



Hinckley Town Centre

The Old Sorting Office

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Heritage Statement

25-69-Pt3 - HER

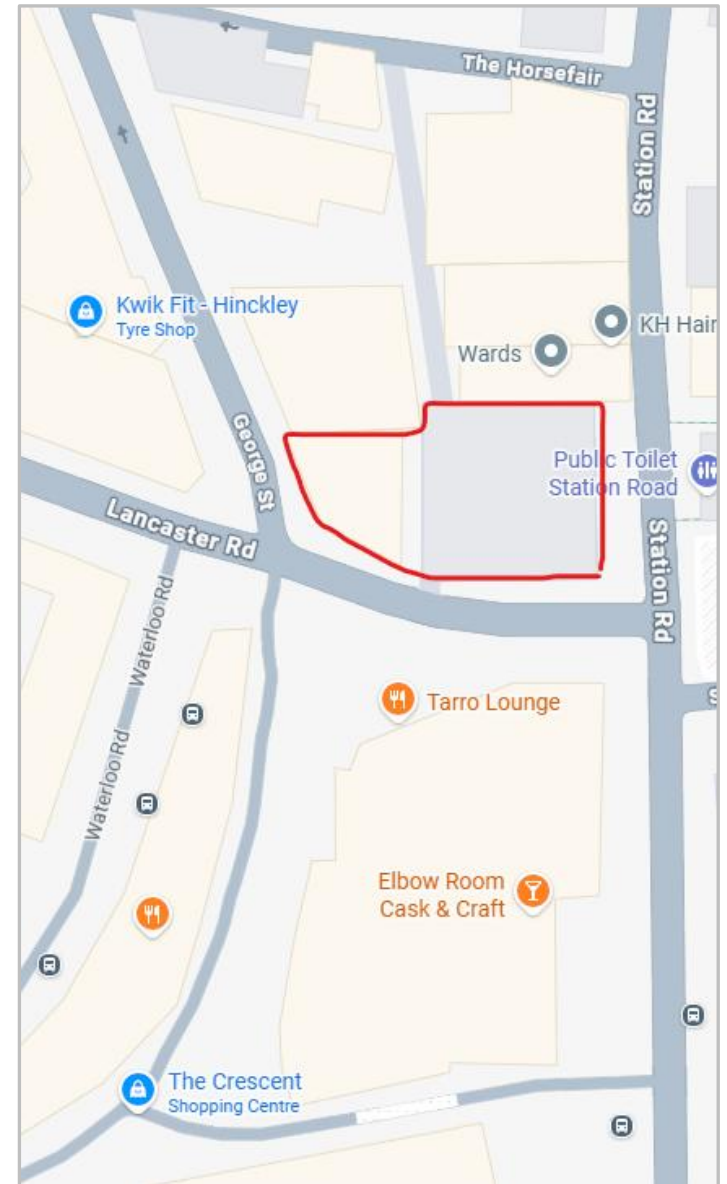
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Preamble

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Hayward Architects to accompany the submission for Full Planning approval for the 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 former post office building 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 and a further ancillary building at an unknown date. The post office counter ceased trading in 2015 with the sorting office and transport hub continuing until 2023 and the buildings have been vacant since. The entire site has been purchased in full by the applicant (Investment Street Ltd)

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 – The Old Sorting Office

Part 1



Part 2



Part 3



Part 4



The Background

Hinckley

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 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.

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



Hinckley Hosiery in full swing



Station Road before demolition

By 1886 the new railway line had been opened, connecting Hinckley with Nuneaton, and the road was designated as Station Road by 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 Hickley supplied uniforms to the allies and largely escaped substantial damage. Bombs were dropped, but 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

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 in 1973 the first uniformed postmen took to the streets.

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

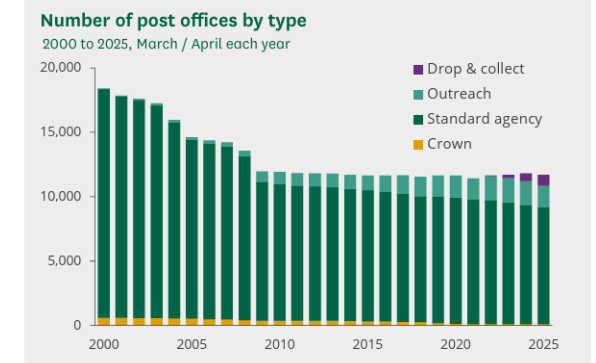
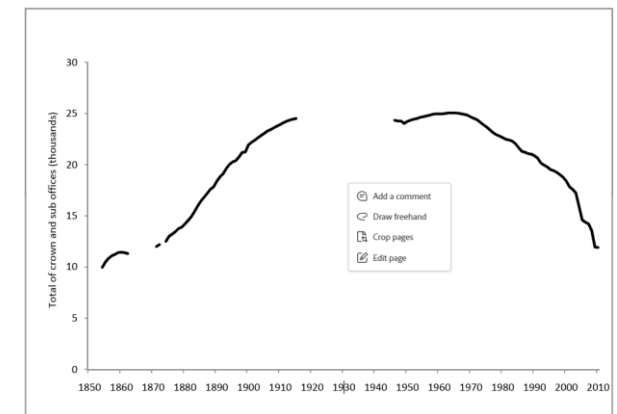
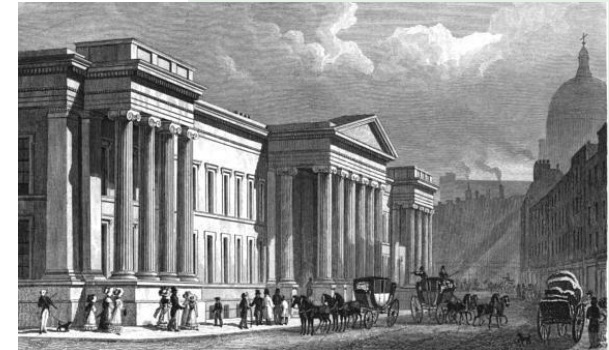
The post office became independent of the Royal Mail group in 2012, paving the way for post offices to leave purpose-built premises and move into established local shops.

The gradual 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 has caused a steep decline in the need for Post Office services and, of course, post office buildings.

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

Postal services in Hinckley have now been divided into the Royal Mail Sorting offices at Sketchley Meadows, Burbage, with 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 post office 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*.

However, the adjoining sorting office to which this application applies is of little architectural merit and is of much more modern design. The building has a strong horizontal emphasis with a band of black brick to the ground floor, buff brick above that and a band of horizontal windows to the top, just under the flat roof. The building ends with a column of red brick which ties it in with the old post office building. The red brick continues for a small distance down the alleyway then the building reverts back to buff brick. The building completely fills the footprint of the site with no external space or landscaping.



Significance of the building in its setting

Hinckley Town centre has three main shopping streets: Station Road, Castle Street and Regents Street, it also has The Crescent which was built in 2015 and has a variety of shops, bars and restaurants.

The sorting office sits in a very prominent position on Lancaster Road, opposite the zebra crossing which links The Crescent to Station Road. When walking towards Station Road from The Crescent the sorting office is the first building you see.



Looking from The Crescent towards the sorting office. When the trees are not in leaf the building is very prominent

Immediately south of the site is a modern shopping development known as The Crescent. This contains retail units, restaurants, a large supermarket 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. However, it's large, block like buildings, flat roofs and buff brick with strong horizontal emphasis ties it more to the sorting office than to the older properties along Station Road.



The old Post Office adjacent to the modern shopping centre. Similarities can be seen between the architecture of sorting office and The Crescent.



The proposal

Description

The proposal is to remove the dilapidated roller shutters and build new glazed frontages thus opening the building up to the street.

A change of use from Sui Generis to Class E will provide for a variety of different town centre appropriate uses within the building.

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

Impact of the proposed works on the building and the setting

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

The proposal will have a positive impact on the setting by providing an active frontage to the street and making a currently empty building more attractive to potential tenants.

Listed Buildings

The building is not Listed but it is in the conservation area. Although the post office is mentioned in the character appraisal the sorting office is not.

It is close to one listed building: The former Library building, on the opposite side of Station Road and adjoins the “locally important” former post office.

Summary

- This proposal seeks to change the use of an existing, vacant sui generis building in the town centre in order to bring it back into use
- The building is within the conservation area but has limited architectural merit
- The proposal involves minimal work to the exterior shell of the building
- This proposal will have no physical impact on the adjacent old post office building and the change of use will only serve to bring use to an empty building and enliven what is currently a blank façade.



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