

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Melissa Tyler.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/01878/FP	Raise existing roof ridge height, installation of roof insulation and replace existing slate roof coverings with fibre cement slates and flush mounted Photovoltaic Panels. Replace existing large rear window with a double glazed, timber framed window.	The Old School House 4 Market Hill Royston Hertfordshire SG8 9JL

Submitted Plan Nos

19-010-A-001 19-010-A-005 19-010-A-006 B

1.0 Policies

1.0 **Local and National Policy**

1.1 **National Planning Policy Framework 2026 (NPPF)**

- 4. Achieving sustainable development
- 14. Achieving well-designed places
- 5. Meeting the challenge of Climate Change
- 20. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

1.2 **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (NHLP)**

Strategic Policies

Policy SP1 – Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2 – Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution

Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability

Policy SP13 – Historic environment

Development Management Policies

Policy D1 – Sustainable Design

Policy D3 – Protecting living conditions

Policy ETC5 – Secondary Shopping Frontages

Policy HE1 – Designated heritage assets

Policy HE3 – Non-designated heritage assets

Policy HE4 – Archaeology

Policy SP4 – Town Centres

2.0 **Relevant Site History**

- 2.1 25/01343/FP – Raise the existing roof ridge height, replace the existing slate roof coverings with fibre-cement slates and install insulation. Refused.

The proposed increase in the ridge height to the high-level roof and the resulting external finishing detail to the gable end elevations of the building, the loss of original slate tiles and replacement with unsympathetic cement fibre tiles by reason of its design, would result in unsympathetic alterations to the existing building resulting in a detrimental impact upon on the character and appearance of the building and the Royston Conservation Area. No public benefits would outweigh the harm identified to the heritage asset. The proposed development would fail to comply with Policies D1, HE1 and HE3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and Section 12 and 16 of the NPPF 2024.

- 2.2 24/02696/FP – Raise the existing roof ridge height and replace the existing slate roof coverings with fibre-cement slates and flush-mounted photovoltaic panels following removal of the existing roof vent. Refused; subsequent appeal dismissed. The reason for refusal stated:

“The proposed increase in ridge height to the high-level roof and the resulting external finishing detail to the gable end elevations of the building, the loss of original slate tiles and replacement with unsympathetic cement fibre tiles and installation of photovoltaic panels, by reason of its design, would result in an unsympathetic alterations to the existing building resulting in a detrimental impact upon on the character and appearance of the building and the Royston

Conservation Area. No public benefits would outweigh the harm identified to the heritage asset. The proposed development would fail to comply with Policies D1 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and Section's 12 and 16 of the NPPF 2024".

Appeal dismissed. The Inspector found that the proposed increase in ridge height had not been shown to preserve the distinctive stepped red-brick detailing and lozenge features to the gables and would result in less than substantial harm, of a medium degree, to the character and appearance of the Building of Local Interest and the Royston Conservation Area. The Inspector did not object in principle to the flush-mounted photovoltaic panels, improved roof insulation or the use of fibre-cement slates, subject to appropriate control of materials.

- 2.3 00/01684/1 - Change of use from retail to cafe and meeting room with ancillary facilities. Conditional Permission.

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.1 **Press, Site and Neighbour Consultation** – None received.

- 3.2 **Royston Town Council** – The committee **RESOLVED** to have **NO OBJECTION**

- 3.3 **HCC Archaeology** – Development likely to impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest. Conditions recommended re: interventions to the fabric of the building.

- 3.4 **NHC Conservation Officer** – I see that point of view and in light of the proposed mitigation works that the agent has outlined below (D&A July 2026).

6.09 To overcome this perception, it is proposed that the existing red feature brickwork be carefully removed and set aside with new yellow facing brickwork, selected to match the existing, being used to achieve the required increase in gable height. The red facing brickwork which was previously set aside would then be used to reinstate the existing detail to the perimeter of the gables

I withdraw my objection to the raising on of the roof on the proviso these conditions are imposed to reflect the above reinstatement work.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The building occupies a prominent position south of the Old Court House and is situated between the parallel streets known as Market Hill and Fish Hill in the Royston Conservation Area. A distinctive part of the building is its steeply pitched roof, with gable ends fronting both streets. The elevation fronting Fish Hill is predominantly single storey. Because of the roof's height and pitch, longer views of the building and its roof slopes are available from Market Hill to the west, north and south and from Fish Hill to the east and south. Both elevations include original yellow brickwork with attractive red-brick detailing at the eaves and elsewhere.
- 4.1.2 History shows the building was formerly an old schoolhouse and is within the Royston Conservation Area and is designated as a Building of Local Interest (BLI) on the Register for Royston dated 27th March 2007. The BLI entry states: '*Former Royston National School, Fish Hill*

The National School was built in 1886 for the children of Church of England families of Royston. It is a flint building with gault brick dressings and chimneys. Its location between Fish Hill and Market Hill results in it fronting and contributing to both streets. The school provides a strong building line to both streets and has an enclosed courtyard facing onto Market Hill. The angled chimneys in gault brickwork at regular positions along the eaves make a particular architectural contribution. The use of flint is a characteristic within the town and is emphasised on the building's Market Hill elevation.' The reason for inclusion on the BLI Register stating: *'Building of local interest to the social and educational history of the town constructed in local materials strongly characteristic of the town.'*

- 4.1.3 The application site is within the settlement boundary for Royston where development is generally acceptable subject to planning policy.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Planning permission is sought to raise the existing roof ridge height by approximately 21cm, install roof insulation, replace the existing slate roof covering with fibre-cement slates, install flush-mounted photovoltaic panels, and replace the existing large rear window facing Fish Hill with a double-glazed timber-framed window.

- 4.2.2 The application is accompanied by a Design and Heritage Statement.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The principal issue is whether the revised proposal has overcome the design and heritage concerns that led to the refusal of the previous applications and the dismissal of the appeal. Particular regard must be given to the Inspector's finding that the earlier scheme had not demonstrated how the roof could be raised without altering or losing the stepped red-brick detailing and lozenge motifs to the gables, resulting in less than substantial harm of a medium degree to the Building of Local Interest and the Royston Conservation Area. The assessment must also consider the weight to be given to the elements that the Inspector found acceptable in principle and whether the proposal is otherwise acceptable in relation to amenity, highways, archaeology, biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

- The previous refusals and appeal decision, including the Inspector's assessment of harm and the weight to be afforded to those findings.
- Whether the applicant's revised method of recording, dismantling, storing and reinstating the decorative gable brickwork satisfactorily preserves the stepped detailing and lozenge motifs.
- The visual effect of the modest ridge increase, replacement roof covering, flush-mounted photovoltaic panels and replacement timber window on the Building of Local Interest and the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.
- The effects on neighbouring living conditions, highway safety and parking, archaeology, biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

Previous history and Appeal decision

4.3.2 The appeal decision relating to application 24/02696/FP (APP/X1925/W/25/3366316) is a significant material consideration. The Inspector's objection was not to the principle of improving the roof or increasing its height in isolation, but to the absence of convincing details showing how the works would preserve the distinctive stepped red-brick detailing and lozenge motifs at the gable ends. On the information then available, the Inspector concluded that those features were likely to be altered or lost, causing less than substantial harm of a medium degree to the significance of the Building of Local Interest and to the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.

- ☐ The building occupies a prominent position and has a distinctive steep roof and gabled elevations.
- ☐ It is identified as a **Building of Local Interest**, with important decorative features including stepped red-brick detailing and lozenge-shaped features on the gables.
- ☐ Raising both roof slopes would be difficult to achieve without damaging or altering these features.
- ☐ The Inspector assessed the impact as **less than substantial heritage harm of a medium degree**.
- ☐ Preserving the exposed internal roof trusses and timber boarding did not outweigh the harm to the externally visible historic detailing.
- ☐ The proposal therefore failed to preserve or enhance the conservation area and conflicted with the relevant heritage legislation, national policy and Local Plan Policies HE1 and HE3.

4.3.3 The Inspector did not identify an objection in principle to the flush-mounted photovoltaic panels, the improvement of the roof insulation, the objective of retaining the internal timber boarding and roof trusses, or the use of fibre-cement slates subject to suitable control of their appearance. The Inspector found that the panels would be reasonably unobtrusive and would deliver renewable-energy benefits, while the roofing materials could be secured by condition. Those findings narrow the outstanding issue to the treatment of the gable detailing and carry substantial weight in the assessment of the current application.

- ☐ **Flush-mounted photovoltaic panels:** Their dark colour and integrated design would make them reasonably unobtrusive against the roof.
- ☐ **Renewable-energy benefits:** The panels would contribute positively to energy savings.
- ☐ **Roof insulation:** Improving the building's thermal performance was supported in principle.
- ☐ **Fibre-cement slates:** These were not identified as a reason for refusal. The Inspector indicated that roofing materials could have been approved through a planning condition.
- ☐ **Retention of internal historic fabric:** The objective of keeping the timber boarding and roof trusses visible was understood, although it did not justify raising the roof.
- ☐ **Limited conservation-area impact from the panels:** Intervening buildings would reduce views of the panels from Market Hill, and their appearance would not alone justify refusal.

4.3.4 The present application materially differs from the refused schemes because it is supported by a defined construction methodology addressing the Inspector's decisive concern. The stepped red-brick detailing and lozenge motifs would be measured and photographically recorded, carefully dismantled, labelled and securely stored before being reinstated to the same pattern and prominence at the raised gable level. This avoids the visually awkward infill treatment previously proposed and provides a credible means of retaining the features that contribute strongly to the building's local significance. Subject to conditions controlling the method of work, replacement bricks, mortar and reinstatement, the applicant has demonstrated that the

ridge can be raised without the loss of the distinctive gable decoration. The double-glazed timber-framed replacement window to the Fish Hill elevation is also acceptable in principle, subject to approval of its detailed design and finish.

Design, Appearance and Impact on the Conservation Area

- 4.3.5 Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Although the Old School House is not statutorily listed, it is a Building of Local Interest and therefore a non-designated heritage asset whose significance must be taken into account. Policies D1, HE1 and HE3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and the relevant design and historic-environment provisions of the NPPF are applicable.
- 4.3.6 The building makes a positive contribution to the Royston Conservation Area through its prominent position between Market Hill and Fish Hill, its steeply pitched roof and gabled form, its use of flint and gault brick, and the distinctive stepped red-brick detailing and lozenge motifs at the gable ends. These elements express the building's historic school use, local materials and architectural character. The effect of the works on the roof form and decorative gables is therefore central to the assessment.
- 4.3.7 The proposed ridge increase of approximately 21cm is modest when viewed against the scale and steep pitch of the existing roof. It would facilitate insulation while allowing the exposed internal roof trusses and timber boarding to remain visible. The external change would be perceptible in some views, but it would not materially alter the building's overall proportions or established roof form. More importantly, the revised construction method would retain and reinstate the decorative gable brickwork rather than introduce the incongruous infill beneath it that informed the earlier concern. Detailed recording, dismantling, storage and reinstatement can be secured by condition, together with approval of matching bricks and mortar.
- 4.3.8 The flush-mounted photovoltaic panels would be dark in colour, closely integrated with the roof plane and reasonably unobtrusive in longer and filtered views. This is consistent with the Inspector's conclusion that the panels would not, by themselves, justify refusal. Their contribution to renewable-energy generation, together with the improved roof insulation, is a positive planning benefit and supports the building's continued efficient use.
- 4.3.9 The proposed fibre-cement slates were not identified by the Inspector as a freestanding reason for dismissing the appeal, and their colour, profile, coursing, ridge and eaves treatment and associated flashings can be controlled by condition to achieve a compatible appearance. The replacement window would retain a timber frame and an appropriately traditional form; detailed drawings of its sections, glazing bars, reveal, cill and finish can likewise be required before installation.
- 4.3.10 In the round, the proposal now provides sufficient assurance that the roof can be upgraded and modestly raised while preserving the building's defining external features. The applicant's methodology directly addresses the evidential and design deficiency identified by the Inspector, and the remaining details can be satisfactorily controlled by condition. The development would therefore preserve the significance and appearance of the Building of

Local Interest and the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area. It accords with Policies D1, HE1 and HE3 of the Local Plan, the statutory duty under Section 72 of the 1990 Act and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties:

4.3.11 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.

4.3.12 No objections have been received from neighbouring properties, and I am satisfied that any impact to existing residential amenity would not be increased as a result of the development and so complies with Policy D3 of the Local Plan and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Highways and Parking:

4.3.13 The development does not have any impact on highway safety or parking.

Archaeology

4.3.14 When considering the impact of proposed development on heritage assets of archaeological interest, the NPPF notes that great weight should be given to conservation. In this regard, Policy HE4 of the Local Plan is consistent with the NPPF.

4.3.15 The works would involve interventions to the historic fabric and could affect heritage assets of archaeological interest. HCC Archaeology has recommended conditions to secure appropriate investigation, recording and reporting. Subject to those conditions, the archaeological effects would be appropriately mitigated and the proposal would comply with Policy HE4 of the Local Plan and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain

4.3.16 The proposed development is considered 'de minimis' because it would affect less than 25 square metres of on-site habitat and less than 5 metres of linear habitat. The application is therefore exempt from the biodiversity net gain requirement under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Environmental Implications:

4.3.17 Section 14 of the NPPF explains how the planning system should support the transition to a low-carbon future. These principles are reflected in Policy D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, which requires development to take reasonable opportunities to reduce energy consumption and respond to changes in technology and lifestyle.

4.3.18 The roof insulation and flush-mounted photovoltaic panels would improve the building's energy performance and provide clear environmental benefits. As the revised construction method and appropriately controlled materials would preserve the building's heritage significance, those sustainability measures no longer conflict with the design and heritage policies of the development plan.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 The previous refusals and dismissed appeal are important material considerations. The Inspector identified a specific deficiency in the earlier proposal: it had not been demonstrated that the ridge could be raised without altering or losing the stepped red-brick detailing and lozenge motifs at the gable ends. The current application overcomes that concern through a clear methodology for measuring, recording, carefully dismantling, storing and reinstating those features to their existing pattern and prominence at the raised gable level. The proposal also retains those elements previously found acceptable in principle, including improved roof insulation, flush-mounted photovoltaic panels and replacement roofing materials capable of being controlled by condition. Subject to conditions governing the gable works, external materials, photovoltaic panels, replacement timber window and archaeological recording, the development would preserve the significance of the Building of Local Interest and the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area. It would not result in unacceptable effects on neighbouring amenity, highway safety, archaeology or biodiversity and would deliver energy-efficiency and renewable-energy benefits. The proposal therefore accords with Policies SP1, SP9, SP13, D1, D3, HE1, HE3 and HE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 and the relevant provisions of the NPPF. Planning permission should be granted subject to the stated conditions.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 The alternative option would be to refuse planning permission on design and heritage grounds. However, having regard to the revised method for dismantling and reinstating the decorative gable brickwork, the Inspector's findings on the other elements of the scheme, the absence of objection from the Conservation Officer and the ability to secure detailed safeguards by condition, refusal would not be justified.

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

- 4.6.1 Pre-commencement conditions are necessary to secure the recording, careful dismantling, storage and reinstatement of the decorative gable brickwork and to secure the archaeological investigation and recording recommended by HCC Archaeology. These requirements go to the heart of the development and must be agreed before the relevant works begin.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to appropriate conditions including the approved plans, detailed recording and reinstatement of the decorative gable brickwork, approval of roof and mortar materials, details of the photovoltaic panels and replacement timber window, and archaeological investigation, recording and reporting.

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 commencement of any works to the gables, a photographic record of the existing decorative red brickwork shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The photographic record shall be sufficiently detailed to identify the location, pattern, profile and detailing of the brickwork and shall thereafter be retained on site for reference during the works.

Reason: To ensure that the existing decorative brickwork is accurately recorded and reinstated following the approved works, thereby preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area, in accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policies SP13 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

4. Prior to the commencement of works to raise the gables, samples of the proposed yellow and red facing brickwork shall be made available on site for inspection and approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved brick shall thereafter be used in the construction of the increased gable height.

Reason: To ensure that the materials used are appropriate to the existing building and preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, in accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policies SP13 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

5. The existing red decorative brickwork to the gables shall be carefully dismantled and retained during the works and shall be reinstated in its original position and pattern following completion of the approved raising of the gables. No replacement of the existing decorative brickwork shall take place unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To preserve the architectural detailing and character of the building and the character and appearance of the conservation area, in accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policies SP13 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

6. Prior to the commencement of the works hereby permitted, full details and/or samples of all external materials to be used in the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external materials are appropriate to the existing building and preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, in accordance

with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policies SP13 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

7. A. No development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of archaeological significance and research questions; and:
 1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
 2. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording as suggested by the archaeological evaluation
 3. The programme for post investigation assessment
 4. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording
 5. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation
 6. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation
 7. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.
8. B. The development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 8 (A)
9. C. Site investigation and post investigation assessment must be completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.

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.

Informative/s:

1. Environmental Health Informative:

During the construction phase the guidance in BS5228-1:2009 (Code of Practice for noise Control on construction and open sites) should be adhered to.

2. Environmental Health Informative:

During the construction works phase no activities should take place outside the following hours: Monday to Friday 08:00-18:00hrs; Saturdays 08:00-13:00hrs and Sundays and Bank Holidays: no work at any time.

3. External materials informative:

Further to condition X (external materials), with regards to submitting details to the Council when an application to discharge the condition is made, in the first instance please provide a website link / photographs / brochure details of the proposed material choice. If it is necessary to submit an actual sample, this Council will only accept a single brick or tile or sample panel without prior agreement. If you need to submit a sample larger than this, please contact the named case officer for your discharge of condition application to determine if the materials are to be viewed on site or if it / they can be delivered to the NHDC Council Offices. In the event that a larger sample is delivered to the Council Offices please ensure that you arrange collection / removal of the sample once the discharge of condition application is agreed.

4. Bats and roof work Informative:

The applicant is advised that all species of bat and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). As roof works have the potential to affect bats and their roosts, the applicant should remain vigilant throughout the works. Should bats, or evidence of bats, be discovered at any stage, all work in the affected area must cease immediately and advice should be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist before works recommence. The granting of planning permission does not remove the applicant's legal responsibilities under the relevant wildlife protection legislation.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 5 October 2026	