

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Tom Rea.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/01812/FP	Alterations to front access path and installation of two lawn signage structures (development already carried out)	The Old Grammar School Broadway Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 3NX

Submitted Plan Nos

6796-1 Drg 101A 6796-1 Drg 102A

1.0 **Policies**

1.1 **North Hertfordshire District Local Plan (The Local Plan) 2011 – 2031**

Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire
Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability
Policy SP13: Historic Environment
Policy D1: Sustainable Design
Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets

2.2 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)**

Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
Section 12: Achieving well-designed places
Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

2.0 **Site History**

None relevant
See site history sheet

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 Letchworth Heritage Foundation: No response

3.2 NHDC Conservation officer: Raises an objection – proposal unsympathetic to the architecture of the host building.

3.2 Site Notice/ Adjoining occupiers: Objection from occupier of 34 Sollershot West :

1. The entrance path walls are overbearing structures quite out of keeping with the open frontage of the former Grammar School. Their modern design is not sympathetic to the building's 1929–31 architecture.

2. The sign above the main entrance doorway of the building partially obscures the original carved HCC coat of arms, which is integral to the design of the front elevation of this landmark building.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The application site involves part of the front lawn and front boundary of the former Grammar School site as it faces Broadway. The site is within the Letchworth Conservation Area.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Alterations to front access path and installation of two lawn signage structures (development already carried out)

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The lawn sign structures comprise of two curved walls supported by piers with decorative balls on top. The walls and piers are cement rendered and unpainted and the walls reduce in height as they curve into the site. The walls sit over a brick plinth. The paving comprises concrete block pavements set in a herringbone pattern. Adjacent each side of the entrance doors are two cement rendered low walls approximately 300mm high.
- 4.3.2 The original Grammar School building maintained an open frontage with no boundary walls or gates as part of its original construction. The building has some stonework around the main entrance door and upper part of the three main projections along its façade however the main external material is a soft red brick punctuated with regularly spaced full height Georgian timber sash windows. The roof is plain tiled.
- 4.3.3 The recently constructed curved walls and supporting pillars are considered to be an alien form of development completely out of character with the opening setting of the building as it faces Broadway. The smooth unpainted cement rendered finish is at odds with and unsympathetic to the predominantly red bricked finish of the main building. Overall the development represents an incongruous form of development that detracts from the character, appearance and setting of the Letchworth Conservation Area (LCA) as well as the host building. The development results in less than substantial harm to the LCA as a designated heritage asset however there are no obvious public benefits that outweigh the identified harm to the LCA. Accordingly, the development is considered to be contrary to the provisions of Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies SP9 and HE1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 – 2031.
- 4.3.4 No objection is raised to the hardsurfacing materials and low walls adjacent the front entrance to the building as they largely respect the open plan landscaped character of the site.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 The development is unacceptable in planning and heritage terms.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

4.5.1 None applicable

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. By reason of their design and appearance, materials used and prominent location the entrance walls and piers represent a visually incongruous form of development that detracts from the setting and appearance of the Letchworth Conservation Area and the visual amenities of the street scene in general. The development is also considered to be unsympathetic to the architectural character and setting of the original Grammar school building.

The development results in less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset however there are no public benefits to the scheme which outweigh the harm identified. As such the development is contrary to Paragraph 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SP9 and Policy HE1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been refused for this proposal for the clear reasons set out in this decision notice. The Council has not acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant as in the Council's view the proposal is unacceptable in principle and the fundamental objections cannot be overcome through dialogue. Since no solutions can be found the Council has complied with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 29 January 2025	