

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 25/00018/FP

Date: 11/04/2025

Planning Officer: TR

Address: 23a Hitchin Street, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6AQ

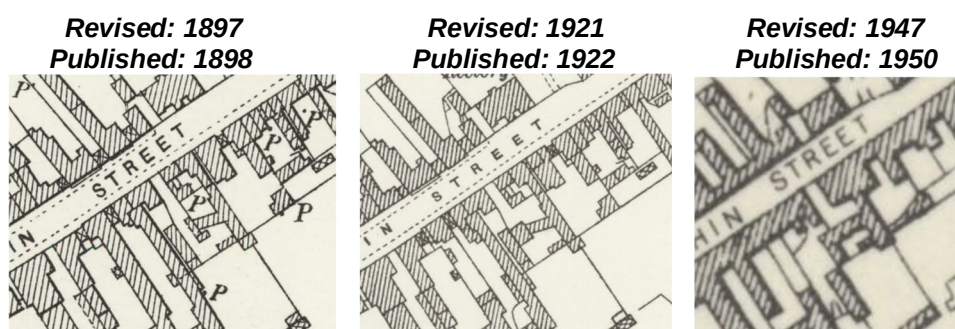
Subject: Change of use from a funeral parlour - E(c)(ii), to 4 number dwellinghouses - C3(a) and associated single storey extensions. Removal of existing entrance portal and installation of new privacy gates following demolition of existing car port roof structures.

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 Whilst I could not say that the current proposal would harm the setting of nearby listed buildings affecting their significance or indeed harm the character or appearance of the Baldock Conservation Area therefore compliant with the provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 and will accord with Section 16 of the Framework or Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031, I firmly believe that the site could deliver an improved arrangement whereby the living conditions and amenity offer are raised. This site is tightly configured and with two units only just meeting the minimum nationally described space standards, I suggest that consideration is given to seeking an amended scheme as set out below by omitting Unit 3 and increasing the size of Units 1 and 2.

2.0 Context

- 2.1 The application site is located in the Baldock Conservation Area, to the south of Hitchin Street with access between two grade II listed buildings: the White Hart PH to the north-east and Lyme Cottage to the south-west. OS map regression shows that various buildings have occupied this backland site since at least from the late C19.



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3.0 The Local Plan and NPPF (Dec 2024)

- 3.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 is relevant as are the following paragraphs of the NPPF:
- **135 c)** (sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment),

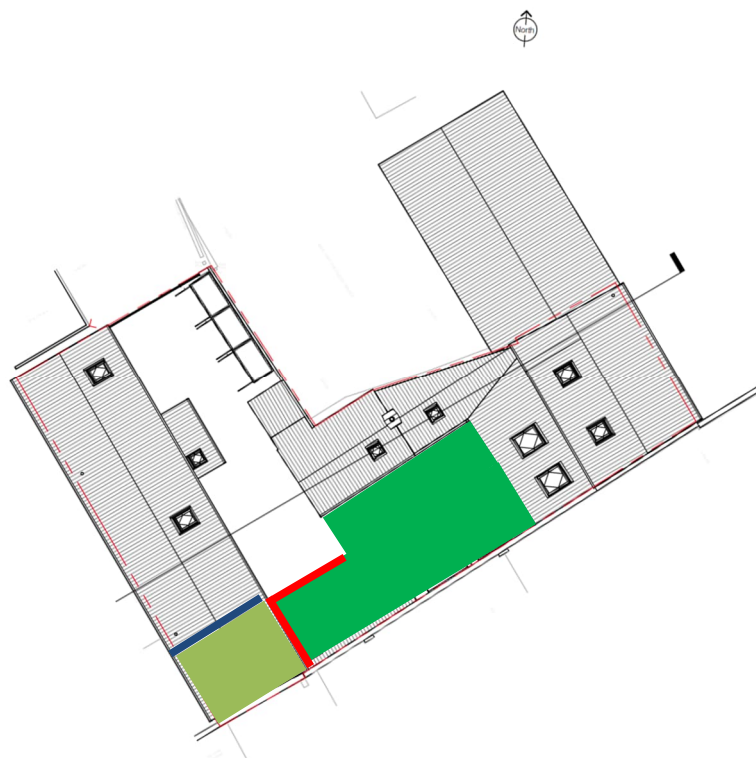
- **207** (local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting)
- **210** (desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness),
- **212** (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).



4.0 The Proposal

- 4.1 I have been involved with several rearward development proposals over the last two decades in Baldock with varying success in my opinion. One scheme that I consider worked particularly well is that a few doors down on the same side of Hitchin Street at nos.17 & 19 (grade II). That is a wider site with a reasonable space between two rear projections and a parking area also to the rear. The configuration on the application site is tighter and more constrained with the same number of units as the scheme referred to.
- 4.2 It is noted that the existing car access will not be maintained, as vehicles cannot enter and exit the site in a forward gear with no turning space available. The applicant considers it more appropriate for the site to give private amenity space over vehicle parking.
- 4.3 Although not a conservation consideration, I note that Units 1 & 2 achieve the minimum nationally described space standard whilst Units 3 & 4 exceed this standard (see below).
- Unit 1 – 37m²
– 1b 1p
 - Unit 2 – 39m²
– 1b 1p
 - Unit 3 – 65m²
– 1b 2p
 - Unit 4 – 100m²
– 2b 3p
- 4.4 Noting that Units 1 and 2 are afforded the minimum standard, I have looked at the current configuration and whether there is an opportunity not only to increase the size of these units but to also see if other positive measures can be realised.

- 4.5 What do I mean by this? Well, there may be an opportunity here to create a slightly better arrangement whereby two units would have private amenity space, including a space for Unit 4 which would be commensurate with a 2b 3p unit. What I have looked at is whether it would be possible to part demolish the elongated building on the south-west boundary. If the building was limited to the blue line in the image below then a small courtyard area could be achieved for ground floor Unit 1 which would also benefit from a larger lounge area with access onto this courtyard. Unit 2 would be increased by the same amount affording this unit either more living room space or a larger bedroom or a bit of both. A wall could perhaps be erected where the red lines are shown with a gated front garden access to Unit 4 (which would become Unit 3). This would also reduce the amount of structures on the south-east boundary, providing a better aspect out from the living room for the larger unit.



- 4.6 A further benefit of the above approach is that the two pairs of glazed doors to proposed Units 1 and 3 on Elevation A, would not be necessary and could perhaps revert to windows on the basis that French doors could be provided in what would be the new south gable end for Unit 1.



- 4.7 These are thoughts for discussion but I think this would significantly improve the living conditions for the remaining three units and considerably ease what is a tight configuration.



- 4.8 What I have not assessed is the impact of taking down the ivy-clad gable in the image below left (April 2018) which is also seen in the Google Maps image below right (Aug 2024).



5.0 Suggested conditions.

- 5.1 For the time being I have not offered any bespoke conditions over and above what I assume would be the standard time condition and the standard condition requiring the development to be implemented in accordance with the approved plans.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer