

Heritage Statement

Site West of Lytton Way, Stevenage

July 2019

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Statutory Constraints	2
3.	Brief History	3
4.	Statement of Significance	7
5.	Description of Development	10
6.	Assessment of Impact	11
7.	Conclusions	16
8.	References	17

Client
Hill Residential Limited

Our reference
17-1032

31 July 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement on behalf of Hill Residential to support an application for the redevelopment of Site West of Lytton Way, Stevenage. The proposals comprise a residential complex across seven separate blocks, ranging from 6 to 16 storeys high to provide 576 new dwellings for Private Sale, Build to Rent and Affordable housing.
- 1.2 This Heritage Statement has been prepared to fulfil paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and to assist the local planning authority in discharging its duty with respect to Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This document also fulfils and Policy SP13 of the Local Plan, which notes that Heritage Impact Assessments must be carried out for development sites within or adjacent to a Conservation Area (CA).
- 1.3 The report has been produced following a site visit and documentary research using secondary sources. The site visit was a visual assessment only. This report is not intended to be an archaeological recording of the building or site, or a structural assessment of the existing building. An online only search of the Historic Environment Record has been undertaken through the Heritage Gateway website.

2. Statutory Constraints

- 2.1 The application site contains no designated or undesignated heritage assets.
- 2.2 The application site is located close to, but outside the boundary of the Stevenage Old Town Conservation Area (CA). The CA was designated in March 1969, and the boundary extended in September 1979.
- 2.3 The most recent appraisal of the CA was carried out by BEAMS Ltd between August 2008 and March 2009. The Old Town High Street CA Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in July 2012.
- 2.4 The application site lies closest to the southern end of the Old Town CA, and is adjacent to Zone 3: High Street (south).

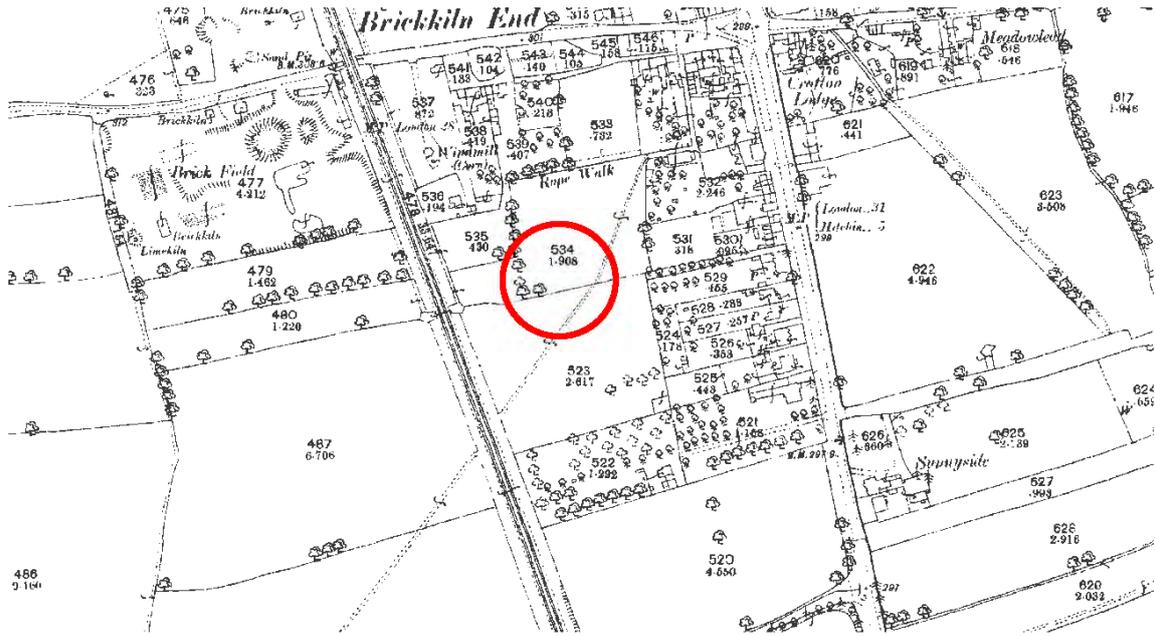
3. Brief History

History of the area

- 3.1 The area comprising Stevenage Old Town CA has been inhabited since at least the early Medieval period, with archaeological evidence of settlement dating from the Bronze Age. Stevenage was recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book as Sticenaece, or “place at the strong oak”, and belonged to the Abbey of Westminster. The intersection of the Great North Road through the Borough contributed to the economic success the area enjoyed in its early years. A market was granted to the town by the Abbot of Westminster in 1281, indicating that the settlement was adequately developed to accommodate such an event.
- 3.2 The town was well-established by the C18, and known for its popular cattle market. A number of fires in the C19 destroyed much of the historic core of the High Street, and the C16 Alms houses on Church Lane. Despite the advent of the railway diminishing the trade which passed through Stevenage, the town continued to grow, and the 1883 opening of the Education Supply Association factory increased local employment.
- 3.3 Although already slowing in the early-mid C20, expansion along the town’s periphery was impacted by the 1946 New Towns Act, with Stevenage being the first designated New Town. In 1948, Stevenage had a population of approximately 6,450; the proposed New Town the New Town development was intended to provide a community for c.60,000 people to live and work in (The Stevenage Development Corporation, 1950). A result of the New Town development was the demolition of buildings east of the Old Town CA, and the construction of new developments.
- 3.4 C20 and C21 construction within the CA has occurred to the rear of properties along the High Street, and to the rear of The Grange. In addition, the development of Vincent Place (on the corner of Trinity Road and the High Street) is an example of modern development.

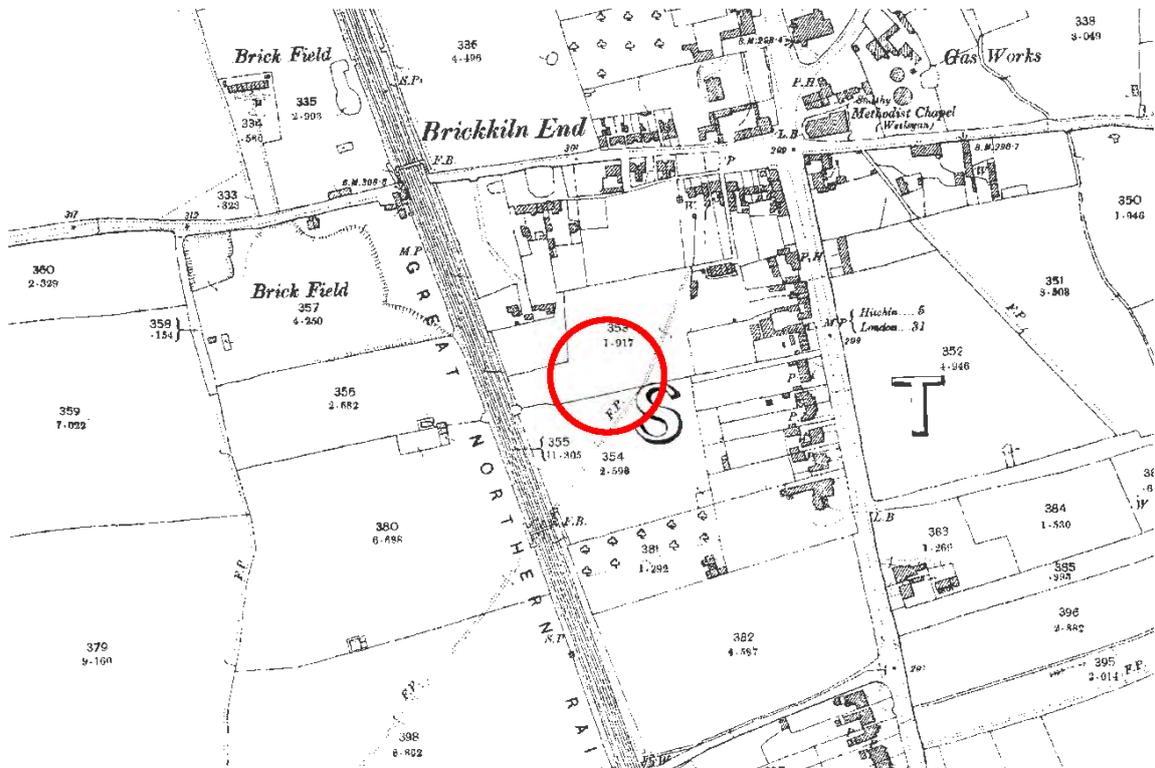
History of the application site

- 3.5 The 1881 OS County Series map of Hertfordshire shows the site as mostly open land with a footpath running through. The site lies across approximately three parcels of land with windmills and brick kilns to the north, and the railway immediately to the west. To the east were plots of land with long gardens and properties (a mixture of detached, semi-detached, and terraces) fronting London Road (part of the Great North Road), now Ditchmore Lane. The southernmost parcel of land that now forms part of the site is well treed with a property in the southeast corner accessed via a long driveway from London Road.



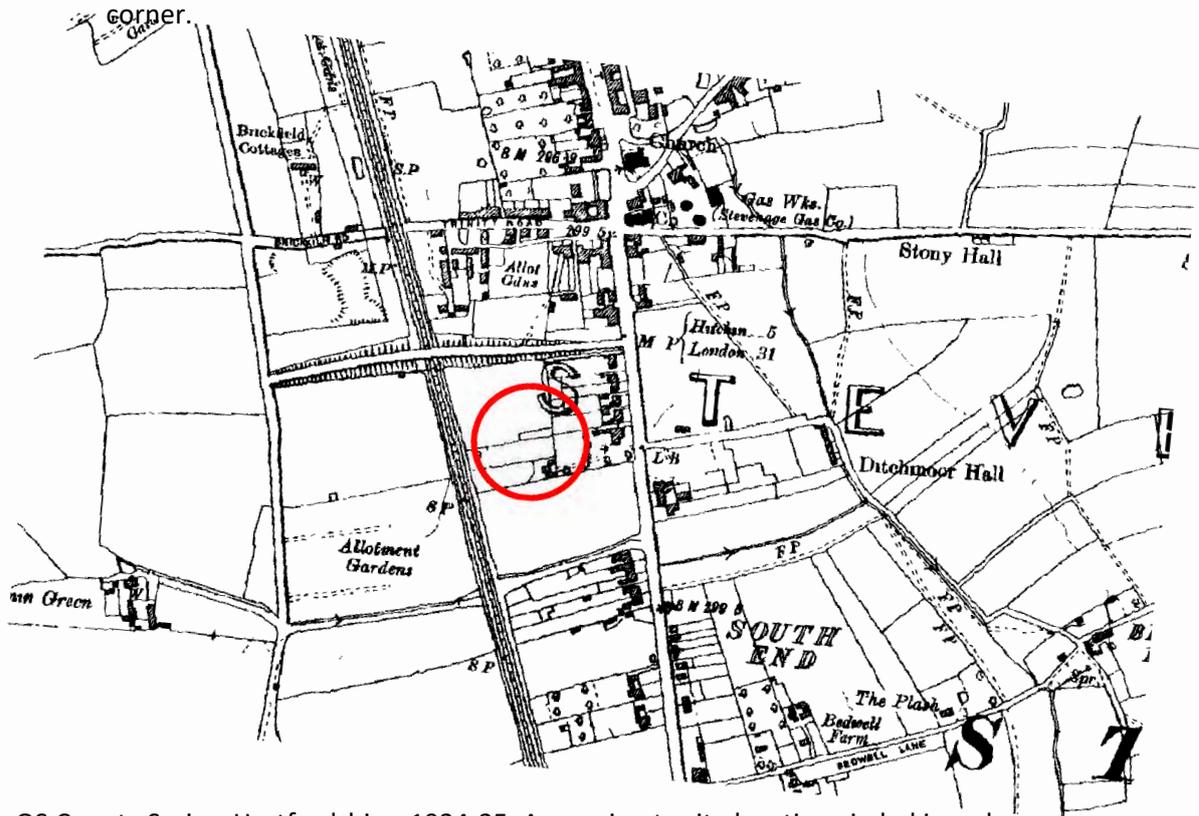
OS County Series: Hertfordshire 1:2,500 1881. Approximate site location circled in red.

3.6 By 1898, the Great Northern Railway had expanded the size of their lines significantly, creating a stronger western boundary to the site. However, there was little change to the properties to the west and the site remained as before, split between the three parcels of land.



OS County Series: Hertfordshire, 1898. Approximate site location circled in red.

3.7 A connecting road between the London Road and a new road that has appeared to the west of the railway line, cuts across the site (between the northern and central parcels of land) and over the railway on the 1924-25 OS map. This road is today truncated by the new ring road (Lytton Way) and is Chequers Ridge Road to the west of the railway and Gates Way to the east, leading off Ditchmore Lane. Some development has occurred to the north of the site, with allotment gardens immediately to the north. The remaining area of the site is still largely open at this stage. The southernmost parcel has been subdivided to form a much smaller curtilage to the property in the southeast corner.



OS County Series: Hertfordshire, 1924-25. Approximate site location circled in red.

3.8 By 1946-1950, the fields around the application site are beginning to be developed, with terraces of houses and semi-detached properties being built. The road running across the site is by now named Chequers Road and renamed Chequers Bridge Road by 1963. Development had continued to intensify to the north and west of the site, and a depot was located to the south. The southern parcel of land is now in use as allotment gardens (the property and its reduced curtilage remains in the southeast corner); with the other parcels still open.

3.9 By 1968-70, the impact of the New Town development of Stevenage is evident, as the existing roundabout adjacent to the application site has been built. The first part of the northern continuation of the new Lytton Way runs north from this roundabout separating the application site from the London Road properties to the east, the plots of which are truncated as a result. The existing property and allotments in the southern parcel of land are also swept away by the new roundabout and road system.



OS Plan: 1968-70. Approximate site location outlined in red. © Crown copyright and database rights 2018. Ordnance Survey License number 100053298.

3.10 The rapid expansion of Stevenage New Town and the implications of this development on the old settlement can be seen from the 1967 OS map onwards. By 1981, the existing road system is in place with the continuation of Lytton Way northwards, parallel to the High Street. A cycle track is identified on the site on the 1982 map. The site is understood to have remained undeveloped until 1989, when the existing building was constructed for Eagle Star Insurance.

4. Statement of Significance

- 4.1 Stevenage Old Town CA was most recently assessed as being in a good condition by the 2012 Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP), with a number of positive attributes and some detracting features.
- 4.2 The significance of the CA is derived from the built archaeological interest of the area, the architectural interest, artistic interest of artistically designed features, and historic associations with the area and buildings. These interests are the features that the CA's designation seeks to protect and create the character and appearance of the area that forms its special interest.
- 4.3 The Stevenage Old Town CA contains approximately 44 archaeological find sites, two scheduled monuments, and many listed buildings. Much of the CA is a designated "Area of Archaeological Significance", first identified in the Stevenage District Plan (2004).
- 4.4 The architectural interest of the CA is derived from the wide variety of historically and architecturally important buildings within the CA, dating from the C15 onwards. Their quality is recognised by the number of listed and locally important buildings contained within the CA. These buildings represent a diverse range of period styles, and the mixed appearance of these buildings contributes to the sense of place within the CA. The Old Town CA is a connection to the historic origins of Stevenage and its variety of building forms is notably different to the relative homogeneity of the New Town planned development which surrounds it.
- 4.5 The artistic interest of the CA comes from designed features, such as the Bowling Green and Millennium Garden, and decorative architectural elements such as decorative timber framing and barge boards along the High Street.
- 4.6 The historic interest of the area comes from the association of buildings with historic figures or events. In the CA, this includes former public houses, buildings reflecting historic street layouts such as former shops, properties which have a rich history (such as the C15 Wealden house at 131 High Street), and the refurbished Alms Houses on Church Lane. They form a historic group, some statutorily listed, reflecting the original settlement contrasting with the New Town development which is of historic interest in itself.
- 4.7 Stevenage Old Town CA is defined by the long north-south High Street which forms part of the original Great North Road. The northern focus of the CA is the Bowling Green. Towards the Letchmore Road / Sish Lane end of the CA, the focal points are Holy Trinity Church and the Methodist Church. Within the High Street, both ends of Middle Row form a focal point.
- 4.8 The principal characteristics of the CA in the 2008 Appraisal are defined as:
 - Wide linear High Street
 - Bowling Green with War Memorial

- Listed buildings
- Buildings of Local Importance / Interest
- Narrow, pedestrianised streets such as Middle Row and Baker Street
- Green spaces to the north and south ends of the High Street
- The Avenue
- Views from Bury Mead to the north-east, towards the spire of St Nicholas' Church on Rectory Lane.

4.9 The nearest character zone to the application site is Zone 3: High Street (south). This area is composed of the southern end of the High Street, Ditchmore Lane, the King George V Playing Field and Memorial Garden, and the western ends of Letchmore Road and Sish Lane.

4.10 Zone 3 is described in the 2008 Appraisal as being open and set largely to commercial use. The area has been significantly impacted by new development, including the residential block at Vincent Place. In common with the rest of the conservation area, this character zone is surrounded by visually incongruous modern buildings, but because of its more open nature, the often larger late C20 buildings are more visible from this part of the CA which, as a result, has a less defined boundary when experienced on the street.

4.11 Point 6.23 of the CAMP reviews strengths of the character zone. These are reproduced below:

- 8no. listed buildings and a further 9 unlisted (groups of) buildings or structures of importance to the area;
- The three Grade II* 15th and 16th century buildings at 131 High Street, 2 Letchmore Road and 154 High Street;
- The large Victorian villas on Ditchmore Lane which have retained a number of original features;
- The contribution made by the open spaces as well as the trees bordering the cricket ground and Ditchmore Lane.



BLIs on Ditchmore Lane, with the site visible between the properties

- 4.12 The application site forms part of the wider context for the CA, and does so primarily in glimpsed views, although some more direct views are available along Ditchmore Lane. In these views, the blue-coloured glass and the reflective nature of the existing building appears incongruous and detracts from the nearby BLIs which are an important part of this character zone. However, the views of the site from within the CA also include a range of modern architecture, and therefore the visibility of modern buildings along the more permeable periphery of the CA is considered to highlight the more historic core of the CA.
- 4.13 4.13 The site is also visible from points further north within the Conservation Area and in a wider view from the Memorial Gardens. However, the distance and intervening buildings largely limits these views to glimpses of the existing building, seen in conjunction with other modern developments outside the CA. Its bulk contrasts strongly with the existing modest scale and fine grain of the historic settlement pattern within the CA. The application site does not therefore contribute positively to the setting or significance of the CA.

5. Description of Development

- 5.1 The proposed development is a residential complex in seven separate blocks, ranging from 6 to 16 storeys high.
- 5.2 The project is designed to form an array of flat-roofed blocks bounding the perimeter of the site with the tallest elements located to the north and south ends of the site, 'bookending' the development. There will be varied heights on the intervening 'pavilion' blocks, with the height rising again to the central elements which act as 'gateways' to the development.
- 5.3 The central blocks will serve to mark an entrance point to the site, and will form a tower rhythm along the boundary with the railway. Smaller block types will increase the permeability of the site and add height variation. A central access road will help to foster an active street setting, and facilitate servicing. Full details of the application proposals are contained within the Design and Access Statement and submitted plans and drawings.
- 5.4 In terms of the materials palette, it is intended that there will be two types of brick, each in different colour choices, for each of the two block types. The materials palette has been inspired by material precedents in the local area, which include a subtle variation in colour and high-quality material.
- 5.5 The treatments for both block types are proposed to include balcony guarding's and entrances treated with an accent colour to create visual interest and emphasise horizontal movement across the elevations, as well as highlighting entrances and other key activity areas and providing unity across the block types. The highlight colour currently proposed is a bronze/brown. The balcony styles have been considered across the scheme, to cement the design scheme and will be positioned according to the direction of view and need for privacy of the residence.
- 5.6 The proposed colour palette for type A blocks includes the accent details, with tall elements being in the lightest colour, with contrasting inset bays using a mid-range colour with a strip in the accent colour to create verticality. This will be combined with lower elements being treated in the mid-range colour, with windows paired using the light and darker material to demarcate bays.
- 5.7 The design for type B blocks also incorporates accent details, and has a 3-colour mix for the main façade, set out in a stretcher bond design, with 50% dark colours, 25% light and 25% mid-range colours. This is intended to emphasise the horizontal movement across the scheme. The central entrance element is proposed to be a light, single-coloured. This will help to break the massing of the pavilion-type buildings, and will highlight the core of the blocks.

6. Assessment of Impact



The Application Site

- 6.1 The proposed development site is adjacent to the Stevenage Old Town CA, but is not within the CA boundary.
- 6.2 The proposed development will have no direct impact on the character or appearance or heritage interest of the Stevenage Old Town CA, as it lies outside the CA boundary.
- 6.3 Therefore, the impact of the development on the setting of the CA must be considered. However, it is noted that the issue of setting was not identified as a threat to Zone 3 of the CA by the CAMP (Section 6), which focused on characteristics derived from within the CA as sources of interest and significance. This indicates that the potential for development within the surrounding area of the CA was not identified as a specific threat to the character or appearance of the CA.
- 6.4 The character of Stevenage Old Town CA is clearly defined, with contributing factors set out in the 2008 Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) (paragraph 4.03), and reproduced here in paragraph 4.08. Further strengths of the area are outlined in the CAMP (Point 6.23), reproduced here in paragraph 4.11. None of the elements identified as above will be altered or impacted by the proposed development.

- 6.5 Key views are included in the definition of character in the CAA (paragraph 4.03). The views in question are:
- Looking south-southeast from the junction between Letchmore Road and Pound Avenue, towards Sish Lane
 - Looking north along the High Street from Sish Lane
 - Looking east along Sish Lane from Trinity Road
 - Looking southeast over the King George V Playing Field from the Millennium Gardens on Ditchmore Lane
 - Looking south along Ditchmore Lane from the junction with Gates Way
- 6.6 These key views are focused to the north, south and east of the CA: none look west in the direction of the application site. It is therefore considered that the proposed development will have no impact on the key views identified in the CAA.
- 6.7 The application site is not considered to lie within the setting of any Listed Buildings, although it clearly forms part of their wider context. The nearest Listed Buildings are located to the northeast of the application site – three on the west side of the High Street (south of Trinity Road), and the Coach and Houses PH and Holy Trinity Church on the east side of the High Street (north of its junction with Sish Lane).
- 6.8 The application site forms part of the wider context of six BLIs along Ditchmore Lane identified in the most recent CAA, and these BLIs were identified as a positive feature of the CA in point 6.23 of the CAMP. All six buildings are C19 domestic buildings, as described below:
- 1 and 2 Ditchmore Lane. A two-storey, semi-detached brick villa-style house
 - 3 and 4 Ditchmore Lane. A two-storey, semi-detached gothic-style house, with two front doors set in a gothic style rendered porch with decorative parapet
 - 5 Ditchmore Lane. A detached, symmetrical, red-brick villa-style house of two storeys, with a central front door
 - 6 Ditchmore Lane. A detached, symmetrical grey-brick villa-style house of two storeys with dormers.



BLIs along Ditchmore Lane, with modern building to the rear.



View from the Millennium Gardens, with the site visible to the left hand side of the red-brick gable end

6.9 The application site is visible in views between these properties, and at junctions running west-east with Ditchmore Lane. However, these views also take in a number of other higher-rise and modern buildings, as they extend beyond the boundary of the CA into the later development of Stevenage. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed development would constitute harm to the setting of the CA, as it is in keeping with existing buildings outside the CA. Indeed, it is considered that the proposed residential nature of the proposed development and the vertical emphasis of the new separate blocks will better complement the existing domestic BLIs. Their limited residential setting within an urban residential area is not affected by the application site.



View from western boundary of the conservation area



View of site from Millennium Gardens – existing (left) and proposed (right)



View of site from Trinity Church – existing (left) and proposed (right)

6.10 Policy SP13 of the Adopted Local Plan notes that Heritage Impact Assessments must be carried out for development sites within or adjacent to a CA. This document fulfils the requirements of Policy SP13. Furthermore, Section 7.11 of the Local Plan notes that Major Opportunity Areas (MOA) have been identified adjacent to the Town Square CA, indicating that the principle of carefully-considered development adjacent to a CA is acceptable. Paragraph 7.14 notes that schemes within these MOAs are “encouraged to incorporate taller, higher-density buildings, with innovative, modern design.” The proposed design is in line with this advice, although relating to a different CA.

6.11 Policy SP13 of the Local Plan also states that the Council will ‘use national guidance and legislation to review, designate and determine planning applications affecting heritage assets’. Therefore, the relevant national planning guidance is now considered.

- 6.12 Policy NH10: Conservation areas notes that development proposals within or affecting a conservation area should have regard to the guidance provided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan SPD. This has been considered in paragraphs 6.3-9 above.

National policy

- 6.13 Paragraphs 194 - 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are relevant where there would be harm or loss to a heritage asset; the relevant paragraph being determined by the designation status of the asset and the scale of the harm or loss to heritage significance.
- 6.14 However, it is considered that the impact of the application on the CA as a designated heritage asset (and including those designated and non-designated heritage assets within it,) does not cause any harm to its heritage significance. Therefore, the development is assessed against paragraph 200 of the NPPF which states:
- 6.15 Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.
- 6.16 The contribution of the site to the CA is currently negligible, as it cannot be seen from much of the CA and therefore forms part of the views from only a very limited area of the CA (Zone 3). The existing building on the application site is a highly reflective structure, largely clad in blue-tinted glass, and this contrasts strongly with the materials palette and styling of properties within the CA, drawing the eye away from the buildings within the CA. It is therefore considered that replacing the existing building with a new, more contextual, development is a desirable change as it would enhance the wider context of the CA, albeit a context which does not contribute substantially to the significance or setting of the CA.
- 6.17 The impact on Zone 3 of the conservation area specifically is also negligible, as the site is only most clearly seen when looking between buildings along Ditchmore Lane. Again, the blue colour and reflective finish of the existing building on the site draws the eye from the buildings within this character zone, and detracts from the Buildings of Local Interest along Ditchmore Lane. The finish of existing building is not in keeping with the style or character of either the CA or the buildings outside the CA which surround it.
- 6.18 As there are no positive elements of the existing site to preserve, and the proposed development is considered to be a higher quality, more contextual, design which better reflects the characteristics of the nearby conservation area, the proposals are considered to better reveal the significance of the conservation area.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 It is considered that the proposed development poses no threat of harm to the special interests which lend the CA and the assets within it their significance.
- 7.2 The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the policies set out in Section 6 of the Stevenage Old Town High Street Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) (a supplementary planning document), adopted in July 2012 and therefore in accordance with policies NH10 Conservation Area and SP13 Historic Environment.
- 7.3 Indeed, paragraph 7.14 of the Local Plan notes the proposed construction of taller, higher-density buildings in MOAs adjacent to CAs. While the application site is not within a MOA, the principle of high-rise buildings being constructed to a CA is established as acceptable (subject to careful management) in this document.
- 7.4 The proposed development is considered to be in line with the guidance set out in Paragraph 200 of the NPPF, as the works will not materially alter the CA, and the existing building is a detracting feature in the wider context of the CA, despite having a limited visual impact on the CA and on Zone 3 in particular. The materials palette and style of the existing building, draws the eye away from the traditional buildings within the CA. It is therefore considered that the replacement of existing building with a development in a more sympathetic materials palette and a more permeable grain would enhance the wider context of the CA.
- 7.5 Thus, in regard to local and national planning policy, it is considered that the proposed development preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the Stevenage Old Town Conservation Area.

8. References

Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031

Stevenage Old Town Conservation Area Appraisal (2009)

Stevenage Old Town High Street Conservation Area Management Plan 2012

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

History of Stevenage <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-stevenage/museum/47012/>

<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

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