

Mrs L Balmforth
3 Rowan Close
Weston
Herts
SG4 7BH

Our Ref : 25/02953/PRELB

Contact : Mark Simmons
Direct Line : 01462 474685
Email : mark.simmons@north-herts.gov.uk
Date : 28 January 2026

Dear Mrs Balmforth,

Pre-Application Listed Building: Replacement of rotting windows, repairs of water damage to shared interior wall, fit heat recovery unit to control damp problems on external facing wall.

5 Pryors Court, Whitehorse Street, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6QU

Thank you for your application received on **24 November 2025** and validated on the same day. As you may be aware, the target date for a response is the **19 January 2026** and my apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

CONTEXT

As you are probably aware, Pryors Court falls under the address no.44 Whitehorse Street, Baldock and is grade II listed and is located within the Baldock Conservation Area. The list entry is described at the following link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1102093?section=official-list-entry>

The main heritage issues to consider are the impact of the proposals upon the listed building's special character and upon the character and appearance of the Baldock Conservation Area.



HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) are applicable.

North Herts Council, PO Box 10613, Nottingham, NG6 6DW

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:
Policy HE1

NPPF (December 2024):

The following paragraphs are relevant:

- *207 (local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting)*
- *210 (desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness),*
- *212 (great weight should be given to the asset's conservation),*
- *213 (clear and convincing justification), and*
- *215 (harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use).*

PLANNING HISTORY

Flats 1 to 27 Pryors Court

78/01350/1LB - Erection of two external fire escape staircase, provision of ground floor fire escape door and block up ground floor window.

CON 18.10.1978

84/01475/1LB - Listed Building Consent for the demolition of garage, boiler house and store.

CON 05.12.1984

84/01530/1 - Alteration and conversion of warehouse into 27 one and two bedroom residential units together with the retention of part of the building for office purposes. Erection of 4 two-bedroom dwellings, first floor link at rear, provision of 37 parking spaces, new vehicular access onto Clothall Road and ancillary works.

R 25.02.1985

85/00607/1 - Alterations and conversion of warehouse into 26 one and two bedroom residential into together with retention of part of the building for office purposes. Erection of 4 two-bedroom dwellings, first floor link at rear, provision of five garages, 31 car parking spaces, vehicular access onto Clothall Road and ancillary works. Retention of existing shop unit.

CP 29.05.1985

85/00544/1LB - Listed Building Consent for alteration and conversion of warehouse into one and two bedroom residential units together with erection of rear first floor link, ancillary works and retention of existing shop and offices.

CON 28.06.1985

16 Pryors Court

02/01001/1LB - Replacement of two existing fixed windows with frosted glass with opening windows with plain glass

CP 08.10.2002

10,12,14,15, 17 and 18 Pryors Court

11/02682/1LB - Replacement of 12 fixed, timber framed windows with top-hung, flush framed, opening windows.

CCON 19.12.2011

THE PROPOSAL

I note that 5 Pryors Court is located on the ground floor in the east corner directly opposite no.1 Icknield Court with two windows facing Clothall Road and one facing onto the covered link with Icknield Court.



Googles Maps - Image capture Aug 2024



I note the following in your submission.

Window replacement

I looked into repairing the windows but companies declined to quote, including Chameleon Window Restoration, Scott James Sash Windows, and LD Window Restoration, so I propose to replace them with units as near identical as possible to the existing ones. There is precedent for replacement as I can see from the NHDC web site that 12 replacement windows were approved to the flats in 2011, and Anglian Windows informed me that they have also fitted replacement windows to an upstairs flat more recently. I arranged 3 quotations for replacement windows and I propose to go ahead with Schnauber, who specialise in heritage properties. Their quotation is attached.

Damp

The property is still troubled by damp despite improved heating, regular ventilation and the use of 2 dehumidifiers since purchase. The walls swell with blisters of moisture, plaster comes away when it is wiped down and there is black mould developing. This is a potential health hazard to the tenant and could adversely affect the condition of the flat contents.

The damp on the internal wall shared with flat no. 6 is ongoing after a leak caused by the flat 6 tenant's washing machine. The water soaked into the ground and was reabsorbed up into the wall leaving salt deposits, requiring work as detailed in the damp survey and accompanying quotation.

*The damp on the external wall is partly due to poor drainage in the road outside the building causing water to be absorbed into the ground adjacent to the wall. The damp survey included a recommendation to fit a **heat recovery unit to one of the outside walls** and I propose to go ahead*

with this. This includes fitment of a **discreet external vent to a wall under an archway** at the side of the building, not in direct view from the pavement. Other flats have similar vents facing the pavement as shown in the accompanying photos.

Addressing the window issue first, it is quite apparent that the existing windows are not in my opinion of special interest either architecturally or historically. However, because your property is one of several forming the Pryors Court development it is important that the window type, framing width/detailing and external finish are consistent with other windows in the group to maintain a coherent external appearance. Whilst I have no objection in principle to the replacement of windows which will require listed building consent, your application should identify how the new windows to be manufactured by Schnauber, will closely replicate what is currently there and specifically the type of glazing system to be used (preference would be the slimlite system).

Turning now to the damp proofing works, I note the following in Procure Group Ltd's Damp Proofing Quote Assessment Survey Report.

Kitchen/Living Room

*Penetrating damp was identified during the internal inspection, with dampness observed at both mid-wall to high levels. This distribution suggests that moisture is entering the property through lateral ingress caused by external weathering. **The external drainage system was found to be blocked, which is likely causing water to accumulate and back up along the path-to-wall junction during periods of rainfall.** This pooling water increases the risk of moisture seeping through the masonry. Additionally, thermal imaging detected localised areas of reduced surface temperature, which is consistent with the presence of dampness and supports the diagnosis of penetrating damp caused by prolonged external moisture exposure.*

Living Room

Although no active leak could be confirmed at the time of the survey due to lack of access to the neighbouring property, the moisture pattern observed in the affected area suggests a possible leak as the underlying cause. Dampness appears to be rising through porous gypsum-based plaster materials, which are known to absorb and retain moisture readily. It is evident that previous electrical rewiring has taken place, and gypsum bonding was likely used to fill in the chased wall sections. This material is not moisture-resistant and has contributed to excessive water absorption in the area. Based on these findings, it is strongly recommended to investigate the possibility of a leak, either current or historical, even if only to rule it out as a contributing factor.

Additional Recommendations (if applicable)

It is recommended to investigate a potential leak within the neighbouring property, particularly where the party wall adjoins the living room. The moisture pattern suggests water ingress may be originating from this area, and confirming or ruling out a leak will be important in resolving the issue effectively. Installation of an ACO drain along the external perimeter of the bedroom, kitchen, and living area is advised. This will assist in redirecting surface water away from the property and reduce the risk of moisture building up at the wall base, particularly in areas currently vulnerable to penetrating or rising damp.

It is noted that existing contaminated plaster is proposed to be removed and a Drybase Flex Adhesive & Membrane System deployed which it says is a **polymer modified cement-based product used to fix Drybase Flex Membrane**, a watertight low-profile sheet membrane for protection against dampness in walls.

If I have understood the survey information correctly it sounds like the damp evident at this property is primarily a result of a blocked external drainage system causing water to accumulate and back up along the path-to-wall junction and a leak at the neighbour's property. If both matters are rectified in conjunction with the installation of the perimeter ACO drain (not requiring LBC but you may wish to check with the Highways Authority at

Hertfordshire County Council) and also following the removal of existing internal plaster finishes, whether the property effectively 'dries out' negating the installation of the Drybase Flex Membrane system.

The reason for saying this is that unlike traditional, soft lime mortars, polymer-modified cements are often very hard. Whilst acknowledging that cementitious waterproofing creates an internal, impermeable layer resistant to capillary rise, lateral water ingress, and contaminant salts, I am concerned that using such a product on older, more porous brick can cause moisture to become trapped, leading to further decay and accelerated deterioration of the original materials. I am not convinced at this stage that a polymer modified cement-based product applied to the internal walls is entirely appropriate. My concern is exacerbated when also acknowledging the following in Procure Group Ltd's report:

External walls painted with weatherproof coating, may be preventing dampness to evaporate naturally externally, therefore pushing moisture internally, specifically when internal humidity levels are high.

I am concerned regarding the property's overall ability to 'breathe' but if a convincing justification is submitted with your application for listed building consent to allay the concerns expressed, then I am willing to consider this further.

With regard to the installation of a Mechanical Heat Recovery Unit (MHRU), whilst the external alteration would be limited to a 'discreet external vent to a wall under an archway' which may be considered de minimis, considering that an application for listed building consent is required for the windows and the installation of the Drybase Flex Adhesive & Membrane System, I advise that the Heat Recovery System also forms part of that application including details of what is required internally. Are there are noise issues associated with this type of installation?

The above is my professional view only and does not prejudice the future determination of any subsequent application(s) submitted to this local planning authority.

Yours sincerely

Mark Simmons

Mark Simmons
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Senior Conservation Officer

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