

HERITAGE STATEMENT

**FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR PROPOSED EXTERNAL
ALTERATIONS TO WINDOWS AND DOORS, ROOF ALTERATIONS
INCLUDING INSTALLATION OF DORMERS AND INSET
BALCONIES, AND HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPING
ALTERATIONS, REFUSE STORAGE AND CYCLE STORES**

AT

**RADCLIFFE HOUSE, THE PRIORY, OLD CHARLTON
ROAD, HITCHIN, SG5 2DW**

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF: METRIC + MAKER LIMITED

APRIL 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Planit Consulting in support of a Full Planning Application (“the Application”) submitted by Metric + Maker Limited (“the Applicant”), for external alterations and associated soft landscaping works at Radcliffe House at The Priory, Old Charlton Road, Hitchin, SG5 2DW (“the Application Site”).

1.2 The Application seeks planning permission for the following development:

External alterations to windows and doors, roof alterations with installation of inset balconies and dormer windows, hard and soft landscaping alterations, refuse storage and cycle stores (“the Proposed Development”).

1.3 This Heritage Statement specifically assesses the effects of the Proposed Development on the character and significance of the nearby heritage assets, including several grade II listed buildings to the north and north east at 1 and 2 Tilehouse Street, the Coach House, the Garden Bridge, the Stables and the grade I listed building at The Priory, and the Hitchin Conservation Area.

2. Methodology

2.1 This report falls into two distinct parts. The first sets out the historical background to the Application Site and its surroundings and focuses on assessing the significance of the Application Site in its current form.

2.2 This Heritage Statement has been prepared in accordance with Historic England Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (2019). The guidance explains that understanding the significance of heritage assets before developing proposals enables more effective and consistent decision-making.

2.3 In line with the guidance, this assessment therefore:

- identifies the heritage assets affected;
- evaluates their significance, including any contribution made by their setting;
- explains the contribution of the site to that significance; and

- considers the degree and nature of impact arising from the proposed works.
- 2.4 This aligns with Historic England's emphasis on proportionate assessment, informed by appropriate expertise and relevant historic environment records.
- 2.5 The second part of the report evaluates the effects of the Proposed Development and its impact in heritage terms. This is consistent with Historic England's staged methodology and its guidance on how Statements of Heritage Significance should support decision-making.

3. Legislative and planning policy context

- 3.1 This section sets out the relevant statutory duties, national policy, and local planning policy that inform the assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on designated heritage assets and the Hitchin Conservation Area.

Statutory duty

- 3.2 Under Section 66 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, decision-makers must have special regard to preserving a listed building or its setting.
- 3.3 Under Section 72 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, special attention must be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Case law confirms that "preserve" means to cause no harm.

The Development Plan

- 3.4 The development plan comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 (November 2022). The following policies are relevant:
- SP9 – Design and Sustainability
 - D1 – Sustainable Design
 - HE1 – Designated Heritage Assets

National policy and guidance

- 3.5 National policy on the historic environment is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated in December 2024 with minor amendments in February 2025. Relevant provisions include paragraphs 202, 203, 207, 208, 210, 213 and 221,

which outline how significance should be understood, how harm should be assessed, and how public benefits are weighed.

- 3.6 Paragraph 210 highlights the need to sustain and enhance significance, support viable uses consistent with conservation, and ensure development contributes positively to local character.
- 3.7 Paragraph 212 requires that great weight is given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, regardless of the degree of harm.

Material considerations

- 3.8 The following documents are material considerations relevant to the assessment of the Proposed Development:
- Historic England (2019) Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition): Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management
 - Historic England (2015) Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: (GPA2) Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment
 - Historic England (2017) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (Second Edition) (GPA3): The Setting of Heritage Assets
- 3.9 The Hitchin Conservation Area Character Area Statement (2011) is a material consideration. The Application Site lies within Character Area 7: Priory Park and Hitchin Hill, where the key considerations include conserving the parkland setting, mature landscape structure and the historic relationship between the Priory, its grounds and surrounding development.
- 3.10 In accordance with the statutory duties, national policy and the Local Plan, this assessment considers the extent to which the proposed external works preserve the character and appearance of Area 7 of the Hitchin Conservation Area and the significance of surrounding designated heritage assets.

4 Historic background

- 4.1 The Application Site is defined by the red line boundary shown in **Figure 1** below and the site location plan included at **Appendix 1**.

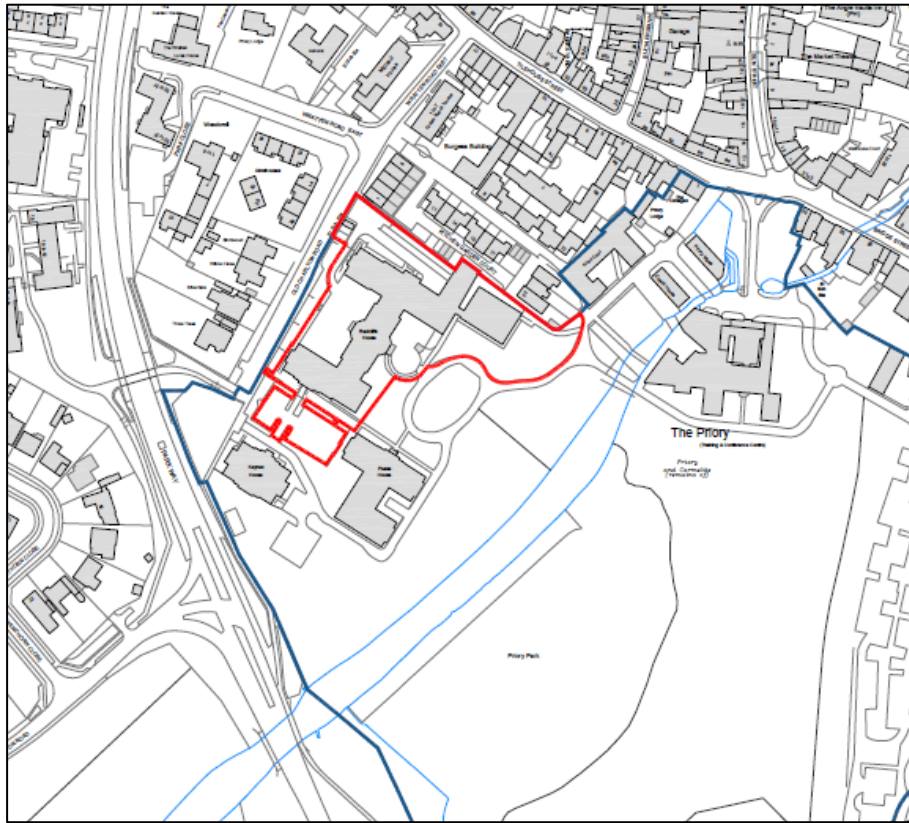


Figure 1: Site location Plan

- 4.2 The Application Site comprises of Radcliffe House, which is a modern three storey office building located towards the southern edge of Hitchin town centre. The Application Site is located on Old Charlton Road. Radcliffe House forms part of a collection of three offices buildings, including Pease House and Keynes House, plus several ancillary buildings.
- 4.3 Radcliffe House was built in the 1987 when National Mutual built Radcliffe House named after the town's well-known Radcliffe family 1990s and situated within 19 acres of parkland at Hitchin Priory. The existing building is located in the western section of the wider site with grade car parking courts located immediately to the west and at basement level. Two ancillary buildings are located immediately to the east of the site and extensive landscaped grounds comprising lawns, mature trees, shrubs, and informal footpaths located directly to the east.
- 4.4 Radcliffe House is situated within the designated Hitchin Conservation Area and is located within Area 7: Priory Park and Hitchin Hill of the Hitchin Character Area Statement (July 2011). It is not a statutory or locally listed building; however, it is near

to statutory listed buildings: the Coach House (Grade II), the Garden Bridge (Grade II), the Stables (Grade II) and The Priory (Grade I). The location of these is illustrated in **Figure 2** below.

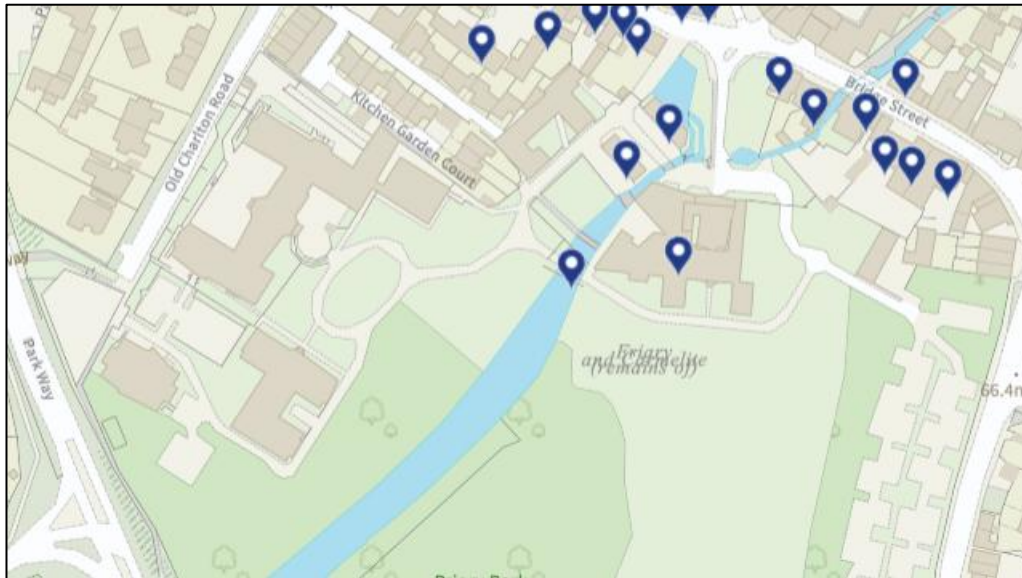


Figure 2: Location Plan of nearby designated heritage assets (pinpointed in blue) (Source: Historic England)

Listed Buildings

4.5 The Priory, Hitchin is a heritage asset of the highest significance, designated at Grade I on the National Heritage List for England (List Entry Number: 1102211). Its exceptional interest derives from both its medieval monastic origins and its subsequent transformation into a major country house estate, reflecting successive periods of architectural and historical development. The Priory was originally founded in 1317, when Edward II granted land to the Carmelite Friars for the establishment of a religious house. The friars constructed a modest convent dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, comprising a cloister, church, hall and associated domestic ranges.

4.6 The statutory list description identifies the building as follows:

A large country house which has gradually developed from medieval times until the late C18. The best known element is the southern section, which was completely rebuilt circa, 1775 in the Adam style. But there also survive details of the earlier priory buildings of the C15, as well as intervening alterations of the C17. English Houses. Period VI - Vol. I (Country Life 1926) pages 255-274; RCHM pages 119-120; VCH, page 13. The Priory, Garden Bridge, Coach House and stables form a group.

- 4.7 In accordance with Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (GPA2), the significance of The Priory derives from its foundation as a Carmelite priory in 1317, established through a land grant from Edward II, with further land contributions by John de Cobham supporting construction of a small convent dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Priory's monastic phase ended with its surrender during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538 during the reign of Henry VIII, after which much of the medieval fabric was dismantled and materials stripped, leaving the site in a ruinous state as recorded in a 1546 Crown survey.
- 4.8 Its evidential value is reflected in surviving elements of medieval flintwork and incorporated monastic fabric, alongside later historic layers, including 17th-century alterations and interior features that chart the building's continuity of occupation across multiple centuries.
- 4.9 The Priory's aesthetic value is especially associated with its substantial late-18th-century rebuilding, including the Palladian/Adam-style south range reconstructed around 1775 under John Radcliffe, creating the elegant architectural character visible today. The designed landscape, with features such as the 18th-century ornamental bridge and icehouse, reinforces this aesthetic interest and contributes to the building's group value with the associated listed Garden Bridge, Coach House and stables. In addition to these key elements, historic mapping also indicates the presence of a symmetrically designed kitchen garden and a formal avenue located to the west elevation, further emphasising the structured and consciously designed character of the wider estate landscape during this period. This is evident and shown in **Figures 3-5 below**.



Figure 3: The Priory Postcard, 1907 (left) and **Figure 4:** The Priory drawing, 1795 (right)



Figure 5: Map of The Priory (OS Six Inch, 1830s-1880s (County layers))

4.10 Furthermore, in accordance with Historic England GPA2 and GPA3 guidance, the setting of The Priory is defined by its intimate designed landscape and the immediate architectural composition around the main house. Modern development to the south and west, including Radcliffe House and Pease House, lies outside the historic designed grounds and does not form part of the setting of The Priory or any of the associated listed buildings. There is no intervisibility between Radcliffe House or Pease House and the listed buildings, and accordingly their setting is not impacted.

Conservation Area

4.11 Map 10 of the Hitchin Conservation Area Character Area Statement, shown in **Figure 6**, identifies several features of relevance to the Application Site. The boundary wall in front of Radcliffe House to the north, including areas of distinctive *rat-trap bond* brickwork, forms part of the established townscape and will remain unaltered by the proposals. Map 10 also defines the historic parkland associated with the Priory Conference Centre, reflecting the reduced extent of the former Priory grounds over time. Radcliffe House does not fall within this identified parkland boundary.

- 4.12 The area of open space located immediately north and east of Radcliffe House is also identified as important within the Conservation Area. This space will remain unchanged, and no key landscape features or tree groups will be affected.
- 4.13 Important views are recorded on Map 10, including View 9 across the lake formed by the River Hiz and View 10 looking towards the town centre and the spire of St Mary's Church. As the external alterations relate only to the building's fabric and do not alter its footprint, height or general form, these established views will not be diminished. Radcliffe House and Pease House do not form part of any designed or principal heritage view associated with the nearby listed buildings, including the Grade I listed Priory. There is no intervisibility between these buildings and the listed buildings, and accordingly their setting is not impacted.



Figure 6: Extract from Map 10: Character Area 7- Priory Park and Hitchin Hill (Source: Hitchin Conservation Area Character Area Appraisal)

- 4.14 The modern office buildings of Radcliffe House, Pease House and Keynes House are not mentioned in the Conservation Area Appraisal and are therefore considered neutral in heritage terms, forming part of the existing character of the Conservation Area without contributing positively or negatively to its significance.

5.0 Impact assessment and justification

- 5.1 Section 3.0 established the significance of the site in built heritage terms. Having considered this, the purpose of this section of the report is to analyse the proposals against that significance in order to establish their effects in built heritage terms. Further, the key characteristics of this part of the Conservation Area include the open space to the north, the mature tree groups, the wider parkland character, and the important long views identified as View 9 (across the lake formed by the River Hiz) and View 10 (towards the town centre and the spire of St Mary's Church).

Impact Assessment

- 5.2 Under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, decision-makers must give special regard to preserving a listed building or its setting. Case law makes clear that to "preserve" is to cause no harm. In this context, the assessment that follows evaluates whether the Proposed Development affects the significance of Hitchin Priory (Grade I) or the associated Garden Bridge, Coach House and Stables (all Grade II), including any contribution made by their settings.
- 5.3 The Priory's setting is defined by its historic designed landscape, the River Hiz corridor, and its close relationship with the associated listed outbuildings that form a coherent estate group. Radcliffe House and Pease House lie outside the historic core and do not form part of the setting of The Priory or its associated listed buildings. There is no intervisibility between these buildings and the listed buildings, and neither forms part of any designed or principal heritage view. As such, Radcliffe House and Pease House cannot impact the significance of these heritage assets.
- 5.4 A substantial belt of mature vegetation and woodland lies between Radcliffe House and The Priory, providing effective visual separation. There is no intervisibility between the two sites and the listed buildings, meaning their setting is not impacted by Radcliffe House. The proposed works remain entirely within the existing built envelope and do not introduce additional height, bulk or visual prominence. The relationship between Radcliffe House and the listed buildings is illustrated in **Figures 7-9** below.
- 5.5 The proposed works to Radcliffe House and its associated ancillary buildings are comparatively modest, involving the replacement of selected windows with doors, the insertion of rooflights, inset balconies and dormers, and other minor external refinements. The proposed dormers are only partially contained within the roof form, with elements that extend beyond the roof plane rather than being entirely recessed. The refined arrangement of new and altered openings follows the rhythm and proportions already established on the elevations.



Figure 8: 3D illustrative views of the spatial relationship of The Priory and its associated Listed Buildings and Radcliffe House (Source: Google Earth, 2026)



Figure 9: 3D illustrative views of the spatial relationship of The Priory and its associated Listed Buildings and Radcliffe House (Source: Google Earth, 2026)

- 5.7 The landscape design responds positively to the immediate setting of Radcliffe House. An Italian-style terrace within the central courtyard is proposed, replacing the existing hardstanding area formerly used for car parking.
- 5.8 By replacing hard surfacing with a more refined landscape feature, the scheme improves the visual quality of the courtyard within the immediate setting of Radcliffe House. The approach to the proposed ancillary buildings incorporates layered planting and grouped tree forms to frame views and soften the building edges.
- 5.9 Around the perimeter of Radcliffe House and its associated ancillary buildings, a series of new garden areas are proposed, replacing extensive hardstanding with soft landscaping, planting beds, hedges and small lawned spaces. These gardens soften the appearance of the buildings within their immediate setting, reduce the dominance of existing paved areas and create a more sympathetic transition between the built form and the surrounding landscape.
- 5.10 Collectively, the external works and landscape approach enhance the building's immediate setting. As Radcliffe House and Pease House do not form part of the setting of the nearby listed buildings and there is no intervisibility between them, the proposals have no impact on the significance of the Grade I and Grade II listed buildings.
- 5.11 Taking the statutory duty under Section 66 as the governing test, the Proposed Development results in a **neutral effect** to the significance of The Priory or its associated listed buildings. As Radcliffe House and Pease House do not form part of the setting of The Priory or its associated listed buildings and there is no intervisibility between them, there can be no impact on the significance of those heritage assets. The proposals therefore fully accord with the requirements of the 1990 Act, the NPPF and Historic England's GPA2/GPA3 guidance on assessing significance and setting.

Conservation Area

- 5.12 An assessment of the contribution of Radcliffe House to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, based on the criteria set out in the Historic England guidance Table 12, is provided below in **Table 5.1**.

TABLE 5.1: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTION OF RADCLIFFE HOUSE TO THE HITCHIN CONSERVATION AREA	
Criteria	Analysis

Is the work of a particular architect or designer of regional or local note?	No.
Does it have landmark quality?	Radcliffe House is a three-storey red-brick office building dating from the 1987. Its contemporary design sits comfortably within the surrounding parkland and responds appropriately to its location near The Priory Hotel.
Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics?	The building is late 20th Century and modern in character. It sits comfortably alongside the nearby historic parkland environment.
Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in any other historically significant way?	Radcliffe House does not form part of the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets. The architectural language of the proposed alterations is sympathetic to the style and appearance of the building.
Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent heritage assets?	The proposed works, including the introduction of soft landscaping and the sensitive refinement of external openings, will improve the immediate setting of Radcliffe House. Radcliffe House does not form part of the setting of adjacent heritage assets and there is no intervisibility between them
Does it contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces including exteriors or open spaces within a complex of public buildings?	Yes. It is a well-designed modern office building of good architectural quality, and its approval took account of the surrounding open spaces and the sensitive setting of the Priory Hotel.
Is it associated with a designated landscape e.g. a significant wall, terracing or garden building?	No. The site does not adjoin or form part of the designated historic landscape of Priory Park. The proposed works relate to the immediate setting of Radcliffe House only.
Does it individually, or as part of a group, illustrate the development of the settlement in which it stands?	It reflects the modern-day growth and progression of the Priory grounds to accommodate the economic growth and needs of the town centre.
Does it have significantly historic association with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?	No, however, it reflects the reduction of the Priory parkland context that has occurred over the centuries.
Does it have historic associations with local people or past events?	Radcliffe House takes its name from the Radcliffe family, former owners of the Priory,

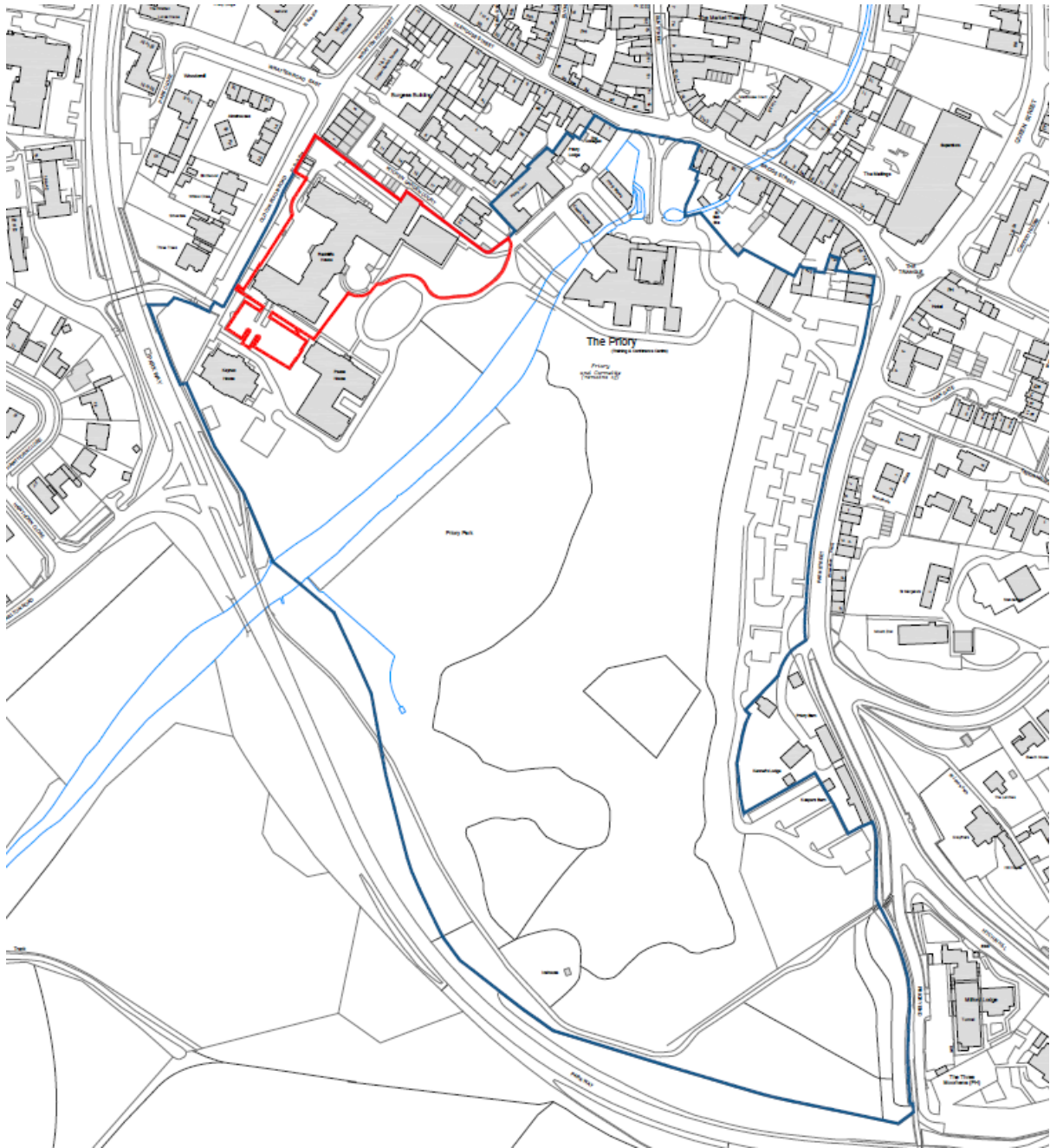
	who rebuilt the main house in 1775 and retained elements of the original 15th-century cloisters.
Does it reflect the traditional functional character of former uses in the area?	The introduction of additional soft landscaping and the sympathetic refinement of external openings improve the immediate setting of Radcliffe House.
Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?	Yes. Its continued use as an office building contributes to the established campus-style character of this part of the site. The proposed works will contribute positively to the immediate setting of Radcliffe House by refining its appearance and introducing softer landscaping.

5.13 Overall, the proposals preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As Radcliffe House and Pease House do not form part of the setting of the nearby listed buildings and there is no intervisibility between them, the proposals will not harm the significance or setting of those listed buildings.

6.0 Summary

- 6.1 The proposed external alterations and soft landscaping will not harm the significance or setting of Hitchin Priory (Grade I) or the associated Garden Bridge, Coach House and Stables (all Grade II).
- 6.2 The works are modest, remain entirely within the existing envelope of Radcliffe House and do not intensify its visual presence. The introduction of additional soft landscaping will further soften the modern office character of the Application Site, offering an enhancement to the building's immediate setting. Radcliffe House and Pease House do not form part of the setting of the nearby listed buildings and there is no intervisibility between them; accordingly, no views that contribute to the appreciation of the listed buildings' significance are affected.
- 6.3 In accordance with Section 66 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, the Proposed Development cause no harm to the significance of the nearby listed buildings or to the contribution made by their settings. They therefore meet the statutory requirement to preserve those assets. In addition, the proposal is in accordance with Section 72 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* as the Application Site lies within the Hitchin Conservation Area. The Proposed Development preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, fulfilling the statutory duty to give special attention to this objective.
- 6.4 The Proposed Development similarly accords with the NPPF, which requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. As the assessment identifies no harm to any listed building or to the Conservation Area, it is not necessary to demonstrate public benefits to outweigh harm under the heritage balance set out in paragraphs 207–213 of the NPPF. In addition, the proposals deliver clear heritage-related benefits through the introduction of enhanced soft landscaping, which improves the immediate setting of Radcliffe House. The sensitive architectural language employed in the external alterations, including refined openings, discretely incorporated rooflights and recessed balconies, further ensures that the building sits comfortably within its immediate context. The proposals therefore fully align with national policy, local policy and statutory requirements.

Appendix 1: Site Location Plan



Appendix 2: Map 10 Area 7: Priory Park and Hitchin Hill Character Area Statement (July 2011)

