



Hinckley Town Centre

The Old Post Office Counter

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Heritage Statement

25-69-PT1 – HER-A

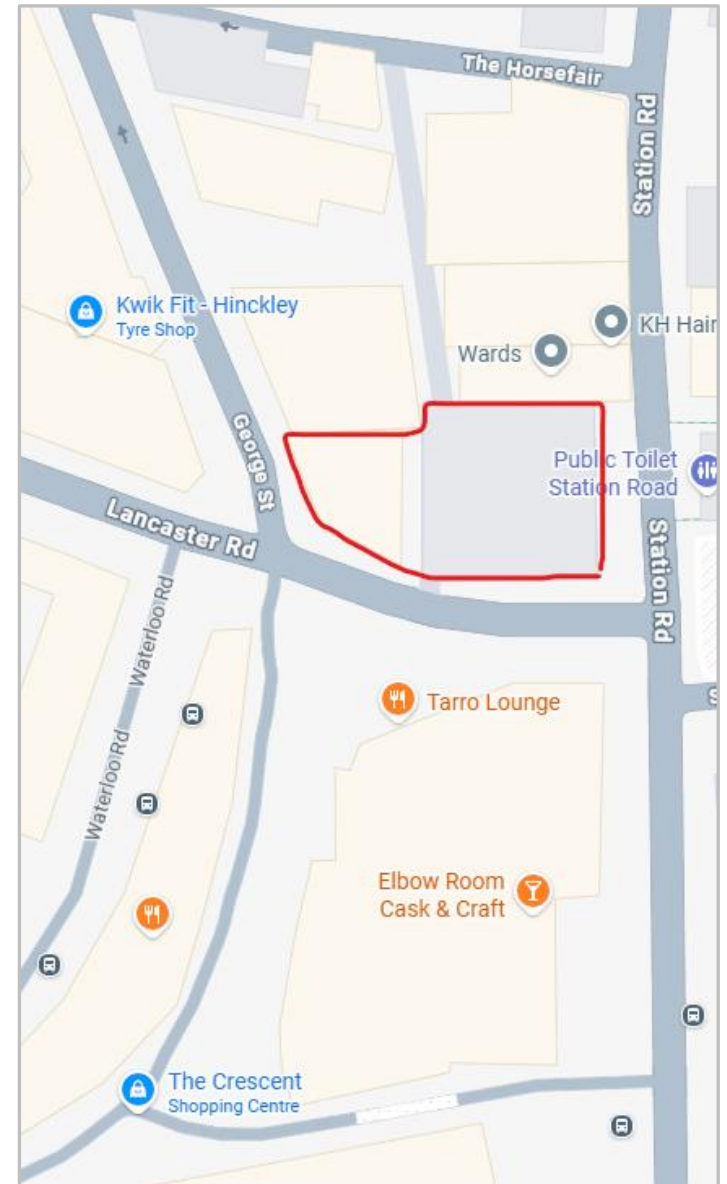
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Preamble

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Hayward Architects to accompany the submission for Full Planning approval for the replacement of a shopfront on Station Road, Hinckley.

This statement is additional material which describes how the proposed development responds to its historic setting, as is relevant to the planning process and is to be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings and the Design & Access Statement



Project Description

This application relates to the first part of a wider development, which seeks to bring a cluster of historic buildings in Hinckley town centre back into everyday use and consequently secure their long-term future and maintenance.

The site is naturally divided into 4 distinct parts with different historic uses and very different architectural styles. These are to be developed under 4 separate planning applications and with a phased approach, (the order of which is yet to be ascertained)

This application is for Part 1 – The old Post Office Counter

The former post office building (Parts 1+2) was constructed in Hinckley town centre in 1902 and designed by the Architect for Provincial Post Office: William Thomas Oldrieve.

A sorting office was added to the side in the mid twentieth century (Part 3) and a further ancillary building at an unknown date (part 4). The post office counter ceased trading in 2015 with the sorting office continuing until 2023. The buildings have been vacant ever since. The entire site has been purchased in full by the applicant (Investment Street Ltd)

Part 1



Part 2



Part 3



Part 4



The Background

Hinckley

The town of Hinckley seems to have begun as a Saxon Village known as *Hinca's Leah*. Leah translates as 'clearing in the wood', which suggests that it was more of a homestead than a settlement.

By 1086 Hinckley is recorded in the Domesday book as a large village with a population of around 300 occupants, comprised from 69 families.

Through the middle ages Hinckley grew yet more, into a local market town for the Leicestershire area, acquiring a castle in 1151 and St Mary's church in 1240 which still stands in the centre of town.

In 1640 the first stocking frame was installed in the town and Hinckley began changing into a centre for hosiery manufacture which sustained local industry for the next three hundred years.

This industry caused the population to grow rapidly throughout the 18th and nineteenth centuries and significant building works grew alongside.

A second population boom occurred at the end of the nineteenth century when steam powered weaving frames replaced the hand looms and the population of Hinckley began to grow even more.



Hinckley Hosiery in full swing



Station Road before demolition

By 1886 the new railway line had been opened, connecting Hinckly with Nuneaton. In 1870 the old houses along the street that we now know as Station Road were bought by the council and demolished, to make way for a wider, grander street.

By the time the Old Post Office building was constructed in 1902, Hinckley had its own hospital and soon acquired council offices, a free library, swimming baths, a billiard hall and a cinema amongst other facilities. This tells us that the population was sizeable and reasonably well off, having money to spend on leisure activities.

During the wars Hinckley supplied uniforms to the allies and largely escaped substantial damage. Bombs were dropped, but always outside the town centre, in Wykin, Stoke Golding and Watling Street, meaning that the Victorian and Edwardian buildings of the town survived. As a result, station road looks very similar today to the station road of the early twentieth century when it was constructed.

Station Road in 1905



Station Road in 2024



Postal Service Buildings

The Post Office dates back to 1660 when it was established by Charles 2nd

For the first 100 years letters were delivered by stage coach until 1873 when the first uniformed postmen took to the streets.

The first purpose-built mail building was constructed in St Martins Le Grand, London in 1829.

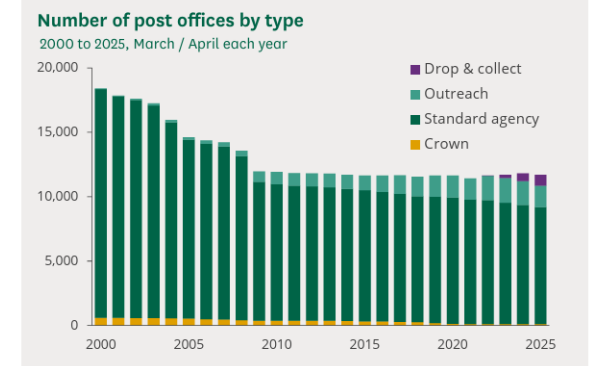
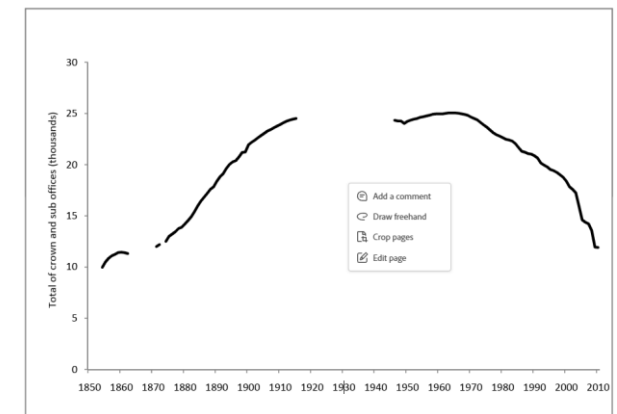
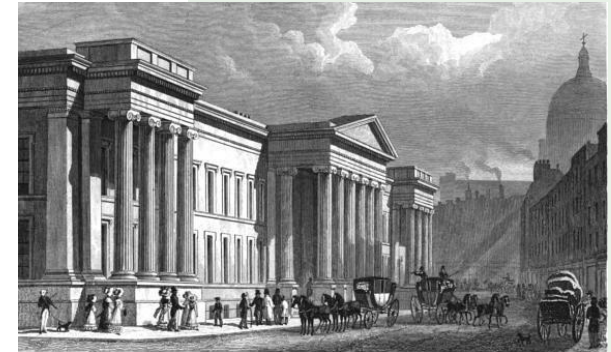
The post office became independent of the Royal Mail group in 2012, paving the way for post offices to leave purpose-built premises and move into established local shops.

In recent years there has been a gradual decline in the demand for Post Office services, driven by the adoption of emails rather than physical letters for both private and business communications coupled with the introduction of rival parcel companies such as Evri and DPD. This of course leads to a decline in the need for post office buildings.

At the peak in 1964, there were over 25,000 branches of the post office. It is estimated that there are currently around 11,500 post offices in the UK, but almost all are located in shops.

The Postal services which used to occupy the Station Road building have now been divided into the Royal Mail Sorting offices at Sketchley Meadows, Burbage and counter services now provided by WH Smiths and the Derby Road Post Office & Newsagents (plus other local shops in the wider Hinckley area)

St Martins Le Grand Post Office, 1829



Source: Post Office - for full list of sources see [data file associated with this briefing](#)

The Building

Architectural Description

The building was designed by William Thomas Oldrieve of Manchester and constructed by Jowett & Co. of Barrow Upon Soar. William Oldrieve's style is quite typical of *Edwardian Classic*.

Throughout Oldrieve's early architectural career he chose to specialize in Post Office design, having been inspired by examples in Berlin, Hamburg, Vienna and Paris; and was appointed *Architect for Provincial Post Offices in England and Wales* in the late nineteenth century.

He later became *Principal Architect for Scotland*.

His body of work contains at least 25 regional post offices around the country, many of which bear similar characteristics to the example in Hinckley.

Falkirk Post Office (1894)



Aldershot (1902)



North Berwick Post Office (1906)



Montrose Post Office (1907)



Haddington Post Office (1908)



Brechin Post Office (1910)



Edwardian Classic Architecture

Edwardian Architecture occupied a brief period (1901-1910) which follows on from the death of Queen Victoria.

It sought to move away from the elaborately over decorated Victorian style and develop a more refined, elegant approach.

Whilst retaining the Victorian sense of grandeur in its proportions of space: high ceilings, large windows and large doors; form become more classical, often incorporating columns and pediments, arches and decorative eaves.

As a contemporary to Art Nuveau, any decoration was often referential to the natural world with leaves and swirls. This tended to be grouped rather than scattered in the Victorians manner.

Civic buildings in this period often lean into a baroque style by incorporating rustication, domed corner rooftop pavilions, exaggerated keystones and arched pediments. Many incorporate Dutch gables which is believed to be inspired by Norman Shaw's Picadilly Hotel in London.

Edwardian architects were very conscious of roofscape as viewed from ground level and tended to add features above eaves level to create a lively silhouette.

Dutch Gables at Norman Shaw's
Picadilly Hotel



Domed corner rooftop pavilion at
8 Station Rd, Hinckley

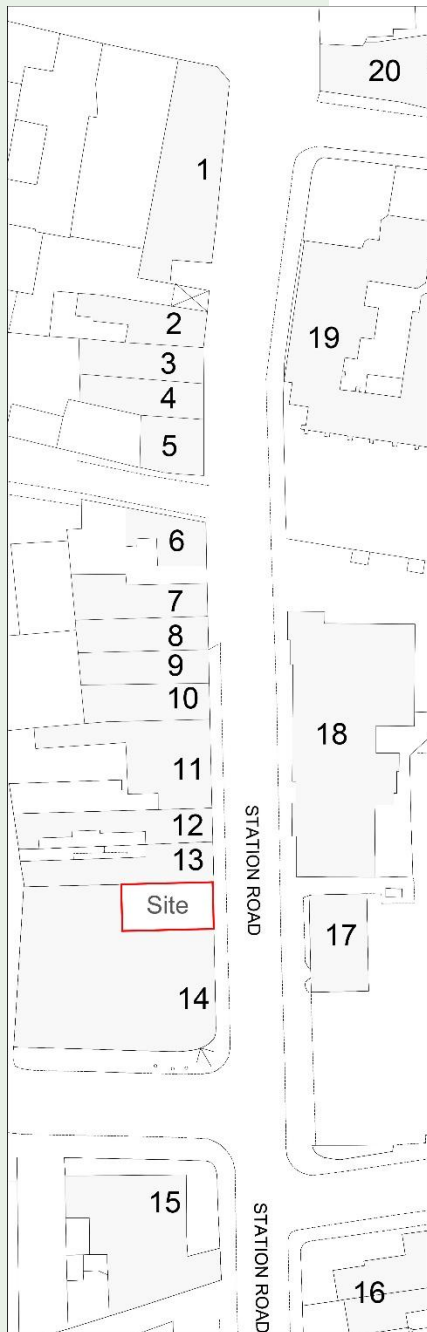


Significance of the building in its setting

Hinckley Town centre has three main shopping streets: Station Road, Castle Street and Regents Street. The post office sits in a very prominent position on Station Road, opposite the newest shopping development: The Crescent, which opened in 2015

It forms a node point at the beginning and end of the historic section of the retail centre in Hinckley





25-June-1902 an article in the Hinckley Times read '*This will be the finest, and certainly one of the most substantial buildings, Hinckley will possess no doubt for many years to come, and the position in which it is placed will give it a commanding aspect.*'. This description is still true in 2025.

Originally, the entrance door was on the corner and led directly into the shop floor with different counters for different purposes. To the rear and upstairs were the telegraph rooms and generous staff accommodation for both male and female postal workers.

Over the years the internal layout has been changed along with needs. Most recently the post office counter was located in the northernmost part of the building (noted as "the Site" on the illustration) and the corner door has long since been blocked in.

This section is the subject of this proposal for renovation, including a new shopfront

The post office counter now



The actual shopfront for the Post Office Counter building is a later addition and in a sorry state of repair. It could easily be argued to be the worst on the street and in sore need of replacement.

The Crescent

Immediately south of the site is a modern shopping development known as The Crescent. This contains retail units, restaurants, a large supermarket, a cinema and the central bus station.

It was opened in 2015 and is unashamedly of its time. It is typical of a twenty first century retail centre which prioritises cost and operational efficiency over beauty or user experience. In this regard it is a stark contrast to the historic town centre it sits alongside.



The post office counter shopfront now



The old Post Office adjacent to the modern shopping centre





The current shopfront

Beneficial, Passive and Harmful Elements

The northern section of Station road is almost entirely occupied by turn-of-the-century retail and civic buildings with a distinctly Edwardian style (see Appendix 2 for Photographic record, taken Dec 2025)

The shopfronts have been replaced ad hoc over the years, some with more success than others. As things stand, the old post office counter frontage is arguably the least attractive on the street and in sore need of repair.

In its current state it is very much a detriment to its setting.

The most successful shopfronts in Hinckley town centre – not just on station road, but also along Regent Street and Castle street; are the ones which make the strongest references to the age of the original building by emulating the Edwardian aesthetic.

They are composed of traditional timber construction with decorative architraves and trimmed panelling, painted in traditional colours with non-illuminated signs and no roller shutters.

Further supported by large windows and recessed doorways, these examples contribute to the true architectural character of the street and indeed the majority of Hinckley town centre.

The proposal

In this application we have a golden opportunity to create a beautiful and traditional shopfront which will enhance the entire street scene and lift the sense of quality in Hinckley town centre.

Description

The unit is to be split into two separate retailers.

The proposal is to remove the dilapidated shopfront entirely, but no works are proposed to the masonry elements of the façade.

It is to be replaced with a traditional timber shopfront with beaded panelling and central, recessed doors.

This will have painted signs and use manual grilles rather than roller shutters

The projecting signs will be of painted timber, hung from a decorative wrought iron bracket. Lighting will be surface fixed and in a traditional style

NB - Please refer to drawings and Design and Access Statement for a more detailed description of the proposal





Example of a suitable projecting sign

Timber sign board with painted lettering



Timber Pilasters with beaded panel detail

Timber stall risers

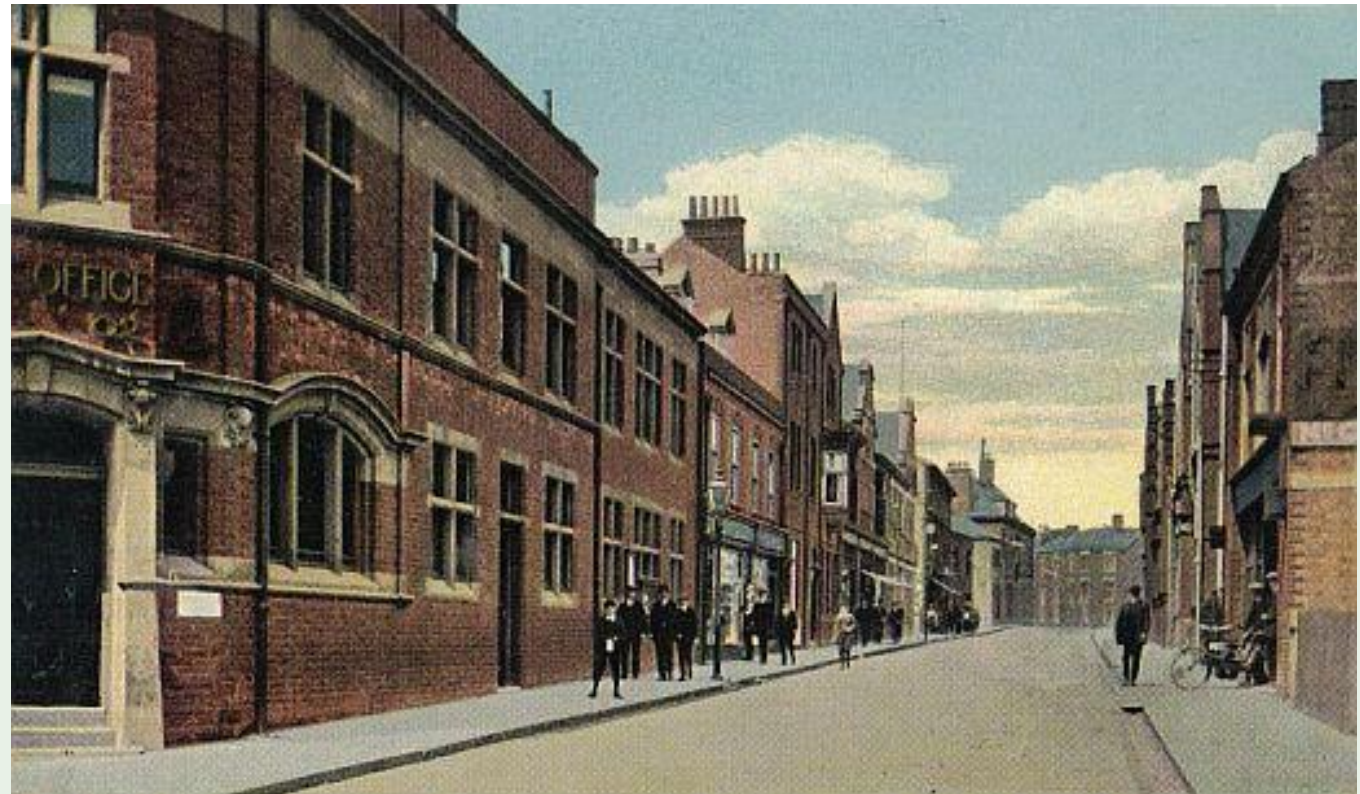
Recessed timber and glass doors

Impact of the proposed works on the Building

The intention is to cause as little impact as possible on the original building and only remove the modern shopfront.

We can see from the pictures of the building in 1902 that the shopfront is a later addition, however, the aperture has been created with reasonable skill and doesn't appear to be in need of any intervention.

For this reason, no work to the masonry is proposed, we can simply protect the older parts whilst inserting the new.



Station Road in 1905

Impact of the proposed works on the setting

The proposal site is located within the boundary of the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area but is not listed.

It is important to note that the street is Edwardian in style, not Victorian. This sets Hinckley slightly apart from many other towns and cities which thrived and grew in industrial revolution Britain, such as Bradford and Leicester. It is the subtle differences which give a location a unique character.

Edwardian shopfronts differ from Victorian examples in similar ways to the general architecture:

- Less focus on fussy ornament, lighter with larger windows, concentrating on elegance
- The beginnings of a return to finding joy in natural materials and human centred arts and crafts.
- Lower stall risers to allow larger windows and a generally vertical emphasis for elegance.
- Ready availability of plate glass allowed for large single panes rather than segmented glazing.
- Lack of elaborate corbels and flourishes, with simple panelled or grooved decorative features preferred.
- More deeply recessed doors (which suits modern access regulations very well)





Examples of existing shop fronts on Station Road

Listed Buildings

The building is not Listed but is recognised as “Locally Important” in the conservation area appraisal.

It is within sight on one listed building: The former Library building, on the opposite side of Station Road

None of the buildings in the terrace are listed.

Given the dilapidated state of the existing shopfront and the traditional aesthetic of this proposal, it can only have a positive effect on the setting of the listed building

Impact of the proposed works on the community

Much of the architectural quality has been lost in the more modern shopfronts along Station Road.

Creating the most beautiful shop on the street will inspire any future new shop to compete on aesthetic terms in order to give an equivalent impression of high quality. This can only be a positive impact.

All of our town centres are under a huge amount of strain in modern Britain for a multitude of reasons which won't be easily solved. Despite this, this proposal seeks to restore and elevate an historic retail unit in a respectful manner.

High quality shops attract high quality retailers and in turn uplift the town centre for all.

The eventual retailer is as yet unknown. The shop will be offered on the open market for rent.



Summary

- This proposal seeks to replace a dilapidated shopfront with a new, historically appropriate timber and glass shopfront which will enhance the street scene.
- The original building is Edwardian and so the proposed shopfront embraces typical Edwardian features (rather than Victorian) and will sit well in its setting
- There is no need to impact physically on the historic parts of the building. The work can be completed by simple removal of the dilapidated modern shopfront and replacement with new.
- Signage will be painted not box-lit and roller shutters will not be allowed.
- This proposal represents best practice in shopfront design in a conservation area and will uplift the location for the entire community of Hinckley

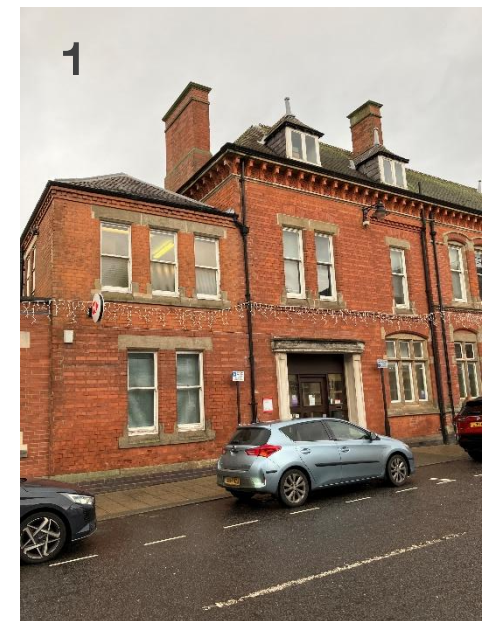
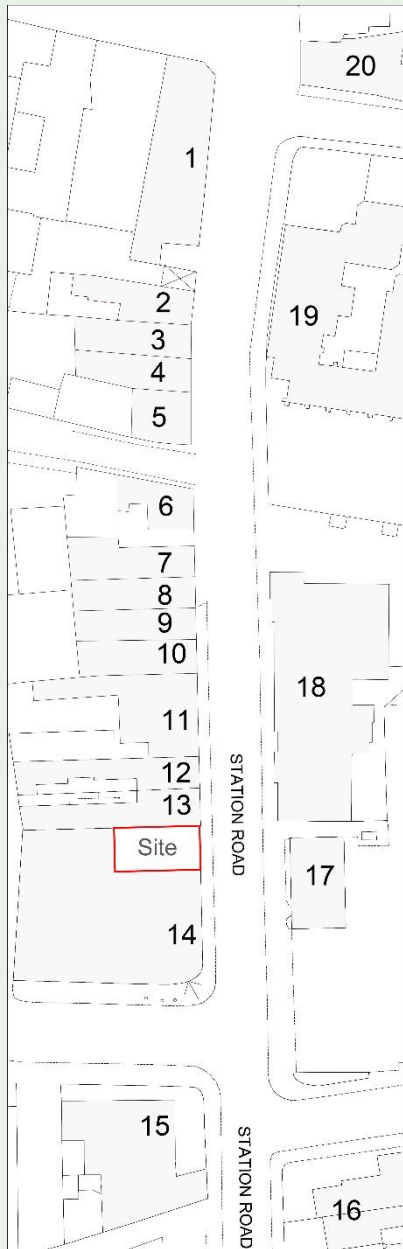
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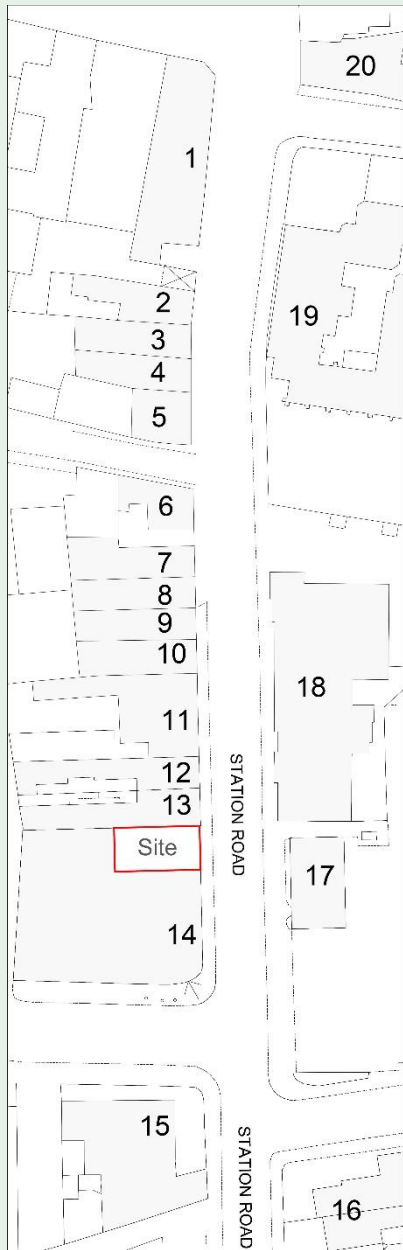
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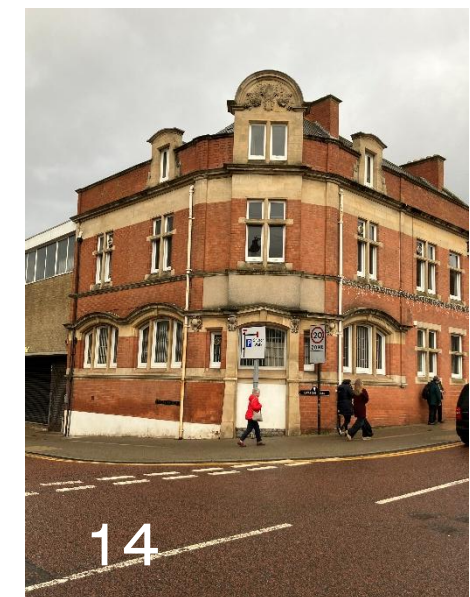
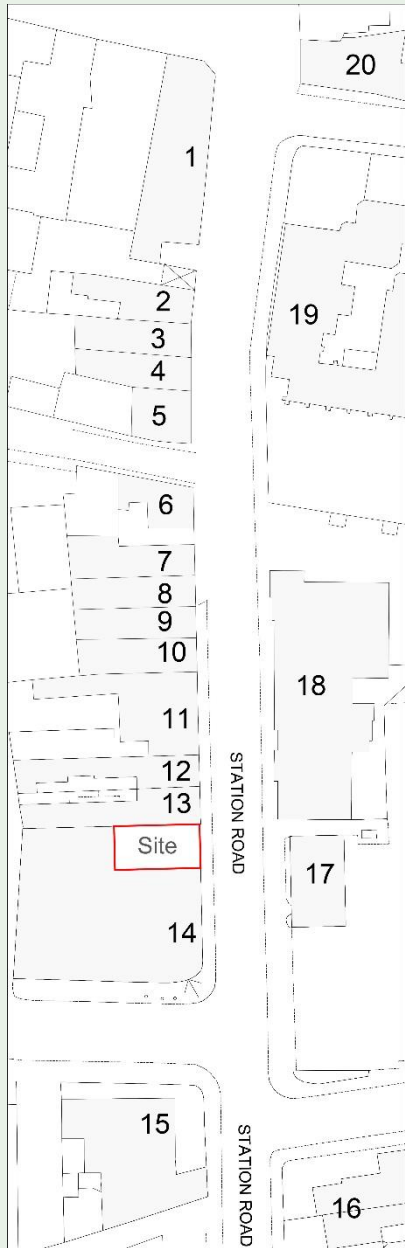
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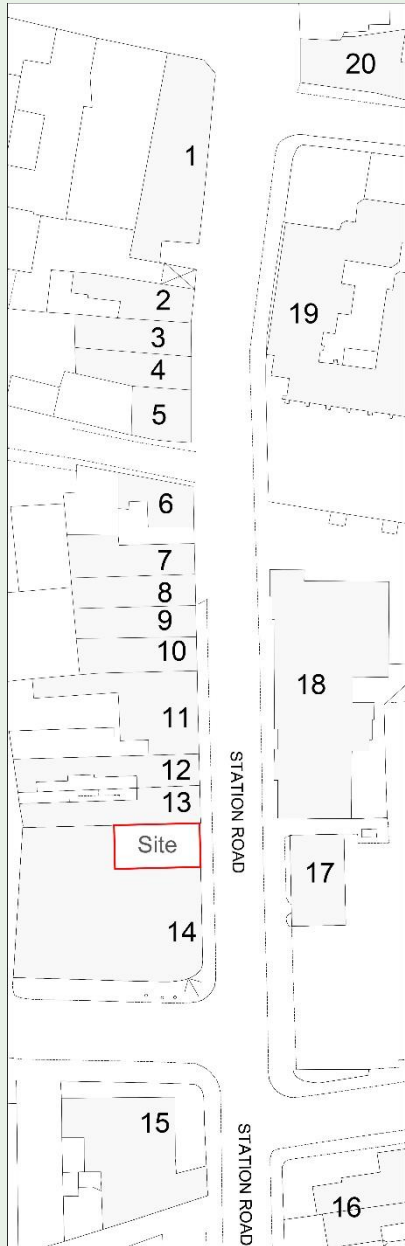
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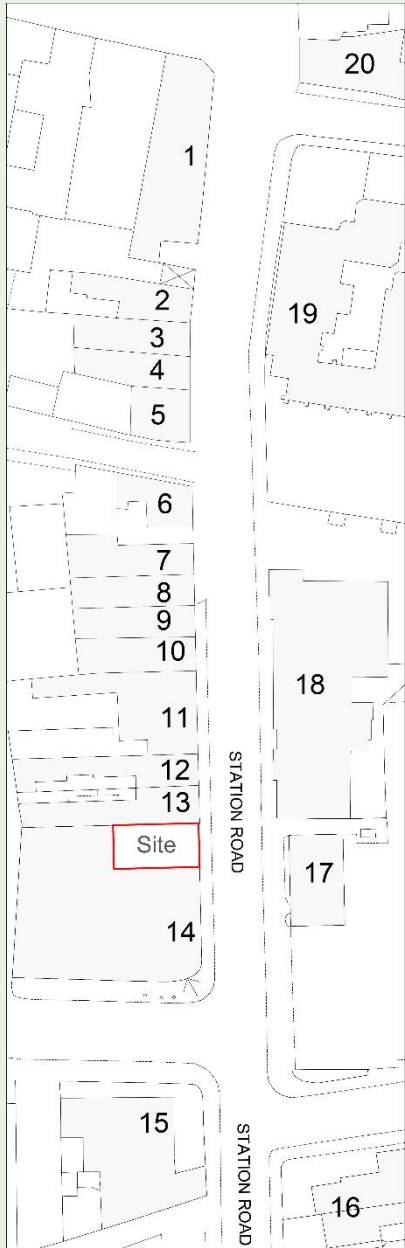
Photographic record of Station Road, December 2025

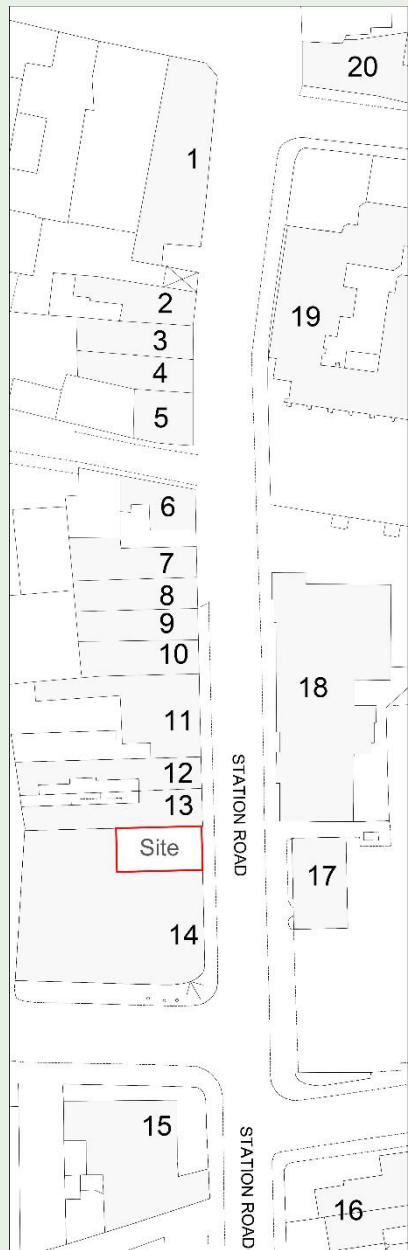














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