

**DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT INCORPORATING THE
HERITAGE STATEMENT
32 CHURCH STREET BALDOCK**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application for works at 32 Church Street, Baldock, a Grade II listed building (Historic England List Entry No. 1347614). The proposal seeks to remove a late 20th-century inserted window and reinstate an active frontage with a new entrance onto Church Street, restoring the historic character and improving the building's contribution to the streetscape. Also reconfigure the internal layout to include a shower room and enclose the utility room. None of which will impact the original fabric.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Design & Access and Heritage Statement accompany a planning application for works at 32 Church Street, Baldock, a Grade II listed building within the Baldock Conservation Area. The purpose of this document is to explain the design rationale, access considerations, and additional works proposed to improve functionality and sustainability while respecting the building's historic significance.

Site and Context

32 Church Street forms part of a historic street within Baldock, which developed as a market town along the Great North Road. Church Street is characterized by 18th- and 19th-century buildings with active frontages and direct street access. The property, listed Grade II (Historic England List Entry No. 1347614), is described as a late 18th-century pair of houses with red brick façades, mansard roofs, and sash windows. Historically, the building featured a shopfront and entrance to the street, later lost through unsympathetic 20th-century alterations. Prior to the conversion to a shopfront, pre-1947, the house was residential with evidence of the dwelling being linked to 34-40 Church Street until circa 1840 and was likely built between 1722 and 1727. In the 1840s 32 was described as a house as opposed to the other dwelling as part of the group which were noted as cottages, suggesting it had been either enlarged or amalgamated, likely to the rear outbuilding on orchard road.

Design Principles

The design approach priorities reinstating the historic relationship between the building and Church Street. The proposed entrance will be located where evidence indicates a former shopfront existed, marked by a render band and photographic records. Materials and detailing will be sympathetic to the building's character, using timber joinery and traditional finishes. The intervention is minimal, reversible, and informed by historical evidence, in line with SPAB principles and Historic England guidance.

Access

The proposal improves pedestrian access by reinstating a direct entrance from Church Street, consistent with the historic pattern of active frontages. The new entrance will provide level access

where feasible and comply with inclusive design principles, ensuring safe and convenient entry for all users without compromising historic fabric.

Planning History.

The property is a Grade II listed building, listed on 15 August 1974. There is no recent planning history of significance beyond minor alterations in 1978 (78/01833/LB), for the change of use of ground floor from shop to residential accommodation involving removal of existing shopfront and installation of new windows and brickwork on front and side elevations together with ancillary internal works and works to the rear building in the late 20th century and early 21st century.

1.2 PROPOSALS

The proposal involves removing the inappropriate late 20th-century window and reinstating an active frontage with a new entrance door onto Church Street. Evidence, including photographic and planning records as well as physical remnants such as a render band, confirms that the property historically featured a shopfront and direct street access, consistent with other properties along Church Street. It is also noted that prior to being converted into a shopfront the buildings would have had direct access onto the street and doors from the dwelling to Church Street are visible on historic photographs as well as physical evidence such as the original doorstep in the pavement.

In addition to reinstating the entrance to Church Street, the development includes several measures to improve functionality, accessibility, and sustainability while respecting the building's historic fabric:

1. New Entrance Lobby: Relocating the entrance from the side to the front involves creating a small lobby. Other than the new door, no changes to original historic fabric occur.
2. Extended WC to Shower Room: The existing downstairs WC, located in a former covered outhouse developed in the late 20th century, will be extended to create a shower room. This improves accessibility and supports the goal of making the property a 'lifetime home' for the current owners.
3. New Utility Space: A new utility area will be introduced internally, involving a partition wall and door, with a Velux rooflight above. These changes are confined to later additions and do not affect original historic fabric.
4. Solar Panels: Installation of solar panels on the rear lower roof slopes of the courtyard buildings will enhance sustainability. Panels will be positioned discreetly to avoid visual intrusion from public viewpoints and will not harm the building's significance.

All works follow best practice conservation principles, ensuring minimal intervention and reversibility where possible, in line with SPAB guidance and Historic England advice.

2. SIGNIFICANCE (HERITAGE)

2.1 Assessing significance.

Assessing the relative heritage significance of heritage assets is now a fundamental part of conservation and decision-making in relation to historic buildings. Significance is defined as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest’ (NPPF). Historic England (previously English Heritage) has provided some guidance on the four main types of heritage value: evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal (Conservation Principles, 2008).

Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present - it tends to be illustrative or associative.

Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Significance can also be defined in relation to levels:

- **Exceptional** – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II* listed buildings and World Heritage Sites.
- **High** – a designated asset important at a national and a regional level, including Grade II listed buildings and conservation areas.
- **Medium** – an undesignated asset important at a local to regional level, including local (non-statutory) listed buildings or those that make a positive contribution to the setting of a listed building or to a conservation area. May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.
- **Low** – structure or feature of very limited heritage or other cultural value and not defined as a heritage asset. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings, and buildings that do not

contribute positively to a conservation area. The removal or adaptation of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.

- Negative – structure or feature that harms the value of a heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

2.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

32 Church Street is of high significance as part of a Grade II listed pair (with No. 34), representing late 18th-century domestic architecture adapted for commercial use. The loss of the original shopfront and street access in the late 20th century diminished its historic character and communal value. Reinstating an entrance will restore the building's intended relationship with Church Street, aligning with evidence from historic photographs and physical features. All other properties on Church Street maintain direct street access, reinforcing the importance of this proposal in preserving the area's historic pattern.

3. PLANNING POLICY

The proposal accords with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023), particularly paragraphs 197–208, which require sustaining and enhancing heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. Paragraph 199 emphasizes that great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. Historic England guidance supports reinstating lost historic features where evidence exists, enhancing significance without harm. Local policy (North Hertfordshire Local Plan) similarly prioritizes preserving and enhancing the character of listed buildings and conservation areas.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) advocates a philosophy of ‘repair not restore,’ prioritizing minimal intervention and respect for historic fabric. This approach emphasizes retaining original materials and features wherever possible, and ensuring that any new work is honest, reversible, and sympathetic to the building’s character. The proposed works follow these principles by removing an unsympathetic modern alteration and reinstating a historically appropriate frontage based on clear evidence, thereby enhancing significance without conjecture. (SPAB Manifesto, 1877; Historic England Conservation Principles, 2008).

4. SUMMARY & REFERENCES

The proposed works will have a positive impact on the significance of 32 Church Street. By removing an unsympathetic late 20th-century alteration and reinstating an entrance based on clear historic evidence, the proposal enhances the building's aesthetic and communal values. No historic fabric of high significance will be lost, and the intervention is minimal, reversible, and sympathetic to the original design. The works will reinforce the historic pattern of active frontages along Church Street, contributing to the character of the Baldock Conservation Area. This approach aligns with NPPF paragraph 199, which requires great weight to be given to the conservation of heritage assets, and Historic England guidance on sustaining significance.

The proposed reinstatement of an active frontage and entrance door will enhance the significance of 32 Church Street by restoring its historic character and communal value. The works are informed by clear evidence and comply with national and local heritage policy. The proposal represents a positive conservation approach, reversing unsympathetic alterations and reinforcing the building's contribution to the Baldock Conservation Area.

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2023: Paragraphs 197–208
- Historic England, Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance, 2008
- SPAB Manifesto, 1877
- Baldock Conservation Area Appraisal, North Hertfordshire District Council
- Historic England Listing Entry: 32 and 34 Church Street (List Entry No. 1347614)

5. SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs of the building along Church Street









Original Shopfront



Internal door to WC - to house



Examples of existing doors to Church Street



