



FAO: Planning Department,  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2018/2498/LB  
Date: 04/12/2018

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

**RE: 1-5 Park Street, Hatfield, AL9 5AT**

The application is for the change of use of the existing grade II listed building from office (B1) to 4 no. residential flats (C3) with associated internal and external alterations.

1-5 Park Street is grade II listed under a single listing entry (list entry no. 1100999). At its core it is 17<sup>th</sup> century in date, with later additions and alterations. It stands within the Old Hatfield Conservation Area and occupies a prominent corner plot opposite the historically significant Fore Street which formed the historic approach to Hatfield House and is almost entirely lined with listed buildings.

Pre-application discussions have taken place regarding the conversion of the building to four flats. Some feedback has been critical of the proposed number of flats, however, I am satisfied that the number of flats can be sensitively accommodated within the building without causing undue harm to its significance, particularly bearing in mind the small size of the plot and the lack of amenity space and parking (although these issues will not be considered here). The conversion will cause a degree of harm by permanently subdividing the building and therefore impeding the ability to experience and understand the internal layout, however, the proposed scheme utilises existing divisions within the building to logically divide it into four units. Feedback received at pre-application stage has been taken on board and resulted in positive amendments to the scheme.

Few alterations are proposed within the basement, other than remedial works to address structural concerns, especially with the 17<sup>th</sup> century staircase, caused by poor interventions made in the 1970s. On the ground floor it is proposed to create two units, both served by existing external doors on either corner of the building. A further door will be fixed shut and left visible externally, and an existing 20<sup>th</sup> century sash window will be removed and the opening enlarged to form a doorway. Concerns were raised about the loss of this window and the potential resulting loss of the historic layout of the fenestration, however, the Planning and Heritage Statement submitted with the application has demonstrated with photographic evidence that this window dates from the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century as there was formerly a shopfront in this position. The proposed door will provide access to a communal hallway, enlarged slightly following pre-application comments and now better



proportioned, with access through to the 17<sup>th</sup> century staircase. It is considered to be beneficial that this staircase, as a key historic architectural feature of the building, remains in communal use. Other alterations to the ground floor are also beneficial in removing late 20<sup>th</sup> century additions, including the proposed replacement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shopfront with a more sympathetic design including fanlight and stallriser details.

The proposed first floor alterations are also considered to be acceptable. Modern stud partitions will be removed to reinstate the original proportions, although in other less significant rooms partitions will be inserted. Concern was raised at pre-application stage about the insertion of a new doorway within Unit 3 but this had been sensitively designed as a jib door allowing the appearance of the existing panelling to be retained and concealing the door.

On balance, the proposed conversion is considered to be sympathetic to the special interest of the listed building and will not cause undue harm to the significance of the building or this part of the conservation area. The removal of unsympathetic 20<sup>th</sup> century internal additions to the building, including the fire escape staircase to the rear, and rectifying poor quality past structural interventions are enhancements which provide a degree of mitigation for the works. In accordance with the NPPF paragraph 196, the less than substantial harm caused to the significance of the building is considered to be moderate and should be judged against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the building's optimal viable use. As the exterior of the building will remain largely unchanged, with positive alterations where proposed (replacement shopfront for example), there is considered to be no impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area.

If listed building consent were to be granted, then conditions should require:

- A written method statement of any structural interventions in relation to the staircase;
- Additional details of new windows, doors, shopfront at a large scale (1:1 to 1:20 as appropriate) in section and elevation;

Details of the proposed ground floor hallway wall, first floor job door and ceiling and wall treatments have already been provided.

This is supported by paragraphs 190, 192, 193, 194 and 196 of the NPPF (2018).

Yours sincerely



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Place Services

*Note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter*