

Application Number:	P/FUL/2026/04554
Webpage:	Planning application: P/FUL/2026/04554 - dorsetforyou.com
Site address:	Leeson House Field Studies Centre, Access To Leeson House, Langton Matravers, BH19 3EU
Proposal:	New extension for WCs and showers, internal alterations and external alterations.
Applicant name:	Dorset Council
Case Officer:	Cari Wooldridge
Ward Member(s):	Cllr Wilson

1. Reason application is going to committee:

This application is reported to the Planning Committee as the applicant is Dorset Council and the application site is Council owned.

2. Summary of recommendation:

GRANT planning permission subject to conditions as set out in Section 17.

3. Key planning issues

Issue	Conclusion
Principle of development in the countryside	Acceptable within countryside.
Scale, design, and impact on character and appearance of the area and the Dorset National Landscape	Acceptable.
Impact on the Grade II Listed Heritage Asset of Lesson House and Langton Matravers Conservation Area	Acceptable subject to condition.
Impact on the living conditions of the occupants and neighbouring properties	Acceptable.
Flood risk and drainage	Acceptable subject to condition.
Biodiversity and trees	Acceptable subject to conditions.

4. Description of site

- 4.1 Leeson House is a large, detached building located on the hillside to the south of Coombe Hill, Langton Matravers. It is accessed via a private driveway which also serves The Coach House to the northwest. Originally a farmhouse, the building developed into a country house and was then used as a boarding school before and after the Second World War. During the war, the house and grounds were used to develop secret projects such as radar. The Grade II Listed building became a Field Study Centre in 1967 and is now operated by Dorset Council as part of the Dorset Council Outdoor Education Service which is part of Children's Services.
- 4.2 The Field Study Centre provides residential educational facilities for Primary to A Level field trips and accommodates up to 80 students and 12 accompanying staff. Self-catering stays for large groups are also accommodated, and residential bookings are taken 7 days a week throughout the year. In addition, a wide range of day visits and outreach activities are offered.
- 4.3 The red line of the application site is tightly drawn around the main building (Leeson House), its northern courtyard and the vehicular access. The wider blue line includes the adjacent Grade II Listed outbuilding, The Coach House, other related buildings, parkland and woodland directly adjoining the site and areas of parking and turning. The site lies outside the Langton Matravers settlement boundary but within the part of Langton Matravers Conservation Area covering Coombe and Leeson Park. It is also within the Dorset National Landscape and Purbeck Heritage Coast being directly surrounded by mature trees and landscaping with agricultural fields (former parkland) beyond. The nearest residential development within the Langton Matravers settlement boundary is along Steppes Hill approx. 78m to the west.

5. Description of development

- 5.1 The application proposes a new single storey extension of approx. 24sqm footprint off the north elevation of Lesson House to provide additional WCs and showers. The flat roof extension will have a maximum height of 3.45m (top of parapet wall and rooflights) and will be finished externally in timber cladding to match that of the west wing elevations.
- 5.2 Internal alterations are proposed to the existing west wing to provide a new dormitory room (2 bed) and a separate staff store.
- 5.3 At first floor, in the main part of the house, it is proposed to replace an existing w.c. / powder room with a shower room.
- 5.4 External alterations including the insertion of a window (to match existing) to serve the new dormitory room, insertion of an in-slate vent, and a replacement Purbeck Stone wall along the eastern boundary of the higher-level courtyard.

6. Background and relevant planning history

- 6.1 There is an extensive history of planning and listed building applications associated with the Field Study Centre use of the site. The most recent planning history is summarised in the table below.

Application No.	Description	Decision	Date
P/PAP/2024/00556	To provide critically needed WC & shower facilities for Leeson House	Summary of response: Proposals are acceptable in principle.	Issued 18/02/2026
P/PDE/2025/00047	PV panels to roof	Planning permission and Listed Building Consent required	18/03/2025
P/FUL/2024/03475 & P/LBC/2024/03894	Demolition of existing stone/brick structure & replace with a new single storey extension to provide WC & shower facilities; Relocate existing equipment store room to the hall, by way of constructing a mezzanine structure; Provide a new dormitory, which is to include a new window to the extension granted planning permission in 2013. Convert existing powder room to a shower room.	Withdrawn	05/09/2024
6/2013/0667	Construction of ground floor extension to provide accessible dormitories with adult bedroom, accessible shower room, store.	Granted	22/05/2014
6/2013/0650	Accessible facilities - provide accessible dormitories, adult bedroom with en-suite, accessible shower room and store. Provide accessible platform lift and stairs to enable access from dining room to hall and dormitories. Provide WC to hall.	Granted	30/01/2014

6.2 The current planning and related listed building consent applications have been submitted following the withdrawal of planning application P/FUL/2024/03475 and listed building application P/LBC/2024/03894 in 2024. An options appraisal was subsequently undertaken by the applicant to determine the most appropriate location to install the required shower and w.c. facilities. This was followed by the provision of positive planning and conservation pre-application advice on a scaled down proposal in early 2026.

6.3 The current application – Option C of the appraisal – proposes:

1. Ground floor single storey extension off the north elevation to provide additional shower and w.c. facilities.
2. Conversion of existing ground floor staff boot room into new dormitory (2 bed) and insertion of window in west elevation to match existing. Internal alterations to create new staff equipment store.
3. Creation of new wet room in existing first floor w.c. / powder room.

6.4 The applicant's supporting documentation advises that the Standards / requirements for safeguarding have changed since the building first became used as a Field Studies centre. It has become increasingly difficult to manage safeguarding, particularly with respect to how shower and toilet facilities are shared. There is a need to be able to segregate different groups using the centre – by age, by gender, or simply because they are from different schools and engaged on different activities as separate groups. There are particular safeguarding concerns for trans -gender students. During the last academic year, Leeson House has had 9 schools request alternative or flexible accommodation due to a child or student with anxiety due to transitioning gender. Individual, more private toilet/ shower facilities with full length floor to ceiling walls would provide for this need. In addition to the safeguarding concerns, there are also too few toilets and showers at the centre and the additional flexibility proposed by the application is required. The supporting statement includes detailed evidence of the identified need and compliance requirements.

7. List of constraints

Grade: II Listed Building: Leeson House. List Entry: 1171880

Grade: II Listed Building: Outbuilding in rear courtyard of Leeson House, immediately north-west of the house. List Entry: 1120304 - Distance: 2.55m

Within Langton Matravers Conservation Area

Within Dorset National Landscape

Within Dorset Heathlands (5km buffer)

Within Purbeck Heritage Coast

Access partly within Langton Matravers settlement boundary

Radon: Class: 1.0

Dorset Council Land Freehold: Leeson House & caretakers

Existing ecological network - Terrestrial

Higher Potential ecological network

Wildlife Present: S41 - Important Amphibian

High Opportunity Nature Areas – surround the site

Potential Activities – create or enhance woodland habitat

Dorset Priority Habitats

Ancient Woodland – Various with nearest being Yards Brake - Distance: 302.85m

Flood Risk:

Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map for Planning – Flood Zone 1

EA Flood Map for Planning – Low Flood Risk,

Dorset Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment- Groundwater – Susceptibility to flooding

8. Consultations

- 8.1 All consultee responses can be viewed in full on the website. A summary is provided below:

Consultees

1. Dorset Wildlife Trust

No comments received.

2. Dorset Council (DC) - Highways

No objection.

Proposal will not alter existing access arrangements or significantly alter travel demand to and from the site.

3. DC - Conservation Officers

Development would not change the character or appearance of the Conservation Area given the distance and overall lack of public intervisibility between the proposed development and public rights of way.

Application seeks to alter, demolish and otherwise build off of relatively modern rear extensions to the building which would not result in any identifiable harm to special interest of the Listed Building.

As indicated in the pre-application response, a condition should be applied to any consent for a sample or image of the raised stone wall to be approved by a member of the Conservation team. This wall must follow the drystone design guidance in the SPD.

No objection subject to condition.

4. DC - Asset & Property

No comments received.

5. Tree Officer (Verbal comments)

Tree protected by Conservation Area siting.

Amended Tree protection Plan is acceptable subject to condition securing implementation and pre-commencement site meeting.

6. Langton Matravers Parish Council

No objection.

7. Southeast Purbeck Ward – Cllr Ben Wilson

No comments received.

Representations received

- 8.2 The application was publicised by way of a site notice on the main entrance gates and an advertisement in the Bournemouth / Dorset Echo. No representations were received in response to the consultation.

9. Duties

s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that when considering whether to grant planning permission for a development which affects a listed building or its setting, there is a general duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) requires Local Planning Authorities to seek to further the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscape (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) when making any decision which affects such land.

10. Relevant policies

Development plan

In this case the development plan comprises:

Local Plan Adopted Purbeck Local Plan:

The following policies are considered to be relevant to this proposal:

V1: Spatial strategy for sustainable communities

E1: Landscape

E2: Historic environment

E4: Assessing flood risk

E5: Sustainable drainage systems (SuDs)

E7: Conservation of protected sites

E8: Dorset heathlands

E9: Poole Harbour

E10: Biodiversity and geodiversity

E12: Design

I2: Improving accessibility and transport

Policy I3: Green infrastructure, trees, and hedgerows

Material considerations

Emerging local plans:

Policy DM4: Emerging development plan proposals of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant plan policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan are to the policies of the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

The Dorset Council Local Plan

The emerging Dorset Local Plan is being prepared in accordance with plan-making processes set out in the Levelling Up and Regenerating Act 2023 and Local Planning Regulations (2026). As the plan is still at an early stage of the plan making process, limited weight can be attached to it when taking decisions on planning applications. Decisions on planning applications should continue to be assessed against the policies in adopted development plans, national planning policy and any other relevant material considerations.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy identifies local priorities for nature recovery and maps areas where action would be most beneficial. In planning decisions it is a material consideration, helping to ensure that development supports biodiversity enhancement and aligns with Dorset's agreed priorities for nature recovery.

National Planning Policy Framework (17 August 2026)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published on 17 August 2026, sets out the Government's national planning policies for both plan-making and decision-making in England.

When determining development proposals decision-makers are required to take a positive and proactive approach and to seek to approve sustainable development where possible.

The NPPF introduces a permanent presumption in favour of sustainable development, through Policies S3 to S5 (which replaces the former "tilted balance" contained in paragraph 11 of the previous NPPF) and sets out the principles for development within and outside settlements. The Framework also confirms that planning applications should

be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Other relevant NPPF chapters and policies include:

- Chapter 3: Decision making policies. Local planning authorities should approach decision making positively, proactively and proportionately. They should work with applicants through pre-application engagement and consultations and aim to resolve concerns through planning conditions or obligations where possible to avoid delay and to enable an approval rather than a refusal. Applications that accord with the development plan, the NPPF and other material considerations should not be refused where they can clearly be approved.

DM1 Preparing development proposals

DM2 Information requirements

DM3 Determining development proposals

DM4 Emerging development plan proposals

DM5 Development viability

DM6 Use of planning conditions and obligations

DM7 Relationship with other regulatory regimes

DM10 Removal of national permitted development rights

- Chapter 4: Achieving Sustainable Development. The objective of the policies in this chapter is to meet development needs through sustainable patterns of development, including by maximising the potential for growth on suitable land within settlements, enabling development which will support the rural economy, rural communities and the provision of infrastructure, and limiting development away from settlements to help safeguard the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

S3 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

S5 Principle of development outside settlements

S6 Neighbourhood plans and the presumption

- Chapter 5: Meeting the challenges of climate change. Planning decisions should support climate change mitigation and adaptation, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing resilience to climate impacts and directing development away from areas at unacceptable risk from flooding.

CC2 Mitigation of climate change

CC3 Adaptation to climate change

- Chapter 7: Building a strong, effective economy. Planning decisions should enable businesses to invest, expand and adapt in a way that reflects the opportunities, challenges and characteristics of different areas, and supports long-term economic growth both locally and nationally.

E4 Rural business development

- Chapter 14: Achieving well-designed places. Development should be high quality, respect and enhance local character, deliver sustainable and attractive places, and accord with relevant design policies. Proposals that demonstrate good design and place-making should be supported, while those that fail to meet established design standards should be refused unless clearly justified.

DP3 Key principles for well-designed places

DP4 The design process

- Chapter 15: Promoting sustainable transport. The objective of the policies in this chapter is to ensure that transport considerations are taken fully into account in the preparation of development plans and the evolution and assessment of development proposals; using a vision-led approach to embed the role that transport infrastructure and choices can play in creating well-designed, sustainable, inclusive and popular places.

TR3 Locating development in sustainable locations

TR4 Street design, access and parking

TR6 Assessing transport impacts

TR8 Public rights of way

- Chapter 16: Promoting healthy communities. The objective of the policies in this chapter is to promote the creation of healthy and inclusive places and support the provision of appropriate public services, by enabling development which can support this aim and seeking to retain, improve and deliver new facilities which are important for community wellbeing and minimising inequalities.

HC4 Proposals for new and improved community facilities, public service infrastructure and development providing public health benefits

- Chapter 17. Pollution, public protection and security. The objective of the policies in this chapter is to ensure that new development is appropriate for its location, taking into account risks posed by pollution and other hazards; that any impacts which development might have are taken into account; and that sufficient provision is made for development required for public safety and security.

P2: Ground conditions

P3: Living conditions and pollution

- Chapter 18: Managing flood risk and coastal change. Development proposals should minimise risks to development arising from all sources of flooding and coastal change, taking into account the impacts of climate change, by steering development away from areas of risk, ensuring that development will be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and incorporating sustainable drainage systems where appropriate.

F4 Assessing flood risk for decision-making

F5 The sequential test

F6 Development in areas at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea

F7 Ensuring development is safe from flooding

F8 Sustainable drainage systems and watercourses

- Chapter 19: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment: Development should conserve and enhance the natural environment by protecting important landscapes, habitats, biodiversity and trees, while maximising opportunities for nature recovery, green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain. Proposals should avoid significant environmental harm, prioritise land of lower environmental value where possible, and be sensitively designed in protected landscapes and coastal areas. Development causing unacceptable impacts on designated sites, irreplaceable habitats or biodiversity that cannot be adequately avoided, mitigated or compensated for should be refused.
- In National Landscapes substantial weight should be placed on the importance of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty.
- Decisions in Heritage Coast areas should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation
- Improving the natural environment biodiversity is to be protected and encourage net gains for biodiversity.

N2 Improving the natural environment

N4 Protected Landscapes

N6 Areas of particular importance for biodiversity and geodiversity

- Chapter 20: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – Great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets. Development that preserves or enhances designated or non-designated heritage assets should be approved. while any harm must be clearly justified and weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Proposals causing substantial harm to, or loss of, heritage assets should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where overriding public benefits outweigh the harm.

HE4 Securing the conservation of heritage assets

HE5 Assessing effects on heritage assets

HE6 Proposals affecting designated heritage assets

HE9 Conservation areas

Other material considerations

National Planning Practice Guidance

All of Dorset:

Dorset AONB Landscape Character Assessment

The Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026-31

Dorset Council Interim Guidance and Position Statement Appendix B: Adopted Local Plan policies and objectives relating to climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable design and construction. December 2023.

Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance for Purbeck area:

District Design Guide SPD

Managing and using traditional building details in Purbeck

Langton Matravers Conservation Area Appraisal

11. Human rights

Article 6 - right to a fair trial.

Article 8 - right to respect for private and family life and home.

The first protocol of Article 1 protection of property.

This recommendation is based on adopted development plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the human rights of the applicant or any third party.

12. Public Sector Equalities Duty

As set out in the Equalities Act 2010, all public bodies, in discharging their functions must have “due regard” to this duty. There are 3 main aims: -

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage the Duty is to have “regard to” and remove or minimise disadvantage and in considering the merits of this planning application the planning authority has taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

The application seeks to provide enough toilets and showers on the ground floor of the building near an adjacent dormitory in a location where the need is greatest. It will ensure that suitable accommodation and facilities are provided for a growing number of children that are transitioning gender or who require more privacy when showering, changing, or using the toilet for other reasons. The proposal will also provide the applicants with more flexibility to segregate visiting groups, or by gender, age, activity etc. as appropriate. The proposals will provide the ability to address existing safeguarding concerns whilst also providing much needed additional toilets and showers at the site.

13. Public Benefits

No significant benefits identified.

14. Planning Assessment

Principle of development

14.1 The application site of Leeson House, its vehicular access, and the surrounding parkland lie outside the settlement boundary of Langton Matravers which adjoins the northern site boundary at the junction with Coombe Hill. As the site does not fall within the settlement boundary, the Purbeck Local Plan 2024 (settlement hierarchy and paragraph 49) note that the site is classed as falling within the open countryside. Purbeck Local Plan Policy V1: Spatial strategy for sustainable communities focuses on delivering housing and employment provision in sustainable locations but does not address extensions and alterations to existing buildings within the countryside.

14.2 However, NPPF Policy S3 sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and notes that outside settlements, Policy S5: Principle of development outside settlements should be applied. Policy S5(1) states:

Only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements, as set out in the following list. These should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework.

Criteria (b) and (c) of the list are relevant to the application proposal:

b. Development for rural businesses and services, including tourism, where a location outside settlements is shown to be necessary;

c. The reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building, provided that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the existing building²⁵. In the case of proposals for a replacement building, it should be for the same use and not disproportionately larger than the one it replaces;

14.3 Criterion (b) supports development for rural businesses and services, including tourism, where a location outside settlements is shown to be necessary. Leeson House is a well-established field study centre for educational purposes. It can also be hired as large group self-catering accommodation at certain times of the year. The proposed extension and internal alterations would provide additional WC and shower facilities to provide flexibility and greater privacy in meeting the needs of visitors. The very nature of the established site and requirement for on-site provision justifies the need for the development outside a settlement.

14.4 Criterion (c) permits the reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building, provided that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the existing building. The host building is of a substantial size, and the proposed minor extension would not result in a disproportionate increase compared to the existing. All other requirements of criterion (c) are met.

14.5 Annexe A of the NPPF advises in paragraph 2 that:

Development plan policies (or parts of those policies) which are materially inconsistent with national decision-making policies in this Framework should be given very limited weight.'

As the principle of the proposed development outside a settlement complies with the requirements of NPPF Policy S5, the proposed extension and alterations are judged to form acceptable and sustainable development in the countryside in accordance with

NPPF Policies S3 and S5. This is subject to the consideration of all other material planning issues and NPPF decision-making policies as set out in the sections below.

Scale, design, and impact on character and appearance of the area and the Dorset National Landscape

- 14.6 Policy E12: Design of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024 requires all development and other works to demonstrate a high quality of design that positively integrates with its surroundings and reflects localised traditions of building materials found across Purbeck.
- 14.7 In response to the pre-application advice, the extension to provide the additional shower and w.c. facilities is to be located off the north elevation of the existing building within a higher-level courtyard. The single storey addition with flat roof will be easily accessed from the existing west wing modern dormitory extension and will form an effective use of an underutilised area. The courtyard is currently enclosed on the eastern side by a small outbuilding and Purbeck Stone wall. It is proposed to replace the outbuilding and wall with a new 3.1m tall Purbeck Stone wall along the eastern boundary of the extension. This will create a more defined space in the adjoining lower courtyard whilst screening the modern extension behind the parapet. To the west, the extension will adjoin the existing west wing dormitory. With the main building to the south, the Grade II Listed outbuilding to the east, and further buildings within the grounds to the northwest, the site will be well screened and largely obscured from wider views within the grounds.
- 14.8 The modern design of the extension will sit comfortably against the modern west wing with external timber cladding and doors to match the existing. Two roof lights will be screened by parapet walls and the existing pitched roofs of the surrounding development and will not appear intrusive in design. The layout, scale, and design of the extension are in keeping with the existing modern dormitory extension and will be well screened from the older sections of the building. External materials and finishes are to match existing as detailed on the plans. As such, the proposal is judged to visually enhance the higher courtyard whilst having an acceptable impact on the historic character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.
- 14.9 The application site is located within the Dorset National Landscape and Purbeck Heritage Coast. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) requires that relevant authorities now seek '*to further the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscape (AONB)*'. Policy E1: Landscape of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024 requires that proposals for development conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area and are appropriate in appearance, scale, height, layout, density, visual quality and other effects on the landscape character. It requires an assessment to be made of their direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts in relation to the significance of the landscape asset and balance them against other sustainable development objectives. Proposals are expected to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area and development that significantly adversely affects the character or visual quality of the landscape or seascape will not be permitted.
- 14.10 Although the wider site of Leeson House is positioned in a raised and prominent position on the hillside, the buildings are well screened by surrounding trees and vegetation. In addition, the proposed single storey extension is screened further by the proposed courtyard siting. As assessed above, the proposal is judged to be of an acceptable appearance, scale, height, and layout within the well screened landscape setting with limited visual impact on the landscape quality. Although a new window and two rooflights

are proposed, they will also be screened by the surrounding buildings and mature landscaping. In addition, the grounds of Leeson House are illuminated at night for safety / safeguarding reasons, and the additional artificial lighting is not therefore judged to result in demonstrable harm to the dark night skies of the National Landscape despite the rural location. As such, it is not considered necessary to require additional restrictions (e.g. visible light transmission restriction) on the glazing or details of external lighting in this case and the proposal is judged to further the purposes of conserving the National Landscape designation.

- 14.11 In summary, officers consider that the scale, design and impact on the character and appearance of the area - including the Dorset National Landscape – is acceptable and complies with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), Policies DP3: Key principles for well-designed places and N4: Protected Landscapes of the NPPF, and policies E1: Landscape and E12: Design of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024.

Impact on the Grade II Listed Heritage Asset of Leeson House and Langton Matravers Conservation Area

- 14.12 The application site falls within the Langton Matravers Conservation Area and Leeson House is Grade II Listed Building. An outbuilding in the rear courtyard of Leeson House (immediately north-west of the house) is also a Grade II Listed Building.
- 14.13 Leeson House is a former country house with its earliest fabric dating from the 17th Century. The house has seen extensive alterations throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries with the former seeing a substantial growth in the building's overall footprint.
- 14.14 The current proposals follow the provision of pre-application advice in February 2025 in which the Conservation Officer advised that the proposed single storey extension and further enhancement of the courtyard area (option c) to provide a more welcoming space would form a positive improvement that would enhance the setting of the listed building. However, in respect of the replacement stone wall between the new extension and the lower courtyard to the east, the Conservation Officer advised that a sample panel be built or submitted as an image for approval. The current Conservation Officer has requested the same condition, and this can be included on the decision for the related listed building consent requiring approval prior to commencement of works on the new wall.
- 14.15 In addition to details of the wall, the pre-application advice noted that rooflights, ventilation slates, pipework and extracts / vents should be sited so as not to draw visual attention. The submitted plans include full details which are judged to be suitably screened and of an acceptable design for impacts to be acceptable.
- 14.16 In terms of impact on the Conservation Area, the Conservation Officer notes that Leeson House is identified as a significant component of the designation, being the former manorial seat of the settlement and the centre of the former estate. While a prominent structure in the area, the development identified in this application would not change the character or appearance of the Conservation Area given the distance and overall lack of public intervisibility between the proposed development and public rights of way.
- 14.17 In conclusion, the proposed development is judged to have no effect on the significance of the Grade II Listed heritage assets of Leeson House and the courtyard outbuilding in compliance with NPPF Policies HE5 and HE6. The proposal is also judged to conserve the Langton Matravers Conservation Area in accordance with NPPF Policy HE9(3). In

addition, the proposal complies with Policy E2: Historic environment of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024 which is in broad compliance with the NPPF heritage policies.

Impact on neighbouring properties and the occupants of the Field Studies Centre

- 14.18 Policy E12: Design of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024 requires that new development avoids and mitigates any harmful impacts from overshadowing, overlooking, noise and any other adverse impacts including light pollution from artificial light on local amenity (criterion e). It also requires that buildings are accessible to all (criterion i). This accords with NPPF policy P3 'Living conditions and pollution' which requires healthy living conditions for users and neighbouring residents including consideration of air, noise, artificial light and other forms of pollution.
- 14.19 The proposed extension and alterations will provide an improved standard of accommodation and facilities for all visitors to Leeson House ensuring that stays at the centre are not restricted for any groups.
- 14.20 The development is set within the centre of the grounds and is sufficiently distanced from neighbouring residential properties surrounding the established use. As such, it is judged that the proposals would not result in any demonstrable harm to the amenity of neighbouring residential properties.
- 14.21 No comments have been received from neighbours of the site and Langton Matravers Parish Council has confirmed that it has no objection to the proposals. As such, it is concluded that the proposal accords with Policy E12 of the Local Plan and NPPF Policy P3.

Flood risk and drainage

- 14.22 The application site is located within Flood Zone 1, and the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning identifies a small area of low surface water flooding at the northeast corner of Leeson House. This does not correspond with the proposed location of the ground floor extension. However, the site of the extension is susceptible to groundwater flooding as identified on the Dorset Council SFRA Mapping.
- 14.23 The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment which identifies that the extension development site comprises an area of concrete which formed the base of previously demolished outbuilding. As such, the proposal will not result in an increase of the existing hard surfaced area. The FRA includes results of groundwater monitoring undertaken in a disused well on site from August 2025 to February 2026. This identifies the highest groundwater level as being 0.78m below ground level in December 2025 – a period of exceptionally high rainfall. This was followed by infiltration testing which confirmed that the ground conditions consist of sands which support viable shallow infiltration. An existing soakaway on the site is also confirmed as being subject of no historic flooding issues.
- 14.24 Based on the testing and ground conditions, the FRA proposes an infiltration drainage strategy to deal with surface water from the proposed extension. Officers note that this will provide a betterment on the existing position as there is no formal drainage system for the existing hardstanding. As such, there will be no worsening of on or off-site surface water flow routes and flood risk. In respect of groundwater flooding, the finished floor levels for the extension will match existing and area raised sufficiently above the maximum recorded groundwater level. Implementation of the FRA and drainage scheme will be secured by condition (Condition 5) on the consent.

- 14.25 In summary, the proposal complies with policies E4: Assessing flood risk and E5: Sustainable drainage systems of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024 and NPPF policies F4: Assessing flood risk for decision-making, F7: Ensuring development is safe from flooding, and F8: Sustainable drainage systems and watercourses.

Biodiversity and trees

Biodiversity mitigation and enhancement

- 14.26 The application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) and Certificate of Approval from the Council's Natural Environment Team dated 5th July 2026. The EclA includes mitigation in respect of nearby priority deciduous woodland habitats, commuting and foraging bats, amphibians, reptiles and nesting birds. Enhancements are also identified including the provision of two bird boxes, a bat box, and be bricks as also indicated on the submitted plans. A condition on the decision (Condition 6) will secure full implementation of the approved mitigation and enhancements.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 14.27 The application has claimed the de minimis exemption from the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. This exemption is accepted as the proposed development falls below the de minimis threshold and meets the relevant criteria.

Trees

- 14.28 Leeson House is surrounded by mature trees which provide visual amenity to the site and mature screening of the built development. They are located within Langton Matravers Conservation Area and are protected for their visual amenity value. The application is supported by a Tree Survey and Tree Protection Plan. The Tree Protection Plan was updated during the application process to provide additional information on the proposed fencing standard and ground protection to secure the required level of protection for the two trees closest to the proposal (Holly and Silver Birch). The Tree Officer has confirmed that they have no objection to the scheme subject to a condition securing implementation of the tree protection and a pre-commencement site meeting to ensure that the position of the protection measures are agreed before any works commence (Conditions 3 and 4).
- 14.29 On this basis, the proposal is judged to comply with Policy I3: Green infrastructure, trees and hedgerows of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024.

Highway impacts and parking

- 14.30 Although an existing vehicular access is included within the red line of the application site, the proposals would not impact on the access road or existing parking. The Council's Highway Engineer has also confirmed that the proposals will not significantly alter travel demand to and from the site and therefore no objection is raised. The proposal complies with Policy I2: Improving accessibility and transport of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024.

15. Environmental implications

There will be some carbon emissions associated with the new development. However, the construction will meet Building Regulation standards, and no significant adverse environmental impacts have been identified.

16. Summary of issues and the planning balance

For the above reasons the application is found to accord with the policies of the Purbeck Local Plan 2024 and the National Planning Policy Framework, and there are no material planning considerations that would warrant refusal.

17. Recommendation

To Grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: This condition is required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

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

23/043/D1A Location plan

23/043/D2A Site Plan

23/043/10 B AMENDED Proposed Part Floor Plans

23/043/20 C Proposed Part Roof Plan

23/043/40 A Proposed Elevations & Sections

23/043/30 C AMENDED Proposed Elevations & Sections

DRL7001 P2 Tree Protection Plan

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

3. The development hereby permitted shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved Tree Protection Plan. All tree protection shall be retained until the development is completed and nothing shall be placed within the fencing, nor shall any ground levels be altered or excavations made without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Required to safeguard and enhance the character and amenity of the site and locality and to avoid any irreversible damage to retained trees.

4. No development, including any preparatory works of ground clearance, tree works, or demolition shall commence until:

1. A site meeting has taken place between the Local Planning Authority's (LPA's) Tree Officer, the appointed Arboricultural Consultant and Site Manager, and the outcomes of the meeting have been agreed in writing by the LPA, and

2. An Arboricultural Supervision and Monitoring Statement, which has been informed by the agreed outcomes of the site meeting, has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the LPA.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved Arboricultural Supervision and Monitoring Statement and approved Arboricultural Impact Appraisal and Method Statement or any variation as may subsequently be agreed in writing by the LPA.

Reason: To ensure that the development proceeds in accordance with the approved arboricultural details and that appropriate protective measures are implemented before any works commence.

5. Prior to first use of the ground floor extension, the development shall be completed in accordance with the proposed works detailed in the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Ref: 25125-GAP-ZZ-XX-RP-C-9000-A and 'Drainage Layout Existing and Proposed' Drawing No: 25125-GAP-XX-XX-DR-C 9000 P01, by Godsell Arnold Partnership Ltd dated July 2026, and shall be maintained as such thereafter.

Reason: In order to safeguard the development from unnecessary flood risk.

6. The development hereby permitted shall be implemented strictly in accordance with the recommendations and requirements in the ecology report titled 'Ecological Impact Assessment' by Cherry Tree Ecology Ltd and dated 04 July 2024 and certified by the Dorset Council Natural Environment Team on 5th July 2024.

The development hereby approved must not be first brought into use unless and until:

- i) the recommendations detailed in sections 4 and 6 of the approved ecology report have been completed in full, in accordance with any specified timetable, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and
- ii) written evidence demonstrating compliance has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

The development shall subsequently be implemented entirely in accordance with the approved ecology report and thereafter the approved mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures must be permanently maintained and retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To mitigate and compensate for impacts on ecological receptors, and to provide biodiversity gains.

Informative Notes:

1. Biodiversity Net Gain

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be Dorset Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. These are listed in full in a subsequent informative below.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

- Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:
 - i) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
 - ii) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

Read more about Biodiversity Net Gain at <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/biodiversity-net-gain>

2. Statutory Exemptions and Transitional Arrangements in respect of the Biodiversity Gain Plan

1. The application for planning permission was made before 12 February 2024.
2. The planning permission relates to development to which section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (planning permission for development already carried out) applies.
3. The planning permission was granted on an application made under section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and
 - (i) the original planning permission to which the section 73 planning permission relates* was granted before 12 February 2024; or
 - (ii) the application for the original planning permission* to which the section 73 planning permission relates was made before 12 February 2024.
4. The permission which has been granted is for development which is exempt being:
 - 4.1 Development which is not 'major development' (within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015) where:
 - i) the application for planning permission was made before 2 April 2024;
 - ii) planning permission is granted which has effect before 2 April 2024; or
 - iii) planning permission is granted on an application made under section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where the original permission to which the section 73 permission relates* was exempt by virtue of (i) or (ii).
 - 4.2 Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:

- i) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
- ii) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

4.3 Development which is subject of a householder application within the meaning of article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. A "householder application" means an application for planning permission for development for an existing dwellinghouse, or development within the curtilage of such a dwellinghouse for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse which is not an application for change of use or an application to change the number of dwellings in a building.

4.4 Development of a biodiversity gain site, meaning development which is undertaken solely or mainly for the purpose of fulfilling, in whole or in part, the Biodiversity Gain Planning condition which applies in relation to another development, (no account is to be taken of any facility for the public to access or to use the site for educational or recreational purposes, if that access or use is permitted without the payment of a fee).

4.5 Self and Custom Build Development, meaning development which:

- i) consists of no more than 9 dwellings;
- ii) is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and
- iii) consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding (as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015).

4.6 Development forming part of, or ancillary to, the high speed railway transport network (High Speed 2) comprising connections between all or any of the places or parts of the transport network specified in section 1(2) of the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Act 2013.

4.7 Developments with a redline site boundary of 0.2 hectares or below

4.8 Temporary developments if:

the whole development is temporary

planning permission is granted for 5 years or less

* "original planning permission means the permission to which the section 73 planning permission relates" means a planning permission which is the first in a sequence of two or more planning permissions, where the second and any subsequent planning permissions are section 73 planning permissions.

3. This permission should be read in conjunction with any decision relating to listed building consent P/LBC/2026/04555 reference number and attached conditions.

4. Informative: National Planning Policy Framework

In accordance with policy DM3 of the NPPF the council, as local planning authority, takes a positive approach to development proposals and is focused on providing sustainable development.

The council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

- offering a pre-application advice service, and
- as appropriate updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions.

In this case:

- The applicant/agent was updated of any issues and provided with the opportunity to address issues identified by the case officer.
- The applicant was provided with pre-application advice.