

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	26/01307/FP
CASE OFFICER:	Will Thompson
APPLICATION SITE:	16 A High Street Hitchin
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Installation of external front roller shutter (development already carried out)

RECOMMENDATION:

There is **AN OBJECTION**. The scheme will satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2) (LBC) and /or 66(1) (FP/FPH) and/or 72(1) (both) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 20 of the NPPF (August 2026) and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

SUGGESTED CONDITIONS:

None

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on listed building's special character – Not applicable

Impact on character and appearance of the conservation area –

The shop is located in a Hitchin Conservation Area within Character 2A and the extract copied below is taken from the character statement.

Character Area 2a: High Street, Bancroft south and Brand Street General description This Character Area once formed part of the large market place to the west of St Mary's Church which was gradually encroached over, so that now the church is no longer visible from the High Street or from Bancroft, described by the architectural historian Sir Nicholas Pevsner as one of the best streets in of Hertfordshire. The street is wide and between Market Place and the junction with Brand Street, where High Street becomes Bancroft, has been subject to an environmental improvement scheme which provided a partially pedestrianised street. The uses are all commercial with residential uses above some of the shops. This is the major shopping area of Hitchin with national chains being represented. On-street short stay car parking is a useful shoppers' facility, but does encourage circulating traffic c looking for free parking – this can lead to pedestrian and vehicular confl ict. These issues were identi fied by stakeholders in relation to the Hitchin Urban Transport Plan that has been endorsed by Hertfordshire County Council's Highways and Transport Cabinet Panel.

The buildings all sit on the back of the pavement without any front gardens or yards, creating continuous frontages. Virtually all of the buildings are either listed, locally listed, or considered to be 'positive' apart from a range of 1960s development on the southeast side of Bancroft, and the Wilkinson Store at no. 18 Bancroft. Of note are the 1920s 'Tudorbethan' shops which turn the corner into Hermitage Road, such as nos.1-5 which are locally listed.

*Of the listed buildings, many are very early (15th to 17th century) with high-quality Georgian or Victorian brick facades. However, many also retain their exposed timber frame frontages, usually with gable facing the street. Together, these buildings provide a lively and varied streetscape **only slightly marred by the modern shopfronts which can be seen on many of the ground floors of these buildings.***

A shop front should relate to the architectural characteristics of the building it belongs to so that it forms part of the elevation rather than an isolated element. It should relate to the upper floors in structural concept, proportion, scale and vertical alignment. This can be achieved by taking account of the architectural style of the building and by echoing the arrangement of the windows, columns and areas of walling on the upper floors.

Shop front design.

It is generally accepted that historic towns with attractive, locally distinctive and well-maintained shopping centres have a better prospect of retaining and improving their economic wellbeing.

The Council required that shop front designs respects local character particularly within conservation areas favouring high-quality materials and traditional proportions. The diagram below is indicative of a traditional shop front element.

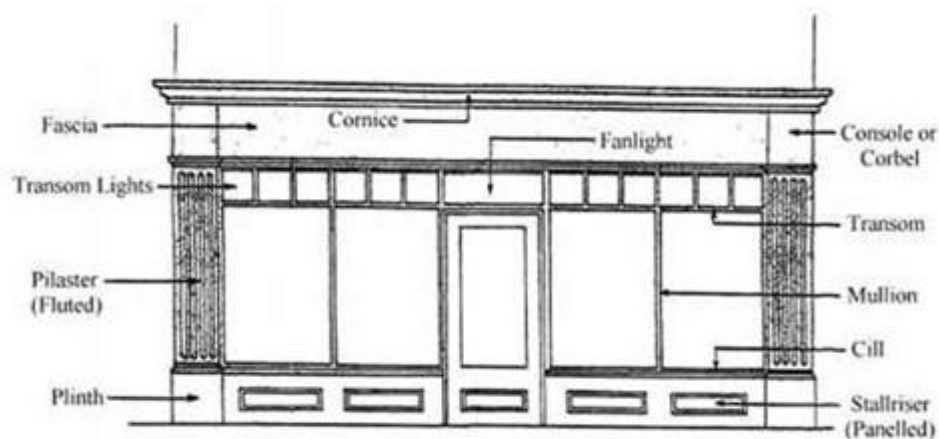


Figure 3.1: Elements of a Traditional Shopfront

In this application the roller shutters that have been installed do not relate to the proportions of the shop front (see drgs HE-003) where the elements of the shop front i.e. Windows and doors are clearly defined. When the shutters are down this is not legible. Additionally, it is considered they do not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of this part of Hitchin Conservation Area and its local character.

Roller shutters deaden the street scene when down and are not permitted. If additional security measures are required, the window may be secured with an open mesh security shutter system located on the inner face of the window between the pilasters.

Site Context:

[Please see summary section above.](#)

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

[Please see summary section above.](#)

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

NPPF (August 2026):

The Local Plan and NPPF

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and the policies contained within it i.e., Policy HE1. The plan was adopted November 2022.

The relevant policy paragraphs of Section 20 of the August 2026 version of the NPPF are detailed as follows.

HE4: Securing the conservation of heritage assets.

1. Heritage assets, as an irreplaceable resource, should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. To achieve this, development proposals which would affect the significance of heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting should: a. Maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation, taking into account the importance of maintaining the assets, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities including local economies, and the positive contribution they can make to local character and distinctiveness; and b. Avoid (or if that is not possible, minimise) harm to the significance of heritage assets, and instead conserve this significance.

2. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (including from development within its setting) should have a clear and convincing justification in accordance with the policies in this chapter

HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets.

1. Development proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The relevant historic environment record should be referred to in making this assessment, and appropriate expertise employed where necessary.

2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets (including through effects on their setting) should identify whether proposals would be likely to: a. Have a positive effect, which is where the significance of a heritage asset would be enhanced, or better revealed, or b. Have no effect on the significance of a heritage asset; or c. Result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or d. Cause the total loss of the significance of a heritage asset.

3. In making this assessment it is the effect on a heritage asset's significance rather than the scale of the development which should be considered.

4. Decision-makers should be satisfied that assessments accurately reflect the effects on heritage assets caused by development proposals.

5. Where a development proposal involves, or has the potential to involve, a heritage asset with archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment should be undertaken and, where necessary, a field evaluation. These should be used to help understand the asset's significance and the potential effect of the proposal on this, which should inform the design, mitigation and implementation of the development.

HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets.

1. When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation 96 (and the more important

the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.

2. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on a designated heritage asset should be supported.

3. Any harm to a designated heritage asset will be a matter of considerable importance and weight, which should be dealt with in accordance with paragraphs 4 to 6 of this policy.

4. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. 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.

5. Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or if all of the following apply: a. The nature of the heritage asset would otherwise prevent all reasonable uses of the site; b. No suitable use for the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; c. Conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is not possible; and d. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the asset back into use.

6. Within this context, development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; while development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional 64*

The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) – December 2017

At para 14 under the sub-heading 'Landscape Assessment and Amenity' it states that "Analysis of setting is different from landscape assessment. While landscapes include everything within them, the entirety of very extensive settings may not contribute equally to the significance of a heritage asset, if at all. **Careful analysis is therefore required to assess whether one heritage asset at a considerable distance from another, though intervisible with it – a church spire, for instance – is a major component of the setting, rather than just an incidental element within the wider landscape.**"

At para 17 it states (my emphasis in bold): "All heritage assets have significance, some of which have particular significance and are designated. The contribution made by their setting to their significance also varies. **Although many settings may be enhanced by development, not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without harm to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate it.** This capacity may vary between designated assets of the same grade or of the same type or according to the nature of the change. It can also depend on the location of the asset: an elevated or overlooked location; a riverbank, coastal or island location; or a location within an extensive tract of flat land may increase the sensitivity of the setting (i.e. the capacity of the setting to accommodate change without harm to the heritage asset's significance) or of views of the asset. This requires the implications of development affecting the setting of heritage assets to be considered on a case-by-case basis."

Relevant National Guidance i.e. Historic England:

Other relevant documents (Please specify):

CONCLUSION:

[There is an objection to the roller shutters for the reasons stated in the summary section above.](#)

OFFICER: Tricia Craggs

DATE: 15 September 2026