



93a Bancroft, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1NQ

Heritage Statement

Ref: 1658_001

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93a Bancroft, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1NQ

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Origin and scope of the report	3
1.2 Designated Heritage Assets	3
1.3 Conservation Area	3
1.4 Nearby Designated Assets	3
1.5 Non-designated assets (NDA)	3
1.6 Setting	4
1.7 Aims and objectives	4
2 Site and Environs	5
2.1 Site	5
2.2 Designated Heritage Assets	5
2.3 Conservation Area	8
2.4 Non-designated assets (NDAs)	9
2.5 Setting	9
3 Significance	11
3.1 Planning History	11
3.2 Change	12
3.3 Statement of Significance	12
4 Impact of Development	14
4.1 Proposed Development	14
4.2 Impact on the Site	14
4.3 Impact on Designated Assets	14
4.4 Impact on Conservation Area	15
4.5 Impact on Non-designated Assets (NDAs)	15
4.6 Setting	16
4.7 Commentary	16
4.8 Harm	16
4.9 The Duty to Preserve or Enhance	17
5 Photos	18
5.1 Photos	18
6 Conclusions and Recommendations	23
6.1 Conclusions	23
6.2 Recommendations	23
7 Planning and Heritage Framework	24
7.1 Statutory protection	24
7.2 National Planning Policy Framework	24
7.3 Local Policy	27
8 Methodology	28

Figures

Figure 1: Site location, site outlined in red © Tower Residential Design4

Figure 2: Nearby LBs.....4

Figure 3: Hitchin Conservation Area outlined in brown9

Note: Site outlines may appear differently on some figures owing to distortions in historic maps. North may not be up the page and is generally approximate on early maps.

Unless otherwise noted, figures are not shown to scale.

Photos

Plate 1 © Client Photograph 18

Plate 2 © Client Photograph 18

Plate 3 © Client Photograph 19

Plate 4 © Client Photograph 19

Plate 5 © Client Photograph 20

Plate 6 © Client Photograph 20

Plate 7 © Client Photograph 21

Plate 8 © Client Photograph 21

Plate 9 © Client Photograph 22

Executive Summary

We are instructed by clients to prepare a Heritage Impact Assessment in relation to development at 93a Bancroft, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1NQ.

This desk-based study assesses the possible impacts of the proposed development on built and other heritage assets in the area.

Heritage assets which may be affected comprise:

- The site is a Grade II listed building
- The site is within a Conservation Area

Nearby designated and non-designated assets are in proximity to the site.

Conclusions

- The site is a Grade II listed building located within the Hitchin Conservation Area. The proposal is for the redevelopment of the existing hardstanding to provide a formalised outdoor seating area and the installation of a lightweight glazed conservatory to support the ongoing commercial use of the premises.
- The site is situated within the immediate setting of several other designated heritage assets, including listed buildings along Bancroft, and a number of Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDAs) such as locally listed and 'positive' buildings or Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs) identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement (2011).
- The proposal includes minimal interventions to historic fabric and employs materials and methods that are sympathetic and largely reversible. The glazed structure has been designed to complement the host building whilst remaining visually recessive. The development is considered to result in a **neutral impact**.
- In its current condition, the yard makes some contribution to the historic setting and towards the viable usage of the commercial business. However, this usage is seasonally limited. The proposed development will provide the optimum viable usage and experience of the space for the site, whilst avoiding harm to the listed building, the surrounding NDAs, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Through careful design and appropriate materials, the proposal will preserve the significance of the heritage assets and maintain the special interest of the historic environment.
- The proposed development would not detract from the character and appearance of the street scene and area in a wider context, nor would it unduly impact upon the residential and commercial amenity of neighbouring occupants.
- By virtue of intervening urban forms and natural environment, relative disposition, and lack of inter-visibility, it is considered that the setting of other designated and non-designated assets in the wider vicinity will be materially unaffected by the scheme and there will be no harm to significance.
- The design does not constitute over development and is determined that the works are necessary to ensure the optimum viable use for the site.
- The proposal is considered to accord in full with legislation, national and local heritage policy and advice.

Recommendations

Although it is recognised there is a possibility of archaeological materials being uncovered if below ground works are undertaken, it is assessed that this is a reduced likelihood. However, if archaeological materials are uncovered during the development, all works must cease and the Council be consulted, with a watching brief subsequently undertaken. It is recognised that there are minimal ground works proposed as part of this proposal.

No further heritage reporting is required at this stage.

1 Introduction

1.1 Origin and scope of the report

- 1.1.1 We are instructed by clients to prepare a Heritage Impact Assessment in relation to development at 93a Bancroft, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1NQ within the North Hertfordshire District Council administration (the site).
- 1.1.2 The subject site is a Grade II listed building within the Hitchin Conservation Area.
- 1.1.3 The proposal is for the redevelopment of existing hardstanding to outdoor seating area and the installation of a conservatory.
- 1.1.4 This desk-based study assesses the impact of the scheme on heritage assets. It forms an initial stage of investigation of the area of proposed development (hereafter referred to as the 'site') and may be required in relation to the planning process in order that the local planning authority (LPA) can formulate an appropriate response in the light of the impact upon any known or potential heritage assets. These are parts of the historic environment which are considered to be significant because of their archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interests.
- 1.1.5 The assessment has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG 2025) and to standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA Oct 2012/Nov 2012), English Heritage (2008, 2011), Historic England (2015) and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC 2009). The LPA has referred the applicant to the HER database.
- 1.1.6 Note: within the limitations imposed by dealing with historical material and maps, the information in this document is, to the best knowledge of the author, correct at the time of writing.

1.2 Designated Heritage Assets

- 1.2.1 The term "immediate vicinity" relates to the asset's distance to the site, its relative proximity, and key views to the site, therefore any heritage assets which do not meet these criteria are scoped out of consideration as there will be no impact on their setting or significance.
- 1.2.2 There are 9 listed buildings (LB) within the immediate vicinity of the site (Figure 2).

1.3 Conservation Area

- 1.3.1 The site is situated within the Hitchin Conservation Area (CA).
- 1.3.2 There is a publicly accessible Conservation Area Character Statement on the council's website which has been utilised for this report.

1.4 Nearby Designated Assets

- 1.4.1 There are other listed buildings (LBs) in the wider vicinity.

1.5 Non-designated assets (NDA)

- 1.5.1 There are NDAs within the immediate vicinity.
- 1.5.2 Other NDAs within the wider vicinity have been scoped out of consideration as there will be no potential for permanent impact on the setting of these assets.

1.6 Setting

1.6.1 There is nothing to suggest that appropriate change will be harmful, as a principle.

1.7 Aims and objectives

- Identify the presence of any built heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals;
- describe the significance of such assets, as required by national planning policy;
- assess the likely impacts upon the significance of the assets arising from the proposals; and
- provide recommendations for further assessment where necessary of the historic assets affected, and/or mitigation aimed at reducing or removing completely any adverse impacts upon heritage assets and/or their setting.



Figure 1: Site location, site outlined in red © Tower Residential Design



Figure 2: Nearby LBs

2 Site and Environs

2.1 Site

- 2.1.1 The site is located on a primarily pedestrianised side road off of Bancroft, within the historic core of Hitchin town centre. The site is flanked by other listed buildings and is situated within the Hitchin Conservation Area. To the front, the property opens out to a hardstanding area. The proposal relates specifically to the front of the premises, which does not face onto Bancroft, but a side street.
- 2.1.2 The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of commercial uses, with restaurants, shops, and services occupying the ground floors of historic buildings. The setting is defined by its high heritage value and pedestrian-friendly streetscape, with Hitchin railway station located approximately 1.2km to the northeast, providing access to wider regional centres.

2.2 Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.2.1 There are 9 listed buildings (LB) within the immediate vicinity of the site, including the site itself.
- 38-40 Bancroft (GII: 1102220)
- 2.2.2 This heritage asset is situated c. 60m north from the site. The Historic England listing describes this asset as follows:
1. 5255 BANCROFT (West Side) Nos 38 to 41 (consec) TL 1829 NE 5/6
- II
2. C17-18 plastered house of 2 storeys beneath steep tiled roof, which is cross-gabled at the Northern end over a carriage-way. Ground floor completely altered with modern shop-fittings, but still indicating that the upper floor originally had a considerable overhang. Upper floor retains basket-work gargetting and a plain plaster roundel in the cross-gable bearing the date '1726'. 3 windows are completely modernized. carriageway under gable.
- 86 and 87 Bancroft (GII: 1102222)
- 2.2.3 This heritage asset is situated c.55m north from the site. Historic England describes the asset as follows:
1. 5255 BANCROFT (East Side) Nos 86 & 87 TL 1829 NE 5/7 13.4.51. 86 to 87 II
2. C17 plastered building of 2 storeys, the upper storey overhanging, Moulded eaves below steep tiled roof, with large brick chimney stack only slightly restored, 4 windows (ground floor, modern shop-window; upper floor, twin frames in single cases, sashed in C18).
- Entrance Court Wall and gateways to Skynner's Almshouses, Skynner's Almshouses (GII: 1173005)
- 2.2.4 This heritage asset is situated c. 40m south from the site. The Historic England listing describes this asset as follows:
1. TL 1829 NE 5/3 BANCROFT 13.4.51 (EAST SIDE) TL 1829 NE 5/3A Nos 68 to 83 (consec) (Skynner's Almshouses). Entrance Court Wall and gateways to No 68 to 88 (consec) (Skynner's Almshouses).

II GV

2. Two long ranges of C17 brick almshouses. The brickwork is very largely of stretcher courses and much restored. The ranges are dated 1670 and 1698. Roofs over the single storey are steeply tiled and have eight rectangular chimney stacks, at intervals, much restored. Pairs of simple Tudor doors separate stretches of 4 window in one range, 2 windows in the other (all diamond-leded casements of two or three lights). Low brick wall. encloses narrow garden in front of the ranges, each approached through 1 tall brick entrance gate. Each gateway contains a sunken stone panel. engraved with a record of the charitable gift. RCHM, pages 123-124.

Nos 68 to 83 (consec) (Skyenner's Almshouses), Entrance Court Wall and Gateway form a group.

34 Bancroft (GII: 1172987)

- 2.2.5 This heritage asset is situated c. 30m northwest from the site. The Historic England listing describes this asset as follows:

1. 5255 BANCROFT (West Side) No 34 TL 1829 SE 4/8 15.4.51. TL 1829 BE 5/8

II GV

2. Hid C18 brick house of 2 storeys It facade re-faced.). Brick string between floors, moulded brick cornice below a parapet, which curves down at each end and is capped in the centre by a small. pediment crowning a slightly projecting central bay. The carved wooden door-code has a rusticated architrave with long-and-short sides and multiple splayed keystone beneath a small pediment; the door, with six fielded panels in its upper half, is recessed back between similarly panelled reveals. 5 windows in broad flush frames, sashes with glazing bars, louvered shutters.

No 30 and Nos 32 to 34 (consec) form a group.

91 and 92 Bancroft (GII: 1347578)

- 2.2.6 This heritage asset is situated c. 5m north from the site. The Historic England listing describes this asset as follows:

1. 5255 BANCROFT (East Side) Nos 91 & 92 TL 1829 SE 4/9 13.4.51. II
2. Late C18 building of 2 storeys in pale vermillion brick. Moulded brick cornice beneath a low parapet. Steep tiled roof. Carnage at side in slightly recessed section. 3 windows (ground floor, modern bay in No 91, shop window in No 92; upper floor, all in shallow reveals, three-light on either side). Plain modern door end fanlight inserted into a pedimented case with Doric semi engaged columns. Attic with small box dormer.

No 91 to 93 (consec). Nos 95 to 103B (consec) and Nos 105 to 109 (consec) form a group.

32 and 33 Bancroft (GII: 1347576)

- 2.2.7 This heritage asset is situated c. 20m northwest from the site. The Historic England listing describes this asset as follows:

1. BANCROFT 5255 (Westside) Nos 32 & 33 TL 1829 SE 4/203 GV II

2. C17 or earlier. Timber frame, whitewashed roughcast, tiled roof. 2 storeys with upper floor oversailing. C19 shop windows. 3 first floor casement windows.

No 30 and Nos 32 to 34 (consec) form a group.

93 Bancroft (GII: 1173028)

2.2.8 This heritage asset is the site. The Historic England listing describes this asset as follows:

1. 5255 BANCROFT (East Side) No 93 TL1829 SE 4/10 13.4.51

II GV

2. Ifidl-C18 brick house of 2 storeys. Boxed wooden eaves. Steep tiled roof with single dormer. Carriageway in slightly recessed section. 3 windows, in shallow reveals, on upper floor; on ground floor, two modern inoffensive canted bay-windows on either side of central door of six panels (top four fielded in moulded architrave, the simple pediment enclosing plain light added later.

Nos 91 to 93 (consec), Nos 95 to 103B (consec) and Nos 105 to 109 (consec) form a group.

30 Bancroft (GII: 1172978)

2.2.9 This heritage asset is situated c. 15m south from the site. The Historic England listing describes this asset as follows:

5255 BANCROFT 1. (West Side) No 30 TL 1829 SE 4/11 13.4.51. II GV

2. Mid C18 brick house of 2 storeys. A section to the North, with a large cross-gable, has been completely rebuilt. The main brickwork, excepting patches of restoration, is of header courses in blue seconds, dressed with red. Moulded. wooden eaves below steep roof in modern slate with modern dormers. 5 windows (centre window blank). Modern door in simple old architrave with slight hood. Flush set sash windows, ground floor cambered arches, first floor glazing bars and flat arches. Porch with Roman Ionic fluted columns. Left central glazed door in architrave surround under dentil cornice on consoles.

No 30 and Nos 32 to 34 (consec) form a group.

95 - 98 Bancroft (GII: 1102223)

2.2.10 This heritage asset is situated c. 15m south from the site. The Historic England listing describes this asset as follows:

1. 5255 BANCROFT (East Side) Nos 95 to 98 (consec) TL 1829 SE 4/12 13.4.51. II

2. C17 plaster house of 2 storeys, the upper floor overhanging. Steep tiled roof. Ground floor, 4 simple modern shop bay-windows; upper floor, 5 small sashed window in broad projecting frames, vertical glazing bars.

Nos 91 to 93 (consec). Nos 95 to 103B (consec) and Nos 105 to 109 (consec) form a group.

2.2.11 These buildings are listed Grade II designated heritage assets and as such are of **medium significance**, as a baseline. The significance of these heritage assets is largely derived from their age and intactness of their built fabric which contribute to their historical and architectural interests.

2.3 Conservation Area

- 2.3.1 The site is situated within the Hitchin Conservation Area (CA) (Figure 3) which was designated in 1969.
- 2.3.2 The Conservation Area Character Statement was adopted in July 2011 and describes the general character of the CA as follows:

The special interest that justifies designation of the Hitchin Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors, including:

- *Large market town with Saxon origins;*
- *Hitchin is one of the oldest continually inhabited towns in the county and arguably the historic centre of north Hertfordshire;*
- *One of only five towns in Hertfordshire identified as being of national importance by the Council for British Archaeology;*
- *The town's long history as an agricultural, market and service centre for the region, as well as some more limited industrial heritage;*
- *The undulating topography and the location on the modestly sized River Hiz provides the townscape with interest and definition;*
- *The designated conservation area encompasses the historic town centre as well as public or private parkland and high quality residential suburbs;*
- *The variety of closed and more open spaces, lined with mainly listed buildings of a relatively modest scale, provides the town centre with a particularly appealing character;*
- *The survival of medieval burgage plots to the western side of High Street, and to both sides of Bancroft, which in places are reflected by the creation of alley ways, carriage entrances and courts;*
- *The current pattern of roads and footpaths preserves a network of rights of way over the former medieval open fields that has significantly influenced the development of the town's layout;*
- *The very high quality of the many historic buildings, the most important of which are The Priory, listed grade I (a former Carmelite priory) and the medieval church of St Mary's, also listed grade I;*
- *A few purpose-built larger commercial buildings, such as the Corn Exchange in the Market Place;*
- *The use of timber framing or red brick for many of the historic buildings adds variety and visual interest;*
- *Priory Park, Windmill Hill and Bancroft Recreation Ground are all close to the town centre and are important open green spaces;*
- *The late 19th century residential suburb based on The Avenue lies to the east of the town centre, close to the railway station, and provides a number of substantial family houses, built mainly of the local red brick;*
- *The construction of a town centre Relief Road in 1981 removed through traffic, which once ran along Tilehouse Street;*
- *From 1993 onwards, the town centre has been partially pedestrianised;*
- *The high quality environment, and the provision of a wide range of both local and national shops within Hitchin, as well as the regular street markets, makes the town popular with shoppers and visitors*

- 2.3.3 The CA is a designated heritage asset and as such is of **medium significance**, as a baseline. It is clear that the CA has evidential and historic values which contribute substantially to its overall significance. It can be argued that whilst the CA has been the subject of modern development over time, various elements of the area retain aesthetic value. There is also some communal value.

2.4 Non-designated assets (NDAs)

- 2.4.1 The site lies within Character Area 2a of the Hitchin Conservation Area, an area noted for its dense historic urban grain and high concentration of heritage assets. While 93a Bancroft is itself a Grade II listed building, it is surrounded by a significant number of Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDAs), including Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs) and other 'positive' buildings identified in the Hitchin Conservation Area Character Statement (2011).
- 2.4.2 As defined in the Character Statement, both BLIs and positive buildings are considered NDAs and are afforded protection in line with national policy. There is a presumption in favour of their retention, and proposals affecting their setting are expected to preserve or enhance their character.
- 2.4.3 The BLI in the immediate vicinity of the site is 88-89 Bancroft.
- 2.4.4 NDAs are of low significance, as a baseline. However, considering the BLI in the immediate vicinity of the site has broad historical and architectural intactness, NDAs in the immediate vicinity are deemed to have a **low to medium significance**.
- 2.4.5 NDAs in the wider vicinity have been scoped out of consideration as there will be no potential for permanent impact on the setting of these assets.

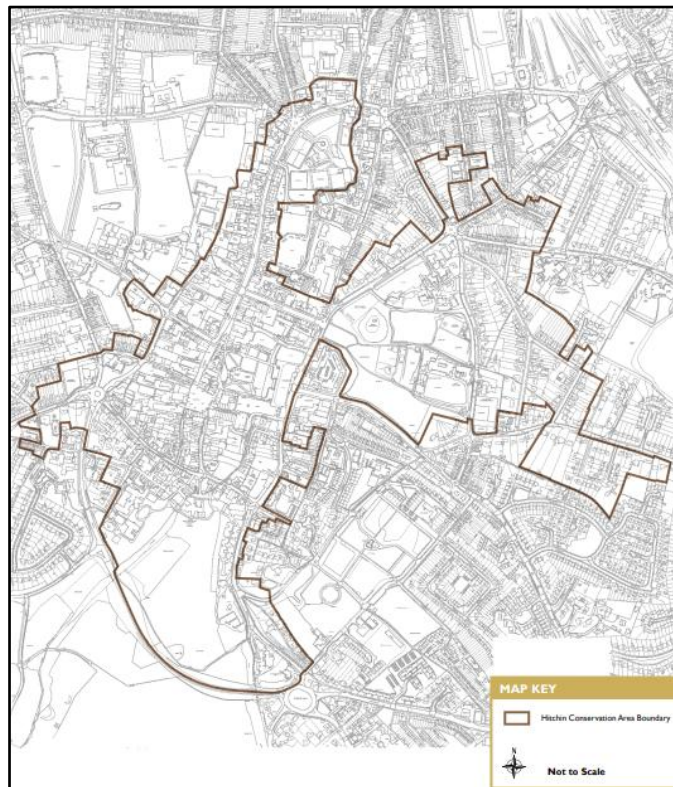


Figure 3: Hitchin Conservation Area outlined in brown

2.5 Setting

- 2.5.1 Setting is generally taken to mean the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral (NPPF 2023 Glossary).

- 2.5.2 A setting is not an asset in its own right, nor does it have significance unless part of another heritage designation.
- 2.5.3 The contribution of setting is generally considered with reference to the Historic England document Good Practice Advice in *Planning Note 3 The setting of heritage assets* (3rd edition 2020) (GPA3).
- 2.5.4 The contribution of setting to the significance of assets is an important consideration. The site is within the Conservation Area and as such its own setting is contiguous with the CA.

3 Significance

3.1 Planning History

3.1.1 A review of the LPA website reveals the following previous planning applications for the site:

19/00884/LBC	Installation of a new kitchen flue to north elevation	15/04/2019
14/01652/1LB	Two storey extension, internal and external alteration to existing building including pitched roof to replace existing flat roof	17/06/2014
14/01792/IDOC	Details reserved by condition 4 (window details) of listed building consent ref no. 13/00670/1LB granted on 19 July 2013.	01/06/2014
14/01704/IDOC	Details reserved by condition 6 (Material Colour and profile of proposed rainwater goods) of listed building consent ref no. 13/00670/1LB granted on 19 July 2013.	01/06/2014
14/01703/IDOC	Details reserved by condition 6 (external finish to all windows, external doors and shop fronts) of listed building consent ref no. 13/00670/1LB granted on 19 July 2013.	01/06/2014
13/03102/1	Two storey extension and external alteration to existing building including pitched roof to replace existing flat roof.	02/01/2014
13/02298/1DO	Condition 6 - Programme of Archaeological Works (as discharge of condition attached to planning reference 13/00821/1 granted permission 19/07/2013)	19/09/2013
13/02274/IDOC	Condition 5 - Sample Materials (as discharge of condition attached to planning reference 13/00821/1 granted permission 19/07/2013)	19/09/2013
13/01959/1	Removal of condition 6 of planning reference 13/00082/1 granted permission on 19/06/13	20/08/2013
13/00670/1LB	Internal and external alterations to building to facilitate conversion from offices to residential use. Two storey rear extension to number 93A Bancroft. (Amended plan received 17/06/13).	25/04/2013
13/00821/1	Two storey extension and alterations to existing building to create one retail unit (Class A3) at ground floor together with 1 x 1-bed and 1 x 2-bed flats at first floor. (Amended plan received 17/06/13).	25/04/2013

12/00536/1	Two storey and single storey extensions following partial demolition and alterations to existing building to create one retail unit (use class A3) and 4 one bedroom flats, one studio flat and 2 two bedroom flats (variation to conditions 4 and 5 of 11/03020/1 granted permission 16/02/12 in addition to alteration	16/03/2012
12/00537/1LB	Internal and external alterations to building to facilitate conversion from offices to residential use. Two storey rear extension to number 93A Bancroft.	16/03/2012
11/03020/1	Two storey and single storey extensions following partial demolition and alterations to existing building to create one retail unit (use Class A3) and 4 one bedroom flats; one studio flat; and 2 two bedroom flats. (Additional plan received 18.01.12 and amended plan received 14.02.12).	22/12/2011
11/03021/1LB	Internal and external alterations to building to facilitate conversion from offices to residential use. Two storey rear extension to number 93A Bancroft. (Amended plan received 14.02.12).	22/12/2011

3.2 Change

- 3.2.1 Taking the CA as a whole, there has been a pattern of change. Organic and incremental changes are likely to continue and also indicates that appropriate change is acceptable.

3.3 Statement of Significance

- 3.3.1 Significance, as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is “the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest”. According to the NPPF “heritage interest” may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.
- **Archaeological interest:** *there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.*
 - **Architectural and artistic interest:** *these are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.*
 - **Historic interest:** *an interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.*

Archaeological Interest

- 3.3.2 Due to the site's location within the historic core of Hitchin, in close proximity to known medieval burgrave plots and a long-established commercial route, it is possible that any below-ground works could encounter archaeological material relating to the town's medieval and post-medieval development.
- 3.3.3 However, it should be noted that the site lies within an area that has been in continuous urban use for several centuries, with evidence of repeated development, servicing, and hard landscaping. As such, previous ground disturbances associated with historic construction and modern interventions may have compromised the survival of any below-ground archaeological deposits. Whilst some potential remains, the likelihood of well-preserved archaeological material in this specific context is therefore reduced.
- 3.3.4 Considering the above, there is the potential for evidence of past human activity, but it is noted that this potential is reduced due to the predominantly developed nature of the site.

Architectural and Artistic Interest

- 3.3.5 The architectural interest of the site is closely tied to its contribution to the historic townscape of Bancroft, a principal thoroughfare within the Hitchin Conservation Area. The building forms part of a tightly grained sequence of listed and non-designated heritage assets that define the medieval and post-medieval urban form. Its interest lies primarily in its age, form, and the survival of historic built fabric, which reflects the evolution of commercial premises within Hitchin's historic market core.
- 3.3.6 The building exhibits vernacular characteristics typical of Georgian and early Victorian adaptations, with elements such as traditional sash windows, painted timber joinery, and a parapet frontage aligned with the street. The front of the property, which opens onto a yard typical of historic burgrave plot development, retains its historic servicing function. While modest in detail, the architectural composition contributes to the rhythm and visual coherence of the streetscape.
- 3.3.7 The building has clear group value with both designated and non-designated heritage assets along Bancroft, including neighbouring listed buildings and a number of locally listed structures. Together, these assets, specifically the commercial frontages, contribute to the architectural variety and continuity that underpin the special interest of the Conservation Area.

Historic Interest

- 3.3.8 The historic interest of the building is primarily derived from its origins within the medieval core of Hitchin and its position just off of Bancroft, one of the town's principal historic streets, which started off as a Saxon Road. The property forms part of the longstanding commercial frontage of the medieval market town and contributes to the understanding of Hitchin's historical development as a regional centre of trade and commerce.
- 3.3.9 The site has remained in active commercial use over time, consistent with the historic function of the area. Although elements of the building have been subject to modern alterations and extensions, the site continues to reflect its historic form and function within the streetscape and retains its value as part of the wider narrative of Hitchin's evolution.
- 3.3.10 Considering the above interests and in accordance with Table 1 (see Section 8), the building is determined to be of **medium significance**.

4 Impact of Development

4.1 Proposed Development

- 4.1.1 The proposal comprises the redevelopment of the existing hardstanding to create an outdoor seating area and the installation of a lightweight glazed conservatory structure to the rear elevation. The proposed works are intended to support the building's ongoing commercial use while improving the functionality and appearance of the rear yard.
- 4.1.2 The proposal comprises several elements associated with the enhancement of the building's rear external area and should therefore be read in conjunction with the submitted plans and application documents for full detail.

4.2 Impact on the Site

- 4.2.1 The site is located off Bancroft, accessed via a secondary side street adjacent to the Sainsbury's development, and occupies a discreet position behind the principal frontage buildings. Whilst the building itself is Grade II listed, the yard area proposed for development has historically served a service or ancillary function and retains limited evidential value. The building's significance is primarily associated with its historic and aesthetic value, particularly in the context of the wider Bancroft streetscape and the Hitchin Conservation Area.
- 4.2.2 The proposed works will be carried out using lightweight, reversible construction methods to minimise intervention into the historic fabric. All new fixings will aim to be located in areas of lesser significance, and care will be taken to avoid damage to historic masonry or joinery. Finishes will be neutral and contemporary in appearance specifically to provide a visually recessive and transparent addition that allows the original building to remain legible. These measures ensure that any physical or visual impact on the heritage asset is minimised and appropriately mitigated.
- 4.2.3 Additionally, the proposal will enhance the experiential value of the listed building by allowing more visitors to engage with it in a comfortable, accessible, and visually open setting, thereby reinforcing its role within the historic core of Hitchin and reinforcing further commercial access.
- 4.2.4 This proposal is anticipated to result in a **neutral impact**. Given the enclosed and visually contained nature of the yard, the intervention will not disrupt key views or group value. Minimal fixings and careful siting will ensure any physical impact on historic fabric is limited to areas of lesser significance.
- 4.2.5 The design does not constitute over development and is determined that the works are necessary to ensure the optimum viable use for the site.

4.3 Impact on Designated Assets

- 4.3.1 The site lies within close proximity to a number of designated heritage assets along Bancroft, many of which are Grade II listed commercial or residential buildings with origins dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. These include traditional shopfronts, terraced townhouses, and structures such as the Skynner's Almshouses and other listed buildings, as mentioned in section 2.
- 4.3.2 The proposed development is confined to the rear of 93a Bancroft and occupies a backland position, physically and visually separated from the streetscape in which these heritage assets sit. As such, there is no intervisibility between the proposed structure and the frontages of the surrounding listed buildings. The glazed structure is of modest scale and height and will not interrupt or obscure any key views of the listed buildings from the public realm.
- 4.3.3 The nature of the proposal is low-impact and reversible, and will not affect the setting,

integrity, or legibility of the nearby listed buildings. Given the discreet siting, absence of encroachment into shared spaces, and the continued commercial use of the property, it is determined that the proposal will result in a **neutral impact** on the significance of the surrounding designated assets.

- 4.3.4 By virtue of lack of intervisibility, relative disposition and intervening urban forms, the development will not be within and therefore have no material impact on the setting of any other designated heritage assets in the wider vicinity. The development also won't feature in any long distance or key views, resulting in a **visually neutral impact**.

4.4 Impact on Conservation Area

- 4.4.1 The works are confined to the rear of the site, which does not contribute directly to the streetscape or key views identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement (2011). The glazed structure is modest in scale and transparent in appearance, allowing the historic form of the listed building to remain clearly legible and avoiding visual intrusion into the wider townscape. As noted in the Character Statement, Hitchin's significance is largely derived from the "continuous frontages of high-quality listed buildings" and the rhythm of the medieval street plan (Section 7.2), both of which remain largely unaffected by the proposal.
- 4.4.2 By formalising an already active seating area without encroaching into undeveloped land, the scheme supports the Conservation Area's vitality and reinforces the active commercial use of a heritage asset, aligning with the principles of positive, sustainable conservation.
- 4.4.3 It is also noted that a large glazed gazebo-style structure forms the entrance to the neighbouring Sainsbury's, located immediately adjacent to the site. In this context, the proposed works will not appear incongruous or visually intrusive and instead reflect a consistent design language already present in the vicinity. The new structure on site, while modern in material, is recessive in form and allows for greater experiential access to the listed building, thereby supporting the commercial vitality and public appreciation of the historic environment. As such, the proposal represents a sensitive and measured intervention that aligns with the aims of preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and results a **neutral impact**.
- 4.4.4 By virtue of lack of intervisibility, relative disposition and intervening urban forms, the development will not be within and therefore have no material impact on the setting of any other CAs in the wider vicinity. The development also won't feature in any long distance or key views, resulting in a **visually neutral impact**.

4.5 Impact on Non-designated Assets (NDAs)

- 4.5.1 In its current condition, the site is causing a neutral impact on the significance of the Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDAs) within the immediate vicinity, which include Buildings of Local Interest and other 'positive' buildings identified in the Hitchin Conservation Area Character Statement (2011).
- 4.5.2 These assets contribute to the character and historic townscape grain of the area. The proposed works, being modest in scale, discretely located down a side street, and designed with complementary materials, will not intrude upon their setting or disrupt group value. As such, the development is considered to result in a **neutral impact** and will preserve the significance of nearby NDAs.
- 4.5.3 By virtue of lack of intervisibility, relative disposition and intervening urban forms, the development will not be within and therefore have no material impact on the setting of any other NDAs in the wider vicinity. The development also won't feature in any long distance or key views, resulting in a **visually neutral impact**.

4.6 Setting

- 4.6.1 Historic England's GPA3, para 17 on, sets out a five 'staged' approach to proportionate decision-taking regarding assessing setting:
- Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected (i.e. the surroundings within which an asset is experienced)
 - Step 2: Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated;
 - Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it
 - Step 4: Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
 - Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes (this latter stage is generally the preserve of the LPA).
- 4.6.2 Within the framework of the 5 stages, it is general practice to consider the setting of an asset in 3 'layers':
- Contextual – the wider landscape/townscape
 - Intimate – the immediate and proximate
 - Prospect – setting as experienced from within (usually the property boundary/curtilage).
- 4.6.3 The contextual setting of the site is the historic core of Hitchin, defined by its medieval street pattern, high concentration of listed and locally listed buildings, and its designation within the Hitchin Conservation Area.
- 4.6.4 The intimate setting of the site includes neighbouring heritage assets along Bancroft and the surrounding commercial townscape, which features a mix of traditional brick façades and enclosed service yards.
- 4.6.5 The prospect setting, as experienced from within the rear yard of the site, is currently characterised by hardstanding, service access, and a utilitarian backdrop.
- 4.6.6 The site is within the Conservation Area and as such its own setting is contiguous with the CA.
- 4.6.7 Through the use of considered design and complementary materials, it is determined that there will be a **neutral** impact on the setting of the CA and the development will preserve and enhance its significance.

4.7 Commentary

- 4.7.1 There has been change over time, however the significance of the CA remains unharmed. The development subject to this application does not take on-going change beyond the tipping point.
- 4.7.2 Change is part of the character of most long-standing heritage assets, as is the case here.

4.8 Harm

- 4.8.1 The NPPF, at paras 212-220 refers to harm to the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 4.8.2 It is considered that the proposal will result in a neutral impact on the site; there will be change, but overall that change will cause little or no harm to the heritage asset. As there is no harm there is no duty to prove public benefit, etc.
- 4.8.3 Overall, the proposal will represent preservation and ongoing viable usage through use of complementary materials and considered design.

4.9 The Duty to Preserve or Enhance

- 4.9.1 It is considered that the proposal will preserve the appearance, significance and character of the area – impact will be in the neutral.

5 Photos

5.1 Photos

5.1.1 This section contains photographs to provide context, they are not extensive.



Plate 1 © Client Photograph



Plate 2 © Client Photograph



Plate 3 © Client Photograph



Plate 4 © Client Photograph

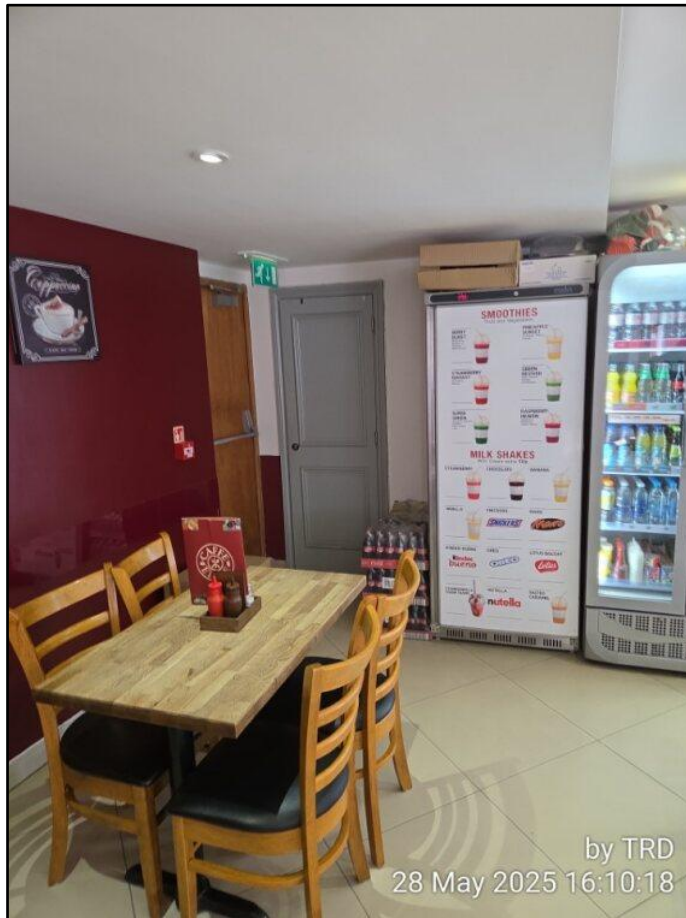


Plate 5 © Client Photograph

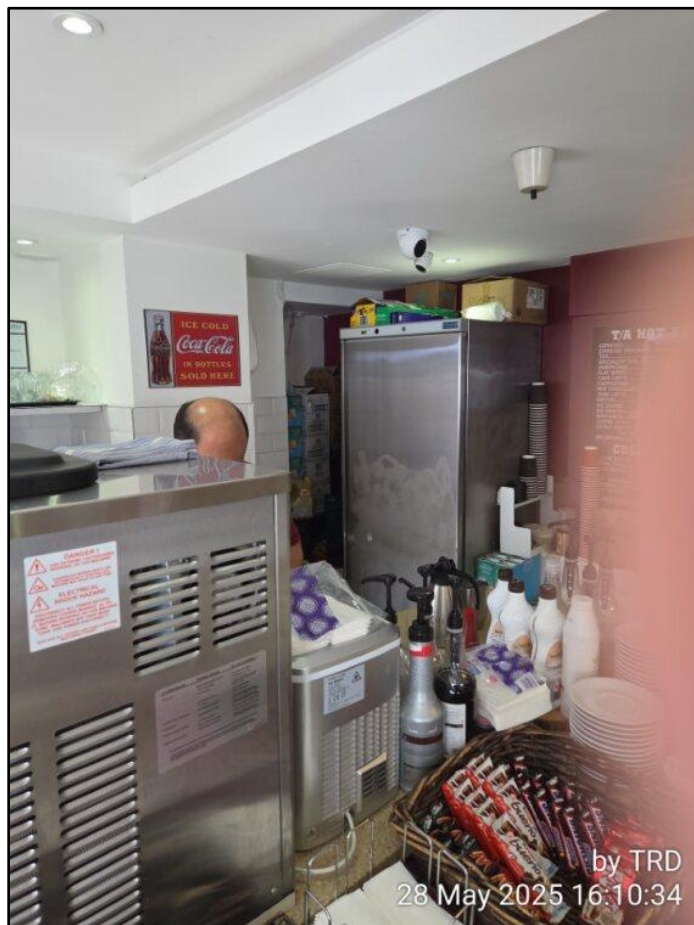


Plate 6 © Client Photograph

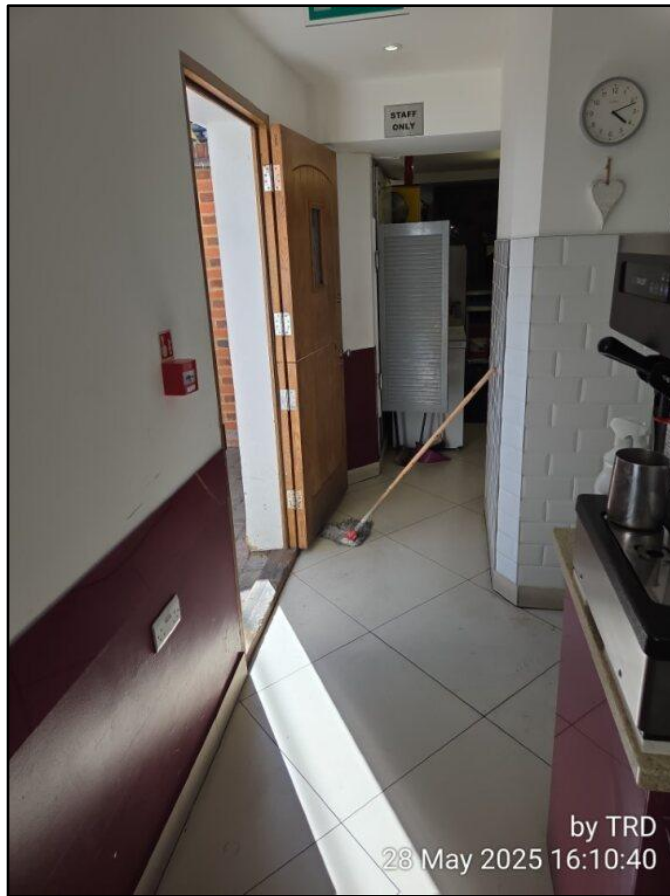


Plate 7 © Client Photograph



Plate 8 © Client Photograph

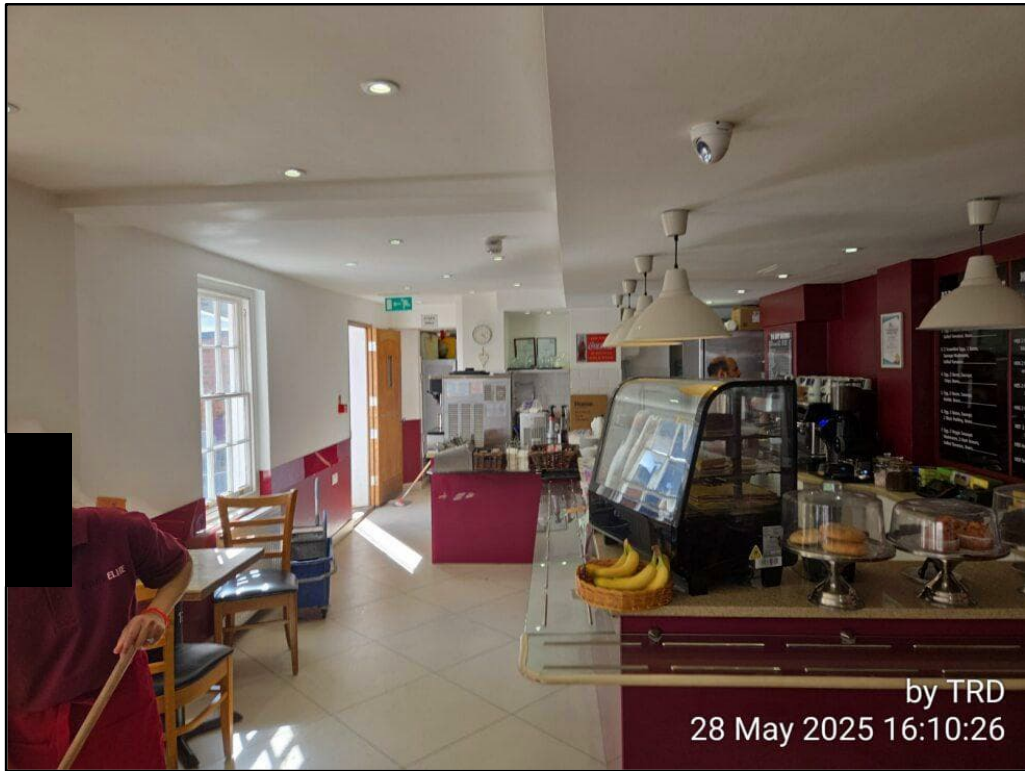


Plate 9 © Client Photograph

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

- 6.1.1 The site is a Grade II listed building located within the Hitchin Conservation Area. The proposal is for the redevelopment of the existing hardstanding to provide a formalised outdoor seating area and the installation of a lightweight glazed conservatory to support the ongoing commercial use of the premises.
- 6.1.2 The site is situated within the immediate setting of several other designated heritage assets, including listed buildings along Bancroft, and a number of Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDAs) such as locally listed and 'positive' buildings or Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs) identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement (2011).
- 6.1.3 The proposal includes minimal interventions to historic fabric and employs materials and methods that are sympathetic and largely reversible. The glazed structure has been designed to complement the host building whilst remaining visually recessive. The development is considered to result in a **neutral impact**.
- 6.1.4 In its current condition, the yard makes some contribution to the historic setting and towards the viable usage of the commercial business. However, this usage is seasonally limited. The proposed development will provide the optimum viable usage and experience of the space for the site, while avoiding harm to the listed building, the surrounding NDAs, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.1.5 Through careful design and appropriate materials, the proposal will preserve the significance of the heritage assets and maintain the special interest of the historic environment.
- 6.1.6 The proposed development would not detract from the character and appearance of the street scene and area in a wider context, nor would it unduly impact upon the residential and commercial amenity of neighbouring occupants.
- 6.1.7 By virtue of intervening urban forms and natural environment, relative disposition, and lack of inter-visibility, it is considered that the setting of other designated and non-designated assets in the wider vicinity will be materially unaffected by the scheme and there will be no harm to significance.
- 6.1.8 The design does not constitute over development and is determined that the works are necessary to ensure the optimum viable use for the site.
- 6.1.9 The proposal is considered to accord in full with legislation, national and local heritage policy and advice.

6.2 Recommendations

- 6.2.1 Although it is recognised there is a possibility of archaeological materials being uncovered if below ground works are undertaken, it is assessed that this is a reduced likelihood. However, if archaeological materials are uncovered during the development, all works must cease and the Council be consulted, with a watching brief subsequently undertaken. It is recognised that there are minimal ground works proposed as part of this proposal.
- 6.2.2 No further heritage reporting is required at this stage.

7 Planning and Heritage Framework

7.1 Statutory protection

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

- 7.1.1 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* sets out the legal requirements for the control of development and alterations which affect buildings, including those which are listed or in conservation areas. Buildings which are listed or which lie within a conservation area are protected by law. Grade I are buildings of exceptional interest. Grade II* are particularly significant buildings of more than special interest. Grade II are buildings of special interest, which warrant every effort being made to preserve them.

7.2 National Planning Policy Framework

- 7.2.1 The Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012 (DCLG 2012) and supporting Planning Practice Guidance in 2014 (DCLG 2014). This advice was last updated in 2025.
- 7.2.2 One of the 12 core principles that underpin both plan-making and decision-taking within the framework is to '*conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.*' It recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and requires the significance of heritage assets to be considered in the planning process, whether designated or not. The contribution of setting to asset significance needs to be considered.
- 7.2.3 Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment sets out the heritage-related consent regimes for which local planning authorities are responsible under the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, as well as to plan-making and decision-making.
- 7.2.4 Paras 202-221 inclusive refer:
202. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.
203. Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:
- d) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets,
and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - e) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation
of the historic environment can bring;
 - f) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local
character and distinctiveness; and
 - g) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic
environment to the character of a place.

204. When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.
205. Local planning authorities should maintain or have access to a historic environment record. This should contain up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and be used to:
- a) assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment; and
 - b) predict the likelihood that currently unidentified heritage assets, particularly sites of historic and archaeological interest, will be discovered in the future.
206. Local planning authorities should make information about the historic environment, gathered as part of policy-making or development management, publicly accessible.

Proposals affecting heritage assets

207. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

208. 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) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

209. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

210. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

211. In considering any applications to remove or alter a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether listed or not), local planning authorities should

have regard to the importance of their retention in situ and, where appropriate, of explaining their historic and social context rather than removal.

Considering potential impacts

212. 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.

213. 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. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

214. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

215. 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.

216. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

217. Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

218. Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part)

in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

219. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

220. Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 214 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

221. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.

7.3 Local Policy

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031

7.3.1 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031 was adopted in November 2022 and outlines how the City will develop and the policies which will guide new developments. Of relevance to this report are the following policies:

- Policy SP13 – Historic Environment
- Policy HE1 – Designated Heritage Assets
- Policy HE3 – Non-designated assets

These should be read in conjunction with the Hitchin Conservation Area Character Statement which is described in section 2 above.

8 Methodology

8.1.1 Significance, as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is “the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest”. According to the NPPF “heritage interest” may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.

- **Archaeological interest:** *there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.*

- **Architectural and artistic interest:** *these are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.*

- **Historic interest:** *an interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.*

8.1.2 The tables below are used throughout this report to determine significance and impacts. Table 1 is used to assess significance, with magnitude of impact determined using Table 2. Table 3 consolidates the results from both Tables 1 and 2 to determine overall heritage impact.

VERY HIGH	· World Heritage Sites · Other buildings of recognised international importance
HIGH	· Scheduled Ancient Monuments with standing remains · All Grade I and all Grade II* Listed Buildings · Some Grade II listed buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical associations not adequately reflected in their listing grade · Conservation Areas containing very important buildings · Undesignated structures of clear national importance
MEDIUM	· Some Grade II Listed Buildings · Historic (unlisted) buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical associations · Conservation Areas containing buildings that contribute significantly to its historic character · Historic townscape or built-up areas with important historic integrity in their buildings, or built settings (e.g., including street furniture and other structures)
LOW	· Locally listed buildings · Historic (unlisted) buildings of modest quality in their fabric or historical association · Historic townscape or built-up areas of limited historic integrity in their buildings, or built settings (e.g., including street furniture and other structures)
NEGLIGIBLE	· Buildings of no architectural or historical note

Table 1: Assessment of Significance. Adapted from Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume II, Section 3, Part 2 (2007)

HIGH	Changes to most or all of the key archaeological or key heritage baseline elements, or comprehensive changes to the setting of such key features that lead to total or almost complete alteration of a features' physical structure, dramatic visual alteration to the setting of a heritage asset, or almost comprehensive variation to aspects such as noise, access, or visual amenity of the historic landscape.
MEDIUM	Changes to many key archaeological materials/historic elements, or their setting, such that the baseline resource is clearly modified. This includes considerable visual change to many key aspects of the historic landscape, noticeable differences in noise or sound quality, and considerable changes to use or access changes to key historic landscape elements.
LOW	Detectable impacts which alter the baseline condition of an archaeological or heritage receptor to a slight degree – e.g., a small proportion of the surviving heritage resource is altered; slight alterations to the setting or structure, or limited changes to aspects such as noise levels, use or access that results in limited changes to historic landscape character.
NEGLIGIBLE	Barely distinguishable change from baseline conditions, where there would be very little appreciable effect on a known site, possibly because of distance from the development, method of construction or landscape or ecological planting, that are thought to have no long-term effect on the historic value of a resource.
UNKNOWN	Extent / nature of the resource is unknown and the magnitude of change cannot be ascertained.

Table 2: Magnitude of Impact. Adapted from Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume II, Section 3, Part 2 (2007)

MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT	SIGNIFICANCE OF HERITAGE ASSET				
	VERY HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
No Change	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Negligible	Slight	Slight	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Neutral
Low	Moderate/Large	Moderate/Slight	Slight	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight
Medium	Large/Very Large	Moderate/Large	Moderate	Slight	Neutral/Slight
High	Very Large	Large/Very Large	Moderate/Large	Slight/Moderate	Slight

Table 3: Heritage Impact. Adapted from *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume II, Section 3, Part 2 (2007)*

