

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Alex Howard.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/01553/FP	Change of use and conversion of existing building from Class E to residential use to create 1no two bedroom flat and 2no one bedroom flats, including external alterations to existing fenestration, insertion of first floor side entry doors and windows, rooflights, installation of side external staircase and erection of refuse and cycle stores (as amended by plan received 1st and 9th September 2025).	54 Church Street Baldock Hertfordshire SG7 5AF

Submitted Plan Nos

3938 01B 3938 02A 3938 03D 3938 04F

1.0 Policies

D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
SP2	Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distrib
ETC7	Local community shops and services
SP9	Design and Sustainability
HE1	Designated heritage assets
HE3	Non-designated heritage assets
T1	Assessment of transport matters
T2	Parking
SECN12	Achieving well-designed places
SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment

2.0 **Site History**

- 2.1 **23/01942/FP** - Change of Use and conversion of existing building from salon (D1) to residential (C3) use to create 2no two bedroom flats and ancillary works and external alterations (as amended by plan received 4th October 2023).

Conditional Permission

- 2.2 **20/02495/FP** - Change of Use and conversion of existing building from salon (Class E) to Residential (C3) use to create 2no two-bedroom flats and ancillary works and external alterations (including new windows and doors) (as amended by plans received 24/03/21).

Conditional

Permission

- 2.3 **03/00769/1** - Change of use from Class B1 (Business) use to Class A1 (Beauty Salon) use.

Conditional Permission.

- 2.4 **88/01964/1** - Retention of use of building for manufacturing use with ancillary storage and retail areas (As amended by letter received on 9th February 1989).

Conditional Permission

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.1 **Site Notice and Neighbour Consultation** – None received.

- 3.2 **Environmental Health (Air Quality, Noise, Land Contamination)** – No objection subject to condition.

- 3.3 **Hertfordshire Highways** – No objection subject to conditions.

- 3.4 **Waste and Recycling** – None received.

- 3.5 **Conservation Officer** – No objection subject to condition.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The site is a 19th Century former Methodist Chapel and is a Building of Local Interest (BLI) in the Conservation Area. The building was last used as a beauty salon. The site includes the land around the building and an informal access onto Icknield Way. The site also has a frontage access onto Church Street.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Planning permission is sought for a change of use and conversion of existing building from Class E to residential use to create 1no two bedroom flat and 2no one bedroom flats, including external alterations to existing fenestration, insertion of first floor side

entry doors and windows, rooflights, installation of side external staircase and erection of refuse and cycle stores (as amended by plan received 1st September 2025).

- 4.2.2 This application is a revision to a recently approved application under ref: 23/10942/FP, which was a carbon copy of a previous application approved under ref: 20/02495/FP.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key considerations are:

- ☐ The Principle of Development
- ☐ Sustainability
- ☐ Design/Impact on the Character of the Conservation Area and Building of Local Interest
- ☐ Impact on the Amenities of Neighbouring Properties/Future Occupiers
- ☐ Highways and Parking
- ☐ Other Matters

The Principle of Development

- 4.3.2 Policy SP2 of the Local Plan states that the majority of the district's housing development will be located within the settlement boundaries of the major towns. The site is located within Baldock, which is one of the major towns in North Herts and the site is within the settlement boundary. As such, the site is considered sustainable and appropriate for housing. The principle of development is therefore acceptable, in accordance with Policy SP2 of the Local Plan.

- 4.3.3 The site is a commercial unit but does not fall within the primary and secondary shopping frontages within the Local Plan. Therefore, Policy ETC7 is relevant in this respect. This policy states:

"Planning permission for the loss or change of use of any shops, services or facilities outside the defined retail hierarchy will be granted where:

- a) There is another shop, service or facility of a similar use available for customers within an 800m walking distance; and*
- b) The proposed replacement use would complement the function and character of the area.*

An exception to criterion (a) above will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the unit is no longer required to meet the needs of the local community, including through evidence of at least twelve months active marketing".

- 4.3.4 In this case the site is within easy walking distance of the Baldock town centre where there are other beauty salons. Furthermore, the proposed replacement use would complement the function and character of the area, which is largely residential. Lastly, planning permission has already been granted for a similar conversion at this property for 2 flats under ref: 23/10942/FP, which was a resubmission of a previous similar application under ref: 20/02495/FP. As such, the proposal would comply with Policy ETC7 of the Local Plan and there would not be an objection to the proposed change of use in principle.

Sustainability

- 4.3.5 The overarching purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achieving sustainable development, as stated in Section 2 of the NPPF. This is considered against the three objectives of sustainable development, the economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 4.3.6 Firstly, in terms of the economic objective, the proposed development would see the delivery of jobs during the build/construction phase which is a modest benefit. Secondly, in terms of the social objective, this proposal would see a net increase of 3 dwellings to the district's 5-year land supply which has deteriorated and warrants engaging of the tilted balance. These dwellings could also be delivered in a relatively short space of time. Lastly, in terms of the environmental objective, there would not be any sustainable building methods or accessories, such as EV charging. Seeing as the building is existing and is to be converted, it is unreasonable to expect measurable gains in biodiversity as it would be exempt from the mandatory 10% BNG.
- 4.3.7 Overall, on the grounds of sustainability, the economic and social benefits of the proposal are relatively modest, which is relative to the scale of development seeking conversion to 3 flats. Overall, it is considered that modest weight should be attributed to these benefits.

Design/Impact on the Character of the Conservation Area and Building of Local Interest

- 4.3.8 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted provided that development responds positively to the site's local context in addition to other criteria. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan further considers that new development will be supported where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context. These considerations are echoed in Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 4.3.9 In planning terms, there are no objections to the external changes proposed to convert this building into 3 flats, as they are largely very minor door/window/rooflight alterations and installations on the side/rear elevations, as approved under the previous application at this site. However, the main design amendment under this application is the insertion of an external staircase to the first floor flats on the southern side elevation, which is to be finished in metal rails. This staircase is set back towards the rear half of the buildings side elevation and is fairly unintrusive, such that it is considered acceptable. All other works are internal. The front of the property will not change in appearance as a result of this proposal, which is in accordance with Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan.
- 4.3.10 Seeing as the site is within the Conservation Area, consideration is given as to the impact of the proposal upon this heritage asset. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that in the exercise of planning powers, in conservation areas *"special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area"*.
- 4.3.11 Moreover, seeing as the site is a Building of Local Interest (BLI), Policy HE3 of the Local Plan is also relevant. This policy states:

"Permission for a proposal that would result in harm to, or the loss of, a non-designated heritage asset will only be granted provided that a balanced judgement has been made

that assesses the scale of harm to, or loss of significance of the non-designated asset and, where the proposal results in the loss of a non-designated heritage asset:

- a) The replacement building contributes to preserving the local character and distinctiveness of the area; and*
- b) Where the asset is located in a conservation area a continuous contract for the demolition and redevelopment of the site has been secured, unless there are justifiable grounds for not developing the site”.*

- 4.3.12 The Conservation Officer was consulted on the previous application under ref: 20/02495/FP and stated no objection subject to conditions. He provided further comment on this application and following the receipt of amended plans on the 1st September 2025, concluded as follows:

“Further to my comments on 21 August 2025 and having just returned from annual leave, I respond to amended drawing no. 04 Rev F received on 1 September 2025. I assume the description will be updated accordingly.

*I raise **NO OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal will satisfy the provisions of Section 72(1) 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”.*

- 4.3.13 The Conservation Officer has recommended the following condition which is considered reasonable:

“Notwithstanding the reference to new windows being ‘painted timber’ on amended drawing no. 04 F, the new windows shall be vertically sliding sash types either manufactured in timber or timber-alternative sashes from the ‘Rose Collection’ unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to the character and appearance of Baldock Conservation Area under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan”.

- 4.3.14 Moreover, in respect of the proposed external staircase, given its rearward siting relative to the street scene, its metal finish, and modest scale, it is considered that this element is acceptable in heritage terms.

- 4.3.15 Therefore, subject to the above condition, the development to will not result in any harm to the significance of the BLI or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, in line with the formal comments of the Conservation Officer. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is considered acceptable in design and heritage terms, in accordance with Policies SP9, D1, HE1 and HE3 of the Local Plan and Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

Impact on the Amenities of Neighbouring Properties/Future Occupiers

- 4.3.16 Policy D3 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.

- 4.3.17 It is considered that there would be no significant harm to the living conditions of nearby residents. The building is sufficient distance away from neighbouring properties not to have an adverse impact. The proposed first floor window would overlook the windows in the side elevation of 52 and 52A Church Street and their front garden. However, this would not result in a material loss of privacy as it is very open anyway and sited forward on this building's side elevation even though serving a bedroom. The first-floor rear windows would not result in a material loss of privacy to the flats to the rear, as although they would face their windows, they would overlook the parking areas and are existing windows. Moreover, with respect to the proposed external staircase, this would have a raised landing area at first floor where someone entering the two first floor flats could have some increased views into the neighbours to the southeast and east. However, it is not expected that future occupiers would gather or use this area for amenity purposes or habitable space, such that any perceived overlooking will be very limited to times where people are entering/leaving the flats. This is not considered maintainable grounds for refusal on amenity grounds.
- 4.3.18 In terms of future occupiers, the proposed flats would meet the minimum sizes set out in the technical housing standards – nationally described space standards for the 2 x 1-bedroom/1-person flats and the 1 x 2-bedroom/4-person flat, as per the amended plans submitted on the 1st September 2025. Moreover, all habitable rooms would achieve suitable levels of natural light. Lastly, whilst the proposed shared amenity spaces to the rear of the flat is small, the flats are close to the town centre and within walking distance of the park. As such, it is not considered that lack of amenity space would be a sustainable reason for refusal. The amenity space would have patio areas and be fenced in by a close boarded fence which is acceptable in this location.
- 4.3.19 As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in this regard, in accordance with Policy D3 of the Local Plan.

Highways, Access and Parking

- 4.3.20 The Highway Authority were consulted on this application and raised no objection subject to conditions covering visibility splays, a Construction Management Statement, and the material for the access road up to 3.0m. These are considered reasonable in planning terms.
- 4.3.21 In terms of parking, the larger flat on the ground floor would benefit from 2 parking spaces provided on the existing driveway and access off Church Street, which complies with the Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD given that this flat has 2-bedrooms. The smaller flats on the first floor would not benefit from any parking, which would normally require 1 space per flat under our Parking SPD. However, whilst this would be contrary to the above requirements of the SPD, the site is within a sustainable location with multiple public transport links nearby, such as Baldock Train Station, various bus stops and Baldock Town Centre being a short walk away. Moreover, Church Street and surrounding roads are served by permit parking, so future occupiers could apply for a permit and park on the street. Therefore, it is considered that the scheme is unobjectionable in this respect and the omission of parking for the two first floor flats is not weighty enough to warrant an objection.
- 4.3.22 Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in its impact on the highway and parking, in line with Policy T1 and T2 of the Local Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.3.23 As the site is entirely covered by buildings or hardstanding and the proposal is a change of use, it is considered to be below the threshold at which a net gain in biodiversity is necessary and is therefore exempt.

Other Matters

- 4.3.24 All flats would have suitable bin storage areas within the private amenity spaces sited behind the close boarded fence and designated set-out points on the highway, which is acceptable for kerb-side pick-up.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 In conclusion, the site is located within Baldock, which is a sustainable location in accordance with Policy SP2. Moreover, as the site is within easy walking distance of the Baldock town centre where there are other Class E units, and the proposed replacement use would complement the function and character of the area, which is largely residential, the proposal would comply with Policy ETC7.

The Conservation Officer is satisfied that following amendments to the scheme, the scheme is acceptable in heritage terms subject to the proposed condition. This scheme has been amended slightly in terms of windows/doors and introduces a external staircase, which is considered acceptable, such that in design terms, the CO and Officers have no issues with the design and heritage impacts of the development. This is in line with Policies SP9, D1, HE1 and HE3. The proposal will not result in any material harm to the amenities of neighbouring dwellings or future occupiers, in accordance with Policy D3.

Overall, taking all matters into account, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in planning terms.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 N/A

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

- 4.6.1 The agent has agreed to the pre-commencement conditions.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. Notwithstanding the reference to new windows being 'painted timber' on amended drawing no. 04 F, the new windows shall be vertically sliding sash types either manufactured in timber or timber-alternative sashes from the 'Rose Collection' unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to the character and appearance of Baldock Conservation Area under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

4. No development shall commence until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, including elements of the CLOCS standards as set out in the Highway Authority's Construction Management template. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan: The Construction Management Statement shall include details of:
Access arrangements to the site.
Traffic management requirements.
Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading / unloading and turning areas).
Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway.
Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times.
Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities.
Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway.

Where works cannot be contained wholly within the site a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway including extent of hoarding which must be kept within the site boundary, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements

Reason: In order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way in accordance with Policies 5, 12, 17 and 22 of

Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. This development is not subject to the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan condition because it is considered exempt under the statutory exemptions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>) or transitional arrangements in respect of the biodiversity gain condition.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line 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: 10 September 2025	