

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET, OLD HATFIELD

HERITAGE STATEMENT Rev B



INTRODUCTION

The application site comprises 1, 3 and 5 Park Street which is a Grade II Listed Building dating back to the 17th Century. The long two storey structure is of mixed masonry and timber frame construction with a combination of tiled and slate covered pitched roofs and a substantial 17th century red brick chimney stack within the central core of the building. The property is located within historic core of the Old Hatfield which is a designated Conservation Area.

The List Description for the property is as follows :-

“ Houses and shop. 17th-century timber frame. Long range with cross wing on S. Rough-cast. Plain and machine tile roof. Two stories. 2 and 5 windows, left hand end slightly projecting with hipped roof. Ground floor shop with two wooden windows and raised wall surface below rough cast. Half glazed door on left with early 19th-century Bracketed hood. Tool mid 17th century red brick chimney stack towards right with six square joint shafts. Late 19th-century flush sash windows to whole range. Moulded wood cornice.”

Hatfield is mentioned in the Domesday Survey and is at least late Saxon in origin. However, evidence of occupation during the Roman period has been found on the Great North Road (HER 1848) on the site of Priory House where two sherds of Roman pottery were found in a new pipe trench. They were associated with an alignment of large flints embedded in clay and which was considered to be the bottom layer of a very much robbed Roman flint wall.

The first documentary reference to Hatfield was in 970 AD when King Edgar granted the estate of Hatfield (40 hides of land) to the new monastery at Ely as a source of timber for the Ely buildings. The Domesday Book records ‘Hetfelle’ (derived from the Saxon Haethfeld, meaning heath-covered open land) which comprised a large and far-flung estate with 4 water mills, woodland to support 2000 pigs and as much arable land as could be ploughed with 30 ploughs. It had a Parish Priest and 54 households (18 villeins, 18 bordars, 12 cottagers and 6 serfs). No archaeological evidence of the Saxon settlement has been uncovered within the search area investigated for this application proposal but it is thought that the monks erected a timber-framed place of worship, which they dedicated to the Saxon Princess Etheldreda who was also the patron saint of Ely cathedral. The earliest parts of the present Parish Church of St Etheldreda (HER 2368) date from the 13th century and it is likely that this site is the site of the Saxon church.

During the Medieval and Post Medieval period (HER 6822), a township grew on the slope down from the parish church and in the 13th century the bishops of Ely encouraged its growth, established a market and rebuilt the church. The road through the town became part of a major route which was later to be called the Great North Road. This became a main coaching route, with inns lining the coach route down Fore Street and cheaper beer houses lining Back Street (Church Street) which was the route for wagons. Hatfield did not expand beyond the old town and the railway line until an attempt was made at building a New Town (HER 16014) in the mid 19th century.

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

Cardinal Morton commenced the building of The Bishop's Palace in 1479 after his appointment as Bishop of Ely and in 1538 the Manor of Hatfield became the property of the Crown. Queen Elizabeth I was confined there and reputedly it was, while sitting under an oak tree in the Park, that she received news of her accession in 1547 and she held her first Council in the Great Hall (The Old Palace) of Hatfield (HER 2932).

In 1607 King James I exchanged the palace at Hatfield for an estate known as Theobalds located in the south of the County, which was owned by Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury and the King's Chief Secretary and Lord High Treasurer. Robert Cecil immediately set about building Hatfield House (HER 2027) and this was completed in 1612. The existence of the Great House and the strategic location of Hatfield on the main road leading from London to the north brought steady growth in trade to the town which was well served by a selection of alehouses and coaching inns. The town also had an established brewery (HER 6878), that prospered until its closure in 1920.

Evidence for industrial activity in the Medieval town has been found at Battersdale West where a 14th century pottery kiln in an area of later industrial activity, at the edge of Great Reed Pond was uncovered (HER 1851). At Priory House (HER 1852), the site of a post-medieval public house, excavations in 1968 revealed a large pit containing pottery of late Norman to 14th century date.

1,3 and 5 Park Street are currently vacant having last been in use as an office building. However, evidence from historic records, inspection of the building fabric and records from excavations in Park Street undertaken in 1972 indicate that the property which can be seen today is the product of a number of different phases of alteration, extension and adaption and that the use and configuration of the building has changed and evolved over time.

The first mention of the Chequers was in 1490, when at the Manor Court, it was ordered that the watercourse between the property and Lesers Lane should be amended. There is no evidence that at this point in time the property was an Inn and it may have been a private house. Every Mediaeval Inn had its own brewhouse as ale would not travel without souring and hopped beer was not introduced until the 14th century when Flemish and Dutch settlers brought it to this country. The Searancke family, living at Essendon by the early 16th century, were probably Flemish, and perhaps helped to introduce beer into the neighbourhood. By the 17th century, one branch of the family had taken over the Chequers Inn behind which would have stood the family's brewhouse. As breweries attached to other Inns began to close so the Searancke Brewery prospered and by the 18th century the family began to acquire more public houses in the locality. By the early 1800's the family owned 12 pubs in the parish and court records from 1802 suggest that the Inn at Park Street had been converted into a private house and was used for some time thereafter as the brewery residence.

The Chequers is known to have issued its own token bearing during the 17th century and the archaeological excavations undertaken in 1972 uncovered an interesting example of a purpose made drinking mug also featuring the chequerboard motif.

About 1815, the business was sold to Joseph Big, a brewer from Stanstead Abbots. Shortly afterwards Big was forced into bankruptcy and in 1819 the business was taken over by Joseph Field. Field died in 1836 and the property was auctioned and sold to James Spurrell a brewer from

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1, 3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

Southwark. Although the 19th-century saw a succession of different owners this was a period of substantial expansion for the brewery and by early years of the 20th century the brewery was one of the most important in the country. However, in March 1920 the brewery was closed down: its 98 public houses was sold to Benskins and Watford Brewery and the brewery site itself was sold to Waters Brothers (a garage).

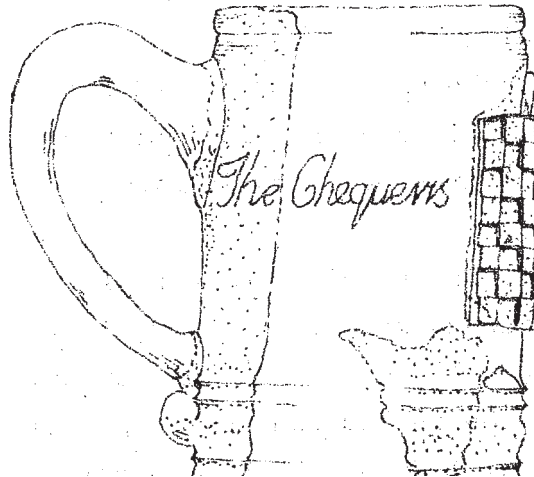
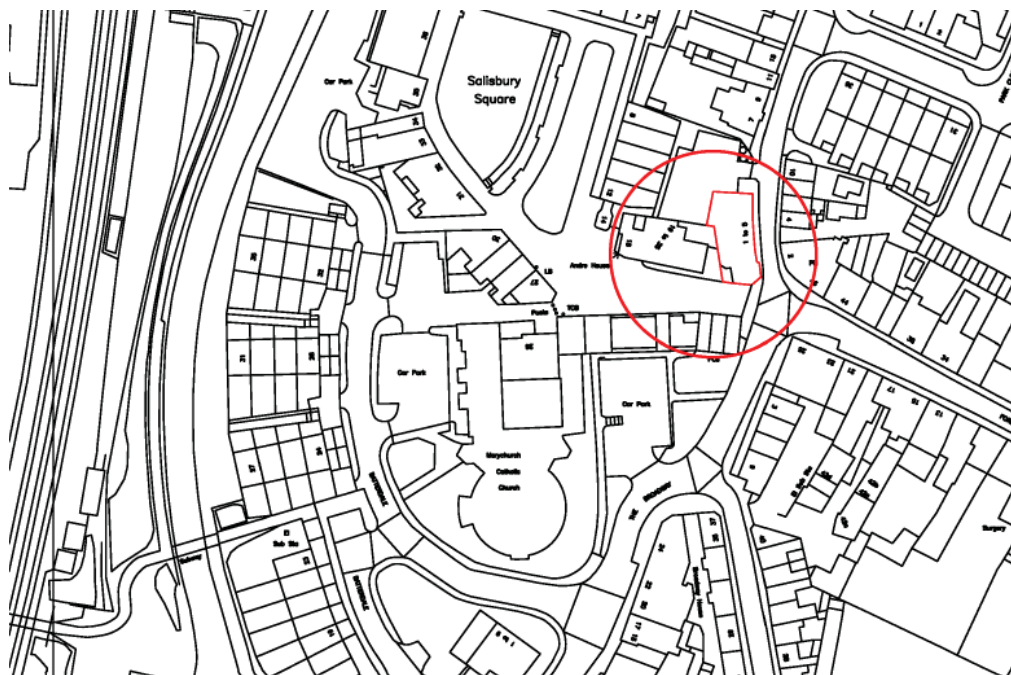


IMAGE OF DRINKING MUG RECOVERED DURING EXCAVATIONS DURING 1972

Comparison of the current Ordnance Survey map for the locality with earlier historic mapping makes clear that the urban landscape to the South and West of the property has changed very dramatically over the post-war period.



CURRENT OS MAP EXTRACT

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT



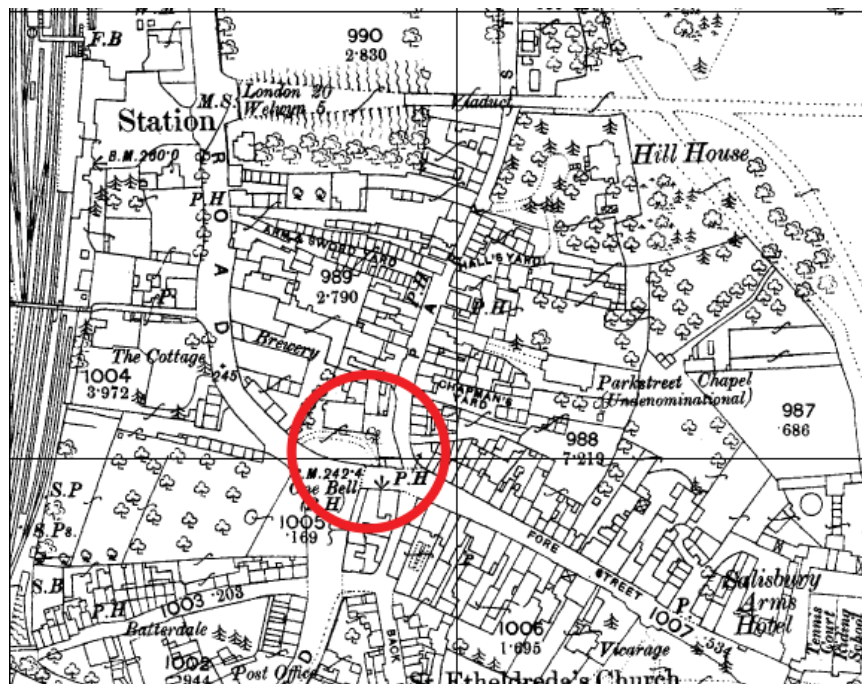
1924 OS EXTRACT



1898 OS EXTRACT

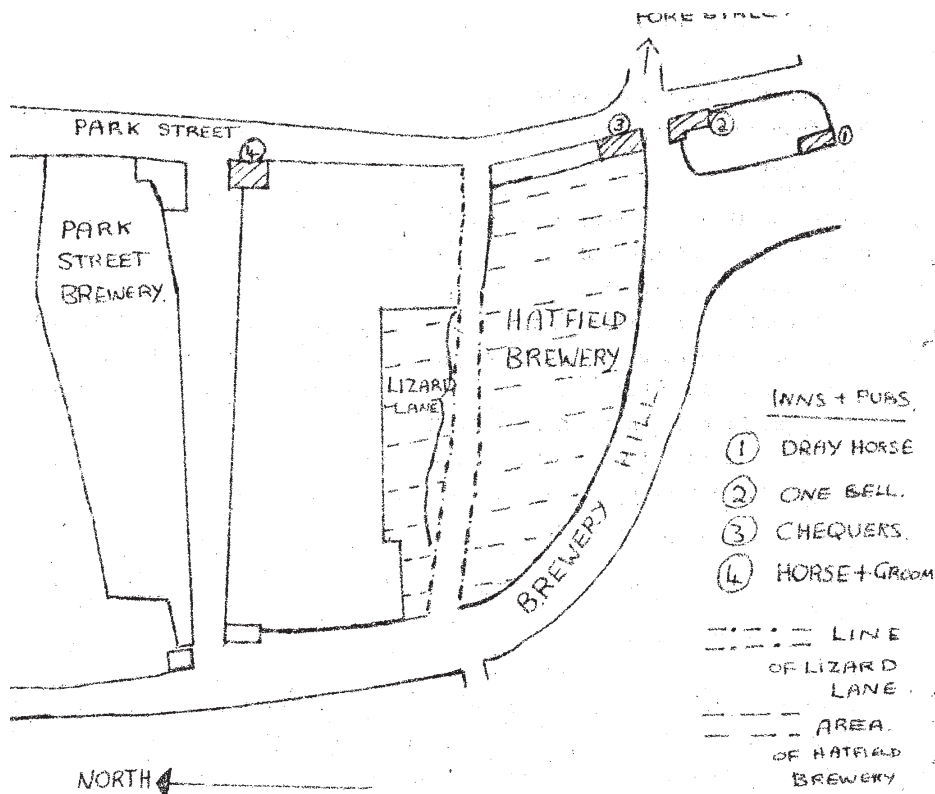
1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT



1879 OS EXTRACT

Analysis within the archaeological report from 1974 also provides helpful insight into the former extent of the Hatfield Brewery.

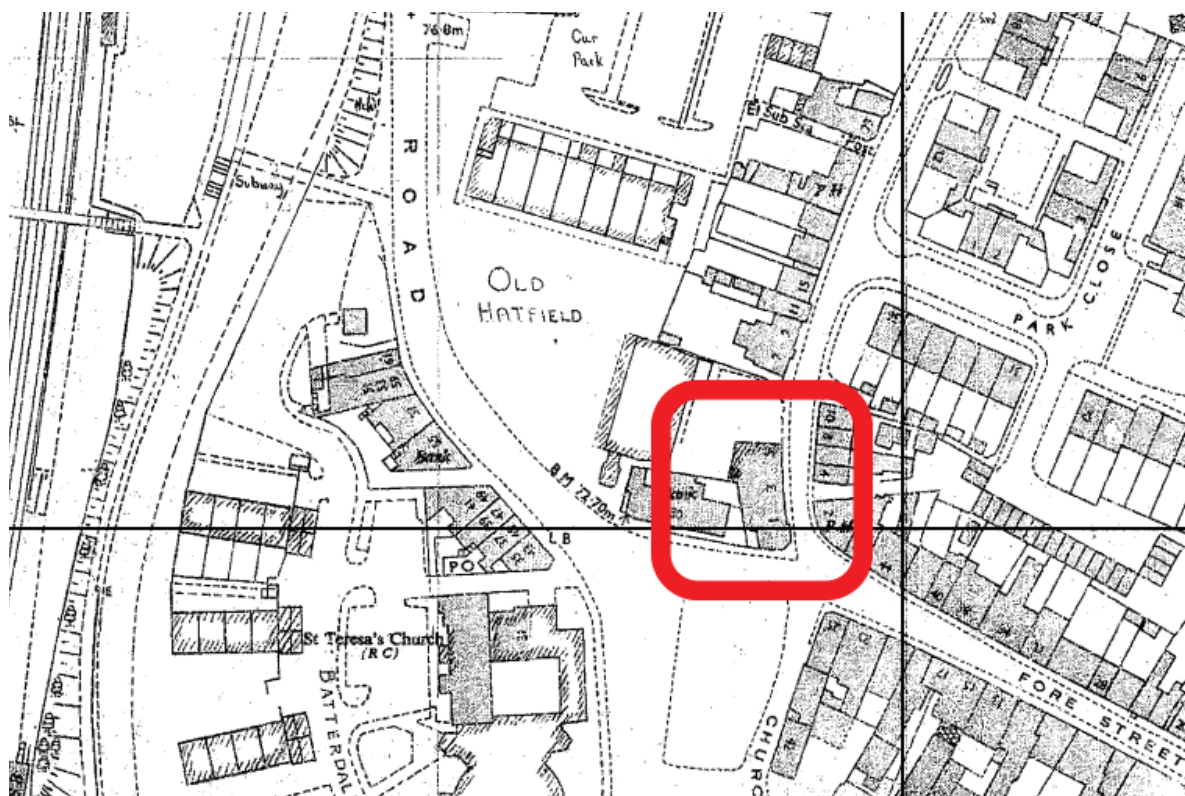


1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

Today, 1 to 5 Park Street comprises a single property which was last in use as a single office building. However, the 1974 archaeological report concluded that only part of the current property was originally used as part of the Chequers Inn and the report went on to suggest that before the 19th century the Inn may have stretched across what is now the highway which leads down to Salisbury Square. In this respect, the report suggests that the Inn originally connected with One Bell which is shown as property reference two on the preceding extract.

As earlier noted the post-war period saw a very substantial reworking and redevelopment of the locality particularly to the south and west of the application site. Interestingly, ordnance survey mapping from the 1970s provides a snapshot showing how this redevelopment occurred and the extract from 1973 shows the urban layout following demolition and clearance of the majority of the former brewery site but prior to completion of redevelopment and reconstruction.



1973 ORDNANCE SURVEY EXTRACT

These clearance works included the demolition of the former northern end of 5 Park Street and it is likely that it was these clearance works which provided the opportunity for the archaeological excavations undertaken in 1972.

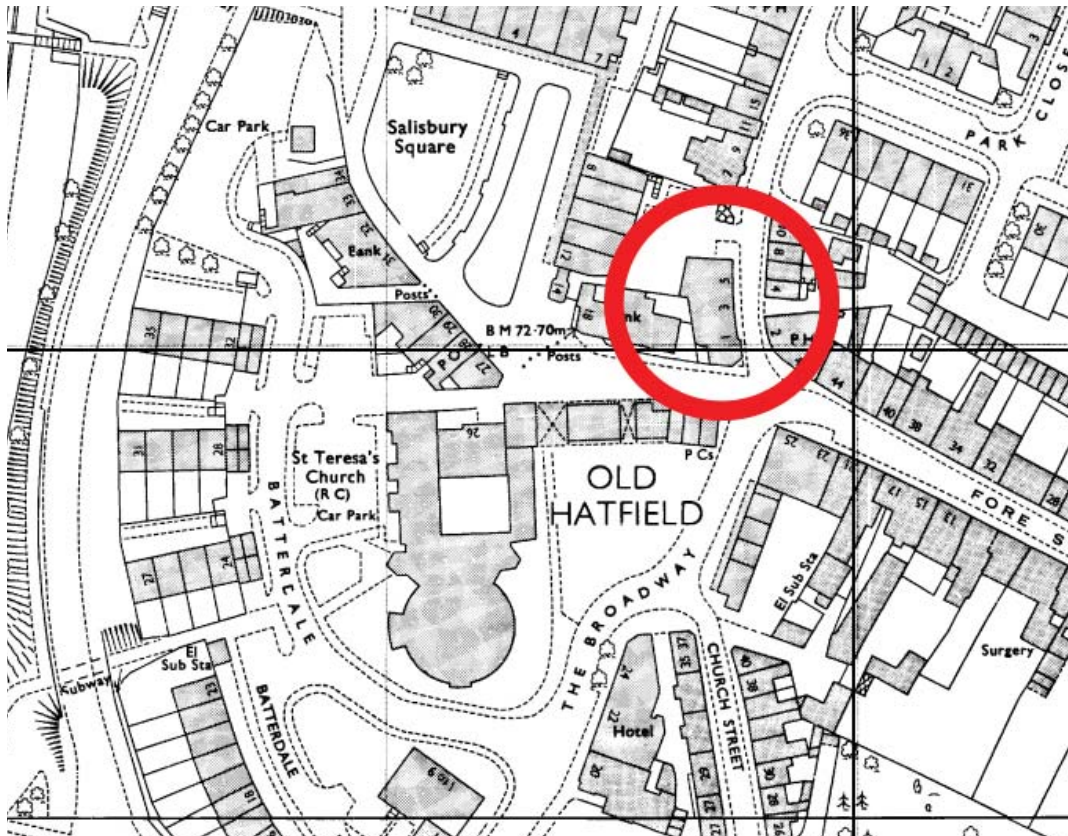
In the context of the current application proposal it is interesting to note that the area of what is now the application site was annotated on the 1973 Ordnance Survey plan as three separate

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

properties (1, 3 and 5 Park Street). This apparent subdivision of what is now the application site is consistent with the List Description and the summary description for the property within the County Council Historic Environment Record which describes numbers 1 to 5 Park Street as “... **houses and a shop...**” .

The succeeding Ordnance Survey Map for the period between 1974 and 1986 is enclosed below and this shows the building out and completion of the post-war development within the vicinity of the application site.



This mapping again appears to suggest that the current application site was at that time divided into three separate properties and this in turn suggests that the conversion from what were presumably two separate houses and a shop into the single office building which can be seen today occurred somewhere during the last quarter of the 20th Century.

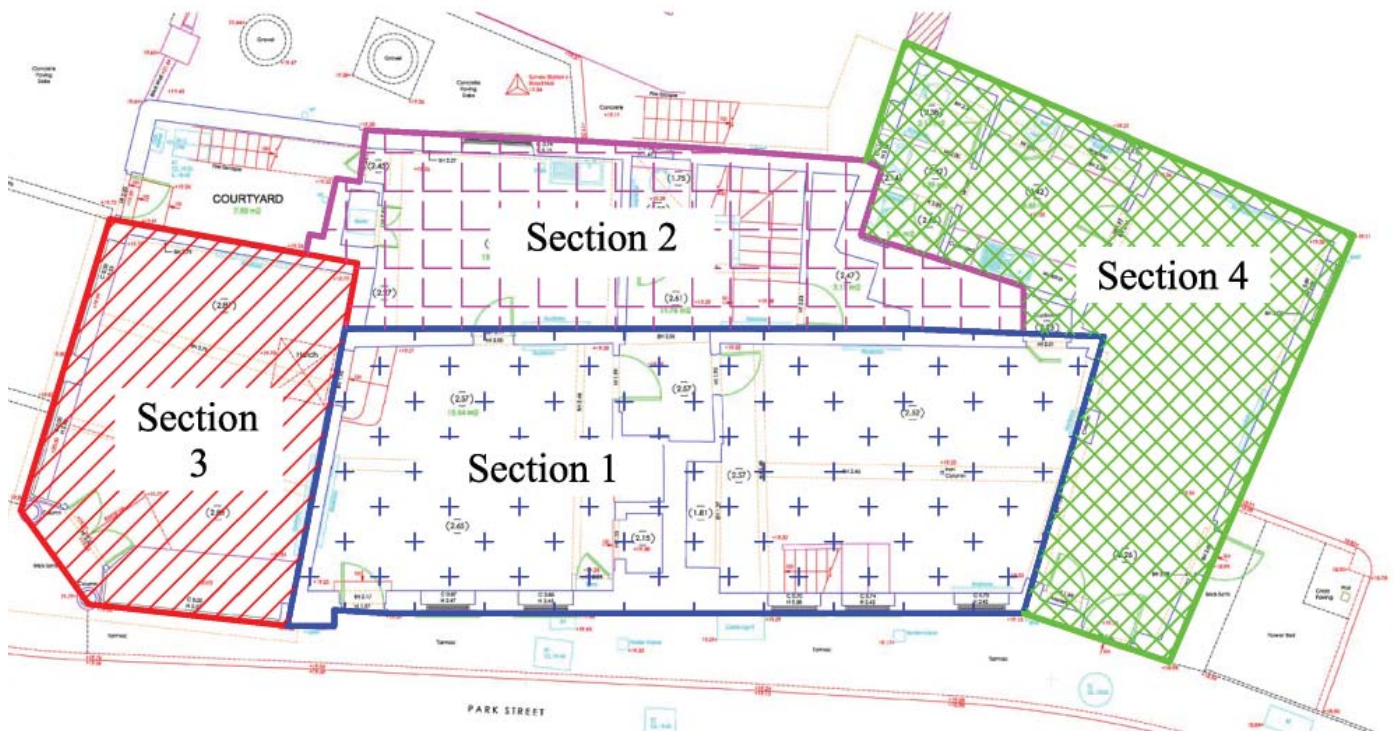
Externally, the property carries a small plaque recording the fact that the building was “restored” by The Commission For The New Towns in 1975 and as later discussed it would appear that these works involved substantial elements of rebuilding including replacement of substantial sections of the ground floor structure. It is possible that the unification of the property into a single building unit occurred as part of this phase of “restoration” work.

On-site inspection of the building reveals that the structure is made up of a number of different phases of development and this is quite consistent with the way in which the function and use

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

of the property has changed and evolved throughout its history. For ease of reference the outline phase plan enclosed below can be divided into 4 main sections reflecting the main different phases of construction which make up the extant structure.



OUTLINE PHASE PLAN

SECTION 1

Section 1 comprises the primary core of the building and surviving elements of historic fabric with this in this section of the property appear to be consistent with a timber framed building from the 17th Century. Within the loft void the roof structure comprises purlins tenoned into light weight principle rafters and although the structure has been partial re-worked original common rafters were tenoned into supporting purlins. The surviving original floors and ceilings are of typical post medieval construction with longitudinal central support beams built into the main central chimney stack. The external elevation to Park Street was heavily re-worked during the 19th century with new 19th century sash windows inserted. It is likely that this phase of 19th-century reworking will also have resulted in substantial sections of the original timber frame external wall construction being replaced with solid brickwork.

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT



EXTRACT PHOTOGRAPH OF ROOF STRUCTURE WITHIN BUILDING SECTION 1

At the northern end of the building the original roof structure at the abutment with building section 4 has been clearly truncated indicating that the original end of the 17th century portion of the building was effectively sliced off during the construction of 5 Park Street.



PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING TRUNCATION OF ORIGINAL GABLE ROOF FORM TO CREATE ROOF SERVING 5 PARK STREET

SECTION 2

Within the List Description Section 2 as described as the South cross wing. However, inspection within the roof structure makes clear that this part of the property was constructed as an extension to the earlier 17th-century core of the building. The framing of the roof structure is of noticeably lighter construction than that above building section 1 and this together with detailing of the carpentry suggests that this part of the building is most probably of 18th or possibly early 19th century construction.

Again, the main public elevations of this part of the property were reworked during the Victorian period with the insertion of first floor sash windows. At ground floor level the building was altered and adapted to form a retail shop. The existing shop windows and shop entrance door which can be seen today would appear to be of post-war construction. However, an earlier fascia and cornice with console brackets at each return end have survived and they suggest that an earlier 19th century shop front was broken out and replaced by the more modern windows and entrance door which can be seen today.

SECTION 4

Building section 4 at the northern end of the property contrasts quite markedly from the construction of building sections 1 and 2 and is of 19th-century rendered masonry construction with a pitched slate roof which cuts back into the truncated roof structure of the original 17th-century core of the building.

Evidence from historic ordnance survey mapping makes clear that this part of the building was itself truncated during the demolition works at the beginning of the 1970s in order to allow creation of access from Street into the car park serving the office buildings which were constructed to the rear. These works included the construction of a raised asymmetric parapet wall facing onto the car park together with demolition and removal of the former north end of 5 Park Street.

SECTION 3

In many ways Section 3 of the property is perhaps the most intriguing part of the building.

Externally, this part of the building would appear to be of fairly straightforward 19th-century brickwork construction with a slate roof constructed as a lean-to which pitches back onto the earlier structure of the pitched roof of the 17th century central core.

However, this section of the building also houses a very fine historic staircase with generously proportioned hand worked newel posts, handrails and spindles which would seem wholly consistent with early 17th-century construction.

Although now truncated at ground floor level passageways from the main basement lead to an early brickwork staircase which aligns with what is now a small cloakroom below the upper flight of the staircase together with a secondary beer/service ramp which appears to align with a small access cupboard below the central staircase flight.



STAIRCASE

Accessed from the ground floor stairwell is also an early storage cupboard or larder and the internal character of this and the surveyed floor plan of the building suggest that it is likely that there is some surviving remnants of a substantial former chimney stack once located at the rear of the property.

My judgement is that the presence of the early staircase and evidence from the adjacent storage cupboard/larder suggest that the 17th-century core of the building may well have been constructed with a rear stair tower and service accommodation which might well have included an early brew house at the back of the property.

However, it is also clear that this part of the building was very heavily rebuilt and reconstructed during the 19th century and it is probable that this phase of works coincided with the conversion of what had been the original Inn into the brewery residence for the expanding brewery.

Below the 17th-century core of the building the property benefits from substantial basements and although heavily altered during the restoration undertaken by the new towns commission in the 1970s it is noticeable that the construction of the surviving historic basement walls is quite varied with a somewhat ad hoc mixture of flint and brickwork. This variation in construction suggests that the cellars which can be seen today may include partial survival from an earlier building which predated the 17th-century Inn above.

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT



PHOTOGRAPH OF CELLAR SHOWING MIXED FLINT AND BRICKWORK CONSTRUCTION OF BASEMENT WALLS TOGETHER WITH 20th CENTURY GROUND FLOOR STRUCTURE CONSTRUCTED DURING THE 1970's.

IMPACT OF POST WAR ALTERATIONS

The whole of the building group has been very substantially affected by post-war alteration which has included :-

- Truncation, partial demolition and partial rebuilding of the northern end of the property.
- Insertion of poor quality external windows and doors (e.g. to north end of the building).
- Wholesale demolition and replacement of the main ground floor structure.
- Substantial loss of historic internal plaster and lath and plaster finishes.
- Demolition and replacement of the majority of the historic shop front to 1 Park Street.
- Removal and loss of historic internal and external joinery.
- Removal of hearths and closing up of first floor fireplaces.
- Demolition and removal of historic internal walls and partitioning.
- Insertion of lightweight stud work partitioning within historic internal spaces.

In addition to the loss of historic building fabric these alterations have also resulted in substantial change and alteration to the internal spatial character of the property. This is perhaps most noticeable within the ground floor at the northern end of the 17th century section of the building where the former end wall of this historic core has effectively been smashed out in order to create an open plan office space extending into what was originally 5 Park Street and which, in historic

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

terms, was effectively a separate building.

At the south end of the property internal joinery and cornice detailing suggests that the first floor room above the former ground floor shop would originally have been an important function room for the historic Inn. However, post-war alterations have completely obscured the original spatial character of the space which has been heavily subdivided with the insertion of poor quality light-weight 1970's stud work. Similar internal subdivision has also occurred at first floor level at the other end of the property where former internal first floor rooms have again been subdivided with stud work.

BUILDING USE & REDUNDANCY

Throughout its history the property has evolved and developed with both the use and structure of the building group being altered and changed to reflect the needs of successive generations of building owners.

On the balance of probability it is likely that the 17th-century core of the building was constructed as an Inn. However, following expansion of the Hatfield Brewery complex historic records suggest that this section of the building was then converted during the 19th century to form a residence. At the same time the 19th-century saw the insertion of a ground floor shop into the southern end of the building group within what is now 1 Park Street.

During the 19th century it is likely that what is now the northern end of the building group (5 Park Street) would have been part of the overall brewery complex but that it would have had a separate use and separate function to the residence converted from the 17th-century Inn.

During the 1920s the brewery was closed down and from then on until the 1970's it would appear that the extant building group comprised a pair of separate dwellings together with the ground floor shop within 1 Park Street.

The 1970s saw major demolition and redevelopment of the former brewery site and these works included truncation, partial demolition and partial rebuilding of the northern end of the property (5 Park Street).

Further substantial structural intervention and alteration occurred as a result of the "restoration" of the building group by the New Town's Commission during the mid-1970s and at some point after this the whole of the building group was converted to form one single large office building.

Since the end of the 20th century substantial changes in technology, working practices and expectations of commercial organisations means that there is much reduced need and demand for large town centre office buildings which do not benefit from meaningful levels of parking provision. As a result of these economic changes the existing, and relatively recent, office use has now become redundant and no longer offers a long-term viable future for the Listed Building.

The most fundamental requirement for the conservation of historic assets of this type is the need

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

to secure a long-term viable use which will generate sufficient economic value to allow the proper maintenance of the building structure and which will ensure the survival of the building fabric for future generations to come.

As a result of the redundancy of the current office use the applicant therefore proposes that the building group should be returned to residential use. Unfortunately, the property does not benefit from a surrounding curtilage which would provide garden or amenity space and it is not therefore practicable for the building to be converted into one single dwelling or indeed a small group of houses.

In this context, it is proposed that the building should be converted into a small number of residential flats.

A change of use of this type will inevitably result in some physical change to the property and in planning terms it would always be easier if nothing ever changed and if the building were to remain in its existing use as a single large town centre office building. However, whilst the planning system has great power to prevent development and to prevent physical change it cannot prevent changes in technology and changes in working practices or indeed the change in the market for office accommodation which results.

If the property is forced to remain in its existing configuration as technology and working practices pass it by the reality is that the building will enter into a slow process of decline as its economic value is reduced and as this reduction in economic value results in inadequate maintenance and repair and/or voids and vacancy and exposure to the associated risks of neglect and vandalism.

In this regard it is worth reiterating the fact that this is a property which has been through a cycle of different functions and uses, a property which was never built as one single functional unit and a building which during the course of its life was previously subdivided into a number of separate occupancies.

My own judgement is that it is a mistake to try and resist the reality of the tide of change in technology and the working environment and that it would be better to recognise that the building does need to enter into a new phase in its history.

In this regard it is also worth pointing out that the conversion during the 1970's into one single office unit did involve elements of material harm to the significance of the Heritage Asset. Works in this regard included alteration of the floor plan, subdivision of some of the more important principal rooms at first floor level, insertion of a new staircase which was punched down to serve the basement area and the insertion of inappropriate and harmful external joinery.

Whilst the Council may express concern about some elements of the application proposal the objective reality is that application scheme also includes significant elements of positive benefit which will undo some of the harmful 1970's alterations. Any perceived harm must also be weighed up and balanced against the primary benefit of the application proposal which is that it will secure a long-term and viable use for what is currently a redundant and disused office building.

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

When the proposed scheme is properly weighed up and assessed in this way my own judgement is that it becomes clear that the application proposal will be of net positive benefit for the special architectural and historic interest of this Listed Building.

INTRODUCTION

POLICY FRAMEWORK

ASSESSMENT

CONCLUSIONS

LIST DESCRIPTION

2.0

POLICY FRAMEWORK

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and took immediate effect, superseding previous national planning policy in the form of Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes. The NPPF is therefore a material consideration in the determination of the current application.

The NPPF introduces a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development. In this regard the ministerial introduction defines this as a presumption in favour of development and growth which makes life better for ourselves whilst not making life worse for future generations.

The NPPF makes it clear that one of the key dimensions of sustainability is protecting and enhancing the historic environment (paragraph 7) and that one of the twelve core principles which underpin both plan making and decision taking is that planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance (paragraph 17). In this regard the guidance emphasizes the great weight which government gives to the conservation of our shared built heritage (paragraph 132).

In dealing with designated heritage assets it is also necessary to comply with the basic statutory requirement to have special regard to the “desirability” of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or the “desirability” of preserving a (Listed) building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Case law makes it clear that the legal requirement to have “Special” regard to this objective creates a high bar for the justification of works which cause harm to significance of designated Heritage Asset and in this sense the determination process should be weighted against works which fail to preserve or enhance the significance of a Listed Building or Conservation Area.

However, in determining whether a proposal serves to preserve or enhance the significance of a Heritage Asset we need to weigh-up the overall net impact of the proposal and we must recognise that in the real world it is quite rare for the impact of works to be either wholly positive or wholly negative for the special interest of heritage assets. Some aspects of a development may cause harm to the significance of an asset whilst other aspects of the same scheme may result in positive benefit and in such cases the net impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset must be considered and weighed up as part of the process of determination.

This principle was explicitly recognised in paragraph 76 of the planning practice guide issued with the introduction of PPS5 in 2010 which stated that :

“...The key to sound decision-making is the identification and understanding of the differ-

ing, and perhaps conflicting, Heritage impacts accruing from the proposals and how they are to be weighed against each other and any other material planning considerations....”

Paragraph 6 of the NPPF also makes it clear that the policies in paragraphs 18 to 219 of the NPPF when “taken as a whole” constitute the governments view of what sustainable development in England means in practice. In this regard, the policies set out within the NPPF for the protection of the Historic Environment make it clear that the protection and conservation of Historic Assets must be weighed up and balanced against the governments other social and economic objectives.

The essential point is that development cannot simply be assumed to be “unsustainable” simply because it involves harm to, or even the demolition and loss of a heritage asset.

In fact, we cannot determine whether a development should be regarded as being “sustainable” or “unsustainable” without first going through a further process of “weighing up” to determine whether any perceived harm to the historic built environment will be justified and outweighed by other social or economic benefits associated with any individual proposed scheme.

There will be many cases in which the harm which will be caused to the significance of a Heritage Asset cannot be justified or outweighed by other social and economic benefits and in these circumstances the development would then be considered to be “unsustainable”.

However, there are instances where harm caused by the loss of an un-designated heritage asset is outweighed by the other public benefits associated with a scheme and in these cases, the NPPF makes clear that the development of this type would be “sustainable” and that there is a presumption that planning permission should be granted without delay.

It is noticeable that in contrast to PPS5 and PPG15 the final version of the NPPF includes no specific presumption in favour of either conservation or preservation of a heritage asset and the tests set out in paragraphs 133, 134 and 135 emphasise that harm to a heritage asset must be weighed up against the other public benefits which flow from a development proposal.

The omission of a presumption in favour of conservation and adoption of a presumption in favour of sustainable development accords with English Heritages principle of Constructive Conservation which explicitly acknowledges that historic built environment is a dynamic and evolving place in which well considered new development can occur.

Similarly, in setting out the great weight which the government gives to the “Conservation” of heritage assets the NPPF confirms the change in approach introduced in PPS 5 which first introduced a structured definition of “Conservation” . This definition is confirmed in the NPPF which states that for the purposes of heritage policy Conservation is :-

“The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate enhances its significance”.

The process of managed and properly considered change is therefore accepted as an inherent and essential part of the proper and responsible management of our shared heritage. Indeed, the

approach taken first in PPS 5 and now the NPPF signals a substantial change in the philosophical approach to the way in which heritage assets are managed by our community.

By way of example paragraph 3.3 of PPG 15 simply stated that “..... there should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation of the listed buildings” and paragraph 3.4 went on to make it clear that the approval of applications for Listed Building Consent should be subject to justification of the proposal by the applicant who was required to show why any works which would affect the character of a Listed Building would be desirable or necessary.

In effect PPG 15 set out a simple presumption in favour of “preservation” of built heritage with statutorily protected buildings being effectively preserved “as found” unless an applicant was able to justify proposed alteration.

Clearly, the fundamental statutory duty to have special regard to the “desirability” of “preserving” a Listed Building, its setting and features of special interest or the character or appearance of a Conservation Area has not changed. However, the way in which we seek to achieve this objective has evolved and current national guidance opens up a much more positive approach to the management of heritage assets which emphasizes the preservation of what is actually special in our historic built environment.

This is part of a much more sophisticated approach to the management of built heritage which focuses much more clearly on the need to make a careful assessment of the actual nature, extent and relative level of the significance of individual heritage assets.

Most telling, is the commentary in English Heritage’s introduction to Constructive Conservation which stated that :-

“ The Conservation Movement has evolved from a reactive process, focusing on preventing change, into a more flexible process of helping people to understand their historic environment and through that understanding, to manage change to it in the most appropriate way”

The fundamental point is that good conservation does not mean simply focusing on preventing change. Change is not harm and harm only results where change causes damage to what is actually “special” about the architectural or historic interest of the Heritage Asset concerned.

This change in philosophical approach is now being reflected in supporting guidance issued by English Heritage and by way of example in its publication “Valuing Places: Good Practice In Conservation Areas” English Heritage states that :-

“This recognition of local distinctiveness is enshrined in legislation. It is not a device for preventing change or new development. Every conservation area contains places which have changed. Often these changes are features of the character which we wish to protect; often too, further changes have to be accommodated if we are to ensure such places have a viable and beneficial future.....”

It goes on to state that :-

“ The care of our built inheritance has to be carefully balanced with the economic and social imperatives of the present”

This is consistent with the approach taken in the NPPF which at paragraph 7 makes it clear that alongside its role in protecting and enhancing the environment (including the historic environment) the planning system has two other key roles which are the need to contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy and its social role in providing badly needed housing and accessible local services.

National policy guidance therefore indicates that the positive economic and social benefits of new development must be given proper weight and that this must be weighed up and balanced against harm caused to the environment.

This approach does not imply any “green light” for unnecessary, inappropriate or ill considered harm to the historic environment and in Paragraph 132 the NPPF states that any harm or loss to a designated heritage asset must be clearly and convincingly justified.

In this regard it also makes it clear that the principle of proportionality is fundamental to the decision making process so that the level of justification which is required depends on the relative significance of the designated Heritage Asset concerned.

As part of this structured approach the NPPF builds on the principles set out in PPS5 and confirms the concept of “Harm” and “Substantial Harm” as two different levels of adverse impact on the significance of a Designated Heritage Asset.

Paragraph 133 of the NPPF relates to the consideration of applications that will result in ‘substantial harm to’ or ‘total loss of significance’ of designated heritage assets and makes it clear that permission for such development should be refused unless the harm caused is outweighed by the public benefit of the proposal or unless it is essential for the long term viability of the asset concerned.

Paragraph 134 relates to proposals that will result in ‘less than substantial harm’ to the significance of a designated heritage asset, stating that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. In considering the level of public benefit which is required to justify development which results in “less than substantial harm” it is necessary to refer back to the principles of proportionality set out in Paragraph 132 which state that “Substantial Harm” to Grade II Listed Building, park or garden should be “exceptional” whilst “Substantial Harm” to a heritage asset of the highest significance should be “wholly exceptional”.

Compared to PPS 5 and the draft NPPF it is clear that government has given further consideration to the way in which the impact of development on designated Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites should be considered and this is resolved and clarified in Paragraphs 137 and 138. In this regard, Paragraph 137 encourages new development within either the designated area or setting of these assets which will enhance or better reveal their significance.

Paragraph 138 acknowledges that not all elements of a World Heritage site or Conservation Area will contribute to its significance. However, this paragraph goes on to consider development which would have an adverse impact on the significance of such assets. In this regard it states that development which results in the loss of a building or element which does make a positive contribution to the significance of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be considered either under paragraph 133 (substantial harm) or 134 (less than substantial harm) “as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole”.

Again this re-emphasises the principle of proportionality and the need for a considered evidence based assessment of the actual significance of the building and element concerned and the actual contribution it makes to what is actually “special” about Conservation Area or World Heritage Site. What is very clear is that this does not provide any justification for Local Planning Authorities to seek to preserve buildings or elements simply because they are there.

Whilst Paragraph 138 refers back to the tests for “substantial harm “ and “less than substantial harm” set out in paragraphs 133 and 134 it is noticeable that paragraph 132 does not provide any specific guidance about the relative level of public benefit which should be required in order to justify such harm to a Conservation Area.

It is respectfully suggested that this reflects the fact that the level of significance of designated Conservation Areas varies very considerably and that unlike in the case of Listed Buildings or designated parks and gardens there is no formalised system of grading. Nevertheless, the policy tests and principles of proportionality set out within the NPPF implicitly require decision-takers to make a considered evidence based assessment of the relative significance of the Conservation Area under consideration.

To take a hypothetical example a Conservation Area which includes individual assets of the very highest significance (e.g. Grade I Listed Buildings) and which is centred on a surviving medieval townscape (i.e. very rare) might be considered to be of the highest national significance suggesting that even “less than substantial harm” should be exceptional and should require the highest level of justification.

Conversely, a Conservation Area, or section of a Conservation Area which contains no individually designated heritage assets and which results from a pattern of 20th century and substantial post war development (i.e. much less rare) might be considered to be of lower relative significance so that “less than substantial harm” would be quite usual & typical due to the requirement for a much lower level of justification.

Finally, the NPPF provides separate guidance in paragraph 135 regarding development which affects un-designated assets. In this regard the policy simply states that the effect of the application on the significance of the asset should be taken into account and that in weighing up such applications a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

Whilst paragraphs 132,133 and 134 provide a methodology for assessing harm it must be recog-

nised that in practice it is quite rare for the impact of works to be either wholly positive or wholly negative for the special interest of heritage assets.

Some aspects of a development may cause harm to the significance of an asset whilst other aspects of the same scheme may result in positive benefit and in such cases the net impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset must be considered and weighed up as part of the process of determination.

Similarly, there are instances of development which result in physical change to a heritage asset but whose impact on the special architectural or historic interest of the asset is entirely neutral.

In this regard an obvious example is the precedent established in *South Lakeland DC v Secretary of State* (1991) 2 P.L.R 97.

This case concerned the decision of an inspector to allow an appeal for construction of a new building within a Conservation Area on the basis that it would neither harm nor enhance the area (largely because it was to be constructed in a location where it would only be visible from very limited view points). Following judgement in the House of Lords this case established the principle that the preservation of the character or appearance of a Conservation Area could be achieved by development which left it unharmed.

Whilst this case related specifically to Conservation Area it is self evident that similar principles can be applied to the consideration of proposals which affect other Heritage Assets such as Listed Buildings.

Finally, in applying the guidance set out in the NPPF it is also important to remember that it cannot override the requirements of primary legislation and that the Courts are the final arbiters of what this legislation actually means.

The policies set out in the NPPF must therefore be set against the interpretation provided by established legal principle.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

In addition to national guidance set out within the National Planning Policy Framework the adopted Local Plan also includes a normal range of policies which are intended to secure the proper management and protection of the Historic Built Environment and individual heritage assets such as Listed Buildings of this type.

INTRODUCTION

POLICY FRAMEWORK

ASSESSMENT

CONCLUSIONS

LIST DESCRIPTION

3.0

ASSESSMENT

IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC ASSETS AND ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE, IMPACT & HARM

The application site comprises a Grade II Listed Building which is of Special Architectural and Historic interest and which by definition is of national significance. The property is also located within the designated area of the Old Hatfield Conservation Area.

The NPPF makes clear that development management should be based on an evidence based assessment of the significance of individual Heritage assets which may be affected by the relevant development proposal. Understanding the relative significance of affected assets is vital to a successful development scheme and in this regard the NPPF reflects the earlier 2008 English Heritage publication of Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance.

Given the diversity and richness of our shared heritage the assessment of significance for individual assets can be a difficult and sometimes subjective process. However this latter English Heritage Guidance sets out a structured approach based first on consideration of a range of Heritage Values encompassing the **evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values** associated with each individual place. Evidential value is defined as value derived from the potential of the place to yield evidence about past human activity whilst Historic Value is that which is derived from the ways in which passed people, events and aspects of life can be connected through the place to the present day. In this regard, the guidance suggests that Historic Value will normally be either illustrative or associative in nature. Aesthetic value is defined as the value which flows from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place whilst Communal Value derives from the meaning of the place for the people who relate to it or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory

The guidance goes on to set out a systematic process for the assessment of significance. Although not all steps will be applicable to all places the guidance emphasises the following key stages :-

- 1 - Understand the fabric and evolution of the place.**
- 2 - Identify who values the place and why they do so**
- 3 - Relate identified heritage values to the fabric of the place.**
- 4 - Consider the relative importance of those identified values.**
- 5 - Consider the contribution of associated objects and collections.**
- 6 - Consider the contribution made by setting and context.**
- 7 - Compare the place with other places sharing similar values.**

So far as possible and applicable this methodology is been used in assessment of this Heritage Asset and I would comment as follows :-

OLD HATFIELD CONSERVATION AREA

The designated conservation area encompasses the historic core of Old Hatfield which is a built environment of great beauty and which has significant aesthetic value. It is also self-evident that it has significant historic, evidential and communal value as a physical link to the historic development of the locality and the shared history of our society.

Relative to other comparable Conservation Areas it is clear that this is a Heritage Asset which has a high level of significance.

The application proposal does involve some external alterations to the property and will therefore result in some physical change to the Conservation Area. However, this does not mean that the proposal will result in any harm to the significance of this Heritage Asset and the proposed changes to the external fenestration envisage the insertion of traditional timber windows and doors which the architect has designed in such a way as to harmonise with the existing character of the Listed Building and the existing character of the Conservation Area.

The vast majority of the existing windows and doors which will be replaced are of modern post-war 20th century construction and the replacement of this post-war joinery does provide an opportunity for better quality joinery detailing which will result in an enhancement of the external visual character of the Listed Building and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

In this regard, works of positive benefit include the replacement of the post-war shop windows to reintroduce a more traditional pattern of shop front with a traditional stall riser. Also of material benefit will be the removal of mass produced storm proof fanlight windows from the North elevation and replacement of what appear to be 1970's fire escape doors on the western side of the property.

These works will be of positive benefit to the historic built environment and the only older element of external joinery which will be replaced is one single sash window which is not original to the Listed Building and which was inserted during the 19th century reworking of the Park Street elevation.

When judged in a balanced way my view is that the impact of the proposed work on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be relatively limited and that it will be of slight net benefit to the significance of this designated Heritage Asset.

1, 3 & 5 PARK STREET

One, three and five Park Street is a Grade II Listed Building and is therefore by definition a Herit-

3.0 | ASSESSMENT 1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

age Asset which is of national significance. It is self-evident that this is an attractive historic building which makes a positive contribution to the street scene and which is therefore of material aesthetic value. It also clear that the building has evidential, historic and communal value as a physical link to the historic development of Old Hatfield and the former brewery.

Further historic value flows from the simple survival of historic building fabric from the earlier phases of the development of the property. The floor plan, detailing and historic building fabric also have historic and evidential value as a record of historic craft practice, building technology and vernacular design practice.

In considering the significance of the building English Heritage's Conservation Principles indicate that we should make an assessment of the relative significance of the Heritage Asset in relation to other comparable Listed Buildings of this type.

The first obvious point to make in this regard is that although this is a Listed property it is not a Grade II* or Grade I building and is not therefore of more than special or of outstanding significance.

It is also apparent that the works undertaken during the 1970s when the building was converted into one single office unit did result in significant harm to the significance of the building as a Heritage Asset. As earlier noted these works included :

- Truncation, partial demolition and partial rebuilding of the northern end of the property.
- Insertion of poor quality external windows and doors (e.g. to north end of the building).
- Wholesale demolition and replacement of the main ground floor structure.
- Substantial loss of historic internal plaster and lath and plaster finishes.
- Demolition and replacement of the majority of the historic shop front to 1 Park Street.
- Removal and loss of historic internal and external joinery.
- Removal of hearths and closing up of first floor fireplaces.
- Demolition and removal of historic internal walls and partitioning.
- Insertion of lightweight stud work partitioning within historic internal spaces (including subdivision of a number of first floor rooms).

It is a matter of simple logic that these works will have reduced the significance of the building as a Heritage Asset and within the broad spectrum of buildings which have statutory protection my own judgement is that the property should be regarded as having a medium level of relative significance.

In considering the application proposal it is also important to recognise what the building is not significant for and to acknowledge that this is not a building which has survived in its original size, in its original form or in its original use. The reality is that this is a property which has changed and evolved over time, which has been heavily reworked by successive generations of property owners and which has been characterised by a number of different uses over its history. In this regard we should acknowledge that the property which can be seen today is in fact made up of what were originally a number of separate building structures.

3.0 | ASSESSMENT 1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

In this context it is wholly consistent with the character and history of the property for us to look positively on a carefully considered proposal for a new scheme of alteration and a new use which will allow the building a long-term viable future as it enters into a new phase in its history.

Whilst 1,3 and 5 Park Street is a Listed Building which should be valued and conserved it is not of exceptional significance and it is not of such value and significance as would normally be regarded as precluding the possibility of carefully considered alteration and change.

The application proposal it is intended to provide a long-term viable future for the building through the conversion of the property in to four residential flats. In developing the design for this conversion it is clear that the architect is sought to work with the historic structure of the existing building and the scheme will involve only the very most limited loss of pre-war building fabric. At ground floor level this will be essentially limited to the removal of a single 19th-century sash window and associated section of low level brickwork to create a new entrance doorway facing on to Park Street. At first floor level the loss of pre-war building fabric will be effectively limited to the construction of a new doorway to provide access to the Home Office/Bedroom 2 of proposed unit number three.

As is inevitable for a residential conversion of this type the scheme of works will involve the insertion of new internal partitioning, new kitchen and bathroom facilities and some works to upgrade the services and thermal performance of the building fabric. In this regard, it is important to recognise that the need to upgrade the services and the thermal performance of the building is not unique to the requirements of residential use.

Any alternative commercial or indeed community use would also bring with it a requirement to meet modern standards for the provision of kitchen and sanitary facilities, the provision of disabled access and disabled facilities and the provision of modern mechanical, electrical and data services. Indeed, many alternative uses such as modern office accommodation can require a much higher density of service provision than simple domestic accommodation. Similarly, and irrespective of the use of the property, we do have a shared responsibility to ensure that, so far as is compatible with the historic character of the building, that the property should be upgraded to reduce carbon use and to make a contribution towards reducing climate change.

As with any alternative use there is considerable flexibility in the way in which thermal improvements and mechanical electrical and data services can be provided and building regulation standards make clear provision for some flexibility in requirements for sound and thermal insulation in order to protect the special architectural and historic interest of Listed Buildings. Should the Local Planning Authority have any particular concern regarding the detail of the proposed upgrading works in this respect it will be entirely reasonable and practical for consent be granted subject to a Condition requiring subsequent discussion and approval of these details and a process of engagement between the planning and building control departments within the Council so that any issues of concern can be resolved in a sensible and balanced manner.

It is however acknowledge that the inherently cellular nature of residential accommodation does result in the need for some internal subdivision of existing spaces within the property. In particular, it is accepted that the application scheme will involve subdivision of the existing open plan rooms

either side of the central chimney stack at ground floor level. This will result in a change in the internal spatial character of the property and it is acknowledged that this is an element of less than substantial “harm” within the application proposal.

However, the degree of “harm” needs to be seen within the context of the actual spaces which will be affected and in particular I would draw attention to the main open plan office on the northern side of the main chimney stack. In this regard, I would respectfully point out that although this space would originally have included one of the principal rooms within the building that the space which can be seen today is not original, that the room was very heavily altered during the 1970’s office conversion and that these works included smashing out the original end wall of the 17th century building to expand the office space together with the insertion of a new basement staircase into the room.

The second point to make is that any harm resulting from subdivision of these two ground floor spaces needs to be balanced against the positive benefits which will arise from the removal of 1970’s internal partitioning within the proposed living/kitchen rooms of flats three and four on the first floor above. These rooms would have been important high status rooms within the historic building and at least one of these may have been used as a function room. The application proposal envisages that the existing 1970’s partitioning which currently subdivides these spaces will be stripped out and removed to reveal the historic form and spatial character of this historic first floor accommodation. It is self-evident that any harm resulting from subdivision of the ground floor accommodation will be offset by the positive benefit resulting from the removal of dividing walls from the historic first floor accommodation and in this regard my judgement is that the impact of the proposed works on the spatial character of the property will be effectively neutral.

Any perceived harm must be weighed up and balanced against those elements of the proposal which will result in benefit for the significance of the Heritage asset and these include works such as the replacement of inappropriate and harmful post-war joinery and the provision of a long-term viable use which will secure the future of the property.

When considered in a rational and balanced way my judgement is that the application proposal will be of net positive benefit for the significance of the Listed Building as a Heritage Asset.

JUSTIFICATION & WEIGHING UP

Whilst it is acknowledged that the application proposal will result in some elements of harm to the significance of the Listed Building the objective reality is that it will also result in some elements of clear positive benefit. It will also serve to secure the fundamental conservation objective which is to ensure that the building has an economic viable use which will secure the long-term maintenance and survival of the property for future generations.

In terms of building conservation I therefore confirm my view that the application proposal will be of long-term net benefit to the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building.

Whilst the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Old Hatfield Conserva-

3.0 | ASSESSMENT 1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

tion Area will be relatively limited the comments outlined above make it clear that the scheme will result in some net benefit to the Conservation Area as a Heritage Asset.

In addition to this the application proposal will provide badly needed new homes which make a contribution towards mitigating the current housing crisis and the apparent inability of the planning system to provide our community with the homes which it needs.

The provision of four new homes for people to live in is a good thing and does accord with government's social objectives set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

It is always easy with any application proposal to imagine possible elements of concern and to assume that the housing which people require will somehow be provided in some other location and without any other adverse impact for our shared historic and natural environment. My view is that this is a mistake and I would urge the Local Planning Authority to give material weight to the clear social benefit which will flow from the provision of four new homes in this sustainable location.

Given the above comments I would confirm my view that the application proposal is appropriate and justified.

INTRODUCTION

POLICY FRAMEWORK

ASSESSMENT

CONCLUSIONS

LIST DESCRIPTION

4.0

CONCLUSIONS

1,3 & 5 Park Street is a Grade II Listed Building which is by definition of national significance and which needs to be protected and conserved so that it can continue to enrich the lives of future generations.

However, it is not a building which is of exceptional or more than special significance and the significance of the building as a Heritage Asset was degraded as a result of extensive alteration and rebuilding works undertaken during the 1970's when the property was converted into a single office unit. National planning policy guidance makes it clear that we should adopt a proportionate approach to the conservation of Heritage Assets of this type and this is not a building of such high or such exceptional significance as would preclude further carefully considered alteration and change.

The property which can be seen today is the result of a number of different phases of development and as indicated by the postal address and as is clear from ordnance survey mapping the property is a product of the amalgamation of different buildings and different building structures. Over its lifetime the building has served in a variety of different uses with the original historic core having been originally constructed as an inn and with the building having been subsequently used as a number of separate dwellings, at least in part as a retail unit and more latterly as an office building.

In this context it would seem entirely consistent with the character of the Listed Building that it should enter into a new phase in its history with the building being converted back into residential use.

The last 25 years have seen significant changes in technology and significant changes in working practices and the demand for larger office premises of this type. It would be a mistake to try to ignore these technological and economic changes and the Council should recognise that the existing configuration and use of the property will not provide an economically viable long-term future for the Listed Building. Similarly, it would be a mistake to assume that other alternative and imagined uses for the building could somehow be accommodated without consequent requirements for alteration and change to provide modern standards of thermal insulation, mechanical, electrical and data services and proper provision for disabled access and sanitary and kitchen facilities.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the application proposal will result in some elements of harm to the significance of the Listed Building the objective reality is that it will also result in some elements of clear positive benefit. It would also serve to secure the fundamental conservation objective which is to ensure that the building has an economic viable use which will secure the long-term maintenance and survival of the property for future generations.

Given the above comments and the benefits which flow a positive process of adaptive managed change I am satisfied that the application proposal is justified and that it will be of net positive benefit for the Historic Built Environment. It will also be of clear social benefit and will provide for badly

4.0 | CONCLUSIONS 1,3 & 5 PARK STREET HERITAGE STATEMENT

needed new homes within what is a clearly sustainable location.

The application proposal is commended to the Local Planning Authority.

INTRODUCTION

POLICY FRAMEWORK

ASSESSMENT

CONCLUSIONS

LIST DESCRIPTION

5.0

LIST DESCRIPTION

UID: 158455

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the

Old Hatfield TL 2308 HATFIELD PARK STREET (west side)

15/192 Nos 1, 3, and 5

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GV II

Houses and shop. C17 timber frame. Long range with cross wing on S. Roughcast. Plain and machine tile roof. 2 storeys. 2 and 5 windows, left hand end slightly projecting with hipped roof. Ground floor shop with 2 wooden Tuscan Columns at door on angle. Right hand part has 2 blank 1st floor windows and raised wall surface below roughcast. Half-glazed door on left with early C19 cut bracketed hood. Tall mid C17 red brick chimney stack towards right with 6 square joined shafts. Late C19 flush sash windows to whole range. Moulded wood cornice.