



FAO: Planning Department,  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2023/2244/LB  
Date: 03/01/2024

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

**RE: *Northaw House Coopers Lane Northaw Potters Bar EN6 4NG***

This application is for the replacement of 6 ground floor windows within the northern elevation of Northaw House.

Northaw House is Grade II listed (list entry: 1100970). The Stable Block to the immediate east is also Grade II listed (list entry: 1100971).

There is insufficient information submitted within the application to support the proposed replacement of the existing windows.

The evidence to support the presence of sash windows largely relates to the sketches from JT Smith's 'Hertfordshire Houses: Selective Inventory' (1993). The Heritage Statement (paragraph 10) states that the presence of sash weights and shutters are evidence of the pre-existing sash windows, but there are no photographs to evidence this.

Figure 1 of the Heritage Statement shows 'Phase 1' of Northaw House in 1698, the property is five bays wide with window apertures reflecting the proportions of sash windows, however by 1833 (Figure 2 showing 'Phase 2 and 3'), the property has been significantly extended including the lowering of the cills of the windows on the north elevation. It is evident that since the construction of Northaw House, the building has been subject to various extensions and alterations over time, including alterations to the window apertures. This is reflective of the differing ownerships, the aspirations of those owners and the changing architectural fashions over time.

The Heritage Statement includes an engraving from 1805 by J P Malcolm (Figure 3), this engraving shows the ground floor windows to the north elevation are in the lengthened composition comprising of eight individual panes. Figure 4 is the same engraving but captioned as an 1830 sketch by J C Buckler; this repetition appears to be an error in the document. Figure 5 is a photograph of the north elevation from c. 1900-1905 and, although it does not depict the full length of the windows, it does show that the windows are two panes wide.



Whilst there is potential for sash windows to have been present at ground floor in the seventeenth century, from the information submitted, the windows appear to have existed in the lengthened composition present today, since at least 1805.

It is evident that the property was substantially extended in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century (at least by 1805 as shown through the engraving) and the alterations to the northern elevation windows are likely part of this construction phase, therefore forming part of the building's legible phasing and chronology. The fact that the listed building has extensions and alterations from different periods contributes to its architectural and archaeological interest as it demonstrates how the building evolved over time. The extensions and alterations have clear evidential value which enhances our understanding of the property's phasing, changing fashions and the changing needs/aspirations of the owners over time.

Removing the existing windows at ground floor and replacing them with sash windows would create a false arrangement. Whilst there may have been sash windows at some point, it is clear from the evidence shown in the images in the Heritage Statement, that this was before the eighteenth or early nineteenth century extensions and alterations. The sash windows on the northern elevation may have never existed alongside the subsequent eighteenth/ early nineteenth century extensions; reinstating an earlier window design would create a potentially inaccurate composition that never existed. This would detract from the architectural and archaeological interest of the listed building.

As per paragraph 136 of Conservation Principles states: *The more radical the restoration, the more likely it is to introduce an element of incongruity. The reversal of relatively minor but harmful changes, to restore a place to a form in which it recently existed as a complete entity, is unlikely to contradict this criterion. By contrast, the restoration of isolated parts of a place to an earlier form, except as legible elements of an otherwise new design, would produce an apparently historic entity that had never previously existed, which would lack integrity.*<sup>1</sup>

According to the evidence provided, the windows have existed in their existing composition since at least the early nineteenth century and therefore make a positive contribution to the significance of the listed building.

Historic England's guidance 'Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading' sets out five general approach principles relating to the replacement or alteration of windows (see pages 62-63), of these five the first two are considered relevant to this application and are reproduced below:

1. *Where historic windows, whether original or later insertions, make a positive contribution to the significance of a listed building they should be retained and repaired where possible. If beyond repair, they should be replaced with accurate copies.*
2. *Where historic windows have already been replaced with windows whose design follows historic patterns, these usually make a positive contribution to the significance of listed buildings. When they do, they should therefore be retained and repaired where possible. If beyond repair, they should be replaced with accurate copies.*

Taking the above into consideration, even if the existing windows do not date from the early nineteenth century and are later replacements, they accurately follow the pattern and design of those seen in the 1805 engraving, therefore making a positive contribution to the significance of the listed building. Following best practice guidance set out above, the windows should be repaired and

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<sup>1</sup> Historic England, *Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance*, (2008), p. 57

retained where possible, if they are beyond economical repair then they should be replaced with accurate copies. The proposal would result in the complete loss of windows which are considered to be positive, and the replacement windows would not be accurate copies. This would detract from the architectural and archaeological significance of the listed building.

There are three principal concerns with the current scheme which are summarised below:

1. The proposal lacks sufficient information to support the proposed replacement windows;
2. Notwithstanding point 1, the proposal would potentially create an inaccurate composition that never existed, lacking authenticity and integrity. This would adversely affect the architectural and archaeological interest of the listed building; and
3. The proposal fails to follow best practice guidance on the repair and upgrading of traditional windows as set out by Historic England.

The proposals would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building, and Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 should be considered. With regards to the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) the level of harm is considered to be 'less than substantial' as per paragraph 208. 'Great weight' should be given to the heritage asset's conservation as per paragraph 205. Paragraph 206 of the NPPF would also be relevant in any harm requiring 'clear and convincing' justification.

Yours sincerely

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Built Heritage Consultant  
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*