



Historic England

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Our ref: P10000929

15 July 2026

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021
The Biggin, Queen Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1AB
Application No. 26/00612/FP

Thank you for your letter regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

This application proposes a series of alterations to The Biggin, a property that provides residential care in a series of 11 small flats. The proposals aim to improve accommodation but also accommodation and servicing, an aim we support but we would like to comment on some matters of detail.

There would be some subdivision of interiors, but these do not appear to be harmful, and the removal of some modern partitions is positive. There are also changes to the circulation plan but none of this appears to affect the significance of the historic significance of the building in a major way.

It is important to maintain and improve the breathability of the masonry. We note the proposed insertion of wall linings in several places including the use of PVC and the use of dado panelling is widespread. We understand the appeal of discretely housing servicing to improve the appearance of the interiors, but it is important that the breathability of historic masonry is maintained and any opportunities to improve it which the works present are taken. This is especially important because of the use of concrete floors throughout the building which in the proposals would be retained. It is proposed to expose an existing fireplace in flat 12 and we understand historic wattle and daub plastering is found elsewhere. In both circumstances it is again important to take the opportunity to conserve these with appropriate, breathable, traditional materials.



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Turning to replacement of windows, there are casement windows found throughout, some with glazing bars and some leaded. The proposal to add secondary glazing to the leaded windows is acceptable. A condition survey is provided though in some cases where wholesale replacement of the windows is proposed it is not clear that this is necessary. In these cases, the condition of the joinery could be established by the Council's conservation officer and the scheme revised under a condition placed on any consent.

We have reviewed this application in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework and are broadly content with the majority of works although, as noted above, there are other places where the precise detail could be agreed by condition placed on the consent. Similarly, if opportunities to improve the breathability of the building through the removal of non-permeable surface finishes is explored further the details of such work could perhaps be agreed by a condition placed on the consent.

Recommendation

Historic England recommends that your Council should approve this application, which, broadly, would conserve the significance of The Biggin (provided that the Council's conservation officer has the opportunity to confirm the areas of detail set out above) unless it finds that other considerations indicate otherwise.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

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