

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Henry Thomas.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/00317/FP	Change of use from office B1 to residential to provide 8 self-contained flats including insertion of dormer windows and rooflights to facilitate accommodation at second floor, amenity parking, refuse and cycling storage. Alterations to existing fenestration, installation of side ramp and railing and rear access steps.	46 Kneesworth Street Royston Hertfordshire SG8 5AQ

Submitted Plan Nos

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 0656_00_010 0656_00_007 0656_00_101b 0656_00_102 0656_00_103b 0656_00_104b
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1.0 Policies

SECN14	Achieving well-designed places
SECN20	Conserving+enhancing natural environment
SECN6	Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
SP1	Sustainable development in North Herts
SP2	Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distrib
SP9	Design and Sustainability
HE1	Designated heritage assets
HS3	Housing mix
T1	Assessment of transport matters
T2	Parking

2.0 **Relevant Site History**

2.1 **77/00601/1 - Change of use from residential to office use**

Refused.

- 2.2 **77/00698/1** – Change of use from residential to surgery/consulting rooms

Refused.

- 2.3 **82/00180/1** - Change of use from residential to offices.

Conditional Permission.

- 2.4 **89/00959/1** - Two storey building for office use, following demolition of existing outbuilding, provision of two additional parking spaces, alteration of existing vehicular access and ancillary works (In accordance with amended drawings received by Local Planning Authority on 4th October 1989).

Conditional Permission.

- 2.5 **89/00960/1CAC** - Demolition of unlisted building in conservation area.

Conditional Consent.

- 2.6 **22/00681/HYA** - First floor extension to existing garage to provide new flat (Outline planning approval with all matters reserved except for appearance, layout and scale). Change of use of existing office building into 9 apartments and external alterations with associated car parking (as amended by plans received 15.07.2022)

Refused.

- 2.7 **22/02587/HYA** - Demolition of garages and erection of two storey building to provide flat with parking under (Outline planning approval with all matters reserved except for scale, access and layout). Change of use of existing office building into 9 apartments and external alterations with associated car parking (as a resubmission of hybrid application 22/00681/HYA refused on 17.08.2022) - (Revised by plans and tree report received 15.03.23)

Conditional Permission.

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.1 **Site Notice and Neighbour Notification** – One neutral comment received requesting tree protection conditions and one objection received summarised as follows:

- Loss of original historic architecture
- Overlooking / Loss of privacy
- Too high density
- Insufficient parking
- Increased congestion / traffic impact.

- 3.2 **Royston Town Council** – No objection, requested inclusion of swift and bat boxes, and that dormers mirror the house opposite in Kneesworth Street.

- 3.3 **NHC Conservation Officer** – No objection:

Nos 42 and 46 Kneesworth Street are both Buildings of Local Interest flanking a grade II listed building that is no.44 (Middle Brooklands) To the south of no.42 stands no.40 (also grade II listed). Together, these four buildings make a very positive contribution to the character and appearance of the RCA. Nos. 42 and 46 are a near identical pair which share group value by virtue of their shared architectural style, features, and materials. Although the two outer dormers on the side elevation will have a small impact upon an appreciation of the chimney stacks on this elevation, I do not consider that as a single issue this is sufficient to maintain an objection. I withdraw my previous objection concluding that the proposal will satisfy the

provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 20 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

3.4 **NHC Environmental Health (Contaminated Land, Noise & Air Quality)** – No objection.

3.5 **HCC Highways** – No objection.

3.6 **NHC Waste and Recycling** – None received.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The site is a terraced 2½ storey building on the corner of Kneesworth Street and Green Drift within a residential part of Royston. The primary frontage is onto Kneesworth Street, vehicle access is from Green Drift. The site is located within the Conservation Area but outside of the Town Centre Area. The application site is a Building of Local Interest.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 Change of use from office E to residential to provide 8 self-contained flats including insertion of dormer windows and rooflights to facilitate accommodation at second floor, amenity parking, refuse and cycling storage. Alterations to existing fenestration, installation of side ramp and railing and rear access steps.

4.2.2 The scheme has been amended to omit the front dormer windows in favour of conservation rooflights, addressing the Conservation Officer's and Royston Town Council's comments.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its resultant impact on the character and appearance of the locality.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on car parking provision in the area.
- The impact that the development would have on the environment.

Principle for Development

4.3.2 The principle of residential development has been demonstrated under 22/02587/HYA. Although this permission is now expired and has not been implemented, given the similarities between these applications, significant weight is given to this fallback position.

4.2.3 The application site falls outside the defined Town Centre Area for Royston but within a built-up area with a defined street scene where there are a large number of local services and facilities. Policy SP1 of the Local Plan supports the principles of sustainable development and to maintain the role of key settlements within and

adjoining the District as the main focus for housing, employment and new development making use of previously developed land. The proposal would be consistent with this policy as well as Policy SP2 which identifies Royston as one of the key settlements where up to 80% of the districts development needs will be met over the Plan period.

- 4.3.4 Policy SP9 of the Local Plan supports new development where it is well designed and located and responds to its local context. I consider that the proposal will, having regard to the particular design and layout of the scheme and the character of the area, will be broadly consistent with Policy SP9 of the Local Plan.
- 4.3.5 The land or premises is no longer required to meet future employment needs of either the local community and there is no Policy ETC2 objection to the loss of commercial floorspace and gain of residential accommodation in this location.
- 4.3.6 NPPF policy S4 states that “development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects”. This policy applies a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development and is therefore afforded significant weight.

Sustainability

- 4.3.7 The NPPF August 2026 version, like the versions before, sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and that to achieve this the planning system has three overarching objectives. These are that development must have an economic, social and environmental objective. These core aims are reflected within the Local Plan Policies SP1 and D1.
- 4.3.8 Regarding economic sustainability, the build process will provide for local jobs and will contribute to the local economy. Socially, friendships may form between new neighbours and residents can join in with local clubs and activities if they wish. The new houses will have to meet the high environmental code of current building regulations with regards to insulation, double glazing, low energy light fittings, low flow water fittings and an energy efficient boiler. Air source heat pumps are also included on the plans. On this basis, the development is considered to be sustainable and comply with the aims of the NPPF and Policies SP1 and D1.

Design, Appearance and Heritage Considerations:

- 4.3.9 The objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include those seeking to secure the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places (Chapter 14 – Achieving well-designed places). Policy DP3 of the NPPF states that “*Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings*”. In this regard, Policy D1 and D2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan are consistent with the objectives set out within the NPPF.
- 4.3.10 The proposed works are predominantly internal, however would require the erection of a number of dormer windows in the side and rear roofslopes and roof lights in the front roof slope. The proposed scheme has been amended to omit the front dormer windows in favour of two conservation type rooflights. As such, North Herts Senior Conservation Officer has raised no objection.

- 4.3.11 The proposal would also require the creation of a new ramp to the north elevation to serve the existing stepped access. In my view a ramp in the position would be a sympathetic addition to the building and would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the building and therefore would not result in any adverse harm to the street scene or the conservation area.
- 4.3.12 The erection of cycle and refuse storage in the rear garden would reuse the existing garage / store building and therefore would not impact the street scene or the conservation area.
- 4.3.13 The proposed development would not result in an adverse impact to the character and appearance of the designated and non-designated heritage assets. This is considered in line with Chapter 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies D1, D3 and HE1 of the Local Plan.

Impact on Neighbouring Occupiers:

- 4.3.14 A core planning principle set out in the NPPF is to always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. This principle is reflected in the provisions of Policy D3 of the NHLP.
- 4.3.15 Given the change from office to residential, the new use is unlikely to differ to any noticeable extent. The impact of the change of use would mean that there would be an increase in the use of the proposed space in that the previous use largely relates to weekdays and daytime activities. In terms of increased noise level from the proposed use, as far as I am aware, the neighbouring units are under commercial and residential usage and therefore would not be affected by noise from a residential unit, regardless I do not consider the noise level associated with the 8 residential flats to be significant. I am satisfied that the proposed development will not significantly impact on the existing amenity of the neighbouring properties and is acceptable.
- 4.3.16 The units are acceptable in size, all exceeding the minimum space requirements of these standards. This, along with parking, bin and bike storage and a communal outdoor space means that these units can be considered to represent a good standard of amenity for future occupiers, and Policy D1 is considered to be met in this regard.
- 4.3.17 The proposed rear and north side dormer windows would provide a similar outlook to the windows at first floor level. The south side dormer windows would face towards the roofslope of the adjacent dwelling and therefore would not overlook any areas of neighbouring amenity.

Highways and Parking:

- 4.3.18 Policy T1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan states that “*planning permission will be granted provided that... development would not lead to highway safety problems or cause unacceptable impacts upon the highway network*”.
- 4.3.19 Policy T2 states that “*planning permission will be granted provided that... proposal have regard to relevant Supplementary Planning Documents*”.
- 4.3.20 The site benefit from 8 vehicle parking spaces, which would give each unit one parking space. In my view, given the sustainability of a town centre location within close distance to multiple bus stops and the train station and the inclusion of cycle storage, the reduced parking provision is considered acceptable.

Environmental Implications:

- 4.3.21 Section 14 of the NPPF sets out how the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. The principles set out in Section 14 are reflected in Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan, which sets out that development proposal should take all reasonable opportunities to reduce energy consumption and waste, retain existing vegetation and propose new appropriate planting, and future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle.
- 4.3.22 The proposed development is the conversion of an existing building and is predominantly hardstanding. As such it is exempt from BNG Legislation defined under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. In my view, the proposed development would be unlikely to have any significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Section 14 of the NPPF and Policy D1 and NE4 of the Local Plan.

Waste

- 4.3.23 The unit is currently served by a bin storage area to the rear of the property. The current bin storage area is sufficient to accommodate the required residential bins.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.3.24 The proposed development is considered 'de minimis' and would not exceed the threshold of 25 sqm of on-site habitat, or and/ less than 5 meters of linear habitats. This application is therefore exempt from BNG legislation defined under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. There is therefore no requirement for the development to include bird and bat boxes.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 The proposed development is therefore considered acceptable and in accordance with Policies SP1, SP6, SP8, SP9, D1, D3, HE1, HS3, T1 and T2 of the NHLP 2011-2031 and Chapters 4, 5, 6, 12, 14 and 20 of the NPPF 2026.

4.5 Alternative Options

- 4.5.1 N/A

4.6 Pre-Commencement Conditions

- 4.6.1 N/A

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. Prior to the use of the development hereby permitted, unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of cycling parking secure and sheltered storage for the proposed 9 cycles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. The cycle parking storage shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with the agreed details and completed prior to occupation of the development hereby approved and shall thereafter be retained, maintained, for the duration of the development at all times.

Reason: To ensure construction of a safe development and to promote sustainable development in accordance with Policies 5, 19 and 20 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. This development is not subject to the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan condition because it is considered exempt under the statutory exemptions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>) or transitional arrangements in respect of the biodiversity gain condition.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed <i>S. Kasparian</i> Sarah Kasparian	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 3 September 2026	