

Devlin Architects Ltd (North)
6 Cattan Green,
Formby,
Liverpool,
L37 8BX, UK

Devlin Architects Ltd (South)
Bridgefoot House,
159 High Street,
Huntingdon, Cambs,
PE29 3TF, UK

Web: www.devlinarchitects.com
Mob: 07775 796 155
Email: info@devlinarchitects.com
Instagram: @devlinarchitects



Project

2601 | Garrison Court, Hollow Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 9SE

Reference

Lawful Development Certificate Proposed

File Code

2601-2.01.03-001-PS-260331

Date

31st March 2026

LAWFUL DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE – PROPOSED

PLANNING STATEMENT

Address: Garrison Court, Hollow Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 9SE

Proposed: Replacement of five rear escape staircases and balustrades following removal of five rear existing staircases and balustrades.

1.0 Existing Site Location:

- 1.1 The works are located at two blocks of flats built in the 1940s to 1950s in the centre of Hitchin situated close to Windmill Hill Park. The flats in question are numbers 1 to 30 within two of three residential blocks on the site. The third block – numbers 31 to 48 Garrison Court are not a part of these proposed works.
- 1.2 The two blocks are set on the corner of Hollow Lane and Mount Garrison – refer to aerial photograph – image 001 below.



(001 – Aerial photograph of the proposed site in RED)

- 1.3 The residential blocks have an open green space behind and gardens to the front that set the blocks away from the road edge.

- 1.4 Situated in the middle of this existing development are a series of garages and mature trees.



(002 – Street view - gap between blocks near corner junction)



(003 – Street view – gap between blocks further round Mount Garrison)

- 1.5 The staircases are not highly visible from the street at all. The staircases are only visible in small, limited glimpses as you walk past the gaps between the blocks, or between the residential flat blocks (See images 002 and 003 above).

2.0 Existing condition:

- 2.1 The existing condition should be read in conjunction with the photographs of the existing arrangement depicted and set within Section 05 below.
- 2.2 The existing residential blocks of flats have internal staircases serving 6 flats per staircase and an external escape staircase to the rear also serving 6 flats per staircase.
- 2.3 Each residential flat has a small narrow balcony space to the rear that is accessed via their kitchens and serve as passages for the escape staircase access for each flat to enter via the rear (i.e. from the garages or green space).
- 2.4 The residents also use these spaces for drying of clothes, placement of plants and gaining access to services (i.e. gas meters for example).
- 2.5 The existing condition of the staircases are of poor quality with the iron / steelwork rusting in all variety of places and do not have a long shelf life if left in place.
- 2.6 The stairs were designed to old building standards that do not allow them to comply with modern standards and building regulations in place now. For example, the height of the balustrading and handrail as you walk up the flights are 25cm (250mm) lower that means a greater risk of falling from height for occupants.
- 2.7 The main steelwork connections – posts and beams are rusting throughout – and because the stairs are supported by these gives a serious concern to their longevity. This is because the previous and subsequent treatments and finishes do not seem to have prevented degradation.

- 2.8 The design of the existing staircases is partially supported by the balconies and the existing buildings. If you review closely the posts are also not vertical – leaning to the building or away. Long term this is not a suitable condition.
- 2.9 The concrete balconies are also problematic in their condition due to them being exposed to the elements and the current arrangement of the balustrading allowing for water ingress to enter from the top permeating down. This has caused for the fronts of the balconies to blow with frost over the decades. There has been repairs undertaken but the fundamental issue is the style of connection and arrangement of the balustrading fixing points.
- 2.10 The concrete balcony elements will be retained, and no repair works are proposed at this time but visually the proposed scheme will improve the aesthetics.

3.0 Proposed scheme:

- 3.1 The proposed scheme should be read in conjunction with the submitted proposed drawings of the submission to demonstrate we have tried to ensure the proposed works with the existing style.
- 3.2 The proposed staircases have been designed to modern building regulations – Approved Document Part K and reviewed through consultations with Building Control officers to ensure compliance.
- 3.3 We were approached via the Management Company and their chosen contractor on behalf of the residents they represent to examine the existing staircases and their condition. It was evident they needed to be replaced due to their condition and current arrangement. We then employed to design a new staircase arrangement that complies with modern regulations.
- 3.4 This design uses the existing styling to influence the new proposal to try and reflect its history and allow for a softer transition between old to new.

3.5 The key changes are as follows:

- 3.5.01 *Handrail height balcony:* 850mm (existing) raised to 1100mm (+250mm) making them safe for people to stand up against.
- 3.5.02 *Handrail height stairs:* 750mm (existing) raised to 900mm (+150mm) allowing the stairs to comply with Approved Document Part K.
- 3.5.03 *Spacings between vertical balusters:* Current spacings over 100mm spacings – close to 200mm. Proposed spacings – max 100mm between them to ensure a ‘babies head’ doesn’t fit through (requirement of Approved Document Part K).
- 3.5.04 *Width of the stairs:* 780mm (existing) width increased to 900mm for a comfortable transition up and around the staircase and allowing for someone to pass you on the stairs.
- 3.5.05 *Landings:* Currently no landings for transferring up between flights to the top floor. Landings introduced therefore allowing the balconies not to become transitional spaces.
- 3.5.06 *Steepness of the stairs:* Current stairs are steeper in angle than the proposed staircase. The Approved Document Part K requires the stairs for an escape / utility stair to be shallower and therefore easier transition upwards. This has created longer staircases but will ensure an easier movement vertically.

3.6 The staircases have also been designed to be independent to the main building and balconies and be self-supporting. This will ensure for a greater durability and reduction of the stress and strain on the existing concrete balconies.

3.7 The proposed balcony guarding will remove the fixings that go through the top into the concrete allowing those holes to be repaired. The new balcony guarding will be applied to the front of the concrete allowing for a massive reduction in any water penetration. The design will also cover the unsightly appearance of the concrete with a face plate to match the staircases improving the aesthetics overall.

- 3.8 The separation of the stairs and introduction of large landings will alleviate movement along the balconies and give a little bit more privacy for each resident on their balcony.
- 3.9 The movement of the guarding to the front edge of the concrete rather than on top will provide a bit more width to these balconies for each resident. Increasing from approximately 670mm to approximately 732mm (varying along length as width of concrete balconies alter).
- 3.10 In addition, a small detail means the posts are set above the ground by a minimum of 150mm rather than the existing condition that set the posts into the ground allow for further degradation from weathering.

Initial planning advice:

- 3.11 We spoke to North Hertfordshire Council Duty Officer in Planning on the 22nd January 2026 to assist us understanding how the council viewed these works and what we needed to submit.
- 3.12 The Duty Officer stated:
- *Felt it would fit within Permitted development works under 'maintenance and repair' but couldn't commit to this statement.*
 - *Gave us two options for proceeding:*
 - *Option 1 – Lawful Certificate of Development Proposed Works: Finalise and ensure it fits within permitted development rules and have acknowledged by the council.*
 - *Option 2 – Full planning: Complete a full planning application for the stairs but the duty officer felt it wouldn't be necessary.*
- 3.13 Through discussions with the client and contractor Option 1 was undertaken as this was felt to match the situation where the staircases are being replaced under 'maintenance and repair' reasons.

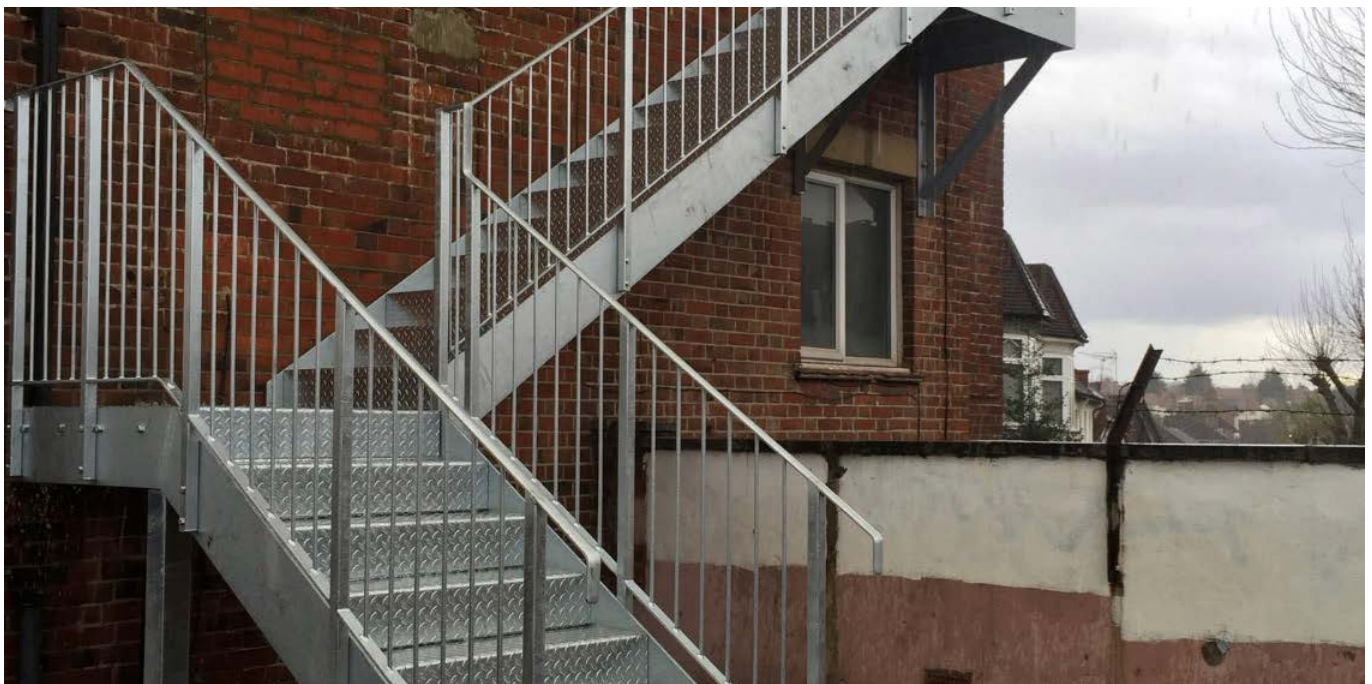
3.14 Therefore, we consider this application to be the following:

- Suitable under 'maintenance and repair' permitted development rules.
- The aesthetics are very similar to the existing.
- The staircases will be durable, safe, and secure and ensure the residents have a safe and secure transition up into their residential flats.
- The staircases will improve the aesthetics of the blocks.

4.0 Materials:

4.1 The existing staircases are painted black iron / steel with the paintwork flaking and adding to the poor-quality appearance.

4.2 Proposed staircase design submitted will use a galvanised steel finish rather than black paint. The galvanised steel finish will offer superior corrosion resistance, long term durability and structural strength that lasts over 50 years. The zinc coating acts as a sacrificial anode, providing a self-healing barrier that protects moisture, scratches, and impact, making it ideal for harsh, coastal, or structural applications.



(004 – Galvanised steel staircase example for materials)

- 4.3 This proposed material change will soften the aesthetics and overall appearance of these staircases making them less harsh than the black painted existing finish.

5.0 Photographs:

- 5.1 We have included within the document a series of existing photographs of the existing staircases to demonstrate the existing condition. However, a visit to site would be advisable to see them in person.
- 5.2 The proposed design can be seen within the submitted drawings for the application.



(005 – Staircase 1 and balustrading – existing condition)



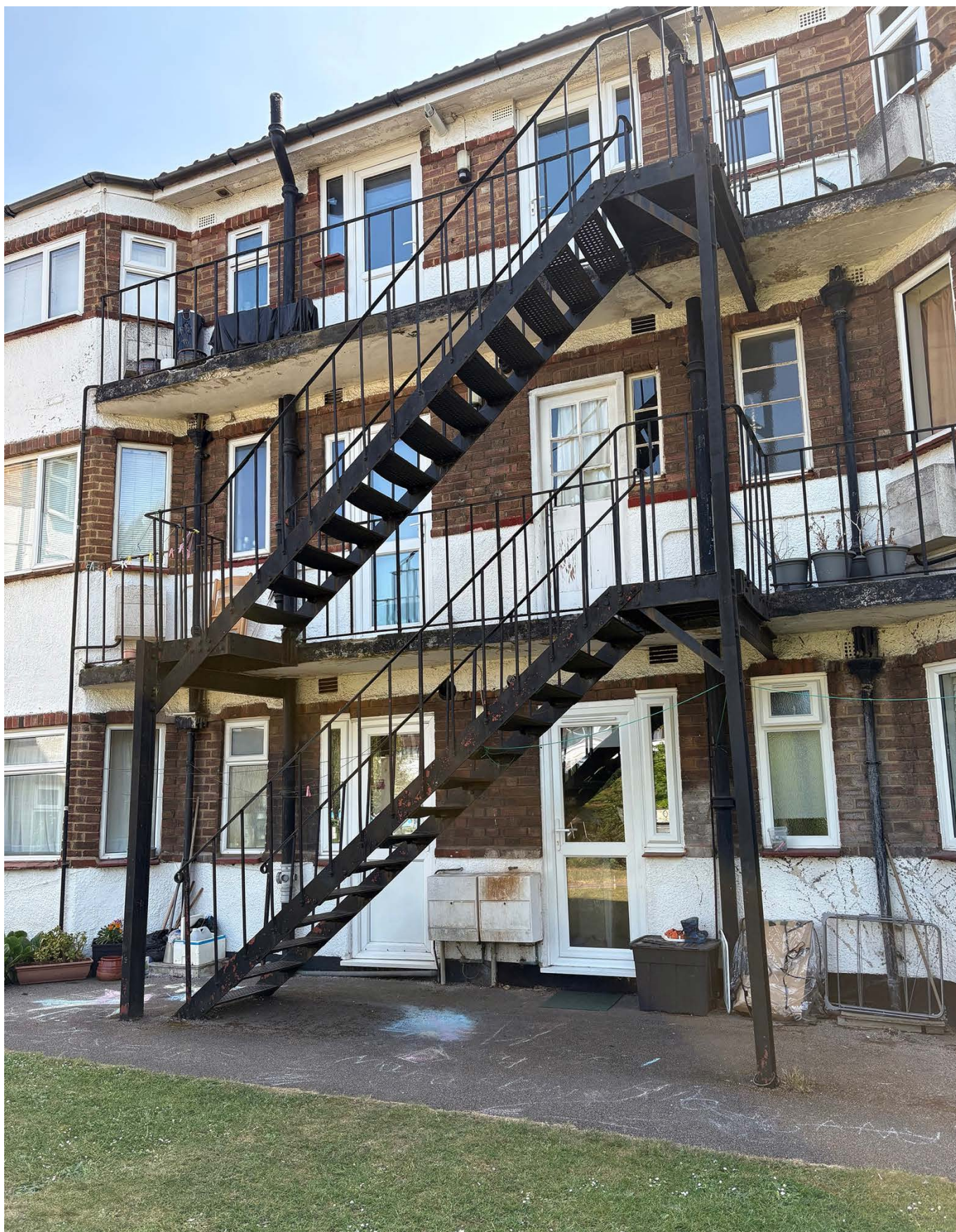
(006 – Staircase 2 and balustrading existing condition)



(007 – Staircase 3 and balconies existing condition)



(008 – Staircase 4 and balconies existing condition)



(009 – Staircase 5 and balconies existing condition)

6.0 Summary:

- 6.1 The existing external escape staircases and external balcony guarding's are of a poor quality and are varied in condition showing signs of significant areas of degradation.
- 6.2 The existing staircases and balconies are narrow and do not comply with modern safety and Building regulations.
- 6.3 The proposed staircase replacement we consider fitting within the 'maintenance and repair' section of Permitted development rules.
- 6.4 The proposed staircases will improve the safety of the residents using these stairs daily to access the rear of their flats.
- 6.5 The proposed design will improve the transition vertically with wider stairs and shallower risers.
- 6.6 The proposal will improve the aesthetics of the rear elevations of these residential blocks and hide the spalled concrete balconies from sight.
- 6.7 The stairs will comply with modern standards and building regulations Approved Document Part K.
- 6.8 The staircases will be finished in a durable and long lasting galvanised steel finish that will ensure their longevity for the residents.