

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Mark Simmons.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/01817/LBC	Retention of shower room in rear entrance lobby and dividing wall at first floor.	The Manor House Bancroft Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 1JW

Submitted Plan Nos

1114-AP01 1114-PL04 1114-PL02 1114-PL03 1114-PL01

1.0 Policies

HE1 Designated heritage assets

SECN16 Conserve + enhance historic environment

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 The only relevant application at no.2 Crown Cottages is the following:

16/00322/1 - Conversion of existing two storey retail unit (A1 use) to 1 x 2 bedroom dwelling.

CP 16.05.2016

16/00323/1LB - Internal alterations to include lower vertical sliding sash secondary glazing units, to facilitate conversion of retail unit to 1 x 2 bedroom dwelling.

CCON 16.05.2016

19/00395/FP - Change of Use and conversion of antique showroom to 2-bed dwelling.

CP 23.05.2019

19/00396/LBC - Internal alterations to facilitate change of use and conversion of antique showroom to 2-bed dwelling.

CCON 23.05.2019

21/01808/LBC - Retention of panelled dividing wall at first floor (part implementation of appn ref: 19/00396/LBC by omitting additional bathroom between bedrooms) and addition of shower and sink to the rear entrance lobby.

WD 27.08.2021

24/01987/S73 - Variation of Condition 2 (revised plans) of planning permission 19/00395/FP granted 23.05.2019 for Change of Use and conversion of antique showroom to 2-bed dwelling (development already carried out).

UP 15.11.2024

24/02163/LBC - Removal of Condition 4 (Full details as to the method of mechanical extraction to the kitchen) of Listed Building consent 19/00396/LBC granted on 23.05.2019 for Internal alterations to facilitate change of use and conversion of antique showroom to 2-bed dwelling.

CCON 15.11.2024

3.0 **Policies**

3.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 is relevant as are the following paragraphs of Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

- **200** (*local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting*)
- **203** (*desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*),
- **205** (*great weight should be given to the asset's conservation*),
- **206** (*clear and convincing justification*), and
- **208** (*harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*).

4.0 **Representations**

4.1 **Historic England** – Consultation with Historic England not undertaken initially. Late notification sent on 18/11/2024 with deadline for 04/12/2024. Non-intervention letter received on 02/12/2024.

Press & site notices – Internal alterations only therefore no requirement to advertise and no representations received.

5.0 **Planning Considerations**

5.1 **Site and Surroundings**

5.1.1 Nos.26 and 27 Bancroft (otherwise known as The Manor House), Hitchin is grade II* listed and is located in the Hitchin Conservation Area. The building is described in the list entry as follows:

2. (The Manor House Galleries' of Messrs Phillips). Fine house of circa 1700, In two sections, which abut yet are distinct. Both sections show careful restoration. (? the Southern section may be a later continuation of the design of the main, Northern, facade). 2 storeys in red brick, with moulded brick modillioned cornice below a plain parapet, which partly masks the steep tiled roof (two leaded dormers in the Northern section). 9 windows with curved heads, all in broad almost flush frames: those in ground floor have projecting brick keystones, running up into the string at first floor level; those in upper floor have plain brick aprons. Northern section (symmetrical 5 window facade) has a magnificent carved wooden porch, so tall and so splendid that it may well have been brought from some more imposing facade (possibly of late C17 rather than later). Fluted Corinthian columns and pilasters, carved modillions, carved end rounded head enclosing a carved cartouche; the whole backed by rusticated woodwork, in which a round-headed recess contains the door of eight fielded panels (the lower half divided by diagonals into four triangular panels) beneath a carved semi-circular fanlight. Elliptically arched carriageway on left.

Nos 21 to 28 (consec) form a group.

Both the building and the Hitchin Conservation Area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the Revised NPPF.

5.2 **Proposal**

- 5.2.1 The proposal is described as: **Retention of shower room in rear entrance lobby and dividing wall at first floor.**

5.3 Key Issues

- 5.3.1 The main issue is to consider the impact of the works on the special character of the listed building.
- 5.3.2 Of significance here is a letter dated 9 March 2016 from Historic England submitted under ref: 16/00323/1LB in which the following is noted (my emphasis in bold):

The Manor House is, in origin, a fine early 18th century house, but its present interest is due to a large degree to its transformation in the late 19th century and after by Phillips, dealers in antique furniture and fittings The very fine Corinthian doorcase, over-scaled for the house, is an addition, and hints at the transformation which the house underwent at Phillips' hands. Your research has demonstrated that the ground floor windows replaced 19th century shop fronts. The transformation within was more radical: the ground floor has been wholly cleared to create a single space, dominated by a screen and a staircase brought from a much larger house. The floor and ceilings of the first floor have been raised to accommodate both this stair and a panelled room of 17th century character, since in whole or part renewed.....

..... It is proposed to return the Manor House to domestic use as a single house. The proposals have been very carefully thought out and illustrated. Although conceived so as to work as far as possible with the existing character of the house the proposals would entail some changes which would to some degree compromise that character. We note the following points....

(ii) The first floor would provide two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Three of these rooms would be provided within the handsome panelled room which occupies the greater part of the front range of the house. This would necessarily detract from the significance of the room and of the house.

The panelling is thought to replace the panelling from a 17th century house in London lived in by Sir Isaac Newton said to have been installed here before its sale to an American buyer. It is probably in part historic and in part reproduction, but it is certainly of some value as part of the assemblage created by Phillips.

Given the limited accommodation provided by the present plan, and the limited significance of the upper room, we consider its careful sub-division to allow the house to have two bedrooms to be justified. The proposals would provide for such a sub-division in a sympathetic manner. We note that although it would be regrettable to displace the monumental doorcase on the landing in order to make it the entrance to the principal bedroom, this would be preferable to the damage to the ordering of the panelling that would otherwise be required.

..... In conclusion Historic England consider your proposals for the Manor House to provide an interesting and sympathetic approach to returning the building to domestic use, in a manner which reflects an understanding of and appreciation for the particular significance of this unusual building. In so far as the proposals would cause some harm to the significance of the house, this would seem necessary to secure the optimum viable use of the building; and there is some scope for such harm to be in part offset by appropriate repairs and enhancements. In sum, therefore, Historic England consider that the proposals could secure the conservation of the Manor House and would be consistent with the relevant policies of the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of the conservation of the historic environment (NPPF, 131, 132, 134).

- 5.3.3 The following is noted in the submitted Design and Heritage Statement:

2. First Floor Alterations

First floor, the proposed layout differs from the approved. During the construction it was discovered that the proposed new drain run would be too destructive to the historical fabric of the front wall. The client therefore took the decision not to install the additional bathroom to the first floor between the bedrooms. The other main alteration is the decorative door that is placed central to the stairwell is remaining in the original position. The approved scheme allowed for the repositioning of this doorway to accommodate the bathroom between the two bedrooms that has not been undertaken. The omission of the bathroom resulted in less alterations to the original features of the building.

3. Shower to rear entrance lobby

An application for a shower and sink was submitted to the council in June 2021, reference 21/01808/LBC. This application was withdrawn as the first-floor alterations needed additional information. Subsequently due to personal reasons, a revised application was not resubmitted until now. During the consultation with conservation, the principal of the shower to the rear entrance lobby was acceptable due to the loss of the first-floor bathroom. The shower has been fitted within the space without removal of any historical fabric. There has been the introduction of an extractor fan in the rear wall. This wall is a later addition, and the brickwork is of poor quality. The existing window has been retained with no other visible alterations.

- 5.3.4 The above gives an insight into the significance of the panelled room at first floor. In the 2016 and 2019 schemes, the subdivision was due to be implemented with panelling and panelled doors to complement the existing panelled interior. However, not only has the bathroom between both bedrooms been omitted, but the dividing wall is also a timber stud and plastered wall finished with a patterned wallpaper with subtle tones, thereby, contrasting with the existing panelling. It is considered that this less intrusive approach i.e. omitting the bathroom and not displacing the monumental doorcase on the landing, safeguards the interior more so when compared with the previously consented scheme.

- 5.3.5 minor The works to form the shower in the rear entrance lobby are considered relatively minor and do not unduly impact upon the side/rear lobby entrance.

5.4 Alternative Options

- 5.4.1 None applicable.

5.5 Pre-Commencement Conditions

- 5.5.1 None applicable.

5.6 Conclusion

- 5.6.1 It is considered that whilst the alterations at first floor would, to a limited extent, occasion some harm to the significance of the house, the view expressed by Historic England in 2016 are echoed here as this would seem necessary to secure the optimum viable use of the building. The question of patterned wallpaper versus the previously consented timber panelling and panelled doors has been considered carefully and would not occasion harm. On balance, it is considered that the alterations assist in securing the conservation of The Manor House, thereby, satisfying the provisions of Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and the aims of Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 That Listed Building Consent be **GRANTED**.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 3 December 2024	