

The Banyers Hotel, 16 Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7BZ

Brunning and Price

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BIDWELLS

HERITAGE STATEMENT

**PROPOSED RETENTION OF COLD ROOM
EXTENSION; REPLACEMENT HIGHER
TIMBER FENCE WITH AN INSET GATE; NEW
ESTATE FENCING GATE; FESTOON
LIGHTING SUPPORTED ON TIMBER POLES;
NEW HANGING LIGHT PENDANT TO LOBBY;
FORM NEW EXIT FROM EXISTING LEAN-TO
TIMBER EXTENSION; TOGETHER WITH
INTERNAL ALTERATIONS**

Heritage Statement

1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany applications for planning permission and listed building consent for the proposed retention of internal and external alterations at The Banyers Hotel, 16 Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7BZ. The application premises now trade as the Chalk Hare public house and restaurant. The application proposals comprise the proposed retention of a cold room extension; replacement higher timber fence with an inset gate; new estate fencing gate; festoon lighting supported on timber posts; new hanging light pendant to lobby; formation of new exit from existing timber extension; together with internal alterations.

Site Analysis

2. The application site comprises existing public house/restaurant premises that are located in Royston town centre. The property itself is a grade II listed building. The application site is also situated within the designated Royston Conservation Area. In addition, the neighbouring building at No. 18 Melbourn Street is a grade I listed building.
3. The application building itself is a grade II listed building, dating from the early nineteenth Century. The Historic England listing description for the application building reads as follows:

1. 5255 MELBOURN STREET (North Side) No 16 (The Banyers Hotel) TL 3540 1/163 II

2. Early C19 refronting in Neo-classical style of much earlier building. Timber framed structure refaced in gault brick. Welsh slated roof behind parapet. 2 storeys, tall Greek Ionic pilasters to pediment right of centre. Doric pilasters at angles. 7 sash windows with glazing bars under flat arches. Doric porch has cast iron balcony railings, entablature with triglyphs, mutule cornice. Road side elevation has pediment 1st floor cast iron balconette, ground floor bay window. North projecting wing has ground floor 3 light pedimented window.

4. The neighbouring building at No. 18 Melbourn Street is a grade I listed building. The Historic England listing description for this neighbouring building reads as follows:

TL 3540 1/71 14.6.64 5255 MELBOURN STREET (North Side) No 18 I

C18 front of channelled plaster, red tiled roof behind parapet with central open pediment. 3 storeys, 7 sash windows in moulded flush frames. Fine central doorway has 6 fielded panelled door and oblong fanlight with ornamental monogram glazing in fielded panelled reveal, surround of Roman Doric half columns, entablature with running fret frieze and dentil and mutule cornice, pediment. Interior contains remarkable early C17 decoration: 3 carved and painted chimneypieces with

elaborate overmantels, painted ceilings with arabesques, oak panelling in 2 rooms, early C18 deal panelling in 1 room.

5. The application site is also located within the designated Royston Conservation Area. There are many buildings of good architectural quality and historic interest within the conservation area, a significant number of which are listed. The layout of Royston is predominantly medieval, and rebuilding has largely occurred in relation to the shape and constraints of these early plots. However, the overall appearance of the conservation area is mainly that of 18th century and early 19th century buildings following the classical design influences of the time (all taken from the Royston Conservation Area appraisal, dated 27 March 2007, published by North Hertfordshire District Council).
6. The application site lies within the town centre of Royston, which contains the usual range of mixed commercial and residential uses that would be expected in such areas. The part of Melbourn Street containing the application building is predominantly commercial in character, with residential properties beyond and a church and its grounds directly opposite. Other food and drink led business exist within the surrounding area, including 'USA Chicken and Pizza' restaurant/takeaway; 'The Manor House' public house; 'Domino's Pizza' takeaway; and 'Wing On' Chinese takeaway, all further west along Melbourn Street. Locally, the surrounding buildings range in date and styles, from historic buildings to modern infill developments.

Proposals

7. The application proposals comprise the proposed retention of internal and external alterations at The Banyers Hotel, 16 Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7BZ. The application premises now trade as the Chalk Hare public house and restaurant.
8. A summary of proposed external works is as follows:
 1. The retention of a cold room extension.
 2. The retention of replacement higher timber fence with an inset gate.
 3. The retention of a new estate fencing gate.
 4. The retention of festoon lighting supported on timber posts.
 5. The retention of a new hanging light pendant to lobby; and
 6. The retention of a new exit from existing timber extension.
9. A summary of the proposed internal alterations is as follows:
 1. The retention of infills of previously formed apertures to the pizza kitchen area, finished with plasterboard and skimmed to match the adjacent wall.
 2. The retention of an infill to kitchen area with part open stud wall and door.
 3. The retention of an infill to bar area to create a new cleaners' store.

4. The retention of the replacement of elements of the existing bar servery, including new timber tops and upper backfitting.
 5. The retention of new doors off existing glazed internal lobby to secure building post trading.
 6. The retention of replacement vanity units in all toilet areas and redecoration of all painted surfaces.
 7. The retention of a new retractable glazed screen.
 8. The retention of the replacement of the LVT ceramic tiling and laminate flooring to ground floor areas with engineered oak flooring.
 9. The retention of a new exit from the existing lean-to timber extension.
 10. The retention of a studwork wall subdivision to a second-floor room to create a secondary office space and store.
10. The application works were commenced on site on 05/01/2026 and were completed on 09/03/2026. These planning and listed building consent applications are therefore made retrospectively and follow contact and advice from Cormac Hosie, the LPA's Planning Compliance Officer (LPA reference: 26/00044/1LB). Their advice was that retrospective planning permission and listed building consent should be sought for these works.
11. In the main, the proposed internal and external alterations generally avoid works to the historic parts of this listed building and instead mainly concern works affecting recent extensions and fabric. The proposed alterations are detailed in the accompanying plans and documents.

Legislation, Guidance and Planning Policy

12. The primary legislation relating to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 16(2) states *"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 architectural or historic interest which it possesses."* Section 66(1) reads: *"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State 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."* In relation to development within Conservation Areas, Section 72(1) reads: *"Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."*
13. The December 2024 Framework requires that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (paragraph 202). Heritage assets should be put to viable uses consistent with their conservation and development should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (paragraph 203). Development proposals should avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal (paragraph

208). In determining applications, LPAs should take account of: the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (paragraph 208). When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance (paragraph 212). Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification (paragraph 213). Where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (paragraph 215).

14. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was published in March 2014 as a companion to the original NPPF, replacing a large number of foregoing Circulars and other supplementary guidance. In respect of heritage decision-making, the PPG stresses the importance of determining applications on the basis of significance and explains how the tests of harm and impact within the Framework are to be interpreted.
15. Historic England's Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance 2008 sets out a logical approach to decision-making and offers guidance about all aspects of the historic environment. This document states that: *"New work or alteration to a significant place should normally be acceptable if: a. there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the place; b. the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed; c. the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future; and d. the long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future"* (page 59).
16. The adopted Development Plan document for the application site comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.
17. Policy SP13 of the Local Plan addresses the historic environment. This policy states that the LPA will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset's conservation and the management of its setting. The LPA will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through, amongst others, maintaining a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance.

18. Policy HE1 of the Local Plan addresses designated heritage assets. This policy states that planning applications relating to designated heritage assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment which: i. Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting; ii. Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and iii. Informs any necessary measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms. Planning permission for development proposals affecting designated heritage assets or their setting will be granted where they: a) Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance; b) Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and c) Will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset's optimum viable use. Where substantial harm to, or loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset is proposed the LPA will refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.

Methodology

19. A heritage asset is defined within the Framework as *"a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)"* (December 2024 Framework Annex 2: Glossary).
20. The significance of the heritage assets within the proposed site require assessment in order to provide a context for, and to determine the impact of, current development proposals. Significance is 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"* (December 2024 Framework Annex 2: Glossary).
21. The aim of this Heritage Statement is to identify and assess any impacts that the development may cause to the value or significance of the identified heritage assets. Impact on that value or significance is determined by considering the sensitivity of the receptors identified and the magnitude of change.
22. Table 1 sets out thresholds of significance which reflect the hierarchy for national and local designations, based on established criteria for those designations. The Table provides a general framework for assessing levels of significance, but it does not seek to measure all aspects for which an asset may be valued – which may be judged by other aspects of merit.

Table 1 – Assessing Heritage Significance

SIGNIFICANCE	EXAMPLES
Very High	World Heritage Sites, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments of exceptional quality, or assets of acknowledged international importance or can contribute to international research objectives. Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens and historic landscapes and townscapes of international sensitivity.
High	Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II Listed Buildings and built heritage of exceptional quality. Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens and historic landscapes and townscapes which are extremely well preserved with exceptional coherence, integrity, time-depth, or other critical factor(s).
Good	Scheduled Monuments, or assets of national quality and importance, or that can contribute to national research objectives. Grade II* and Grade II Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas with very strong character and integrity, other built heritage that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical association. Grade II* and II Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and historic landscapes and townscapes of outstanding interest, quality and importance, or well preserved and exhibiting considerable coherence, integrity time-depth or other critical factor(s).
Medium	Grade II Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, locally listed buildings and undesignated assets that can be shown to have good qualities in their fabric or historical association. Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, undesignated special historic landscapes and townscapes with reasonable coherence, integrity, time-depth or other critical factor(s).
Low	Assets compromised by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations but with potential to contribute to local research objectives. Historic buildings or structures of modest quality in their fabric or historical association. Locally-listed buildings and undesignated assets of moderate/ low quality. Historic landscapes and townscapes with limited sensitivity or whose sensitivity is limited by poor preservation, historic integrity and/or poor survival of contextual associations.
Negligible	Assets with no surviving cultural heritage interest. Buildings of no architectural or historical note. Landscapes and townscapes with no surviving legibility and/or contextual associations, or with no historic interest.

23. Beyond the criteria applied for national designation, the concept of value can extend more broadly to include an understanding of the heritage values a building or place may hold for its owners, the local community or other interest groups. These aspects of value do not readily fall into the criteria typically applied for designation and require a broader assessment of how a place may hold significance. In seeking to prompt broader assessments of value, Historic England's Conservation Principles categorises the potential areas of significance (including and beyond designated assets) under the following headings:

Evidential value – *‘derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity...Physical remains of past human activity are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them...The ability to understand and interpret the evidence tends to be diminished in proportion to the extent of its removal or replacement.’* (Conservation Principles page 28)

24. Evidential value therefore relates to the physical remains of a building/structure and its setting, including the potential for below ground remains, and what this primary source of evidence can tell us about the past.

Aesthetic Value – *‘Aesthetic values can be the result of the conscious design of a place, including artistic endeavour. Equally, they can be the seemingly fortuitous outcome of the way in which a place has evolved and been used over time. Many places combine these two aspects... Aesthetic values tend to be specific to a time cultural context and appreciation of them is not culturally exclusive’* (pages 30-31).

25. Aesthetic value therefore relates to the visual qualities and characteristics of an asset (settlement site or building), long views, legibility of building form, character of elevations, roofscape, materials and fabric, and setting (including public and private views).

Historic Value – *‘derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative... Association with a notable family, person, event, or movement gives historical value a particular resonance...The historical value of places depends upon both sound identification and direct experience of fabric or landscape that has survived from the past, but is not as easily diminished by change or partial replacement as evidential value. The authenticity of a place indeed often lies in visible evidence of change as a result of people responding to changing circumstances. Historical values are harmed only to the extent that adaptation has obliterated or concealed them, although completeness does tend to strengthen illustrative value’* (pages 28-30).

26. Historic value therefore relates to the age and history of the asset, its development over time and the strength of its tie to a particular architectural period, person, place or event. It can also include the layout of a site, the plan form of a building and any features of special interest.

Communal Value – *‘Commemorative and symbolic values reflect the meanings of a place for those who draw part of their identity from it or have emotional links to it... Social value is associated with places that people perceive as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence. Some may be comparatively modest, acquiring communal significance through the passage of time as a result of a collective memory of stories linked to them...They may relate to an activity that is associated with the place, rather than with its physical fabric...Spiritual value is often associated with places sanctified by longstanding veneration or worship, or wild places with*

few obvious signs of modern life. Their value is generally dependent on the perceived survival of the historic fabric or character of the place and can be extremely sensitive to modest changes to that character, particularly to the activities that happen there’ (pages 31-32).

27. Communal value therefore relates to the role an asset plays in a historic setting, village, town or landscape context, and what it means to that place or that community. It is also linked to the use of a building, which is perhaps tied to a local industry or its social and/or spiritual connections.
28. Once the value and significance of an asset has been assessed, the next stage is to determine the ‘magnitude’ of the impact brought about by the development proposals. This impact could be a direct physical impact on the assets itself or an impact on its wider setting, or both. Impact on setting is measured in terms of the effect that the impact has on the significance of the asset itself, rather than setting being considered as the asset itself.

Table 2 - Assessing magnitude of impact

MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT	TYPICAL CRITERIA DESCRIPTORS
Very High	Adverse: Impacts will destroy cultural heritage assets resulting in their total loss or almost complete destruction. Beneficial: The proposals would remove or successfully mitigate existing and significant damaging and discordant impacts on assets; allow for the substantial restoration or enhancement of characteristic features.
High	Adverse: Impacts will damage cultural heritage assets; result in the loss of the asset's quality and integrity; cause severe damage to key characteristic features or elements; almost complete loss of setting and/or context of the asset. The assets integrity or setting is almost wholly destroyed or is severely compromised, such that the resource can no longer be appreciated or understood. Beneficial: The proposals would remove or successfully mitigate existing damaging and discordant impacts on assets; allow for the restoration or enhancement of characteristic features; allow the substantial re-establishment of the integrity, understanding and setting for an area or group of features; halt rapid degradation and/or erosion of the heritage resource, safeguarding substantial elements of the heritage resource.
Medium	Adverse: Moderate impact on the asset, but only partially affecting the integrity; partial loss of, or damage to, key characteristics, features or elements; substantially intrusive into the setting and/or would adversely impact upon the context of the asset; loss of the asset for community appreciation. The assets integrity or setting is damaged but not destroyed so understanding and appreciation is compromised. Beneficial: Benefit to, or partial restoration of, key characteristics, features or elements; improvement of asset quality; degradation of the asset would be halted; the setting and/or context of the asset would be enhanced and understanding and appreciation is substantially improved; the asset would be brought into community use.
Minor / Low	Adverse: Some measurable change in assets quality or vulnerability; minor loss of or alteration to, one (or maybe more) key characteristics, features or elements; change to the setting would not be overly intrusive or overly diminish the context; community use or understanding would be reduced. The assets integrity or setting is damaged but understanding and appreciation would only be diminished not compromised. Beneficial: Minor benefit to, or partial restoration of, one (maybe more) key characteristics, features or elements; some beneficial impact on asset or a stabilisation of

	negative impacts; slight improvements to the context or setting of the site; community use or understanding and appreciation would be enhanced.
Negligible	Barely discernible change in baseline conditions
Nil	No discernible change in baseline conditions.

Assessment of Significance and Impact

29. The Banyers Hotel is a grade II statutory listed building situated within a designated conservation area and within the setting of a grade I designated heritage asset. Therefore, any development affecting this heritage asset can be held to have the potential of high to medium significance.
30. In assessing the impact of the proposed internal and external alterations of The Banyers Hotel (now trading as the Chalk Hare), regard has to be had to the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of change.
31. The implications of the application proposals upon historic fabric and the remaining historic planform of the host building are very modest and considered to be appropriate and justified. In the main, the internal and external alterations have generally avoided works to the historic parts of this listed building and instead mainly concern works affecting more recent extensions and fabric.
32. The internal and external alterations to the host building itself are modest and appropriate in nature and detail. Their implications for the historic fabric and the remaining historic planform are minimal and considered to be acceptable.
33. The retention of a cold room extension is perhaps the most significant element of the application works, and this is linked to the host building via an existing lean-to, timber-framed extension, such that it avoids historic fabric. Similarly, the associated new exit necessitated by the placement of the cold room extension, affects the same lean-to, timber-framed extension, again avoiding direct impact upon historic fabric. Associated with these elements of the application proposals, all located within the south-eastern sector of the application site, the previously existing timber access gates were replaced with a higher timber fence with an inset gate. The replacement fence and gate effectively screen the cold room extension from the public realm, thereby reducing any direct visual implications for the character and appearance of this part of the Royston Conservation Area. Similarly, the implications of the cold room extension upon the setting of the grade I listed No. 18 Melbourn Street is mitigated by the screening effects of the replacement higher timber fence and inset gate.
34. The remaining external elements of the application proposals are considered to be modest and minor in nature. The new estate fencing gate is comparable and sympathetic to the existing estate fencing on site. The new hanging light pendant to the lobby is modest and appropriate in siting,

design and detail. The festoon lighting supported on timber posts are located within an external customer area and provide modest and appropriate visual interest for this part of the site. All of these works are also easily removed from the application site when no longer required and thereby comply with conservation best practice of reversibility.

35. The internal alterations are also considered to be modest and appropriate in nature. The most significant of these comprise: the retention of infills of previously formed apertures to the pizza kitchen area, finished with plasterboard and skimmed to match the adjacent wall; the retention of an infill to kitchen area with part open stud wall and door; the retention of an infill to bar area to create a new cleaners' store; and the retention of a studwork wall subdivision to a second-floor room to create a secondary office space and store. The works within the pizza kitchen area restored the historic wall depth within this room through the removal of these previously formed apertures. The retention of an infill to kitchen area with part open stud wall and door affects a more modern, timber studwork wall and thereby avoids historic fabric. The retention of an infill to bar area to create a new cleaners' store has not resulted in any significant intervention to historic fabric and is modest in nature. Finally, the retention of a studwork wall subdivision to a second-floor room to create a secondary office space and store only affected more modern studwork walling and therefore avoided historic fabric.
36. The other internal alterations are all considered to be modest and appropriate in nature. These comprise: the retention of the replacement of elements of the existing bar servery, including new timber tops and upper backfitting; the retention of new doors off existing glazed internal lobby to secure building post trading; the retention of replacement vanity units in all toilet areas and redecoration of all painted surfaces; the retention of a new retractable glazed screen; the retention of the replacement of the LVT ceramic tiling and laminate flooring to ground floor areas with engineered oak flooring; and the internal elements of the retention of a new exit from the existing lean-to timber extension. Historic fabric is not directly affected by these remaining internal alterations. All items can be easily removed when no longer required and thereby comply with conservation best practice of reversibility.
37. The application proposals ensure the continued maintenance and upkeep of this listed building for its appropriate and beneficial continued use as a public house/restaurant; a use which is also publicly accessible and an appropriate town centre use for this part of Royston. There are therefore significant public benefits arising from these proposals. For the reasons rehearsed within the accompanying Heritage Statement, it is considered that the application proposals would respect the architectural and historic character, interest and fabric of this listed building, the settings of the neighbouring heritage asset, and the character and appearance of the designated Royston Conservation Area. The application proposals are therefore considered to be in compliance with the requirements of the December 2024 Framework and Policies SP13 and HE1 of the Local Plan.

38. The internal and external alterations are considered to be appropriate to the character, form, materials and design of the host building and these would not comprise inappropriate alterations to the host building. The proposed works would allow the applicant to rationalise, improve and enhance the existing customer facilities and back of house accommodation and facilities, at this existing public house/restaurant. Furthermore, the design, materials and form of the alterations and associated works are considered to be sympathetic and appropriate to the existing character, architectural detailing and materials of the host building.
39. The wider design and visual impacts implications of the application proposals are considered to be appropriate and sympathetic to the host building and its local context within this part of the designated Royston Conservation Area. Overall, the proposed alterations and associated works are considered to be modest, sympathetic and appropriate to the existing public house/restaurant building. It is therefore considered that there would be no material conflict with the requirements of the December 2024 Framework and Policies SP13 and HE1 of the Local Plan.
40. The appropriate alteration, refurbishment and enhancement of the existing customer and staff accommodation and facilities at this existing public house/restaurant are necessary in order to help attract continued custom and facilitate the continuing economic health of this valued and important community hospitality and leisure facility within Royston town centre. The application proposals have appropriately enhanced and improved customer and staff accommodation and facilities and the customer offer at this site and were an essential part of the applicant's investment into this public house/restaurant and a key part of the applicant's strategy to attract custom to ensure the continued economic viability of this existing commercial social and leisure facility.
41. In order to remain economically viable, commercial hospitality and leisure uses, such as public houses and restaurants, will need to continue to update and enhance their customer offer and the application proposals were required by the applicant as part of their investment into this public house/restaurant facility, to ensure its continued economic viability, that provides direct and indirect employment and generates local economic activity. The application proposals help facilitate the continuing operation of this public house/restaurant facility, for its established and beneficial hospitality and leisure use, which continues to add to and enhance the economic vitality and viability of Royston town centre.
42. During the continuing difficult economic climate, post pandemic and during the current cost of living crisis for its customers and staff, the application site has suffered from lost revenue and the application proposals were designed as a key element of the applicant's investment into improving customer and staff facilities at these premises, to attempt to attract more customers to the site and enhance its economic well-being. It was important that the site enhanced, updated and improved upon its customer offer and attraction, otherwise the site could have continued to suffer serious detrimental effects on the ability to attract customers, thereby subsequently further affecting sales and viability to the detriment of the continued economic vitality of the public house/restaurant; which ultimately led to the previous operators selling-up. Both full and part-time staff are employed

at these premises and are reliant on it for their income. Any drop in sales would affect the ability of this property to maintain current staff levels. The LPA should therefore use its best efforts to support the recovery of their own hospitality and leisure sector in this regard.

43. The application proposals form an essential part of the applicant's strategy to attract custom to ensure the continued economic viability of this existing commercial social and leisure facility. The existing public house/restaurant facility is an important local community hospitality and leisure facility within Royston town centre. In order to remain economically viable, commercial hospitality and leisure uses, such as this, will need to continue to update and enhance their customer offer and the application proposals were required by the applicant to ensure the continued economic viability of this existing commercial hospitality and leisure facility that provides direct and indirect employment and generates local economic activity. The application proposals therefore help facilitate the continuing beneficial and sympathetic use of this listed building, which continues to add to and enhance the economic vitality and viability of Royston town centre.
44. The application proposals also result in public benefits which outweigh any alleged heritage implications raised and help ensure the continued beneficial and appropriate use of The Banyers Hotel and ensures its ongoing maintenance and upkeep for a publicly accessible use. Consequently, it is considered that any modest (and certainly less than substantial) harm caused by the application proposals would be clearly outweighed by the public benefits that they would generate for the economic viability and retention of the historic, established and beneficial town centre use of The Banyers Hotel.
45. Taking all of the above into account, it is therefore considered that there are no reasonable grounds, in terms of heritage impacts, to withhold the granting of planning permission and listed building consent in this case. For these reasons, it is considered that any proportionate and reasonable assessment of the application proposals, set against the adopted planning policy context, would conclude that there was no material conflict caused. It is therefore considered that the heritage implications of the application proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable, and it is considered that the application proposals are in accordance with the requirements of the December 2024 Framework and Policies SP13 and HE1 of the Local Plan.
46. The heritage implications of the application proposals are considered to be appropriate and are considered to respect and preserve the architectural and historic interest of the host listed building, the character and appearance of the designated conservation area and the setting of the neighbouring designated heritage asset. Taking all of the above into account, it is therefore considered that there are no reasonable grounds, in terms of heritage impacts, to withhold the granting of planning permission and listed building consent in this case.

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