
42 – 44 KNEESWORTH STREET

Heritage Impact Assessment



12th December 2025

CLIENT: Grand Park Homes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Heritage Impact Assessment reviews the significance of Nos. 42–44 Kneesworth Street, Royston, and the impact of proposals to integrate No. 44, a Grade II listed early nineteenth-century house, into the adjoining St George's Nursing Home at No. 42, a locally listed Victorian building. The project aims to improve circulation, accessibility and residential capacity while preserving the site's historic character.

No. 44 holds high architectural significance, defined by its early nineteenth-century yellow brick façade, curved bow windows, original sash windows, chimneys and central stair within a Georgian two-cell plan. Nos. 42 and 46 form a complementary historic group that enhances the Royston Conservation Area. Rear ranges to both buildings, including later lean-tos and extensions, are of low significance and offer potential for sensitive alteration.

Description of Proposals; The proposals include:

- Internal reconfiguration of No. 44 to provide enlarged bedrooms, new ensuites, improved circulation, and a lift.
- Creation of a new internal link between Nos. 42 and 44 through later (low-significance) fabric to enable integrated use.
- Rationalisation of the rear elevations, including removal of an external WC and improvements to fenestration.
- Minor alterations to No. 42 to improve layout and add an additional bedroom.
- Retention of key historic features including staircase, structural walls, fireplaces, sash windows, front and rear elevations, and overall plan form.

Assessment of Heritage Impact

The proposals have been designed using a conservation-led approach, working within the building's existing hierarchy, plan form, and fabric. There is:

- No harm to the principal east elevation or the character of the conservation area.
- Neutral to beneficial impact on the rear elevation and courtyard setting through removal of poor-quality additions and improved coherence.
- Low-level, less-than-substantial harm to internal plan legibility due to new lobbies, partitions and ensuites; this harm is reversible, avoids high-significance features, and occurs only where change is considered acceptable in the Historic Building Assessment.
- No loss of historic fabric of high significance.

Public and Heritage Benefits

The scheme delivers clear and substantial public benefits:

- Increased care-home capacity from 22 to 30 residents in a sustainable location.
- Improved accessibility, fire safety and quality of accommodation for elderly residents.
- Securing the long-term viable use and maintenance of the Grade II listed building.
- Enhancement of the building's rear appearance and improved understanding of its historic form.
- Positive contribution to the character of the Royston Conservation Area.

FORWARD:

This initial assessment has been prepared to help guide proposals for making internal changes to the building in the form of a conversion. As a listed building an assessment of its architectural and historical significance was carried out through visiting the site. The assessment of the building gives an outline of the scope of change that may be acceptable.

The report assesses the intention to improve the use of the building for the Care Home, so as to maximise the use of the existing floor space in the building. This will subsequently support a planning application to be submitted to East Herts to improve the space on the inside of no 42-444 Kneesworth Street.

The objective is to respect the character of the building and its hierarchy whilst improving the space, so it is fit to be occupied by residential dwellings. The proposal to facilitate the improvement of internal spaces (through diligent intervention) and instate discrete changes to the layout of the building will see the accommodation refer to its former importance as a handsome Georgian (no 44) and late Victorian house (no 42).

It is proposed to make internal changes to the building in the form of light remodelling and refurbishment works to bring the space up to date with the current use.

The proposals to connect the spaces and convert the existing accommodation into new sized rooms require an appraisal of the buildings architectural and historic character. The assessment identifies the constraints imposed by the listed interior of the building outlining its significance and describing elements that will need to be retained and worked around when configuring the new accommodation.

The architectural survey gives an assessment of the internal parts of the building. The current mode for interior decoration is neutral on the floors where the object of the proposal takes place. The overwhelming character of the space is given by the tall ceilings (ground and first floors), large windows and some timber floors.

The assessment concludes that the proposed works constitute a sensitive, well-justified and policy-compliant intervention that preserves the special architectural and historic interest of No. 44 and enhances its setting. The degree of heritage harm is minimal to none, is outweighed by significant public benefits, and is consistent with NPPF expectations for conserving heritage assets while supporting viable, sustainable use. The proposals therefore represent an appropriate and positive development for Nos. 42–44 Kneesworth Street.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Assessment has been prepared to support emerging design and forthcoming applications for planning permission and listed building consent relating to proposed alterations at Nos. 42–44 Kneesworth Street (KS). The purpose of the document is to examine the architectural and historic significance of the buildings, to assess the sensitivity of their form, layout and materiality, and to evaluate the likely impact of a modest rear extension and changes to the interior by the applicant.

The report provides the evidence base required to inform design development, demonstrate policy compliance, and ensure that the special interest and character of the heritage assets are respected, retained, and where possible enhanced.

1.1 Context and Objectives

The client's ambition is to upgrade elements of the existing buildings so that the accommodation better meets contemporary standards for residential use, particularly for elderly patients. The central aim is to facilitate clearer, more accessible connections through the rear of the property while retaining the historic character that defines Nos. 42–44 KS.

The proposals consist principally of an internal link between the rear kitchen of No. 44 and an existing bedroom at No. 42. This is intended to improve circulation, usability, and environmental quality across the ground floor.

Squire Heritage has been instructed to advise on the potential for change within the constraints of both local and national heritage policy. The approach taken is collaborative, with the intention of working constructively with East Herts District Council to bring forward a scheme that is realistic and appropriate from a conservation perspective.

At the same time, the proposals must be practically aligned with the operational needs of the building's residents and staff. The overarching objective is to achieve a sensitive balance between conserving important historic fabric and ensuring the long-term viable use of the buildings.

The site itself sits within a sensitive heritage context. No. 44 KS is a Grade II listed building and therefore a designated heritage asset of national importance. Nos. 42 and 46 KS, which adjoin the site, are both locally listed buildings and therefore recognised as non-designated heritage assets of significant local value. The wider setting is the Royston Conservation Area, characterised by a rich architectural mix ranging from medieval timber-framed buildings to Georgian, Victorian, and early 20th-century structures.

Any proposed development must therefore demonstrate a clear understanding of the qualities of the conservation area and ensure that alterations do not cause unacceptable harm to its character or appearance.

A conservation-led methodology underpins the design and assessment process. The architectural and historical significance of the buildings, and particularly of No. 44, establishes the framework for determining which elements of fabric and layout should be safeguarded.

Notable features include the early 19th-century yellow brick façade and distinctive curved bow windows, as well as the coherent internal plan form with its central corridor and stair. The objective is to retain these and other defining elements, including chimneys, roof tiles, brickwork, and original windows, while permitting suitably modest interventions that support the building's contemporary use.

It is also necessary to consider the cumulative history of change across the site. The buildings have experienced only limited alteration since their construction. No. 44 retains its original ground-floor layout, while No. 42 includes a deeper wing extension accommodating dining, office, kitchen, and storage facilities.

Later interventions, including the 1988 car park and nursing home extension, have contributed to an evolving built form that must be acknowledged in the present proposals. Understanding this chronology helps to identify which elements of the buildings contribute positively to significance and which areas offer greater capacity for change.

1.2 Methodology

The assessment applies established conservation principles and follows national guidance on evaluating the significance of historic buildings and their settings. The report begins with a review of relevant legislation and policy, including the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024), and local planning policy. These provide the statutory and policy context against which the proposals must be assessed.

A comprehensive site visit was undertaken to examine the buildings' exteriors, interiors, and setting, enabling the preparation of a working chronology of development. The condition, authenticity, and contribution of individual features to significance were recorded through a photographic survey. Examination of all elevations helped to clarify the evolution of the built form, and this was supported by historic mapping and documentary research.

The report includes an appraisal of the wider setting within the Royston Conservation Area. The historic morphology of the area is mapped to illustrate the development of Kneesworth Street, showing how its architectural character has evolved over time. Heritage assets within a 100-metre radius, including the listed Yew Tree Cottage (No. 36a KS) and No. 40 KS, are identified and assessed to understand how the proposals may affect their significance. Locally listed buildings at Nos. 42 and 46 KS are also evaluated as non-designated assets relevant to the site context.

The structure of the assessment is intentionally clear and sequential. Section 2 presents the historical background of the site and its townscape setting. Section 3 provides the Historic Building Assessment, including an analysis of significance. Section 4 evaluates the impact of the proposals against identified significance and against national and local policy. This ensures that the final design is informed by a rigorous and well-evidenced understanding of the buildings and their heritage value.

1.4 Policy Considerations

In assessing proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets, the statutory duty to preserve or enhance their character and appearance is paramount. Sections 16, 66, and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require decision-makers to have special regard to the desirability of conserving listed buildings and their settings, and to pay special attention to preserving or enhancing conservation areas.

The NPPF (2024), particularly Section 16, reinforces these duties and frames significance as central to assessment. The policy recognises heritage assets as irreplaceable and requires that any harm be clearly and convincingly justified. It also encourages opportunities for enhancing or better revealing significance, especially within conservation areas. National guidance is supplemented by the North Herts Local Plan (2018) which emphasises high standards of design, appropriate materials, and sympathetic approaches to historic buildings.

The principal local policies relevant to the historic environment are:

- **Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets**
- **Policy HE2: Heritage at Risk**
- **Policy HE3: Buildings of Local Interest**
- **Policy SP13: Historic Environment**
- **Policy D1 & D2: Design and House Extensions** (supporting character and setting)
- **Policy SP9: Development in Town Centres** (contextual design and conservation)

2.0 Nos 42- 44 AND ITS HISTORIC CONTEXT

2.1 Historic background

Early

Royston's historic development is closely linked to its strategic position at the crossroads of two ancient routes — Ermine Street, the major Roman road from London to York, and the Icknield Way, a prehistoric trackway running from East Anglia to Wessex. This advantageous location gave rise to early settlement activity, with archaeological evidence indicating occupation from the Roman period onwards.

The town's name derives from 'Roisia's Cross', a stone cross erected in the 12th century by Lady Roisia, which stood near the present-day crossroads. A settlement gradually formed around this landmark, and by the 13th century, Royston was an established market town. It developed a medieval street pattern still legible today, characterised by narrow burgage plots extending back from the High Street and Kneesworth Street. The town's prosperity grew from agriculture, local trade, and services catering to travellers along the two important routes.

In the **16th and early 17th centuries**, Royston's fortunes were transformed by royal patronage. King James I established a royal hunting lodge in the town around 1604, adapting former monastic buildings following the Dissolution of the Priory of St Thomas of Canterbury. The presence of the royal court brought economic and social prestige, leading to the construction of substantial timber-framed and early brick buildings for lodging, stabling, and trade. Surviving examples from this period include properties along Kneesworth Street and Market Hill.

The **18th and 19th centuries** saw Royston thrive as an important coaching and market centre. The town's location on the London–Cambridge road made it a key staging post, reflected in the number of inns and public houses from this period. The architecture of the Georgian and Victorian eras introduced refined façades, sash windows, and brick elevations, which today define much of the town's visual character.

The arrival of the railway in 1850 further stimulated commerce and modest industrial growth, while the market continued to serve the surrounding agricultural hinterland.

In the 20th century, Royston expanded beyond its medieval boundaries with new residential areas and commercial development. However, the historic core, comprising the High Street, Kneesworth Street, and surrounding lanes, retains its medieval street pattern, traditional building materials, and distinctive market-town character.

This area, now designated as the Royston Conservation Area, remains the architectural and historical heart of the town, encapsulating over eight centuries of development from a medieval crossroads settlement to a thriving modern community.

2.2 Heritage Assets: Royston Conservation Area

Special Interest of Royston Conservation Area:

The Royston Conservation Area is of special architectural and historic interest as a well-preserved market town whose urban form, buildings, and spaces reflect a long period of continuous development. Its character and appearance are defined by a harmonious blend of medieval street patterns, Georgian and Victorian architecture, and a strong sense of place derived from its historic setting and topography.

At the heart of its special interest lies Royston's historic plan form, centred on the junction of the ancient Ermine Street and Icknield Way. The distinctive street layout, including High Street, Kneesworth Street, Baldock Street, and Melbourn Street, retains the narrow burgage plots of medieval origin. These streets are framed by an intimate and varied townscape, with buildings tightly aligned to the pavement, creating strong enclosure and rhythm.

The area's architectural interest is given by a rich variety of building types and periods contribute, from medieval timber-framed structures and Georgian townhouses to Victorian civic and commercial buildings. Local materials, including red brick, painted plaster, stone, and clay tiles, unify the townscape despite stylistic diversity.

Notable historic buildings include the former King James Palace range on Kneesworth Street, the 16th-century Cross Keys Public House, and St John the Baptist Church, whose spire forms a key landmark within and beyond the conservation area. Royston's historic function as a market and coaching town remains evident in the form and scale of its buildings, the presence of former inns, and the survival of Market Hill, which continues to act as a focal public space.

Equally important is the town's coherent visual quality, arising from consistent building heights, traditional rooflines, and the careful relationship between built form and open space. Mature

trees, historic boundary walls, and small greens soften the urban environment and enhance its setting.

Overall, the special interest of the Royston Conservation Area derives from its historic street pattern, architectural richness, varied townscape, and enduring role as a civic and commercial centre. Together, these elements convey the town's evolution and collective memory, making Royston a place of significant cultural, architectural, and historic value worthy of preservation.

Special Interest of Kneesworth Street

Kneesworth Street is of special interest for its **historic and architectural character** which richly contributes to the identity of Royston. The street lies within the town's conservation area and retains the medieval plot pattern (narrow plots with street-front buildings) typical of its burgage layout. The street's townscape features a rich mix of materials (timber-frame, brick, plaster), historic rear gardens and walls that enhance the setting, and a sense of continuity in its built form. Together, these elements make Kneesworth Street a vital component in illustrating Royston's evolution — from royal residence to market town — and worthy of careful conservation.

Architecturally, the street hosts a remarkable range of building types and eras. For example, No. 23 is a Grade I listed building: a circa 1700 red-brick house with sash windows, ornate door surround, and interior panelling — once part of the royal palace complex. Nearby, Nos 17-21 are a Grade II* timber-framed C15-/C16 building with plaster-faced exterior, part of the former buttery for King James's palace. The plastered frontage conceals a medieval frame with jettied upper floors and original roof timbers. Its age, craftsmanship, and royal association make it one of Royston's most significant surviving structures.

Further along, the 17th-century range at Nos 35-41 reflects lodging for court servants, with simple casement windows and historic shopfronts. The Cross Keys Public House (Grade II), is a timber-framed former coaching inn dating from the 16th century with later alterations. It reflects Royston's historic role as a market and staging post on the London–Cambridge route. The inn's long façade, carriage entrance, and traditional detailing make it a local landmark.

The Old Post Office, No. 45 Kneesworth Street is an example of an unlisted building of local interest. It is a late 19th-century commercial building retaining original shopfront features, decorative brickwork, and a distinctive corner position. It exemplifies the Victorian phase of Royston's urban growth and maintains continuity in material and scale within the street scene.



23



17-21



35-41



Old Post Office

Local Historic Townscape

The northern stretch of Kneesworth Street marks a shift in form and scale, characterised by large 18th- and 19th-century detached and semi-detached houses set slightly back behind brick walls or railings. Built mainly in red or gault brick, with some rendered examples, they feature gabled or hipped roofs of clay tile or slate and a range of sash window styles reflecting evolving 18th–19th-century design. North Hall and North Lodge stand out as rendered buildings.

The early–mid 19th-century Congregational Church, built in gault brick with a slate roof, sits set back within its former churchyard, now a car park. The Rookery and Yew Tree House are two large dwelling houses, which occupy a large section of the western side of Kneesworth Street 19 between the former congregational church and the junction with Palace Gardens.

The Rookery is a large early 19th century house situated in a large garden plot that compliments its size. It is on the back pavement edge and is constructed of gault brick with slate roof and sash windows with margin lights. Full height bay windows are a feature to one end of the façade with an off centre recessed 6-panel entrance door with columns to either side.

Yew Tree House is an early 18th-century red-brick residence set slightly back behind a low wall and dense yew hedge, occupying a large garden plot that reflects its historic status. An adjacent listed 18th-century brick wall and the former stables and coach house—now a nursery—reinforce the character of the group. Yew Tree Cottage, also early 18th-century and red brick, completes the ensemble.

Gaillard's Lane, paved in distinctive brown cobbles with drainage channels, runs between Yew Tree House and The Rookery. It is flanked by notable boundary walls, including an impressive flint wall and a rare brick crinkle-crankle wall.

Hesman House is a two-storey building dating from the 19th century. It was built for Hesman Abbots who owned a furnishing company in the town. It has a hipped slate roof with a shallower pitch than the plain clay tiled roofs of earlier buildings. It is deeper in plan and has symmetrically placed sash windows with margin lights and a central door. This style and form is continued on both sides until the end of the street excepting no.40.

The houses to the northern end of Kneesworth Street are constructed of either gault or red brick, with slate roofs. Bay windows are also a feature and are typically canted in shape. However, **no.44** displays two curved front bays with fine glazing bars dating to the early 19th century. The houses are symmetrical in design, usually with panelled central entrance doors. The doors are situated either within set recessed arches or framed by flat roofed porches supported on Doric columns.

No.40, North Lodge is a large, white rendered dwelling house dating to the 19th century but of a different style to the other buildings within the street. It is of the Italianate style and is situated in a large garden extending to the rear and side of the building enclosed by a boundary wall.

To the rear of the houses are gardens enclosed by brick, flint or clunch walls. The gardens are important to the special character and appearance of the area and large trees in gardens, notably at The Rookery and adjacent to the road at North Hall.

The former Corn Mill on the western side of Kneesworth Street is a landmark building at this end of the town. The building dates to the 19th century and was one of the largest employers within the town at this time, along with the Manure Company and breweries. Situated close to the station, the corn would either have been used in the town's maltings or sent via train to other malting towns. The mill is a large building of two storeys with a large corner tower and large hoist doors projecting from the roof. The mill is important to the industrial history of the town and along with the railway lead to its development to the north in the 19th century.

In front of the corn mill are Mrs. Barfield's Almshouses also constructed of gault bricks but built before the mill in 1833 and enlarged in 1858. They have an effective 'H' plan layout and dominant chimneys. Opposite, 19th century gault brick houses and shops with slate roofs line the east side of Kneesworth Street.

The buildings are gault brick with a stucco rendered ground floor. Disappointingly, Upvc double glazed windows have replaced previous vertical-sliding sash windows. The almshouses in Queens Road, erected in 1885, are decorative in design with fish scale roof tiles and plasterwork above the windows. Both reflect important aspects of the 19th century social history of Royston.

2.3 Historic development of No's 42-44

Local Context: The development of these two buildings is connected with the town's prosperous coaching and malting industries, with red brick buildings like no. 46 being examples from the 19th century. The area behind Kneesworth Street would have featured outbuildings used for stabling, storage, or malting, which was a prominent local industry in the 16th century. The thriving industries led to the replacement or re-fronting of some earlier buildings in a Georgian style.

The first OS 25 inch map shows the development of services based around milling, malting and livestock. As a corn mill, malthouse and cattle pens are located on the south side of the railway station highlighting the nature of working activity on KS at the end of the 19th century.

The former Corn Mill on the west side of Kneesworth Street is a prominent 19th-century landmark reflecting Royston's industrial growth. Once a major employer, alongside the Manure Company and local breweries, it played a key role in the town's economy. Close to the railway station, the mill processed and distributed corn for local and regional maltings. Its distinctive two-storey form with a corner tower and hoist doors symbolises Royston's 19th-century expansion and remains an important reminder of the town's industrial heritage and northern development.

The 1896 map also shows the site of former almshouses adjacent to the railway track – today in the setting of a garage car park. Further south there is a transition to more residential plots with houses being shown on both sides of the road down to Melbourne Street. The buildings are noted on the map and include Sycamore House, Yew Tree House and Kings House.

In the northern section there is a group of three buildings on the left hand side, sited in the same spot as no's 42 – 46. No 40, on the south side of the group is known as North Lodge, whereas a building along the lane to the west of no 42 is called Hesman House, a house built for Hesman Abbots who owned a furnishing company in the town



Corn Mill



Almshouses

No's 42-44

No's 42 and no 46 were built in and around 1896 and are shown on the OS for this year. The 1896 plan shows 3 houses with a similar width and depth, with no 42 and no 46 being rectangular. No 44 has a different arrangement at the rear, with a central wing formed as a dog leg, leaving a void on its north and south side respectively. The historic format and plan form is consistent with the outline of the existing building, with the rear garden area being different in the case of no 42 and no 44.

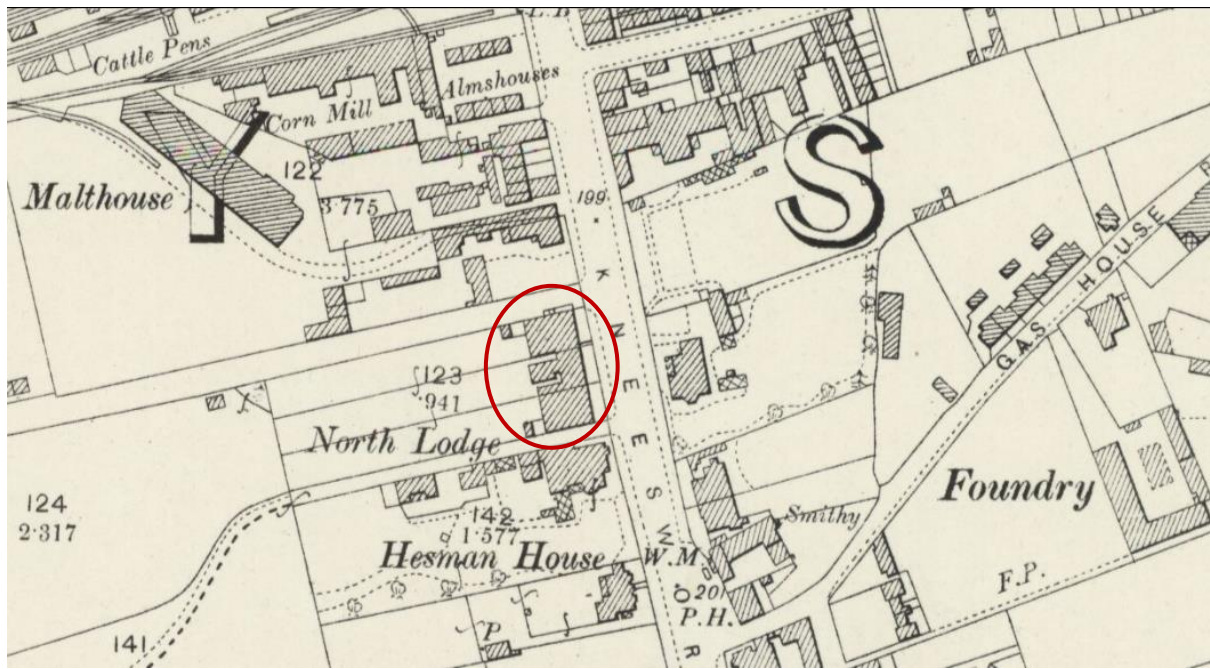
The southern rear return is shown as being part of no 44, although in today's building, this is established as being part of no 42, where a side return is given as garden to the latter. The plan form remains the same and the only change to the group is seen in 1922 (and 1937) when an extension has been added to the north side of no 46 and two outbuildings are located to the rear of no 42.

Prior to 1896, no 44 is shown on one historic map as a free-standing house without the two flanking properties to its side. In 1885, the house has an irregular layout, with three different depths projecting to the rear along three bays. The southern (current side) elevation is long and may well have been the front to the house.

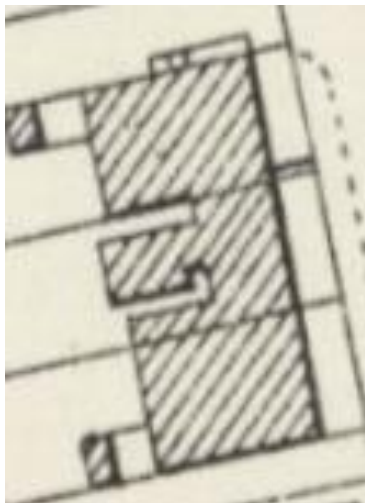
It seems likely that when the new houses were built on its south and north sides, there was some removal and redefinition of building lines at no 44. The depth of the building today is less than that which is shown on the map and the central block at the rear appears to have been configured out of a mixture of garden land and existing built form.



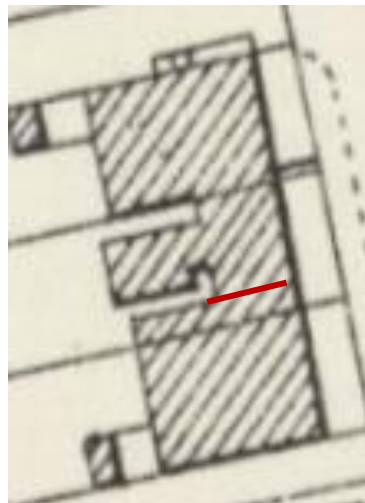
1885



1896



Former ownership boundaries, 1896



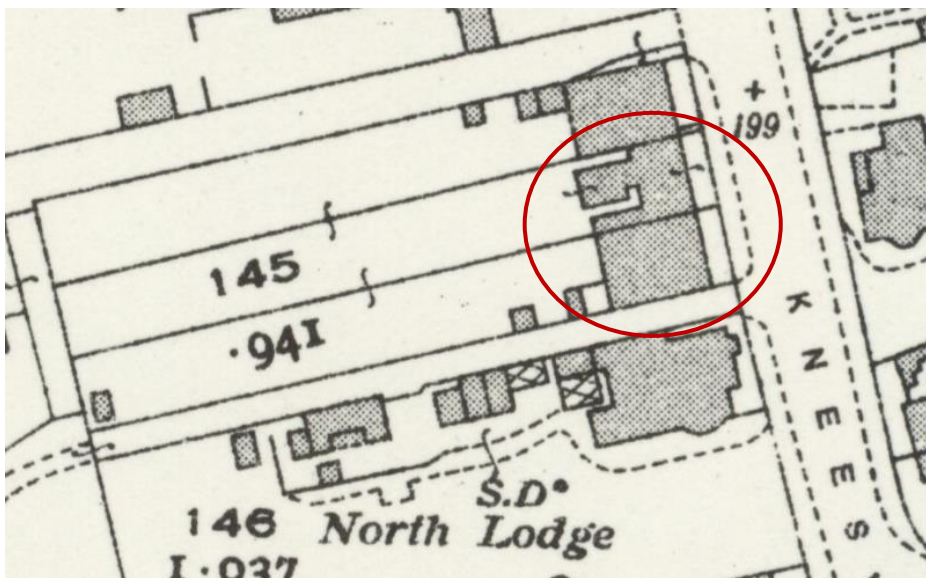
Party wall division, 2025



1885, no 44



1901,



1937

Planning Background

The extension at no 42 is a recorded addition to the main house. Otherwise, most changes have happened to the outbuildings and boundary treatments.

1. Continued siting of portable building for use as office in association with the nursing home, (06/01000/1| 2006
2. Felling of one lime tree (90/00059/1TPO), 1990
3. Two storey rear extension to Nursing home and car park in rear garden. 88/01263/1. 1998

2.4 Listed Building Designation

The building at no 44 was listed in **June 1976** and the description is below:

No 44 (Middle Brooklands)

Early C19. Yellow brick, Welsh slated roof with cornice. 2 storeys, 3 sash windows with glazing bars under flat arches. 2 ground floor semi-circular bow windows. Central 6 panel door, 2 panels flush, and traceried fanlight in double round arched reveal.

2.4.1 Descriptive for non-designated Heritage Asset¹

No 42:

Nos. 46 and 42 Kneesworth Street Red brick buildings forming a flanking pair to no.44 Kneesworth Street. No.46 is inscribed above the portico entrance with 'Brooklands 1896' and a blue plaque acknowledges that Capt Harold Ackroyd previously lived here. Capt. Ackroyd was attached to the Royal Army Medical Corps when he was awarded the Victoria Cross for rescuing wounded men under fire and killed at Ypres on 11th August 1917. No.42 is now St George's Nursing Home and forms the other flank to no.44 Kneesworth Street.

Reason for inclusion: *Both buildings are architecturally interesting and form an essential part of the setting to no.44, contributing positively to the streetscene and therefore, to the appearance of the conservation area. No. 46 also has an important historical association.*

¹ From register of buildings of local interest



Figure 1: Site of listed building



No 44, front elevation, east facing



No 42 front elevation, east facing



No 42, 44 & 46



Southeast elevation, showing south side of no 42 and the chimney roofline

3.0 ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

3.1 Form & Significance of the building

Age and design

No 44 is a red brick building that forms a flanking pair with no. 42 and no 46 Kneesworth Street. It is located in a part of Royston that features many dwellinghouses, both detached and semi-detached, with individual garden plots. Historically, the nearby building, 46 Kneesworth Street, has "Brooklands 1896" inscribed above its entrance, indicating its construction date.

No 42 is of the same dimensions and material outlook as no 46 and is likely to have been built at the same time, in 1896. This therefore gives the name given to no 44, Middle Brooklands, a context in relation to the two flanking houses.

No 44 is described as being early 19th century and its design is typical of Georgian design principles with balanced classical proportions. The frontage is constructed in brown/ yellow stock brick, laid in Flemish bond, with contrasting painted dressings highlighting the openings.

Elegant sash windows with fine glazing bars and recessed frames are set beneath shallow segmental brick arches. The ground-floor bay windows add a subtle Victorian refinement, enhancing light and status. This distinctiveness is amplified by the doorway where the central entrance features a semi-circular fanlight and a decorative arched surround.

These hallmarks of early 19th-century domestic architecture that emphasise formality and symmetry are highlighted by the upper order of the house. A slate-covered hipped roof with tall paired brick chimneys at each gable end gives the house a distinctive silhouette and balanced roofline.

Development and Plan form

It is interesting to read no 44 as being enclosed by two largely identical buildings to its sides giving an overall symmetrical outlook. The eaves and pitch of no 44 are lower than no 42 and no 46. The chimney stacks at the south and north end of the ridge have grandness that promotes its position between the two later buildings.

In earlier times the rear of the building was an integral part of the industrial activity this building played in the local area. It is probable that the rear area now occupied by gardens to no 42, 44 and 46 was used for storing of goods associated either with the maltings or corn mill. Access was taken from the road and it is probable that the working side of the building faced southwards and had a different frontage to the main CURRENT elevation that faces eastwards.

The south facing side of the building which is now occupied by no 42, may well have had an important role and status as befitting the industrial uses likely to have taken place. Unfortunately there is no record of what this former south elevation looked like before no 42 was built, although there appears to be some irregularities in the wall which may account for how it was changed.

It is likely that the south elevation was the main front and only in later times was the east elevation raised to be the main frontage of the house, facing the road and giving an impression of fine architectural quality, more refined than the south elevation.

The building at no 44 originally comprised a house, which by 1896 had been reformed into the shape which is prominent today. The house has a garden wing that forms a slender dog-leg shape to the west of the house. In the early 20th century the rear of no 44 was broadly the same as the rear of no 42 and no 46. This layout represents the former activity of the houses as private homes and attributes much significance, having undergone at least one phase of conversion (i.e. 1998) over the past 30 years at least.

No 42 and 46 were built in the late 19th century and were designed to enclose no 44. They seem to have been constricted with independent walls which form a secondary skin to no 44. Rather than internal walls abutting the primary party walls of no 44, new dividing walls were constructed adjacent to the older form.

The house itself is significant for the reasons given in the listing, as the original 19th century core of the house can still be witnessed in the 2-cell layout as well as the fireplaces and the centrally located staircase.

No's 42 and 44 is a building over two storeys that has seen few modifications. The majority of additions concern two recent phases in the building's history; firstly, the one-storey lean extension to no 44 and secondly, the two storey extension of the care home at no 42 in 1998. Alterations have been undertaken to provide strengthening for the patient accommodation.

The house at no 42 is very much a semi-detached self-contained structure based on the confines of the brick walls. The living space is contained within a rectangular-shaped layout that has the main door to the centre on the east side. Direct access to the rear garden is taken from the access road on the south side of the house. Internal access is given through the kitchen and office in the rear extension.

The existing plans relate to the general dimensions and proportions of the original building with the rooms following the existing line of the original walls from the ground-floor up. The arrangement of rooms on the first floor relates to the original building although it is seen that walls on the right hand side have been closed off to create separate flat accommodation.

The location of the fireplace in two locations at no 44 gives a constant vertical line through the building. It is noted that the position of the staircase is highlighted within the corridor/. On the first floor this space is a well sized landing linking the two rooms either side of the staircase. The stairs are likely to date back from the early 19th century and this provides some further indication of the largely unaltered character of the property.

When observed from the courtyard it is possible to see the single storey lean-to extension at no 44 in the same views as the two storey extension at no 42. The former effectively abuts the latter. the extension is architecturally sympathetic to the core building, as the positions of the windows forms an order over the ground and first floors and the pitched roof is sympathetic to the core roof although it is perpendicular.

The eaves also marry up with the original building at no 42. There is a modern 1980's rear French door and currently access to the courtyard is only taken through the kitchen extension, thereby negating any connectivity around and through the building.

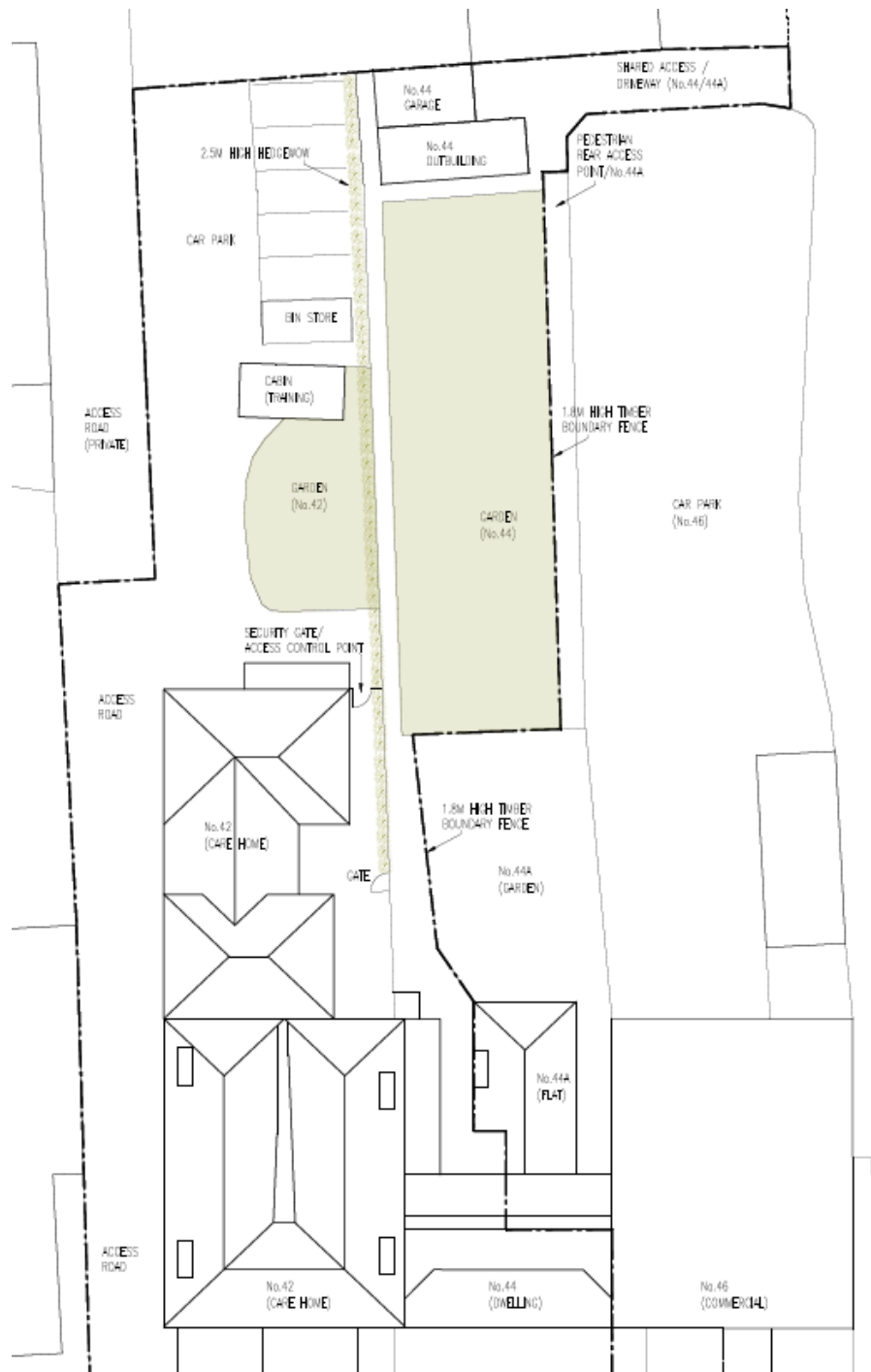


Figure 2.: Roof Plan

3.1.1 Rear Garden

The garden extension at No. 42 contains a two-storey structure (plus roof) which runs westward from the core building. It comprises a dining room, office and kitchen. The lean-to extension at No. 44 has greater architectural calibre, commensurate with its likely construction in the late 19th century; it too houses a kitchen.

These two pieces of architecture potentially serve as a place for recreation on the west side of both houses, where they face onto the garden. Here there is an opportunity to embrace the notion of the garden as a social space, yet currently the outward aspect presented is unattractive. It is likely that this arrangement differs from the original house.

The garden sits with its south side relating to the access track taken from the road, while the north has an outlook to the fence enclosing the site at No. 46. The west end is overlooked by the car park. The south side of No. 44 refers to the former extent of land of which the house was central; a long return wing may once have formed a frontage facing southwards. This was demolished before 1895 when No. 42 was built.

The external elevations still relate well to the building's historic function and there is a degree of parity between the building plan and former boundary lines.

There is a brick wall with copings and iron bars along the top, denoting the former boundary between No. 42 and No. 44. A wrought-iron gate is located in a gap between the walls and may indicate a former access into the land of No. 44 before No. 42 was built in the late 1890s.

The junction between No. 42 and No. 44 is most evident when reading the alignment of their respective roofs. The eaves of No. 42 overlap those of No. 44, showing that they were deliberately built to ascend and enclose the older building.



3.2 Architectural Assessment

No 44

This elevation exhibits the restrained elegance of early to mid-Victorian domestic architecture, with strong Georgian influences. The façade is symmetrical, featuring a central six-panelled door set within a semi-circular fanlight and arched brick surround, emphasising formality and balance.

The two-storey brick construction uses fine-gauge buff or brown stock bricks, with timber sash windows—six-over-six at ground floor and three-over-six above—set within painted stucco surrounds. The shallow pitched slate roof has a modest eaves cornice and is flanked by tall, decorative red-brick chimney stacks, adding verticality. The projecting canted bay windows with panelled bases and bracketed cornices contribute refinement and rhythm, giving the building a polite, late-Georgian/early-Victorian townhouse character.

Rear

The rear elevation shown has a traditional late Victorian domestic character. It features loadbearing brick construction with a mixed palette of yellow and red bricks, typical of the period. The elevation has tall, narrow sash windows with timber frames, segmental or flat brick arches, and chimney stacks in red brick with decorative detailing.

The slate roof with dormer and vertical emphasis of the openings reflect the era's vernacular style. Evidence of alterations and patch repairs (e.g., infilled openings and rendered areas) suggests incremental adaptations over time, while mature planting and adjoining structures contribute to a layered, historic appearance.

No 42

The front elevation forms part of a two-storey late Victorian domestic building, constructed in traditional materials and displaying architectural detailing characteristic of the late 19th to early 20th centuries. The building contributes positively to the historic townscape through its use of high-quality brickwork, well-proportioned fenestration, and restrained decorative detailing typical of this period's suburban architecture.

Rear

The building presents an L-shaped plan form, enclosing a modest courtyard area. The elevation is two storeys in height with a traditional pitched roof concealed behind shallow eaves. The massing is compact but articulated by projecting wings, creating depth and visual interest. This form likely reflects the original domestic arrangement, where service and living spaces were clearly distinguished by plan.

The primary walling is buff/yellow stock brickwork, laid in Flemish bond, complemented by red brick dressings that highlight structural and decorative features such as lintels, string courses, and sill bands. It has a natural slate roof with simple eaves and lead flashings are typical of the era, offering a low-profile roofscape that aligns with neighbouring buildings.

The elevation features tall, vertically proportioned window openings that reinforce the building's period character and vertical emphasis. The ground-floor windows are paired and symmetrically set, with clear glazing and transoms above. The upper-floor windows are single, large openings aligned to the bays below. Frames are painted timber or later uPVC replacements, retaining the traditional sash-like proportioning.

The architectural detailing is expressed through a string course as seen through a horizontal red brick band that runs along the façade between the storeys, visually dividing the elevation. There are some patterns in the brickwork, as occasional decorative diamond-shaped red brick inlays break up the plain wall surfaces.

Later modifications include a lightweight polycarbonate canopy supported by metal posts at ground-floor level, offering weather protection to the courtyard entrance. While functional, it is a modern intervention that contrasts with the historic fabric. Minor adaptations such as new rainwater goods and altered door openings appear to accommodate changes in use, yet the building's historic character remains largely intact.



West elevation



Brick wall



Side of extension, no 42: Looking towards house



Lean-to from above



Lean-to and rear wall of no 44

3.3 Internal character (See photos in Appendix 1)

As **Figure 1 shows** no 44 was originally a 2-cell central-entrance plan, with a later extension to its west side comprising a one storey block. The additions made to the rear of the building through the later Victorian kitchen extension account for the rear range of the building. Additions made in more recent times to the right hand side have altered the original form of the first floor, but it is known that the space on the north side of the staircase is likely to have always been one cell.

Indeed, in the current form, it is possible to make out the layout of an early house, with rooms either side of the staircase, acting as the living and eating areas. There was initially a front and rear range reflecting the position of doorways in two positions in the hallway, feeding into the south side of the stairway. Fireplaces were originally located on the right and left hand rooms and act as a means for reading how the house was heated in earlier times.

No 44 is a dual-phased building. Today, the building floor plan is formed of rooms on the south and north side of the hallway, with the later Victorian kitchen extension forming an additional space that forms a subsidiary part of the two storey house. The upper floor shares the same principal layout, a format that provides accommodation in comparable room sizes accessed from the staircase. It is noted that one quarter of the first floor does not feature in this assessment as it is under different ownership.

The current floor plan is adopted from the original layout at the house. Formerly, access would have been from a front door sited in the front facing wall, giving entrance directly into the lounge. The original house would have comprised two cells in the front and rear ranges located either side of the staircase / the hallway. A fireplace was located in two places, first on the left-hand side and then on the right-hand side, giving heat to both external walls of the building.

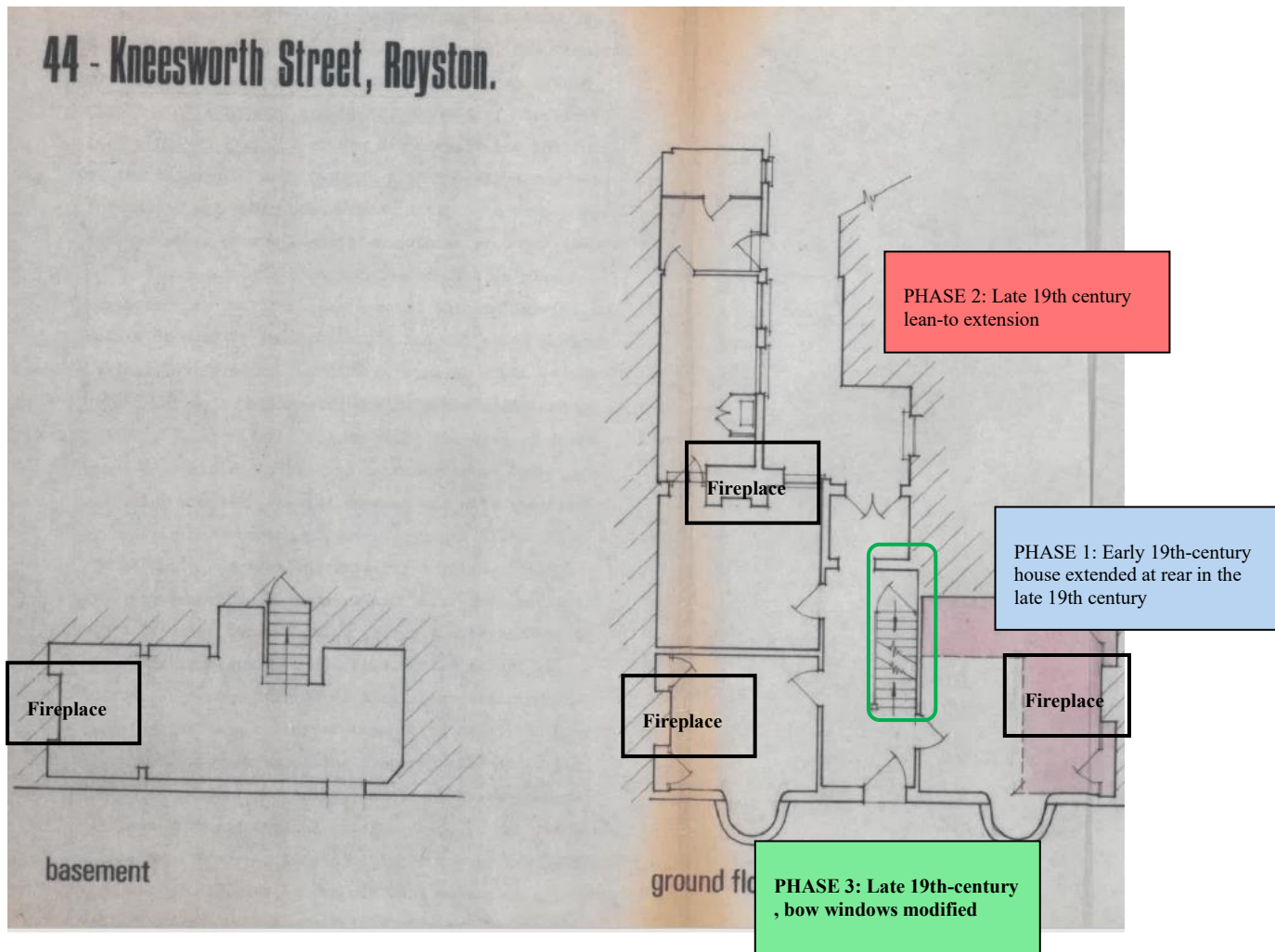
The core building is double depth. The earlier plan form from 1885 cannot be read in the current format as the building has been rebuilt at the rear. The 1896 plan form is a more accurate gauge of how no 44 was formed in the Victorian period. This rear wall ran was irregular as it took account of the sudden extension on the right hand side of the house. Here, the ground an first floor projected out in an east west direction across the back of the building into he garden, leaving the current untypical shape at the rear,

In the Victorian house of no 42, the space at the rear of the ground floor was later to be extended in an east west direction as the new kitchen/ office was built (1998) to form a new addition on to the original building. The one storey lean at no 44 to was probably arranged at the rear of no 44 in the late 19th century, giving basic kitchen accommodation. The changes were made through creating openings in the existing rear external wall and at no 44, there is a notable step change from the original to the extension.

AT no 44 the existing layout on the ground and first floor is very much unchanged from the early 19th century. Only the creation of an opening between the front and rear room on the left hand side is a change to take note of. Also, there have been instances of furnishings and fittings added to accommodate the needs of householders and residents.

At no 42, there has been slightly more change to the internal spaces to accommodate the accoutrements of a Care home. Specialist heavyweight equipment requires self supporting structures which have been raised against walls and there is evidence of pipes and cables which have been wired through the walls and ceilings to supply services.

Otherwise, the spaces have been carefully utilised to provide bedded accommodation for the users of the care home. The large sash windows, profile doors and wide corridors all represent important features of its architecture and have been carefully woven into the design of the existing care home. There is no obvious sign of partitions or unsympathetic changes.



- Phase 1** early 19th century - 4 cell house
- Phase 2** late 19th century – Kitchen extended
- Phase 3** late 19th century – Bow windows added

Figure 2: Phased development

Materials and fabric

The Historic Plan layout in Figure 2 highlights key elements of the internal space to which future proposals would need to take account of. Fireplace and staircase are features which represent former sources of heating and movement patterns through the house and so warrant much significance.

The main wall construction at ground and first floor level appears to be solid brick whilst the basement comprises sections of chalk.

The dividing walls between no 42 and no 44 appear to be independent of the respective property, with gullies, vent outlets and drainage channels located in the space between the north wall of no 42 and the south wall of no 44.

The floors and ceilings are likely to be of lath and plaster but areas of more modern plasterboard are present in no 42. No 44 has a mix of original timber floorboards and tiled floor surfaces.

The extent of wall that separates the garden of no 42 and no 44 is solid and denotes the former division between the 2 houses. The space that is located on the north side of the kitchen extension at no 42 creates a gap of approximately 2 metres to the garden wall. It is likely that this space was in the public realm in historic times before no 42 was built, allowing traders and occupants to access the main houses of no 44 from the southern side.

The retention of the former room sizes gives the current building well-formed spaces including the two front rooms of no 44 at ground level. The walls on the sides of the old house were built thick to help carry the weight of the chimney stack. The chimney breast, therefore, retains its original positions, heating rooms of the building.

The stack in the rear room of no 44 is contained in its own volume on the external wall and has a later fireplace set within. The stack in the front room has been retained and is exposed in full with hearth, surrounds, lintel and grate. Cupboards have been inserted in the gap given by the return to the wall.

The associated fireplace on the first floor (left hand side) has been redesigned with a new stone hearth and tile mantel. The fireplace in the right hand side front room however is of a statuesque nature and influenced by the motifs and style of the Adam type popular in period homes.

The staircase has Georgian character in its proportions and order. The flight has an attractive arched movement as it raised to the first floor and the actual architecture of the banister and railings is ornate. There is a newel post at the end and the underside has wooden panelling.

Decoration such as Internal joinery includes skirting boards, architraves, frames and doors. The skirting and coving are of a simple single profile and is unified through the building. A low level dado rail is a feature of the rear room (no 44) and the architraves to doors are well profiled.

An arched wall demarcates the entrance lobby from the hallway, expressing a well known Victorian means of deciphering internal space in a house. Another arch has been created in the wall facing the garden at the other end of the hallway. This is probably a later change to make the internal passage from front and rear symmetrical.

The two bow windows feature the most decorative aspect to the interior. As the sinuous form of the under window section presents great craftsmanship and artistry. Whilst the shutters are concealed within the inner wall they open out as small doors to form an attractive means of closing the unit.

Features and Fittings

Often the most interesting architectural element to be found on a building's interior, the original staircase is seen in its detail, with balusters and a Newell post. The volume of the staircase is

important as it forms part of the original decorative scheme and is unified from the ground to first floor, thus contributing to an understanding of the building.

Other features of decorative intent to be found are the fireplaces. The fireplaces form part of a coherent design scheme, which gives them significance apparent in their current state. Both fireplaces located on respective position on the ground and first floor, has a corresponding chimney stack. This means it is possible to read how the building was heated in historic times in the original parts of the structure.

Windows

External windows and doors are predominantly sash types to the front of no 44, made of standardised panes of glass divided by thin, delicate wooden glazing bars. The pattern of windowing to the front broadly follows the urban typology as the ground-floor windows are a little more expansive than the first-floor windows. Yet the first floor windows are large and express the social and civic function that the front rooms has at no 44.

The rear windows of no 44 are generally a mix of casement and sash. At no 42, the rear windows have been designed in sash to reflect the older sash of the front windows.

Commentary on changes

The original house dating from the early 19th century was substantially remodelled or rebuilt in the late 19th century. Evidence from historic plans shows that the south side was overhauled in order to make way for the new building at no 42.

The property at no 44 has experienced little “modernisation”, whilst no 42 has been subject to more changes including the construction of the new extension in 1988. No 44 retains a number of original features, such as the windows, fireplaces and staircase.

Much of the furnishings are free standing and only in some places such as the front room have cupboards been affixed to the wall. In the kitchen, many fittings associated with the use of the space have been attached to the walls, most noticeably the cooking station and cupboards. Changes made to internal spaces on the ground and first floors do not appear to have altered the mouldings seen on architraves, skirting, cornicing and doors. There seems to be a common pattern on the architraves, leading to a regular appearance.

Throughout its history, the first floor would have been used as accommodation, with well-sized windows providing signs to their status. The space at the front of the house would have had the highest status and would, in historic times, have acted as the main rest and entertainment area for the resident individual and his family. The fireplace feature is evidence of this status.

Although no original plans have been traced it is clear from the surviving primary fabric of the building that the principal spaces followed the usual layout of a 2-cell building with a front and rear range coming off a central lobby entrance with two rooms either side of the staircase/hallway. The rear kitchen which drives in an east west direction is an important feature in understanding how the residents have moved through the building.

3.4 Exterior

Description of the Elevations:

The enclosed nature of no 44 makes the building read as being composed of a front and rear part. The front elevation has a distinctive element that sets it apart from the rear of the building. This means that the building can be read as comprising 2 independent constructions with varying degrees of significance and, in some cases, a degree of distraction from the original.

The alteration brought to the significance of no 44 by the building of no 42 on its south side has an impact on the symmetry of the building and is also seen as an additional layer in the building's history. The visibility of the outline of the Victorian garden wall on the west side of no 42 and no 44 also creates character and adds to the story of the recreational uses of the house.

The original building is mainly witnessed in full on the **east elevation** where an overall order given by the regular windows on bays to the side of the entrance porch. The symmetry is further defined by the two chimneys standing at either end of the ridge.

The roofline is defined by two sections of roof, aligned in a north south direction over the volume of the house. The former original pitched roof is over sailed by a secondary roof which mainly falls down the rear section of the slope. This additional roof is more visible from the rear where it is seen as adding the additional mass in which the rear block is contained. Its construction is as a rear roof extension, clad in slate tiles and filling on the slope at the rear of the roof of no 44. The line of the roof to the front is irregular in relation to the roof of the historic building, but it aligns well with the taller ridgeline of no 42 and no 26 next door.

The **east elevation** has 2 distinctive movements with the front block comprising the two storey house plus roof, which moves up to the roof extension behind. The side of no 44 is not seen as it is enclosed by the walls of no 42 and no 46. The south side elevation of no 42 presents a long linear brick mass, with a series of equally spaced windows of the same size. A stack at the front and rear of this side section complete the visualisation of no 42.

On the **western elevation**, the kitchen is defined by the yellow stock brick, protruding eaves and line of equally sized sash windows with arched brick soldiers. The kitchen wing of no 42 projects out into the garden, leaving a gap to the brick wall which forms access to the car park from the kitchen. The rear entrance to no 42 is well expressed through double doors and a small canopied area.

The rear entrance to no 44 is more intimate and given by an original arched opening. The character of the one storey lean-to is also underwhelming and presents as an extension that is seen as being of a lower scale but of a similar appearance due to the render being used. The windows do not follow the same pattern as on the west elevation of no 44.



West elevation



Brick wall



Side of no 42



Rear of no 44



Steel Gate in wall



Lean-to



Rear entrance to no 44

3.4.1 Contribution of the elevations to the character of the house

All two elevations at the front and rear show where changes to the built structure have occurred. The west elevation to the rear is layered by the succession of architecture as witnessed in the slightly differing scale of the two different buildings that present to the garden.

This adds to the visual interest of the main building at no 44 and it shows how historically different uses were accommodated across the various parts of the building. It is interesting that the west elevation also is of different massing and character and compares with the unified order of the east facing elevation. The kitchen extension at no 42 is indicative of the functional nature of the Nursing Home and is a secondary elevation that equates to the hierarchy of the building.

The architecture to the rear of no 42 has been crafted so that it relates sympathetically with that of the earlier late Victorian house it appends. The materiality, scale and roof detail of the extension refer well to the host building whilst the windows have been enlarged so as to foster better use by the care home for its patients.

The extension does not align perfectly with the listed building at no 44 but has been designed so that the new can be seen as clearly different from the old. The 2 storey rear extension is brick and has been designed to acknowledge the scale of the core house.

The scale of the kitchen extension at no 44 is broadly conterminous with no 42 and so allows it to feature gently in the lower order of the building on this side. In this way it balances a little with the extension at no 42.

The extension is aligned to the core building of no 42 and it expresses a linear presence which ties it in with the main axis of the house. The south wall is perpendicular to the house, although the north wall has been brought in from the garden wall so that space is left for the walkway to the side. The presence of a pitch roof ties in with the core building and in amplifies the complementary nature of the rear extension.

The former lean-to of no 44 is in scale with the original building, and its materiality blends in with the visual completeness of the main building. The structure is aligned with the main house, yet the brickwork is of a different character and denoted by poor quality pointing. This difference helps to relate the age of the buildings to the house and enforce the notion that the lean-to was built at a later time.

Description of the setting: Contribution to the landscape

From a streetscape point of view, No 42 and 44 presents itself as being in an area of medium density, on a street set on the west side of KS. There are buildings on its south and north sides and a small attractive front garden separates it from the main road. The west side of the site including the garden is enclosed by a medium height wall between no 42 and no 44. In this respect only part of the western elevation of both buildings is visible from the car park with the floors and roof being glimpsed in various irregular positions.

Due to the sight of the former garden wall and the lean-to (no 44) and kitchen extension (no 42) the west elevation creates a sense of the ancillary or service nature of the building and in so doing, it contributes towards an appreciation of the older building and the way in which different movement patterns and access were arranged in historic times. The east elevation is a more social front and presents the presence of an established house in the street.

3.5 Assessment of Significance

A Statement of Heritage Significance is an objective analysis of significance, an opportunity to describe what matters and why, in terms of heritage significance. The assessment of the building above in 3.1 provides a level of detail proportionate to the complexity of the application.

This analysis has underpinned the design of the proposal and takes account of:

- a) the special architectural or historic importance of the building;
- b) the particular physical features of the building that justify its designation as a listed building

The significance of a heritage asset is the sum of its architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest. With any heritage assets which may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting, it is important to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of their significance. This report assesses the heritage significance of the site, in particular, the listed building itself and the contribution of its internal parts to its significance.

The Government's objectives for planning in the historic environment are to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions concerning the historic environment, including:

- recognition that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource;
- taking account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation;
- recognising that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term.

Assessments of significance are recognised as being critical when ascribing value to individual heritage assets, as well as to small groups of buildings to neighborhoods and places. The idea of 'significance' lies at the core of objectives given by English Heritage, 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' (2008).

The criteria used for assessing significance is based upon the Historic England guidance contained in the revised 'Statements of Heritage Significance'². This document highlights the importance for Understanding the significance of heritage assets, in advance of developing proposals for buildings and sites, enabling owners and applicants to receive effective, consistent and timely decisions.

² Historic England Advice Note 12, Published 21 October 2019

Significance is categorised into three main headings:

Archaeological interest: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Historic interest: the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective memory or experience. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

Architectural or artistic interest: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. This may result from an interest in the design and general aesthetics of a place which can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. This will often include an interest in the art or science of the design, including the construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types.

Recent Historic England Guidance on the Setting of Heritage Assets states that the setting of any heritage asset is likely to include a variety of views of, across, or including that asset, and views of the surroundings from or through the asset. It advises that the protection of the setting of heritage assets need not inhibit change and that change can enhance or reduce the significance and appreciation of an asset or leave it unchanged.

The setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

In addition, context and setting play an important part in understanding the significance of the place, as often expressed by reference to visual considerations. In respects to setting and context, the application site forms a part of the setting which contributes to the significance of Hunsdon.

There are interests in the design and general aesthetics of the building, arising from the way the heritage asset has evolved. What follows is an assessment of the significance of the heritage asset potentially affected by the proposals. More specifically:

i. Archaeological interest: MEDIUM

No 44 was built in the early 19th century as a house that was to be substantially remodelled/rebuilt in the late 19th century. The consequence of this is that the frontage could genuinely be early 19th century, but much fabric may have been replaced with later brickwork.

There appears to be some discrepancy between the intermediary walls that form on the south side of no 44 and the north side of no 42. It is not clear whether there is a double skin formed by the respective wall of either house or if there are locations where a single wall is common to both.

The evidential value will then depend on uncovering wall fabric to confirm authenticity. Further examination may reveal the degree to which bricks are elements which form a continuation of the existing construction through the building.

ii. Surviving historic elements within the site; MEDIUM

The house has much historic value through its use as a private property that once was an important farmhouse in the locality. It has historic links to the development of the settlement around Royston including the land that was closely connected with the railway industries to the north.

The remodelled house is a good example of the house type, based around a two-cell plan with the staircase and front door at the centre. The present building has undergone much alteration, but the architectural effects of the 19th century rebuild account for its listing.

The original core is evident in the scale, floor plan and roof, albeit with the lean-to extension added on its west elevation. The location of the roof extension to the rear is of some interest and adds to the historic narrative of this building, purporting to its use for increased residential activity.

No 42 has made additions to enable its continuation as a Nursing Home. No 44 also survives as a house and its changed form and shape contribute to an understanding of the history of houses in Hertfordshire and England.

The building principally derives its significance from being a late 19th century house, adapted from an early 19th century house. It is representative of the 2-cell plan type, in its form and shape. The retention of the former main door to the building on the east elevation indicates its historic relationship with the settlement, whilst the location of the lean-to on the west side tells the story about the relationship of the house with the growing importance of residential activity that took place here.

From this it is possible to read the status of No 44 and no 42 as forming part of a productive and active settlement. Indeed, it is possible to make the lean-to (no 44) and extension (no 42) out as one of a sum of parts which formed an interconnected sequence of buildings. The front of the building's significance is more controlled than the rear as it has a greater visibility in the public realm and defined the status of the building in relation to the town.

iii. Architectural or artistic interest: MEDIUM

The building has had extensions and additions since its construction; the exterior is seen as a series of layers that have been wrapped around the original core. Indeed, the building of no 42 and no 46 to the sides of no 44 were designed to flank the older building. This gives to the current frame by which no 44 is visualized in the present day.

The front elevation of the building reads as one of unity as illustrated through the window sizes on the ground and first floor. The west side of no 44 expresses a different aesthetic in its current form compared with the east elevation. It is seen as a unified front that contrast with the more layered reading of the garden and its elevations.

The brick-built form once announced the building which, alongside a record of it being occupied by local families for a long time, makes it an invaluable piece of local history.

In terms of the contribution made by the building to the settlement, the front of the building is clearly of great historic interest in providing context to the historic and architectural evolution of Royston. Whilst the rear is immediately disjointed from the front and plays a different part in creating the setting as it relates to the recreational and utility aspect of the building and its site. The interior is an example of architectural design where decoration and craftsmanship reflect the often-varied interests of previous occupants.

The extension (lean-to in late 19th century) and kitchen (1988) were connected to the existing built form and allowed for a better use of interior space. At the rear, the house had an important relationship with the gardens; the west side of the house provided a place of recreation and a service area.

No 44 has aesthetic value demonstrated through the retention of the original features at the front. The garden also contributes to its aesthetic value as well as the semi-tranquility of the wider landscape surrounding the site.

With respect to its *communal value*, it is a building whose presence relates strongly to the development of the area from the 19th to the 21st century. Its location on the road and relationship to the group of buildings gives it a higher sense of importance in the shared consciousness of residents and visitors to the area. It has some local memory/identity value as a house.

3.5.1 Summary of Significance

The property's heritage value is given through the visible built form. Its true significance may well depend on whether the walls on the south side of no 44, adjoining no 42, still contain original early 19th-century brickwork. If not, some of its heritage character may already have been lost, which would reduce conservation constraints going forward.

Externally, the building derives its significance from the front facing east elevation and from the garden facing elevation. These two sides of the building demonstrate its former activity as a house when the eastern elevation was the front of the building and the west elevation which faced into the gardens was the social end of the house.

Formerly, before 1885, the west side of the house was the operational and 'business end' of the building where its role in the local industrial activity was carried out. These former roles account for the more formal appearance of the east elevation and the less regular character of the west elevation.

The house form and shape has been altered and added to in layers, meaning the original cell plan has evolved into an extension plan format, with the kitchen extension adding a one storey element on the rear range of no 44. Yet as it is possible to read the outline and substance of the original building its significance is retained.

The hipped and gabled ends seen on the west end of the house display craftsmanship of quality and character whilst the two large chimney stacks gives the building some gravitas.

The building has basic symmetry on the roadside elevation whilst its built order on the west side is represented through additional buildings of various sizes and forms. Parts of the building that were added later are of interest and their link to the sequence of building is considered important in deciding the significance of the structure. In this respect, the 19th century rear lean-to extension is of minor significance and the 20th century roof extension is of no significance.

No 44 illustrates how a building on an enclosed site both harmonises with its surroundings and has a strong presence. The former frontage on the east is expressed through the residential frontage at ground and first floor which is enlivened by the presence of the bow windows. This elevation accords with the urban vernacular so often seen in the Hertfordshire countryside.

It is possible to read the east elevation as comprising a unified front range with a collection of windows grouped either side of the door. The west elevation is rather more disjointed and its construction at different points in history is manifest.

The elevation retains a high degree of architectural integrity and remains representative of early 20th-century domestic building traditions in the region. Its materials, proportions, and decorative brick detailing contribute positively to the character and appearance of the wider built environment. Any proposed development or alteration should therefore be sympathetic in material, form, and detailing, ensuring the preservation of the building's historic and architectural value.

In terms of the contribution made by the building to the landscape, the building is of historic interest in providing context and a part of the setting. It is also an example of a particular building type that displays some innovation. The retained historic interior is an example of architectural design, decorations and craftsmanship for a building intended as a single house.

Therefore, it is important to note the following features of architectural and historic importance that the proposed design is seeking to retain. Table 1 below presents the features to be altered and improved and Section 4 describes the proposals in relation to their effect on the historic and architectural importance of the listed building.

Summary of Heritage Significance

Designated and non-designated assets

- No. 44 (Middle Brooklands) – Grade II listed, early C19 house of high architectural interest: yellow/brown stock brick in Flemish bond, fine sash windows, distinctive curved bow windows, six-panelled door with traceried fanlight and hipped Welsh slate roof with prominent chimneys.
- Nos. 42 and 46 – Locally listed late-Victorian houses, forming an intentional flanking pair to No. 44 and making a positive contribution to the setting of the listed building and Royston.
- Royston Conservation Area / Kneesworth Street – Historic market town street with medieval burgrave plots, strong enclosure, and a rich mix of Georgian and Victorian frontages. Nos. 42–46 form part of the high-quality northern residential streetscape.

Elements of highest significance: The following are of high significance and to be retained:

- Overall house layout and primary structure of No. 44 (two-cell plan either side of central stair, at ground and first floors).
- East (street) elevation of No. 44, including its sash and bow windows, doorcase and fanlight.
- The west elevation as a legible historic rear, despite later accretions.
- Historic stair at No. 44 and its generous landing.
- Original fireplaces and chimneys.
- Contribution of Nos. 42–44 as a coherent group to the conservation area; the rear garden and boundary walls as part of the traditional service side and setting.

Elements of lower or neutral significance / capacity for change

The HBA also highlights areas where change is more readily accommodated:

- The late C19 lean-to at No. 44 – of minor significance; material character sympathetic but clearly later.
- The C20 two-storey rear extension at No. 42 – read as an awkward, visually “alien” composition when seen against the earlier lean-to and the rear of No. 44, contributing only neutral design quality.
- Rear courtyard and service elevations, which already reflect a history of incremental extension and functional change.

Table 1 below divides features into:

- To retain – basic layout, elevations, fireplaces, staircase.
- To alter – rear kitchen wall at No. 42, courtyard extension and internal reconfiguration for new bedrooms/communal areas, accessibility improvements (ramp, lift, escape door).
- To improve/refurbish – first-floor re-planning, ensembles, obscure glazing and circulation upgrades.

This framework provides a benchmark for judging whether the proposals discussed in section 4.0 below remain within the capacity for change identified by this historic building assessment.

Features to be retained

- Basic house layout, including primary building structure;
- The east and west elevation, including the windows on the key rooms that are formed in this space;
- Fireplaces;
- Staircase;

Features to be altered

- The removal of rear kitchen wall at no 42;
- Extend kitchen into courtyard and turn it 90 degrees, so it flush with the rear wall of the lean-to at no 44;
- Inner link to connect 42 and lean-to/ kitchen of no 44.
- Internal reconfiguration provides new bedrooms and communal areas.
- Accessibility improvements include a ramp, lift, and new escape doorway.

Features to be improved/ refurbished

- First-floor works involve structural reconfiguration, ensuite additions, window infills or obscure glazing, and updated circulation routes.

Table 1: Features to retain, improve and reintroduce.

4.0 PROPOSED IN RELATION TO ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORIC CHARACTER

4.1 Design Approach & appraisal (To be read in conjunction with the Plans & Drawings)

The character of historic buildings and the contribution of their context and setting can be diminished through insensitive alteration, extension or neighboring development, or through neglect and dilapidation. The applicant has put forward a practical solution to effectively utilize the building, thereby allowing it to be viable in the long-term. This will have a positive outlook for the patients of the care home as well as the staff and their families.

The current building has generous amounts of space on the inside for use as designated bedrooms/ private rooms for its patients. Therefore, the original rooms sizes are fit for the purpose of the care home and currently provide several bedrooms. Subsequently there is no requirement for enlarging or reducing the the space required for an improved care provision.

Instead, the changes proposed concern the uses of rooms and improvements to movement and access.

The Assessment below evaluates the heritage effects of the proposals described in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) for the conversion and integration of No. 44 Kneesworth Street into the existing St George's Nursing Home at No. 42.

It measures the proposals against the findings of the initial Historic Building Assessment (HBA) above (on pages 1-36), which identifies the architectural and historic significance of Nos. 42–44 and sets out the scope for acceptable change, including elements to retain, alter and improve.

The design has been configured to take into account and address the following:

- The significance of the heritage assets (listed building, locally listed neighbours and conservation area setting).
- The impact of specific physical works, internally and externally.
- The degree and nature of impact (harm, neutrality or benefit) on that significance.
- Whether any harm is “less than substantial” and if so, whether it is justified by public benefits, in line with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and NPPF Section 16 (2024).

Summary of Proposals

Key elements of the scheme, as set out in the DAS, are:

1. Change of use / integration

- Conversion of No. 44 from C3 dwelling to C2 care accommodation, integrated with St George's Nursing Home at No. 42, raising capacity from 22 to 30 residents.

2. Internal works – No. 44

- Ground floor: rationalisation to form three new bedrooms, small communal area, staff nurse office and care-use kitchen; introduction of platform lift serving split levels; removal of external WC; new internal partitions and limited infilling of existing openings.
- First floor: re-sizing of bedrooms, addition of ensembles, new fire-lobby arrangement and re-planned circulation; removal of existing WC to form lift shaft (with structural trimming of joists).
- Basement: retained primarily for storage/plant with existing escape maintained, minimal change.

3. Internal works – No. 42

- Minor re-configuration to relocate sluice and create an additional bedroom.
- Adjustments to circulation and door swings to improve legibility and horizontal evacuation routes.

4. Fire safety and compartmentation

- New fire-resistant partitions and fire secure doors to create compartmented zones aligned with progressive horizontal evacuation strategy; use of hold-open devices linked to 1 fire alarm.

5. Accessibility

- Platform lift at No. 44 (for ambulant residents), with reliance on the existing Part M-compliant lift in No. 42 for wheelchair users.

6. External works

- No changes to principal east elevation of No. 44; bow windows, sash windows and front door retained.

At the rear:

- Local infill of redundant openings and formation of new escape door in existing fabric.
- Opaque glazing to protect privacy.
- Limited infill to extend floor area of No. 44 and link to No. 42, including removal of an external WC.
- New security gate between rear garden fences; minor adjustments to rear landscaping and raised planter to allow stepped access between patios.
- Provision of three additional parking spaces in the rear car park (total eight), with access via existing shared drive.

It is important to emphasise that the works are modest, largely reversible, and use materials to match existing wherever practicable.

4.2 Design Specifics: An Impact Assessment by Element

Overall use and concept

It is acknowledged that a viable, long-term use for No. 44 as part of the nursing home is central to its conservation.

Impact on significance:

It is positive that the change of use from a compromised dwelling to integrated care accommodation ensures ongoing investment, regular maintenance and a clear functional role for the listed building, consistent with NPPF para. 197 on uses that sustain significance. It is significant that its continued use as care accommodation is compatible with the domestic scale and character of the house.

Principal (east) elevation and streetscape

No external changes are proposed to the listed front elevation of No. 44, including sash and bow windows, the six-panel door and fanlight, or its relationship with the flanking locally listed Nos. 42 and 46.

Assessment:

- Impact on building significance:
 - Neutral to slightly positive. The principal elevation, identified as of the highest architectural significance, remains untouched, fully meeting the requirement to retain east and west elevations and key window openings.
- Impact on conservation area:
 - Neutral to positive. The established townscape rhythm on Kneesworth Street and contribution of Nos. 42–46 as a coherent group are preserved.

Rear elevations and courtyard

The HBA judges the existing two-storey rear extension at No. 42 and its relationship with the lean-to at No. 44 as visually awkward and of neutral design quality, weakening the character of the courtyard setting.

The following are proposed:

- Removal of the external WC and partial removal of the rear kitchen wall at No. 42.
- Turning the No. 42 kitchen through 90° to align better with No. 44's lean-to.

Assessment:

- Effect on listed building fabric (No. 44):
 - Direct physical change is limited to the later lean-to and adjacent areas of lower significance, identified as having capacity for change.
- Effect on group value and courtyard setting:
 - Beneficial. Rationalising the accreted rear forms is likely to create a clearer, more coherent courtyard composition and improve the visual relationship between Nos. 42 and 44 noted as problematic in the HBA.

Overall, the rear works represent a slight enhancement to significance, provided detailing and materials follow the conservation-led intent set out in the HBA.

Internal plan form and circulation at No. 44

The HBA places strong emphasis on retaining the two-cell plan and central stair as the main expression of the early 19th-century house.

The proposals:

- Retain the central stair and main structural walls, with new partitions predominantly lightweight and reversible.
- Introduce new en-suite pods and lobby partitions within rooms to meet care standards and fire strategy.
- Re-use enlarged rooms at first floor as double or single care bedrooms, respecting the basic room hierarchy front/rear.

Impact:

- On plan form:
 - The underlying two-room-either-side arrangement is still readable. New partitions go into existing rooms but do not remove principal walls or the stair core.
 - Harm is limited and reversible; it is considered "less than substantial" at the lower end and in line with the HBA's acceptance of internal reconfiguration to create new bedrooms and communal areas.
- On features (fireplaces, windows, cornices):
 - Proposals commit to avoiding harm to fireplaces, cornices and sash windows when locating partitions and lifts.
 - The design aligns directly with the HBA's requirement to retain these elements.

The inner wall which currently divides the Quiet Room of no 42 with the Kitchen of no 44 will be opened up. The area of the proposed wall for opening is of single thickness and differs from the double depth of wall seen on the south side of this point where the two houses overlap. The single depth of wall at this point illustrates where the extension at no 42 was built. The new opening folds into the kitchen at the rear of no 44. It is located in the wall of the later lean-to extension at no 44 which appends the older structural wall which forms around the kitchen fireplace.

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Staircase and vertical circulation

The historic stair in No. 44 is retained in situ. New fire-resistant lobbies and doors will enclose it to achieve the required level of compartmentation for a progressive horizontal evacuation strategy.

Impact on significance:

- The stair's position, form and functional role remain unchanged; enclosure with appropriately detailed partitions and doors is a common and acceptable adaptation in care-home conversions.
- Minor harm to the sense of openness on landings is offset by retention of fabric and reversibility of the new construction. This falls within the scope of "diligent intervention" anticipated in the HBA.

Lift installation and structural works

The first-floor WC is to be removed and a lift shaft created, supported by new trimming beams under existing joists.

- The WC is not identified in the HBA as contributing to significance; it appears to be of modest and adaptable character.
- In structural terms, trimming around a new shaft is likely to affect only limited portions of joists; these works are concealed and reversible.

Impact:

- Negligible heritage harm, while delivering significant accessibility benefits within the constraints of the historic fabric, consistent with NPPF support for inclusive design and continued viable use.

Basement and services

The basement is primarily a functional storage area with coal cellars and limited natural light.

- No significant change is proposed beyond retention of storage and escape routes.

Impact: Neutral.

External landscape, boundary treatments and parking

The HBA notes the importance of rear gardens, boundary walls and the sense of the west side as a historic service area.

The proposal maintains:

- Existing garden structure and boundary treatments, with only minor functional adjustments (security gate, stepped access between patios, retention of existing bin store).
- Existing car park arrangement with three additional spaces, contained within the existing rear hardstanding and accessed via the existing driveway.

Impact:

- The character of the rear as a service/garden space is preserved.
- Additional parking is modest and does not encroach into key green areas identified as important in the HBA; impact on setting is neutral.

4.3 Level of Harm and Public Benefits

Assessment of harm

Taking the proposals as a whole:

- Will be no harm to the principal east elevation or its contribution to the conservation area.
- There is a neutral to beneficial impact on the rear elevation and courtyard setting through a more coherent fenestration/ door arrangement and removal of poorer quality accretions (WC).
- There is limited “less than substantial” harm at the lower end to internal plan legibility and openness, arising from new partitions, ensuites and fire-lobbies.

In summary, these works respect the hierarchy of spaces, retain the stair and fireplaces, and are reversible in principle, aligning with the HBA’s capacity-for-change framework.

There is no indication of any impact amounting to “substantial harm” to the significance of the Grade II listed building or to the character or appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.

Public benefits

The Proposals identify a series of clear public benefits, including:

- Increased care home capacity in a sustainable town-centre location, responding to demographic need.
- Improved accessibility, safety and dignity for elderly and vulnerable residents, through enlarged bedrooms, ensuites, improved fire safety and better circulation.
- Securing the long-term, viable use and maintenance of a Grade II listed building and its locally listed neighbour.
- Support for social sustainability, enabling residents to remain within their community and supporting local employment.

These benefits are significant and long-term. When weighed against the limited and carefully managed level of heritage harm identified above, they clearly satisfy the NPPF requirement (**para. 202**) that “less than substantial harm” be outweighed by public benefits.

Mitigation and Recommendations

The following measures are integral to keeping impacts low and should be secured by condition or detailed design:

1. Conservation-led detailing
 - Retention and repair (not replacement) of original sash windows, bow windows, doors, fireplaces, cornices and stair components, with any necessary new work being like-for-like.
2. Reversibility
 - New partitions, lift enclosures and fire-lobbies to be lightweight, clearly distinguishable from historic fabric on close inspection, and fixed in ways that minimise loss of original material.
3. Material specification
 - Use of matching or compatible brick, mortar and slate; careful junctions between new and old to avoid scarring historic fabric.

4. Recording

- Basic photographic record of the existing internal layout, particularly at ground and first floors of No. 44, prior to works, to capture current plan legibility.

4.4 Impact on architectural and historic character

- **General design**

The listed building is important and contributes to the quality of the built environment in Royston and in this part of Kneesworth Street. Through an understanding of the building and its context, it is possible to evaluate the heritage impacts accruing from the proposals.

Generally, the use for which the house was designed has been continuous, although the nature of the residential activity has changed from being lived in by local families to being occupied by care home patients. Changes to the interior involved the building of a ground floor extension followed by a first floor extension above at the rear on no 44. Such later work pertains to the architectural quality of the core house, albeit the scale and roof are different to no 42.

It is credible that the integrity of the fireplaces/ chimney breasts are retained as part of the scheme to help create a new space as befits the standards of 21st century accommodation. The main front rooms spaces either side of the hallway continue to be unified in the original configuration that is located within the primary walls of the historic structure.

The desire for improvements to internal space provides a viable opportunity to improve the building and keep it in active use. The proposal creates a better use of the building that is compatible with the current fabric, exterior and interior. This has great benefits for the users of the building and for members of the elderly community in this part of the county.

With respect to the proposals for the house it is important to ensure that the architectural detailing of the building to which the development relates is not eroded or that the quality of the setting is compromised.

The existing internal layout itself will not be greatly changed and it is only through select reconfiguration that discrete changes in the floor plan will be made. Importantly, these changes do not affect the cellular nature of the ground and first-floor layout.

Impact on the Listed building

The front elevation is the chief reason for the listing of the building and the design carefully ensures that works will not touch or impinge on this central feature. The listing also mentions the bow windows, which amplify the character of the building.

So, the proposal to keep within the existing dimensions and materials is typical of the house and causes no impact to the reading of the buildings vertical and horizontal characteristics. The proposal is not expected to have any material effect on the character or appearance of the host building. In addition, the proposals to maintain the existing spaces within the house, with the two main front rooms, being retained will preserve the historic and architectural integrity of the composition. As the rear room at no 44 has already been modified through the opening up (to connect with the lean-to) of the walls to the side of the kitchen then the further changes proposed here to this space do not lead to any harm.

Although some minor remodelling is proposed, the changes to the layout of the building are minimal and confined to later additions which act as the interface between the old and newer parts of the building. It is worth noting that the interesting architectural elements of the building's interior such as fireplaces and old staircase will all be retained.

The future treatment must be handled with sensitivity and it is positive that the proposed retains all of the existing primary walls. In this respect it is important that all of the original double width wall forming the link between the sides of no 42 and no 44 are retained in the scheme as it acknowledges an earlier part of the building and how the two were built independently whilst still sharing the same fittings. The scheme will respect the overall intactness of the structural elements, including the roof and chimney stacks.

4.5 Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency is addressed indirectly through the following aspects of the proposals:

1. Re-use of the existing building fabric

- The scheme prioritises the **continued use and adaptation of Nos. 42–44**, rather than demolition and rebuild.
- This aligns with sustainable principles by **retaining embodied energy** within the historic structures and minimising new material use .

2. Minimal external alteration and retention of historic windows

- The principal elevations, including sash and bow windows, are retained unchanged.
- While this limits opportunities for conventional thermal upgrades, it reflects a conservation-led balance between **heritage protection and environmental responsibility** typical of listed buildings

3. Improved internal layout and circulation efficiency

- Rationalisation of internal spaces, better circulation, and integration of No. 44 into the existing care home reduce duplication of services and improve operational efficiency, which can have **secondary energy benefits** through more efficient use of space and building services

4. Targeted refurbishment rather than wholesale replacement

- First-floor refurbishments, new en-suites, and internal reconfiguration are focused on areas of lower heritage significance, allowing **incremental improvement of building performance** without harming key fabric

5. Sustainable development rationale in policy terms

- The report explicitly frames the proposals as securing a **long-term, viable and sustainable use** of the listed building, consistent with NPPF objectives for sustainable development, even though detailed energy measures are deferred to later design stages

Appropriate upgrades to a heritage building

The Heritage Impact Assessment makes it clear that certain **energy-efficiency or building upgrades would be inappropriate** because they would harm significance, historic fabric, or character. These are constrained both by the Grade II listing of No. 44, the locally listed status of No. 42, and the Royston Conservation Area designation.

Upgrades that would not be appropriate

1. Replacement of historic windows

- **uPVC or aluminium window replacements**, double-glazed units with thick profiles, or altered opening patterns would be unacceptable.
- Original sash and bow windows are identified as **key significance-bearing features** and are explicitly retained in the proposals.
- Even visually similar replacements would result in loss of historic fabric and detailing.

2. External wall insulation or cladding

- **External insulation systems**, render coatings, or cladding would fundamentally alter the appearance of historic brick façades.
- The brick elevations, Flemish bond, and original proportions are central to the building's significance.
- Such works would be especially harmful on the principal east elevation, which is identified as the most sensitive and significant.

3. Alterations to the principal elevation or roofscape

- Additions such as solar panels, roof-mounted plant, roof lights on the main slope, or changes to chimneys would harm the building's architectural hierarchy and skyline.
- Chimney stacks and roof form are specifically noted as contributors to significance and are to be retained unchanged.

4. Removal or alteration of historic internal fabric

- Works such as:
 - removing fireplaces or chimney breasts,
 - cutting through principal walls,
 - altering the central staircase,
 - lowering ceilings or boxing-in historic details would be inappropriate.

- These elements are explicitly identified as **heritage features to be retained**, even where internal reconfiguration occurs.

5. Sealing or over-insulating traditional construction

- Introducing **impermeable insulation, membranes, or airtight systems** that prevent traditional solid walls from “breathing” would be harmful.
- The buildings are of **solid brick and chalk construction**, and inappropriate insulation could cause moisture trapping and long-term fabric decay.

6. Large-scale mechanical or renewable installations

- Visible **air-source heat pumps, ventilation plant, flues, or service trunking** on external elevations or in historic interiors would be inappropriate.
- The assessment stresses that services upgrades must avoid visual and physical harm and be confined to areas of low or neutral significance, such as later extensions.

In Summary:

Energy efficiency is **acknowledged at a strategic and conceptual level**, primarily through:

- conservation of embodied energy,
- efficient re-use of space,
- and long-term sustainable occupation,

This approach does not alter fabric, which is consistent with best practice for listed buildings and heritage assets. Any upgrade that alters appearance, removes historic fabric, or disrupts traditional construction methods would not be appropriate in this heritage context.

The proposal adopts a **conservation-led approach**, meaning:

- Energy efficiency must not override heritage significance.
- Upgrades should be **reversible, discreet, and located in later or lower-significance fabric**.
- Measures that rely on **replacement rather than retention** of historic elements are generally unacceptable.

Reasonable Provision in the Context of a Listed Building

National planning policy and heritage guidance recognise that listed buildings require a balanced and proportionate approach to modern standards, rather than full regulatory compliance where this would result in unacceptable harm. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Historic England guidance support a “reasonable provision” approach, whereby accessibility, safety and environmental improvements are delivered only to the extent that they can be achieved without compromising heritage significance.

The proposed scheme at Nos. 42–44 Kneesworth Street has been developed in accordance with this principle.

The design is informed by a clear understanding of significance, as set out in the Historic Building Assessment. Elements of high significance—including the principal elevation, historic plan form, fireplaces, staircase, sash windows and primary masonry—are retained and protected. Interventions are instead focused on areas identified as having lower or neutral significance, such as later rear extensions, service areas and selective internal partitions. This ensures that change is directed to locations where heritage impact is minimised.

Accessibility improvements are provided on a proportionate basis. A platform lift is introduced within No. 44 to support ambulant users, while wheelchair access is accommodated through the existing Part M-compliant lift in No. 42. This approach avoids extensive structural intervention within the listed building while delivering inclusive access across the integrated care facility as a whole, consistent with national guidance for historic buildings.

Fire safety is addressed through a heritage-sensitive strategy that retains the historic staircase in situ and introduces compartmentation, fire-rated partitions and doors, and a progressive horizontal evacuation strategy. These measures significantly enhance life safety without requiring the removal or alteration of significant historic fabric. New interventions are lightweight, discreet and largely reversible.

Environmental performance is approached pragmatically. While conventional upgrades such as external wall insulation, replacement glazing or prominent renewable technologies are constrained by the building's listed status, the scheme promotes sustainability through the re-use of the existing structure, retention of embodied energy, and improved functional efficiency through rationalised layouts. National policy recognises that the conservation and continued use of historic buildings is itself a sustainable outcome.

The scheme deliberately avoids inappropriate upgrades that would harm significance, including alterations to the principal elevation or roofscape, replacement of historic windows, or removal of fireplaces and chimney breasts. All new works are clearly legible as modern additions while remaining subordinate to the historic fabric.

Overall, the proposals demonstrate a reasonable provision approach by achieving proportionate improvements to safety, accessibility and usability, securing the long-term viable use of the listed building, and fully aligning with national policy for the historic environment.

Advice to SBEM assessor

For the purposes of SBEM modelling and energy strategy development, the assessor should be aware that the building is subject to **heritage-led constraints** arising from its statutory and non-statutory designations and from the significance of its fabric. These constraints limit the range of energy-efficiency measures that can be assumed within the assessment.

Heritage designations and sensitivity

- No. 44 is **Grade II listed**; No. 42 is **locally listed**. It is within the **Royston Conservation Area**.

- Principal elevations, roofscape, and key internal elements are significance-bearing and highly sensitive to change.

Fabric and envelope constraints

- Historic windows (sash and bow) must be retained; replacement, thick double glazing, or altered opening patterns are not acceptable.
- External wall insulation, cladding, or render systems are inappropriate, particularly on principal elevations with historic brickwork.
- Walls are of traditional solid brick and chalk construction; impermeable insulation, membranes, or high airtightness assumptions that prevent vapour permeability are unsuitable.
- Roof form, chimneys, and ridge lines must remain unchanged; assumptions of roof-mounted technologies or extensive roof alterations should be avoided.

Services and renewables constraints

- Visible plant or equipment on external elevations or within significant interiors is not acceptable.
- Solar PV, roof-mounted plant, flues, or ventilation terminals on principal roof slopes are unlikely to be permitted.
- Large or visually intrusive air-source heat pumps or external plant should not be assumed unless located discreetly within later or low-significance areas.

Internal constraints

- Key internal features such as fireplaces, chimney breasts, principal walls, and the main staircase must be retained.
- Extensive penetrations, service boxing, or reconfiguration affecting historic fabric should not be assumed.
- Lower-significance areas and later alterations may accommodate discreet services upgrades, subject to detailed design.

Modelling implications for SBEM

- SBEM assumptions should reflect limited fabric upgrade potential, particularly to windows and external walls.
- Improvements should be modelled conservatively and focused on services efficiency, controls, zoning, and operational improvements, rather than fabric performance.
- Any assumed upgrades should be reversible, discreet, and heritage-compatible, with clear justification.

SBEM assessment must be informed by a conservation-led approach in which heritage significance constrains achievable energy performance, and compliance is sought through sensitive, proportionate measures rather than standard new-build or non-heritage retrofit assumptions.

5.0 HERITAGE ASSESSMENTS

No 44 is a grade II listed building whose significance rests in its architectural value, as an example of a 19th century house with later 19th and 20th century additions. The house contains examples of craftsmanship and is also of historical value as it illustrates the way in which this building type in general developed.

Indeed, its single use as a house illustrates the continuity by which this house type has been able to serve the many people who have lived here.

Alterations to the house need to be pay reference to controls enforced on Listed Buildings and need to be considered against Local Plan Policy's and conservation guidance which is set out in the NPPF.

There is a statutory requirement that the local planning authority
"shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses"³.

The NPPF advises of the desirability of any development for,
"sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses "consistent with conservation"⁴."

The elevation and building materials are the main reason for the listing. Although not mentioned, the internal plan form is also the key to the significance of a building and the scheme discussed above will make little change to this. It is contended that the benefit gained by the addition of a slightly reconfigured ground floor space will provide a scheme that far outweighs the loss of aesthetic significance. Its impact on the listed house itself is positive in that it restores some historic quality to the core part of the house, whilst giving more commodious accommodation within the confines of a historic building.

5.1 Local Plan assessments

North Herts has a rich and diverse historic environment and its historic buildings, areas and townscapes contribute to the special character of the district, helping to create a sense of place. In an effort to retain the attractive historic character of parts of the landscape many archaeological remains are also protected.

Development that would adversely affect the historic or architectural integrity and appearance of these features is generally resisted. New development should have a high standard of design and also be efficient and where possible accessible to all.

Local Plan Policy (SP13) states that the Council will permit proposals to alter a listed building where it would not result in the damage or loss of features of special architectural or historic interest and the character and appearance or setting of the building would be preserved or enhanced.

³ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, 66.1

⁴ NPPF 190

Below is an assessment of **each applicable policy** and how the proposals perform.

Policy SP13 – Historic Environment

SP13 states that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, and development must make a positive contribution to character and local distinctiveness.

In this respect the scheme at no 44 will make a positive contribution because:

- The principal elevation of No. 44, identified as of highest significance, is untouched, conserving architectural value.
- Works focus on areas of low/neutral significance (rear lean-to, 20th-century extension), aligning with SP13's expectation of proportionate and sensitive change.
- The rationalised rear extensions improve coherence and remove visually weak accretions, providing a net positive enhancement to the conservation area's character.
- Re-use of No. 44 as part of an expanded care home secures its long-term viable use, which SP13 explicitly encourages as a means of sustaining heritage significance.

Overall, the works conserve and enhance the historic environment in line with SP13.

Policy HE1 – Designated Heritage Assets

HE1 requires that proposals involving a listed building or affecting its setting to preserve and enhance its significance. It is imperative that any harm is avoided unless public benefits outweigh it.

The scheme at no 44 will cause no significant harm because;

- No harm to the listed front elevation or contribution to the street scene.
- Low-level “less than substantial” harm arises internally from partitions and lift installation. This has been minimised, is reversible, and avoids loss of features such as fireplaces, sash windows and stair structure.
- The HBA provides a robust assessment of significance, satisfying policy validation requirements.

The scheme at no 44 will cause public benefit as there is increased care capacity, enhanced accessibility, improved safety, and long-term viable use. These values clearly outweigh any minimal internal harm and align with the NPPF and HE1. Thus, the proposal is in strong conformity with HE1.

Policy HE2 – Heritage at Risk

HE2 supports development that **secures the future of heritage assets at risk** and brings neglected buildings into sustainable use.

The scheme at no 44 will proactively reduce risk because;

- While No. 44 is not formally on the Heritage at Risk Register, it is noted that as a domestic house, it suffers from functional constraints and would otherwise struggle to attract investment.
- By incorporating it into the care home and guaranteeing ongoing maintenance, the proposal contributes to risk reduction, consistent with HE2's purpose.

Policy HE3 – Buildings of Local Interest (*applies to No. 42*)

In this policy proposals should preserve or enhance the character, appearance and setting of locally listed buildings. No 42 complies because:

- The street elevation remains unchanged, preserving its contribution to Kneesworth Street.

- Rear alterations (rotation of kitchen) occur within previously altered areas and do not affect its character-defining features.
- The improved coherence between Nos. 42 and 44 enhances the group value, which HE3 encourages.

Royston Conservation Area

The Council must ensure development **preserves or enhances** the conservation area under s.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Conservation Area guidance emphasise the importance of retaining positive frontages, respecting plot patterns and domestic scale, as well as maintaining rooflines, boundary walls and garden character.

The scheme at no 44 preserves and slightly enhances Royston Conservation Area;

- No changes to the principal streetscape, sustaining Kneesworth Street's architectural rhythm.
- Rear works are subservient, improving legibility and removing some poor-quality structures noted in the HBA.
- Boundary walls, garden structure and open space character are retained, with only minor functional amendments.

The conservation area's character and appearance are therefore preserved, meeting statutory and local policy requirements.

Design Policies (D1, D2, SP9)

The key requirements for these policies are:

- High-quality, contextually appropriate design.
- Respect for character and scale.
- Sensitive treatment of extensions in historic contexts.

The scheme at no 44 will meet these stipulations as:

- Scale and massing of rear additions remain **low-key and subservient**.
- The material strategy will match or complement existing brick, joinery and slate.
- The functional improvements (legibility, level access, safe circulation) are achieved without undermining heritage qualities.

The scheme is compliant with North Herts Heritage Policies. Therefore, it meets the Council's design-led approach to development in historic settings.

In relation to HE1, HE2, HE3, SP13 and design policies, the proposals will;

- Preserve the most significant heritage features of the Grade II listed building.
- Improve the coherence and quality of the rear elevation and courtyard.
- Deliver substantial public benefits, including increased care capacity, better accessibility and securing long-term viable use.
- Cause **only low-level, less-than-substantial internal harm**, which is minimised, reversible and appropriately balanced against benefits.
- Preserve and subtly enhance the **Royston Conservation Area**.
- Respect the setting and character of the **locally listed building**.

Therefore:

The development is compliant with North Hertfordshire's policies on the historic environment and supports approval in heritage terms.

5.2 NPPF assessments

The NPPF constitutes the government's current national guidance and policy regarding development within the historic environment.

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The policies in paragraphs 203 to 221 of NPPF, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what conserving and enhancing the historic environment means in practice for the planning system.

The NPPF places much emphasis on heritage "significance", defined as:

*"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."*⁵

In respects to NPPF the following criteria for assessment are important in establishing the credibility of the proposal:

- Impact on significance (207 and 208)
- Suitable design (135)
- Conservation of heritage assets (203, 207 and 210)

IN RELATION TO PARAGRAPH 207 & 208: the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance

No 44 Kneesworth Street represents one type of heritage asset: the listed building. The section on Historic Summary (2.1) and list description (2.3) gives information to help understand the significance of this heritage asset.

No 44 Kneesworth Street is a grade II listed building whose significance rests as an altered example of an **early 19th century brick house**. Its retention has been warranted through the addition of newer elements in later times, such as the lean-to kitchen extension in the later 19th century.

IN RELATION TO PARAGRAPHS 135 and 162: the consideration of design should include scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and use.

The retention of the front and rear elevations and the roof structure is a key factor in the proposals for the changes proposed to the external spaces of the house. The removal of a small section of party wall to the kitchen will not compromise these features and it is positive

⁵ Annex 2, Glossary, p.74

that an extent of ordinary later fabric (that formed the lean-to) can be removed to allow for a new internal connection to be made between no 42 and no 44.

Floor levels are unified and materials are used that will relate to the historic building. A proposal of this quality will make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.

The proposal is successful in achieving design quality in the historic context of no 55 and no 42 Kneesworth Street. The design interventions are modest, subservient and sympathetic, meeting the requirement for high-quality, contextually appropriate design affecting heritage assets.

IN RELATION TO PARAGRAPHS (203, 207 and 210): Weight given to the significance of a designated heritage asset and its conservation

Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As the building is a designated heritage asset the impact of the proposals on the building and the setting of the listed building needs to be carefully evaluated.

As has been stated, the building's historical significance (as part of Royston is conclusive. Internal spaces have been modified and re-formed within the confines of the original building; the significant structural elements are recognised in their current form, although they have been modified to a small degree by later elements added to the rear elevation, such as the lean-to.

The proposed v=creation of some partitions to form new rooms in space will bring significant improvements and benefits to users. The conservation benefit of the proposal effectively sees imagination in the design process and how the new relates to historic features in the interior and to the surrounding context on the exterior. This aims to minimise conflict and bring greater clarity to a listed building that forms an important context in the historic settlement of Royston.

The proposals for No. 44 Kneesworth Street (Grade II) and the adjoining locally listed No. 42 align with the following national requirements.

Para. 218 – Understanding Significance

The Historic Building Assessment provide a **proportionate, evidence-based understanding** of the building's architectural, historic and communal significance. This meets para. 218's requirement for applicants to describe significance to an appropriate level of detail.

Para. 203, 210 & 215 – Sustaining Viable Uses

The proposals secure the **long-term viable use** of the heritage asset by integrating No. 44 into the existing care home. This directly fulfils para. 203, which encourages maintaining heritage assets in an active, sustainable use.

Para. 212 – Avoiding Unnecessary Loss

No significant loss of historic fabric occurs. Key features—principal elevation, stair, fireplaces, sash windows, are **retained and conserved**, consistent with Nppf's emphasis on avoiding unnecessary harm.

Paras. 214 - 215 – Assessing Harm

Internal interventions (partitions, lift, fire lobbies) result in **low-level, less-than-substantial harm**, fully justified and minimised through reversibility and avoidance of high-significance features. Para. 214 requires such harm to be weighed against public benefits.

Balancing Harm and Public Benefits

Public benefits—including **increased care capacity**, improved accessibility, safer evacuation arrangements and securing long-term upkeep, **clearly outweigh** the minimal heritage harm. The proposal therefore satisfies the para. 2014 public-benefit test.

Para. 219– Conserving Conservation Areas

The unchanged principal frontage and improved coherence to the rear **preserve the character and appearance** of the Royston Conservation Area, in line with para. 219.

NPPF Summary

The NPPF requires any harm to the designated heritage asset to be clearly and convincingly justified. Local Plan policies referred to above state that proposals to alter a listed building will only be permitted where it would not result in the damage or loss of features of special architectural or historic interest and where the character and appearance or setting of the building would be preserved or enhanced.

The proposed offers a solution to using the internal footprint of the house as a guide to the formation of the new. This then offers a meaningful interpretation of the spaces that give this building its character. The scheme continues to work with the space, allowing access from the front and rear of the building to the Care Home and creating improved circulation space between the two houses from within the middle of the building.

In respect to the weight given to the heritage significance, the work proposed has fundamentally recognised the integrity and value of any remaining historic fabric. The preservation of such features is a key part of the set of proposals.

Qualities which give the building historic and architectural credence, such as the staircase and fireplace, are to be retained whilst external appearance is being enhanced through the improvement of the rear elevation. Such measures will allow the historic integrity of the existing building to be incorporated into the proposals for the development as part of the conservation process.

5.3 Heritage Benefits of the proposed design

The development actively seeks to preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset, such as the frontage and roof of no 44. Elements of the interior such as the fireplaces will be conserved, thus reinstating a significant part of the building's architectural character.

The proposal follows a design that will have an improvement on the setting of No 44. The changes to the rear of the building respond well to the architectural integrity of the host building whilst the objective of creating improved fenestration on the rear elevation will complement the front elevation of the house.

A number of potential heritage benefits that weigh in favour of this scheme, including:

- It enhances the significance of a heritage asset and contribution of its setting.
- It makes a positive contribution to sustainable craftsmanship.
- The scale and detailing are carefully arranged, so as to respect the layout, plan and arrangements of the historic building.
- The existing cellular layout of the house and the building is retained;
- The changes are an appropriate design that relates to its context and makes a positive contribution to the character, quality and distinctiveness of the historic environment. Its layout is well adapted to improved residential use;
- Heritage value will be restored through the new internal link, ensuring this element is unified with the core building;
- It does not detract from other evidential, historic, aesthetic or communal values

In respects to the District Plan the scheme relates well to the distinctive local character of the area and its adjacent buildings and is designed to create a safe, inclusive and attractive environment that will enhance Royston's rich and diverse heritage.

The analysis has shown that the new design is appropriate and compatible in terms of size, scale and materiality. In respects of National Policy, the degree of the harm caused to the historic environment is zero and is not compromised when balanced against the wider design, public realm and community benefits.

This statement concludes that the proposed would be an appropriate solution to this Listed building, particularly as a result of its design, which is based on a respect for traditional architecture, and its use of materials, which sit well within the locality. The design causes no harm to the character of the listed building and does not impinge on its setting.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Historic Building Assessment has been prepared to measure the proposals in the Design and Access Statement.

The Assessment shows that a proposal can be worked up that represents an imaginative and appropriate response to the setting of No 42 and no 44 Kneesworth Street in the context of Royston and more especially to the subject site. This part of the town has seen gradual change and updating of buildings for residential uses with some examples of later rear infill and extensions.

The Heritage Assessment has appraised the significance of No 44 and how its historical context and the rise of a settlement is a relevant factor in development and design. A design which is crafted according to the individual merits and dimensions of the host building will allow for well detailed changes that raises the profile of the older parts of the building which will be retained.

Local Plan policies referred to above state that proposals to alter a listed building will only be permitted where it would not result in the damage or loss of features of special architectural or historic interest and where the character and appearance or setting of the building would be preserved or enhanced. As a listed building, No 44 is subject to an assessment of how the changes would impact on its architectural significance.

The harm to the listed building as a result of the changes would be non-existent because they are designed according to the size and scale of the existing rear range and kitchen area. The proposal enhances the current visual amenity and aesthetics of the building.

The approach to the works is to retain all of the historic fabric of the building and as such, the character of the listed building would not be harmed. There will be select removal of later built fabric from the wall that separates no 42 from no 44, to create the inner link between buildings.

In the history of this building, changes have been made to the floor plan and internal decorations to make it habitable. The changes proposed now relate to a commitment to improve the quality of housing available in the space.

It has been shown that the current plan form is mainly original with later additions to the rear range. So, the proposal to establish an improved space on this side of no 42 and no 44 is a positive decision. The proposals will retain the linear plan form, demonstrating an improvement in the quality of the accommodation. The two rooms that make up the front range will be unaltered, thereby expressing the historic notion of an entrance to the house with a room on either side.

The new fenestration design at the rear enhances the space while maintaining harmony with the existing structure and surroundings. Shielded from public view, it avoids vertical dominance and respects the house's front. It blends into the garden and courtyard context with lightness and permeability. Its design evokes historic landscape and ensuring a complementary change to no 44.

There would not be any harm to historic fabric or the historic plan form of the building, as the former is being retained and the latter will continue to be legible within the new enhanced layout. The architectural interest of the listed building is preserved by virtue of the high-quality sensitive design envisaged in this proposal. Consequently, there is no harm to the significance of the listed building.

The creation of a thoughtfully articulated inner link which presents itself as a continuation to the existing core building will act to draw attention to the quality of the later 19th century part of the listed building.

The proposals will see the rear of No 44 connect positively with its surroundings to create a safe and inclusive place through the use of good design principles including form, scale, materials, natural surveillance and orientation, and sustainable construction. It is positive that increased residential capacity can be provided without having to make an increase to densities; at the same time, it is compatible with local character and preserves the setting of the historic building.

The historic environment has been considered as part of the design process, with the contribution made by the setting and context of the place a major factor. Currently, the contribution of the building to the area's character is neutral at the rear and positive at the front. The new design creates a visually satisfying interpretation of the contemporary style so as to provide an enhancement to assets.

In weighing up the planning benefits, as the new work itself preserves the historic interest and significance of the listed building, then public benefits are seen as positive additions which the scheme brings. With respect to the Local Plan, the proposal preserves the integrity, plan form, the original hierarchy of historic floor levels and structure of the building including the arrangement of rooms, ceilings and corridors. The changes being made to layout can be incorporated within the altered building and if anything, bring a greater rationale to the appearance of the house.

The proposed design and layout have been prepared having considered the defining character of the listed building and the constraints and opportunities imposed by its retained structure and unique features. The proposal respects the character of the building and its hierarchy whilst improving the space as a residential care home. In this way it meets the key objectives of the NPPF, in ensuring the design approach causes no harm to the character of the listed building.

Our conclusions are that the scheme will respect the key elements of significance identified for No. 44 (front and rear elevations, principal plan form, stair, fireplaces). It allows for the focus of physical change to be made on areas of lower or neutral significance, particularly the later lean-to and existing C20 rear extension arrangements.

The proposed will deliver substantial public benefits in terms of enhanced care provision, inclusive design and the long-term conservation of the heritage assets. The scheme will result in no harm to the principal elevation or conservation area character. There will be a slight enhancement to the rear courtyard setting, and only low-level, less than substantial harm to internal plan legibility, which is clearly outweighed by the benefits.

On this basis, the proposals can be considered compliant with the 1990 Act duties, NPPF Section 16 and relevant local plan heritage policies.