



**Historic Building
Advisory Service**

Historic Building Record

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



December 2024
Reference: 24915A

**71 – 73 CAVERSHAM ROAD
READING
BERKSHIRE**

Historic Building Record

Prepared on behalf of

**Westbury Projects Ltd.
G10,
Power Road Studios,
114 Power Road,
Chiswick,
London
W4 5PY**

By

**The Historic Building Advisory Service
PO Box 2140
Tisbury
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP2 2DW**

Reference: 24915A

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71 – 73 CAVERSHAM ROAD READING BERKSHIRE

Historic Building Record

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. This is to take place prior to the demolition of the main part of the block, during which only the north wall adjacent to Northfield Road, the right half of the east wall's first floor (facing Caversham Road), and the left half of the west wall will be retained. In accordance with the approved planning application, new doors and windows will be installed within the retained section of the west wall.

The purpose of this 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 inspection and survey of the building to try and understand its means of construction as well as the way it has been altered and adapted over time.

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. As part of this a survey of readily assessable documentary, mapping and other sources of information was also researched. 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 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 following years until the 1970s this block was altered and adapted several times as can be suggested by historic mapping evidence. Most of the ancillary buildings associated with its original use were removed during the years from the second quarter of the 20th C.

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 evidently included the removal of any remaining intermediate former malting floors, altering the internal layout, as well as remodeling the external appearance. It was then fully amalgamated in to a single building with the insertion of the central infill block, 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.

Planning consent was given for the demolition of the building, with the exception of the only the north wall adjacent to Northfield Road, the right half of the east wall's first floor (facing Caversham Road), and the left half of the west wall on 22 March, 2024 will be retained. In accordance with the approved planning application, new doors and windows will be installed within the retained section of the west wall. As part of this approval was a condition requiring a record of the building to be produced before work was undertaken.

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

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

71 – 73 CAVERSHAM ROAD READING BERKSHIRE

Historic Building Record

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. This is to be prior to the demolition of the main part of the block, where only the north wall adjacent to Northfield Road, the right half of the east wall's first floor (facing Caversham Road), and the left half of the west wall will be retained. In accordance with the approved planning application, new doors and windows will be installed within the retained section of the west wall.
- 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, analyses 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 of the facility. Similar considerations apply to surfaces with directly applied coverings such as wall paneling 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.

1.3 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 floor space (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 Royal Berkshire archives as well as on-line resources.

- 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 SU712740 / SU7124874039
- 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

- 2.1.1 The site is on the west side of Caversham Road and is rectangular on plan, where it is in the southern angle of the junction to Northfield Road, which runs along its north side. To the south and west of the site is another commercial site that wraps around this one.

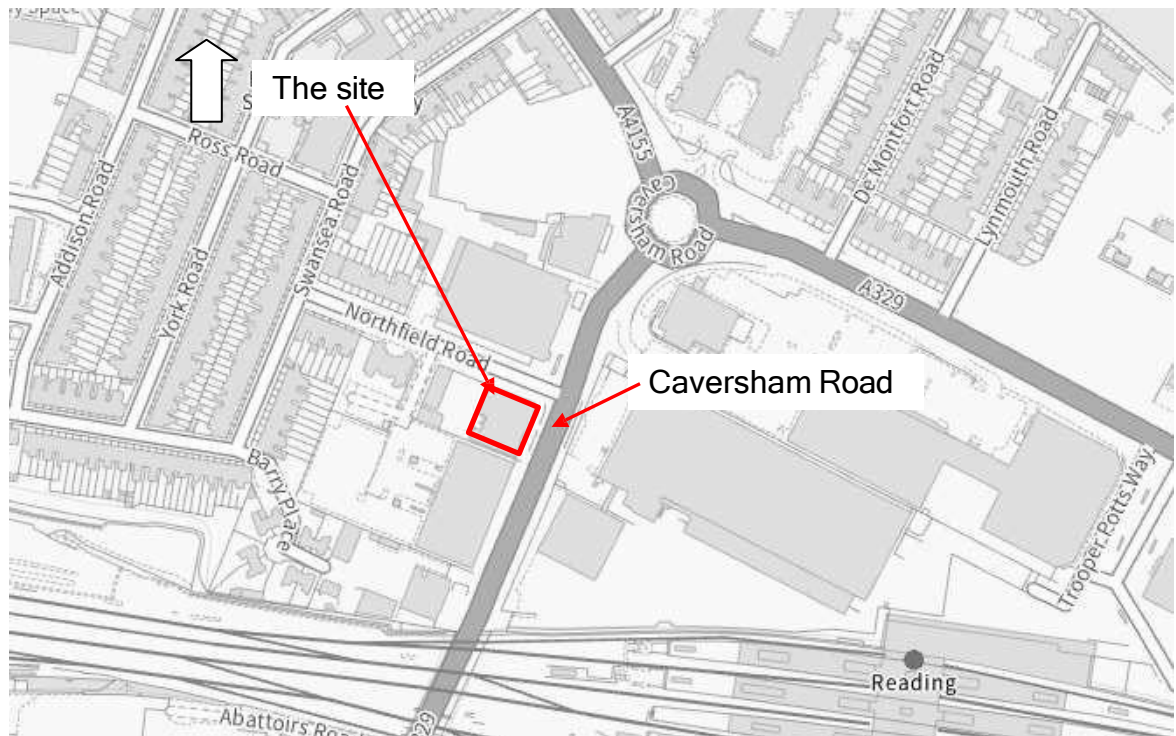


Fig 2.1.1: Location plan

- 2.1.2 71 - 73 Caversham Road, as a building, sits to the front of its site against the back edge of the pavement of Caversham Road and on the north side it is against the back edge of the pavement to Northfield Road. To the rear (west) of the building is a service yard and beyond which is a further group of buildings called 1 Northfield Road. This other block has been converted into offices and is not considered as part of this study, apart from reference to the setting of this building.
- 2.1.3 This is in predominantly a commercial area of Reading with a commercial building, containing a gym, with associated car parking lying to the south side of the site. On the north side of adjoining junction to Northfield Road is a three storey office building. Opposite this site, on the east side of Caversham Road, there are office

and other buildings that are connected with or part of the railway land on the north side of Reading station.



Fig 2.1.2: 71 - 73 Caversham Road from the southeast (71 left)



Fig 2.1.2: 71 - 73 Caversham Road from the northeast (71 left)

2.2 Description

- 2.2.1 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.
- 2.2.2 N° 71 Caversham Road is the south block and the north block is N° 73 Caversham Road, where each run from a frontage on to the back edge of the pavement to Caversham Road. These both have been constructed in the mid – late third quarter of the 19th C and have been subject to much alteration, particularly the early to mid 20th C as indicated by historic mapping.



Fig 2.2.1: Caversham Road elevation (71 left)

- 2.2.3 The two main blocks were built as part of a set of malting buildings where these may have contained the germination floors and then the kiln and malt stores may have been at the west end and now demolished. Due to the various internal alterations in the 20th C there is scant noticeable evidence of the use of the buildings for malting purposes.
- 2.2.4 Between these the two main blocks an infill block was created in stages from the early - mid 20thC. This enabled the two parts to be linked so that this had become a single unit by the fourth quarter of the 20th C.
- 2.2.5 The north and south blocks roofs have gables at the west end and then have ridges that run from there to the front. The central infill block has a simple plain wall with a parapet headed top to a flat roof behind at the west end and then a recessed brick facade at the front between the adjacent structures.



Fig 2.2.4: West end of building from the southwest (71 right)

- 2.2.6 The south roof has a step-up in the slopes and ridge in a position approximately one third of the length of the roof from the back and this corresponds with a change in the internal floor arrangement, possibly related to a change in the building structure. At the front the south roof finishes with a half hip.
- 2.2.7 On the west end wall, towards the south side, there is an attached small mono pitch canopy type roof over a former loading bay shutter door.
- 2.2.8 At the front of the north block (73) the roof is parallel to Caversham Road with a gable end to Northfield Road, and probably had one at the south end before the insertion of the infill block roof. The roof over the rear section runs from a gable at the west end and because this is wider than that to the front roof it comes in over the gable to form a hip connection. The resultant configuration of the north roof produces a T shape on plan, where the west end gable is at the foot and the head is the front cross roof.
- 2.2.9 The infill block runs from the west end to the back of the front cross wing as two sections of flat roof, where that over the west end is higher than the other. At the front the two storey infill has been roofed over with a cross roof to close the gap between the south and north block, where it is set back slightly from them. As with the south block this section has a canopy type roof attached in the junction between this and the south wall of the north block.
- 2.2.10 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.

- 2.2.11 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.
- 2.2.12 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 2.2.12: Ground floor to north block (73) looking to the front

- 2.2.13 On the south side it can be seen how the floor and wall layout reflects the roof structure over this block, where internally there is a change in floor level as well as an internal dividing wall on the junction between the two parts. This part is also contains two floors, where there are the remains of offices across the front as well as the other offices in the back area of this on the first floor.



Fig 2.2.13: West end of south block

- 2.2.14 The infill block between the north and south blocks was evidently constructed, or at least adapted, when this was used as retail premises where it acts as the main distribution space to the ground and first floor level on each side. This has an external access at the front, which was probably for the general public in to the retail part of the building. The rear door acted as fire escape and goods entry.
- 2.2.15 In the upper part of the link block there is a centrally positioned mezzanine landing from where a set stairs run up from this to upper floors of the north and south blocks. This landing is approached by metal stair cases from both the front and back parts of the building. There are also ground floor level connections between the buildings on either side to enable travel between them, as well as access the stairs to the upper level.
- 2.2.16 Within the first level of the rear section of the infill block there is a link floor with a connection to both sides and on this a set of staff toilets as well rest rooms were 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.

2.3 Description Reference Plans

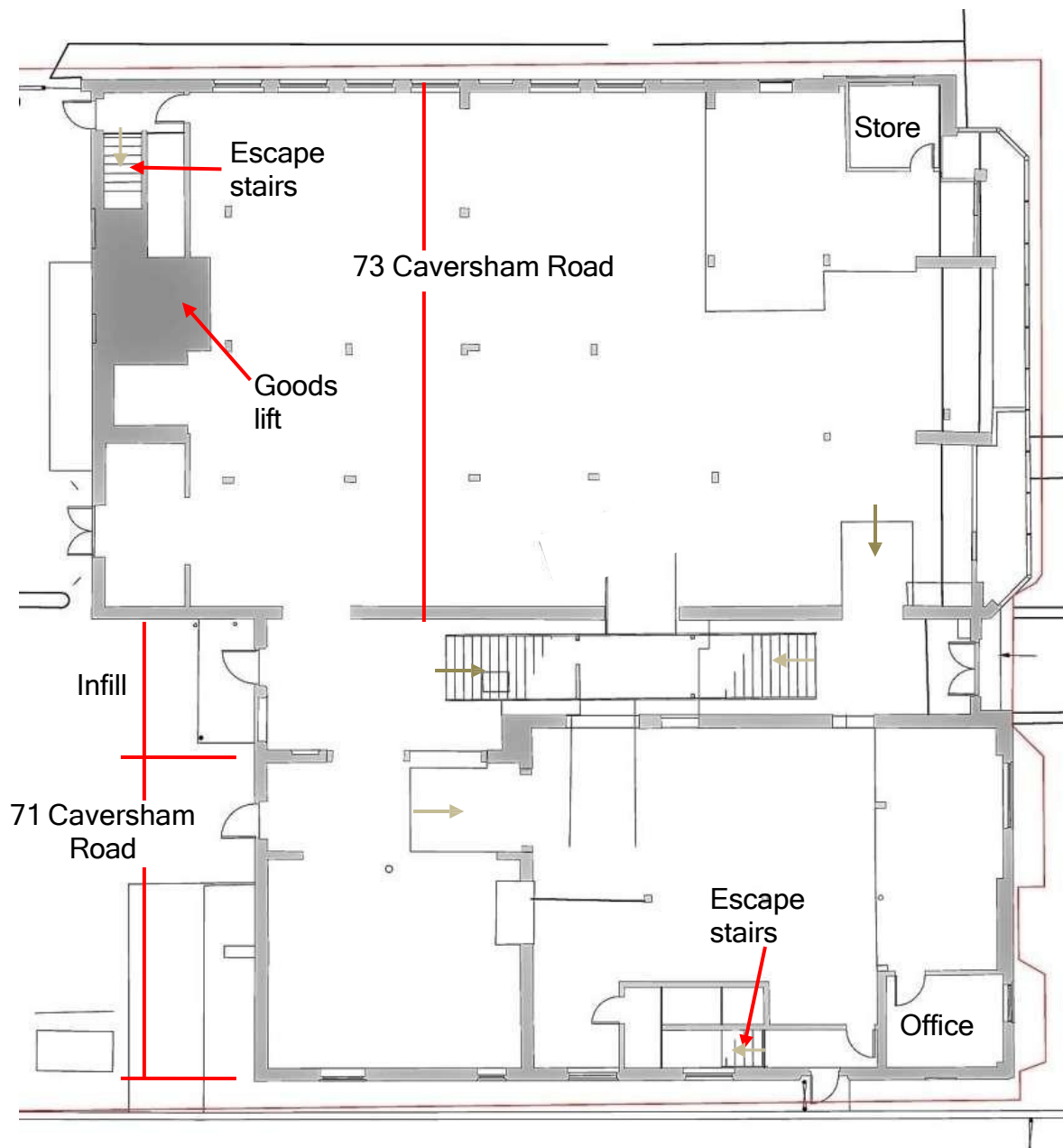


Fig 2.3: Existing ground floor plan (NTS)

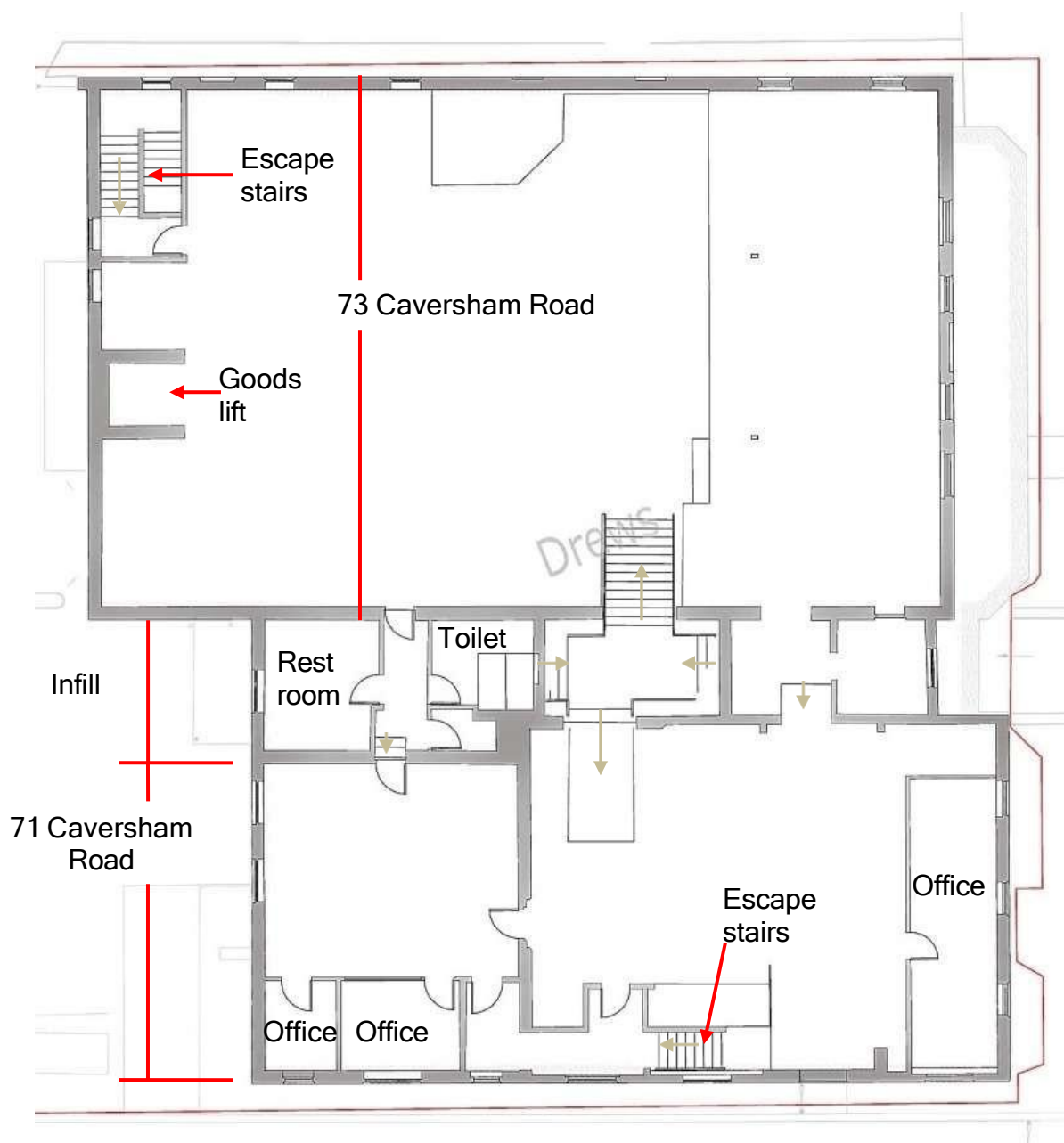


Fig 2.3: Existing first floor plan (NTS)

3 EXTERNAL INSPECTION

3.1 Roofs



Fig 3.1.1: Roof to north block (73) from west gable

- 3.1.1 The roof of the north block (N° 73) from the west gable to the front cross ridge is a single structure, with a pitch of approximately 40°, which 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 sitting flush to the head of the west gable wall.



Fig 3.1.2: Front roof of north block (73)

- 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.



Fig 3.1.3: Eccentric eaves height to the north gable of front wing

- 3.1.3 The front cross range to the north block has an eccentric arrangement with pitch of approximately $42\frac{1}{2}^\circ$, where the front eaves is higher than at the back where it is as that for the main rear part.



Fig 3.1.4: Front range infill block roof

- 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 brown coloured machine made very regularly shaped and even clay plan tiles of a „Rosemary“ type. 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 main east end of part of the south range, including the half hip to the front, has a pitch of approximately 45° and is covered with machine made plain clay tiles of an orange colour of a „Rosemary“ machine made type, with roll top hip and ridge tiles fitted to this. Where this finishes above the rear section of the south block roof the upstand is finished with vertical hung plain tiles.



Fig 3.1.6: Front section of south block (71) roof

- 3.1.7 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°. This has a lower ridge height compared to the east section, but where there is an increase in eaves height on the south side and above the main east part. It has lead stepped flashings to the junction between this roof and the front part.



Fig 3.1.7: Rear south block roof

- 3.1.8 Across the front of the north block (73) and abutting the forward projection of the south range is a shop front, with large display windows, which are below a form of canopy roof. This is of standing seam copper coloured zinc sheeting with a shape similar to a mansard roof, with a vertical fascia over the window heads, which then slopes backwards and then becomes a flat top that closes to the front wall face. 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.



Fig 3.1.8: Shop front canopy

3.2 Eaves and Rainwater Goods

- 3.2.1 To the front of the south block the head of the wall, below the pointed verge to the tiles, there is a course of bricks laid stretcher over decorative a course of diagonally set bricks to form a hounds tooth dentil course. This rises from a slightly corbelled block on the junction with the eaves to the south side of the roof. Under the half hip to this part of the roof the guttering is supported on brackets below the drip



Fig 3.2.1: South block east gable

- 3.2.2 The eaves to the south side of the east section of the roof to the south block consists of a triple corbel course of rowlock brickwork that terminate on either side of the first floor windows heads. The top course appears to support a simple painted timber fascia board, which spans across the window openings, to which is fixed grey uPVC half round section gutters that empty in to circular section downpipes at each end.
- 3.2.3 At the head of the wall to the west end eaves on the south side of the south block are approximately 600 mm or four courses of brick above that to the east part. The wall head is formed with two courses of rowlock brickwork set flush to the face of the wall. Over that is a single corbelled rowlock course of bricks that support the projecting ends of the rafter feet extending of the head, where there is boarding above and to the underside of the roof coverings. The ends of the rafters support a timber fascia board that in turn supports rainwater goods as at the east end. The head of the west gable is dressed over with .



Fig 3.2.2: South wall eaves to south block (71) at east and west part junction



Fig 3.2.4: Eaves to front infill block (left) and main front (right)

- 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 at the north end of the front cross block to the front of the north block (N° 73) there is a projecting course of bricks laid stretcher bond up the slope to the top of wall. 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.



Fig 3.2.5: North gable to front cross roof to N° 73



Fig 3.2.6: Eaves to north side of north block (73)

- 3.2.6 Along the north side of the north block (73), 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 under the eaves drip and which empties into hopper heads on top of circular section cast iron downpipes, at either end of this part of the block.

3.3 WALLS



Fig 3.3.1: North elevation

- 3.3.1 The north wall of the block (N° 73) is built in a reddy orange brick and is about one and half bricks thick, which is laid in English bond up to about the head of the ground floor window arches and above which it changes to Flemish garden wall bond. Then four courses below the bottom of the wall head eaves corbel eave is a header course of dark red brown bricks extending from the west gable to the bottom of the rear roof slope to the front cross wing roof. This is all pointed with a slightly struck joint of orangey buff coloured mortar. Along the bottom of the wall to the pavement there is a painted rendered plinth band.



Fig 3.3.2: Ground floor window

- 3.3.2 The ground floor windows along the main north wall are effectively one and a half storey high set within openings that have splay headed bricks forming angle outer reveals, with a similar profile brick on edge to form the cills. Over these openings are brick cambered arches formed with a double course of pale buff coloured splay header bricks on edge topped with a course of plain header bricks. The first floor window openings have similar squint cills and reveals, but with no decorative heads as these are directly below the eaves.
- 3.3.3 Between the second from the east ground floor window and the centre east window there is what is what would seem to be a bricked-up narrow door opening that is formed in a similar manner to the window openings. This has a cill just below that of the adjacent windows, but has a lower head.



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 wall and the north gable to the front cross range of building there is a blocked up doorway at ground floor level. This has a semicircular stone arch with central keystone, 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.



Fig 3.3.5: North gable to end of front cross wing

- 3.3.5 There is no obvious construction joint between the long north end wall to the rear part of N° 73 and the north gable to the front block to this part of the building. This

gable is of a similar type of brickwork to the main wall and is laid in English bond from pavement level to the head of the gable. Within this there are tall windows openings to the upper floor and small windows at a lower level. The upper windows are of similar appearance as to those in the main north side, but without the plain header course over to the upper openings. The lower small window is possibly an original malthouse size of window that has not been altered.

- 3.3.6 Running across the north gable, from a position equating to the bottom of the west (rear) slope of the front cross wing roof, is an interrupted band of dark brown bricks. Then lower down this part of the wall there is a double course of brown bricks, separated by single course of plain bricks, which run between the lower level window heads.
- 3.3.7 Along with the change in brick bond to the main side wall there is a change in the bricks that are used where the colour is almost the same, but there is a change in the surface texture. By this overall form it can be suggested that there has been a significant rebuilding of the north side wall, which probably also involved reforming the main windows along this side.
- 3.3.8 It can be seen where changes have occurred to this elevation where, with alterations to the size and possibly also the positions of windows at both levels. The upper windows have had their cills lowered by the change in brickwork to the lower parts of these where these would originally have corresponded with the horizontal line of brown bricks. The lower windows appear to show where these altered by the changes in brickwork form at the west end of the range, the change in the brick bonding arrangement in between them and also over the heads. There is also a change in window spacing between lower and upper windows, where it is usually found these are symmetrical for maltings.
- 3.3.9 The upper windows to the north gable show distinct changes in the brickwork to the reveals to the upper and lower parts. The small windows in this elevation show where the double course of brown bricks line-up with the brick arches over them where the reveals and cills as those on ground floor to the main north side.
- 3.3.10 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 seems to be „ghost signage“ of the name of the building or the owner at some time in the past. This has either weathered away or more likely has been deliberately removed and because of its condition it is not possible to suggest what it may have read.
- 3.3.11 To the lower part of the east side of the front range north gable has a facing skin of modern metric sized bricks laid in stretcher bond applied over the original walling, and which is capped with a dark red brown header plinth bricks. This skin wraps around the northeast corner of the block and then butts against the north end of the projecting shop window section facing onto Caversham Road, where it then becomes the stallriser below the shop windows and around the main retail

entrance in to the building. It then continues as an applied brick skin across the ground floor of the east end of N° 71. This brickwork matches the original to some extent in terms of colour, but it differs in surface texture, brick size, joint width, mortar type and pointing.

- 3.3.12 At first floor level to the Caversham Road face of the front cross range to N° 73, 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.



Fig 3.3.12: Upper section of Caversham Road front to N° 73



Fig 3.3.13: Decorative brickwork to front of N° 73

- 3.3.13 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 arcade pattern. This has with vertical pairs of pilasters header bricks topped with a single stretcher of the same colour in a double course of dark red brown bricks. By the manner in which this decoration has been disrupted it can be suggested that the windows are later insertions.

- 3.3.14 The first floor south infill section to the south end of the front cross range is built in brickwork that matches that used for the modern shop front to the Caversham Road 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.



Fig 3.3.14: Front of infill block

- 3.3.15 The upper part east end of the south block (N° 71), above the applied modern skin, is in brickwork, similar to the north block. This is laid in English bond with heavy type cement pointing to the joints and there are single splay bricks to the outer corners that runs up to just below eaves level where there is a run-out brick and this becomes a square corner. In the head of this gable there a decorative X formed with dark red brown header bricks.



Fig 3.3.15: Upper east gable to N° 71

- 3.3.16 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 levels are parallel courses of dark red brown bricks as noted on the north gable to the front range
- 3.3.17 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 that is positioned at mid height to the first floor windows.
- 3.3.18 At the east end of the south wall there are three levels of windows, suggesting these are the remains of the original fenestration pattern to the east section of this part of the building. The top has had its cill lowered as noted above, the centre is apparently unaltered and bottom one has been bricked-up. Then to the west of this set of windows the former centre row of windows have had their cills lowered

to incorporate the lower window openings as storey height openings and the upper floor windows have had their cills lowered to form deeper openings.



Fig 3.3.17: View of south elevation, showing fenestration pattern

- 3.3.19 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.

- 3.3.20 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 a comprehensive 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 not as much decorative brickwork. From what could be seen on the internal face of this wall there was not a regular fenestration pattern at low and centre level as seen to the east section, with only one window in the centre, but a range at high level.



Fig 3.3.20: Rear gable to N° 71 and infill block (left)

- 3.3.21 The west gable to the south block (N° 71) is of solid construction brickwork laid English bond and then painted. In this there are blocked-up doorways what would have been former upper and middle floors, but where the top now contain windows. At ground floor level there is a pedestrian, last used as a fire escape, and a larger unloading door. These door openings would indicate where a section of building has been removed in the past, but with little evidence for that remaining, apart from the mortar shadow line of a roof abutment starting below the barge board on the north side that continuing down to the top of the a brick buttress in an almost central position from ground to mid height. A further roof abutment line rind down from the south side of the buttress to the outer corner of the block.

- 3.3.22 Between the rear (west) wall of the infill block and the west wall of N° 71 there is no obvious construction joint in the brickwork, where this continues through as English bond and is also painted. Within this wall the window openings seem to be of a similar pattern to those at the east end of the south wall, so could suggest they may be related to former internal floor levels. However, these windows are of a plain square type and unlike the more original forms seen elsewhere around the building.
- 3.3.23 The rear gable end of the north block (N° 73) extends to the west beyond the back walls to the in-fill block and that to the south block. This side wall as well as the main part of the gable is built in brickwork s solid construction where this is laid in English bond and painted. The top part of the gable has been rebuilt in a brick laid stretcher bond and is undecorated where it sits back over the wall below by approximately 100 mm. In the central part there is evidence of a former window or similar opening that has been closed-up as suggested by a difference in the bricks used. Below the south abutment of this infill section there is what appears to be a vertical scar running down the face of the wall, finishing over the head of a door where a wall has probably been removed.



Fig 3.3.22: West gable to N° 73

- 3.3.24 Within this west wall there are windows at high level that are at a level corresponding with those in the upper north wall, set within plain openings.

Towards the south end there is a cambered brick arch in a plain section of brickwork as well as what appears to be a timber lintel. In approximately the centre of the wall, top to bottom and side to side, there are two further closed-up openings that would correspond to where there may have been an intermediate floor to the building. At ground level there is a pedestrian fire escape door, one to the lift shaft and a loading door.



Fig 3.3.25: Link nib on northwest corner to removed building

- 3.3.25 The north wall protrudes slightly, almost forming a buttress type element beyond the northwest corner of the west gable. To this the outer face finishes with a column of splay bricks that project out about half a brick (110 mm) beyond the face

of a one brick thick inner nib. It would seem that a wall that has been removed, possibly timber framed, finished against the nib and over which the outer brick face lapped.

3.4 Joinery

- 3.4.1 The north side ground floor window openings contain large single glazed four pane windows, where the lower sections are 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 four pane cast iron, centre pivot, casement window with two pane fixed lights on either side. This may be a survival of the malthouse window 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 over 4 pane 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 (N° 73)



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

- 4.1.1 This extends the whole length of N° 73 from the west gable to the retail display area to the back edge of the pavement to Caversham Road at the front and which extends from the north wall to Northfield Road and the side wall to the in-fill block. At the west end there are late 20th C concrete block walls laid fair faced that enclose a goods lift and an escape staircase from the floor above. At the front of the area, adjacent to the shop display front, there is a small store room formed from modern hollow wall construction faced with plasterboard or similar. Most of this space has most recently been used as retail showroom, as suggested by a scatter of residual advertising materials throughout this space.
- 4.1.2 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 this part and the space to the back has

been cut through it is now supported by a steel posts with a boxed steel beam running over their heads.

- 4.1.3 Throughout this area there are rows of late 20th C H section steel columns that supports beams that carry the apparently suspended timber floor above, as indicated by the construction seen from above. This has been underlined with some form of sheeting or boarding, as have some of the supporting beams, while others are not.
- 4.1.4 The floor through this area is a reinforced concrete structure, as seen where this has been opened up for inspection. This has a concrete slab, approximately 200 mm thick, over a polythene damp proof membrane, then scalplings and hard core under that and is typical of late 20th C construction.



Fig 4.1.3: Ground floor slab

- 4.1.5 On the north side, the inner face of the external wall is faced with painted brickwork that it is much as that noted on the outside face, but with square reveals and sills to the windows. Over the window heads there appear to be some form of steel beams as lintels that are set within the brickwork with timber facings to them. These are almost flush to the underside of the beams supporting the first floor.

- 4.1.6 The south wall to this unit is all in brickwork 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 internal travel.
- 4.1.7 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.



Fig 4.1.8: Interior of frontage retail display area.

- 4.1.8 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 is supported by steel beams that are encased with timber boarding. Beyond that, is the area that

has been extended out to form the retail type shop front display area under the external zinc covered canopy.

4.2 Ground Floor – Infill Block



Fig 4.2: Front stairs from ground floor to mezzanine landing in infill block

- 4.2.1 This has a concrete floor that is slightly above that to the north block and approximately 300 mm above that in the south block. It is likely this element is of similar construction to that seen in the north block.

- 4.2.2 The lower sections of the side walls of both the north and south blocks have been rendered and painted and above that, at about mezzanine landing level, they are of painted brickwork. In the upper section can be seen arches and former window opening that have been bricked-in, so indicating that they were built as separate units and this block part was inserted later.
- 4.2.3 In an approximately position front to back of this part of the building is a late 20th C metal staircase that lead up to a mezzanine 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 building as a whole.
- 4.2.4 Over the front and back parts of this section the ceiling is apparently plasterboard to the underside of the first floor. Over the landing there is high level ceiling to the underside of the roof deck above.

4.3 Ground Floor – South Block (N° 71) Front Section



Fig 4.3: South block looking towards first floor 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. This part of the floor is of solid construction with a painted finish. The wall between this part and the area to the rear has been cut through on the line of the ground floor level change. This is supported by a steel beam supported on H section column and a circular cast iron post with a splayed support top. The floor to this upper office section does not

readily relate to a former central floor of the original malting and is of timber construction underlined with painted timber boarding.



Fig 4.3.1: Front of south block, under office section



Fig 4.3.2: Floor tiling

- 4.3.2 The floor to the main part east section of the south block has solid floor covered with square black coloured quarry tiles that are approximately 150 x 150 mm and 19mm thick and are bedded in mortar on a concrete slab.
- 4.3.3 Along the south side of the east section there is late 20th C walling of fair faced concrete blockwork that encloses a fire escape staircase from the first floor.
- 4.3.4 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. These have varying width, where they closed to the dividing wall between the east and west section of this block. This is typical of solid suspended floor construction of the late 19th C and may be the original upper floor to this building. This is supported on late 20th C H section steel posts carrying similar section steel beams over the top and to the underside of the floor beams.



Fig 4.3.4: Underside of brick upper floor

4.4 Ground Floor – South Block (N° 71) Rear Section

- 4.4.1 Dividing the front section of N° 71 from this part is a brick wall laid in English bond that is a 320 mm thick that has been painted. This has been cut through for door openings with steel H section lintels over the heads to connect the two parts. By the manner in which the upper east section floor finishes to this wall on the other side it would suggest it was built at the time of initial construction



Fig 4.4.1: Front and rear section dividing wall of or N° 71 looking to the front

- 4.4.2 The walls around this part are of brickwork, much as that seen externally, with no evidence for closed-up windows in either of the side walls.



Fig 4.4.3: Support to underside of upper floor

- 4.4.3 In the middle of this section there is a tall cast iron post that supports a deep H section beam spanning from the back wall to the dividing wall and then two cross

beams from side to side. This is all under a high level first floor above is apparently a suspended timber structure as indicated by the construction seen from above. This has been underlined with some form of sheeting or boarding, but not the supporting beams

4.5 First Floor – North Block (N° 73)



Fig 4.5: North block first floor looking towards the front

- 4.5.1 The surface of 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.
- 4.5.2 The walls to the exterior are painted brickwork, generally as that noted on the ground floor. There no indications of closed-up window openings in the south wall.
- 4.5.3 At the west end modern there is a modern concrete block housing for a set of fire escape stairs and the lift shaft, which is as described for this structure on the ground floor.

- 4.5.4 The roof over this block, extending from the back of the front cross range to the west wall is supported on a series of painted steel framed Fink pattern trusses at approximately 1.5 m centres of late 19th C or early 20th type. These have a slightly raised centre section and where the outer bottom cords angle down to the eaves level at the head of the side walls. They are comprised of angle iron principal rafters and struts, with simple plain bar cords and ties and bolted gusset plate connections on all the joints. There is a vertical central tie rod in between them and then additional bracing added to the side sections.



Fig 4.5.4: Roof trusses to north block man roof

- 4.5.5 The trusses support painted 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 running from the eaves, over the purlins, to the ridge.
- 4.5.6 In alternate upper purlin bays along the south slope there are large extractor fans under cowl hoods mounted over the external roof sheeting. Then in the lower bays, on both sides of the roof there are panels of translucent roof sheeting, as noted as part of the externally.
- 4.5.7 Over the front of this section, under the cross wing, there is a flat soffit of plasterboard. On the junction between this area and the main part to the rear

there is a beam against the east end truss to the rear roof that is supported on posts. Because of the close nature of this part we could not properly ascertain the roof structure above, but which is assumed to be a cut timber roof.



Fig 4.5.7: Front area to the first floor of the north block (73)

4.6 First Floor – Infill Block

- 4.6.1 From the intermediate mezzanine landing there is a flight of late 20th C steel stairs that run up to the first floors in the north block, where this cuts into the side of that floor. On the opposite side of the landing there is a shorter set of steel steps that leads up the upper floor of the south block first floor. The relative length of the stairs the difference in upper floor levels between the main parts of this building.
- 4.6.2 At upper floor level, corresponding with that to the north side, at the front end of this part of the building there is a travel connection across this to both the north and south blocks. There is also a small office that formed that extends into this part from the front cross wing range on the north side, where this is all in modern lightweight partitioning.



Fig 4.6.2: Infill link block at front with connection to south block



Fig 4.6.4: Toilets to rear section

- 4.6.3 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 and provides natural light over the internal corridor.
- 4.6.4 At the west end of this part, at nominal first floor level to the north block, there are toilets and staff restroom installed and from where a further door connects to the office area at the west end of the south block. The floor is a suspended timber structure generally as that described for the north area. The division walls are a mixture of modern fair faced concrete blockwork hollow partition construction with plaster finish and standard joinery doors fitted in openings. All sanitary and kitchen fittings are of a style and form dating to the fourth quarter of the 20th C

4.7 First Floor - South Block (N° 71) Front Section



Fig 4.7: South block first floor first at east end

- 4.7.1 At the front of the east end of the south block the floor is a suspended timber structure, where this is what may have been a former office section and is approximately 200 mm higher than that to the infill block. This changes to a solid

floor structure in the area to the rear, where the underside is seen from the ground floor in a position that would correspond with the front dividing wall seen at that level, and which is covered with vinyl asbestos tiles similar to that to the upper floor in the north block.

- 4.7.2 All the external walls have been plastered and painted, while along the south side of this part is a modern concrete block structure forming a fire escape provision and position. Across the front of this part of the building modern hollow partition walls of plasterboard on timber framing form a set of offices to the windows on the road elevation.
- 4.7.3 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 and plate fink trusses, with gusseted connections. However, these are supported on brick nibs that corbel out from the inner face of the walls on both sides to give support to the truss ends. The bottom sides of the trusses are clad with painted vertical timber boarding. Between the trusses there is a raised lay-in grid suspended ceiling system carrying timber fibre tiles.



Fig 4.7.3: Boxed truss end on brick nib

4.8 First Floor - South Block (N° 71) Rear Section



Fig 4.8: South block first floor west end office

- 4.8.1 The dividing wall between the front and the rear section of the south block (N° 71) is generally the 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.
- 4.8.2 The floor to this section of the south block is a suspended timber structure covered with carpet.
- 4.8.3 Where seen, the external walls are of painted brick work, generally as those described for the structure externally. Internal walls are all of a late 20th C hollow partition type with timber framing, plasterboard facings and inserted glazed panels. All the doors are of similar age standard joinery items.
- 4.8.4 Over this part of the building is a flat soffit of lay-in grid suspended ceiling system carrying timber fibre tiles. This is carried on wires from metal trusses similar to the roof structure over the front part of this block although, here the purlins and sarking boards are not painted and truss ends are carried directly on the heads of the external walls.



Fig 4.8.4: South block roof truss at west end above suspended ceiling

6 DESK TOP STUDY

6.1 Map Study

- 6.1.1 A map of Reading from post 1847, as it shows the line to Newbury. Even though it is at a reasonably large scale, it does not show Northfield Road or any other form of development on or in the immediate vicinity of this site.



Fig 6.1.1: Map of Reading post 1847

- 6.1.2 The first edition of the 25" to the mile scale Ordnance Survey (OS) map, published in 1878, shows there are group of buildings on this site that are generally labelled as „*Malthouses*’. There is a building against the south boundary, towards the front of the site, which would appear to be about the same size and length of the present south block (N° 71). The north block (N° 73) is against what was to become the Northfield Road side of the site and extends back as far as the present north side rear entrance gates and then returning partially across the west end of the other block. Between the south and north blocks there is a gap, although there is what could be a connection between them in a central position as well as another at the rear of the south block to the returned part of the north block. .



Fig 6.1.3: 1882 edition OS map extract

- 6.1.3 On the 1900 edition of the OS map the buildings are no longer named as malt houses and similarly on subsequent editions of mapping. Northfield Road along the north side of the site is seen for the first time as a developed area.
- 6.1.4 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 both the blocks extending towards the front for about half the length. The early editions of the mapping also show that the front range section to the north block (N°73) is in three sections, suggesting that it this was a different form of roof, probably with valley running front to rear, compared to that now seen to the building.
- 6.1.5 The 1934 OS 25" map shows little apparent change from the previous edition.
- 6.1.6 Later OS mapping in 1957 and then in 1961 shows this as a large, almost square, block of building and is designated as „Warehouse', which is extends back to the west as far as the entrance gates on the north side. There another block that connects this building on the south boundary with that which is now 1 Northfield Road, but no longer exists. 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.

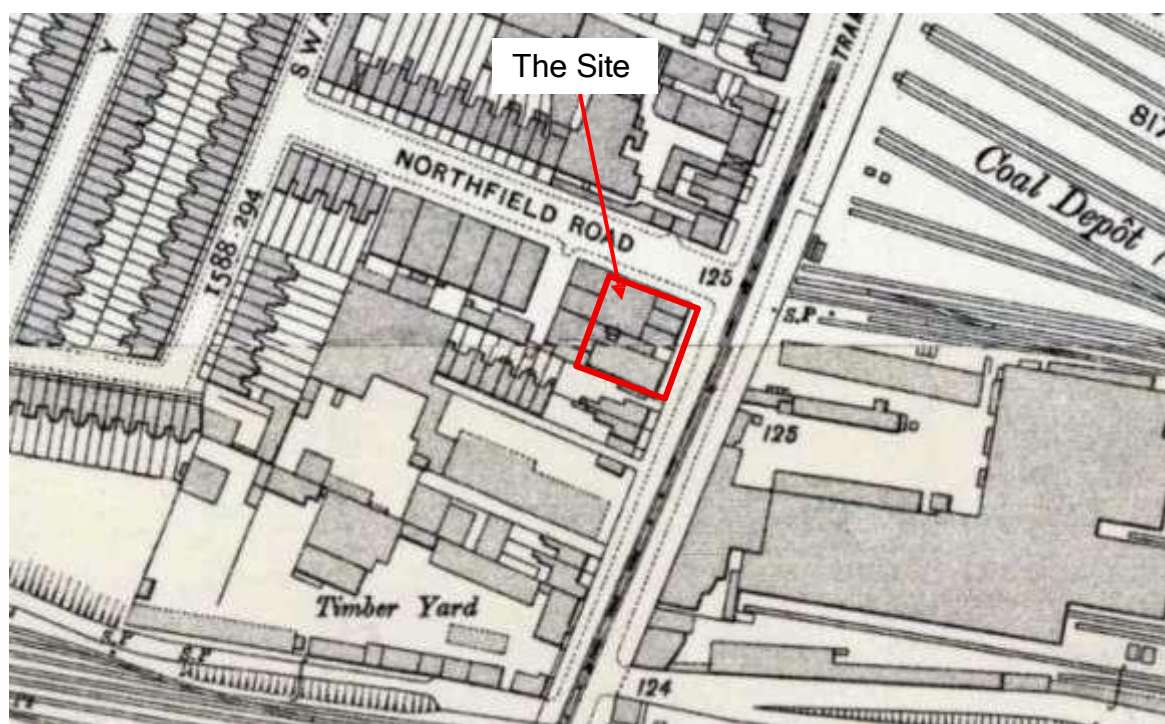


Fig 6.1.5: 1912 edition OS map extract

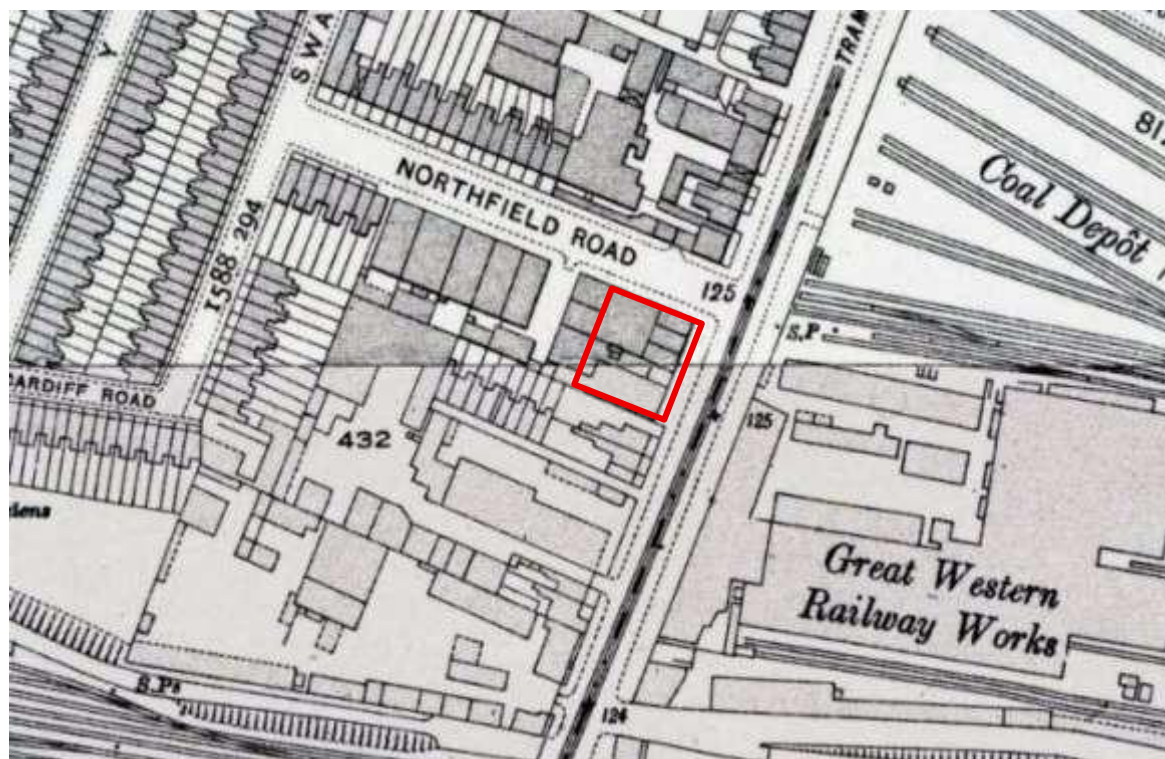


Fig 6.1.6: 1934 edition OS map extract

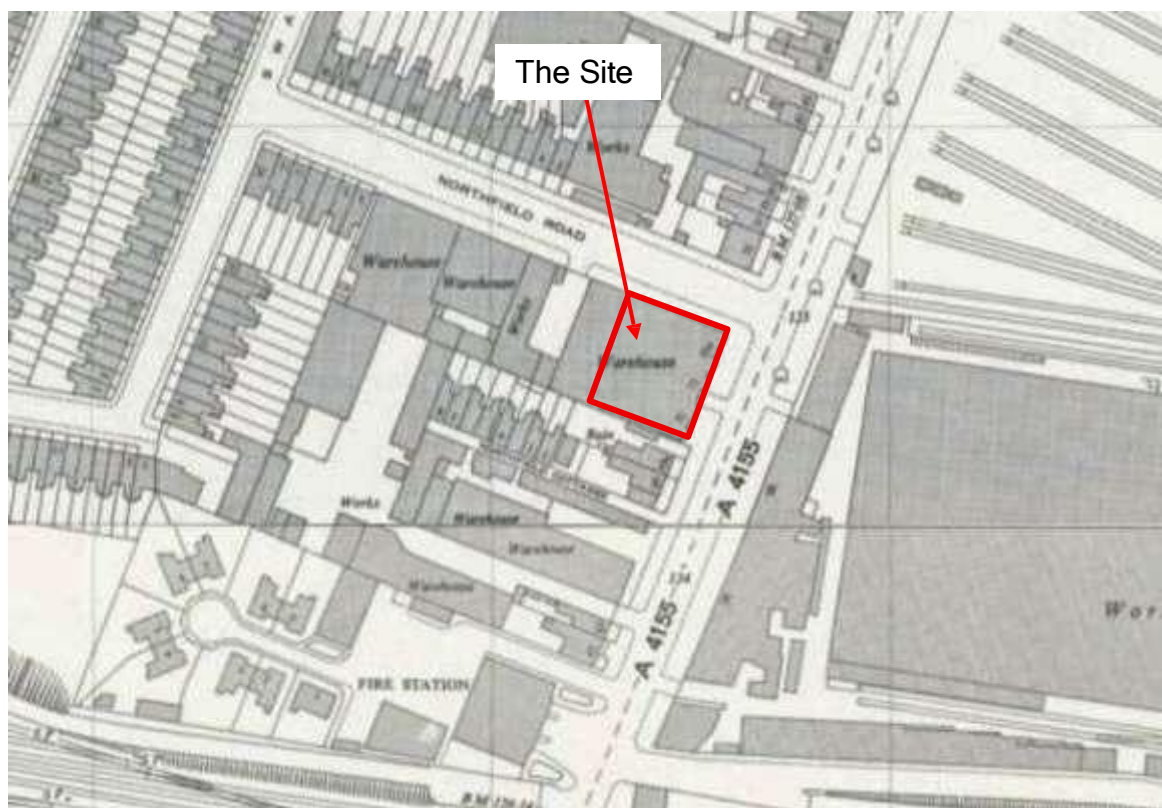


Fig 6.1.7: 1961 edition OS map extract

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 malthouses in Reading.
- 6.2.2 Between 1872 and 1903, Dowson's business supplied H & G Simonds Brewery with malt, as their own malting area in Bridge Street had to be converted to beer storage to keep up with demand for their products. It is not known whether this was purely from this site or in combination with the Dowson's other maltings in the town.
- 6.2.3 Dowson died in 1902 subsequent to that and the cessation of malting the buildings were assigned to Arthur Cooper, a surveyor; Robert Curtis, a builder and George Lewton, an architect. Mr Cooper applied to the council make changes to the buildings and converted them into stables, stores, workshops and lock-up shops in

Northfield Road, as well as alter the malthouse on the corner of the road and conversion of one of the buildings into more shops.



Fig 6.2.4: Frontage to Caversham road in the 1930 - 40s

- 6.2.4 The alteration and adaptation of the malthouse was evidently very thorough as evidenced from photographs taken in the early - mid 20th C. These show the windows along the north side having been completely altered with the loss of the mid storey fenestration and the ground floor window heads lifted to a double height as they are now. The front of the building on to Caversham Road was changed to one that presented the appearance of traditional small shop fronts of that time with plate glass windows and the walls above being rendered. What is now the infill block with the main shop entrance was then an access to a workshop behind.
- 6.2.5 Amongst the first to occupy the buildings in 1905, were Stransom and Cheney, who were corn, hay and straw merchants and remained there until 1914. Other businesses on the site in this early period were a grocer and boot repair company. A manufacturing chemist, G W Harrison, moved in to part of the site and remained there for about twenty years, although partially damaged by a fire that spread from an adjacent site in 1918 and left around 1933.
- 6.2.6 During that time, through the period of the first war, the buildings also housed a tailoring firm, Album and Solomon, as well as Read and Partners, who were electrical engineers and left in 1930.



Fig 6.2.8: Frontage to Caversham Road at the time of Drews" closure

- 6.2.7 Percy H Smallbone was a motor engineer and he moved to the site in 1925 and stayed until 1947, and the remnant of whose name is seen in the „ghost sign" on the north wall. They were followed by Brown Brothers, who were described as motor accessories factors and later as electrical wholesalers. Drews, a firm of ironmongers and builders merchants, occupied the site in 1977 and remained there until closure in December 2018.
- 6.2.8 A high level aerial photograph, although of somewhat grainy nature, shows the site at a slight oblique angle. In this can be seen the two buildings forming the subject of this record as well as the position of the former kiln at the west end of the north block. With the angle of the shot it is possible to see that the fenestration pattern on the north side wall had been changed by this time to tall ground floor windows and deepened cills to upper level windows. The roof over the new block appears to be very light in colour that could suggest this was fairly new asbestos cement sheeting that was possibly installed in the late 1930s and before the onset of the Second World War with subsequent building material rationing.
- 6.2.9 Also on the 1948 areal picture can be seen the malt kiln at the west end of the north block, with a square pyramid roof and cowl / vent projecting up through the apex. Alongside that on the south side is another building running to the back of what is not the in-fill block. Around both these now removed buildings the window pattern appears to have changed from what be expected for maltings.

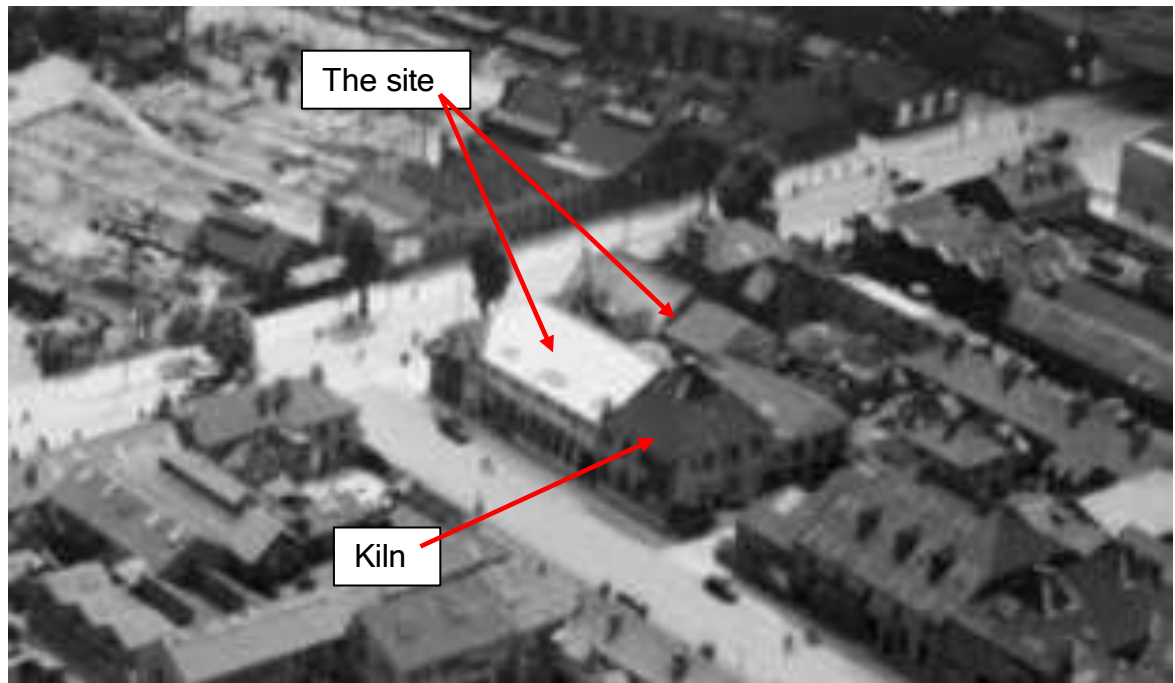


Fig 6.2.7: Aerial picture extract, June 1948

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

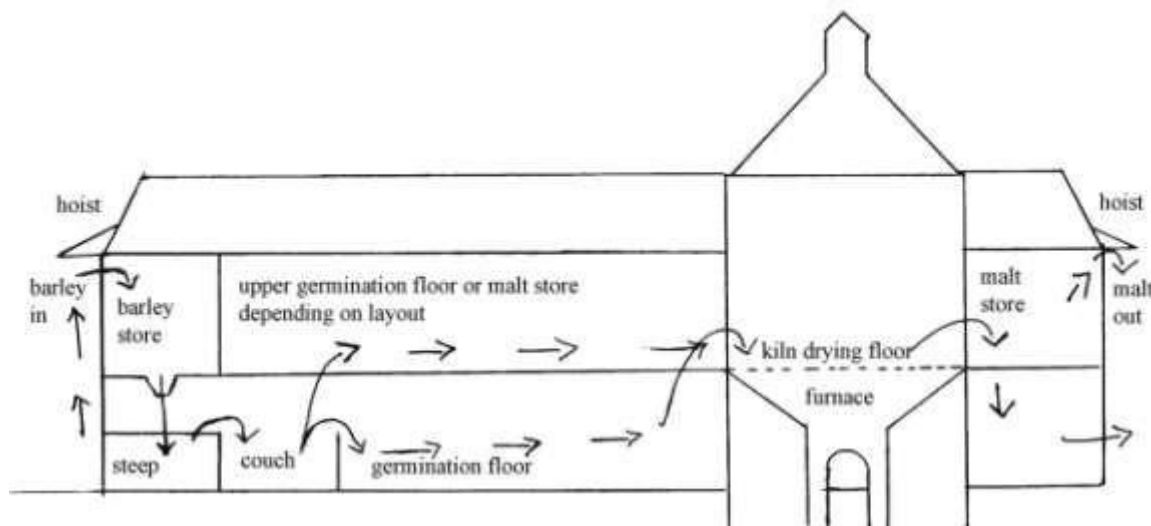


Fig 8.1: Typical malthouse production flow

- 8.1.1 The present building was built as two parallel malt germination houses as part of larger malt manufactory, where there are now only a few external features that are unchanged since they were built. The visible external shell still has the general bulk and overall appearance of a structure that relates to an industrial use. However, the fenestration pattern of parallel rows of small windows, which would be the most typical feature to allow it to be identified as a maltings has largely been lost. On both of the north and south walls the centre windows have been cut down to form storey height openings and the upper floor windows have had their cills lowered to increase their size. On the north side only one original window remains at the east end and there is a stack of three on the south side towards the front.
- 8.1.2 Internally there has been significant alteration to structure where very little of the original processing has survived and it is difficult to discern much of the malting layout. It is possible that the steep and couch were at the front to Caversham road where deliveries from the beginning could be easily directly from the road. These two blocks are likely to have been the germination floors, with the kiln being at the west end of the north block against Northfield Road. The store buildings are likely to have been to the south of the kiln and across the west end of the south block.
- 8.1.3 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 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

- 8.1.4 Over the main part of the north block the roof sheeting is as that described for the west part of the south block. However, on an aerial picture of 1948, it looks very bright and so be of the late 1930s date, as no such materials were available due to rationing the immediate post war period.
- 8.1.5 At the front of the building over the north end of the cross range the slating is of a somewhat indeterminate age, but it can be suggested as being of early 20th C installation. This may be part of Cooper's alterations to the corner of the maltings, but which was not noted on mapping due to level the re-survey undertaken over that period.
- 8.1.6 Both the north and south blocks have side walls of traditional solid brick construction, where these have a similar fenestration patterns with tall storey height windows on the ground floor and smaller high level windows to what is now the first floor. The high level windows have been enlarged by having their 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 lines. Their original 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.
- 8.1.7 The closed-up doorway on the north wall with the green brick surround is of a style and form fairly typical of the early 20th C and not commonly expected for incorporation within a late 19th C malthouse. This is most probably part of the early 20th C work instigated by Cooper to improve access in and around the premises following their division into shops and workshops.
- 8.1.8 The windows to what is now the ground floor on both sides 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. The spacing of these on the north side do not reflect those at the higher level, as could be expected for a maltings and with the change in brickwork bond to this side could suggest that there was substantial re-ordering of this wall.
- 8.1.9 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. Aerial photographs, as late as 1948, show most of the buildings in place then and even show as part of the large block to mapping of the early 1960s, but by OS mapping these had been removed by the early 2000s.
- 8.1.10 The 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.
- 8.1.11 Internally the buildings have been restructured at various forms and manners since the cessation of malting in 1903. This has with included the removal of intermediate floor through the north block and the likely replacement of the upper

floor with a timber structure. 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. In the south block the middle floor has been removed and what seems to be the original brick upper floor to the east section is retained and supported on a modern steel frame structure.

- 8.1.12 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.
- 8.1.13 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 The construction of these buildings marked the start of a period of development of this part of the town and which fanned out to the west and north of 71 – 73 Caversham Road. Much of this was undertaken by a landowner, Weldale Knollys who leased this site to Dowson 1870, with the requirement that site was develop within two years. In modern property terms this site would be classed as a catalyst development, probably providing initial capital funding to get the rest rolling.
- 8.2.2 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.
- 8.2.3 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.
- 8.2.4 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.
- 8.2.5 The configuration of the buildings shown on the mapping indicates there was an attached building at the west end of the north block. From aerial photographs of this building taken in 1948 it can be seen that this was the malt kiln and which had a pyramid shaped roof with a single vent in the centre. It was the east slope of this

roof that butted to the end of the north block and where the remains of the roof flashing line can be seen to the bottom of the undecorated brick gable head.

- 8.2.6 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. This was most probably part of the alteration that Cooper undertook in the period 1903 – 5 following his grant of permission from the council. It would seem 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.
- 8.2.7 By comparison of 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.
- 8.2.8 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 on both the north and south sides were also altered. This would give a dating for the removal of the first floor to create the present internal ground floor height, which would have been needed for this to be used as workshops or large bulk as would have been need for hay and animal feed storage. That is because the floor heights in most malting is quite low, often in the region of 2.0 m, so as to conserve heat as well as accommodate as much floor area as possible per building and reduce load stresses applied to the external walls.
- 8.2.9 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.
- 8.2.10 It would appear, from the form and how of the work was undertaken, that it was in the later years of Drews' 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 recording survey. The frontage display windows would also date to Drews" occupation.

8.3 Building Development – Phased Plans



Fig 8.3: Ground floor plan (NTS)

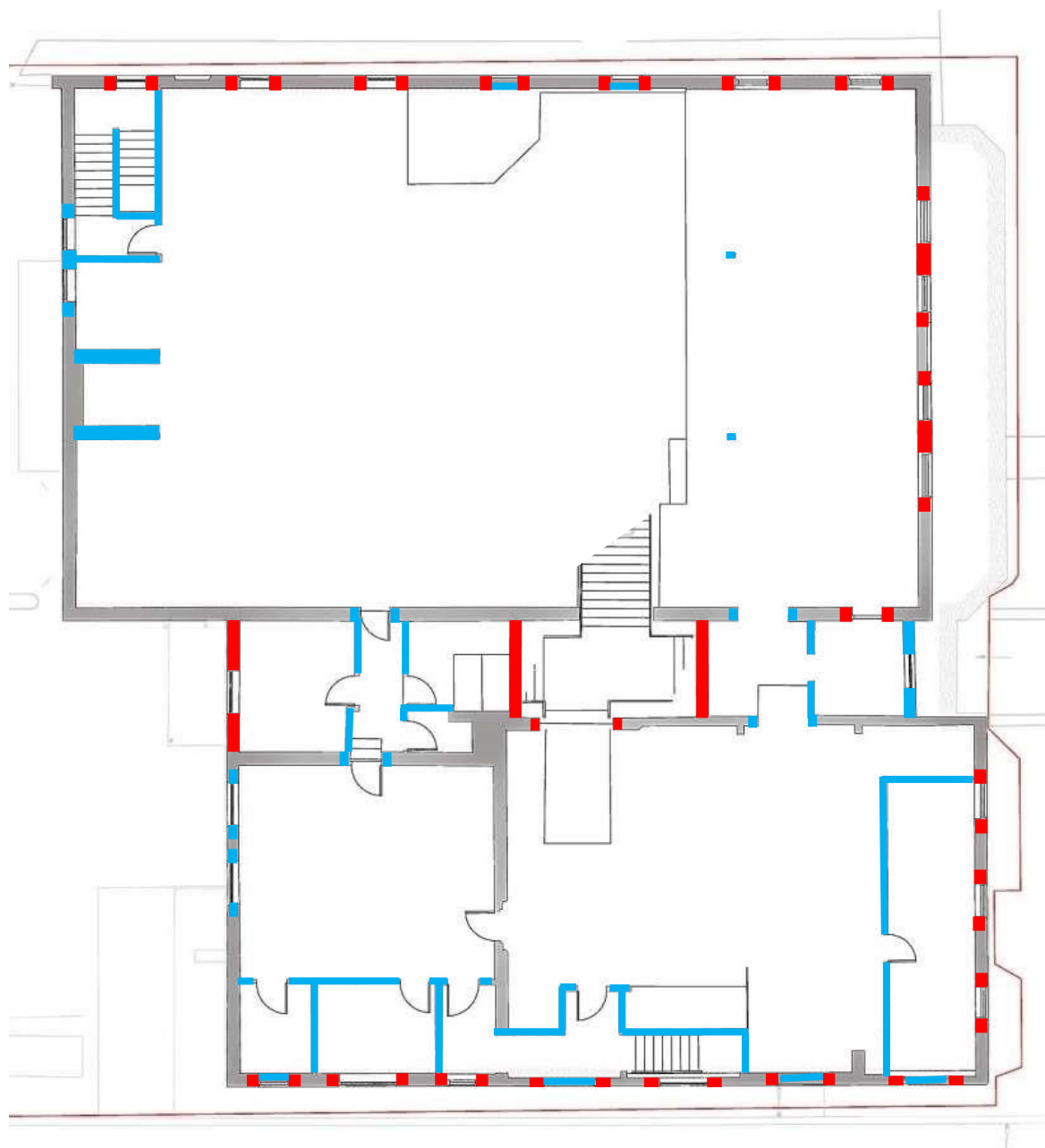


Fig 8.3: First floor plan (NTS)

Key:

Apparently original 1871 fabric

Early 20th C fabric / alteration

Late “ “ “ “



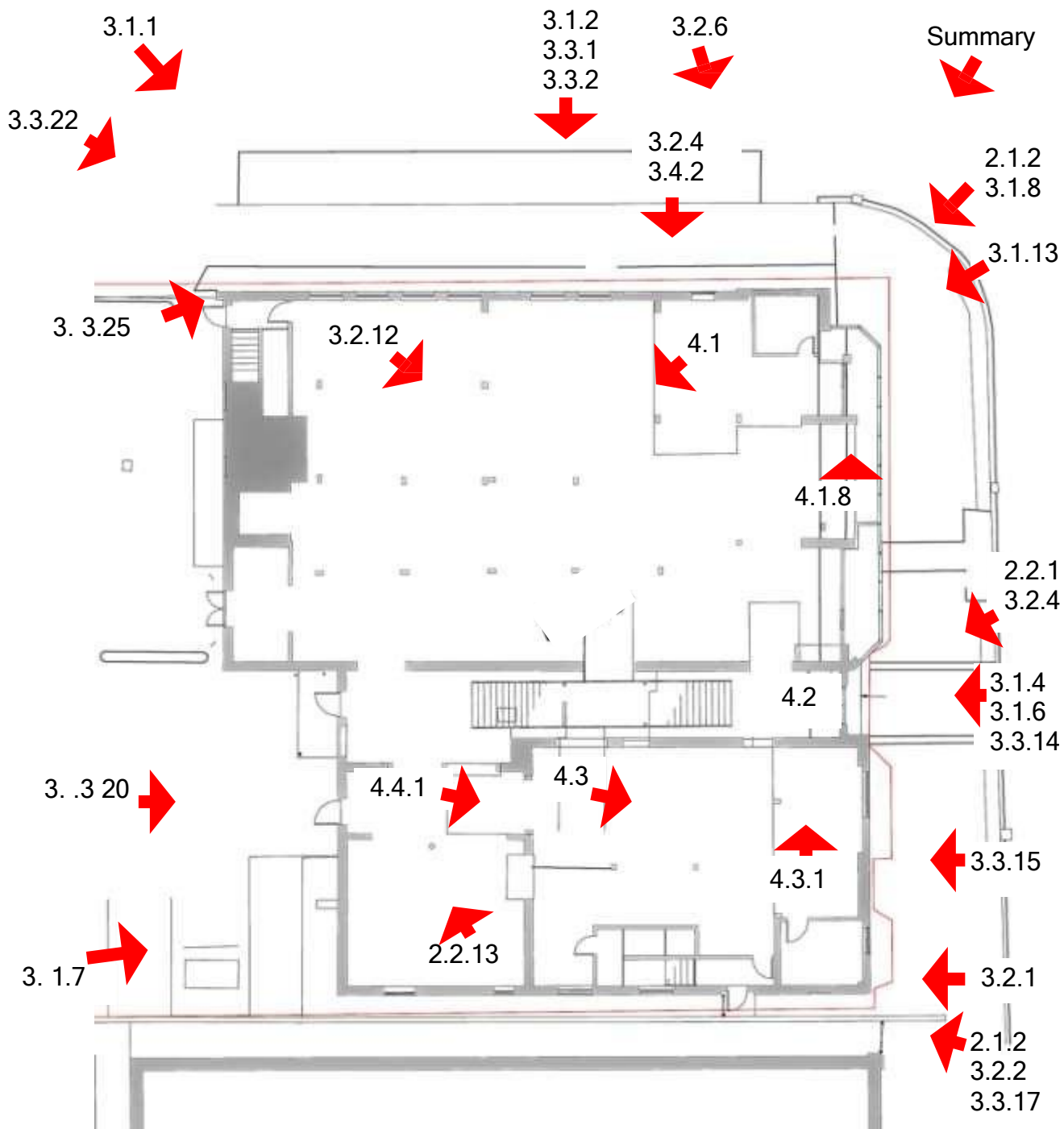
9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1.1 This building was originally two malthouse buildings that were built in parallel to each other in 1871 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, which led to the owner supplying malt to Symonds, the main brewer in the town, until 1902.
- 9.1.2 There was a change of building ownership 1903 to a group including a surveyor, architect and a builder who applied for planning permission to redevelop the site and buildings to shops, workshop and other uses, which included changes to the corner of the maltings. This is likely to have involved changes and alterations to the exterior and interior to the buildings so as to make them usable by new occupiers. During the alteration and adaptation work, the north wall from the upper part of the ground floor windows upwards may have been rebuilt. This would account for the change in brick bond and type for this area to Flemish bond, where the main building is in English bond of a slightly different colour and texture.
- 9.1.3 Cooper's conversion of the malthouses was quite thorough as can be seen from historic photographs of the building from the mid 20th C. This would have changed the appearance and the character of these buildings very substantially from how they would have appeared at the end of the 19th C. From looking quite austere with mostly blank walls penetrated by three rows of small regular windows the building took on more of an appearance of a row of shops along Caversham Road and on the north and south sides almost more window than wall.
- 9.1.4 Across the front of the building the removal of the early render finish seems to have required a re-facing of the brickwork to that elevation, which has resulted in damage to the brickwork creating an increase in the texture to the facing. At ground floor level the applied brick skin from the north end gable and across the south gable hide what would have been the earlier shop fronts. This has resulted in further change of both appearance and character of the malthouse from that it would have had at the time of its construction.
- 9.1.5 Until the 1970s, with the occupation of the building by Drews, the site had been used by many firms of differing types of business, often with several on site at the same time. Then into the late 20th C the building turned entirely to retail use that continued until 2018. During this time the two buildings were amalgamated into a single block and many remaining historic features seem to have disappeared completely.
- 9.1.6 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.

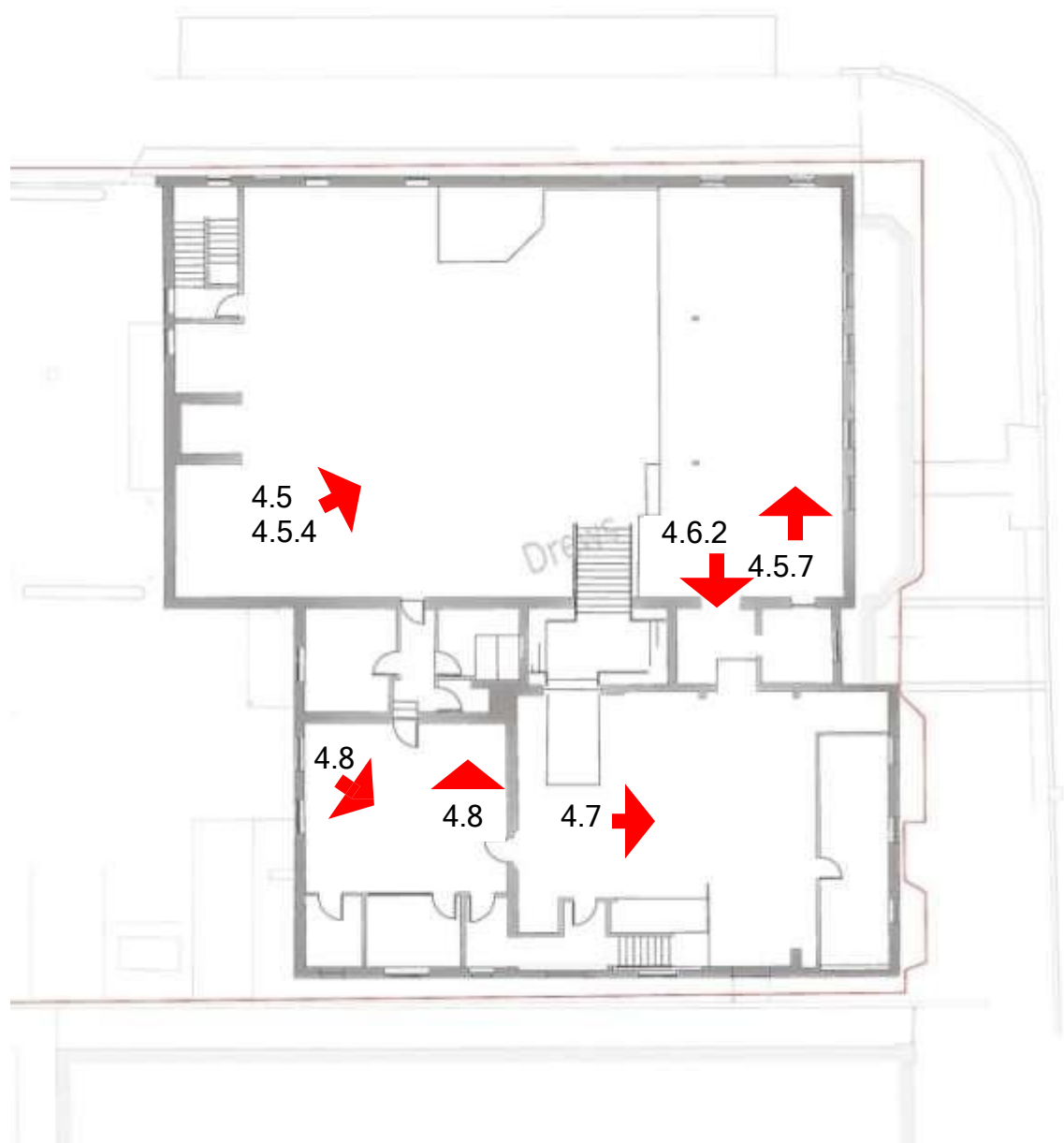
- 9.1.7 As the result of the changes and alterations that have been applied to both buildings, internally and externally, there has been significant change to these that has removed most of their historic character. The north wall has undergone major change from how it would have appeared as it would have been as a malting with three parallel rows of small equally spaced windows reflecting the typical internal floor arrangement for such a building of this age.
- 9.1.8 Internally the building reflects the character of a late 19th C industrial building of a rather indeterminate type, as there is no particular element or feature that would readily explain what it has been used for. The use of brick structures for upper floors and quarry tiles for ground floors are components that can be found in many such building so this age and some of these aspects could have come about from changes and alterations instigated by Cooper in 1903 – 05.
- 9.1.9 Malting was carried out only for a period of about thirty years, after which the site and its use became obsolete. Then, as with so many other buildings over the decades, it was altered and adapted as time went on to suit the needs and requirements of new occupiers and uses. The result is that there is now very little to mark this building out as a traditional late 19th C malthouse.

10 PHOTOGRAPH REFERENCE

10.1.1 These plans are only to show position and direction of view to photographs with the text of this report



Ground floor photograph position and direction plan (NTS)



First floor photograph position and direction plan (NTS)

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12 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.

13 APPENDIX B – REPORT SUMMARY SHEET

- Site name/address: 71 - 73 Caversham Road, Reading, Berkshire
- Ordnance survey ref SU712740 / SU7124874039
- 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, in advance of the demolition of most of the building.

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, before any demolition took place. 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. Malting eased in 1902, when there was also change in ownership. Between 1903 – 05 the buildings were altered and adapted to form shops and workshop and other uses and after which it was often in multiple occupancy by various businesses. This possibly included taking out intermediate floors, altering the internal layout, as well as remodelling the external appearance.

Then in the late 1970s this block was taken over by a Reading firm, as a single occupier and altered and adapted to become a large retail premises as an ironmongers and builders merchants. 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. It was during this period of occupation that the major remaining features of the maltings that survived, mostly being the kiln, were removed from the west end of the site, leaving these two blocks exposed at that end.

As a result of the alterations and adaptations that have occurred to the buildings since the very early 20th C these structures retain very little historic character retained from their original use as maltings. The external envelope has been largely restructured, re-fenestrated and re-roofed and the front facade mostly re-ordered. Internally both buildings have been gutted of original malting features and equipment and most of the intermediate floors have been removed, so that it is now seen as an open floor plan retail unit, with associated office accommodation.

The buildings, apart from being the shells of part of a late 19th C industrial unit retain very little to show that they were part of a malt manufactory, where the expected hall mark of such buildings, being the fenestration pattern, has been lost. In addition there has been a change of character with the replacement of expected original roof covering with corrugated asbestos cement sheeting as well as windows being changed to aluminium or uPVC frames. Across the front of the block to Caversham Road, this has been greatly altered to give it the appearance of a large retail unit of a style of the fourth quarter of the 20th C.

Internally there is very little of historic significance remaining that can be specifically related to the use of the original use of the building as part of a maltings. Spatially it has changed much with the removal of internal floors to form double storey heights to the ground floors. The on each level, these are generally open floor plans that are typical of those found for fairly modern retail premises as well as circulation facilities through and around them.

14 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Desk Top Study

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Fig 6.1.1 - Map of Reading circa 1840

Fig 6.2.4 - Photograph - Smallbone, Caversham Road

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Fig 6.1.3 - scale 6” to the mile scale. Sheet Oxfordshire LVI and Berkshire XXXVII, 1882 and 1883, Author: Ordnance Survey

Fig 6.1.5 - scale 25” to the mile, Berkshire XXXVII.3 and Berkshire XXIX.15, 1912 and 1913, Author: Ordnance Survey

Fig 6.1.6 - scale 25” to the mile, Berkshire XXXVII.3 and Berkshire XXIX.15, 1934, Author: Ordnance Survey

Fig 6.1.7 - scale 1- 2,500, SU7073-SU7173 and SU7074-SU7174, 1961, Author: Ordnance Survey

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Fig 6.2.7 -June 1948, Publisher: Historic England

Fig 6.2.8 - Haslams, *71 – 73 Caversham Road sales brochure (undated)*

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Format: Website

Title: Reading Borough Council

Author: Reading Borough Council

First Listed: 11 February, 2020

Site Accessed: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage-and-conservation/conservation-areas-listed-buildings/locally-listed-buildings/#LL15>

Date document was accessed: January 2025

Listing reference: LL15