

APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

OFFICER DELGATED REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/02826
APPLICATION TYPE:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
SITE ADDRESS:	Ramsbury Manor, Ramsbury, Marlborough, SN8 2RG
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Further opening up works (following reference PL/2024/11184) required to remove asbestos and in order to facilitate the specification of the proposed repairs / upgrading to The Manor House.
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

Ramsbury Manor is a Grade I listed building, set within a grade II listed park and garden, with a grade II* lodge and gatehouse entering the site, and a grade II former stable block. The significance of the site as a whole is considerable, relating to its architectural and historical status: the Manor is an exceptionally complete and little altered example of a 17th century country house built in the Queen Anne style, most likely designed by Robert Hooke for Sir William Jones, a prosperous lawyer who successively held the offices of Solicitor-General and Attorney General. The interior retains many 17th and 18th century features, including panelling, plaster ceilings and an overmantel by Grinling Gibbons. Later alterations have had little impact on the overall character and architectural quality of the Manor which stands out as a rare survivor of a great house of its period.

The list description states, for means of identification purposes only, the following:

Great House. 1681-83, probably by Robert Hooke for Sir William Jones, attorney-general. On site of house of the Earl of Pembroke c1560 replacing a palace of the Bishops of Salishury. Brick, with stone dressings. Tiled roof. 2-storey with attics and basement, becoming 3 storey on south. 9 x 6 bays, double pile plan with servants cottages to south forming courtyard enclosed by conservatory of 1775. Centre 3 bays of elevation quoined and projected, having central glazed doors up flight of steps and segmental pediment. Crowning pediment containing arms and festoons. 24-pane sashes with stone architraves and cornices and rich modillion cornice. Roof hipped with 6 flat roofed dormers, 4 to returns. Cupola lighting central well, and panelled stacks. Rear elevation similar, north with 2 central bays with pediment and pair of segmental pedimented doors. Interior: Entrance hall with C17 panelling leads to rear saloon with C18 plaster ceiling and good carved overmantel in style of Grinling Gibbons. Principal stair on north c1800. Secondary stair to south of cross axis has heavy turned balusters and connecting bridge at first floor level. Most other internal features of mid to late C18, including fireplaces and library, and one bedroom with Chinese wallpaper. Conservatory south of courtyard of 5 tall arched windows and full length pediment.

PROPOSAL

Further opening up works (following reference PL/2024/11184) required to remove asbestos and in order to facilitate the specification of the proposed repairs / upgrading to The Manor House.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
PL/2024/11184 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 6/6/2025 – Opening up works required in order to facilitate the specification of the proposed repairs / upgrading to The Manor House.
PL/2024/11186 - Approval of details reserved by a condition Decision - Approve Date: 23/1/2025 – Discharge of condition 5 (Details of any intrusive opening up or investigative works found to be required in order to facilitate the specification of the proposed repairs / upgrading to the Manor House) relating to application PL/2022/04972.

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.

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 – full response on file: *"Historic England supports the need for opening up to safely remove asbestos and allow the upgrade of services in a manner that will reduce the impact on historic fabric. We also recognise that the proposals would facilitate the positive intention to open the house to the public."*

We have some concerns regarding the potential lifting of historic fireplace hearths and removal and reinstatement of historic furniture. As acknowledged in the submitted application documents, this requires further investigation. If found necessary, justification should be provided alongside detailed schedules before the work is carried out. The same should apply to any proposed removal and reinstatement of historic skirting boards'

REPRESENTATIONS

Internal works to Grade II

In accordance with the requirements of Section 5(3)(a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended) publicity is not required for listed building consent to carry out works affecting only the interior of a Grade II (unstarred) listed building.

In addition to the above, the Council also publicised the listed building consent application by way of:

- 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:

- None received.

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.

- Heritage Statement
- Heritage Statement Appendix 1
- Design and Access Statement
- Opening up plans (findings from previous consent PL/2024/11184)
- Asbestos survey and methodology

The supporting information is exemplary in its efforts to describe, assess and justify the works associated, along with the findings of the opening up works, granted consent under PL/2024/11184. The documents, when combined, provide an extremely thorough run through all the rooms within the Manor, the works required accompanied with justification and assessment impact. This supporting information is considered adequate and proportionate for the works proposed, and therefore considered to be sufficient information to support the application, in line 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.

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 largely with its high architectural qualities being a fine 17th century Queen Anne country house designed by a prominent architect of the period. Its high status puts the building in the top 2.5% of listed buildings nationally, being of exceptional interest. Its fine and formal external architectural detailing, form and style, is echoed inside, with a grand staircase and formal rooms on the ground floor, and hierarchy of space throughout the building. Despite some alteration, the building has retained its 17th century character, with adapted elements from an earlier building evidenced on the lower ground level.

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 212-221 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and relevant local heritage policies and guidance.

This report should be read in conjunction with that on approved application PL/2024/11184, as essentially the proposed works are a more extensive version of those previously approved. The report on PL/2024/11184 gives the background on the works, which are required to update services and conduct investigations in relation to suspected structural concerns with certain parts of the building, in particular the floor structure within the Salon on the ground floor.

The application is essentially to increase the area of exploratory works approved in 2025, as once implemented, the areas approved under the previous application were not extensive enough to enable the structural investigation to take place.

In addition to the structural investigation, when the boards were lifted, the presence of asbestos was discovered. The need to remove this dangerous material from the building is vital considering the intention to open the building for public access, resulting in increased movement around the building, and potentially disturbing the asbestos below the floorboards.

The proposals now seek to lift every floorboard in every room of the building to clear it of asbestos, which is now the top priority for safety. This may also require some careful removal of skirting boards, lifting of fireplace hearths and remove of built in historic cupboards and shelving. The plans submitted with the application clearly show the areas of floorboards approved for lifting previously, along with colour coding of the additional areas proposed for lifting. The information does make it clear that the lifting of all floorboards, and the additional features such as hearths, is 'worst case scenario', and the works will be scaled up or down accordingly as additional boards are lifted. However, considering the potential scale of the works, based on the recent findings, it is prudent to cover the whole building, to save potential additional applications.

Historic England generally support the works as continuing progress towards restoring the building and updating services to enable the future public access, however they do raise concerns with regard to the potential lifting of hearths and removal (and reinstatement) of historic furniture and skirting boards. HE has advised that this requires further justification and schedules of work before the work is undertaken.

It is acknowledged that at this stage, the potential additional works to hearths etc is quite hypothetical and the additional information cannot be provided or indeed anticipated until additional lifting of floorboards around these features has taken place. Therefore it is considered appropriate in this instance that these details are submitted post-decision, once further investigation has taken place to ascertain whether or not these additional works are needed.

Some harm is acknowledged by the lifting of the historic floorboards, as this is disturbance of fabric, although thorough assessment of the floorboards has revealed that more areas than at first anticipated have actually been lifted in the past, most likely when the Mr Hyams updated the services in the c.1970s. However, the works approved for the structural investigation require a more extensive area to complete this survey, so it is reasonable to support further opening up to enable this, and the asbestos issue is a safety concern that also needs to be addressed. These two reasons are clear and completely understood and supported, to enable works to update the building for future public access to be completed safely: this is considered reasonable and acceptable justification for the works, which have been adequately supported by the documents provided.

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):

N/A.

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, the impact of the proposals on designated heritage asset will cause some harm by the lifting of all floorboards throughout the building. However this is considered to be to the lesser degree, as all the boards will be retained, labelled and re-laid in their existing locations, rather

than being lost from the building. The proposals will result in heritage benefits by virtue of the proposed investment in repair and upgrading/structural repair which will help to secure the future of the building. This more limited harm is justified by the need to address certain issues or investigations uncovered during recent approved works, and the harm outweighed by the public benefits achieved by enabling the future public access to this exceptional listed building.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

- Standard time limit
- Approved plans
- x 3 to cover lifting of hearths, skirtings and furniture
- Floorboards etc to be labelled and stored in room to which they belong
- Informative – consent does not extend to other works that may be required based on the findings of the investigative works.