

Avonbridge House
Chippenham

Alliance Pharmaceuticals Ltd

Heritage Statement

Assessment of Heritage Significance

and the Implications of Development Proposals

LBC10-11 (Substation and EV chargers) : 14th August 2023

DESIGNSCAPE
ARCHITECTS

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1 Preamble

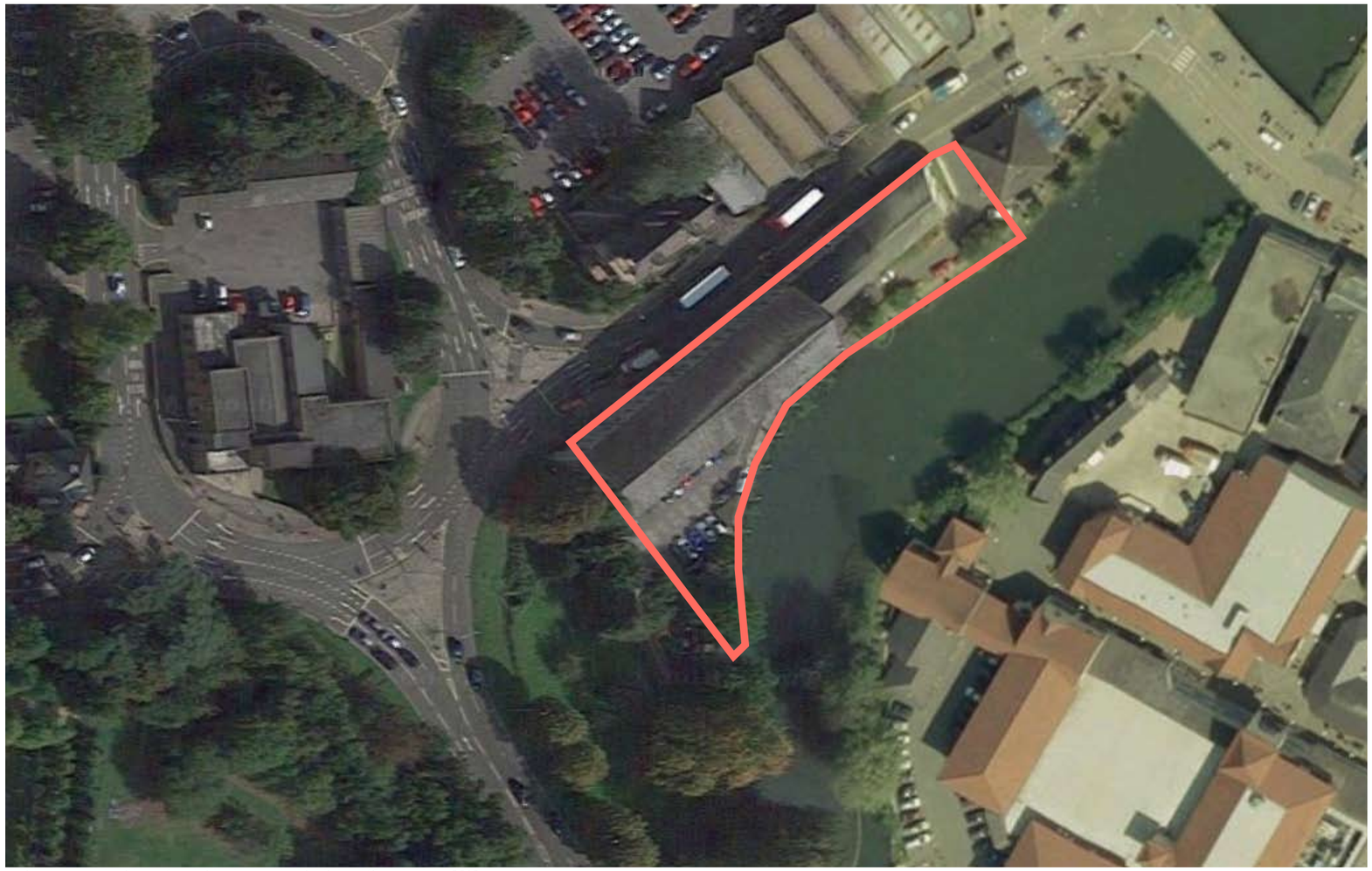
This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Designscape Architects in accordance with Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It is presented in support of an application for Listed Building Consent to Wiltshire County Council planning department relating to alterations to the subject Grade II listed Avonbridge House (formerly listed as Nestlé's Warehouses) located on Bath Road, Chippenham.

The purpose of this document is to identify the architectural and historical significance of the building and existing fabric, and to cover design concepts and principles, and access issues, associated with applications for planning and listed building consent. The heritage statement is intended to be read in conjunction with supporting drawings and reports.

The Heritage Statement aims to investigate and provide an understanding of the development of both the heritage asset that is Avonbridge House and its context. This will help inform the design approach and philosophy of any proposals in order to minimise harm and maximise the enhancement of the historic building and its setting. The intention is to seek a consensus with the planning team on the heritage significance of the building in order to inform the proposals for its repair and refurbishment, and to assess the potential impact of new works.

Avonbridge House was listed Grade II in 1978 in reaction to its proposed demolition. Buildings of this nature are considered nationally important and of special interest. A copy of the list entry is included in Appendix A.

Alliance Pharmaceutical are long term tenants of Avonbridge House. They are an international business with their global headquarters located within the building, in Chippenham.
They have occupied the building over an extended period of time, growing such that they now occupy the entire building. In recent years they have been responsible for a number of approved changes to the building which have replaced works undertaken in the early 1980's as part of the conversion of the building from derelict former condensed milk factory to its current use as offices. These works have included the removal of internal partitions, suspended ceilings, better revealing the historic form and fabric of the factory, conservation works to repair the former bell tower and the replacement of modern windows, curtain walling and atrium entrance structure with new fittings which improve the appearance and prolong the life of the building.



Aerial photograph with the Avonbridge House plot highlighted (Google Maps, 2018)

This statement has been updated and revised with respect to each of these individual applications, listed on page 9.
This current version has been prepared in support of applications for; car park works, installation of a new substation enclosure and electric vehicle charging points.

Methodology 1

This report is the result of undertaking a desktop study combined with site visits and searches of local archives.

The methodology used in researching this Heritage Statement follows the guidance and general principles for assessing the significance of a Heritage Asset, as set out in the ICOMOS Education and Training Guidelines. These guidelines include 14 points which amount to the principles underlying all of the international standards for Conservation good practice, including the accreditation schemes run by the RIBA, RIAS, RIAI ICE etc, and which are also reflected in BS7913 1998 (currently being updated).

These principles are also supported by conservation best practice publications such as "The Repair of Ancient Buildings" SPAB (1929 etc), The Athens Charter (1933), The Venice Charter 1964).

The terminology used in this report accords primarily with the English Heritage publication *"Conservation Principles - Policies and Guidance"* (2008) and "*The Setting of Heritage Assets"* (2012).

These documents set out important terms and definitions and key principles of how to understand and evaluate heritage assets in terms of ***Setting, Evidential value, Historical value, Aesthetic value, and Communal value.***

The Heritage Asset in this case is one of two structures remaining from a nationally significant former condensed milk factory (Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company's (later Nestlé) first factory in the United Kingdom); located close to the centre of Chippenham and forming an important part of this Wiltshire market town's industrial heritage. The second structure being the Grade II listed Bank House (factory office) on the other side of the Bath Road.



ICOMOS: 14 Principles for the Education and Training of Conservationists.
Good conservation practice should:

1. *Read a monument, ensemble or site and identify its emotional, cultural and use significance;*
2. *Understand the history and technology of monuments, ensembles or sites in order to define their identity, plan for their conservation, and interpret the results of this research;*
3. *Understand the setting of a monument, ensemble or site, their contents and surroundings, in relation to other buildings, gardens or landscapes;*
4. *Find and absorb all available sources of information relevant to the monument, ensemble or site being studied;*
5. *Understand and analyse the behaviour of monuments, ensembles and sites as complex systems;*
6. *Diagnose intrinsic and extrinsic causes of decay as a basis for appropriate action;*
7. *Inspect and make reports intelligible to non-specialist readers of monuments, ensembles or sites, illustrated by graphic means such as sketches and photographs;*
8. *Know, understand and apply Unesco conventions and recommendations, and ICOMOS and other recognized Charters, regulations and guidelines;*
9. *Make balanced judgements based on shared ethical principles, and accept responsibility for the long-term welfare of cultural heritage;*
10. *Recognize when advice must be sought and define the areas of need of study by different specialists, e.g. wall paintings, sculpture and objects of artistic and historical value, and/or studies of materials and systems;*
11. *Give expert advice on maintenance strategies, management policies and the policy framework for environmental protection and preservation of monuments and their contents, and sites;*
12. *Document works executed and make same accessible;*
13. *Work in multi-disciplinary groups using sound methods;*
14. *Be able to work with inhabitants, administrators and planners to resolve conflicts and to develop conservation strategies appropriate to local needs, abilities and resources;*

CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES
POLICIES AND GUIDANCE
FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

ENGLISH HERITAGE



2 Statement of Significance

The following is a summary of conclusions drawn from the research and analysis described later in the report.

Setting

Avonbridge House is located close to Chippenham town centre, fronting the Bath Road with the River Avon to its rear. Chippenham has a rich industrial (food processing) heritage of which Avonbridge House forms a key part. The town benefits from good connections to Bristol and London via (A4) road, (Kennet & Avon) canal, and (Great Western) railway networks.

The listed building is formed of two parts (hereafter referred to as wings), with the office entrance occupying a central location in the western most part of the eastern wing. This entrance can be accessed both from the Bath Road and the riverside, making use of one of two arched former goods entrances.

The western wing is both wider and taller than the eastern section giving it a more dominating presence. Divided into office 'Suites', the building is currently entirely occupied by Alliance Pharmaceutical Ltd.

During its life as a factory the building would have had a clear distinction between its formal street frontage and a haphazard array of lean-tos and extensions on the rear riverside elevation. This elevation has undergone significant changes during the course of the C20th. 1935 demolition of the early C19th Bridge Factory buildings, adjacent to Town Bridge, was followed by the clearance of the rear additions to Avonbridge House during the site's conversion to offices in 1985. As a result there is little historic integrity left in the rear elevation of Avonbridge House other than in the remaining built fabric itself. Fortunately the Bath Road elevation remains much as it would have looked in 1935. It comprises a monolithic stone wall with a repetitive array of window openings and two arches which presumably catered for 'goods in' and 'goods out'. The windows themselves are recent modern, aluminium framed replacements of the 1980's replacements to the originals which have returned to a facsimile of the original glazing pattern.

Avonbridge House remains a fair example of late C19th urban industrial heritage and the building undoubtedly contributes positively to its street setting, however this contribution is largely the result of its scale and use of materials, not by virtue of any particular detailing or historic features.

Evidential Value - *'The potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.'*

The main evidential value of the building lies in its basic form and primary construction as a former condensed milk factory; part of our industrial heritage linked to period of great expansion of the British Empire, fuelled in part by advances in preserved foodstuffs.

The building has undergone significant alteration, primarily as a result of the 1980's conversion to offices, which has remove any remnant of the building's original plan form. The interior has also been thoroughly altered, although some original fabric remains in the cast iron columns, solid intermediate floor and primary roof trusses. In addition local remnants of past industrial use remain with odd bits of ironwork, pipe fittings and the like littered throughout the building. Many of these features have recently been revealed during extensive, phased internal refurbishment work which stripped out much of the 1980's partitions and suspended ceilings and it is felt important to retain them insitu as part of the narrative of the building.

At the point of conversion into offices, the buildings were understood to have been in a poor state of repair, after many years of neglect and water ingress, and its listing appears to have been in reaction to calls for its demolition. The front, roadside northern range of buildings was reportedly in a better condition to much of the rest of the factory. The conversion works kept the main structural envelope, altering it as necessary to accommodate the demolition of the rear sections and formation of new windows. The internal cast iron columns, beam and pot first floor structure and primary truss roof and timber attic floor structures were also retained. The existing ground floor slab was replaced with a new floor constructed above flood level. No internal partitions or features associated with the buildings time as a factory survived the conversion, however whether any still existed at the time of the conversion is unknown. The existing roof slates were reused or replaced with salvaged slates and laid onto a modern felt underlay. Until recent investigations it had been assumed that the 1985 slates were new, but this has proved not to be the case. Many of the existing roof rafters were also replaced, however the majority were re-used. New aluminium windows were installed throughout.

Demolition of the rear sections of the factory, at the time of conversion, created external walls from what had previously been interior walls. At the time, considerable discourse took place between the applicant, architect, council officers and local heritage bodies concerning the treatment of these newly exposed walls. The applicant proposed render, others wished these sections to be faced in natural stone to blend in with the rest of the original building. Possibly as a result of viability arguments the render proposal was accepted. With the benefit of hindsight the decision is aligned with current conservation best practice in using a contrasting finish which clearly displays the developmental history of the building and acts as a reminder of the structures which stood there prior to 1985.

> *"Owners and managers of significant places should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential future interest and value, provided that recognized heritage values are not eroded or compromised in the process"*
>
> *Conservation Principles : Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment : English Heritage 2008. P 42*

Historical Value - *'The ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.'*

The building contains some historical significance as the first 'Milk Condensery' in the country and a survivor of a period when a significant food processing industries were located in Chippenham. Many of these buildings have since been demolished, most notably the former Matteson's meat processing plant on Westmead Lane, which increases the importance of those that remain.

Aesthetic Value - *'The ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.'*

This building never possessed any intended aesthetic value. It was built to fulfil a utilitarian requirement, that of containing the factory processes of milk condensing. This it achieves in a manner common with many other industrial buildings of the time. It was not designed with aesthetic considerations and has little by way of intrinsic aesthetic value of than it is a building of historic interest with a prominent urban presence. The significance of the building does not reside within the aesthetic value of its proportion, details or form.

Communal value - *'The meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.'*

The building is a well-known local landmark and despite the fact that it has not been occupied by Nestlé, or functioned as a condensery for over 50 years, it is widely known that it once did. Many local people can trace relatives who once worked for Nestlé and this is of communal interest both within the town and beyond. It is a common subject of a number of on-line history blogs, with contributors throughout the world.

Identifying the Heritage Asset Affected and its Setting

The Setting

The setting of the building must be considered from both its traditional street frontage (Bath Road) and the rear riverside frontage which was created in 1980's.

The building is a prominent local landmark close to the town centre, visible from a number of positions, especially the riverside where it can be seen in relation to the town bridge and River Avon, and as a backdrop to the riverside setting. It is an important part of Chippenham's industrial heritage. Views of the building are typically oblique - looking down the street, however the western end can be seen in a wider context when approaching from the gyratory to the north-west.

The extent of the condensed milk factory complex, in which the building originally sat at its height, has been lost with the demolition of a number of significant factory structures which extended across to the north side of the Bath Road. These ancillary buildings housed stores, packaging, tin making and other support facilities to the dairy production. They were demolished between the relocation of Nestlé in 1966 and the end of the C20th. The exception is Bank House (factory office) which is constructed in a Swiss-style and understood to date from the early 1870's. Instead the site is currently occupied by transport infrastructure, car parking, and an 'occasional market' structure of adjoining pitched roofs of a similar form to the factory building it replaced. This turns its back to Avonbridge House and is separated from the Bath Road by a landscaped border of trees and hedging.

At the eastern end of the site, C19th buildings on the northern side of Bath Road survive. The Town Bridge was widened and replaced in the 1960's and new buildings constructed at either end. A detached building with a slate pyramidal roof was built in 1985 on the site of the Bridge Factory; currently housing a café.



Nestlé factory site circa 1920



Bath Road elevation (2021)



Riverside elevation (2021)

3 Identifying the Heritage Asset Affected and its Setting

Context - the Bath Road

The Bath Road once formed part of the coaching route which ran from London to Bristol via Hungerford, Marlborough and Chippenham. An important turnpike, part of a national road system that existed from the middle of the C14th and upon which coaches ran from the mid C15th. The Turnpike Act of 1663 and subsequent Acts of 1706-7 led to the improvement of this road and usability of the route and increasing trade. This road later became part of the A4 trunk road which along with the A420 was one of the main roads serving the town and converged at the town bridge at the eastern end of the site. This convenient means of access will have been of benefit to the supply and distribution of the dairy business, however as the operation grew to include the site north of the road, it was necessary to serve the main factory by crossing the road. As this road became busier during the C20th with increasing use of motor vehicles, the road crossing became more inconvenient and created disruption to the efficiency of the factory. After closure of the factory, the northern part of the factory complex returned to a self-contained site.

Subsequent changes to the local road network have moved the main road traffic from the section of Bath Road running in front of the building and across the town bridge. The A4 and A420 now converge and cross at the gyratory located at the western end of the site. Now the traffic passing the site is limited to those accessing the town centre.

Context - the River Avon

The wool industry became established in Chippenham during the C16th partly as a result of the river. Historic maps from 1898 to 1943 indicate the Chippenham Flour Mills north of the town bridge. The river was not used for primarily navigation purposes. A spur of Wilts and Berks Canal was built to Chippenham in 1798 with a wharf built on the site of the current bus station.

The river was prone to flooding and as a result the ground floor was raised above external ground level as part of the 1980s conversion. During the second half of the C20th major works were undertaken to manage the river and flood risk. Until this point the river divided for a section into two courses, the main running close to the factory, a secondary course, possibly used as a mill race separated the town cattle market from an eyot known as the 'Isle of Rea'. Flood alleviation works resulted in the widening of the river to the south of the factory and filling of the mill race. The Back Avon Bridge (downstream, to the south) was replaced with a new sluice gate and bridge. Above the town bridge the river was completely widened, re-routed and re-profiled, eliminating the weir and mill race serving the flour mill.

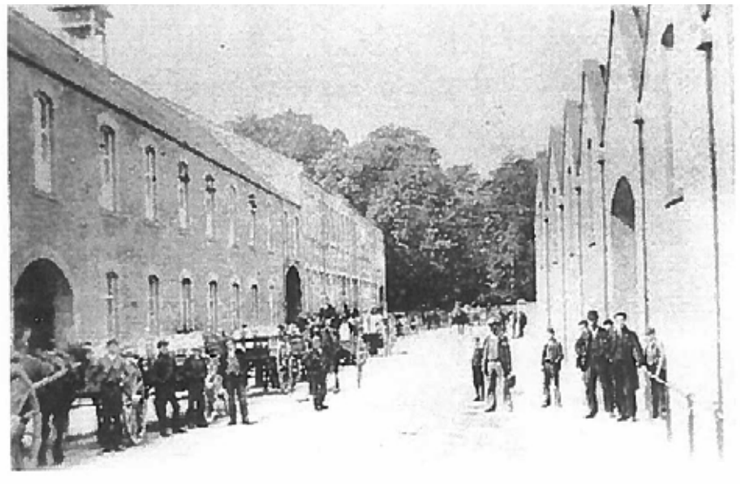
The river clearly divides the site from the historic town centre. Recent development of the cattle market and former eyot has enclosed the river and altered its historic context, creating a built up area where previously there was green river bank. This development is in the form of a large pub and terraced apartment block which provide a riverside frontage.

Context - the Town Bridge

There has been a settlement at this bridging point across the River Avon since Roman times. The historic centre of Chippenham is located to the south on the other side of the river, accessed by the town bridge. Development of the town north of the river was primarily the result of the arrival of the railway line connecting London and Bath in 1841. The arrival of the railway prompted the growth of industrial agricultural businesses. Mid C19th Chippenham was a centre for the production of dairy and ham products. Matteson's, Wiltshire Bacon and Nestlé had factories in the centre of the town, the latter being located on the site in question. The Town Bridge was widened with a replacement clear span structure as part of the river flood alleviation works.



Turnpike Road Map 1700-1900



Bath Road looking west circa 1900s (with horse drawn milk carts)



Town Bridge circa 1900s (Bridge Factory is shown on the far left)



Town Bridge (2018)

Identifying the Heritage Asset Affected and its Setting

Planning applications since 1974

78.0228	Demolition of Warehouse	Refused 25.10.78
78.0229	Conversion to Supermarket	Refused 25.10.78
80.0836	Change of Use to Leisure Centre	Withdrawn 03.09.80
80.0837	Change of Use to Residential Flats	Withdrawn 11.03.81
80.0839	Change of Use to offices and car parking	Withdrawn 11.03.81
80.1112.LB	Demolition of Listed Building	Withdrawn 30.10.80
81.1187	Alterations to Building to Provide 20 Flats	Approved 21.09.81
81.1742.LB	Part Demolition and alterations to Listed Building	Granted 20.05.82
83.1678	Change of Use to Offices	Withdrawn 09.09.83
83.1923.LB	Conversion to 39 Flats	Withdrawn 10.02.84
N.83.1650.LB	Demolition of two storey annex to former warehouse	Granted 02.04.84
83.1924	Conversion to 39 Flats and parking spaces	Withdrawn 10.02.84
N84.0499.F	Conversion of Warehouse to Offices with Car Parking and Landscaping	Approved 16.07.84
N.84.0973.LB	Part Demolition of and Alterations to Listed Building	Granted 12.09.84
N.84.1252.AD	Single sided advertisement board	Refused 13.08.84
N.84.2263.DC	Discharge of Condition on N.84.0499.F Walls Fences Vehicle Control Barriers, Colours and Finishes	Approved 05.03.85
N.85.1037.AD	Display of Non-Illuminated Agent and Developers Letting Board	Approved 23.05.85
N.86.0980.LB	Alterations to Listed Building (2 No Vents in Door)	Granted 17.06.86
N.89.3316.LB	Alterations to Listed Building Erection of Historical Plaque	Granted 29.01.90
N.90.0116.LB	Alterations to Listed Building Installation of 3 No Split Air conditioning units in 3 No South Facing Offices	Granted 11.05.90
N.91.1882.DC	Discharge of conditions relating to N90.0116. LB	Granted 10.07.91
N.94.0337.LB	Installation of Bollards under Archway of Bath Rd Entrance	Granted 11.04.94
99.01856.LBC	External Louvre to mechanical ventilation systems gable elevation	Permitted (no date)
00.03045.COU	Change of Use to professional Training and other D1	Permitted (no date)
04.00031.FUL	Installation of 4 No Condensers associated with Air Conditioning	Permitted 19.03.04
04.00032.LBC	Amend internal partitions (Ground floor) and install air conditioning	Permitted 19.03.04
06.01270.LBC	Proposal to install a demountable fire screen within the offices and air conditioning unit	Permitted 17.07.06
08.01739.LBC	Install a set of metal gates under archway (SW Corner)	Permitted 11.09.08
N.12.01877.LBC	Internal Alterations & Installation of Air Conditioning	Approval 17.10.12
N.13.01440.LBC	Remove concrete stair and replace with new stair. Replace balustrade handrails, replace tiled floors with non-slip tiles, insert lift and re-configure First Floor landing. Replace boiler, add flue and re-render gable.	Approval 23.09.13
18/03992/LBC	Internal alterations to Office Suites C & D (Ground Floor): Removal and alteration of internal partitions and ceilings. Install new stair, kitchen, WC. Alterations to building services.	Approval 27.06.18
18/08080/LBC 18/07771/FUL	Replacement of existing glazed 2 storey riverside reception atrium and Suite C/D curtain walling. Replace front entrance screen. Construct terrace deck. New non-illuminated building signage.	Approval 17.10.18
18/08745/LBC	Internal alterations to Office Suites B & D (First Floor): Removal and alteration of internal partitions and ceilings. Alterations to building services. External alterations within covered archway area (Ground Floor) associated with ventilation plant.	Approval 18.02.19
19/03473/FUL 19/03994/LBC	Internal alterations to Offfice Suite D including conversion of existing attic space into new office suite E. Comprising alterations to existing building fabric, installation of new stairs, WCs, air handling systems and building services. External works include the provision of new roof lights within both existing roof slopes	Approval 08/11/2019
19/02718/FUL 19/02830/LBC	Internal alterations to office Suite A. Comprising removal and alteration of existing C20th internal parttions and ceilings, fire protection of existing steelwork, renewal of air handling systems and building services and installation of new external vent grille	Approval 10/05/2019
19/10884/FUL 19/11223/LBC	Replacement of existing C20th metal framed windows	Approval 28/01/2020
20/11459/LBC	Removal of C20th internal partitions and suspended ceilings - retrospective. Proposed replacement of heating and ventilation system, installation of new ceiling lining to underside of retained roof structure within Suite B (first floor east wing) and adjacent entrance landing, repairs to bell tower support structure	Approval 12/03/2021
PL/2021/04450	Repairs to Bell Tower support structure and timber. Changing paint colour on external doors, gates, railings and bell tower from red to grey colour	Approval 04/06/2021
PL/2022/05006 PL/2022/05334	Replacement of existing roof slates with new and installation of Photo Voltaic Solar panels.	Approval 24/02/2023

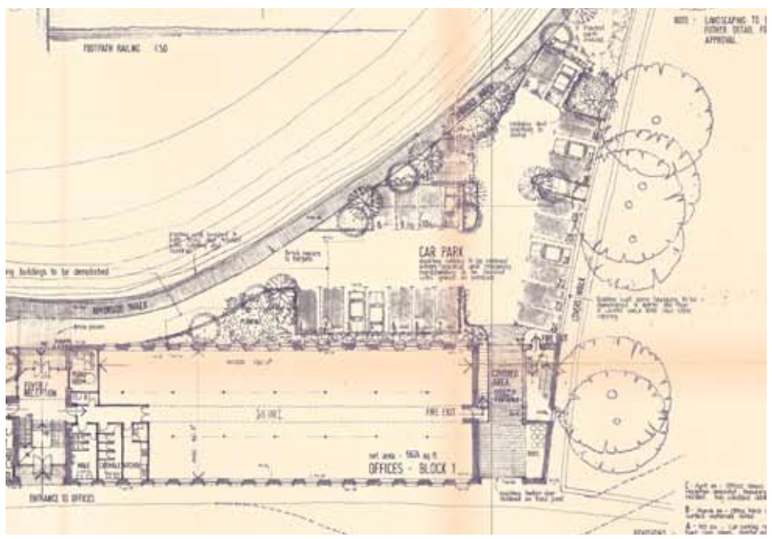
Development History

The Planning History reveals a series of attempts to find a new use for the building since its proposed demolition, and listing, in 1978. These culminated in the most significant planning approval with respect to the building fabric N84.0499.F and associated listed building consent N.84.0973.LB, which permitted the conversion of the building to offices in 1984/5 and resulted in the demolition of several adjoining structures to leave the building largely as seen today.

Since 1985 a series of subsequent consents have dealt with minor alterations to the building fabric or curtilage associated with the occupation of the building by various tenants. Recent work by Alliance Pharmaceuticals has included the complete refurbishment of the building interior, replacement of the modern windows and curtain walling, creation of a new entrance atrium and consent for the conversion of attic space including installation of roof lights.



View from Town Bridge circa1980



Plan extract N.84.0449F

3 Identifying the Heritage Asset Affected and its Setting

Chronological Timeline

1811 Thomas Goldney builds the Bridge Factory (used as factory dyehouse and shear shops). Four storeys plus attics in a mansard roof; rubble stone.
1813 Five storey extension to Bridge Factory constructed.
1816 Mill employs 44 people.
1818 Business no longer in existence.
1825 Building leased by Joseph Speirs used as silk factory.
1827 Steam pipes fitted to warm mill. Water closets on each floor.
1830 Owner Anthony Guy goes bankrupt. Building of five floors 85ft by 25ft sold.
1846 Speirs relinquishes lease. Building used for storage of hides.
1872 Woollen mill converted to first condensed milk factory in Britain by Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company (founded by US brothers George and Charles Page). Several new buildings are constructed over the following years.
1878 Warehouse built opposite.
1897 New 18 ton boiler installed.
1905 Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company merges with Nestlé.
1907 67 men and 27 women employed.
1934-5 Reorganisation, modernisation and development. Internal structure of the building was modified and condensing plant and tin making equipment modernised.
1937 Bridge Factory and extension demolished (rear riverside section retained).
1962-6 Condensery closed, production transferred to Cumberland.
1967 Boiler house chimney (opposite) demolished.
1970's Various occupiers including Avon Rubber tyre store.
1980 Warehouses on other side of Bath Road demolished.
1985 Building partially demolished, retained building converted to offices, new retail building and car parking on site of demolished buildings at north eastern end. Owners MP Kent PLC (later Beezer).
1987 Car park tarmacked.
1987 Sold to Brabham Miller, then Mount Olympus Developments, which later became Promarn.
1987*on* Occupied by Crown Prosecution Service and Yarrow Admiralty & Research.
1998 Alliance Pharma occupy Suite B (7 members of staff).
2009 Alliance expand into Suite A (30 staff).
2010 Alliance expand into Suite D.
2012 Improvement work undertaken in Suites B & D.
2016 Alliance expand into Suite C (100 staff).
2018 Internal alterations programme commences
2020 Window replacement and atrium works commence.
2021 Suite B interior alterations, Bell Tower refurbishment, Atrium, curtain wall and window replacement works completed
2022 Installation of attic access stair comenced.



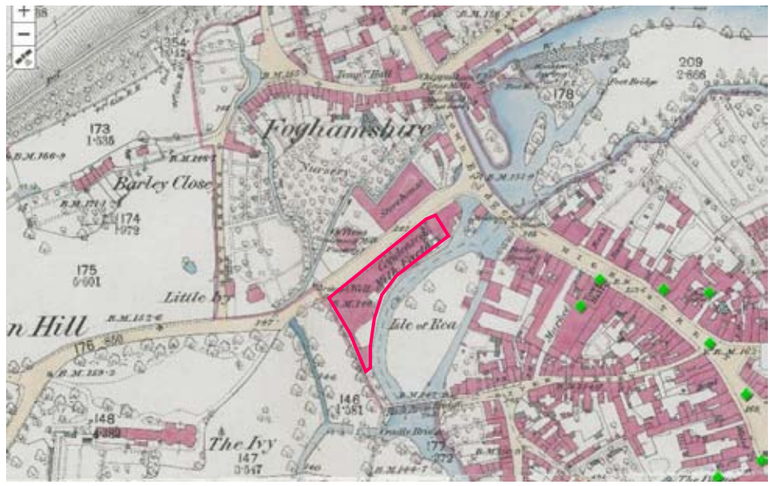
Site circa 1920 (for larger version refer to previous page)

This photograph shows the condensed milk factory at its peak.
Note the more domestic scale of the two left-hand buildings of the former Bridge Factory (demolished in 1937). Roofs are somewhat dominated by painted advertising. This is no longer in evidence.



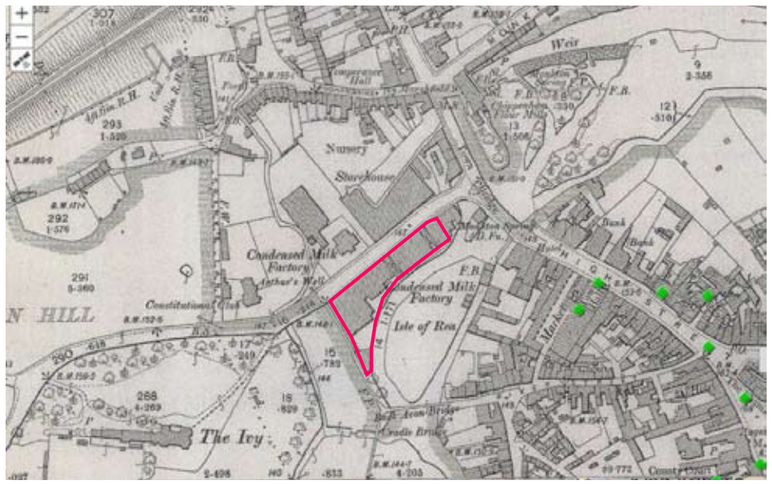
1840 Tithe Map

The 1811 Bridge Factory along with 1813 extension is indicated at the eastern end of the site close to the Town Bridge. The western end of the site is occupied by a house at this time.



1888 OS Map

The Bridge Factory has been extended by additional wings abutting the river. The Condensed Milk factory (Avonbridge House) has been constructed to the west along with a warehouse and Bank House (offices) across the Bath Road to the north.



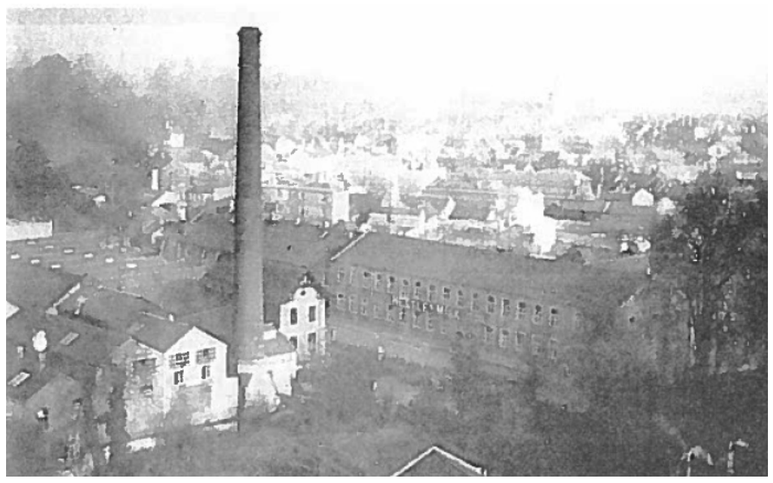
1894 OS Map

The boiler house to the north of Bank House has been constructed.



Site circa 1950

At this time, the warehouse complex is complete and the Bridge Factory buildings are gone. The Town Bridge is shown in advance of its replacement and river works have not yet taken place. The industrial building at the top of the photograph is not part of the Nestlé complex and was, until recently demolished, located in the centre of what is now the Bridge Roundabout.



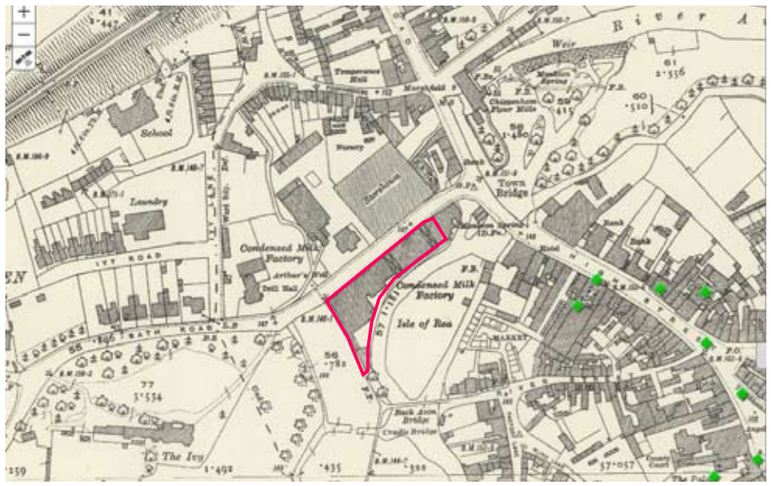
Site circa 1955

A view from the north-west, prior to demolition of the boiler house and chimney in 1967. Bank House is clearly visible as is a large advertising sign painted on the face of what is now Avonbridge House. Roof top advertising has disappeared.



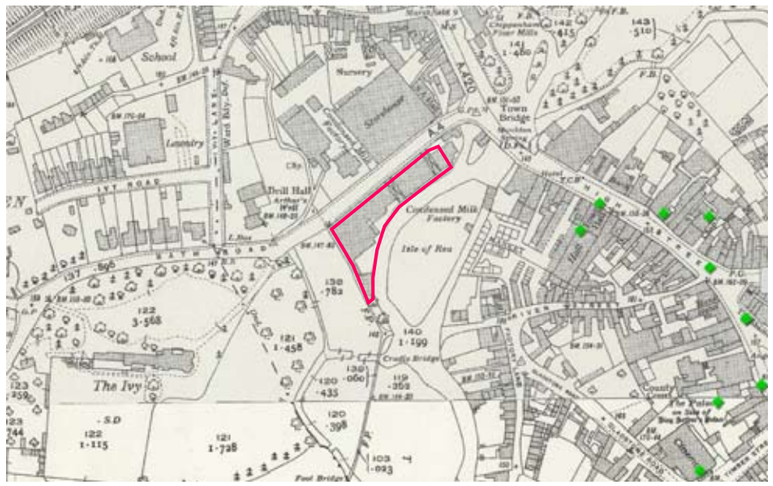
Site circa 1965

A view from the south-west, shortly after the widening of the river and construction of the replacement Town Bridge. The warehouse buildings are in evidence filling the riverside site. These building will survive until 1985 when the structures to south of Avonbridge House are removed and replaced with car parking between the building and the river. The south bank of the river has since been developed with mixed use buildings.



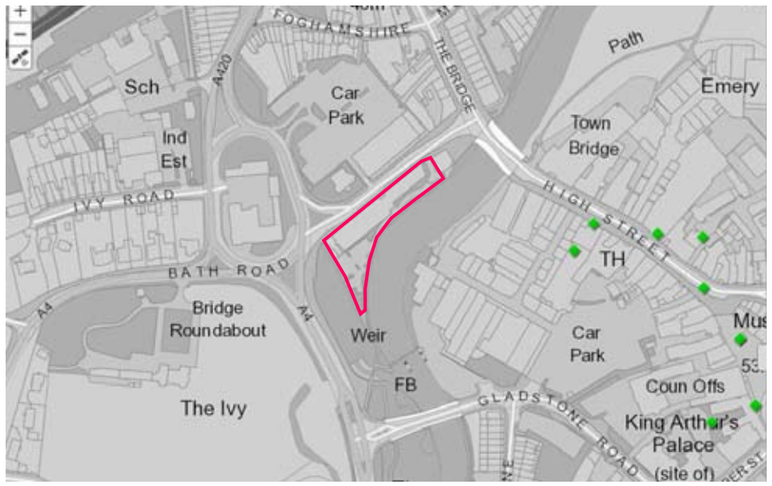
1898 - 1939 OS Map

The warehouse to the north side of the Bath Road has been extended and additional storage buildings constructed.



1921 - 1941 OS Map

The pre-condensed milk factory (1811 & 1815) Bridge Factory buildings at the east end of the site are demolished during this period.



Current (2018) OS Map

This map shows the changes of the second half of the C20th, comprising 1985 demolition work on site, construction of the bridge side retail unit, alterations to course of the river and its bridges, construction of new ring road and gyratory, demolition of north side factory buildings and creation of car park, and development on the former site of the Isle of Rea. It does not show the most recent demolition of the building in the centre of the Bridge Roundabout.

3 Identifying the Heritage Asset Affected and its Setting

The Exterior

The building as it exists today, is one of two remnants of the Milk Condensery constructed here in 1873, sat either side of the Bath Road.

On the south (river) side, Avonbridge House remains with the rear sections of the building complex removed in 1985 as part of its conversion to office use. Whether this was due to the state of repair of these sections of the building, their unsuitability for use as part of an overall office redevelopment, or in order to provide space for parking on site, or a combination of all of these factors, is not clear from the historic record. Until this period much of the rear elevation was internal and is highly unlikely to have the pattern of windows which exists today. The render finish and curtain walling to the rear façade approximately corresponds with sections of the building which were internal prior to 1985.

The building was reglazed in 1985 with aluminium double glazed casement windows (replacing timber windows). These were approved in response to the applicant's desire for low maintenance solution. An application for the replacement of these windows was approved in 2020 and works completed in 2021. Alterations to replace the 1985 riverside entrance and curtain walling with a new double height atrium and staff terrace was completed in 2021 as part of a wider refurbishment programme.

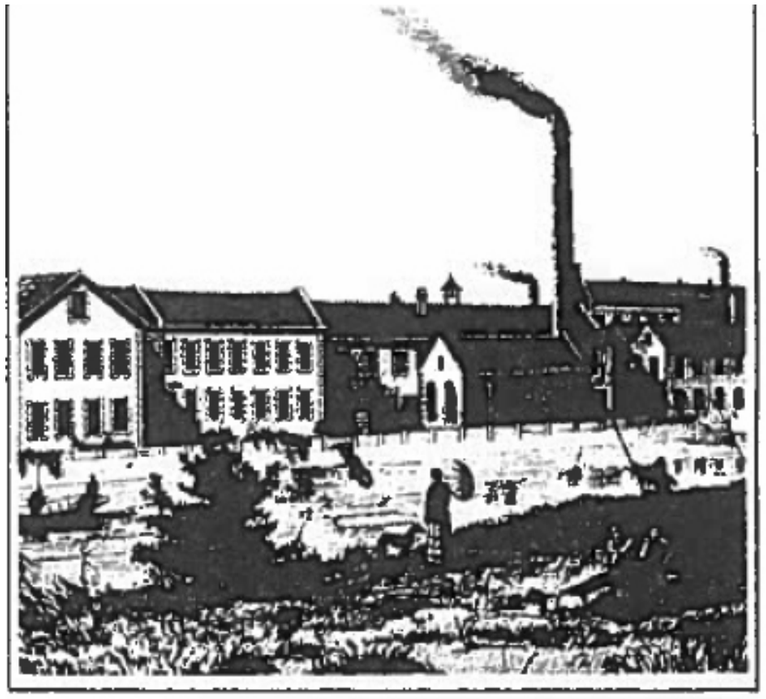


View from east (1976)



View from Town Bridge circa 1980

The derelict factory building prior to conversion. The nearest (riverside) structures were demolished as part of the conversion works.
See also roadside view (right).



Illustrated view from South (circa 1880)



April 1983

The junction of the demolished riverside wings with the retained main block can be identified in the converted building by a change in wall finish.
The building in the foreground was replaced by a glass (curtain wall) extension.

(left) Early illustration of the new condensed milk factory. No evidence remains of the gable elevation shown on the left of the image. This may be 'artistic licence', or else it was shortly subsumed into an enlarged factory complex.



View across River Avon from south (April 1983)

Riverside view prior to demolition of nearside wings.



Bath Road frontage circa 1910 (horse drawn transport)



View looking west along the Bath Road (late C19th) The nearest building is the 1813 extension to adjoining Bridge Factory (1811).



Bath Road view (flooded) (late C19th)



Bath Road frontage circa 1920 (motorised transport)



View from northeast (1982)



Bath Road view of west end of Avonbridge House (flooded) (January 1926)

Flooding of the River Avon occurred on several occasions. See images above and below. C20th river works were intended to reduce this risk. Work to covert the building in the 1980's to office accommodation included a new ground floor level raised above the anticipated flood risk.



Riverside frontage during building works autumn 1984 - eastern wing roof entirely removed and no rear wall constructed



View from south of River Avon (2018)

3 Identifying the Heritage Asset Affected and its Setting



Aerial View circa 2015

This photo clearly shows the development to the south and east fronting the riverside - Borough Parade. The former warehouse building has been replaced by market buildings and car park. The surviving elements of the former Nestlé factory are clear (Avonbridge House and Bank House), as is the gyratory and now demolished Bridge Centre.



View from across Bath Road (2018)

This view is of the entrance archway from the car park now occupying the site of the former Nestlé warehouse complex on the north side of the Bath Road. Bank House, the factory's former office building, is located on the right. On the left hand side the site is occupied by late C20th market sheds and car parking.



Bank House

Former Grade II listed works office building dating from circa 1873.



View of River Parade and Borough Parade located opposite the site

Development upon the former Isle of Rea located opposite the site.



View across River Avon (2021)

Current setting looking from the south.



Bath Road looking west

The demolished warehouse buildings on the north side of the Bath Road have been replaced by market sheds which face away from the road and have little roadside presence. Bank House sits beyond.

Identifying the Heritage Asset Affected and its Setting



Rear car -park, south western end (2022).

Covered archway links through to a red gate on Bath Road. This area is used for building servicing and is secured by modern metalwork gates. A boundary wall seperates the site from the footpath beyond.



Bath Road - main entrance

Front office entrance from Bath Road. Internal steps climb up to a raised ground floor. Glazing framed in aluminium comprise the front and rear entrances.



South -western gable (2018)

This elevation is largely obscured by trees. Modern windows are located within historic openings. These have now been replaced to match new on the main elevations (2021)



Bath Road - Western end (2021)

The roof to Avonbridge House is covered with natural slates, understood to have been replaced with salvaged when the building was re-roofed in 1985. The roof plane exhibits a degree of unevenness as a result of following the original timber structure which will have moved and distorted over time. The red gates include a open grille section with a fresh air path to the plant area behind. Consent has been obtained to paint these grey.



Riverside elevation - eastern end (2021)

Walls previously abutting demolished buildings were rendered. The riverside / car park entrance is in the middle distance and is formed of a glazed and zinc clad extension completed in 2021



View from south of River Avon (2021)

Avonbridge House (western wing - Suites C / D) looking across the river. The rendered wall and single storey glazed extension are reminders of former abutting structures removed in 1985. Glazed curtain wall sections and windows were replaced in 2021.

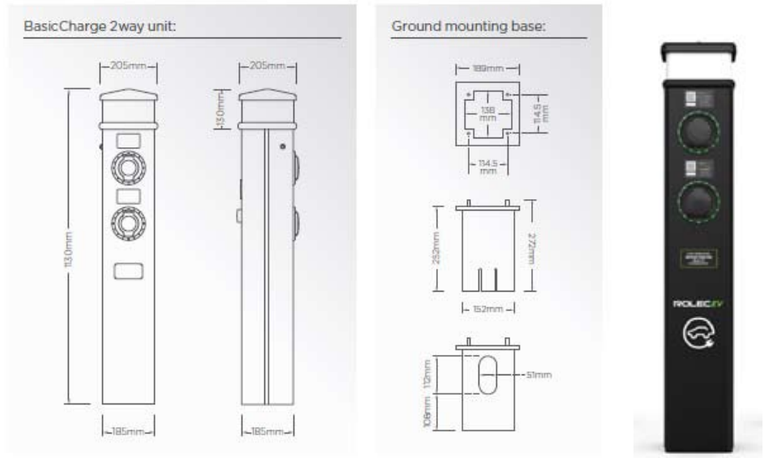
3 Identifying the Heritage Asset Affected and its Setting

The Exterior - Riverside Car Park

Up until the 1985 works, the area now forming the car park was built upon with additional wings of the former factory. These were not in a good state of repair and were removed as part of the works to form the car park. As previously outlined, the rear elevation of the building as it stands now is quite different to how it was historically. The rendered sections date from the 1985 works, with window openings which evoke the historic pattern, but do not form part of the original fabric. The wall forming the south western boundary of the site and car park was constructed as part of the 1985 works, is faced with render and circa 2m high.

As part of the Alliance drive to reduce carbon, it is proposed to install two dual, post mounted Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points located to serve bays against the SW boundary wall.

The mains electrical supply to the building dates from the conversion of the building. It has been running at capacity over a number of years. Notwithstanding the reduced electrical demand achieved by the renewed building services, in order to optimise the functionality of the recently approved PV array, feed the grid, serve the EV charging points and provide resilience for an anticipated increase in staff occupation numbers, it is necessary to replace the existing supply and install a new electrical substation. The substation will be in a grey coloured GRP enclosure, positioned within the space previously occupied by 2 parking spaces, close to the archway beneath the south western end of the building.



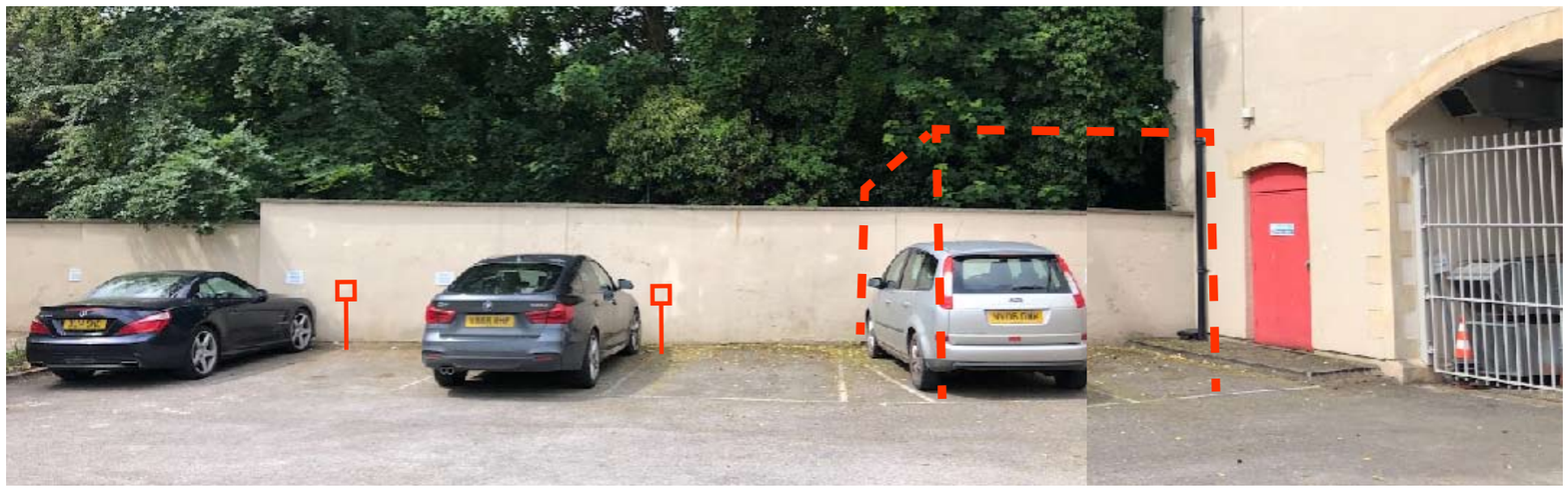
Pole mounted dual charging point



Pole mounted dual charging point with protection barrier



Proposed Transformer enclosure (colour to be grey)



Car park adjacent building - proposed site of sub-station and EV charging points

Assessment of Significance of the Heritage Asset and its Contribution to the Setting



View from Town Bridge circa 1980 - showing the twin blocks of the now 'East Wing'



View from Town Bridge, March 2018 - showing the reinterpreted single block of the 'East Wing'



East Wing riverside elevation (2021)

The Value of the Heritage Asset

Through applying Heritage Values as set out by English Heritage, the value and significance of Avonbridge House, as part of a greater factory complex, lies in a combination of its exterior, street-facing architectural composition, its overall setting close to the town centre and River Avon, its evidential value contained within the remnants of industrial architectural heritage both fixed to and inherent within the building's structure, and in its communal and enduring historic value as a significant local employer with a world-wide reach operating during the early period of global commerce. Avonbridge House has special significance as being the first condensed milk factory in Britain.

With this in mind any alteration work would seek to protect and enhance any internal factory-period features which remain intact. Where discovered these would need to be assessed on a case by case basis with an assumption that they are worthy of preservation.

Exterior

Notwithstanding the years of neglect following the departure of Nestlé, and extensive repairs and alterations that have taken place, the building retains its principle character as a converted industrial building. Its earlier use remains evident in the building's robust construction, use of materials and substantial form / massing.

The Bath Road frontage remains largely honest to its roots ,despite changes to the fenestration and the infilling of the central entrance in 1985. The rear riverside elevation less so, although the treatment of the elevation hints at its past as the facade material varies from render to natural rubble stone and back to render again. The building will never be aesthetically attractive however it retains an honest monolithic character and massing which is to be protected.

The form of the roof has been retained, however the roof slates and rainwater goods were replaced c1985. The bell-tower was rebuilt at this time and refurbished in 2021. Whilst the building exterior is relatively plain and has been significantly refurbished, there remains evidential value in the original building fabric where retained and where subsequent modifications have clearly taken place.

In terms of potential to enhance, approved works have undertaken and were completed in 2021 which have upgraded and replaced the tatty 1980s curtain walled glazed add-ons which were failing to perform their function. Roof works including the installation of solar panels is due to commence in autumn 2023.

Interior

The interior of the building has been extensively altered, most significantly as a result of its conversion into offices. The original factory layout ('plan form') has been greatly compromised by the 1985 works, with little remaining which other than historical records of how the factory operated, and how this might have changed from its original layout in 1873, to the extensive modernisation work carried out in 1935, and latterly to Nestlé quitting the site in the 1960s. Little can be gleaned either as to how the building might have operated in section as the structure was stripped back to a bare shell prior to being fitted out for office use with new stair cores, etc, inserted. Furthermore the original external walls have been lined internally with blockwork, either in the 1980s or possibly during and earlier period of alteration work. The south elevation of the East Wing is understood to be a modern invention after the neighbouring block was demolished in the 1980s, although some original structural piers or remnants of a dividing masonry wall may remain within the modified construction.

Following this period one can expect that the building would have undergone a series of changes as it converted to new uses and finally to compartmentalised office accommodation.

Contrary to this trend the most recent modernisation work, following the current tenants aquisition of the entire building, has enabled floor spaces to be significantly opened up and returned to their former glory. It is now high quality open plan office space which proudly celebrates the original building fabric, the scale of space, and fully reveals the fenestration rather than part concealing it behind suspended ceilings and dividing the volume up with partitions. A process of revealing the remaining historic fabric comprising of circular cast iron columns with makers mark, concrete vaulted first floor structure, steel trusses and encased iron beams has been undertken.

There is additional evidence of the previous industrial use of the building in the form of sundry metalwork, pipes, etc, hanging from the structure in various locations that have survived previous building re-fit works, much of which has been revealed as part of recent works to remove suspended ceilings throughout the building.

6 Assessment of Effect of the Development on Significance of the Asset

The Contribution of the Asset to the Setting

The contribution of Avonbridge House to its setting rests primarily in its role as a former industrial complex close to the centre of Chippenham. The main Bath Road frontage remains imposing and a good reminder of its former use. By contrast the riverside frontage is not authentic from a heritage perspective, instead it retains an important role as a backdrop to the River Avon and views of the site from the town centre. It also reveals the scale and massing of the two linked structures (east and west wings). The loss of the structures between Avonbridge House and the river may be lamented, however the current riverside elevation maintains its own interest as part of a continuing history of adaptation to the changing needs of the building's occupants.

The Effect of the Proposed Development on the Significance of the Heritage Asset

Setting

The proposals are visually insignificant and the setting is unaffected by the proposed works within the car park.

Evidential value

No historic building fabric will be effected by the proposed works. .

Historic value

The historic value of the asset is quite well recorded. It will not be affected by the proposed alteration works.

Aesthetic value

Previous recent works to the exterior of the building have enhanced the building's aesthetic value and contribution to its historic setting. The current proposals will have no impact upon the aesthetic value of the building which resides in the overall character of the building.

Communal value

The report identifies the communal value of Avonbridge House through its former use as a condensed milk factory and historic part of Anglo-Swiss / Nestlé's commercial empire. There is no indication that the communal value would be adversely affected by the proposals, and it is believed that this would be enhanced through the tenure of the current sole occupier and their continued investment in the building and as a significant local employer.

*"152. **The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate**, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; **encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.** ."*

*'158. When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, **local planning authorities should: a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;** and b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable...'*

*202. **Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including**, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

National Planning Policy Framework: July 2021

"138 - 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;
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."

Conservation Principles : Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment : English Heritage 2008.

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North Wiltshire District Council, 2007. *Chippenham Conservation Area Appraisal* : North Wiltshire District Council.

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Chamberlain, J A, 1976. *Chippenham* : Chippenham Charter Trustees.

Stanier, Peter, 2006. *Wiltshire in the Age of Steam: C 1750-1950: A History and Archaeology of Wiltshire Industry* : Devon Books.

Brunel Design Partnership, 1983. *Bath Rd Site, (Ex Chippenham Condensery) Structural Report on Existing Properties.*

Websites

English Heritage [online] available at <www.english-heritage.org.uk>

Chippenham Civic Society <www.chippenhamcivicsociety.co.uk>

Appendix A

Listing
historicengland.org.uk

AVON BRIDGE HOUSE
List Entry Summary
This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: AVON BRIDGE HOUSE

List entry Number: 1268166

Location
AVON BRIDGE HOUSE, BATH ROAD
The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:
District: Wiltshire
District Type: Unitary Authority
Parish: Chippenham

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 22-Jun-1978
Date of most recent amendment: 16-Sep-1996

Legacy System Information
The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.
Legacy System: LBS
UID: 462176

Asset Groupings
This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description
Summary of Building
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details
CHIPPENHAM

ST9173SE BATH ROAD 930-1/9/2 (South side) 22/06/78 Avon Bridge House
(Formerly Listed as: BATH ROAD (South side) Nestlé's Warehouses)

II

Warehouses and factory, now offices. c1873 and later rebuilding of an earlier cloth factory. Squared coursed limestone rubble with freestone dressings and slate roof. 2 blocks, both rectangular plan (and part of a wall to 3rd block to the left, east, now demolished). EXTERIOR: 2 storeys and attic; block to the left 10-window range, taller block to the right 18-window range. C20 glazing to tall segmental-arched windows with rusticated architraves; similar quoins and jambs to wide segmental arches and to each end and centre. The block to the left has a more steeply pitched roof, a blank left return and a pyramidal bellcote (restored); the block to the right has stone coping over stepped freestone blocks to the right return which has one window to the attic, 3 to the 1st floor and one to the ground floor. INTERIOR: not inspected but noted as retaining original cast-iron columns and beams. HISTORY: the site was acquired in 1873 by the National Anglo-Swiss Milk Company for their 1st factory in Britain. (Jefferies S (Chippenham Civic Society): A Chippenham Collection: Chippenham: 1987-: 45-46).

Listing NGR: ST9187473316

Selected Sources
Books and journals
Jefferies, S , A Chippenham Collection, (1987), 45-46

National Grid Reference: ST 91874 73316

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