

**13-16 MARKET PLACE
(FORMER NATWEST BANK)
READING**

**Conversion of listed building for retail
and residential use, and addition of
new residential building to rear**

Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment

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1. INTRODUCTION, POLICY CONTEXT, AND QUALIFICATIONS

1.1 Introduction and Policy Context

1.1.1 This report examines the historical context of Nos. 13-16 Market Place, Reading – a Grade II listed former bank – and assesses the heritage impact of proposals to renovate and redevelop it for retail and residential use, and to erect a new block of flats at the rear of the property.

1.1.2 The bank closed in early 2020 and the building was then stripped of its furnishings, ATMs, and corporate signage. The remaining non-historic interiors were removed under a Listed Building Consent of July, 2021 (Ref. 210874), and pre-application advice and applications for planning and listed building consents followed in the autumn of 2021. These were revised in May, 2022, and after follow-up pre-application advice and discussions, the current applications have been prepared to (a) convert the listed 1870s’ building for ground-floor retail with four flats on the upper floors; and (b) develop a new, five-storey block of 11 flats at the rear of the property.

1.1.3 The analysis has been prepared in line with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as amended in July, 2021, and relevant local authority policies. The NPPF aims to achieve a proportionate response to development which impacts on the historic environment, which is largely defined by its heritage assets – designated assets (listed buildings, conservation areas, and archaeological sites) and locally-identified assets which are not statutorily designated. The Framework requires applicants and Local Planning Authorities to identify relevant designated and non-designated heritage assets, and to establish the degree and nature of their significance. The level of detail *“should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”* (para. 194). The evidence base for this process is set out in paras. 194-195 of the NPPF, and this appraisal has been carried out on the basis of evidence which satisfies those policies.

- 1.1.4 13-16 Market Place was listed as Grade II (Group Value) on 26 July, 1973 with the following description:

Mid C19. Renaissance palace style. 3 storeys. Bath stone ashlar with Portland balustraded parapet. 3 bays , the outer ones project slightly with corner piers. Astragal to moulded modillion cornice. Tripartite plate glass sash windows with enriched lintels and side pilasters with relief panel carvings supporting enriched entablature. 2nd floor centre bay has paired architrave windows. Modillion cornice over ground floor. Outer doorways with pink granite pilasters and round headed doors in rusticated concave jambs; similar surrounds to 2 central windows.

- 1.1.5 It is unclear whether the 1870s' bank was an entirely new structure, or whether it retained parts of the previous buildings on the site, but as discussed below, the footprint and nature of the rear buildings suggest that these structures – which were cleared away when the buildings were extended to the site boundaries in the 1970s or 1980s – were retained when the listed front building was erected.

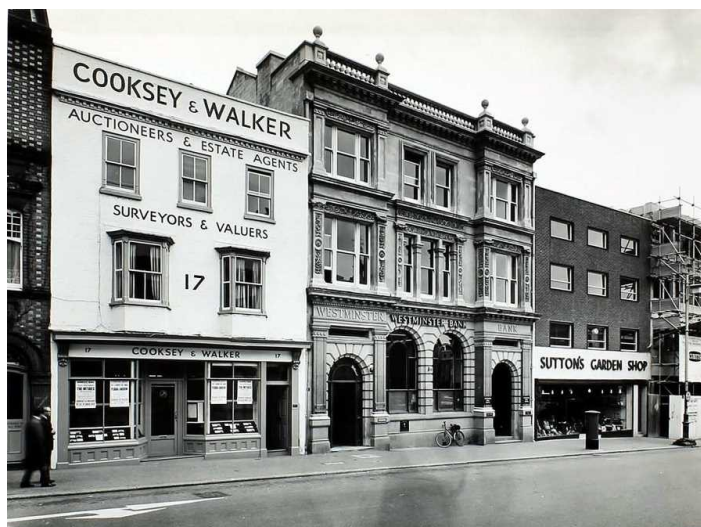
- 1.1.6 The bank sits within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area, designated in 1972, extended in 1982, and the subject of a Conservation Area Appraisal of 20 March, 2007, the policies of which have been taken into consideration in this analysis.

1.2 Statement of Qualifications

- 1.2.1 My qualifications for undertaking this analysis are based on my work and experience as a professional building and topographical historian who researches, documents, and assesses historic buildings. I hold a B.A. from the University of Ottawa (1974) and an M.Sc. in urban and regional planning from the University of Toronto (1976), and was first involved with architectural and urban history as a post-graduate, when my master's research examined criteria for designating historic buildings and sites. Since then I have spent 45 years in the fields of planning, building preservation, and historical research, and the past 37 years as an historian and advisor supporting professionals and owners dealing with historic buildings and sites.
- 1.2.2 My work has included documenting topographical and building histories and offering professional advice as to the historical significance and listability of buildings and/or elements which are to be restored, renovated or converted. I have also written policies and text for conservation management plans, and in the 1980s and 1990s I held a continuing consultancy with the Crown Estate Commissioners for research into Regent's Park and Regency architecture. For some 15 years from 1995 I held similar commissions with the Royal Household Property Section for research into the occupied royal palaces.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT and CHRONOLOGY

- 2.1 The former NatWest bank at 13-16 Market Place, Reading was erected in 1875-77 for the expansion of the London & County Bank (formed in 1851 by the amalgamation of two earlier banks). The three-storey building was designed by Albury and Brown, a significant local architectural firm of the period.



11-12, 13-16, and 17 Market Place, 1966

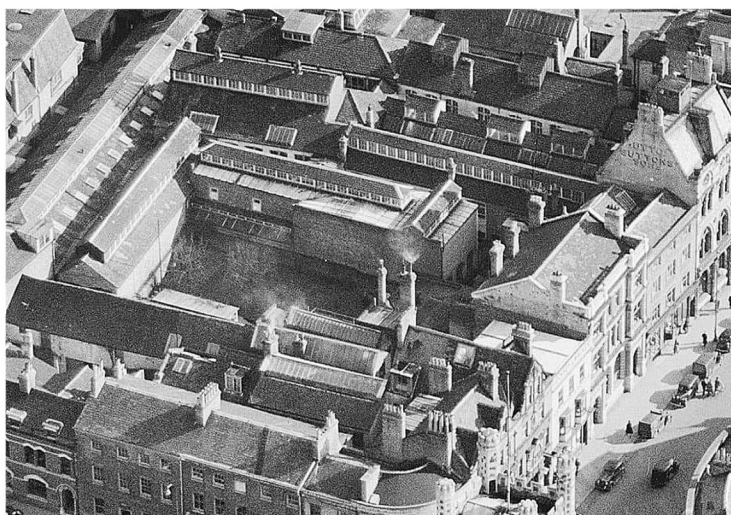
- 2.2 The footprint of the site on the 1879 Ordnance Survey – two years after the new bank was occupied – was unchanged on the Goad fire insurance plan of 1895, which shows the main three-storey building in front of a motley collection of one- and two-storey rear extensions. This layout looks far too random to have been part of a planned development (or to have evolved within two years of its completion), and it is almost certainly the case that the rear buildings were retained when the front was rebuilt in the 1870s.



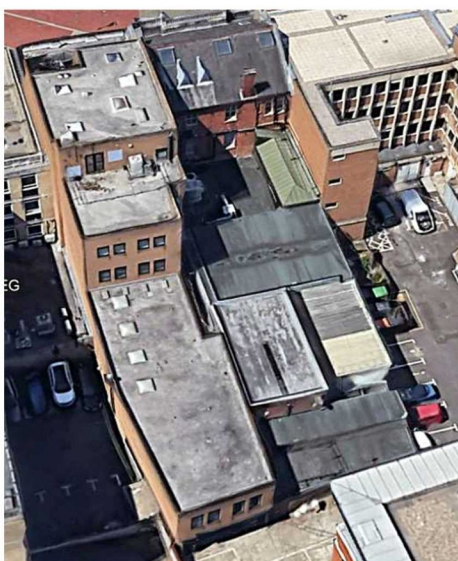
Ordnance Survey, 1879 and Goad Insurance Plan, 1895



1928



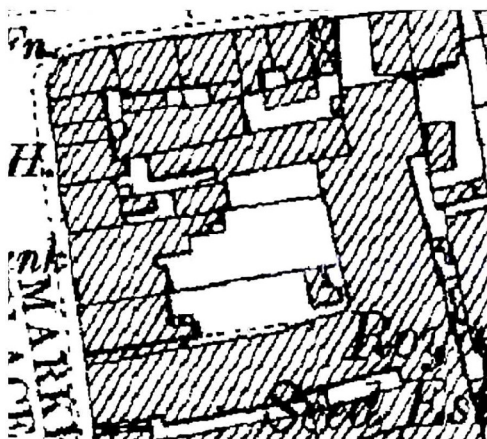
1951



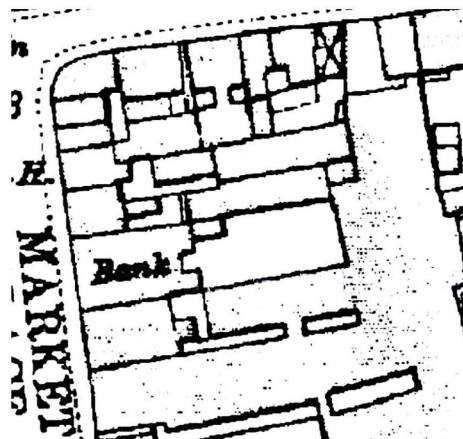
2020

Aerial views, 1928. 1951, and 2020.

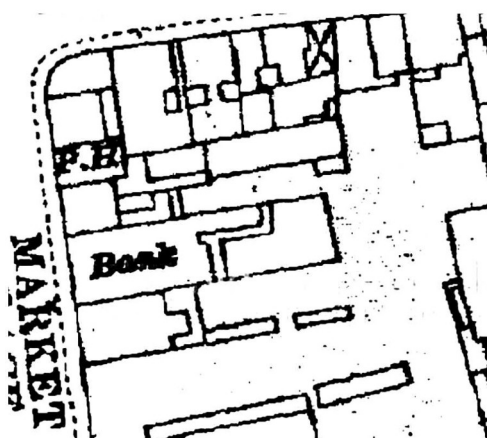
- 2.3 Aerial views of 1928 and 1951 confirm that the garden shown on the 1879 survey survived, as did the building's five chimney stacks (the dates when all but one of these were removed is unclear). Curtains in the windows of the upper floors can be seen in 1928, reflecting the continuing domestic occupation of the upper floors (by the bank manager and his family until the 1890s, after which they housed a bank porter and his wife as a caretaking couple to at least the second World War).
- 2.4 Ordnance Surveys suggest that the footprint of the rear buildings was slightly reordered between 1912 and 1931, with the rear buildings then shown as unchanged on Ordnance Surveys up to 1971. By 1988 the existing one- and two-storey extensions extended over the whole of the site, but it is unclear which period of works removed the rear ground-floor wall of the 1870s' building. Land Registry titles suggest that the bank acquired the freehold of the adjacent building at 11-12 Market Place in 1987, presumably marking the date when connecting doors were opened in the party wall to expand the bank's offices to the upper three floors of that building.
- 2.5 The interior of the bank continued to be altered into the 21st century, with the most recent refurbishment dating to 2006. Apart from upgrading signage and the ATMs at the front of the building, little else appears to have changed prior to the bank's closure in January, 2020, after which Listed Building Consent was obtained to remove fixtures and furnishings and to make good the ATM apertures on the front of the building. The remaining fittings, lifts, toilets, suspended ceilings, and internal partitions were removed under a listed building consent of 19 July, 2021, after which pre-application advice was obtained and incorporated in revised proposals to restore and convert the former bank building and erect a new block of flats at the rear of the property.



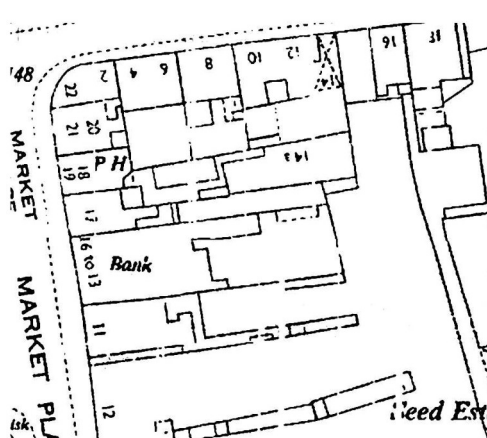
1899



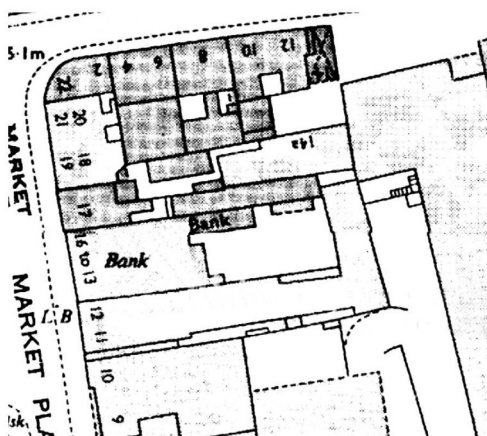
1912



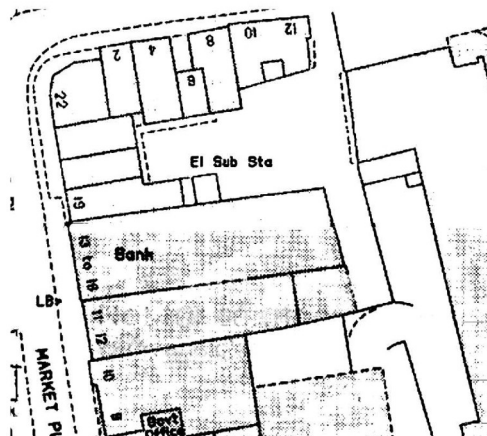
1931



1957



1971



1988

Ordnance Surveys, 1899 - 1988

2.6 Chronology

Pre 1874	In the 1860s-1870s, Nos. 11-12 Market Place was occupied by a tailor; 13-15 by a linen draper and later a groom; 16 by a gardener (later a seedsman).
1874-1877	London & County Bank obtained lease of 13,14,15,16 Market Place and rebuilt the front premises. Architects were Frederick William Albury & William Brown (a significant local architectural firm); building occupied in 1877.
1879-1899	O.S. and Goad maps. 1879 shows rear of property as a garden (still evident in 1928 aerial), with mix of 2- and 1-storey buildings to rear of bank. Footprint unchanged between 1879 and 1899.
1881-1891	Flat in the building occupied by bank manager and family.
1899-1923	London & County and London & Westminster Banks united in 1909; merged in 1918 with Parr's Bank; and renamed in 1923 as Westminster Bank Ltd.
1901-1939	Upper floors of building occupied by bank porters/live-in caretakers.
1928-1951	Chimney stacks and rear garden still shown in 1928 and 1951 aerial photos, although substantial changes to the rear buildings are apparent between the 1912 and 1931 O.S.
1962	Agreement 01/08/1962 between Sutton and Sons Limited (occupant of Nos. 11-12 Market Place) and Westminster Bank Limited relates to rights of escape in the event of fire.
1967	Deed of Dedication (29/08/1967) dedicated strip of land 1 foot 1" wide (points A and B on the title plan) to the public, forms part of the public highway.
1968	Westminster Bank Ltd renamed National Westminster Bank.
1973-1988	13-16 Market Place listed Grade II GV (26/07/1973). Footprint unchanged between 1931 and 1973, but by 1988 the remaining undeveloped garden to the rear had been covered with one- and two-storey buildings.
1987	Freehold of Nos. 11-12 Market Place registered to National Westminster Bank.
1989-2005	1989 alterations to Nos. 11-12 with change of ground floor from retail (A1) to office/estate agents (A2); new fascia signage 1990-91, 1999, 2005.
2001-2017	Minor alterations to Nos. 13-16 (signage, ATM openings); general refurbishment of floor and wall finishes, and alterations to partitions, 2006.
2013	Ground-floor shop of 11-12 Market Place leased 16/09/2013 for 10 years from 01/08/2013, from National Westminster Bank to D.W. Stevenson Ltd.
2020-2021	Bank branch closed and de-commissioned; non-original fixtures, fittings, furniture and equipment removed, including external ATMs, filling of ATM apertures with sandstone to match existing, and all external signage.
2021-2022	First to fourth floors of 11-12 Market Place converted from offices to flats. Remaining non-historic interiors of Nos. 13-16 removed (LBC 210874), followed by pre-application advice and applications for conversion and building of new block of flats to rear.

3. HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.1 As discussed above, it seems likely that the new building of the 1870s at 13-16 Market Place was limited to the front of the site, and retained the evolved collection of extensions and the garden to the rear of the site. The outbuildings appear to have survived in some form until the 1970s, after which the building was extended to the site boundaries with a mix of one- and two-storey buildings.
- 3.2 This has implications for the significance of the heritage asset, as it restricts the areas of significance to the façade and structure of the 1870s' front building. The recent stripping-out confirmed that a continuous process of expansion, upgrading, reordering, and refitting removed all of the historic interiors and replaced the internal walls; introduced *ad hoc* steel and brick strengthening; inserted lifts (now removed); and rebuilt the primary internal staircase in concrete. The result is that the only original internal fabric of 13-16 Market Place appears to be the walls and floor joists of the carcass, and the roof structure – although even there, the bottom members of the trusses were replaced with a steel support frame. The (now-removed) interiors were neither historic nor of any inherent architectural interest.
- 3.3 In addition to the architectural significance of the street façade, the building makes a significant positive contribution to the character of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. These aspects of the building's heritage significance were carefully monitored when permission was granted in 2020 to remove the features of the decommissioned bank, and ensured that the exterior stonework was properly reinstated.

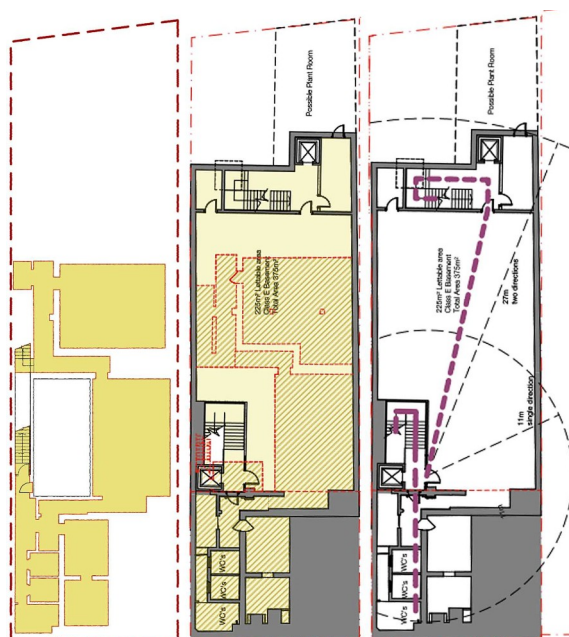
4. HERITAGE IMPACT OF PROPOSED WORKS

The proposals have been revised to reflect the pre-application advice as well as consultations with the council's Design Review Panel and planning officers.

4.1 Proposals for the Listed Building (13-16 Market Place)

Basement	New staircase inserted to link basement and ground-floor retail, with possible plant room at rear of site for new flats. Internal layout either unchanged and refurbished for Class E use, or walls removed to create consolidated basement space.
Ground Floor	Existing rear buildings rebuilt for Class E use, with new block of flats at rear of site. Retail space retained with new internal staircase to basement. Existing secondary street entrance and staircase to the upper floors is removed.
Upper Floors	Converted to 2 one-bedroom flats on the first floor, and 2 two-bedroom maisonettes on the second and attic floors, accessed from a staircase in the unlisted 11-12 Market Place.

4.1.1 Basement Floor

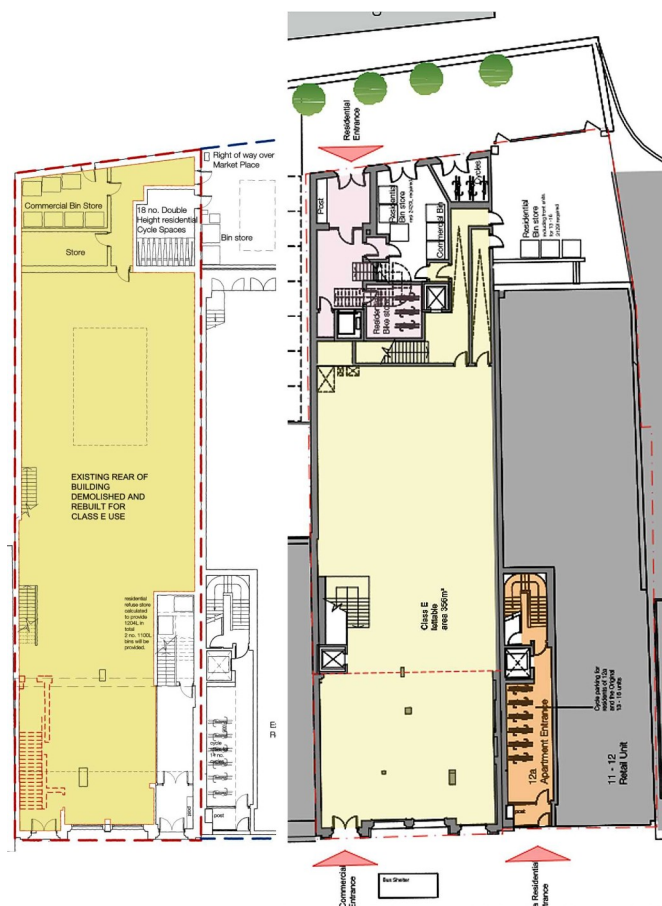


Basement, Existing and Proposed

The alternative proposal consolidates the basement rooms into a single space.

- Consolidation of basement rooms, change of use to Class E, and insertion of ground-to-basement staircase.
Impact: Neutral.
- Staircase and potential plant room inserted beneath proposed block of flats.
Impact: Neutral.

4.1.2 Ground Floor



Ground Floor, Existing and Proposed

- The existing rear extensions to the historic building are non-historic, and the proposed rebuilding effectively retains the existing arrangement.
Impact: Neutral.
- Non-historic internal staircases on the north and south sides of the 1870s' building are replaced with a relocated staircase to the basement. The existing access to the flats above the historic building is removed and replaced by a staircase in Nos. 11-12.
Impact: Positive.
- The siting of the rear fire escape route and the entrance and service uses for the flats in the new block does not impact upon historic fabric.
Impact: Neutral

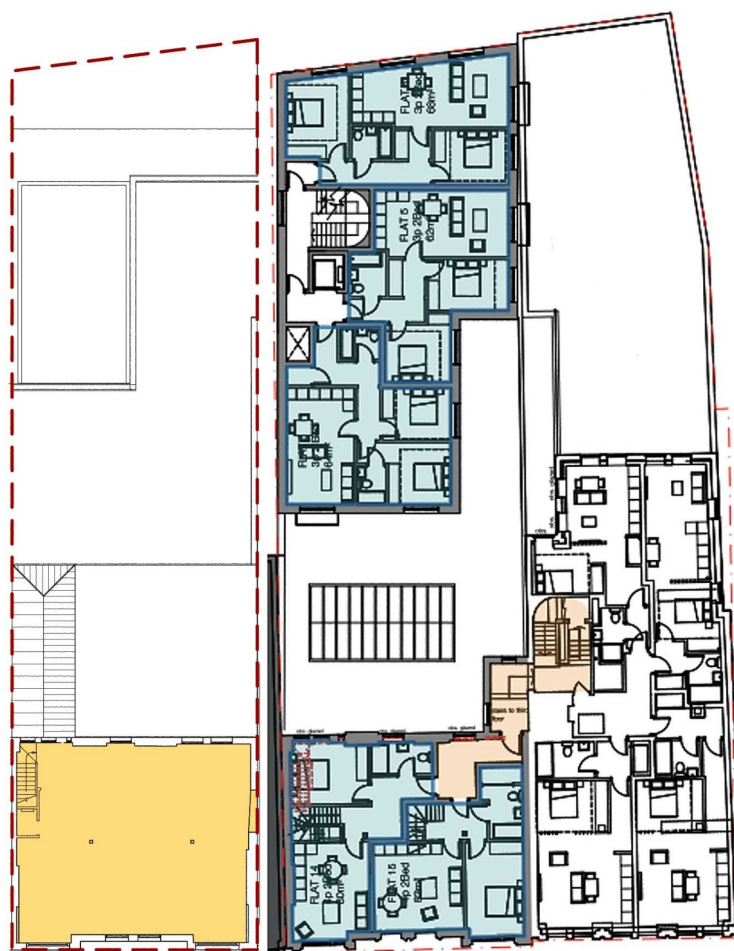
4.1.3 First Floor



First Floor, Existing and Proposed

- First floor of historic building partitioned to form 2 flats. There are currently no partitions (historic or otherwise) on this floor.
Impact: Neutral.
- The main entrance and staircase to the flats is within Nos. 11-12, limiting alterations to the listed building to a small rear extension outside the envelope of the historic building. A rear window of the building is converted to a door leading to a shared entrance lobby.
Impact: Minor.

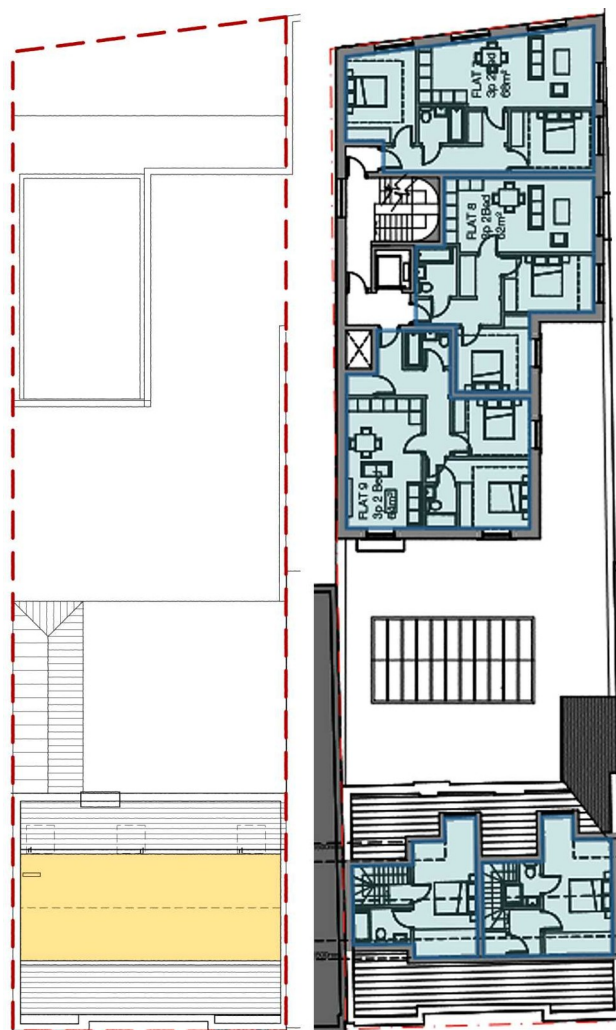
4.1.4 Second Floor



Second Floor, Existing and Proposed

- Second and third (attic) floors of historic building partitioned to provide 2 maisonettes. There are currently no partitions (historic or otherwise) on these floors.
Impact: Neutral.
- As with the first floor, the main entrance and staircase to the flats is within Nos. 11-12, limiting alterations to the listed building to a small rear extension outside the envelope of the historic building, and the conversion of rear window to a door leading to a shared entrance lobby.
Impact: Minor.

4.1.5 Third floor



Third Floor, Existing and Proposed

- Third (attic) floor of listed building converted to upper floor of second-floor maisonettes.
Impact: Neutral.

4.1.6 Fourth Floor and Roof



Proposed Fourth Floor and Proposed Roof Plans

- Existing skylights and triangular ventilation grilles to the rear roof slope of Nos. 13-16 will be replaced with traditional lead-clad dormer windows.
Impact: Positive.

4.1.7 Front and Rear Elevations



Front and Rear Elevations, Existing and Proposed

- The stone surrounds of the former ATM openings are removed and the front windows and stone cills reinstated to restore the front façade.
Impact: Positive.
- Service accretions on the rear façade of the listed building are cleared away and the façade and windows reinstated.
Impact: Positive.
- Ventilation grilles and skylights on the rear roof slope are removed and replaced with two traditional lead-clad dormer windows.
Impact: Positive.
- Exterior access added and windows on first and second floors altered to doors leading to shared lobbies to flats.
Impact: Minor.

4.2 Proposed flats at rear of 13-16 Market Place

- 4.2.1 Following pre-application advice and consultations, the massing of the initial proposal for this building has been altered by moving the new block further away from the listed building, and stepping the upper floors to respect the integrity of the listed building and reinforce subsidiarity of the new block.



Context elevation (South)
Includes sight line from Market Place



Context Elevation (North)

- 4.2.2 The principle of developing flats on this site was accepted by the council, and the Design Review Panel did not raise any issues of the impact of height, scale, and massing upon the setting or significance of the listed building. Reservations were nonetheless raised in the follow-up pre-application advice, which maintained that the five-storey element of the building was still higher than the ridge height of the listed building, and therefore remained insufficiently subsidiary.
- 4.2.3 The potential impact of the new building operates at a number of levels: the immediate relationship with the listed building; the wider context of Market Place to the west; and

the relationship with the more recent development to the east in general, and to One The Forbury and Davidson House in particular.



Context Elevation (West)
Elevation to lightwell



Context Elevation (East)
Elevation to One The Forbury

4.2.4 The relationship between the listed building and the proposed flats is explained in the Design and Access statement, with the revised proposal addressing the issue of subsidiarity by (a) siting the new building further back and stepping it back from the listed building; (b) repairing and restoring the rear elevation of the latter building; and (c) separating the two buildings with a lightwell which includes a landscaped, non-accessible green roof above the ground-floor retail space.

4.2.5 In the context of its wider setting, the new building has no visual relationship with Market Place, since – in spite of the generous width of the street – there are no sight line to the new building from the opposite side of the street. Views from the upper floors of the buildings on the west side of Market Place would at most be limited to the top of the new building, with the stepped-back massing and brick-clad exterior reading as a transition between the listed building and the six-storey buildings of One The Forbury and Davidson

House, rather than introducing a more abrupt change between the height of these buildings.

- 4.2.6 In light of this, it is reasonable to conclude that the revised design of the flats has sufficiently minimised and mitigated its impact on the significance and setting of 13-16 Market Place, and satisfies the reservations expressed in the Borough's pre-application advice for this development.

5. SUMMARY IMPACT STATEMENTS

- 5.1 No heritage interiors survived in 13-16 Market Place, and the proposals to convert the interiors of the building for ground-floor and basement retail use, with flats on the upper floors, have little to no impact on the architectural or historic significance of the building.
- 5.2 Removal of the redundant ATM surrounds and reinstatement of the windows and stone sill of the front façade of 13-16 Market Place restores the front elevation to its original configuration, and is a positive enhancement which reinforces its contribution to the character of the conservation area.
- 5.3 Replacing the ventilation grilles and skylights to the rear roof slope of 13-16 Market Place with two traditional, lead-clad dormers is a positive enhancement of the listed building, as is the general restoration of the rear façade.
- 5.4 The new main staircase to the upper floors of 13-16 Market Place is placed within Nos. 11-12, and thus does not impact upon the heritage significance of the listed building. At the rear of the building, the two-storey access addition and conversion of single windows on the first and second floor for access to the shared flat lobbies is a minor alteration, the impact of which is justified on the grounds of enabling productive use of the upper floors.

- 5.5 The stepped-back massing and brick-clad exterior of the proposed new building to the rear of 13-16 Market Place introduces an appropriate transition between the height of the listed building and the buildings of The Forbury.
- 5.6 In addition to this, the proposed new building has no visual relationship with the street setting of Market Place, as there are no sight lines to the new building even when viewed from the opposite side of the street. Views from the upper floors of the buildings on the west side of Market Place would be limited at most to the top of the new building, reading as an intermediate height between the listed building and the office blocks of One The Forbury and Davidson House.
- 5.7 In light of this, it is reasonable to conclude that the revised design of the block of flats has sufficiently addressed and mitigated its impact on the significance and setting of 13-16 Market Place to reduce any harm to less than substantial. This level of harm is justified by the public benefit of providing town-centre residential accommodation in a manner which respects the heritage aspects and setting of 13-16 Market Place, and reinforces the mixed-use character of the Market Place Conservation Area.