

PLANNING, DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

Hexton Manor, Hexton Hertfordshire SG5 3JH



November 2024





Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Site description	2
3	Planning history	5
4	The proposal	5
5	Relevant planning policy	8
6	Principle and Green Belt	9
7	Design and character	10
8	Impact upon neighbouring living conditions	12
9	Heritage assets	12
10	Access and parking provision	13
11	Trees, ecology and landscaping	14
12	Flood risk	15
13	Conclusion	15



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared by INTOUCH PLANNING LTD regarding a planning application for change of use and conversion of an outbuilding to a single dwelling, within the Hexton Manor Estate. The site address is Hexton Manor, Hexton, Hertfordshire SG5 3JH.
- 1.2 The Statement provides an assessment of the planning policy framework relevant to the proposal, as well as other relevant material considerations and explains the design process and principles based on a contextual understanding of the site and the locality.

2. Site description

- 2.1 The wider site comprises a large detached main dwelling building of Hexton Manor itself, which is grade II listed, with various substantial outbuildings, separate cottages, lake, extensive gardens, walled garden and internal access roads, as part of the overall Hexton Manor Estate.
- 2.2 The site is in a secluded location within the village of Hexton, albeit close to the village amenities. The building that is the subject of this application is The Bothy, located south-west of the Manor, which is a single storey ancillary building.
- 2.3 In regard to planning policy designations, the building is within the Green Belt. The Bothy is considered to be a curtilage listed building to the main Hexton Manor. The site is within the Hexton Conservation Area and within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The grounds of Hexton Manor are designated as a historic park and garden. The following images show the location plan of the site, followed by photographs of the building.



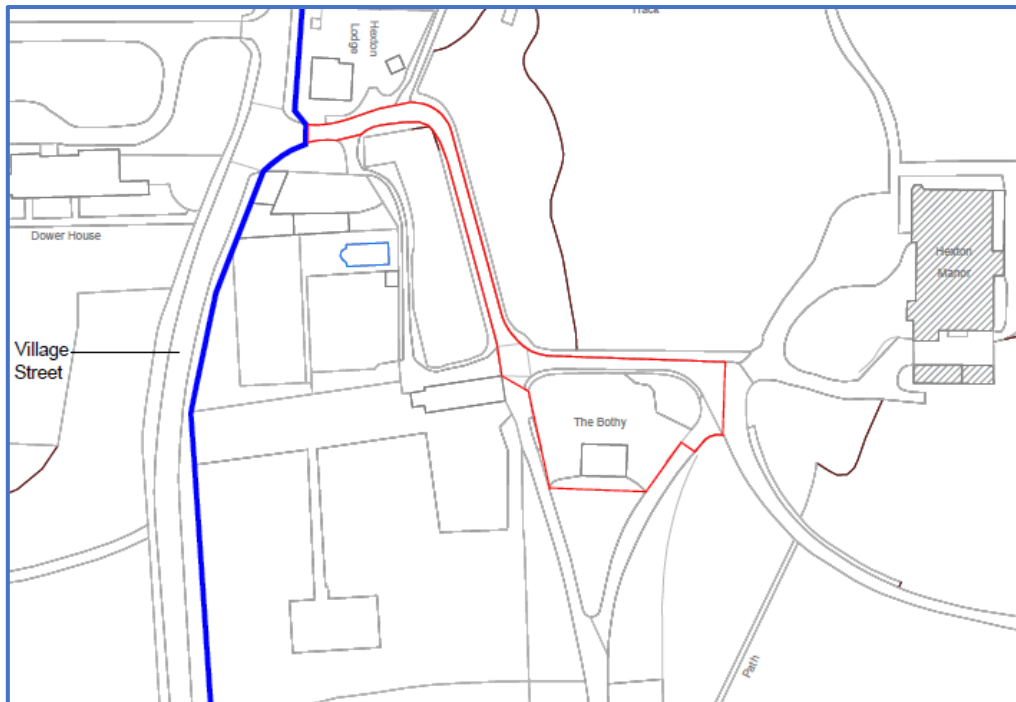


Figure 1 – Location of the application site and surroundings



Figure 2 – View of The Bothy – East elevation





Figure 3 – View of The Bothy - North elevation



Figure 4 – View of The Bothy – West elevation



3. Planning history

- 3.1 The recent planning history for the site building is as follows.
- 3.2 23/01598/PRE - Pre-application advice - Conversion of three outbuildings into three extended residential dwellings with associated parking and landscaping – Advice confirmed no objection to the principle of extension and conversion of this outbuilding to a separate dwelling, with acceptable internal and external amenity, parking and landscaping. Impact upon heritage assets and the AONB likely acceptable.
- 3.3 23/02724/FP and 23/02725/LBC - Conversion of existing outbuilding to one 2-bed dwelling to include single storey side extension following demolition of existing extensions with parking and landscaping. Alterations to fenestration – Planning permission and listed building consent granted.

4. The proposal

- 4.1 The proposal consists of change of use and conversion of The Bothy building, as an ancillary building of the Hexton Manor Estate, to a 1 bedroom dwelling, together with rendering of the building to match the recently approved render of Hexton Manor itself. The existing small extensions will be removed.
- 4.2 The building is of brick construction and is permanent and substantial in condition and form. The dwelling layout would provide entrance, lounge, kitchen / diner, with one bedroom and bathroom. All accommodation is to ground floor only as this single storey building.
- 4.3 The materials proposed are smooth render in a 'linen' colour, with the whole roof changed to slates to match the Manor building. Timber fenestration is proposed, to suit in specific style to the building accordingly.



- 4.4 Amenity space for the dwelling is proposed within the modest curtilage, with parking provision as two spaces. A turning area is provided for all vehicles including service vehicles, within the existing private access roads of the Estate.
- 4.5 Minor works for hard and soft landscaping are proposed, with replacement of the tarmac driveway with gravel, formation of private lawned garden area, with additional tree and hedgerow planting to boundaries.
- 4.6 The proposal consists of the following plans:
2023/26/01 - Proposed site plan, floor plan and elevations
2023/26/02 - Existing floor plans and elevations
2023/26/03 - Existing Location and site plans
- 4.7 The following images are extracts from the principal drawings for the development, of existing and proposed site plans, proposed floor plan and the proposed front elevation.

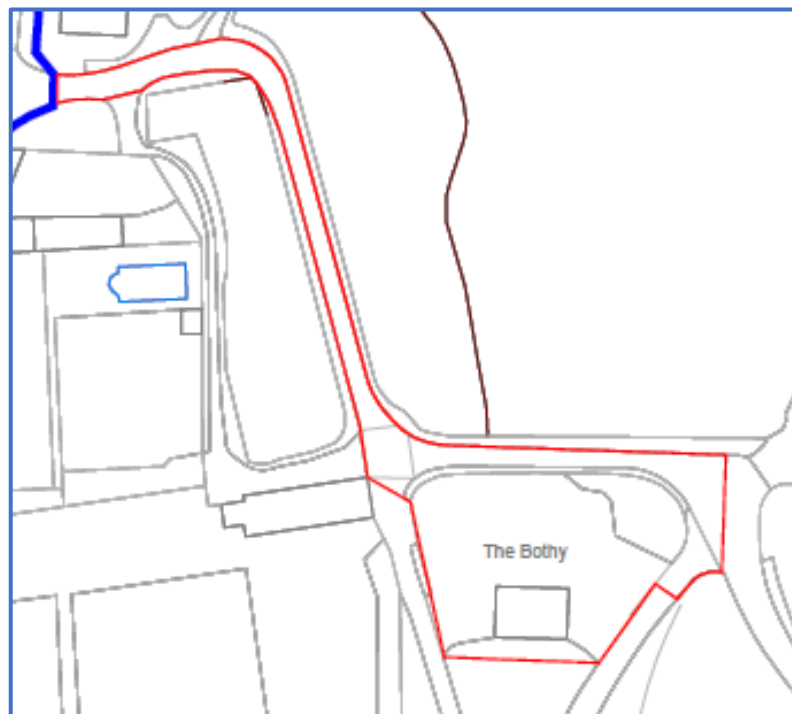


Figure 5 - Existing site plan extract



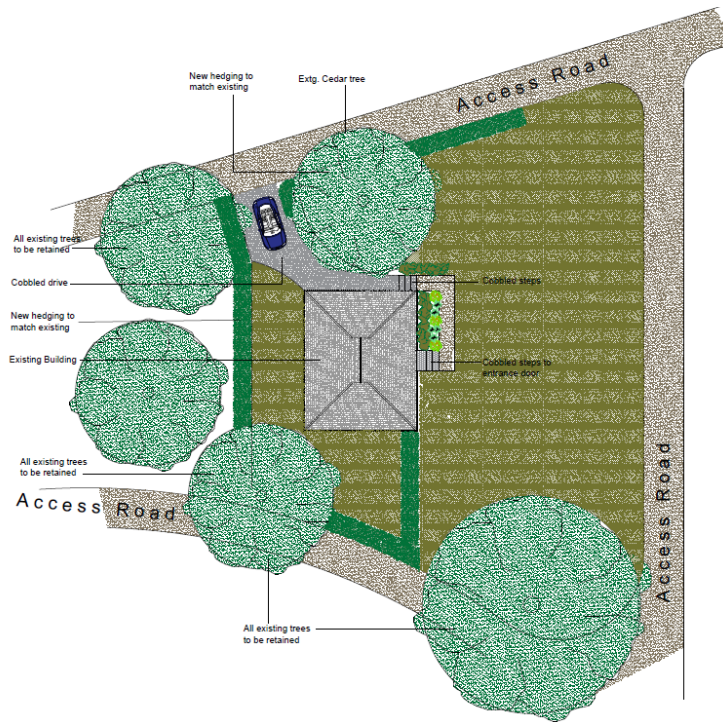


Figure 6 - Proposed site plan extract

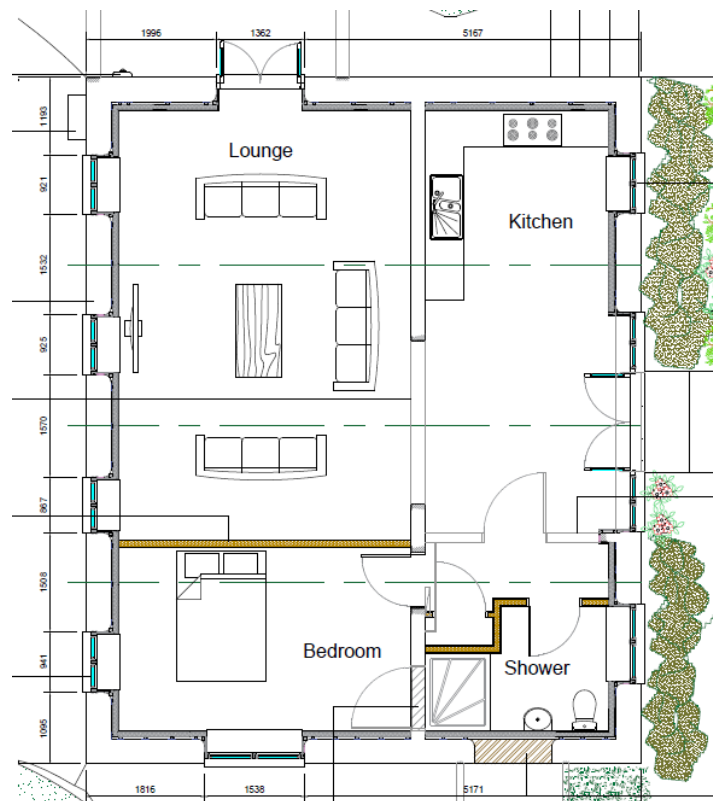


Figure 7 - Proposed floor plan



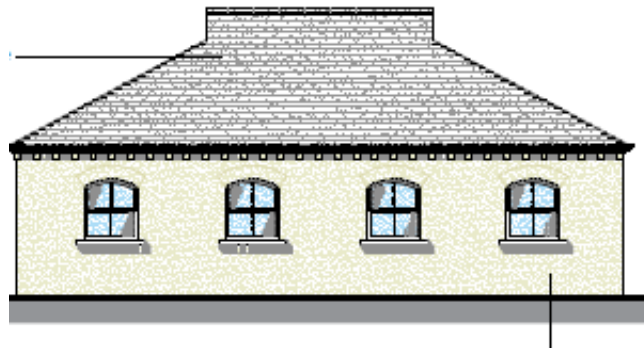


Figure 8 - Proposed front elevation

5. Relevant planning policy

5.1 The relevant planning policies at the local and national level, are as follows:

5.2 North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031

Policy SP1 - Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2 - Settlement Hierarchy

Policy SP8 - Housing

Policy SP5 - Countryside and Green Belt

Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability

Policy T1 - Assessment of transport matters

Policy T2 - Parking

Policy HS5 - Accessible and Adaptable Housing

Policy D1 - Sustainable Design

Policy D3 - Protecting Living Conditions

Policy HE1 - Designated heritage assets

Policy HE4 - Archaeology

Policy NE3 - Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design

Vehicle Parking at New Development



5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Section 2. Achieving sustainable development

Section 12. Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

Section 13. Protecting Green Belt land

Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

6. **Principle and Green Belt**

6.1 In regard to the actual principle of change of use of the building to a separate dwelling, this is acceptable in this case. This is because the building is very closely located to the village of Hexton, which is designated as a Category A village in the new Local Plan. These villages can support new dwelling development as they have several services in relation to sustainable development objectives of the NPPF. New buildings would be unacceptable outside of the settlement boundary but this proposal seeks to re-use an existing substantial building of the Estate. This is subject to the following related section on Green Belt, but the actual principle of dwelling formation from existing buildings in this location, is considered wholly acceptable in this case. This was agreed by grant of the recent planning permission.

6.2 The application site lies within the Green Belt, being just outside of the Hexton settlement envelope and is washed over by this designation. The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) advises that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 explains that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, except for listed exceptions.

6.3 One relevant exception is the re-use of existing buildings, provided that the building is of permanent and substantial construction and that it preserves Green Belt openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.



The building is indeed of such construction and the proposals preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

- 6.4 In regard to the assessment of any harm upon the openness of the Green Belt, the site is very secluded having mature trees and hedgerows to all boundaries. The building of The Bothy is significantly back from the highway, along a private road. The conversion as formation of a dwelling, would result in no harmful impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.5 The garden and parking area is tightly wrapped around the natural curtilage of the building, with only that required to provide a high standard of amenity for occupiers as a single dwellinghouse. The dwelling is not at all extensive in size or impact, having no harm upon Green Belt openness from either the built form, or the external layout. The resulting building as a dwelling would sit entirely comfortably within the very open and spacious overall site of the Estate.
- 6.6 In view of the above, the proposal is considered to constitute appropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt, being in accordance with Section 13 of the NPPF, together with Policy SP5 of the Local Plan.

7. Design and character

- 7.1 In regard to the design of the building, this is considered to be of high quality and entirely suitable for the building and context in this case. The extension is no longer proposed, to be a one bedroom dwelling only.
- 7.2 The only difference to the building since the last permission is the rendering of the building to match the linen coloured render, approved for Heston Manor. This is together with the same approved whole roof changed to slate tiles, also matching to the Manor building.



7.3 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states,

“130. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);”.

7.4 It is considered the development would function well and, would add to the overall quality of the area for the long term. The layout of the dwelling would provide occupiers with excellent natural light levels and outlook, with private amenity space. The dwelling also exceeds the minimum floorspace requirements of the national space standards, giving a high standard of living conditions and residential amenity.

7.5 The proposal would be visually attractive, with matching materials to Hexton Manor. The scheme is sympathetic to its surrounding historic built environment, as a result of the considered design.

7.6 In regard to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is considered there would be no impact upon the AONB in this case, for conversion of this secluded building within the site of the overall Hexton Manor Estate.

7.7 The development is appropriate in scale having regard to national policy, in this case exceptions for development in the Green Belt. The proposal would conserve the AONB's special qualities, distinctive character and biodiversity, tranquillity and remoteness, in accordance with national planning policy and the overall purpose of the AONB designation.



- 7.8 The sensitive size and design and site layout have regard to the Chilterns Building Design Guide and technical notes, by being of high-quality design which respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, its traditional built character and reinforces the sense of place and local character. The proposal therefore accords with the requirements of Local Plan Policy NE3 for the Chilterns AONB.
- 7.9 Overall, with high quality matching materials to result in an attractive dwelling, with no harm upon the visual amenity of the public or private road street scene. As such, the design and appearance of the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the provisions of Policies D1, SP9 and NE3 of the Local Plan, the Design SPD and with Section 12 of the NPPF.

8. Impact upon neighbouring living conditions

- 8.1 The host building is well spaced away from other residential properties, with the closest being Hexton Manor itself. The development would therefore have no detrimental impact on the living conditions of any nearby occupiers. The proposal complies with D3 of the Local Plan and, with Section 12 of the NPPF.

9. Heritage assets

- 9.1 In regard to heritage assets, The Bothy is considered to be curtilage listed to the main listed building of Hexton Manor, as a grade II listed building. Other listings within the overall Manor Estate are the Medieval Cross Base adjacent Hexton Manor, which is also grade II listed, with the Walls to the Walled Gardens also being grade II listed. There is then also the nearby Pump on Roadside Opposite Dairy Cottages, which is also grade II listed.
- 9.2 The building of The Bothy is located within the Hexton Conservation Area, as well as the Manor itself. The grounds of Hexton Manor are designated as a historic park and garden.



- 9.3 In regard to the character and significance of the host building itself, this is considered to be entirely preserved. The main listed building of Hexton Manor would not be affected in its setting or special character by the proposals. Nor the listed Medieval Cross, the Walled Garden, or the roadside Pump feature.
- 9.4 The character, appearance and overall setting of the Conservation Area would also be preserved by the proposal. The high quality design and materials, would have no harmful impact upon the Conservation Area.
- 9.5 In regard to all designated heritage assets of the building and overall site, the proposals are considered to have no harmful impact and would preserve the setting of the Conservation Area, the special character and setting of the listed buildings and features, together with the preservation of the significance and character of the host building. There would therefore 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.

10. Access and parking provision

- 10.1 There are no alterations required to the access into the overall site, which is off Village Street. The dwelling would be accessed from the internal access roads of the Estate, with no new accesses or crossovers required onto the public highway. The development would have no adverse impact upon the safe and free flow of the highway network.
- 10.2 In regard to storage of bins for waste and recycling, these would be stored adjacent to the dwelling in a suitably designed bin store. The bins would be collected internally by grounds staff of the Estate and presented to the highway in the same arrangements as existing for Hexton Manor. Therefore, access within the overall site for a refuse collection vehicle is not required for the new dwelling.



- 10.3 In regard to parking provision, the proposed dwelling layout provides at least two spaces, which accords with the requirements of the Parking SPD. Ample turning areas are provided for occupier and service vehicles, with ample informal spaces for visitor car parking from the spacious nature of the overall site.
- 10.4 An electric vehicle charging point would be installed, adjacent the parking area. A cycle store would be located in the rear garden. Access and parking provision are therefore considered to be acceptable for the proposal.

11. Trees, ecology and landscaping

- 11.1 In regard to trees of the site, there are many trees along the boundaries and within the overall site of Hexton Manor Estate. No trees are required to be removed for the proposed works to the building.
- 11.2 In regard to ecology, the grass areas around the building have been regularly mown and much of The Bothy frontage is existing hardstanding. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is submitted. In order to offer enhanced opportunities for wildlife, bird and bat boxes are proposed to the nearby mature trees. Also, supplementary tree and hedge planting is proposed along the existing boundaries where required. These and other measures are expected to deliver an ecological net gain for the site, in accordance with Section 15 of the NPPF. Biodiversity Net Gain calculations and report are not required as the works are below the threshold and are under the de Minimis exemption.
- 11.3 Landscaping will be of an enhanced standard with driveway and parking areas formed in gravel. The private garden would be laid to lawn with shrub borders, giving occupiers a high quality and spacious amenity area.



12. Flood risk

- 12.1 In regard to flood risk of the site, as shown in the image below from the Environment Agency flood risk mapping, the whole Hexton Manor Estate site is located well away from any area of flood risk. Being in Flood Zone 1 (FZ1), this is the zone of lowest flood risk. The site is also not in an area identified by the Environment Agency as having critical drainage problems. It is reasonable to conclude that the site is not at risk of flooding and that the proposed development would not result in an increase in flooding. The following image shows the flood risk for the site, from the Environment Agency mapping.

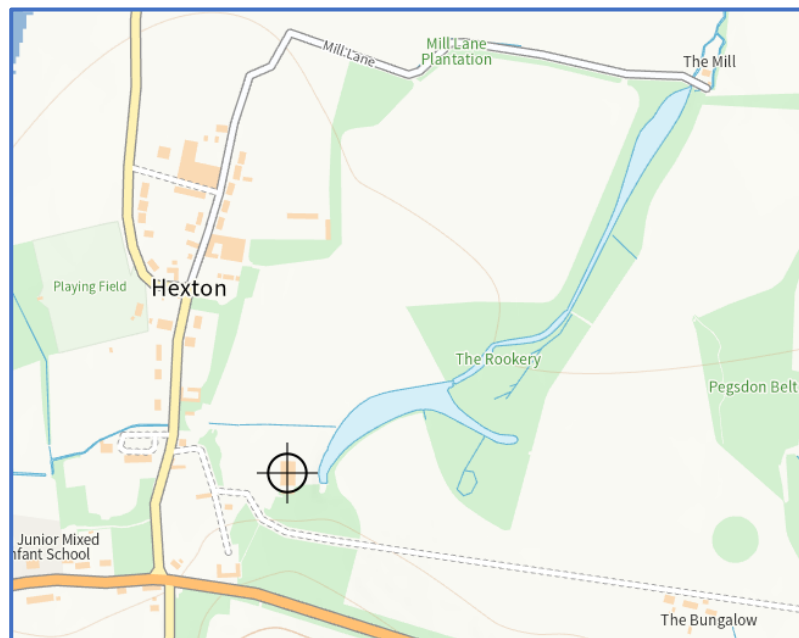


Figure 9 - Flood Risk: Rivers and surface water

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 In conclusion of the proposed development, the scheme comprises conversion of this ancillary building of the Hexton Manor Estate, to a single dwelling. The building is located close to the Category A village of Hexton in this relatively



sustainable location, which has been agreed with on previous applications of this building and the overall Estate.

- 13.2 The works re-use an existing building which is substantial in its construction and condition. As such, the proposal constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt, having no harmful impact upon its openness and the rural setting of the area. Consequently, the proposal is in accordance with local and national planning policy for re-use and extension of an existing building in the Green Belt.
- 13.3 The highly sympathetic and complementary matching materials to Hexton Manor, would represent high quality design and therefore is not considered to result in any harm upon the character and setting of the site, or the visual quality of the AONB.
- 13.4 A high standard of amenity would be afforded to occupiers and the development would have no harm upon the living conditions of any neighbouring properties. Ample parking for occupiers and visitors is provided. No trees would be affected and there would be only ecological enhancements for the site. No heritage assets would be affected in their setting or special character.
- 13.5 There are therefore no identified elements of harm from the proposal, to outweigh the benefits of this scheme, which would provide one dwelling towards the District's housing supply, whilst securing the heritage asset as a long term viable use of the building. 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. The development is therefore considered to be acceptable for the grant of conditional planning permission and listed building consent accordingly.

