



FAO: Planning Department,
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2021/0557/LB
Date: 10/04/2021

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: *Eight Bells, 2 Park Street, Hatfield, AL9 5AX*

The application is for the installation of non illuminated 1x fascia sign, 1x post mounted sign, 2x painted mural signs, 1x vinyl wall mounted sign, 2x wall mounted signs and 1x lockable poster case and three gold lanterns and two upward facing LED floodlights to facilitate signs.

The property is Grade II listed and located within Old Hatfield Conservation Area. It is thought to date to the seventeenth century (although the listing description states “probably sixteenth century”) and occupies a prominent position on the corner of Park Street and Fore Street.

There are no objections in principle to the replacement of the existing signage and there is an opportunity to enhance the appearance of the building. It is unclear whether the existing signage benefits from listed building consent. The planning history shows listed building consent for new signage in the late 1990s (S6/1996/0737/LB) but nothing more recently and it is understood from photographs that the current blue and white signage was installed around 2015/6.

The proposed colours for the walls, woodwork, plinth and rainwater goods are acceptable. Care should be taken to ensure the paint for the walls is breathable (if the existing paint is) to avoid encasing the building in a non-permeable material. Some elements of the scheme could be improved to better preserve the special interest of the building. Comments and recommendations are made on each element of the proposal below.

Sign A – There are no objections to its replacement, however, this should be a painted timber board not aluminium. As noted above, the existing sign may not benefit from listed building consent and the use of a modern material is not appropriate for a traditional building. The repositioning of the trough light so it does not overhang the sign is supported.

Sign B – There are no objections to the design, however, timber is recommended. The Design and Access Statement explains that the weight of timber is a concern. At the least, the panel sign at the top should be painted timber and, if the design cannot be streamlined to reduce the weight of the bells, then a modern material for their construction may be acceptable.



Sign C – This sign, although painted, is considered to be too large and prominent on this elevation of the building. It is also unknown whether 1226 is an accurate date for the establishment of the pub and whether it was in this location (in a former building) so it is recommended that this is omitted. It is also recommended that the “a historic 17th century coaching inn” is omitted as the sign is large and in a prominent position, detracting from this elevation. Advertising the history of the building on the panel sign (Sign D) is supported, but a large painted statement is not considered to be in keeping. The brickwork on this part of the building was historically unpainted. The sign will also detract from the wider streetscape, particularly along Fore Street which is lined with listed buildings and retains its historic character.

Sign D – Retaining the panel of historic information is supported. This panel should be painted timber and would benefit from some moulding detail or a bullnose frame to match the other signs.

Sign E – The amenity boards should be painted timber to reflect the traditional materials of the historic building, as per Sign A.

Sign F – There are no objections to the poster case. The use of timber should be explored, although it is appreciated that this may not be possible for the poster case and it is considered an acceptable addition in order to advertise events and menus.

Sign H – There are no objections to the replacement and repositioning of the lantern lights.

Sign I – It is recommended that these lights are removed as the trough light will illuminate the pub sign. The existing uplighters are unattractive modern features on the elevation and the replacement lights will perpetuate this. There is an opportunity to improve the appearance of the building by removing these lights, particularly if Sign C is omitted.

If the above recommendations are followed there would be no objections to the proposal as it would preserve (and potentially enhance) the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the special interest of the listed building, causing no harm to their significance. However, as proposed, the works are considered to result in ‘less than substantial’ harm to the significance of both the listed building and the Conservation Area and paragraph 196 of the NPPF should be applied. Paragraph 193 affords great weight to the conservation of heritage assets. Consideration should also be given to Sections 16 (2) and 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 under which local planning authorities should pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings and their special interest, and the character or appearance of conservation areas.

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