

February 2025

Heritage Statement

Royston Digital Signage



<i>Project number: 24.120</i>		
<i>Version</i>	<i>Prepared by</i>	<i>Checked and issued</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>Emma Healey IHBC, AssocRTPI</i>	<i>Jenni Mason, IHBC, February 2025</i>

COPYRIGHT

The contents of this document must not be copied or reproduced in whole or in part without the written consent of JB Heritage Consulting Limited.

JB Heritage Consulting Limited. Registered in England and Wales. Registered number: 13063265. Registered office: BCS, Windsor House, Station Court, Great Shelford, Cambridge, CB22 5NE.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Site Context
- 3..0 Legislation, Policies and Guidance
- 4.0 Brief History & Statement of Significance
- 5.0 Heritage Impact Assessment & Conclusions

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of the Applicant to accompany the submission of Advertisement Consent for two digital signs in Royston. One will be located within Angel Pavement and another to the side of No. 32 High Street.
- 1.2. Both Sites are located within Royston Conservation Area; No. 32 High Street is also a Grade II listed building.
- 1.3. The purpose of this Heritage Statement is to describe the heritage significance of those assets potentially affected by the proposed development and assess the potential heritage impact. It has been informed by desk-top research and a site visit undertaken on 28th January 2025.
- 1.4. The scope of this report deals only with the above-ground heritage constraints.

2.0 Site Context

- 2.1. Heritage assets are defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) as:

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decision, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.2. Both the proposed locations for the digital signs are within Royston Conservation Area. There is one listed building in close proximity to one of the proposed locations for the digital signs, No. 32 High Street (NHLE 1174499). These are the only assets scoped into the assessment given the nature of the proposals.

Non-designated heritage assets

- 2.3. North Herts Council holds a list of Buildings of Local Interest, but none of these will be impacted by the proposals. In addition, none are identified within the Royston Conservation Area Townscape Analysis Document.
- 2.4. An online search of the Hertfordshire and St Albans Historic Environment Record via Heritage Gateway did not identify any additional assets that would have the potential to be impacted by the development proposals.



Fig. 1. Heritage asset plan. Listed Buildings marked in blue, the Sites are labelled in white. The entire map base is located within Royston Conservation Area. ©Google 2025 ©Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky Maxar Technologies, The GeoInformation Group.

3.0 Legislation, Policies and Guidance

3.1. This section sets out a summary of the core heritage decision-making framework. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

Legislation

- 3.2. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 establishes powers to designate listed buildings and conservation areas together with a statutory duty to consider the impacts of proposed development in the determination of planning applications.
- 3.3. Section 1 makes provision for the Secretary of State to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Section 5 defines a 'listed building' to include any object or structure fixed to the building, and any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948.
- 3.4. Section 69 of the Act establishes powers for local planning authorities to designate areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance as conservation areas.
- 3.5. Section 72 establishes a general duty in the exercise of planning functions with respect to any buildings or other land within a conservation area to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Local Plan

3.6. The Development Plan for the Site is the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031. The North Herts Local Plan seeks to address the key issues facing North Hertfordshire and will set a strategic vision and spatial strategy for the District over the period 2011 to 2031.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan

- 3.7. Local Plan Policy HE1 Designated Heritage Assets is relevant to the development and is set out below:
- Planning applications relating to Designated heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement that:*
- 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 (as applicable):*
- 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 Council shall refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.

National Planning Policy

- 3.8. National planning policy is established in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024).
- 3.9. Paragraph 125(c) states: "Planning policies and decisions should:... give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land."
- 3.10. Chapter 16 (paragraphs 202-221) sets out policy guidance for development affecting the historic environment.

- 3.11. Paragraph 202 recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner that is appropriate to their significance such that they can be enjoyed by existing and future generations.
- 3.12. Paragraph 207 requires applicants to describe the heritage significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposed development, including the contribution made by their setting. This should be proportionate to the assets' importance, and no more than is required to understand the potential nature of the impact on that significance. Paragraph 196 requires local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets potentially affected to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposed development.
- 3.13. Paragraph 210 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities 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; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 3.14. Paragraphs 212 onwards provide guidance for considering the potential impacts. Paragraph 206 states that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This should be proportionate to its significance, the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of whether the harm is substantial, total loss, or less than substantial.
- 3.15. Paragraph 213 goes on to state that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, including through development within its setting, should require clear and convincing justification.
- 3.16. Paragraphs 213 and 214 deal with instances of substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. Development causing substantial harm should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or other criteria are met. Paragraph 215 guides that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 3.17. Paragraph 216 deals with non-designated heritage assets. It guides that the effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken in to account. A balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 3.18. Paragraph 219 encourages local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Those proposals that preserve elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably.
- Guidance and Best Practice**
- 3.19. Interpretation of the NPPF is provided by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This is a digital guidance note divided into a series of chapters which is subject to regular review; the historic environment chapter was last updated in July 2019.
- 3.20. The historic environment chapter guides that understanding the significance of a heritage asset and its setting from an early stage in the design process can help to inform the development of proposals which avoid or minimise harm (paragraph 8). Paragraph 13 provides further guidance on setting, making clear that setting is not only related to visual attributes but other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration as well as the relationship between places.
- 3.21. Paragraph 15 recognises that sustaining heritage assets in private hands often requires an incentive for their active conservation. It goes on to note that putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to investment in their maintenance and thereby support their long-term conservation. It goes on to state that harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused, and provided the harm is minimised.

- 3.22. Paragraph 18 provides guidance on assessing harm. It is clear that proposed development may have no impact or may enhance an asset's significance such that no harm is caused. Where development would be harmful to a designated heritage asset, this needs to be categorised as either 'less than substantial' or 'substantial' harm. The level of harm can vary within these two categories. It goes to elaborate that substantial harm is a 'high test' and therefore is unlikely to arise in many cases. This harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.
- 3.23. Historic England has produced a series of best practice guidance notes to assist in the identification of assets, assessing significance and managing change. Those of particular relevance include:
- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008)
 - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (2015)
 - The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) (2017)
 - Statements of Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets Historic England Advice Note 12 (2019)

4.0 Brief History and Statement of Significance

Brief history and map regression

- 4.1. Royston is located on the crossroads of two principal Roman roads: Ermine Street and the Icknield Way. Occupation of the area however precedes even the Roman period, with pre-historic activity evocatively signalled by the barrows across the chalkland landscape at Therfield Heath.
- 4.2. The town is thought to take its name from 'Roysia', the Countess of Norfolk, who erected a cross where the two roads meet, first referenced in the late 12th century. This became the market place, at first occupied by temporary stalls before becoming a permanent space that was later infilled, forming Upper and Lower King Street.
- 4.3. The layout and grain of the built form that characterises the townscape was established in the medieval period, heavily influenced by the Priory which stood in the location of the Memorial Gardens. Over the late medieval and early post medieval period, the town grew rapidly to become one of the largest market towns regionally and one of the largest corn markets nationally, surrounded by a rich agricultural landscape.
- 4.4. The town continued to thrive into the 17th and 18th centuries, prospering from its location on the North Road linking London and Cambridge, and to the north beyond. The town became an important staging post for travellers, and by the 18th and 19th centuries the town is recorded as having over 50 inns. This wealth paid for the ongoing development of the town, with many

of the earlier buildings replaced or re-fronted to match the more 'polite' architectural fashions popular in the Georgian period.

- 4.5. The Ordnance Survey map published in 1899 depicts the built up town centre, lining the main streets of the High Street, Market Place, Baldock Street and Melbourn Street. There are smaller, less built up roads leading off these main through roads. 30 and 32 High Street are depicted on the map in much the same form as they are present in the town today. The publication of this map is prior to Angel Pavement being built, in its place are two Public Houses, one on the High Street and the other on the Market Street side, each with a rear courtyard.

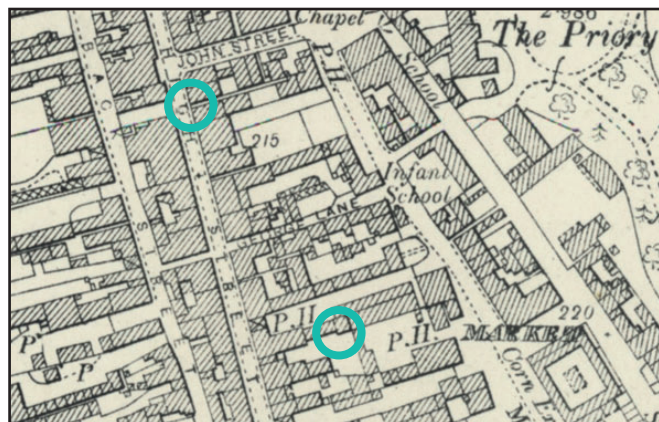


Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey Map, surveyed 1896 and published 1899, accessed via National Library of Scotland. Approximate location of signs marked with a blue circle.

- 4.6. Angel Pavement was first constructed in 1965, following the demolition of both public houses. The shopping development linked

the High Street with the Market Place to the east. It was named after the Angel Inn which stood on the Site previously. Angel Pavement is visible built out on the OS map published 1977-1982 as a through way lined with shops. The map depicts further changes to the area through the gradual infill, demolition and redevelopment of the buildings within the town.

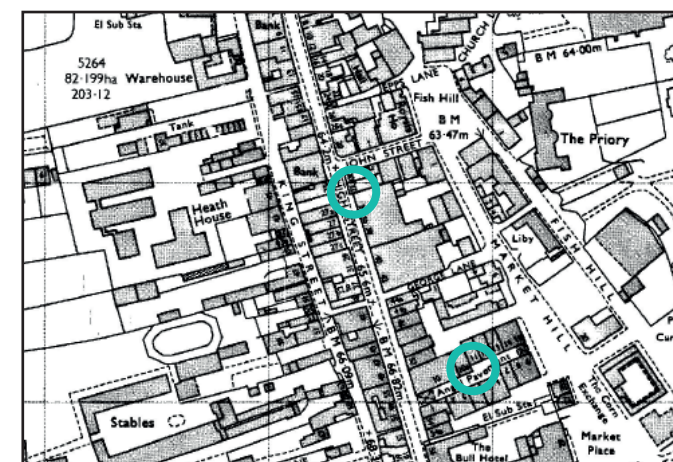


Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey Map, published 1977-1982, accessed via Promap. Approximate location of signs marked with a blue circle.

Statement of significance

Introduction

- 4.7. Determining significance is a professional judgement taking into account the designation status, desk-top research and fieldwork. The assessment should seek to understand the nature, extent and level of

	significance, and should be proportionate to the relative importance of the asset (Historic England, 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2' [2015] p. 2.)		<i>Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.</i>		<i>and the formation of a central cross to the layout.</i>
4.8.	Annex 2 of the NPPF defines significance as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest'. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. An understanding of significance must therefore derive from the heritage interest/s of the heritage asset.				• <i>The location of the monastery and its grounds and its major contribution to the history, development and layout of the town together with the current position and contribution of the Church of St John the Baptist and its churchyard.</i>
4.9.	The 'Historic environment' chapter of the PPG provides a definition for these interests as follows (Paragraph: 006): • <i>archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.</i> • <i>architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.</i> • <i>historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic).</i>	4.10.	Significance derives not only from the heritage interests of the asset itself, but also from the contribution made by its setting. The setting of a heritage asset is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: <i>The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.</i>		• <i>The size, shape and open character of the historic market places and their relationship to each other.</i> • <i>The width, shape and alignment of streets and the strong building lines and their relationship with the narrow alleys between the main commercial streets.</i> • <i>The elongated form of the plots with narrowest end onto the street.</i> • <i>The transition in Kneesworth Street from narrow fronted shops with continuous façades in south to rectangular detached or semi-detached houses set in individual plots in the north.</i> • <i>The large classical houses in Melbourn Street.</i> • <i>Buildings lying parallel to and abutting the roads or back pavement edges creating a strong building line, with occasional narrow breaks between buildings to rear yards or gardens.</i> • <i>Island buildings forming additional historic streets are important to the historic development of the town.</i> • <i>The historic and architectural contribution of the Old Palace and its associated</i>
			Royston Conservation Area		
		4.11.	The Royston Conservation Area Townscape Analysis document (RCATA) of March 2007 sets out an analysis of the townscape character of the conservation area.		
		4.12.	It summarises the characteristics and features important to the special interest of the conservation area at Section 4.0 as follows: • <i>The medieval layout of the town resulting from the relationship with the ancient trackways and historic roads (including Icknield Way and Ermine Street), the Priory</i>		

buildings and land within the centre of the town.

- *The classical character of most frontage buildings either constructed or re-fronted in the 18th and 19th centuries. The symmetry and detail of these buildings and the vertical emphasis of sliding sash windows.*
- *The earlier buildings of various character interspersed amongst the buildings of classical character adding historic and architectural interest and variety.*
- *Rear ranges and outbuildings, gabled and lower in form and aligned to follow the narrow shape of the plots and the characteristic carriageways between or through buildings reflecting the original use of the buildings.*
- *The mix of original building types, inns, maltings, houses, shops and public buildings still reflected today together with the utilitarian character of rear outbuildings, coach houses and maltings, which are simple gabled forms with limited window openings constructed either of brick or timber-framed and rendered or weather-boarded.*
- *The surviving brown cobbles and other historic surface treatments under carriageways, within alleyways, fronting buildings and edging pavements.*
- *The open green character of The Warren and the grouping of houses around it and the open character and contribution of the Memorial Gardens to the layout*

of the town, its historic relationship with the priory and views into and out of the conservation area.

- *The lack of trees and green features within the streets and the contribution made by garden trees over rooftops and glimpsed through carriageways.*
- *The views from the higher areas of the town namely down London Road, High Street, Market hill and Fish Hill. The roofscape of the town with a variety of chimneys and strong gabled roof forms provides important views of the town from the higher areas.*
- *Brick, flint and clunch boundary walls enclosing yards and gardens, and dividing and defining plot boundaries and lining alleys and roads.*
- *Boundary walls linking or fronting buildings within the street scene and following the building line and the strong use of flint and clunch to boundary walls and building construction.*
- *The heights of buildings, which are largely two storeys with some three storey buildings. In addition the slight variances in roof heights between buildings of different styles and construction.*
- *The large mix of walling materials especially red or gault bricks and renders of neutral colours of whites or ochres.*
- *The predominant use of plain clay tiles and occasional use of Welsh Slate to some 19th century buildings, notably those at the*

north end of Kneesworth Street and the strong characteristic of plain eaves to most buildings.

- *Historic shop fronts in buildings close to The Cross and particularly along the High Street and the concentration of public buildings in Fish Hill and Market Hill and also in Kneesworth Street and Melbourn Street.*
- *Surviving historic street features such as railings, handrails and foot scrapers.*
- *The use of timber joinery to windows, doors, cornices, door surrounds and canopies.*

4.13. This summary makes clear that the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area is rooted in the surviving medieval layout and spatial arrangement of the principal streets and key historic spaces within the town, and its relationship to more ancient trackways and route ways beyond.

4.14. The built form is generally of two-three storeys and characteristically encloses the streetscene with a strong building line. Glimpses are afforded to secondary, ancillary spaces and buildings occupying rear service yards behind which form part of the historic grain of development and character, as well as being illustrative of the mixed historic uses within the town. The building stock contributes to the historic character in providing evidence for these different uses through different building typologies, as well as being an integral component of the architectural interest. The 18th and 19th century classically-inspired frontages are highlighted as a particular characteristic, together with key buildings such



Fig.4 The proposed location of the Digital Sign in Angel Pavement, taken January 2025.



Fig.5 The proposed location of the Digital Sign on the High Street, taken January 2025.



Fig.6 30-32 High Street, looking south, taken January 2025.

as the Old Palace and Church of St John the Baptist.

- 4.15. In the appraisal, Angel Pavement is noted as a negative feature within the conservation area as a result of its bulk, form, design and materials which do not respect the scale and character of the historic buildings. The location of the proposed sign within Angel Pavement does not contribute in and of itself to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It simply forms part of a negative area within the conservation area.

- 4.16. In relation to the High Street, the appraisal notes: *"The High Street is a relatively narrow but straight street reflecting its origins as the direct route through the town to and from London. It slopes down towards The Cross with clear views along its length from London Road to the hills to the north of the town. Most*

of the buildings are listed and provide a strong building line on the back pavement edge with continuous facades. Generally, there are no accesses through buildings to rear courtyards from the High Street. The High Street is relatively narrow with narrow pavements to either side of the road. The road and pavement are surfaced in materials of similar colour unifying the street. The pavements are of York stone and the roads brown/grey bricks. There are no verges or street trees."

- 4.17. As with the other proposed sign location, the High Street site does not make an individual contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It simply forms part of the strong building line and well enclosed High Street which is identified as an important route within the conservation area.

No. 30 and 32 High Street - Grade II listed building

- 4.18. This designated asset is a three storey early 19th century building, constructed in brick with a stucco render. The ground floor is formed of 19th century shop fronts with pilasters simplified entablatures, consoles. There are typical 19th century sash windows with glazing bars to the upper floors and cast iron balconettes with anthemion pattern.
- 4.19. Its position on the corner of the High Street and John Street lends it some local prominence in the streetscene and it turns the corner attractively with a curved corner with curved sash windows set into it at the upper floors. The shopfront too is positioned on the corner and curves around to front both streets. This is echoed in the shopfront on the other side of this junction. There is group value in the asset as part of the cluster of traditional properties

along the High Street and John Street which create an important historic streetscape within the town.

- 4.20. There is moderate historic and architectural interest in the asset given its characteristic 19th century features and importance as a historic shop front within Royston.

Setting

- 4.21. The asset is located on the High Street in Royston and forms part of the historic street scene as a 19th century shop with accommodation above. The building is surrounded by other such buildings which helps to create a commercial setting to the asset, reflective of its location on the main shopping street within the town. The surrounding buildings vary in date from historic to more recent 20th century additions, creating a varied streetscape. The asset is more widely surrounded by the built up development of the town.
- 4.22. The proposed sign position is adjacent to the small blank side elevation of the building as it steps out along the High Street. This elevation is of plain white painted brick and already features a poster directly attached to the building. This side of the building adjoins a later building to the south and which obscures much of this elevation. It is clearly a secondary elevation with no features of interest and does not form part of the prominent almost symmetrical frontages of the building which form its principal exterior interest.

5.0 Heritage Impact Assessment and Conclusions

Proposed development

- 5.1. As part of proposals, two digital signs will be installed within Royston town centre. One sign will be positioned within Angel Pavement and the other adjacent to 32 High Street.
- 5.2. The proposed signs will be slightly over 2.5m tall, framed in black with an interactive, digital sign at its centre which will advertise events in the town and provide information to visitors and help with wayfinding. A decorative Royston Crow or Hooded Crow will be placed on the top of the sign to provide a local reference to the bird historically found in the sheepfields around Royston, Hertfordshire.

Heritage Impact assessment

- 5.3. As set out in Section 4, the Sites are both located within Royston Conservation Area. The location within Angel Pavement forms part of a negative area within the conservation area and does not contribute to its special interest.
- 5.4. The proposed sign location in the High Street does not in itself contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area, but it is located within the High Street which is an important route within the conservation area. The location on the High Street is directly adjacent to the small flank elevation of No.32 High Street which is Grade II listed. This elevation is not considered to contribute strongly to its significance.
- 5.5. Both locations already currently contain a wall

mounted static sign. The proposed digital sign simply changes the form of advertisement, and will remove the fixed cases which will be replaced with freestanding structures. The proposals create an opportunity to showcase the town, highlighting events and history to help and educate visitors to the conservation area, increasing an appreciation of its special interest.

- 5.6. The design of the signs is slim and refined to work well within the proposed locations and respects their conservation area location. They are located in areas set back from the main paths to ensure unimpeded access is maintained. The chosen location on the High Street in particular helps to preserve the High Street's appearance as a through road with minimal visual clutter. There are no works to the listed building itself.

- 5.7. The signs are also entirely reversible and can be removed in the future should the needs of the town change or new signage technology develop. For these reasons there is not considered to be any harm caused to the special interest of the conservation area or the setting and thereby significance of 30-32 High Street, Royston.

Conclusions

- 5.8. This Heritage Statement has been produced to accompany the submission of advertisement consent for two digital signs in Royston town centre.
- 5.9. This assessment has outlined that care has been taken in relation to the design and location of the proposals to ensure

the character and appearance of Royston Conservation Area is preserved in addition to the setting of 30-32 High Street.

- 5.10. The scheme will help to provide better interpretation within the conservation area and is entirely reversible should plans and needs of the town change in the future. The proposals have been supported by a number of local businesses and groups including the Royston Historical Society.
- 5.11. The proposals are considered to be in accordance with the relevant policies of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, in addition to the policy tests set out in the 1990 Act and Chapter 16 of the NPPF.