

BELLE VUE HOTEL, 2 TILEHURST ROAD
READING, RG1 7TN

HERITAGE STATEMENT



Ref: 2409.1590 | 18 December 2024

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HS1 LISTING DESCRIPTION

HS2 ROOM SCHEDULE

REVISION SCHEDULE					
Rev	Date	Details	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
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2					



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Heritage Statement has been produced by **heritage** unlimited to support a planning application at (former) Belle Vue House Hotel, 2 Tilehurst Road, Reading, relating to change of use to seven one-bedroom dwellings together with associated internal works and external site works including parking provision and soft landscaping. The hotel is understood to have closed c.2020, since which time it has been vacant.
- 1.2. The current application follows pre-application advice (re.240617) which received favourable feedback. The conservation officer undertook a site visit to inform their response which summarised that:

“The proposal would be acceptable in principle. It appears that the proposed works can potentially improve the existing condition of the building and its setting... The proposed works would probably meet the requirements of Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.”

- 1.3. The application also follows two applications in 2020 and 2021 to convert the building to HMO, being refused and withdrawn respectively. Whilst ultimately unsuccessful, the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee identified that change of use of the property creates an opportunity to improve the exterior and interior of the building. They identify a number of potential works (referencing the plans submitted in 2021) which could provide enhancement, stating:

“For consideration among such improvements would be a re-opening of the window on the front west side of the ground floor, shown as ‘bricked up’ on the plans (kitchen); re-opening of the window on the rear west side of the ground floor shown as ‘bricked up’ on the plans (bedroom G5); re-opening of the window on the rear east side of the ground floor shown as ‘bricked up’ on the plans (bedroom G7); the bricked up window between the bathroom and bedroom on the lower ground floor is also problematic (bedroom B2); removal of exterior pipework if possible; enhancement of railings, removal of television aerial if no longer in use, removal of extraneous exterior fixtures and fittings and repainting with paint suitable for a heritage property”

- 1.4. Consequently, following this feedback and information gathered from a site visit by Heritage Unlimited, a number of these works are proposed, including reinstatement of infilled window openings, general tidying of the exterior, and new landscaping.



- 1.5. 2 Tilehurst Road is a grade II listed building and is also located within Russell Street/Castle Street Conservation Area. The listing description and a room-by-room schedule of internal images can be found in the appendices, **HS1** and **HS2**.
- 1.6. Listed buildings and Conservation Areas are defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (NPPF) as designated heritage assets. As the proposed development affects one or more heritage assets, paragraph 207 of the NPPF requires a Heritage Statement to support a planning application.
- 1.7. This Heritage Statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. The purpose of a Heritage Statement is to identify the significance of any heritage asset affected by the proposed development, the impact the proposed development will have upon the identified significances and justification for the proposed development.
- 1.8. This Heritage Statement should be read in conjunction with architectural plans and other supporting documents, which form this planning application.
- 1.9. This report has been compiled by Shaun Moger MSc Historic Building Cons and is based on desk-based research and a site visit carried out in October 2024.



2.0 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1. The former Belle Vue House Hotel, 2 Tilehurst Road, is located on the north side of the street on the east corner of the junction with Belle Vue Road. Access to the property is via a gated entrance to the southeast corner of the plot onto Tilehurst Road, leading to a gravel parking area which continues around all sides of the building. The perimeter boundary comprises of a red brick wall which is low to the south side and tall and stepped to the east, west, and north, reflecting the downward slope in terrain.

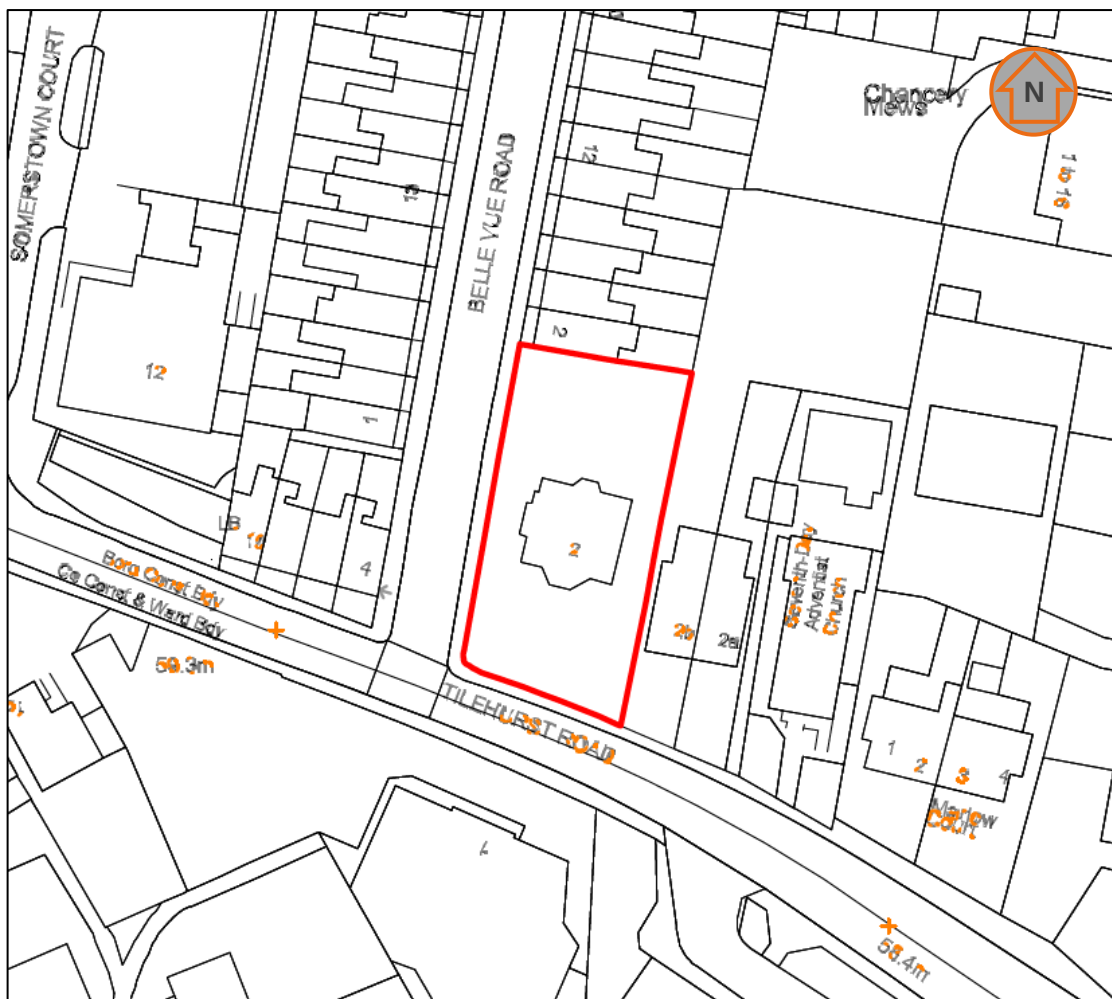


Fig.1: Site location outlined in red.

- 2.2. The property is positioned centrally within the plot with the principal elevation to the south overlooking Tilehurst Road. The elevation is defined by a large two storey bay window to its centre with a smaller single storey bay found to the rear (north) elevation. The main entrance to the former hotel is to the east corner of the south elevation, accessed via a short flight of steps, and leading to the reception area. A secondary entrance is positioned centrally to the west side elevation as part of a small post-construction additions and leads to the central corridor and stairwell.

- 2.3. The building is two storeys plus attic and basement and of brick construction with a painted render finish and slate roof. The roof is characteristic of the Italianate style of the property with deep eaves and prominent stacks to the taller gabled central section, whilst the flanking two storey wings feature shallow pitched roofs set behind parapet walls surmounted by oval shaped urns.
- 2.4. Fenestration comprises primarily of timber sash windows in traditional styles, however, the majority appear to be replacements from either an earlier 20th century phase or late 20th/21st century. The former include the windows of the projecting canted bays which include larger panes in a one-over-one or two-over-two configuration as opposed to the smaller, more numerous panes of the earlier windows. Whilst some modern replacements imitate the glazing style of the historic windows, albeit double glazed, the glazing bars are thick and lack detail. Retained original windows are limited and never without some form of alteration, such as modern replacement single glazing. A large number of windows, particularly to the rear, have been fixed shut, infilled internally, and the glazing painted black, likely in conjunction with the mid-20th century hotel conversion and the need to create additional, smaller rooms internally. Further window information is provided below and in the appendices.
- 2.5. The building is currently secured by additional security measures and boarding following repeated attempts to enter the property by squatters who have previously been successful but were subsequently removed from the property.



Fig.2: Front (south) elevation of the property, seen from Tilehurst Road.



Fig.3: The property seen from the corner of Tilehurst Road and Belle Vue Road.



Fig.4: Rear (north) elevation of the property seen over the wall on Belle Vue Road.



Fig.5: The front door of the property, secured along with the accessible windows to prevent persistent trespass issues. The first floor window over the door has been infilled internally and the panes painted black. The entirety of the site is laid with gravel and is currently overgrown due to prolonged vacancy.



Fig.6: Looking along the west side of the property towards the rear. The arch to the opposing side to the front door is blind and may be a post-construction infill.



Fig.7: Side access addition to the west side of the property.



Fig.8: East side elevation.



Fig.9: Rear elevation with four blocked up and painted windows (ground floor arches, first floor middle and far left), early/mid-20th century windows to bay, gable end window altered to fixed pane rather than swivel opening.



Fig.10: Gravel parking area to the rear (north) of the site, brick boundary walls of mixed c.1890-early 20th century context, side elevation of Belle Vue Road terrace (c.1890s).

- 2.6. Internally, the property is dominated by modern works, fabric, and finishes relating to the mid- 20th century (possibly post-1931) conversion of the former villa to a partial (seven room) guest house and conversion to a full hotel in 1993 (app. ref. 930873). As a consequence of these works, the vast majority of rooms lack historic décor, invariably being totally without cornice, however rooms including the canted bays and larger windows may retain historic window surrounds with limited skirting adjacent. The ground floor lounge is an exception, featuring ‘egg and dart’ cornice and Victorian skirting, both of mixed historic and replacement context. Though not without alteration, such as textured plastering, the stairwell retains the greatest degree of historic fabric and character, appearing to be the original (c.1838) stairs, balusters, banister, and skirting plus arch detail to the ground floor landing.
- 2.7. With regards to layout, the hotel usage also resulted in extensive subdivision of the building to create the believed 16 bedrooms, ensuites/bathrooms, communal, operational, and storage spaces. Consequently, the basement, ground, and first floors have a greatly constricted layout and circulation pattern related to the creation of narrow internal corridors running parallel to either side of the stairwell. Similarly, the larger front and rear rooms of each floor, already reduced in depth by the corridors which abut the inner side of the chimney breasts, and further divided to form two bedrooms or a bedroom and ensuite.
- 2.8. The following images provide an indicative account of the current context of the property as this is found to be generally consistent throughout the building. For a room-by-room schedule of photographs, see the appendix **HS2**.



Fig.11: Attic front room with modern refurbishment, rooflight, and early/mid-20th century replacement window.



Fig.12: Attic landing, back room with altered historic window (fixed pane set in historic swivel opening frame), and stairwell with modern rooflight.



Fig.13: Example of narrow post-construction corridor (seen here to first floor, south side) with modern partition in front room to left and stairwell to right.



Fig.14: Studwork partition to large first floor front bedroom to form ensuite. Early/mid-20th century replacement windows, surrounds possibly of earlier historic context.



Fig.15: Example of one of six such small post-construction bathrooms located to the east and west sides of the building to the first and ground floors.



Fig.16: Stairs with historic context including balusters, bannisters, and skirting. Walls refinished with modern textured plaster.



Fig.17: Ground floor stairs landing with arch of historic context.



Fig.18: Ground floor front room (lounge) which includes egg and dart cornice, Victorian skirting, and fire surround all of mixed historic and replacement context, and early/mid-20th century replacement windows.



Fig.19: Cornice detail (lounge and reception) plus modern texture and papering to ceiling and walls.



Fig.20: Stairs and landings to lower ground and ground floors, seen from the side entrance.



Fig.21: Basement level arch opening to stairwell, looking towards a bedroom to the east side of the building. This floor is in particularly poor condition with damp and damage commonly found and entirely lacking historic fabric.



Fig.22: Example of lower ground floor bedroom – low light due to boarded windows and shut-off power during the site visit.



Fig.23: Example of modern replacement window (first floor northwest bedroom), identified by thick, square profile glazing bars.



Fig.24: Example of early/mid-20th century replacement windows (typically found fitted to canted bays, as here to ground floor lounge) with larger individual panes and clean, machine-cut glazing bars.



Fig.25: Example of a retained historic sash window (ground floor kitchen), though all identified examples include modern replacement single glazing and further interventions. Characterised by thin profile glazing bars with pronounced wear and lack of horn braces.



Fig.26: Detail to historic sash window.

3.0 IDENTIFIED HERITAGE ASSETS

- 3.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that all heritage assets affected by the proposed development are identified and their significance and setting described. The level of 'harm' the proposed works will have to the identified heritage assets also needs to be determined within the context of a Heritage Statement.
- 3.2. This section of the document identifies the principal heritage asset, the grade II listed application building, 2 Tilehurst Road, in addition to the Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area.

2 Tilehurst Road

- 3.3. The application property, 2 Tilehurst Road, also known as the (former) Belle Vue House Hotel, Belle Vue House, Belle Vue Villa, or Bellevue, is a grade II listed building designated in 1976. A description of the property (at the time of listing) can be found in the appendix **HS1**.



Fig.27: 2 Tilehurst Road after the closure of 'Belle Vue House Hotel' (c.2020).

- 3.4. The building is cited as being built before 1839, which is corroborated by it being first shown on the Tithe Map published in 1838, which identifies it as being Belle Vue house, gardens, and outbuildings, owned and occupied by Joseph Lawrence. The following Ordnance Survey maps, surveyed and published in the mid-late 1870s, show the property in significant detail, including its substantial garden, which extended to the west, north, and east. As demonstrated by subsequent map editions, the grounds would come to be developed with Belle Vue Road (named after 'Bellevue' as it was then known) c.1890, and 2a and 2b Tilehurst Road and the Seventh Day Adventist Church in the interwar period.
- 3.5. Whilst accounting for varying levels of detail in depiction, the plan form of the property appears to change little over historic maps with the most notable changed instead occurring to the boundaries and outbuildings. Census records provide insight into use and occupancy of the property and suggest that it remained a single occupancy dwelling home to wealthy individuals until at least the interwar period, with barristers and people "living on their own means" cited as residing there.



Fig.28: Tithe map 1838, site location marked by the arrow. The accompanying Tithe apportionment identifies the site as Belle Vue House, Outbuildings, and Gardens in the ownership and occupation of Joseph Lawrence.

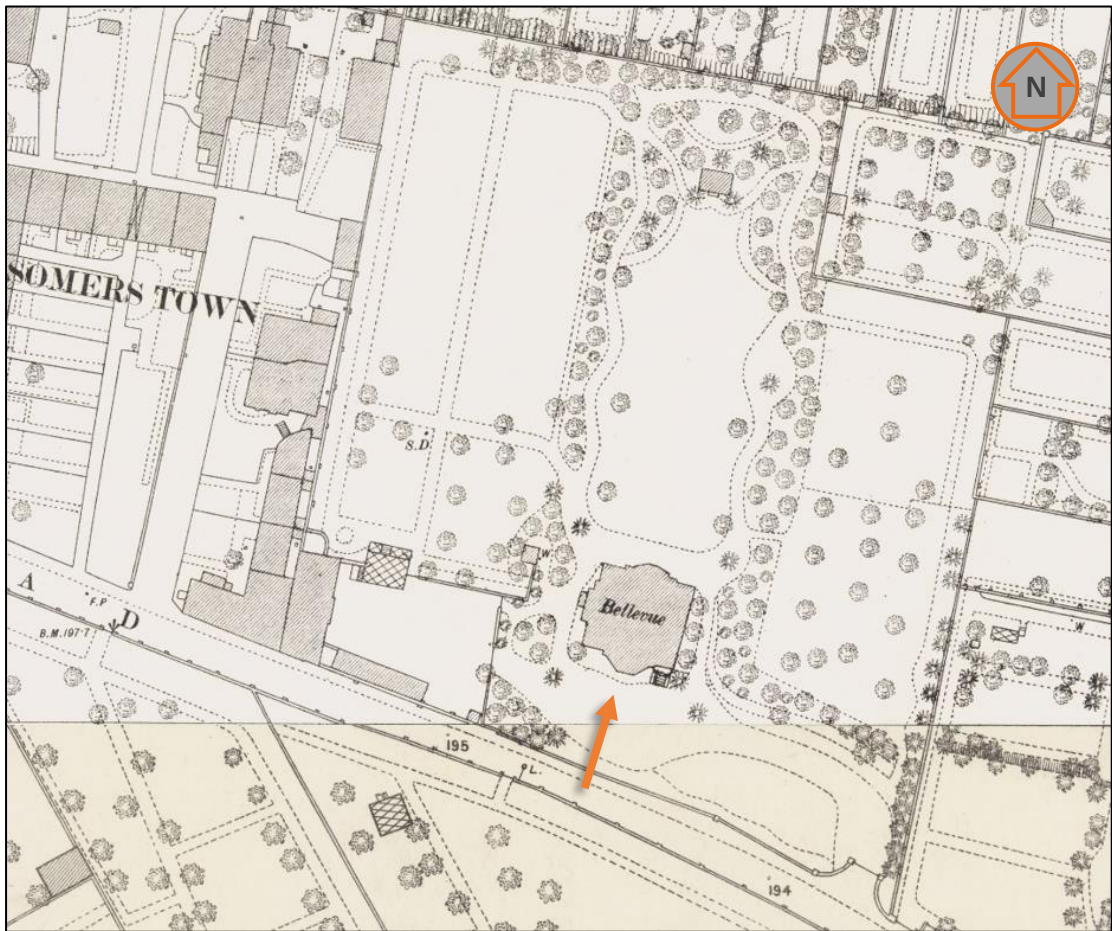


Fig.29: Spliced Ordnance Survey maps, surveyed 1875-77, published 1879, depicting the early form of the house and grounds in significant detail.

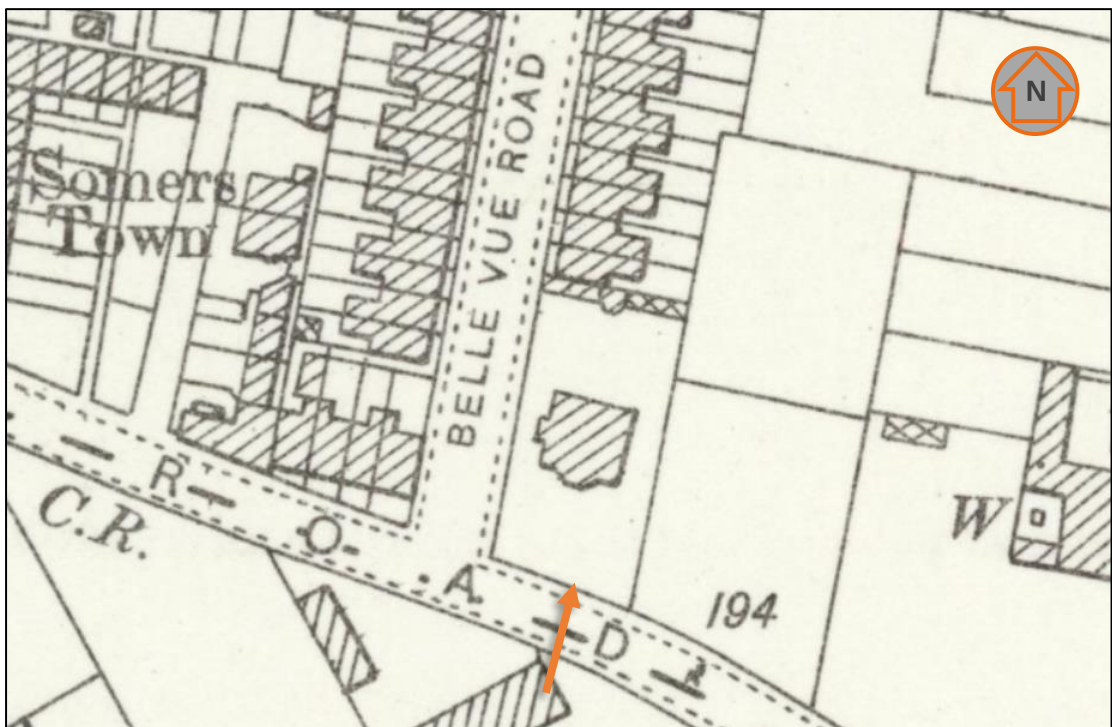


Fig.30: Ordnance Survey map, revised 1898, published 1900, following division and development of the grounds with Belle Vue Road.

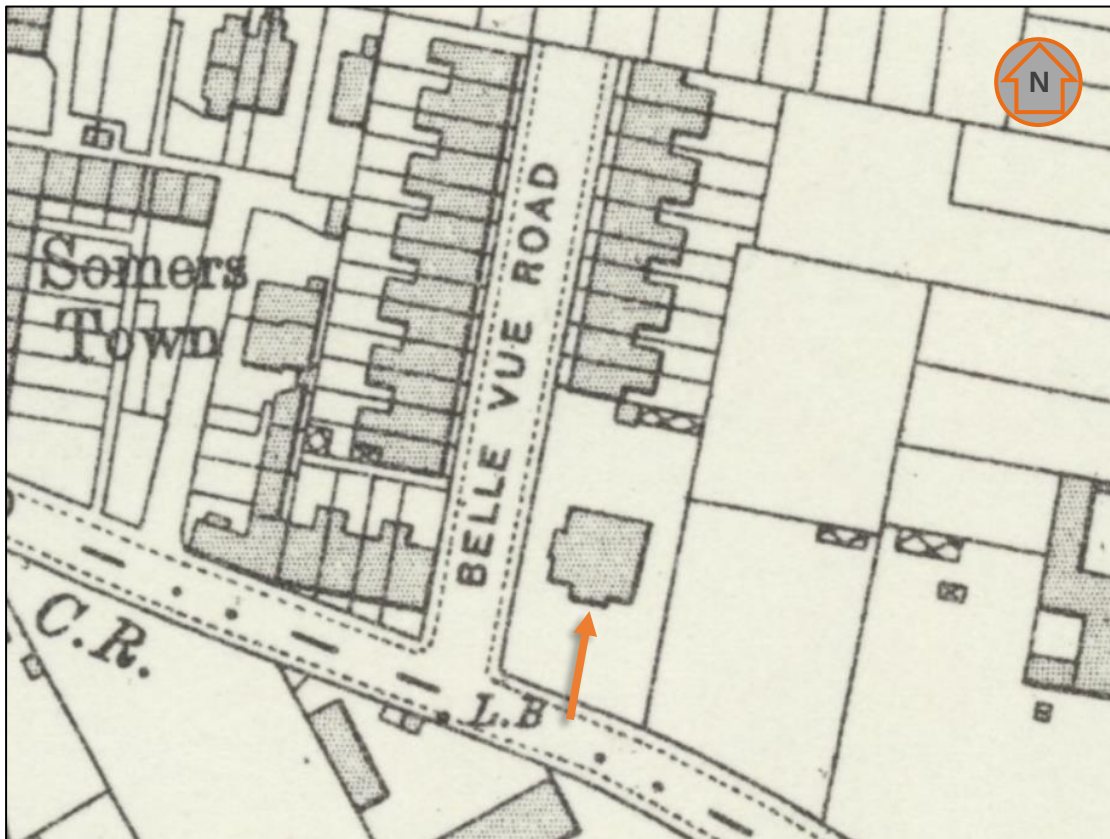


Fig.31: Ordnance Survey map, revised 1909-10, published 1912.

- 3.6. Records and map depictions become less clear from the interwar period onwards, including what appears to be temporary subdivision of the garden in the 1930s (reverting 1950s) and incomplete data entered on the 1939 Register. It is likely that residential use continued during the mid-20th century in some capacity, whether as a single dwelling or flats, as searches of 1930s directories do not return results for a Guest House or Hotel at the site.
- 3.7. The 1993 planning application for change of use to a full Guest House indicates that it had previously operated as a partial Guest House with seven rooms prior to this date. However, it is not known exactly when this began, though assessment of the internal subdivision fabric may reasonably suggest it occurred in the mid-late 20th century. The listing description (c.1976) does not describe the interior or use or the building at the time of designation.



Fig.32: Ordnance Survey map, revised 1931-32, published 1934, showing subdivision of the garden and following development of 2a and 2b Tilehurst Road and The Adventist Church to the east.



Fig.33: Ordnance Survey map, surveyed 1958, published 1959, showing no garden subdivision.

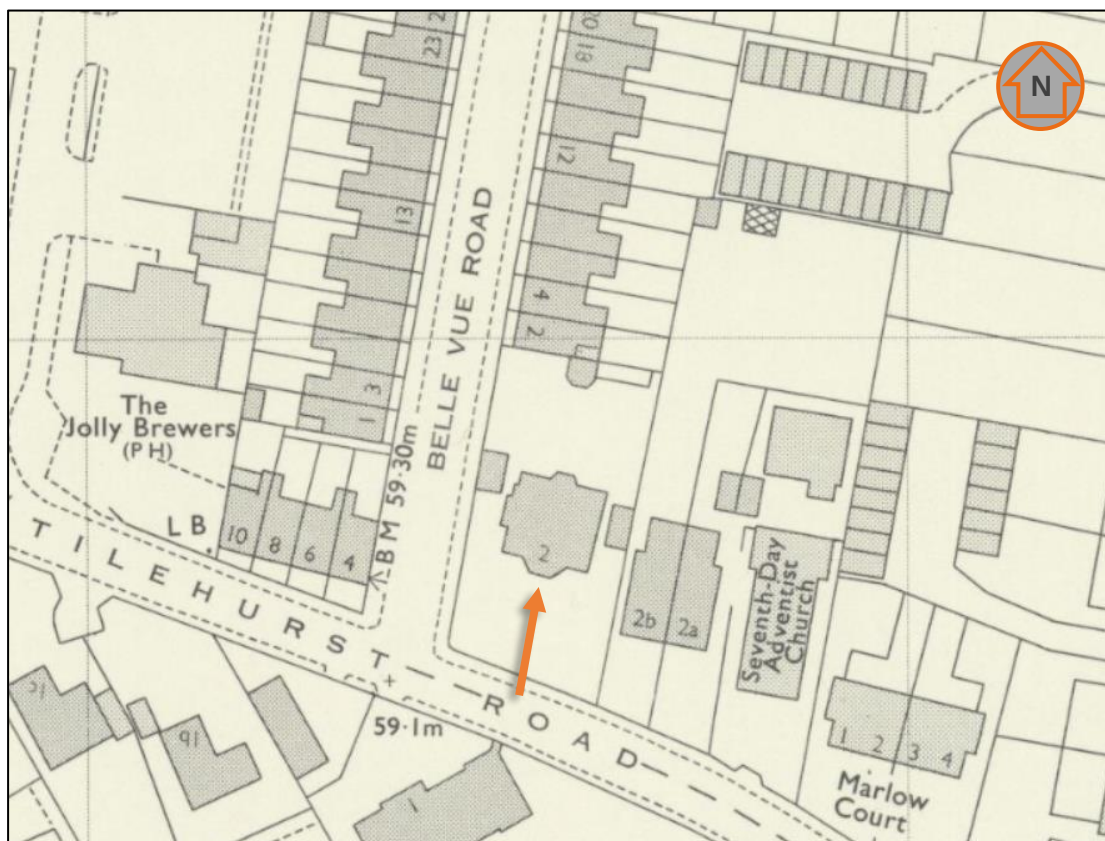


Fig.34: Ordnance Survey map, revised 1971, published 1971, the final available historic map which shows the site prior to demolition of the outbuildings.

Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area

- 3.8. Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area was designated in 1974 with boundary amendments following in 2004 and 2019. The Character Appraisal document was published by Reading Borough Council in March 2020. The application site is located within the 'Streets West of Russell Street' character area to the western side of the conversation area.
- 3.9. The area is stated to be of significance due to its diverse urban, domestic architecture which primarily spans the Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian periods with good examples of each across a range of styles and scales, albeit with some modern infill development. The area also demonstrates the emergence of a street pattern as the former agricultural land to the west of the mediaeval town centre was progressively developed. This first took the form of an elegant suburb for members of the town's elite and later as streets of terraced housing for employees of Reading's manufacturing industries whose rapid growth was enhanced by the arrival of the railway.

- 3.10. The application site, 2 Tilehurst Road, is described in the conservation area appraisal document in context with the 'Streets West of Russell Street' character area (where referred to as Bellevue House, Villa, or Lodge). The appraisal recognises it as one of only a few early estate houses in the area but notes that its original grounds have been reduced by development and given over to gravel parking, remarking that it "could be more sensitively landscaped". Nevertheless, the property is identified as a key positive feature of the area – though it should be noted that this comment preceded the closure and subsequent deterioration of the site.

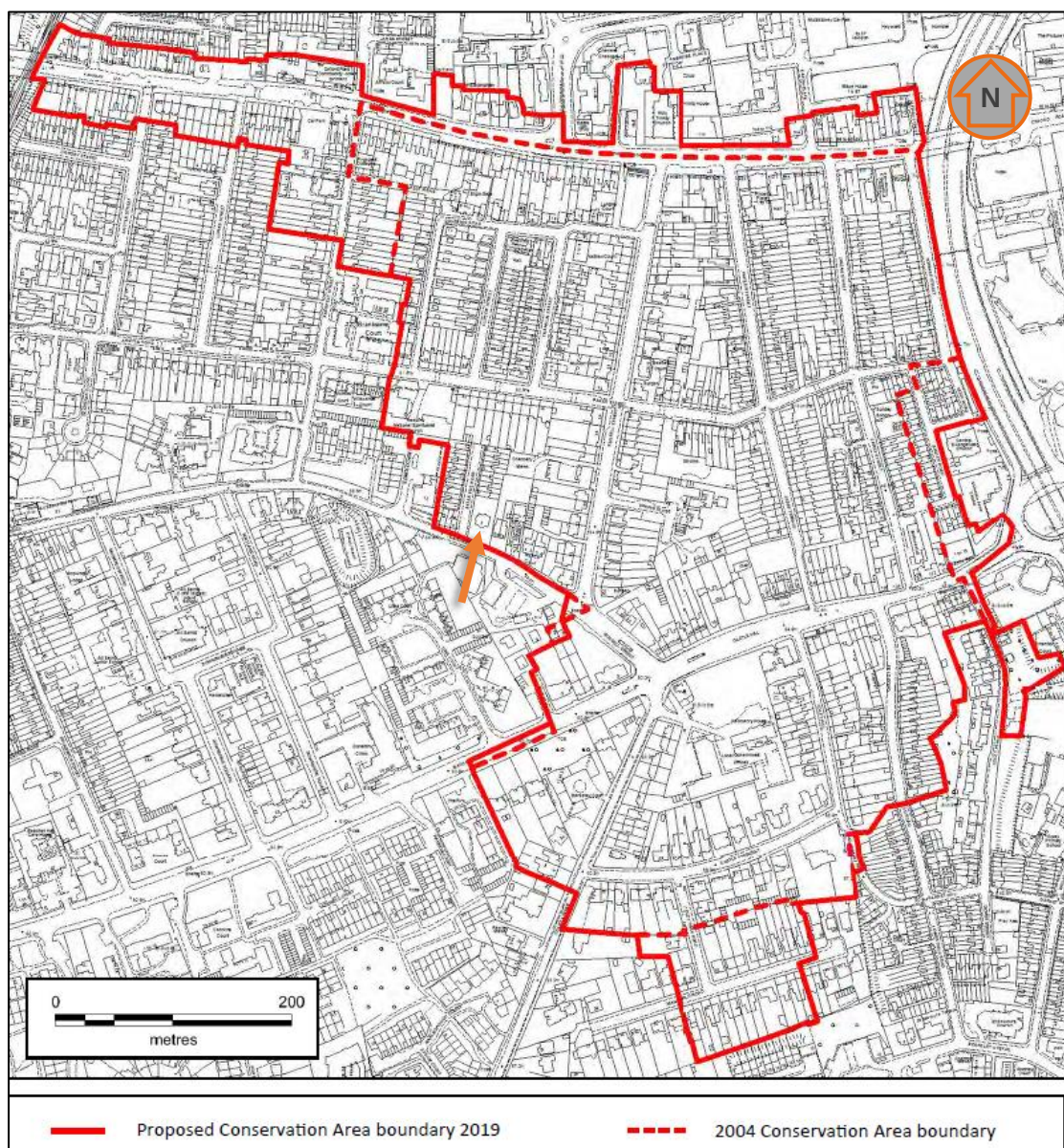


Fig.35: Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area.

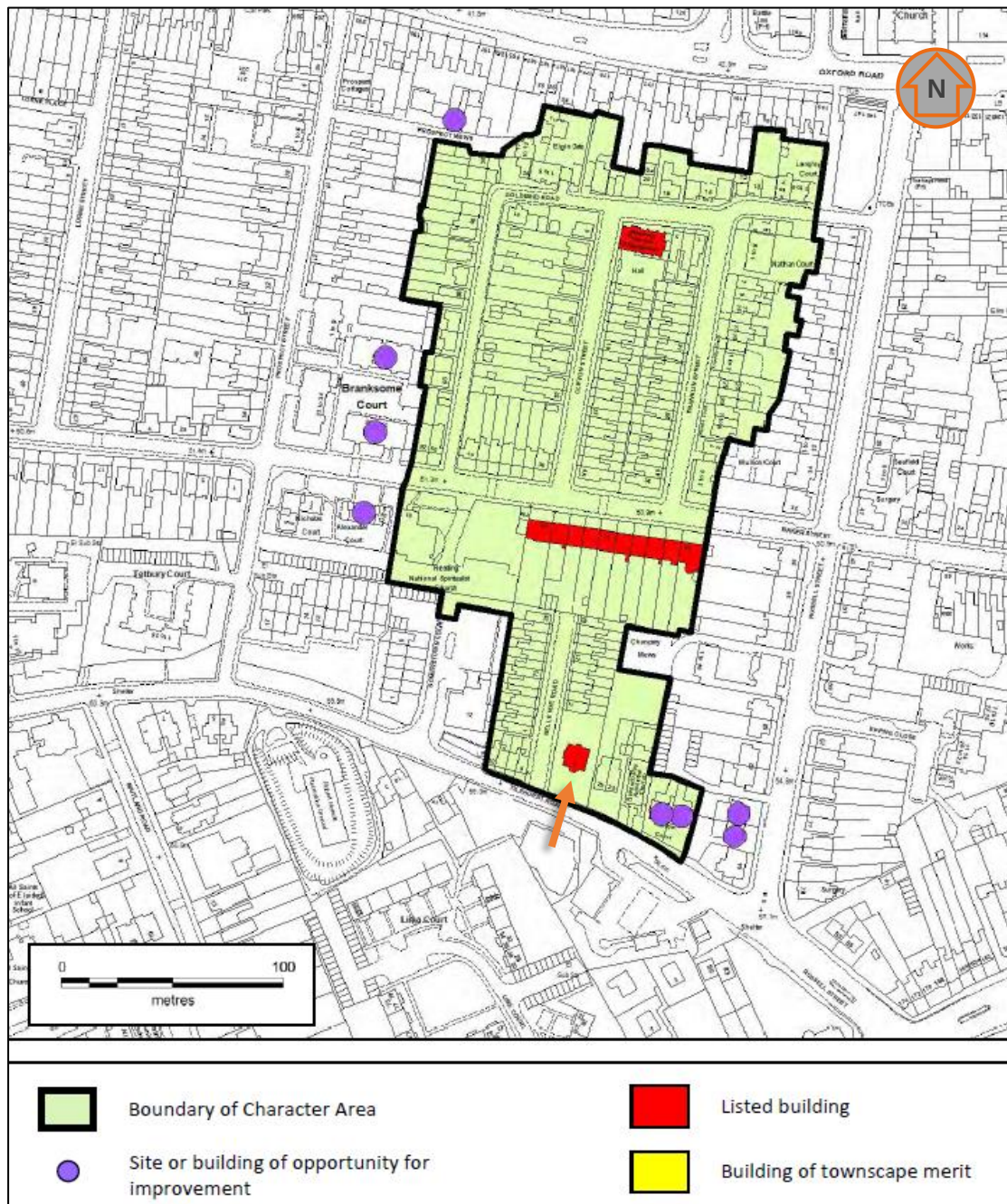


Fig.36: Streets West of Russell Street Character Area, including identification of heritage assets, site marked by arrow.

4.0 PLANNING LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

Legislation

- 4.1. The legislative framework for the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas are set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Historic England, defines preservation in this context, as not harming the interest in the building, as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged.
- 4.2. In 2014, a ruling by the Court of Appeal (Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northants District Council, English Heritage and the National Trust) made clear that to discharge this responsibility, decision makers must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings (and by implication other heritage assets) when carrying out the balancing exercise of judging harm against other planning considerations, as required under the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.3. Another ruling made in May 2017 by the Court of Appeal (Barwood Strategic Land II LLP v East Staffordshire Borough Council and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government), upheld a High Court ruling, that subordinates National Planning Policy Framework development presumptions to the statutory authority of an up-to-date local plan, as the NPPF is no more than ‘guidance for decision-makers, without the force of statute behind it. Paragraph 13 of the decision states, *‘The NPPF is the Government’s planning policy for England. It does not have the force of statute, and, ought not to be treated as if it did. Indeed, as one might expect, it acknowledges and reinforces the statutory presumption in favour of the development plan, and it also explicitly recognizes and emphasizes its own place in the plan-led system of development control. Its “Introduction” acknowledges that “[planning] law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise”, and that “[the NPPF] must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions”. Paragraph 12 recognizes that the NPPF “does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making”. Paragraph 13 describes the NPPF, correctly, as “guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers”, which, in the context of development control decision-making, is “a material consideration in determining applications”. Paragraph 215, in “Annex 1: Implementation”, says that “due weight should be given*

to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with [the NPPF] (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in [the NPPF], the greater the weight that may be given)”, but this too is guidance for decision-makers, without the force of statute behind it’.

- 4.4. Therefore, by implication, this judgment again emphasises the relative importance of sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in making planning decisions in relation to development that affects listed buildings and conservation areas.
- 4.5. Section 16(2) relates to an LBC application and states, ‘In considering whether to grant listed building consent/ for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’.
- 4.6. Section 66(1) relates to planning applications and states, ‘In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’.
- 4.7. Section 72(1) relates to development affecting conservation areas and states, “In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area...’special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”.
- 4.8. As a minimum, the tests provided require the works to preserve the listed building or its setting and preserve the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 4.9. Historic England defines preservation in this context as not harming the interest in the building, as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 4.10. As mentioned above, there is a need to carry out a balancing exercise of judging harm against other planning considerations as required under the NPPF. The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are to be applied. The guiding principle of the document is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the protection and enhancement of the historic environment is embedded in this approach.



- 4.11. Sustainable development is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF breaks down this definition into three objectives: economic, social, and environmental. Within the environmental objective, sustainable development needs to contribute to 'protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment'.
- 4.12. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF contains Strategic Policies, which provide an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision for the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built, and historic environment.
- 4.13. Section 16 of the NPPF contains policies relating to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Within this section (paragraph 207), the Local Planning Authority requires the applicant to describe the significance of any affected heritage asset including any contribution made by their setting as part of an application.
- 4.14. Significance is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF, as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historical interest. Significance also derives not only from the asset's physical presence but also from its setting. Setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, the extent of which is not fixed and can change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to significance of an asset.
- 4.15. Impact from a proposed development to the significance of a designated heritage asset needs to be evaluated, NPPF paragraph 212, states, 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'. NPPF paragraph 213 identifies that alteration, destruction, or development within the setting of a designated heritage asset can result in harm to, or loss of, the significance of the asset and that such loss requires a clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional and substantial harm or loss of grade I and grade II* listed buildings should be wholly exceptional.
- 4.16. NPPF Paragraphs 214 and 215 define the levels of harm as substantial or less than substantial. The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides useful guidance on assessing harm in relation to these definitions and gives the following example, 'In

determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting'. The PPG quantifies substantial harm (NPPF paragraph 214) as total destruction while partial destruction is likely to have a considerable impact but, depending on the circumstances, it may still be less than substantial harm or conceivably not harmful at all. Anything less than total destruction needs to be evaluated on its own merits, for example, the removal of elements to an asset which themselves impact on its significance may therefore not be harmful to the asset. The PPG advises works that 'are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm (NPPF paragraph 215) or no harm at all'. However, it is important to consider each development in its own context as the PPG also identifies that minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm to the significance of an asset.

4.17. Paragraphs 214 and 215 refer to 'public benefit' as a means to outweigh the loss of or harm to a designated heritage asset. The PPG identifies that public benefit may follow many developments and as such this benefit could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress which are the dimensions to sustainable development defined by NPPF Paragraph 8. The PPG states, 'Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefit'. Public benefits may include heritage benefits such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting.
- Reducing or removing risk to heritage asset.
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long- term conservation.

4.18. The three points above relate to NPPF Paragraph 210, which requires the Local Planning Authority to take these points into account when determining applications. Although, there is no defined list of public benefits, examples of public benefit for a designated heritage asset may include:



- The restoration of a listed building.
- The improved setting of a listed building.
- The enhancement of a conservation area.

Local Planning Policy

4.19. As well as legislation and national planning policies, Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019) includes policies relating to the historic environment. Relevant policies include:

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Historic parks and gardens; and
- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:

- Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;
- Restoring original building features;
- Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;
- Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;
- Improving signage and street furniture;

- Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;
- Sympathetic landscaping and planting;
- Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;
- Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;
- Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);
- b. Sensitivity to historic context;
- c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);
- d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.

5.0 ASSESSING SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.1. Significance of a heritage asset is defined by the NPPF as the value of a heritage asset placed on it by current and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological; architectural; artistic or historical. The setting of a heritage asset also contributes to its significance and is defined by the NPPF as the surrounding in which a heritage asset is experienced. In comparison, Historic England's Conservation Principles (2008) uses evidential; aesthetic; historical and communal values to define significance. These different set of values have been combined for the purpose of this report.
- 5.2. Part 4 of British Standard 7913:2013 Guide to Conservation of Historic Buildings provides information on heritage values and significance. In context, this document states, 'A wide range of factors can contribute to the significance of a historic building. As well as physical components, significance includes factors such as immediate and wider setting, use and association (e.g., with a particular event, family, community or artist and those involved in design and construction)'.
- 5.3. Identifying the values of an asset allow us to understand the degree of significance and inform us of the potential impact the proposed works will have to the heritage asset and its setting. These values may be tangible, the physical fabric of the building, capable of being touched, or viewed such as its landscape. Also, the value may be intangible through a past event or an association with a person.
- **Evidential (archaeological) value** relates to physical aspects of the site which provide evidence from the past. This can be with built form or below ground archaeology.
 - **Historical value** is the extent to which the asset is associated with or illustrative of historic events or people.
 - **Aesthetic (architectural/artistic) value** includes design, visual, landscape and architectural qualities.
 - **Communal value** includes social, commemorative, or spiritual value, local identity, and the meaning of place for people.

5.4. The assessment of significance draws upon information contained in the section on Heritage Assets and uses the values defined above to establish the level of significance detailed below:

- Features of the asset which contribute to the principal historical and architectural interest are considered to be of **high significance**.
- Features of the asset which noticeably contribute to the overall architectural or historical interest and may include post construction features of historic or design interest are considered to be of **medium significance**.
- Features of the asset which make a relatively minor contribution to the historic and architectural interest are considered to be of **low significance**.
- Features which do not contribute to the historic and architectural interest of the asset, and in some cases may even detract from the significance are therefore considered to be either **neutral or detracting**.

Assessing Setting

5.5. The primary guiding document for assessing setting is The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 (2017), produced by Historic England.

5.6. Setting varies from asset to asset and cannot be generically defined. Changes to the setting of heritage assets may be positive such as replacing poor development which has compromised the assets setting. It is likely that the setting of an asset has changed over time from the dynamics of human activity and natural occurrences such as weather.

5.7. The importance setting makes to the contribution to the significance of the heritage asset is often related to how the heritage asset is seen in views. This can include views looking towards the heritage asset or from the heritage asset looking outwards and may include relationships between the asset and other heritage assets, natural or topographical features. Assets may also be intended to be seen from one another in designed landscapes for aesthetic reasons.

- 5.8. Historic England's Good Practice Advice 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017), notes a staged approach to proportionate decision-taking, with relevant NPPF paragraphs along with guidance contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance for their implementation, providing the framework for the consideration of changes affecting the setting of heritage assets which should be assessed proportionately and based on the nature, extent, and level of the heritage asset's significance.
- 5.9. The Guidance recommends a five-step approach to the assessment of the effect of development on the setting of heritage assets as follows:

- Step 1:** identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
- Step 2:** assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s);
- Step 3:** assess the effects of the proposed development whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance;
- Step 4:** explore ways of maximising enhancement and avoiding or minimising harm;
- Step 5:** make and document the decision and monitor outcomes

2 Tilehurst Road

- 5.10. The significance of the listed building 2 Tilehurst Road is derived primarily from the architectural value of its external character and historic value as an example of a large late-Georgian villa from a period of increased development on the west side of Reading. The Italianate style and comparative scale of the property makes it a notable visual landmark within the streetscape, however its landscaping has been negatively impacted by the late 20th century laying of gravel throughout the site to create parking facilities. Prior to this, the original setting – an extensive Georgian/Victorian landscaped garden – was also greatly reduced and developed between c.1890-1930.
- 5.11. Internally the property has also been considerably impacted by mid-late 20th century works relating to use as a hotel. Consequently, the layout and circulation pattern has been greatly altered by the formation of new corridors and subdivision of larger rooms whilst historic décor is absent from the majority of rooms leaving only limited examples of historic window fabric and some cornice and skirting in the ground floor front room.

- 5.12. As such, the significance of the building is therefore derived primarily from its external character. Nevertheless, as a grade II listed building, 2 Tilehurst Road is a designated heritage asset considered to be of **high significance**.

Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area

- 5.13. The significance of Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area is derived from its diverse urban, domestic architecture which primarily spans the Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian periods with good examples of each across a range of styles and scales, however it has also been subject to later/modern infill and redevelopment in places. As such, the conservation area holds architectural/aesthetic value as well as degrees of historic, social, and evidential value relating to the morphology of the town, which in turn can be linked to the expansion of local industry and the railway network.
- 5.14. Due to its position at the edge of the conservation area, the application site overlooks late 20th century development (petrol station and veterinary practice) on the south side of Tilehurst Road, creating a clear division between the included and excluded areas.
- 5.15. Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset considered to be of **medium-high significance**.

6.0 PROPOSED WORKS AND ASSESSMENT

Current Context

- 6.1. As described in detail in Sections 2 and 3 and the appendices of this report, the current context of the property is defined by extensive mid-late late 20th century internal works relating to conversion for use as a hotel. Consequently, the interior predominantly lacks historic fabric and features and has an altered room layout and circulation pattern due to numerous subdivisions and creation of internal corridors.
- 6.2. The property is currently vacant following closure of the hotel c.2020.

Proposed Works

- 6.3. The current application relates to change of use of the building into seven flats arranged as two per floor to the lower ground, ground, and first floors and one within the attic.
- 6.4. The proposed flats will primarily utilise the existing internal layout of the property, however the modern partition within the large rooms to the front and rear will be removed, restoring their original widths. Due to the additional services already in place from hotel use, these will also be utilised for proposed kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- 6.5. The proposal also includes retrofitting and replacement of windows with slimline double glazing or secondary glazing as appropriate for their identified context. Modern and incongruous windows are to be replaced with new timber sash windows with slimline double glazing to match the style of existing historic windows. Windows with historic context (original with replacement modern glass) and those that are early replacements (early-mid 20th century and as described in the listing description) are to be repaired and retrofitted with slimline double glazing or fitted with an internal secondary glazing system.
- 6.6. The windows identified as having been blocked up are to be reinstated using timber sash windows with slimline double glazing to match existing.
- 6.7. General repair will be undertaken to the exterior of the property and repair and treatment of damp issues within the lower ground floor.
- 6.8. Landscaping is also proposed, reinstating a rear garden and small front garden with lawns and planting, parking bays, covered bin stores, and cycle parking.



Assessment and Impact

- 6.9. As previously identified during the course of earlier applications and consultations, due to the current context of the property, both in terms of physical condition and prolonged vacancy, the current application presents an opportunity to **enhance** the listed building and its contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.10. Through high quality and appropriate design, which takes the historic and current context of the building into consideration, it is considered that this is achieved. The change of use of the vacant hotel to flats will facilitate necessary repair works to the fabric of the building as well as improvements to landscaping, which is currently identified by the conservation area as being poor. It should also be noted that residential use has historic context (having originated as a dwelling) and that this therefore represents the **optimum viable use** of the property, assisting in its **long term conservation**. In this regard, combined with the creation of additional housing in the area, **public benefit** is therefore provided which can be used to offset potential harm to the designated heritage assets.
- 6.11. As the existing interior layout and fabric of the property is defined primarily by modern alteration and this layout is to be utilised by the proposed arrangement of flats, it is considered that this aspect of the proposal would result in **no harm** to historic or significant fabric. Similarly, the limited amount of retained historic features are to be retained, causing **no impact** to them.
- 6.12. As it is proposed that the modern partitions of the larger front and rear room be removed, the reinstatement of their original width and reversal of any related pre-existing impact to windows will in fact have a **positive impact** to the fabric, layout, and significance of the listed building.
- 6.13. Similarly, the reinstatement of seven blocked up historic window openings (as previously suggested by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee) will also provide **enhancement** and heritage benefit to the listed building. In conjunction with the other proposed repairs, retrofitting, and replacement of existing windows, it is considered that the window works will have an overall positive impact and result in a harmonious historic character to all fenestration whilst also benefitting from improved thermal efficiency for future occupants and the carbon footprint of the building.

6.14. In summary, reflecting on the current context of the property and the extensive existing alterations to fabric and layout, the proposals provide many sources of **enhancement**, reinstating and/or repairing historic features and benefitting the long term occupancy and conservation of the building. Returning the building to residential use is a priority for the upkeep and maintenance of the historic building, and to this end implementation of the proposals would be beneficial in providing enhanced amenity and flexibility of use. Consequently, the minimum requirement to **preserve** the designated heritage assets is satisfied and arguably exceeded, having a positive impact to the listed building and character and appearance of the conservation area.



7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1. Paragraph 208 of the NPPF advises Local Planning Authorities that the significance, including setting of any heritage asset is assessed. This document has concisely described the heritage assets affected by the proposed works and their significance.
- 7.2. As discussed in detail in this report, 2 Tilehurst Road, has been substantially altered in conjunction with its modern tenure as a hotel with modern fabric, finishes, and circulation now defining the majority of the interior of the building. Through an informed understanding of the current context and fabric of the building, the proposed works primarily concern such post-construction elements of the property whilst historic features are to be retained, repaired, or reinstated. As such, the works do not result in loss or harm to historic or significant fabric and will instead provide substantial heritage benefit through the reinstatement of seven blocked historic window openings and other internal improvements. Furthermore, with regards to landscaping, the proposal will have a positive impact to the character and appearance of the streetscape and conservation area.
- 7.3. Overall, the proposed change of use of the property to seven residential flats represents the optimum viable use of the vacant listed building, facilitating both its immediate repair and long term occupancy and conservation.
- 7.4. With regards to the development meeting the statutory tests provided by Sections 16(2) and Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the minimum aim is to preserve the setting; building; features of special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings. As described above, it is concluded that the proposal satisfies this test and **preserves** the listed building, 2 Tilehurst Road. However, as the proposal also includes repair and reinstatement works and general improvement to the building and its setting, it is considered that the minimum requirement is exceeded and the proposal provides **enhancement**.
- 7.5. With regards to the development meeting the statutory test provided by 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the minimum aim is for works to preserve the character or appearance of a conservation area. As the works to the building are primarily internal or like-for-like external, they have minimal impact to the conservation area, however there is considerable improvement to the setting and landscaping. Thus, the minimum requirement is exceeded and the character and appearance of Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area is **enhanced**.

- 7.6. It should be remembered that Historic England defines preservation in this context as not harming interest in the heritage asset as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged.
- 7.7. With regards to NPPF paragraphs 212-215, public benefit is required to offset any harm to a designated asset. Whilst little to no harm is anticipated, the proposal would nevertheless provide optimum viable use and improved amenity inside the building, which, combined with the enhanced appearance of the building and landscaping, supports the beneficial use and long term conservation of the listed building. Furthermore, the proposal would also create seven new dwellings and improve the thermal efficiency and carbon footprint of the site. The proposal is therefore considered to provide public benefit which is sufficient to overcome any potential low levels of harm.
- 7.8. Regarding local policies EN1, EN3, and EN6, the proposed works are found to enhance the conservation area and the special interests and setting of the listed building for the aforementioned reasons, thus protecting the historic environment of Reading.
- 7.9. It is concluded that the proposed works would not be contrary to the heritage related legislation, national, and local planning policies and it is therefore requested that the planning application be approved.

8.0 SOURCES

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024), *National Planning Policy Framework*.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990

Ordnance Survey Maps (various dates)

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2018) <http://planning.guidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment> / National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019 revision) / National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG 2019) / National Design Guide (2019)

Historic England (2017) *The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 (Second Edition)*

Historic England (2008) *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*

Kelly's Directory of Berkshire 1931

Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019)

Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal (2020)



HS1

Listing Description

Heritage Category	Listed Building
Listed Building Name	2, TILEHURST ROAD
Address	2, TILEHURST ROAD
List Entry Number	1113596
Grade	II
Date First Listed	21 January 1976
Date Amended	n/a
District	Reading (Unitary Authority)
Parish	Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference	SU7065773078

Listing Description

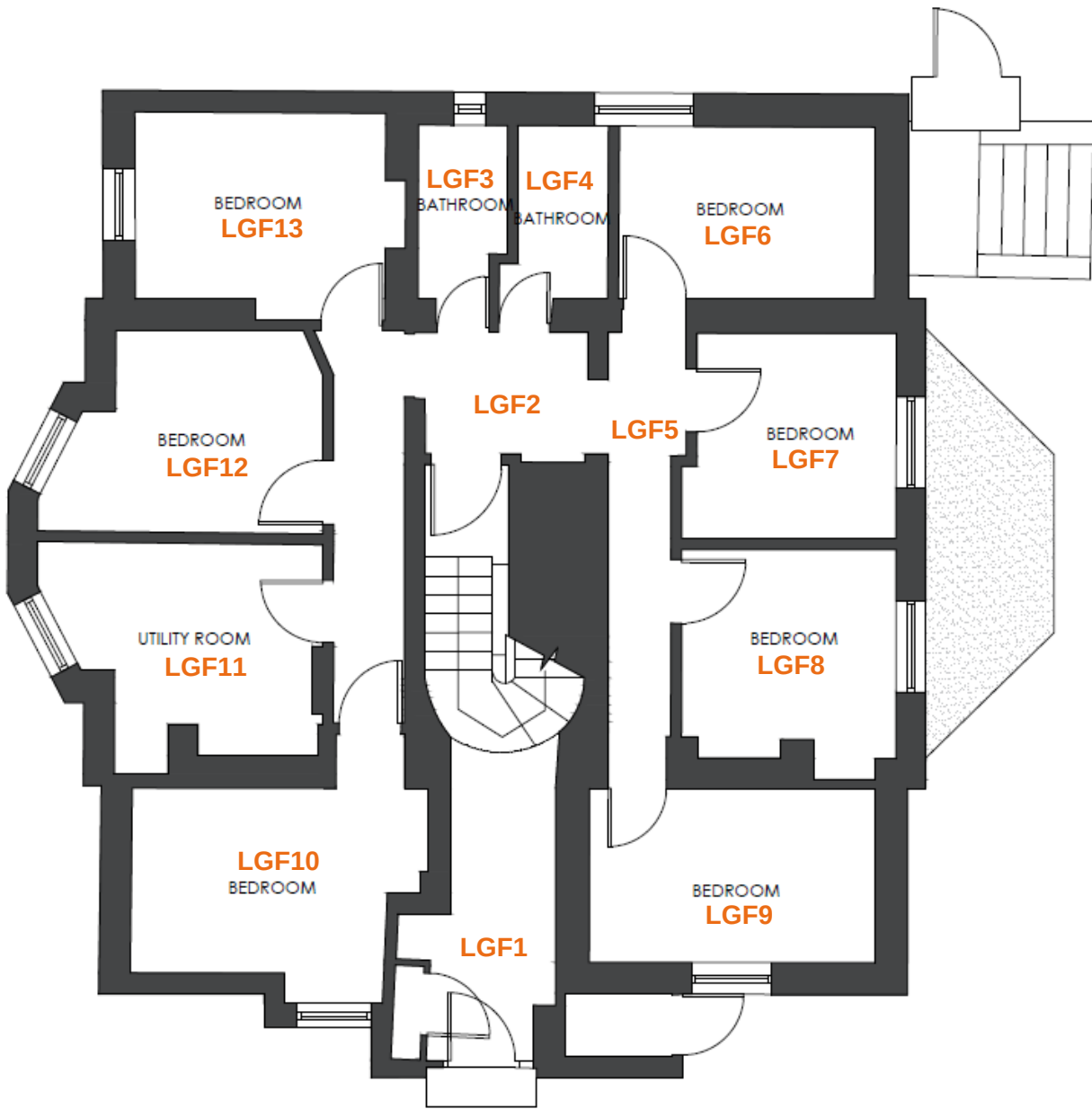
TILEHURST ROAD (North Side) No 2

II

2. Previously called Bellevue. Built before 1839 as a detached 2 1/2 storey stucco villa on basement. Front: 3 bays the centre a 2 storey canted 3 window bay with round headed windows on ground floor, open arcade to basement, segmental attic window. Glazing bar and cross glazed sash windows. Central break is higher with pediment gable formed of bracket verges and eaves. Wings have impost string carried over centre and cornices and blacking courses with central panels surmounted by elegant oval shaped urns, possibly of Coade stone. Flight of steps to doorway to right, flanked by panels and with radiating and wreathed fanlight. Slate roof with prominent corniced chimney stacks. North front similar but grander with bullseye attic window and arched recess with urn over centre window.

HS2

Room Schedule



EXISTING LOWER-GROUND FLOOR PLAN



LGF1 – Historic stairs, modern wall finishes



LGF2 – Modern fabric



LGF3 – Modern fabric



LGF4 – Modern fabric



LGF5 – Modern fabric, damp to altered arch opening



LGF6 – Modern fabric



LGF7 – Historic window with replacement modern glazing



LGF8 – Historic window with replacement modern glazing



LGF9 – Modern fabric and window



LGF10 – Modern fabric and window



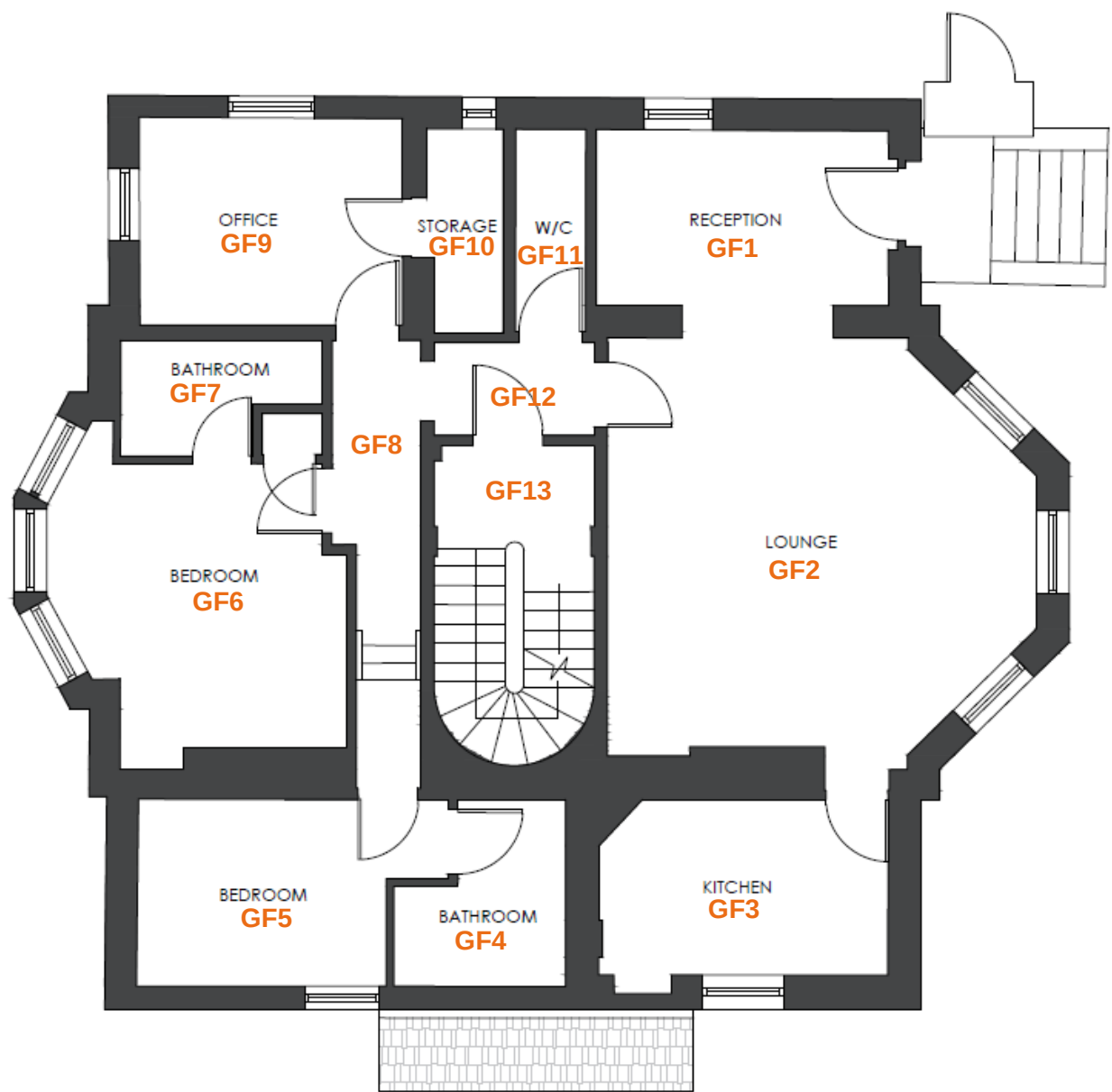
LGF11 – Modern fabric and replacement window. Former window to right blocked up and split by modern partition



LGF12 – Modern fabric and replacement window



LGF13 - Modern fabric, small casement window of historic context with modern glass



EXISTING UPPER-GROUND FLOOR PLAN



GF1 – Mixed context historic and replacement skirting and cornice, modern door with historic fanlight, modern sash window



GF2(1) - Mixed context historic and replacement skirting and cornice, post-construction alteration to arch



GF2(2) – Mixed context historic and replacement skirting and cornice, c.early 20th century replacement windows with modern single glazing (non-original but mentioned in 1976 listing)



GF3 – Modern fabric, historic window with modern single glazing



GF4 – Modern fabric



GF5 – Modern fabric and window



GF6(1) – Modern fabric and ensuite partition, early-mid 20th century replacement windows



GF7 – Modern fabric



GF8 – Modern corridor and fabric



GF9(1) – Modern fabric and window



GF9(2) – Former window to left infilled internally (sealed and painted over externally)



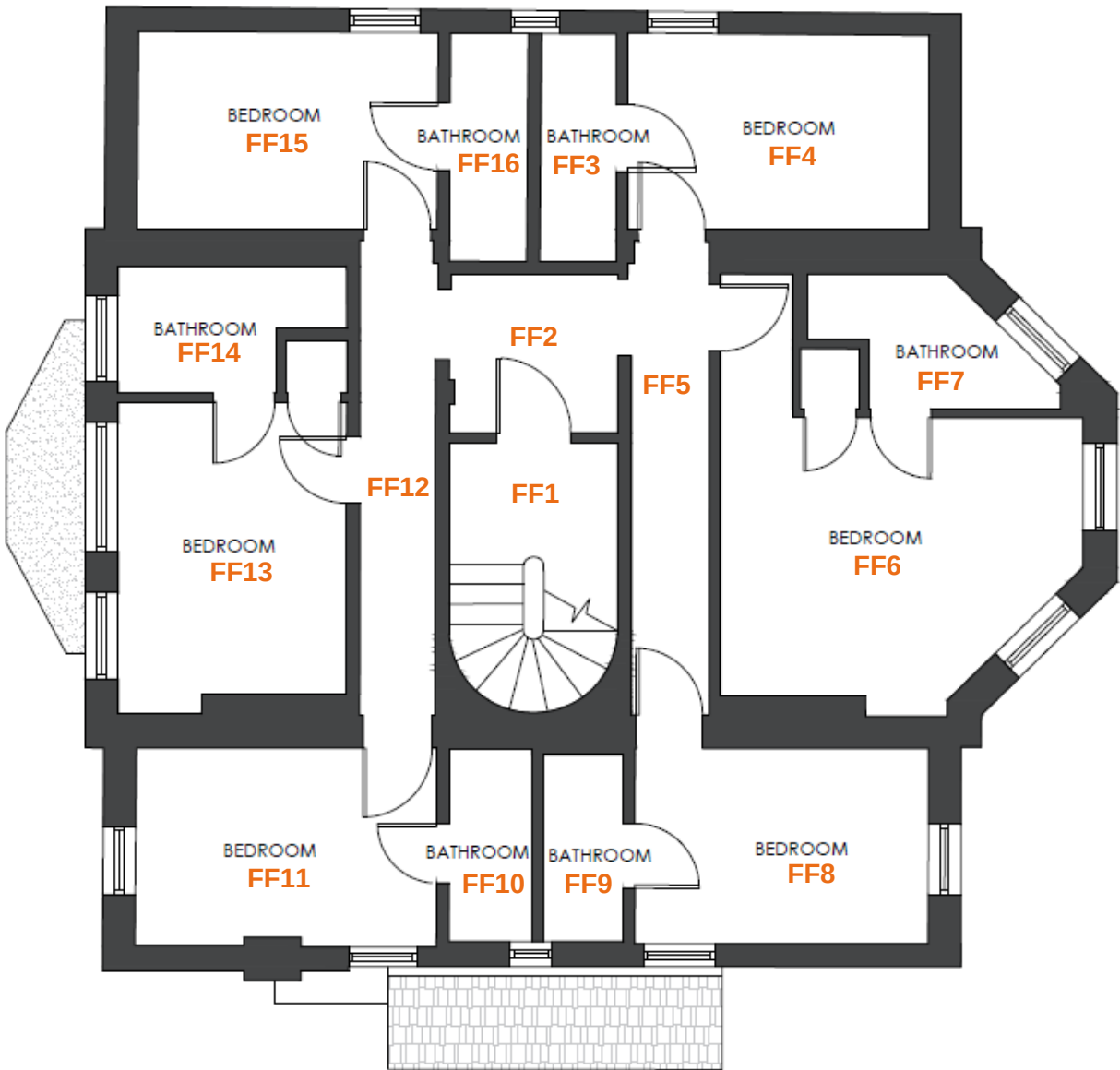
GF10 – Modern fabric



GF11 – Modern fabric



GF12 – Historic stairs, arch, and skirting, modern textured finish



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN



FF1 – Historic stairs and skirting, modern textured finish



FF2 – Modern fabric



FF3 – Modern fabric and window



FF4 – Modern fabric, window of uncertain 20th century context split by modern partition



FF5 – Modern fabric and partitions



FF6(1) - Early 20th century replacement windows with modern single glazing (non-original but mentioned in 1976 listing), surround with possible historic context, modern partition



FF6(2) – Modern ensuite and cupboard partitions



FF7 - Early 20th century replacement window with modern single glazing (non-original but mentioned in 1976 listing), surround with possible historic context, modern partition and lowered ceiling



FF8 – Modern fabric and windows



FF9 – Modern fabric, small round window covered over



FF10 – Modern fabric, window of uncertain 20th century context split by modern partition



FF11 – Modern fabric and window



FF12 – Modern fabric and corridor



FF13 – Historic window to left with modern single glazing, former French door to centre infilled internally (sealed and painted externally), modern fabric



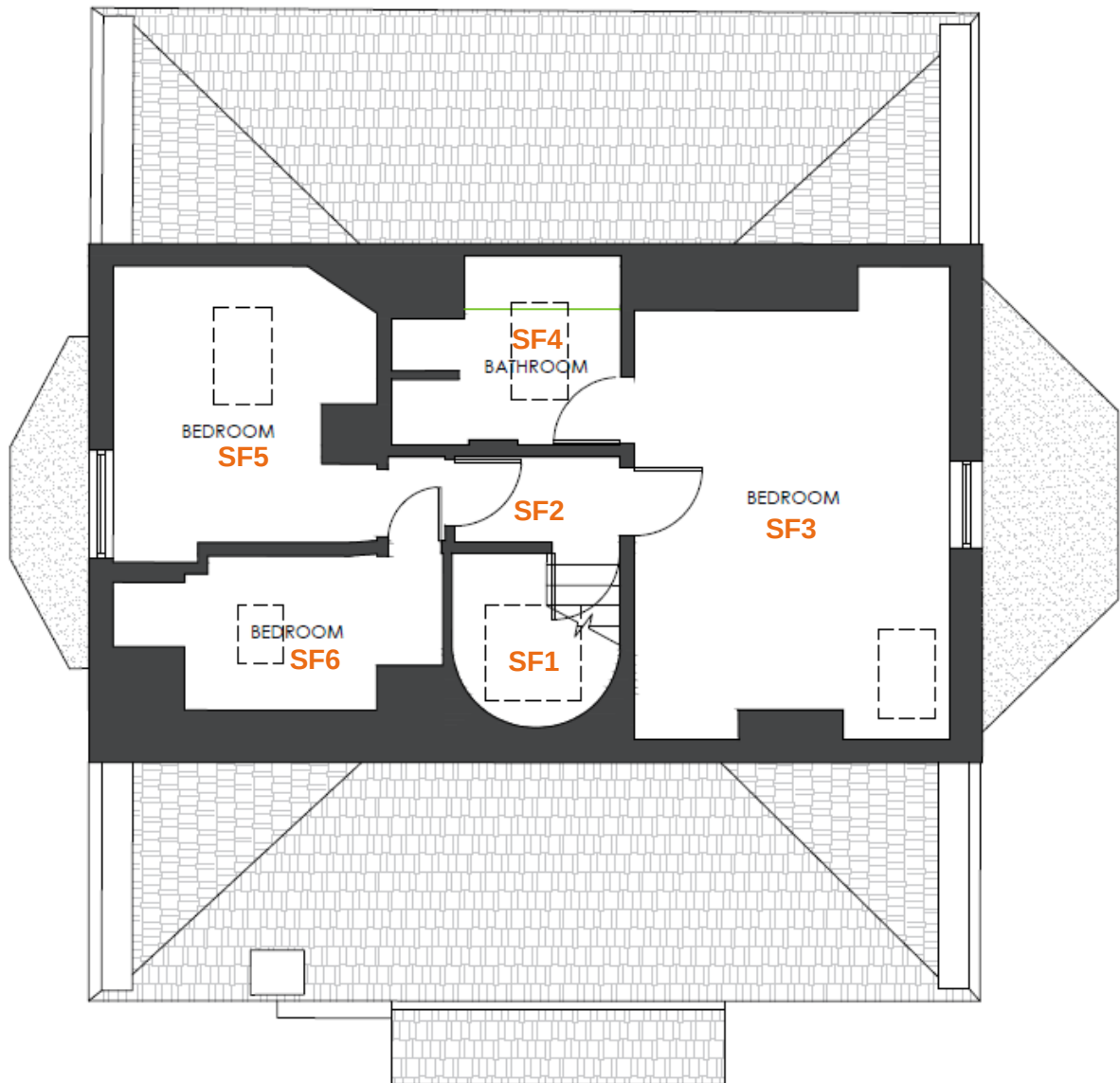
FF14 – Historic window with modern single glazing, modern fabric



FF15 – Modern fabric and window (inset), additional infilled window behind camera



FF16 - Modern fabric, window of uncertain 20th century context split by modern partition



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN



SF1 – Historic stairs and detailing, modern textured wall finish and ceiling



SF2 – Modern fabric including wall, skylight, ceiling hatch, and doors



SF3(1) – Modern fabric, early 20th century replacement window with modern glass



SF3(2) – Modern fabric and ensuite



SF3 – Modern fabric



SF4(1) – Modern fabric, oval window opening of historic context with swivel opening replaced by modern fixed pane glass



SF4(2) – Modern fabric and rooflight



SF5 – Modern fabric, damage caused by ceiling leak



understanding
heritage
to inform
change