



Development and Conservation,
North Hertfordshire District Council,
PO Box 10613,
Nottingham,
NG6 6DH

Date: 20th May 2025
Our ref: 19/010/A/mc
Your ref:

Dear Sirs

**RE: PLANNING AND CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT APPLICATION FOR REROOFING
WORKS AT THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE, 4 MARKET HILL, ROYSTON,
HERTFORDSHIRE. SG8 9JL**

Please be advised that we have, today, submitted a Planning and Conservation Area Consent Application for the reroofing of the above property using the Planning Portal. For the sake of clarity, the application comprises the following information:

- This Covering Letter (including Design and Heritage Statement)
- The Application Form
- The Application fee of £298.00 which has been paid to the Planning Portal and will be forwarded to you in due course
- Drawings
 - 19/010/A/001 – Location and Block Plans
 - 19/010/A/005 – EXISTING – Plans and Elevations
 - 19/010/A/006 A – PROPOSED – Plans and Elevations
- Product Information: Cedral 'Rivendale' Fibre Slate Roofing.

Design and Heritage Statement:

The Old School House (4 Market Hill)

The Old School house comprises part of the Former Royston National School which was built in 1886 for the children of Church of England families of Royston and is classed, by North Hertfordshire District Council, as a Building of Local Historic Interest.

The building comprises two distinct elements; the part of the application site which fronts Fish Hill is predominantly a single storey flint building with gault brick dressings, chimneys and a small bell tower whilst the remainder comprises a tall, gable ended, building in yellow brick with red feature brickwork which fronts both Fish Hill and Market Hill.

The Conservation Area Townscape Analysis dating from March 2017 states that:

"...Fish Hill (named after the fish market originally held there) and Market Hill are parallel streets situated to the east of the High Street. The streets are relatively narrow, creating an intimate character which is maintained for the length of Fish Hill, however, Market Hill is tapered in shape and becomes wider as the hill rises to the south and then opens into

the Market Place. The Market Place is at a lower level than the A10, which separates the Market Place from The Boars Head and The Green Man public houses which are on the south side of Market Hill and close the view at the top of the Market Place. There is also an open space at the bottom of the hill to the North enclosed by buildings of mixed age and appearance...

...Royston National School Building (1886-1944) is situated behind the Old Court building between the two streets. It is a single storey flint building with regularly positioned chimneys situated close the eaves. The School provides a strong building line to both Fish Hill and Market Hill and has an enclosed courtyard facing onto Market Hill..."

The Brief:

The Applicants have carried out significant internal improvements in recent years to facilitate the use of the building as a community asset with various local groups, charities and businesses making use of the facilities, however, the existing fibre cement roofing slates on both parts of The Old School House are well overdue for replacement and there are now signs of significant water ingress internally, particularly in the Meeting Hall.

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 reroofing works.

The Challenge:

Approved Document Part L2 of the current Building Regulations states that any existing thermal elements being renovated (or renewed) should meet minimum 'limiting' standards with regards thermal performance. The require minimum standard for roofs in existing buildings of this type is 0.18w/m2K.

The existing single storey block along Fish Hill has had the thermal performance of its external walls improved and some insulation introduced under the existing roof structure during a previous internal refurbishment but its roof only achieves a U-value of 0.258 w/m2K. the roof of the Meeting Hall is uninsulated and achieves a U-value of 1.536 w/m2K.

The single storey flint building which was previously the Royston National School Building has, at some stage, been sub-divided with part of that building being occupied by the adjacent Dentist Practice and part being within the application site and, therefore, any roof replacement works must ensure that the existing roof plane is preserved. This will require any additional insulation to be introduced between and under the existing rafters, an approach which was anticipated during the previous refurbishment works with insulation being introduced to the underside of the rafters.

The roof over the Meeting Hall is unaffected by any adjacent roofs and, therefore, is not constrained in the same way as the lower-level roof and it is, therefore, possible to introduce insulation either between and below the existing rafters as in the lower building or over and between the existing rafters.

Internally this part of the building benefits from exposed collar tied timber roof trusses and diagonal timber boarding fixed to the underside of the existing rafters, all of which contributes to the historic character of the building.

Installing insulation below and between these rafters would result in the removal of the timber boarding and the partial obscuring of the trusses whilst insulating over and between the same rafters would preserve these elements but would result in an increase in the height of the existing roof.

The solution:

The solution to the requirement to thermally upgrade the roof to the single-storey building along Fish Hill is dictated by the nature of the building itself and the fact that The Applicants do not have control over the whole of the original building.

These constraints limit the options to those articulated above and, therefore, it is proposed to introduce insulation between the existing rafters, once the existing roof finishes have been removed, to complement the insulation which has already been placed under the rafters and allow the replacement roof finishes to continue within the same plane as the existing finishes of the adjoining part of the building.

This approach will improve the U-value of this part of the thermal envelope from 1.536 w/m²K to 0.134 w/m²K which is substantially better than the required 'limiting' U-value stated in Approved Document Part L2.

The preferred solution for the high-level roof over the Meeting Hall is driven by the desire to preserve the visibility of the existing historic fabric inside the building.

Whilst this will require an increase to the ridge height of the existing building, it is our view that the increase is minor considering the overall height of the existing building and will not result in an adverse impact upon the character of the building nor the surrounding conservation area.

This approach will improve the U-value of this part of the thermal envelope from 0.258 w/m²K to 0.159 w/m²K which is better than the required 'limiting' U-value stated in Approved Document Part L2.

Policy Context:

Policy D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 states that:

"Planning permission will be granted provided that development proposals:

- a) Respond positively to the site's local context;*
- b) Take all reasonable opportunities, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme, to:
 - i. create or enhance public realm;*
 - ii. optimise the potential of the site by incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);*
 - iii. reduce energy consumption and waste;*
 - iv. retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new planting;*
 - v. maximise accessibility, legibility and physical and social connectivity both internally and with neighbouring areas;*
 - vi. future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle;*
 - vii. design-out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour; and*
 - viii. minimise the visual impact of street furniture and parking provision;**
- c) Have regard to the Design SPD, and any other relevant guidance;*
- d) Within Letchworth Garden City have regard to the Letchworth Garden City Design Principles contained in Appendix 5; and*
- e) For residential schemes, meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and optional water efficiency standards."*

We believe that the proposed works respond positively to the site's local context and are sympathetic to the appearance of the existing building. In addition, the scheme seeks to reduce

energy consumption and waste (b iii) and has regard to the Sustainability SPD produced by the LPA (c). The other paragraphs of this policy are not relevant to these proposals.

Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 states that:

“Planning applications relating to Designated heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement that:

- i. Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting;*
- ii. Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the*
- iii. significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and*
- iv. Informs any necessary measures to minimise or mitigate against*
- v. any identified harms.*

Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable):

- a) Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;*
- b) Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and*
- c) Will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset’s optimum viable use.*

Where substantial harm to, or loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset is proposed the Council shall refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.”

This letter addresses the requirement for applications of this nature to provide a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement.

The scheme has been designed to enable the existing locally listed building to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance by reducing the cost of heating the main hall and will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset (conservation area) with the public benefit being the preservation of the existing building and its continuing use as a community asset for the long term.

The proposed roof slates are a direct like for like replacement for the existing, degraded, fibre cement roof slates and the brickwork required to build up the existing gable detailing will be selected to match the existing feature brickwork. In our opinion these new materials constitute an appropriate palette of materials.

It has already been established, during consultation with the Conservation Officer regarding the previous application, that the lifting of the main roof and the associated brickwork would constitute ‘less than significant harm’ and there is clearly a public benefit in retaining this building in a sustainable, community focussed use.

Paragraphs 9.2 and 9.3 of North Herts District Council’s Sustainability SPD states that:

“The NPPF (para. 164) states that LPAs “should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights).

Where proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings or other relevant designated heritage assets, the NPPF requires the consideration of additional

considerations as set out in Chapter 16 of the NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment)."

Whilst Paragraph 209 of the NPPF states that:

"The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset."

The application site is not a Listed Building, however, we recognise that as a Building of Local Interest The Old School House has an important role to play in the story of the social and educational history of the town.

In choosing the proposed roofing materials we have selected a modern roof slate which combines modern slate technology with the look of a natural slate which, in our opinion, is a visual and technical improvement on the existing fibre cement slate.

The proposed approach to introducing insulation over the existing high-level roof will have an impact upon the gable ends of the Meeting Hall part of the building, increasing both gables by approximately 210mm (3 courses of brick). It is proposed that the existing red feature brickwork along the gable edge of the roof be extended in brickwork selected to match the existing with the verge of the roof being reinstated as the existing detail. Any cut bricks in the existing detail will be removed with the new brickwork being toothed into the existing.

Planning History:

A Planning Application for a similar scheme with the addition of flush mounted Photovoltaic Panels was submitted to the Local Planning Authority on 26th November 2024 (ref: 24/02696/FP).

Comments were received from the Conservation Officer which stated that:

"There is an objection to the installation of the pv panels on the flank roof as this is considered to cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area by changing the appearance of the roof."

There is no objection to the raising of the ridge height as this is minimal and will not cause harm...."

"...The proposed PV panels are considered to cause harm to the character of the conservation area as they would be visible from both Market Hill and Fish Hill. Although there are intermediate buildings which may reduce the visual impact the expanse of the proposed pv panels overall the proposed will not enhance the character of the conservation area. Any development should seek to enhance or better reveal the character and appearance."

There is no objection to the raising of the roof ridge to accommodate internal insulation as this is considered to be of minimal impact and not have a negative impact of the character and/or significance of the conservation area and building of local interest..."

Despite further representations the application was subsequently refused on 11th April 2025 with the following reason for refusal:

"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 alteration 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."

This revised application removes the proposed Photovoltaic Panels to address the objection raised by The Conservation Officer.

Conclusion:

The applicants are aware of their responsibilities to maintain and preserve The Old School House as a heritage asset of local significance within Royston and, faced with the immediate need to replace the existing roof coverings to ensure that further water ingress does not occur, have sought to balance the technical and legislative requirements around the replacement of the roof coverings with the need to ensure that any proposed works do not have an unacceptable impact upon the historic character of the building and the wider Conservation Area.

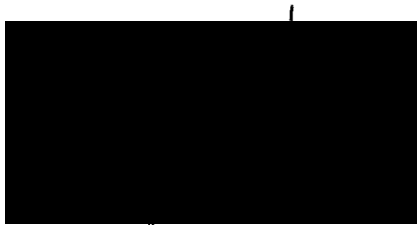
The proposed works to the lower-level building are of little visual impact with additional insulation being introduced to meet the technical requirements of the Building Regulations without the need to alter the external appearance of the building.

The proposed alterations to the high-level roof strike a sensible balance between minimising the impact upon the appearance of the non-designated heritage asset, particularly internally, and the character of the Conservation Area with the need to replace the failed roof covering whilst achieving appropriate levels of insulation and improving the sustainability of the building as a whole.

We trust that you will share our view of the proposed works and granted Planning Permission in due course.

Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact us using the details at the top of this letter.

Yours faithfully



Mark Cotton BA (arch); Dip Arch. RIBA Chartered Architect

Director
For and on behalf of

architecture & design services ltd.

