

April 2026

23A Market Place

Hitchin
Heritage Statement/ DAS/ AHIA

Michael Collins Architects Ltd

This statement, in accordance with the guidance, will:

- 1. Demonstrate how the proposals relate to the site context and the impacts upon it.
- 2. Explain the design principles and concepts and how they are applied to the proposals, including taking into account the local planning guidance and mitigating measures to minimise effects upon neighbouring amenity and heritage assets.

The content of this statement is proportionate to the scale, complexity and nature of the application. It will tell the story by explaining the design thinking behind the proposal and how issues relating to access have been addressed using images, plans and diagrams to supplement the text.

Note to be read in conjunction with the planning statement.

1.0 Summary

The following is the description of the proposals:
Change of use from Restaurant Class E(b) to office Class E(c), Internal partitions, linings repairs, services, decoration and minor alterations to facilitate this further to application reference 26/00859/LBC 24

This document provides a combined Statement of Significance and Heritage Impact Assessment in support of proposals to form alterations to nr 23A Market Place in association with a connection to nr 24 market Place, Hitchin.
Both properties are designated listed buildings located within the historic core of Hitchin, contributing positively to the character and appearance of the Market Place and the wider conservation area. The proposals facilitate occupation by a single tenant, supporting viable use and enabling a programme of repair and enhancement (subject to separate Listed Building Consent).



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1.1 Site description & use

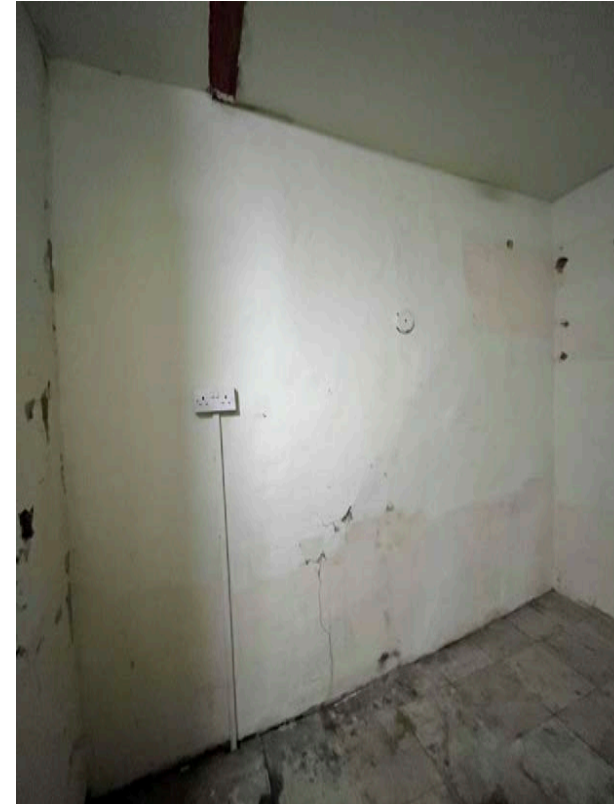
The site is located on the South side of Hitchin's historic Market square, the street is occupied predominantly by commercial premises at street level. and a mixture of office accomodation and other uses at first floor.



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1.2 Condition of Existing Building - External

Existing first floor Hallway

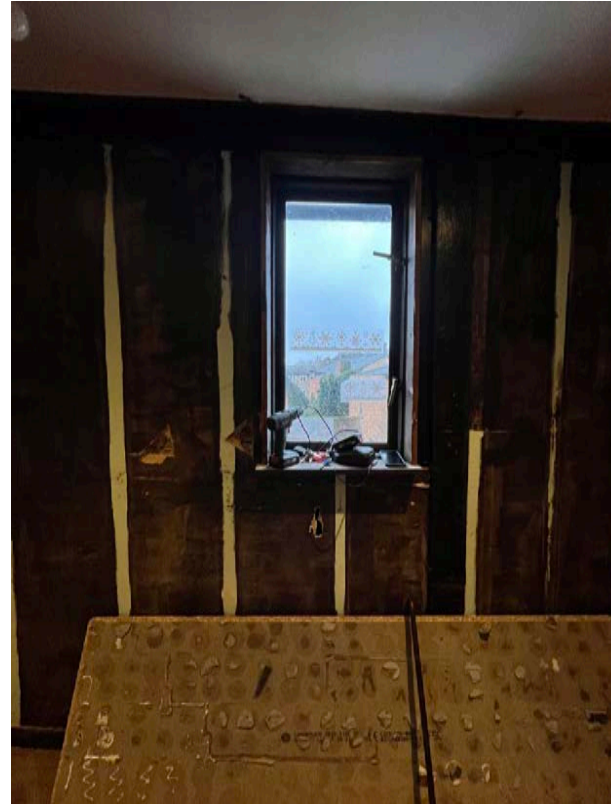


Existing second floor and first floor office



1.2 Condition of Existing Building - External

Existing second floor area and toilets



Existing First kitchen, second floor dining area



2.1

Description of the Proposed Works

- * Change of use from restaurant to office
- * Formation of New stud partitions to reinstate walls removed by previous restaurant fit out
- * New plasterboard wall linings set on battens to reinstate existing damaged plasterboard wall linings.
- * New ceiling linings to replace asbestos (already removed)
- * New timber infills set between existing timber studs.
- * New internal services, wiring and removable radiators generally.
- * Two reversible timber steps to accommodate a level change in No. 23
- * Internal decoration generally.
- * New sliding door to the stud partition area
- * Existing plasterboard linings removed from existing timber beams to be exposed and repaired
- * Carpet laying over existing flooring.

- Sources:
- Historic England Listed Building Register
 - Digimap Historic Maps
 - ‘A Walk Along Sun Street’ Hitchin Historical Society, 2009
 - Hitchin Conservation Area: Character Statement, 2011

Designations:

- 22-23
The Grade II
1. 5255 MARKET PLACE (South Side) Nos 22 & 23 TL 1829 SW 1/63 13.4.51. II GV

2. Late t118 or early C19 stucco front to earlier structure, Steeply pitched roof with M shaped gable to front, tiles. 3 storeys, wide moulded eaves cornice. Shop windows including canted bay in C19 modern frames. 3 sash windows with glazing bars in reveals. Glazing bars to shop bay windows.

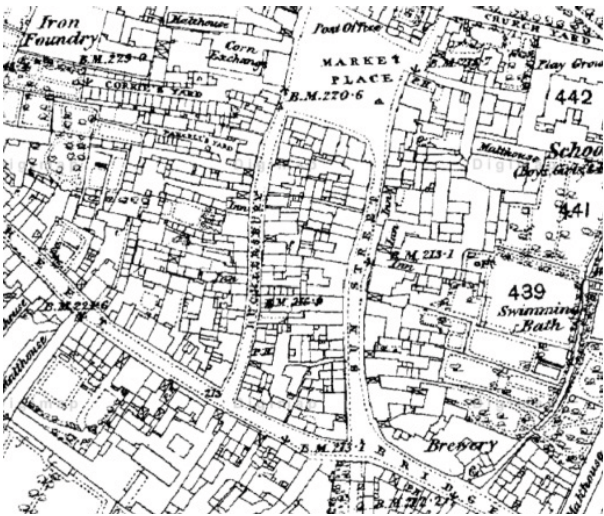
All listed buildings in Market Place form a group.

- 24-25
The Grade II
1. 5255 MARKET PLACE (South Side) Nos 24 & 25 TL1829 SW 1/258 GV II

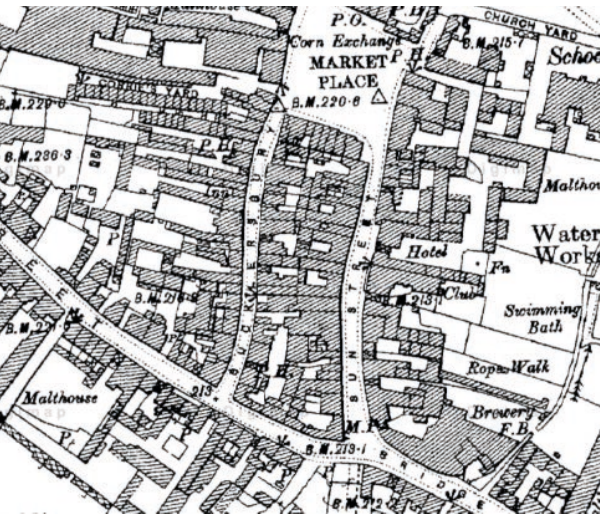
2. C19, front in Tudor style with half timbering, herringbone brick nogging. Gabled Welsh slated roof. 2 storeys and attics. Shop windows, 2 1st floor triple light casement windows. Included for group value.

All listed buildings in Market Place form a group.

Listing NGR: TL1838229024



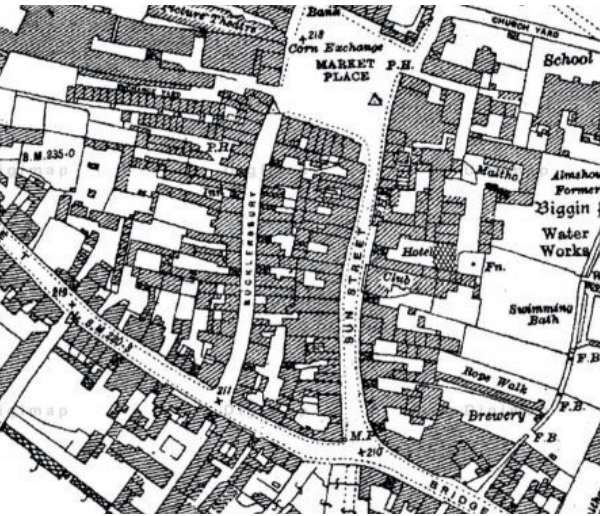
The Site c. 1880



The Site c. 1890



The Site c. 1920



The Site c. 1930



The Site c. 1960



The Site c. 2024

2.2 Appraisal

In its current state, the property relating to this application occupies the ground, first and second floor of a 3-storey building.

- 1. The front elevation of nr 23 has a late 18th century frontage (with later alterations) stucco finish, timber framed shop front windows (altered during the 20th C), and white painted timber framed windows on the first and second floor.
- 2. The rear elevation has a stucco finish, and timber framed windows on the first and second floor
- 3. The front elevation of nr 22 has a decorative late 19th Century facade.
- 4. Much of the interior of both properties have been subject to alterations over the last Century.

2.3 Approach to Significance

The basis of protection for buildings of cultural heritage significance is understanding their unique identity, expressed as a collection of values that can be enshrined by a place – in other words, what is important, and what aspects of the building contribute to that importance.

23 Market Place embodies a range of values relating to historic, cultural, social and associational aspects of its past. An overview of these helps define what makes the building special and therefore what significance the wider site has in relation to this Heritage asset. This is essential to the informed decisions about the proposed interventions upon the site.

The following assessment of significance is laid out in accordance with the documents Historic England Conservation Principles, 2008 and British Standard 7913: Conservation of Historic Buildings, 2013, which acknowledge that understanding both the tangible and intangible significances of this site enables effective decision-making about its future.

2.4 Assessment of Cultural Values

BS Standard 7913 identifies four categories of primary values, paraphrased as follows:

- 1. Evidential value
An element of an historic asset that provides evidence about past human activity, including standing structures that are easily visible, as well as those that may be hidden below ground or under water. This aspect of value is strongly related to physical remains, but may also include documentary sources, pictorial records and artefacts.
- 2. Historical value
These aspects of significance are often less tangible than physical evidence, including associations with notable people, or historical events or developments. They often connect past people, events and aspects of life with the present, and are likely to have changed with time of shifting perspectives. Historical values are less vulnerable to change than evidential values.
- 3. Aesthetic value
This is derived from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from an historic asset, including its appearance and how it lies within its setting. As such, this aspect of value is more subjective than the preceding classifications, being particularly sensitive to change over time and subject to fluctuations depending on many factors.
- 4. Communal value
This element of value derives from the meanings an historic asset holds for those who relate to it, or for whom it forms part of a collective experience, or memory. This may include emotional links, and aspects of the site that people can relate to their collective history and heritage.

3.0 Summary of Key Significances related to the Proposals

3.1 Overview

Nos. 23 and 24 form part of a historic Market Place frontage, reflecting Hitchin’s development as a commercial centre. Their significance derives from:

- * Architectural and structural form
- * Survival of historic fabric
- * Contribution to the townscape and streetscape character

3.2 No. 24

Use and Alteration:

- * Current use: office
- * Subject to cosmetic and functional alterations, including artex, modern fixtures, and services
- * Original stair lost; some architraves and mouldings survive

Significance:

- * High: timbered and tiled façade, townscape contribution
- * Moderate: legible plan form
- * Low: altered interior finishes

3.3 No. 23

Use and Alteration:

- * Former use: restaurant, resulting in large openings, wall/floor/ceiling alterations, and addition of false historic detailing
- * Proposed future use: office, more consistent with historic pattern of occupation
- * Facilitates reinstatement of elements of plan form (separate LBC)
- Surviving high-significance features (confirmed by site evidence):
 - * Front first-floor room timber beams and framing, dating from an earlier period than Victorian, with high evidential value
 - * Historic fireplace
 - * Areas of historic plaster and lath plaster at first- and second-floor front levels
 - * Second-floor timber framing, comprising a mix of hand-cut historic timbers and sawn Victorian/Edwardian timbers, reflecting historic repair and evolution
 - * Staircase (first to second floor) – likely historic
 - * Rear first-floor structure, including timber framing and Victorian moulded beams supporting the jettied rear structure

Significance:

- * High: principal front room, historic beams and framing, fireplace, staircase
- * Moderate: rear rooms, circulation spaces with surviving structure
- * Low: areas heavily altered for restaurant use and modern additions

3.4 Circulation Spaces

The first-floor hallway

- * Brick infills and timber studwork
- * Modern interventions: surface wiring, fire equipment, modern lighting, later joinery
- * Brick infill appears irregular and likely later, reducing significance
- * Moderate to low significance
- * Suitable for carefully controlled, reversible change

3.5. Legislative and Policy Context

- * Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 66(1)
 - * National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Paras. 205, 206, 208, 209, 210
3. Statement of Significance

3.1 Overview

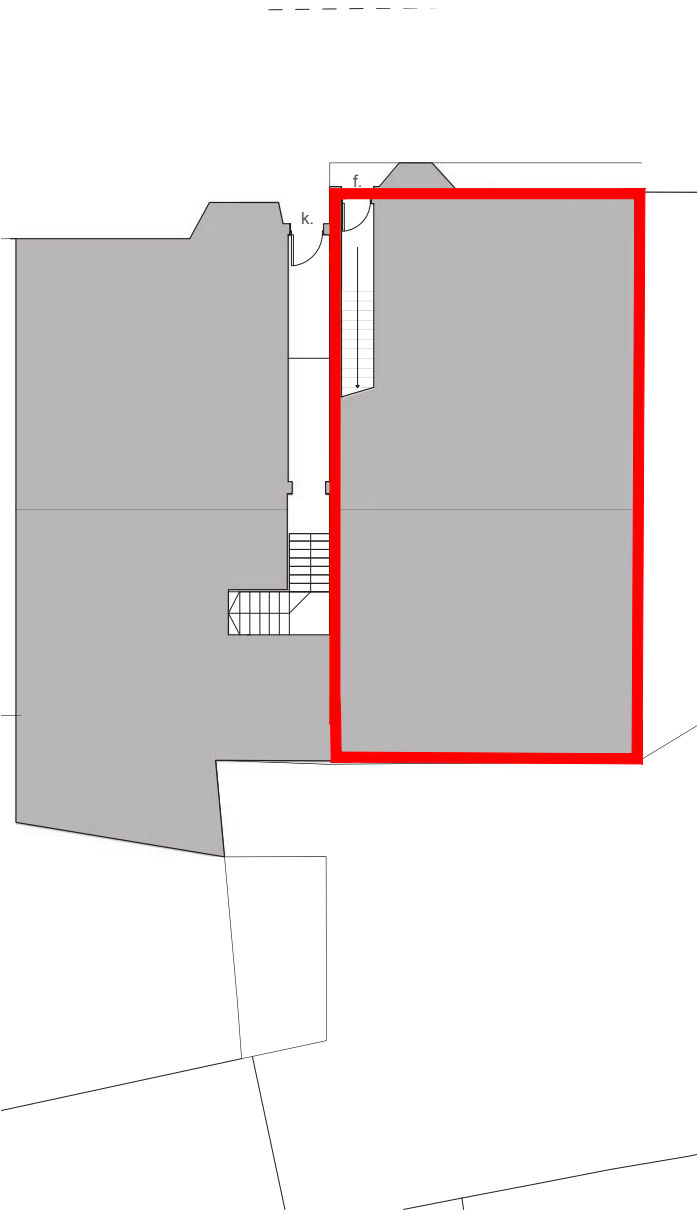
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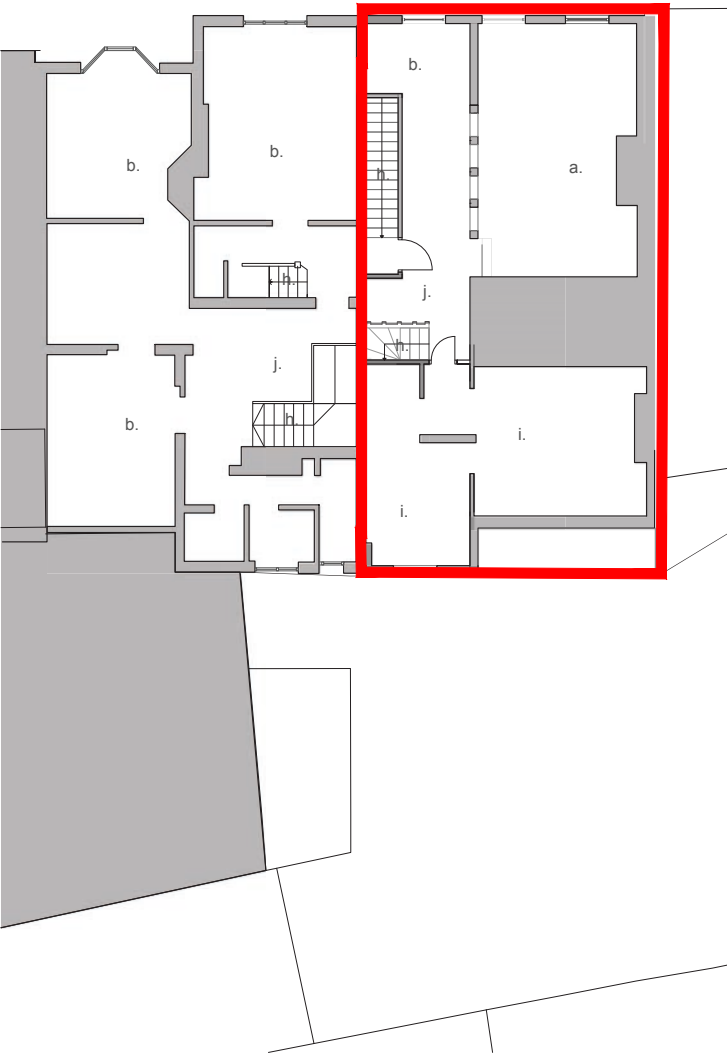
- * Architectural and structural form
- * Survival of historic fabric
- * Contribution to the townscape and streetscape character



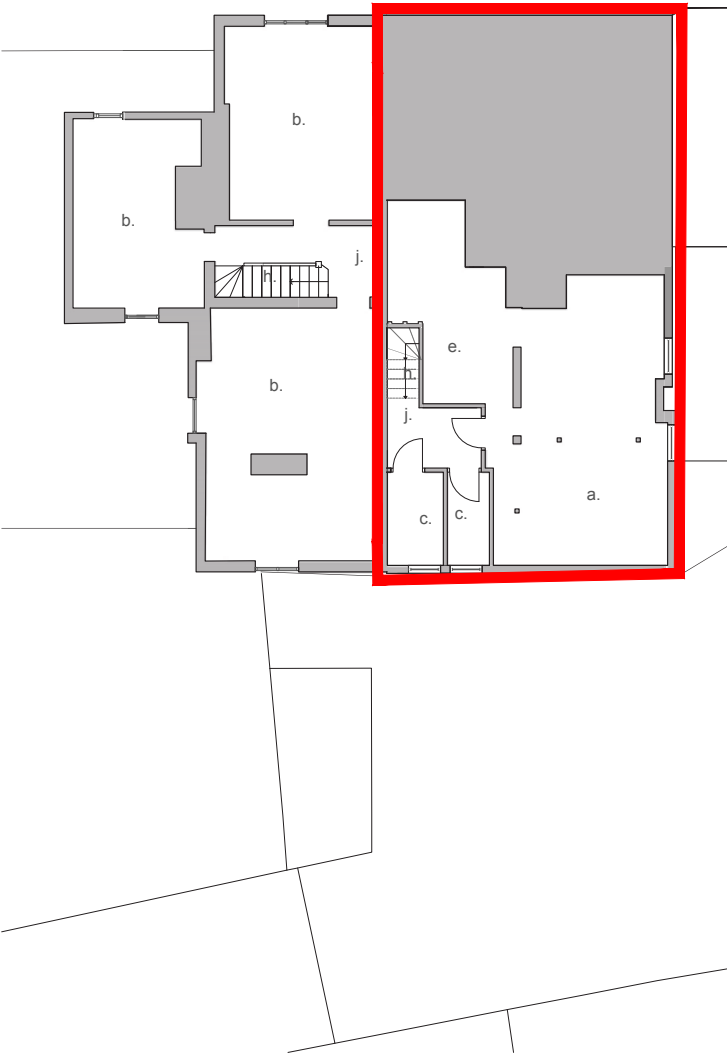
4.1 Existing Site Plan



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

- Notes:
- a. Existing restaurant area.
 - b. Existing offices
 - c. Existing toilets
 - d. Existing restaurant area
 - e. Existing storage area
 - f. Entrance nr 23
 - g. Existing Lobby Partition
 - h. Existing stair
 - i. Existing kitchen area
 - j. Existing hallway
 - k. Entrance nr 24

23A Market PI, Hitchin



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23A Market Place ;
283 Plans as existing
Stage: Stage 3
Status: Planning / LBC

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5.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

As stated by BS 7913, The purpose of heritage impact assessments (HIAs) is to gain an understanding of the effect of developments and changes on the historic asset, and how the impact of change might be mitigated.

5.1 Impact on Plan Form

- * The new partitions have a negligible impact upon plan form and in fact reinstate fragments of wall lost as part of the previous restaurant fit-out at first floor level. Impact is low and arguably a heritage gain in terms of re-instatement.
 - * The infill of plaster panels to the existing areas of exposed studwork are seen as an honest an evidential approach to creating the necessary fire and acoustic separation where existing timber studs are exposed. These timber studs would have had plaster and lath coverings or potentially brick infills historically, retaining their presence but recessing reversible walls between ensures that these remain legible features.
- Summary: Low/Neutral Impact

5.2 Impact on Historic Fabric

- * Limited to infill panels set between timbers. mechanical fixings to be carefully installed to existing ficing holes where possible with shallow wood screws to ensure these can be removed without damage.
 - * There is no loss of high-significance elements
 - *Existing timber framed elements to be coated in a matt clear fire retardant coating. This is to enable the building to meet modern fire standards for structural integrity. The existing timbers have been varnished and existing layers will need to be abraided prior to application.
 - *New electrical services will be run between timber battens and no new penetrations are proposed to historic linings or plaster and lath ceilings or walls.
 - *New wall linings will replace existing damaged plastered linings and will be set off existing historic fabric using timber battens to create service zones.
 - *Existing timber beams to the rear existing first floor kitchen area will be exposed creating a heritage gain.
 - *A new sliding door will be incorporated to the existing stud partitions to the front office area. This is a modern intervention that deliberately avoids creating a new conventional door where one did not exist previously and retains the legibility and openness of this element.
- Summary: Low/Moderate Impact.

5.3 Refined Assessment of Affected Area

- * Photographic evidence confirms the space has limited aesthetic coherence
- * Modern interventions reduce sensitivity
- * The opening will avoid structural timbers and target lower-significance infill

5.4 Design and Legibility

- * All new services to be surface fixed where in contact with historic fabric.
- * New timber architraves and surrounds to express new work
- * The treatment of the modern partitions to the first floor aim to avoid false historic replication

5.5 Reversibility

- * Servcies can be removed without damaging historic fabric
- * Partitions and linings are removable. There is minimal permanent impact

=

5.7 Impact on High-Significance Elements

- * Front first-floor room, historic beams, fireplace unaffected
- * Staircase retained
- * Rear first-floor structure preserved

5.8 Use and Viability

- * Supports coordinated occupation
- * Enables long-term conservation
- * Proposed office use in No. 23 aligns with historic function

5.9 Historic Precedent

- * Evidence of historic inter-building connections (e.g., No. 24–25)
- * Intervention reflects evolutionary nature of the terrace

6. NPPF Assessment

- * Works result in no harm, or negligible less-than-substantial harm
- * Justified under Para. 206
- * Public/heritage benefits under Para. 208
- * Preserves/enhances significance (Paras. 209–210)

7. Heritage Benefits

- * Removal of harmful modern partitions and repair of historic eleents
- * Improved plan form legibility
- * Supports viable use
- * Reversible, controlled intervention
- * Honest architectural expression
- * Protects high-significance fabric

8. Conclusion

The proposed internal alterations represent a necessary and conservation-led intervention:

- * Targets moderate/low-sensitivity fabric
- * Preserves high-significance elements
- * Enhances understanding of the building
- * Supports sustainable, historically sympathetic use

Overall Conclusion:

The works preserve and in part enhance the significance of No. 23 Market Place, in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the NPPF, and should be supported.



As Existing - Hallway



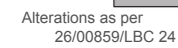
As proposed - Hallway



As Existing - Room side



As proposed - Room Side



Plan extract

- | Notes: | | Notes: | |
|--------|--|--------|---|
| a. | Existing restaurant area. | r. | existing timber framing |
| b. | Existing offices | | ae. Replacement plasterboard over existing plasterboard walls set over existing plaster walls |
| c. | Existing toilets | | |
| d. | Existing restaurant area | s. | New partitions |
| e. | Existing storage area | t. | Void below over doorway |
| f. | Entrance nr 23 | u. | Sliding door |
| g. | Existing Lobby Partition | v. | Glazed/solid acoustic partitions |
| h. | Existing stair | w. | Office |
| i. | Existing kitchen area | x. | Conference room |
| j. | Existing hallway | y. | Store |
| k. | Entrance nr 24 | z. | WC |
| l. | Proposed doorway | aa. | Staff area |
| m. | new plasterboard partition | ab. | Kitchen units |
| n. | Steps set within doorway | ac. | New plastered panels set between timber studs |
| o. | New glazed timber fire door and side panel | ad. | Fire retardant paint to timber studs |
| p. | Existing partition removed | | |
| q. | Doorway formed between | | af. plasterboard ceilings to replace existing asbestos ceilings (removed) |
| | | | ag. Redecoration of existing plaster and lath |
| | | | ah. new timber fire door |
| | | | ai. Existing bathrooms overhauled. |
| | | | aj. New surface fixed light fixtures, electrical services and heaters. smoke detection and heat detectors |
| | | | ak. Low level panelling to accommodate electrical services |



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