

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	26/00612/FP & 26/00613/LBC
CASE OFFICER:	VW
APPLICATION SITE:	The Biggin, Queen Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1AB
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Installation of perimeter railing, gate and wall following removal of existing fence. Installation of free-standing Air Source Heat Pump and associated enclosure, new bin, and cycle store together with hard and soft landscaping works including low-level lighting. Internal and external alterations including replacement windows and installation of secondary glazing.

RECOMMENDATION:

In light of Historic England's response on 15 July stating that *"There would be some subdivision of interiors, but these do not appear to be harmful, and the removal of some modern partitions is positive"*, and having also received resistance from the applicant to my proposal to reduce the number of units to ensure that other units more fully accord with the Nationally Described Space Standard, I withdraw my objection on this point.

Furthermore, I have adjusted my recommendations considering a successful resolution to the leaded-light window issue and considering the recently revised NPPF. Paragraph 4 of HE6 of the NPPF refers to *"important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed"*.

26/00612/FP- I raise **NO OBJECTION** as this proposal will facilitate maintaining a long-term viable use for this building and arrest deterioration to the extent that the building may not then appear on a future At Risk Register. The proposal satisfies the provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the aims of Section 20 of the NPPF, the aims of Policy HE1 of North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

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DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

I previously provided comment on 25 June 2026 at which I raised several matters as follows:

1. **Amount of accommodation** – Units fall well below what is set out in the *Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (27 March 2015)*. Although the proposal indicates an enlargement of Flat 6 which is a positive other units fall short of the minimum standard and layout improvements suggested that would result in scheme being reduced to nine units.

Update: It is understood that the scheme remains an 11no. unit scheme and whilst I consider this a missed opportunity to improve the floorspace of some units, the resistance to a 9no. unit scheme is not an objectionable matter.

2. **Entrance doors** – Not convinced by the detailing on drawing no. 070 Rev R01 or the side light to the south elevation entrance.

Update: Drawing no.070 R01 indicates glazed doors with side lights to DG02 and DG03. I remain unconvinced that glazed door with side light to DG03 is the right way to go and in my conversation with Michael this morning he confirmed that he would like to retain the proposed glazed sidelight but is happy for a condition (see below) to be considered for the replacement door on the South Elevation.

3. **Roof space** – At page 9 of the Servicing Strategy it states:

The plaster in the loft is considered of high historic value with its range of characterful inscriptions. The plaster is however crumbling, utmost care should be taken to prevent further loss.

Although the 'grading' of the building's interior is provided at page 20 of the Statement of Significance (SofSig), no assessment is provided of the roof space which would be helpful considering my comments on this point. Significance of inscriptions not fully understood, and a level of recording is advised in case of further loss.

Update: No further comments received from architect re: roof space and Micheal happy for this to be covered by condition (see below).

4. **Works to the timber frame** – Request received to allow some opening-up of the external infill panels to enable a more detailed assessment of the structure.

Update: On 30 June I responded to the architect stating:

I note your preferred choice of panel to be removed which is on the south elevation and is where the facade has suffered the most over the years and is facing away from the public, shielded by trees. I note that the removal of this panel will also give access to survey the condition of the timber to the right of the panel. I also note that in terms of protecting the exposed area, one solution would be to infill the panel with the material and method intended for the wider repairs and upgrades. Such material and detail will, as you say, be subject to the survey, and will form part of the wider repair strategy.

I confirm that this degree of investigation can be undertaken to the panel identified without requiring listed building consent and which will assist and inform future repair works. Your temporary preferred solution of creating a shelter or shield appropriately detailed to protect the revealed fabric would be acceptable in the short term and I am happy to await a strategy and method statement before those works commence.

The architect provided further information including a photographic recording of the opening up work on 8 July.

No further comments received from architect but following discussion today, Micheal happy for this to be covered by condition (see below).

5. **Environmental Upgrade Strategy** – Impact on the internal character of rooms affected if a timber framing system were to be installed, was raised. Position of the Hot Water Cylinders on drawing no. TB-SK-MEP-PL-11 Rev P1 and the Ventilation layout on drawing no. TB-SK-MEP-PL-12 Rev P1 was raised but only in conjunction with a potential reduction in units which is not proposed. The Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment states:

Mitigation

New service ducts behind bathroom appliances and kitchen units are proposed to avoid chasing of historic fabric. Waterproof panelling is to be incorporated to wet areas set on battens off wall surfaces to protect existing constructions from moisture. Where there is any potential loss of historic fabric, appropriate mitigation measures will be considered, including recording and archiving in line with best conservation practice.

Update: Historic England responded on 15 July 2026 (see extract below)

It is important to maintain and improve the breathability of the masonry. We note the proposed insertion of wall linings in several places including the use of PVC and the use of dado panelling is widespread. We understand the appeal of discretely housing servicing to improve the appearance of the interiors, but it is important that the breathability of historic masonry is maintained and any opportunities to improve it which the works present are taken. This is especially important because of the use of concrete floors throughout the building which in the proposals would be retained. It is proposed to expose an existing fireplace in flat 12 and we understand historic wattle and daub plastering is found elsewhere. In both circumstances it is again important to take the opportunity to conserve these with appropriate, breathable, traditional materials.

I had a further discussion with Michael on this this morning. It is understood that a 20mm plaster 'skim' of diathonite is to be applied to the internal face of external walls at ground floor with a mdf constructed boxed plinth standing 500mm high and 50mm deep to receive services/pipework/wiring.

Note AI Overview: Diathonite (often searched as diaphonit) is a premium line of eco-friendly, cork-based insulating plasters manufactured by the Italian company Diasen. Formulated from natural raw materials—including cork granulates, clay, diatomaceous earth, and natural hydraulic lime (NHL)—it acts as an "all-in-one" solution for thermal insulation, soundproofing, and moisture management.

6. **Glazing** – Objection raised to slimlite glazed leaded-lights with preference for slimlite secondary glazing.

Update: I met with Michael on 22 July 2026 at The Lodge, Elmside Walk, Hitchin to view 4:4:4 i.e. 12mm double-glazed, leaded light windows on this BLI. Following which I emailed David Eve (Historic England) stating:

..... You will see that although externally the windows at The Lodge are very convincing and that internally, the ironmongery and saddle bars convey a degree of authenticity, there is an obvious double reflection that cannot be avoided with this system (the same is true however with secondary glazing). Overall though, for this BLI I consider the window alterations to be a success.

I have attached the applicant's submitted window/door schedule which once again indicates the 'dark blue', 'light blue' and 'green' strategy.

A key decision is whether to insist upon single-glazed windows to the 'dark blue' windows with secondary glazing i.e. the same strategy as the 'light blue' windows or to potentially support the use of the system viewed at The Lodge. Considering the Historic England recommendation advising that North Herts approves this application on the basis that it 'broadly, would conserve the significance of The Biggin (provided that the Council's conservation officer has the opportunity to confirm the areas of detail set out above) unless it finds that other considerations indicate otherwise', I am keen to seek a consensus on the appropriateness of the proposed window detailing.

It is my intention to revisit The Biggin in the next couple of weeks and to go through the window schedule with the architect further, to establish a firm position going forward. In advance of that second site visit, it would be helpful to know Historic England's position on slimlite leaded-light windows and where the inner pane is clear glass.....

David Eve replied on 27 July stating (my emphasis in bold):

*To answer your question, I don't think we have an official position on installing slimlite leaded-light windows with the inner pane being clear glass, which is quite an unusual proposal. Considering the replacement of more common timber framed traditional windows we would normally expect the sealed glazing units to be mounted within timber glazing bars of a suitable profile and pattern. This does not seem achievable with leaded lights where the glass panes are small and the lead comes thin (and, of course, flexible). I assume we are therefore being asked to consider a single sealed unit with a pattern of lead (or something which looks like it) adhered to the surface of the glass. It seems to me this would result in a window with a decorative detail stuck on it to give the impression of smaller panes divided, not a traditional window with glazing bars which incorporates modern sealed units in place of traditional single panes of glass. **This fundamentally differs from the principles of conserving the significance of the building by installing traditional windows which differ by incorporating sealed units and is not something I would support. In this case secondary glazing is the best alternative.***

Amended drawings were received on 10 September 2026 with an updated window schedule with the 'dark blue, retain and repair' note updated to clarify introduction of secondary glazing.

Note: It remains slightly unhelpful and confusing that whilst this an eleven flat scheme, twelve flats are mentioned but Flat 1 is the Laundry and Storeroom.

Draft conditions (LBC only)

1. Although no works are proposed to the roof frame or roof covering, if such works are required, details shall be submitted to and if considered acceptable, approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to those works being undertaken. Thereafter any roof framing or roof covering works shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II* listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

2. No works shall commence within the attic voids until:
 - i) a programme of building recording and analysis of the inscriptions on the existing plaster wall and ceiling finishes;

- ii) the making of a detailed record; and
- iii) a watching brief during the works affecting the historic fabric;

have been undertaken by a person or body approved by the Local Planning Authority and in accordance with a written scheme approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing.

Reason: To secure and safeguard the provision for inspection and recording of matters of architectural and historical importance associated with the building that may be lost in the course of works under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

3. Notwithstanding the methodology for undertaking works to the timber frame at page 15 of the Architectural Impact Assessment, prior to the commencement of works to the timber frame, details of any proposed works shall be recorded by way of coloured annotated elevation drawings highlighting frame retention / repair / replacement and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. If acceptable, the Local Planning Authority shall confirm in writing, thereafter, the works shall proceed in accordance with the approved drawings.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II* listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

4. Existing wattle-and-daub infill panels that are fit for purpose shall be retained in situ. Any wattle-and-daub panels that cannot be retained shall be identified on a plan submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and replacement wattle-and-daub panels shall then be installed. Any later infill panels of different material proposed for removal shall also be identified on elevation drawings and details of the replacement infill material shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the panels shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II* listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

5. All new render and repointing shall be undertaken using lime-based as opposed to cement-based mixes unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II* listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

6. Notwithstanding the proposed glazed entrance door detail for DG03 as noted on approved drawing nos. 070 Rev R02 and 032 R02, the door shall be of solid timber unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details of the replacement door shall be submitted to and if considered acceptable, approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to manufacture. Thereafter, the door shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II* listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

7. Prior to manufacture, full window joinery details at a metric scale (including a 1:1 section of the glazing bar profile and glazing system) for the proposed hardwood windows coloured green on approved drawing nos.032 R02 and 033 R01 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the windows shall be manufactured and installed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II* listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

8. Windows coloured dark blue on approved drawing nos.032 R02 and 033 R01 shall remain as single-glazed leaded lights with the option, as approved, for secondary glazing behind.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II* listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

9. Existing panelling proposed to be retained shall remain unpainted unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II* listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:
Sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1)

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:
Policy HE1

NPPF (August 2026):
Section 20.

CONCLUSION:
I find this proposal **UNOBJECTIONABLE**.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 11/09/2026