

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Alex Howard.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/00853/AD	Installation of illuminated gym signage to front of property (development already carried out).	Mitre Works 1 Priory Lane Royston Hertfordshire SG8 9DW

Submitted Plan Nos

2132-10 2132-200

1.0 Policies

2.0 Representations

2.1 **Hertfordshire Highways** – No objection.

3.0 Planning Considerations

3.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 3.1.1 The site is a gym located on Priory Lane, Royston, on the north side of the one way system. The site is within the Conservation Area.

3.2 **Proposal**

- 3.2.1 Installation of illuminated gym signage to front of property (development already carried out).

3.3 **Key Issues**

- 3.3.1 The key material considerations are amenity and public safety.

Amenity

- 3.3.2 The site is within the Royston Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that in the exercise of planning powers, in conservation areas “*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*”. The site is also opposite and adjacent to three Building of Local Interests (BLIs) non-designated heritage assets, which are 41 Market Hill (BLI/026) and Old Court Police Station (BLI/027) opposite and Market Hill Rooms (BLI/025) adjacent, which significantly contribute individually and cumulatively to this gateway into the Royston Conservation Area. The site is also adjacent to the Prior Memorial Gardens, which is an important green space.
- 3.3.3 Policy SP13 of the Local Plan states that “*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*”. This reflects paragraph 205 of the NPPF which stipulates that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, such as conservation areas. Policy HE1 states that “*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*”.
- 3.3.3 The installation of the illuminated signage for this gym has already taken place without advertisement consent and this application seeks to retain the signage. The signage as installed is very contemporary and large, the lettering is tall and wide which dominates the top half of the building’s front elevation which has been finished in a horizontal timber cladding, with the bottom half of the building painted in dark grey. The application before the LPA only seeks consideration of the signage element at this site, but one would question the suitability of the horizontal cladding and dark grey painted finish in this traditional local context.

- 3.3.4 The signage, by virtue of its size, location, colour and contemporary form, is considered at odds with the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The impact is compounded by the existence of the three BLI's which are immediately adjacent and opposite to the site, which together contribute to the historical context and traditional setting as one enters this part of the Royston Conservation Area. The signage, if allowed to remain, would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as required by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In respect of Policy HE1 of the Local Plan, the signage has not incorporated a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The Council have in the past been robust in their challenges against what is considered poorly designed commercial signage in Conservation Areas and on listed buildings, favouring more traditional form and modest scale to ensure historic character is maintained, which cannot be said for the signage herein.
- 3.3.5 As such, it is considered that the illuminated gym signage to the front of this site which has already been carried out without advertisement consent, is unacceptable in its impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the significance of nearby non-designated heritage assets (BLI's), which together make a significant positive contribution to this part of the Conservation Areas as a gateway into Royston. This level of harm is deemed to be low to moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum and in accordance with Policy HE1 of the Local Plan, it is further considered that there are no public benefits associated with this development that outweigh the identified harm to the significance of the relevant designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Public Safety

- 3.3.6 It is considered that the proposed signage would have no impact upon public safety, following a response of no objection from the Hertfordshire Highway Authority.

3.4 Conclusion

- 3.4.1 Overall, the proposed signage is considered unacceptable for the following reason:

No.1 Priory Lane stands at the entrance to the Royston Conservation Area, west of The Priory Memorial Gardens (Important Green Space), east of The Market Hill Rooms (BLI 25) and opposite no.41 Market Hill (BLI 26) and Old Court Police Station (BLI 27). By reason of their size 11350mm x 1595mm, the 75mm built up lettering with LED Halo illumination and with the word 'Gyms' also being a vibrant blue colour, the signage has an overtly strident and assertive presence in the street scene adversely affecting the setting of nearby non-designated heritage assets and harming the appearance of the Royston Conservation Area. The signage fails to satisfy the provisions of Section 72(1) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 and will not accord with Section 16 of the Framework or Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031. The degree of harm is considered to be low - moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum. The building is considered to have an optimum viable use and there are no public benefits to outweigh the harm identified.

4.0 **Recommendation**

4.1 That Advertisement Consent be **REFUSED** for the following reason:

1. No.1 Priory Lane stands at the entrance to the Royston Conservation Area, west of The Priory Memorial Gardens (Important Green Space), east of The Market Hill Rooms (BLI 25) and opposite no.41 Market Hill (BLI 26) and Old Court Police Station (BLI 27). By reason of their size 11350mm x 1595mm, the 75mm built up lettering with LED Halo illumination and with the word 'Gyms' also being a vibrant blue colour, the signage has an overtly strident and assertive presence in the streetscene adversely affecting the setting of nearby non-designated heritage assets and harming the appearance of the Royston Conservation Area. The signage fails to satisfy the provisions of Section 72(1) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 and will not accord with Section 16 of the Framework or Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031. The degree of harm is considered to be low - moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum. The building is considered to have an optimum viable use and there are no public benefits to outweigh the harm identified.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been refused for this proposal for the clear reasons set out in this decision notice. The Council has not acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant as in the Council's view the proposal is unacceptable in principle and the fundamental objections cannot be overcome through dialogue. Since no solutions can be found the Council has complied with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 12 May 2025	

