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Planning Design and Access Statement & Brief Heritage Statement

Proposed Redevelopment

18-19 Bancroft, Hitchin, SG5 1JQ

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On Behalf of
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May 2025

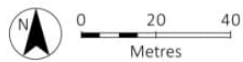
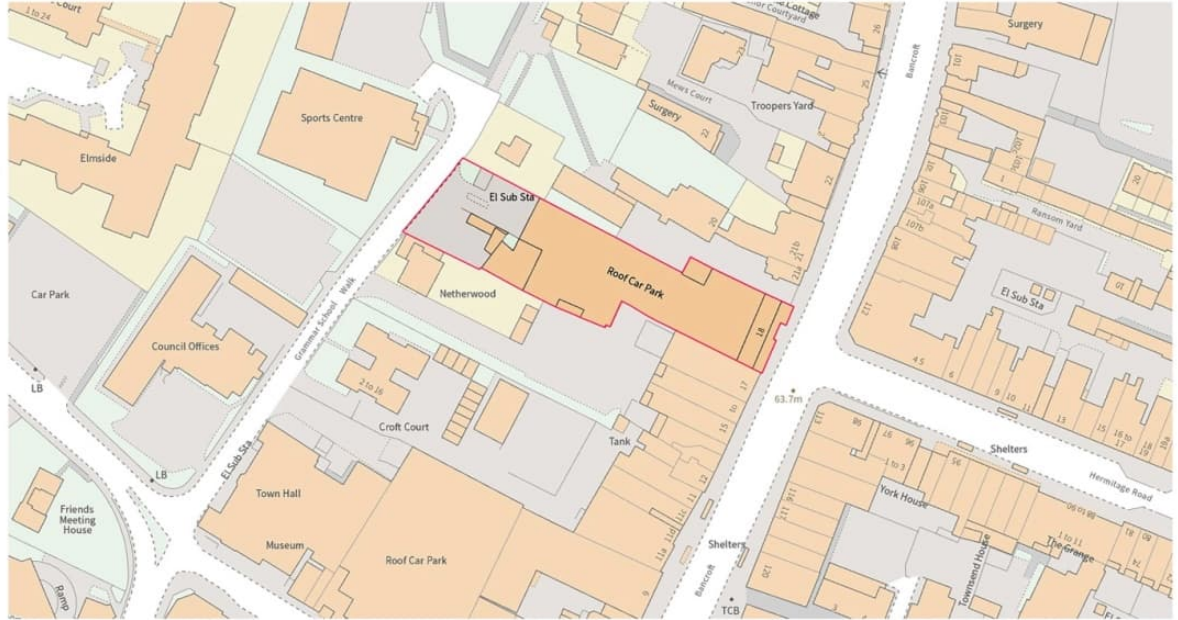
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1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a submission for planning permission in respect of redevelopment of the whole of the site at 18-19 Bancroft, Hitchin.
- 1.2 This application follows receipt of pre-application advice 23/02/2024, ref: 23/02450/PRE which will be analysed in subsequent text.
- 1.3 The site has been in the applicants' family ownership for over 60 years and remains in family ownership and was, until recently, occupied by Wilkinson (Wilko) on a long lease, who traded in household DIY and homeware goods.
- 1.4 With the demise of the Wilko business, having been placed into administration, the future for the store and indeed the space and overall site that it occupied is presently indeterminate. Poundland, are currently in occupation on a short term lease but with the long term uncertain. This has very recently been reinforced by the news that Poundland is in financial difficulty and is up for sale. Nevertheless it was deemed better to accept a lease that is far from favourable for the owners than to have an empty building in the centre of Hitchin. This would have been unsatisfactory for both owners and the town itself.
- 1.5 The building, now over 50 years old, is known to have a number of material and possibly structural issues which would also be a major factor within any tenancy negotiations or indeed even the short term future of the building. Some of these issues have been attended to recently but do not necessarily represent a permanent solution.
- 1.6 Accordingly the owners have been looking at the various options as to how the site could be meaningfully redeveloped, and these options were dealt with comprehensively through the Council's pre-application advice process which has provided a strong guide. After discussion with the professional team, it was readily apparent that refurbishment was neither a workable nor practicable solution. Moreover, it did not address the decades of local concern at the unsympathetic appearance in this most prominent of locations in town. The owner / applicants are putting high priority on obtaining planning permission for a building worthy of this address.
- 1.7 The written pre-application advice was subsequently supplemented by an on-site meeting with the Planning Officer and Conservation Officer that dealt with providing that advice.
- 1.8 Since, quite reasonably at the pre - application stage, these options were not explored in detail, it is now the purpose of this detailed planning application to flesh out the detail and infill the gaps.
- 1.9 The detail has evolved through the initial collaborative liaison with NHC as a planning authority and with a strong reliance on working closely in partnership with Conservation in order to achieve an optimum solution to the benefit not just of the applicants but the future owners, tenants and Hitchin at large, especially acknowledging that this site is arguably one of the most important sites in the town, being precisely the stop end to views along the central axis to Hermitage Road and Windmill Hill.

Location Plan



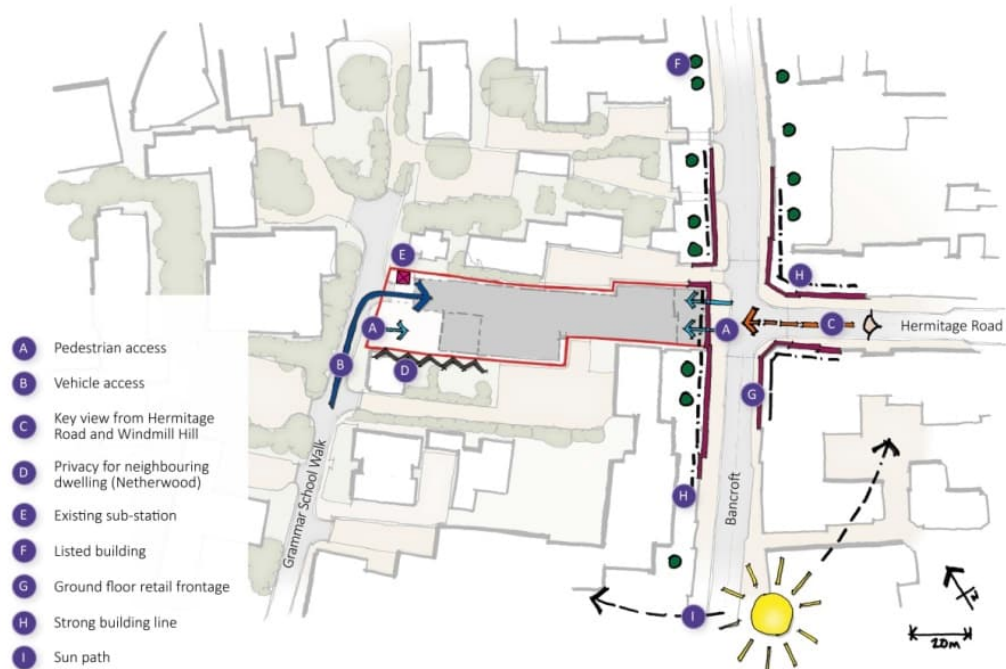
Ownership area - 2,461 m² /
0.246 hectares



2.0 Site Analysis

- 2.1 The overall site curtilage of 18-19 Bancroft as outlined in red on the application location plan above and has a total area of c. 0.25 ha (0.6 acres).
- 2.2 The site is currently occupied by a budget retail store, Poundland, with parking for 73 cars largely on the store roof, accessed from Grammar School Walk.
- 2.3 The Design Drivers were considered at the pre-application stage and again are analysed on the plan below.

Design Drivers



2.4 The site lies within Hitchin's extensive conservation area but the existing building and ancillary structures do not have listed status.

2.5 The building however is briefly described in Hitchin Museum's schedule of town buildings together with the building that it replaced:

Recessed shop-front in red brick by Hamilton Associates, 1970-75. Timber framed buildings (known as the Waters Building) DEMOLISHED 1967. This consisted of the remains of an early fifteenth-century building incorporated into later work. Two storeys in fine red brick, with slightly recess arcading along the ground floor: the central door in a slightly projecting bay. Plain parapet (restored), partly masking a steep tiled roof with three dormers. Seven windows, of the same height in both storeys. Bold porch, with semi-engaged columns supporting a panelled lintel and hood. Six-panelled door hung between panelled reveals and beneath a fanlight with glazing bars in a design of interlacing circles.

2.6 From research of Historic England's register of Listed Buildings, it has been found that there are nearby properties that have been awarded Grade II Status namely: 12-14 Bancroft, 15-16 Bancroft and 21-21A Bancroft. It is noted that all have suffered to a lesser or greater extent by virtue of a more contemporary/corporate approach to their shop fronts, and clearly interior layouts have been adapted to suit the associated use.

2.7 The Bancroft retail frontage is, from a topological survey, 21.1m.

- 2.8 The premises have access from Bancroft which is effectively restricted to public pedestrian access with all vehicular access and servicing carried out from the rear off Grammar School Walk. A lift and stairs provide access from the car park to the retail floor.



Grammar School Walk Parking and Servicing Access

- 2.9 Grammar School Walk also provides access to the 73 parking spaces which clearly is in excess of any reasonable parking standard for both customer and operational activity, especially noting the surfeit of parking provision in the immediate area. The car parking is accommodated by taking advantage of the significant level difference between Bancroft and Grammar School Walk.
- 2.10 The site is located within an area that in relatively contemporary times has been exclusively retail or retail associated at ground floor level. Upper floors have been either ancillary offices, storage or staff welfare and more recently converted to residential use, especially under the Prior Approval change of use initiative.
- 2.11 The adjoining and neighbouring properties are not of uniform height, but, predominantly two and three storeys.
- 2.12 The key feature of the site, and we would suggest as quintessential in any planning consideration, is its location precisely on the central axis of Hermitage Road and line of sight from Windmill Hill.
- 2.13 In this respect the existing building which originally was the home to Safeway, before moving to the Lairage site, now Waitrose, created a controversial talking point with the majority condemning its bland unsympathetic appearance and mourning the loss of the

predecessor, a part 15th Century building of some note both historically and architecturally. In contrast there have been a few who have applauded its contemporary, minimalist, somewhat brutal approach. The Planning Authority's views as aired in the pre-application advice, are addressed within the next section, and align with the majority view.



The Stop End to Hermitage Rd



This is how it used To be

2.14 The Grammar School Walk streetscene provides no consistency of appearance, scale or massing that can be adopted as a foil, but is predominantly residential in appearance.

2.15 Along the East side of Grammar School Walk we have the town hall, a wide tarmac gap providing nominal car parking for the hall and access to a service yard and the upper storey public car park. This is flanked by a pair of 4 storey flat roofed blocks of flats, Croft Court, siamesed by an access core. The streetscene is again punctuated by a service access road and parking to the rear of the Bancroft properties neighbouring the subject site. The next property appears to be a traditional two storey dwelling, Netherwood, under a pitched roof with a largely blank elevation to the subject site boundary, car park and service access. The two upper storey windows are set back from the boundary. The adjacent building to the northern boundary, The Lodge, is the school caretaker's residence and is similarly domestic in scale and with a single first floor window which, due to the local topography, is lower relative to the boundary.

2.16 The Lodge is partially masked by a brick boundary wall and a plethora of commercial and domestic size bins associated to the school and on permanent display.

2.17 Adjacent to The Lodge boundary is a small substation enclosure that was created in order to service Safeway's needs.

2.18 Access to Hitchin Boys' School is the stop end with the sports hall on the west side of the road, school car park and then Centenary House and associated parking.



Access to Roof-Top Car
Park Off Grammar School
Walk

Croft Court – 4 Storey Block
of Flats

Netherwood

2.19 The site lies in Flood Zone 1 where there is little to no likelihood of flooding – see Environment Agency Flood Map, appended.

APP 1

3.0 Pre-application Advice Analysis – 23 / 04250 / PRE (using the pre-application advice enumeration)

- 3.1 Formal pre-application advice was received 23/02/2024 and in brief, this provided an excellent comprehensive guide to inform the way forward and this resultant planning application. A full copy is appended for ease of reference.
- 3.2 Various options were tabled from which the team of client and consultants have evolved the most appropriate response which will be described in some detail within section 4.0.
- 3.3 The scheduling of both National and District policies is most helpful and where appropriate, together with advice under the heading “Documents to accompany an application for planning permission” (pages 7 and 8), the requisite surveys and reports are appended to the application by way of scheduled appendices.
- 3.4 Assessment – The Site – Whilst the description is generally a brief but fair assessment, it is worth noting that whilst the main bulk of the existing building may be considered to be three storey, the brick façade to Bancroft would better be described as four storey plus.

APP 2

- 3.5 The Proposal – This section deals with the three scenarios originally tabled and although there is some discrepancy with regard to numbers of dwellings, this is now largely irrelevant with only a single proposal being submitted for planning permission. Additionally, once drawn up in more detail against a laser topographical survey, it became clear that the original proposals were somewhat over ambitious in quantum and did not address local market trends.
- 3.6 Assessment – Principle of Proposed Development – Policy ETC4 advice was noted and taken on board in order to preserve a commercial use for the Bancroft ground floor element. Professional advice has also now been sought from local commercial agents with regard to the type and size of unit most appropriate.
- 3.7 Impact on Designated Heritage Assets – National and local policies have been fully noted together with the true heritage value of the neighbouring Listed Buildings which have generally been allowed to devalue their status by virtue of corporate signage and unsympathetic shop fronts which do nothing to enhance the Conservation Area, also a heritage asset. In respect of appearance and advice from Conservation, it is applauded that the applicant and LPA Officers are 100% in agreement that pastiche of the historic vernacular would not be an appropriate response. Moreover, it is fully concurred that the site begs for a high quality contemporary, but sympathetic, frontage to Bancroft but with a more traditional approach to the rear and Grammar School Walk.

The advice over height is a little ambiguous, as already observed the existing building has many facets and certainly the most dominant exceeding four storeys. However, with a residential element over the commercial requiring only domestic ceiling heights, the lesser interpretation can be taken as the guide.

Public realm space will be dealt with within section 4.0.

With regard to preferred options, whilst preferences were put forward in the pre-application advice, the overall comments were, with certain caveats, interpreted as providing an almost blank canvas in terms of density.

- 3.8 Design and Appearance – All points understood although following professional advice, scenario 3, as originally submitted fails to meet market requirements,
- 3.9 And, in any event a higher density scheme of smaller units would be met by proposals (in whatever form) at 9 – 10 High Street which would also be the more appropriate location. However we are fully in agreement that Grammar School Walk is visually “unremarkable”, but for the most part beyond this application’s control, any improvement to the streetscene would make a contribution to enhancing the character of appearance of the area and as a result, the public realm. Additionally, an unremarkable context should never be an excuse for perpetuating that situation.
- 3.10 Residential Development – As already observed, following a detailed topographical survey and taking market led advice, the proposal has been reduced to ten dwellings. Accordingly, the current affordable housing targets are not applicable. The townhouse dwellings accessed off Grammar School Walk align with recent planning permissions and developments.

3.11 Parking – Although the initial proposal indicated a single space per dwelling, with the adoption of a reduced density scheme of larger units it has been deemed more appropriate to provide two spaces per dwelling together with a provision for visitors. There is no parking provision for the Bancroft commercial unit with this being met by the surfeit of local parking provision, and all as agreed with the planning officer at the pre-application site meeting.

3.12 Ecology and Biodiversity – The Specialist Consultant’s report is listed in section 9.0, “Schedule of Support Documents” and has been uploaded to the Planning Portal.

3.13 Standard of Accommodation for Future Occupiers – Policy Standards are fully met as conveyed on the submission plans.

3.14 Other Issues – Comment on the pedestrian link has been taken on board and by making this link exclusively for the on-site residential, the building line is not fragmented. This will also be described and justified in more detail in section 4.0.

With regard to Highways issues, noting the current car park for 73 cars and loading dock together with light trafficking, mainly to the school, at this end of the cul de sac, it is inarguable that the situation can only be greatly improved.

Flood risk has already been dealt with by inclusion of Environment Agency flood map, also submitted within the pre-application submission.

APP 1

3.15 Documents – All Consultants’ reports form part of the application and accordingly are uploaded to the Planning Portal. They are also listed in section 9.0 within the “schedule of support documents”.

3.16 Conclusion – All as already noted above.

3.17 Heritage and Conservation – To be covered in Section 5.0.

4.0 Development Proposals

4.1 The market is indicating that it is unlikely that a Large Space User will be found to take the premises as existing and that although retail is generally not buoyant, smaller units with inherently fewer overheads will be more marketable. Over the years, Hitchin has seen the decline of its Large Space Users (LSU), from my memory, inter alia, Nicholls Department Store in Bancroft, Hawkins Clothiers in Bucklersbury, Kenmore Interiors in Hermitage Road / Bancroft, Woolworths / Poundland in the High Street, Carpetland in Bridge Street< Brookers Yard in Bucklersbury / Market Square and the old B & Q / B & M in Walsworth Road will follow. All, a result in a shift in retail trends exacerbated by the growth of online shopping. However, it is acknowledged that, as in 1.4, Poundland is currently operating from the premises on a short term basis.

- 4.2 Similarly, expert commercial advice has confirmed what we already know, that there is a lack of appetite for the traditional offices over shops. Especially post Covid, a significant number of people continue to work from home, and this has been reinforced by planning law allowing Prior Approval for change of use to C3 residential.
- 4.3 Bearing all the above important facts and advice in mind, the opportunity has been taken to look at an overall enhanced and more beneficial use for the site and without reference to any preconceptions with regard to potential uses or density. The result is the application proposal which is scheduled below in 4.4 – 4.9, together with application drawings here listed.

Drawing No.	Drawing Title	Scale	Sheet Size
001	EXISTING SITE SURVEY (By Ross Laird)	1/200	A1
002	EXISTING STREET SCENES (By Ross Laird)	1/100	A1
003	EXISTING SITE SECTIONS (By Ross Laird)	1/100	A1
004	PROPOSED SITE PLAN – AT GROUND FLOOR LEVEL	1/200	A1
005	PROPOSED SITE ROOF PLAN & LANDSCAPING	1/200	A1
006	PROPOSED STREET SCENES	1/100&200	A1
007	PROPOSED SECTIONS	1/100	A1
008	PROPOSED PLANS - C1 & C2, A1 - A5	1/100	A1
009	PROPOSED PLANS H1 & H2	1/100	A1
010	PROPOSED PLANS H3 – H5	1/100	A1
011	PROPOSED ELEVATIONS 18 – 19 BANCROFT	1/100	A1
012	PROPOSED ELEVATIONS TOWNHOUSES H1 & H2	1/100	A1
013	PROPOSED ELEVATIONS TOWNHOUSES H3 – H5	1/100	A1
014	EXISTING BLOCK PLAN	1/500	A1
015	PROPOSED BLOCK PLAN	1/500	A1

- 4.4 Bancroft ground floor – This area is dedicated to Retail / quasi retail / professional or medical services and is split into two small units of c. 130m² each which will accommodate

servicing from Bancroft rather than Grammar School Walk. In addition a private secure access walkway is provided to the Northern boundary which allows pedestrian connectivity from the town houses to Bancroft together with providing access onto Bancroft for refuse collection from the commercial units and apartments over. Refuse is dealt with separately.

- 4.5 Bancroft first floor – 2 no. 2 bedroom apartments (A1 and A2) of c. 180m² each with dual aspect and private rear balconies. These apartments are serviced with a communal staircase and private lift with exclusive access to each apartment.
- 4.6 Bancroft second floor – 2 no. 2 bedroom apartments (A3 and A4) of c. 180m² with dual aspect and private rear balconies. Access as for A1 and A2.
- 4.7 Bancroft third floor – 1 no. 2 bedroom apartment (A5) of c. 240m² with dual aspect, private balconies and front terrace.
- 4.8 Grammar School Walk frontage – 2 no. 3 bedroom town houses (H1 and H2) of c. 180m² with frontage court parking and rear garden with terrace and part loggia created by first floor balconies.
- 4.9 Central site – 3 no. 3 bedroom town houses (H3 - H5) of c. 370m² including secure undercroft parking and storage of c. 130m² and private lift and staircase to the upper floors. Each property has a private courtyard garden with part loggia created by first floor balconies.
- 4.10 Site access and parking – vehicular and pedestrian access is from Grammar School Walk via a private gated entrance and ramp leading down to the town house undercrofts and parking for the apartments (A1 – A5). Two spaces per unit are provided plus visitor parking and a specific disabled bay.
- 4.11 Bancroft Elevation – Ground floor level adopts an upper storey overhang to partially reflect the single positive element of the existing building. This not only provides a degree of weather protection but more essentially provides, by use of the central column and boundary pilasters, vertical articulation of the building that adds visual interest. This also helps to delineate the two separate commercial units, both with bow fronted bays. The upper storeys are in part supported by a central stone/reconstructed stone circular column and semi-circular pilasters, taking reference from the Tuscan order with stone-faced lintelling. Apartments A1 – A4 have a frontage of London stock or similar facing brickwork (not dissimilar to 15 -16 Bancroft) with antique bronze anodised aluminium windows. Stone pilasters follow the line of those on the ground floor. Stone banding separates 1st floor from 2nd floor. Apartment 5 takes a more contemporary approach as a flat roof penthouse but materially linked by the use of the same type of antique bronze fenestration and standing seam cladding and fascia.
- 4.12 Town houses H1 – H2 – Provide a more traditional approach to the street elevation with red/brindle mix facing brickwork with stone banding and a slate mansard roof. Door case and windows of white microporous painted hardwood and traditional metalwork detailing with stone capped gable end parapets and party wall. The rear elevation applies

consistency of materials but with a subtle contemporary slant including a glazed first floor balcony creating a loggia at ground floor level. The open fire to the living area creates the opportunity to provide a barbeque/chiminea to the loggia.

4.13 Town houses H3 – H5 – Again adopt a traditional approach to the front elevation with the three upper storeys of London Stock style facing brickwork and stone banding topped with a parapet masking a traditional shallow monopitch roof but with a sedum finish. Doorcase, fenestration and decorative metalwork all as H1 – H2. The rear elevation also takes its lead from H1 – H2.

4.14 The Existing railing enclosure to the substation is replaced with a facing brick enclosure with pyramid slate roof and louvred doors.

4.15 The North boundary wall will be covered by a living garden wall, Silvanus or similar. The watering will be automated and maintenance will be covered by a detailed management plan which will also cover the car parking, security gates, external works, landscaping, overall infrastructure etc.

5.0 Refuse Management – From experience, concerns are often raised with regards to refuse collection arrangements with inflexible insistence to adherence to often unrealistic or impractical standards. Accordingly, Cawleys Waste Management was approached at the pre-application stage and subsequently consulted with these application proposals, all of which included a site meeting. The result of this constructive dialogue confirms that the overall proposal constitutes a workable solution which is analysed in the next few points.

5.1 H1 will have the bins located as indicated on drawings nos. 004 and 009 within the property boundary.

5.2 H2 will use the communal refuse collection point as indicated on drawings nos. 004 and 010.

5.3 H3 – H5 will use the communal refuse and recycling bins as indicated on drawings nos. 004 and 010. It will be the responsibility of the householders to take their black sacks to the collection point.

5.4 A1 – A5 have their bins located within a purpose built compound as indicated on drawings nos. 004 and 008. On bin collection day it will be the responsibility of the residents to take their respective bins to the designated collection point on Bancroft for early morning collection, currently Friday. This is precisely the current *modus operandi* for the majority of properties on Bancroft and, from knowledge and experience, residents tend to work cooperatively by often sharing taking bins out and bringing them back post collection.

5.5 Commercial units – May be asked to make their own arrangements for storage within the premises however, the proposed plan has allocated potential space for bins to share the bin

area with A1 – A5. Due to the proposed uses for these premises, the waste requirements will be light.

- 5.6 This arrangement works faultlessly for all the Bancroft premises that have no alternative and those that have restricted access for refuse freighters.

6.0 Emergency Vehicle Access – As with refuse management, this often becomes an inflexible stumbling block. Accordingly, as part of our pre-submission consultation we attended a two hour detailed meeting with two Herts Fire and Rescue Senior Officers to iron out any potential issues. The following text outlines the advice and how this has been interpreted within the application proposals.

- 6.1 The plans were tabled and following the meeting have been developed further in order to ensure that the proposals could be developed at the Building Regulations stage in the knowledge of being fully compliant. The Highway Consultant's report is listed in section 9.0, "Schedule of Support Documents" and has been uploaded to the Planning Portal.
- 6.2 Although it had initially been intended that no service vehicles would enter the site beyond the Grammar School Walk gates, we have been persuaded that although this could be made compliant, the *preferred* solution would be to make provision for fire tender entry. The fire tender requires a minimum access road width of 3.1m. 3.5m is provided and confirmed by Fire and Rescue as acceptable.
- 6.3 Following an event of having to attend a fire, Fire and Rescue would *prefer* to be able to manoeuvre on site in order to exit in forward gear. Due to site constraints, turning on site for a full size fire tender is not possible and therefore the scenario would be that, following completion of their duties on the site the fire truck could reverse the short distance up to the Grammar School Walk with the aid of a banksman.

We would suggest a pragmatic approach should be adopted in this respect taking into consideration –

- In the lifetime of the buildings what is the likelihood of a fire? Never? Once? Twice? Certainly no more.
- In an emergency the Bancroft properties could be tackled from Bancroft.
- The prime purpose of Fire and Rescue is firstly to save life and secondly property and if access is not *ideal*, in the words of the Senior Fire Officer, "So be it, it is what it is".
- It was applauded that the proposal includes the installation of a domestic sprinkler system to BS8458/9251 for all properties together with a fire hydrant, appropriately located.

- We have subsequently discussed with Herts Fire and Rescue the installation of a horizontal riser main which would allow the fire tender to park at the gates, attach their water supply to a connection point and the fire-fighting hose to the fire hydrant within the site. This meets the fire-fighting vehicle B5 access requirements of Approved Document B (ADB) and is regularly accepted by Planning Authorities and Building Control.
- Whilst construction details do not form part of the planning process, it was helpful, from out meeting with Fire and Rescue, to understand the general requirements for fire separation, fire protection, means of escape, stay put policy for the apartments, etc. Where appropriate, these recommendations have been incorporated within the planning proposals.

6.4 It is additionally worth noting that from a survey of Bancroft there are innumerable properties that cannot be reached by virtue of restricted access width or height, and a number relatively recently approved, inter alia:

West Side - 22 Bancroft/Mews Court

Troopers Yard

26 Bancroft/Manor Court

28 Bancroft

Bancroft Centre

Silver Court

Bancroft Business Centre

East Side - Between 85 and 86 Bancroft

Between 101 and 102 Bancroft

Between 102 and 103 Bancroft

Between 104 and 105 Bancroft

6.5 In summary, it was consequently encouraging to note that our proposal was already compliant or could readily be made compliant and not necessarily with a single option.

7.0 Brief Heritage Statement

- 7.1 Whilst the existing building and infrastructure at 18-19 Bancroft does not have any Listed status and therefore not a heritage asset in its own right, it is acknowledged and accepted that the whole of the site and surrounding properties firmly lie within Hitchin's extensive Conservation Area.
- 7.2 The Conservation Area designation, in itself constitutes a heritage asset that must be given due consideration.
- 7.3 Additionally, a number of buildings in the vicinity are scheduled on Historic England's register of Listed Buildings, either in their own right or due to Group Value. And these are indicated on Historic England's Listed Building Map and scheduled below:

APP 3

- 12-14 Bancroft. Grade II – List Entry: 1347572, Listed June 1974 – circa 1740. Two storeys, red brick, three sashes, dentilled cut brick cornice, parapet, modern shops. Noted also that 12-17 form a group.

Hitchin museum records verbatim the Historic England description but adding supplementary text for 15-17 of the group:

- 15-17 Bancroft. Grade II - List Entry: 1102215, Listed April 1951 – 2 early C19 storeys, grey brick, brick sashes, boxed eaves with console pairs of brackets, modern shops. Band at 2nd floor level. 12-17 as a group.
Group 15-16: Circa 1833, built for William Jeeves, baker. Three storeys, grey brick, six wide sashes, boxed eaves with console pairs of brackets, modern shops. Band at second floor level.
- 17: *Mid eighteenth-century brick house of two storeys; moulded eaves below a steep tiled roof with dormers, Ground floor disfigured by blatant modern shop window; upper floor has five windows, square sashes in broad flush frames that have slightly curved heads*
- 21 Bancroft. Grade II Listed – List Entry: 1102216, Listed June 1974 – early C19 front of red brick with modillioned cornice and parapet. 2 storeys, first floor band. Neo-Georgian shop front. Included for group value (21-28).
- Hitchin museum, records the following additional text for 21 / 21A / 21B.
Late eighteenth-century house of three storeys in deep red brick. Moulded brick strings above both lower storeys; moulded brick cornice beneath a plain parapet which masks the roof. Five windows in plain reveals. Slightly projecting central bay contains wooden porch, carved in a classical design of semi-engaged columns supporting an entablature with a design of alternate rosettes and triglyphs. The door, with four fielded panels in its upper half, hangs in a round-headed recess, with archivolt and fielded panelled reveal.

- 7.4 From record and visual inspection, as already noted, most, if not all, these scheduled buildings have lost a significant element of their historic significance by virtue of a succession of work, alterations and lack of control of shop front design. Consequently, in

this most special of locations, we have given the commercial front, and Bancroft elevation as a whole, the most careful of consideration in both principle and detail together with context.

- 7.5 There are no properties, other than Centenary House, the Town Hall and The Boys' School main building that are of Listed status within Grammar School Walk and all these are adequately distanced and separated from the subject site by non-Listed Buildings and spaces.
- 7.6 It is concluded from the above research and personal inspections and general acquaintance that the heritage assets of the area, including the conservation area itself, will neither be prejudiced nor adversely affected.
- 7.7 Moreover, it is suggested that this situation provides a golden opportunity to enhance rather than preserve, and in this respect, planning and conservation guidance has been formally received together with the benefit of a site meeting with the original Case Officer and Conservation Officer.
- 7.8 The question fundamentally, other than the massing, scale and detail design, is how best to address the principal elevation which lies on the direct centre line axis of Hermitage Road and Windmill Hill. It is commonly accepted that the view down Hollow Lane to St Mary's Church is the town's jewel. In contrast the current view down Hermitage Road and Windmill Hill is the complete antithesis. Here we have taken this rare opportunity to redress this which with the LPA's advice has resulted in a completely fresh architectural approach so as to be a statement of now but not brashly competing with buildings of another time.
- 7.9 In conformity with the pre-application advice this contemporary approach has been adopted for the Bancroft street elevation whilst not wholly turning its back on a more traditional palette. Again, this accords with on-site discussions with Conservation.
- 7.10 The townhouses however, as advised, have adopted a fully traditional approach to the principal elevations in style, detail and materials paying token homage to the Georgian style. However, the opportunity to provide a more contemporary living style, internally and to the rear, satisfies a preferred style of choice.
- 7.11 Whilst the existing buildings along Grammar School Walk have, in my opinion, a negative effect on the Conservation Area, the application proposal for the relevant element of the development inarguably does better than have a neutral effect by embracing the street scene, aided by two properties providing a street frontage that lifts the aspect of the area.
- 7.12 Similarly, and more importantly perhaps, by way of some repetition, the Bancroft frontage offers a significant enhancement to this section of the street and provides that all-important stop end to what is arguably one of the most important views of the town, and this is accomplished with a contemporary but nevertheless sympathetic approach that we believe coalesces smoothly with the broad palette of neighbouring designs whilst maintaining a distinctive individuality that the location begs for.

7.13 Accordingly, in conclusion, the heritage assets, i.e. both Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area are not adversely affected or compromised, but on the contrary significantly enhanced.

8.0 Summary

- 8.1 The existing premises would seem to be currently anachronistically oversized, particularly given current market trends for high street retail units in such a prime location in Hitchin. This seems to be an overall squandered use of such a prominent site, which inarguably could be better served,
- 8.2 With the current tenant only on a short-term lease, whilst a suitable replacement may be found, this is highly unlikely given the age and life-expired state of the building, it is almost certain that this would not produce the opportunity for a visually improved stop end to Hermitage Road. Locally respected expert commercial advice has confirmed this. Moreover the opportunity should be seized and the responsibility taken to provide an enhanced return not only for the owner, but also for the tenants / occupiers, conservation and the public at large in this historic market town.
- 8.3 In tandem, and as above, it is patently clear that the site's current form falls far short of any commercial optimum and hence the proposals here submitted seek to address this whilst giving due consideration to the site's context and other prevailing criteria and policy aims.
- 8.4 Whilst maintaining the all-important retail frontage to Bancroft, the residual site is dedicated to residential which not only meets a proven need in what is a highly sustainable location but also assists NHC in justifying its claim for a deliverable 5 year housing land supply.
- 8.5 As above it is notable that there has been, in recent years, a significant increase in the demand for quality town centre living, recognising that Hitchin can justifiably boast to have arguably one of the best selections of restaurants, cafes and bars in North Hertfordshire. These residential developments include the Mews Court development and more recently Manor Court at the rear of 26 Bancroft, both of which are seen as comparable with the application proposals.
- 8.6 Pre-application advice was sought and it is acknowledged that a comprehensive and detailed response was provided in as much as could be given at the principle rather than detail stage.
- 8.7 This has been enhanced by the subsequent site meeting with the original Case Officer and Conservation Officer.
- 8.8 Whilst all points have been given serious consideration by the team, and indeed virtually all aspects taken on board, it is trusted that it would not be imperative to adopt all the advice verbatim and without any question or reference to a changing market.

- 8.9 Accordingly, the sole area that has not been adopted literally is the one of “Preferred” density, in that it was noted that Conservation had a preference for a high density block of flats for the residential element. There were two main drivers here to diverge from this to the present proposal namely, 1) not being wholly in agreement with this as an approach, especially noting Netherwood, The Lodge, Mews Court and Manor Court all in close vicinity, a block of flats would be contrary to the local grain and 2) strong market advice from respected local agents were unequivocal in steering the scheme towards that as now presented. It would be suggested that Croft Court should not provide a steer.
- 8.10 Over recent years, Hitchin has continued to attract two major contenders for this style of residential life: 1) Retired couples wishing to downsize from large family homes in the numerous North Herts / Central Beds villages, shunning the bland grey retirement homes on offer, but still requiring quality spacious living with easy access of the wealth of local facilities & 2) Others wishing to move out of London with its inordinately high overheads to a more open environment that nevertheless benefits from excellent rail and road connections to the Capital and represents better value.
- 8.11 Moreover, with high density proposals firmly on the cards for 9 – 10 High Street, currently 46 1-2 bed apartments,beit most probably not in the current form, this end of the market is accommodated locally.
- 8.12 There are no highway issues with parking standards fully accommodated and excellent vehicular access onto Grammar School Walk, with traffic movements significantly reduced from the existing 73 car parking spaces.
- 8.13 All requested surveys and reports have been provided, indicating positive support for the proposals.
- 8.14 In final summary therefore it is concluded and submitted that there are no substantive planning grounds for not granting, subject to conditions, full planning permission.
- 8.15 However, as part of NHC’s pro-active policy as directed through the NPPF, collaborative dialogue has, as always, been requested throughout the planning process so as to ensure a favourable, positive outcome for the common good. However, with that positive and helpful dialogue, to ensure excellent and appropriate development, having been removed last year, it is nevertheless hoped that, with this most important, prominent project, the closed door will at least be left ajar so as not to leave us in a post-submission vacuum. It is hoped that North Herts shares these sentiments.

9.0 Schedule of Support Documents

The following Consultants' reports have been uploaded to the Planning Portal:

Document Title	Filename
Transport Statement	240405_18-19_Bancroft_Hitchin_TS_Final_Issue.pdf
Planning Noise Assessment	RK3747 - 18-19 Bancroft_Hitchin - Spectrum Noise Impact Assessment Report-1-37.pdf and RK3747 - 18-19 Bancroft_Hitchin - Spectrum Noise Impact Assessment Report-38-59.pdf
Energy Sustainability Statement	Energy Sustainability Statement_18-19 Bancroft_Hitchin_Hertfordshire SG5 1JQ - Selumi Investments Ltd and Holt End House Investments Ltd.pdf
Preliminary Contaminated Land Assessment	EnviroSmart report_Contaminated Land-1-106.pdf and EnviroSmart report_Contaminated Land-107-126_compressed.pdf
Drainage Strategy	Drainage Strategy_GeoSmart Information.pdf
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost	PEA_PRA_MKA Ecology Ltd - 156524 - 18-19 Bancroft_Hitchin.pdf
Biodiversity Nett Gain Plan	BNG_MKA Ecology Ltd - 156524 18-19 Bancroft_Hitchin - Biodiversity Net Gain Plan Statutory Metric 2.0.pdf

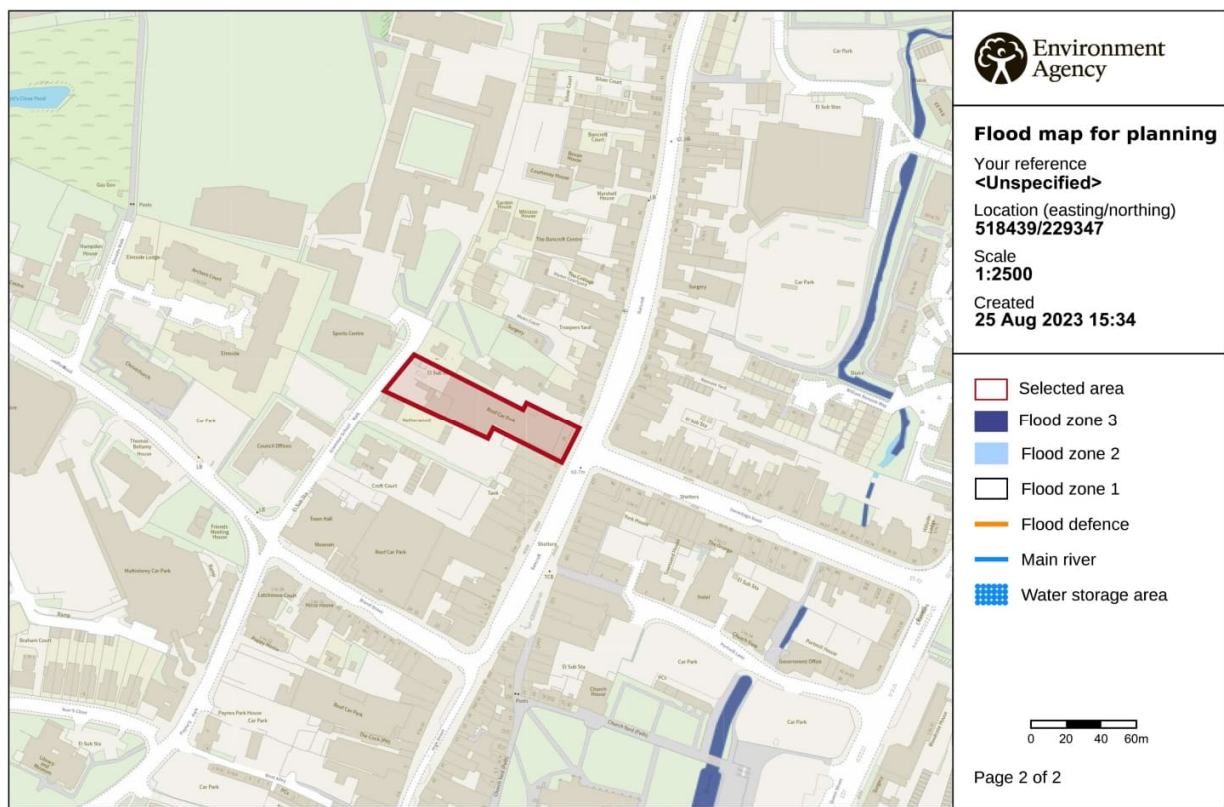
10.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Environment Agency Flood Risk Map

Appendix 2: Pre-application advice 23 / 04250 / PRE

Appendix 3: Historic England Listed Building Map

APPENDIX 1: Environment Agency Flood Risk Map



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APPENDIX 2: Pre-Application Advice 23/04250/PRE



www.north-herts.gov.uk

Colin Eades

Our Ref : 23/02450/PRE

Rose Cottage
High Street
Gosmore
Hertfordshire
SG4 7QQ

Contact : Ben Glover
Direct Line : 01462 474248
Email : ben.glover@north-herts.gov.uk
Date : 23rd February 2024

FAO: Colin Eades

Dear Sir / Madam,

**Pre-Application Advice: Part change of use of retail unit for up to 25 Class C3 residential dwellings together with associated parking
18 - 19 Bancroft, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1JQ**

I refer to your request for pre-application advice regarding the property above and the proposed development.

For your information, the relevant national and local planning policies that would relate to the potential future planning application are as follows:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Section 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy
Section 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres
Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
Section 11 – Making effective use of land
Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
Section 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

North Hertfordshire Draft Local Plan 2011-2031 (NHLP)

SP1 - Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire
SP2 – Settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution
SP3 – Employment

North Herts Council, PO Box 10613, Nottingham, NG6 6DW



SP4 – Town centres, Local centres and community shops
 SP6 – Sustainable transport
 SP7 – Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions
 SP8 – Housing
 SP9 – Design and sustainability
 SP10 – Healthy communities
 ETC1 – Appropriate used in employment areas
 ETC3 – New retail, leisure and other main town centre development
 ETC4 – Primary Shopping Frontages
 T1 – Assessment of transport matters
 T2 – Parking
 HS2 – Affordable housing
 HS3 – Housing mix
 HS5 – Accessible and adaptable housing
 D1 - Sustainable design
 D3 - Protecting living conditions
 D4 – Air quality
 NE2 – Landscape
 NE4 – Biodiversity and geological sites
 NE7 – Reducing flood risk
 NE8 – Sustainable drainage systems
 NE11 – Contaminated Land
 HE1 – Designated heritage assets
 HE4 – Archaeology

Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD - November 2011

Design SPD - July 2011

Assessment:

The Site

The application site is No. 18-19 Bancroft. The site is situated within the town centre of Hitchin and is within the Hitchin Conservation Area. The site sits on the west side of the junction between Bancroft and Hermitage Road.

The existing site comprises of a brick-built brutalist three storey structure with a ground floor retail unit to the front of the site and car park with service area to the rear.

There are several Grade II listed buildings adjacent to the application site. The site is also identified as a primary shopping frontage within the Local Plan.

The Proposal

The development proposes the part change of use of the existing retail unit to allow for the creation of up to 29 dwellings together with associated car parking. This proposal would likely include the replacement of the existing building that fronts Bancroft.

The pre-application enquiry seeks advice in relation to the principle of development and to the options submitted.

The options presented for consideration include the following:

Scenario 1: Removal of the existing parking structure to create c. 8 - 10 no. three storey town houses with private rear gardens and one 'on plot' parking space. Commercial frontage to Bancroft with the potential to provide 4 no. apartments (instead of commercial) on the upper levels.

Scenario 2: Retention of the existing structure (if feasible) or creation of a new structure for undercroft parking with up to 10 – 12 no. mews homes and private gardens above this. Potential for an additional 4 no. apartments on the upper floors at Bancroft.

Scenario 3: A high density version of Scenario 2, replacing mews homes with up to 25 no. one and two bed apartments above a parking podium together with private balconies and communal amenity space. Potential for an additional 4 no. apartments on the upper floors at Bancroft.

Assessment

Principal of the Proposed Development:

The application site is situated within Hitchin. NHLP Policy SP1 on sustainable development in the district is the backbone for considering proposals. It requires the main role of key settlements, such as Hitchin, to be the main focus for new development. Proposals should 'deliver an appropriate mix of homes, jobs and facilities that contribute towards the targets and aspirations of this Plan', 'provide the necessary infrastructure...', 'protect [the] environment', and 'secure any necessary mitigation measures that reduce the impact of development...'

Hitchin is identified within SP2 of the Local Plan as a town in which, along with the other towns within North Herts, the substantial majority of new housing, employment, retail and other development will be located.

The proposed development would likely consist of a mixed use of both retail and residential. Although it is noted that an opinion on whether a scheme of purely residential units would be acceptable in this location.

Policy ETC4 (Primary Shopping Frontages) sets out that within the designated primary shopping frontages, planning permission will be granted at ground floor level for shops or other main town centre uses (residential is not included in the definition of main town centre use on page 322 of the Local Plan).

Given that the site is within a prominent location within the town centre and is a prominent primary frontage, I would advise that the ground floor of the development that fronts Bancroft be retained as retail, or other town centre uses, in order to comply with Policy ETC4 and to maintain the viability of the town centre.

I do not object to the principle of a mixed-use development of both retail and residential units within the site as a whole, but a mixed-use would also likely be acceptable within the Bancroft frontage building. The development would help maintain the role of Hitchin as a key settlement.

Impact on Designated Heritage Assets:

The application site is situated within the Hitchin Conservation Area and is in proximity to several Grade II Listed Buildings.

Paragraph 201 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that Local Planning Authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset.

Paragraph 203 c) of the NPPF states *"In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness"*

Local Plan Policy SP13 indicates that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight shall be given to the asset's conservation and the management of its setting. This reflects Paragraph 205 of the NPPF which states *"When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance."*

Paragraph 206 of the NPPF states *"Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification."*

Local Plan Policy HE1 seeks to weigh the public benefits of a proposal against the harm and this reflects paragraph 208 of the NPPF which states, *"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."*

The application site is a large reasonably narrow plot neighboured to the north and south by Grade II listed buildings. As mentioned above, the existing building that forms the frontage of the site is a brutalist red brick and flat roofed building. To the rear of the site is a low-level rooftop car park with a service area.

The neighbouring listed buildings and locality are generally of a more traditional design, although many buildings do feature a range of later alterations including shop frontages.

Following advice from the Senior Conservation Officer, it is considered that any replacement building, or redevelopment of the frontage should not attempt to replicate the original historic environment and should instead seek to achieve a high-quality design that would enhance the historic environment. It is considered that this could be achieved through a mixed approach of contemporary development to the Bancroft elevation and a more traditional approach to the rear of the site.

The height of the replacement Bancroft frontage should not exceed that of the existing building. This recommendation carried through to any development to the rear of the site.

The rear of the site, as mentioned above, consists of a service area and car parking. There is significant potential to improve the area and surrounding public realm though the redevelopment of this part of the site. It is the Conservation Officer's opinion that Scenario 3 would be the most likely to offer the most improved public realm space.

Scenario 3 as shown on page 11 of the submitted Design and Access Statement shows a three-storey block of flats that would provide up to 25 one and two bed properties.

These plans at this stage are clearly indicative and therefore it is not possible to fully assess the impact of the development upon the Hitchin Conservation Area and nearby Grade II Listed Buildings. However, there is the potential to enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area and limit harm to the significance of the nearby listed buildings.

Whilst the Conservation Officers preferred option would be Scenario 3, provided the redevelopment of the Bancroft frontage took into consideration the points above, I am of the opinion that Scenario 2 would also be a potentially acceptable alternative option.

Design and Appearance:

Whilst several sketches have been provided within the Draft Design and Access Statement, these are indicative only and provide limited information for a full assessment. As advised in the report above, the scheme should aim to achieve a high-quality contemporary appearance to the front of the site and a more traditional appearance to the rear of the site.

Policy D1 of the Local Plan sets out the criteria for which the scheme should comply with. Given that the rear of the site is unremarkable, there is significant potential to improve the contribution this site has to the character and appearance of the area.

Any development should respond positively to the site's local context and should take all reasonable opportunities to enhance the public realm. Scenario 3 is considered the most likely scheme that would achieve compliance with local design policy.

Residential Development:

The three scenarios put forward each proposed a different number of residential units, ranging from 12 units up to 29 units. Each potential scenario would therefore require an affordable housing contribution as set out in Policy HS2 of the Local Plan.

HS2 sets out the following affordable housing targets:

- a. 11-14 dwellings would require a 25% affordable housing contribution.
- b. 15-24 dwellings would require a 35% affordable housing contribution.
- c. 25 or more dwellings would require a 40% affordable housing contribution.

Affordable units should be delivered on site unless a robust justification is put forward for consideration by the Local Planning Authority.

It is expected that 65% of the affordable housing required will be rented and 35% comprise of other forms of affordable housing.

It should be noted that Policy HS5 of the Local Plan sets out that planning permission for major development will be granted provided that applicants demonstrate that at least 50% of homes can be built to the M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard, and on site where affordable units will be delivered, 10% of these can be built to M4(3) wheelchair user standard.

Policy HS3 of the Local Plan requires schemes to provide an appropriate range of house types and sized and states that there should be an initial assumption of 60% larger 3+bed properties and 40% smaller 1 or 2 bed properties. However, this should be considered on a site-by-site basis.

It is not clear from Scenarios 1 and 2 what the mix would be. However, Scenario 3, the preferred option by the Conservation Officer, would comprise of 1 and 2 bed flats. For this scheme to comply with Policy HS3, the development should provide at least 17 (60% of 29 units) 3-bed apartments. However, given the location and type of development proposed by Scenario 3, the provision of one- or two-bedroom dwellings would likely be considered appropriate in this instance.

Parking:

Policy T2 states planning permission will be granted provided that residential development is provided in accordance with the minimum space standards set out in Appendix 4 of the Local Plan.

The proposal put forward indicates that each residential unit would be provided with one parking space.

The Local Plan allows for a reduction in parking spaces required if the applicant can demonstrate that the accessibility, type, scale, mix and use of the development; the availability of and opportunities for public transport; local car ownership levels; and on-street conditions justify a reduced number of parking spaces per dwelling.

Given that the site is located in the town centre of Hitchin, which provides a wide range of services, and is an appropriate distance from the railway station and bus stops, the site is considered to be within a sustainable location. The provision of one space per dwelling would therefore likely be considered acceptable in this location.

The scheme should provide on-site cycle storage for use by each of the residential units. EV charging should also be provided.

The North Herts Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD sets out non-residential parking standards. However, as above, with the site being in a sustainable location, it is considered that a reduced number of spaces can be provided. Cycle parking should also be provided to employees of any retail units.

Ecology and Biodiversity:

Policy NE4 sets out that Planning Permission will only be granted for development proposals that appropriately protect enhance and manage biodiversity. Policy NE4 goes on to set out that development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity.

It should also be noted that from the 12th February 2024, the Environment Act 2021 came in to force requiring all major development to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain.

Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site or off-site. If neither on-site or off-site gains are possible, the developer must buy biodiversity credits from the government. However, this should be a last resort.

There is a statutory biodiversity metric that will need to be used to calculate the biodiversity units. The application should be submitted along with a completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric, a Biodiversity Statement, and scaled plan showing any existing on-site habitat.

Standard of Accommodation for Future Occupiers:

Policy D1 of the Local Plan sets out that residential schemes should meet or exceed the nationally described space standards. All proposed dwellings on the site comply with the space standards as a minimum.

The Design SPD requires “adequate private space to meet the needs of occupants...the council encourages a mix of garden sizes’ and should have enough space for ‘outdoor living requirements such as children’s play, lawn/shrub area for leisure and recreation, recycling bins and storage facilities”.

Other Issues:

The Design and Access Statement sets out nine questions to be answered by this pre-application response. Most have been addressed in the report above. The remaining issues are discussed below.

The applicant has asked for advice as to whether a pedestrian connection that links the rear of the site to Bancroft would be possible. Policy D1 of the Local Plan sets out that development proposal should take all reasonable opportunities to maximise accessibility and social connectivity. Whilst improvements to pedestrian accessibility and connectivity between places is always encouraged, the introduction of a pedestrian link that would break the building line along Bancroft and could result in harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. If a pedestrian link can be sensitively designed and incorporated, then this could be considered a planning benefit in terms of connectivity within this urban environment.

The scheme would require contributions towards infrastructure to accommodate the additional demands the development would put upon the area. This is in line with Policy SP7 of the Local Plan.

The development should incorporate measures that would reduce energy consumption and waste. The inclusion of solar panels, EV charging, water efficient fittings and appliances, and high efficiency boilers or air source heat pumps should all be considered.

The Highway Authority have not been consulted on this application, as they offer their own pre-application service and the Local Lead Flood Authority do not offer pre-application advice currently.

Documents to accompany an application for planning permission.

The application must be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement given the location of the site within the conservation area. As indicated previously a Statutory Biodiversity Metric, a Biodiversity Statement, and scaled plan showing any existing on-site habitat must also accompany the application.

In addition, you may wish to consider submitting the following documents to assist in the assessment of the application.

Planning Statement
Drainage Strategy
Transport Statement & draft Travel Plan
Street scenes/photomontages
Noise Assessment

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the redevelopment of this site to a mix of both retail and residential would be supported in principle and I would recommend the submission of a planning application to the Local Planning Authority taking the above report into consideration.

This is an important site that is prominent in views looking down Hermitage Road. The existing building is of a design that reflects the point in time when it was designed and built and unfortunately made little attempt to respect and reflect its context. There is an excellent opportunity to enhance the appearance of this site and therefore the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Following consultation with the Senior Conservation Officer, Scenario 3 would be the preferred option. The development should be of a high-quality design with a contemporary design approach taken to the Bancroft side of the site and a more traditional design approach to the rear of the site.

Affordable housing provision should be included as part of the development assuming the development would comprise of 11 or more dwellings.

The application should be accompanied by relevant Biodiversity Net Gain documents that demonstrate a net gain of at least 10%.

All residential units proposed should comply with the nationally described space standards so that an acceptable standard of accommodation is provided for future occupiers.

The development should incorporate a range of energy and water saving measures that would reduce the environmental impact of the development.

Any advice given by Council Officers for pre-application enquiries does not constitute formal response or decision of the Council with regards to future planning permission or consents.

Kind regards,

Ben Glover
Senior Planning Officer

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Appendix 1: Senior Conservation Officer Comments

Heritage & Conservation

Pre-Application consultation response

Application reference:	23/02450/PRE
Site:	18-19 Bancroft Hitchin SG5 1JQ
Proposal:	Part change of use of retail unit for up to 25 Class C3 residential dwellings together with associated parking
Action required prior to determination:	No (see below)

Summary

In principle there is support for the redevelopment of this site to retain the shop front elevation and development for the remainder of the site. Please see below for more detailed comments.

Heritage Assets

Conservation Area
Neighbouring Listed Buildings

Discussion

The supporting Design/Access and Heritage statement has put forward a case for the various options to redevelop this site.

Currently the vacated Wilkinson's building is non apologetic in its "brutalist" appearance and clearly demonstrates the shift in architectural styles over the decades and support for this is varied and subjective.

The neighbouring historic environment i.e., current and previous architectural styles have been traditional, and many examples still remain with listed buildings along Bancroft which have been subject to later interventions.

Advice is sought from the conservation team as to how to approach the re development of this site in design, mass and scale.

It would be ill judged to try and re-create an architectural language that replicates the original historic environment. Any future development should seek to achieve high quality design that would enhance the historic environment and I believe this can be delivered through a mixed approach i.e., contemporary to the Bancroft elevation and potentially more traditional approach to the rear of the site. However, I would welcome any appetite for a sustainable development and if that requires a more radical design approach it would merit consideration.

As for height of the of the proposed new developments both on Bancroft and to the rear i.e., Grammar School Walk it should not exceed that of the existing building particularly the Bancroft elevation, At present the rear of the building is given over to service area and car parking and there is an opportunity to improve this area and the surrounding public realm. Three scenarios have been offered

up in the submitted with the draft D&A Heritage statement. A preference will be given to the scenario that offer the most improved public realm space and on first review that would indicate Scenario 3.

In summary the conservation team would be seeking a scheme that offers a strong presence in terms of the Bancroft elevation and reflect the approach that has been offered 4.8. (3)

"3) adopt a highly contemporary design solution which could be described as an architectural landmark building and which unashamedly and overtly is the focal point of views from the East along Hermitage Road. More than on balance, this would seem to be the correct response to this blue moon opportunity. However, all options are open and this is the purpose of seeking pre-application advice and guidance from the planning authority."

And the most improved public realm offer to the rear of the site.

PC

21 February 2024

APPENDIX 3: Historic England Listed Building Map

