



Hinckley Town Centre

The Old Post Office

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Heritage Statement

25-69-PT2 - HER

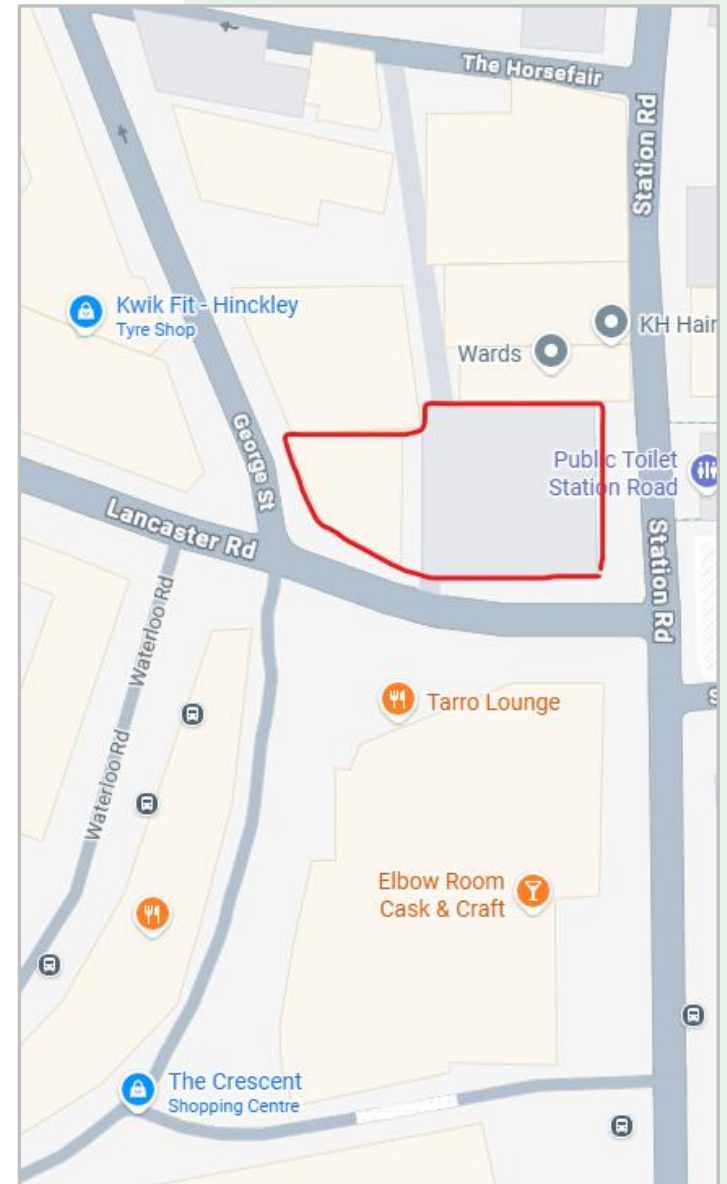
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Preamble

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Hayward Architects to accompany the submission for Full Planning approval for the conversion of an existing former post office (Class E) to a house in multiple occupation (class C3), 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 Part2 – The old Post Office

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.

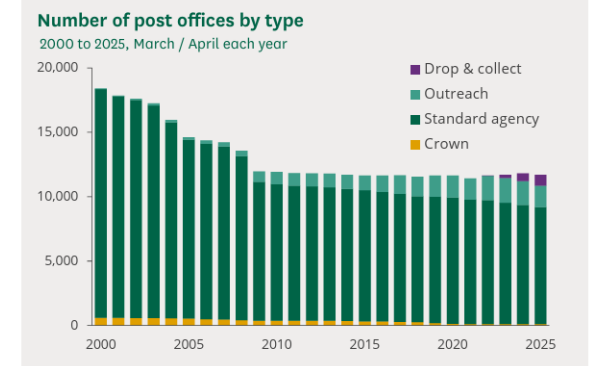
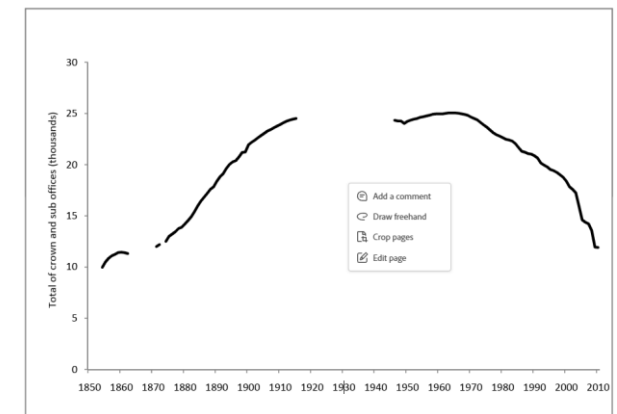
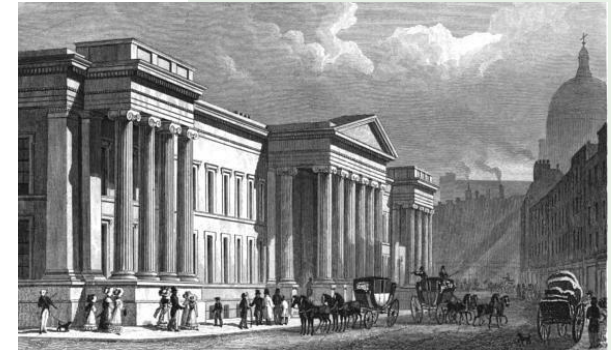
The post office became independent of the Royal Mail group in 2012, paving the way for post offices to leave purpose-built premises and move into established local shops.

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

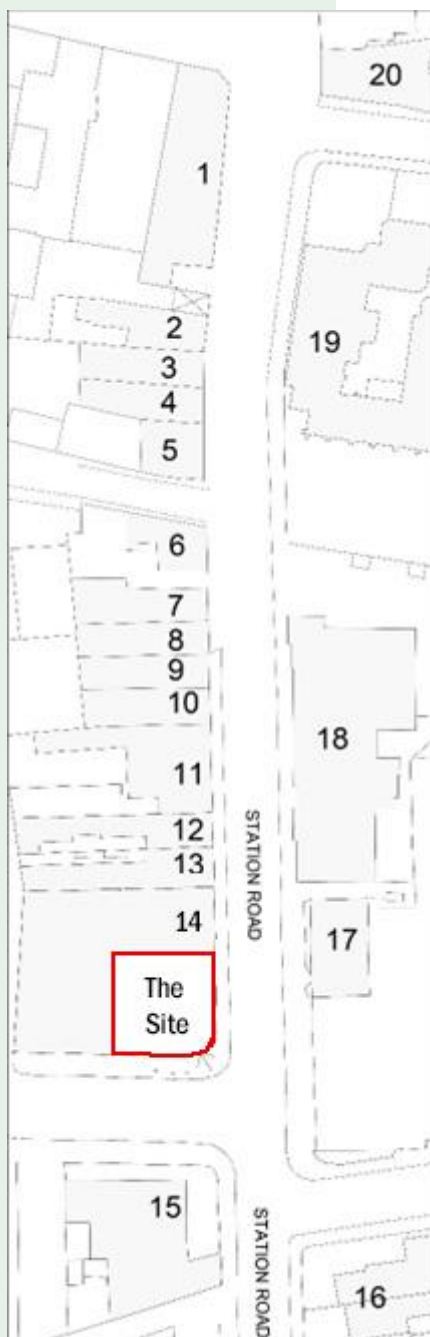


Significance of the building in its setting

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 to the northernmost part of the building and the corner door has long since been blocked in.

The shopfront for the former post office counter is in a sorry state of disrepair and is the subject of another planning application to reestablish an historically appropriate replacement



The post office counter shopfront now

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 twentieth/ 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 old Post Office adjacent to the modern shopping centre



Beneficial, Passive and Harmful Elements

The building itself is a fine example of the work of the architect at a high point in his career. It represents a good example of typical Edwardian civic building design in both its form and its detailing.

Arched pediments over the windows and doorway are typical of the baroque references often found in such buildings and the nature inspired crest on the corner pediment gives the customary nod towards Art Nouveau

The original door surround has the characteristic classical style with pilasters, pediment and decorative corbels. The roofscape has the distinctive Dutch gables and articulated silhouette.



The Proposal

The proposal does not seek to make any unnecessary alterations to the building, rather to restore and upgrade it. There are two alterations which are necessary for the building to be brought back into use:

Description

New Entrance

The most recent incarnation of the Post Office had two entrances: a public entrance into the Post Office Counter area and a staff entrance into the back-office areas. The post office counter building will be used as an entirely separate retail space, meaning a new front door is needed.

The original entrance is easy to see on the corner, where the lower section has been blocked in and rendered. The ideal would have been to reinstate this door and make it the primary access point again.

Alas, after exploring this we simply can't make it workable in a functional or building regs/ fire escape context.

Instead, we propose to reinstate the secondary entrance which can be seen on the 1902 photograph.

New Dormers

Two of the attic rooms currently have only rooflights.

It was usual in Edwardian times to add dormers to rooflines, indeed the attached neighbour has two such rooflights.

The style of these is to be emulated in the proposal ensuring a historically complementary alteration which sits well in the street scene.

[Please see drawings and DAS for details]

Impact of the proposed works on the building

The intention is to cause as little impact as possible on the original building.

Windows and doors will need to be replaced with new, building regs compliant versions and external walls will be insulated on the inside as will floors and the roof space

Only two changes to the external envelope of the building is not excessive and represents the minimum necessary intervention for the change of use.

Given that the new doorway is actually a reinstatement of an original doorway and that the dormers are replicas of the adjoining building, the impact of the works on the building will be minimal

The existing rear staff door is to be re-used as a fire exit. Adjacent to this will be the bin store and bike store. This makes sure that these necessary additions for domestic use are kept out of sight of the conservation area to protect its character.

The red door will be replaced by a secure timber slatted gate



The new fire escape and
bin/ bike door

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.

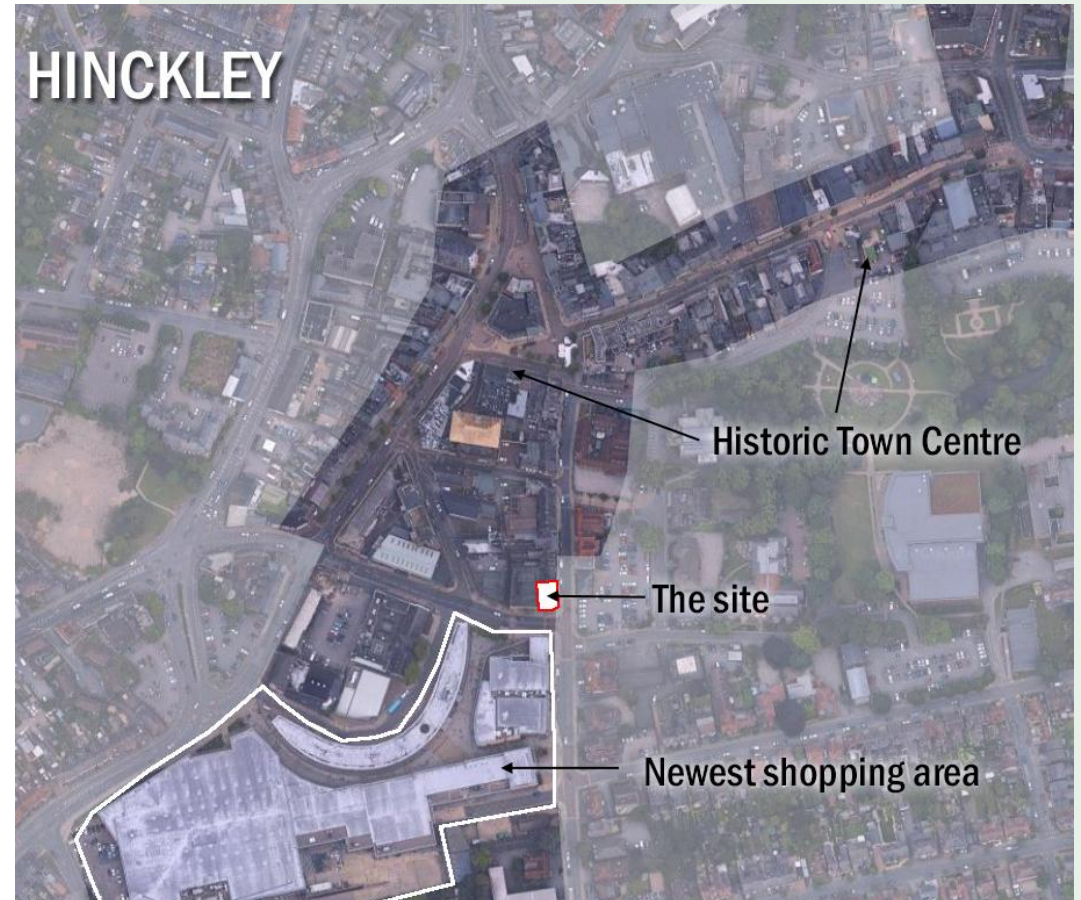
External changes will have no material impact upon the setting because they are historically appropriate.

The impact of bringing this building back into use, however, will have a very positive effect on the setting.

It is situated at an important node point in the town which joins the newest shopping area to the historic shopping area and the building is at serious risk of dereliction without intervention.

The condition of the building is currently good but will soon slip into a state where renovations become too costly to attract investors.

It is important for the grain of Hinckley town centre that this building is inhabited.



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.

Bringing this building back into use will ensure its continued maintenance and thus will not become a detriment to the setting of the nearby listed building

Impact of the proposed works on the community

British High streets are facing a difficult time and all opportunities to prevent their dereliction must be embraced. The need for physical retail units has declined in recent years leaving our towns with a large number of vacant buildings. We need to consider other appropriate uses for these buildings.

The need for housing in the UK has not only grown in volume, but it has also changed in nature. Single person households need low cost and flexible accommodation choices where they are able to be part of a community. Shared living allows those who choose it, to avoid the loneliness and dissociation of solitary living.

This proposal does offer to respect the history of the building with appropriate and minimal interventions which serves to protect the character of Hinckley for current and future residents.

Summary

- This proposal seeks to bring a vacant historic building back into use by restoring, renovating and upgrading it to current standards
- Ensuring continued occupation of an historic building ensures its continued maintenance and avoids dereliction
- This proposal has a positive effect on the building, the town centre, the conservation area, the listed buildings nearby and the community of Hinckley.
- British high streets are in crisis across the country and every opportunity to ensure their future must be embraced. Changing social needs mean that we have to consider different uses for city centre buildings. This proposal offers a suitable use which will cause minimum negative impact.
- The details of this proposal consciously respect the character of the building and the history of Hickley town centre.

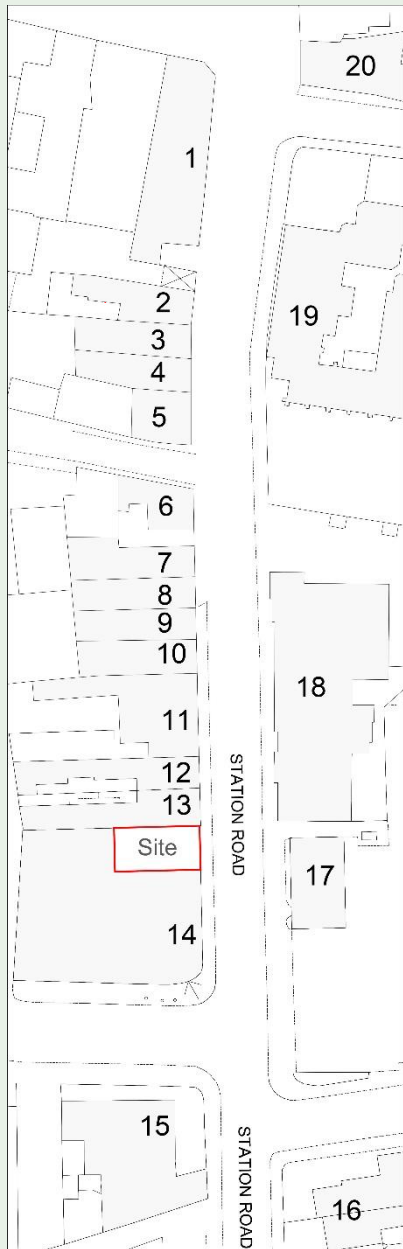
Appendix 1

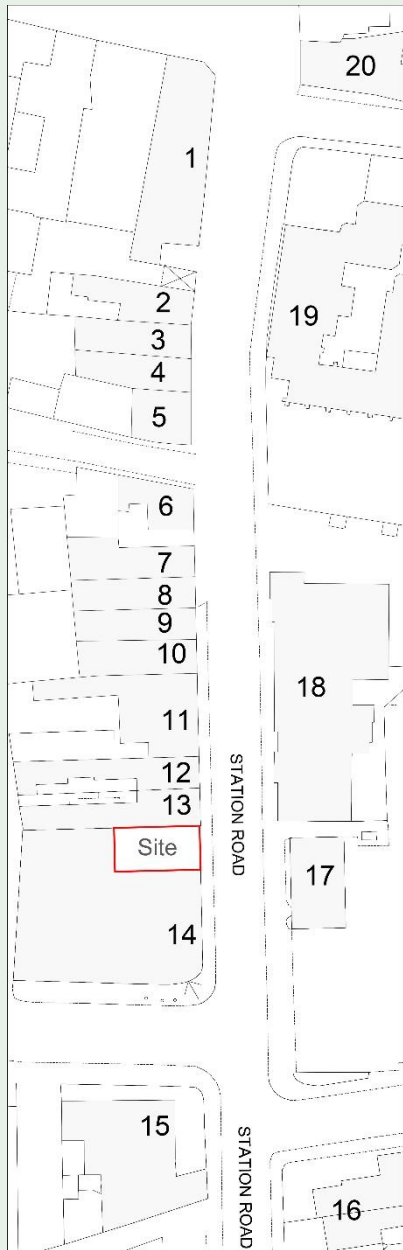
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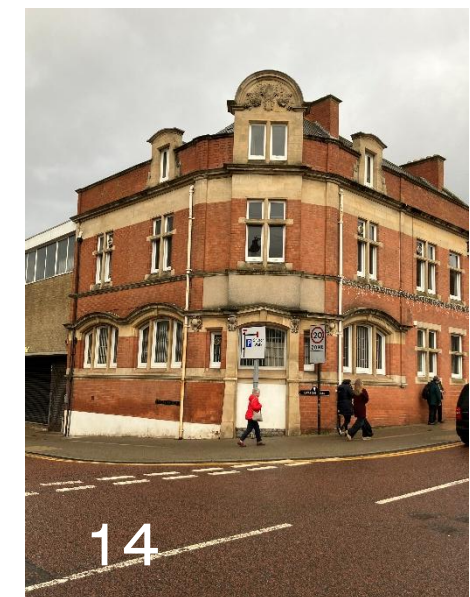
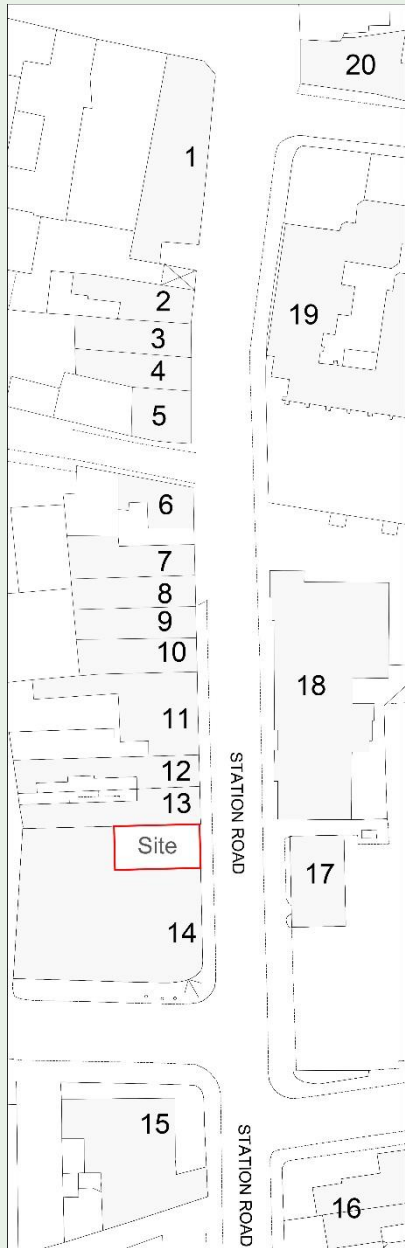
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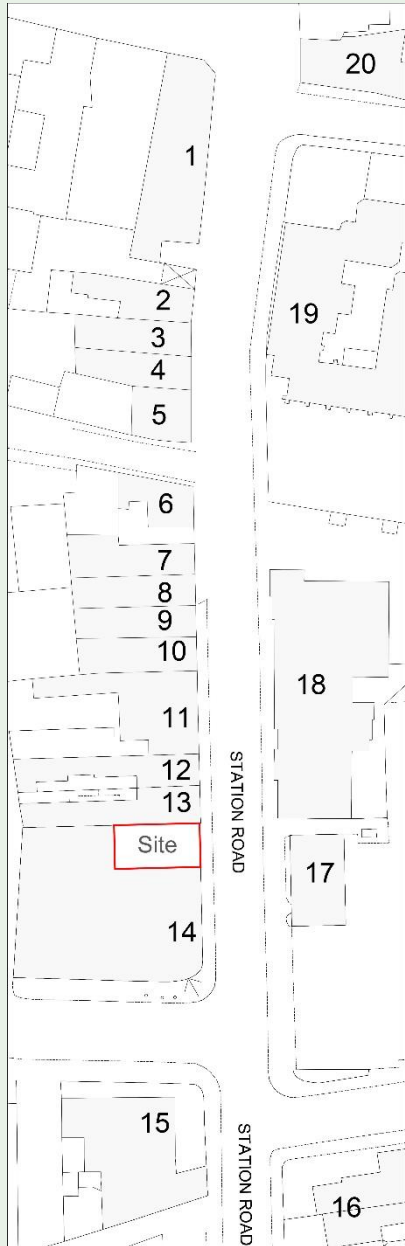
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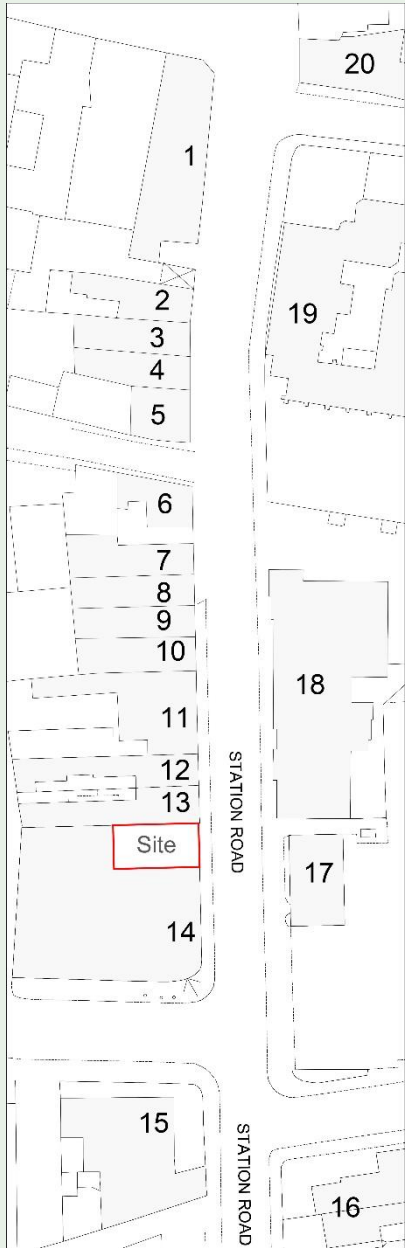
Photographic record of Station Road, December 2025

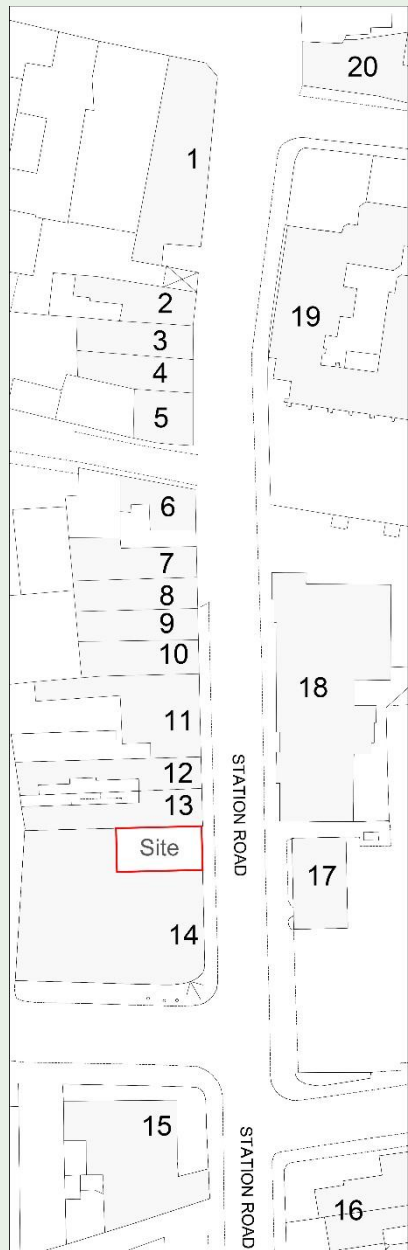














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