

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Thomas Howe.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/02806/FP	Installation of shopfront (Development already carried out).	4 - 5 Bancroft Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 1LH

Submitted Plan Nos

L100 PE101 PE102 E101 E102

1.0 Policies

D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
HE1	Designated heritage assets
SECN12	Achieving well-designed places
SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 Various applications.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Neighbour Consultation** – None received.

3.2 **Conservation Officer** – Objection.

“For the existing shopfront ie black aluminium and large picture windows will not secure a retrospective LBC if this is what is sought by applicant.

They would need to return a traditional shopfront like many other along this stretch of Bancroft for example Visioncare at No 3 or even along the lines of the previous shop front (photos are available on Google street view).”

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 No. 4-5 comprises a ground floor unit off Bancroft, Hitchin. The site is within the Primary Shopping Frontage of Hitchin and the Conservation Area. It is Listed, and its list entry reads as follows:

C19 and modern drastic alteration of C15 building. Modern ground floor shops, plaster faced first floor, tiled roof with C19 horsman figurine at east end of ridge copted from original, 4 casements. RCHM p 123; VCH pp 3-4.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Planning permission is sought for the replacement of the shop front. The development has already been carried out.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:

- The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its resultant impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- The impact of the proposed development upon heritage assets within the area.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the living conditions of neighbouring properties.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on car parking provision in the area.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the environment.

Design and Appearance:

- 4.3.2 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that development will be granted provided the design of the development appropriately and positively responds to the site's local context together with other criteria to encourage a positive and sustainable form of development. Policy D2 of the Local Plan requires extensions to houses and the erection or replacement of buildings to incorporate design that is sympathetic to the main building in terms of its scale, form and orientation and does not harm the character and appearance of the locality around the site. These policies are broadly consistent with Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.3.3 The site is within the main shopping area of Hitchin and is within the conservation area. Various Listed Buildings are present, including the application building. The development has been completed and is present on site. It has resulted in the replacement of a traditional frontage featuring a large window with glazing bars, stall risers and white paint, with a new frontage that comprises a large glass floor to ceiling window and door and a very modest black stall riser. To this side of Bancroft, frontages comprise traditional forms and appearances, whilst this new frontage comprises a more modern addition that would appear incongruous and out of place in the context of this side of the road. It is noted that some frontages are relatively similar to this frontage, notably, opposite, however, given the use of materials, colour and the extent of glazing, I would consider that this site is an outlier and would harm the planned and consistent nature of this part of Hitchin. It is noted that the Council Conservation officer has raised objections to the scheme owing to the non-traditional frontage type that is present on site. They conclude that the upper end of less than substantial harm would be occasioned by the development, and that no public benefits outweigh the harm. Therefore, the development is objectionable in both heritage and design terms and should not be supported.

- 4.3.4 The proposed development is therefore considered to run contrary with Policies HE1, D1 and D2 of the Local Plan and the core principles set out within Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The design and appearance are therefore considered to be objectionable.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties:

- 4.3.5 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 mitigation measures to reduce these impacts. This is generally reflected by the provisions within the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.3.6 Given that the built envelope of the building has not been enlarged, I do not consider that dominance would arise for neighbouring occupiers. Furthermore, outlook from the building would be consistent with existing, and is therefore not objectionable. It is noted that no neighbouring representations were received.
- 4.3.7 Given the above, it is considered that the proposed development would result in no unacceptable detrimental impact upon neighbouring occupiers and is therefore compliant with Policy D3 of the local plan and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Environmental Implications:

- 4.3.8 The proposed development, by virtue of its limited scale in general terms together with the sustainable location would have no significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Section 14 of the NPPF.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 The proposed development is considered to occasion less than substantial harm to this Listed Building and the surrounding Hitchin Conservation Area due to its modern appearance being at odds with the planned and traditional appearance of shop frontages to this part of Bancroft. No public benefits are identified to outweigh this harm. The development would therefore run contrary to the provisions of the Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011- 2031. Refuse conditional permission.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 None applicable.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. The site comprises a Grade II Listed Building and is within the Hitchin Conservation Area. This prevailing Town Centre character is considered to be an important part of the character, setting and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area, which

would be adversely effected if the proposed development was permitted. The harm to the setting of the Conservation Area is considered to be less than substantial but which is not outweighed by the limited public benefits of the proposed development. Accordingly, the proposed development is considered contrary to Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been refused for this proposal for the clear reasons set out in this decision notice. The Council has not acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant as in the Council's view the proposal is unacceptable in principle and the fundamental objections cannot be overcome through dialogue. Since no solutions can be found the Council has complied with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 12 March 2025	