

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	26/01496/FP & 26/01497/LBC
CASE OFFICER:	TK
APPLICATION SITE:	20 High Street, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6AX
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Change of use of first and second floors into 8 residential flats. Internal alterations to facilitate change of use of first and second floors to 8 residential flats.

RECOMMENDATION:

The following matters are of concern:

- The vacant space at ground floor with no long-term use identified. I have queried as to why the additional 6no. flats and commercial unit are not identified as forming part of a more comprehensive scheme.
- The extent to which window alterations may have been undertaken pursuant to appn refs: 23/02191/FP, 23/02192/LBC and 24/02388/LBC.
- The external condition of the building, particularly the north elevation.

Having had a telephone conversation with the agent this morning I am aware that a new drawing was produced no. P0426-323 labelled 'Proposed ground, first and second floor plans'. This helps to clarify the situation regarding the ground floor. Whilst having that conversation I said that drawing no.2075-02 Rev F - Location plan Block Plan and Proposed floor plans showing Cycle Store as per previous planning condition, is showing on our NECDM system. The agent stated that this plan was not part of his submission and should not form part of the suite drawings on the decision notices.

Next, the agent was also unsure as to the extent to which replacement/new windows had been implemented on site previously and agreed that a comprehensive window schedule for the first and second floors would be prepared to support these applications.

Finally, I said that I would be minded suggesting imposing a condition regarding repairs to the external envelope of the building (see draft conditions below).

Apart from the above, I find the proposal **UNOBJECTIONABLE** satisfying the aims of Sections 16(2) (LBC only), 66(1) (FP only) and 72(1) (both) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and Section 20 of the NPPF (August 2026).

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on listed building's significance and the character and appearance of the Baldock Conservation Area (BCA)

The proposal on the LBC application is for internal works only, therefore, will have no impact upon the character or appearance of the BCA. Internally, the proposal will have a small yet noticeable impact upon the building's internal arrangement but will not adversely affect the building's special character.

SITE CONTEXT:

As stated at 2.1 of the Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement

The application site comprises the original No. 20 and the since amalgamated No. 22 and is located off High Street, set back from the highway. This is a grade II listed building, formerly in use as a hotel and restaurant and recently was in use as sheltered housing accommodation, which has now expired for its temporary planning permission. The building has ground, first and part second floors, with two basement areas. There is a wide side passage with courtyard to the south, giving external access to the rear of the building. The site is located within the Baldock Conservation Area.

Both the building and area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the policies of the NPPF. The list entry reads as follows:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1175472>



I previously commented under refs:

- **14/01335/1 & 14/01336/1LB** - Addition of two windows and replacement window and doors to north side elevation. Part replace existing painted render on north elevation with black timber cladding (as amended by drawing no.8790-02A received 20/11/2014 and drawing no.8790-1D received 08/12/2014) – Split decision for Planning and listed building consent, whereby the windows were granted and the timber cladding refused.
- **20/00957/FP & 20/00958/LBC** - Change of use from hotel and restaurant (C1 and A3 use class) to one retail shop (A1 use class) and 14 residential apartments (C3 use class) including internal and external alterations (as amended by plan received 11-06-2020) - Planning permission and listed building consent granted.
- **22/00927/FP & 22/00928/LBC**- Temporary change of use for three years of ground floor hotel restaurant to residential sheltered housing accommodation to provide 10 en-suite rooms and ancillary facilities, with internal and external alterations - Planning permission and listed building consent granted.
- **22/01498/FP** - Retention of change of use of first and second floors to residential sheltered housing accommodation to provide 19 en-suite rooms and one office for a temporary period of three years - Planning permission granted.

- **23/02191/FP & 23/02192/LBC** - Temporary change of use until 31/12/25 (the time limit approved in applications 22/00927/FP and 22/01498/FP) of the ground floor hotel restaurant to residential sheltered housing accommodation to provide one additional en-suite room and ancillary facilities, with internal and external alterations (as a variation to application 22/00927/FP and with amended drawing no. 2075-03G received on 28/11/23) - Planning permission and listed building consent granted, with discharge of conditions granted.
- **24/02388/LBC** - Minor changes to window arrangements of approved application 23/02192/LBC. Conditional Consent

I was also the case officer for ref: 24/02770/DOC for ***Details reserved by Condition 4 (Window joinery section details) of listed building consent application reference 24/02388/LBC granted on 04.12.2024.***

As noted above the current applications relate to the first and second floor with the ground floor being relevant for access whilst refuse and recycling would be provided in the current general store at the rear of the side courtyard of the site and cycle storage would be provided by way of a vertical hung secure cycle store to the courtyard area. At 4.1 of the submitted Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement it says:

The ground floor will remain vacant at present but was part of the previous permission for 14 apartments.

As stated above, it is my understanding that the 6no. flats on the ground floor as part of the 14-unit scheme under refs:20/00957/FP & 20/00958/LBC were not implemented and this permission has lapsed. I understand that it is currently not a viable option to implement the ground floor as set out in the 2014 scheme therefore, the additional 6no. flats have not been applied for. My slight concern is that with there being no activity on the ground floor, how is this space proposed to be managed including the long-term future of the commercial Unit 1 if it is effectively 'moth-balled' in the short to medium term.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Whilst there is an extensive recent planning history, there has been some uncertainty over this building's long-term use particularly considering the expired recent temporary permission. During the last decade and beyond, the building's external envelope has in part deteriorated (specifically the north-facing elevation), Where new windows have been installed, 'making good' the surrounding render has not been executed to a good standard and existing rendered finishes are failing. In short, a viable use that safeguards the building's future ideally needs to be found.

As stated by the case officer considering a scheme in 2020:

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the building from its current hotel (Class C1) and restaurant (Class E(b)) use to a use as 14 residential apartments (Class C3) and a shop (Class E(a)). Other operational development involved in the proposed change of use includes replacement some external windows to double glazed units.

The case officer went to say at 4.3.1 (my emphasis in bold):

*The key issues in the determination of this application are the **vitality and vibrancy of the Town Centre**; the principle of the residential use; the housing mix; parking requirements; the living conditions of the future occupiers of the premises; **preserving the significance of the heritage asset; the character of the building and sites surroundings**; and the living conditions of the occupiers of adjoining premises.*

Further on at 4.3.18 the case officer stated:

Following consultation and negotiations with the Senior Conservation Officer at North Hertfordshire District Council, I am satisfied that the proposed development would preserve the significance of the heritage asset. The internal arrangement of the existing building has little historical significance, and the proposed internal alterations, as a result, would not harm the heritage asset. The external alterations, where required, do not materially impact historic fabric or architectural significance. The alterations in window detailing has been negotiated to preserve windows of significance with secondary glazing, and improve fenestrations of no significance while ensuring noise amenity for future occupiers through sound attenuating glazing measures.

Whilst at 4.3.19 the officer reports:

Consequent to the above discussion, subject to conditions, the proposed development would not harm the significance of the heritage asset in terms of its historic or architectural significance. As a result, it is considered the proposal would also respect the contribution of the site to the significance of the Conservation Area, as well as the contribution of the site to the setting of adjoining heritage assets.

The following is stated at 8.2 & 8.3 of the Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement (my highlights in bold):

The viability of the current hotel and restaurant use of this grade II listed building, has been impacted upon ever since the arrival of a new Travelodge and Premier Inn in Letchworth several years ago. As such, finding an alternative suitable and ideally optimum viable use for this building is important. The opening of these two other major hotel options in the local area, meant an overnight reduction in business for Templars Hotel. As part of the application for the 14 apartments, the company accountant provided the latest summary of trading accounts for Templars and an advisory letter to close the business due to the loss-making situation.

***It was accepted that the use of the building as a hotel and ancillary restaurant was unviable and is highly unlikely to reverse the decline in custom and would continue to make a loss.** With the local hotel accommodation options and similar facilities being available throughout the town, of public houses and restaurants, it is considered there would be no harm to the vitality of the town centre from the change of use to residential use. Just as was concluded in the 2020 application and permission for 14 apartments.*

The extent of internal demolition for the current proposal is noted on ARDECO Ltd's drawing no. P-0426-321.

Paragraphs 12.3 o& 12.4 of the Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement says:

The internal works required would not be harmful to any features of significance. The removal of internal walls concern only modern stud partitions. Therefore, there would be no harm to the significance or special character features of this listed building. Likewise, the works and use of the building as residential apartments, would have no impacts upon the Baldock Conservation Area or nearby listed buildings.

*It is therefore considered that the sensitive internal conversion of this building, **together with completion of the minor external repairs to existing facades**, is entirely acceptable and would cause no harm to the significance or setting of the host listed building, any nearby listed buildings, nor the character and appearance of the Baldock Conservation Area.*

I have no reason to contest the above position. What I have highlighted above is a matter of concern and which needs attention.

Paragraph 2 of Policy HE5 of the NPPF states:

2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets (including through effects on their setting) should identify whether proposals would be

likely to:

- a. Have a positive effect, which is where the significance of a heritage asset would be enhanced, or better revealed; or
- b. Have no effect on the significance of a heritage asset; or
- c. Result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or
- d. Cause the total loss of the significance of a heritage asset

In my opinion, the proposal should be considered under Policy HE5 paragraph 2.b, however, if a good standard of external fabric repair is undertaken to the north elevation, then this potentially could be considered a Policy HE5 paragraph 2.a case.

Suggested conditions (LBC only)

Note: Apart from including standard LBC time condition, depending upon what comes back from window survey I will be looking to draft an additional condition(s) relating to windows, but I cannot provide this at the present time.

1. Prior to the commencement of the consented alterations, a detailed schedule of works including render specification for the North Elevation shall be submitted to and if acceptable, approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the works in the approved schedule shall be undertaken and completed prior to the occupation of the first unit hereby consented.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

2. Prior to the commencement of the consented alterations, full details of all external vents (mechanical extract and/or boiler) shall be submitted to and if acceptable, approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the new vents shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Sections 16(1) (LBC only), 66(1) (FPH only) and 72(1) (both)

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

Policy HE1

NPPF (Aug 2026):

Section 20

CONCLUSION:

Subject to receiving a window schedule and maybe adding a window condition(s), it is considered that the proposal will not occasion harm to designated heritage assets, therefore, I raise **NO OBJECTION**.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons**DATE:** 23/09/2026