

FORMER BARCLAYS' BANK, 3 FORE STREET, TROWBRIDGE

Built Heritage Statement

September 2026

Title of project **3 Fore Street, Trowbridge, Wiltshire**
Client **MCH Minibuses Ltd**

Date 3rd September 2026

Prepared for **MCH Minibuses Ltd**

Client Address Uxbridge

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Project 3 Fore St, Trowbridge

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by Jonathan Smith of Blake Turnbull Heritage Consultancy Ltd, on behalf of MCH Minibuses Ltd. The Statement, in conjunction with the RPS' pre-application-built heritage statement [Appx.1], assesses the likely impact on the historic built environment of the proposed applications related to the Grade II* listed former Barclays' Bank, 3 Fore Street, Trowbridge (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') [Appx.1, Fig.1]. The assessment has been full review, in July 2026 with a return to all the data and a further site walkover survey, of the RPS work July 2025 [Appx.1]. This reassessment has included a review of the pre-application and subsequent commentary and advice from Historic England and the Council's conservation officer.
- 1.2 The report, with Appx.1, is provided to support the full planning application and the listed building consent application for the demolition of the harmful twentieth-century flat-roof extensions to the rear; the remodelling of the historic frontage range to form two apartments; the reinstatement of the historic side alleyway and rear courtyard; and new-build development of a four-storey apartment block towards the rear of the Site.
- 1.3 The Site is centred at NGR ST 85476 58014 on the northern side of the historic core of Trowbridge. The historic frontage range addressing Fore Street was the eastern half of a single dwelling, prior to becoming a bank in the mid twentieth century, there having previously been a banking building in the rear part of the Site in the nineteenth century. The twentieth-century Barclays Bank caused widespread harm to the heritage asset, including extensive single-storey, flat-roofed extensions to the rear of the historic frontage range and the removal of internal and the historic frontage range's rear wall (excluding the central bow-bay's wall, which had been retained).
- 1.4 The built element of the Site is designated at Grade II*. The Site's heritage value is focussed on the Site's historic frontage range as one half of a post-medieval merchant's house fronting onto Fore Street (its other half is now No.2 Fore Street, which includes an early service wing). The range reflects something of the asset's historic and architectural significance as a post-medieval wool cloth merchant's house that was fashionably remodelled and rebuilt in the eighteenth century. It forms part of a group of designated Georgian merchant houses on Fore Street (many listed at Grade II*). The Site is in the 'Historic Retail Character Area' of the Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 1.5 This Statement, with the Appendix, refers to the relevant legislative framework contained within the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* and the *Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023*, as well as relevant national and local planning policy.

Appropriate Historic England guidance has also been consulted to inform the judgements made. The reports are further based on the findings of historical research, Site and area walkover surveys (including extensive internal inspection), map studies and professional judgement.

- 1.6 It was initially considered that the proposals for the Site hold the potential to have an impact on the significance of the two identified built heritage assets: the Grade II* listed 3 Fore Street; and Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area, which includes numerous other listed buildings (which are dealt with in the report as a collective part of the Area).
- 1.7 It is concluded that the proposal will deliver a number of significant heritage-centred public benefits to the identified designated built heritage assets. These include the demolition of the harmful later twentieth-century single-storey, flat-roof extensions allowing the reinstatement of the historic frontage range's rear elevation and the courtyard/garden space in the Site. These current elements' demolition will also reveal and allow the reinstatement of the eighteenth-century central, rear bow-bay in the historic frontage range's rear elevation. Other enhancements (heritage public benefits) delivered by the proposal include the reinstatement of the historic rear-access side alleyway (now a twentieth-century window); the removal of the later twentieth-century shallow bay window in the front façade; the reinstatement of the eighteenth-century portrait windows, thereby reinstating the symmetrical eighteenth-century façade addressing Fore Street; and the reinstatement of the front door step (and the associated internal historic ground-floor level).
- 1.8 Additionally, the overall, general heritage-centred public benefit that the proposals will deliver is to deliver the optimum viable use of this highly significant designated asset (an asset that is increasingly vulnerable to becoming derelict and attracting damaging anti-social activities), returning the frontage range and its associated courtyard/garden to its historic residential use in a sustainable manner securing the asset's enjoyment and legibility as a post-medieval merchant's house by future generations.
- 1.9 The proposal will also deliver some less significant harms. These include the re-subdivision of the ground and first floors of the historic frontage range – returning this element of the Site to a residential use – and the introduction of a separate, multi-storey element towards the rear of the Site. The new subdivisions can be carried out with stud wall partitions causing a minimal impact to historic fabric and would be reversible. The new built element to the rear of the Site matches the mass and height of back land developments seen in adjacent properties and will not be visible from Fore Street [as illustrated by the Architect's drawing 3903.206 B].

- 1.10 The remnant of the eighteenth-century chimney breast surviving at first-floor level (this feature has been notably damaged, including the removal of the associated stack and removal of an eighteenth-century hearth) will now be retained in the scheme, as set out in the submitted drawings.
- 1.11 The Built Heritage Statement concludes that the proposal will deliver an aggregate enhancement to the significance of the Grade II* listed 3 Fore Street and to the character and appearance of Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area (including the significance of other listed buildings adjacent and nearby the Site – most notably 2, Fore Street, also designated at Grade II*).
- 1.12 The proposal's public benefits are set out in the Planning Statement supporting the applications (including those public benefits beyond heritage enhancements). This confirms that the proposal's public benefits outweigh the heritage harms caused. As such, the aggregate public benefits, including the noted significant heritage benefits to the identified built heritage assets' significance, provide the justification for the noted, lesser heritage harms caused by the proposals. Additionally, in reference to the decision maker's statutory duty under s.66 (2) of the 1990 Act, they will give regard to the desirability of keeping the identified designated assets from harm ('preserved') in a situation where the proposals deliver an aggregate enhancement to the historic built environment, including to designated assets within the top 6% of the most important historic buildings in England.
- 1.13 The proposals will have no aggregate adverse impact on the significance of any built heritage asset. The proposals deliver an aggregate of significant heritage enhancements to the significance of these assets. Many details of the proposal can be secured by condition. The Statement provides sufficient information as per the requirements of the August 2026 NPPF and Local Plan policy to allow the LPA to determine the impact on the significance of built heritage assets as part of their planning decision-making. Consequently, there is no built heritage impediment to granting consent to the planning and the listed building consent applications.

2 LEGISLATION POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The legislation, policy and guidance pertinent to this case is set out in the pre-application built heritage statement [Appendix 1]. However, the government has updated the NPPF August 2026; policy therein is set out below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (17th Aug. 2026)

- 2.2 The NPPF is the principal document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It defines a heritage asset as a: *'building, monument, site place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest'*. This includes both designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.3 Section 20: *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* (HE1-10) relates to the conservation of heritage assets in the production of local plans and decision taking on planning applications. It emphasises that heritage assets are *'an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance'*.
- 2.4 For proposals that have the potential to affect the significance of a heritage asset, including any contribution made by their setting, HE5(1) requires applicants to identify and describe the significance of any heritage assets that may be affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to an asset's significance.
- 2.5 HE5(2) notes that assessments of the potential effects of development proposals should identify whether the proposal has a positive effect; has no effect; results in harm to an asset's significance; or causes total loss of significance. Where harm occurs, that degree of harm should be identified. HE5(2c) states that substantial harm occurs where a proposal would *'seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance'*.
- 2.6 HE6(1) emphasises that *'substantial weight'* should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of whether any potential impact equates to a positive effect, harm (previously *'less than substantial harm'*), substantial harm or total loss of an asset's significance.
- 2.7 HE6(2) and HE7(1) state that development proposals which would have a positive effect on the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset should be supported.
- 2.8 HE6(4-6) sets out that harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from a proposal. Where a development will

result in substantial harm to, or total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused, unless this harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits, or all of a number of criteria are met. HE4(2) adds that any harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should have a clear and convincing justification set out by the applicant.

- 2.9 HE7 refers to non-designated heritage assets. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against a proposal's public benefits and a balanced judgement made, having regard to the scale of harm and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.10 Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, it should only be supported where the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal, having regard to the scale of the harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
- 2.11 HE8 includes specific policy for world heritage sites; HE9 for conservation areas; and HE10 relates to the loss or removal of heritage assets with some specific references to archaeological heritage assets.

3 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The description of the Site, its historic development and the identification of the potentially affected built heritage assets is set out in the RPS' pre-application built heritage statement [Appx.1].
- 3.2 In summary, the historic frontage range addressing Fore Street has a fine eighteenth-century oak-framed roof and it appears likely that the building was first constructed as a large, two-storey-plus-attic merchant's house. The roof timbers and curved wind-braces were clearly meant to be seen and details such as the curved step stop to the chamfers of the two of the principal truss ties and tenoned purlins indicate an early eighteenth-century date. However, the Trowbridge Extensive Urban Survey attributes a fifteenth-century date to the roof, making the building an early survival in the context of Trowbridge. It remains possible that the frontage range's gable walls and some elements of the roof survive from the late medieval period.
- 3.3 In the eighteenth century the building was rebuilt and remodelled in a Neo-Classical style, both inside and out. The works appear to have included new front and back walls (of brick, cased on the façade in oolite limestone ashlar) and a new interior. The ground storey (the former banking hall) still retains sections of fine plasterwork to two front-back ceiling beams dating from the eighteenth-century works. The quality of finish indicates that the building is likely to have remained a merchant's house at this time.
- 3.4 In 1843 the Trowbridge Savings Bank was built to the rear, accessed from Fore Street via a passage through the eastern end of the facade. The Site was taken over by Barclays Bank in the 1920s, who carried out extensive alterations in 1923; 1929 (insertion of concrete strong room in the basement); 1953 (alterations to front elevation); and 1965. Everything to the rear, including much of the historic range's rear elevation and internal ground-floor partitions, was demolished and replaced with extensive flat-roofed extensions between 1936-1969. It is likely that the side access was blocked off in this period.

4 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description of Historic Frontage Range

- 4.1 Nos. 2 and 3 Fore Street were historically a single residential property. They were listed Grade II* together, as one asset, in December 1950. The listing citation states:

'Fore Street Nos 2 and 3 (formerly listed as No 2 No 3 (Barclay's Bank)) 29.12.50. II Older house, re-fronted c.1700. 2 storey and attic. Ashlar stone. Projecting plinth. String at 1st floor level. Narrow moulded cornice and parapet with moulded coping. Formerly 4 now 3 tall carved vases on parapet (right hand missing). Stone tile roof. 3 pedimented dormers, the central segmental, with heavily moulded heads, each with 2 light casements and decorative leadwork to front verges. Seven glazing bar sash windows with bracketed sills and stone architrave surrounds on first floor. Eight-panel central door on ground floor in stone doorcase of engaged Doric columns and entablature with block triglyph and rounded frieze, moulded cornice and segmental modillioned pediment.*

Barclay's Bank (no.3) [the Site's frontage range] has modern windows to left hand of door and yard entry in left hand corner [replaced with a sash window, probably, in 1953]. The ground floor of No 2 altered and 'restored' with central replica Doric doorcase with segmental pediment, six-panel door and steps protected by railings. Doorway flanked by glazing bar sashes with bracketed sills and moulded architraves. No 3 retains railing to an exiguous area and has been lately embellished by a projecting cast iron bank sign and ornate cast iron panelled standards with a lamp overthrow. In the east gable wall are traces of timber framing (now exposed) and in the roof and fine array of wind braces.

Nos 1 to 9 (consecutive) form a group'.

- 4.2 The historic frontage range, that addressing Fore Street, was substantially rebuilt and remodelled in the first half of the eighteenth century. It is possible that the eastern gable wall, elements of the roof and foundations survive from the later medieval period.
- 4.3 Excepting for the restored front doorcase (with the removed steps); the ground-floor shallow bay window; and the blocked side entrance, the eighteenth-century façade, including much of the fenestration, survives as seen today [Appx.1: Figs 4-8]. Where the inner face of the elevation is visible, the wall is shown to be constructed of eighteenth-century handmade bricks in a lime mortar matrix. Much of the first-floor wall head has been rebuilt in machine-made twentieth-century bricks and the occasional use of blockwork, with similar remedial work around the windows. The outer face is of ashlar limestone. The asset's front elevation is largely formed of fabric from the eighteenth-century rebuild/remodelling. The elevation

retains, when viewed from Fore Street, its legibility as a Georgian merchant's house of a Classical style with the associated architectural ratios and detailing.

- 4.4 Excepting for much of the first floor and the wall to the projecting ground-floor bow-bay, the historic frontage range's rear wall does not survive, having been demolished in the twentieth century. The upper rear elevation is also formed in handmade eighteenth-century brickwork, but with a twentieth-century cement render to the exterior. There are extensive examples of remedial work in modern brickwork across the wall head, around the windows and in patches across the chimney flue (including a blocking of a removed hearth). The elevation retains three windows matching those seen in the front elevation. There is an inserted twentieth-century doorway accessing an external steel staircase to the eastern end.
- 4.5 All of the first-floor windows are identical, all having narrow (c.15mm) glazing bars with an early ovolo and cavetto moulding and no horns [Appx.1: Figs 26-35]. The front elevation windows are recessed, with their sash boxes concealed by the ashlar stonework. Those to the rear are set flush with the rear façade, with sash boxes concealed by modern softwood architraves and sills. The windows' narrow glazing bars point to a late eighteenth or nineteenth-century date. There is minimal survival of handmade glazing (two, possibly three examples [Appx.1: Fig.35]), suggesting that most of the surviving machine-made glazing is later nineteenth or twentieth century in date.
- 4.6 Internally the ground floor has been extensively altered, with nearly all internal partitions removed; floor levels altered by the front door; the ceiling reformed; and the walls and ceiling re-rendered. The only surviving eighteenth-century features of note being the wall to the range's central projecting rear elevation bow-bay (subsumed within the twentieth-century flat-roofed extensions) [Appx.1: Fig 17]; elements of decorated plasterwork on two surviving front-back ceiling beams [Appx.1: Figs 15-16 & 18-19]; and a Georgian doorway sporting reeded architraves with corner blocks [Appx.1: Fig.20]. A floor hatch allows access to the basement.
- 4.7 The basement plan presumably matches that of the ground floor, excepting for the rear bow-bay. It is currently very much smaller than its likely eighteenth-century (and later medieval) plan, due to the two concrete strongrooms inserted in the twentieth century. Its current plan is included in the applications' drawings. The basement was profoundly remodelled in 1929 to form two banking strong rooms, thereby greatly reducing its extent. This construction significantly reduced the height, elevated the floor and reduced the extent in plan with very much thicker walls formed. The concrete insertions were formed in shuttered concrete, presumably reinforced with iron rods. It is also presumed that elements

of the early/original walls of the basement survive beyond the insertions in their original eighteenth-century (later medieval) position.

- 4.8 The first floor of the historic frontage range is now formed of a single space with an open roof space above. It appears to have not been in use, possibly since the mid-twentieth century. A twentieth-century false floor has been inserted c.400mm above the oak beams and joists of a (possibly eighteenth-century) floor structure, truncating three window seats [Appx.1: Fig.26]. There are no boards surviving where the false floor has been opened up [Appx.1: Fig.25] but, at the entrance in the south-eastern corner, there are two oak boards that are overlain by the false floor [Appx.1: Fig.24], implying that at least part of the earlier floor may survive.
- 4.9 The interventions to the walls, particularly at the wall heads, has already been noted above [Appx.1: Fig.21]. Most of these are clearly contemporary with the extensive major repairs to the roof, which included all new dormer windows and many replacement rafters. All floor joists of the attic storey have been lost, though it is clear that the attic had been floored, at least in part, and the first-floor space partitioned, possibly with two internal walls front to back.
- 4.10 The roof, despite numerous replaced timbers, is clearly of an eighteenth-century date with a few elements possibly surviving from the later medieval period. The roof is formed in four trusses and a full complement of original book-matched wind-braces [Appx.1: Figs 22 & 36-47]. The innermost pair of trusses (possibly of medieval survival) have ties that are deeper than with the outer two. Both have chamfers with curved step stops and a long section to each with no joist sockets, implying a large opening in the floor above for an attic staircase. All purlins are tenoned into the outer faces of each truss and are well finished, with chamfers with curved step stops. Empty sockets to the underside of the principal rafters indicate that the trusses originally had queen posts and possibly collars, similar to the surviving east gable-end truss.
- 4.11 Towards the eastern corner of the rear elevation, a chimney breast is formed in eighteenth-century handmade brick over a single bay with, currently, a single small fireplace at an angle to the western side [Appx.1: Fig.23]. It is formed in ovolo timber mouldings and has been truncated by the inserted twentieth-century floor. There are signs of inserted modern brickwork and cement render to consolidate the feature, particularly at the wall head, associated with the modern repairs to the roof, the wall heads and window heads across the whole range. It is likely that there was a larger fireplace in the breast's main, parallel face but this has been blocked and much of the breast is plastered over. The external stack

above has been removed and the flue capped below the roof's cladding. There is no evidence of a flue and associated features extending below on the ground floor.

- 4.12 It is likely that the breast is the surviving element of a series of fireplaces, hearths and flues against the rear wall of the frontage range. It has lost its associated external stack and all but one of its fireplaces, and all its hearths. The fireplace was likely blocked with the early twentieth-century remodelling to change from a residence to banking use, since these elements have been plastered over with a gypsum-based render. Later consolidation works associated with the repair to the roof and consolidation of the wall heads can also be seen in the breast.

Significance of Historic Frontage Range

- 4.13 No.3 Fore Street is a statutorily designated heritage of very high national significance. Its designation at Grade II* places it within the top 6% of England's most significant designated historic buildings and structures. The asset's significance, its special interest, is primarily derived from the age, form and fabric of the historic frontage range comprising the surviving elements of an eighteenth-century merchant's town house.

Medieval House

- 4.14 The earliest elements of the asset, dating from the late medieval period, potentially comprise the range's gable walls, some elements of the roof and, presumably, the range's foundations. As such, the range's plan, and potentially its massing, height and roof form too, are legible as a being late medieval in origin. This delivers a strong primary contribution to the asset's very high significance.

Eighteenth-Century House

- 4.15 The historic frontage range was substantially rebuilt and remodelled in the early eighteenth century. The surviving associated fabric includes the range's front and rear elevations, the layout of the surviving fenestration, the structure and some boards of the first floor's floor and much of the roof's structure. The front elevation, with its fenestration in a Classical ratio; string courses; parapet; Classical doorcase; and pedimented dormers, is clearly legible as a Georgian town house despite the twentieth-century interventions. These elements deliver a strong primary contribution to the asset's very high significance.
- 4.16 Detailed surviving eighteenth-century elements include the first-floor chimney breast and hearth, the two front-back, ground-floor roof beam plasterwork and the wall to the ground-floor, rear elevation bow-bay.

Chimney Breast

- 4.17 The first-floor chimney breast is the only surviving element of a configuration of eighteenth-century flues, hearths and chimneys. All ground-floor elements and the external stack have been demolished. The surviving breast itself has been extensively repaired and altered, with the large facing hearth removed and blocked. As such, it includes modern brickwork, particularly at the wall head, and extensive areas of modern render. A smaller Georgian hearth survives at an angle to the west but is truncated by the twentieth century raised floor.
- 4.18 The chimney breast is contemporary with the range's eighteenth-century rebuild. However, due to its numerous later interventions and it being a small element of a wider, demolished structure (its potential significance has been notable diminished by these harms), it delivers a secondary level of contribution to the asset's significance.

Windows

- 4.19 It has already been noted that the layout of the surviving eighteenth-century fenestration delivers a strong contribution to the asset's significance. In regard to the sash windows themselves, analysis of those in the eighteenth-century embrasures indicates that they are late eighteenth or nineteenth century in date. Most of the glazing is of a later nineteenth or twentieth-century date. They are in good repair with contemporary fittings surviving.
- 4.20 While the windows maintain a Georgian appearance in their six-over-six form, their fabric is not contemporary with the range's eighteenth-century rebuild. As such, these windows deliver a secondary level of contribution to the asset's significance.

Plasterwork

- 4.21 There are sections of surviving eighteenth-century plasterwork on two front-back roof beams in the ground floor of the historic frontage range. These elements are complete and in excellent repair. As such, these discrete elements of decorated plaster deliver a small but primary level of contribution to the asset's significance.

Joinery

- 4.22 The significance of the roof timbers is discussed and noted above. Other joinery within the historic frontage range, aside from the windows, includes the ground-floor internal Georgian doorcase and the surround to the small first-floor hearth, both contemporary with the range's eighteenth-century development. These are discrete, small elements of joinery exhibiting good survival and, as such, deliver a small but primary level of contribution to the asset's significance.

Site Passage Entrance

- 4.23 The side passage was clearly in place in the mid-nineteenth century but is likely to have been constructed as part of the eighteenth-century development of the historic frontage range. It was blocked as part of the asset's remodelling as a bank in the twentieth century. This was carried out in a high-quality manner, using ashlar masonry matching the façade and reproducing the form of the existing Georgian window casements. However, the blocking of the passage entrance delivered harm to the significance of the asset.

Rear Elevation Bow-Bay

- 4.24 The walls of the rear bow-bay survive subsumed within the twentieth-century extensions. Its construction is likely to have been part of the eighteenth-century development of the frontage range. It had three windows which are blocked and their sills removed. The bow-bay's roof was removed and is currently roofed by a part of the flat roofs serving the rear twentieth-century extensions.
- 4.25 The bow-bay, as part of the eighteenth-century development and evidence of the importance of the rear garden to the Georgian house, is an element of strong primary contribution to the asset's significance.

Twentieth Century Bank

- 4.26 The remodelling of the historic frontage range through the twentieth century to effect a change of use from residence to bank delivered a strong harmful contribution to the asset's significance. These works included the rear flat-roof extensions; the demolition of much of the range's rear ground-floor wall; the removal of internal partitions on both floors; the insertion of a first-floor false floor; the blocking of side passageway; the insertion of a ground-floor, shallow bay window in the main façade; the construction of two concrete strong rooms in the basement; the removal of the front door's steps (and reduction of floor level immediately within); the insertion of an external first-floor door in the rear elevation; and the associated steel stairs.
- 4.27 The dormer windows are later twentieth-century constructions that maintain a Georgian appearance. These windows deliver a secondary level of contribution to the asset's significance. The frontage elevation's ground-floor bay window is a harmful element to the asset's significance.
- 4.28 The front door casement is a high-quality formation that replaced the original eighteenth-century casement. It similarly maintains a Georgian appearance to the main façade. It provides a secondary level of contribution to the asset's significance.

Conservation Area and Group Value with Listed Buildings

- 4.29 The contribution of Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area and surrounding listed buildings to the significance of No.3 Fore Street is covered in Appx.1. Similarly, the assessment of the Conservation Area and the proposal's impact on its character and appearance (significance) is covered in Appx.1.

5 PROPOSALS AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Proposals

- 5.1 This section wholly supplants section 6 *Proposals and Assessment of Impact* in the RPS' pre-application built heritage statement [Appx.1].
- 5.2 The details of the proposals are set out in the drawings and the planning statement supporting the planning application and the listed building consent application. The proposals, in summary, comprise the demolition of the twentieth-century single-storey, flat-roof rear extensions, the remodelling of the two-storey frontage range to form two apartments and the development of a four-storey structure towards the rear of the Site.

Assessment of Impact

- 5.3 The proposals will deliver a number of significant heritage-centred public benefits to the identified designated heritage assets. These include the demolition of the twentieth-century flat-roof extensions allowing the reinstatement of the historic central courtyard/garden space in the Site. These elements' demolition also will reveal and allow the reinstatement of the eighteenth-century central bow-bay in the frontage range's rear elevation (itself to be reinstated).
- 5.4 Of this latter element, the three windows will be reinstated to match the Georgian-style windows seen elsewhere in the frontage range. The delivery of suitable windows, casements and reinstated sills can be secured by an appropriately worded condition(s) on consent. A similar approach is wholly suitable for the reinstatement of two Georgian-style window casements and windows once the twentieth-century bay window in the façade has been removed.
- 5.5 Additionally, no element of the bow-bay's roof structure has survived the demolition works in the building's conversion from a residence to a bank. The details of the form of the reinstated roof to the bay, materials and form, can be secured by an appropriately worded condition(s) on consent.
- 5.6 Other enhancements delivered by the proposal include the reinstatement of the historic rear-access side alleyway; the removal of the twentieth-century shallow bay window in the front façade; the subsequent reinsertion of eighteenth-century-style windows, thereby reinstating the symmetrical appearance of the eighteenth-century façade; and the reinstatement of the front doorstep (and the internal historic floor level).

- 5.7 The reinstatement of the side passageway entrance will use the casement of the inserted Georgian-style window inserted in the twentieth century. The materials to be used, the form of the entrance below the current window and the form of the new door can be secured by an appropriately worded condition(s) on consent. A similar approach is wholly suitable for the reinstatement of the front door's step and the associated internal flooring.
- 5.8 Due to the divergence of professional opinion between the RPS assessment [Appx.1] and that within the Trowbridge Extensive Urban Survey, the Council could secure a dendrochronology survey of the roof as a condition on consent. This would confirm the origin date of the roof structure.
- 5.9 Contrary to the proposal as set out in the pre-application discussions, the submitted scheme will retain the remnant of the eighteenth-century chimney breast that survives in part on the first floor of the historic frontage range.

Harmful Impacts

- 5.10 The proposal will deliver a series of some less than significant but notable harms. These include the re-subdivision of the ground and first floors of the historic frontage range – returning this element of the Site to a residential use – and the introduction of a multi-storey element towards the rear of the Site. The new subdivisions can be carried out with stud wall causing a minimal impact and would be reversible. The detailed form of the interface between the new stud-wall divisions with the existing fabric can be secured by an appropriately worded condition(s) on consent.
- 5.11 The new built element to the rear of the Site matches the mass and height of back-land developments seen in adjacent properties and will not be visible from Fore Street.

Summary of Impacts

- 5.12 The Built Heritage Statement concludes, as set out in the Planning Statement, that the proposal will deliver an aggregate enhancement to the significance of the Grade II* listed No.3 Fore Street and to the character and appearance of Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area (including the significance of other listed buildings adjacent and nearby the Site – most notably No.2, Fore Street).
- 5.13 The overall, general heritage-centred public benefit that the proposal will deliver is the optimum viable use of this highly significant designated asset, returning the frontage range to its historic residential use; thereby securing it its enduring sustainable use for the enjoyment of future generations.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by Jonathan Smith of Blake Turnbull Heritage Consultancy, on behalf of MCH Minibuses Ltd. The Statement, in conjunction with the RPS' pre-application built heritage statement, assesses the likely impact on the historic built environment of the proposed planning and listed building consent applications related to the Grade II* listed 3 Fore Street, Trowbridge. The Site is centred at NGR ST 85476 58014 on the northern side of the historic core of Trowbridge.
- 6.2 In summary, the proposals comprise the demolition of the twentieth-century flat-roof extensions; the internal remodelling of the historic frontage range to form two apartments; the reinstatement of the historic side alleyway and rear courtyard; and new-build development of a four-storey apartment block towards the rear of the Site.
- 6.3 The built element of the Site is designated at Grade II*, with its historic other half (No.2), reflecting their historic and architectural significance as a late-medieval or early post-medieval wool cloth merchant's house that was fashionably re-faced in the eighteenth century. It forms part of a group of designated Georgian merchant houses on Fore Street in the Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 6.4 This Statements refer to the relevant legislative framework contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as relevant national and local planning policy. Appropriate Historic England guidance has also been consulted to inform the judgements made. The reports are further based on the findings of historical research, a Site and area walkover survey, map studies and professional judgement.
- 6.5 It was initially considered that the proposals for the Site hold the potential to have an impact on the significance of only two built heritage assets: the Grade II* listed 3 Fore Street; and Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area, which includes numerous listed buildings.
- 6.6 It is concluded that the proposals will deliver significant heritage benefits to the identified built heritage assets. These include the demolition of the twentieth-century flat-roof extensions allowing the reinstatement of the historic courtyard/garden. These elements' demolition also will reveal and allow the reinstatement of the rear bow-bay in the frontage range's rear elevation. Other enhancements delivered by the proposal include the reinstatement of the historic rear-access side alley; the removal of the inserted bay window in the main façade; the reinstatement of the portrait windows, thereby reforming the symmetrical appearance of the eighteenth-century façade; and the reinstatement of the front doorstep.

- 6.7 The overall, general heritage-centred public benefit that the proposal will deliver is the optimum viable use of this highly significant designated asset, returning the frontage range to its historic residential use. The scheme, contrary to that set out at pre-application, will include the retention of the remnant of the eighteenth-century, first-floor chimney breast.
- 6.8 The proposal will also deliver a series some less than significant but notable harms. These include the re-subdivision of the frontage range and the introduction of a multi-storey element towards the rear of the Site. The new subdivisions can be carried out with stud wall causing a minimal impact and can be reversible. The new built element to the rear of the Site matches the mass and height of back land developments seen in adjacent properties and will not be visible from Fore Street.
- 6.9 The Built Heritage Statement concludes, as set out in the Planning Statement, that the proposal will deliver an aggregate enhancement to the significance of the Grade II* listed 3 Fore Street and to the character and appearance of Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area (including the significance of other listed buildings adjacent and nearby the Site – most notably 2, Fore Street).
- 6.10 The proposal's public benefits are set out in the Planning Statement supporting the applications. This confirms that the proposal's public benefits notably outweigh the heritage harms caused. As such, the aggregate public benefits, including the noted significant heritage benefits to the identified built heritage assets, provide the justification for the noted, lesser heritage harms caused by the proposal. Additionally, in reference to the decision maker's statutory duty under the 1990 Act, the decision maker will give regard to the desirability of keeping the identified designated assets from harm ('preserved'); this regard would be applied in a case where the proposals deliver an aggregate enhancement to the historic built environment.
- 6.11 The proposals will have no aggregate adverse impact on the significance of any built heritage asset. In fact, the proposals deliver heritage enhancements to the significance of the identified assets. The Statement provides sufficient information as per the requirements of the NPPF and Local Plan policy to allow the LPA to determine the impact on the significance of built heritage assets as part of their decision-making within the planning process. There is no built heritage impediment to granting consent to the planning application and the listed building consent application.

APPENDIX 1: PRE-APPLICATION BUILT HERITAGE STATEMENT

FORMER BARCLAY'S BANK, 3 FORE STREET, TROWBRIDGE

Built Heritage Statement

HER01319
v.3
28th July 2024

REPORT

Document status					
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Built Heritage Statement has been prepared to assess the potential impact on the historic built environment arising from the proposed conversion of No.3 Fore Street, Trowbridge from a bank to 2(no.) apartments, to include a new 4-storey apartment block to the rear providing a further 4(no.) apartments.

The host building is the eastern half of what was originally a single dwelling, the two parts (nos.2 and 3) being Listed at Grade II* on account of their historic and architectural special interest as an early post-medieval woolcloth merchant's house that was fashionably re-faced in the eighteenth century. It forms part of a group of exceptional Georgian merchant's houses on Fore Street (many Listed at Grade II* or Grade I), those on the south side (including the Site) being built on an outer element of the site of Trowbridge's former medieval castle.

The proposals will substantially restore the key front facade of the host building to its original eighteenth-century state, reflecting the previous similar treatment of 2 Fore Street. This will include the bay window inserted in the early twentieth century, reflecting the later commercial rather than the historic residential use. It will also strip out the harmful, flat-roof extensions wholly at odds with the asset's historic character and remodelling of the Site to convert it to a bank in the twentieth century. The scheme will, therefore, reinstate the historic courtyard and arrangement of the rear elevation to the historic building. These enhancements can be regarded as a significant public benefit, as they will enhance the significance and the legibility of the asset's significance, as well as that of the wider group of important historic merchant's houses on Fore Street.

The proposed apartment block at the rear of the Site has historic precedent in a large building that is shown at the back of the plot on published maps prior to 1969. It seems most likely that this was a clothier's warehouse before becoming bank to the rear of the residence in the later nineteenth century. Further precedence, in terms of height and number of storeys of the proposed rear element, is given in immediately adjacent backland and rear elements, including to the rear service wing of number 2 Fore Street (part of the original historic building on the Site). Given these precedencies, coupled with the discreet location of the proposed new block (it will not be visible from Fore Street), no notable harm from the proposed new block is predicted to the host building's heritage significance.

Apart from a new external door (in the existing opening) and replacement external stair access (replacing the existing steel structure) the proposals involve no change to the historic fabric of the first-floor rear elevation, subject to the conservation repair of the existing fenestration. The removal and replacement of the existing large rear, flat-roof, ground-floor extension, with the reinstatement of the historic rear courtyard and the revealing of the historic rear elevation (the central projecting bay), is regarded as having a large positive effect on the heritage asset's significance and its legibility, and that too of the setting to adjacent built heritage assets.

Other heritage benefits and enhancement to the ground floor include the reinstatement of the ground floor and the attendant step at the front door. The scheme will also see the reinstatement of the historic side passage allowing rear access to the Site from Fore Street.

The ground-floor two-bed apartment in the frontage range will be located partly within the retained frontage range. Because of the twentieth-century rear extension and previous internal interventions, the work will involve no removal of significant historic fabric. The historic ceiling will be retained, albeit that it will be divided in places by new partitions. The division of the ceiling will have a moderate adverse effect on the building's architectural and artistic (evidential) significance.

Bringing the first and second floors (attic space) of the frontage range into a beneficial use (an optimum viable use) as an apartment is regarded as a significant benefit. Subject to the retention and conservative repair of the windows. The removal and impacts on historic fabric will be minimal and, in most cases, would be reversible.

This proposed first-floor apartment is currently a single space due to previous removal of all partitions and attic floor, probably when the roof was subject to past extensive repair. There is nevertheless abundant evidence of the positions of past partitions, both within the wall finishes and the remaining roof carpentry. Given the existing state of these upper floors, the proposed partitions are not seen as unduly harmful, particularly as the

proposed subdivision of the space can be reversible and will retain a double-height space at the western end of the building and towards the centre of the building.

It seems likely that the removal of the false floor will reveal further evidence of past room layouts. Historic building recording, including dendro-dating of the roof carpentry and first-floor structure (secured by an appropriate condition) would be of benefit to the building's archaeological (evidential) significance and would mitigate any necessary harm.

Concern has been expressed during initial pre-application discussions that the proposed four-storey block might have an adverse impact on views across the Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area, particularly the 'Historic Retail Centre Character Area'. As will be seen from the panoramic images contained in this Heritage Statement, it is clear that the Site is substantially invisible in ground-level public views. If any part of the proposed new block is visible (e.g. from the upper windows of the surviving woollen mills within the Character Area), there is no reason why a new red-brick building under a traditional gabled slate roof should have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the conservation area.

It would no doubt be desirable to enhance the thermal performance of the first- and second-floor windows, but there is no reason to believe that such an objective cannot be satisfactorily met by draught-stripping, secondary glazing or 'slimline' double-glazing without detriment to the host building's architectural or historic interest. Subject to retention and reuse of the existing window joinery and the retention of the hand-made glass of the front-facing windows on the first floor, a satisfactory upgrade of the thermal performance of the windows may be secured by a suitably-worded planning condition.

Overall, the proposed development will deliver a number of significant public benefits that mitigate in its favour, including giving this neglected building a long-term sustainable use and providing six new town-centre dwellings. These benefits need to be weighed against any minor harms, most of which may be mitigated through a programme of dendro-dating and archaeological building recording.

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by RPS, a Tetra Tech company, on behalf of MCH Coaches, Uxbridge. It addresses the proposed redevelopment of the Grade II* Listed former Barclays Bank, 3 Fore Street, Trowbridge (hereafter referred to as ‘the Site’) from redundant office and ancillary accommodation to one two-bedroom apartment and five one-bed apartments.
- 1.2 This report refers to the relevant legislation contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and both national and local planning policy. In addition, relevant Historic England guidance notably The Setting of Heritage Assets has been consulted to inform the judgements made. Relevant information, including the listing citations for the relevant heritage assets have also been consulted in preparing this Built Heritage Statement. The conclusions reached in this report are the result of detailed historic research, a walkover survey of the Site and publicly accessible locations in the surrounding area, map studies and the application of professional judgement.
- 1.3 The findings of this report are based on the known conditions at the time of writing and all findings and conclusions are time limited to no more than two years from the date of this report. All maps, plans and photographs are for illustrative purposes only.

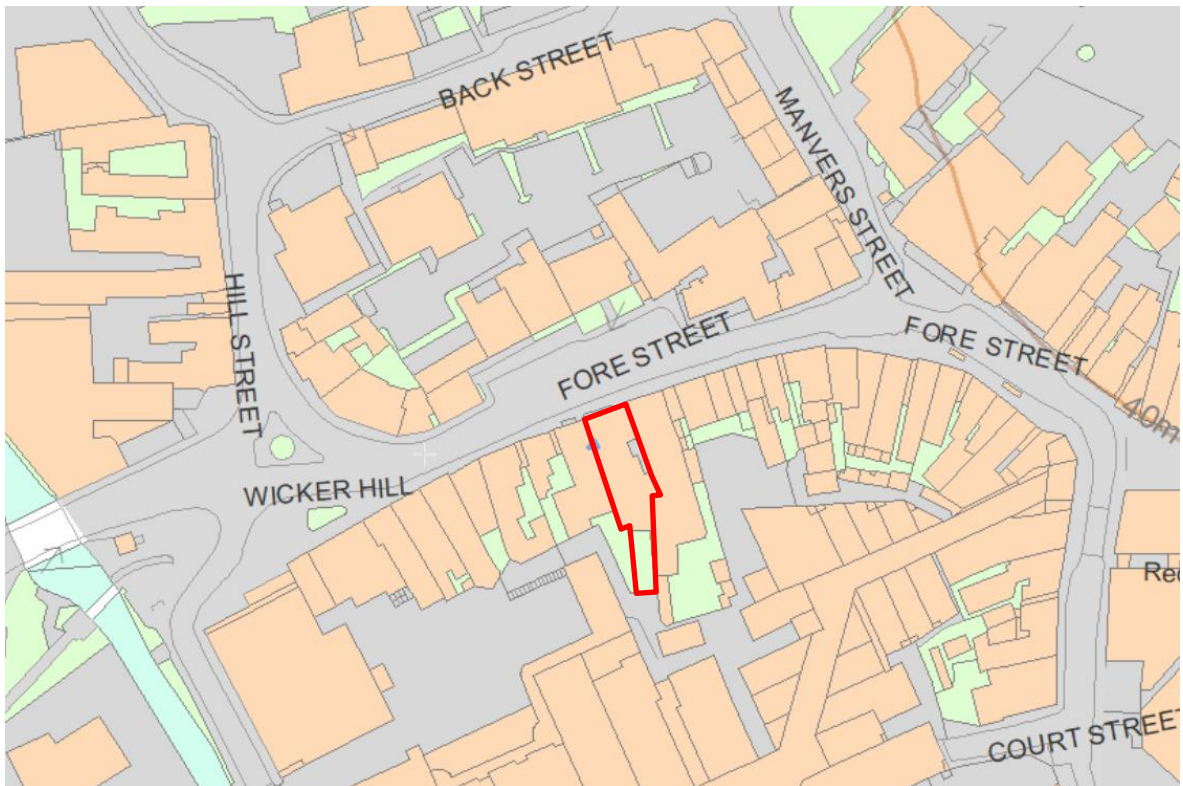


Fig.1: Location plan showing the proposals site

2 LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The current national legislative and planning policy system identifies, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that applicants should consider the potential impact of development upon 'heritage assets'. This term includes designated heritage assets which possess a statutory designation (for example listed buildings and conservation areas); and non-designated heritage assets, typically identified by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and incorporated into a Local List and/or recorded on the Historic Environment Record.

Legislation

- 2.2 Where any development may affect certain designated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure proposed works are developed and considered with due regard to their impact on designated heritage assets. This extends from primary legislation under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 2.3 The relevant legislation in this case extends from section 66 of the 1990 Act which states that special regard must be given by the decision maker, in the exercise of planning functions, to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings and their setting.
- 2.4 The meaning and effect of these duties have been considered by the courts, including the Court of Appeal's decision in relation to Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northamptonshire District Council [2014] EWCA Civ 137.
- 2.5 The Court agreed within the High Court's judgement that Parliament's intention in enacting section 66(1) was that decision makers should give 'considerable importance and weight' to the desirability of preserving (i.e. keeping from harm) the setting of listed buildings.
- 2.6 Section 69(1) of the Act requires LPAs to 'determine areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and to designate them as conservation areas. Section 69(2) requires LPAs to review and, where necessary, amend those areas 'from time to time'.
- 2.7 For development within a conservation area section 72 of the Act requires the decision maker to pay 'special attention [...] to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'. The duty to give special attention is considered commensurate with that under section 66(1) to give special regard, meaning that the decision maker must give considerable importance and weight to any such harm in the planning balance. However, unlike the parallel duty under section 66, there is no explicit protection for the setting of a conservation area.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

- 2.8 The NPPF is the principal document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- 2.9 It defines a heritage asset as a: 'building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest'. This includes both designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.10 Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment relates to the conservation of heritage assets in the production of local plans and decision taking. It emphasises that heritage assets are 'an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance'.
- 2.11 For proposals that have the potential to affect the significance of a heritage asset, paragraph 207 requires applicants to identify and describe the significance of any heritage assets that may be

affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected. This is supported by paragraph 208, which requires LPAs to take this assessment into account when considering applications.

- 2.12 Under 'Considering potential impacts' paragraph 212 states that 'great weight' should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of whether any potential impact equates to total loss, substantial harm or less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets.
- 2.13 Paragraph 214 states that where a development will result in substantial harm to, or total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, permission should be refused, unless this harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits, or a number of criteria are met. Where less than substantial harm is identified paragraph 215 requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development.
- 2.14 Paragraph 216 states that where an application will affect the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement is required, having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.15 Paragraph 219 notes that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. It also states that proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the asset should be treated favourably.
- 2.16 Furthermore, paragraph 220 states that not all elements of a conservation area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. When determining the impacts arising from the loss of a building or element that does positively contribute, consideration should be given to the relative significance of that building and the impact to the significance of the conservation area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023

- 2.17 Heritage is dealt with in Chapter 3 whereby amendments enacted to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 are set out.
- 2.18 The effect of the Act [Clause 102] in regard to the setting to scheduled monuments is that these now have the same statutory status to those of listed buildings.
- 2.19 Clause 102 also enacts amendments to the two Acts such that a desirability to not only 'preserve' a designated asset (World Heritage Sites; Scheduled Monuments; Registered Parks and Gardens; listed buildings and Protected Wrecks, but not conservation areas) and its setting, but now a desirability to 'preserve or enhance' such a designated asset and its setting.
- 2.20 No part of the Act is engaged in this case in relation to built heritage assets.

National Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance (DCLG)

- 2.21 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) has been adopted to aid the application of the NPPF. It reiterates that conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle.
- 2.22 The PPG defines the different heritage interests as follows:
 - 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.
 - 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.

- historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). 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.

- 2.23 Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. It states that substantial harm is a high bar that may not arise in many cases. It also states that while the level of harm will be at the discretion of the decision maker, generally substantial harm is a high test that will only arise where a development seriously affects a key element of an asset's special interest. It is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development, that is to be assessed.

Overview: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning

- 2.24 Historic England have published a series of documents to advise applicants, owners, decision-takers and other stakeholders on managing change within the historic environment. These include Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning (GPAs) documents and Historic England Advice Notes (HEANS).

GPA1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans (March 2015)

- 2.25 This advice note focuses on the importance of identifying heritage policies within Local Plans. The advice echoes the NPPF by stressing the importance of formulating Local Plans based on up-to-date and relevant evidence on economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area, including the historic environment.

GPA2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (March 2015)

- 2.26 This document provides advice on numerous ways in which decision making in the historic environment could be undertaken, emphasising that the first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and the contribution of its setting to that significance. In line with the NPPF and PPG, the document states that early engagement and expert advice in considering and assessing the significance of heritage assets is encouraged. The advice suggests a structured, staged approach to the assembly and analysis of relevant information:

1. Understand the significance of the affected assets;
2. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance.
3. Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
4. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
5. Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance balanced with the need for change; and
6. Offset negative impacts to significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Second Edition; December 2017)

- 2.27 This advice note focuses on the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. This document replaces GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (March 2017) and Seeing History in the

View (English Heritage, 2011) in order to aid practitioners with the implementation of national legislation, policies and guidance relating to the setting of heritage assets found in the 1990 Act, the NPPF and PPG. The guidance is largely a continuation of the philosophy and approach of the 2011 and 2015 documents and does not present a divergence in either the definition of setting or the way in which it should be assessed.

- 2.28 As with the NPPF the document defines setting as ‘the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve’. Setting is also described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context. The guidance emphasises that setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, and that its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset, or the ability to appreciate that significance. It also states that elements of setting may make a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the significance of the heritage asset.
- 2.29 While setting is largely a visual term, with views considered to be an important consideration in any assessment of the contribution that setting makes to the significance of an asset, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced, setting also encompasses other environmental factors including noise, vibration and odour. Historical and cultural associations may also form part of the asset’s setting, which can inform or enhance the significance of a heritage asset.
- 2.30 This document provides guidance on practical and proportionate decision making with regards to the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. It is stated that the protection of the setting of a heritage asset need not prevent change and that decisions relating to such issues need to be based on the nature, extent and level of the significance of a heritage asset, further weighing up the potential public benefits associated with the proposals. It is further stated that changes within the setting of a heritage asset may have positive or neutral effects.
- 2.31 The document also states that the contribution made to the significance of heritage assets by their settings will vary depending on the nature of the heritage asset and its setting, and that different heritage assets may have different abilities to accommodate change without harming their significance. Setting should, therefore, be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.32 Historic England recommends using a series of detailed steps in order to assess the potential effects of a proposed development on significance of a heritage asset. The 5-step process is as follows:
1. Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
 2. Assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of a heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated;
 3. Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it;
 4. Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
 5. Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

HEAN12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (October 2019)

- 2.33 This advice note provides information on how to assess the significance of a heritage asset. It also explores how this should be used as part of a staged approach to decision-making in which assessing significance precedes designing the proposal(s).
- 2.34 Historic England notes that the first stage in identifying the significance of a heritage asset is by understanding its form and history. This includes the historical development, an analysis of its surviving fabric and an analysis of the setting, including the contribution setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset.

- 2.35 To assess the significance of the heritage asset, Historic England advise to describe various interests. These follow the heritage interest identified in the NPPF and PPG and are: archaeological interest, architectural interest, artistic interest and historic interest.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.36 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations.
- 2.37 The statutory Development Plan is the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015). This incorporates Saved policies from former District Local Plans, that were not replaced by the WCS, and will continue to be saved until replaced as part of the Local Plan Review process. It also contains the following Policies of relevance to this application:

Core Policy 57 - Ensuring high quality design and place shaping

A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality. Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through:

- i. enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced*
- iii. responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting*
- iv. being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and historic landscapes*
- vi. making efficient use of land whilst taking account of the characteristics of the site and the local context to deliver an appropriate development which relates effectively to the immediate setting and to the wider character of the area*
- vii. having regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants, and ensuring that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself, including the consideration of privacy, overshadowing, vibration, and pollution (e.g. light intrusion, noise, smoke, fumes, effluent, waste or litter)*
- x. the sensitive design of advertisements and signage, which are appropriate and sympathetic to their local setting by means of scale, design, lighting and materials*
- xi. taking account of the needs of potential occupants, through planning for diversity and adaptability, and considering how buildings and space will be used in the immediate and long term future*

Core Policy 58 - Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment. Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance, including:

- i. nationally significant archaeological remains*
- ii. World Heritage Sites within and adjacent to Wiltshire*

iii. buildings and structures of special architectural or historic interest

iv. the special character or appearance of conservation areas

v. historic parks and gardens

vi. important landscapes, including registered battlefields and townscapes.

Distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced. The potential contribution of these heritage assets towards wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits will also be utilised where this can be delivered in a sensitive and appropriate manner in accordance with Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping).

Heritage assets at risk will be monitored and development proposals that improve their condition will be encouraged. The advice of statutory and local consultees will be sought in consideration of such applications.

- 2.38 The Government requires every Local Plan to be reviewed at least once every five years. Wiltshire's Local Plan, is therefore being reviewed.
- 2.39 The Wiltshire Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038 has been through the Regulation 19 consultation (autumn 2023), which took place between 27 September to 22 November 2023 and is ready for independent examination.
- 2.40 In the Regulation 19 Wiltshire Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038 Policies 57 and 58 of the Core Strategy are replaced by Policy 98 - Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping and Policy 99 - Ensuring the Conservation and Enhancement of the Historic Environment.
- 2.41 Apart from the changed policy numbers, the wording of the existing and Regulation 19 Design and Heritage policies are essentially the same.

3 HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT APPRAISAL

Historical Background

Typonymy

- 3.1 The origin of the name *Trowbridge* is uncertain; one source claims derivation from *treow-brycg*, meaning 'Tree Bridge', referring to the first bridge over the Biss, while another states the true meaning is the bridge by Trowle, the name of a hamlet and a common to the west of the town. On John Speed's map of Wiltshire (1611), the name is spelt *Trubridge*.

Early History

- 3.2 In the tenth century, written records and architectural ruins begin marking Trowbridge's existence as a village. In the 1086 Domesday Book the village of *Straburg*, as Trowbridge was then known, was recorded as having 24 households, well endowed with land, particularly arable ploughlands, and rendering 8pounds sterling to its feudal lord a year. Its feudal lord was an Anglo-Saxon named Brictric, who was the largest landowner in Wiltshire.

Castle

- 3.3 The first mention of Trowbridge Castle was in 1139 when it was besieged. It was no longer in military use by the 14th century and by the sixteenth century only ruins remained. The castle is thought to have been a motte-and-bailey castle, and its morphological influence can still be seen in the town today. Fore Street follows the path of the castle ditch, and the town has a Castle Street and the Castle Place Shopping Centre.
- 3.4 It is likely the Castle was built by Humphrey I de Bohun; his family dominated the town for over a hundred years. The most notable member of the family was Henry de Bohun, born around 1176, who became lord of the manor when he was about 15 years of age. It was he who really began to shape the medieval town. In 1200 he obtained a market charter, arguably the earliest for a town in Wiltshire, and one of the earliest in England. His officials were to lay out burgage plots for traders, artisans, and shopkeepers. The outline of these plots can still be seen today in the footprints of some of the present properties in Fore Street.
- 3.5 Within Trowbridge Castle was a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon church. Henry de Bohun turned this to secular use and instead had a new church built outside the Castle; this was the first St James's Church. In the base of the tower of the present-day church, below the subsequently added spire, can be seen the Romanesque architecture of the period.
- 3.6 In 1200 Henry de Bohun was created Earl of Hereford by King John. Like other barons, Henry was later threatened by King John and his caput of Trowbridge was taken from him. Henry then joined with the other barons to oppose John's arbitrary rule and forced him to seal Magna Carta (the Great Charter) at Runnymede; and was elected as one of the 25 enforcers of the charter. Some years after Runnymede, Henry regained control of Trowbridge.

Woollen Cloth Industry

- 3.7 Trowbridge developed as a centre for woollen cloth production from the fourteenth century. Thus before the start of the Tudor period, the towns of south-west Wiltshire stood out from the rest of the county with all the signs of increasing wealth and prosperity during the period of trade recovery led by exports begun under Yorkist Edward IV and, still more, during expansion under Henry VII, when England's annual woollen exports increased from some 60,000 to some 80,000 cloths of assize.
- 3.8 During the seventeenth century the production of woollen cloth became increasingly industrialised. However, mechanisation was resisted by workers in traditional trades; there were riots in 1785 and 1792, and again in the era of Luddism (1811–1816) owing to the introduction of the flying shuttle. Thomas Helliker, a shearman's apprentice, became one of the martyrs of the Industrial Revolution in 1803 when he was hanged at Fisherton Jail, Salisbury. Nevertheless, at one point in 1820, Trowbridge's scale of production was such it was described as the 'Manchester of the West'. It had

over twenty woollen cloth producing factories, making it comparable to northern industrial towns such as Rochdale.

- 3.9 The woollen cloth industry declined in the late nineteenth century with the advent of ring-spinning, and this decline continued throughout the twentieth century, although Trowbridge's West of England cloth maintained a reputation for excellent quality. The last mill, Salter's Home Mill, closed in 1982 and is now the home of Boswell's Café and Trowbridge Museum and Art Gallery, integrated into the Shires Shopping Centre. Clark's Mill is now home to offices; straddling the nearby River Biss is the 'Handle House', formerly used for drying and storage of teazles used to raise the nap of cloth. This is one of very few such buildings still known to exist in the United Kingdom.

1800s to present

- 3.10 In its place a bedding industry developed, initially using wool cast off from the mills; the company now known as Airsprung Furniture Group was started in the town in the 1870s. Food production also developed in the town when Abraham Bowyer started his business in 1805 which eventually, as Pork Farms Bowyers, became one of the largest employers in the town until closure in April 2008 when production moved to the Shaftesbury and Nottingham factories.
- 3.11 The town became the county town of Wiltshire in 1889 when Wiltshire County Council was formed and sought a place which representatives from Swindon and Salisbury, among others, could reach and return home from in one day. Trowbridge fulfilled this criterion by virtue of its railway connections and thus was chosen as the county town, further reinforced by the construction of Wiltshire County Hall in 1939.

History of the Site

- 3.12 The building now known as Nos. 2 and 3 Fore Street has a fine early post-medieval oak-framed roof and west gable and it appears likely that the building was first constructed as a large, two-storey-plus-attic merchant's house. The roof timbers and curved wind-braces were clearly meant to be seen and details such as the curved step stop to the chamfers of the two of the principal truss ties and tenoned purlins indicate a likely date between 1550 and 1600, although the Trowbridge Extensive Urban Survey attributes a fifteenth-century date to the roof, making the building an early survival in the context of Trowbridge.
- 3.13 In the early eighteenth century the building was thoroughly modernised and brought up-to-date in neo-classical manner, both inside and out. The works appear to have included new front and back walls (of brick, cased on the façade in oolite limestone ashlar) and a much-altered interior after the latest fashions. The ground storey still retains some fine plasterwork to the ceiling. The quality of finish indicates that the building is likely to have remained a merchant's house at this time.
- 3.14 In 1843 No.3 Fore Street became the Trowbridge Savings Bank, with the bank itself apparently in a large building at the rear, accessed from the street via a passage through the eastern end of No.3. The Trowbridge Savings Bank was taken over by Barclay's Bank in the 1920s [Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre; NRA33478 Wiltshire savings (Minutes)]. Barclays carried out a number of alterations, in 1923, 1929 (Strong Room), 1953 (Alterations to front elevation) and 1965 (Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Building Plans). The latter has not been examined, but OS mapping indicates that everything at the rear was demolished and replaced with flat-roofed extension sometime between the OS 1:2500 maps of 1936 and 1969.



Fig.2: Excerpt from the OS 1:125 Town Map revised 1899, showing 'Bank' in a large building to the rear of No.3 Fore Street.

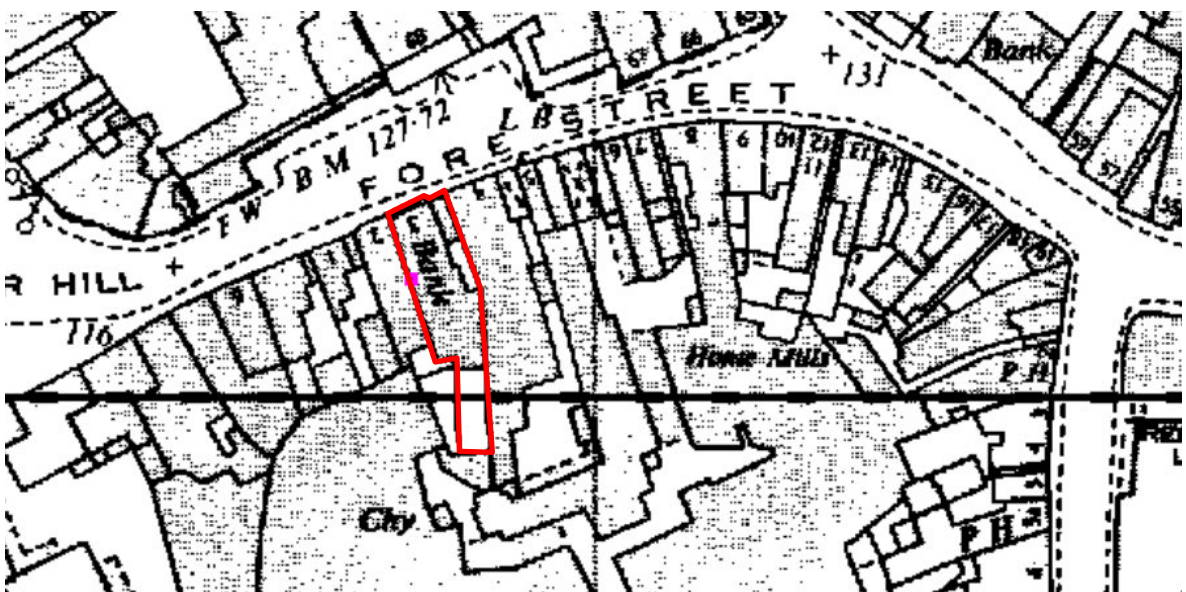


Fig.3: Excerpt from the OS 1:2500 map of 1969, showing alterations to the rear.



Fig.4: Mid nineteenth-century view looking east up Fore Street, from a lithograph by Edward H. Buckler, showing No.2 (on right) as 'Savings Bank'. By this date, No.2 (far right) had an elaborate projecting shop window, with the name 'Evans'. The image clearly shows the covered alley accessing the rear of the building.

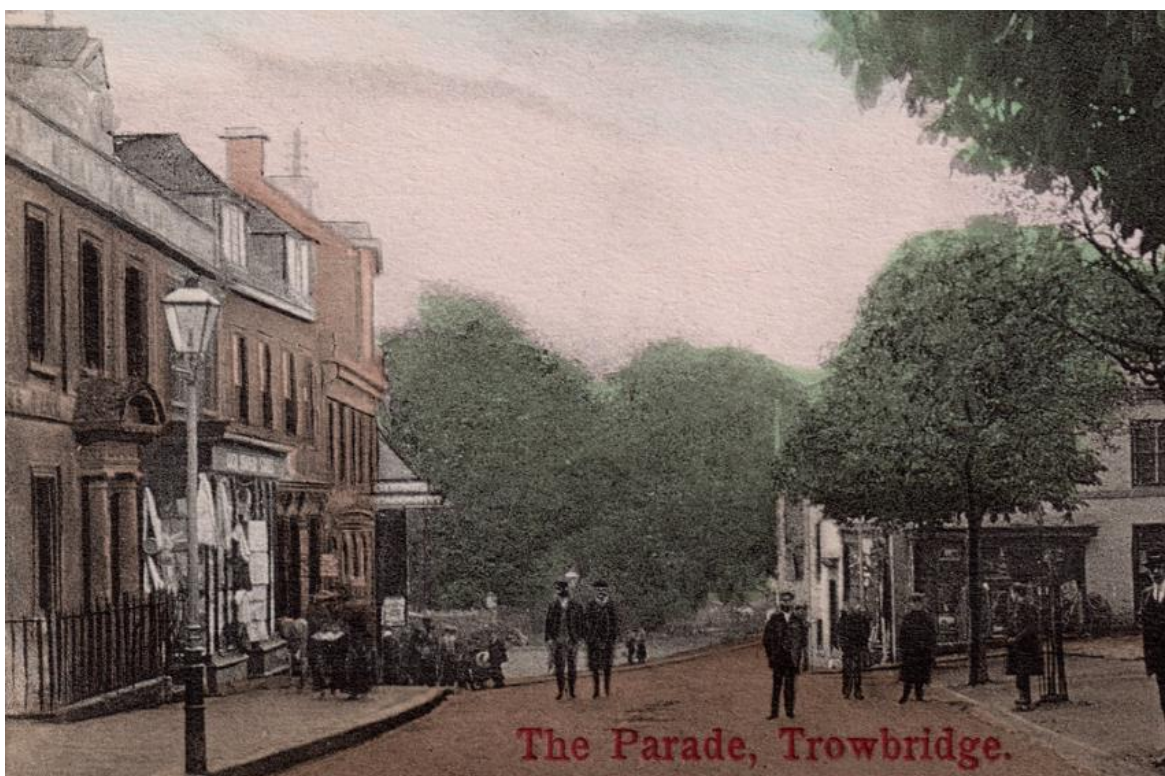


Fig.5: Early twentieth-century view looking west along Fore Street towards Wicker Hill, with Nos 2 and 3 Fore Street on far left.



Fig.6: c.1920 view, looking west, of Wicker Hill and Fore Street. By this time No.3 had gained its large ground-floor window.



Fig.7: View of 1933 looking east along Fore Street, showing the ground floor of No.3 still with a covered passage leading to the back of the building, together with a large window replacing two earlier sash windows. No.2 is now 'Gardner'.



Fig.8: Contemporary view showing No.2 Fore Street (to right) following the removal of the Victorian shopfront and addition of central, pedimented door in stone.

4 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

- 4.1 Nos. 2 and 3 Fore Street were historically a single property. They were listed together, as one asset, in December 1950. Today they share Grade II* Listing. Together they share the following statutory Description:

*FORE STREET Nos 2 and 3 (formerly listed as No 2 No 3 (Barclay's Bank)) 29.12.50. II**

Older house, refronted circa 1700. 2 storey and attic. Ashlar stone. Projecting plinth. String at 1st floor level. Narrow moulded cornice and parapet with moulded coping. Formerly 4 now 3 tall carved vases on parapet (right hand missing). Stone tile roof. 3 pedimented dormers, the central segmental, with heavily moulded heads, each with 2 light casements and decorative leadwork to front verges. 7 glazing bar sash windows with bracketted cills and stone architrave surrounds on 1st floor. 8-panel central door on ground floor in stone doorcase of engaged Doric columns and entablature with block triglyph and rounded frieze, moulded cornice and segmental modillioned pediment.

Barclay's Bank (no.3) has modern windows to left hand of door and yard entry in left hand corner (since replaced with a sash window). The ground floor of No 2 altered and 'restored' with central replica Doric doorcase with segmental pediment, 6 panel door and steps protected by railings. Doorway flanked by glazing bar sashes with bracketted cills and moulded architraves. No 3 retains railing to an exiguous area and has been lately embellished by a projecting cast iron bank sign and ornate cast iron panelled standards with a lamp overthrow. In the east gable wall are traces of timber framing (now exposed) and in the roof and fine array of wind braces.

Nos 1 to 9 (consec) form a group.

- 4.2 The façade of No.3 Fore Street was substantially refaced in the early eighteenth century and, as shown in early iconography, save for the large bay window on the ground floor (opening created in the 1920s or 1930s) and the conversion of the passage opening to a window (probably 1953). The ornate cast iron panelled standards with a lamp overthrow in front of the front door probably date to the same time. Where the inner face of the front elevation is visible, it is of handmade brick in a lime-mortar matrix with no evidence of earlier fenestration. The front wall of the building thus appears to be of Georgian origin.
- 4.3 Only the upper (first floor) part of the rear elevation survives, excepting the projecting central bay. The upper floor rear wall is also of handmade brick on the inside, with a modern cement-render to the exterior. This elevation has three sash windows matching those at the front. The door at the eastern end appears to be inserted.
- 4.4 All of the first-floor windows are identical, all having narrow (c.15mm) glazing bars with an early ovolo and cavetto moulding and no horns. The front-facing windows are recessed, with their sash boxes concealed by the ashlar stonework. Those at the rear are set flush with the rear façade, with sash boxes concealed by modern softwood architraves and sills. All are historic, but the narrow glazing bars imply a late- (rather than early) eighteenth-century date.
- 4.5 Internally the ground floor has been extensively altered, with the only features of note being the (formerly) central projecting rear-wall bay, fine plasterwork concealing the ceiling beams of the surviving frontage and one door opening with reeded architraves with corner blocks, together with some fragments of skirting boards.
- 4.6 The first-floor space (comprising first floor and attic) has not been used for many years and contains much evidence of a relatively recent major repairs to the roof, including all new dormer windows and many replacement rafters. All floor joists of the attic storey have been lost. A modern false floor has been inserted c.400mm above the oak beams and joists of a (possibly original) floor structure, truncating three window seats on the side. There are no boards surviving where the false floor has

been opened up, but at the entrance in the south-eastern corner, there are two oak boards that are overlain by the false floor, implying that at least part of the earlier floor may survive beneath the false floor. Towards the south-eastern corner is what appears to be a chimney breast with Georgian fireplace truncated by the false floor. It is probable that removal of the false floor may reveal evidence of earlier floor layouts for both the ground and first floors.

- 4.7 The roof is fine and clearly of an early post-medieval, if not late medieval date, with four trusses and a full complement of original book-matched wind-braces. The two innermost trusses have ties that are deeper than with the remainder. Both have chamfers with curved step stops and a long section to each with no joist sockets, implying a large opening in the floor above for an attic staircase. All purlins are tenoned into the outer faces of each truss and are well finished, with chamfers with curved step stops. Empty sockets to the underside of the principal rafters indicate that the trusses originally had queen posts and possibly collars, similar to the surviving east gable-end truss. The roof clearly continues over No.2 Fore Street next door.



Fig.9: View of Nos.2 and 3 Fore Street in their setting, looking east up Fore Street.



Fig.10: View of the north elevation of Nos 2 and 3 Fore Street, showing the twentieth-century dormers, left-hand ground floor window (former doorway to passage), bay window in reformed opening, cast iron panelled standards with a lamp overthrow and the wholly new ground-floor facade and door surround to No.2.



Fig.11: Ground-level view of the rear of No.3 Fore Street, showing the large mid-twentieth-century extension.



Fig.12: Rear view of No.3 Fore Street as seen from the flat roof of the rear extension, showing four-storey buildings to either side.



Fig.13: View of the rear of the frontage of No.3 Fore Street, showing inserted door and rooflight.



Fig.14: Rear detail, showing sash windows with no horns set flush with the outer face, indicating a likely pre-1850 date. The sills and architraves are modern.



Fig.15: Ground-floor frontage range internal view, showing moulded beams and raised floor.



Fig.16: Ground-floor internal view, frontage range, showing moulded beam and raised floor.



Fig.17: Interior view of the modern rear extension, looking north, with western side of central projecting bay (former external rear wall).



Fig.18: Detail of early eighteenth-century mouldings to beams in ground-floor frontage range.



Fig.19: Detail of early eighteenth-century mouldings to beams, showing irregularities.



Fig.20: Detail of ground-floor door opening with reeded architraves with corner blocks.



Fig.21: General view of the first floor, looking north-east, showing modern false floor.



Fig.22: General view of the first floor, looking south-west, showing suspected chimney-breast and recessed window to left.



Fig.23: Detail of suspected fireplace, showing ovolo mouldings.



Fig.24: First-floor lobby detail, showing two oak floorboards disappearing under the false floor .



Fig.25: Detail showing oak floor joists beneath the first-floor modern false floor.



Fig.26: First-floor: Detail of first front-facing window from west, showing historic window seat truncated by false floor.



Fig.27: First-floor: Detail of second front-facing window from west, showing historic window sill.



Fig.28: First-floor: Detail of third front-facing window from west, showing historic window seat truncated by false floor.



Fig.29: First-floor: Detail of fourth front-facing window from west, showing historic window seat truncated by false floor.



Fig.30: First-floor: Detail of first rear-facing window from west, showing ten-inch wall below and to left.



Fig.31: First-floor: Detail of second rear-facing window, showing decayed bottom rail and modern sill.



Fig.32: First-floor: Detail of second rear-facing window, showing decayed bottom rail and modern sill.



Fig.33: Window detail, showing window catch and early twentieth-century replacement.



Fig.34: Front-facing window detail showing narrow (c.15mm) ovolo and cavetto glazing bars and bubble in hand-made glass.



Fig.35: Detail of view through front-facing pane, showing optical deformation typical of hand-made glass.



Fig.36: Attic detail showing queen-post collar truss at east end.



Fig.37: General view of roof, showing truss ties and beam flitched with modern softwood.



Fig.38: Attic view looking east, showing first tie from east notched for joists along the full length.



Fig.39: Attic view looking east, showing second tie from east notched for joists at northern end only of eastern face.



Fig.40: Attic view looking west, showing second tie from east notched for joists at northern end only.



Fig.41 Attic view looking west, showing third tie from east notched for joists along its full length.



Fig.42: Detail of chamfers and curved step stops to the first and second trusses from the east.



Fig.43: Detail of curved wind-braces and empty mortice for queen posts.



Fig.44: Detail of tenoned purlins with chamfers and curved step stops .

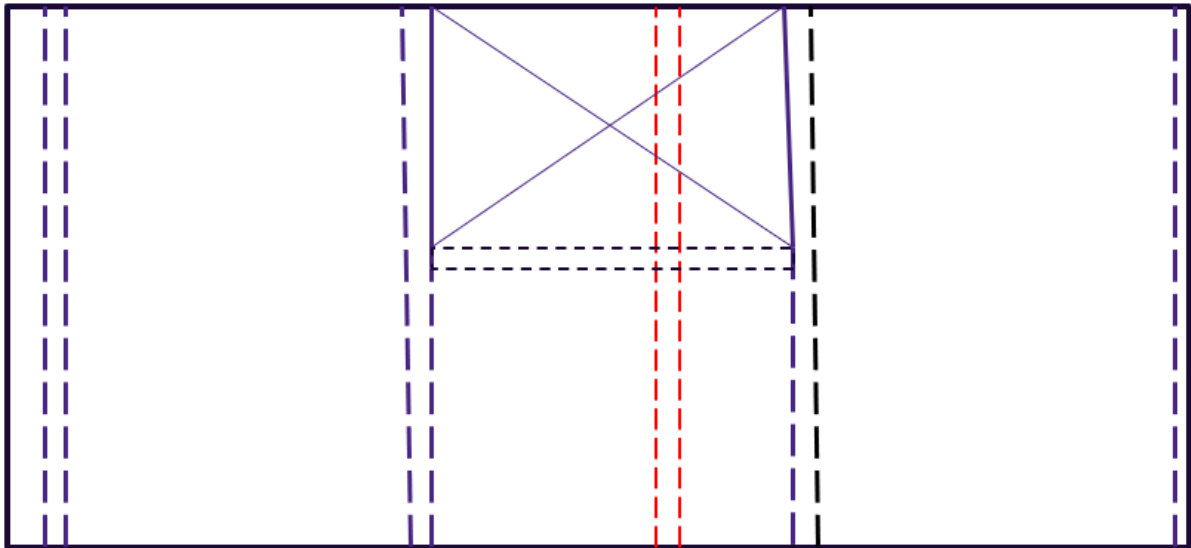


Fig.45: Sketch plan of the attic showing truss ties and inserted flitched trimmer (red). Dashed = trimmer and ties trenched for floor joists; Solid = no joist sockets [not to scale].



Fig.46: Views of underside of south slope of roof, showing curved wind-braces and extensive replacement of rafters.



Fig.47: Views of underside of north slope of roof, showing curved wind-braces and extensive replacement of rafters and dormers.

5 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE ASSETS

Listed Buildings

- 5.1 Nos 2 and 3 Fore Street form a statutorily listed building (Grade II*), as are almost all the buildings on Fore Street and on Wicker Hill, including No.1 and No.4 to either side of the Site. Many of the buildings on this part of Fore Street (including Nos.2-3) are exceptionally fine Georgian townhouses built by Trowbridge's wool merchants whose clearly substantial wealth derived from the sale of wool or from the manufacture of finished woolcloth, key examples being Nos. 64, 68 and 70 Fore Street (all Grade I) and Nos. 66, 67 and 72 Fore Street (all II*). All of these are Georgian buildings.
- 5.2 The Site and the adjacent No.2 Fore Street form a listed building, designated at Grade II*. Its statutory Description is given in Section 4 above.
- 5.3 Given the extensive alterations, remodelling and extensions that have affected the building during the twentieth century, the key architectural, historic and artistic (aesthetic) heritage values of the Site lie primarily with the building's principal elevation, notwithstanding the large mid twentieth-century bay window and inserted lower-left sash window (the latter formerly the opening to the passageway to the yard at the rear). The elevation benefits from the fine ashlar face; hornless first-floor upper sash windows with handmade glass; steeply-pitched Cotswold slate roof with three dormers; stone doorcase with engaged Doric columns and entablature with block triglyph and rounded frieze; moulded cornice and segmental modillioned pediment; railings; and ornate cast iron panelled standards with a lamp overthrow.
- 5.4 The first-floor rear elevation is of little note, the key features being the three hornless sash windows, which would benefit from conservative repair and more appropriate detailing to the architraves and sills. The historic ground-floor elevation is largely enclosed by the twentieth-century rear extensions. The central projecting bay is wholly enclosed by the extensions.
- 5.5 The interior of No.3 Fore Street (the Site) has been greatly altered, remodelled and extended. The only visible historic features of note are the very fine plasterwork to the beams of the ground-floor ceiling; the central projecting rear bay; and, perhaps, one door opening. The sole features of note on the first floor are the suspected chimney breast; truncated window seats; and suspected fireplace. The surviving historic elements of the roof structure are clearly important for their early date and fine finish. The plasterwork and roof are of historic, architectural and artistic significance.
- 5.6 The continued existence of the first floor and roof and the extensive inserted walls and wall finishes within the ground floor indicate that the Site has the potential for archaeological (evidential) significance in its concealed historic fabric.
- 5.7 It seems likely that a programme of archaeological recording (including dendro-dating of the first floor and roof) during the development of the Site could reveal significant further information about the building's origins and its evolution through time.
- 5.8 The rear, flat-roof extension has no heritage significance.

Conservation Areas

- 5.9 The Site at the centre of the Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area, within the 'Historic Retail Centre Character Area' which is centred on the site of the former castle, now largely occupied by The Shires Shopping Centre. The character area includes Fore Street, Castle Street, Market Street and a part of Wicker Hill and it is bounded to the south by the River Biss corridor.
- 5.10 The Trowbridge Town Centre – Conservation Area Character Assessment (March 2006) summarises the key characteristics of the Conservation Area thus:

Uses

Historically, retail trade and residential uses have flourished in this area, and retail is still the predominant use. Current uses are more mixed, including commercial, residential and

community facilities.

There are some residential uses above shops and offices, and vacant premises above shop level tend to be more prevalent in this part of the town. This can have the effect of deadening the town's vitality at night and creating building maintenance problems. Buildings entirely in residential use tend to be on the periphery of the retail centre. Where historic buildings have been adapted for offices, some have become vacant. This appears to be a trend that needs to be addressed.

Layout

Most of the buildings directly front the pedestrian footways; however, some higher status ex-residential buildings have courtyards or small spaces in front of them, bound by formal walls and railings. This is particularly apparent with Parade House and the surrounding group of buildings.

The curved building lines, terminated views and varying street widths result in an informal sense of enclosure. Coupled with the informal paving and vitality of the shop fronts, this creates a friendly and attractive character at a traditional market town scale. This is apparent in Fore Street, where the curved road reflects the earlier historic association of the castle's precincts. As the oldest part of the town, much of this area is characterised by narrow plot widths reflecting the medieval burghage plots.

Small alleyways are a regular feature within the historic retail centre, reminiscent of the earlier town layout. These vary in size and can be private relating to only one or a few properties. Within these alleys some of the most interesting street furnishings and traditional paving materials have been retained, whereas on the main streets the majority have been lost. Consequently, these are considered to be valuable reference points in terms of traditional street design. The larger public alleyways include:

- *Narrow Wine Street - This unusually narrow street has buildings fronting onto it. It is intimate and visually rich in character due to a variety of materials used in building and street surfaces.*
- *White Hart Yard - Linking Fore Street with Silver Street, the entrance to White Hart Yard off Fore Street is quite open, and widens out into a café courtyard.*
- *Church Walk - Accessed from Fore Street, whilst associated with St James's Church and secondary retail area 1, the entrance allows glimpses of St James's Church.*
- *Red Hat Lane - This narrow enclosed alley is on maps dating back to 1860.*

Architectural Form

There is a concentration of prestigious Georgian buildings on Fore Street known as "The Parade"... Having most recently been in commercial use, these buildings dominate this part of Fore Street. They are famously referred to by N Pevsner (1993, revised 1991) as "a stretch of Palaces". Originally built as rich clothiers' houses, this small group of ornate, 18th century stone buildings creates an impressive street scene. Their classical design and scale, and key features such as Tuscan columns, create a consistency that gives this area a distinct quality. Despite the outward appearance of them being mid to late 18th century, some have earlier 17th century building fragments encapsulated within them.

Similar architecture can be found elsewhere within the centre and creates an important visual link between different parts of the town centre. This area has tended to develop in accordance with Georgian proportions, and strong vertical and horizontal lines have been retained which break up the building mass and add interest to the street scene. In addition, ashlar limestone materials and architectural features such as sash windows and Georgian classical embellishment are prominent.

Redevelopment and refurbishment in the 20th century has done little to contribute to the street scene or the distinctive qualities of the town centre.

Some are in such prominent locations that they are considered harmful to the overall character of the conservation area...

Some of the unlisted buildings have retained interesting features above shop level in terms of window surrounds and interesting stonework. These include 34 Fore Street and 23 Fore Street.

Landmark Buildings and Features

The retail centre has the highest density of historic buildings, many of which are listed, within the town. Many of these buildings or structures stand out in their context and are marked on the accompanying map for this area as significant landmarks:

- *Trowbridge Town Hall.*
- *St James's Church.*
- *The Old Market Hall (front of Castle Place Shopping Centre)*
- *46 Fore Street - Court Hall, Castle Street (Mastershoe) f Castle House, Castle Street.*
- *Parade House & group, Fore Street (The Parade)*
- *64 Fore Street (Lloyd's Bank) f 34 Fore Street (Abbey National)*
- *Kitchener's Court, Hill Street and No. 10 Wicker Hill.*
- *Old Lending Library, Hill Street.*

Building Materials

Walls: There is a mixture of building materials used in this part of the town centre, although the prevalent material has historically been stone of ashlar as well as moulded and carved Bath stone that has been used so flamboyantly on the prestigious 18th century buildings. Many of the earlier buildings in this area have been refronted in stone but have earlier timber frame structures behind the facades or contained within the building. Fore Street, in particular, has a number of examples of this merging of construction methods.

Roofs: These are generally clad in either clay or stone tiles, although some of the later buildings have Welsh slate coverings. The forms are quite simple - most properties have gabled roofs, and some have small gabled dormers, indicating the use as servants' quarters in the roof spaces. Many are closely built up with one or more stone or brick chimneys serving each property.

Fenestration: In most cases, the original windows or closely matching replacements are in place, taking the form of sliding timber sashes, often with moulded glazing bars. Good examples of historic timber shop fronts with simple pilasters, plinths and console brackets can still be found in some parts of this area. 60 Castle Street is a particularly good one, as are some of the smaller units fronting onto Fore Street.

Street Character

Fore Street: *There is a considerable contrast between the two sides of this part of Fore Street. The northern side has already been described in the Architectural Form Section. The buildings on the southern side tend to have narrower building frontages, reflecting the early medieval origins of this part of the town and their position on the castle's outer defences.*

Castle Street: *The northern end of Castle Street is a narrow one-way street that has a number of public houses and attractive retail frontages along its western side. However, the service entrance for the Shires, and the fact that the buildings on the eastern side of the road turn their back on Castle Street, detracts from the otherwise vibrant nature of this street, creating a secondary feel to a primary*

shopping location. Opposite the junction to Market Street is Court Hall (now Mastershoe), an impressive mid 19th century building. Originally built as the Magistrates' Court its strong presence within the street scene reflects its importance as a civic building, forming a visual group with the Town Hall and Market Hall in Market Street. Castle Street widens at this point to take two-way traffic.

The Shires: The Shires adjoins Fore Street, Market Street and Castle Street. Originally the site of Trowbridge Castle, this piece of land was subsequently developed with the highest concentration of industrial buildings in the town before it was redeveloped in the mid 1980s as a shopping centre. The Shires is well linked in terms of pedestrian access to Fore Street and Castle Street. Its interior is typical of a mid 1980s shopping centre development. Nevertheless, the design allows views of Stone Mills, and two historic buildings, Bethesda Chapel and Home Mills, have been retained and incorporated into the development.

Streetscape

The Parade is an area of original pitched paths (cobblestones). This offsets the appearance of these buildings very effectively and is an important feature in the setting of this group of listed buildings. One other example of such paving can be found in front of Park House on Park Road... One of the most characteristic features within the area is the high number of properties with their individual front boundaries onto the street, demarcating their private space and elevating the importance of the building itself. Most of the historic buildings still retain stonewalls and piers with cast iron railings and gates. However, these are vulnerable to damage and neglect.

Landscape

Historically, there were trees situated along Fore Street that were part of the setting of the "Parade". The reinstatement of trees in this area would be strongly encouraged and will be considered in the management strategy.

Opportunities

- The retention of historic shop fronts and reinstatement of more appropriate shop fronts is desirable. Consequently, shop front and advertisement guidelines will be developed as part of the management strategy.
- There are opportunities for street planting generally within the conservation area and such activity would be encouraged. f The Buildings at Risk survey has identified a number of buildings within this area that would benefit from repair and help in the town's regeneration.
- Loss of employment space, especially in historic buildings, is a key issue that needs to be considered in the management strategy for the conservation area.
- Opportunities of a site-specific nature are highlighted on the associated plan (map 5).

Summary of Key Features

Street and building layout

- The retail centre is characterised by curving roads that result in angled views. Glimpses and views open up throughout the retail centre.
- The varying width of the pedestrian part of Fore Street, along with the angled views, adjoining streets and the informal nature of the street layout, retains the market town scale of Trowbridge.

Building types

- The area is predominantly characterised by commercial and civic buildings.

- *A number of residential and civic buildings have been converted into retail and other commercial uses - in particular a number of prestigious clothiers' houses.*

Building scale

- *Traditional buildings in the retail centre are generally two or three storeys; however, there are a significant number at four storeys.*
- *There are a number of feature buildings that stand out because of their height and detailed design. These are identified on the accompanying map.*

Building materials

- *Ashlar blocks of Bath stone.*
- *Some coarsed rubble stone walls.*
- *Stone, clay or Welsh slate roof tiles.*
- *Timber windows, mainly sashes, in multiple panes or plain glazed.*
- *Timber shop fronts with simple pilasters, plinths and console brackets.*
- *Good examples of historic cast iron in railings and overthrows.*

Landscape features

- *There are only a few trees in this locality. Those that have been retained make a valuable contribution to the area's visual interest and attractiveness.*
- *Further street trees should be encouraged, as they would contribute to the market town character of the area.*

Streetscape

- *There are few traditional street furnishings remaining - sections of granite kerbs are important for historical reference.*
- *There are two areas of pitched paths off Fore Street and Park Road that contribute greatly to the appearance of the street scene. Further areas also survive in Silver Street.*
- *There are a number of walls and railings that are listed in their own right and are important features in the street scene. Some older street name signs are in this area.*
- *Shop signs are reasonably low key and respectful of their surroundings.*

Skyline

- *The skyline is generally varied. However, the spires on St James's Church and the Town Hall dominate the skyline. Views of the Mill buildings on Court Street are important from Castle Street.*

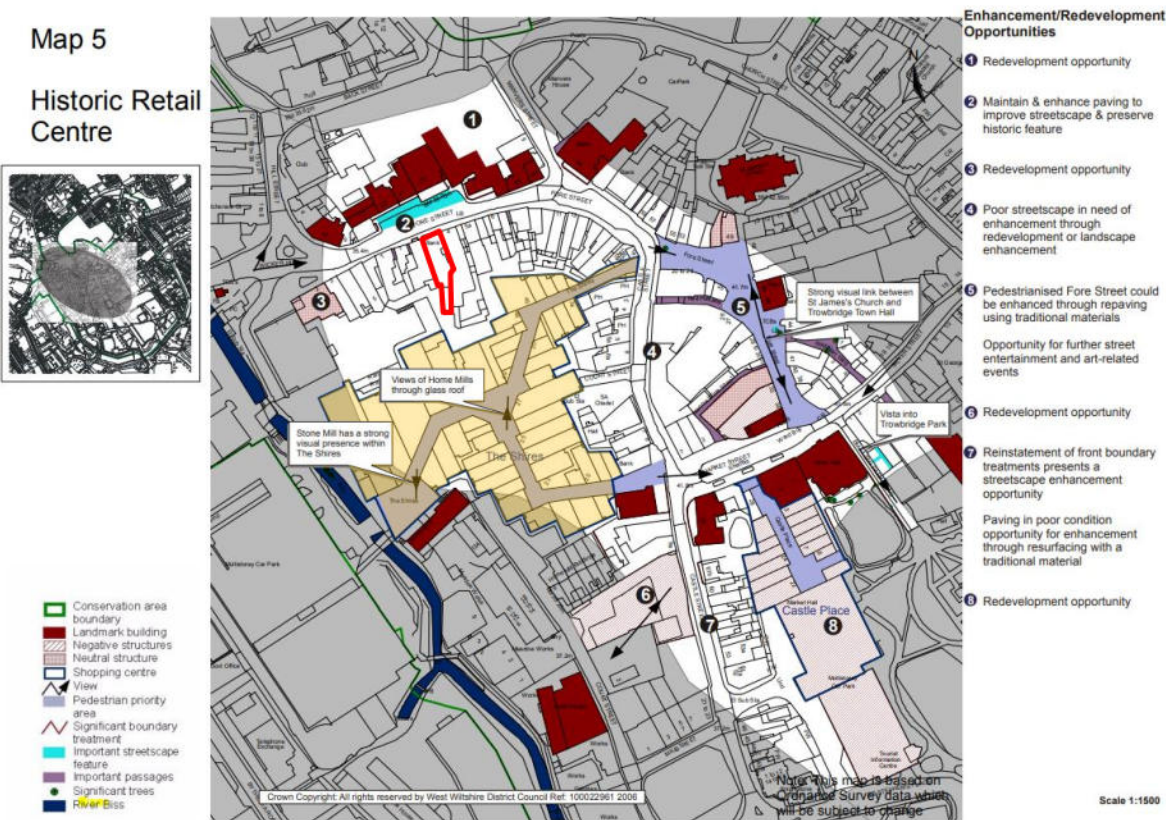


Fig.48: CAA Map 5 – Historic Retail Centre.

6 PROPOSALS AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Introduction

- 6.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by RPS, on behalf of MCH Coaches, Uxbridge.
- 6.2 It addresses the proposed redevelopment of the Grade II*-Listed No.3 Fore Street as 2(no.) two-bed apartments, together with the erection of a new four-storey block in the yard at the rear to accommodate a further 4(no.) 2-bed apartments. The ground-floor apartment will be accessed directly from Fore Street, whilst the remainder are to be accessed from the street via a reinstated ground-level passage at the east end of the Listed building.
- 6.3 Under the proposals, the present flat-roofed ground-floor extension at the rear (dated to between 1936 and 1969, probably 1965) is to be demolished and will enable the reinstatement of the historic, projecting central semi-circular bay window.
- 6.4 As assessed in Section 5, the principal heritage interest of the Site derives principally from:
- the eighteenth-century frontage of the former townhouse;
 - the surviving central, projecting rear-elevation bay, currently enclosed in the twentieth-century extensions;
 - the eighteenth-century plaster decoration of its ground-floor ceiling; and
 - the late medieval or early post-medieval carpentry of the roof.

Proposals and Assessment of Impact

External Alterations

- 6.5 The proposed alterations to the northern (Fore Street) elevation comprise the removal of the present ground-floor bay window and its replacement by two sliding sash windows matching those on the upper storey, together with the removal of the inserted ground-floor window at the eastern end of the ground storey and the reinstatement of the historic doorway.
- 6.6 These changes, that will complement the similar work carried out to the ground storey of No.2 Fore Street, will restore the frontage to its eighteenth-century form, that was maintained until around the 1920s when the large window opening was created, followed by the replacement of the passage opening to a doorway, probably in 1953. The restoration of the exterior is regarded as a heritage public benefit as it will enhance the appreciation of the host building, as well as that of the wider group of important historic merchant's houses along Fore Street.
- 6.7 The works involve the removal of the 1960s bay window (as well as its 1920s opening), the removal of a very recent modern window at the eastern end (inserted following the removal of an ATM) and the replacement of the existing front doors (probably dating to the 1920s). The proposals retain the first-floor and attic windows (early nineteenth-century and modern respectively), the Georgian railings and the ornate cast iron panelled standards with lamp overthrow.
- 6.8 The proposed doorway to the reinstated passage as shown on the 'as proposed' plans is significantly narrower than that shown in historic imagery. As this opening was originally a passage accessing the warehouse and early bank at the back of the building, this new opening would benefit from widening, even if the reinstated passage behind is narrower than it was historically. Additionally, the reinstatement of the floor will enable the reinstatement of the historic steps at the main door.
- 6.9 Apart from a new external door (in the existing opening) and replacement external stair access (replacing the existing steel structure) the proposals involve no change to the historic fabric of the rear elevation, subject to the conservative repair of the existing fenestration. The replacement of the existing large extension is regarded as having a large positive effect on the host building's artistic

(aesthetic) significance. Importantly the historic courtyard space will be reinstated, thereby revealing the central projecting bay as part of the historic rear elevation to the historic building.

- 6.10 It would no doubt be desirable to enhance the thermal performance of the first and second-floor windows, but there is no reason to believe that such an objective cannot be satisfactorily met by draught-stripping, secondary glazing or 'slimline' double-glazing without detriment to the host building's architectural or historic interest. Subject to retention and reuse of the existing window joinery and the retention of the hand-made glass of the front-facing windows on the first floor, a satisfactory upgrade of the thermal performance of the windows may be secured by a suitably-worded planning condition.

Ground floor (frontage) apartment

- 6.11 The ground-floor two-bed apartment in the frontage range will be located partly within the retained frontage and partly within a new rear extension. Because of the existing modern rear extension and previous internal interventions, the work will involve no removal of significant historic fabric. The historic ceiling will be retained, albeit that it will be divided in places by new partitions. The division of the ceiling will have a moderate adverse effect on the building's architectural and artistic (evidential) significance. The floor will be reinstated, including the steps at the front door.
- 6.12 The replacement of the existing large extension is regarded as having a large positive effect on the host building's artistic (aesthetic) significance.

First- and second-floor frontage apartment

- 6.13 Bringing the first and second floors of the frontage into a beneficial use as an apartment is regarded as a significant benefit. Subject to the retention and conservative repair of the windows, the only removal of historic fabric will be the removal of the suspected chimney breast and fire surround on the first floor. The removal of the modern false floor is seen as a significant benefit.
- 6.14 This proposed apartment is currently a single space due to previous removal of all partitions and attic floor, probably when the roof was subject to past extensive repair. There is nevertheless abundant evidence of the positions of past partitions, both within the wall finishes and the remaining roof carpentry. Given the existing state of these upper floors, the proposed partitions are not seen as unduly harmful, particularly as the proposed subdivision of the space retains a double-height space at the western end of the building and towards the centre of the building where a spiral staircase is proposed.
- 6.15 It seems likely that the removal of the false floor will reveal further evidence of past room layouts. Historic building recording, including dendro-dating of the roof carpentry and first-floor structure (secured by an appropriate condition) would be of benefit to the building's archaeological (evidential) significance and would mitigate any necessary harm.

Four-storey apartment block at rear

- 6.16 The proposed apartment block at the rear of the Site has historic precedent in a large building that is shown at the back of the plot on published maps prior to 1969. It seems most likely that this was a clothier's warehouse before becoming part of the Savings Bank. Given this precedent, coupled with the discreet location of the proposed new block, no harm is predicted to the host building's heritage significance.
- 6.17 Concern has been expressed during pre-application discussions that the proposed four-storey block might have an adverse impact on views across the Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area, particularly the 'Historic Retail Centre Character Area'. As will be seen from the panoramic images below, it is clear that the Site is substantially invisible in ground-level public. If any part of the proposed new block is visible (e.g. from the upper windows of the surviving woollen mills within the Character Area), there is no reason why a new red-brick building under a traditional gabled slate roof should have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the conservation area.



Fig.49: Floor plans and elevations, initial concept plan.



Fig.50: View looking north-east from the location of the proposed four-storey block, showing the four-storey back range of No.4 Fore Street.



Fig.51: View looking east from the location of the proposed four-storey block, with part of The Shires Shopping Centre on right.



Fig.52: View looking south-east from the location of the proposed four-storey block, looking over part of The Shires Shopping Centre to the Grade II-listed Home Mills Main Block.



Fig.53: View looking south from the location of the proposed four-storey block, looking over part of The Shires Shopping Centre to the Grade II-Listed Home Mills Main Block and Grade II The Chapel, (Offices of Samuel Salter & Co Ltd.).



Fig.54: View looking south-west from the location of the proposed four-storey block, looking over part of The Shires Shopping Centre.



Fig.55: View looking south-west from the location of the proposed four-storey block, looking over part of The Shires Shopping Centre.



Fig.56: View looking south from the location of the proposed four-storey block, looking over part of The Shires Shopping Centre to two of the listed mills on Court Street.



Fig.57: View looking south-west from the location of the proposed four-story block, showing the four-storey building to the rear of No.2 Fore Street. This formed the rear service wing to the combines Nos 2 and 3 Fore Street. It has been extended in height in, at least, two phases.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Built Heritage Statement has been prepared to assess the potential impact on the historic built environment arising from the proposed conversion of No.3 Fore Street, Trowbridge from a bank to two apartments, to include a new four-storey apartment block to the rear providing a further four apartments.
- 7.2 The host building is the eastern half of what was a single dwelling, the two parts (Nos.2 and 3) being Listed at Grade II* on account of their historic and architectural significance as a late-medieval or early post-medieval woolcloth merchant's house that was fashionably re-faced in the eighteenth century. It forms part of a group of exceptional Georgian merchant's houses on Fore Street (many listed at Grade II* or Grade I) , those on the south side (including the Site) being built on an outer part of the site of Trowbridge's lost castle.
- 7.3 The proposals will substantially restore the key front facade of the host building to its original eighteenth-century state, reflecting the previous similar treatment of No.2 Fore Street. This change is regarded as a significant public benefit, as it will enhance the appreciation of the host building, as well as that of the wider group of important historic merchant's houses on Fore Street.
- 7.4 The proposed apartment block at the rear of the Site has historic precedent in a large building that is shown at the back of the plot on published maps prior to 1969. It seems most likely that this was a clothier's warehouse before becoming part of the Savings Bank. Given this precedent, coupled with the discreet location of the proposed new block, no harm from the proposed new block is predicted to the host building's heritage significance.
- 7.5 Apart from a new external door (in the existing opening) and replacement external stair access (replacing the existing steel structure) the proposals involve no change to the historic fabric of the rear elevation, subject to the conservative repair of the existing fenestration. The replacement of the existing large extension is regarded as having a large positive effect on the host building's artistic (aesthetic) significance.
- 7.6 The ground-floor two-bed apartment in the frontage range will be located within the retained frontage range. Because of the existing modern rear extension and previous internal interventions, the work will involve no removal of significant historic fabric. The historic ceiling will be retained, albeit that it will be divided in places by new partitions. The division of the ceiling will have a moderate adverse effect on the building's architectural and artistic (evidential) significance. The reinstatement of the historic ground-floor central, projecting bay, with the reinstatement of the rear courtyard, will deliver a significant heritage enhancement (public benefit).
- 7.7 Bringing the first and second floors of the frontage into a beneficial use as an apartment is regarded as a significant benefit. Subject to the retention and conservative repair of the windows, the only removal of historic fabric will be the removal of the suspected chimney breast and fire surround on the first floor. The removal of the modern false floor is seen as a significant benefit.
- 7.8 This proposed apartment is currently a single space due to previous removal of all partitions and attic floor, probably when the roof was subject to past extensive repair. There is nevertheless abundant evidence of the positions of past partitions, both within the wall finishes and the remaining roof carpentry. Given the existing state of these upper floors, the proposed partitions are not seen as unduly harmful, particularly as the proposed subdivision of the space retains a double-height space at the western end of the building and towards the centre of the building where a spiral staircase is proposed.
- 7.9 It seems likely that the removal of the false floor will reveal further evidence of past room layouts. Historic building recording, including dendro-dating of the roof carpentry and first-floor structure (secured by an appropriate condition) would be of benefit to the building's archaeological (evidential) significance and would mitigate any necessary harm.

- 7.10 Concern has been expressed during pre-application discussions that the proposed four-storey block might have an adverse impact on views across the Trowbridge Town Centre Conservation Area, particularly the 'Historic Retail Centre Character Area'. As will be seen from the panoramic images contained in this Heritage Statement, it is clear that the Site is substantially invisible in ground-level public views. If any part of the proposed new block is visible (e.g. from the upper windows of the surviving woollen mills within the Character Area), there is no reason why a new red-brick building under a traditional gabled slate roof should have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 7.11 It would no doubt be desirable to enhance the thermal performance of the first- and second-floor windows, but there is no reason to believe that such an objective cannot be satisfactorily met by draught-stripping, secondary glazing or 'slimline' double-glazing without detriment to the host building's architectural or historic interest. Subject to retention and reuse of the existing window joinery and the retention of the hand-made glass of the front-facing windows on the first floor, a satisfactory upgrade of the thermal performance of the windows may be secured by a suitably-worded planning condition.
- 7.12 Overall, the proposed development will deliver a number of significant public benefits (heritage enhancements) that mitigate in its favour, including giving this neglected building a long-term sustainable use (an optimum viable use) and providing six new town-centre dwellings. These benefits need to be weighed against any minor harms, most of which may be mitigated, to a degree, through a programme of dendro-dating and archaeological building recording.

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