

Design & Access Statement

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Site Address:

8a Bucklersbury
Hitchin
SG5 1BB

Date:

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Applicant:

Sarav Ltd

Architect:

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1.0 Statement of Intent

This design and access statement is prepared by Northlight Architects on behalf of Sarav Ltd in support of an application for Full Planning and Listed Building Consent. The proposal is for minor internal and external alterations and a Change of Use into a small HMO (C4).

2.0 Site Location and Character

Hitchin is a busy market town in North Hertfordshire. The application site is located in the centre of the town, adjacent to the central market square. Bucklersbury contains a mix of commercial and residential uses. It has excellent access to all the town's shops and amenities.



Aerial view indicating application site within context



View towards 8a along Bucklersbury

3.0 Description of the site

As an ensemble, 2-8 Bucklersbury has undergone extensive refurbishment and redevelopment works since 2020. The group of buildings was formerly known as the Hawkins department store and is now in use as a mix of commercial units at ground level and 8 new residential units at ground and first floor level, together with two pre-existing, self-contained residential units, one of which is the site of this application, Unit 8a. No 8a has been intermittently in use as a 3-bedroom flat. It is currently tenanted.

The existing unit extends over the first and second floor and is accessed from a terrace at rear first floor level.



Existing context elevation along Bucklersbury

4.0 Description of Design

The applicant is seeking approval for a change of use from C3 to C4 (small HMO). The intended internal adjustments to the existing property will be minimal and the design was carefully developed, in order to minimize disturbance of historic fabric. The proposed HMO will consist of 2 single bedsits and 2 double bedsits, with a maximum total occupancy of 6 persons.

First Floor

The proposed first floor layout shows the retention of all of historic fabric, with exception of the doors. Internal alterations will include a new partition to create two separate bedsits, new doors, new kitchen furniture, and new linings to the ceiling to improve fire rating and acoustic insulation. The upvc windows to the front elevation will be replaced with single glazed timber sashes. The first floor will remain the entrance storey of the unit.

Second Floor

An existing staircase leads to the upper floor and will be retain in its current form. Internal alterations will include the installation of new doors and sanitary ware, and new floor treatment to improve fire rating and acoustic insulation. The ceiling finishes are to be retained, and loft roll insulation will be installed in the roof void above.

5.0 Planning Considerations

Listing and Demolition

The proposed works carefully consider the historical fabric and features. All historic internal finishes and features within No.8a will be protected and the proposed work have limited effects on the historically valuable building fabric. External works are carefully designed to improve the appearance of the building and are limited to the replacement of the front entrance door, and the replacement of unsympathetic upvc windows with single glazed timber sashes. A heritage statement is also submitted in support of the application.

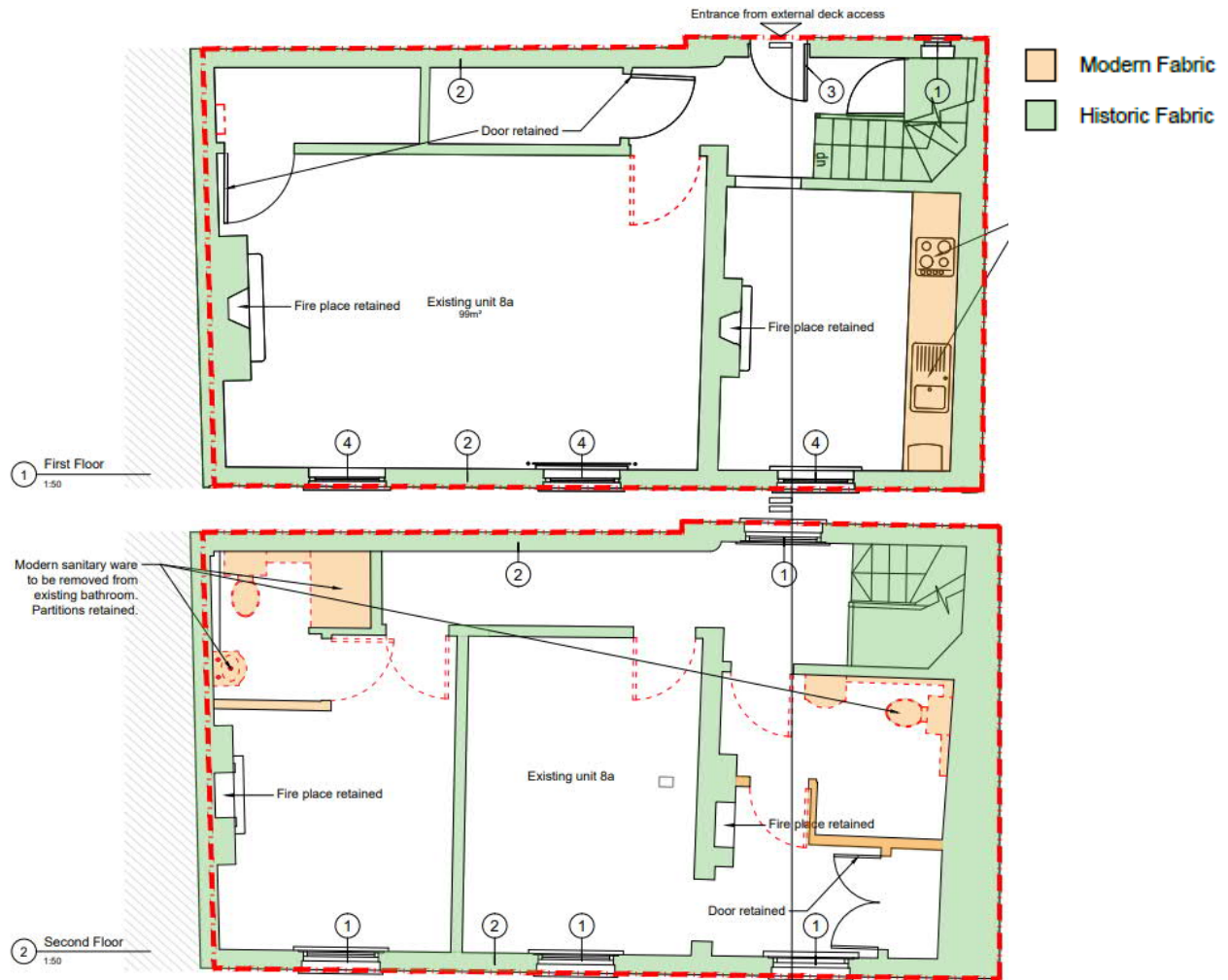
Planning History

Apart from the previously described works encompassing the entirety of 2-8 Bucklersbury, the unit 8a was granted Planning and Listed Building Consent in 2022 for the conversion of the existing C3 residential unit into two separate C3 studio flats. This approval has not been implemented. However, the extant approval nevertheless creates a precedent for the works, which are proposed as part of this current application, in that many proposed alterations are identical and the extent of the removal of existing fabric have previously been deemed acceptable by the LPA. It is therefore expected that there will be no objection from the Conservation Team in regards to the very minimal alterations, which are currently suggested.

Planning Policy

The change of use from C3 (self-contained residential) to C4 (small HMO occupied by up to 6 people) is a permitted development and the LPA has no article 4 directions in place, limiting this permitted change of use. It is therefore expected that there will be no objections in principle to the change of use of this property under town planning terms.

However, as the property is also Grade II listed and because external alterations (albeit of very minimal nature) are proposed, this application is made in the form of a Full Planning and Listed Building Consent.



Existing Plans indicating the modern and historic fabric

6.0 Materials

Internal materials will be modern plasterboard and fixings, new doors, and new kitchen and bathroom fittings. External materials used will be new single glazed timber sash windows to rectify unsympathetic recent works and a new 4-panel front door.

7.0 Access

Generally, No 8a Bucklersbury will remain accessible via the existing routes across the first-floor flat roof/terrace.

8.0 Bin and Bicycle storage

The HMO will benefit from bin and bike storage facilities already installed as part of the regeneration of the whole site.

9.0 Summary

The design seeks to change the use of the existing 3-bedroom C3 unit into a small HMO (C4). The principle of the internal alterations has been agreed through a prior application for similar alterations in 2022. The principle of the change of use is deemed acceptable as the property benefits from Permitted Development rights.