

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Vicki Wood.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/02696/FP	Raise existing roof ridge height and replace existing slate roof coverings with fibre cement slates and flush mounted photovoltaic panels following removal of existing roof vent.	The Old School House 4 Market Hill Royston Hertfordshire SG8 9JL

Submitted Plan Nos

19-010-A-001 19-010-A-005 19-010-A-006

1.0 Policies

1.0 **Local and National Policy**

1.1 **National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF)**

Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development

Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Section 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

1.2 **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (NHLP)**

Strategic Policies

Policy SP1 – Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2 – Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution

Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability

Policy SP13 – Historic environment

Development Management Policies

Policy D1 – Sustainable Design

Policy D3 – Protecting living conditions

Policy ETC5 – Secondary Shopping Frontages

Policy HE1 – Designated heritage assets

Policy HE4 – Archaeology

Policy SP4 – Town Centres

2.0 **Relevant Site History**

2.1 00/01684/1 - Change of use from retail to cafe and meeting room with ancillary facilities. Conditional Permission.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Press, Site and Neighbour Consultation** – None received.

3.2 **Royston Town Council** – No objection.

3.3 **HCC Archaeology** – Development likely to impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest. Conditions recommended re: interventions to the fabric of the building.

3.4 **NHC Conservation Officer** – Objection based on degree of less than substantial harm.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The building occupies a prominent position south of The Old Court House to the north and is situated between the parallel streets known as Market Hill and Fish Hill in the Royston Conservation Area. A distinct feature of part of the building is its steep pitched roof with gable end's fronting both Hill's. The elevation fronting Fish Hill is predominantly single storey. As a result of the steep roof height, longer views of the building and its roof slope can be seen from Market Hill to the west, north and south and from Fish Hill to the east and south. Both elevations benefit from original yellow

brickwork with an attractive red brick feature design to the eaves and other elements of the design construction.

4.1.2 History shows the building was formerly an old schoolhouse and is within the Royston Conservation Area and is designated as a Building of Local Interest (BLI) on the Register for Royston dated 27th March 2007. The BLI entry states: *'Former Royston National School, Fish Hill The National School was built in 1886 for the children of Church of England families of Royston. It is a flint building with gault brick dressings and chimneys. Its location between Fish Hill and Market Hill results in it fronting and contributing to both streets. The school provides a strong building line to both streets and has an enclosed courtyard facing onto Market Hill. The angled chimneys in gault brickwork at regular positions along the eaves make a particular architectural contribution. The use of flint is a characteristic within the town and is emphasised on the building's Market Hill elevation.'* The reason for inclusion on the BLI Register stating: *'Building of local interest to the social and educational history of the town constructed in local materials strongly characteristic of the town.'*

4.1.3 The application site is within the settlement boundary for Royston where development is generally acceptable subject to planning policy.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 Raise existing roof ridge height and replace existing slate roof coverings with fibre cement slates and flush mounted photovoltaic panels following removal of existing roof vent.

4.2.2 The application is accompanied by a Design and Heritage Statement dated 26th November 2024.

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:

- The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its resultant impact on the character and appearance of the BLI and the Royston Conservation Area.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the living conditions of neighbouring properties.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the environment.

Design, Appearance and Impact on the Conservation Area:

4.3.2 Within a Conservation Area, the Council has a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, in accordance with Section 72 of the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act (1990). Furthermore, Section 16 of the NPPF sets out guidance relating to sustaining and enhancing heritage assets. In this regard, Policy HE1 of the NHLP is consistent with the NPPF.

4.3.3 When considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset (such as a Conservation Area), the NPPF notes that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation; the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.

4.3.4 The objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include those seeking to secure the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and

places (Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places). Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that “*Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities*”. In this regard, Policy D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan are consistent with the objectives set out within the NPPF. In terms of impact on heritage assets within a Conservation Area, the Council has a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, in accordance with Section 72 of the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act (1990). Furthermore, Section 16 of the NPPF sets out guidance relating to sustaining and enhancing heritage assets. In this regard, Policy HE1 of the Local Plan is consistent with the NPPF.

4.3.5 The Design and Heritage Statement states that ‘*In order to ensure the continued viability of the building and prevent the building deteriorating the applicants have decided to replace the existing roof finishes and, to improve the suitability of the building, introduce flush mounted photovoltaic panels whilst carrying out the re-roofing works.*’ In order to facilitate the proposed works, the development includes raising the existing roof ridge height of the high-level roof. The works would involve the installation of insulation between the existing rafters following the removal of the existing roof finishes. It is understood that the proposed insulation would complement the existing insulation already installed under the rafters. To allow for the proposed insulation, the works would require the ridge height of the existing high-level roof to be increased by approximately 21cm. In general terms, I raise no objection to the principle of an increase in the ridge height as this is considered to be of minimal impact and less than substantial harm at the medium to high end of that continuum if the existing detailing is to be recreated and therefore harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As a result of the likely inability to replicate the existing detailing, I find the proposed alteration to increase the ridge height of the high-level building to be inappropriate and unacceptable and contrary to Policies D1 and HE1 of the Local Plan and Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF for the reasons stated.

4.3.6 In addition, the development would involve the removal of the existing slate roof covering and its replacement with a modern cement based imitation tile. No justification has been submitted to evidence the reason(s) as to why the existing slates could not be re-used with limited matching replacements where necessary. The existing slate roof covering is part of the historic fabric of the building and contributes highly, in my view, to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. I therefore find the replacement roof tiles to be inappropriate and unacceptable and contrary to Policies D1 and HE1 of the Local Plan and Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF for the reasons stated.

4.3.7 The final aspect of the development would include the installation of a number of photovoltaic solar panels to the southeast facing roof slope of the high-level building. The panels are shown to be integrated within the proposed roof structure and would therefore display a flush external finish. Given the longer views of the roof slope from a southeast point in Market Hill and Fish Hill, I am of the view that the proposed panels would be highly visible from the public domain and would sit at the less than substantial medium to high end of the continuum. I therefore find the installation of the proposed panels to be inappropriate and unacceptable due to the fact that the harm would outweigh the public benefit. I therefore find the replacement roof tiles to be inappropriate and unacceptable and contrary to Policies D1 and HE1 of the Local Plan and Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF for the reasons stated.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties:

- 4.3.8 A core planning principle set out in the NPPF is to always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. This principle is reflected in the provisions of Policy D3 of the NHLP.
- 4.3.9 No objections have been received from neighbouring properties, and I am satisfied that any impact to existing residential amenity would not be increased as a result of the development and so complies with Policy D3 of the Local Plan and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Highways and Parking:

- 4.3.10 The development does not have any impact on highway safety or parking.

Archaeology

- 4.3.11 When considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset (such as archaeology), the NPPF (Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) notes that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation; the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. In this regard, Policy HE4 of the Local Plan is consistent with the NPPF.
- 4.3.12 The proposed works are likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest as a result of the interventions to the fabric of the building and is contrary to Policy HE4 of the Local Plan and Section 16 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.3.13 The proposed development is considered 'de minimis' and would not exceed the threshold of 25 sqm of on-site habitat, or and/less than 5 meters of linear habitats. This application is therefore exempt from BNG legislation defined under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Environmental Implications:

- 4.3.14 Section 14 of the NPPF sets out how the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. The principles set out in Section 14 are reflected in Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan, which sets out that development proposal should take all reasonable opportunities to reduce energy consumption and waste, retain existing vegetation and propose new appropriate planting, and future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle.
- 4.3.14 The proposed installation of photovoltaic panels would make a positive contribution towards energy savings and the proposed insulation would be likely to improve the overall energy efficiency of the building, however, whilst the development may comply with the broad requirements of Section 14 of the NPPF, para 167 also requires development to accord with other planning policies and in particular Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy D1 of the Local Plan which, in my view, the proposal fails to do for the reasons evidenced.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 The proposed development is considered unacceptable and fails to comply with Policies SP1, SP9, SP13, D1, D3, HE1 and HE4 of the NHLP 2011-2031 and Sections 2, 12, 14 and 16 of the NPPF 2024.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

4.5.1 N/A

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

4.6.1 N/A

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. The proposed increase in ridge height to the high-level roof and the resulting external finishing detail to the gable end elevations of the building, the loss of original slate tiles and replacement with unsympathetic cement fibre tiles and installation of photovoltaic panels, by reason of its design, would result in an unsympathetic alterations to the existing building resulting in a detrimental impact upon on the character and appearance of the building and the Royston Conservation Area. No public benefits would outweigh the harm identified to the heritage asset. The proposed development would fail to comply with Policies D1 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and Section's 12 and 16 of the NPPF 2024.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been refused for this proposal for the clear reasons set out in this decision notice. The Council acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant in an attempt to narrow down the reasons for refusal but fundamental objections could not be overcome. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Sam Dicocco Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 11 April 2025	