

PLANNING, DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

**The George, 2 Hitchin Street,
Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6AE**



Use of part ground floor as a bakery shop, a retail unit and an ancillary office. Internal alterations, with insertion of two windows to rear elevation

February 2026



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared by INTOUCH PLANNING LTD, to support an application for full planning permission and listed building consent. The development comprises use of the ground floor as a bakery shop, a retail unit and an ancillary office. Internal alterations, with insertion of two windows to rear elevation. The site address is The George, 2 Hitchin Street, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6AE.
- 1.2 The Statement provides an assessment of the planning policy framework relevant to the proposal, as well as other relevant material considerations, based on a contextual understanding of the site and the locality.

2. Site description

- 2.1 The application building is The George (formerly The George and Dragon) and is situated at the junction between Hitchin Street and Church Street, within Baldock town centre. The ground floor currently comprises a restaurant (long term vacant), a retail unit, and four accommodation rooms. This is a grade II listed building and the site is located within the Baldock Conservation Area.
- 2.2 With regard to neighbouring properties, the building adjoins 1-6 Coach Yard flats (formerly part of the overall No. 2 building). Located to the west of this is the entrance to St Mary's Church from Hitchin Street, with Butterfield House as a grade II* listed building to the west of this entrance on Hitchin Street. Opposite the site are 1-7 Hitchin Street. To the rear of the site is the churchyard and St Mary's Church. The following images show the location of the site at Figure 1, with the external photographs of the building in Figures 2 to 5.





Figure 1 – The application site and surroundings



Figure 2 – Front elevation to Church Street





Figure 3 – Elevation to Hitchin Street



Figure 4 – Side elevation entrance doors to Hitchin Street





Figure 5 – Rear elevation to the churchyard of St Mary's Church

3. Planning history

The relevant planning history for the site is as follows:

- 3.1 04/00931/1 - Conversion of part of former restaurant building into 6 dwellings (as a variation of ref no 01/1678/1 granted on 29/10/2002) – Planning permission granted.
- 3.2 07/02593/1PUD - Use of building as Restaurant / Café (A3) at ground floor level and Hotel Accommodation (C1) at first floor level – Certificate of Lawfulness granted.
- 3.3 11/01138/1 - Replacement of rear flat roof with pitched roof to provide a bedroom in new roof area. Replacement of flat roof over bin store with pitched roof. Insertion of 3rd floor window in North West elevation and replacement of ground floor window with door in North West elevation and ancillary works (as a variation of planning permission ref no. 07/02293/1



granted on 22 February 2008 and amended by plans received on 19 July 2011)
- Planning permission granted.

- 3.4 11/01139/1LB - External and internal alterations to include replacement of rear flat roof with pitched roof to provide a bedroom in new roof area. Replacement of flat roof over bin store with pitched roof. Insertion of 3rd floor window in North West elevation and replacement of ground floor window with door in North West elevation and ancillary works. Internal modifications to include rearrangement of first floor layout to provide 3 additional bedrooms (as a variation of planning permission ref no. 07/02294/LB granted on 22 February 2008 and amended by plans received on 19 July 2011) – Listed building consent granted.
- 3.5 22/01853/FP & 22/01854/LBC - Part change of use and conversion of ground floor restaurant to two residential flats (C3 use), with insertion of ground floor windows to rear elevation and internal alterations - Withdrawn.
- 3.6 24/00181/FP and 24/00182/LBC - Part change of use and conversion of ground floor restaurant to four hotel rooms (C1 use) and one retail (E(a) use) and bar unit, to include insertion of two windows to rear elevation and internal alterations – Planning permission and listed building consent granted.

4. The proposal

- 4.1 The development comprises use of the ground floor as a bakery shop, from the approved Class E commercial unit but with bakery kitchen to the rear, then a retail unit formed from the long-term vacant restaurant area, with an ancillary administration office for the management of the building. Internal alterations are proposed for minor changes to walls, with insertion of two windows to rear elevation.
- 4.2 Access to the building would remain unaltered, from the existing entrance doors to Hitchin Street and the principal elevation facing Church Street.



4.3 The only external alteration required is the insertion of two windows to the rear elevation. These small proportioned windows would match the same two approved windows which are now in place alongside, to match for double glazed timber sash windows, painted white.

4.4 The proposal consists of the following drawings and supporting documents:

Drawings:

- PL01 - Location Plan
- PL02 - Site Plan
- 2410-01C - Existing ground floor plan
- 4.01-A - Proposed ground floor plan
- 305-TG - Existing and Proposed NW Elevations

Supporting documents:

- Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement

4.5 The following images are extracts from the principal drawings for the development, of the proposed floor plan and proposed rear elevation.



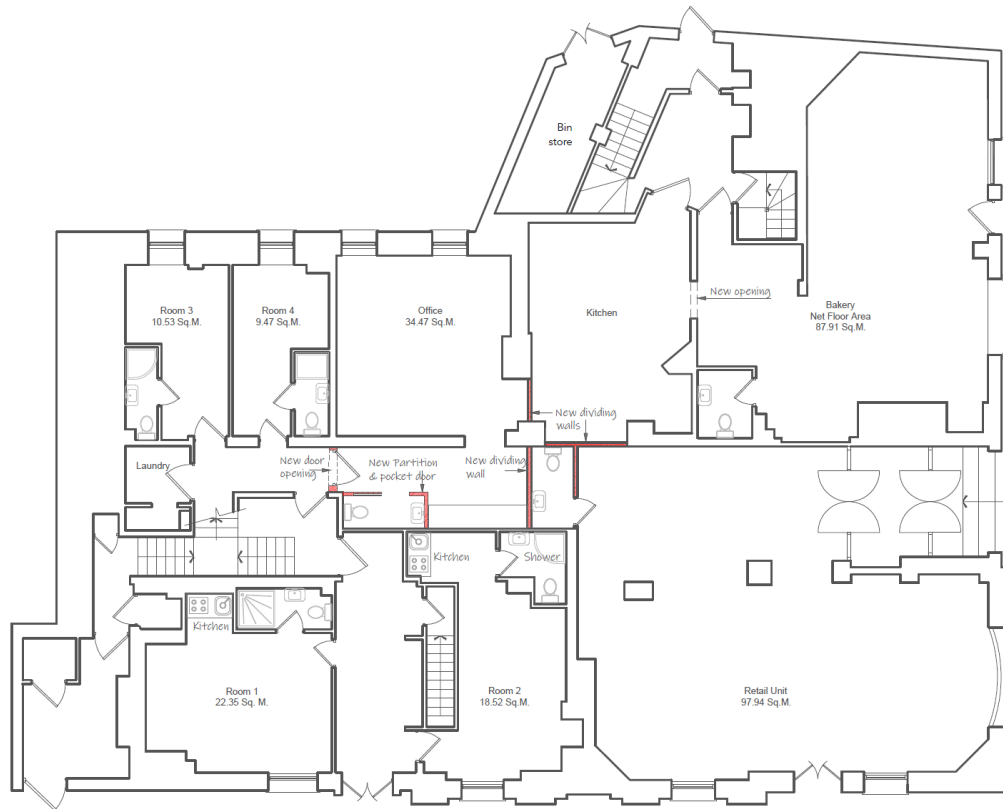


Figure 6 - Proposed ground floor plan



Figure 7 - Proposed rear elevation



5. Relevant planning policy

5.1 North Herts Local Plan 2011 – 2031

Policy SP1 - Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability

Policy ETC7 - Local Community shops and services in towns and villages

Policy T2 - Parking

Policy D1- Sustainable Design

Policy D3 - Protecting Living Conditions

Policy D4 - Air Quality

5.2 Supplementary Planning Documents

Vehicle Parking at New Development

5.3 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Section 2. Achieving sustainable development

Section 6. Building a strong, competitive economy

Section 11. Making effective use of land

Section 12. Achieving well-designed places

Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

6. Principle of the uses

- 6.1 The current use of the ground floor has recently undergone the changes approved under planning permission reference 24/00181/FP and listed building consent reference 24/00182/LBC. The NPPF encourages planning authorities to protect community facilities. This broad policy intention of the NPPF is reflected in Policy ETC 7 of the Local Plan. The proposal entails change of use of the current vacant restaurant to a retail unit, which retains a community facility as a retail function.



- 6.2 This is proposed due to the continued lack of interest in the altered size of restaurant and is likely to be far more viable and to be leased by an operator, as a retail unit instead. This will retain the active frontage for the ground floor of this building, within Baldock town centre. Accordingly, there is no conflict with this policy, as there would be no loss of a service or community facility. Moreover, there is no material change in the overall uses, remaining within the Class E use class designation.
- 6.3 The formerly approved commercial unit was going to be for a retail / bar operation for a wine bar with deli shop. However, this was not proceeded with. This is due to an historic restrictive covenant by the original owners Greene King. The 2007 Title transfer contains an absolute prohibition on use as a public house / wine bar / other drinking establishment, and Greene King have declined to release the covenant.
- 6.4 Instead, there is now firm uptake from Batch 52, whereby they require a bakery premises with kitchen, for preparation and sale of bakery goods, which will also serve their current premises opposite at the Batch 52 coffee house. This unit will make an ideal premises for Batch 52, being so close to their successful coffee shop.
- 6.5 An office is proposed to the rear part, which the two new windows would serve for natural light. This is an ancillary management office for the owners, as a general administration office. Again, this is Class E use, the same as the retail and bakery units.
- 6.6 Therefore, the principle of these uses is wholly acceptable in this case and will only assist in increasing the viability and vitality of this part of Baldock town centre.



7. Impact upon neighbouring living conditions

- 7.1 With regard to any impact of the development upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, there would be no adverse impact from this very similar use to the existing. The rear elevation windows proposed are to ground floor only and would only face onto the churchyard footpath. As such, no harm would be caused to the living conditions of any existing residential properties in terms of loss of light, outlook, privacy or dominance. The proposal complies with Policy D3 of the Local Plan and with Section 12 of the NPPF.

8. Design and appearance

- 8.1 In regard to the external design and appearance, minor external alterations are required to facilitate the conversion works. The only alterations are the insertion of two windows to the ground floor of the rear elevation. These are to match the existing previously approved two windows. This would give an entirely acceptable and balanced rear elevation.
- 8.2 The windows are small in proportion to the first floor windows, so as not to be overtly dominant, leaving plenty of the surrounding feature brickwork in this elevation facing the churchyard. The Church are supportive of the proposal as it would give further natural surveillance of the Church and the Church grounds.
- 8.3 Overall, the design, form and appearance are in accordance with the provisions of Section 12 of the NPPF and with Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan.

9. Heritage Statement

- 9.1 The following section addresses the impact upon the heritage assets of the scheme. In this case these are the host listed building, nearby listed buildings



and the Baldock Conservation Area. In regard to the heritage context of the site and its surroundings, the host building is grade II listed and is located within the Baldock Conservation Area (both Designated Heritage Assets). The building was listed in 1974 and the list entry reads as follows:

The Old George and Dragon Hotel TL 2433 NW 1/254

Early C19 front of red brick with slightly projecting 5 storey centre, 2 storey wings. Hipped tiled roof. 1:3:1 sash windows with glazing bars in reveals under flat arches, ground floor arched panels to 3 central windows, Dummy window in centre of each floor. Roof parapets, brick modillion cornice above 2nd floor. Modern wing on left.

Nos 2 to 16 (even) form a group.

Listing NGR: TL2443633898.

9.2 In regard to policy context, Policy HE1 of Local Plan states the following:

“Planning applications relating to Designated Heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment / Justification Statement that:

- i. assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting;*
- ii. justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and*
- iii. informs any necessary measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms.*

Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable):

- a. enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;*



- b. incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and
- c. will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset's optimum viable use.
- d. Where substantial harm to, or loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset is proposed the Council shall refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss".

9.3 The following map shows the application building located centrally and the blue triangles represent the listed buildings within the vicinity of the site, including St Mary's Church to the rear, the Tomb of William Clarkson in the church grounds and many other listed buildings in the locality.



Figure 8 – Extract from Historic England web site



- 9.4 The significance of this building is that it is a large key corner building, at the junction of Hitchin Street and Church Street. It is a focal building when seen from across the wider junction with High Street and which forms the start of the run of buildings located along Hitchin Street.
- 9.5 The retention of an active frontage to the ground floor and principal elevation facing Church Street, will leave the building entirely unaltered from these elevations and therefore unaffected in the building's significance from these key views.
- 9.6 The only external alteration is the insertion of two windows to the rear elevation. There used to be one window here, as seen in the bricked up section, with lintel also evident. Due to the raised bank abutting the rear of the building, the windows would sit close to the ground level of the bank, but at regular height within the room. It is considered the insertion of these windows, of matching design to the existing ground floor windows and being of smaller size to the existing windows above, would have no adverse impact upon the significance, setting or special character of the host listed building. The current rear elevation is shown in the following image and the bricked up former window section can be clearly seen.





Figure 9 - Rear elevation for proposed ground floor windows



Figure 10 - Bricked up former window and lintel on rear elevation

- 9.7 The internal works required would not be harmful to any features of significance. The doorway proposed in an original wall is only a 1 metre wide opening. The other works are only for installing minor wall sections as required for the proposed layout.



- 9.8 Due to the very minimal external change required, being insertion of two ground floor windows to rear elevation, there would be no harmful impact upon the heritage assets in this case and this side of the building. These are the Tomb of William Clarkson, the St Mary's Church and the Baldock Conservation Area. The sympathetic insertion of these windows will ensure the character and setting of these heritage assets is preserved.
- 9.9 It is therefore considered that the sensitive alterations to the ground floor, together with minor external alteration, is entirely acceptable and would cause no harm to the significance or setting of the host listed building, any nearby listed buildings and features, nor the character and appearance of the Baldock Conservation Area. Should it be considered that less than substantial harm would result from the works, it is strongly asserted that this very low level of harm is substantially outweighed by securing the long-term viable use of the ground floor of this listed building. This will be achieved by providing more viable commercial uses, in this sustainable location.
- 9.10 The scheme is therefore considered to satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(1), 66(1) and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and, Policy HE1 of the North Herts Local Plan, along with the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF.

10. Access

- 10.1 In regard to access of the proposed development, this is unaffected by the proposals. The retail unit would have the main entrance doors and the bakery to have the smaller entrance door to right of frontage, both facing Church Street. The ancillary office space is to be accessed through the accommodation rooms entrance hallway from Hitchin Street.



- 10.2 In summary, access is therefore considered to be acceptable for the proposal in this highly sustainable location, causing no harm to the safe and free flow of the local highway network, or upon highway safety.

11. Waste and recycling

- 11.1 In regard to waste and recycling storage, this will be stored internally for both commercial units (Batch 52 bakery and the separate retail unit) and brought out to the kerbside on collection days, before being returned internally. The collection of waste and recycling is therefore considered to be acceptable for the proposed development.

12. Conclusion and planning balance

- 12.1 In summary of the proposal, the current restaurant use of the part ground floor remains vacant with no uptake from a proposed operator. There is firm intent for the operator of Batch 52 coffee to open a bakery operation from the premises, which is best suited to the commercial unit as denoted, with ideal kitchen space to its rear to use as this overall new premises. The bakery use is then also not in breach of the restrictive covenant on the property. This former approved retail space can instead be offered as the corner unit in place of the restaurant.
- 12.2 There would be no loss of a service for the town in this case, with the proposal only increasing the long-term viability of the overall active frontage of the ground floor of this building. This in turn will only enhance the vitality and vibrancy of Baldock town centre.
- 12.3 There would be no harmful impact upon the living conditions of any neighbouring occupiers. The proposal would provide a more efficient and viable layout of the ground floor. The minor external alteration of insertion of the rear windows, would be of high-quality timber windows, being highly



sympathetic to the context and character of the building and, which match the existing pair of windows to this elevation.

- 12.4 The development would preserve the setting and significance of the host listed building, nearby listed buildings and, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Consequently, there would be no harmful impact upon heritage assets and, the scheme does not conflict with any provisions of the Local Plan, or Section 16 of the NPPF.
- 12.5 Given the above considerations, it is concluded that in the planning balance of the material considerations and assessment of benefits and harm, there would be no harm from the sensitive alterations and use of the ground floor as proposed. There are clear and substantial benefits of providing this far more efficient and viable use of the ground floor, within this highly environmentally, socially and economically sustainable location.
- 12.6 There are therefore no identified elements of harm from the proposal, to outweigh the benefits of this scheme. The proposal is not considered to conflict with any specific policies of the NPPF. The proposal is therefore compliant with Policies of the North Herts Local Plan, supplementary guidance and with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. As such, the development is fit for the grant of planning permission and listed building consent accordingly.

