

North Herts District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JF

Our Reference: 145011

5 September 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

**Orchard Day Nursery, Church Street, 32a Kneesworth Street, Royston
– Application for Advertisement Consent and Listed Building Consent**

Verve Planning
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Reg no. 11491335

We are pleased to submit on behalf of Orchard Day Nursery Ltd an application for advertisement consent to display signage on the front boundary walls of the property along with an application for Listed Building Consent to affix the signage to the walls.

The applications have been submitted concurrently and collectively comprise the following:

- The completed application forms and ownership certificates;
- Site Location and Block Plan – Drawing 189-01
- Proposed Block Plan – Drawing 189-02
- Existing Part Plan and Elevations – Drawing 189-03
- Proposed Part Plan and Elevations – Drawing 189-04
- Signage Details – Drawing 189-05
- Planning and Heritage Statement (this letter)

The application fee of £168 (£85 plus service charge) has been paid via the planning portal payment scheme in respect of the advert consent application.

These applications respond to a request from Enforcement officers to address breaches of planning control at the site (24/00038/1ENF). The two signs affixed to the front gates have been removed. The applications for advert consent and listed building consent therefore relate to the two remaining signs on the front wall of the premises.

The Application Site

The nursery is located on the west side of the Kneesworth Road in Royston and is set back from the road frontage. The site is a grade II listed building, known as the Former United Reformed Church, (list entry number 1347642), first listed on 11th June 1976.

The site is also within the historic core of Royston town centre designated in 1969 as a Conservation Area. Both are designated heritage assets.

The surrounding area is a mix of residential and commercial uses with many of the surrounding buildings being separately listed, including on the opposite side of the street. See google image of site over page.



Streetview image of site looking westwards (2023)

The Proposed Development

These applications are for the retention of two small low-level signs advertising the nursery which are affixed to the walls each side of the entrance. The first (Sign 1) is on the chamfered southern wall to replace a previous sign (seen in the above photo). The second sign (Sign 2) is positioned on the northern wall facing the street.



Sign 1



Sign 2

Further details of the location, size, materials, appearance, etc of the proposed signage is contained within the application forms and on the drawings prepared by Sharp Architectural Services.

Planning History

A summary of the planning history available on the council's online planning database is as follows:

- 82/00574/1 - Erection of external fire escape staircase – Conditional Permission 01/06/1982
- 82/00628/1LB - Application for Listed Building Consent for erection of external fire escape staircase – Withdrawn 21/05/1982
- 83/00701/1 - Change of use to public local authority museum with associated meeting room for up to 50 persons – Conditional Permission 06/07/1983
- 83/01696/1 - Internal alterations to facilitate use as architects studio and offices – Consent 08/12/1983
- 83/01695/1 - Change of use of former church to architects' studio and offices with ancillary car parking – Conditional Permission 08/12/1983

- 85/00075/1 - Retention of metal entrance arch to car park – Conditional Permission 14/03/1985
- 86/00070/1 - Erection of first floor rear extension – Conditional Permission 13/03/1986
- 86/00071/1LB - Erection of first floor rear extension – Consent 10/04/1986
- 20/02744/LDCE – Use of premises as offices (Use Class E (former Use Class B1A)) Approved 13/02/2021
- 21/00127/LBC – Internal alterations (as amended by drawing no. 392SK03 A) Approved 15/03/2021
- 23/01614/LBC - Retention of internal alterations (as a variation to listed building consent ref: 21/00127/LBC granted on 15/03/2021) and partial removal of existing curtilage-listed boundary wall followed by its rebuild in brick and blockwork

Planning Policy Context

The Development Plan for the area comprises the North Herts Local Plan (2022). The Policies Map indicates the site is within the Royston Conservation Area and Royston Town Centre.

In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) are important material considerations along with the Royston Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2007).

Planning and Heritage Assessment

Adverts

Paragraph 141 of the NPPF 2024 states that ‘Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts’. At the local level, Policy D1 and T1 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to ensure that signs and advertisements respect amenity and public safety.

The proposed signs are of a high-quality design and choice of material which will complement the wall façade. There has been a history of advertisements placed in a similar position to those proposed. They are placed at low level and are modest in size with no illumination and are inobtrusive in their location to ensure that they respect visual amenity and character of the area (see below heritage assessment).

Neither of the proposed signs would cause a hazard to public or highway safety.

As such the proposed signs fully accord with the advice contained with the NPPF and policies D1 and T1 of the Local Plan with respect to advertisements.

Heritage

Paragraph 207 of the NPPF advises that applicants should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

At the local level, Policy HE1 of the adopted Local Plan advises that proposals should incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness. The supporting text advises that the Council will provide guidance for shopfront design and advertising within conservation areas to encourage high quality design and enhance the character and significance of conservation areas.

Church House (No.32a) is part of a group listing with Nos 28 to 36 (even) Kneesworth Street, Yard Wall and Nos 36 and 36A and Nos 1 and 3 Lower King Street. The listing description states:

*(Formerly listed as United Reformed Church, KNEESWORTH STREET (west side))
GV II Early to mid C19. Yellow brick, Neo-classical style. Gabled front has four tall Doric pilasters, central round arched panel with arch springing from simplified entablatures over pilasters and flanking panels. Central doorway has panelled two fold door, oblong fanlight with geometrical glazing bars, cambered arch. Sash window above, round arched with glazing bars.*

The Significance of Listed Building lies with its historical use as a church and meeting place along with the architectural features of the front gable with its simple neo-classical style and gault bricks, central arch with arched window along with the central vista of the building. Internally the building is largely characterised by the double height void in the central hall of the building.

There are also adjoining listed building at No.32 and 34 Kneesworth Street and opposite at 31, 35, 37,41 Kneesworth Street. Nos 32 and 34 are of a similar character and style to Church House, although No.34 is imposing in the streetscene and to the setting of Church House.

The Royston Conservation Area Appraisal (2007) indicates that its significance is as follows:

Royston has a high quality townscape owing significantly to the concentration of many fine historic buildings. The character of the area is principally defined as urban with a good mix of commercial and residential properties.

The Appraisal also states at paragraph 3.39 that':

The Congregational Church is set back from the street within a front churchyard, now converted for car parking. It is situated on the western side of the street between nos.32 and 34. It dates to the early to mid 19th century and is constructed in gault bricks with a slate roof.

Section 4 of this document discusses the characteristics and features that are important to the special interest of the conservation area. This includes:

4.11 The classical character of most frontage buildings either constructed or re-fronted in the 18th and 19th centuries. The symmetry and detail of these buildings and the vertical emphasis of sliding sash windows.

4.20 Boundary walls linking or fronting buildings within the street scene and following the building line and the strong use of flint and clunch to boundary walls and building construction.

Assessment

It is commonplace for businesses to display signage advertising the business use in town centre locations. In this regard, there has been a history of business signage on the front walls of the property. Most recently, this includes a similar sized sign to that proposed on the chamfered part of the left boundary wall and a smaller metal sign with the building name on the right wall. These are shown in the submitted drawings.



When viewed from the south the view of the front walls is as seen in the streetview image (2023), left.

In this vista the left-hand sign on the chamfered wall is not visible and the right-side wall sign is only briefly glimpsed due to its understated appearance.

The vista from the opposite direction is shown below. In this vista, it is only when close to the site that the signage is visible.



The direct view of Church House and its vista is seen below, taken from Google Streetview:



Whilst both signs would be visible in foreground of this vista, there would be no impairment of the view of Church House as a result of the proposals or any harm the classical character of the building or its symmetrical design. There would be a change to the boundary wall in as much as it would contain some business signage, but the fixings are so modest in nature that they would not harm the physical structure of the

wall and the low-level signs have a modest scale, form, appearance which would not be out of keeping with this business use. In our view they would not have a detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the area (being in a town centre), or cause harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets or their setting identified above.

As such, the proposals would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and special interest of the Listed Buildings and their setting. The proposal therefore complies with statutory duty, Policies D1 and HE1 of the Local Plan, and the NPPF.

Conclusions

For the reasons set out above, we consider that these applications should be supported by the Council.

We look forward to receiving confirmation of receipt and validation of the applications at the earliest possible opportunity.

Yours faithfully

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Helen Greenhalgh.

Helen Greenhalgh

Enc As listed on page 1
cc: Josh Woolley, Kindred Education Limited