

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Application No: PL/2026/04624 (PP) & PL/2026/04955 (LBC)
Internal and external alterations to support the continued use of the building as a specialist school for children and young people. Internal works include the installation of reversible timber slatted screening and access-controlled gates to selected staircases in order to improve safeguarding, manage pupil movement between age groups, and enhance security. Additional acoustic panelling is proposed within the main hall. External works include the installation of three new canopies to provide sheltered outdoor areas for pupils and a new air conditioning unit is also proposed on the existing plant room roof
Melksham House, 27 Market Place, Melksham

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

Recommendations:

☐	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.

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 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 (August 2026) sets out Government planning policy for England. Chapter 20, *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, recognises heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource. Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, with harm avoided unless there is a clear and convincing justification. Decision-makers are required to apply a balanced approach, giving substantial weight to the conservation of heritage assets and weighing any harm to significance against the public benefits of the proposal.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

Historic England's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008) provides policy and guidance for the "sustainable management of the historic environment". Additional guidance on the application of policies set out in the NPPF is 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 (2017)
- Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets (2025)

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."

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 '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.

Proposal: the application proposes minor alterations and additions in connection with the building's current use as an educational facility. In this case, the internal works to provide guarding adjacent to the stairs and acoustic panels to the hall and for the addition of A/C units require LBC. The free-standing canopies, however, require only planning permission. As a matter of good practice, the descriptions on each application should be amended to refer to the relevant works to avoid future confusion.

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

Information considered/provided: Policy HE5 of the NPPF requires applicants to assess the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including the contribution made by their setting, and to identify the likely effects of the development on that significance. Sufficient information should be provided to enable a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, and the impact of the proposal upon it.

Decision-makers must be satisfied that assessments accurately reflect the effects on heritage assets caused by development proposals and in this case the applications are accompanied by a "Design Statement" which provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposals and is proportionate to their scope. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

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 of a building may be architectural, or historic as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 S 1.

Melksham House is listed at Grade II and located in the centre of Melksham within Melksham Conservation Area. The list description reads as follows:

*ST 9063 MELKSHAM MARKET PLACE (west side)
7/129 No 27 (Melksham House)*

Detached house with side wing, now sports and social club. Early C18 with C19 alterations. Rubble stone, stone slate hipped roof, ashlar stacks with moulded capping. 2 storeys and attic, 6 windows. Central 2-storey porch is C19 addition with round-arched opening with keystone, imposts and square drip mould, door inside has flanking Tuscan columns. To right are two plate glass sashes and to left are plate glass sashes and one 2-light beaded mullioned window. Continuous string course, also on porch. Porch has 3- light chamfered mullioned window to front and 2-light mullioned windows to side, on first floor, either side are cross windows. Moulded eaves cornice porch has pierced parapet and ball finials. Three hipped dormers with casements to roof. Right return has sash to ground floor and cross window to first. Wing to left is C18 with C20 alterations, rubblestone with stone slate hipped roof. 2- storeys, windows. Ground floor has cross windows and C20 insertions. First floor has four hollow chamfered 2-light mullioned windows and projecting chimney stack. Rear has large C20 attached sports complex. Interior not inspected. Included despite C20 alterations and rear additions, as good early C18 house.

Melksham House has recently been refurbished and converted for use as an educational facility providing SEND school accommodation. Melksham's new Community Campus has been constructed on the site of the former football ground to the south and the remainder of the site comprises an ornamental pond, bowling greens, tennis courts, pitches for rugby and cricket, formal parkland and surfaced car parks. The house incorporates the remnants of a former three bay house of early-mid C17th which became the service core of an C18th house which turned its main elevation towards the church.

After the First World War, the House and grounds were acquired by Cooper (later Avon) Tyres in order to create a sports and social club and the site has been used for leisure purposes since. In 1920, Melksham House was badly damaged by fire and subsequently partially rebuilt and extended. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century the building was subject to further extensions with ancillary buildings constructed in the vicinity.

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. In this case the significance of the building lies with its architecture and historic fabric - its form, layout and architectural expression and use of vernacular materials which have significant architectural and aesthetic interest. They also provide evidence of the complex development of the building over time and the whole contributes to the character of the conservation area. It has also acquired a significant communal value in its long history and use as a sports facility at the heart of the town.

Assessment: similar slatted guarding has previously been approved adjacent to staircase 2 to secure the staircase. Similar guarding is now proposed adjacent to staircase 3 at first floor and at the second-floor head of the principal staircase. As previously, the proposal is for open vertical wooden slatted screens and proposed with a low-level gate adjacent to Stair 3 and a full height gate at second floor adjacent to the principal stair 1. Whilst the works represent an unwelcome intervention which will have some impact on the character of the building internally it is accepted that the proposed works avoid the formal ground floor main circulation spaces, will be kept independent of the original staircase and are easily reversible should the building use change.

The proposed acoustic panels to be installed in the main hall are similarly reversible and lightweight to avoid harm to the fabric of the building. Whilst visible, they respect and will not interrupt views of the historic roof structure.

The air conditioning units are located on a flat roof in a relatively discreet location and will have a minimal impact on key views of the building. Internally, service runs can follow existing services and the units are appropriate to the functional classroom environment.

The proposed canopies represent an unwelcome and utilitarian addition within the setting of the house.

Which will add to existing clutter and the further erosion of the building's setting. However, as mitigation, it is noted that they are lightweight and visually permeable and also free-standing and ephemeral in their construction. They should be easily removeable and reversible should be use of the building change.

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms that when considering the potential impact of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial 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 will be a matter of considerable importance and weight which requires clear and convincing justification.

The proposals will result in some harm to the building via the insertion of additional non-traditional features within and outside the building which will contribute to the further erosion of the character of the building and its setting. In mitigation, the proposals have been designed to be lightweight and reversible and to avoid harm to the historic fabric of the building. The aircon units are also discreetly located to avoid visual impact.

It is also noted that the building was without a use and in a poor and deteriorating condition for a number of years. It has been difficult to locate an appropriate use and, as a result, the proposals will also result in some heritage benefit by virtue of the sustaining the current use for which the building was restored and securing continued investment in repair which will help to secure the future conservation of the building. Taking into account the substantial weight to be given to the conservation of the asset, these public benefits are sufficient to offset the harm caused.

The requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance are considered to be met and there is therefore no objection to the approval of the application from the point of view of the built historic environment.