

HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Post Office Stores, Church Street, West Chiltington
DESCRIPTION:	
REFERENCE:	DC/25/2018
RECOMMENDATION:	Advice / No-Objection / Objection / More-Information / Modification / Refusal
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION: The commercial use of this property is important to retain the vibrancy and character of the conservation area. Conversion to residential use will have an immediately harmful impact to the character of the conservation area and harm to the special interest of the listed building in the longer term. This harm will be less than substantial and towards the higher end of that scale.	

MAIN COMMENTS:

Dear Sam,

I met with the owner and their agent and we discussed the proposal. Although I am sympathetic to the owners' personal circumstances and the gradual decline of the success of the business I am mindful that once the commercial space is converted to residential use this will effectively be gone forever. I cannot imagine any future owner wanting to lose residential space once it is established. Retaining the physical shopfront will not be enough to mitigate the loss of activity and sense of vibrancy that a village shop provides. I appreciate that this use might cease in the short term, as the current business will close in any case but the potential for the space to be used for business purposes in the future will remain. The fact that this is the only shop in this ancient part of West Chiltington exacerbates the extent of harm if it were to be converted to residential use. The pub is currently open but this is a precarious time for village pubs and it was closed recently for some time. It is not certain it will be a viable business in the future and therefore it is essential we do not lose any commercial space in the core of the ancient village.

The character of the conservation area is not just created by physical structures and the relationship between them. The character is also created and maintained by the type of activity that takes place within it. In this case, this part of West Chiltington is an ancient village centre and the building sits on an important meeting of routeways. Although the shop may have only existed in its current guise since the nineteenth century, there is every reason to believe that the building's position at the cross roads provided opportunity for local and passing trading activities. In any case, it is important that in order to preserve the character of the conservation area we do not remove the opportunity for commercial activity in this location.

I appreciate that retaining the physical shopfront despite residential conversion will not have a great or immediate impact to the special interest of the listed building. However I am mindful that the desire for privacy and security will increase pressure to agree or overlook gradual alteration that will dilute the principal elevation. The current proposals do not include any physical alteration that would harm the special interest of the listed building but the loss of the commercial space will erode an understanding and appreciation of the building's historic use and this will be compounded over time leading to harm in the longer term.

Regards,
Seán

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS: N/A

NAME:	Seán Rix
DEPARTMENT:	Conservation
DATE:	13.01.26