

PLANNING STATEMENT – SECTION 73 APPLICATION

Application Site: 74, 80 & 81 Hermitage Road, Hitchin

Existing Permission: 24/01108/FP

Proposal: Variation of condition (approved plans) to replace drawings 03D & 04B with drawings 03F & 04C.

1. Introduction

This Section 73 application seeks to vary the approved plans condition attached to planning permission 24/01108/FP. The revised drawings 03F and 04C incorporate two minor amendments to the approved scheme:

1. Provision of an external painted steel fire-escape staircase on the south elevation to serve the two second-floor flats.
2. Minor alterations to the fenestration on the south elevation associated with the installation of the staircase.

No other changes are proposed.

2. Background and Need for Amendment

Following the grant of permission, discussions with Building Control identified a deficiency in the means of escape for the two second-floor flats. The approved arrangement requires occupants to escape in a single direction, passing up to four other flat entrances along the deck access. Building Control advised that this presents an elevated risk in the event of a fire occurring elsewhere on the level.

To provide a compliant and safe second means of escape, an external steel staircase is now proposed. The associated adjustments to the fenestration ensure suitable access, safe landings, and compliance with Building Regulations.

3. Description of Proposed Changes

The revised drawings 03F and 04C introduce:

- A lightweight steel escape stair, powder-coated in a recessive colour.
- The staircase is positioned at the western end of the south elevation, constructed tight against the brick wall of the adjoining Premier Inn hotel, ensuring it is as discreetly located as possible and largely screened from wider public views.
- Minor adjustments to windows and doors on the south elevation to integrate the staircase, enable safe use, and retain the balance of the elevation.

All other elements of the approved development remain unchanged, including the number and layout of the flats and all access, servicing, and amenity arrangements.

4. Planning Considerations

Visual Impact

The staircase is positioned on a secondary and visually contained elevation, tightly abutting the Premier Inn wall, significantly reducing visibility and presence. Its simple design and

recessive finish ensure that both the structure and the updated fenestration have no material impact on the character or appearance of the building or surrounding area.

Residential Amenity

The amendments do not introduce any overlooking, loss of privacy, overshadowing, or noise impacts. The fenestration changes are minimal and do not materially alter the relationship with neighbouring properties.

Highways and Access

No changes arise to vehicle access, parking, or servicing. The new staircase provides an improved and compliant emergency escape route.

Public Safety (Fire Safety)

The proposal directly resolves the issue identified by Building Control relating to single-direction escape. The new arrangement provides a safe, independent route to ground level, supporting compliance with Approved Document B.

5. Conclusion

The proposed amendments are minor, safety-led, and discreetly located. The external staircase and associated fenestration adjustments are essential to delivering a safe and compliant development while maintaining the visual integrity of the building and avoiding harm to the surrounding area.

Approval of revised drawings 03F and 04C in place of 03D and 04B is therefore respectfully requested under Section 73.

Job no. 3728
19th November 2025
Pentangle Design Group