

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Andrew Hunter.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/01190/FP	Change of use from Office to create one studio flat. Replace existing roof to include installation of No.3 side elevation rooflights and No.2 dormer windows.	91C Bancroft Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 1NQ

Submitted Plan Nos

PL-TRD-2416 - A1/02 PL-TRD-2416 - A2/02

1.0 Policies

D1 Sustainable design

D3 Protecting living conditions

ETC2	Employ Dev outside Employ Areas
HE1	Designated heritage assets
SECN11	Making effective use of land
SECN12	Achieving well-designed places
SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment
SECN6	Building strong, competitive economy
SECN9	Promoting sustainable transport
SP13	Historic environment
SP2	Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distrib
SP3	Employment
SP6	Sustainable transport
SP9	Design and Sustainability
T2	Parking

2.0 **Relevant Site History**

- 2.1 15/01917/1LB - Provision of two new dormer windows, one rebuilt dormer window and rooflight in front roofslope; insertion of rooflights in rear roofslope; addition of pitched roof to existing rear flat roof extension and first floor rear extension together with addition of ground floor rear window and internal alterations to create 4 flats and conversion of basement to 1 apartment (as amended by plan nos. DP634 01C, 02D and 04 B) – Approved 15/10/15.
- 2.2 15/01916/1 - Provision of two new dormer windows, one rebuilt dormer window and rooflight in front roofslope; insertion of rooflights in rear roofslope; addition of pitched roof to existing rear flat roof extension and first floor rear extension together with addition of ground floor rear window to facilitate change of use from office to residential to create 2 x 2-bedroom flats and 2 x 1 bedroom flats and conversion of basement to 1-bed studio apartment (as amended by plan nos DP634 01 C, 02 D and 04B) – Approved 15/10/15.
- 2.3 15/00147/1 - Provision of new dormer windows and one rebuilt dormer window to front elevation and new rooflights at front and rear together with addition of pitched roofs to existing rear flat roof extensions to facilitate change of use from office to residential to create 4 x 2-bedroom flats; conversion of basement to 1-bed studio apartment; erection of 1 x 2-bed house with deck amenity space following demolition of existing detached garage and wall – Refused 2/4/15 for:
1. By reason of the siting, scale and inappropriate design of the proposed extensions and the new detached dwelling the proposed development would have an adverse impact on the visual amenities of the locality and would result in an overdevelopment of the site. The development would fail to provide a sufficiently high quality and inclusive design that would function well and add to the overall quality of the area. Furthermore and as a result of its scale, design and siting, the proposed development would adversely affect the setting of adjacent listed buildings and the setting of the Hitchin Conservation Area as designated historic assets. As such, the proposed development would be contrary to the advice in sections 7 and 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.4 12/00537/1LB - Internal and external alterations to building to facilitate conversion from offices to residential use. Two storey rear extension to number 93A Bancroft – Approved 8/5/12.
- 2.5 12/00536/1 - Two storey and single storey extensions following partial demolition and alterations to existing building to create one retail unit (use class A3) and 4 one bedroom flats, one studio flat and 2 two bedroom flats (variation to conditions 4 and 5 of 11/03020/1 granted permission 16/02/12 in addition to alteration to entrance to flat 6) – Approved 8/5/12.
- 2.6 11/03021/1LB - Internal and external alterations to building to facilitate conversion from offices to residential use. Two storey rear extension to number 93A Bancroft. (Amended plan received 14.02.12) – Approved 16/2/12.
- 2.7 11/03020/1 - Two storey and single storey extensions following partial demolition and alterations to existing building to create one retail unit (use Class A3) and 4 one bedroom flats; one studio flat; and 2 two bedroom flats. (Additional plan received 18.01.12 and amended plan received 14.02.12) - Approved 16/2/12.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Environmental Health** – No objections.

3.2 **Conservation Officer** – No objection to associated listed building consent.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The site is a 2 storey rear projection which is part of a larger Grade II listed building. The first floor that is the subject of this application is used as an office and loft space, and is accessed from a ground floor entrance (a bathroom is also on the ground floor).

4.1.2 The rear projection is within a car park and yard area at the rear of Nos. 91 and 92, which has a gated entrance. Nearby properties accessed from the car park are a mix of residential and commercial.

4.1.3 The site is central Hitchin, which overall has a commercial character. A supermarket is to the rear. Nearby uses to the north and south are commercial and residential. The site is in a Conservation Area. Listed buildings are nearby to the south and west.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 The change of use of the first floor (including ground floor entrance and stairs) to a studio flat (Use Class C3). The roof would be re-built. Two new dormers and three new rooflights would be added to the new roof. The flat would be accessed from the rear car park. The flat would not have any parking provision.

4.2.2 The application was accompanied by parallel listed building consent application 25/01192/LBC.

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The key material considerations are whether the proposal is acceptable in principle, design and heritage, neighbour amenity, future living conditions, and parking.

Principle

4.3.2 The site is in Hitchin, a town under Local Plan Policy SP2 where most new development is to be located, therefore the principle of the creation of a new dwelling at the site is acceptable.

4.3.3 The proposal also involves the loss of an office (Use Class E). Local Plan Policy ETC2 states the following in respect of the loss of existing employment uses on unallocated sites:

The Council will only permit the loss of existing employment uses on unallocated sites, where it can be demonstrated that:

i. the land or premises is no longer required to meet future employment needs of either the local community or the District, demonstrated through evidence of at least twelve months of active marketing;

ii. the existing use has a significant adverse impact on the amenities of surrounding land uses; or

iii. the existing use is detrimental to highway safety.

- 4.3.4 The existing use is not considered to fall under ii or iii, as it's very small in scale and is not considered to result in adverse impacts.
- 4.3.5 In respect of i, it has not been stated that any marketing has been carried out. The Planning Statement does not address the loss of the office, focusing instead on the merits of the proposed flat.
- 4.3.6 The office to be converted is however very small, and would not be considered to play any material role in meeting future employment needs of the District. It's loss is not therefore considered to be contrary to the objectives of ETC2. The proposal is considered acceptable in principle.

Design and heritage

- 4.3.7 The application site is a Grade II listed building, which is a designated heritage asset. The proposal therefore needs to be assessed as to whether it would harm its significance under S66(1) of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 4.3.8 The proposed works are overall considered to be of a small scale, with none of the fabric of the building to be altered considered to be of such significance that this will be harmful. On the basis of the comments from the Conservation Officer, the proposed works are considered sympathetic to and in keeping with the special significance and character of the listed building.
- 4.3.9 It is not considered that the application harms the significance of the designated heritage asset the subject of this application. The impacts of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building and its significance as a designated heritage asset are therefore considered acceptable.
- 4.3.10 Near the site to the south and west are other listed buildings, which are also designated heritage assets. The impacts of the proposal on their settings and significance also needs to be assessed. In this case the proposed works are of minor scale and visual impacts, and are not considered harmful to the settings of the nearby listed buildings.
- 4.3.11 The proposed change of use and alterations would overall be of a small scale, and will not harm the character and appearance of the locality. The proposal is not considered harmful to the significance of the Conservation Area. The design and impacts on heritage assets are therefore acceptable. The proposal complies with Policies D1, D2 and HE1 of the Local Plan, and Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

Neighbour amenity

- 4.3.12 The re-built roof will be of the same size, height and siting as the existing, and won't result in additional impacts to neighbours. The three new rear rooflights would be at a high level and of a small size, and are not considered harmful to privacy.

- 4.3.13 The two new dormers would face towards a two storey rear projection that contains one first floor window and two rooflights. The window is obscure glazed, therefore no loss of privacy will occur as the dormers won't be able to see through it.
- 4.3.14 The two rooflights would be viewed obliquely from the dormers as they are higher up and spaced between the dormers, therefore it's not considered that the dormers would cause harmful loss of privacy and amenity. The proposed use as one studio flat is not considered harmful to amenity. Impacts on amenity are considered acceptable. The proposal complies with Policy D3 of the Local Plan.

Future living conditions

- 4.3.15 Local Plan Policy D1 e) states that residential schemes meet or exceed the nationally described space standards. For a 1 bed, 2 person studio, the minimum gross internal floor area should be 50 m² and 1.5 m² built-in storage. The flat would include built-in storage of over 1.5 m², therefore this criterion is met. The total gross internal floorspace would be approx. 43 m², which is under the 50 m².
- 4.3.16 However, the studio could equally be occupied by only one person, which requires a minimum gross internal floorspace of 39 m² and internal storage of 1 m². The internal floorspace exceeds these minimums, therefore the amount of floorspace is considered acceptable.
- 4.3.17 The quality of the internal floorspace is considered acceptable. It's not considered that potential occupants would experience overbearing impacts, overshadowing, loss of privacy, noise or other harm to their amenity from nearby buildings and uses.
- 4.3.18 The new flat would not have any outside private amenity space. It is however the change of use of a small part of a building in central Hitchin and would provide one small studio, therefore such amenity space couldn't be expected to be reasonably provided in all such circumstances. The flat would in any case be a short walk from Bancroft Recreation Ground to the north, which would provide outside space. Future living conditions are considered acceptable. The proposal complies with Policy D1 of the Local Plan.

Parking

- 4.3.19 The proposed studio would have one bedroom, which requires a minimum of one parking space under the Council's parking standards. No parking spaces would however be provided.
- 4.3.20 The site is however in central Hitchin with a supermarket nearby to the east, and within walking distance to shops, services, and public transport. The location is very sustainable where occupants wouldn't require a car on a daily basis, therefore the lack of parking is acceptable. The proposal complies with Policy T2 of the Local Plan.

4.4 **Balance and Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 In the absence of material planning reasons to the contrary it is my view that planning permission is **GRANTED**.

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.

Biodiversity Net Gain

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  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 10 July 2025	