

Heritage Justification Statement

**To Support a Proposal to Amend the Signage at
11A Bancroft, Hitchin, SG5 1JQ**

Aug 2026

**TIME ARCHITECTS LTD
226 – 228 Holme Lane
Sheffield
S6 4JZ
T. +44(0)114 430 0114
E. info@timearchitects.co.uk**

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FORWARD

Property Address: 11A Bancroft,
Hitchin,
HG5 1JQ
Applicant: Sostrene Grene
Agent: Mike Leigh of Time Architects Ltd

This Heritage Justification Statement has been prepared by Mike Leigh of Time Architects Limited. The document has been prepared in support of the planning application for the proposed amendments to the shop frontage signage to 11A Bancroft, Hitchin, HG5 1JQ.

This document has been prepared in line with the advice and guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012. In reaching its conclusions, the statement has involved examination of the relevant planning and heritage context, a review of the available historic environment information for the site and its surroundings to identify any Heritage Assets which might potentially be affected by the proposed development and an assessment of the proposed development on them. In line with the advice contained in paragraph 128 of the NPPF, a proportionate approach has been taken which reflects the scale of the development proposed and the nature of the heritage assets affected.

Assessment of the significance of heritage assets has taken account of the approach advocated by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) in its document "Conservation Principles" (2008).

Policy

National Planning Policy/Development Plan Policies

The Local Planning Authority will be guided by the policy framework set by central government advice, the current Development Plan and any other material planning considerations.

Legislation

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states:

"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."

Creative Conservation - Inspiring Design

Time Architects 226 - 228 Holme Lane, Sheffield S6 4JZ

Registered Company Number in England and Wales: 8033383, Director: Michael Leigh

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National Planning Policy Framework 2012

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It advises that in determining planning applications, "local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to 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" (paragraph 128).

Annex 2 of the NPPF defines a Heritage Asset as being "a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)."

In determining planning applications, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take account of:

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

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1.0 UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

1.1 SITE LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is located within the Hitchin Conservation Area and within the central area of the market town. The building itself is not listed, and is modern and therefore also has no heritage value.

The surrounding topography is predominantly commercial built-up townscape with a large number of buildings surrounding the site.

1.2 MANAGEMENT AND MAINTAINANCE

The building in its current form stands fully occupied as a commercial retail unit to both the ground and first floor. The current owners are looking to amend the modern internal shop fittings and shop frontage signage in line with their retail use proposed for the building, all in keeping with the current use of the site.

1.3 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Hitchin is a historic market town in the North Hertfordshire district of Hertfordshire, England, famous for its medieval layout, cobbled streets, vibrant independent business culture, and nearby scenic lavender fields. Located approximately 35 miles north of London, it sits in the valley of the River Hiz at the edge of the Chiltern Hills and has a population of over 35,000 residents.

The central area of the town is defined by the following key characteristics;

- **Historic Market:** Operates as one of the largest outdoor markets in the region, featuring general stalls, antiques, crafts, and farmers'
- **St Mary's Church:** The largest parish church in Hertfordshire, standing prominently in the town centre next to the River Hiz.
- **Cultural Character:** Often described as having a bohemian and left-field spirit, blending modern independent boutiques, artisan coffee shops, and a thriving live music scene

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- **Local Economy:** Maintains an exceptionally low shop vacancy rate, largely driven by a strong community focus on supporting local independents..

The application property contributes in only a minor way to the character of the Conservation Area given its modern nature and simple design, proportions and materials. There are a number of nearby listed buildings to all denominations, however the application site is sufficiently separated from these assets to avoid any impact on their setting.

Recent works to the application site has seen the full restoration and repair of the building and internal redevelopment to the current use. This has seen a revamp of the ground floor retail units to their current contemporary commercial appearance. The works proposed to the site, under this application, are intended to retain the current aesthetic.

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2.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is to amend the modern external signage of the building in line with the proposed retail use of the owners.

For further details of the works please refer to drawings:

- 260801 100 – Location Plan
- 260801 101 – Site Plan as Existing
- 260801 102 – Ground Floor Plan as Existing
- 260801 103 – Front Facing Elevation as Existing
- 260801 201 – Ground Floor Plan as Proposed
- 260801 202 – Front Facing Elevation as Proposed

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3.0 HERITAGE IMPACT

The Heritage Asset, in this instance, is that of a Conservation Area. The building in question has no heritage value overall given the building is modern by design, however, the materials and styling are in keeping with the surrounding area. The works in question are to make amendments to said retail shop frontage that carries no heritage value whatsoever.

Careful consideration has been placed on the impact of the works upon the heritage asset as a whole. In assessment we would propose that the works constitute amendments to the modern retail unit and are in line with the current building form, style and character. The proposed changes do not deviate away from the accepted visual and material frontage of the building.

The works therefore have no negative impact on the heritage asset and therefore cause no harm.

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4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states:

“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 securing its optimum viable use.”

It is considered that this proposal does not result in any harm to the historic integrity of the site or wider area. It is considered that the scheme fully accords with relevant legislation, planning policy and guidance.

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