

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	25/01119/LBC
CASE OFFICER:	Melissa Tyler
APPLICATION SITE:	The Library 10 Brand Street Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 1HX
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	External and internal alterations including extending/excavating existing basement, installation of two front basement glazed doors to form a new habitable space. Insertion of a mezzanine level. Repairs to roof and addition of roof light to existing roof. Alterations to windows on rear elevations. Addition of front railings (amended plans received 26/08/2025)

RECOMMENDATION:

There is no objection to the proposal as detailed above.

Therefore, as submitted it will satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2) (LBC) and /or 66(1) (FP/FPH) and/or 72(1) (both) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

SUGGESTED CONDITIONS:

A structural report be a condition of the approval of this planning application in addition to a construction phase plan and BIA.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the listed building to which this consent relates and to comply with Policies SP13 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031

Full joinery details of the proposed new timber doors/windows to a metric scale and 1:1 scale drawings of the proposed glazing bars hereby granted consent, shall be submitted to and agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority before any works are commenced/prior to manufacturing of the doors.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the listed building to which this consent relates and to comply with Policies SP13 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

Details and/or samples of materials to be used for the works, hereby granted consent, shall be submitted to and agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority before any works are commenced.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the listed building to which this consent relates and to comply with Policies SP13 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on listed building's special character

The structure was listed in 1974 having been the Former Library and Mechanics Institute. The link to the list is copied below.

[FORMER LIBRARY NOW PART OF NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, Non Civil Parish - 1102186 | Historic England](#)



The listed building has been subject to a number of uses in the past including as the Library of Mechanics Institute. There are no records that could be located relating to the interior features of the former library.

Given this knowledge much of the remaining significance is attributed to its external appearance and distinct architectural treatment as described in the list description.

Internally the perimeter walls are considered to be of exceptional significance and there is no intervention here that would result in loss of fabric of significance.

Pre application advice was given ref 24/00988/PRELB

This advice was broadly supportive and following revisions as a result of further site meeting the proposal is supported. Please see below for detailed analysis.

Internal alterations and opening up the ceiling.

The internal alterations and opening up the ceiling will see minimal loss of historic fabric i.e. most of the architectural decorative features such as cornices are lost. The ceiling level could be reinstated if it is found to be of historical importance. It will enable the features such as the existing trusses and their bearings to be revealed and an improved understanding of this space.

Forming a new rooflight and the repairs to the existing roof

No historic fabric of significance will be lost through the intervention required. No changes to the to roof pitch and ridge and the rooflight could be reversed if required. The proposed rooflight is consisted of a number of panes of glass which are not uncommon features in institutional buildings like this. Additionally it would be hardly visible from the public domain and neighbouring properties.

Forming new window infill to the rear elevation

The revisions to the rear elevation are especially in terms of fenestration and the omission of an access door is considered to an improvement and more in line with the classical proportions of this rear elevation and the overall style of the building.

New Basement, lightwell, low level windows and alterations to the front

This intervention will alter how the space functioned historically how is not considered to be the most significant part of the building.

The front elevation will now receive a new lightwell serving the new basement and glazing to respond to the size of the original opening mirroring the east and therefore reinstating the symmetrical treatment often seen in classical buildings.

Although lightwells are not a common feature in Hitchin they are not unheard of in institutional buildings and townhouses.

Impact on character and appearance of the conservation area.

The site falls within the Hitchin Conservation Area and character area 2.

7.2 Character Area 2: The Town Centre This Character Area covers the historic town centre from Bancroft in the north to Tilehouse Street/Bridge Street in the south. It is focused on the Market Place and St Mary's Church and its churchyard and is notable for the high concentration of listed or locally listed buildings. Of interest is the survival of the medieval (or earlier) street plan and

burgage plots which provides the long thin building plots and associated buildings which help to define the special character of this part of Hitchin. It has been divided up into three sub-Character Areas as follows: Character Area 2a: High Street, Bancroft south and Brand Street; Character Area 2b: St Mary's Church; Character Area 2c: The Market Place, Bridge Street, Tilehouse Street and Upper Tilehouse Street.

Brand Street leads off High Street and represents a 19th century widening of a former alleyway. It has more mixed development than the other two streets, and has suffered from a greater degree of modern infilling or redevelopment. The western end of the street is dominated by Hitchin Town Hall, built in 1900 and grade II listed. To the north-west is the former Friends Meeting House (grade II listed and now known as Centenary House) and located almost opposite the Town Hall on the south side of Brand Street, is the former Town Hall of 1840 (now 'Ivory'), which is also grade II listed and provides a rare example in the town centre of a substantial, stuccoed building. The corner into Paynes Park is marked by an unfortunate red brick block of offices, four storeys high and dating to the 1970s or 1980s. Beyond the current Friends Meeting House (a BLI) and to the west, is Thomas Bellamy House, an early to mid-19th century yellow brick grade II listed building marking the entrance into the conservation area from this direction

There will be impact on the character of Hitchin Conservation area as a result of the changes to the front of the building, but these are not considered be detrimental and as previously stated not unusual in building of this period and its former and present use.

Conclusion

Overall, the proposal is considered to see minimal loss of historic fabric and will see some heritage gain in terms of revealing historic internal structural elements.

In terms of setting and impact on the conservation area due to new openings is not considered to be negative.

In summary the proposal is considered to cause less than substantial harm with many interventions being reversible if required.

Site Context:

The site is location within the Hitchin Conservation and affects the setting of a Listed Building.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Please see summary section above.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

NPPF (December 2024):

The Local Plan and NPPF

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and the policies contained within it i.e., Policy HE1. The plan was adopted November 2022.

The relevant paragraph numbers at Section 16 of the July 2021 version of the NPPF have been changed as follows:

197. *In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- 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.*

199. *When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

200. *Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.....*

202. *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, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

206. *Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.*

The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) – December 2017

At para 14 under the sub-heading 'Landscape Assessment and Amenity' it states that *"Analysis of setting is different from landscape assessment. While landscapes include everything within them, the entirety of very extensive settings may not contribute equally to the significance of a heritage asset, if at all. **Careful analysis is therefore required to assess whether one heritage asset at a considerable distance from another, though intervisible with it – a church spire, for instance – is a major component of the setting, rather than just an incidental element within the wider landscape.**"*

At para 17 it states (my emphasis in bold): *"All heritage assets have significance, some of which have particular significance and are designated. The contribution made by their setting to their significance also varies. **Although many settings may be enhanced by development, not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without harm to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate it.** This capacity may vary between designated assets of the same grade or of the same type or according to the nature of the change. It can also depend on the location of the asset: an elevated or overlooked location; a riverbank, coastal or island location; or a location within an extensive tract of flat land may increase the sensitivity of the setting (i.e. the capacity of the setting to accommodate change without harm to the heritage asset's significance) or of views of the asset. This requires the implications of development affecting the setting of heritage assets to be considered on a case-by-case basis."*

Relevant National Guidance i.e. Historic England:

Other relevant documents (Please specify):

CONCLUSION:

There are no objections for the reasons stated above.	
OFFICER: Tricia Craggs	DATE: 8.10.2025