines significance 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 assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place. The interest may be architectural, or historic as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 S 1.

Relationship of the buildings

Much of the village was rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1689, though there were a few survivors, including the Old Manor (c.1505-36), which has been it has been modernised during its life and West Lavington Manor, constructed in the C16 though believed to have an older core.

The Manor House was the major building within the village, with the Home Farm (which the site forms part of) being the farm that produced the food to support the manor house and the staff who worked there. Home farms were often higher quality or exemplar due to their close relationship with the manor house. In this situation it appears that Home Farm was of good but not exceptional quality. As this is a village location, many of the working buildings were placed behind more attractive dwellings that front the High Street.

Village farmsteads were a common feature within Wiltshire, but as farming practices altered, many were relocated outside of the settlement boundaries, therefore remaining farm buildings in village are of significance.

Farm buildings

The proposed site is to the rear of No. 69 but can clearly be seen from the street scene through the historic opening which would have allowed carts and carriages access from the main road (High Street) to the working yards at the rear. This was important as part of the working functions of the site and contributes to the significance of the buildings.

Home farmhouse, the associated Granary, 63 & 65, 69 (all Grade II listed) and Hooks Court form a complex that supported the running and functions of West Lavington Manor. Part of the complex includes the mix of boundary walls, and some of these are deemed as curtilage listed as they part of the pre-1948 development.

The buildings are now under separate ownership and have been subject in recent years to conversion to residential uses, they can still be understood and read as a group of buildings.

Building 1-

The building is single storey, masonry-built structure with a mix of double door openings and window types (metal framed, casement and fixed pane) & sizes which respond to the changes of use, ad-hoc repairs, maintenance and requirements, each adding to the layers of change, rather than a wholesale replacement or renewal. To the north-west end there are three open bays to allow for the storage of carts, etc. The main building is divided into three spaces. Part of the floor is concrete, and part remains of compacted stone and earth, which is likely to be the original floor finish when the structures were formed.

As this was a working building, there was little consideration of appearance when undertaking the changes and this contributes to the significance of these buildings.

Building 2-

The small building, referred to as the Garage in the Heritage Statement (Building 2 in Engineers Report) is partially formed with the boundary walls (considered to be curtilage listed) and lined internally with concrete block work. The south elevation is constructed with timber posts, with possible staddle stones with infill horizontal timber cladding to the timber frames. The roof construction is similar to the Building 1, indicating that it is of a similar age. The floor is a concrete finish.

The Engineers report notes the timber frame construction but provides no details of the age, however, the report provides photographs which indicate that the central supporting post is of some age with later smaller intermittent supports. Whilst it appears that this structure is more ad-hoc and has had some changes and repairs, there appears to be sufficient fabric and evidence to consider this building as of some significance.

Summary-

The buildings are small, subservient and clearly working and not domestic spaces, with the ad-hoc openings and double doors, the materials used, and the simple linear form. They contrast with the more Polite and regular fenestration patterns of the domestic dwellings which line the High Street. The outbuildings can clearly be seen from the road through the historic cart opening, contributing to the character of the conservation area.

The historic mapping and the construction techniques would suggest that these are similar age buildings, and when the Calderdale test is applied, both are considered curtilage listed. This means that they have statutory protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at the same grade as the main building, which is Grade II listed.

Assessment: The submitted information was submitted for a planning application. It was noted that as these were curtilage listed, then a LBC application should be submitted. This has now been validated but contains the same information as the planning application. As previously noted, there is limited information submitted within this planning application and a full impact assessment on the significance of these listed buildings will be difficult to undertake.

The linear development of the village means that the domestic dwellings were placed on the roadside, with ancillary buildings beyond. The proposed scheme looks to create an annexe in the form of a self-contained 2No. bedroom (with ensembles) dwelling in Building 1, with a separate Hobbies Workshop and Sewing Room in Building 2. This introduces a dwelling to the rear of the property, which has the potential to alter the appearance of the former buildings, and introduce domestic clutter and paraphernalia. This has the potential to cause harm to the significance of the listed buildings, the setting of the host building and to the character of the conservation area if undertaken without care and consideration. As an annexe, it should have a dependency link with the main house, and therefore there is a potential to minimise the domestic appearance and clutter.

Building 1

To create the required internal space to create a 2-bedroom annexe, it is proposed to create an extension to Building 1 to form an 'L' shaped building. This changes the linear form of the building, and while the proposed extension is similar in form, it is not considered subservient to the original structure and loses the linear appearance. A smaller, subservient extension may be acceptable if additional space is required to form the annexe, but any extension should respect the significance of the building, relationship with the other buildings and its setting. The principle of the large extension is not supported on heritage grounds as it is deemed to cause harm to the (curtilage) listed building and boundary wall. No clear and convincing justification has been presented as part of the application, as required under the NPPF.

The new extension will form the bulk of the living space, with 3 pairs of French doors facing out towards the cart opening of the main house. The scale and form of the French doors are not a traditional form within smaller agricultural structures. The extent of the proposed glazing will allow direct views into the annexes kitchen and living space, heightening the domestic appearance of this agricultural building. Whilst this could be amended in a redesign, as previously advised, the proposed extension is not supported.

The proposed design looks to remove all the fabric to the front elevation and create a new front elevation with regular windows openings. This is considered to result in a loss of historic (and modern) fabric and creates a very domestic appearance building. The existing open cart shed will partially be infilled and part covered by the proposed large extension to create a large living/ kitchen space. The ad-hoc appearance created from the gradual changes and evolution will be removed. The current lack of uniformity forms part of the significance of the buildings and contributes to the character of the conservation area, albeit in passing.

The Heritage Statement notes that the works will ensure the long-term protection of the building but has offered no further evidence or guidance why the existing fabric or form will be lost. The total loss of the existing external elevation, including the existing windows is considered to be harmful to the designated heritage asset, and it has not been clearly and convincingly justified (as required under the NPPF para. 213) why this harm is acceptable. Whilst some loss could be balanced with heritage benefit of a longer-term use, this building is currently being used as a Hobbies Workshop and Sewing Room, which is proposed to be relocated into an enlarged Building 2. Even if the building was not being used, the level of harm is not considered to be offset by the heritage benefit.

Some consideration has been undertaken with the proposed materials as these respond to vernacular materials. As the existing structure is predominantly brick, it is unclear why weatherboarding is proposed to clad the building.

To create a domestic interior, it is proposed to sub-divide the space to create 2 No. bedrooms, with ensembles, a utility room with WC and a large kitchen/ dining area. No information has been provided on the existing finishes or sub-division, though it is likely that the interior of the space has altered over its lifetime to suit the changing needs and uses. No details have been provided on how the partitions will be formed or connected to the historic fabric, which would be part of a LBC application. The principle of sub-division is acceptable; however, this should be limited to ensure minimal intervention into the structure and allow the significance of the building to be retained or enhanced.

Summary - The proposed extension is not considered to be in keeping with the linear structure and introduces built form within the former courtyard. Whilst some additions could be considered, they would need to protect or enhance the significance of the curtilage listed buildings. The extent of the interventions, including the loss of fabric, and the proposed design is considered to cause harm to the listed building, which under the NPPF terminology would be deemed as the higher end of less than substantial due to the extent of the loss of fabric and change of appearance.

The principle of conversion into an annexe is supported from a heritage consideration, however, the existing footprint and fenestration pattern of the building should be the starting position. This may require a smaller scale annexe, with the required shared facilities/ dependency with the host dwelling. As this is proposed to be an annexe, then a legal agreement should be entered into to ensure dependency with the main house. However, the proposed scheme looks to create a dependant dwelling which would require additional requirements, such as parking and private amenity space which would not be able to be supported within the confines of the site, and would cause additional harm to the designated heritage assets.

Design considerations could include the retention of the large timber doors which could be pinned open with a glazing solution behind, retaining the auxiliary appearance, or glazing the existing cart openings. If additional windows are required, they should be of a more ad-hoc form to respond to the piecemeal changes that have occurred.

Building 2

This structure needs to be comprehensively understood prior to any proposed changes or alterations being proposed. This is a simple, small structure, and could have been a small, domestic granary (due to the saddle stones), or formed on an ad-hoc basis to provide additional storage. From the street scene it is a modest, brick outbuilding.

The proposed scheme looks to almost double the existing footprint of the building, bringing the built form closer to the main house and the street. The proposed elevations will be weatherboarded, with a tripartite window placed in the end gabled elevation. As with Building 1, it introduces a domestic appearance with larger, regular fenestration, altering the external appearance to more domestic proportions.

The weatherboarding will alter the appearance, reverting it from a brick building (dating to possibly the C18/C19) to the appearance of an 'older' structure. No justification has been proposed for the works or the proposed cladding material. As it is prominent from the street scene, it will change the view into the courtyard.

The proposed loss of fabric, the increase of footprint and the change of appearance are considered to cause harm to the listed building, and no clear and convincing justification has been provided. As with Building 1, finding a long-term sustainable use for the building is supported from a heritage perspective.

A careful balance needs to be undertaken to preserve or enhance the listed buildings and their significance and ensuring that the buildings have a long-term sustainable use. Any use should not be at the expense of heritage asset. The NPPF para.215 recognises that harm (less than substantial) could be offset with public benefit, which can include heritage benefit. Whilst it is for the Case Officer to undertake this planning balance, there is no heritage benefit offered within the scheme.

Required Information

As previously advised, both of these buildings are considered curtilage listed. The current applications provides limited information to make a full impact assessment. The submitted Structural Engineers report does provide some guidance on the proposed works, including the insertion of an insulated floor. These elements have the potential to cause further harm (collapse and loss of the structure) if not carefully considered, and once lost, the structures cannot be replaced.

As part of an LBC application, it would be expected that the following details/ information are provided:

- Internal treatment, including thermal up grading, to roof structure and external walls, including any fire protection for the change of use
- Treatment to the floor, especially as this is a combination of concrete slab and compressed earth & stone
- Joinery details of existing & proposed windows and doors (1:1; 1:5 or 1:10)
- Information regarding services, including SVP, heating systems (flues), drainage, etc
- New floor finishes, including any required foundations
- Understand the existing fabric.

Summary & 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.

The principle of conversion to an annexe and auxiliary spaces is acceptable and it is likely to have heritage benefit by maintaining them in a sustainable use. However, the proposed scheme creates a large, independent 2No. bedroom dwelling, with a domestic appearance, that results from the loss of fabric and increase to the footprint to Building 1, and a change of appearance and scale to Building 2. Therefore, the submitted scheme is considered to cause harm to the curtilage listed buildings and boundary walls, the setting of the listed buildings and to the character of the conservation area. The creation of a self-contained dwelling would not be supported as the creation of the private amenity space and parking would add to the development and sub-division of the courtyard, causing harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets.

The proposals could therefore be considered as causing 'less than substantial harm' for the purposes of interpreting the NPPF, but they involve the loss of important historic fabric and a negative impact on significance. Indeed, the wording of the NPPF and the 'special regard' by Sections 16 and 66 of the Act requires that any level harm caused should be taken seriously.

Whilst paragraph 215 allows that a level of harm may be offset by public benefits, which could include conservation benefits, in this case no objective justification has been provided for the works and it has not been demonstrated that the works will result in any public benefit. As a result, the proposals fail to meet with the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance and I therefore recommend refusal.