

March 2026

22-25 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:

A new door access at first floor level to connect nrs 23 and 24 along with associated internal alterations. This document provides a combined Statement of Significance and Heritage Impact Assessment in support of proposals to form a new internal doorway at first-floor level between Nos. 23 and 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.



- Notes:
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 2. These layouts are preliminary until further surveys are undertaken.
 3. Scale and boundaries are indicative.
 4. Ownership boundary indicative based on OS data.
 5. Red dotted line is shown as site boundary.
 6. Elevation key plan not to scale.
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1.2 Condition of Existing Building - External

Existing first floor Hallway



Existing second floor and first floor office



2.1

Description of the Proposed Works

- * Formation of a new internal doorway at first-floor level between two hallways
 - * Opening approximately 1 metre wide
 - * Careful removal of brick infill within timber studwork, retaining structural frame
 - * Opening formed between existing studs
 - * Installation of a new timber surround, ensuring the intervention is honest and legible
- Associated works:
- * Two reversible timber steps to accommodate a level change in No. 23
 - * Removal of a late 20th century stud partition around the stair
- No external alterations are proposed.

- 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 tl18 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 19 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.

22-25 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 and Area of Works

The first-floor hallway (location of proposed doorway):

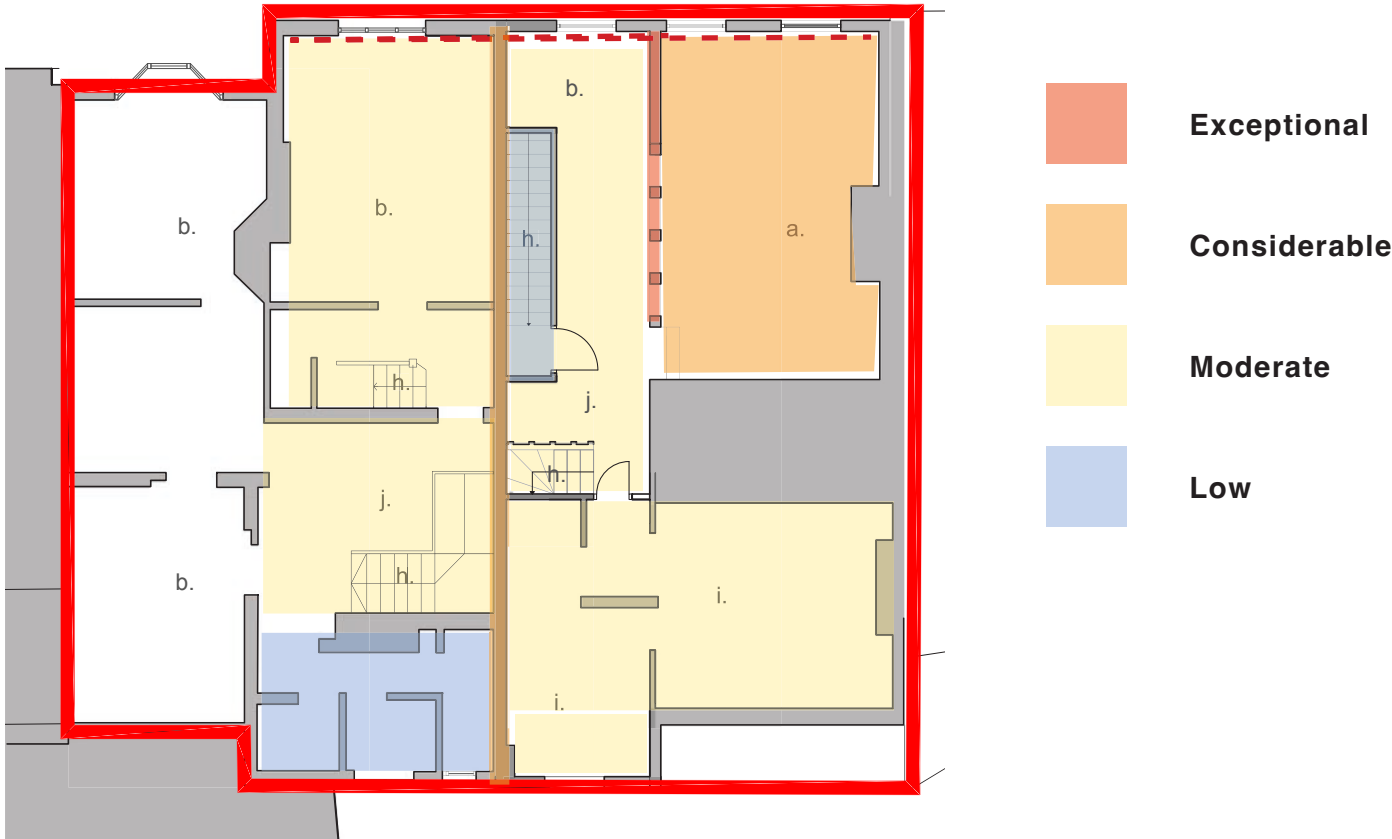
- * Brick infill within timber studwork
- * Modern interventions: surface wiring, fire equipment, modern lighting, later joinery
- * Brick infill appears irregular and likely later, reducing significance
- * Functions as a secondary circulation space

Assessment:

- * Moderate to low significance
- * Suitable for carefully controlled, reversible change

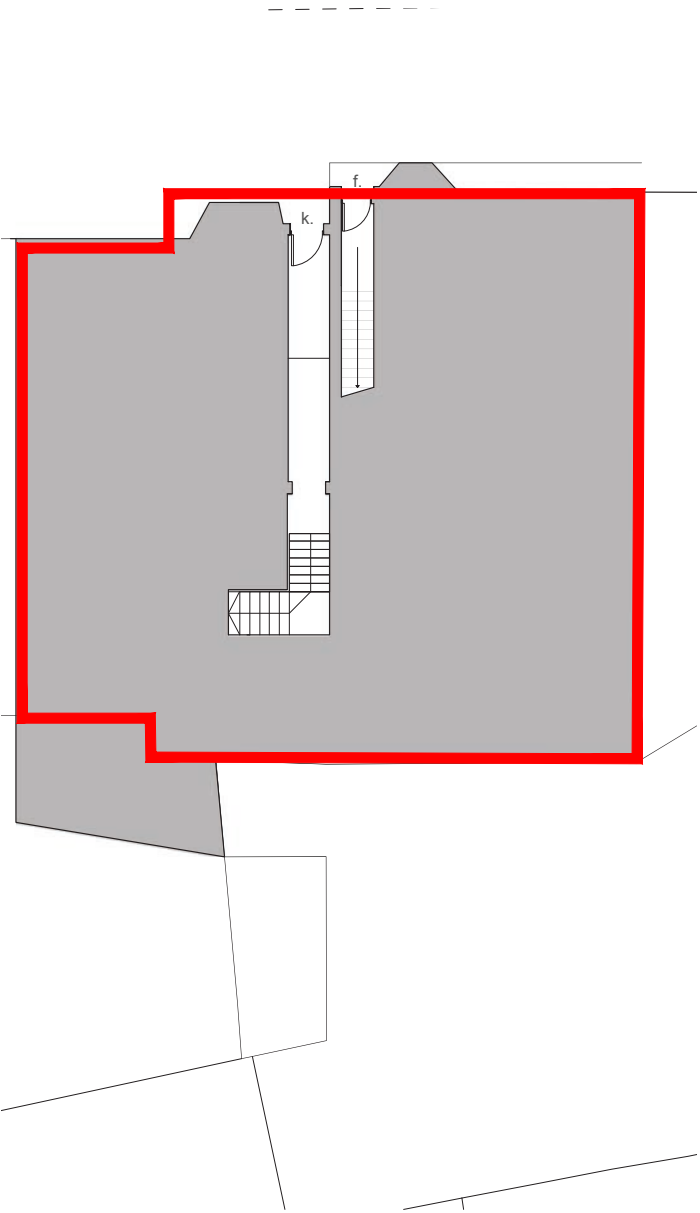
3.5. Legislative and Policy Context

- * 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

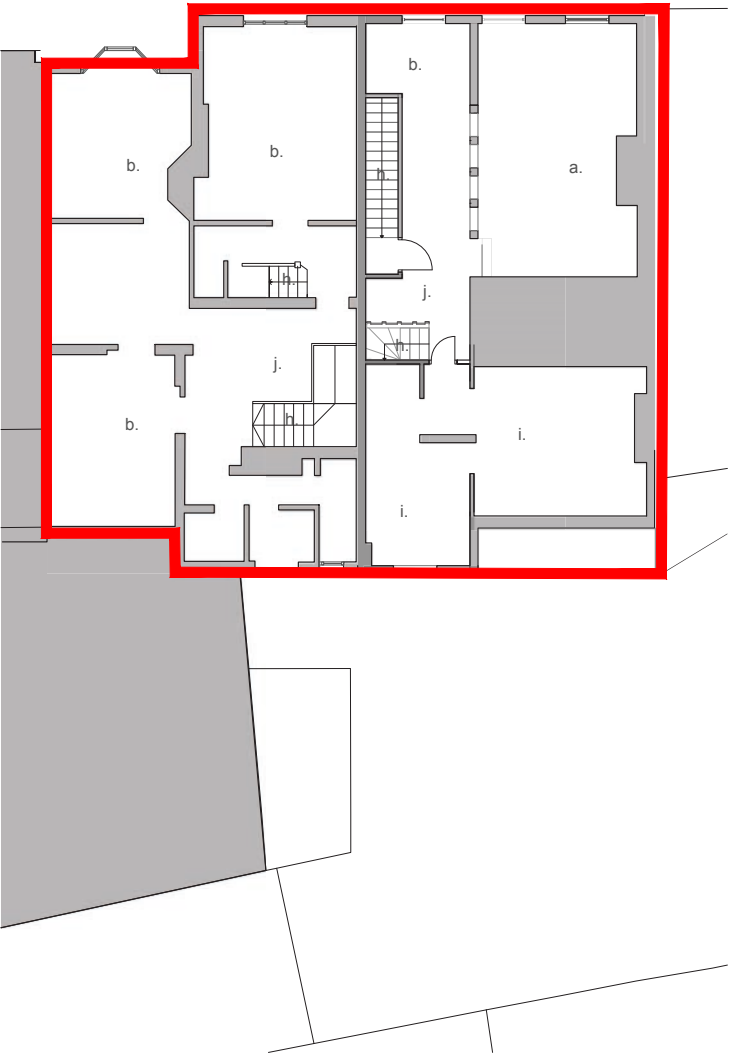


Significance - first floor

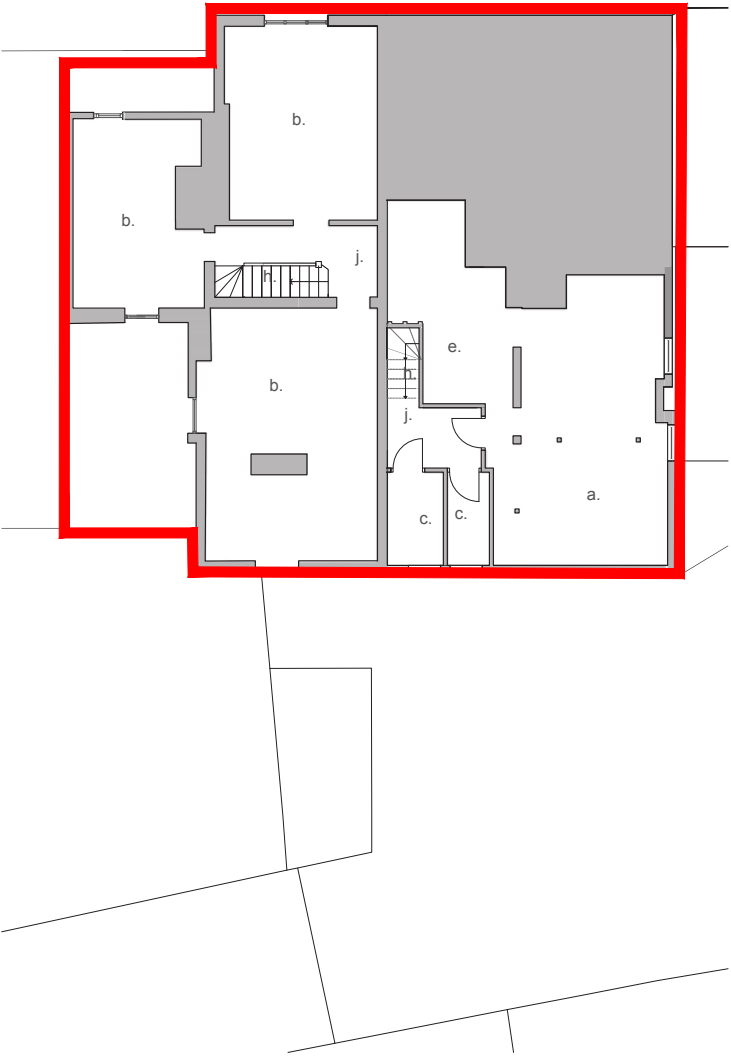
4.1 Existing Site Plan



2-25^BMarket PI, Hitchin
Ground Floor Plan



22-25 Market PI, Hitchin
First Floor Plan



22-25 Market PI, Hitchin
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



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22-25 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

- * Intervention in secondary circulation spaces
- * Primary plan form remains intact
- * Removal of modern partition enhances spatial clarity

5.2 Impact on Historic Fabric

- * Limited to brick infill panels, not primary timber framing
- * Formed between studs, preserving structure
- * No loss of high-significance elements

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

- * Doorway width: 1m
- * New timber surround clearly expresses new work
- * Avoids false historic replication

5.5 Reversibility

- * Doorway infillable
- * Timber steps removable
- * Minimal permanent impact

5.6 Level Change

- * Managed with three lightweight timber steps
- * Fully reversible
- * Located in a secondary space

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
- * Facilitates restoration works (separate LBC)

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
- * Improved plan form legibility
- * Supports viable use
- * Reversible, controlled intervention
- * Honest architectural expression
- * Protects high-significance fabric

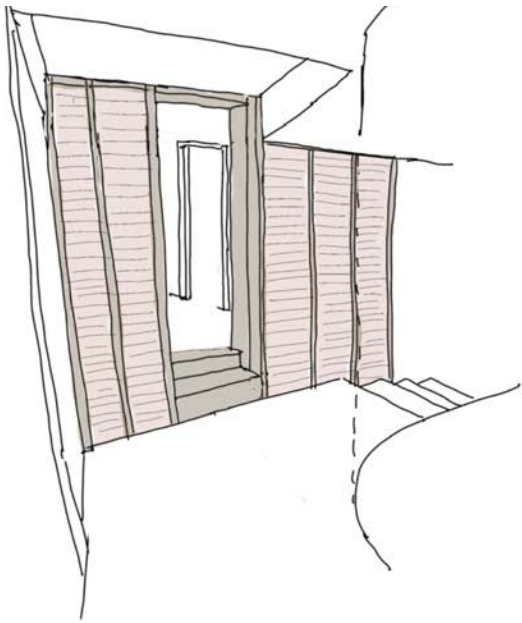
8. Conclusion

The proposed internal doorway represents a 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 Nos. 23 and 24 Market Place, in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the NPPF, and should be supported.

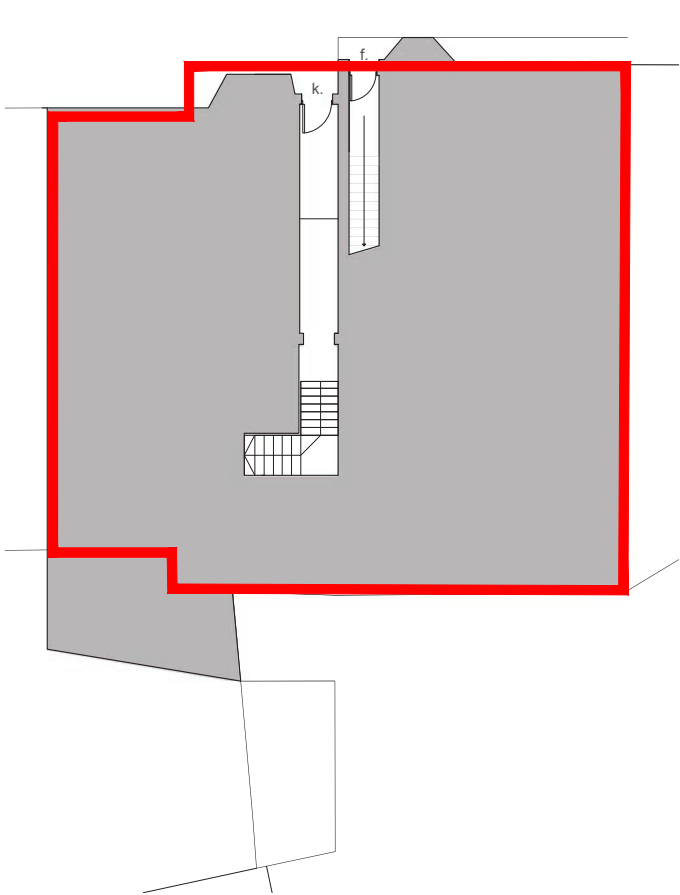


Doorway from nr 23 side

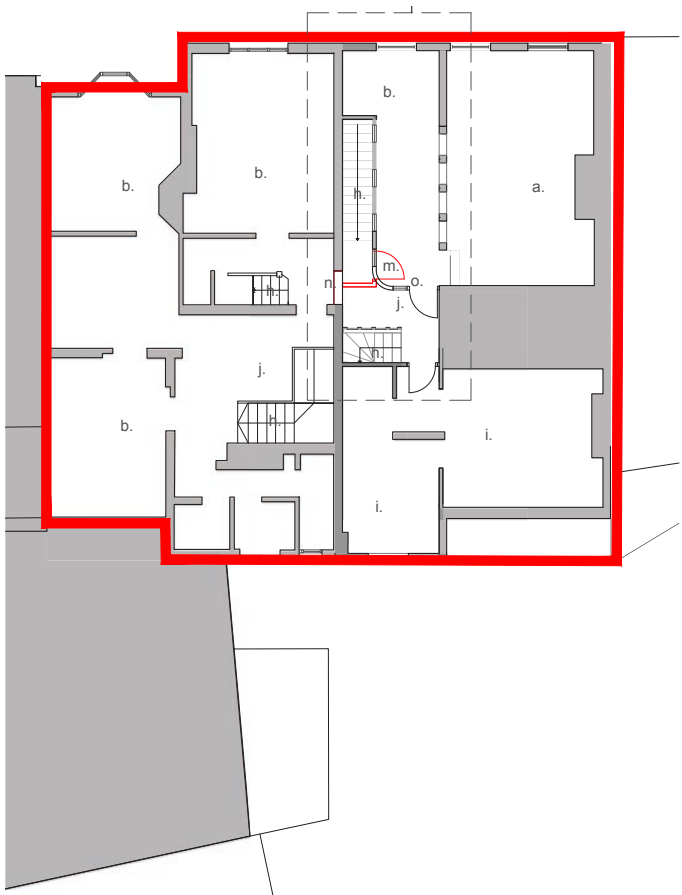


Doorway from nr 24 side

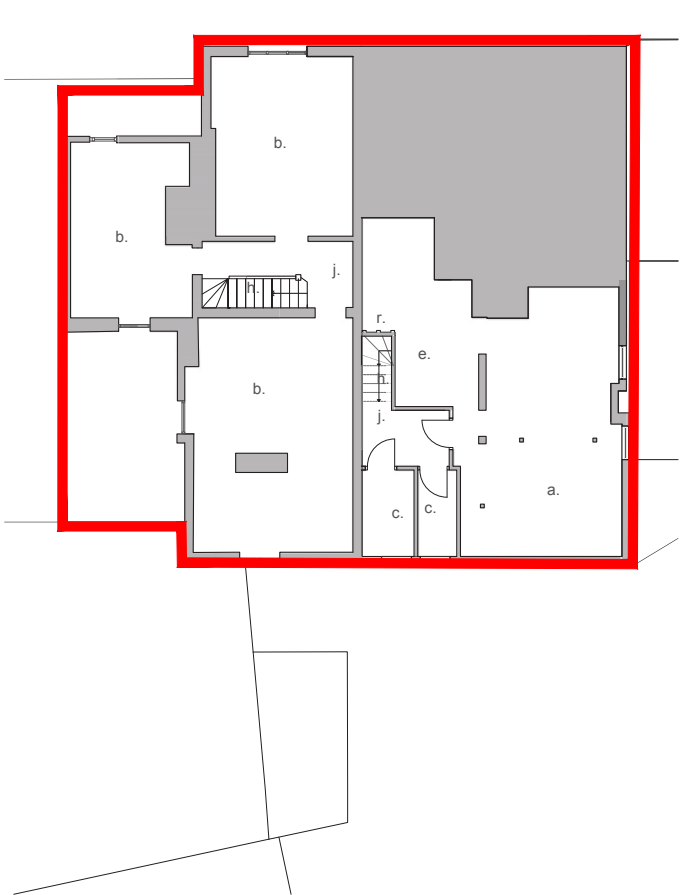
6.1 Proposed Site Plan



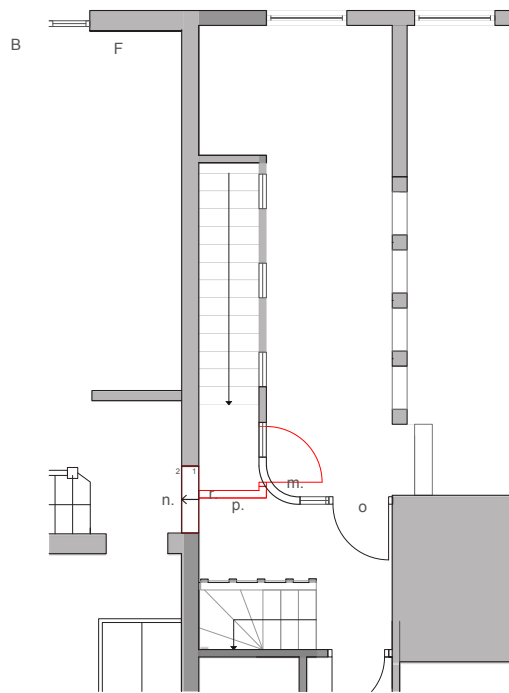
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22-25 Market PI, Hitchin
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 - e. Existing storage area
 - f. Entrance nr 23
 - g. Existing Lobby Partition
 - h. Existing stair
 - i. Existing kitchen area
 - j. Existing hallway
 - k. Entrance nr 24
 - l. Proposed doorway
 - m. new plasterboard partition
 - n. Steps set within doorway
 - o. New glazed timber fire door
 - p. Existing partition removed
 - q. Doorway formed between existing timber framing
 - r. Existing plasterboard ceiling over modified to obtain more headroom



Plan extract
1:50



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