

JP2/01/n2901

North Herts Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Herts
SG6 3JF
Submitted via Planning Portal only

04 February 2026

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: Full planning application (retrospective) for use of land from car park to external seating area at 'Land adjacent to The Manor House', Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7BZ.

nineteen47 is instructed by JD Wetherspoon plc ('the Applicant') to prepare and submit a full planning application (retrospective) in respect of Land adjacent to The Manor House Public House ('the Site') for change of use of land from car park to external seating area ('the Proposed Development' or 'proposals') to regularise the existing use. This submission follows recent discussions with North Herts Council ('the LPA') who have asked that a retrospective application is submitted before 06 March 2026.

The proposed (retrospective) external seating area has operated as such for more than five years, having previously benefited from temporary legislative provisions that were introduced during the pandemic but have since been removed. The additional external seating area represents a modest extension to the existing approved outside area in connection with the Public House.

In support of this application, the following information is submitted alongside this supporting letter:

- Application Forms and Certificates
- Plans pack prepared by DV architects:
 - Location plan (-300A)
 - Existing (approved) GF layout (-100)
 - Proposed (current) GF layout (-200)
 - Existing (approved) external elevations (-500)
 - Proposed (current) external elevations (-501)

The application fee plus administration fee has been paid via the planning portal.

Listed building consent (LBC) is not sought because the application Site is not within the curtilage of the main listed Public House. The proposals do not include any objects or structure fixed to the building or its curtilage, as defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (Part 1, Chapter 1(5.)).

The Site and Surroundings

The Site comprises part of the wider existing car park immediately adjacent the existing external seating area in connection with the Grade II* listed two and a half storey red-brick Public House (Sui Generis) on the north side of Melbourn Street. It is located within the secondary shopping frontage in Royston Town Centre and lies within the wider Conservation Area.

Neighbouring units include a mixture of commercial and retail uses such as retail units to the west, take-away to the east and to the south on the other side of Melbourn Street, a two-storey shopping precinct know as 'Market One' which is home to further retail, leisure and take-away uses.

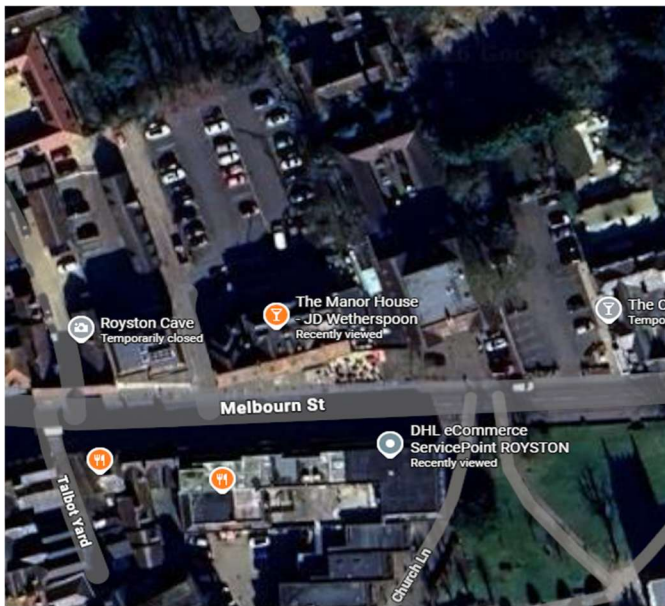


Figure 1 – Site Location (Source Google Maps)



Figure 2 – Proposed (retrospective) seating area

To the north (rear) of the Site is a privately operated open-air car park with capacity for circa30 vehicles. It is the southernmost portion of the car park which is subject to this (retrospective) application (see Figure 2, above) with the area comprising 206sqm of the wider car park – equivalent to less than 10% of the wider car parks area.

At the rear of the Site, boundary treatments include a ~12ft high wall to the east and shared access drive to the west, beyond which is a combination of commercial/ office buildings and residential uses.

Relevant Planning History

The lawful use of the wider Site as a Public House and an external seating area to the rear was established in February 2013 when a series of refurbishments and external alterations to facilitate use as a Public House were approved, LPA ref: 12/02367/1 and 12/02368/1LB. The permissions included a list of approved plans which clearly demarcate an external seating area to the rear of the venue, a position also confirmed in writing by the LPA on 22/10/2025, LPA ref: 25/00170/1ENF.

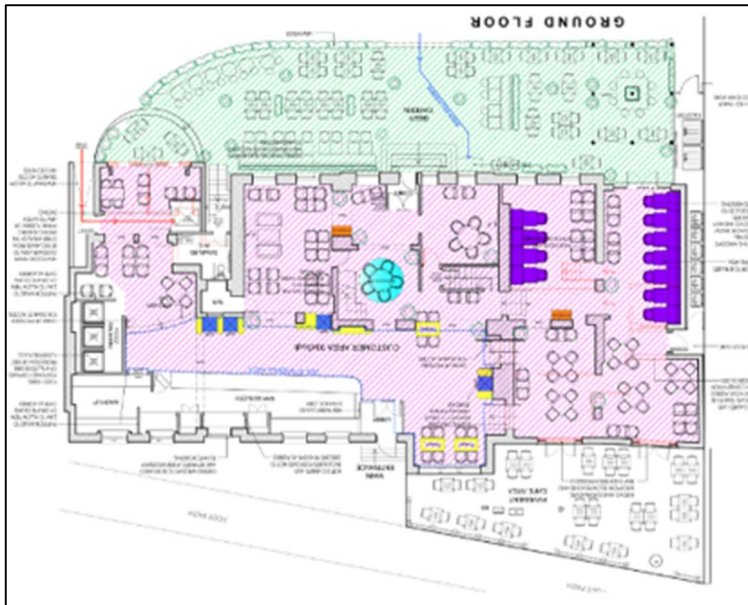


Figure 3 – Approved plan extract (existing external seating area in green)

The planning permissions confirm the principle of an external seating area being acceptable. In coming to the decision to grant permission, the planning authority concluded the proposals did not have an adverse impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties, character or visual amenities of the Conservation Area, or the setting of the listed building. Weight was also given to the positive contribution the Site will make to the viability of Royston Town Centre.

The LPA have contacted JD Wetherspoons to advise that part of the external seating area does not have the benefit of planning permission and is therefore unauthorised. Following constructive dialogue between the Applicant and LPA, it has been agreed that a retrospective application will be submitted to regularise the use of this area as part of the wider external seating arrangements.

Proposed Development

JD Wetherspoon (the Applicant) seeks full planning permission (retrospective) for the change of use of land from car park use to an external seating area to be used in connection with 'The Manor House'. The application will regularise the existing use of a small part of the wider car park (less than 10%) as an extension to the existing (approved) external seating area in connection with the Public House.

The application does not seek any 'new' development or external changes to the existing Public House and external seating area, nor are the existing/ approved accesses affected by the retrospective application. The continued use of the Site as a seating area does not result in the loss of any parking spaces associated with the adjacent car park.

The external seating is well used by patrons and is managed in line with the Company policies and procedures for all its external areas.

Assessment of the Proposals

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The planning policy context for this application is provided by the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2022). The NPPF (2024) is also a "material consideration" in planning decisions, meaning it must be considered when evaluating planning applications, especially when local plans are absent, outdated, or silent on a particular issue.

General Principle of Development

By nature of the application being retrospective to regularise an existing use of the land which has taken place for more than five years without any complaints or issues, combined with the principle of an external seating area already being established by the planning history (LPA ref: 12/O2367/1 and 12/O2368/1LB), the principle of development is acceptable with this application not seeking approval for a use which is not already considered acceptable in this location.

Given the Site's location in the Town Centre and secondary shopping frontage, the principle of the external seating area is also supported by relevant local policy SP4 'Town Centre, Local Centres and Community Shops' and ETC5 'Secondary Shopping Frontages' which support proposals that protect and enhance pubs and drinking establishments within the town centres.

With the principle of development established, the main considerations associated with the Proposed Development is the impact on amenity of neighbouring uses, and the impact the proposals have on the character and setting of the listed building (The Manor House) and wider Conservation Area.

Residential Amenity

The Site is located within the secondary shopping frontage in Royston Town Centre and is surrounded predominantly by commercial and retail uses. The presence of nearby residential uses is noted, including at first and second floor levels at neighbouring 10 Melbourn Street and Royston Manor house, both of which were granted approval to include residential uses in 2022. However, in coming to the decision to approve, the LPA acknowledged and referenced the town centre location whereby background noise levels are higher. As a result, conditions were attached requiring minimum internal noise standards to be achieved in recognition of the town centre location and existing background noise environment.

Notwithstanding the existing noise background, the proposed (retrospective) external seating area operates in line with the wider venues opening hours and management practices which JD Wetherspoon have in place for all their Public Houses and successfully operate in many town centre locations which have residential properties in proximity. This includes measures such as CCTV, ensuring staff and customers are made aware of the need to respect neighbours, a complaints system and through the use of signage.

In combination with the fact the Site benefits from an approved external seating area, the modest external area which is the subject of this application which has operated for more than five years without complaints, and the Applicant's significant experience in operating pubs in Town Centre locations, the proposal is acceptable when assessed against relevant policy including H3 'Protecting living conditions' which requires proposal to not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions. Furthermore, planning practice guidance (PPG) is also clear that proposed developments must be designed to not place additional requirements on existing established businesses in the interests of avoiding any adverse impact (such as noise) on future amenity considerations – otherwise known as the 'agent of change' principle.

The Manor House has successfully traded for more than 10 years and has a good reputation with the local community and continues to operate without any significant issues which impact upon residential amenity. It is also important to note that the Applicant has a no music policy across the majority of their estate, including the Manor House and its external seating areas.

This retrospective application is submitted solely to regularise the existing use which has operated without issue, therefore there are no amenity considerations which warrant further assessment.

Conservation and Heritage

The Site is located within the wider Royston Conservation Area and the Public House itself is Grade II* listed, 'Royston Manor House' (ID 1102011). The listing entry confirms the Public House is of early C18 origins with red stretchers, grey headers and a old, tiled roof.

There is no specific reference to land to the rear of Melbourn Street displaying any specific qualities that contribute to the wider Conservation Area in The Royston Conservation Area Appraisal (2007). This is consistent with the current uses that make up the rear of the Application Site including the privately owned car park and shared service spaces in connection with the ground floor commercial uses that predominantly front the main road.



Figure 4 – Setting to the rear of The Manor House

Historically, the setting of the Public House to the rear would have been landscaped gardens, making sense of the grandeur of the detailing afforded to the rear elevation. Over the passage of time however

this has given way to hardstanding providing car parking, and non-descript neighbouring development which has eroded the historic quality and interests at the rear of the Site.

Given the existing baseline and the scale of change proposed because of the retrospective application, the proposals are not considered to have any impact on the identified heritage asset and wider Conservation Area.

The location of the (retrospective) external seating areas is not visible within the main street scene. Overall, it has a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the listed building and Conservation Area. The proposal is confined as a modest extension to the existing external seating area and does not involve alterations to the principal elevations (front or rear), nor is there any historic fabric of the building which is eroded or diminished by the proposals. It does not harm the appearance, character or setting of any identified listed buildings, or the overall character and appearance of the surrounding Conservation Area. The proposals are therefore considered to be in line with Local Plan policy HE1 (Designated heritage assets).

Other Material Considerations

The existing public house provides a significant contribution to the vitality and viability of Royston Town Centre. JD Wetherspoon provide a family friendly environment which attracts a diverse range of customers and the proposals seek to maintain and strengthen this role by regularising the existing (retrospective) external seating area, which itself represent a modest extension to the existing (approved) seating area. The seating is well managed by the Applicant and includes attractive boundary features in the form of new millboard planters which provide a positive visual contribution to the rear of the Site and clearly demarcates the area as being separate from the adjacent car park.

The Proposed Development does not result in the loss of any vegetation or undeveloped areas and therefore no habitat is impacted. No ecological considerations apply, nor is the proposal required to deliver 10% BNG because it exempts under the 'de minimis' threshold.

The Site is in a Flood Zone 1 (low risk of flooding) with no known records of surface water flooding and does not increase the impermeable area. The proposed development is not at significant flood risk, nor does it increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

Summary

This Application has been prepared by nineteen47 on behalf of JD Wetherspoon PLC (the 'Applicant') in support of a full planning application (retrospective) for change of use of land from car park to external seating area at Land adjacent to The Manor House'.

The Site has operated as an external seating area for more than five years without complaints. The principle of the seating area more generally to the rear of the Site is established through the planning history and this supporting planning note has identified the relevant material and demonstrated how the Development Proposal is acceptable in these respects.

There are no planning, material or technical constraints associated with the development proposals. It is concluded that the proposals comply with relevant national and local planning policies. It is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

We trust the following information is satisfactory, however please do not hesitate to get in touch should you require further information.

Yours faithfully



Jamie Pert
Associate Director

