



**Historic Building
Advisory Service**

Historic Building Record

**71 – 73 Caversham Road,
Reading, Berkshire.**



December 2024
Reference: 24915

**71 – 73 CAVERSHAM ROAD
READING
BERKSHIRE**

Historic Building Record

Prepared on behalf of

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Summary



Fig : 71 – 73 Caversham Road from the northeast

The Historic Building Advisory Service was commissioned by Westbury Projects Ltd to undertake an historic building assessment and record of a building known as 71 – 73 Caversham Road, Reading, Berkshire.

The purpose of the survey was to undertake an assessment and record of the historic nature and character of the building that is currently vacant and was last used as retail premises. This was undertaken by means of a visual assessment and analysis of the

building to understand its means of construction as well as the way it has been altered and adapted over time.

A survey of readily assessable documentary and mapping was undertaken and other sources of information were also researched. This assessment aims to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

A visual inspection, accompanied by a general photographic record was carried out in and around this building with the aim of understanding its basic form of construction, materials employed and the methods involved. This was to a level sufficient to produce a written record in accordance with level 2 specification as set out in *UNDERSTANDING HISTORIC BUILDINGS: A guide to good recording practice* (Historic England, 2016).

This building dates to the mid to late part of the third quarter of the 19th C and was originally used as a pair of malt houses that were separated by a narrow gap. It seems to have ceased being connected with malting in the early part of the 20th C and then in 1931 it became an ironmonger's premises. Over the intervening years until the late 1970s this block was altered and adapted several times as can be suggested by historic mapping evidence. Much of the ancillary buildings associated with its original use were removed during the years from the second quarter of the 20th C.

Then in the 1970s this block was bought by a Reading firm who apparently undertook much alteration work as well as removing sections to convert it to a large retail store. This possibly included taking out intermediate floors, altering the internal layout, as well as remodelling the external appearance. It was then fully amalgamated in to a single building, as well as having a new retail style frontage formed across the back of the pavement to Caversham Road. They left the site in 2018 and since when it has been vacant.

The site inspection was carried out on 20 December, 2024.

This historic building survey and assessment were undertaken by R J Hill MRICS, MCIfA, and who also undertook the historic research and managed the project on behalf of the Historic Building Advisory Service.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 The Historic Building Advisory Service was commissioned by Westbury Projects Ltd to undertake an historic building assessment of a building known as 71 – 73 Caversham Road, Reading, Berkshire.
- 1.1.2 The examination of the building was undertaken generally within the guidelines of good surveying and building archaeology practice. The purpose of the survey was to undertake an assessment of the historic nature and character of the building that was last used as offices for professional practice. This was undertaken by means of a visual and physical assessment and analysis of the building to understand its means of construction as well as the way it has been altered and adapted over time.
- 1.1.3 A survey of readily assessable documentary and mapping was undertaken together with other sources of information that were researched and information gleaned from present and past owners of the site.

1.2 Survey Content

- 1.2.1 The aim of this report is to produce an overall impression of the property and its setting at the time of the inspection. This was undertaken by a visual examination of the elements that make up this facility to identify the means of construction, analyse its construction, and assess its historic significance and what historic character remains.
- 1.2.2 Voids, cupboards, closed spaces, etc. were inspected where these were relevant and ready access could be gained. There were no areas that we were requested or prevented from entering by the owner / occupant of the facility. Similar considerations apply to surfaces with directly applied coverings such as wall panelling or heavy coverings, fully fitted or stuck down carpets and other sheet floor coverings were assessed in general terms only. In all these cases the general 'feel' of the building has been taken into account to whether there was any

historic fabric concealed or there is a need for a further more detailed inspection or opening up of the structure that will involve the client in additional cost.

- 1.2.3 Readily accessible documentary sources were reviewed in an attempt to create an established time and ownership line for the relevant parts of the site and buildings. The results of this research were then applied to the findings from the site survey in an attempt to show the development of the relevant part of the site.
- 1.2.4 This assessment has been compiled generally in line with good practice to meet the requirements of NPPF.

1.3 Planning Background

- 1.3.1 The planning application with which this report is regarded to is for *Partial demolition of former retail warehouse and erection of a mixed-use building comprising 29 residential units, retail floorspace (Use Class E(a)) at ground floor and associated car parking, cycle parking and landscaping (amended description)*.
- 1.3.2 The planning application was approved on 22 March 2024 with conditions.
- 1.3.3 This report has been produced in relation to planning condition 4, requiring: : *No development shall commence on site, including any works of demolition and any preparatory works, until details of the recording of the existing buildings, following as a minimum the Level 2 guidance set out in “Understanding Historic Buildings, A Guide to Good Practice” (Historic England 2016) (or any document which supersedes this document), are submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

1.4 Methodology

- 1.4.1 The methodology and development of this report and record entailed and comprises an assessment of the structure based on a measured survey provided by the contractor and photographic survey conducted by HBAS. This is augmented by documentary research to the level required by the general specification.
- 1.4.2 The survey is, as a minimum standard, to Level 2 standard as considered appropriate for the site and as set out in *UNDERSTANDING HISTORIC BUILDINGS: A guide to good recording practice (Historic England, 2016)*.
- 1.4.3 The survey was undertaken during the period of advance and initial preparation works by the contractor. Access was possible throughout the building and in all areas we were able to view aspects of the underlying fabric where finishing materials were removed to gain a better understanding of the construction.

- 1.4.4 This specified level of recording did not require additional research beyond that contained within this report. We have conducted archive research only, of map regressions and reliable documents readily found within the ** which** archives. It was considered that any further research would not provide any information that would aid this report.
- 1.4.5 Drawings provided by the owner have been used to indicate room locations and subsequently building and development phases. Where necessary the drawings have been altered and adjusted to show what was seen at the time of the survey.

1.5 Survey Information

- Premises inspected: 71 – 73 Caversham Road
- Location: Reading, Berkshire.
- Grid Reference SU7125374040
- Planning Reference Reading Borough Council 220922
- Client: Westbury Projects Ltd
- Current Use: Vacant
- Reason For Inspection: Historic building assessment& record
- Inspection By: R J Hill MRICS, MCIfA
- Inspection Date: 20 December, 202*
- Listed Building? Locally listed
- Registered Park / Garden .No
- Scheduled Monument .No
- Conservation Area? No
- National Landscape / Park? No

2 GENERAL

2.1 Location



Fig 2.1.1: 71 – 73 Caversham Road from the southeast (71 left)

- 2.1.1 The site is rectangular on plan, where this is on the west side of Caversham Road in the junction to Northfield Road that runs along its north side. To the south and west of the site is another commercial site that wraps around this one.
- 2.1.2 To the front of this building is Caversham Road and on the north side it is against the back edge of the pavement to Northfield Road and along which extends to the west. The block is approximately rectangular on plan with a service yard to the rear and beyond which, to the west boundary, is a further group of buildings called 1 Northfield Road. This other block has been converted into offices and sits across what is the back (west) side of the overall site.
- 2.1.3 This is in predominantly a commercial area with a commercial unit lying to the south side of the site, others on the north side of Northfield Road and more office buildings opposite this site on the east side of Caversham Road. Further to the west of this site, along Northfield Road, there is what can be considered as typical late 19th or very early 20th C type terrace housing.

2.2 Description

- 2.2.1 This building seemingly consists of two original blocks, parallel to Northfield Road, where the south block is N° 71 and the north block N° 73 Caversham Road, and

with a modern infill block between them. The south block (71) runs from a frontage on to the back edge of the pavement to Caversham Road, whilst the north block (73) was originally set back slightly from the frontage line of the south block. Historic mapping of this area shows that both these blocks have been significantly altered from their original construction in the mid – late third quarter of the 19th C.



Fig 2.2.2: West end of building from the southwest (71 left)

- 2.2.2 The north and south blocks are gable ended at the west end and then have ridges that run from there to the east, where the south roof finishes with a half hip. This runs through from front to back, although there is upward step in a position approximately two thirds of the length of the roof towards the back where the form changes. On the west end wall there is small mono pitch canopy roof towards the south side, which is attached to the gable
- 2.2.3 The roof to the north block runs in to, and above, the back of what can be considered a cross roof to the front that is parallel to Caversham Road and is gable ended to Northfield Road. The resultant configuration of the north roof produces a T shape on plan, where the west end gable is the foot and the head is the front cross roof over that range. As the main rear ridge of this block is higher

than front part there is a small hip between the two where it slopes down to meet the lower ridge.

- 2.2.4 The infill block between the south and north buildings now runs from the west end to the back of an extension to front cross wing as a two section flat roof where that over the west end is higher than the other. As with the south block this has a canopy roof attached to the west end wall. At the front the addition is a two storey structure that has closed-up the gap between the south end of the north block and the north of the south, where it is set back slightly from the front of the south block.
- 2.2.5 The front cross range finishes with a gable on the north end on the corner of Caversham Road and Northfield Road. At the south end the inserted addition, which is set back slightly from the front, has a lower ridge height to the new roof that overlaps that to the north side of the south block.



Fig 2.2.5: Front cross range to N° 73 (left) and new infill against south block (71)

- 2.2.6 The whole of the front cross range to N° 73 is set back from the frontage of the site and the south block it abuts. This has been levelled-up to the back of the present pavement with a single storey extension to the front with a metal roof over what could almost be considered as a large bay containing retail shop windows behind roller shutter security grilles.
- 2.2.7 The infill block between the south and north buildings now runs from the west end to the back of an extension to front cross wing as a two section flat roof where that over the west end is higher than the other. As with the south block this has a

canopy roof attached to the west end wall. At the front the addition is a two storey structure that has closed-up the gap between the south end of the north block and the north of the south, where it is set back slightly from the front of the south block.

- 2.2.8 Internally the north block contains two stories where the ground floor extends through in to the shop window type extension to the back edge of the pavement to Caversham Road. Against the west gable there are late 20th C structures that contain store rooms and a goods lift to the upper floor. The first floor on the north side is similar to the ground floor and largely open from front to back



Fig 2.2.8: Ground floor to north block (73)

- 2.2.9 On the south side it can be seen how the floor and wall layout reflects the roof structure over this block, with a change in floor level as well as an internal dividing wall on the junction between the two parts. This is also of two floors, where there are the remains of offices to the front as well as the back on the first floor.
- 2.2.10 The infill block between the north and south blocks was evidently adapted, when this was retail premises, to act as the main distribution space to the floors on

either side. To achieve this there are a set of stairs running up from both the front and back part of this section to a mezzanine type landing at a higher level. From there a staircase ran up to the first floor to the north and a set of steps to that on the south.

- 2.2.11 Within the first level of the rear section of the infill block a set of staff toilets as well rest rooms formed. To the front section this has been infilled as a connection between north and south sides of the building as part of the retail and office space.
- 2.2.12 For the purposes of this report we have only considered the main blocks that front on to Caversham Road. 1 Northfield Road, the block to rear end of this site, is not included.

2.3 Description Reference Plans

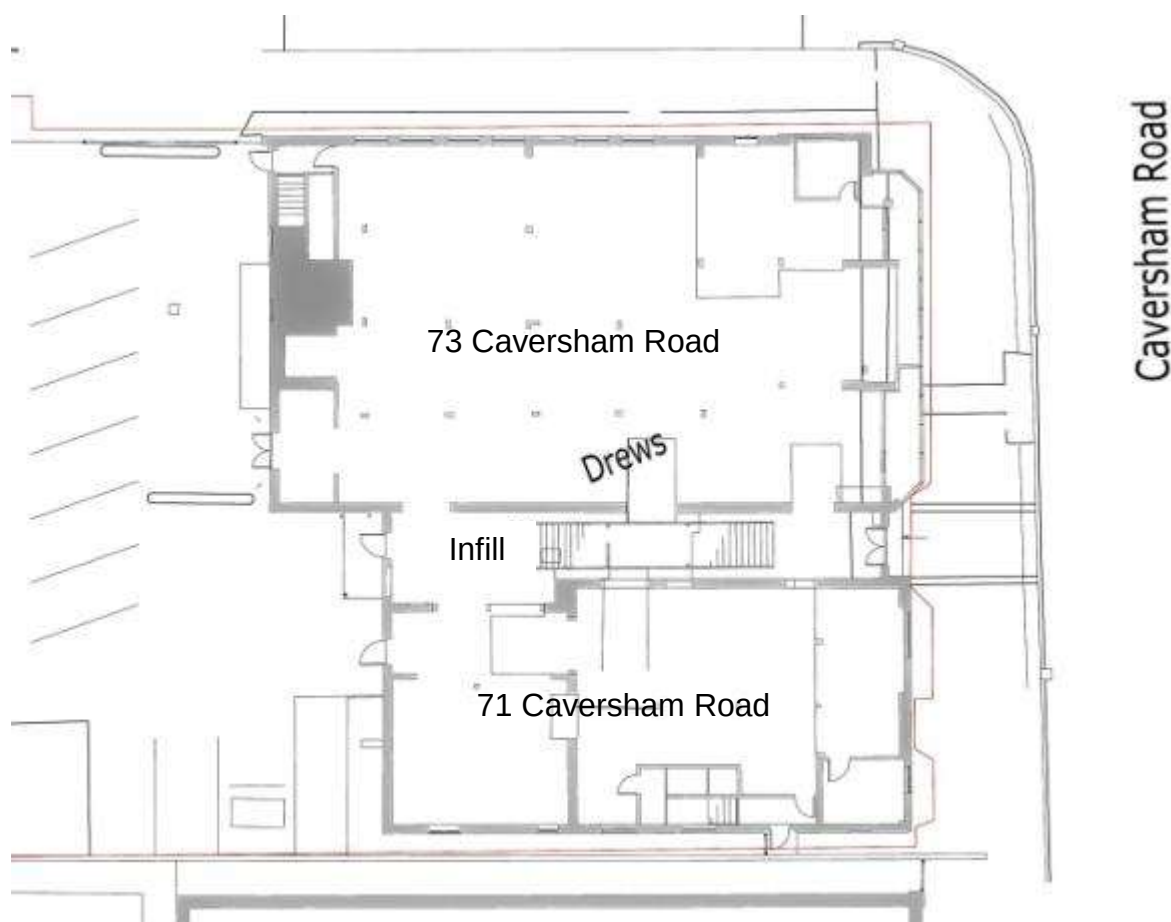


Fig 2.3.1: Existing ground floor plan



Fig 2.3.2: Existing first floor plan

3 EXTERNAL INSPECTION

3.1 Roofs



Fig 3.1.1: Roof to north block (73)

- 3.1.1 The roof of the north block (73) from the west gable to the front cross ridge is a single structure that is covered with big six profile corrugated asbestos cement sheeting with some panels of translucent sheeting set in the surface. The top is capped asbestos cement ridge units and the west verge is finished with wrap-over asbestos cement barge boards to the head of the gable. This has a pitch of approximately 40°.
- 3.1.2 At the front, east, end of the north roof, where this runs down and meets the top of the cross roof there is a partial hip down to front roof slope. This part, as well as the front and back slopes of the front cross roof are covered with natural dark grey slates. The hips to the top section are dressed over with lead and the main ridge is capped with grey clayware ridge tiles bedded in mortar. The valleys on the rear slope front slope to the main rear roof are lined with lead.
- 3.1.3 The front cross range to the north block has an eccentric arrangement with pitch of approximately 42½°, where the front eaves is higher than at the back where it is as that for the main rear part.
- 3.1.4 Over the infill south section of the front cross range roof is built below that to the northern block, both to the eaves and ridge. This is covered with machine made very regular shaped and even clay plan tiles of a 'Rosemary' type of a brown colour. This runs up to the top which is capped with concrete ridge tiles of a dark grey colour and are mortared together.
- 3.1.5 The roof over the rear part of the infill block is covered with modern standard bituminous and single polymer ply flat roof coverings for this situation. These finish to a low upstand parapet wall at the west end.

- 3.1.6 The roof over the east end of the south range has a pitch of approximately 45° and is covered with machine made plain clay tiles of an orange colour as used over the front range south end in-fill block with roll top hip and ridge tiles fitted to this. The roof to the rear section of the south block is covered with corrugated asbestos sheeting of a profile and fittings as noted for the north block roof and similar comments apply and this is laid to a lower pitch of approximately 35 - 37½°.



Fig 3.1.7: Front roofs with low level zinc roof

- 3.1.7 Across the front of the north block (73) and abutting the forward projection of the south range is a type of shop front that is covered with a modern form of mansard roof where this a fascia over the windows which then becomes a backward sloping lower section below a flat top that runs back to the front wall of the building. This is all faced and covered with copper coloured zinc sheeting with a box profile roll to the sloping and flat top part. At the abutment to the walls this has stepped flashing to the sloping side and cover flashing to the back upstand all formed in zinc sheet.

3.2 Eaves and Rainwater Goods

- 3.2.1 At the front of the building there is heading to the top of the wall to the verge of pointed tiles supported on a stretcher course of bricks over decorative brick hounds tooth dentil course. The guttering is supported on brackets under the half hip eaves and returns at each end to discharge over the adjoining roof slope.
- 3.2.2 Along the south side of the east section of the roof the top of the wall consists of a simple double corbel course of brickwork that terminates with sideways corbels on either side of the first floor windows heads below the eaves. This appears to

support simple timber fascia board to which is fixed grey uPVC half round section guttering emptying in to circular section downpipes.



Fig 3.2.1: East verge and south wall eaves

- 3.2.3 The roof over the west section of the south range has a simple painted timber fascia board fixed to the wall head the double corbel course of bricks with similar gutters to the east part. These eaves are set above those to the east by about 600 mm or 4 courses of brickwork.
- 3.2.4 The front infill block has a simple fascia board fixed to the head of the wall supporting half round section uPVC guttering. The eaves of the adjoining front cross range from the south to the north end have a simple timber fascia board fixed to plain head of the wall and supporting uPVC half round section guttering.
- 3.2.5 The gable head at the north end of the front cross block there is a projecting course of stretcher bricks laid up the top of wall to follow the slope. The verge of the slating finished directly over that with a slight overhang that has been pointed with mortar to the underside. On the bottom of the rear slope this finishes on top of the top of the north side corbel course and at the bottom of the front slope there is projecting block that wraps round from the top of the front elevation.
- 3.2.6 Along the north side of the building there is a three course projecting corbel course to the head of the wall that terminates with sideways corbels on either side of the first floor windows heads. This corbelling supports box section cast iron guttering

that empties into hopper heads at each end of the block on top of circular section cast iron downpipes.



Fig 3.2.6: Eaves to north block (73)

3.3 WALLS





Fig 3.3.1: North elevation

- 3.3.1 The north wall of the block is all built in a reddy orange brick and is about one and half bricks thick that is laid in English bond up to about the head of the ground floor window arches when it changes to Flemish garden wall bond. Four courses below the bottom of the top corbel eave is a header course of dark red brown bricks that extends from the west gable to just under the bottom of the rear roof slope to the front cross wing roof where it meets the eaves on this side. This is all pointed externally with a slight struck joint of orangey buff coloured mortar and along the bottom of the wall to the pavement there is a painted rendered plinth band.

- 3.3.2 The ground floor windows along the north wall are effectively one and a half storey high set within opening single splay bricks to the reveals and on edge to form the cills. Over these are brick cambered arch arches with a double course of pale buff coloured brick header on edge topped with a course of header bricks of the same colour as the main wall, where the bottom course is of squints. The first floor window openings have similar squint cills and reveals, but no decorative head (below).



Fig 3.3.2: Ground floor north windows

- 3.3.3 Between the second from the east ground floor window and the centre east window there is what would seem to be a narrow bricked-up door opening that has

a cill just below that of the windows, but a lower head. This is formed in a similar manner to the window openings.



Fig 3.3.4: Closed-up door opening

- 3.3.4 Adjacent to, and just on the west side of the junction between the main north run and the front cross range of building and the front range section on the north side, there is a blocked up doorway at ground floor level. This has a semicircular stone arch over it with central keystone and which rests on green glazed bullnose profile brick jambs on either side. Most of the gloss from the face of the bricks has been lost through erosion or possibly abrasive cleaning.

- 3.3.5 There is no obvious construction joint between the north end wall to the cross front wing and the main north side wall, where this is all generally as the other part. However, the brickwork is laid entirely in English bond for the full height. Within this there are windows with storey height openings to the upper floor and small windows at a lower level, where these are of similar appearance as to those in the main north side, but without the plain header course over to the upper openings.



Fig 3.3.5: Front cross wing north gable

- 3.3.6 Running across the gable, from the lower eaves level to the rear roof is heading course of dark red brown bricks, as those in the main north wall below the eaves.

Then lower down this wall there is a double course of these, separated by single course of plain bricks, which run between the lower level window heads.

- 3.3.7 In the front range north gable there is a pattern of slightly smaller windows, with similar window heads, reveals and cills as those on ground floor to the north side. The upper pair of full depth windows have been boarded over, one opening has been bricked-across and one still retains a cast iron centre pivot casement.
- 3.3.8 To the lower part of the east side of the front range north gable a facing skin of modern bricks, of metric size, has been applied over the original walling where this is laid in stretcher bond and capped with a dark red brown header plinth brick. This wraps around the whole of the northeast corner of the block and then butts against the north end of the projecting shop window section. It is then used to face the stallriser below the shop windows, faces the shop door to the frontage before being taken over the ground floor level face of the Caversham Street end of the south range to a simple finish on the southeast corner of the block. While the colour of this new brickwork matches the original to some extent, it differs in surface texture, joint width, mortar type and pointing.



Fig 3.3.9: First floor front windows

- 3.3.9 At first floor level to the street face of the original front cross range there are five windows that have been either boarded or bricked-up. Of these the outside and centre have openings, with dressings, similar to those seen in the north wall of the building, but where the two on each side of the centre are plainer and are modern inserts as indicated by the change in brickwork around them.

- 3.3.10 Across the front range elevation to Caversham Road, in an almost central position to the height of the first floor windows there is projecting decorative banding of yellow buff brickwork between two courses a forming an arcature pattern with vertical pairs of pilasters of projecting yellow buff header bricks topped with a single stretcher of the same colour in a double course of dark red brown bricks. Where the new windows have been formed this feature has been lost in the centre of the wall.



Fig 3.3.10: Decorative brickwork to front of 73.

- 3.3.11 The first floor south infill section to the south end of the front cross range has walling that is similar to that used for the modern cladding to the face of the building both in size and texture. This is laid in stretcher bond in a comparatively crude manner to the rest of the building and in this the window opening has no decorative work to the surround
- 3.3.12 The upper part east end of the south block (71), above the applied modern skin, is in brickwork, similar to the north block, that is laid in English bond with heavy type cement pointing to the joints and this has an single splay bricks to the returns at both sides. This feature runs up to just below eaves level where there is a run-out brick and this becomes a square corner.
- 3.3.13 In the head of the east gable there a decorative X formed by a single set of dark red brown header bricks.
- 3.3.14 Over the heads of the east gable windows, at both ground and first floor levels, are cambered arches of buff bricks as noted on the north side, but here the top header course is a contrasting dark red brown colour and single splay bricks to all the

arises and cills. Running between the window heads at both level levels are parallel courses of dark red brown bricks as noted on the front range north gable.



Fig 3.3.12: Upper east gable to N° 71

- 3.3.15 There is a difference in height between the east and west sections of the south block, where the west end unit steps up at the eaves by approximately 600 mm. Whilst these are apparently separate buildings there is no obvious construction joint in this position to indicate that and where it is all laid in Flemish garden wall bond.
- 3.3.16 Along the east end of the south side the window openings are as described for those in the east gable, including the brick colouration and intermediate banding. In addition there is a single course of dark red bricks from the south east corner to the end of this part of the building that is positioned at mid height to the first floor windows.
- 3.3.17 Due to the position of the west section of the south block relative to the adjoining boundary and buildings on the neighbouring site we could not gain any realistic view of the south wall. Therefore we can make no further comment on its construction apart a very general one of it being similar to the east part, but with as much decorative brickwork.



Fig 3.3.17: Restricted view of south elevation, showing eaves level change

- 3.3.18 The rear gable ends and infill section of the building is all in brickwork, mostly laid in English bond that has been painted, with the exception being the gable peak to the west end of the north block with is in Flemish bond and unpainted. At the bottom of this latter section of wall there is what appears to be the remains of a flashing across the whole of this face, which could mark where an adjoining roof previously abutted. There is a slight step in the roof slope and covering to the main roof where this runs out over the gable to support this suggestion.
- 3.3.19 In the both the west gable ends there are many signs of where alterations have taken place with door and window openings having been closed-up, altered and adjusted. Window heads are very simple with either concrete or timber lintels over

them and are of a type typical of former internal openings. These walls have much the appearance of where other building and structures have been removed in the past and then adapted in more recent times.



Fig 3.3.19: West end of N° 71 (left) and infill blok

- 3.3.20 On the north elevation of the building, between the heads of the ground floor and cills of the first floor windows there are patches of what seems to be historic paint. This is possibly the ghost of signage that the name of the building or the owner at some time in the past and has either weathered away or more likely deliberately removed. Because of its condition it is not possible to suggest what it may have read.
- 3.3.21 On the west corner of the block the end of the north wall protrudes slightly, almost forming a buttress type element from the end to that flank. This finishes with an outer face of projecting column of single splay brick on the outer face where the ends are about half a brick (110 mm) beyond the face of a one brick thick nib. It would seem that another wall, possibly timber framed, finished against the nib and over which the outer brick face lapped.



Fig 3.3.21: Link nib on northwest corner to removed building

3.4 Joinery

- 3.4.1 The north side ground floor window openings contain large single glazed four pane windows, where the lower sections were larger than the upper and have been boarded over. The first floor windows, where they are not boarded over, are double glazed UPVc units with concrete lintels over them to the eaves.

- 3.4.2 In the north gable to the front cross wing there is a small cast iron centre pivot casement window with fixed lights on either side. This may be a survival of the malthouse fenestration pattern.



Fig 3.4.2: Cast iron window

- 3.4.3 At first floor level to the front of the building on to Caversham Way the windows, behind the external boarding, are 2 over 2 pane vertical timber sliding sashes.
- 3.4.4 Across the frontage to Caversham Road the windows behind the closed roller shutters are all storey height plate glass display windows within aluminium shop front type framing. These have slightly raised internal cills that allowed for an internal displayed area.
- 3.4.5 The windows on the south wall to the south block are single glazed 4 x 4 casements to the upper units and large fixed pane windows to the lower, similar to those noted on the north side.
- 3.4.6 The joinery to windows and doors in the west end walls of the block are all of a modern and somewhat inferior in style, being mostly standard joinery items from the last quarter of the 20th C.

4 INTERNAL INSPECTION

4.1 Ground Floor - North Block



Fig 4.1: North block ground floor looking from back to front

- 4.1.1 Throughout the north block ground floor is a reinforced concrete structure as could be seen where this has been opened up for inspection. This is a modern concrete slab, approximately 200 mm thick, over a polythene damp proof membrane and then scalplings and hard core underneath that.
- 4.1.2 On the north side, the inner face of the external wall has a painted finish and apart from that it is much as that noted on the outside face, but with square reveals and sills to the windows. Over the windows there appear to be some form of steel beams as lintels that are set within the brickwork with timber facings to them.
- 4.1.3 At the front of the building to Caversham Road the original line of the front wall, above the applied shop front section, has been cut through and supported by steel beams that are encased in timber boarding. Beyond that is the area that has been extended out to form what had been a retail type shop front display area under the external zinc covered canopy.

- 4.1.4 The south wall to the north unit is all in brick work that has been painted and is much as that to the north wall. Within this there are large cut-through openings for doorways, stair access etc, to link to the central section for travel between internal areas.
- 4.1.5 Within this part of the building is a mid - late 20th C inserted steel framed structure of large H section columns supporting cross beams between them and a concrete deck at high level. This rises up to just over ground floor window head height on the north side. The deck and beams are underlined with what s likely to be some form of fire insulation board.



Fig 4.1.5: Column with opened-up floor

- 4.1.6 At the west end of the ground floor are modern concrete block walls that are laid fair faced and painted. These have been installed to enclose a lift shaft, a staircase between levels, store and other general purpose rooms. The rest of the space would have been used as retail showroom as suggested by a scatter of residual advertising materials throughout this space.

- 4.1.7 It would appear that there had been a set of offices or similar built across the front of this part of the building as a two storey structure when it was in its more original form. Where the dividing wall between these and the back has been cut through it is now supported by a steel post and a cast iron post and a boxed steel beam running over their heads.

4.2 Ground Floor – Infill Block

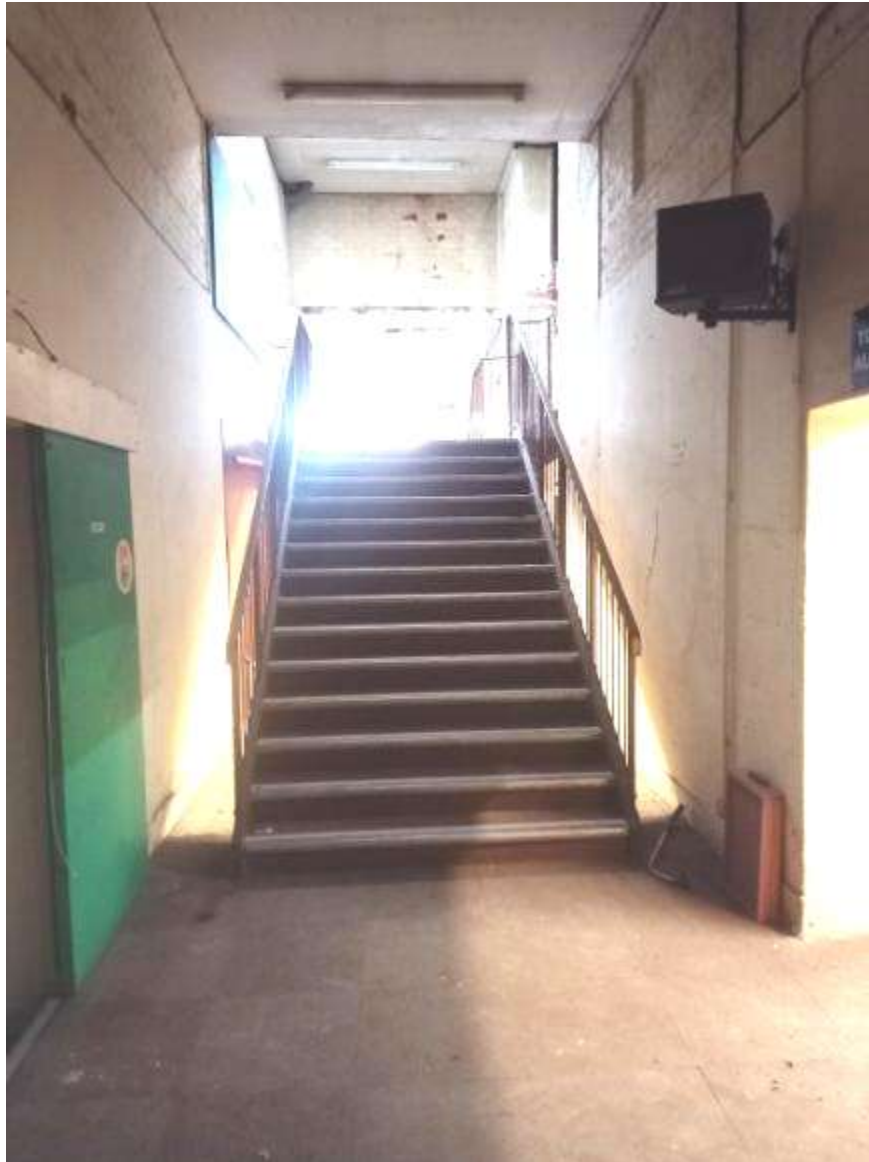


Fig 4.2: Front stairs from ground level in infill block

- 4.2.1 This has a concrete floor throughout the ground floor that is slightly above that to the north block and approximately 300 mm above that in the south block. It is likely this is of similar construction to that seen in the north block.
- 4.2.2 In the flank walls of both the north and south blocks arches and former window opening can be seen, suggestions that these two blocks were separate until this block was inserted.
- 4.2.3 In an approximately position front to back are two sets of modern, late 20th C, metal stairs front and back that lead up to a landing in a central position. This would have provided the main access and egress to the upper floors and correspondingly the front and back doors to the overall building.

4.3 Ground Floor – South Block



Fig 4.3: South block looking towards former offices to front

- 4.3.1 Across the front of this section there is a step-up in the floor of approximately 200 mm to the former office section of this part of the block. The floor is of solid construction with a painted finish.

- 4.3.2 The former wall between the front office and the area to the rear has been cut through on the line of the floor level change. This is supported by a steel beam with on H section column and a circular cast iron post with a splayed support top.
- 4.3.3 The floor to the main part east section of the south block has solid floor covered with a dense square black coloured quarry tiles that are approximately 150 x 150 mm and 19mm thick and are bedded in mortar on a concrete slab. In the west part there is a concrete floor that has been painted.



Fig 4.3.: Floor tiling

- 4.3.4 Along the south side of the east section there is modern walling of concrete blockwork that encloses a fire escape staircase from the first floor.
- 4.3.5 At high level over the main body of the east section there is what appears to be the underside of a brick floor that arches between beams that span across the building. This would appear to be typical of solid suspended solid floor construction of the late 19th C.



Fig 4.3.5: Underside of brick upper floor

- 4.3.6 At the back of the east section there is a brick dividing wall that is a brick and half thick (320 mm), laid in English bond and has been cut through for door openings with steel H section lintels over the heads in to the west part. In the west section the walls are painted fairly plain brickwork.



Fig 4.3.6: Dividing wall between front and rear section of south block

- 4.3.7 Across the middle of the east section there is a steel post supporting an inserted high level first floor over this part and there is similar post to that in the west part of the block.

4.4 First Floor – North Block



Fig 4.4: North block first floor looking towards the front

- 4.4.1 The north block first floor has a top that is a suspended timber structure covered with what appears to be vinyl asbestos floor tiles that are stuck to some form of boarding below, over what would seem to be timber joists.
- 4.4.2 The walls to the exterior are painted brick work, generally as that noted on the ground floor.
- 4.4.3 At the west end modern there is a modern concrete block housing for a set of fire escape stairs and the lift shaft.
- 4.4.4 The roof over this block from the back of the front cross range to the west wall is supported on a series of steel framed trusses at approximately 1.5 m centres. These are of a late 19th C fink pattern truss with a slightly raised centre section

and the outer bottom cords angling down on either side to the eaves level. It is comprised of angle iron principal rafters and struts simple plain bar cords and ties. The trusses have bolted gusset plate connections on all the joints and a vertical tie rod in between them and then additional bracing added to the side sections. These all have a paint finish.



Fig 4.4.4: Roof trusses to north block man roof

- 4.4.5 The trusses support timber purlins where there are eight per side, including the eaves purlin, and a ridge board at the top. There are painted timber sarking boards, over the purlins, which run up from the eaves to the ridge. In the upper purlin bays along the south slope there are large extractor fans mounted under cowl hoods mounted over the external roof sheeting.
- 4.4.6 Over the front section of this section that is a flat soffit of plasterboard over the former office area and under the front cross range roof. On the junction between the former office area and the main part to the rear there is a beam against the east end truss that is supported on posts.



Fig 4.4.6: Lower ceiling to former office area to front of first floor north block (73



Fig 4.5: Infill link block at front with connection to south block

4.5 First Floor – Infill Block

- 4.5.1 From the intermediate mezzanine landing there is a further set of modern steel stairs that run up to the first floors in the north block. Then on the opposite side there is a shorter set of steel steps that lead up the south block first floor.
- 4.5.2 Within the infill block at the west end, at nominal first floor level, there are toilets and staff restroom installed. The floor is a suspended timber structure generally as that described for the north area. This area has a mixture of walls of modern fair faced concrete blockwork as well as hollow construction with plaster finish and standard joinery doors fitted in openings. From this area a door connects to an office area at the west end of the south block.
- 4.5.3 Towards the east end of the infill block at this level is a connection across this area from both the north and south block, together with a small office that is formed in the front cross wing range..
- 4.5.4 Over the front part to this section is the pitched roof for the front link block into which a Velux type roof window is set in the rear slope.

4.6 First Floor - South Block



Fig 4.6: South block first floor first at east end

- 4.6.1 The front section of the east end of the south range has a suspended timber floor where this is to the former office section and then changes to solid floor, where the underside is seen below, and is all covered with vinyl asbestos tiling similar to that in the north range. It is slightly higher, by approximately 200 mm, to the link from the infill.
- 4.6.2 The floor of the rear section of the south block is a suspended timber structure covered with carpet.



Fig 4.6.3: South block first floor west end office

- 4.6.3 All the external walls have been plastered and painted and then the room divided up with modern concrete block partitioning to form offices and storerooms. Over this is a fibrous laying grid suspended ceiling system below steel trusses generally similar to that noted for the rest of the building.
- 4.6.4 Where seen, the external walls are of painted brick work, generally as those described for the structure externally.

- 4.6.5 Along the south side of this a modern concrete block structure for fire escape provision and position, whilst across the east end modern hollow construction wall forming some set of offices to the windows on the front.
- 4.6.6 The dividing wall between the front and the rear section of this phase is generally form of construction as seen for the rest of the building including the dressings to the doorway between them with single splay bricks and cambered head arch over it and into which is fitted a modern fire resistant door.



Fig 4.6.7: South block roof truss at west end above suspended ceiling

- 4.6.7 The trusses supporting the roof structure over this area are similar to those over the main part of the north block, where these are iron plate and angle iron fink trusses. , However, these are supported on nibs to the inner face of the walls on both sides that corbel out to give support to the truss ends. In the western section of this block the bottom sides of the trusses are clad with timber boarding with a raised flat soffit between them of painted timber boarding.

6 DESK TOP STUDY

6.1 Map Study

- 6.1.1 A map of Reading date 1840, even though it is quite a large scale, does not show any form of development in the region of this site.



Fig 6.1.1: Map of Reading circa 1840

- 6.1.2 The first edition of the 25" to the mile scale Ordnance Survey (OS) map, published in 1878, shows there to be two buildings on this site that are labelled as malt house. There is a building against the south boundary that would appear to be about the same size and length of the present east part of the south block. Between the south and north blocks there is a gap, and then the north block wraps around part of the west end of the other.
- 6.1.3 Along the north side of the side of this site Northfield road is only shown as a narrow piece of land the depth of the site on the 1882 edition, but it is shown as Northfield Road by 1912.



Fig 6.1.3: 1882 edition OS map extract

- 6.1.4 On the 1900 edition of the OS map the buildings are no longer named as malt houses and on future editions there is no such designation.
- 6.1.5 By the time of the 1912 edition of the 25" OS map there has been development on the site where an addition is shown extending to the west from the south side of the west end of the south block. There had also been some in-fill of the gap between the blocks extending towards the front for about half the length. The mapping also shows that the front range section to the north block is in three sections. That is different from the single roof to this part that is presently seen.
- 6.1.6 On the 1934 edition of the map there is little apparent change of development on the site from the previous edition
- 6.1.7 Later OS mapping in 1957 and then in 1961 this as a large, almost square, block of buildings with a small structure on the south boundary linking it to the structure that is now 1 Northfield Road. At the front it is set back from the edge of the pavement indicating that the frontage display windows had not been installed by that time. At the west end of this block there is a level back, unlike the present stepped arrangement, that extended up to the site gate and similar to that seen on the map of 1934.

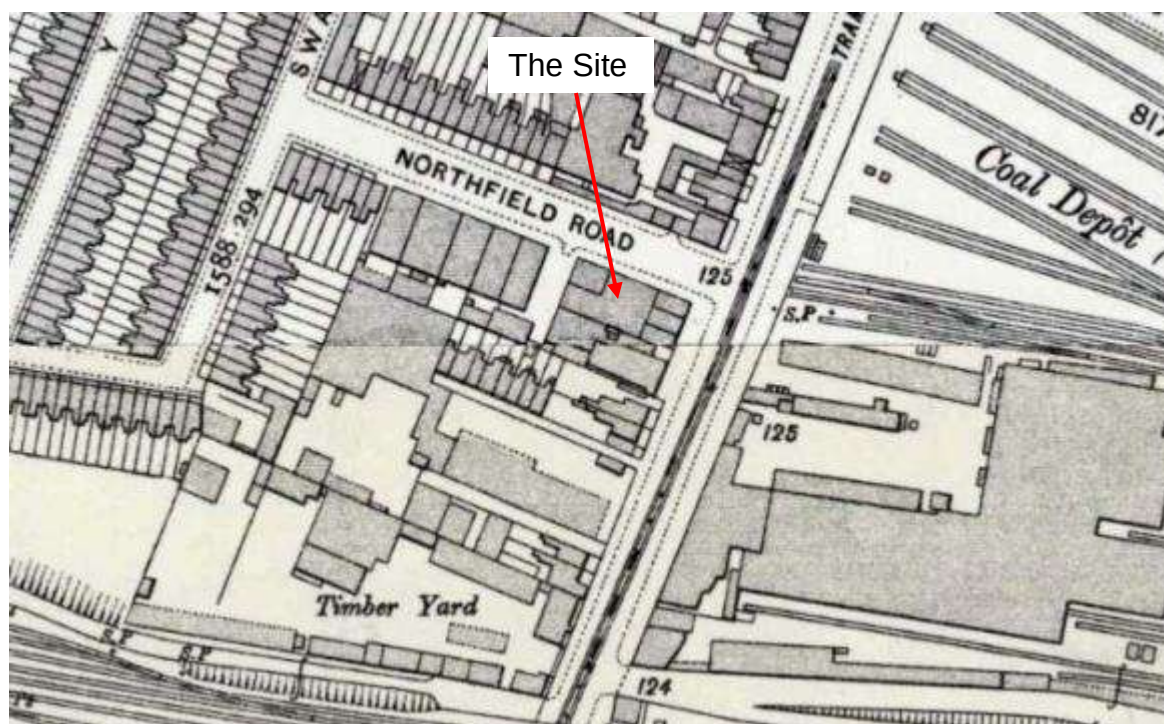


Fig 6.1.5: 1912 edition OS map extract

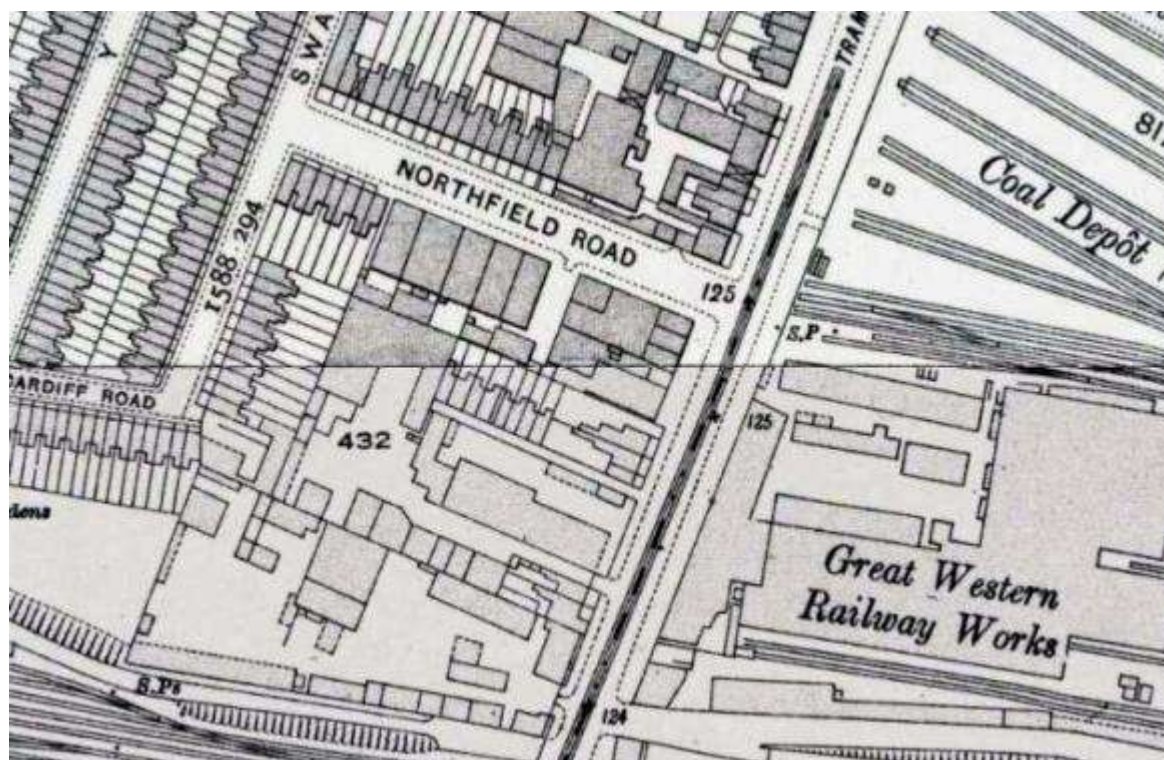


Fig 6.1.6: 1934 edition OS map extract

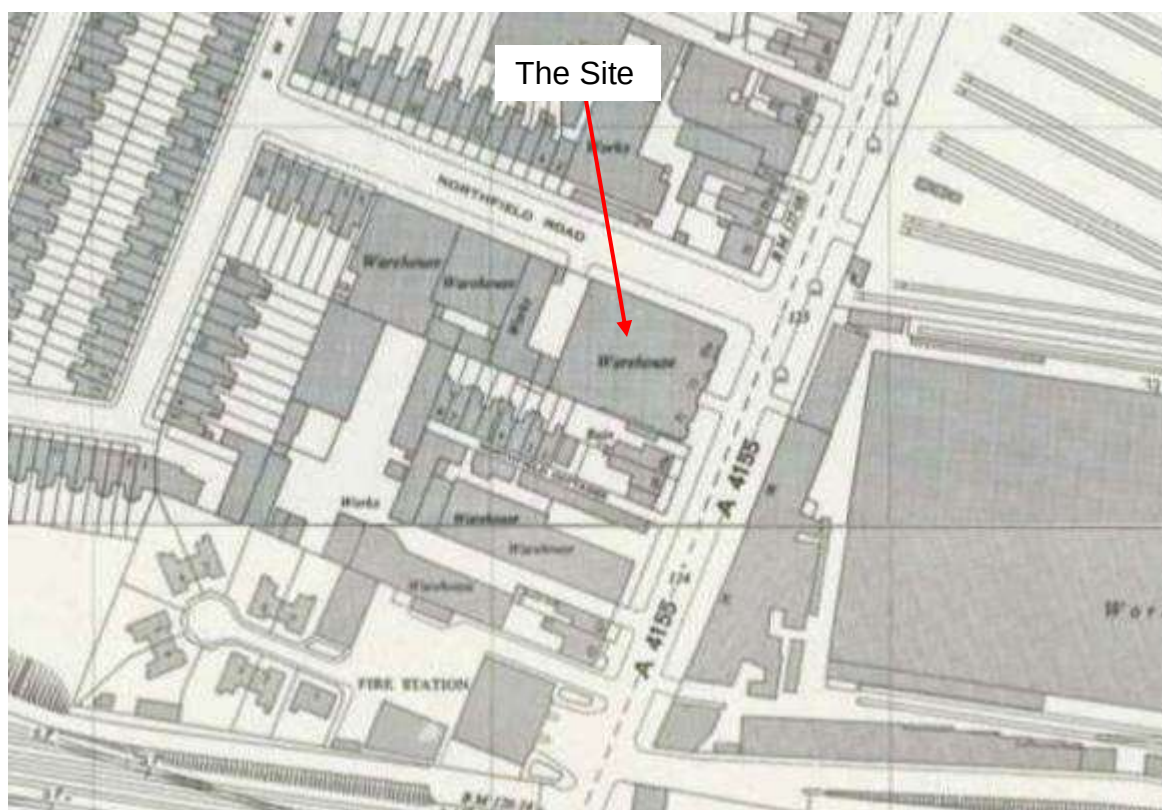


Fig 6.1.7: 1961 edition OS map extract

6.2 Documentary Material

- 6.2.1 In *Strategy for Historic Industrial Environment Report No.1: Maltings In England* (Patrick, 2004) it is noted that the building has importance which contributes to its architectural and historic value: It was built in 1870 by Henry Pendlebury Dowson, who was prominent locally as a businessman and active in Liberal politics locally and was associated with him until he died in 1900. As well as this site he owned two other malt houses in Reading.
- 6.2.2 The building was built as an industrial malt-house and many of the external features of the buildings are largely unchanged since construction, but with alterations to the buildings that are mainly to the internal structure. The structure clearly relates to its industrial use with the ground floor windows of the 'malthouse' probably being 'blind', with bins behind for barley storage and with any germination floor separated from these bins. The kiln was in the part of the building on Northfield Road that has been demolished and the flat bottomed steep, and an adjacent couch frame, would have been located at the opposite end of the building. Such features would have been required to conform to the Malt Tax regulations (repealed 1880).

- 6.2.3 The buildings construction marked the start of a period of development of the building of the roads and houses which fanned out to the west and north of 71 – 73 Caversham Road and the final period of brewing in the town, one of Reading's principal industries.
- 6.2.4 The building became a hardware / ironmonger's store in 1931 and remained it that use years until its closure in December 2018. It has undergone various changes over the years since it ceased being maltings, consisting of extension, alterations, replacement of windows and doors on the ground floor, whilst several openings have been boarded or bricked up, or covered with metal roller shutters. It would seem that the most modern alterations were undertaken when the building was taken over by the firm P J Drew acquired it in 1979 and remained there until they ceased trading. This included removal of part of the west end of the building and the addition of the frontage shop windows to Caversham Road.
- 6.2.5 The smaller buildings to the rear are known as The Brewery and The Malthouse, now 1 Northfield Road. Like 71 - 73 Caversham Road these buildings were both historically former brewery buildings and were later converted to other uses and have been in office use since at least the mid-2000s.

7 LISTING

LL15 – Former Drew's site, 71-73 Caversham Road, 1 Northfield Road and the Malthouse Building, Northfield Road

Date added to local list: 11 February 2020

A collection of buildings at the corner of Caversham Road and Northfield Road, with strong historical / social and industrial connections to the Reading beer industry.

The original owner, Henry Pendlebury Dowson, was a notable Reading figure. He was a well-known local businessman and maltster who owned two other malthouses in Reading. The buildings were built for the purposes of malting in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, but these were later converted to other commercial uses; although the principal structures survive. The buildings contain features notable to the area and the industry such as patterned brickwork and decorative arches and are an important feature in the local townscape.

8 HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

8.1 Building Construction

8.1.1 The roof over south block is in two sections, where both are supported on similar forms of structure internally, although there is a change in covering materials. The tiles to the south section are all of modern, mid – late 20th C and the use the of type profile of sheeting to the rear part would suggest an installation date to the early third quarter of the 20th C

8.1.2 Over the main part of the north block the roof sheeting is as that described for the west part of the south block. At the front, over the cross range the slating is over a somewhat indeterminate age, but it can be suggested it is of at earliest mid 20th C as historic mapping shows this to have had a very different configuration until just before World War II.

8.1.3 Both the north and south blocks have walls of traditional solid brick construction, where these have a similar fenestration pattern of the main north and south elevations with tall storey height windows on the ground floor and smaller high level windows on what is now the first floor. It can be suggested that the high level windows have been enlarged by having the cills lowered as indicated by the change in the brick and mortar colour, and where they would have corresponded with the upper dark red brown brick line. Their size may have been as that of the small cast iron window that is seen in the lower part of the front range north gable.

8.1.4 The windows to what is now the ground floor are of a size that would not be expected for this a malthouse as they would have cut across internal floor levels, which would have been lower than now found. Their grouping does not reflect those at the higher level, as could be expected for a maltings and there is not the same amount of obvious alteration as noted to the higher level. This could suggest that there was substantial re-ordering of this wall subsequent it no longer being used of its original purpose.

8.1.5 Across the back of the site the west walls show where these have been much altered and adapted, mostly through the removal of other structures. Some of these can be seen from historic mapping, but as with such industrial buildings, before the days of planning constraint, changes were made frequently to suit the operation of the plant and mapping did not always catch-up with those unless a complete re-survey, rather than revision, was undertaken.

8.1.6 The complete closure of the gap between the north and south blocks is largely in forms of construction and styles of appearance that would suggest this having been undertaken in the third quarter of the 20th C. It was evidently part of a scheme to allow the premises to be effectively connected and used as large retail outlet.

- 8.1.7 Internally the buildings have been restructured with the possible removal of internal floors as could be expected if these were originally malthouses. This is all supported on modern steel frames, with intermediate H section columns taken down to new foundations and beams that run out to the side walls.
- 8.1.8 The possible exception to this is a section of what may have been the top (third) floor in the east section of the south block and that is now the 'first' floor of the block. This is seen to be a brick construction carried on steel beams across the building.
- 8.1.9 Across the front of the building to Caversham Road there is evidence for a two storey office block having been formed. Part of the structure for this is seen to the front of the south block and under the front cross roof to the north block there is a drop beam under the first floor and a different ceiling structure at first floor.

8.2 Building Development

- 8.2.1 Historic OS mapping of the site show there to have been two buildings on the site by 1878 where that on the south side is taken to 71 Caversham Road and that on the north side as N° 73.
- 8.2.2 N° 71 is somewhat narrow as is the present building compared to N° 73 and only extends about two thirds along its length. The other building then wraps around the northwest corner of this one to about half its width. Between the main two parts there was a gap, with just a small link block in the centre.
- 8.2.3 By the time of the 1912 edition of the OS 25" scale map the back part of the gap between the buildings has been filled-in to the part that comes around from the that on the north side. A further building had been built of the south side of the south block between that boundary and the side of the north block.
- 8.2.4 The configuration of the buildings shown on the mapping indicates there was a separate building in what was the northwest corner of the north block. This is now apparently part of the rear service yard and the overlap nib on that corner of the present structure possibly indicates from where it was built-off. The remains of the roof flashing line to the bottom of the undecorated brick gable head possibly indicates where the adjoining roof abutted.
- 8.2.5 At the front of this of the north block there is now a single roof structure across that end, but on OS mapping up 1934 this is shown as being three roofs that ran from the street side back to the wall of the main rear part of the block and was approximately 11.5 m (35' 0") wide as compared to about 6.2 m today. That would suggest this was rebuilt as a new structure that included a re-orientation of the back and front roofs to achieve the present arrangement, possibly in the years before Work War II and in association with the use of the building a hardware store from 1931. This would have necessitated the erection of the gable to the north

end of the front cross wing, and possibly also involved the lifting of the front eaves of the building so as to create internal head room for offices on two floors.

- 8.2.6 By comparison with the steel roof trusses used over both the main parts of the south and north blocks it can be suggested the west section of the south block was constructed at about the same time as the north side and front of the building was altered. That could account for the lack of noticeable construction joint externally as the south flank wall may have been taken down, at least partially and then reconstructed to incorporate the new rear part with a higher roof structure. Such an arrangement could account for the slightly ad-hoc method in which the trusses over the original east part have been installed, as these are likely to have been retrofitted.
- 8.2.7 As well as the building having a new fenestration pattern formed to the Caversham Road elevation at time of the front rebuild, it is likely that the windows to at least ground floor on both the north and south sides were altered. If that was the case it would give an indicative dating as to when any previous first floor would have been removed to form the present internal ground floor height. That is because the floor heights in most malting was quite low, often in the region of 2.0 – 2.3 m, so as to conserve heat as well as accommodate as much floor area as possible per building, as well as reduce stresses on external walls.
- 8.2.8 In more recent years, when used by Drew's, the interior of the building was evidently altered more as can be suggested by the use of modern concrete blockwork and steel frames to open it up so as to form a large open warehouse type retail space. The offices in the front cross range were partially incorporated in to the trading area and the central gap became the main access provision for the site, with doors from both the front and back. Replacement offices were formed at the west end of the south block, together with staff welfare facilities.
- 8.2.9 It would appear, from the form and how the work was undertaken, that it was in the later years of Drew's occupancy that the rear section of the building was removed. That resulted in the exposure of what has evidently been internal dividing walls between spaces and as they remain at the time of this survey.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1.1 This building was originally two malthouse buildings that were built in parallel to each other in the mid – late part of the third quarter of the 19th C at a time when Reading was developing as an industrial centre following the arrival of the railway in the 1840s. These were presumably intended to service the brewing industry, which had long been established in the town and was now expanding.
- 9.1.2 These buildings, along with others, were owned by a prominent local business man and they appear to have continued in used until the early 1900s. By the 1930s they were being used as warehousing and then into the late 20th C they were in retail use that continued until 2018. During this time the two buildings were amalgamated into a single block.
- 9.1.3 As these building passed out of use as maltings they were altered and adapted to suit the new uses to which they were put. This evidently involved some considerable restructuring to both blocks including the front to N° 73 to form offices and the removal of internal floors to create more usable headroom within them. As part of that work it is likely that the main roofs were also reformed. To the exterior there seems to have been much re-fenestration to the main north and south elevations to better suit the new internal floor layout.
- 9.1.4 In the late 1970 or early 80s further work was carried out to the building when the frontage to Caversham road was redesigned to create a large retail window display provision. This was part of the conversion of the building to a large warehouse sales space.

10 RIGHTS OF ORIGINATOR

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11 APPENDIX A – RECORDING LEVEL – A DESCRIPTION

Level 2 as defined within *Understanding Historic Buildings, A Guide to Good Practice* (Historic England 2016)

This is a descriptive record, made in similar circumstances to Level 1, but when more information is needed. It may be made of a building which is judged not to require a more detailed record, or it may serve to gather data for a wider project. Both the exterior and interior of the building will be seen, described and photographed. The examination of the building will produce an analysis of its development and use and the record will include the conclusions reached, but it will not discuss in detail the evidence on which this analysis is based. A plan and sometimes other drawings may be made, but the drawn record will normally not be comprehensive and may be tailored to the scope of a wider project.

A Level 2 record will typically consist of:

Drawn record - item 1 or 2;

- 1 Sketched plan, section, elevation or detail drawings (when no more thorough drawn record is made). Sketches may be roughly dimensioned.

Or

- 2 Measured plans (to scale or fully dimensioned) as existing. These may extend to all floors, or they may be restricted to one or a selection. The latter option may be appropriate, for example, in a town-centre building where an upper floor has been little altered. Buildings with a repetitive structure may also be planned on one floor, but a note or a sketch plan should be made to indicate the arrangement of other floors. Plans should show the form and location of any structural features of historic significance, such as blocked doorways, windows and fireplaces, masonry joints, ceiling beams and other changes in floor and ceiling levels, and any evidence for fixtures of significance.

Photography – items 1, 2 and 4

- 1 General view or views of the building (in its wider setting or landscape if 2 (below) is also to be adopted).
- 2 The building's external appearance. Typically a series of oblique views will show all external elevations of the building, and give an overall impression of its size and shape. Where individual elevations include complex historical information it may also be appropriate to take views at right-angles to the plane of the elevation.
- 4 The overall appearance of the principal rooms and circulation areas. The approach will be similar to that outlined in 2.

Written record – items 1-3 and 6

- 1 The precise location of the building as an address and in the form of a National Grid reference.
- 2 A note of any statutory designation (that is, listing, scheduling, Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, conservation area). Information on statutory designations can be found on the Historic England website. Non-statutory designations (local lists) may be added.
- 3 The date when the record was made, the name(s) of the recorder(s) and the location of any archive material.
- 6 A longer summary statement. This account should summarise the building's form, function, date and sequence of development. The names of architects, builders, patrons and owners should be given if known. Its purpose is to describe the building when no fuller record is necessary. Alternatively it may serve as an introduction to the more detailed body of a record that may follow, for users who may need a summary of the report's findings.

12 APPENDIX B – REPORT SUMMARY SHEET

- Site name/address: 71 – 73 Caversham Road, Reading, Berkshire
- Planning number: Reading Borough Council 220922
- Field work dates: December, 2024
- Type of fieldwork: Visual building inspection, non intrusive.
- Report Author: Mr R J Hill MRICS, MCIfA
- Name of Client: Westbury Projects Ltd

Non-technical Summary

The Historic Building Advisory Service was commissioned by Westbury Projects Ltd to undertake an historic building assessment of a building known as 71 – 73 Caversham Road, Reading, Berkshire.

The purpose of the survey was to undertake an assessment and record of the historic nature and character of the building that is last used as retail. This was undertaken by means of a visual assessment and analysis of the building to understand its means of construction as well as the way it has been altered and adapted over time.

This building dates to the mid to late part of the third quarter of the 19th C and was originally used as a pair of malt houses that were separated by a narrow gap. It seems to have ceased being connected with malting in the early part of the 20th C and then in 1931 it became an ironmonger's premises. Over the intervening years until the late 1970s this block was altered and adapted several times as can be suggested by historic mapping evidence. Much of the ancillary buildings associated with its original use were removed during the years from the second quarter of the 20th C.

Then in the 1970s this block was bought by a Reading firm who apparently undertook much alteration work as well as removing sections to convert it to a large retail store. This possibly included taking out intermediate floors, altering the internal layout, as well as remodelling the external appearance. It was then fully amalgamated in to a single building, as well as having a new retail style frontage formed across the back of the pavement to Caversham Road. They vacated the site in 2018 and since when it has been vacant.