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Heritage Statement – 46 Kneesworth Street, Royston

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the change of use of the existing office building to 8 self-contained residential flats, including a loft floor extension and dormer windows at 46 Kneesworth Street, Royston, Hertfordshire, SG8 5AQ.

The statement has been prepared to accompany the submitted Design and Access Statement and should be read alongside it. Together, these documents explain the design rationale, assess heritage significance and demonstrate how the proposal preserves the character and appearance of the Royston Conservation Area.

This assessment accords with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

2. Site and Heritage Context

2.1 The Application Site

46 Kneesworth Street is a traditional 2½-storey brick building positioned on the corner of Kneesworth Street and Green Drift. The building was originally constructed as a dwelling and later converted to office use. It retains a strong domestic scale and form, with a pitched roof, red brick elevations and traditional window proportions.

2.2 Heritage Designations

The site lies within the Royston Conservation Area and the building is identified as a Building of Local Interest, making it a non-designated heritage asset. As such, it is recognised as a positive contributor to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area.

The significance of the site is therefore derived from:

Its architectural interest as a well-proportioned historic building;

Its contribution to the streetscape of Kneesworth Street;

Its role in illustrating the historic residential development of Royston.



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3. Significance of the Heritage Assets

3.1 Royston Conservation Area

The Royston Conservation Area is characterised by a high concentration of historic buildings of varying scale and period, unified by the use of traditional materials, consistent building lines and strong street enclosure. Kneesworth Street in particular contains many buildings of architectural and historic interest, with red brick construction, pitched roofs, classical detailing and vertically proportioned fenestration.

The conservation area appraisal identifies Kneesworth Street as a street of strong historic character, where buildings such as No. 46 make a positive contribution through their scale, materials and architectural detailing.

3.2 Building of Local Interest

As a Building of Local Interest, No. 46 Kneesworth Street is valued for its:

Symmetrical proportions;

Traditional red brick construction, likely laid in Flemish or English bond;

Historic roof form and detailing;

Contribution to the rhythm and grain of the street.

While not statutorily listed, the building holds clear local heritage value and warrants careful and sympathetic treatment.

4. Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

4.1 Statutory Duties

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The proposal has been assessed against Section 16 of the NPPF, which seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment. In particular:

Paragraph 210 encourages sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets;



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Paragraph 212 requires great weight to be given to conservation;

Paragraphs 213–214 require any harm to be clearly justified and weighed against public benefits;

Paragraph 219 supports development within conservation areas that preserves or enhances significance.

4.3 Local Planning Policy

The proposal has regard to the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, particularly policies relating to design quality, heritage protection and sustainable development.

5. Description of the Proposed Development

The proposal seeks to:

Convert the existing building from office use to 8 residential flats;

Introduce a modest roof extension to improve internal layouts;

Add side and rear dormer windows and limited front rooflights;

Retain and repair the existing building fabric wherever possible.

The development has been informed directly by pre-application advice from North Hertfordshire District Council and the Council's Conservation Officer.

6. Impact on Heritage Significance

6.1 Principle of Development

The principle of residential conversion has already been established under planning permission ref. 22/02587/HYA. The proposal represents the sustainable reuse of a previously developed site and secures the optimum viable use of the building, in accordance with paragraph 214 of the NPPF.

As set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement (Sections 3 and 4), the scheme reduces the number of units previously proposed and improves internal layouts, thereby minimising intervention into the historic fabric.



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6.2 Impact on the Royston Conservation Area

The proposal has been assessed having special regard to the statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The development preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area by:

Retaining the established scale, massing and building line along Kneesworth Street;

Respecting the prevailing architectural language of red brick elevations, pitched roofs and traditional proportions;

Ensuring that new roof elements are read as subordinate additions.

As described in the Design and Access Statement (Section 5), dormer windows and roof alterations are a recognised feature within the wider streetscape. Their inclusion in this instance is therefore considered appropriate in principle.

6.3 Impact on the Building of Local Interest

The building is identified as a non-designated heritage asset and a positive contributor to the conservation area. The most sensitive elements of the proposal relate to the roof alterations.

In direct response to Conservation Officer advice, the scheme has been designed to minimise harm through:

Setting dormers down from the ridge line to maintain roof hierarchy;

Limiting their depth and visual prominence;

Using traditional materials and detailing;

Specifying conservation-style rooflights of the smallest practicable size on the front elevation.

As set out in the Design and Access Statement (Sections 5.2 and 5.3), existing windows and doors are to be retained or replaced on a like-for-like basis in timber, with any double glazing replicating historic profiles.

Taken as a whole, the proposal results in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Building of Local Interest and the Royston Conservation Area.



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7. Public Benefits and Heritage Balance

In accordance with the NPPF, the limited and carefully controlled harm is outweighed by the following public benefits:

Securing the long-term viable use of a heritage asset;

Preventing vacancy and potential deterioration;

Delivering new homes in a highly sustainable location;

Enhancing the appearance and condition of the building through repair and investment.

These benefits carry significant weight in the planning balance.

8. Conclusion

This Heritage Statement demonstrates that the proposed development at 46 Kneesworth Street has been informed by a clear understanding of the site's heritage significance and its contribution to the Royston Conservation Area.

The proposal:

Preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area in accordance with Section 72 of the 1990 Act;

Results in no more than less than substantial harm, as defined by the NPPF;

Secures the long-term viable use of a Building of Local Interest;

Delivers public benefits which clearly outweigh the limited and carefully controlled heritage impact.

When read alongside the accompanying Design and Access Statement, the proposal is considered to comply with national and local heritage policy and is therefore acceptable in heritage and conservation terms.