

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 24/01466/FPH & 24/01467/LBC

Date: 12/09/2024

Planning Officer: HS

Address: Hexton Manor, Hexton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3JH

Subject: See 2.2 below.

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 It is considered that the proposal will neither harm the setting to Hexton Manor or harm the character or appearance of the Hexton Conservation Area or harm the designated Historic Park and Garden. I, therefore, raise **NO OBJECTION**, on the basis that the development satisfies the provisions of Sections 66(1) & 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF together with Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

2.0 Descriptions

- 2.1 The applications are described as follows:
- **24/01466/FPH** - Erection of garage outbuilding, following demolition of existing service outbuilding.
 - **24/01467/LBC** - Erection of garage outbuilding, following demolition of existing service outbuilding.
- 2.2 My only comment here is that whilst the existing service building may be considered 'curtilage-listed', the proposed garage outbuilding is linked to the main house via boundary wall. To say that the new building directly affects the special character of the host building to necessitate requiring listed building is little tenuous. I advise that the description for the listed building consent application is altered to read perhaps as: **Demolition of curtilage-listed, single-storey service range.**

3.0 The Local Plan and NPPF

- 3.1 As acknowledged in the submitted Planning, Design, Access & Heritage Statement ['PDAHS'], Hexton Manor is grade II listed and the site is located in the Hexton Conservation Area. The grounds of Hexton Manor are also a designated Historic Park and Garden. All the above are Designated Heritage Assets.
- 3.2 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 as are the following paragraphs of the NPPF (2023 version):
- **200** (local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting)
 - **203** (desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness),

- **205** (great weight should be given to the asset's conservation),
- **206** (clear and convincing justification), and
- **208** (harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use).

4.0 The Proposal

- 4.1 This is a relatively large replacement building but then again it may be said to be commensurate with the status of the main building on this site which is described in the list entry as:

Country house. Early C18 incorporating part of early C17 farmhouse, enlarged and altered late C18, stuccoed and enlarged c.1820 for de Lautour family and Caroline Young de Lautour lived here up to her death in 1869, renovated and c.1820 single-storey wings removed c.1900 for Mr. Torr, kitchens extended and SW tower added c.1902 for G.H. Hodgson, tower reduced to general height later C20. Red brick stuccoed. Stone dressings to tower. Hipped slate roofs concealed by parapets. A large 3-storeys and cellars house set in an extensive wooded park with lake, it forms a tall rectangular block with service rooms at S, entrance by small pilastered porch near N end of irregular W front, and former entrance front on N. The latter is 3-windows wide with shallow projection to central bay, and wide triple sash windows to ground floor. Thin stucco pediments replaced segmental heads to ground floor openings c.1900. Sash windows generally, 3 to each floor, with 6/6 panes, to right of entrance on W front, with heavy rustication to water tower at SW corner. The interior has a top-lit central rectangular 2-storeys hall with pendentives, oval lantern, and arcaded 1st floor, elaborate early C18 mutuled cornice in NW room, and carved white marble early C19 fireplaces. 6-panelled moulded doors. Good photographic record of C19/C20 changes kept at house. (inf the owners).



NMR_26373_040: Aerial view of Hexton Manor.
28th July 2009, English Heritage.

- 4.2 Whilst I concur with the view given at 9.1 of the PDAHS that the existing store and service building could be considered to be curtilage-listed to the main listed building of Hexton Manor which is supported by the map regression that I provide below, the existing service building is considered to possess low significance and where I agree with 9.3 of the PDAHS, that *“the current building totally detracts from the setting of the listed building, from its flat roof form, very close siting and poor design and appearance, as a purely functional and utilitarian building only”*.

Surveyed 1880 Published 1882



Surveyed 1922 Published 1924

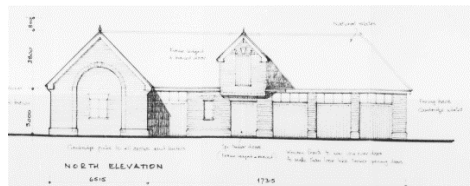


Surveyed 1947 to 1948 Published 1950



*With permission from the
National Library of Scotland*

- 4.3 A key question is whether the size of the building and its position is such that it has a deleterious impact upon the heritage assets referred to above. There are similarities here with other schemes in the district, for instance, at Codicote Lodge (now Codicote House), Heath Lane, Codicote where a large garage/store building was granted under ref: 00/00713/1HH and where the Conservation Officer wrote the following:



File/Reference: 00/00713/1HH
Subject: Detached Garage Block & Store

Date: 21/06/00
Planning Officer:
David Rusling

Address: Codicote Lodge Heath Lane Codicote

Policy and Environment Comments:

As Codicote Lodge is a substantial country house, it would be quite appropriate for it to have a comparably large vehicle storage building – a modern garage block being equivalent to an historic stables and carriage house. Therefore, I see no basic conservation objections to the overall size of block proposed.

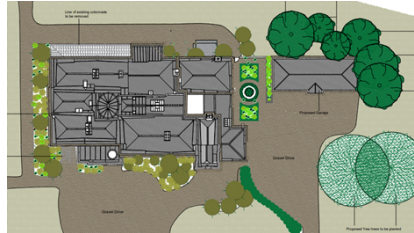
I do, however, wonder about the first floor projections that add substantial bulk to the building without any apparent use. I would, therefore, suggest omitting these. As other aspects of design – bearing in mind the large size of the block – I would advise using materials and detailing that relate more to the house than the existing small rear domestic ancillary structures i.e. slate roofing and all gault brick detailing rather than any contrasting red brick.

The other major issue is the siting of the block. As discussed, I see no building conservation problems with this. The garaging would be close enough to the house to be practical and reflect possible historic relationships of main house and outbuildings, particularly as it is also closest to the domestic offices rather than the formal living part of the house.

Setting into existing well-established planting would have the added benefits of 'softening' its overall impact on the site though this will need to take account of ensuring the retention of any important trees. If the latter were compromised in any way such as to suggest any re-siting of the garage, I would wish to be involved in any relevant considerations.

Signature

- 4.4 The proposed garage is a 'service' building that would replace an existing 'service' building to be removed and would sit perpendicular to the footprint of the building proposed to come down. When viewed from the east, the building would nestle down into the slope in the image below and would be partly screened by vegetation.



- 4.5 It is acknowledged that the garage building would be taller and more formal in appearance when compared with the building to be removed. It is noted that being 5-bays the design has taken the opportunity to introduce a feature central gable which would not work so well with a building of let's say 4-bays but would work with a smaller 3-bay building. The latter, however, may be considered too small for the applicant's use and would be modest considering the mass and form of Hexton Manor.
- 4.6 The front gable feature in the CGI below seems somewhat larger than that on the roof plan above. Having said that, the building is not considered in heritage terms to be so substantial as to harm the setting to Hexton Manor. Even though linked to the main house via the wall, the proposal ensures that a reasonable amount of separation remains between both buildings and that the garage building, on balance, is seen as sufficiently subordinate to the principal building.



- 4.7 I generally concur with para 7.1 of PDAHS as set out below:

In regard to the design of the new garage building, this is considered to be of high quality and entirely appropriate for the host listed building and context in this case. The front facing but set back layout, compared to the Manor, would read as an entirely subordinate and ancillary outbuilding, serving the main building. The attractive inset pitched roof with eaves parapet detail, front gable feature, overall form and matching materials to the Manor, would be a significant design enhancement compared to the unsympathetic and flat roof current building.

- 4.8 It is acknowledged that there are thin stucco pediments at Hexton Manor. This same detail has been carried through and onto the garage building which, on the one hand, may be seen as unifying the built forms, however, this embellishment on the new build could also be seen as a visual distraction when experiencing Hexton Manor. I question the need for this detail but if it is to remain part of the design, I would suggest perhaps omitting this from the

gabled central bay. I also question whether the roof needs to be as high as shown and whether the pitch can be slightly slackened. Furthermore, if the roof height is reduced slightly then there may be a case for lowering the height of the string/band course and reducing the height of the central gable proportionately. Before determination, I would like to have seen how this would translate and been able to compare these suggestions with what is currently proposed. However, the applicant may not wish to entertain these suggestions.



5.0 Suggested conditions

1. Standard time condition.
2. The alterations hereby consented 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 approved alterations are carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of listed building consent.

3. The roof of the garage building hereby approved shall be covered with Westmorland natural slates as stated in the application unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to the setting of Hexton Manor under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

4. The garage doors shall be manufactured in timber unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to the setting of Hexton Manor under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

5. Details of any rainwater goods shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of that part of the development hereby consented. Thereafter the rainwater goods shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to the setting of Hexton Manor under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer