

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Thomas Howe.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/03239/FP	Installation of front canopy, front access ramp and solar panels to existing front, rear and side roofslopes. Alterations to fenestration.	Maintenance House 3 - 4 Portmill Lane Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 1DJ

Submitted Plan Nos

3947 07B 3947 05 3947 06A 3947 08C 3947 09C 3947 12F 3947 13C

HE1	Designated heritage assets
D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
T2	Parking
SECN12	Achieving well-designed places
SECN14	Meeting climate change,coastal,flooding
SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment

2.0 **Site History**

- 2.1 25/02930/PNMA - Change of use of ground floor office use (Class E) to residential use (Class C3) to provide two self-contained one-bedroom flats. – Prior Approval Given
- 2.2 25/02744/PNMA - Change of use of the first floor office use (Class E) to residential use (Class C3) to provide three self-contained two-bedroom flats. - Prior Approval Given
- 2.3 25/02745/PNMA - Change of use of the second floor from office use (Class E) to residential use (Class C3) to provide two self-contained two-bedroom flats. - Prior Approval Given

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.1 **Neighbour Consultation** – None received.
- 3.2 **Conservation Officer** - No Objection. No conditions recommended.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The application site comprises Maintenance House, 3-4 Portmill Lane, within the town centre area of Hitchin. The site is within the Hitchin Conservation Area, and is adjacent to listed buildings. The layout of the site results in the parking area being to the rear.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Installation of front canopy, front access ramp and solar panels to existing front, rear and side roof slopes. Alterations to fenestration.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:

- The principle of the development.
- The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its resultant impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- The impact of the development on the Conservation Area and nearby Listed Buildings.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the living conditions of neighbouring properties.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on car parking provision in the area.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the environment.

Principle of Development:

- 4.3.2 The site is within the settlement boundary of Hitchin. Policy SP2 advises that 'general development' will be permitted where they are sited within the defined settlement boundary of Hitchin. Given that the site is within the settlement boundary, the proposed development would comply with Policy SP2. The site is also not within primary shopping frontage, and would not conflict with other town centre locations. It is noted that the site benefits from PNMA determinations for conversion into residential use, and this is acknowledged. I do not consider that the question of the principle of the use of the building is applicable to this case given that the works do not require the change of use of the building, as they are for access, changes to fenestration and to introduce solar panels. The principle is therefore supported.

Design and Appearance:

- 4.3.3 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that development will be granted provided the design of the development appropriately and positively responds to the site's local context together with other criteria to encourage a positive and sustainable form of development. This policy is broadly consistent with Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Policy HE1 emphasises how permission will be refused where proposals would cause substantial harm or a loss of significance to a Heritage Asset, in this case, the Conservation Area, and permission should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits to outweigh this harm or loss. Policy SP13 emphasises how great weight will be given to the potential

harms to the significance of heritage assets, seeking their conservation and management of their setting. This policy is broadly consistent with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) act 1990 emphasises that development should seek to the preservation or enhancement of the Conservation Area.

- 4.3.4 The site is within the Hitchin Conservation Area and is in proximity to Listed Buildings. I consider that the structure is a modern addition to the locality, and is set apart from the historic buildings and other more traditional buildings found to this part of Hitchin. The proposed development seeks to introduce a new ramped entrance way to the principal elevation, and would introduce solar panels to the front, side and rear roof slopes. Alterations to fenestration would comprise new framed windows, a new canopy, and in-fill panels to the first-floor bay windows. A new window is proposed to the rear elevation. Broadly, the character of the building would remain, and it is considered that the proposed alterations would not result in harm or be detrimental to the contributions that the building makes to the surrounding street scene. It is noted that the solar panels cover a large part of the roof, however, views of the panels to the principal slope would be predominantly obscured by the proximity of the building opposite, and the panels to the rear are within a service yard, and would be obscured from view from the main thoroughfares within the area. The panels to the side may be visible within Portmill Lane, however, their modest scale and their siting is unlikely to result in them being read within the street scene. I therefore do not consider that they would be harmful. I consider it is prudent to condition the materials for the canopy and for the layout and appearance of the solar panels given that the plans indicate that there are potential options for these. This would enable the LPA to fully consider these details. The proposed anthracite grey windows are considered to be acceptable and would not appear out of place or be adverse, particularly when viewed in the context of the Premier Inn Hotel on Portmill Lane and the relatively mixed nature of the parking area.
- 4.3.5 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in compliance with Policies D1 and D2 of the Local Plan and the core principles set out within Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The potential impacts to the surrounding Conservation Area are considered to be acceptable, and the significance of this heritage asset will not be unacceptably harmed. Policies HE1 and SP13 of the Local Plan 2011-2031 and Section 16 of the NPPF are considered to be complied with. The development is considered to comply with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) act 1990. The design and appearance are therefore acceptable.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties:

- 4.3.6 Policy D3 of the Local Plan permits development that does not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and where necessary encourages the use of mitigation measures to reduce these impacts. This is generally reflected by the provisions within the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.3.7 The proposed alterations are unlikely to result in a sense of dominance or overshadowing given their modest change to the overall bulk of the building. I do not consider that noise generation or other nuisances are likely to arise due to these alterations. The introduction of the new window to the rear is noted but would not cause a new viewing perspective that would be harmful to amenity. The ramp may introduce a

raised platform that could provide new aspects, but the height of the platform is not considered to cause overlooking into neighbouring units.

- 4.3.8 Given the above, it is considered that the proposed development would result in no unacceptable detrimental impact upon neighbouring occupiers and is therefore compliant with Policy D3 of the local plan and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Environmental Implications:

- 4.3.9 The proposed development, by virtue of its limited scale in general terms together with the sustainable location would have no significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Section 14 of the NPPF.

Highways and Parking:

- 4.3.10 The proposed alterations to the building would not require additional parking provision. The applicant has confirmed that the works would be within land under their ownership. The area outside of the building, adjacent to the ramp is a pedestrian footway from Portmill Lane to the main shopping area. I consider that the development is unlikely to obstruct this pedestrian link unacceptably.

Other Matters:

- 4.3.11 The planning agent has agreed to the attached pre-commencement conditions.

4.4 **Conclusion and Planning Balance**

- 4.4.1 The Conservation Officer has not objected. The design and visual impacts are concluded as being acceptable and would not harm the wider Conservation Area, street scene or the setting of Listed Buildings. The significance of heritage assets would therefore not be undermined. Impacts to neighbour amenities are not considered to be harmed.
- 4.4.2 The proposed development is considered acceptable and is considered to comply with the necessary provisions of the Local Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework. Grant conditional permission.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 None applicable.

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. Details and/or samples of materials for solar panels hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before these are installed and the approved details shall be implemented on site.

Reason: To ensure that the development will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the appearance and character of the surrounding area and to comply with Policies HE1 and D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

4. Details and/or samples of materials for new entrance canopy hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before this is installed and the approved details shall be implemented on site.

Reason: To ensure that the development will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the appearance and character of the surrounding area and to comply with Policies HE1 and D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

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. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. 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: 11 March 2026	