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Blue Lion, Witherley: Historic Impact Assessment Report



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Change History

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1. Executive Summary

David Hickie Associates has been commissioned by Mr Vince Wetton, to undertake a historic building survey and to prepare a historic impact assessment report for the proposed development works to the Grade II listed Blue Lion public house in Church Road, Witherley.

The house is a good example of a traditional late eighteenth century town house, with extensions to the rear and side added not much later than the 3-bay original building. Over the years the buildings has had several phases of internal alterations and external additions, but the front elevation facing Church Road has remained unaltered.

The five double-hung sash window frames and the central door with its pedimented doorcase appear to be original, but close examination of the sashes reveals that they have been replaced at least once. The glazing pattern is correct, but the timber sections, modern glass and few paint layers compared with the frames and internal architraves show that they are not original.

There is a certain amount of wet rot in some of the sashes and frames, but all the windows, both to the front and side elevations, are repairable. However, replacement of the sashes would not involve destruction of historic fabric, and new sashes could represent an improvement if obtained from a reputable joinery company, and traditional cylinder glass incorporated. Heat loss and draughts could be reduced by carefully-designed secondary glazing.

The current phase of proposed development works can be summarised as:

External

Ext 1: New semi-open porch to replace existing lean-to porch
Ext 2: Kitchen Extension - Chimney retained and pitched slate roof extended plus infill brickwork
Ext 3: Kitchen Extension - New Glazed screen panels, timber panelling and new extraction grilles
Ext 4: New bar entrance door and side lights, and removal of ducting
Ext 5: Existing Windows – to be repaired and small window on first floor North elevation to be replaced - low quality doors to be replaced
Ext 6: Gutters and downpipes to be replaced by black cast aluminium

Internal

Int 1: Additional Restaurant Space – Internal wall removed
Int 2: New Kitchen – new partition
Int 3: New fire in lounge – removal of existing fireplace and removal of wall
Int 4: Blocking up existing Lounge Doorway to Front Entrance
Int 5: Existing kitchen – internal and external doors bricked up, new doorway and converted into female toilets
Int 6: Bar server – new wash up area and backfitting
Int 7: Bar/Entrance Lobby – door and wall removed
Int 8: Existing Male/Female toilets – converted to disabled and male toilets

All these changes have been assessed and it is judged that they will result in either low or no adverse impact on the significant historic fabric/form of this Grade II listed building. In some cases there will be a beneficial improvement.

PART 1 HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BUILDING

2. Introduction



This survey and report has been undertaken in accordance with the guidelines for an English Heritage Level 2 report - 'Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice' (English Heritage, 2006) - providing a descriptive summary of the building and sketch plans of the layout and specific elements of historic significance.

Table 1: Building Conservation Listing

SP 39 NW WITHERLEY CHURCH ROAD (east side) 7.11.66 The Blue Lion Inn Grade II House now public house. Late C18. Red brick with plain tile roof and brick end stacks. 2 storeys. Regular 3-window front: 16-pane glazing bar sashes with rusticated wedge-shaped lintels with raised key blocks. Central 6-panelled door within a pilastered and pedimented surround containing fanlight with radiating glazing bars. C19 single-storey, 2-bay extension to left with glazing bar sashes. Further C19 extensions to rear. Interior remodelled in the 1980's.

The Blue Lion also lies in the Witherley Conservation Area.

Site inspections were undertaken on Wednesday 21st October 2009 and Tuesday 19th January 2010.

3. The Original House

The house was built in the second half of the eighteenth century in the style typical of town-houses of the period. It is a modest but elegant two-storey 3-bay building with attics and a central doorway, the front wall being set back by about 7 ft (2m) from the road. The original building had a simple plan of four rooms on each floor, and a central staircase.



The roof is a simple pitch, tiled, with eaves gutters, but no rainwater pipes on the front elevation. Fireplaces to each of the principal rooms on ground and first floors were positioned on the gable walls, with flues to one chimney stack at each end. On the frontage the red bricks are laid in Flemish bond with fine mortar joints, and the windows are double-hung sashes in box frames with projecting wedge-shaped rusticated stone lintels (the keystones projecting slightly further) and stone cills.

This town-house plan was reproduced many times all over the country in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and because it was both architecturally pleasing and functional, many examples survive and are happily occupied. Modern comforts in the form of kitchens and bathrooms are usually accommodated in extensions to the rear, as in this example.

4. Later Development

The original house did not remain unaltered for long. A substantial two-storey extension was added in the early nineteenth century, at right angles to the main house. The straight vertical joint between the two builds clearly shows that the extension is later, but the use of very similar bricks indicates a relatively short pause in building activity. The brickwork of the extension is a random bond, but so are the gable walls of the main house. The precision of the Flemish bond was reserved for the 'polite' elevation.



The windows of the extension are wider and flatter, with brick-arched lintels, divided into 3 with timber mullions, more typical of the nineteenth century.

The 1835 edition of 'Pigot's Directory of Warwickshire' (p. 498) lists the Blue Lion Inn, Witherley. with the landlord named as John Cook.

The 1889 edition of the OS 1/2500 map (Sheet VI.15) which was surveyed in 1886 shows a small extension which was probably on the ground plan of the first section of existing single-storey extension off the main house. From the Church Road side the various different aged brickwork sections indicate a number of rebuilding phases for this section of the building. The 1903 edition of the OS 1/2500 map (Sheet VI.15) shows the extension to be the current extent of the extensions off the main building. Therefore, sometime between 1886 and 1903 the single story extension was again extended to its current length.



From the Church Road side, the single-storey extension the left of the main frontage, again of similar brickwork and a tiled roof and two sash windows which stay in keeping with the main house.

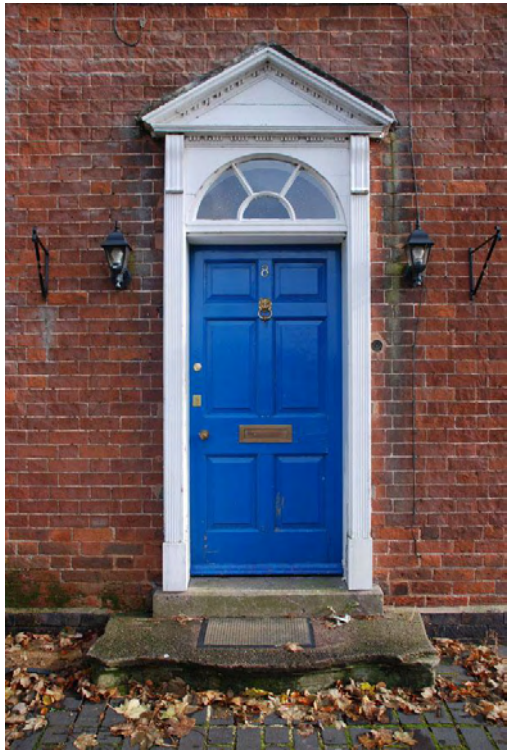
The single-storey extension has had the two panels infilled with brickwork which matches the brickwork on the lounge entrance porch. Section of red engineering bricks have been infilled around the windows on both the Church Road and inner courtyard side of the single-storey extension.

Local residents remember when the front room of the main house was still a domestic room and separate from the pub. In the late twentieth century the building was converted into a larger pub with, internal walls removed and other alterations, and further extensions to the back and side. The later extensions have unfortunately not been built with the same elegance of their predecessors, but the front elevation has remained substantially unaltered. The pub is entered from the rear, and although there is a connection from the hallway to the bar, the front door is used only for access to the first floor living accommodation.

The single-storey range of nineteenth-century outbuildings to the rear has several enlarged doorways which have compromised its original simple functionality. All but one of its original windows has been lost. There are some original timber trusses and it has been reroofed in the recent past.



5. The Front Elevation



The front elevation of the original house has a central doorway with a painted doorcase. It has ribbed pilasters and scrolled brackets supporting a timber pediment with a semi-circular fanlight below, with simple glazing divisions. This is all original apart from the plinth blocks, which have recently been renewed. The door has 6 raised and fielded panels, and could also be original.

The front step is stone and elegantly curved. It has unfortunately been covered in concrete in recent times.

The 3 equally-spaced windows on the first floor (the central one above the door) are double-hung sliding sashes, divided in the Georgian manner, 6 panes on 6. The ground floor windows, one each side of the door, are 8 on 8, and consequently wider than the first floor sashes, with proportionally larger lintels.



It is likely that the attic floor originally had dormer windows. The original staircase extends to this floor, and although the doors to the two rooms are not panelled but planked, these rooms were clearly designed as bedrooms. Visible clues for the existence of dormers have been obliterated, and recent windows have been inserted in the gable walls. Oblique views of the front of the house are slightly compromised by these inappropriate insertions.

It is unusual for ground floor and first floor windows to be of different widths. The building is essentially a modest town-house (even the doorcase is of a modest scale) and it is likely that the ground floor windows were originally designed to be the same width as those on the first floor, and the sashes 6 on 6. Perhaps the owner decided that the principal ground floor rooms deserved more generous windows, and if the openings could be enlarged by one brick each side, the brickwork

bond would be maintained. The lack of scars indicates that if this was the case, the enlargement happened quite soon after the original house was built, or even during its construction.

This is an interesting speculation, but nobody is suggesting a change to the present arrangement.

6. The Windows

Until the early eighteenth century, opening windows were hinged at the side, opened outwards or inwards, and are known as casements. When glass-blowing techniques developed and larger panes became available, these were incorporated into sashes, with the panes divided by glazing bars. The design of two sashes sliding vertically, one in front of the other, was first devised in Holland in the 1680's, and became popular in England through the eighteenth century.

The basic design stayed essentially the same throughout the century, with the sliding sashes on ropes and pulleys, with cast iron counterweights hidden in the box frames. However, the glazing bars, which at the beginning of the century were relatively thick, gradually became more slender. In country houses and important buildings these were manufactured in hardwood, but the more usual material was softwood, painted. The glass fitted into a rebate and was puttied on the outside. The insides of the glazing bars were moulded to soften the contrast between the light coming in from outside, and the relative darkness inside.

The windows of the Blue Lion are examples of the relatively slender design of the late eighteenth century. However, the sashes are certainly not original. The moulding on the glazing bars, the stiles and top and bottom rails has a radius slightly shorter than would have been the case in the original windows, the horns at the bottom of the top sash and the top of the bottom sash (to strengthen the joint) are rather crude, the glass is modern float glass which was not widely available until the 1920's, and most of the sashes have a maximum of three coats of paint. Had they dated from the original build, it is likely that there would have been at least a few surviving panes of original glass, and far more layers of paint would have been evident.

In contrast, the frames, which usually survive much longer than the sashes, are very probably original (although repaired), and the internal architraves, 45mm x 27mm, with their small and simple ogee moulding covered in many layers of paint, are certainly of the eighteenth century.



The sashes are made up of standard mouldings which are readily available. Although not original, they are a close approximation to how they would have looked when first installed.

The rear extension windows are of the nineteenth century, divided into three by heavy timber mullions, with casements of three panes. The frame has a moulded architrave internally, similar to that on the front windows which raises the question, was there a more elegant earlier form? It is difficult to imagine a different pattern, however, since the shape of the opening is wide and squat. So this was probably the original nineteenth century arrangement, albeit with replaced casements.

7. Condition

Painted softwood when exposed to the weather will gradually deteriorate unless carefully maintained. These windows have some decay, particularly at the bottoms of the frames and in the bottom rails of the sashes. They are all in need of at least an overhaul, but they are repairable. They have been badly painted recently, the paint having spread well onto the glass. This gives the glazing bars the appearance of being thicker than they really are.



If the sashes were totally replaced, there would be no danger of discarding any original material, and the opportunity could be taken to glaze with hand-blown cylinder glass, to give them back the authentic look of the eighteenth century. Several specialist joiners exist who can produce timber windows to the correct pattern and profiles.

It is difficult to double-glaze sliding sashes, because the rebate would have to be increased in depth to accommodate a double thickness of glass, and the extra weight could not be balanced by the counterweights within the restricted size of the box frames. However, heat loss can be reduced by secondary glazing on the inside, provided it is designed so that no new construction interferes visually with the existing glazing pattern.

Some timber window manufacturers offer double-glazed sashes, but they should be approached with caution because the counterbalancing could not be achieved in the traditional way.



PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT WORKS

8. Proposed Development Works

A planning and building consent application has been made with regard to a number of external and internal improvements to the Blue Lion public house.

These can be summarised as:

External
Ext 1: New semi-open porch to replace existing lean-to porch
Ext 2: Kitchen Extension - Chimney retained and pitched slate roof extended plus infill brickwork.
Ext 3: Kitchen Extension - New Glazed screen panels, timber panelling and new extraction grilles.
Ext 4: New bar entrance door and side lights, and removal of ducting
Ext 5: Existing Windows – to be repaired and small window on first floor North elevation to be replaced - low quality doors to be replaced
Ext 6: Gutters and downpipes to be replaced by black cast aluminium

Internal
Int 1: Additional Restaurant Space – Internal wall removed
Int 2: New Kitchen – new partition
Int 3: New fire in lounge – removal of existing fireplace and removal of wall
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Int 5: Existing kitchen – internal and external doors bricked up, new doorway and converted into female toilets
Int 6: Bar server – new wash up area and backfitting
Int 7: Bar/Entrance Lobby – door and wall removed
Int 8: Existing Male/Female toilets – converted to disabled and male toilets

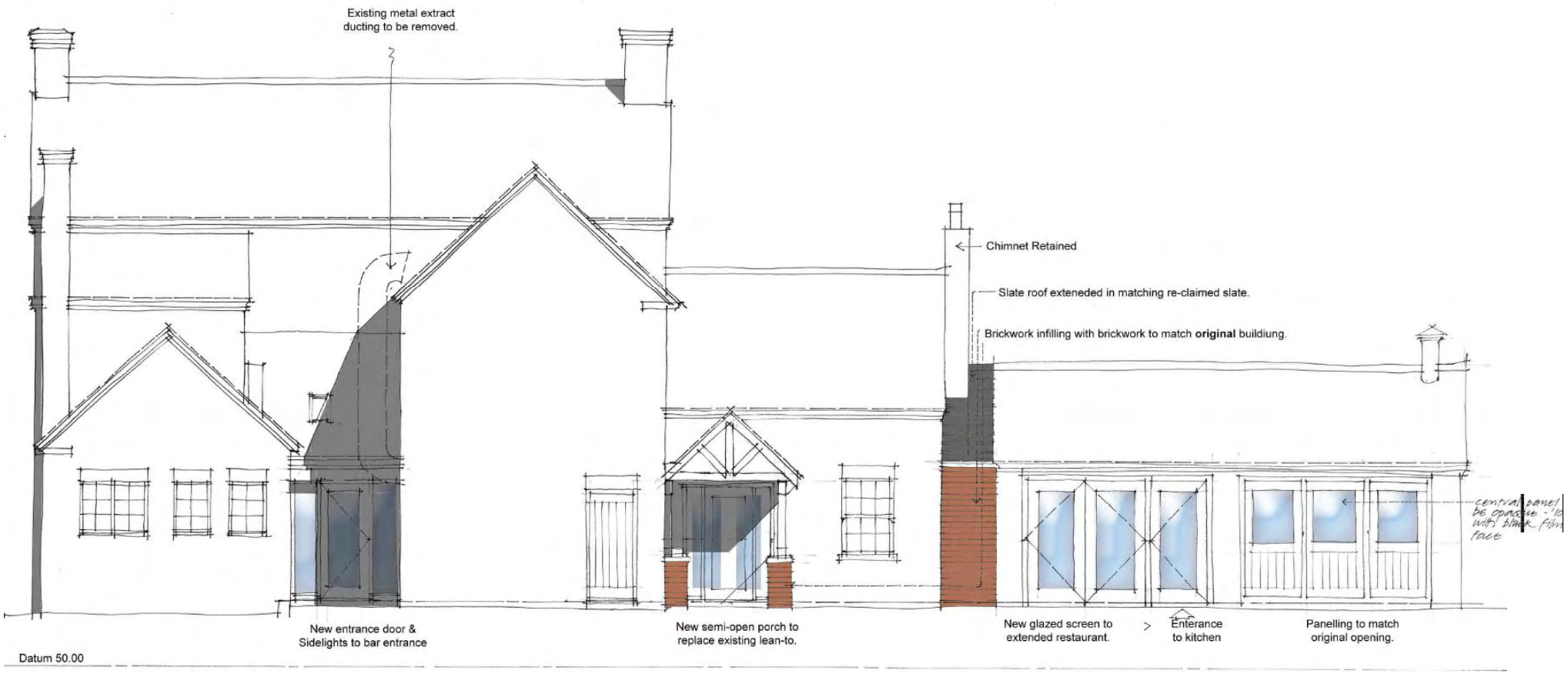
Blue Lion: West Elevation – Proposed Alterations



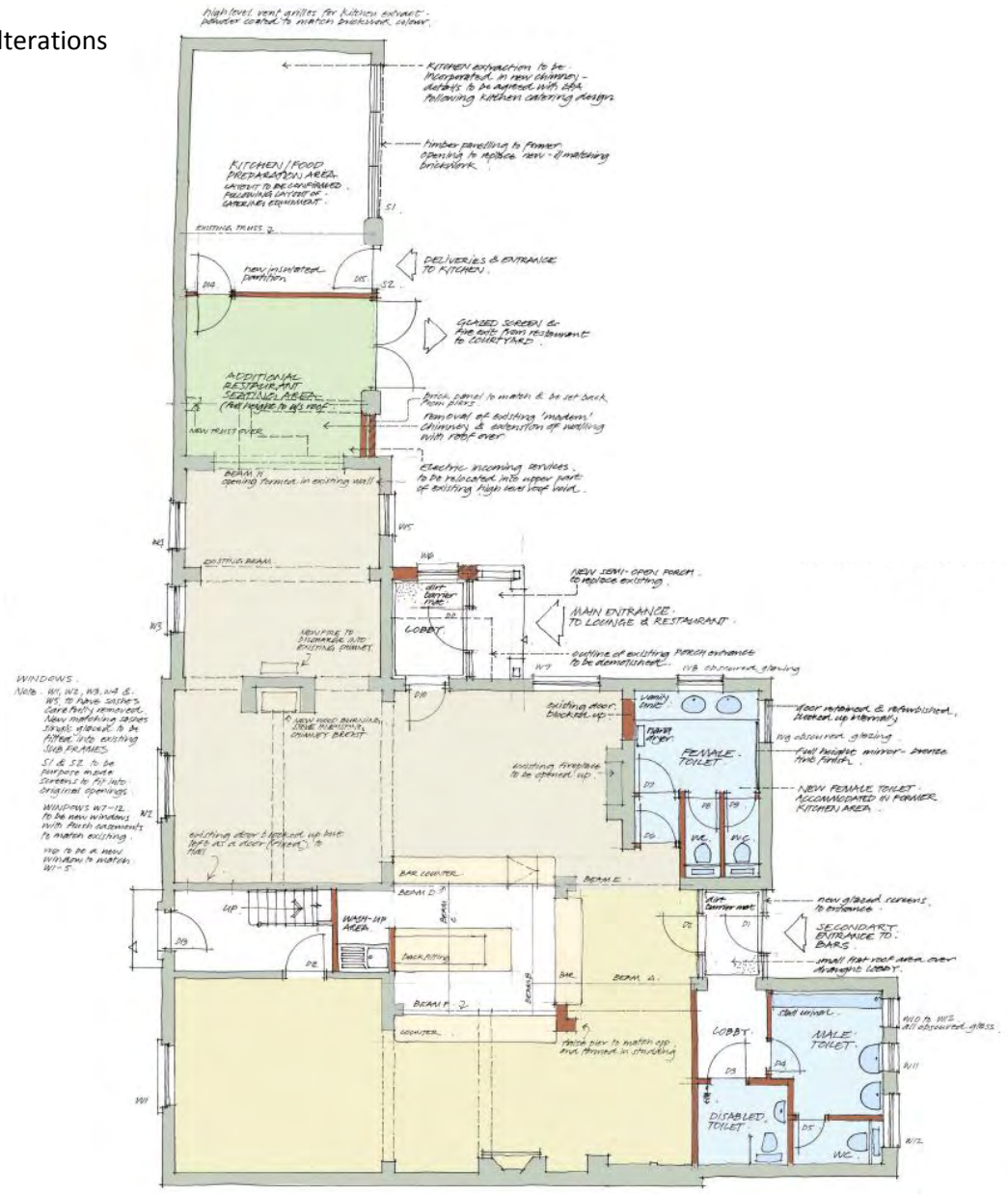
Blue Lion: North Elevation – Proposed Alterations



Blue Lion: East Elevation – Proposed Alterations



Blue Lion: Proposed Internal Alterations



8.1 Assessment of Development Proposals

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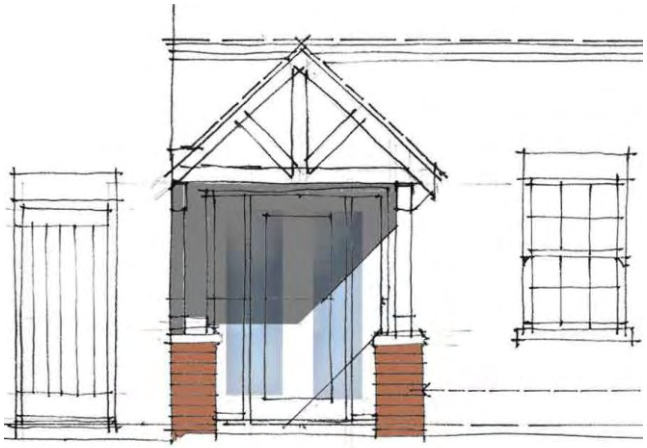
Ext 1: New semi-open porch to extend existing lean-to porch

Existing:



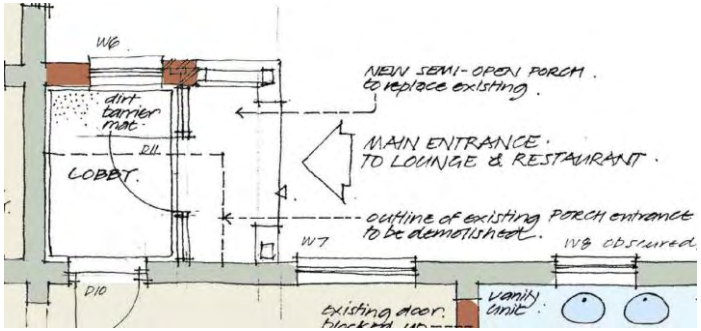
Historic Significance:
As can be seen in the above photograph, the lean-to porch is a relatively recent addition built in a very incongruous brick. It is highly likely that this was rebuilt during the 1980s brewery refurbishment. This structure is of low historic significance.

Proposals:



New semi-open porch to replace existing lean-to.





Assessment of Impact of Change:
The removal of the existing structure which is of low historical significance and replacement with a new pitched roofed structure which, whilst a new addition to the building is in character with the general building style, results in a low impact of change.

Ext 2: Kitchen Extension - Chimney retained and pitched slate roof extended plus infill brickwork.

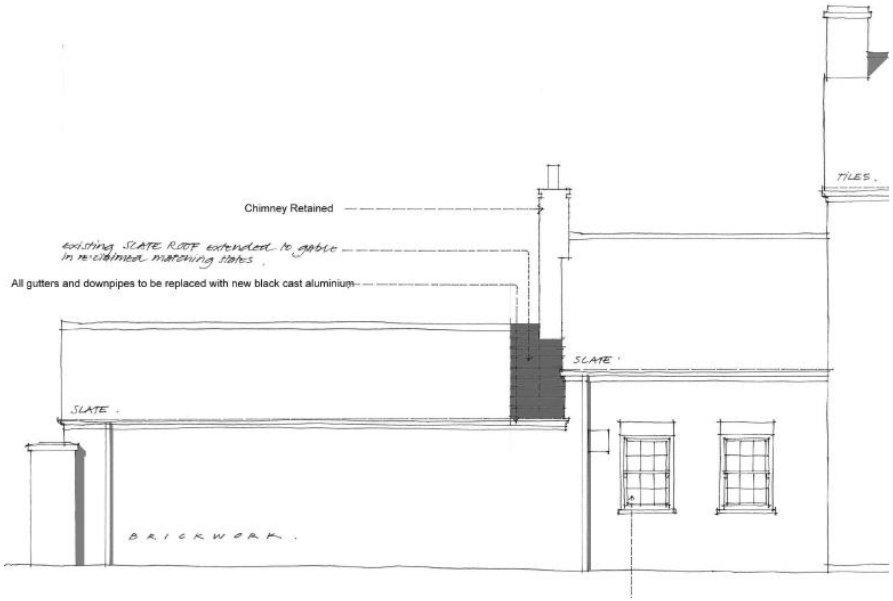
Existing:



Historic Significance:
There have been a number of single story extensions on the northern wing of the building which have been rebuilt over the past 120 years. The current roof gap between the two pitched roofs, whilst being part of recent the history of the building, is of low significant historic value. The chimney has been relatively recently rebuilt in red engineering bricks and is an important skyline element in the street scene.

Proposals:





Assessment of Impact of Change:
The proposed works will be an enhancement of the external profile of the building and therefore be a low positive impact of change.

Ext 3: Kitchen Extension - New Glazed screen panels, timber panelling and new extraction grilles.

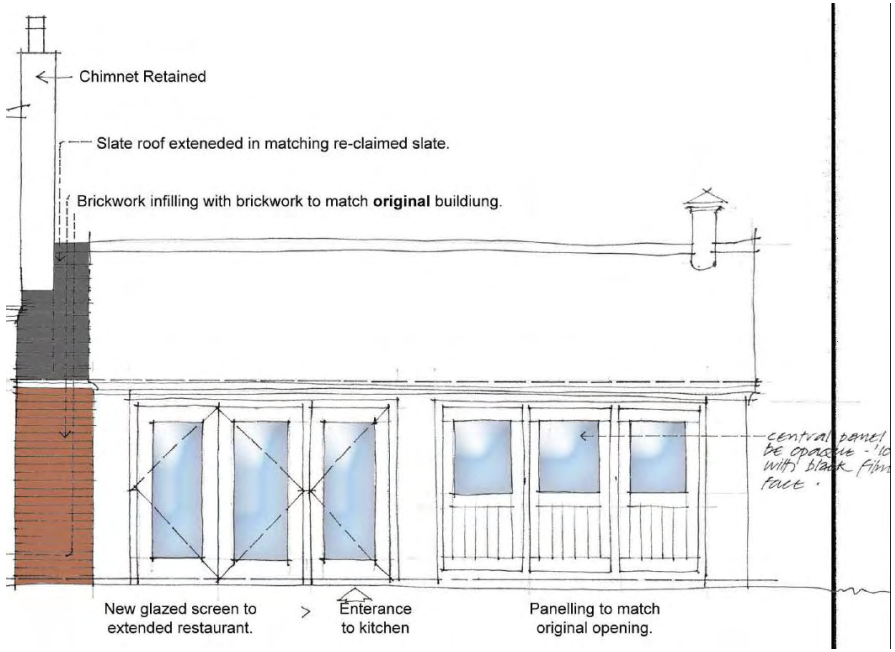
Existing:

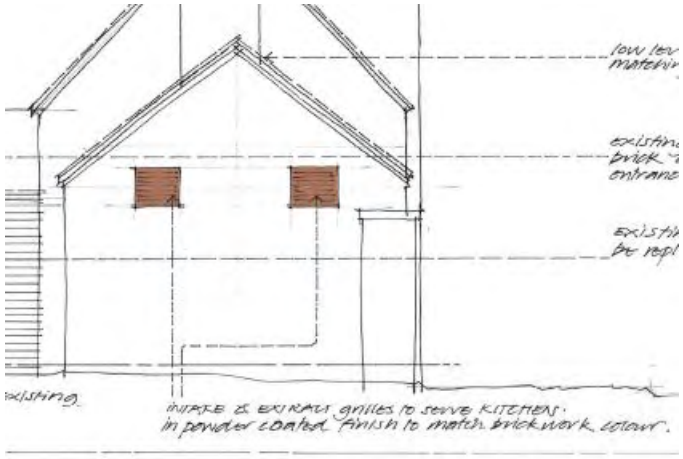


Historic Significance:
This end building was built to be a cart shed. Local villagers can remember it being used for this purpose in the 1950s. It had two front openings, which have been bricked up during the 1980s refurbishment or slightly earlier. The brickwork used does not match the traditional brick used on the main building. The use of the non-matching brickwork could have

been a deliberate ploy to help the untrained eye recognise that the doorways had been filled (SPAB style approach).

Proposals:





Assessment of Impact of Change:

The replacement of the poorly matching brick with new door elements allows the building to be better understood as a former building with two doorways of cart width. It is assessed that this proposal is of low to neutral impact. The new extractor grilles on the end of the building will be colour matched with brickwork and, therefore, be of low impact as well.

Ext 4: New bar entrance door and side lights, and removal of ducting

Existing:



Historic Significance:

This rear part of the building has been remodelled externally and internally over the years, and it is hard to read what the rear of the building would have looked like prior to the mid C20. The current doorway, adjacent toilet extension block and the large extractor ducting are highly likely to date back to the 1980s refurbishment. Therefore, this area is of very low historic significance.

Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change:

The construction of the new entrance door and sidelights will be of neutral to low historic impact. The removal of the large extractor ducting will be a positive impact to this Grade II listed building.

Ext 5: Existing Windows – to be repaired and small window on first floor North elevation to be replaced – low quality doors to be replaced

Existing:





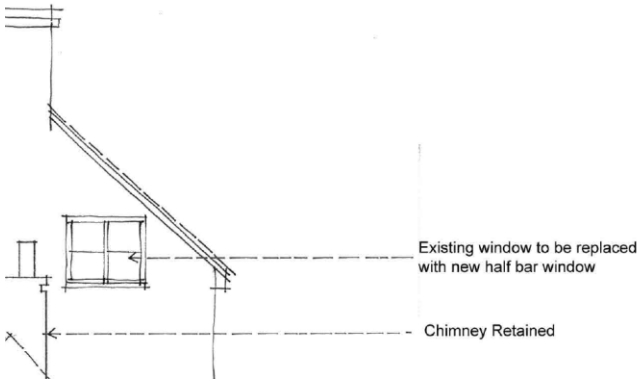
Historic Significance:
The historic window styles are one of the most important features of this Grade II listed building. Whilst only some of the frames are original, the sashes and other windows which have been replaced over the years are in the appropriate period style.

Proposals:
Windows - W1, W2, W3, W4 & W5, to have sashes carefully removed. New matching sashes single glazed to be fitted into existing sub-frames.

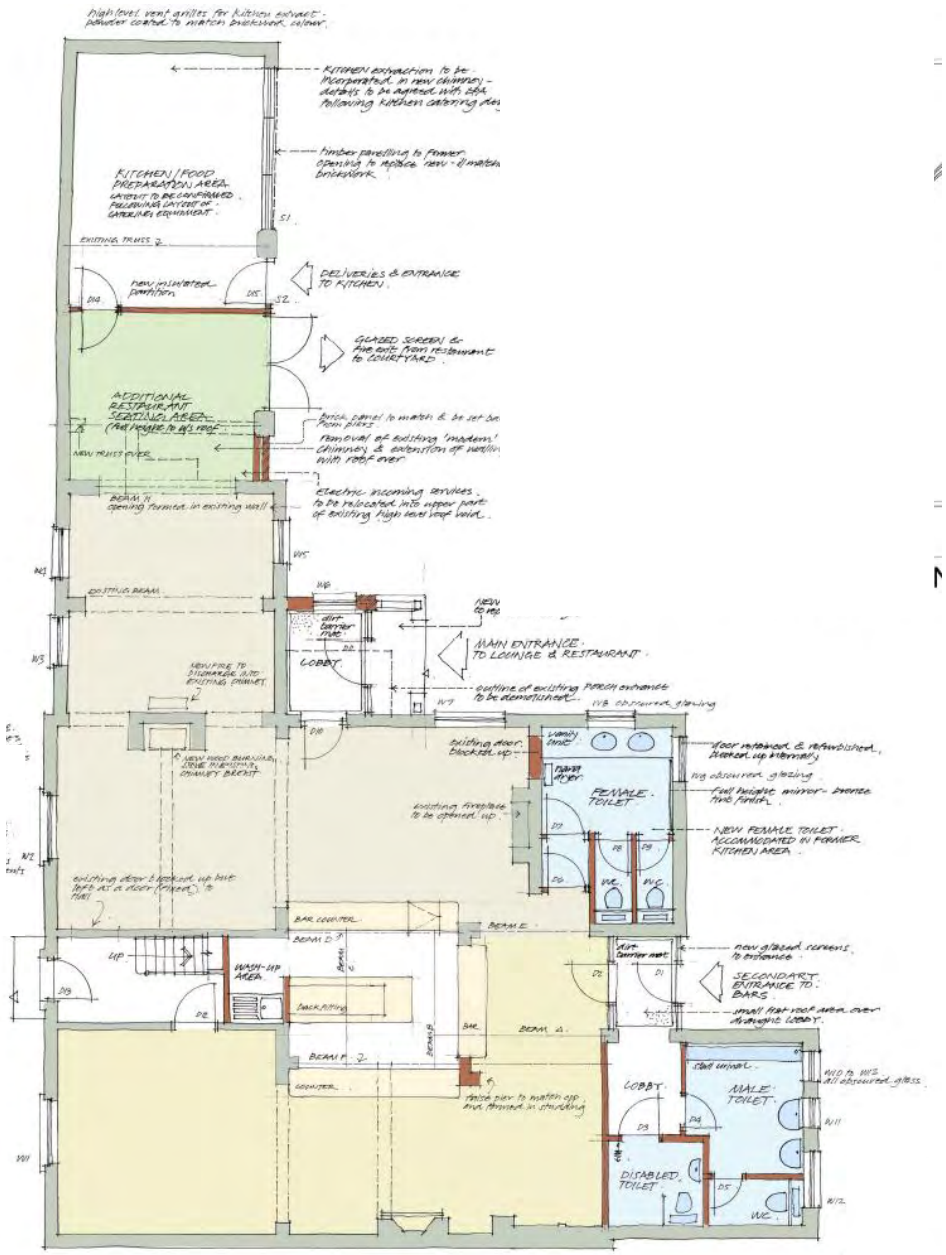
S1 & S2 to be purpose made screens to fit into original openings.

Windows W7 – W12 to be new windows with flush casements to match existing. W6 to be a new window to match W1-5.

North elevation second story window to be replaced with new half bar window.



Low quality 1970s/1980s doors to be replaced by new doors in keeping with the historic style of the building.



Assessment of Impact of Change:
Low impact due to repair and replacement of windows in period style. Original sub-frames of sash windows to be repaired and sash windows replaced with exact matches. Windows on rear to be replaced with flush casements which would be similar to those used originally.

The replacement of the low quality doors will be a positive impact of change.

Ext 6: Gutters and downpipes to be replaced by black cast aluminium

Existing:
Cast-iron gutters and downpipes which have not been maintained and need replacing.

Historic Significance:
Cast-iron gutters in traditional style but not original.

Proposal:
Replace all gutters and downpipes with black cast aluminium.

Assessment of Change:
Low impact as, whilst this is not a replacement of like for like, the cast-aluminium gutters and downpipes will look very much like the cast-iron.

Internal

Int 1: Additional Restaurant Space – Internal wall removed

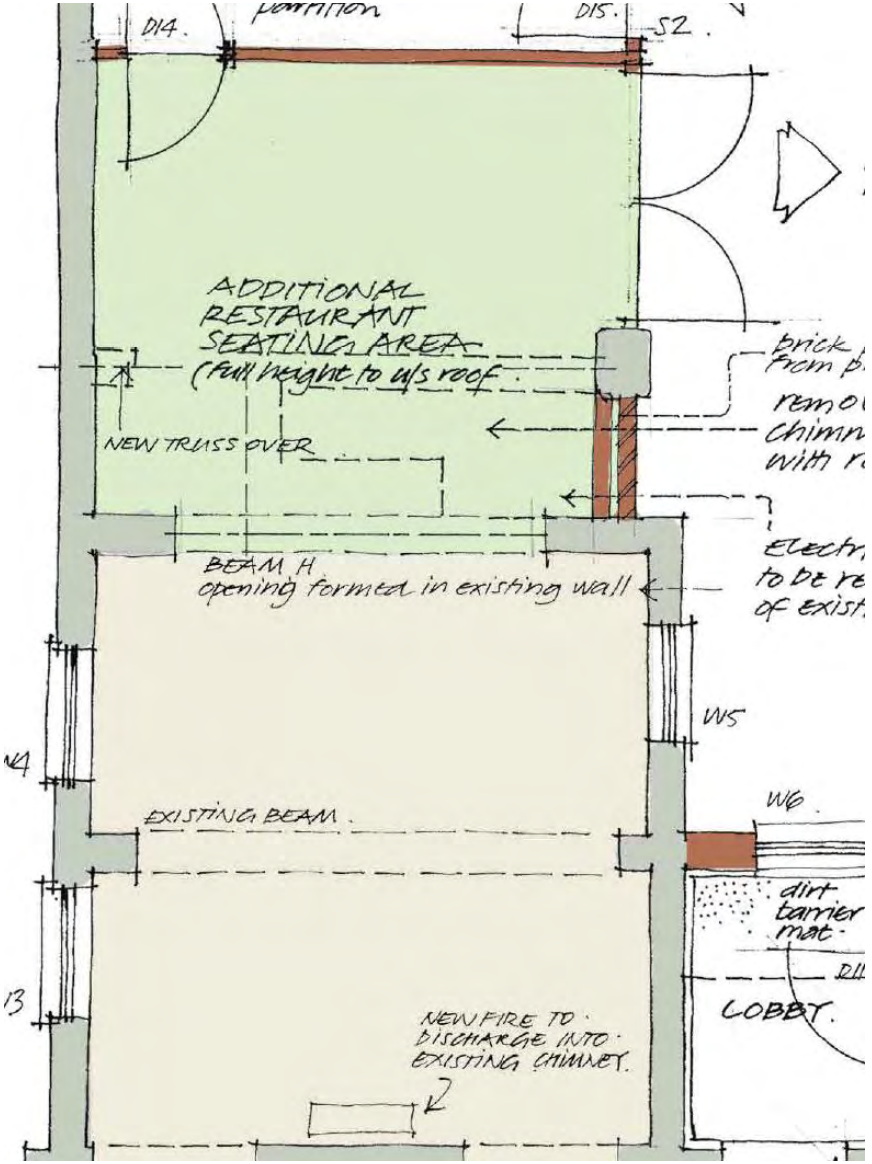
Existing:



Historic Significance:

This internal wall does demarcate the line between the two extensions in the north wing of the building. The wall, doorway and fireplace are likely to be relatively modern. Previously this room had been used as a domestic kitchen and converted into extension to the lounge area in mid/late C20. The building fabric is of low historic significance but the wall is of value in helping to read the building.

Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change:
The removal of the wall, fireplace and doorway will be of relatively low impact as they are not of any real historic significance. The side piers will be extended into the room as shown and the additional seating area will have the ceiling to the full height of the underside of the roof allowing the separate nature of the extension to be easily read.

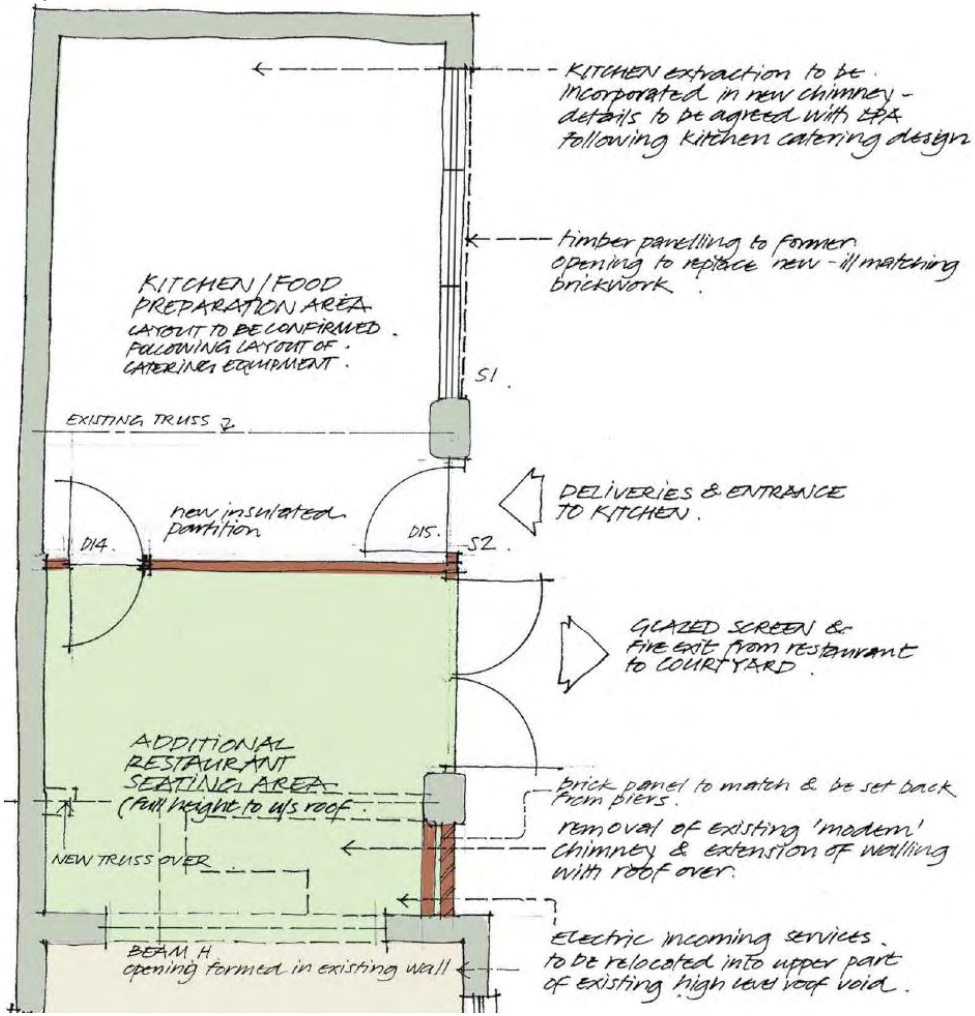
Int 2: New Kitchen – new partition

Existing:



Historic Significance:
This part of the building was completely refurbished in the 1980s to form the cellar area for the bar. Externally it reads as one building. Externally the building is of historic significance but there are no internal features of any historic significance.

Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change
The construction of a new insulated partition and doorway in the centre of this building will have a low impact. The central location of the partition which is in line with the centre of the two external doorways of the former cartshed, will not unduly detract from the current internal form of this building.

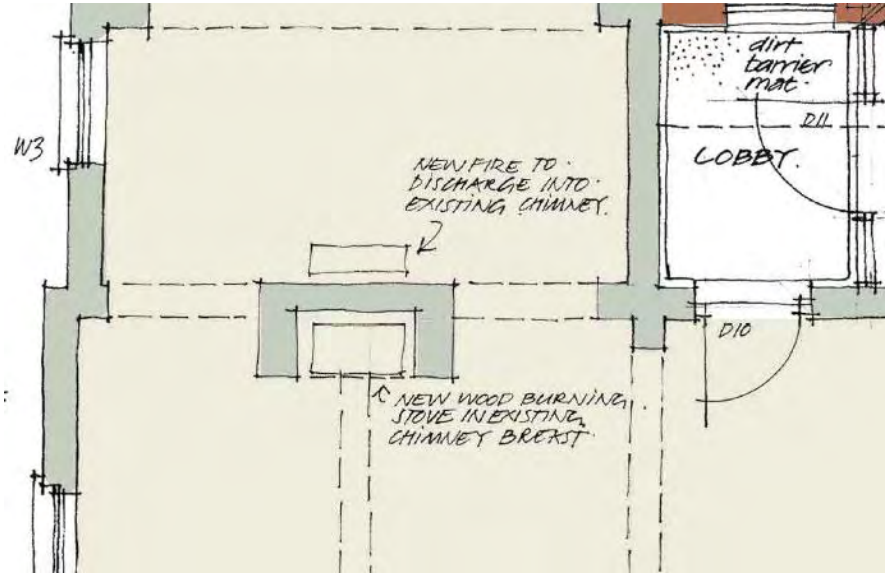
Int 3: New fire in lounge – removal of existing fireplace and removal of wall

Existing:



Historic Significance:
This current reproduction fireplace is in original fireplace position of one of the two ground floor rooms of the original Georgian house. The walls either side were removed in the 1980s refurbishment or slightly earlier. The right-hand wall section was blocked up again about 4 years ago. This fireplace/chimney location is in its original location and is of historic importance in terms of the feature but not the fabric.

Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change:
The replacement of the existing reproduction fireplace with an open wood burning stove in existing chimney breast is of low impact. Whilst the new fireplace may not necessarily be in the original style, the retention of a fireplace in this location is important. A double fireplace open to both rooms was considered. It is now accepted that it is important to keep a plain wall in the restaurant area to ensure that the former exterior wall can be read by an onlooker. The new fire/stove in the restaurant will discharge into the existing chimney and, therefore, will again be of low impact.

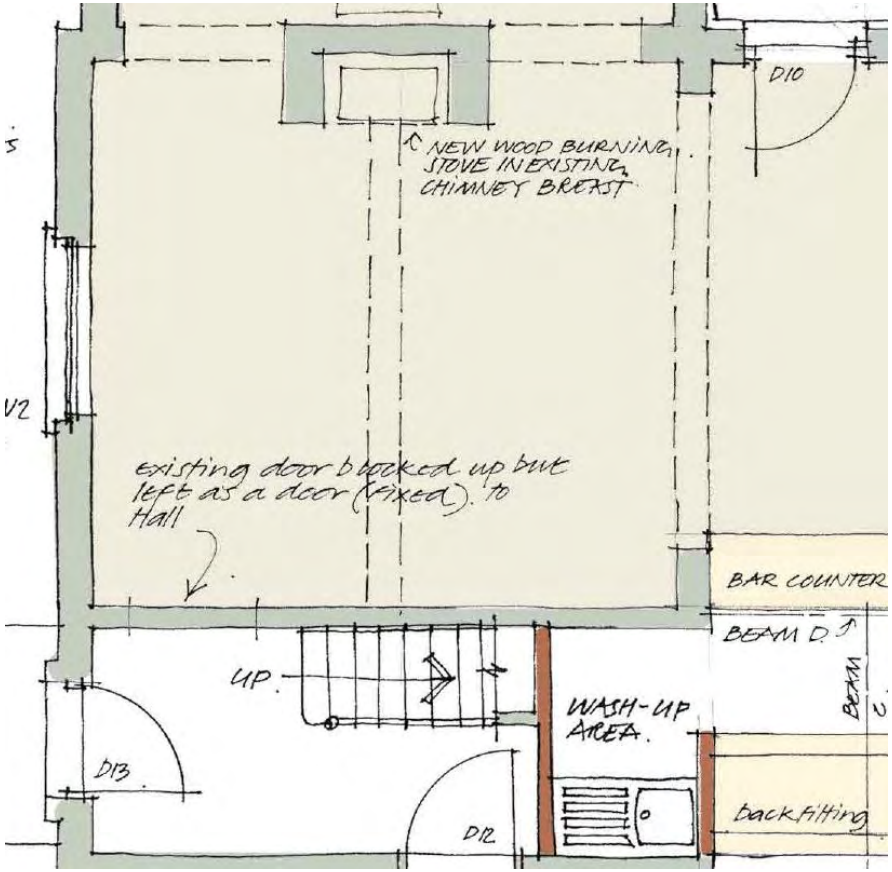
Int 4: Blocking up existing Lounge Doorway to Front Entrance

Existing:



Historic Significance:
This doorway was the original entrance to this part of the house when it was a separate room in the original Georgian house. In the mid C20 the room was opened up to become part of the bar. Since that time this doorway has not be in regular use. The doorframe and door were refurbished in the 1980s and are of no historic significance. The doorway location is of low historic significance.

Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change
It is intended to continue the fitted furniture around the corner and the door fabric is of no real historic significance. From the entrance hallway, the opening door will be replaced with a fixed door, so that the original location of the doorway can be discerned by future generations. It is assessed that these changes are of low impact.

Int 5: Existing kitchen – internal and external doors bricked up, new doorway and converted into female toilets

Existing:



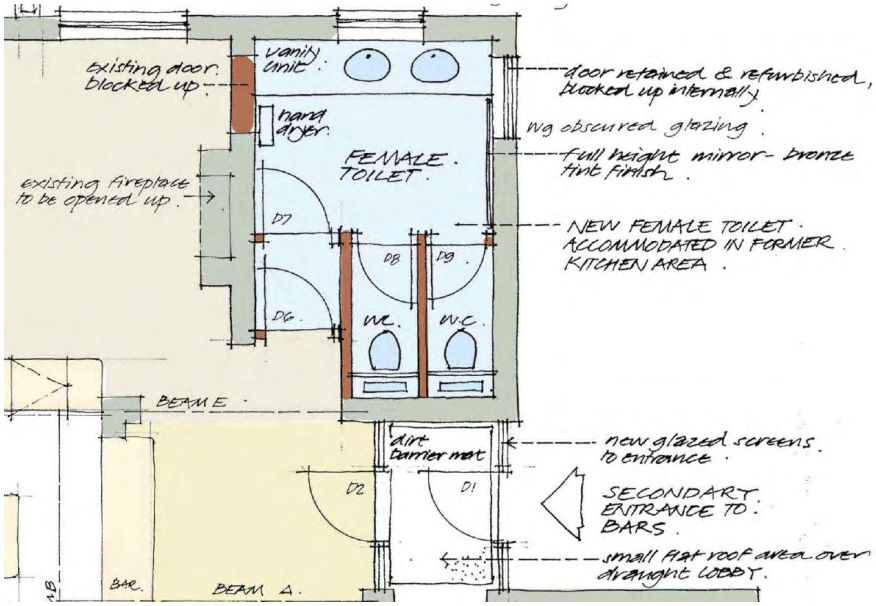


Historic Significance:

The existing kitchen has been refurbished on a number of occasions in the recent past and there are no internal features of historic significance. The external doorway is of historic significance and should be conserved.

Structural investigations led to the recent discovery of the old fireplace in the bar area. This had been bricked up in a previous refurbishment phase – possibly the 1980s. The fireplace is of historic significance and should be conserved.

Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change

The conversion of the existing kitchen into the new female toilets is of low impact. The existing internal door may or may not have been in its original location. The bricking up of this doorway will have low impact.

The retaining of the external doorway (although fixed) is important. The opening up of the original fireplace is a positive impact of the change.

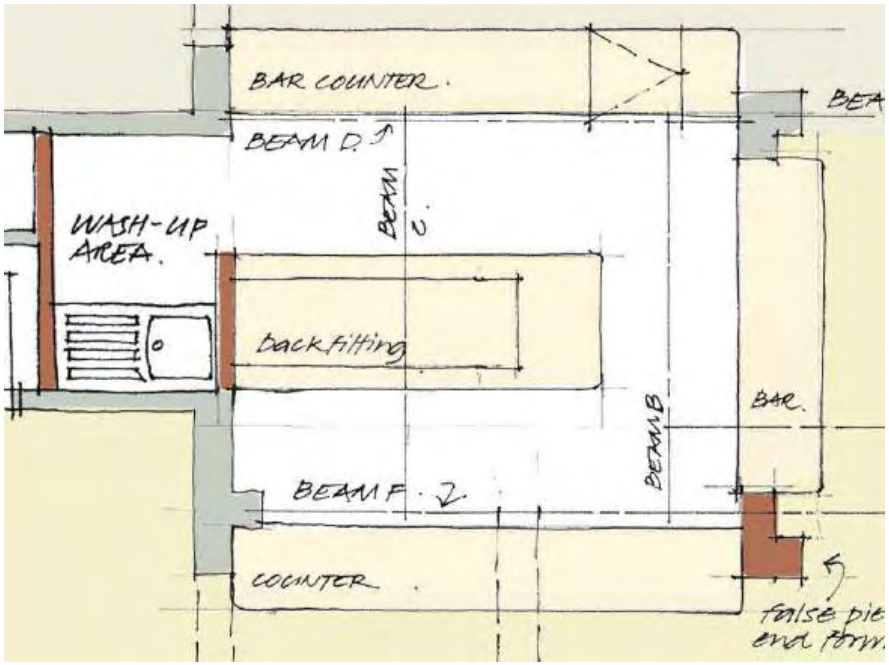
Int 6: Bar server – new wash up area and backfitting

Existing:



Historic Significance:
The bar area has been refurbished on several occasion during the C20 and no original fabric or features are to be found.

Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change:
No adverse impacts of change have been assessed in this area.

Int 7: Bar/Entrance Lobby – door and wall removed

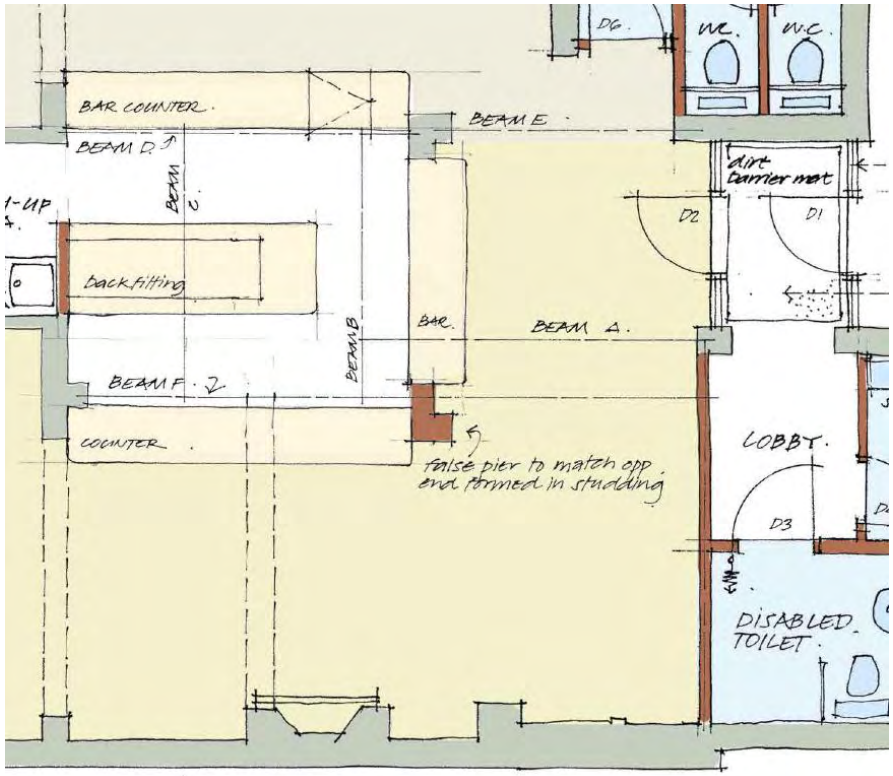
Existing:



Historic Significance:

Plans of the building show that the first and second floor internal brickwalls do not match up with the ground floor brickwalls in this area. See plan on following page. There are numerous new steel joists which span across the groundfloor walls to support the upper floor structure. Therefore, it has been deduced that during one of the late C20 refurbishments, the groundfloor in this area was substantially modified and the existing toilet block added. The fabric and location of walls in this zone have little real historic significance, other than being part of a recent refurbishment phase.

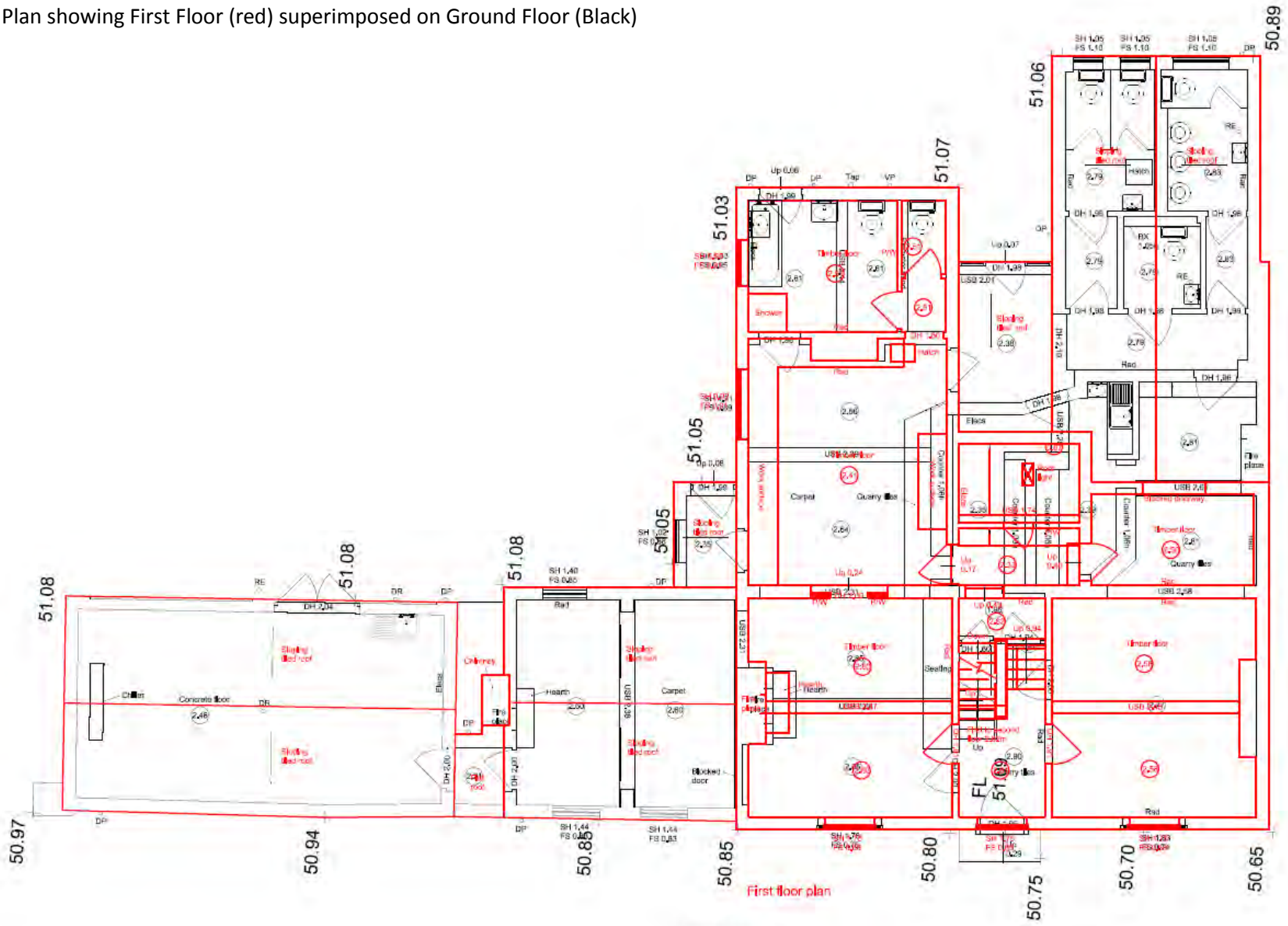
Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change:

It is assessed that the opening up of this lobby/bar/lounge area and repositioning of a number of internal walls has a low impact on this building.

Plan showing First Floor (red) superimposed on Ground Floor (Black)



Int 8: Existing Male/Female toilets – converted to disabled and male toilets

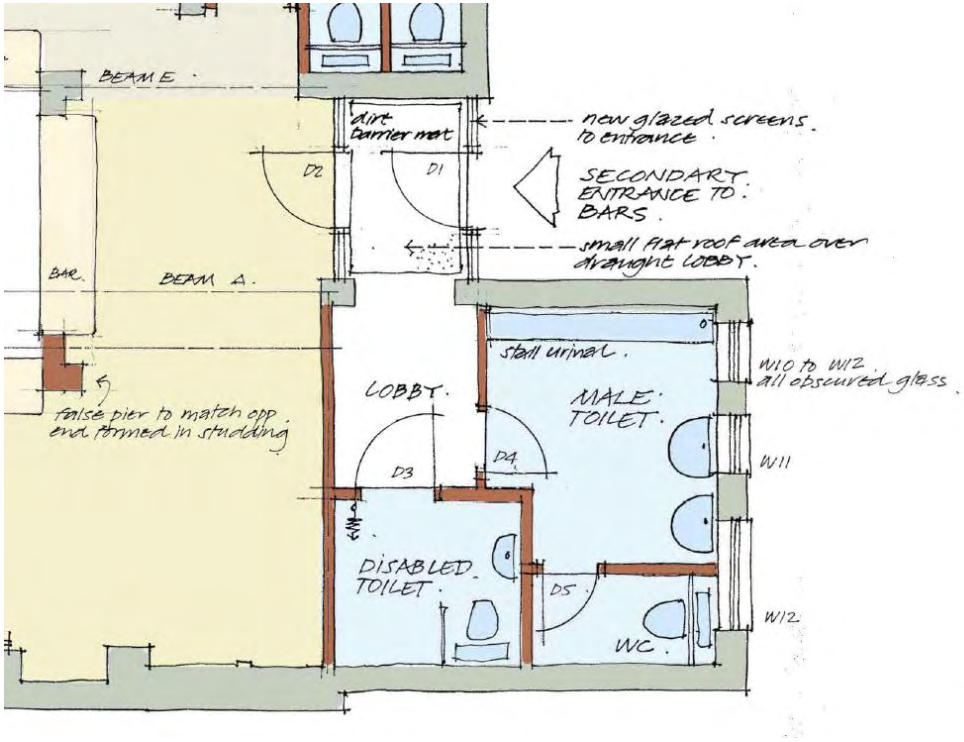
Existing:



Historic Significance:

The existing toilet block is of recent vintage, probably built as extension onto the rear of the building during the 1980s refurbishment. It has no fabric or walls of historic significance.

Proposals:



Assessment of Impact of Change:

It is assessed that the internal remodelling of the existing toilet area will have no impact on the historically significant features of the building.

Appendix 1: Timber Window and Glass Suppliers

Traditional sash windows:

The Original Box Sash Window Company, Windsor
www.boxsash.com

Mumford & Wood Ltd, Tiptree, Essex
www.mumfordwood.com

The Sash Restoration Co., Hereford
www.sash-restoration.co.uk

Sashcraft of Bath
www.sashcraftofbath.co.uk

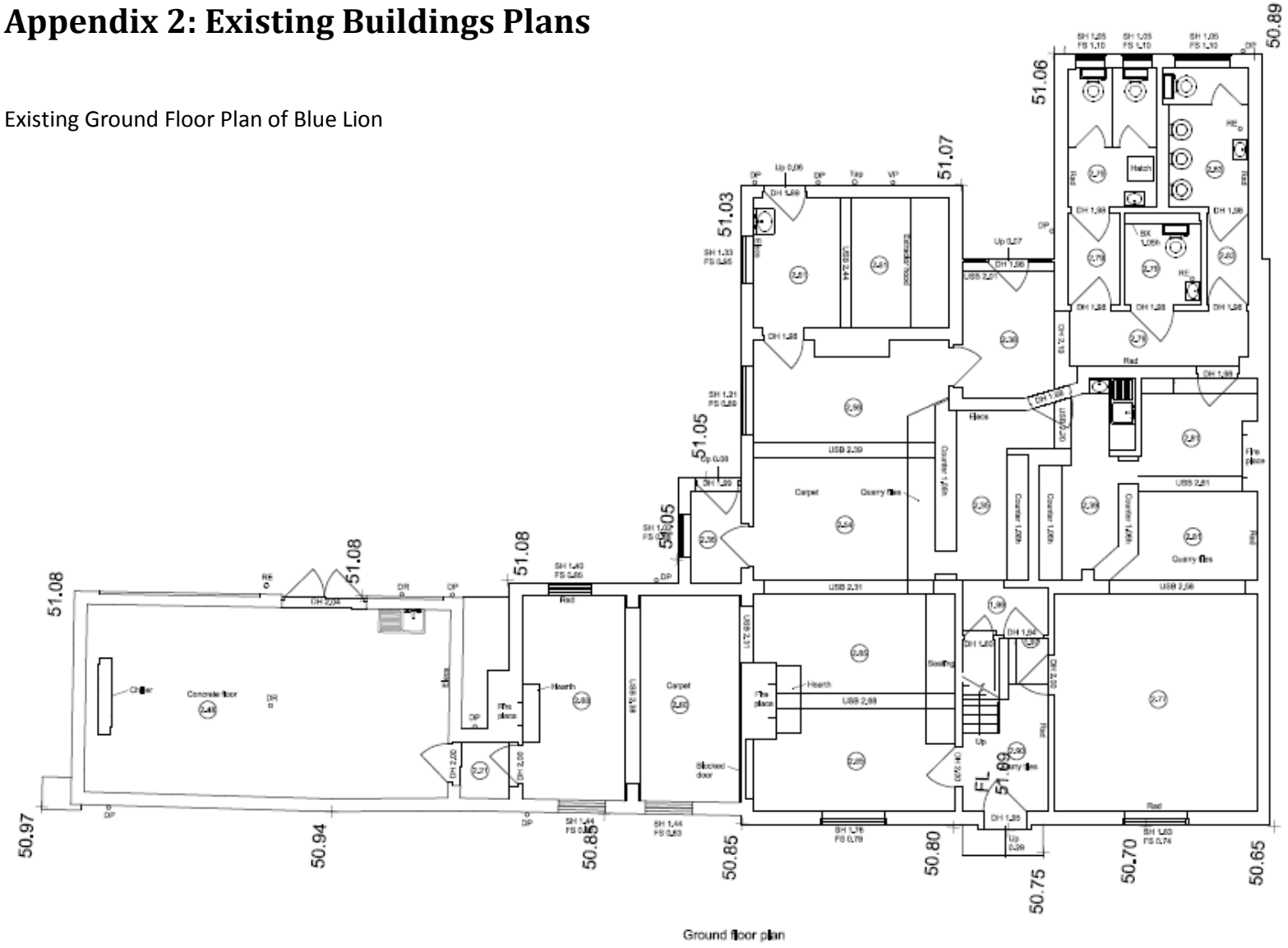
Traditional hand-blown glass:

English Antique Glass Ltd., Redditch
www.englishantiqueglass.co.uk

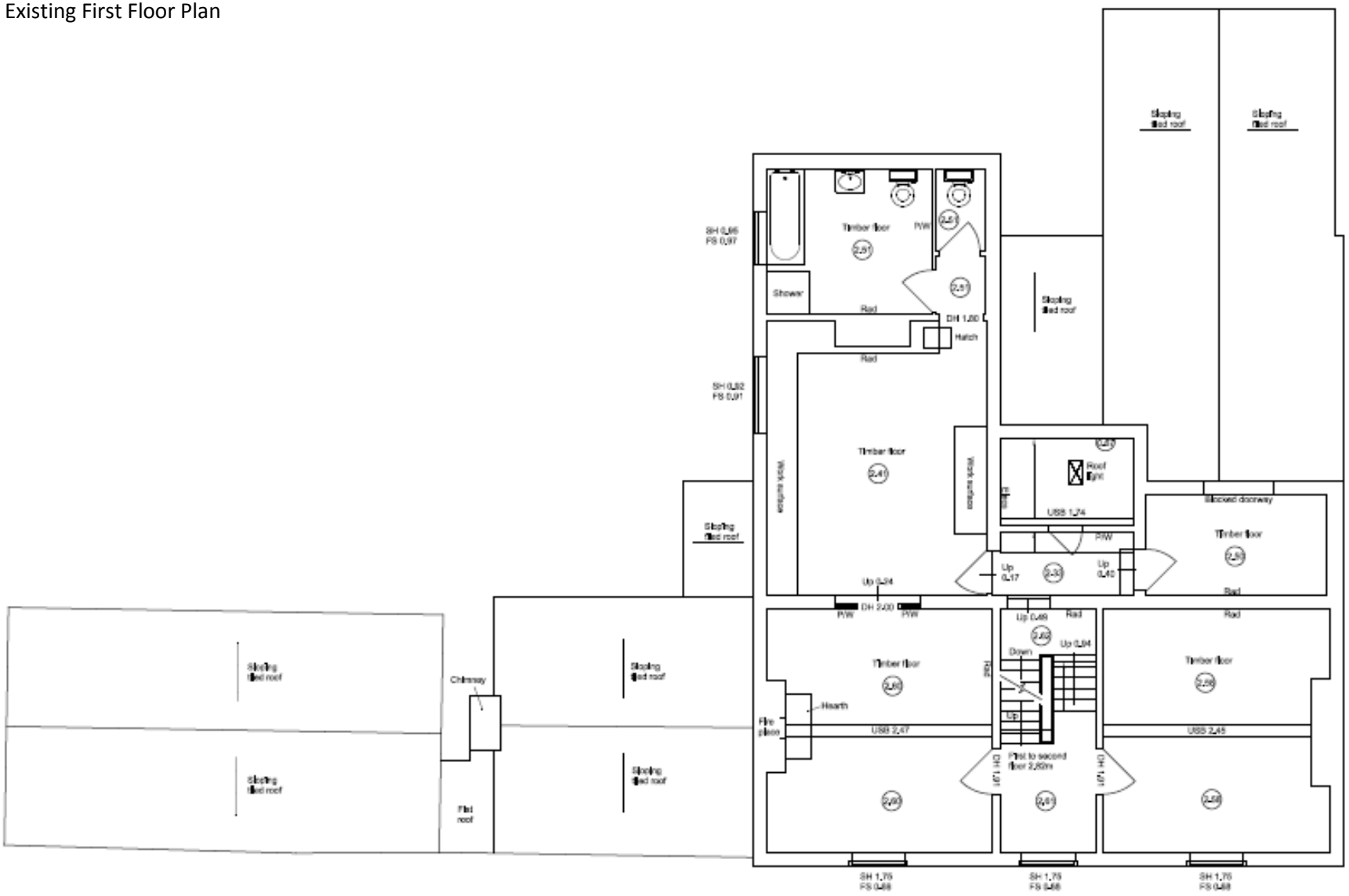
The London Crown Glass Company, Henley on Thames
www.londoncrownglass.co.uk

Appendix 2: Existing Buildings Plans

Existing Ground Floor Plan of Blue Lion

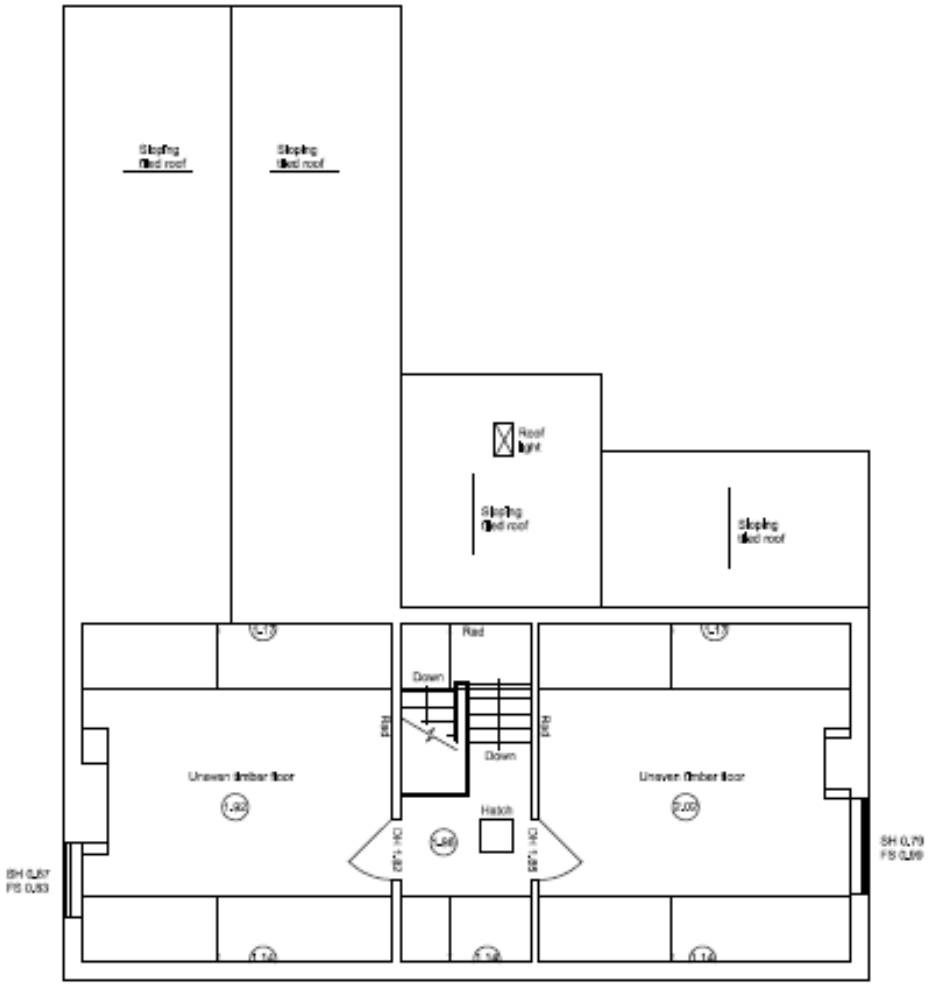


Existing First Floor Plan



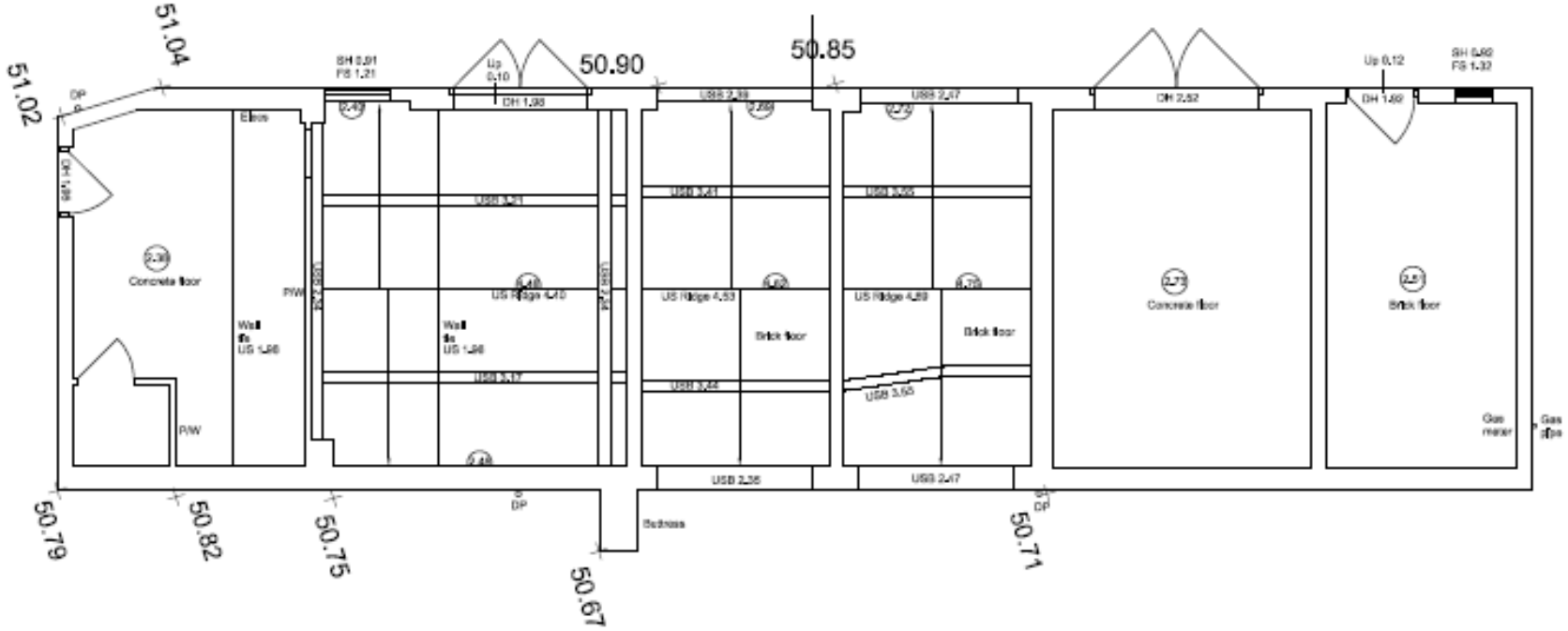
First floor plan

Existing Second Floor Plan

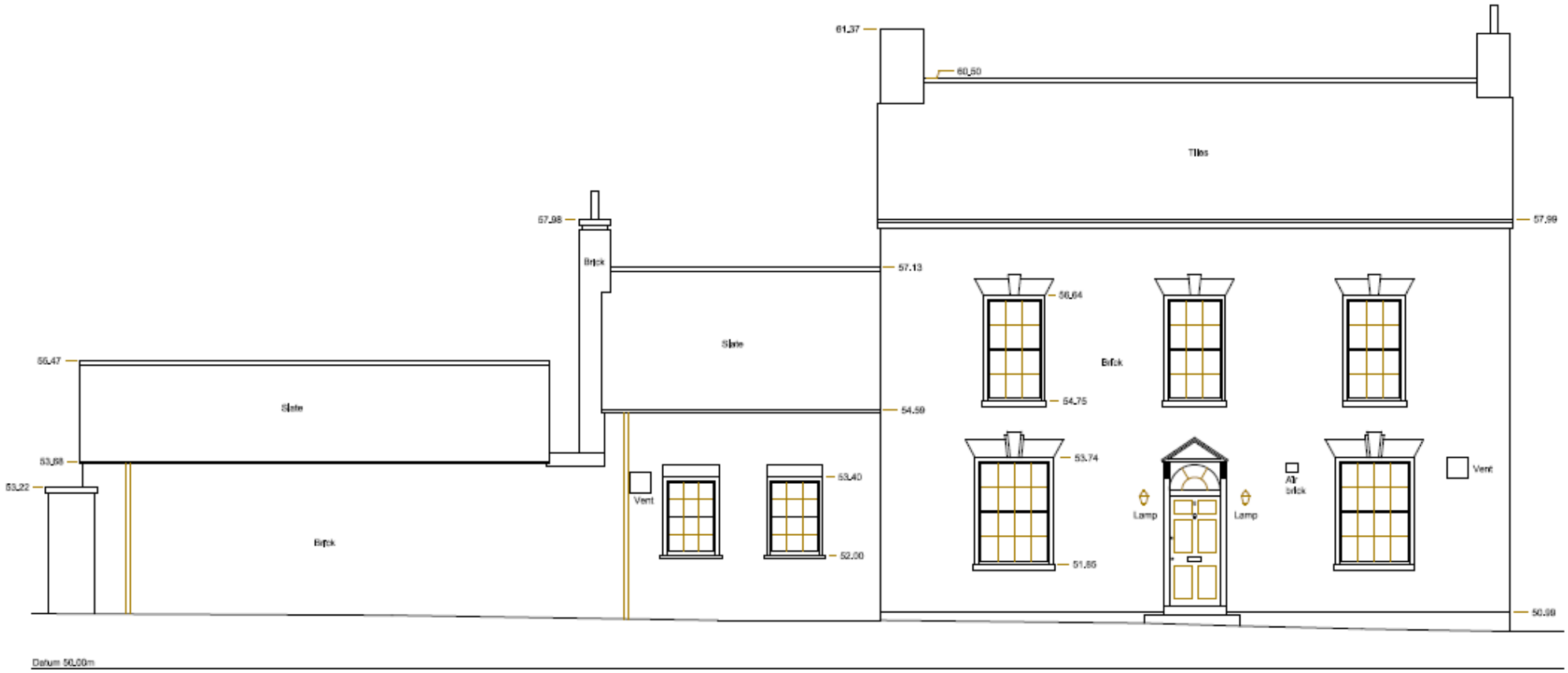


Second floor plan

Existing Ground Plan of Outbuilding



Existing West Elevation – Existing



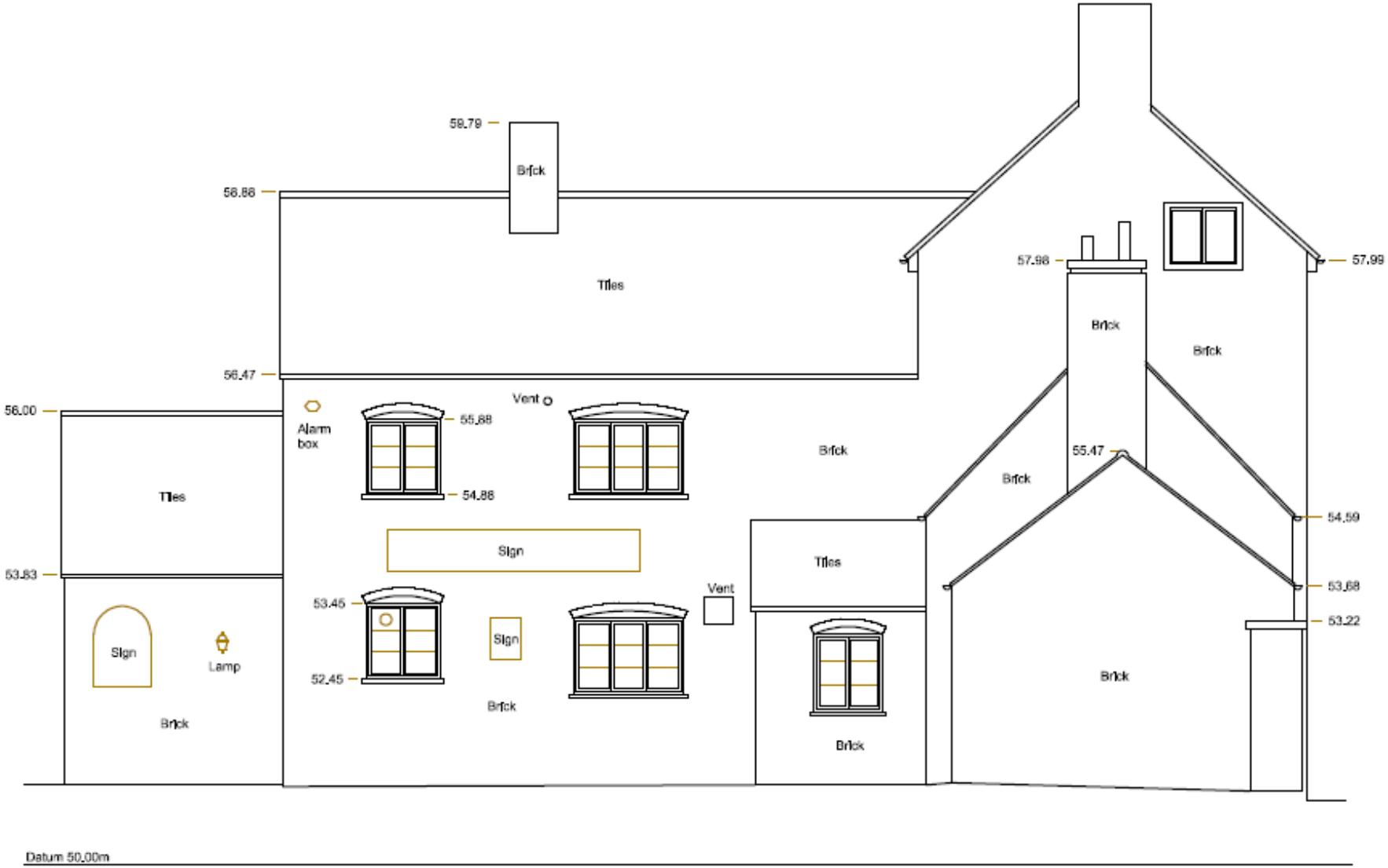
West elevation

Existing East Elevation



East elevation

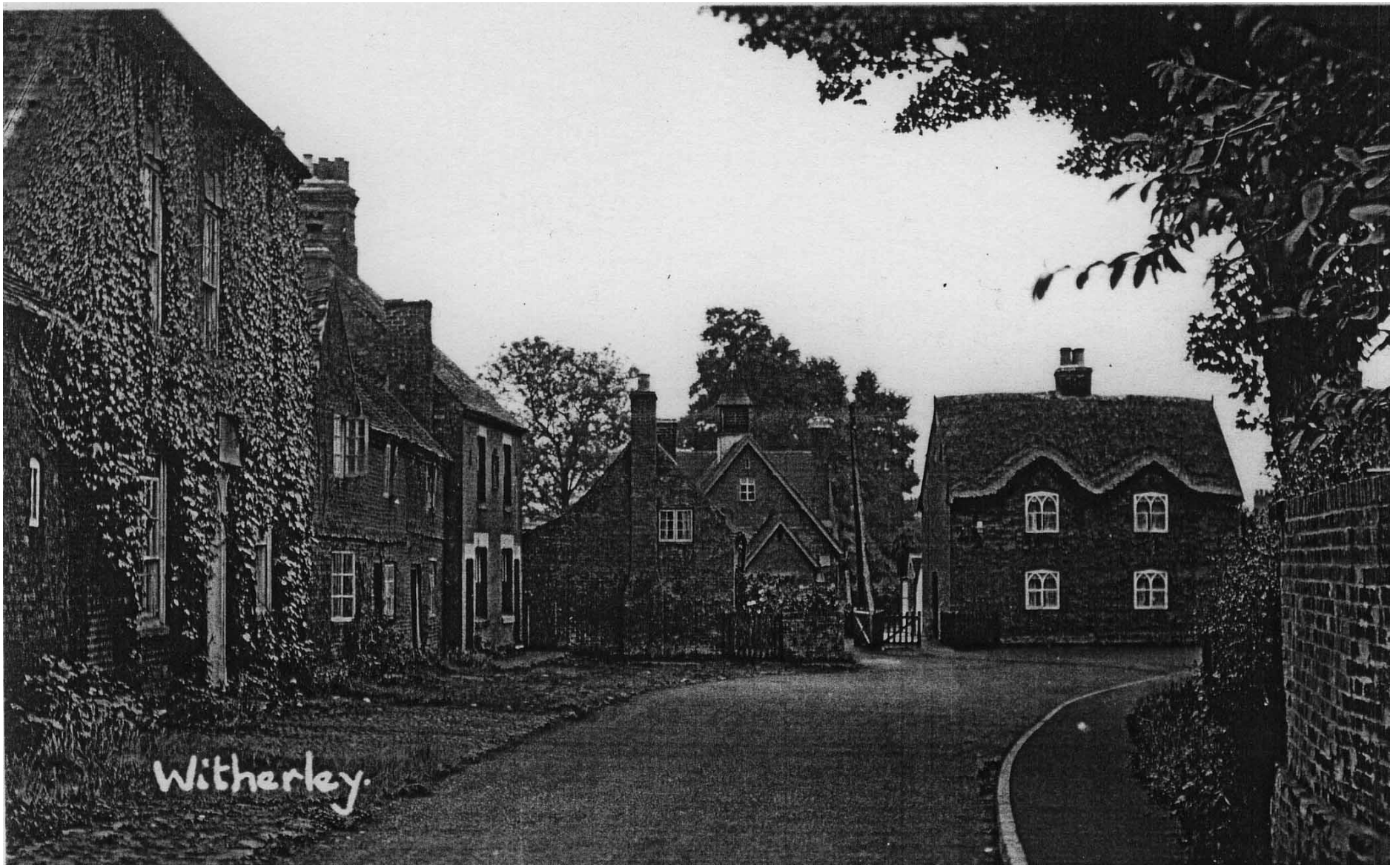
Existing North Elevation



North elevation

Appendix 3: Historic Photographs




Witherley.