

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Mark Simmons.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/02133/LBC	Internal alterations to include installation of underfloor heating with associated trench heaters to ground floor, replace existing hall floor, renovations to timber panelling in hall and dining room. Installation of plumbing, underfloor heating and electrical works to first and second floor and replace any damaged floorboards. Creation of wine room to lobby with insulated walls. Remove and block up existing Chef's kitchen window to install cupboards and modify opening into kitchen off service corridor (as amended by drawing no. 2023/32/101 Rev B and Scope of Works Rev B received on 16/01/2025).	Hexton Manor Hexton Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 3JH

Submitted Plan Nos

2023-32-04 2023/32/02 2023/32/03 2023-41-101 2023-41-102 2023-41-103 2023/32/101 Rev B

1.0 Policies

HE1	Designated heritage assets
SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 **23/02358/PRE** - Internal and external alterations and refurbishment works, including change of use of second floor to three residential units for holiday letting accommodation.

24/00254/FPH - Demolition of existing front conservatory and rear colonnade. Alterations to fenestration and external render.

CP 23.08.2024

24/00255/LBC - Internal and external alterations following demolition of front conservatory and rear colonnade. Alterations to fenestration (as amplified by drawing nos. 2023/32/201; - 202 and -203 received on 24/06/2024 and as amended by drawing no. 2023/32/01 Rev D received on 21/08/2024 and Scope of Works (Rev F) also received on 21/08/2024).

CCON 23.08.2024

3.0 Policies

- 3.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 is relevant as are the following paragraphs of Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024):

- ☐ **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 Representations

- 4.1 **Hexton Parish Council** – No comments received.

Historic England – Non-intervention letter stating the HE is not offering advice and that this should not be interpreted as comment on the merits of the application.

Natural, Historic and Built Environment Advisory Team – No comments received.

Chilterns Conservation Board – No comments received.

Press and site notices – No comments received.

5.0 **Planning Considerations**

5.1 **Site & Surroundings**

- 5.1.1 Hexton Manor is grade II listed and is located within grade II registered parkland and gardens and within the Hexton Conservation Area. The list entry for the house reads 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).

5.2 **Proposal**

- 5.2.1 The proposal is to ***'Internal alterations to include installation of trench heaters to ground floor, replace existing hall floor, renovations to timber panelling in hall and dining room. Installation of plumbing, underfloor heating and electrical works to first and second floor and replace any damaged floorboards. Creation of wine room to lobby with stud walls and making some doors unusable. Remove and block up existing Chef's kitchen window to install cupboards (as amended by drawing no. 2023/32/101 Rev B and Scope of Works Rev B received on 16/01/2025).'***

5.3 **Key Issues**

- 5.3.1 The main issue is to consider the impact of the works on the special character of Hexton Manor and the application is to be assessed in the order of the items covered in the amended Scope of Works (SoW).

Trench Heating

- 5.3.2 As stated in the submission, the previous application for Listed Building Consent established the installation of new column radiators to match existing. However, it is

noted that the applicant has difficulty in sourcing such radiators that match the existing ones and are small enough to sit below the window board level in the kitchen and seating areas.

- 5.3.3 Trench heaters will provide a large amount of heat in these critical areas and will be less visually intrusive than a column radiator, the top of which would sit above the line of the adjacent window board. Antique brass floor grilles are proposed, and this method heating is considered unobjectionable.

Hall Floor

- 5.3.4 On 18 April 2024 under ref: 24/00254/FPH & 24/00255/LBC, I commented regarding the

Hallway floor and cupboard stating the following:

At 5.3.4 of the HS it reads:

The lobby opens into a large entrance hall that stretches from the west to the east side of the House. The hallway features a parquet floor and both low level and full height timber panelling towards the eastern side of the hallway. The room features moulded cornicing and large decorative plaster corbels (Plate 23).

At 4.2.1 of the SofW submitted with the pre-app, it stated:

Existing floor covering in the hall is not an original feature and is to be removed and replaced. The exact style and type of floor covering will be confirmed and will form part of a formal application for Listed Building Consent. All other floor coverings are 20th century additions and will be removed and discarded.

In my response to the pre-app, I said that:

I have not had the opportunity to investigate whether the existing floor has significance to justify retention, but I advise that further assessment is carried out. If not considered to be of heritage value, I would be seeking either a timber boarded floor or may be something similar to that which previously existed at Princess Helena College (Temple Dinsley) in the hallway there (see below) which is a variation on Carreaux d'Octagones flooring).

I note that 4.2.1 of the SofW has been amended to read as follows:

All floor coverings other than the main hall are 20th century additions and will be removed and discarded.

It is assumed that 'floor coverings' is reference to either carpet/lino/modern tiling etc in which case no objection is raised. However, if this is with reference to any historic floor covering under carpets etc. that may include original timber boards then this statement is not considered acceptable in its present form.

- 5.3.5 I have no reason to doubt the suggestion in the SoW that the current parquet floor covering in the hall was imported from Belgium in the early 20th century and the image dated 1905 in the Heritage Statement accompanying the previous application for Listed Building Consent is noted. Having said that, parquetry floors and borders were popular and used a variety of newly imported, different-coloured hardwoods from the Empire during the Victorian era.
- 5.3.6 It is noted that the floor covering is non-original and is a thin veneer that has not been maintained. The SoW also says that "Refurbishment of this floor would be difficult as all of the darker petals to the pattern are Rosewood which is no longer permitted to be used in the UK".

5.3.7 With respect to the replacement floor finish, it is noted that in many large early-mid Georgian houses, stone or marble floors were used in entrance halls and reception rooms to effectively show off the owner's wealth and status. Different colours were often used to create beautiful geometric floor patterns. Decorative squares of dark marble, slate or cabochon are typical of the Georgian entrance hall.

5.3.8 In this context the proposed replacement of the early C20 parquet veneer floor finish with Jordans Basebed Portland stone tiles is considered acceptable although the applicant has once again been encouraged to consider a decorative Carreaux d'Octagones finish and to which the following email response was received:

The hall floor - the client did consider the one suggested, it was felt that over a large area it would be a very 'busy' effect and, would detract / distract the eye from the lovely oak panelling. The portland will be a simpler clean / light finish to not compete with / detract from the merits of that space of the panelling / wall and ceiling details / features. Therefore, subject to you being able to on balance support this, we propose to leave as is for the proposed portland stone please, to replace the damaged parquet flooring.

Floorboards at first and second floor

5.3.9 It is noted that a survey of the existing floorboards has been carried out which showed that there are, predominantly, three differing types / sizes of floorboards located on the first and second floors. The SoW states that

Some of the circa 215mm x 27mm thick original pitch pine floorboards still exist in the northern part of the manor house. Further towards the centre of the building the original floorboards have been replaced with a narrower floorboard in Scots pine. These are similar in thickness to the original floorboards in adjacent rooms.

5.3.10 The SoW continues by stating that:

A much more recent floorboard has been laid in the central and southern part of the house and on the second-floor kitchen and lounge space as shown on the accompanying plans. These are modern, machine finished 22mm thick tongue and groove floorboards and we assume these replaced the ones originally installed.

5.3.11 At first floor, some of the circa 215mm x 27mm thick original pitch pine floorboards still exist in bedrooms 2, en-suite to bedroom 2, the seating area, bedroom 3 and the dressing room. These floorboards are in relatively good condition with some rot evident at the ends of the boards where they abut the external walls. The proposal is to temporarily lift these floorboards to allow the installation of the plumbing, underfloor heating and electrical works. When relaying these, the intention is to concentrate them in one or two of the rooms in the original northern section of the house.

5.3.12 It is noted that the later Scots pine boarding is also butt jointed and in good condition and the proposal is to use these boards alongside the original floorboards to make up any shortfall to complete these rooms.

5.3.13 The SoW continues by stating that the remaining, floorboards located throughout the central and southern end of the property are modern, machine finished, circa 160mm x 22mm tongue and groove boards. The difficulty in lifting these boards is noted and the proposal is to remove and discard these later floorboards and replace them with 18mm plywood boarding. This type of boarding will provide a good base for the new oak timber floor covering, which is intended to be laid throughout the house, with the exception of the stair and hall.

- 5.3.14 At second floor, the lounge and kitchen located at the northern end of the building hold the original floorboards and are consistent in condition with the ones uncovered on the first floor. Again, it is proposed to temporarily lift these floorboards to allow the installation of the plumbing, underfloor heating and electrical works. Again, in relaying these boards the intention is to concentrate them in one or two of the rooms in the original northern section of the house and the later Scots pine floorboards will be used to make up any shortfall to complete these rooms. The remaining floorboards in the east facing rooms are a modern machine finished 22mm tongue and groove. As with the first floor, the proposal is to remove and discard these boards and replace with 18mm plywood boarding as a base for a new timber floor.
- 5.3.15 Overall, the works to the first and second floors have been reasonably well justified and subject to imposing a condition, is considered acceptable.

Wine Room

- 5.3.16 This application proposes to include a wine room located in the lobby area adjacent to the main kitchen. This wine room is proposed to be lined with an insulated stud wall sitting in front of the existing skirting boards, architraves and coving so as not to disturb them. These items will sit behind the stud wall should a subsequent owner of 'The Manor' wish to remove the wine room and reinstate the lobby. The inclusion of this wine room will require the insulated stud walls to cover the door to the main hall, the door to the cupboard and door to the rear hall. It is intended for these doors to remain in place but will simply remain unusable. Furthermore, one of the openings formerly providing access to the hall has already been blocked up to provide a cupboard. This cupboard framing will still be removed as agreed in the previous application for Listed Building Consent. Separating the wine room from the house will be a glass wall.
- 5.3.17 In an email to the applicant's agent, I stated that *"there is good justification for seeking to retain a view of the three doors as seen in Plate 35. To achieve this, I advise that the Wine Room wall is pulled away from these doors (light blue line below) and maybe reducing the island unit to a square plan form. The doors could then become openings to let's say two cupboards"*.
- 5.3.18 The SoW now reads as follows and the amendment to drawing no. 2023/32/101 Rev B is considered acceptable:

The inclusion of this wine room will require the insulated stud walls to cover the door to the main hall, the door to the cupboard and door to the rear hall. These doors will remain in place and will now provide access to a storage cupboard to the rear of the stair. Furthermore, one of the openings formerly providing access to the hall has already been blocked up to provide a cupboard. This cupboard framing will still be removed as agreed in the previous application for Listed Building Consent.

Chef's Kitchen Window

- 5.3.19 The SoW states that existing window between the chef's kitchen and stairwell is intended to be removed and the opening blocked up to allow the installation of the kitchen units. It is noted that this window is currently covered with a mirror on the side of the stairwell so therefore does not provide any benefit to that area.
- 5.3.20 The window possesses limited historic significance, and the proposal is justified to the extent of being acceptable.

Service Hall Door and Window

5.3.21 At page 38 of the Heritage Statement submitted under ref: 24/00255/LBC it states:

Rear Service Corridor & Inner Courtyard

5.3.17 The rear service corridor provides access to the rear service rooms of the building including the office, kitchen/dining area, south lobby, rear service staircase and laundry room. The corridor features a modern floor with sky light in the roof and panelled timber doors (Plate 37).

Furthermore, the previous SoW provided for the application reference 24/00255/LBC proposed the following:

The external area located between the library / wine store and kitchen will be utilized within the kitchen by the removal of the walls as shown, and the installation of a glazed roof to provide much needed light to this area.

The existing door located between the rear access hall and new glazed kitchen area is in a poor condition and unrepairable. This door will be replaced with a new door to match existing.

It is now proposed to remove the dilapidated door and window alongside and create an opening into this newly formed glazed area adjacent to the kitchen. The justification given is that this widened opening will allow significantly more light into, what is currently, a dark service hall and will, according to the applicant, significantly improve the flow from this area to the kitchen. Furthermore, this alteration will also allow the existing rainwater pipes located on the west side of the glazed area to be boxed-in.

5.3.22 The door and sash window are not considered to be in particularly poor condition and there are arguably sound conservation reasons to retain both as there would be a small degree of harm resulting from the change proposed. The three justifications given: i) natural light onto the service corridor, ii) improve flow, and iii) allow for boxing-in of downpipe, are not overly convincing. Having said that, the overall character of the rear service corridor would remain and the creation of a centralised 920mm wide opening into what would be a newly formed glazed area adjacent to the kitchen would not be considered so harmful as to merit or sustain an objection.

Doors to Cloak Room

5.3.23 It is proposed that an opening leading from the entrance lobby to the cloak room is created and that the cloaks area can then also be utilized as a boot room allowing the applicants and their guests to remove their footwear prior to entering the hall.

5.3.24 The two pairs of double doors to the lobby (external and doors leading into hallway) emphasise the entrance into the building. The justification for the pair of doors into the cloakroom is not that convincing and if this is to be considered acceptable it is considered important to downplay this entrance and for this reason the applicant was invited to consider a single door.

5.3.25 The SoW now reads as follows and the amendment to drawing no. 2023/32/101 Rev B is considered acceptable:

The new door will match the existing six panel door currently serving this cloakroom from the main hall.

5.4 Alternative scheme

5.4.1 Not applicable.

5.5 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

5.5.1 Not applicable.

5.6 **Conclusion**

5.6.1 The existing hall floor covering is non-original and would require a very careful repair if retained in-situ. Although there is a case to suggest that the loss of the parquet floor would result in small degree of less than substantial harm, there is also a reasonable case to be made for a stone floor.

5.6.2 Although not fully satisfying the provisions of Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, in accordance with the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF, the proposal will help to secure the long-term preservation of this asset which is receiving significant investment to not only preserve but to enhance its special character. Overall, it is considered that the proposal is Policy HE1 compliant. It is considered that by granting listed building consent this proposal will conserve this large designated heritage asset and will ensure that it maintains an optimal viable use. The benefits clearly outweigh any perceived harm and the proposal considers the asset's significance and importance.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 That listed building consent be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Notwithstanding Condition 12 of listed building consent ref: 24/00255/LBC which states that in accordance with 4.2.1 of the submitted Scope of Works (Rev F), the parquet hall floor referred to at 5.3.4. of the submitted Heritage Statement shall remain in-situ, listed building consent is hereby granted to replace the parquet floor with Jordans Basebed Portland stone tiles.

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.

3. Following lifting to allow for the installation of the plumbing, underfloor heating and

electrical works and subject to their condition, the existing original pitch pine floorboards in Bedroom 2, en-suite to Bedroom 2, the seating area, Bedroom 3 and dressing room shall together with later Scots pine boarding, be relaid to complete these rooms 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.

4. Following lifting to allow for the installation of the plumbing, underfloor heating and electrical works and subject to their condition, the existing original pitch pine floorboards in the lounge and kitchen located at the northern end of the house shall together with later Scots pine boarding, be relaid to complete these rooms 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.

5. Prior to the formation of the consented opening, existing and proposed internal elevations of the access into the kitchen from the rear service corridor shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the 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.

6. In accordance with 9.0 of the Scope of Works Rev B, the door to the Cloakroom off the Entrance Lobby hereby consented shall match the existing six-panel door serving this Cloakroom and accessed from the Main Hall in terms of construction and finish 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.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 20 January 2025	