

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...William Thompson.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/01307/FP	Installation of external front roller shutter (development already carried out)	16A High Street Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 1AT

Submitted Plan Nos

Location plan HE-002 HE-003 HE-004 HE-005

1.0 Policies

SECN5	Meeting the challenge of Climate Change
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SECN14	Achieving well-designed places
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SECN20 Conserving+enhancing historic environmnt

SP13 Historic environment

HE1 Designated heritage assets

D1 Sustainable design

D3 Protecting living conditions

2.0 **Relevant Site History**

2.1 No relevant site history.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Site Notice and Neighbour Consultation** – No comments received.

3.2 **Ward Cllr** – No objection, providing that the roller shutters are commensurate with North Hertfordshire Local Plan policies concerning Conservation Areas.

3.3 **Conservation Officer** – Objection.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The application site accommodates a shop, the 'Health Emporium', located on High Street, Hitchin. The site is within the Hitchin Conservation Area and is subject to an Article 4 direction.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 Installation of external front roller shutter (development already 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 impact on the character and appearance of the area and Conservation Area.
- The impact of the proposed development on the living conditions of neighbouring properties.
- The impact of the proposed development on the environment.

Design, Appearance and Heritage Impact:

4.3.1 Policy D1 of the Local Plan requires that development proposals respond positively to the site's local context. This is broadly consistent with Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

4.3.2 Policy HE1 emphasises how permission will be refused where proposals would cause substantial harm or a loss of significance to a Heritage Asset, while Policy SP13 emphasises how great weight will be given to the potential harms to the significance of heritage assets, including management of their setting. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that, in exercise of planning powers in conservation areas, "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area".

4.3.3 The applicant has not provided a Heritage Impact Assessment.

4.3.4 Commercial units along Hitchin High Street typically exhibit the design elements of traditional shop fronts and respond to the character of their relative host buildings. These shop fronts make a positive contribution to the character of the Hitchin Conservation Area. To preserve this character, internal open mesh shutters are common forms of security along the High Street.

4.3.5 The external roller shutters, which form the subject of this application, distort the traditional design character of the Health Emporium shop front. The roller shutters are contrary to the established character of the High Street and therefore cause a degree of harm to the special character of the Hitchin Conservation Area.

4.3.6 The Conservation Officer reinforces this view and has objected to the proposal on the following grounds:

In this application the roller shutters that have been installed do not relate to the proportions of the shop front (see drgs HE-003) where the elements of the shop front i.e. Windows and doors are clearly defined. When the shutters are down this is not legible. Additionally, it is considered they do not make a positive

contribution to the character and appearance of this part of Hitchin Conservation Area and its local character.

Roller shutters deaden the street scene when down and are not permitted. If additional security measures are required, the window may be secured with an open mesh security shutter system located on the inner face of the window between the pilasters.

- 4.3.7 In my view, the proposal is unacceptable in design terms and would, therefore, cause harm to the character and appearance of the street scene and Conservation Area. In accordance with Policy HE5, paragraph 2(c) of Section 20 of the NPPF, I consider that the external roller shutters would cause a degree of harm to the Hitchin Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset. Directed by Policy HE6 of the NPPF, harm to heritage assets should be weighed against public benefits. There are no identified public benefits that would outweigh the harm.
- 4.3.8 Thus, the development would neither preserve, nor enhance, the character and appearance of the street scene or the Hitchin Conservation Area, and is therefore contrary to the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies D1, SP13, HE1 of the Local Plan, and Chapters 14 and 20 of the NPPF.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties:

- 4.3.9 A core planning principle set out in the NPPF is to always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. This principle is reflected in the provisions of Policy D3 of the NHLP. Due to the nature of the proposal and on account of the neighbouring units being commercial, this development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy D3 of the NHLP and Section 14 of the NPPF.

Environmental Implications:

- 4.3.10 The development is not large enough in scale to cause significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Section 5 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

- 4.3.11 This is a form of development which is exempt from BNG Legislation, defined under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 due it falling under the scope of the 'de minimis' exemption.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 In the absence of material planning reasons to the contrary it is my view that planning permission is **REFUSED**.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

4.5.1 None applicable.

5.0 **Recommendation**

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

1. Through the use of unsympathetic, external roller shutters, which is contrary to the established character of Hitchin High Street and the Hitchin Conservation Area, the roller shutters are considered to be unacceptable in design terms and would, therefore, cause harm to the character and appearance of the street scene and Conservation Area. No public benefits have been identified that would outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of the Hitchin Conservation Area.

Therefore, the proposal is not considered to comply with Policies D1, SP13 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 or Sections 14 and 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026.

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 <i>S. Kasparian</i> Sarah Kasparian	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 17 September 2026	