

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
PROJECT: 25 HIGH STREET, HITCHIN, SG5 1AT
DATE: JANUARY 2025

Planning permission for a replacement roof at 25 High Street, Hitchin, SG5 1AT.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement relates to an application seeking the replacement of the roof tiles on the front pitched roof and dormer windows of 25 High Street, to match the existing. Following recent storms, the roof has become damaged and needs to be replaced to prevent dilapidation of the building. The proposal seeks to also improve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by way of a new replacement roof using matching high quality traditional handmade clay plain tiles.
- 1.2 No. 25 High Street comprises a vacant commercial building on the ground floor fronting High Street, and first floor (formerly Halifax Bank), together with a separate shop fronting Churchyard walk at the rear of the site. The premises comprise of a two and a half storey building, with first-floor ancillary space, including offices, a staff room, storage and WC facilities. The site is currently vacant with one ground-floor retail unit occupied by Timpson Locksmith at 25a High Street.
- 1.3 This statement explains the thinking behind our planning application. It is prepared in compliance with the guidelines set out by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in 2006. The report (section 2) shows how we have thought about the design relative to factors identified by CABE, but also in relation to relevant development plan policy and Government guidance.
- 1.4 This evaluation is informed by an analysis of the physical, economic, social, historical, and policy context of the site.
- 1.5 **Planning Policy Background**
- 1.6 **Policy** - The building is located within the Hitchin Conservation area and Character Area 2a, High Street, Bancroft South and Brand Street. The site is also under an Article 4 direction. To the northern boundary is an arched carriage entrance providing access to a courtyard

behind the High Street, adjacent to the site. The building is not listed nor is the site within the curtilage of a listed building. To the southern boundary is No. 26 High Street which is Grade II listed. The High Street has many positive features including the survival of the historic street layout with almost continuous frontages of high-quality buildings, some of them Grade II listed, with the Area statement promoting opportunities for enhancement and refurbishment. Not every building has a shopfront, reinforcing the residential character of parts of the area.

1.7 Summary of the key considerations

- Replacement of damaged roof tiles ensuring the future sustainability of the building.
- Improvement to the façade.
- high quality like for like handmade clay roof tile replacement.
- Enhancement of the Conservation Area.

1.8 Relevant Policies

Local Plan policies are listed below for general compliance purposes. In these circumstances, the NPPF December 2023 carries significant weight for the purposes of decision making and specifically with regards to sustainable development as defined by social, economic and environmental considerations.

North Hertfordshire Draft Local Plan 2011-2031 - (Approved by Full Council April 2017)

HE1 Conservation Area

ETC3 New retail, leisure, and other main town centre development

ETC4 Primary shopping frontages

SP4 Town Centres, Local Centres and Community Shops

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 2 Sustainable Development

Section 7 Ensuring vitality of town centres

Section 12 Achieving well-designed places

Section 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

1.9 Planning History

1.9.1 Ref No. 77/01456/1 - Installation of new shopfront
Approved 05/01/1978

Ref No. 93/01282/1 - Change of use of part of Class A1 (Shop) to Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services). Approved 29/09/1994

Ref No. 94/00669/1 - New shopfront to include auto telling machine (as amended by drawing no 3048/6/B received 05.09.94). Approved 07/09/1994

Ref No. 08/01843/1 - Installation of atm and alterations to existing front entrance
Approved 29/10/2008

Ref No. 08/02002/1 - Retention and completion of air conditioning units on existing ground floor flat roof. Approved 14/08/2008

Ref No. 24/00619/FP - Replacement windows at first floor and dormer windows at second floor level. Approved 16/05/24



2.1 Evaluation of the site context

No. 25 High Street (above) has a double shopfront on the ground floor (formerly Halifax Bank), with a deep plan commercial space extending to the rear of the site. It is proposed to replace the front pitched roof to match, including the dormer roof tiles.

- 2.2** The submitted drawings show the layout of the existing roof plan, elevations and street scene. The site has a wide frontage of approx. 12.4 metres and a deep site plan of approx. 33 metres.
- 2.3** The existing front pitched roof has been damaged by recent storms and requires replacement. The new roof tiles will match the existing like for like and will be reinstated to the same ridge height and pitch. The new roof will help to preserve the future of the building.



Front façade pitched roof tiles to be replaced like for like



Rear of pitched roof to be replaced

- 2.4** The proposal seeks to remove the existing damaged roof tiles and replace them with natural handmade clay tiles to match, such that the overall appearance is the same. The proposed tiles are Marley Canterbury handmade clay plain tiles to create an authentic replacement roof in keeping with the historic styles of the Conservation Area. The proposal is for new matching replacement roof tiles and therefore, will not result in a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area but will enhance the building within the street scene.

2.5 Proposed Pitched Roof

Front elevation

Product: Marley Canterbury Handmade Clay Plain Roof Tiles

www.marley.co.uk/roof-tiles/clay-roof-tiles/canterbury-handmade-plain-tile

Finish: Fine sanded finish.

Size: 265mm x 165mm

Green guide rating: A+

BES 6001 Excellent



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2.5 Covering the mid section of the ground floor plan is a flat roof.

3.0 Access

No change is to be made to the access of the front unit or the shopfront, as it is currently suitable and compliant with Part M of the Building Regulations.

3.1 Use

The existing and proposed building comprises of sales/offices uses, Class A1 (Shop) and Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services).

3.3 Existing Photographs





4.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND POLICIES

- 4.1** The application site is currently vacant and most recently used as Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services).
- 4.2** In respect of car parking, the site has on street short-stay vehicle permit and loading bay. The site lies within Hitchin town centre and there is both on and off-street parking with short and long-stay options.
- 4.3** The proposal will therefore not have an impact on transport and highways.
- 4.4** In its current state, the roof of the building is damaged from recent storms and cannot be adequately repaired. It risks the further deterioration of the building and does not contribute positively to the Hitchin Conservation Area. Where a building fails to contribute positively to its surroundings and the character of the Hitchin Conservation Area, refurbishments should be promoted. The proposals represent a very high-quality replacement traditional handmade clay tiles to match, using high-quality roof tiles.
- 4.5** The replacement roof will have no impact on / from adjoining premises, or on the intended occupiers of the development.

4.6 Evaluation of the proposals

The proposal seeks to: -

- Improve the character of the street scene by providing an upgraded replacement roof to match the existing.
- Improve the character of the wider Conservation Area by promoting high quality materials to Hitchin High Street and the Conservation area.

4.7 ***POLICY HE1: Designated heritage assets***

Designated heritage assets include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens. National guidance states that great weight should be given to the conservation of those assets, including (where appropriate) securing an asset's optimum viable use.

This high-quality proposal to upgrade the dilapidated roof relates better to the historic street scene than the existing damaged roof. By doing so, the proposal protects and enhances the essential character of the Hitchin Town Centre settlement and Conservation Area. For these reasons, the proposals meet with the objectives of the Policy.

POLICY SP4, ETC3 and ETC4: Town Centre Area

The Council will make provision for an appropriate range of retail and service facilities across the District and is committed to protecting the vitality and viability of all centres.

We will: a) Promote, protect and enhance the provision of shops, financial and professional services, café or restaurants, pubs or drinking establishments or takeaways in the following centres in our retail hierarchy.

The replacement roof will ensure the future protection of the building. For these reasons, the proposals meet with the objectives of the Policies.

NPPF Section 2 - Sustainable Development

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For plan-making this means that:

- all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;

The proposal is for a new high-quality replacement roof to match which will relate well to the adjoining buildings and for these reasons the proposals meet with the objectives of the Local Plan.

Section 7 - Ensuring vitality of town centres

90. Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places

131. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

196. 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.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This statement describes how the proposals would help to maintain a high street commercial use with a high quality roof in such a sustainable location in Hitchin. The proposal would both preserve and enhance the Hitchin Conservation Area, meeting with the aims of the North Herts Local Plan and the objectives of National Planning Policy where the justification for planning approval has been clearly identified and the proposal can be safely approved.