

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	26/01281/FP
CASE OFFICER:	Thomas Howe
APPLICATION SITE:	10 High Street Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 1BH
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Installation of new shopfront.

RECOMMENDATION:

There is AN **OBJECTION**. The scheme will not 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:

None

SHORT SUMMARY:

Using some or all the suggested high-level headings or a short paragraph, please provide a concise summary of your analysis and key considerations that lead to your conclusion.

Impact on listed building's special character – Not applicable.

Impact on character and appearance of the conservation area –

10 High Street is located within the Hitchin Conservation Area under Character Area 2a.

General description *This Character Area once formed part of the large market place to the west of St Mary's Church which was gradually encroached over, so that now the church is no longer visible from the High Street or from Bancroft, described by the architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as one of the best streets in of Hertfordshire. The street is wide and between Market Place and the junction with Brand Street, where High Street becomes Bancroft, has been subject to an environmental improvement scheme which provided a partially pedestrianised street. The uses are all commercial with residential uses above some of the shops. This is the major shopping area of Hitchin with national chains being represented. On-street short stay car parking is a useful shoppers' facility, but does encourage circulating traffic c looking for free parking – this can lead to pedestrian and vehicular confli ict. These issues were identi fi ed by stakeholders in relation to the Hitchin Urban Transport Plan that has been endorsed by Hertfordshire County Council's Highways and Transport Cabinet Panel*

Impact on setting of heritage assets and how this affects significance – The building is not listed, and the nearest listed building is 22 High Street located opposite.

There is some concern over the increased glazing being proposed above the new automatic bi-parting doors. This is considered to be excessive in relation to what is predominantly a traditional High Street and shopfronts.

It is acknowledged that the building is not listed but is in a prominent part of the High Street and should make a positive contribution to the conservation area. The increased glazing would negatively alter the proportions of this large and prominent shopfront.

This increased glazing is considered to cause harm to the character of the conservation area for the reasons stated in the previous paragraph therefore the application is refused based on this element.

Site Context:

Please see comments in summary section above.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Please see comments in 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 is an objection to one element of the proposal as described in the summary section. If this were to be omitted there would be potential support for the scheme.

OFFICER: Tricia Craggs

DATE: 24 Jun 2026