

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 24/01279/FP

Date: 16/08/2024

Planning Officer: MT

Address: Former Hsbc Bank, Station Place, Letchworth GC, Herts SG6 3EU

Subject: Conversion of roof space to create one 2-bed flat including insertion of No.3 front dormer windows, No.1 rear dormer window and No.4 rear rooflights.

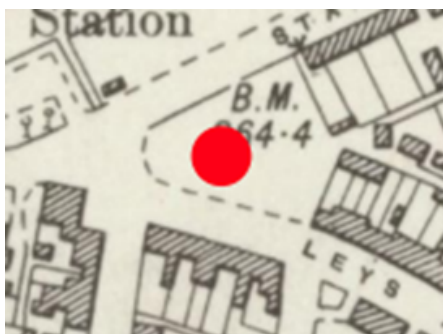
1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 In determining applications, great weight should be given to the conservation of Designated Heritage Assets (para 205, NPPF) and any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset from development within its setting requires clear and convincing justification (para 206).
- 1.2 I raise **NO OBJECTION** on the basis that the scheme satisfies Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990, the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The former Hsbc Bank, Station Place is an unlisted building located within Letchworth Conservation Area. At 3.13 of the Letchworth Conservation Area Character Statement dated 18 December 2001 it states the following: *The HSBC Bank occupies a prominent site, on a triangular plot on the corner of Leys Avenue and Station Road, facing into Station Place opposite the train station, providing a strong linkage between the two roads and the central space.*
- 2.2 I note from the Pre-Planning Submission Rep (17 October 2023) that the building was erected sometime between 1925 and 1947.

Historic map 1921-1925

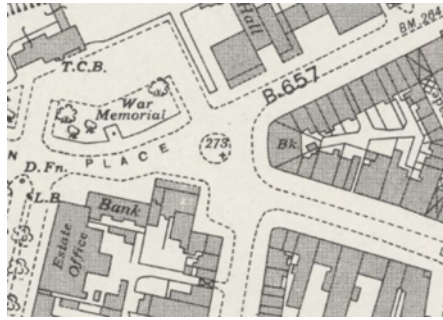


Historic map 1947-1951



- 2.3 Looking at further map regression it is possible to reduce this building period to between 1925 and 1938 (see below) and the build type is consistent with Neo-Georgian architecture of the Inter-War period which was the dominant official building style at this time (at the same time as the first modern movement designs were being seen in this country).

Hertfordshire VII.11
Revised: 1938, Published: 1946



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2.4 On 25 January 2024, I commented on ref: 23/02466/PRE as follows:

“.....this building has a presence within the streetscene. Whilst this building does not currently have dormer windows there are several examples of dormer windows in the town centre. In the first Google Maps image below, the former bank can be seen alongside nos.2-12 (evens) Leys Avenue whilst in the second image below Broadway Chambers (unlisted) and Lyall Cambers (grade II) can be seen with dormer windows.”

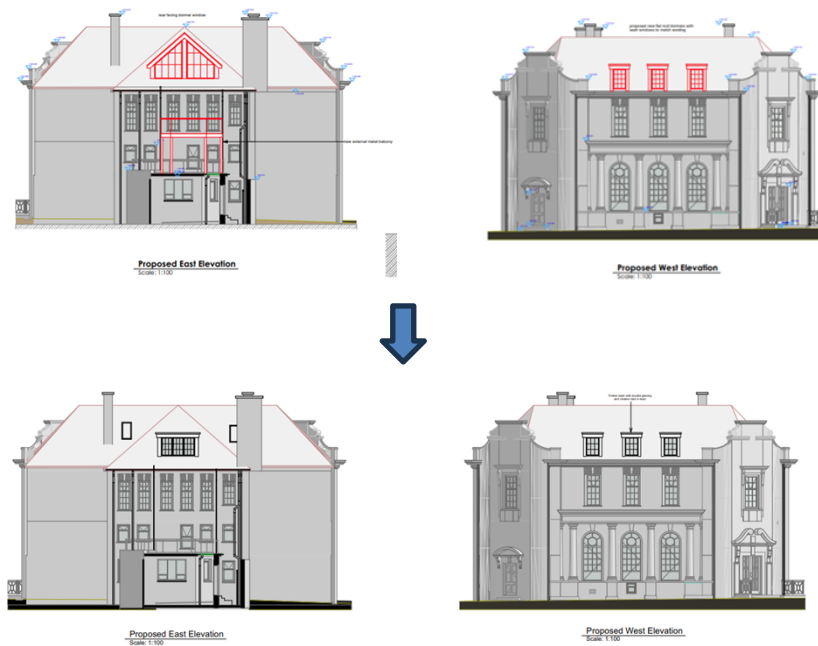


2.5 I went on to say:

“The front elevation to the former bank facing due west is noted for its shaped gable projections between which sits an expanse of clay tile roof. In my opinion, well-proportioned and well-detailed dormer windows would not have an adverse impact upon the host building or the character or appearance of the conservation area. However, it will come down to the detailing and ensuring that these are not over-designed in terms of bulky insulation systems. In addition, I am concerned that the depth of these dormers as 6-over-6 sashes may appear quite dominant at roof level even though it is noted that the first-floor windows below are larger still and are 6-over-9’s.”



2.6 I advised that the proposed dormers are reduced to let's say 3-over-6's but acknowledged that these may not then comply with fire regs if required to be an alternative means of escape.



2.7 I note Letchworth Garden Heritage Foundation's comments on 10 July 2024 which state:

".....From the viewpoint of the Heritage Foundation the proposed dormers to the front elevation would not be supported. Dormer windows are generally only allowed on buildings where there is evidence that they were an original feature. This is a landmark building within the town centre and the dormer windows would weaken the overall appearance of the building. There would however be no objections to the proposed rear dormer and rooflights to the rear elevation although the Foundation would require 1:20 drawings of the dormer as well as a specification for conservation rooflights as part of any application for Landlords Consent."

In my opinion, the dormers would only serve to 'weaken' the overall appearance if they are not executed to a high standard of design. I advise that a condition requiring fully detailed drawings of these is sought. At page 19 of the submitted Design, Access and Heritage Statement (DASH) it says: *"The dormer windows will be timber sash windows, with lead cheeks and a cored roll lead flat roof, with detailing like this neighbouring pitched roof example"*. Currently the elevation drawings do not adequately reflect this design.



2.8 Finally, for the avoidance of doubt, I note that on the front elevation drawing, the ground floor windows are shown as being side hung whilst the first-floor windows are shown as having 6-pane top-hung lights suggesting that these may be changed. Neither method of opening reflects the existing situation,

and which should, in my opinion, be maintained i.e. 6-over- sliding sashes at first floor.



3.0 The Local Plan and NPPF

3.1 The proposals are considered in the context of Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 and government policy guidance including the following paragraphs of the NPPF (Dec 2023 version):

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

1. Standard time condition.
2. Full metric scale details of the 3no. front and 1no. rear dormer windows including window joinery and a 1:1 section detail of the glazing system including the glazing bar profile, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the formation of the dormers. Thereafter, the dormers shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II listed building under Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer