

REPORT FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	24 th May 2017
Application Numbers	16/11304/DP4 & 16/11410/LBC
Site Address	Corsham Mansion House, Pickwick Road, Corsham, SN13 9BL
Proposal	Demolition of the former single-storey Corsham Library. New two-storey extension and internal refurbishment to existing Grade 2 listed Mansion House, including selective demolition of single-storey elements of the Mansion House, new building single-storey entrance lobby, external parking areas, access road, landscaping and waste & recycling compound.
Applicant	Wiltshire Council
Town Council	Corsham Town Council
Electoral Division	Corsham Town – Cllr Whalley
Grid Ref	
Type of application	Full Planning/Listed Building Consent
Case Officer	Simon Smith

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

These applications have been referred to the Strategic Planning Committee because they have been submitted by Wiltshire Council and objections have been received raising material planning considerations. In the interests of transparency, where objections raising material considerations are received to applications submitted by the Council, they are brought before a committee for determination. The Associate Director of Economy and Planning deems that these applications raise issues that should be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee.

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of the proposals against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations and to consider the recommendation that planning permission should be **APPROVED** and that the Listed Building Consent application should be referred to the **Secretary of State with a recommendation that it should be granted.**

2. Report Summary

The key issues in considering the applications are as follows:

- Principle of the development.
- Impact on character and appearance of the area.
- Impact on the listed building and its setting
- Archaeology
- Impact on neighbour amenity
- Highways and parking

Corsham Town Council raised no objection to the proposed development. 15 letters of objection have been received, including multiple letters from individual writers, a petition and representations from Corsham Civic Society.

3. Site Description

The Mansion House is a Grade II Listed building, with a portion of perimeter wall and piers (with urns) to Pickwick Road being separately Listed Grade II. It is centrally located in Corsham and is within the Corsham Conservation Area. The application site amounts to some 0.54Ha in area.

Dating from the early eighteenth century, the Mansion House comprises a house, service range and stable block, the main house in ashlar and service structures in stone rubble under stone tiled roofs. The grounds include a walled forecourt fronting the property, which is set back from the street. To the rear are further walled areas and outbuildings, including a small stone built summerhouse contemporary with the original dwelling. The main house was remodelled in the 1890s by the noted Wiltshire architect Harold Brakspear, who lived locally and also worked on high profile sites such as Windsor Castle and Lacock Abbey. The property came into the ownership of the council after the war, during which it is understood to have been requisitioned for army use.

To the South-East of the Mansion House is the now vacant Corsham library building. Constructed in 1969 to a pavilion form, being a large square open plan single storey space with pyramidal roof and clerestory glazing. The site is currently served by a small car park of some 8 space, intervening between the library and Pickwick Road.

4. Planning History

15/03920/LBC - To install ply faced timber framed gates to the front entrance of the existing stone boundary wall. APPROVED

N/02/00987/LBC - External alterations to window and door. APPROVED

15/02163/ADV - Hoarding. APPROVED

5. The Proposal

Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent is sought to convert Corsham Mansion House into an incubator centre for digital start-up businesses. Such a use would fall into the B1a (Office) use class for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As Amended).

It is intended that the development would provide a range of small business units from single person offices upwards to offer flexibility and opportunities for businesses to grow and remain within the same facility. The proposal would create 1286m² of office and ancillary floorspace.

The development would include the demolition of the existing free-standing library and its replacement with a two storey extension, linked to the listed Mansion House. It is also proposed to replace the nineteenth century single storey front extension to The Mansion House and to create new openings within the boundary walls.

For completeness, minor changes to the description of the development for the LBC have been agreed with the applicant. Demolition of the library and construction of a new (freestanding) recycling compound does not require listed building consent. However, the creation of new openings within the boundary walls requires both listed building consent and planning permission.

6. Local Planning Policy

Wiltshire Core Strategy Jan 2015:

Core Policy 1 -	Settlement Strategy
Core Policy 2 -	Delivery Strategy
Core Policy 34 -	Additional Employment Land
Core Policy 57 -	Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
Core Policy 58 -	Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment
Core Policy 61 -	Transport and Development
Core Policy 62 -	Development impacts on the transport network
Core Policy 63 -	Transport Strategies
Core Policy 64 -	Demand Management

Saved Policies of the North Wiltshire Local Plan:

NE18 -	Noise and Pollution
T5 -	Safeguarding
R2 -	Town Centre Secondary Retail Frontage

7. Summary of consultation responses

Corsham Town Council - No objection

“Resolved: Not to object to this scheme but to ask that the Town Council’s previous objections and suggestions continue to be considered as the proposal moves forward. Also that an archaeological watching brief be put in place on any geotechnical/ground investigation test pits.”

Wiltshire Council Conservation Officer - No objection. See main “Planning Considerations” section for detailed analysis.

Wiltshire Council Archaeologist – No objection. See main “Planning Considerations” section for detailed analysis.

Historic England – No objection.

Twentieth Century Society – No objection.

Georgian Group – Objection. See main “Planning Considerations” section for detailed analysis.

“Thank you for informing the Georgian Group of a revised scheme for alterations and additions to the above GII listed building. I must sincerely apologize for our delay in replying. The Group wishes to maintain its objection to the scheme. The Mansion House is a building of c1723 with a distinguished classical principal façade; alterations and additions were undertaken to the house by the talented architect Harold Brakspear c1897. The Georgian Group has previously advised your authority of our strong objection to the construction of any new addition which will adversely affect the setting of the Mansion House’s principal façade (email of the 16th of December 2016). In our previous email, we also raised concerns about the over-assertive nature of the design of the proposed new addition, which we advised would visually compete with the restrained classical principal façade of the listed building. Whilst we recognise that the applicant has made significant efforts to mitigate the impact of their proposals, we would advise that the scheme would still have a considerable negative impact on the listed building. The NPPF is unequivocal in stating that any proposal which would cause harm to a designated heritage asset needs clear and convincing justification. As we have previously advised, it would be preferable for the existing library building to be used for the proposed purpose, as this discreetly designed building has much less of a visual impact on the Mansion House’s setting than

any attached structure would. We have not yet seen a satisfactory explanation as to why this is not possible. The applicant has also failed to satisfactorily justify their desire to place a large addition in the proposed location, rather than at the rear of the building where it would have less visual impact. The justification for causing harm to the listed building is therefore not yet sufficiently robust to meet the requirements of the NPPF. With regret the Georgian Group must maintain its objection to these proposals and we recommend that listed building consent is refused.”

Ancient Monument Society – Objection. See main “Planning Considerations” section for detailed analysis.

“We very much welcome the proposal to bring Corsham’s Mansion House back into use. The renovation works described in the Design Statement Addendum are much needed and will improve both the appearance and long-term sustainability of the building. We note that a stone urn is to be reinstated on one of the Mansion House’s listed gate piers and that two large fir trees are to be removed to better reveal the building’s main façade. We welcome both of these interventions. The more sensitive approach to demolition within the Mansion, as described under ‘Heritage gains’, is also an improvement. The proposal to step back by 1.5 metres to the south the position of the new extension is a positive gesture, but it does not address the fundamental objection which we raised in our response of 23 January 2017, namely that the proposed new extension would be harmful to the setting of the Grade II-listed Mansion House. We agree with the Georgian Group that the proposed new extension is “incongruous in its materiality and [that] it competes visually with the building that has been designated for its special architectural and historic interest.” In our view this is harm which has not been justified. We endorse Paul Kefferd’s position, as set out in his most recent representations, that the option of building an extension the rear of the Mansion House should be explored. From an architectural and historic building perspective, there is no reason why this approach should not be acceptable. As has been pointed out, the Mansion House’s main (north façade) retains its Georgian appearance, whereas the rear of the building was altered in the late 19th century. It would be useful to see a detailed assessment of the Mansion House’s setting to establish levels of significance and capacity for change.”

Wiltshire Council Highways – No objection.

“I am satisfied that access can be achieved via the planned access to the new extension and via the existing access to the main house. Even if waste vehicles reverse into the site from the highway the periodic use will not be a severe impact on the highway so I raise no highway objections to the above proposal.”

Wiltshire Council Drainage – No objection.

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by neighbour letter, site notices and press advert. 15 letters of objection have been received, inclusive of multiple letters from individual writers, a petition (containing 70 signatories) and the comments of the Corsham Civic Society. In summary they raise the following relevant planning issues:

- Extension should be hidden to rear of Mansion House not on site of library building (citing example of Holburne Museum, Bath).
- The rear of the Mansion House is not considered to be of any historic, or other, interest and can therefore accommodate new development.

- Development is substantial and would be out of character with the Listed Building and Conservation Area.
- Proposal pre-empts development in the back of the site.
- Applicant is wedded to design and ignores comments from statutory consultees (notably: AMS and Georgian Group).
- The existing entrance to mansion House should be used as main entrance to development.
- New glass foyer is strange and a large redundant indulgence.
- Difficult and congested roads in vicinity of the site. Parking area and outdoor terrace area should be closed after working hours so as to avoid disturbance to nearby residential properties.
- Potential for overlooking from new office building into properties at mansion House Mews – particularly at first floor. Request for screening planting along boundary and/or that the windows are opaque.
- Insufficient parking provision.
- Concerns over external lighting to be used.
- Request for planting along boundary to Mansion House Mews so as to soften stark appearance of the proposed development.
- No supporting evidence to suggest how proposals would address climate change, have a carbon-neutral impact, ground source heating, grey water harvesting or offsetting the carbon effects of demolition.
- Proposal incorporates all of the significant community elements previously articulated through the consultation process (undertaken by the applicant).
- Proposal does not include replacement of removed urn from separately listed gate pier.
- Library building is a good example of mid C20th civic architecture (far superior architecturally to the building that replaced it at the Springfield Campus).
- Trees to front of site are out of control and add nothing to the historic context of the Mansion House. Should be removed.
- Concerns over the running of air conditioning units and generators running day and night causing nuisance to residential amenity.
- Concerns over adequacy of drainage system.

9. Planning Considerations

9.1 Principle of Development

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In this case, the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS), including those policies of the North Wiltshire Local Plan saved in the WCS, forms the relevant development plan for the Corsham Area. The emerging Corsham Neighbourhood Plan is at a relatively early stage and formal submission is some way off. Accordingly, that plan may be afforded only limited weight in decision making.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are material considerations which can be accorded substantial weight.

The application site is located entirely within the defined limits of development for Corsham, which is regarded as a Market Town by the Settlement Strategy set out in CP1 of the WCS. The substantive part of the site is also within the town's secondary retail frontage, as defined by saved Policy R2 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011. The use of the proposed development is as B1(a) (office) and therefore Policy CP34 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy is relevant, relating to additional employment land. In locations such as this, CP34 confirms that proposals for employment development will be

supported. For the same reasons, there is no need for an impact assessment on the proposals potential impact upon the Corsham Town Centre since the proposal is a compatible use class.

In general, and subject to the detail (assessed below), the proposals would allow reuse of existing historic main buildings without significant alteration. CP49 (Protection of rural services and community facilities) of the WCS is not relevant in this instance, since the town's library has long since been relocated to the Corsham campus.

9.2 Impact on character and appearance of the area.

The entirety of the application site is located within the Corsham Conservation Area. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas. Policies CP57 & CP58 of the WCS as well as the NPPF para 12 is also relevant in considering proposals for development that may impact upon a Conservation Area, which is a heritage asset in its own right.

Corsham High Street, with its fronting buildings presenting a strong sense of enclosure (and main concentration of Listed Buildings), is acknowledged as being the core of the Conservation Area. However, on the Southern side of the pedestrianised Martingate Centre (which itself has destroyed the original common building line of the High Street), the Mansion House site does much to define the character and appearance of the Pickwick Road part of the Conservation Area.

The Mansion House is set back from the street behind an intervening private forecourt which emphasises the building's status and separation from everyday activity. To the rear of the main house, the garden front faces onto an area of garden enclosed by stone walls and a summer house which was presumably the principal private garden space for the house. Further walled areas behind the service ranges enclose the outbuildings and land beyond and presumably housed various service functions. These garden areas have unusually remained largely unaltered and undeveloped during the building's history and do significantly contribute to the special interest of the building. The walls and outbuildings should be considered to form part of the curtilage of the listed building and contribute to an attractive setting.

Taken as standalone building, the library has some historic interest as an example of a carefully designed community building of the period. It retains some aesthetic value although this has been marred by poor maintenance in recent years. It will also hold some community value as a building which has been visited and enjoyed by families over the period since its construction. However, despite some design references to the architecture of the main house, its spreading footprint, substantial mass, location forward in the site and use of artificial stone mean that its contribution to the setting of the main building and character and appearance of the conservation area could perhaps be said, at very best, to be neutral.

Whilst replete with significant improvements to built form, visibility and massing in relation to the frontage to Pickwick Road (discussed in detail below), the proposal, by and large, continues the existing form of the Mansion House site and its role in the Conservation Area – most particularly, the new building replicating the position of the existing library building to one side of the Mansion House itself. The proposal would provide distinct enhancements to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would therefore be entirely in accordance with the NPPF and CP58 of the WCS.

9.3 Impact on the listed building and its setting

Policy

The Mansion House is a Grade II listed building. A portion of perimeter wall and piers (with urns) to Pickwick Road are separately Listed Grade II. Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a Listed Building and its setting or any features of special architectural or

historic interest which it possesses. Considerable weight must therefore be given to the preservation of the listed building, including its setting.

For the purposes of determining the application, CP58 of the WCS is relevant. It states:

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment.

Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance

In relation to design, CP57 of the WCS is also relevant to the considerations.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment (Section 12). The policy requires that great weight be given to the conservation of heritage assets and advises a balanced approach with the public benefits which may result from proposals being weighed against any harm caused. National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

Significance of the site

The property retains considerable architectural and historic significance which merit its listing and contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Referring to Historic England's Conservation Principles 2008, which defines a series of values to aid assessment of special interest, the Council's Conservation Officer confirms that the property holds:

- Evidential value inherent in the historic building's fabric and layout which may hold evidence for the layout and appearance of the buildings in previous phases of its history;
- Illustrative historical value in the layout and floorplan of the buildings, the use of materials, elevational and internal treatments which illustrate its social history and the approach accorded to different domestic functions. Alterations and remodelling of the late C19 demonstrate changing fashions, tastes and expectations in domestic accommodation;
- Associative historical value including association with the local Neale family, who owned the site for over 200 years, and with the noted Wiltshire architect Harold Brakspear;
- Aesthetic value of the property as a whole in its designed surroundings, from the high status and quality architecture and construction of the main house (including decorated principle rooms) and from the contrasting but similarly high quality vernacular architecture of the service buildings. From the use of local materials which contribute to the character of the area;
- Communal value from years in municipal use as a focal public building within the town.

The building is currently vacant and the listed building is in deteriorating condition due to vandalism and theft of lead. A new and economically viable use urgently needs to be found to secure the future of the building. It is understood that extensive marketing undertaken by the applicant has not resulted in a successful sale and the current proposal stems from a new capital (grant) funding source which will allow the building to remain in Council ownership, providing a mix of units to stimulate business growth. Significant conservation benefits would result from a proposal bringing the building back into an economically viable and suitable use which can secure its future and ensure its continuing maintenance. It should be noted that the proposed use is entirely compatible to the town centre location and therefore and prior marketing undertaken on this site/building is not determinative to the applications.

Assessment of proposals

The proposal will result in the demolition of the existing library building. Dating from 1969, the library building was designed by the Architects Department of the then Wiltshire County Council and whilst its presence is mentioned by Pevsner (as were many public buildings of this period in Wiltshire), it is not noted as having any particular interest or merit. It is a single storey building with a substantial footprint and mass, set forward within the site. Faced in reconstituted stone, the main building is a clear span under a prominent copper lantern roof which echoes the central roof of the main building.

It is understood that the library building is judged by some locally to be of value. However, the Council's Conservation Officer suggests that it would be difficult to argue that its presence enhances the setting of the Mansion House or that it makes any significant positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area as a whole (as noted in the section above). To reinforce that view, the Twentieth Century Society has raised no objections to the revised plans and, accordingly, it is considered that the loss of the library would result in only minor harm in terms of the loss of a local asset; the impact on designated heritage assets being neutral or even beneficial in removing a substantial and visually assertive building which sits forward of the main elevation of the Mansion House, with a tendency to dominate within the street scene. Critically, Historic England have not objected to the demolition of the library building.

The proposed new building, linked to the side of the Mansion House is intended to provide the spaces required to facilitate the new use; reduce the need for intrusive services and a lift within the most sensitive area of the building; and provides access for users to key spaces within the building whilst limiting the impact on its historic fabric. The Council's Conservation Officer notes that the new building, albeit in a modern style, nonetheless takes cues in its scale, form and dimensions from the historic building as well as making reference to key architectural features such as the string course and parapet. Materials including natural stone, grey metal cladding and glazing reflect the colours, textures and materials of the area and are appropriate. Whilst similar to those of the current library, they should appear more subtle than its artificial stone and its copper roof.

Following negotiations between the applicant and Officers, revised plans have been submitted (and consulted upon, including local publicity), which, *inter alia*, repositions the proposed building further back on the site, such that it now falls behind the line of the gable window of the Mansion House. These revised plans also reduce the height of the new building and depth of the parapet to reinforce the subservience of the new building in relation to the principal elevation of the main house. However, reductions have had to be kept within the parameters set by Building Regulations and by the need to serve the intended purpose of creating level access to the main building and facilitating movement for all over the first two floors of the main house.

Although two-storey, the footprint of the new building is substantially smaller than that of the existing library and is set much further back within the site, behind the line of the main elevation. The Conservation Officer notes that the net result is a visual impact (deriving from the new building) not being significantly greater than that of the existing library building which, although it clearly has the benefits of long familiarity in the street scene, is a substantial and architecturally assertive building on a large footprint which extends well forward of the building line and competes directly with the main elevation of the building. To the rear, the proposed new building will encroach slightly further into the garden, albeit over a smaller footprint than the existing. Critically, the impact upon the formal garden of the main house, both to the immediate front of the principal elevation as well as the rear will not be worsened over that of the current situation. The side elevation, in contrast, is a secondary elevation facing onto a space which makes only a limited contribution to the setting of the building.

The proposed use for the site requires a practical entrance with generous circulation space, access to toilet facilities and the lift to the upper first floor etc. and this is to be provided by the new building. Regrettably, this precludes the use of the principal doorway to the Mansion House since the main entrance to the office space, which presents difficulties in providing a level disabled access required by Building Regulations. However, and whilst the concerns of the local objectors in this respect are noted, it is the case that the main entrance will remain in use and visually, if not functionally, it will retain its prominence in the elevation.

In their comments, the Council's Conservation Officer concludes that proposals for a link over two storeys between the new structure and old will result in a level of harm to the listed building in terms of the loss of historic fabric and the aesthetic qualities of the bay window (which was part of the 1897 remodelling undertaken by Brakspear). However, they go on to note that the use of a lightweight glass structure, which would encompass the whole of the window opening would allow for a design which minimises physical impact and loss of fabric, thus ensuring that the aesthetic quality of the bay window can continue to be appreciated.

Position of new building and comments of statutory consultees

Several of the received local objections comment that the new building should be positioned to the rear of the Mansion House (rather than to the side, in place of the library building) so that it is hidden from public view and would leave the principal front elevation of the Mansion House unadulterated. In their comments on the Listed Building Consent application, both the Georgian Group and the Ancient Monument Society (though, critically, not Historic England) specifically repeat those local comments, in the latter case referencing a local objector by name.

The proposals do not seek permission for the new building at the rear and neither have Council Officers sought revised plans to change the proposal in that respect. There are considered to be several compelling reasons why the proposal is considered acceptable and, in fact, preferable to a proposal that would shift the new building to the rear of the Mansion House:

- The library site is Previously Developed Land (NPPF, para. 17 – Core Planning Principles) where any archaeology is also likely to have already been thoroughly disturbed.
- Whilst the C19 remodelling may, arguably, have changed the architectural interest of the rear elevation it has not removed its significance (architectural, historic and aesthetic) as the principal garden frontage of the building.
- Land to the rear constitutes the historic private garden area of this high status dwelling, including curtilage listed garden walls and summerhouse which are of value in their own right. Development within this intact and *designed* setting would detract from the house's setting and diminish the special interest of the building.
- In contrast, the current proposal is attached to a secondary elevation of the building and, whilst it is viewed in the context of both the front and rear principal elevations, the direct impact is confined to a secondary, previously developed, section of the building's curtilage.
- Simply "hiding" new development to the rear does not acknowledge the need to take account of the impact of development from a variety of perspectives, not merely the principle frontage to Pickwick Road.
- Positioning of the new building to the side allows for level circulation internally as well as providing for legibility when accessing the site, therefore more likely to secure the building's longer term future.
- Even if there were to be a preferable alternative to the proposed development (which Officers do not believe there to be), it would not automatically render a proposal before the Local Planning Authority unacceptable if it were to be considered acceptable in other respects.

The Georgian Group and Ancient Monument Society are, in effect, advocating consideration of the proposed development in the context of the architectural interest of the principle street elevation alone. They have failed to assess the building's significance holistically or to take into account the contribution that its setting as a whole makes to that significance. Furthermore, they are doing so without a detailed explanation why they are disregarding fundamental conservation principles. It should be noted that repeated invitations to attend meetings and engage positively with the Council to develop the proposals have not been taken up. In such a situation and because the main Government adviser on such matters (Historic England) are raising no objections to the revised plans, Officers are strongly advising the Strategic Planning Committee to acknowledge but ultimately disagree with their comments.

Under the Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications – Notification to Historic England and National Amenity Societies and the Secretary of State (England) Direction 2015, it is the case that in light of an objection from a proscribed National Amenity Society, should the Strategic Planning Committee resolve to grant Listed Building Consent, that application will need to be referred to the Secretary of State for determination.

Replacement of early C20th corridor

It is proposed to replace the early 20th century covered corridor which encloses the ground floor front of the service range. The existing structure appears to be related to the upgrading of the former billiard room which sits between the three storey service range and stable block around the turn of the century. The corridor appears on maps by 1908 and was presumably constructed to provide separate internal circulation avoiding service areas of the building, including the kitchen. In their comments, the Council's Conservation Officer notes that the existing corridor is of limited historic or architectural interest and is in poor condition. The Conservation Officer goes on to conclude that they have no

objection to its removal, as it will not harm the special interest of the building. Its replacement with a glazed structure is required for similar reasons to those which prompted the construction of the original structure – to provide circulation (as well as a secondary entrance). The proposed structure is a modern lightweight design which will allow the original early C18th ground floor façade and mullioned windows to be more visible from the exterior than they are at present.

Frontage walls and lost urn

Received local comments have suggested a public appetite for greater visual permeability into the site and the proposals provide for the removal of the existing solid door in the frontage walling so as to allow some views of the front elevation, whilst retaining the sense of privacy and separation imparted by the enclosed forecourt. In addition, the overgrown conifers which currently overshadow and significantly reduce the pleasantness of the forecourt area as well as screening the main building from view will be removed. The applicant has confirmed that the missing stone urn on the gate pier will be replaced.

Internal works, repairs, service provision

Revised plans do now limit the impact on the building's historic fabric and character. Subdivision within existing rooms has been kept to a minimum and the imposition of suitable conditions on the listed building consent can secure the use of lightweight, reversible, partitions scribed around existing features where it is needed. There will be conservation benefits resulting from the removal of asbestos and the upgrading of unsightly regimes of decoration and service provision which have resulted from many years of institutional use.

The submitted condition survey does not specifically identify the requirement for any substantial areas of repair, which may require Listed Building Consent in their own right. The final scope and details of routine repair and maintenance such as localised repointing and replacement of rainwater goods can be secured via a condition on any consent.

So often intrusive to historic buildings, strategies for achieving modern servicing (ventilation, extraction, data cabling, fire prevention requirements and the like) within the Mansion House have been carefully negotiated by the Council's Conservation Officer and are considered to be acceptable. These allow for the siting of heating and lighting and routing of some services through suspended ceiling panels within the principle rooms of the main house, which will be set back from the room perimeters. In these rooms, power and data supplied will be fed through the floors so far as possible. Elsewhere in the service ranges localised areas of suspended ceiling at ground and first floor will combine with surface mounted service runs at second floor where headroom is limited. In the absence of wall panelling, heating will be via more traditional wall mounted radiators. The proposals will minimise impact on fabric and allow architectural features to continue to be appreciated and final details of precise routes will need to be specified following initial opening up and can be secured via condition.

9.4 Highways and parking

Some local concerns have been expressed in relation to the adequacy of the quantum of parking for the new development being proposed.

The small parking area serving the existing library building provides for only 8 spaces and this is, perhaps a function of the location within Corsham town centre – a highly sustainable location. The proposed development includes parking for a total of 23 car parking (and 2 motorcycle) spaces, 6 of which will be located with the Mansion House courtyard, with the balance in-front and to the side of the new extension. Cycle parking is also provided. In this sustainable location and based upon the *maximum* parking standards set out within Annex C to the Council's Parking Strategy 2011 (1 space per 30m² created for B1 office), the proposal is considered to provide sufficient off street parking.

In their comments on the application, the Council's Highway Officer confirms that adequate access can be achieved to the new development via the substantively unaltered existing accesses to the new extension and the main house. In their comments, they go on to state that, even if waste vehicles

reverse into the site from the highway, the periodic use will not be a severe impact on the highway. No objections have been raised by the Highway Officer and there is no evidenced reason to diverge from that conclusion.

9.5 Archaeology

The application site lies outside what is regarded as the core of the Medieval settlement of Corsham.

In her comments upon the planning application, the Council's Archaeologist confirms that no archaeological assessment or planning condition for monitoring is required. The degree of previous disturbance (from existing development – notably the library building) and the low potential for significant remains to be present does not justify the requirement for further investigation, via a *watching brief*, for example. The Council's Archaeologist notes the requirements of NPPF para.206, which states that conditions should only be imposed where deemed necessary and reasonable and has firmly concluded that it is not considered that they are necessary in this case. Although the concerns and suggestions of the Town Council are noted, there is no evidential reason to diverge from the Council's own Archaeologist comments and conclusions on the matter.

In responding directly to specific concerns raised by local residents, the Council's Archaeologist confirms that the service does look for opportunities to discover and record buried archaeological remains of all periods through to post-medieval when suitable proposal development is proposed. However, few suitable chances have come up in Corsham and it is not considered that the proposal at the Mansion House to be one of them. Equally, the Archaeologist has confirmed that (like several other settlements in Wiltshire), Corsham is not included within the suite of Extensive Urban Surveys (EUS) undertaken in Wiltshire in the past. It is hoped that grant funding will be gained in the near future so as to undertake EUS on the towns that were missed in the original project.

9.6 Impact on neighbour amenity

The application site is surrounded by residential properties. To the West of the site is The Tynings, where the properties back onto a pedestrian path, which borders the site and its substantial boundary walls. When taken together with their relatively substantial rear gardens, it is considered that the amenity of these properties at the Tynings will not be significantly affected.

East of the site is a series of properties at Mansion House Mews. More directly related to the part of the application site where the new building would be positioned, several residents have understandably raised concerns. However, the potential for significant impacts upon their amenities would be mitigated by several aspects of the proposals. Firstly, the proposed extension would be positioned at a greater distance from the boundary wall with Mansion House Mews than the existing library building – the drawings confirming that distance to be 21.0m and greater. Secondly, whilst the extension would be two storeys in height (compared with the library's single storey), the windows facing Mansion House Mews are minimised and arranged in two vertical strips, one of which serves circulation rather than office space. Thirdly, the applicant has signalled their willingness to accept a planning condition specifying opaque glazing in those windows. Changes to the layout of the car park would mean a greater number of spaces close to the boundary, but the substantial wall will continue to shield from unreasonable noise and car lights in winter evenings.

Concerns have been raised by local residents regarding the potential for use of the building and site in the evenings and weekends. It should be noted that a B1 (office) use class is generally defined as a use which can comfortably coexist with adjoining residential properties. Use of the external areas of the site, the patio, garden area and car park (particularly unauthorised use) does have the potential for noise and disturbance. However, since the operation and management of the site would remain under the auspices of the Council, it would be possible to impose a planning condition which requires a management plan (which would cover authorised uses as well as measures to be employed to prevent unauthorised uses) to be submitted and agreed prior to its first use.

The proposed development will not result in any significant adverse impact on the residential amenities of adjoining properties in terms of loss of sunlight, daylight or privacy. The proposal is therefore not in conflict with Core Policy 57 in this respect.

10. Conclusion

In the context of its siting within Corsham town centre, the proposal is considered to be a suitable reuse of the Mansion House site for B1 office and would comply with the provisions of CP34 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy as well as Saved Policy R2 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.

Subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, the proposal will not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the amenities of surrounding residential occupiers and is considered to provide for an appropriate vehicular and pedestrian access to the site as well as car parking spaces. The proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of Policies CP57, CP61, CP62, CP63 and CP64 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy as well as the principles set out within the NPPF.

The demolition of the existing library will have a neutral impact on the historic built environment and will not result in harm either to the character and appearance of the conservation area or to the setting of the listed building.

The proposed replacement extension will occupy the same general location as the existing library, adjacent to a secondary side elevation in an area formerly occupied by tennis courts. Whilst set over two storeys, the scale and design remain subservient to the adjacent house and the reduced footprint and the proposed location of the new building further back within the site ensure that the replacement building will not have any adverse impact on the setting of the listed building, its special interest or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and, in this respect, would comply with the provisions of policies CP57 and CP58 of the WCS. Neither Historic England nor the Council's own Conservation Officer object to the proposals.

The Council's Conservation Officer concludes there to be a minor loss of historic fabric in effecting the link to the new extension. They go on to conclude that the harm caused by these works can be considered to be at the *lower end* of "less than substantial harm" for the purposes of interpreting the requirements of the NPPF. There is no evidence or reason to disagree with those conclusions.

The NPPF paragraph 134 requires a balanced assessment to be made "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 securing its optimum viable use". In this case, it is considered that significant conservation benefits will result from bringing the building and site back into an economically viable use, which is entirely appropriate to its location within Corsham town centre, thus securing its future and its continuing maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning permission should be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. No development shall commence on site until the exact details and samples of the materials to be used for all new external walls (for both the new building as well as any new free-

standing walls) and roofs have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such a submission shall include a sample panel to be erected on site for inspection, demonstrating coursing and mortar mix. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: The choice of final external materials to be used in this development is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, in the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of this sensitive location.

3. Prior to the commencement of development, full and complete details of all hard and soft landscaping to be created on the site shall have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall include, but not be limited to, an identification of the position of any trees proposed to be retained and the measures to be employed to secure their protection during construction. The details shall also include an identification of all trees to be removed on the site as well as timing for those removal works. Development and landscaping shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure a suitable hard and soft landscaping scheme for this sensitive site and so as to ensure the retention of appropriate trees on the site in the interests of visual amenity.

4. All soft landscaping comprised in the approved as part of the detailed component of the planning application shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the completion of the development whichever is the sooner. All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.

5. No part of the development hereby permitted shall be first brought into use until the access, turning area and parking spaces (including car, motorcycle and cycle spaces) have been completed in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans. The areas shall be maintained for those purposes at all times thereafter.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

6. Before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use, all first floor windows in the East elevation of the new building shall be glazed with obscure glass only. Those windows shall be maintained with obscure glazing in perpetuity.

REASON: In the interests of residential amenity and privacy of neighbouring residential occupiers.

7. No external lighting shall be installed on site until plans showing the type of light appliance, the height and position of fitting, illumination levels and light spillage in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers in their publication "Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light" (ILE, 2005)", have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved lighting shall be installed and shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details and no additional external lighting shall be installed.

REASON: In the interests of the amenities of this sensitive area and to minimise unnecessary light spillage above and outside the development site.

8. The development hereby permitted shall not be first brought into use until final details of the arrangements to be made for the storage of refuse and recycling from the development, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and; the approved refuse and recycling storage has been completed and made available for use in accordance with the approved details. The approved refuse and recycling storage shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of public health, safety and visual amenity in this sensitive location.

9. The development hereby approved shall achieve the BREEAM's 'Very Good' Standard, and within 3 months of being first occupied or brought into use, a post construction stage certificate certifying that the 'Very Good' standard has been achieved shall be issued and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its written approval.

REASON: To ensure that the objectives of sustainable development set out policy CP41 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy are achieved.

10. No development shall commence on site until a scheme for the discharge of surface water from the site (including surface water from the access/driveway), incorporating sustainable drainage details, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be first brought into use until surface water drainage has been constructed in accordance with the approved scheme.

REASON: The arrangements for the disposal of surface water from the development is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that it is undertaken in an acceptable manner, to ensure that the development can be adequately drained.

11. No development shall commence on site until details of the works for the disposal of sewerage including the point of connection to the existing public sewer have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be first brought into use until the approved sewerage details have been fully implemented in accordance with the approved plans.

REASON: The arrangements for disposal of sewerage from the development is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that it is undertaken in an

acceptable manner, to ensure that the proposal is provided with a satisfactory means of drainage and does not increase the risk of flooding or pose a risk to public health or the environment.

12. Prior to the commencement of development, a detailed management plan for the use of the new offices, car park, external patio area and all environs of the site (which would cover authorised uses as well as measures to be employed to prevent unauthorised use after regular opening hours) shall have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. At all times the operation of the development shall be carried out in complete accordance with that approved management plan to be submitted and agreed prior to its first use.

REASON: In the interests of ensuring the operation of the development does not unduly impact upon the amenities of nearby residential properties.

13. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

To be inserted.

All date stamped XXXX unless otherwise indicated.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

That the Listed Building Consent application should be referred to the Secretary of State for determination with the recommendation that LBC should be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1. The works for which Listed Building Consent is hereby granted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Prior to the works taking place, a full schedule of repair of the Mansion House shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed schedule.

REASON: To ensure that the repairs to the Mansion House are of a suitably quality appropriate to the heritage asset.

3. Prior to the works taking place, final details of ceiling layouts affected and service runs created by the necessary mechanical and engineering and data cabling installations shall have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority beforehand.

REASON: To ensure that the proposals will minimise impact on the historic fabric of the building and, where possible, to allow architectural features to continue to be appreciated.

4. Prior to the works taking place, full and complete details of proposals for necessary fire protection measures shall have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure that the proposals will minimise impact on the historic fabric of the building and, where possible, to allow architectural features to continue to be appreciated.

5. Prior to the works being undertaken, details of the type of all new partitions to be installed within the building shall have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall include confirmation of the method of installation and confirmation that they be of a lightweight construction, reversibly installed and scribed around historic mouldings and architectural features. The installation of all new partition shall be in accordance with the details so agreed.

REASON: To ensure new partitions are of a suitably lightweight and reversible construction so as to minimise impact upon the historic fabric of the building.

6. Prior to the works being undertaken, full and complete details of new urn to replace stolen/removed original on the listed boundary wall shall have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The replacement urn shall be installed prior to the first use of the development hereby granted Listed Building Consent.

REASON: To ensure the replacement urn is of an appropriate design and quality and to ensure its installation in a timely manner.

7. The works hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

To be inserted.

All date stamped XXXX unless otherwise indicated.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.