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PLANNING STATEMENT

**PROPOSAL: CHANGE OF USE FROM OFFICE TO CREATE STUDIO FLAT,
REBUILD OF EXISTING ROOF AND INSTALLATION OF THREE
CONSERVATION ROOF LIGHTS AND TWO DORMERS
SITE: 91C BANCROFT, HITCHIN, SG5 1NQ**

DATE: APRIL 2025



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by LRJ Planning Ltd to accompany the full planning application and application for listed building consent for the change of use and associated alterations of 91C Bancroft, Hitchin, SG5 1NQ from an office to a studio flat.
- 1.2 This Statement provides a planning analysis to demonstrate that the submitted proposal is acceptable in planning terms and in accordance with the relevant policy and guidance.
- 1.3 The application is supported by floor plans, which illustrates that the site is capable of the conversion.
- 1.4 The remainder of this Statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2: Site location and description
 - Section 3: Development Proposal
 - Section 4: Planning Policy Context
 - Section 5: Planning Analysis
 - Section 6: Summary

2.0 Site Description

- 2.1 The application site comprises part of the first floor at the rear of a Grade II Listed Building located on the eastern side of Bancroft. The Listing Description (Entry Number: 1347578) states:

"1. 5255 BANCROFT (East Side) Nos 91 & 92 TL 1829 SE 4/9 13.4.51. II

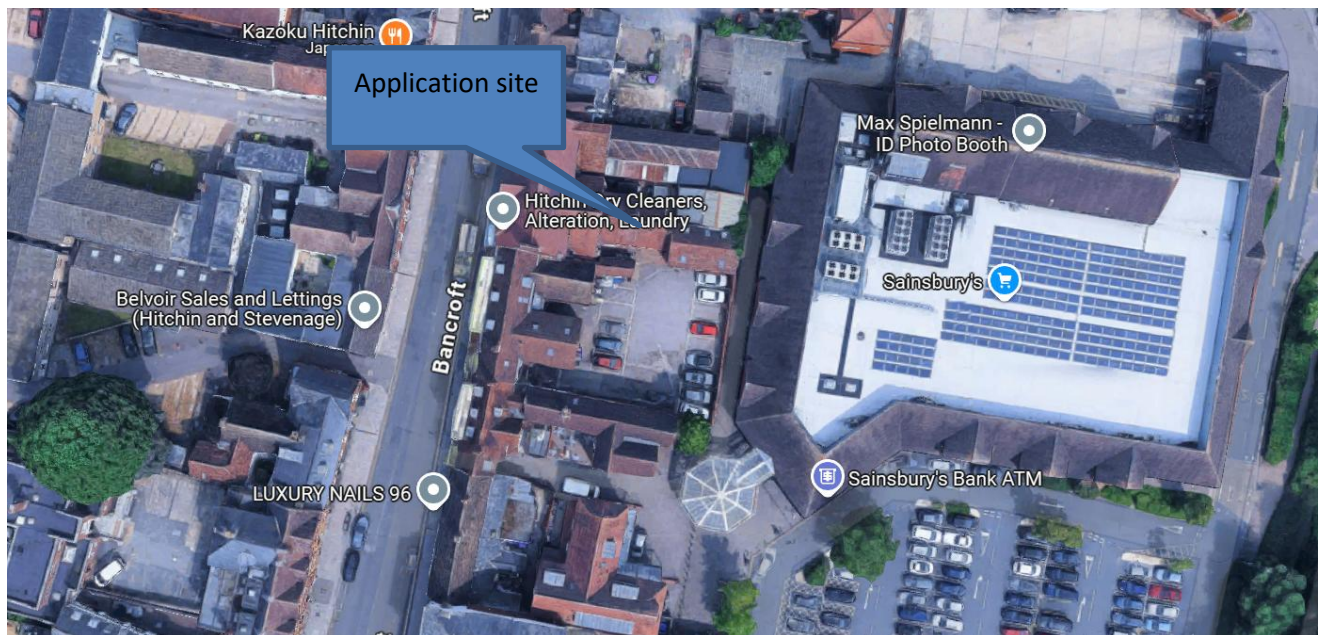
2. Late C18 building of 2 storeys in pale vermillion brick. Moulded brick cornice beneath a low parapet. Steep tiled roof. Carnage at side in slightly recessed section. 3 windows (ground floor, modern bay in No 91, shop window in No 92; upper floor, all

in shallow reveals, three-light on either side). Plain modern door end fanlight inserted into a pedimented case with Doric semi engaged columns. Attic with small box dormer.

No 91 to 93 (consec). Nos 95 to 103B (consec) and Nos 105 to 109 (consec) form a group.”

- 2.2 The aerial photograph exhibited in figure 1 below illustrates the location of the site and nature of the surrounding development.

Figure 1 – Aerial View of Site



- 2.3 The site is considered to occupy a highly sustainable location for new housing with easy access to schools, shops, green open space, as well as public transport links
- 2.4 The property is located within the Hitchin Conservation Area.





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- 5.2 Paragraphs 2 and 47 of the NPPF states that *“Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise”*. This plan-led approach to development is enshrined by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 5.3 Paragraphs 7 and 8 confirm that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which comprises economic, social and environmental dimensions.
- 5.4 Paragraphs 10 and 11 identify the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with Paragraph 11 reaffirming that *“applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise”*, and that development proposals which accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.
- 5.5 Importantly, Paragraph 11d also states that...
- “where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless:*
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”.*
- 5.6 Paragraph 60 highlights the Government’s objective to significantly boost the supply of homes.



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- 5.7 Paragraph 70 notes that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly.
- 5.8 Paragraph 38 of the NPPF relates to decision making and confirms that “*Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.*”
- 5.9 Paragraph 123 highlights that policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, maximising the use of brownfield land. Similarly, Paragraph 124d encourages decisions to promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.
- 5.10 Paragraph 131 notes that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It elaborates that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 5.11 Paragraph 135 seeks to ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, and be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.
- 5.12 The Courts have held that Central Government’s policy is a material consideration that must be taken into account by the decision maker, as are relevant appeal decisions.



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5.13 Local Planning Policy relevant to this small scale development proposal is contained within the North Herts Local Plan. The following policies are considered to be relevant:

North Herts District Local Plan 2011–2031:

- **SP1** – Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire
- **SP2** – Settlement Hierarchy
- **SP8** – Housing
- **SP9** – Design and Sustainability
- **SP10** – Healthy Communities
- **SP11** – Natural Resources and Sustainability
- **SP13** – Historic Environment
- **T2** – Parking
- **D1** – Sustainable Design
- **D3** – Protecting Living Conditions
- **D4** – Air Quality
- **HE1** – Designated Heritage Assets
- **NE4** – Biodiversity and Geological Sites
- **NE7** – Reducing Flood Risk
- **NE8** – Sustainable Drainage Systems

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

- **SPD – Vehicle Parking at New Developments**

6.0 PLANNING APPRAISAL

6.1 This section seeks to highlight the main issues relevant to the determination of the application and assess the scheme against the local and national planning policies referenced in section 4.0 above. The proposal accords with the Local Plan and aims to



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meet the city's demand for additional housing in sustainable urban areas while complying with relevant policies to ensure the well-being of occupants and neighbouring residents.

6.2 The main issues that are considered to be relevant in this case include the following:

- The principle of development
- Heritage matters
- Neighbour amenity
- Transport related matters

A) Principle of Development

6.3 The application site is located within the built-up area of Hitchin and lies entirely within the settlement boundary, as defined in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. In accordance with Policy SP2 (Settlement Hierarchy), Hitchin is identified as one of the District's main towns where development is directed and actively supported. Policy SP2 makes clear that new residential development will be permitted within the defined settlement boundaries of Hitchin, subject to compliance with other relevant planning policies and material considerations.

6.4 The proposal seeks to provide a new residential unit in the form of a self-contained flat, which represents a sustainable and efficient use of land within an established urban area. The creation of an additional residential unit will contribute positively to the District's housing supply and aligns with the overarching objectives of both local and national planning policy to support the delivery of new homes in appropriate and accessible locations.

6.5 Given the site's position within the built core of Hitchin, and its proximity to local services, amenities, and sustainable transport links, the principle of residential



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development on this site is wholly consistent with the spatial strategy for growth. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle, subject to consideration of detailed matters such as design, residential amenity, and highways, which are addressed in subsequent sections of this statement.

B) Heritage Matters

- 6.6 The application site lies within the Hitchin Conservation Area and relates to a Grade II listed building, and as such the proposed works must be assessed in the context of statutory and policy requirements for preserving heritage assets.
- 6.7 Under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the local planning authority is required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Similarly, Section 72(1) of the same Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.8 The proposed development seeks to convert an existing upper floor office into a single residential flat, rebuild part of the existing roof, and install three conservation-style Velux rooflights along with two dormer windows to facilitate appropriate internal living space. These interventions have been carefully designed to respect the proportions, detailing, and historic character of the host building.
- 6.9 Policies, HE1, D1 and D2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan are of direct relevance. Policy D1 encourages development that positively responds to the local context in terms of character and appearance, while Policy D2 requires alterations and additions to be sympathetic to the original building and its surroundings in terms of scale, form, orientation, and detailed design. These policies are broadly aligned with Section 12 of



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the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which promotes high-quality design and places great weight on the conservation of heritage assets.

- 6.10 The proposed works have been sensitively designed to ensure minimal visual impact on the listed building and the wider Hitchin Conservation Area. The new dormers are modest in scale, appropriately located, and reflective of traditional roof forms in the locality. The Velux rooflights are conservation-style and lie flush with the roof slope to reduce visual prominence. The alterations to the rear elevation are discreet and maintain the architectural coherence of the rear façade.
- 6.11 Importantly, the conversion of the office space into a residential flat represents a viable and sustainable re-use of the building, contributing to its long-term preservation. The internal and external interventions avoid harm to the historic fabric and retain the key architectural features of significance.
- 6.12 In summary, the proposals are considered to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building, cause no harm to the significance of the heritage asset, and maintain the character and appearance of the Hitchin Conservation Area. The development therefore complies with Policies HE1, D1 and D2 of the Local Plan, Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and the NPPF.

B) Residential Amenity

- 6.13 The proposal has been carefully designed to respect the character and fabric of the listed building while providing a high standard of accommodation for future occupiers.
- 6.14 Policy D3 of the Local Plan permits development that does not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and, where necessary, encourages the use of appropriate mitigation measures. This policy approach is consistent with



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paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which seeks to ensure that developments create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

- 6.15 The proposed studio flat would benefit from appropriate levels of natural light and outlook via the new rooflights and dormer windows, which are sensitively designed in conservation style to minimise visual impact. The placement and orientation of the new openings have been carefully considered to avoid any direct overlooking or loss of privacy for neighbouring residential properties. Furthermore, the introduction of habitable use at first-floor level would not give rise to any increased overlooking relative to the existing lawful use as an office.
- 6.16 In view of the above, it is considered that the development would not result in any unacceptable detrimental impact on neighbouring occupiers or the character of the area and is therefore fully compliant with the provisions of Policy D3 of the Local Plan and the overarching aims of the National Planning Policy Framework.

C) Highways and Parking

- 6.17 The proposed development does not include the provision of on-site car parking. However, the site's highly accessible and sustainable location effectively mitigates this omission and complies with the overarching principles of sustainable development promoted within both local and national planning policy.
- 6.18 The application site is located within the centre of Hitchin. Additionally, multiple bus stops are located in close proximity to the site, providing access to an established network of local and regional services. The site is also well-served by a range of amenities including shops, services, and community facilities, all within a short walking or cycling distance. This concentration of transport options and local services



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contributes to a highly sustainable pattern of development where reliance on private car ownership is demonstrably reduced.

- 6.19 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages the optimisation of land in sustainable locations, particularly where this can support reduced car dependency, promote walking and cycling, and make effective use of public transport. The NPPF recognise that in locations that are well-served by public transport, opportunities should be taken to reduce the need for parking provision and instead encourage sustainable travel behaviour. The proposed scheme fully accords with these objectives.
- 6.20 Moreover, the Local Plan and accompanying parking standards allow for flexibility where developments are located in highly accessible urban locations, subject to satisfactory justification. In this case, the lack of car parking is a considered response to the site context, and not expected to generate undue pressure on existing parking provision in the area.
- 6.21 Overall, the proposal is located in a demonstrably sustainable and accessible location where the absence of car parking does not give rise to any material harm. The approach is consistent with the aims of the NPPF and the Local Plan in promoting sustainable development patterns and minimising car dependency.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 As demonstrated within this Planning Statement the site is located within a highly sustainable, built up residential area and would provide a mix of housing which is required and meet the needs of the community. The proposal delivers much-needed housing in a sustainable location while maintaining high standards of residential amenity and complying with local transport and parking provisions.



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- 7.2 In light of the scheme's accordance with the development plan, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.