

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	26/00729/LBC
CASE OFFICER:	HT
APPLICATION SITE:	14 High Street, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 9AG
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Installation of front elevation roller shutter door.

RECOMMENDATION:

I raise an **OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal will harm the listed building's special character and occasion harm to the character or appearance of the Royston Conservation Area. The proposal satisfies the provisions of Sections 16(2) and 72(1) (both) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of para 135(c) and Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on the listed building and upon the character and appearance of Royston Conservation Area.

The proposal will have an adverse impact upon the above designated heritage assets.

SITE CONTEXT:

Nos. 14 & 16 are grade II listed and are located within the Royston Conservation Area. Both the building and the area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF. The list entry can be found at the following link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1174467?section=official-list-entry>



DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

The submitted Heritage Statement says:

The site lies within the historic High Street of Royston, contributing to a coherent and traditionally developed townscape of heritage value.

The front elevation makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the High Street.

The ground floor frontage is particularly sensitive due to its visibility and contribution to the streetscape.

This listed building forms part of a collective group of listed buildings. Individually these buildings are significant in terms of their history and differing architectural styles. The property has an C18 red brick front with C19 altered shopfront (see below left) and is in-keeping with its historic surroundings, thereby, preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of adjacent listed buildings. The significance of the listed building comprises its date of construction, shopfront, and the contribution of the building to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is noted that opposite at what was once Godshaws jewellers is now Chloe's Jewellers and the shopfront has also been painted black. It looks as though a solid shutter may have been installed.



Whilst there are examples of other external roller shutters in the RCA only the shutter to 'Tres Belle Jewellers' relates to a listed building; the others relate to unlisted buildings and for which I could find no planning permission. The image immediately below of 'Moreno's Café' has according to Google Maps had a shutter / grille since 2008. A Google Maps The image from 2008 shows a grille device allowing what was vacant ground floor to be viewed through the grille. The image of 'Tres Belle Jewellers' shows the shutter down (according to Google Maps this premises has had a roller shutter since at least 2008).



Another shutter exists down from Moreno's Café (above right) whilst the image below shows a more acceptable security device.



For comparison with another two centre conservation area, if walking down Churchyard, Hitchin several examples of external grille/mesh 'shutters' can be found and their permeable construction allows the shop frontages to be seen i.e. a semi-active rather than passive streetscene.



The proposed elevations indicate the following:



PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION WITH
ROLLER SHUTTER CLOSED. 1:50.



PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION WITH
ROLLER SHUTTER OPEN. 1:50.

If the roller shutter is in an up position, it would be obscured to an extent behind the existing fascia and has no perceivable impact on its surroundings. However, when the roller shutter is lowered it fills the entirety of the shop front, covering the shop frontage including its display windows and infilling the recessed shop doorway, creating a largely obscured, flat, semi-industrial appearance to the frontage of the shop. It is complementary to the host building in that it would be painted black. Rather than preserving the character and appearance of the surrounding conservation area and the setting of adjacent listed buildings, when down, it would detract from both.

Whilst the roller shutters are only ever in a down position outside of opening hours when footfall may be less, this does not negate the harm caused. During the hours when it is

closed, the shutter would cover the shopfront providing an, essentially, blank frontage to the street, further reducing the relationship between the street and the shop behind. The incongruity of this modern shopfront within this historic centre would be harmful and whilst activity from a nighttime economy would be less, significance in respect of heritage assets is not dependent on the numbers of people visiting them.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Sections 16(2) & 72(1)

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

Policy HE1

The Royston Shop Front Design Guide (1998) is a supplementary planning document produced by North Hertfordshire District Council. Initially thought to be revoked, I am aware that at Cabinet in July 2017, it was reported that the following SPGs were to be reviewed and consolidated into a single revised Design SPD.

- SPG11: Design guide for a shopfront in Baldock
- SPG12: Design guide for a shopfront in Hitchin
- SPG13: Design guide for a shopfront in Letchworth
- SPG14: Design guide for a shopfront in Royston

SPG14 referred to the following:

History

*Royston town centre is based on the original medieval street pattern comprising a number of island blocks of development which are thought to have originated from market stalls gradually made into permanent buildings. **The centre retains much of its historic character, its designation as a Conservation Area and the wealth of buildings which have been "Listed" as being of architectural or historic importance is testament to its quality.** Generally there is a uniformity of scale and building materials giving the town a pleasant, intimate quality which is one of its attractions to visitors.*

f Security

*Where there is a need to increase the security of shop in the Conservation Area or on a Listed Building, security measures may be permitted. **On Listed Buildings, external steel roller shutters are generally unsuitable** and traditional timber shuttered, laminated glass and internal chain-link screens are modern alternatives. Traditional stallrisers are an effective deterrent to "ram-raiders", as are small shop windows between masonry piers. These considerations should also be the first approach to designs for non-listed buildings, particularly where they are related to historic buildings and/or important street scenes. **Exceptionally, where external shutters may be considered, they must be sensitively designed in relation to the building and the street scene.** For non-listed buildings in the Conservation Area external security shutters will be permitted provided they are sensitively designed.*

NPPF (December 2024):

The following paragraphs are relevant:

- **135 c)** (sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment),
- **207** (local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting)
- **210** (desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness),

- **212** (*great weight should be given to the asset's conservation*),
- **213** (*clear and convincing justification*), and
- **215** (*harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*).

CONCLUSION:

In my opinion the harm identified would be 'less than substantial' in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework para 208. Such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the roller shutter. The roller shutters in question are no doubt an effective security measure, deterring crime, vandalism, and antisocial behaviour. The roller shutter protects the shop front thereby preserving local character reducing adverse impacts on trading. Nevertheless, alternative options for security, such as an internal grille, which may be more sympathetic to the historic surroundings, and which maintain the existing shop front, are not considered here. In this case, therefore, the public benefits do not outweigh the less than substantial harm I have found. Consequently, I find the proposal **OBJECTIONABLE**.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 28/05/2026