

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Mark Simmons.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/01629/LBC	Internal alterations comprising the removal of some non-structural walls, and boarding up of existing basement stairs (as amended by drawing nos. 18.08/02.1 Rev A; -05.1 Rev A and -12.1 Rev A received on 12.08.2024, drawing nos.18.08/06.1 Rev B and -07.1 Rev C received on 20.09.2024 and as amplified by drawing no.18.08/08.1 received on 20.09.2024).	25 High Street Royston Hertfordshire SG8 9AA

Submitted Plan Nos

18.08/06.1 Rev B 18.08/07.1 Rev C 18.08/08.1 18.08/02.1 Rev A 18.08/05.1 Rev A 18.08/12.1 Rev A

HE1 Designated heritage assets

SECN16 Conserve + enhance historic environment

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 The full planning history can be viewed on file and only a selection of pertinent applications is provided below:

09/00776/1 - Change of use of ground floor from Class A1 (retail) to Class A3 (restaurant/cafe). Single storey glazed side extension. Change of use of first and second floors to create one 3-bedroom flat. (as amended by plans 06B and 07B received 12/10/09 and plans 01A - ground floor, 04C and 05C received 28/10/09).

CP 17.11.2009

09/00777/1LB - Internal and external alterations, including new single storey glazed side extension, to create new A3 (cafe/restaurant). Internal alterations to first and second floors to create one 3-bedroom flat (as amended by plans 06B and 07B received 12/10/09 and plans 01A - basement, 04C and 05C received 28/10/09).

CCON 17.11.2009

15/01816/1 - Conversion of first and second floors into two one-bedroom flats (as amended by plan received 30.9.15)

CP 05.10.2015

15/01817/1LB - Conversion of first and second floors into two one-bedroom flats; internal alterations (amended plan received 30.09.15)

CCON 05.10.2015

16/00375/1 - Conversion of first and second floors into two one-bedroom flats (as amended by plan received 30.9.15). Section 73 application to reposition and alter bin store (as Minor Material Amendment to Planning permission 15/01816/1 granted 5/10/2015).

CP 24.05.2016

16/00387/1LB - Insertion of two double doors in rear wall to create a bin storage area.

CCON 24.05.2016

3.0 **Policies**

3.1 Policies HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 is relevant as are the following paragraphs of the NPPF (2023 version):

- 200 (local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any
- heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting)
- 203 (desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness),
- 205 (great weight should be given to the asset's conservation),
- 206 (clear and convincing justification), and
- 208 (harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use).

4.0 **Representations**

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

Press & site notices – No comments received.

5.0 **Planning Considerations**

5.1 **Site & Surroundings**

5.1.1 No.25 High Street is grade II listed and is located within the Royston Conservation Area. Both the building and the area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of the NPPF.

C19 front. South side elevation has scalloped pargetting and old tiled roof.

Nos 7 to 13 (odd) and 17 to 25 (odd) form a group.

5.2 **Proposal**

5.2.1 The proposal is ***'Internal alterations comprising the removal of some non-structural walls, and boarding up of existing basement stairs (as amended by drawing nos. 18.08/02.1 Rev A; -05.1 Rev A and -12.1 Rev A received on 12.08.2024, drawing nos.18.08/06.1 Rev B and -07.1 Rev C received on 20.09.2024 and as amplified by drawing no.18.08/08.1 received on 20.09.2024).'***

5.3 **Key Issues**

5.3.1 The key issue here is to consider the impact of this proposal on the special character of this grade II listed building. With reference to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the following should be noted: *"In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special interest or historic interest which it possesses".*

5.3.2 Prior to 2009, the premises was a toy shop (A1) and applications received that year sought a change of use of the ground floor to a coffee shop operated by the national franchise Costa Coffee (A3) and accessed off of the High Street. The change of use to a coffee shop included the erection of a flat roof glazed seating area which occupies the

small parcel of open space between 25 and the modern building at 27a linking The High Street and Upper King Street visually. The scheme also included the conversion of first and second floors of 25 to a 3-bed flat with access from Upper King Street only. Both the change of use for residential purposes and the proposed coffee shop involved structural works, alterations and changes to the listed building most notably adding the glazed structure and breaking through the fabric of the grade 2 listed building.

5.3.3 The case officer reported that the Conservation Officer has “*sought to reconcile the requirement to preserve the historic character of the building with finding a new a productive use The Conservation Team has considered this proposal in much detail and worked hard with the applicant to secure changes the like of which, subject to conditions, render the scheme acceptable in conservation terms*”.

5.3.4 The Design and Heritage Statement says that the proposed works to the listed building are as follows:

- ☐ *Removal of existing internal walls, which appear to be modern additions to the original listed building.*
- ☐ *Boarding over of existing basement stair.*
- ☐ *New access hatch and ladder to basement.*
- ☐ *Removal of one existing cramped bathroom to provide a larger Back of House area.*

The DHS continues saying:

The building exhibits an existing layout which is extremely tight and cramped, which has led to a very small counter being constructed within the coffee shop and a small back of house area which is no-longer fit for purpose. With this existing layout, the coffee shop is struggling to serve the needs of both the community that use it, as well as its staff. In addition to this, there is an existing customer toilet which is just 860mm in width, which is almost impossible to use.

The proposal set out in the application seeks to provide a space which is more suitable for public use and comfort, and which can support the functioning of the business more effectively.

As can be seen from the Proposed Ground Floor Plan in this application, the removal of non-structural walls at the top of the plan, which appear to be of a later modern addition (please refer to Figs 3-5). There are no previous historical plans to refer to in order to date the internal walls that are proposed to be removed, but Figure 3, a 2008 image of the previous Toy Shop, appears to show an open store-front, with no internal walls or storage space visible to the right side of the elevation, which is in contrast to the current configuration (Figure 4), in which a cupboard door and walls can clearly be seen, therefore indicating that these walls are likely of a much later modern addition.

The removal of these walls in the front of house allows for greater space at the front of the store by recessing the counter further into the store. This creates a more useable, functional space for a full-size counter and a comfortable and safe circulation space for customers and staff.

The removal of the non-structural walls to the top of the plan allows for the proposed counter to be moved further back into the store. In order to accommodate this, the proposal includes the boarding up of the existing basement stair. To replace this, a new access hatch has been proposed, with a ladder to provide access to the basement storage area.

Finally, the removal of the existing small bathroom and associated wall allows for the creation of a larger and more practical Back of House area for storage and services such as a hand-wash

basin and fridges. The existing bathroom is just 860mm in width and is almost impossible to use (please refer to Fig 6), and it represents a later modification to the listed building.

The proposal has been carefully considered and planned, with the least amount of disruption caused as possible to the listed building, respecting its character and heritage. The proposals also only relate to the interior of the building, and as such, there is no impact or changes to the exterior character of the listed building and its curtilage. The proposed changes can be seen as positively improving the use and practicality of the listed building, whilst maintaining its character and appearance. In addition to this, by improving the usability and comfort of the space, we believe that the local area will benefit from this proposal, socially and economically, through promoting an increase in social interaction and turnover of customers between this commercial establishment and the surrounding High Street environment.

- 5.3.5 A site meeting was convened on 10 September 2024 at which the basement area was also inspected. Following which, amended drawings were received on 20 September indicating an alternative basement hatch position which will have less impact on fabric and allow for optimal access. The hatch is proposed to be fitted flush with the floor and structural details are to be as per the Engineer's design.

5.4 **Alternative Options**

- 5.4.1 None applicable.

5.5 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

- 5.5.1 None applicable.

5.6 **Conclusion**

- 5.6.1 In line with Section 4 of the DHS it is agreed that the proposed works have no impact on Royston Conservation Area due to only proposing minor internal alterations which do not cause any impact to the exterior of the listed building. In addition, the proposed works will not occasion harm to the listed building's special character.
- 5.6.2 The proposal is therefore **UNOBJECTIONABLE**, satisfying Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and the aims of Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

6.0 **Recommendation**

- 6.1 That listed building consent be **GRANTED** subject to the following condition

1. The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Signed  Anne McDonald Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 24 September 2024	