



Heritage Statement

Princes Mews, Royston



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Assessment of significance and impact on a non-designated heritage asset within the
Royston Conservation Area

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Executive Summary

- This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment of the existing surface car park at Princes Mews, Royston, to provide six three-bedroom townhouses.
- The site lies within the Royston Conservation Area and is located close to a number of Grade II listed buildings along King Street, including the listed outbuilding to the rear of No. 47 King Street.
- The application site occupies a historic backland position within the medieval urban block, historically associated with the rear service areas of the long burgage plots extending behind King Street and Baldock Street.
- Although the site's historic location remains legible, its significance has been substantially diminished through twentieth-century redevelopment, and the existing surface car park makes only a limited positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- The assessment has considered the significance of the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework, and Historic England guidance.
- The proposals have been informed by a heritage-led design process, responding to the site's historic urban grain, backland character and relationship with the surrounding historic townscape.
- The layout, scale, massing, roof forms and material palette have been designed to reinforce the established character of Princes Mews whilst remaining subordinate to the historic King Street frontage.
- The redevelopment would replace an underused area of hardstanding with a well-designed residential scheme that reinstates enclosure, improves the appearance of the site and better reflects the historic pattern of development.
- The proposals would preserve the significance and setting of nearby Grade II listed buildings, including their group value, principal public views and relationship with the surrounding historic townscape.
- The development would preserve the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area, reinforcing the historic urban morphology without competing with the architectural prominence of the surrounding heritage assets.
- The scheme would deliver a number of heritage and wider public benefits, including the enhancement of a degraded backland site, improved townscape quality, increased landscaping and the provision of housing within a sustainable location.
- Overall, the proposed development represents a well-considered, heritage-led redevelopment that preserves the significance of designated heritage assets and accords with the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, national planning policy and the heritage policies of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Report

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Squire Heritage Consulting in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment of the existing car park at Princes Mews, Royston, to provide six three-bedroom townhouses.

The purpose of this report is to identify and assess the significance of the heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals, including the Royston Conservation Area and nearby Grade II listed buildings, and to evaluate the likely effect of the development upon their significance. In doing so, the report demonstrates how the proposals have been informed by an understanding of the historic environment and whether they preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of neighbouring listed buildings.

The assessment has been prepared in accordance with the statutory duties contained within Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which require special regard to be paid to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings and special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

The report also has regard to the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and Historic England's published guidance on the conservation and management of the historic environment. In addition, the assessment has been informed by the heritage policies of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and the Royston Conservation Area Character Statement.

The report adopts a proportionate, heritage-led approach, considering the significance of the site and its surroundings before assessing the impact of the proposals. Its objective is to demonstrate that the proposed development represents a well-designed and appropriate form of redevelopment that preserves the significance of nearby heritage assets while making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.

1.2 Scope

This Heritage Statement provides a proportionate assessment of the heritage implications of the proposed development at Princes Mews, Royston. The scope of the report is focused on those heritage assets whose significance may be affected by the proposals, either directly or through changes to their setting.

The assessment considers the contribution made by the application site to the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area, with particular regard to its backland location, existing use as a car park, relationship with the historic street frontages of King Street and Baldock Street, and its role within the wider historic townscape.

The report also considers the setting of nearby listed buildings, principally those located on King Street and within the immediate surroundings of the site. The assessment identifies the elements of their setting that contribute to their significance, including historic plot boundaries, rear yards, roofscape, townscape enclosure and the relationship between principal street frontages and secondary service areas.

The report assesses the significance of the relevant heritage assets and the contribution made by the existing site to that significance. It then considers the likely heritage impacts of the proposed development, including effects arising from layout, scale, massing, roof form, materials, detailing, views, townscape character and the historic urban grain.

The assessment is therefore concerned with whether the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, preserve the setting and significance of nearby listed buildings, and represent an appropriate form of development within this sensitive historic townscape context.

1.3 Methodology

This Heritage Statement has been prepared following a site inspection and a programme of documentary research to establish the historic development of the application site, identify the heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals, and assess their significance in accordance with current legislation, planning policy and best practice guidance.

A site visit was undertaken to inspect the application site and its surroundings, enabling an assessment of the character of the Conservation Area, the relationship between the site and nearby listed buildings, important views, the historic townscape, and the contribution made by the existing car park to the significance of the historic environment. Photographs taken during the inspection have been used to illustrate the assessment and inform the analysis of setting and heritage impact.

Documentary research included a review of historic mapping, statutory list descriptions, the National Heritage List for England, relevant planning policy and guidance, together with published information relating to the historic development of Royston. Particular regard has been given to the **Royston Conservation Area Character Statement**¹, which identifies the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area and provides an important basis for assessing the contribution of the application site to its significance.

The assessment has been prepared having regard to the relevant guidance published by **Historic England**, including *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008), *The Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA3)*, and other relevant advice concerning the assessment of significance, setting and heritage impact.

In accordance with Historic England's *The Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA3)*, the assessment considers the surroundings in which each listed building is experienced and identifies those attributes of setting that contribute to its significance. These include physical and spatial relationships, historic and functional associations, townscape enclosure, views, visual prominence and the manner in which the asset is experienced. The assessment distinguishes between those aspects of setting that make an important contribution, those that make a limited contribution and those that are neutral or detracting.

¹ Royston Conservation Area townscape analysis 27 March, 2007

Reference has also been made to the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, which advocate a proportionate, evidence-based approach to assessing the impact of development upon the historic environment.

Consistent with national policy and guidance, the assessment adopts a **proportionate methodology**, reflecting both the relatively limited heritage significance of the application site itself and the greater significance of the surrounding designated heritage assets. The report first establishes the significance of the Royston Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings before assessing the extent to which the proposed development would affect that significance.

The analysis focuses on those aspects of the proposals most relevant to heritage considerations, including the historic urban grain, layout, scale, massing, roofscape, materials, setting and townscape character, enabling a balanced and robust assessment of their likely heritage effects.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY

2.1 Introduction

The proposed development falls within the Royston Conservation Area and is located in the vicinity of several Grade II listed buildings. Consequently, the determination of the application requires careful consideration of the statutory duties relating to designated heritage assets together with national and local planning policies concerning the conservation of the historic environment.

The following sections summarise the principal legislative and policy framework relevant to the assessment of the proposals. The detailed consideration of compliance is addressed in the heritage assessment and planning balance contained later in this report.

2.2 Statutory Duties

The primary statutory duties relating to the historic environment are contained within the **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**.

Section 66(1) requires decision-makers, when considering development affecting a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Section 72(1) requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Although the proposals do not involve works to a listed building, they have the potential to affect the setting of nearby Grade II listed buildings and the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area. These statutory duties therefore form the principal legislative framework for this assessment.

2.3 National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the historic environment as an irreplaceable resource and requires heritage assets to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Paragraph 205 requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of the level of potential harm.

Paragraph 209 requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting, with the level of detail being proportionate to the significance of the asset and the potential impact of the development.

Paragraphs 210–215 establish the framework for assessing proposals affecting designated heritage assets, requiring any harm to significance to be clearly identified and justified and balanced against any public benefits arising from the development.

The Framework also recognises that well-designed development can make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness while supporting sustainable growth.

2.4 Planning Practice Guidance

The accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides additional advice on the assessment of significance, setting and heritage impact.

The guidance emphasises that significance derives not only from the physical fabric of a heritage asset but also from its setting and the contribution that setting makes to its appreciation. It further advises that heritage assessments should be proportionate to the significance of the assets affected and the scale of the proposed development.

The methodology adopted within this report reflects this proportionate approach.

2.5 Historic England Guidance

This assessment has also had regard to relevant guidance published by Historic England, including:

- *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008);
- *The Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA3)* (Second Edition); and
- *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets* (Historic England Advice Note 12).

Together, these documents provide best-practice guidance for understanding heritage significance, assessing setting and evaluating the effects of development upon designated heritage assets.

2.6 Local Planning Policy

The Development Plan for the area comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031. The policies most relevant to this assessment seek to ensure that new development preserves the significance of heritage assets and responds positively to local character.

Of particular relevance are those policies relating to:

- conservation areas;
- listed buildings;
- high-quality contextual design;
- local character and townscape;
- archaeological remains, where applicable.

The proposals have also been assessed against the guidance contained within the **Royston Conservation Area Character Statement**, which identifies the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area and the characteristics that contribute to its significance.

2.7 Policy Summary

Having regard to the statutory duties, national planning policy and local planning policies, the principal heritage consideration is whether the proposed redevelopment preserves the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings. The assessment that follows considers these matters in detail, together with the extent to which the proposals have been informed by the significance of the historic environment and comply with the relevant heritage policy framework.

Policy	Requirement	Response
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	Preserve listed building settings and preserve or enhance the Conservation Area	Addressed in Sections 5–10
NPPF	Conserve heritage significance and assess any harm proportionately	Addressed throughout this report
Historic England Guidance	Understand significance and setting before assessing impact	Methodology adopted in Sections 4–8
North Hertfordshire Local Plan	Respond positively to heritage assets and local character	Demonstrated in the heritage assessment
Royston Conservation Area Character Statement	Preserve the defining characteristics of the Conservation Area	Considered throughout the design and impact assessment

Table 1: Policy Compliance table.

3.0 SITE CONTEXT AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Site Description

The application site comprises an existing surface car park located within Princes Mews, to the rear of the historic street frontage buildings on Baldock Street and King Street. The site lies within the Royston Conservation Area and occupies a backland position within the historic urban block. It is currently characterised by hardstanding, parked vehicles, low boundary walls and utilitarian surfacing, and makes only a limited positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Surrounding context

The wider site context is varied. To the north, Baldock Street forms part of the historic approach into the centre of Royston and contains a mixture of traditional buildings, later commercial development and more recent infill. The roundabout at the junction of Baldock Street and Princes Mews marks the principal point of access into the mews and provides a transition between the more formal street frontage of Baldock Street and the more informal backland character of Princes Mews.

No. 19 Baldock Street backs onto the application site and forms part of the surrounding historic street frontage. Its rear relationship with the site is important in understanding the historic distinction between principal frontage buildings and the secondary service areas behind them. No. 4 Baldock Street also contributes to the wider townscape context, illustrating the mixed scale, age and architectural character that defines this part of the Conservation Area.

The north side of Baldock Street is lined by two storey historic buildings of a domestic scale relating to the medieval plot size and layout with continuous frontages abutting directly onto the pavement edge. The southern side includes the Old Post Office and Upton House.

Princes Mews itself has a more intimate and secondary character than Baldock Street. It contains a varied group of buildings and spaces, including later twentieth-century cul-de-sac development such as Princess Court, which reflects a more suburban phase of backland redevelopment. This contrasts with more traditional-looking houses, such as No. 2 Princes Mews, which adopt a more domestic scale, pitched roof form and conventional materials.

Carrington Court forms part of the more recent residential context of the site and demonstrates the extent to which the immediate surroundings have already been altered by late twentieth-century and modern residential development. This gives Princes Mews a mixed character, combining historic rear plot relationships, later backland housing and modern car parking.

Overall, the site is best understood as a low-significance backland space within a more sensitive historic townscape. Its importance lies less in any intrinsic architectural or historic interest and more in its relationship with the surrounding Conservation Area, nearby listed buildings, historic plot structure, rear boundaries and the secondary character of Princes Mews.



Existing car park



Roundabout at junction of Baldock Street and Princes Mews



Former Morrisons building at roundabout



19 Baldock Street, backing onto the site



4 Baldock Street



On Princes Mews



Traditional looking house at 2 Princes Mews



Carrington Court

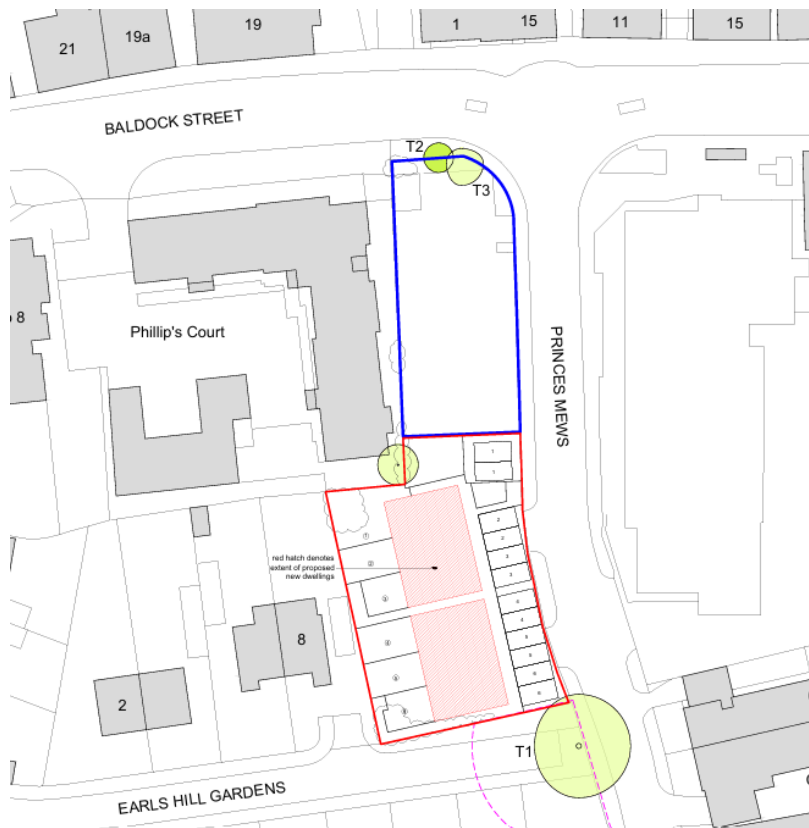


Figure 1. Site Location



Figure 2. Aerial View



Existing Site, looking eastwards out of car park

3.2 Proposed Development

The application seeks full planning permission for the redevelopment of the existing surface car park to provide 2 terraces of 3 townhouses with associated access, parking, landscaping and ancillary works.

The proposed dwellings are arranged along the western side of the site, creating a coherent building line that reinforces the enclosure of Princes Mews while maintaining an appropriate relationship with neighbouring residential development. The layout has been designed to respect the established pattern of backland development and to reflect the intimate scale and secondary character that distinguish Princes Mews from the principal historic frontages of Baldock Street and King Street.

Vehicular access to the site would continue to be taken from Princes Mews, utilising the existing point of access and avoiding any alterations to the surrounding highway network. Parking is provided within the site in accordance with the proposed layout, ensuring that vehicles are accommodated in an orderly manner without dominating the streetscape or detracting from the quality of the public realm.

New soft landscaping softens the development, reinforces the residential character of Princes Mews and replaces extensive hardstanding with planting, improving the appearance of the Conservation Area.

The proposed dwellings adopt a simple domestic architectural language expressed through traditional proportions, high-quality brickwork, pitched roofs and carefully detailed fenestration. The use of a restrained palette of materials is intended to complement the character of the surrounding buildings without resorting to direct replication of historic architecture. The proposals seek instead to provide a contemporary interpretation of the established building forms that characterise this part of Royston.

The roofscape comprises traditionally proportioned pitched roofs that reflect the prevailing roof forms within the surrounding area. Their scale and profile have been designed to sit comfortably within the varied townscape of Princes Mews whilst remaining subordinate to the more prominent historic buildings that define the principal street frontages.

Overall, the proposed development represents a carefully considered form of backland redevelopment that responds positively to the historic urban context. Through its layout, scale, architectural composition and material palette, the scheme seeks to reinforce the character of Princes Mews whilst preserving the significance of the Royston Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.



Figure 3 – Proposed Site Layout

4.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Development of Royston

Royston occupies a historically important position at the crossing of two ancient routes: Ermine Street, running north from London, and the Icknield Way, an earlier prehistoric route which passed through the town along the line of Melbourn Street and Baldock Street. This crossing point was fundamental to the later development of Royston and continues to inform the plan form and townscape structure of the Conservation Area.

During the medieval period, Royston developed as an important market town. Market rights were granted in the late twelfth century, followed by further fair rights in the thirteenth century. The town's layout retains a medieval pattern, with buildings set close to the street on long, narrow burgage plots, with principal buildings facing the thoroughfare and workshops, yards and ancillary buildings occupying the rear of the plots. This relationship between street frontage and rear areas is especially relevant to the assessment of Princes Mews.

The dissolution of the monastery in the sixteenth century altered the religious and administrative structure of the town, but Royston continued to prosper through its market, agricultural hinterland and malting industry. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the town had become closely associated with coaching and malting. Its position on the North Road made it an important stopping point for travellers, while the surrounding agricultural land supported a strong malting economy.

The wealth generated during the coaching and malting period led to the replacement or re-fronting of many earlier buildings in the Georgian style. This accounts for much of the present architectural character of the historic core, where earlier timber-framed structures often survive behind later brick or rendered facades.

The arrival of the railway in 1850 brought the coaching era gradually to an end but encouraged further expansion. During the nineteenth century, Royston grew beyond its historic core, particularly to the north around the station, maltings and corn mill. Despite this growth, the historic centre retained its medieval street pattern, burgage plots, rear yards and layered townscape character, all of which remain central to the significance of the Conservation Area.

4.1.1 Royston Conservation Area

The special interest of the Royston Conservation Area derives from the survival of an exceptionally well-preserved historic market town whose character reflects its medieval origins, monastic foundation, royal associations and later commercial prosperity.

Royston developed at the junction of **Ermine Street** and **Icknield Way**, a crossroads that established its distinctive plan and importance as a market town. The historic layout remains clearly legible through the survival of long, narrow plots, continuous street frontages, narrow lanes and passageways, and an intricate urban grain that preserves the town's medieval form.

The Conservation Area also reflects the influence of the **twelfth-century Augustinian Priory**, founded in 1184. Although the monastery has largely disappeared, its significance survives in the Church of St John the Baptist, the Memorial Gardens occupying the former monastic precinct, surviving flint walls and the historic relationship between these spaces.

Royston's importance as a royal stopping place and coaching town is expressed through the Old Palace of King James I, its historic inns and buildings associated with the Great North Road, illustrating the town's prosperity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Architecturally, the Conservation Area contains an extensive collection of listed buildings ranging from the medieval to Victorian periods. Together they display traditional brick, flint, render and timber construction, clay tiled roofs, timber sash windows and a coherent townscape of consistent scale and high-quality craftsmanship.

The area's special character is further reinforced by its landmark buildings, mature trees and open spaces, surviving cobbled lanes and flint boundary walls, varied roofscape, and long views along its principal historic streets, all of which contribute to its distinctive historic identity.

The application site occupies part of the historic rear of the medieval burgage plots described above. Although twentieth-century redevelopment has removed much of their

physical expression, the site's historic position within the urban morphology remains legible and informs the assessment that follows. Consequently, the principal heritage consideration is whether redevelopment reinforces the historic grain and preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



Figure 4: Conservation Area maps

Townscape Analysis

The townscape analysis illustrates the application site's position within the northern part of the Royston Conservation Area, immediately to the south of Baldock Street and to the rear of the historic commercial frontage of King Street.

The site occupies a secondary backland location surrounded by a number of Grade II listed buildings, including Nos. 43–59 King Street and the listed outbuilding to the rear of No. 47, reflecting the historic relationship between the principal street frontage and the ancillary service areas extending behind the medieval plots.

The plan also demonstrates that the site lies within an area identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as an opportunity for redevelopment, recognising that its existing appearance makes only a limited contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The current surface car park interrupts the historic pattern of enclosure that once characterised the rear plots and contrasts with the dense urban grain preserved along King Street.

The surrounding townscape is defined by continuous historic building frontages, narrow plot widths, enclosed rear plots and a strong hierarchy between the principal commercial streets and the secondary backland areas. Although the application site retains its historic position within this urban structure, its character has been substantially altered through twentieth-century clearance and the creation of the existing car park.

Consequently, the townscape analysis demonstrates that the principal heritage opportunity is not the preservation of the existing site, but the introduction of development that responds positively to the historic urban grain, remains subordinate to the surrounding listed buildings and reinforces the character of Princes Mews as part of Royston's historic backland environment.

4.2 King Street

Historic development

King Street forms one of the principal historic streets within the medieval core of Royston and owes its origins to the gradual development of permanent frontage buildings around the medieval marketplace. Originally known as Back Street, it developed parallel to the High Street as market activity expanded and temporary stalls gave way to permanent commercial buildings.

Today, the street retains much of its historic plan form and continues to make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.

King Street is one of the oldest streets in Royston and has its origins in the medieval expansion of the town following the establishment of the Augustinian Priory in the late twelfth century. Originally known as Back Street, it developed parallel to the High Street as commercial activity associated with the market increased. The creation of permanent buildings along what had previously been the rear of the principal market frontage reflected the continued growth and prosperity of the medieval settlement, with King Street evolving into an important commercial thoroughfare in its own right.

Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, King Street accommodated a mixture of shops, inns, workshops and dwellings serving both the local community and travellers passing through Royston. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, increasing prosperity generated by the coaching trade and the town's malting industry resulted in many earlier timber-framed buildings being remodelled or refronted in the Georgian style.

Many buildings were refronted whilst retaining their earlier medieval timber-framed structures. Consequently, although many of the buildings visible today date principally from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the street continues to reflect its medieval origins through its layout, plot pattern and underlying urban form.

King Street forms one of the principal historic streets within the medieval core of Royston and owes its significance not only to its collection of historic buildings but also to the remarkable survival of its medieval town plan.

The Post Office on Baldock Street is one example of the change witnessed in the local area. It was constructed in 1930's in the side garden to Upton House originally occupied by the early 13th Century Medieval Hospital of St John and James of Jerusalem. Possibly it was a hospital not only for the sick but for poor wayfarers. Part of the possible cemetery associated with this hospital was located in 1959 on Briary Lane.

When the building was completed in 1935 the second floor housed the local telephone exchange and the construction included a 'hop up' to allow the police officer on patrol to check the money safe. This can still be seen today at the front of the building to the left of what was the main door.

The Old Post Office became a pub in the late 1990s and has changed its name many times. It was last known as The Jolly Postie Pub and now stands empty.

Built Character

King Street is characterised by a **continuous building line**, with the majority of buildings constructed directly on the back edge of the pavement. This creates a strong sense of enclosure and reinforces the urban character typical of medieval market towns.

Narrow breaks between buildings are generally limited to historic carriageways and passageways providing access to rear yards and service areas, rather than interrupting the continuity of the street frontage. This pattern remains one of the defining characteristics of King Street and contributes strongly to its historic townscape.

Underlying this built form is the survival of the medieval **plot pattern**. Long, narrow plots extend back from the street frontage, with their narrowest ends facing King Street. This arrangement reflects the medieval process of urban development, whereby commercial premises occupied the street frontage whilst workshops, stables, stores, maltings and other ancillary buildings were accommodated within the rear of each plot.

Although some plots have been amalgamated or altered over time, the historic grain of development remains readily legible throughout the Conservation Area and continues to define the relationship between the principal streets and the secondary backland spaces beyond.

The rear portions of these plots retain a network of **yards, courtyards and service buildings**, many of which remain accessible through historic carriage arches and narrow

lanes. These areas possess a noticeably more utilitarian character than the principal street frontage, reflecting their historic function as places of servicing, storage and small-scale industry.

Abbotts Yard is the first building to the north on the western side of Upper King Street. A carriageway provides access to a small central courtyard, which now contains a number of shops. A modern office building is situated adjacent reflecting the character of its neighbour. Beyond, is an historic outbuilding orientated to end onto the street.

Buildings are generally simpler in architectural treatment and include weatherboarded barns, brick outbuildings, former workshops and ancillary ranges arranged around enclosed courtyards. Historic surfaces, including cobbles, survive in places and further reinforce the functional character of these rear spaces.

Several surviving examples illustrate these historic relationships. **Mulberry Court** retains an eighteenth-century frontage building with an earlier timber-framed rear range accessed through a traditional carriageway. A **Grade II listed weatherboarded barn** (The Old Barn) presents its gable directly onto King Street and survives as an important reminder of the service buildings formerly associated with the town's commercial premises.

Similarly, many properties retain enclosed rear courts containing historic outbuildings that step down in height from the principal buildings, preserving the hierarchy between the formal street frontage and the working areas behind.

This historic pattern is directly relevant to the application site at Princes Mews. The site occupies part of the former rear service area associated with the historic frontage development along King Street.

While the original ancillary buildings have largely been replaced by modern parking and later development, the relationship between the principal commercial frontage and the secondary backland spaces remains legible within the urban form. Consequently, the significance of the application site derives less from its existing fabric than from its position within the historic burgh plot structure and its contribution to the wider medieval townscape. This understanding provides an important basis for assessing the appropriateness of the proposed redevelopment later in this report.



Abbotts Yard



Mulberry Court



The Old Barn, 44 King Street

4.3 Princes Mews

Princes Mews occupies land that historically formed the rear portions of the long burgage plots extending westwards from King Street and eastwards from Baldock Street. Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods these rear plots accommodated a variety of ancillary uses associated with the commercial premises fronting the principal streets, including workshops, stables, barns, stores, maltings and other service buildings.

Unlike the formal street frontages, these areas possessed a distinctly functional character, providing the working spaces necessary to support the economic activity of the historic town.

The historic distinction between principal frontage buildings and secondary rear areas was an important characteristic of Royston's urban form. Whilst the principal elevations addressed the public realm through continuous building frontages, the rear plots contained a more informal arrangement of outbuildings, enclosed yards and service courts accessed through narrow carriageways and passageways.

This hierarchical relationship between the public street and the private working areas behind was fundamental to the medieval development of the town and remained evident well into the nineteenth century.

During the twentieth century, however, much of this historic backland character was progressively altered. The gradual removal of workshops, outbuildings and ancillary structures, together with the amalgamation of individual plots, resulted in the loss of much of the historic enclosure and fine-grained subdivision that had previously characterised the area.

As commercial activities declined and changing patterns of transport increased demand for vehicle parking, many former service yards were cleared and converted to open hardstanding.

The application site reflects this later phase of redevelopment. It is now occupied by a surface car park comprising extensive areas of tarmac, parked vehicles, modern lighting, boundary fencing and other utilitarian features. Whilst the site continues to occupy the

historic location of former rear plots, little physical evidence of their original form or function now survives.

The historic pattern of enclosed yards, ancillary buildings and narrow plot divisions has largely been lost, replaced by an open area whose character is determined by vehicle parking rather than by the historic morphology of the town.

Consequently, the significance of the application site derives principally from its location within the historic urban block. Although the site remains part of the medieval plot structure established during the development of Royston, its present condition represents the **erosion rather than the preservation of the historic urban grain**.

The existing car park makes only a limited positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and does little to express the historic relationship between the principal commercial streets and their former service areas.

This understanding is central to the assessment of the proposed development. Rather than replacing a well-preserved historic townscape, the proposals seek to redevelop a substantially altered backland site whose historic character has already been diminished by twentieth-century change. The extent to which the proposed scheme responds positively to the historic plot pattern and secondary character of Princes Mews is therefore considered in the following sections of this report.

4.4 Historic Map Analysis

Historic mapping illustrates the gradual evolution of the application site from a densely developed rear service area associated with the commercial frontage of King Street and Baldock Street into the open car park that exists today.

1896

The earliest Ordnance Survey mapping shows the site forming part of the rear of the historic burghage plots extending south from Baldock Street. The application site was occupied by a relatively modest ancillary building positioned within an enclosed service yard behind the principal street frontage. To the west lay the brewery complex, whilst the surrounding land comprised a closely arranged network of rear buildings, yards and boundaries typical of the medieval and post-medieval development of Royston.

The map demonstrates the fine-grained pattern of development that historically characterised this part of the town, with individual outbuildings occupying separate plots rather than a single open space.

1937

By the beginning of the twentieth century the pattern of rear development had become more intensive. Additional buildings had been erected within the rear plots and the relationship between the principal frontage buildings, service yards and ancillary structures remained readily apparent. Although the buildings varied in size and function, they collectively reinforced the enclosed character of the rear plots and maintained the historic urban grain established during the medieval period.

The application site therefore continued to function as part of the wider service area supporting the commercial premises fronting King Street and Baldock Street.

1970

The 1970 mapping records a significant change in the character of the site. Many of the earlier ancillary buildings had been removed and large areas of previously enclosed backland had been cleared. The application site had been incorporated into a surface car park, reflecting changing patterns of land use and the growing importance of the private motor car during the twentieth century.

The creation of extensive areas of hardstanding resulted in the loss of much of the historic subdivision that had previously defined the rear plots. Whilst the overall urban block remained legible, the detailed historic grain had largely disappeared.

Summary

The application site occupies part of a historic rear plot structure and the historic maps illustrate a clear process of change. The site evolved from a tightly enclosed network of historic rear plots containing ancillary buildings and service yards into an increasingly open and simplified area dominated by vehicle parking.

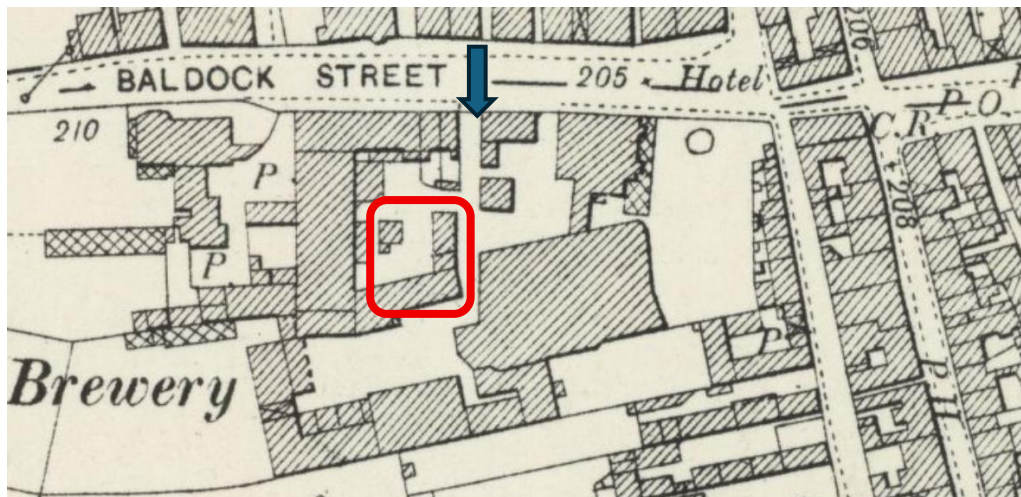
Importantly, the maps demonstrate that the application site no longer preserves the historic morphology that once characterised this part of Royston. The existing car park is a relatively recent intervention that has removed much of the historic enclosure and fine-grained subdivision formerly associated with the burgage plots. Consequently, the site's heritage value lies principally in its location within the historic urban block rather than in its surviving fabric or present appearance.

This evolution is significant when assessing the proposed redevelopment. Rather than replacing a well-preserved historic townscape, the proposals seek to redevelop a site whose historic character has already been substantially diminished by twentieth-century change.

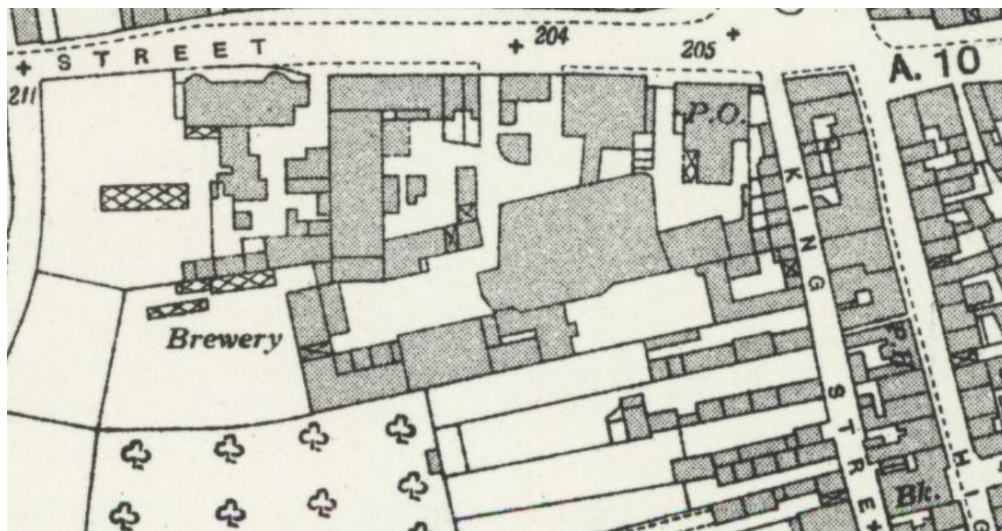
The assessment that follows therefore considers the extent to which the proposed development can better reflect the historic urban grain and secondary character of Princes Mews than the existing open car park.

Evolution of the Application Site (1884–1970)

Historic mapping demonstrates the progressive loss of enclosed rear yards and ancillary buildings, culminating in the creation of the existing surface car park. The proposals provide an opportunity to reinforce the historic urban grain through a more coherent built form that responds to the traditional pattern of development.



1896, with current site location marked



1937



1970

5.0 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Significance of the Royston Conservation Area

The significance of the Royston Conservation Area derives from the exceptional survival of its medieval street pattern, the richness of its historic building stock and the continued legibility of the town's historic urban form. Although individual buildings range in date from the medieval period to the twentieth century, the Conservation Area possesses a coherent identity created by the interaction of its historic street network, plot pattern, building forms and traditional materials.

Collectively, these elements illustrate the evolution of Royston from a medieval market town into an important coaching centre while retaining many of the characteristics that define its historic character.

Medieval Street Pattern

The medieval street pattern forms one of the most significant characteristics of the Conservation Area. The historic routes of High Street, King Street, Kneesworth Street and Baldock Street remain substantially unchanged and continue to define the plan form established during the medieval period.

Their irregular alignment, frequent junctions and enclosed spaces reflect the organic growth of the town rather than planned urban expansion.

The application site occupies the rear of the historic urban block immediately behind this street network, within the rear of the medieval urban block, where the historic relationship between principal commercial frontages and secondary service areas remains an important component of the town's significance.

Urban Enclosure

A defining characteristic of the Conservation Area is the strong sense of enclosure created by continuous building frontages, narrow streets and limited building setbacks. Throughout much of the historic core, buildings are constructed directly onto the back edge of the pavement, creating well-defined street spaces and reinforcing the intimate scale typical of a medieval market town.

King Street provides an excellent example of this character, where a largely uninterrupted building line encloses the public realm and focuses views along the street. Similar qualities are evident along sections of High Street and Baldock Street, where historic buildings combine to create a cohesive and well-defined townscape.

Historic Burgage Plots

Underlying the historic townscape is the survival of the medieval burgage plot pattern. Long, narrow plots extend behind the principal street frontages, reflecting the medieval process of urban subdivision. Traditionally, commercial premises occupied the street frontage, whilst workshops, barns, stables, warehouses and ancillary buildings occupied the enclosed yards to the rear.



Enclosed linear quality of King Street



Stamford Yard, Lower King Street



11 Lower King Street

Although many rear plots have evolved over time, the historic grain remains legible throughout much of the Conservation Area and continues to influence the spatial relationship between the principal streets and secondary backland areas such as Princes Mews.

Roofscape

The roofscape makes an important contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. A varied composition of pitched roofs, clay plain tiles, natural slate, chimney stacks and gables creates a distinctive skyline that reflects successive phases of the town's development. Along **Baldock Street**, the **Old Post Office** is distinguished by its **hipped plain clay tiled roof**, while the adjoining **Upton House** retains the restrained roof form typical of the Georgian period.

Opposite, the two-storey building on the corner of **Princes Mews** is characterised by its **arched openings, chamfered corner and hipped roof**, forming an important focal point within the townscape. Further west, the buildings on the north side of Baldock Street are covered in **natural slate**, with occasional **plain clay tiles**, their simple pitched and gabled roofs punctuated by traditional brick chimney stacks and, on the larger houses such as **No. 19 Baldock Street**, modest dormers.

It is useful to note the contrast in scale at this point of the Conservation Area, as no 21 **Baldock Street** comprises a small cottage that reflects a more rural character.

Similar characteristics are evident on **King Street**, where the historic commercial buildings are unified by pitched roof forms with ridges generally running parallel to the street. Behind the principal frontages, historic outbuildings and former workshops retain simple **gabled tiled roofs**, including the detached timber-framed and weatherboarded ancillary buildings to the rear of **Nos. 6 and 8 Lower King Street**, which illustrate the historic service character of the rear plots.

Throughout both streets, brick chimney stacks contribute to the layered roofscape and reinforce the historic skyline when viewed from surrounding streets and from within the rear plots.

Changes in roof height and orientation add visual interest whilst maintaining an overall coherence appropriate to the scale of the historic settlement. Longer views across the town reveal overlapping roofs and chimney stacks rising above the continuous street frontages, reinforcing the layered historic character of the Conservation Area.

The Old Post Office building, Baldock Street acts as a focal point at the Cross in Royston. It is a large 2-storey building with a hipped roof and a symmetrical façade following the Classical Style.

The large infill building (formerly Morrisons) on the corner of Princes Mews is **Neo-Georgian** or **contextual contemporary architecture**, borrowing traditional proportions and materials without replicating historic detailing. It is designed to sit comfortably within a historic town centre through its use of brick, sash-style windows and pitched roofs. Its use of brick, pitched roofs and regular window proportions helps it integrate into the historic urban context.



Former Post Office



Upton House



19 Baldock Street



21 Baldock Street



Ancillary buildings, rear no 8 Lower King Street



Former Morrisons building

Townscape Character

The Conservation Area possesses a rich and varied townscape resulting from the accumulation of buildings spanning several centuries. Medieval timber-framed buildings (**Mulberry Court**), Georgian townhouses (Upton House, Baldock Street (former brewer's house; Nos. 19 & 21 Baldock Street), eighteenth-century coaching inns (**Bull Hotel** and **Chequers Inn** on the High Street), Victorian commercial premises (The **Old Post Office**, Baldock Street) and later infill development combine to create a visually diverse yet coherent environment.

With regards later development, Phillips Court, Dunedin House, Nos. 13, 15 & 17 Baldock Street, and Cardinals Gate, were all designed to reflect the scale and materials of the historic townscape whilst representing twentieth-century redevelopment.

The significance of the Conservation Area lies not solely in individual buildings but also in their collective relationship, with changes in scale, architectural style and building age reflecting the gradual evolution of the town rather than diminishing its character.

Examples include the historic frontages along King Street, the surviving coaching inns on High Street, the former brewery complex and numerous Grade II listed buildings that contribute to the architectural richness of the town centre.

The Old Post Office building, Baldock Street acts as a focal point at the Cross junction. It is a large 2-storey building with a hipped roof and a symmetrical façade following the Classical Style.

The Post Office was constructed in 1930's in the side garden to Upton House originally occupied by the early 13th Century Medieval Hospital of St John and James of Jerusalem. Possibly it was a hospital not only for the sick but for poor wayfarers. Part of the possible cemetery associated with this hospital was located in 1959 on Briary Lane. The skeletons of 3 adults and 1 child, were discovered, along with evidence for coffins and other artefacts of medieval date.

When the building was completed in 1935 the second floor housed the local telephone exchange and the construction included a 'hop up' to allow the police officer on patrol to check on the money in the safe. This can still be seen today at the front of the building to the left of what was the main door.

The Old Post Office became a pub in the late 1990s and has changed its name many times. It is now known as The Jolly Postie Pub.



Dunedin House, Briary Lane



Philips Court

Philips Court

Philips Court makes a generally positive contribution to the character of Princes Mews. Although a modern residential development, it reinforces the urban enclosure of the mews through a continuous building line, domestic scale and traditional pitched roof forms. Its use of brick, restrained detailing and conventional proportions enables it to integrate comfortably within the Conservation Area.

Whilst the development inevitably simplifies the finer subdivision of the historic burgage plots, it preserves the broader historic hierarchy between the principal commercial frontages of Baldock Street and King Street and the secondary backland character of Princes Mews. Overall, Philips Court demonstrates how contemporary development can respond positively to the historic urban form without competing with the surrounding heritage assets.

Carrington Court reinforces the enclosure of Princes Mews by maintaining a defined built edge and replacing what might otherwise be a more open backland space. However, its larger scale, undercroft parking and unified footprint simplify the historic burgage plot pattern, partially interrupting the fine-grained urban morphology. Nevertheless, it preserves the historic hierarchy by remaining subordinate to the principal frontages of King Street and Baldock Street.

Dunedin House reinforces the enclosure of Briary Lane by presenting a substantial built frontage that defines the street edge and contributes to the continuity of the townscape. Although its larger footprint and contemporary form simplify the historic pattern of smaller plots, it broadly preserves the established urban grain at a block scale. It also maintains the historic hierarchy by remaining secondary to the principal commercial frontages and landmark buildings of the historic town centre.

Hierarchy of Streets and Spaces

The Conservation Area retains a clearly defined hierarchy of streets and spaces that reflects its historic development. Principal streets, including High Street, King Street and Baldock Street, are characterised by continuous commercial frontages, greater building scale and a more formal public realm.

In contrast, secondary spaces such as Princes Mews retain a more intimate and functional character, historically accommodating rear yards, workshops and ancillary buildings associated with the principal commercial streets. This distinction between formal frontage and informal backland remains an important aspect of the Conservation Area's significance and contributes to its historic legibility.

Historic Materials

The architectural coherence of the Royston Conservation Area is reinforced by the consistent use of traditional materials and detailing. Although buildings vary considerably in age and architectural style, they are united by a restrained palette of natural materials that contributes to the area's distinctive local character.

Brick is the predominant walling material, ranging from warm red stocks to pale gault brick, frequently complemented by painted render to principal elevations. Roofs are generally covered in clay plain tiles or natural slate, whilst traditional brick chimney stacks provide vertical emphasis within the roofscape.

Timber sash and casement windows, painted joinery and brick boundary walls are recurring features that reinforce the historic appearance of the streetscape.

These materials are evident throughout King Street and Baldock Street. The Old Post Office retains its hipped clay plain tiled roof and brick construction, whilst Upton House is distinguished by its white gault brick façade. Elsewhere, the domestic buildings along Baldock Street are characterised by brick and rendered elevations beneath slate or clay tiled roofs, with timber sash windows providing a consistent architectural rhythm.

Similarly, the commercial buildings on King Street retain traditional brickwork, painted joinery and tiled roof coverings that contribute to the visual continuity of the historic street.

The survival and continued use of these traditional materials contributes significantly to the authenticity of the Conservation Area and provides an important reference point for the design of new development. The careful selection of materials is therefore fundamental to ensuring that new buildings integrate successfully within the established historic townscape.

Summary of Significance

The significance of the Royston Conservation Area therefore derives not only from its concentration of listed and historic buildings but also from the survival of its medieval urban morphology. The historic street pattern, continuous building frontages, burgage plots, varied roofscape, traditional materials and hierarchy between principal streets and secondary backland spaces collectively define its special architectural and historic interest.

These characteristics provide the benchmark against which the proposed redevelopment at Princes Mews should be assessed. They also explain why the design of new development should respond to the historic urban grain and reinforce, rather than dilute, the distinctive character of this part of the Conservation Area.

Attribute	Contribution
Medieval street pattern	High
Historic plot pattern	High
Continuous frontage	High
Rear yards	Moderate
Roofscape	Moderate
Traditional materials	High
Existing car park	Limited

Figure 5: Significance of attributes

5.2 Listed Buildings

5 listed buildings are noted as being within a 100 metre radius of the site:

1. Nos. 43 and 43A King Street (Grade II)

Architectural Interest

Nos. 43 and 43A King Street are of considerable architectural interest as an early nineteenth-century remodelling of an earlier building. The principal elevation presents a restrained Georgian composition characterised by its rendered façade, regular arrangement of flush sash windows, moulded window surrounds and pronounced eaves cornice beneath a traditional clay tiled roof. The three gabled dormers and substantial brick chimney stacks with paired octagonal shafts create an attractive and distinctive roof profile that contributes positively to the varied skyline of King Street.

A particularly significant architectural feature is the centrally positioned carriageway, framed by simplified Doric pilasters and a segmental arch with projecting cornice. This feature provides both architectural emphasis and physical access through the building, illustrating the traditional relationship between the principal commercial frontage and the service yards beyond.

Although altered over time, the building retains the proportions, detailing and roof form that characterise the Georgian redevelopment of Royston's medieval town centre.

Historic Interest

The building possesses considerable historic interest through its relationship with the medieval development of King Street. Whilst the existing façade dates principally from the early nineteenth century, it occupies the site of an earlier property established within the medieval burghage plot pattern. It therefore illustrates the successive adaptation of historic commercial premises rather than wholesale redevelopment.

The surviving carriageway is of particular historic importance, providing tangible evidence of the way goods, people and vehicles historically moved between the commercial frontage and the workshops, barns, stores and service buildings located within the rear plots. It demonstrates that the historic function of King Street extended beyond the principal elevations to include an interconnected network of ancillary buildings occupying the backland areas now represented by Princes Mews.

Townscape Value

Nos. 43 and 43A make a strong contribution to the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area through their position within the continuous building frontage of King Street. The restrained proportions of the façade, regular fenestration and traditional materials reinforce the enclosed character of the street and contribute to the visual coherence of this part of the town centre.

The carriageway introduces an important visual rhythm within the frontage without disrupting its continuity. Together with the prominent gabled dormers and chimney stacks, it provides visual interest whilst maintaining the established scale and architectural hierarchy of King Street.

Group Value

The building possesses strong group value as part of the designated listed group comprising Nos. 41–67 (odd), the adjoining barns north of No. 41 and No. 43A King Street. Collectively these buildings illustrate the historic commercial development of King Street and preserve the characteristic relationship between frontage buildings and their associated service structures.

The adjoining historic barns reinforce this relationship by demonstrating the functional buildings that once occupied the rear portions of the burgage plots. Together, the listed buildings and ancillary structures provide a valuable illustration of the way in which Royston's medieval and post-medieval commercial properties were organised.

Setting

The significance of Nos. 43 and 43A is enhanced by their setting within the historic urban grain of Royston. Their relationship with the continuous frontage of King Street, the medieval plots extending to the rear and the surviving pattern of carriage access forms an important aspect of their special interest.

The application site occupies part of the historic rear area historically associated with these and neighbouring properties. Whilst much of the original ancillary development has been lost through twentieth-century clearance and the creation of the existing car park, the spatial relationship between the principal street frontage and the secondary backland area remains readily understandable.

Consequently, the contribution of the application site to the setting of Nos. 43 and 43A derives principally from its position within the historic burgage plot rather than from its existing appearance. The present car park makes only a limited positive contribution to the significance of the listed buildings. The principal heritage consideration is therefore whether the proposed redevelopment respects the historic hierarchy between the formal King Street frontage and the subordinate rear plots.

Provided that the proposed townhouses remain subordinate in scale, preserve the historic pattern of development and respond to the intimate character of Princes Mews, there is no reason why the redevelopment should diminish the significance or appreciation of Nos. 43 and 43A.

Overall Significance

Nos. 43 and 43A King Street derive their significance from the combination of their Georgian architectural composition, evidence of earlier medieval origins, important surviving carriageway, contribution to the enclosed streetscape of King Street, strong group value with neighbouring listed buildings and continuing relationship with the medieval burgage plot pattern. These characteristics make the building an important component of the Royston Conservation Area, whilst also providing a clear heritage framework for assessing development within the historic rear plots occupied by Princes Mews.

The other 4 listed buildings at **No. 45 King Street, Nos. 49–53 King Street (Grade II), Nos. 55–59 King Street (Grade II) and Outbuilding to the Rear of No. 47 King Street (Grade II) are described below.**

2. No. 45 King Street

Architectural Interest

No. 45 is a modest nineteenth-century frontage to an earlier building. Its rendered façade, clay tiled roof, traditional casement windows and exposed gault brick side elevation contribute to the varied architectural character of King Street, although its individual architectural interest is more restrained than that of neighbouring listed buildings.

Historic Interest

The building illustrates the gradual adaptation of the medieval burgrave plots and retains evidential value as part of the historic commercial development of King Street.

Townscape and Group Value

The principal significance of No. 45 lies in its contribution to the continuous historic frontage of King Street and its strong group value with the adjoining listed buildings between Nos. 41 and 67. Although modest in architectural expression, it reinforces the enclosed character and historic rhythm of the streetscape.

Setting

The building's setting is defined principally by its relationship with the historic street frontage and the rear burgrave plots. The application site occupies part of these former service areas, although the historic setting has already been diminished by twentieth-century clearance and the creation of the existing surface car park. The proposed development should therefore be assessed primarily against its ability to respect the historic urban grain rather than the existing car park.

3. Nos. 49–53 King Street (Grade II)

Architectural Interest

Nos. 49–53 comprise a well-preserved late eighteenth-century terrace displaying the restrained proportions typical of Georgian commercial architecture. The plum-coloured brickwork with contrasting red brick dressings, modillioned eaves cornice and hipped clay tiled roof create a unified architectural composition, while the mixture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sash windows illustrates the building's gradual evolution. Of particular significance is the central carriageway, which provides a strong architectural feature and preserves the historic connection between King Street and the rear service yards.

Historic Interest

The terrace reflects the eighteenth-century remodelling of Royston's medieval commercial core during the prosperity generated by the coaching and malting industries. The surviving carriageway provides important evidence of the historic organisation of the burgrave plots, demonstrating how commercial premises on King Street were historically served by workshops, stores and yards located behind the frontage buildings.

Townscape Value

Nos. 49–53 make a strong contribution to the character of King Street through their continuous frontage, consistent scale and traditional materials. The carriageway introduces

one of the few openings within the building line, maintaining the historic visual and physical link between the principal street and the secondary spaces beyond.

Group Value

The terrace forms an important part of the listed group comprising **Nos. 41–67 (odd)** together with the adjoining historic barns. Its architectural consistency and relationship with neighbouring listed buildings reinforce the historic commercial character of King Street and contribute to the collective significance of the group.

Setting

The significance of the terrace is enhanced by its relationship with the historic rear plots. Although much of the original ancillary development has been replaced by the existing surface car park, the historic hierarchy between the formal King Street frontage and the secondary backland areas remains legible. The principal heritage consideration is therefore whether redevelopment of Princes Mews respects this established relationship and remains subordinate to the listed frontage.

Overall Significance

Nos. 49–53 derive their significance from their well-preserved Georgian architectural character, distinctive carriageway, contribution to the enclosed streetscape of King Street and strong group value with adjoining listed buildings. Together these attributes illustrate the historic relationship between the principal commercial frontage and the rear service areas that form the context for the application site.

Contribution of Setting to Significance

The significance of Nos. 49–53 King Street is enhanced principally by their position within the continuous historic frontage of King Street, their group relationship with neighbouring listed and traditional buildings, and the enclosed character of the street. They are experienced predominantly in sequential views along King Street, where their building line, scale, roofscape and architectural detailing contribute to the character of the historic commercial core. Their rear surroundings retain a historic spatial relationship with the former yards and service areas of the burgage plots, although this relationship has been weakened by clearance, plot amalgamation and modern car parking. The application site therefore forms part of the wider historic backland setting but, in its present open and utilitarian condition, makes only a limited contribution to the significance of the listed buildings.

4. Nos. 55–59 King Street (Grade II)

Architectural Interest

Nos. 55–59 comprise an eighteenth-century refacing of an earlier building, illustrating the gradual evolution of Royston's historic commercial core. Their roughcast elevations, clay tiled roof and traditional sash windows reflect the restrained character of Georgian architecture, whilst the three-storey front range with oversailing upper floors provides a distinctive architectural feature that hints at the earlier building tradition. The partly exposed red brick ground floor to No. 59 further illustrates the terrace's incremental development.

Historic Interest

The terrace demonstrates the adaptation of earlier medieval buildings during the eighteenth century, when many properties within Royston were modernised rather than rebuilt. It continues to illustrate the historic relationship between the commercial frontage of King Street and the ancillary buildings and service yards that historically occupied the rear of the burgage plots.

Townscape Value

Nos. 55–59 make a positive contribution to the character of King Street through their varied scale, oversailing upper floors and traditional roofscape. Their simple architectural treatment and traditional materials reinforce the enclosed character of the street while adding variety to the continuous historic frontage.

Group Value

The terrace forms part of the listed group comprising **Nos. 41–67 (odd)** together with the adjoining historic barns. Its traditional scale, roof forms and architectural character contribute to the cohesion of the group, whilst the oversailing upper floors provide an important element of architectural diversity within the terrace.

Setting

The significance of the terrace is enhanced by its relationship with the historic rear plots associated with King Street. Although these service areas have been substantially altered through twentieth-century redevelopment, the historic hierarchy between the formal street frontage and the secondary backland remains legible. The principal consideration is therefore whether redevelopment of Princes Mews respects this established pattern of development and remains subordinate to the listed buildings.

Overall Significance

Nos. 55–59 derive their significance from their eighteenth-century architectural character, evidence of earlier origins, distinctive oversailing upper floors, contribution to the continuous streetscape of King Street and strong group value with adjoining listed buildings. Together these attributes reinforce the historic relationship between the principal commercial frontage and the historic service areas to the rear that provide the context for the application site.

5. Outbuilding to the Rear of No. 47 King Street (Grade II)

Whilst the preceding listed buildings derive their significance principally from their contribution to the historic King Street frontage, the outbuilding to the rear of No. 47 is of particular relevance to the application site because it survives as one of the few remaining historic service buildings associated with the medieval plots.

Architectural Interest

The outbuilding possesses considerable architectural interest as a well-preserved early eighteenth-century ancillary building. Its roughcast walls, hipped clay tiled roof with a modillioned cornice, hipped dormers and traditional sash windows reflect the simple vernacular character typical of historic service buildings. The adjoining rendered outbuildings further reinforce the functional nature of the rear plot and illustrate its gradual evolution.

Historic Interest

The outbuilding is a rare surviving example of the ancillary buildings that historically occupied the rear of Royston's historic burgage plots. It provides valuable evidence of the workshops, stores and service accommodation that supported the commercial premises along King Street and illustrates the historic relationship between the principal street frontage and the enclosed working areas beyond. Unlike many neighbouring rear plots, this historic arrangement remains readily appreciable.

Townscape Value

Although largely hidden from King Street, the outbuilding makes an important contribution to the character of the historic backland townscape. Its modest scale, traditional materials and simple form reinforce the enclosed and utilitarian character that historically distinguished the rear areas from the more formal street frontage.

Group Value

The building forms an important component of the listed group comprising **Nos. 41–67 (odd)** together with the adjoining historic barns. Its significance is enhanced by its close historic and functional association with No. 47 King Street and by its ability to illustrate the historic relationship between the principal frontage buildings and their ancillary service accommodation.

Setting

The setting of the outbuilding is fundamental to its significance. Unlike the street-fronting listed buildings, it derives much of its special interest from its location within the historic rear plots and its association with the former service yards. Whilst the surrounding area has been substantially altered by twentieth-century redevelopment and the creation of the existing surface car park, the outbuilding remains an important reminder of the historic character of Princes Mews. The principal heritage consideration is therefore whether the proposed development respects the intimate scale, subordinate form and historic grain of this backland environment.

Contribution of Setting to Significance

The outbuilding derives its significance from its survival as a rare eighteenth-century ancillary building illustrating the historic organisation of Royston's burgage plots. Its greatest significance lies in demonstrating the historic character of the rear service areas that once occupied the application site, making it one of the most relevant heritage assets when assessing the impact of the proposed redevelopment at Princes Mews.

The setting of the outbuilding makes a more direct contribution to its significance than is the case for the principal King Street frontage buildings. Its position behind No. 47, within the former service area of the property, enables its historic ancillary function to be understood and preserves the traditional hierarchy between the principal street-facing building and the simpler structure to its rear. Its modest scale, utilitarian architectural treatment and relationship with former yards and plot boundaries are important elements of its experience.

The surrounding backland has nevertheless been altered through the removal of other ancillary buildings, amalgamation of plots and introduction of hardstanding and modern development. The application site forms part of this altered backland setting and contributes

to the spatial separation between the outbuilding and the surrounding modern development, but the present car park does not reinforce its historic functional character. Its contribution is therefore mixed: the site's location within the historic rear plots is of some relevance, while its current appearance and use make little positive contribution.



43 and 43a, King Street



49-53, King Street



55-59 King Street



Figure 6 : Site of listed buildings in context

Setting of the King Street Frontage Buildings

The listed buildings along King Street are experienced primarily as components of the continuous historic street frontage. Their setting is defined by the narrow alignment and enclosure of King Street, adjoining historic buildings, traditional roofscape and the surviving hierarchy between formal commercial frontages and secondary rear plots. These elements make an important contribution to their group value and to an appreciation of Royston's development as a historic market town.

The application site lies beyond the rear plot areas and is not prominent in principal views of the buildings from King Street. Its historic position within the backland contributes to an understanding of the former relationship between frontage premises and their working yards, although the existing car park has substantially weakened that relationship. The site therefore forms part of their wider setting but currently makes only a limited positive contribution to their significance.

Heritage asset/group	Principal setting contribution	Contribution of application site
King Street frontage buildings	Continuous frontage, street enclosure, group value, principal views and historic relationship with rear plots	Limited positive contribution
Outbuilding rear of No. 47	Ancillary rear-plot location, functional relationship, yards and intimate backland character	Some historic/spatial relevance, but presently weakened
More distant listed buildings	Wider historic townscape and roofscape	Neutral or negligible contribution

Figure 7: Summary of the Contribution Made by Setting

5.3 Relevance to the Application Site

The listed buildings on the western side of King Street derive their significance from a combination of their architectural quality, historic association with the commercial development of Royston and their contribution to the continuous historic streetscape. Collectively, they illustrate the gradual evolution of the town from the medieval period onwards, with many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century façades concealing earlier buildings established on medieval burgage plots.

A recurring characteristic of these listed buildings is their relationship with the long, narrow rear plots that historically accommodated workshops, barns, stores, stables and other ancillary structures. Surviving carriageways, rear outbuildings and service buildings demonstrate the historic functional relationship between the formal street frontage and the secondary backland areas that now comprise Princes Mews.

The application site forms part of this historic backland environment. However, historic mapping and site inspection demonstrate that much of the original ancillary development has been lost through twentieth-century clearance and the creation of the existing surface car park. As a consequence, the site now makes only a limited positive contribution to the setting of the listed buildings, with the historic relationship being understood principally through the surviving urban morphology rather than through historic fabric.

The principal heritage issue is therefore not whether the existing car park should be preserved, but whether its redevelopment respects the established hierarchy between the principal King Street frontage and the subordinate service areas to the rear. In this regard, the surviving outbuilding to the rear of No. 47 King Street is of particular importance, as it provides one of the clearest surviving examples of the type of ancillary building that historically occupied these rear plots.

Accordingly, the assessment that follows considers whether the proposed development preserves the significance of the nearby listed buildings by responding appropriately to the historic urban grain, maintaining a subordinate scale and reinforcing the traditional character of Princes Mews.

Collectively, the listed buildings establish the heritage benchmark against which the proposals should be assessed: they require a development that responds to the historic burgage plot pattern and the character of the historic rear service areas, rather than one that simply preserves the existing modern car park.

5.3 Contribution of the Application Site to the Significance of the Conservation Area

The application site forms part of the historic backland area associated with the medieval burgage plots extending from King Street and Baldock Street. As such, it contributes to the significance of the Royston Conservation Area by preserving the historic spatial relationship between the principal commercial frontages and the secondary service areas that historically accommodated workshops, stores, stables and ancillary buildings.

The site's position within the historic urban block therefore continues to reflect the medieval plot pattern that remains one of the defining characteristics of the Conservation Area.

The open nature of the site also allows the historic hierarchy between the principal street frontage and the rear plots to remain legible. Although the original ancillary buildings have largely disappeared, the site's location and relationship to the surrounding listed buildings continue to illustrate the historic organisation of this part of the town.

However, the contribution made by the application site is substantially diminished by its existing condition. The historic rear yards and service buildings have been replaced by an extensive area of modern hardstanding used for vehicle parking. Tarmac surfacing, parked vehicles, modern lighting columns, utilitarian boundary treatments and the absence of historic enclosure have significantly altered the character of the site, eroding much of the historic grain that once characterised this part of the Conservation Area.

Consequently, whilst the site retains evidential value through its position within the historic burgage plot pattern, its existing appearance makes only a limited positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to the setting of the surrounding listed buildings. Its heritage significance derives principally from its location within the historic urban morphology rather than from its surviving fabric or present-day townscape quality.

Therefore, the principal heritage issue is not the retention of the existing surface car park, but whether the proposed development better reflects the historic pattern of enclosed backland development, reinforces the traditional hierarchy between the principal street frontages and the secondary service areas, and preserves the significance of the surrounding heritage assets.

Key Characteristics

- **the site has historic value** because of its location within the burgage plots;
- **its physical character has been degraded** by twentieth-century change;
- **the existing car park is not itself a heritage asset**; and
- **the opportunity lies in replacing a poor modern space with development that better reflects the historic urban grain.**

6. KEY VIEWS AND VISUAL RELATIONSHIP

The application site occupies a backland position within the Royston Conservation Area and is enclosed by development on all sides. Unlike the principal historic frontages along King Street and Baldock Street, the site is not a prominent component of the public townscape and is experienced principally from Princes Mews and adjoining streets.

Views into the site are generally localised and are filtered by surrounding buildings, boundary walls and changes in direction along the surrounding streets. Consequently, the principal heritage consideration is not the preservation of long-distance or landmark views, but whether the proposed development responds appropriately to the established urban grain and preserves the character of the surrounding historic townscape.

6.1 Views from King Street

King Street is one of the principal historic streets within the Conservation Area and is characterised by a continuous frontage of listed eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings occupying medieval burgage plots. Owing to this continuous enclosure, the application site is almost entirely concealed from public views within King Street.

Visibility is limited to occasional glimpsed views through historic carriageways and narrow gaps between buildings, which reveal only fragments of the rear plots beyond. These incidental views reinforce the traditional relationship between the principal commercial frontage and the ancillary service areas behind but do not provide clear or uninterrupted views of the existing car park. Consequently, the proposed development would not interrupt the historic streetscape of King Street nor compete visually with the surrounding listed buildings.

6.2 Views from Baldock Street

The application site is more readily appreciated from Baldock Street, particularly in the vicinity of the roundabout where Princes Mews joins the highway. From this location the site is experienced as an open area of modern hardstanding used for surface parking. The view is characterised by parked vehicles, tarmac surfacing, modern lighting columns and utilitarian boundary treatments rather than historic townscape.

The surrounding built form, including the buildings fronting Baldock Street and the modern residential development at Princess Court, provides a strong visual enclosure. The application site therefore reads as a gap within an otherwise enclosed urban block rather than as an important open space.

6.3 Views from Princes Mews

Princes Mews provides the principal public views of the site. The existing character is dominated by the extensive surface car park, modern boundary walls and parked vehicles, giving the area an open and utilitarian appearance that contrasts with the intimate scale of the surrounding historic streets.

The proposed development would replace this underused space with a more coherent built form, re-establishing enclosure and defining the street in a manner more consistent with the historic pattern of backland development. The proposed townhouses would therefore be experienced principally as part of the evolving townscape of Princes Mews rather than in direct association with the principal historic frontages of King Street.

6.4 Roofscape and Longer Views

The site is visible in limited medium-distance views from Baldock Street and Princes Mews, where the roofscape of the proposed development will be seen against a backdrop of existing residential buildings of varied age, form and height. The surrounding area already contains a mixture of traditional pitched roofs, modern residential development and commercial buildings, resulting in a diverse roofscape rather than one of uniform historic character.

Provided the proposed dwellings retain appropriately pitched roofs, traditional materials and a scale that remains subordinate to the surrounding historic frontage buildings, the development would integrate comfortably within these wider views and would not appear visually intrusive.

6.5 Summary of Key Views

The application site does not occupy a visually prominent position within the Conservation Area and makes only a limited contribution to important public views. Existing views are dominated by the modern surface car park and associated infrastructure rather than by historic fabric or spaces of particular heritage significance. The most sensitive public views are obtained from Baldock Street and Princes Mews, where the principal consideration is the quality of the replacement townscape rather than the retention of the existing open car park.

The proposed development would not affect the important views along King Street or diminish the appreciation of the surrounding listed buildings. Instead, it provides an opportunity to reinforce the historic pattern of enclosed backland development, improve the visual quality of the site and strengthen the urban grain of this part of the Royston Conservation Area.

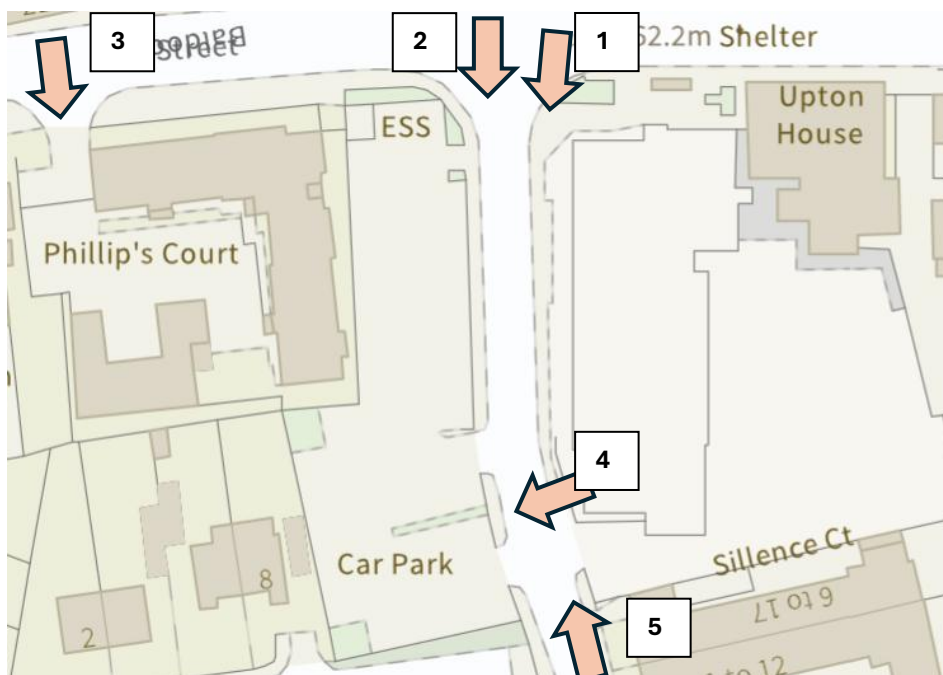


Figure 8: Visual Receptor Points



1. Top of Princes Mews



2. View from Baldock Street



3. Princes Mews junction



4. Entry to car park, Princes Mews



5. Princes Mews, south of site

7.0 HERITAGE-LED DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The proposed development has evolved through a heritage-led design process informed by an understanding of the significance of the Royston Conservation Area, the setting of the surrounding listed buildings and the historic development of Princes Mews. Rather than replicating historic buildings, the proposals seek to respond to the defining characteristics of the historic urban grain whilst providing high-quality contemporary housing.

The setting assessment in Section 5 identifies the importance of maintaining the hierarchy between the principal King Street frontage and the secondary backland. The development should therefore remain subordinate in scale, retain an intimate mews character and avoid competing with the roofscape or architectural prominence of the listed buildings.

The principal objective has been to replace an extensive modern surface car park with development that better reflects the historic pattern of enclosed backland development associated with the medieval burgage plots, whilst remaining clearly subordinate to the historic frontage buildings on King Street and Baldock Street.

The following design principles have informed the proposals.

Responding to the Historic Urban Grain

The layout has been designed to reinforce the historic morphology of this part of Royston. Historically, the rear portions of the burgage plots were occupied by workshops, stores, stables and ancillary buildings arranged behind the principal street frontage. Although these structures have largely been lost, the historic plot pattern remains legible.

The proposed development responds to this pattern by reinstating built form within the backland area, replacing the existing open expanse of hardstanding with a more enclosed arrangement that reflects the historic grain of development. The buildings are arranged parallel to Princes Mews, maintaining the established relationship between frontage, access route and rear gardens.

Subordinate Scale and Massing

A key design objective has been to ensure that the new buildings remain visually subordinate to the historic frontage buildings on King Street and Baldock Street.

The proposed townhouses occupy the secondary backland position historically associated with ancillary development rather than competing with the principal historic frontages. Their height, footprint and spacing ensure that the architectural dominance of the listed buildings remains unchanged, whilst the development reinforces the traditional hierarchy between the principal streets and the rear service areas.

Traditional Roof Forms

The proposed pitched roofs draw upon the prevailing roofscape of the Conservation Area, where simple gabled and hipped roofs finished in clay tiles form one of the defining characteristics of the historic townscape.

The roof forms avoid unnecessarily complex profiles or bulky upper storeys, helping the development integrate comfortably within the surrounding roofscape whilst maintaining the modest character traditionally associated with backland development.

Traditional Materials and Detailing

The proposals employ a restrained palette of traditional materials that responds positively to the surrounding historic environment. Brick walls, clay tiled roofs and painted joinery reflect the materials commonly found throughout King Street, Baldock Street and Princes Mews.

Rather than replicating historic architecture, the detailing provides a contemporary interpretation of traditional forms, ensuring that the development is clearly of its own time whilst remaining sympathetic to its historic context.

Active Frontage to Princes Mews

The proposed dwellings present a continuous and active frontage onto Princes Mews, replacing the visually inactive edge currently formed by the surface car park.

Individual front entrances, regular window openings and landscaped forecourts provide natural surveillance and create a more attractive streetscape. This strengthens the sense of enclosure within Princes Mews whilst reinforcing its role as an established residential street.

Landscaped Setting

Soft landscaping forms an integral component of the design. New tree planting, front gardens and private rear gardens introduce greenery into a site currently dominated by hardstanding and parked vehicles.

This landscaping softens the appearance of the development, improves visual amenity and enhances the setting of the Conservation Area by replacing an extensive area of modern surfacing with a more traditional domestic environment.

Narrow Plot Rhythm

The six townhouses have been designed as individual narrow plot units, reflecting the rhythm and proportions that characterise the historic burgage plots from which Princes Mews evolved.

This regular plot pattern avoids the appearance of a single large building and instead reflects the incremental nature of historic urban development, creating a scale and rhythm more closely aligned with the historic morphology of the Conservation Area.

Reinforcing the Character of the Rear Plots

The proposals acknowledge that Princes Mews has historically functioned as a secondary service area rather than a principal street. The architecture is therefore deliberately restrained, with simple forms, traditional materials and modest detailing that reflect the functional character historically associated with rear plots.

Rather than introducing a suburban estate layout, the development reinforces the intimate scale and enclosed character of this backland environment whilst providing a high-quality residential setting. In doing so, the proposals respond positively to the historic evolution of the site and offer an appropriate replacement for the existing surface car park.

8.0 DESIGN ASSESSMENT

Elevations of the proposed buildings are given in figure 9 below:

The proposed development has evolved through a heritage-led design process informed by an understanding of the significance of the Royston Conservation Area, the surrounding listed buildings and the historic development of Princes Mews. Rather than replicating historic architecture, the proposals respond to the defining characteristics of the site by reinforcing the historic urban grain, respecting the established hierarchy of development and replacing a modern surface car park with a high-quality residential environment. The following assessment considers how the final design responds to these objectives.

Layout and Urban Grain

The layout responds positively to the historic morphology of this part of Royston. The six townhouses are arranged parallel to Princes Mews, reinforcing the established building line and maintaining the traditional relationship between buildings, the access route and enclosed rear plots. Although the historic ancillary buildings that once occupied the site have been lost, the proposals reintroduce enclosure and subdivision that better reflect the medieval plot pattern than the existing open car park.

The development is expressed as six individual houses occupying narrow plots rather than a single continuous block. Individual entrances, vertically proportioned bays and private rear gardens create a rhythm that reflects the fine-grained character of the historic town whilst avoiding the appearance of a modern apartment building. The arrangement also establishes an active frontage to Princes Mews, replacing the fragmented edge created by the existing parking area.

Overall, the layout reinforces the historic urban grain and reflects the traditional pattern of backland development rather than a conventional suburban estate.

Scale, Massing and Roofscape

The proposed townhouses adopt a consistent two and a half storey form that responds appropriately to their backland location. Their modest scale ensures that they remain subordinate to the larger historic buildings fronting King Street and Baldock Street, preserving the established hierarchy between the principal commercial streets and the secondary rear plots.

The subdivision of the development into individual dwellings further reduces its perceived mass, preventing the scheme from appearing as a single dominant building. The retained parking area adjacent to Phillips Court also provides visual separation from neighbouring development, reducing the perception of continuous built form.

Simple pitched roofs with restrained ridge heights respond positively to the surrounding roofscape, where clay tiled pitched roofs are a defining characteristic of the Conservation Area. The roof orientation and modest scale ensure that the development integrates comfortably within the layered skyline of Royston without competing with the more prominent historic buildings.

Overall, the scale, massing and roofscape preserve the established hierarchy and reinforce the secondary character of Princes Mews.

Architecture and Materials

The proposed architectural approach draws upon the traditional materials and proportions found throughout King Street, Baldock Street and Princes Mews whilst adopting a clearly contemporary architectural language. Brick walls, clay tiled roofs and timber windows respond to the established material palette of the Conservation Area and ensure continuity with the surrounding townscape.

Architectural detailing is deliberately restrained, relying on proportion, rhythm and material quality rather than decorative ornament. This reflects the modest character historically associated with backland development and avoids competing with the more elaborate listed buildings along King Street.

The front elevations are defined by the well-proportioned ground, first and roof floors, whilst the hierarchy of the windows reflects the order of the adjacent Churchill homes development.

Rather than replicating historic architecture, the proposals provide a contemporary interpretation of local building traditions. This avoids pastiche whilst ensuring that the development remains sympathetic to its historic context.



Figure 9: Front elevations

Public Realm and Landscape

The proposals significantly improve the quality of Princes Mews by replacing an extensive area of hardstanding with an active residential frontage. Individually expressed front doors, regularly spaced windows and soft landscaping establish a stronger relationship between the buildings and the street, increasing natural surveillance and creating a more attractive public realm.

Street planting, front gardens and private rear gardens soften the appearance of the development and reduce the visual dominance of hard surfacing and parked vehicles. Together, these elements reinforce the domestic character of Princes Mews and create a greater sense of enclosure than currently exists.

The landscape strategy therefore complements the architectural design by enhancing the setting of the Conservation Area and replacing a visually poor parking area with a coherent residential environment.

Character of Princes Mews

The proposals reinforce the distinctive character of Princes Mews as a secondary backland street within the historic core of Royston. The development remains clearly subordinate to the principal historic frontages of King Street and Baldock Street through its modest scale, simple architectural expression and restrained detailing.

The layout respects the traditional pattern of enclosed rear plots and avoids the characteristics of a conventional suburban estate. Narrow plot widths, continuous building lines and active frontages create an intimate streetscape that reflects the historic evolution of this part of the town.

By replacing a modern surface car park with development rooted in the historic urban grain, the proposals strengthen the character of Princes Mews and contribute positively to the wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Summary

The design assessment demonstrates that the proposals have evolved directly from an understanding of the significance of the Royston Conservation Area and the surrounding listed buildings. The scheme reinforces the historic urban grain through a simple linear layout of individual dwellings, maintains a scale and roofscape that remain subordinate to the historic street frontages, and employs a restrained palette of traditional materials interpreted in a contemporary manner.

The replacement of the existing surface car park with active frontages, soft landscaping and a coherent pattern of backland development also represents a significant improvement to the quality of Princes Mews. Overall, the proposals respect the historic hierarchy of the town, preserve the setting of nearby listed buildings and provide a heritage-led response that preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.

9.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 Setting of listed buildings

Nos. 43 & 43A King Street (Grade II)

The application site occupies part of the historic rear plots associated with Nos. 43 and 43A King Street. Whilst this relationship contributes to the significance of the listed buildings, the historic setting has been substantially altered through the loss of ancillary buildings and the creation of the existing surface car park.

The proposed townhouses reintroduce built form that reflects the traditional pattern of backland development. Their two and a half storey scale, simple pitched roofs and restrained architectural expression ensure they remain subordinate to the principal King Street frontage and do not compete with the listed buildings. The historic hierarchy between the formal street frontage and the secondary rear plots is retained.

Architectural Interest - Unaffected.

Effect: Preserved.

Group Value - Continuous terrace retained.

Effect: Preserved.

Setting - Principal views unchanged.

Effect: Preserved.

Historic Relationship - Backland hierarchy retained.

Effect: Preserved.

Overall, the proposals preserve the setting and significance of Nos. 43 and 43A King Street. The heritage impact is considered to be neutral.

No. 45 King Street (Grade II)

The significance of No. 45 is derived principally from its contribution to the continuous historic frontage of King Street and its group value with neighbouring listed buildings. The application site lies within its historic rear plot, although this area has been substantially altered through twentieth-century redevelopment.

The proposed development remains subordinate in scale and occupies the traditional backland position formerly associated with ancillary buildings. It does not interrupt the appreciation of the listed building from King Street nor diminish its architectural prominence.

The assessment used above on Nos. 43 & 43A King Street is the same. Therefore the proposals preserve the setting and significance of No. 45 King Street and result in a neutral heritage impact.

Outbuilding to the Rear of No. 47 King Street (Grade II)

The outbuilding has the closest relationship with the application site, deriving much of its significance from its survival as a historic ancillary building within the rear of the historic burgage plots. The proposals introduce new residential development within this wider backland setting.

However, the proposed townhouses adopt a scale, layout and architectural character that reflects the traditional pattern of enclosed rear-plot development. They remain subordinate to the historic outbuilding and replace an existing surface car park that contributes little to its setting.

The assessment used above on Nos. 43 & 43A King Street is the same. The proposals preserve the significance of the listed outbuilding. Any change to its setting would be negligible and, at most, amount to very limited harm at the lowest end of the less-than-substantial harm spectrum.

Nos. 49–53 King Street (Grade II)

The significance of Nos. 49–53 derives principally from their Georgian architectural character and the surviving carriageway linking King Street with the historic rear plots. Although the application site forms part of those historic plots, their setting has been substantially altered by modern development.

The proposed townhouses reinforce the historic hierarchy between the principal street frontage and the secondary backland areas through their modest scale, traditional roof forms and simple architectural treatment. The listed terrace remains the dominant architectural element within the townscape.

The assessment used above on Nos. 43 & 43A King Street is the same. The proposals preserve the setting and significance of Nos. 49–53 King Street and give rise to a neutral heritage impact.

Nos. 55–59 King Street (Grade II)

The proposed development occupies the historic rear plots associated with Nos. 55–59 King Street but remains physically separated from the listed buildings by existing boundaries and intervening land. The existing surface car park makes only a limited contribution to their setting.

The proposed townhouses respect the established hierarchy of development through their two-storey scale, simple roof forms and restrained architectural expression. They reinforce the historic pattern of backland development without competing with the continuous historic frontage of King Street.

The assessment used above on Nos. 43 & 43A King Street is the same. Overall, the proposals preserve the setting and significance of Nos. 55–59 King Street. The heritage impact is therefore considered to be neutral.

9.2 Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Royston Conservation Area

The proposed development has been informed by a detailed understanding of the significance of the Royston Conservation Area and responds positively to the characteristics that define its special interest. Although the application site forms part of the historic backland associated with the medieval burgrave plots, its contribution has been substantially diminished through twentieth-century redevelopment and its current use as a surface car park. The proposals therefore provide an opportunity to replace a poor-quality site with development that better reflects the historic urban grain.

The layout reinforces the historic pattern of development through a simple linear arrangement of individual townhouses with enclosed rear gardens, reintroducing a degree of enclosure that has been lost through the creation of the existing car park. The two-storey scale and modest massing remain subordinate to the principal buildings fronting King Street and Baldock Street, preserving the established hierarchy between the formal street frontages and the secondary backland areas.

The simple pitched roofs, restrained ridge heights and traditional materials respond positively to the surrounding townscape. Brick walls, clay tiled roofs and timber windows reflect the established material palette of the Conservation Area, whilst the contemporary architectural detailing avoids pastiche and ensures the development is clearly identifiable as a modern intervention.

The proposals also improve the quality of the public realm by replacing extensive hardstanding, parked vehicles and minimal enclosure with active frontages, soft landscaping and a well-defined building line. This creates a more attractive residential environment that reinforces the intimate character of Princes Mews and avoids the appearance of a conventional suburban estate.

Overall, the proposals represent a heritage-led response to a site whose historic character has been substantially eroded by modern development. By reinforcing the historic urban

grain, respecting the established hierarchy of development and significantly improving the existing townscape, the proposals preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.

The proposals therefore satisfy the statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and resulting in no harm to its significance.

Architectural Character

The proposals would not affect the principal architectural characteristics that define the Conservation Area.

Effect: Preserved

Historic Urban Grain

The proposals reinstate enclosure and reflect the traditional pattern of rear plot development.

Effect: Reinforced

Townscape Enclosure

The existing car park creates an unusually open space

The proposed terrace restores enclosure.

Effect: Improved

Principal Views

Views along King Street remain unchanged.

Effect: Preserved

Spatial Relationships

The hierarchy between principal frontage and secondary backland remains legible.

Effect: Preserved

Overall Heritage Effect

The proposal preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

10.0 HERITAGE AND PUBLIC BENEFITS

The proposed development delivers a number of heritage benefits that contribute positively to the significance of the Royston Conservation Area and the setting of the surrounding listed

buildings. These benefits arise not simply from the provision of new housing, but from the replacement of an underused and visually poor site with development that responds positively to the historic character and urban morphology of this part of Royston.

The redevelopment of the existing surface car park represents a significant improvement to the townscape. Whilst the application site forms part of the historic burgage plot pattern, its contribution has been substantially diminished by modern hardstanding, parked vehicles, lighting and limited enclosure. The proposals replace this degraded environment with a coherent pattern of development that better reflects the historic evolution of the site.

A further benefit is the strengthening of the historic urban grain. The layout reintroduces enclosure within the backland area through a simple arrangement of narrow individual dwellings, reinforcing the traditional relationship between Princes Mews and the rear portions of the historic plots. This responds more closely to the historic morphology of the Conservation Area than the existing open parking area.

The architectural quality of the development also represents a positive contribution. The proposed buildings employ traditional materials, including brick, clay tiled roofs and timber windows, interpreted through a restrained contemporary architectural language. This approach ensures that the development integrates comfortably within its historic surroundings whilst remaining clearly identifiable as a modern addition to the town.

The proposals further enhance the public realm by replacing an inactive car park with active residential frontages, improved natural surveillance and high-quality landscaping. These interventions strengthen the character of Princes Mews, improve visual amenity and reinforce the sense of enclosure that is characteristic of historic market towns.

Collectively, these measures will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area whilst providing a sustainable long-term use for an underutilised site. The proposals therefore deliver clear heritage benefits by reinforcing the historic urban structure, improving townscape quality and creating a development that responds positively to its historic context.

Heritage Benefits

- Redevelopment of an underused surface car park;
- reinforcement of the historic urban grain through reinstated enclosure; improved townscape quality;
- enhancement of the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area;
- preservation of the setting of nearby listed buildings;
- use of contextual scale, materials and roof forms that respond positively to local character.

Environmental Benefits

- Replacement of extensive hardstanding with soft landscaping;
- improved biodiversity and visual amenity;
- more efficient use of previously developed land;
- reduced dominance of parked vehicles within the Conservation Area;
- opportunities for sustainable drainage and urban greening.

Social Benefits

- Provision of six family dwellings in a sustainable town centre location;
- improved residential environment;
- increased natural surveillance and activity within Princes Mews;
- enhancement of an underused area, improving perceptions of safety and place quality.

Economic Benefits

- Efficient redevelopment of brownfield land; s
- Support for the vitality of Royston town centre through additional residents;
- construction employment and associated investment; long-term contribution to the local housing supply.

Collectively, these heritage, environmental, social and economic benefits demonstrate that the proposals would deliver a comprehensive package of public benefits extending beyond the conservation of the historic environment. The scheme would secure the sensitive redevelopment of a degraded backland site, reinforce the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area, provide additional housing on previously developed land and contribute positively to the continued vitality and sustainability of Royston town centre.

11.0 PLANNING BALANCE

11.1 Potential Heritage Harm

The assessment concludes that the proposed development has been informed by a detailed understanding of the significance of the Royston Conservation Area and the setting of the surrounding listed buildings. The scheme respects the historic urban grain, remains subordinate to the principal historic frontages of King Street and Baldock Street, and employs a scale, form and material palette that responds positively to the character of Princes Mews.

The proposals preserve the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area and maintain the significance of the surrounding listed buildings. Consequently, **no harm** has been identified to the significance of the designated heritage assets.

If the Council were to conclude that the introduction of new built form within the historic backland setting gives rise to any adverse effect, such harm would be no more than negligible and at the very lowest end of the less than substantial harm spectrum. It would arise solely from the inevitable change associated with redevelopment rather than from any failure to respond appropriately to the historic character of the site.

11.2 Heritage and Public Benefits

The proposals deliver a number of clear heritage and wider public benefits, including:

- the redevelopment of an underused surface car park with a high-quality residential development;
- reinforcement of the historic urban grain and the traditional pattern of enclosed backland development;

- strengthening of the established hierarchy between the principal street frontages and the secondary rear plots;
- enhancement of the character and appearance of Princes Mews through active frontages and improved enclosure;
- significant improvements to the public realm through landscaping and the replacement of extensive hardstanding;
- the use of high-quality, durable materials that respond positively to the character of the Conservation Area;
- improved natural surveillance and a more attractive residential environment; and
- the long-term preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.

In addition, the proposals contribute to the efficient use of previously developed land within the town centre and provide six new dwellings in a sustainable location, supporting wider planning objectives.

11.3 Planning Balance

For the reasons set out in this assessment, the proposals preserve the significance of the Royston Conservation Area and the setting of the surrounding listed buildings, satisfying the statutory duties under Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Accordingly, the proposals comply with the heritage objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, Historic England guidance and the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

Should the Local Planning Authority conclude that the proposals give rise to any very limited less than substantial harm, that harm would be clearly and comfortably outweighed by the substantial heritage, townscape and public benefits identified above. The proposals should therefore be supported in heritage terms.

12.0 CONCLUSION

This Heritage Statement has assessed the significance of the application site, the Royston Conservation Area and the surrounding listed buildings, together with the likely effects of the proposed redevelopment to provide six townhouses at Princes Mews.

The assessment has established that, whilst the application site occupies part of the historic rear burgage plots associated with King Street and Baldock Street, its existing contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area has been substantially diminished through twentieth-century redevelopment and its current use as a surface car park. The site retains evidential value through its position within the historic urban morphology, but its existing appearance makes only a limited positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or the setting of the surrounding listed buildings.

The proposed development has been informed by a detailed understanding of Royston's historic development and the characteristics that define the significance of the Conservation

Area. The layout, scale, massing, roof forms and material palette respond directly to the historic urban grain, reinforcing the established hierarchy between the principal street frontages of King Street and Baldock Street and the secondary backland character of Princes Mews. Rather than introducing a conventional suburban layout, the proposals re-establish a pattern of enclosed development that better reflects the historic evolution of the site.

The assessment concludes that the significance of the surrounding listed buildings will be preserved. Their architectural prominence, group value and relationship with the historic street frontages remain unchanged, whilst the redevelopment of the existing surface car park provides a more appropriate setting that responds positively to the historic character of the rear plots.

The proposals also preserve and, in several respects, enhance the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area by reinforcing the historic urban grain, improving the quality of the public realm and replacing a visually poor area of hardstanding with a coherent pattern of high-quality residential development.

Accordingly, the proposals satisfy the statutory duties under **Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**, preserving the significance of the nearby listed buildings and the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area. They also accord with the heritage objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, Historic England guidance and the relevant policies of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

Overall, the proposals represent a well-considered, heritage-led scheme that responds positively to the opportunities and constraints of this sensitive historic environment. They preserve the significance of the designated heritage assets, deliver clear heritage and public benefits, and should therefore be supported from a heritage perspective.