



North Hertfordshire District Council

Heritage Assessments

Heritage Assessment of Churchgate and Surrounding Area, Hitchin



June 2016

Amec Foster Wheeler Environment
& Infrastructure UK Limited



Report for

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Doc Ref. 38368rrHI01

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Document revisions

No.	Details	Date
1	Final Heritage Assessment	17 June 2016
2	Client Comments	27/06/2016



Executive summary

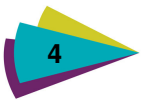
Purpose of this report

This report has been produced for the purpose of providing North Hertfordshire District Council with an appraisal of the potential impacts of an allocation site upon the significance of both designated and undesignated heritage assets.

It is advised that following consideration of the conclusions of this document, the Historic Environment Unit (Archaeology) at Hertfordshire County Council are consulted over the archaeological implications of the proposal site. The report makes recommendations as to the suitability and management of such allocations, as well as the compliance with planning policy.

Hitchin contains one proposal site known as Churchgate and surrounding area for mixed use development. The site is immediately adjacent to the grade I listed church of St Mary's, and located within the Hitchin Conservation Area (See Figure 1, Appendix B).

Policies have been recommended to help guide the potential development of this allocation site.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Document

North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) is currently preparing a new Local Plan for the period 2011 – 2031. It is anticipated that NHDC will be planning for a minimum of 14,400 additional dwellings over the plan period to meet its own objectively assessed housing needs. North Hertfordshire is unable to accommodate this level of growth on previously developed sites and are having to consider large amounts of growth on greenfield sites in sustainable locations on the edges of urban settlements and larger villages and on previously developed land within urban settlements.

NHDC consulted on its Local Plan Preferred Options in January 2015. A number of representations were received regarding the impact of some of proposed site allocations on the setting of heritage assets.

Of particular relevance is the representation submitted from Historic England with regard to specific sites.

The Council is working towards submitting its proposed Local Plan Submission Draft to its Executive in September 2016.

The Council consulted on its Local Plan Preferred Options in January 2015 and received a number of representations regarding the impact of some of proposed site allocations on the setting of heritage assets.

NHDC have therefore commissioned Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure (Amec FW) to assess the potential impacts of mixed use development upon the significance of heritage assets and make recommendations as to the suitability and management of such allocation.

In addition to meeting its housing needs, the Council also needs to encourage sustainable economic growth. This includes reviewing its retail strategy to guide appropriate development across the district that will make provision for an appropriate range of retail facilities and support the vitality and viability of all centres.

1.2 Planning Policy and methodology

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) provides an active policy framework under which Heritage Assets are protected. Of particular relevance to the scheme are the following:

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF emphasises the role of heritage, and the positive enhancement of the historic environment as one of three dimensions to achieving sustainable development.

Paragraph 14 states that local authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Proposals should also seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Historic England¹ have produced a guidance document to enable the historic environment to play a positive role in identifying allocation sites which are suitable for development and providing advice on policies to ensure proposal sites protect and enhance the significance of heritage assets. The purpose of this guidance document is to ensure that proposal sites comply with the requirements of paragraph 182 of the NPPF, in that sites are prepared, justified and consistent with national and local policy. This document provides a methodology for site selection:

- ▶ Step one - Identify which heritage assets are affected by the potential site allocation;
- ▶ Step two - Understand what contribution the site (in its current form) makes to the significance of the heritage asset(s);

¹ Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans. Historic England Advice Note 3.



- ▶ Step three – Identify what impact the allocation might have on that significance, including the setting of heritage assets;
- ▶ Step four – A high level, in principle, assessment of whether the sites can accommodate development without having an unacceptable impact upon the nearby heritage assets. The scale of development is assumed to be in line with information to be supplied by NHDC; and
- ▶ Appropriately illustrate the conclusions.

2. Heritage assets affected by the proposal sites

The location of the proposal site in relation to designated and undesignated heritage assets is shown in Figure 1, Appendix B.

A search area of 250m from the centre of the proposed allocation site has been used to provide the spatial parameters for the following assessment. The spatial scope was considered to be sufficient given the urban location of the proposal and the built up nature of the townscape. Intervisibility between designated assets and the proposed allocation site was amongst issues considered to have a potential impact upon heritage assets during a site walkover, conducted on 10th June 2016.

2.1 Scheduled monuments

There are no scheduled monuments located within the proposed allocation site. There no scheduled monuments located within the wider search area.

The nearest scheduled monuments (list entries 731254 and 702381) Manor House Galleries and 21a Bancroft, respectively lie (at their closest) 165m northwest and 190m northwest respectively of the proposed allocation site. There will be no impact to these designated assets as the proposal site does not contribute to their significance.

2.2 Registered Parks and Gardens

There are no registered parks or gardens located within the proposed allocation site, or located within the wider search area. Windmill Hill (located 250m east of the proposed allocation site) is notable as a mature woodland around a former quarry ('The Dell'). Views into the proposed allocation site from Windmill Hill are obscured by the presence of the 1970s three storey residential structures located in the triangle around the streets of Hollow Lane, Queen Street and Mount Garrison.

2.3 Listed buildings

Due to the urban location of the proposed allocation site, a total of 85 listed structures are located within, and adjacent to, the proposed allocation site as well as within the wider search area. These are as set out within Table C1, Appendix C.

Designated structures within the search area, which are considered to be affected through changes to their settings by the proposals are further described below:

The Grade I listed Church of St Mary (list entry number 161476)

This Grade I listed structure is surrounded by the proposed allocation site to its north, east and south sides. The earliest fabric within the church dates from the 12th century, although records show a Benedictine monastery founded on the site in 792AD, with continuity assumed from this period onwards. The key construction phases of the present structure of St Mary's occurred during the period of 12th to 15th centuries AD, and a range of materials including Roman brick, tiles, sandstone, clunch and flint have been used within the construction palette. The church interior contains fine examples of wooden rood screens ('The Angel Screen' which is ornately carved and is 15th century in origin) and brasses of late 15th century origin (depictions of both merchants and civilians) set within the eastern chapels. The 15th century piscina and pulpit are also retained original fixtures, which further enhance the justification for designation of the church at Grade I status. The setting incorporates the churchyard on all four sides, with mature trees, pleasant pathways and the River Hiz (which has been widened to form a pond) to the east, and the basin forms a focal point which increases the amenity value around the church itself. Buildings west of the church between the churchyard and High Street are the result of the fossilisation of medieval market stall locations and the

construction of permanent buildings in their place. Within this area many of these buildings occupy the full plot with small yards and alleys providing the only separation.

The Grade II* listed The Biggin (list entry number 161528)

This building is located to the immediate south and west of the proposed allocation site, abutting it. This two storey, timber framed building includes addition in red brick. Initially considered to be 17th century in origin, a recent survey² has suggested that the property may represent the remains of a 14th century Gilbertine priory, which was partially destroyed by fire in the 16th century. The property has a courtyard with a Tuscan colonnade; the courtyard formerly contained a pump. The property itself has latterly been used as an alms house for up to 18 women, reflecting the endowment of John Kempe on his sister in the 17th century. The structure is surrounded on all sides by mature trees, which screen The Biggin from new residential development to the south (Jill Grey Place) and the service ranges for the 1970s Churchgate Shopping centre. Greenspace around the Biggin is well defined with hedgerows, bollards, railings, and to the west, the culverted River Hiz, which contain The Biggin and define its curtilage.

The Grade II* Sun Hotel (list entry number 161531)

The Sun Hotel is located adjacent to the southeastern boundary of the proposed allocation site. This three storey red brick building originally functioned as a coaching inn, and predominantly dates to the 1700's. The stables attached to the rear of the buildings within the courtyard are timber framed. The Sun was re-fronted in the 18th century, and contains an assembly room, located to the rear of the inn and on the first floor with a Diocletian window, located beneath a hipped roof. The wider setting encompasses the town centre proper, and the primary elevation of the Sun Inn opens onto Sun Street, which is aligned roughly north-south. Properties along this street are mostly listed, and largely reflect the proliferation of inns or coaching houses which dominated the town in the 16th to 19th centuries; the buildings are generally two or three storeys high, and stretch back from the street aligned east-west within the medieval burgage plots. Sun Street is a complex, and well defined streetscape where buildings rise sheer from the rear of the pavement. This regularity is only broken up by the 1970s Churchgate shopping centre, whose columns stand proud of the street frontage, narrowing the view and the vehicular entrance in towards the Market place, which restricts views towards the church. To the south, the Sun Inn is adjacent to the service ranges for the Churchgate shopping centre, which detract from its setting.

The Grade II* numbers 8-12 Market Place (list entry number 161508)

Numbers 8-12 Market Place are located adjacent to the west boundary of the proposed allocation site. The West range of the single storey, timber framed buildings, is all that remains of an original structure of 15th century origin built around a courtyard. The surviving building is of two storeys with a pitched roof, and has been modified throughout the 18th and 19th centuries for commercial purposes. The setting incorporates the south western extent of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary, the associated graveyard and the Hitchin War Memorial. The service ranges and informal car parking used to the rear of the properties detracts from the setting of the properties.

The Grade II listed numbers 24-28, Churchyard (list entry number 161485)

Numbers 24-28 Churchyard are located 30m south east of the proposed allocation site. This terrace of five small houses, built of red brick with a steeply pitched, half hipped, tiled roof, dates from the 18th century. The lower floors are shops, and the wider setting is similar to that described above for numbers 8-12 Market Place.

The Grade II listed numbers 7 and 8, Portmill Lane (list entry number 161522)

Numbers 7 and 8 Portmill Lane are located 15m northwest of the proposed allocation site. This comprises a pair of red brick, tiled roofed, two storey 18th century town houses. The wider setting incorporates the Grade I listed Church of St Mary, and the church gardens (including the locally listed brick cloisters with iron grilles and gates bordering the Old Burial Ground, Church-house and River Hiz) to the southwest. The setting is

² Fitzpatrick-Matthews, K. J. North Hertfordshire District Council. The Buildings of Hitchin; The Biggin.

somewhat affected by the level car park which fronts the property, which detracts visually from the townscape value of the property and the wider amenity value of being adjacent to the riverside.

2.4 Conservation areas

The proposed allocation site lies within the heart of the Hitchin Conservation Area. NHDC published a character statement³ for the conservation area in July 2011. This statement includes, in Section 2, a summary of the features and characteristics important to the special interest of the conservation area as a whole. These include:

- ▶ A vibrant historic town centre which includes a variety of closed and more open spaces, lined with mainly listed buildings of a relatively modest scale;
- ▶ The current pattern of roads and footpaths which preserves historic plot forms, and that has significantly influenced the development of the town's layout, which in places are reflected by the creation of alley ways, carriage entrances and courts;
- ▶ The very high quality of the many historic buildings, the most important of which are Hitchin Priory, and the medieval church of St Mary;
- ▶ A few purpose-built larger commercial buildings, such as the Corn Exchange in the Market Place;
- ▶ The use of timber framing or red brick for many of the historic buildings that adds variety and visual interest;
- ▶ Presence of a thriving market which contributes to the economic success of the town and is a tourist attraction;
- ▶ The presence of the River Hiz and a large number of trees (including willows) which contribute to amenity value of the area on the outskirts of the town centre, and is a significant aspect of the setting of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary;
- ▶ Use of structures within the town centre for largely commercial purposes, with residential uses above some of the shops, and radiating residential properties on the outskirts of the town;
- ▶ A principal shopping street in the town, well served by on-street car parking and adjoining surface car parks;
- ▶ Buildings which all sit on the back of the pavement without any front gardens or yards, creating continuous frontages. Most of the buildings are two or three storeys high, but roofs are extremely varied.

Important views identified within the Conservation Area assessment include the following:

- ▶ From the public car park facing St Mary's Square, over the lake and fountain towards the east elevation of St Mary's Church – one of the defining views of Hitchin;
- ▶ On emerging from Munts Alley, a narrow pathway from Bancroft, a pretty view of the church and churchyard, with the many mature trees and grass-covered churchyard;
- ▶ On approaching the church and churchyard from the Market Place, where pedestrians have priority and the War Memorial and Grade I listed St Mary's Church dominate the view.

The proposed allocation site is located within the conservation area boundary, and will have a direct impact upon the conservation area.

³ North Hertfordshire District Council, July 2011. Hitchin Conservation Area: Character Statement.

2.5 Locally listed or significant buildings

NHDC maintains a list of locally important structures as a 'register of buildings of local interest'. The buildings are not afforded the same legal protection as designated assets but do form a material consideration during planning application.

Locally listed Buildings are selected according to the criteria set out within the document, North Hertfordshire District Council - Hitchin Register of Buildings of Local Interest 2011. In summary they should be:

- ▶ Good quality work of a well-known local architect or craftsman.
- ▶ Buildings of particular local architectural interest, which are important locally for their special architectural design, decoration, craftsmanship or construction including technical innovation and particular important local building types.
- ▶ Buildings of particular local historic interest which clearly illustrate important aspects of local social, industrial, cultural or military history or the historic development of the town.
- ▶ Buildings which act as an important architectural feature or landmark within an historic street scene or setting.
- ▶ Buildings which are well documented to have a close historical association with important and significant local historic events or people.

A total of four locally listed structures lie within or adjacent to the proposed allocation site. The descriptions for which are taken from the NHDC Buildings of local interest register, and are as follows;

- ▶ Terrace and Walls at St Mary's Square. Comprising brick, stone and paved terracing with a stepped area, fronting on to the River Hiz, a fountain installed in 2008, and St Mary's Church. The stone steps bear an inscription commemorating the clearance of slums here and their replacement by council housing elsewhere. The inscription bears the date 1927-9.
- ▶ Cloisters located at the northern extent of the Churchyard. Comprising brick cloisters with iron grilles and gates bordering the Old Burial Ground, the Church-house and the River Hiz; dating from the 1920s redevelopment of St Mary's Square. The inner wall has a commemorative plaque of 1909 connected to municipalisation of the Old Burial Ground.
- ▶ Warners Almshouses, located within the southern extent of the Churchyard. Comprising two late 19th century cottages in the south-east corner of the Churchyard. Succeeded previous buildings here used as parish provision for the poor and which were in ruinous condition by the mid-18th century. In 1760 they were first rebuilt by Daniel Warner, a local turner, for poor widows or ancient couples [sic]. They were rebuilt and enlarged again in 1893 using a legacy to the poor of Hitchin given by Elizabeth Lucas, who died in 1860. Their interest includes surrounding brick boundary walls and plaques.
- ▶ Rose and Crown, located on the Market Place. Comprising a 1930s rebuild of an inn in this location dating back at least to 1720; the structure forms an important corner feature for the Market Place/Churchyard.

2.6 Archaeology

The proposed allocation site sits within the Hitchin Town Centre Archaeological Area (HER number 381401). The Historic Environment (Archaeology) Unit at Hertfordshire County Council should be consulted on archaeological matters.

3. The site and heritage assets

3.1 The contribution of the site to the significance of heritage assets

Conservation Areas

The proposed allocation site sits within the heart of the conservation area, and is located off the main thoroughfare through Hitchin (Queen Street, the B656). The proposed allocation site includes the entirety of the Churchgate shopping centre, including access areas for service ranges associated with the shopping centre, a car park and a semi-covered area for Hitchin Market (Plates 1, 2 and 6, Appendix A). The proposed allocation site wraps around the eastern extent of the existing town centre, providing access into the heart of the commercial area of the town, and is located in an area which is largely characterised as market, riverside, parking and shopping areas.

The proposed allocation site is within an area identified in the Hitchin Conservation Area Character Statement as an improvement opportunity. Character Area 2C of the Hitchin Conservation Area states that the Churchgate Shopping Centre should be redeveloped in its entirety in the long term, or enhanced in the short term. Character Area 3 includes the car parking between Queen Street and Hermitage Road. The assessment states that the large areas of surface car parking present an opportunity for enhancement.

The car park is well used (evidenced during the site walkover). Its design is dated and currently it does not provide equal access for pedestrians due to a number of changes in level, and number of steps.

At the market place, the existing Churchgate Shopping centre breaks forward from the established building line in a way that is entirely out of character with the established frontage of buildings on Sun Street. The projection of the Churchgate Centre terminates views along Sun Street into the market place (Plate 3).

Elements of the proposed allocation site currently detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area. Specific elements that detract from the character of the conservation area include the shopping centre range south of the church which detract from the riverside setting of the Grade I listed church (Plate 8). Hitchin Market occupies a defined area of the allocation site which is dominated by fixed stalls which whilst functional and well used, could be made more accessible, and the riverside itself, which could be opened up to create greater amenity value.

Listed Buildings

The setting of the Grade I listed Church is largely defined by the grave yard. This area is defined to the east by commercial buildings and partially to the north. To the south side the churchyard is contained by a range of the Churchgate Centre and the boundary of Hitchin Market (Plate 8). To the north a range of buildings define the boundary of the churchyard until the churchyard extension and car parking, located to the north of the churchyard, expand the setting of the building. To the east beyond the River Hiz, the setting of the church is far more open due to the extensive area of car parking (Plate 7). The churchyard has a number of mature trees which add to its character, but the planting is not dense enough to screen the building or its surroundings but leave the church and churchyard open to wider views. The proposed allocation site currently provides the immediate backdrop to the eastern extent of the Grade I listed church of St Mary, and as a principal view northwest along one of the main thoroughfares through Hitchin Town (Plate 5). The extensive area of car parking, and Hitchin Market ensures that the church is visible from much of the proposed allocation area.

The proposed allocation site also serves as an access point to the rear (eastern extent) of Hitchin Market, and has an indirect and somewhat negative contribution to the setting of the Grade II* Sun Hotel and the Grade II listed numbers 7 and 8, Portmill Lane. The latter of these listed structures is somewhat divorced from its historic setting because of the existence of the car park and encroachment from modern developments; the proposed allocation site therefore detracts from the setting of the listed structures.

Grade II* listed 8-12 Market Place adjoin the Churchgate Centre, and to their rear is a partially enclosed service yard providing access to the row fronting onto the south side of the churchyard (Plate 4). This area

lacks activity and active frontages, whilst its form partially reflects the historic courtyard layout referenced in the list descriptions of the buildings the use and quality of the area negatively impact upon the settings of the listed buildings.

The proposed allocation area is sufficiently screened from the Grade II* listed The Biggin (Plate 9) by the presence of mature trees and greenspace, which are within the curtilage of The Biggin itself; the contribution to the proposed allocation site of the setting of this structure is therefore limited.

Locally listed buildings

The locally listed brick cloisters and terracing along St Marys Square are located within the proposed allocation site (Plate 7). The current setting is one of municipal parking, with the wider setting of the Grade I listed Churchyard of St Mary and the culverted River Hiz and fountain providing a more positive backdrop. The proposed allocation site currently makes a negative contribution to the setting of these assets due to its condition and lack of accessibility options.

3.2 The impact of allocation to the significance of heritage assets

This report considers a proposal for a mixed use development which will encompass both residential and commercial uses with town centre parking.

Conservation Area

The replacement of the Churchgate Centre with a modern, mixed use development would improve the character and appearance of the conservation area, subject to design details, scale and form of any proposed building. The reintroduction of buildings into the areas of car parking within the proposal site, subject to design and detailing would provide a sense of enclosure and definition to the townscape that this part of the conservation area is presently lacking. Building to the rear of the Sun Inn, depending upon design and layout, has the potential to reintroduce the historic plot boundaries which have been lost in this area. The reuse of the land presently occupied by Hitchin Market has the potential to improve the appearance of this area through the removal of the fixed stalls; however the contribution of the activity associated with Hitchin Market to the character and activity of the conservation area is valuable.

Overall the site is a significant part of the conservation area and has been included as an enhancement opportunity within the Conservation Area Character Statement.

Listed Buildings

The replacement of the Churchgate Centre has the potential to improve the setting of the Grade I St Mary's Church and Grade II* 8-12 Market Place and Sun Hotel depending upon the design, detailing and scale of any proposed replacement. Redesign of the frontage to Market Place has the potential to improve the setting of numerous listed buildings.

The sensitive design and reintroduction of buildings to the east of the Sun Hotel has the potential to contribute to the significance of this building through the reintroduction of historic property boundaries lost through the clearance of land for car parking.

Due to its well-defined curtilage and its separation from the proposal site by Biggin Lane, the setting of The Biggin is more constrained and will be impacted less by development of the proposal site, subject to design detailing and scale of any buildings. Reducing public parking from areas accessed by Biggin Lane will reduce traffic impacts to the setting of this building.

Construction within the car parks to the east of the parish church has the potential to improve the setting of the church and repair locally listed stairs and terracing within the proposal site. This part of the proposal can contribute to the significance of the parish church through providing defined views of the east end of the church and, subject to design, detailing and scale of buildings improve the setting of the church. Retaining and framing views of the east end of the church, with the tower behind, should be a fundamental consideration for the design of this part of the site.

To the north of the church development proposals have the potential to define and enclose the setting of the church, reintroducing built forms into the historic town plan south of 7-8 Portmill Lane. Subject to design, detailing and scale of buildings the reintroduction of buildings into the historic core of the town has the potential to enhance the significance of listed structures.

As a result, the proposed allocation area has the potential to enhance the setting of nearby listed structures in a largely positive manner.

Locally listed Buildings

Subject to suitable design, detail and scale of the proposal, there will be a positive impact on the setting of locally listed structures by improvements to the amenity value around the River Hiz and adjacent to the Grade I listed Church of St Mary.

The detailed design of any frontage to the proposal site with Market Place will improve the setting of the locally listed Rose and Crown Inn and contribute to its significance. It is recommended that the frontage of the proposal site in Market Place rises in alignment with the frontage of the Rose and Crown Inn, reflecting the development of buildings within the conservation area where they rise sheer at the rear of the footway.

Archaeological remains

The proposed allocation site is located within a designated Archaeological Area (AA). Any development within the AA will require consultation with the NHDC Historic Environment Team who will advise a suitable strategy to investigate the archaeology within the proposal area.

3.3 Can the site accommodate development without having an unacceptable impact upon heritage assets?

The proposal site currently occupies an area that contains uses and buildings that adversely affect the significance of heritage assets. Areas of the proposal site do not provide equal access and the Conservation Area Character Statement recognises that the proposal site is in need of enhancement.

Whilst the current use of the allocation site (as a car park, service ranges, a small shopping centre and a location for Hitchin Market) provides good incentives for shoppers, and supports the vibrancy of the town as a whole, the area lacks amenity value, and is largely a negative contribution to the conservation area and to the setting of individual heritage assets.

Development of this area at a suitable scale, using appropriate materials and reflecting the historic property boundaries and enhancing views of the most significant heritage assets, has the potential to enhance the significance of heritage assets and contribute to maintaining and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Broad recommendations for the scale and arrangement of new buildings within the proposal area are included in Section Four.

4. Guidance and Policy considerations

Paragraph 182 provides details of the NPPF test of soundness. The local plan should comply with the following tests:

- ▶ **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- ▶ **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- ▶ **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- ▶ **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

The proposal sites examined here have the potential to make a contribution to economic vitality of the town centre as well as the objectively assessed housing needs of North Hertfordshire. Proposals presented here indicate that mixed use development within the proposal site is possible, subject to guidance and policy, to ensure the preservation of the significance of heritage assets.

Development within the centre of Hitchin has the potential to contribute to the economic health of the town centre, through the provision of new retail units, residential accommodation, parking and improvements to the visual amenity of the town centre. Successful integration within the existing townscape requires consideration of the scale and rhythm of surrounding buildings and the use of complimentary materials. Much of the guidance for the redevelopment of the site is contained within the Hitchin Conservation Area Assessment. The assessment details the scale of buildings within the immediate area and their character and provides clear guidance.

4.1 Does the allocation meet the NPPF tests of soundness?

Drawings from an earlier scheme for the proposal area have been used as guidance to assess impacts upon the heritage assets identified within this report. Any proposed scheme would need to be judged upon its own merits;

South of the church

The redevelopment of the Churchgate Centre provides the opportunity to create a modern, mixed-use development within the town centre. Areas of the proposal site impact differently upon designated heritage assets. Sensitive reconstruction of the area, taking into account character descriptions of the areas where the new buildings meets the public realm should be the objective. The different faces of the Churchgate Centre demonstrate the problems of servicing an enclosed centre of this type (that forces servicing out into the public realm). An outward looking centre that is serviced via a central corridor would address the street and surroundings better. The service access to a building such as this would require sensitive design and placement to avoid a large area of inactive frontage.

Within the immediate setting of St Mary's Church, listed buildings of Grade II and grade II* status are generally of two storeys with a pitched roof. As the surroundings of the church, especially to the west, are structures built within the infilled medieval marketplace, they are generally built with roofs parallel to the street, and are three, four or five bays in width. Redevelopment to the south side of the church, in the footprint of the Churchgate Centre, would be infilling a plot originally fronting onto the market place. Infill buildings of a similar scale, addressing the church, but built of a variety of materials and taking reference from those to the west side of the churchyard would represent a suitable development in this area. With sensitive design, two storey buildings with dormers in the roof, designed with a similar level of variety and

interest to those west of the church would represent a suitable introduction. A considered development of this scale should enhance the setting of the grade I listed parish church.

The reconstruction of the yard to the rear of the locally listed Rose and Crown and grade II* listed 8-12 Market Place should be considered. At present the yard is a service area and contributes negatively to the significance of the listed buildings. The reuse of the historic route into Market Place would preserve the enclosure of the space and provide a link to the south on an alignment with Biggin Lane.

The east extent of the Churchgate Centre and the start of Hitchin Market Place respects a historic boundary visible on early maps, including the Ordnance Survey 2nd edition. East of the Churchgate Centre is the wall dividing Hitchin Market from the church. The wall provides a sense of enclosure to the churchyard, and is punctured in a number of locations by breaks infilled by railings, providing glimpses of the activity in the market. It is recommended that a break in the building line between the market and Churchgate sites is included in any development, potentially provide a view of the church from the south. The building scale fronting onto the church should continue to be two storeys, potentially with a dormer roof. The variety and interest of the buildings should be maintained, rather than the site be treated as a monolithic block.

The Churchgate Centre, due to its projecting upper storeys and the heavy piers supporting these within the paved area intrudes into views of the market place along Sun Street, showing an extensive, blank elevation at first and second floor levels. Whilst the architectural intention of signalling the presence of the building is clear and there may well be a historic justification for the projecting frontage of the Centre, this feature of the present building is entirely out of character with the fine range of listed and locally listed buildings that occupy the market place. Within the medieval streets of Hitchin town centre, unless buildings are timber framed, they tend to rise directly from the pavement frontage. Any replacement of the Churchgate Centre should rise in line with the frontage of the local listed Rose and Crown Inn and the shop fronts of the present centre.

The Market Place contains an exceptional collection of listed buildings; enhancing the character of this space with a development scheme that improves upon the present Churchgate Centre should include a scale of building that reflects those around the Market Place. Broadly the larger buildings are of three storeys, or two tall commercial storeys, in the case of the Corn Market. One building to the north side has an attic third storey within a gable. Generally, the buildings fronting onto the market place have a visible roofscape with gables and pitches of roofs visible within the Market Place. These buildings provide a clear reference to scale in terms of height. The buildings to the north side of Market Place are generally larger in scale. There is a clear precedent for a three storey building to occupy the site of the Churchgate Centre, however any replacement structure should follow a similar rhythm to the buildings on the north side of the market and be capable of being read as three separate buildings. The replacement buildings should have variety in materials, fenestration and roofscape to reconstruct the lost rhythm of building plots that formerly occupied this site. An examination of suitable historic maps should indicate the scale of building plots formerly occupying the site.

Development of the remaining area of the Churchgate Centre has the potential to impact upon the setting of significant heritage assets, not least the rear wing of grade II* listed Sun Hotel. At present the provision of servicing for the Churchgate Centre prevents an active frontage of the shopping centre near to the grade II* listed building. A considered redesign of the centre should focus on consolidating and enclosing the servicing, to provide active frontages and where possible to the perimeter of the site.

East of the Sun Hotel and South of the Churchgate Centre is a plot of land that relates to the grade II* listed Sun Hotel. This plot is to the rear of the burgage plot occupied by the hotel. Its development will impact upon the setting of the hotel building. Consideration of the form of development in this area should reflect historic plot boundaries between the Sun Hotel and grade II listed 5 Sun Street, to its south. Development in this area should have a linear form, running east to west, relating to the buildings to either side of the Sun Hotel's courtyard, continuing the linear built form. Buildings to the rear of the Sun Hotel are a generous two storeys with pitched roofs.

The grade II* listed Biggin is separated from the Churchgate Centre by planting to its west, the River Hiz and Biggin Lane. Compared to other assets adjacent to the Churchgate Centre (comprising the Market Place and its listed buildings, the Sun Inn and St Mary's Church), the Churchgate Centre impacts the setting of the Biggin less than the other assets, due to this separation.

East of the Church

Development within the present Hitchin Market area, east of the Churchgate Centre and south of the church, will impact upon the setting of The Biggin that lies to the south of this site. Proposals should respect the alignment of the River Hiz in this area and potentially offer the opportunity to uncover the river, improving the visibility of this historic boundary line. Historically, what is now the carpark east of the church and the area of Hitchin Market east of the River Hiz are a series of plots that would have fronted onto Queen Street with the rear of the plots reaching the River Hiz. Development within this area would need to frame views of the east end of the church from the car park and terrace. Framed views of the east end of the church facing west on Hollow Lane are important for place making and the identity of the town. Development to the east of the church, within the car park should preserve such views.

The formal arrangement of terraces and steps between the car park and the basin containing the River Hiz should be retained, conserved, and upgraded to ensure equal access to all is possible in this area of the town. A view respecting the width of the locally listed steps and terrace should be retained between any proposed buildings to frame the view defined in the Conservation Area Character Statement and additional views from Queen Street and Hollow Lane. Within this part of the town the construction of the steps, terraces and basin containing the river are of heritage significance and are included on the local list; this significance should be recognised in any development.

The proposals supplied by NHDC for this site included buildings of three storeys with a pitched roof including basement car parking and a commercial ground floor level. Proposals for large scale basement construction should be discussed with the Historic Environment (Archaeology) Team at Hertfordshire County Council. The scale of buildings adjacent to The Biggin will need careful consideration. Proposals of this scale reference buildings to the east side of Queen Street and commercial buildings to the north of the proposal site. Adjacent to The Biggin a more reduced scale is suggested that rises as the site advances to the north.

North of the Church

Proposals for new buildings in this part of the site should respect the original historic burgage plot boundaries which have been lost. As with the area south of the church, the properties historically have a linear character that is partially reflected by buildings to the north side of Portmill Lane, including grade II listed 7 and 8 Portmill Lane and the recently constructed hotel and the block of flats presently under construction. Numbers 7-8 Portmill Lane are built of two storeys with an attic; the flats presently under construction are of three storeys with an attic level and the hotel building is of three commercial storeys under a pitched roof. These buildings all directly address the street and rise from the rear of the pavement in Portmill Lane. Any new development within this part of the proposed allocation will need to address both Portmill Lane, to the north and present an attractive frontage south to the church. Any building should reflect the scale of those to the north side of Portmill Lane.



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Appendix A Photographic Gazetteer

Plate 1: Northwest facing photograph showing service range for the 1970s Churchgate shopping centre.



Plate 2: West facing photograph towards the Sun Hotel (Grade II* listed structure). Note Diocletian window, indicating area used historically for assemblies and stable blocks located to the left side of the photograph. Allocation site boundary located at point of short red brick walling, in foreground of photograph.



Plate 3: North facing photograph along Sun Street from the Angel Inn. To note, the narrowing created by the monolithic colonnade created by the entrance to the 1970s Churchgate shopping centre.



Plate 4 North facing photograph taken towards the back range of commercial structure along Churchyard (forming a dead end alley behind the Rose and Crown Inn). Note the prominence of the church tower and spire in the background.



Plate 5: West facing photograph taken from Queen Street towards the proposed allocation site (currently used a municipal parking area) and showing the principal aspect (and key view) of the Grade I Listed St Mary's Church within the town.



Plate 6: north west facing photograph taken from within eastern extent of Hitchin Market (within proposed allocation site), towards Hitchin Market Place. The spire and tower stages of Grade I listed St Mary's Church are visible in background (right) side of photograph.



Plate 7: south west facing photograph taken into the proposed allocation site, showing the locally listed building of the churchyard cloisters and glimpses of the Grade I listed Church.



Plate 8: south west facing photograph taken into the proposed allocation site, showing the locally listed building of the churchyard cloisters and glimpses of the Grade I listed Church.

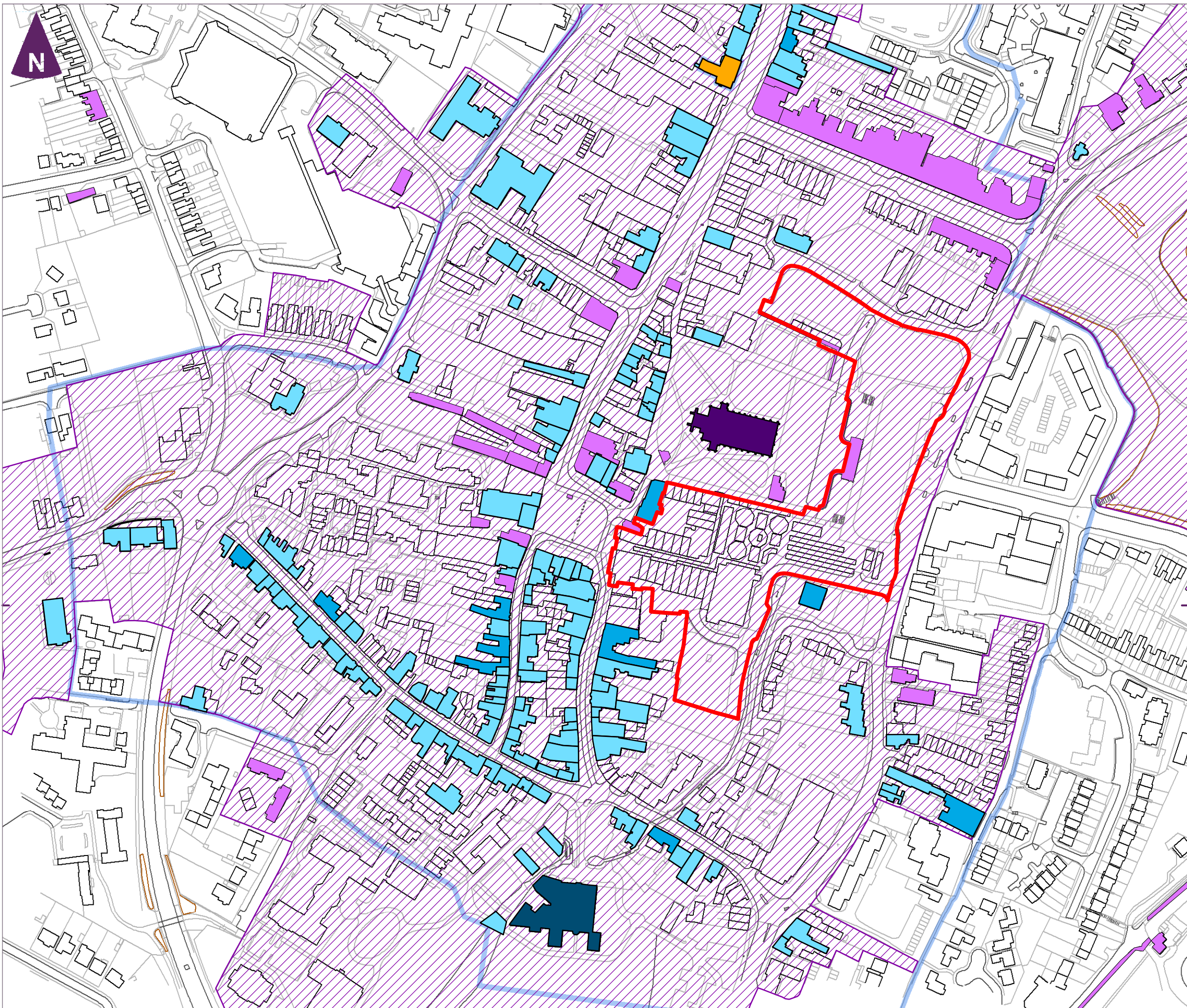


Plate 9: south facing photograph of the Biggin , showing northern elevation.





Appendix B Figures



Key

- Assessment Boundary
- Scheduled Monuments

Listed Buildings

- Grade A
- Grade I
- Grade II*
- Grade II
- Buildings of Local Interest
- Conservation Areas
- Archaeology Areas



Scale at A3: 1:2,500

38368 Hitchin Historic Environment



Historic Environment Figure 1

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Appendix C

HER data tables

Table C1 Designated Heritage Assets located within 250m search of proposed allocation site

Address	Grade	NHLE List Entry Number	Function of structure
Numbers 9-12, Bucklersbury	II	161453	
Former Old Town Hall (now council offices)	II	161440	Council Offices.
Former Library (now part of North Hertfordshire District Council Offices)	II	161439	Former Library, now offices.
Number 20 Market Place	II	161509	House and shop
3 & 4 Bucklersbury	II	161450	House and shop
5 Bucklersbury,	II	161451	House and shop
St. Mary's Church and Churchyard,	I	161476	Church
107 Bancroft	II	161434	House and shop
108 Bancroft	II	161435	House and shop
37 Bucklersbury	II	161469	House and shop
27a, Market Place	II	161513	House and shop
21 Bancroft	II	161411	House
2 Bucklersbury	II	161449	House
24-25, Market Place	II	161512	House and shop
22 Market Place	II	161511	House and shops
20 Market Place	II	161510	House and shop
28 Sun Street	II	161545	Houses and shops
Number 25B-26, Sun Street	II	161544	House and shops
Number 9 Churchyard	II	161481	House and shop
Numbers 6-7, Churchyard	II	161480	House and shop
Number 5 Churchyard	II	161479	House and shop
Number 4 Churchyard	II	161478	House and shop



Address	Grade	NHLE List Entry Number	Function of structure
30a, Bucklersbury	II*	161466	House
24A, Sun Street	II	161543	House and shop
Number 6 Bucklersbury	II	161452	House and shop
2 High Street	II	161488	House and shop
The George, 33 Bucklersbury	II*	161468	House
The Corn Exchange, 31 Market Place	II	161604	Corn Exchange (now P.H.)
13 Bucklersbury	II	161454	House and shop
25 Churchyard	II	161485	Terrace of 5 houses
14 Churchyard	II	161483	House and shop
30 Market Place	II	161514	House and shop
40 Bucklersbury	II	161470	House and shops
7-8, Portmill Lane	II	161522	House pair
19B, Market Place	II	161548	House and shop
Town Hall, Brand Street	II	1394494	
Sun Hotel, Sun Street	II*	161531	Hotel
5 Sun Street	II	161532	Was house, now club
6 Sun Street	II	161533	House and shop
Number 28 Bucklersbury	II	161464	House
Number 16 and 17 Sun Street	II	161540	House and shop
3-4, High Street	II	161489	House and shops
Merricks, 1A, High Street	II	161487	House and shops
Briggs Shoes, 2-2A, Market Place	II	161505	House and shop
Visions, 4 Market Place	II	161506	Inn
St. Marys Tea Room, 1 Churchyard	II	161477	Was vicarage, now shops, store and offices
Number 7 Sun Street	II	161534	House



Address	Grade	NHLE List Entry Number	Function of structure
68 Queen Street	II	161527	Terrace of houses
Keelings, 40 Queen Street	II	161526	House
Hitchin British School Trust, 41 Queen Street	II	161596	Master's House, British Schools.
42 Queen Street	II	161597	House
Park Associates, Roslyn House, 7 Sun Street	II	161535	House and shop
5 Market Place	II	161507	House and shop
Bank Flat, 5-6, High Street	II	161490	House
9 Sun Street	II	161536	House and shop
10-11, Sun Street	II	161537	House and shop
15 Churchyard	II	161484	House and shop
6 Bancroft	II	161406	House
4-5, Bancroft	II	161405	House
Green Hythe 2A, Paynes Park	II	161603	Cottage
4 Brand Street	II	161438	House and shops
121B, Bancroft	II	161436	House and shop
9 Market Place	II*	161508	House and shop
26A, High Street	II	161497	House and shop
8 High Street	II	161491	Inn
22 High Street	II	161496	House and shop
21 High Street	II	161495	House and shop
20A, High Street	II	161494	House
19 High Street	II	161493	House
17 High Street	II	161492	House and shop
10-11, Churchyard	II	161482	House and shop
1 The Biggin	II*	161528	Almshouses
Lincolns, 15 Bucklersbury	II	161455	House and shop



Address	Grade	NHLE List Entry Number	Function of structure
North-Western block	II	161595	
North-Eastern block	II*	420840	
18 Sun Street	II	161541	House and shop
19 Sun Street	II	161542	House and shops
29 Sun Street	II	161546	House and shop
31 Sun Street	II	161547	House and shop
12 Bancroft	II	161407	House and shops
15-17, Bancroft	II	161408	House and shops
17 Bancroft	II	161409	House and shop
21B, Bancroft	II	161411	House and shop
32 Bucklersbury	II	161467	House and shop
Red Hart, 29 Bucklersbury	II*	161465	House

