



Design and Access Statement

Conversion of First Floor Office to Studio Flat, Including Roof Alterations 91C Bancroft, Hitchin, SG5 1NQ

1.0 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to support a full planning application and associated application for Listed Building Consent in relation to 91C Bancroft, Hitchin, SG5 1NQ. The proposal concerns the change of use of an existing first floor office to a self-contained studio apartment, along with associated roof alterations, including the installation of conservation-style rooflights and two modest dormer windows.

The purpose of this statement is to articulate how the design responds to the heritage context of the site, assess its compatibility with the character and appearance of the surrounding Conservation Area, and demonstrate that the proposal complies with the relevant national and local planning policies. This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted plans and heritage information.

The statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2: Site Context and Heritage Significance
- Section 3: The Proposed Development
- Section 4: Design Justification
- Section 5: Access Considerations
- Section 6: Policy Compliance and Conclusion



2.0 Site Context and Heritage Significance

The site comprises part of the first floor to the rear of Nos. 91–92 Bancroft, a Grade II listed building located within the Hitchin Conservation Area. The building is positioned on the eastern side of Bancroft, a principal thoroughfare in the historic core of Hitchin.

Listing Description (Entry Number: 1347578)

The property forms part of a late 18th-century two-storey terraced building constructed in pale vermillion brick with a moulded cornice and low parapet. The frontage features traditional fenestration within shallow reveals, and the building forms part of a wider group of listed properties, contributing positively to the character and appearance of the townscape.

3.0 The Proposed Development

The proposed development seeks permission to convert the existing office (Class E) use on the first floor to a studio flat (Class C3), involving internal reconfiguration to provide appropriate residential accommodation.

Externally, the scheme includes the rebuilding of a section of the existing pitched roof and the installation of three conservation-style rooflights to the rear roof slope and two dormer windows on the front-facing pitch. These roof-level interventions are designed to introduce light into the converted space and enable functional headroom for domestic living, while minimising visual impact and preserving the character of the listed building.

The scheme is supported by detailed architectural drawings which illustrate the feasibility of the conversion and ensure that the proposed works remain sympathetic to the host building's architectural language.



4.0 Design Justification

4.1 Layout and Use

The proposal results in a modest, single-unit dwelling that reflects the sustainable reuse of underutilised floor space. The internal layout ensures sufficient natural light and ventilation, with a logical arrangement of kitchen, bathroom, and living areas that complies with modern space and habitability standards.

4.2 Scale and Massing

The footprint and volume of the building remain unchanged, with only minor roof alterations proposed. The introduction of two traditional dormer windows and conservation rooflights is considered appropriate in scale and subservient to the original roof structure. The proposed dormers replicate vernacular forms observed elsewhere along Bancroft.

4.3 Architectural Detailing and Materials

Materials and detailing have been selected to harmonise with the existing historic fabric. The dormers will be finished in timber with pitched tiled roofs to match the existing covering, while the conservation rooflights are designed to sit flush with the roof plane. The intervention is subtle and respects the building's heritage status.

4.4 Heritage Impact

The works have been carefully conceived to respect and preserve the architectural and historic interest of the listed building and to contribute positively to the Hitchin Conservation Area. As required by Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the proposals demonstrate due regard for the special architectural and historic character of the host building and its wider context.



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The building retains much of its historic frontage and form. The works to the rear are modest in nature, clearly legible as 21st-century additions, and reversible without substantial loss of fabric or significance. The proposal thus adheres to the conservation-led approach advocated by both national and local planning frameworks.

5.0 Access Considerations

The existing point of access via the side carriageway entrance will remain unaltered and will continue to serve the upper floor. Given the urban location and proximity to local amenities and public transport, the proposal does not generate any unreasonable demand for parking or vehicle movements.

The studio flat is designed to meet minimum accessibility standards for a first floor dwelling in a historic context. Due to the listed status and fabric constraints, step-free access cannot be provided, although the design provides for convenient, safe circulation internally.

The proposal aligns with the principles of inclusive access, ensuring that the unit is safe, usable and navigable for the majority of future residents, within the limits imposed by the existing structure.

6.0 Policy Compliance and Conclusion

The site is located within the settlement boundary of Hitchin, a designated sustainable location for new housing. The reuse of the space for residential accommodation contributes positively to local housing supply, optimises use of existing infrastructure, and represents an appropriate response to evolving land use patterns within town centres.

Crucially, the design has been guided by a clear understanding of the site's heritage context. It safeguards the special interest of the listed building and enhances the character of the Conservation Area through sensitive, small-scale intervention.