SMYTHEMAN ARCHITECTURAL

Heritage Statement

31 High Street, Upper Tean, Staffordshire, ST10 4DY

SMD/2017/0532

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Smytheman Architectural in support of an application for full planning consent submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. This is commissioned on behalf of the property owners; Mr & Mrs Varughese. This appraisal has been carried out to assess the impact of proposed alterations to a Grade II Listed Building within a Conservation Area. The appraisal is concerned with the process of conserving the special architectural and historic interest of the building and the character of the area.

1.2 This appraisal has been conducted in accordance with the general guidelines set out in British Standard 7913:2013 'Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings' and Historic England publications 'Informed Conservation' and 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' and in particular responds to policies outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In respect of information requirements, it sets out that:

"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance."

1.3 Guidance on the implementation and interpretation of historic environment policy has been provided by the Historic England publications 'Historic Environment Good Practice in Planning' notes 1 'The Historic Environment in Local Plans, GPA2 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment' and GPA3 'The Setting of Heritage Assets'.

1.4 Local level planning policy for Upper Tean comes from Staffordshire Moorland District Council, hereafter abbreviated to 'SMDC'. Planning policy comprises the 'Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy'.

1.5 The author Bruce Johnson is an Architectural Designer with over 10 years' experience working with historic buildings. He has studied an MSc Degree in Building Conservation & Regeneration at the University of Central Lancashire and a BSc in Architectural Technology accredited by the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists.

1.6 A site survey and visual inspection of the property was carried out in September 2017. Background research was conducted with reference to the interactive planning service, historic mapping databases, archived material, and through discussions held with the applicant. The assessment of the proposals will be conducted with reference to a range of texts, particularly the Historic England good practise guides and local authority's appraisal of the building and conservation area.

2.0 Building Location & Site Information

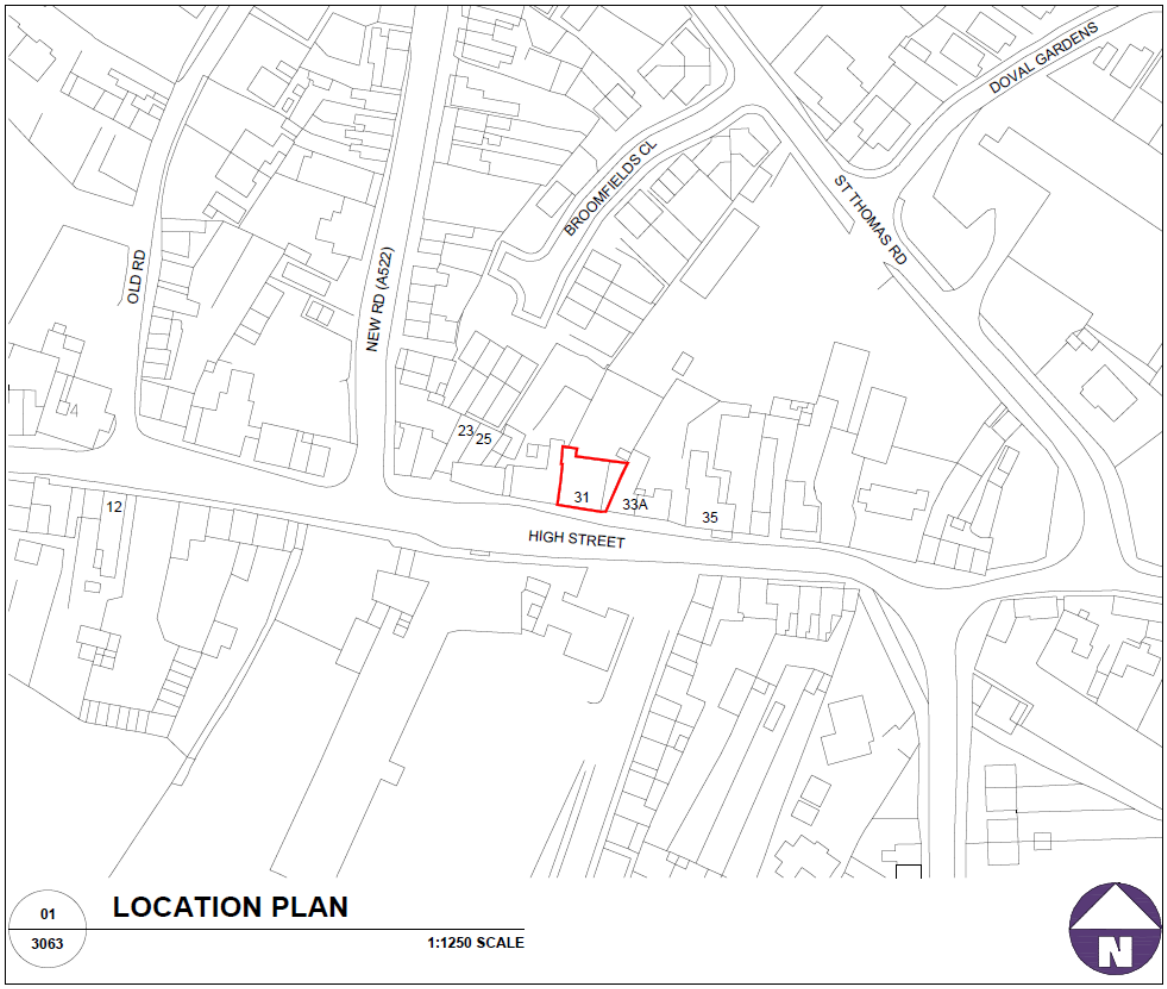

Figure 1: Extract from Ordnance Survey presented on drawing by Smytheman Architectural

2.1 31 High Street, also referred to in this document as 'the building', is located at national grid reference - SK009395.

2.2 The building has a footprint of approximately 130m^2 (1,400ft^2) and fronts the highway on the main road 'High Street', the A522 running between 'Draycott in the Moors' and 'Checkley'.

2.3 There are currently 14 Conservation Areas within the area covered by the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Planning Authority. These are designated at Alton and Farley, Bagnall, Biddulph Grange, Caldon Canal, Caverswall, Cheadle, Checkley, Cheddleton, Endon, Horton, Ipstones, Leek, Stanley and Upper Tean. The building lies within the Upper Tean boundary. See Section 4.0.

3.0 Listing Description

3.1 The building has been designated a Grade II Listed Building by Historic England and as such is one of the 92% of listed buildings in England recognised for its national importance and special interest.

3.2	**List entry No**	SK0101139582	**Location**	Checkley
	District	Staffordshire Moorlands	**Grade**	II
	Date Listed	3 January 1967		

3.3 **Description**

3.3.1 *House and shop. Now post office. Early to mid-C19 with minor alterations. Painted, rendered brick; raised band at first-floor cill level; tiled roof on dentilled cornice; end stacks; two-storey, two-window front; glazing bar sashes in moulded surround on brackets; ground floor right hand window now plate glass and left half an early C19 shop front of two large 16-pane) pane windows under a frieze and cornice with pilasters at extremities and recessed entrance between windows with C20 glazed door and overlight.*

4.0 Conservation Area Appraisal

4.1 A Conservation Area is defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as *'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'*. Conservation Areas usually comprise groups of historic buildings and/or areas of attractive landscape closely associated with the built environment. They can be large enough to include historic cores of town centres such as Leek and Cheadle, or small in scale to contain attractive village scenery or special features such as a canal or historic parkland.

4.2 There are currently 14 Conservation Areas within the area covered by the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Planning Authority. The application building is located in Upper Tean.

4.3 The Upper Tean Conservation Area is defined by the following boundary line:

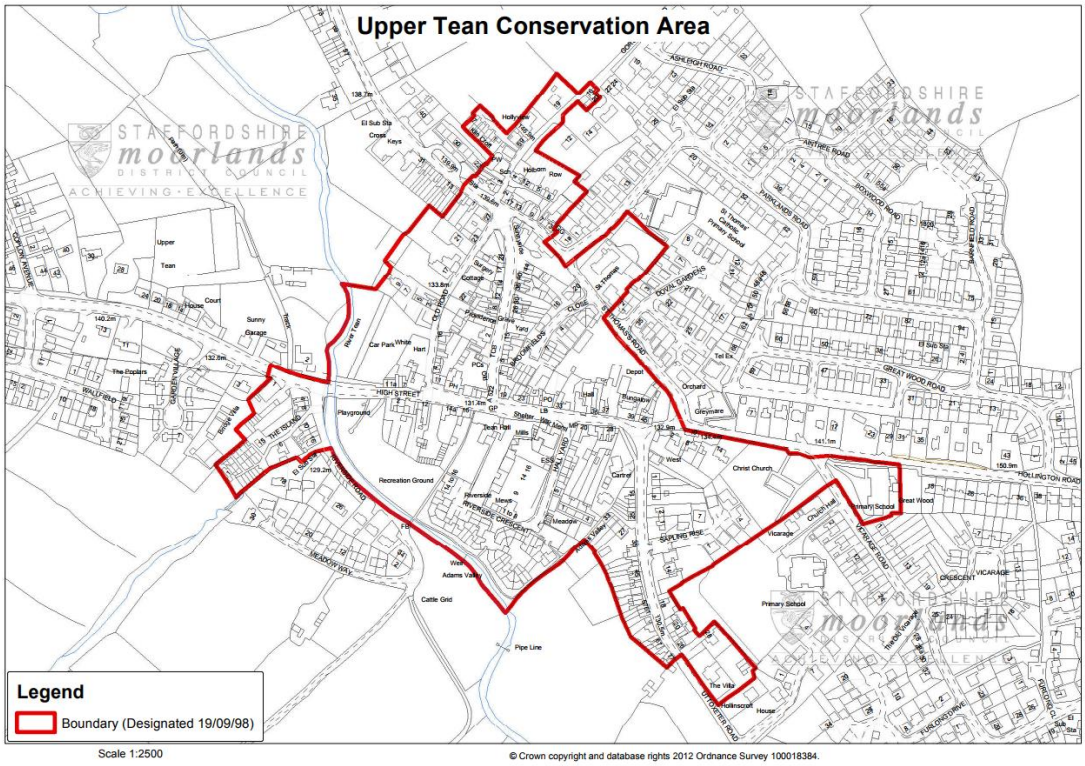

Figure 2: Conservation Area boundary by SMDC

4.4 The Upper Tean Conservation Area boundary was designated or revised on 19th September 1998. SMDC have not produced a Character Appraisal for the area and there are no Article 4 Directions imposed.

5.0 Brief Historic Background

5.1 The listing description states that the building dates from the early to mid C19. The building has some Georgian style features such as the large 16 pane sash windows, the two gable end chimneystacks and the dentilled cornice to eaves level. As a matter of interest, the Georgian period run from 1714-1830 under four kings named George. The Victorian period begun in 1837 and continued to the beginning of the C20.

5.2 The buildings original use has not been researched by the author, however, the listing description suggests the original use was as a house and shop, before becoming a Post Office and house.

5.3 The historic map extract from the first series of the ordnance survey in 1881 reveal the application site in use as a Post Office. It is interesting to note that no alteration to plan form has occurred to the application site or any of the immediate neighbours in comparison to a modern day map.

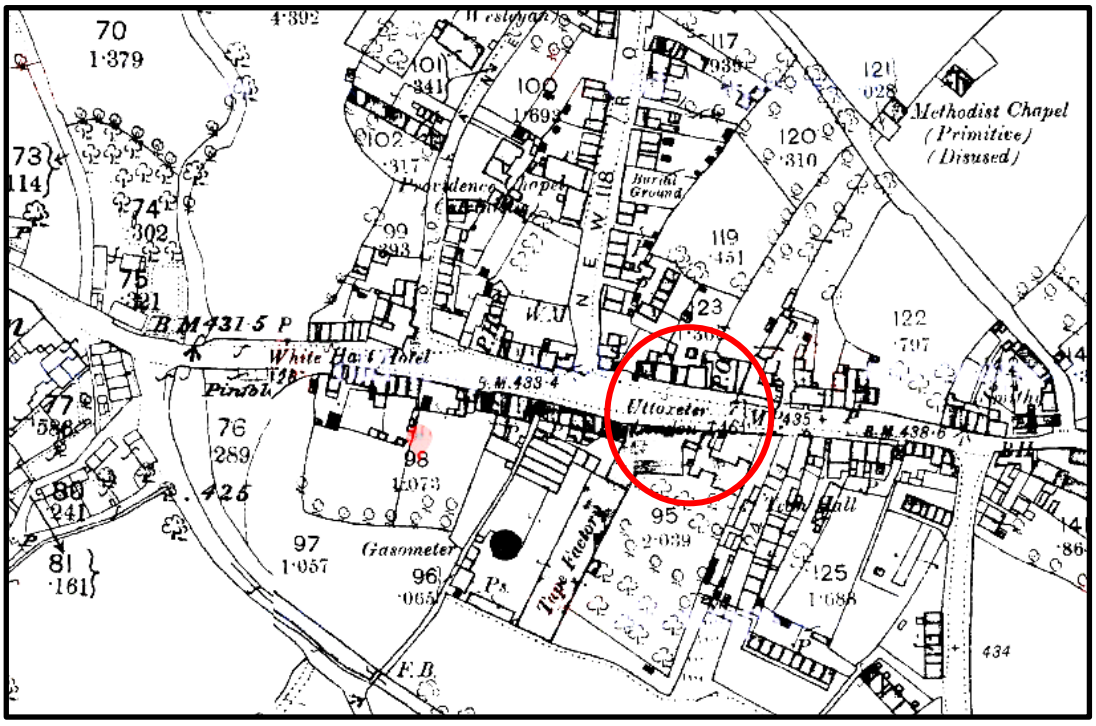

Figure 3: Ordnance Survey Extract circa 1881.

6.0 Heritage Values

6.1 An appraisal of the heritage values associated with the building has been carried out. This process relates to the range of heritage values as outlined by Historic England; formerly English Heritage in the 2008 guidance document.

These values are distilled under the following headings: evidential value, historic value, communal value and aesthetic value. The purpose of assessing these values is to enable an assessment of the site's significance - whether physically manifest (e.g. architectural features) or in some other less tangible form (e.g. historical associations) - so as to enhance the objective appraisal of proposals for the change to the building.

In essence, this follows the approach generally advocated by Historic England, whereby necessary change in the historic environment is intelligently managed. A summary of what each heritage value is and a subsequent table identifying the values associated with the application site are provided below.

6.2 Evidential value is described by Historic England as "*physical remains*" (EH.2008.s38) and "*evidence of human past activity.*"(EH.2008.s35) and is derived from one's ability to interpret the history and historic evolution of a building through visible and tangible features.

6.3 Historical value "*derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present*" (EH.2008.S39). This is generally regarded as either *Illustrative* whereby the site can be perceived to represent a period in history, or *Associative* where a connection with an event or person can contribute to the historic significance of a site.

6.4 Aesthetic value according to Historic England "*derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.*" (EH.2008.S46). This value can be attributed to conscious design whether it be predetermined by an architect or the work of a craftsman and can also encompass historic and evolutionary changes to a building.

6.5 Communal value "*derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory*." (EH.2008.S54). This can be divided in to *Commemorative and Symbolic* values where the place may invoke emotion or contribute to an individual's or community's sense of place or *Social* values where a place can be a form of catalyst for memories associated with it.

6.6 The following table briefly describes the Heritage Values of the application site based on the above description from Historic England.

Evidential	**Historic**	**Aesthetic**	**Communal**
Original external plan form is largely in-tact.	Historically old likely Georgian façade.	Set in a prominent high street location.	The attractive listed building adds to the sense of place locally.
Evidence of an early to mid C19 structure. Historic England state most buildings 1700-1840 will be listed.	The building and neighbours are still accurate in footprint to the 1881 ordnance map.	The building has a positive effect on the conservation area character.	The building will always be remembered as a community post office. Retention of the post box ensures this.
Many original exterior features.		Attractive historic shopfront. Early C19.	The building is unique to the conservation area.
Red “ER” Elizabeth Regina post box demonstrates previous use.		Characterful façade, architectural features and various original windows.	

7.0 Statement of Significance

7.1 In summary, 31 High Street has a positive effect locally, the building is attractive and unique in style adding to the character of the conservation area. It also has historic value by virtue of its age. Aesthetically, the historic shop front to the left hand side of the façade is original and well detailed. Many of the windows also appear to be original and typically Georgian in style.

7.2 The building has largely retained its historic and aesthetic features to the C21. This is positive. Internally there is some evidence of structural alteration, however, this is natural progression allowing the building to operate viably as a post office in the past.

8.0 Proposal Overview

8.1 Unfortunately, the Post Office use is no longer viable, therefore, to ensure the future upkeep of the building a new use is sought. This would be recommended as ensuring heritage assets remain in viable use is essential to their long term conservation.

8.2 The building is currently up for sale with a commercial ground floor use and a residential use elsewhere. The original C19 shopfront is on the left hand side of the façade and the right hand side is more domesticated in style.

8.3 Internally there is evidence of a large opening being formed allowing the shop unit to be the full building width. This was likely done in the C20. (See image)



Figure 4: View from the right hand side of the ground floor commercial unit looking towards the post office counter on the left hand side. See large modern opening.

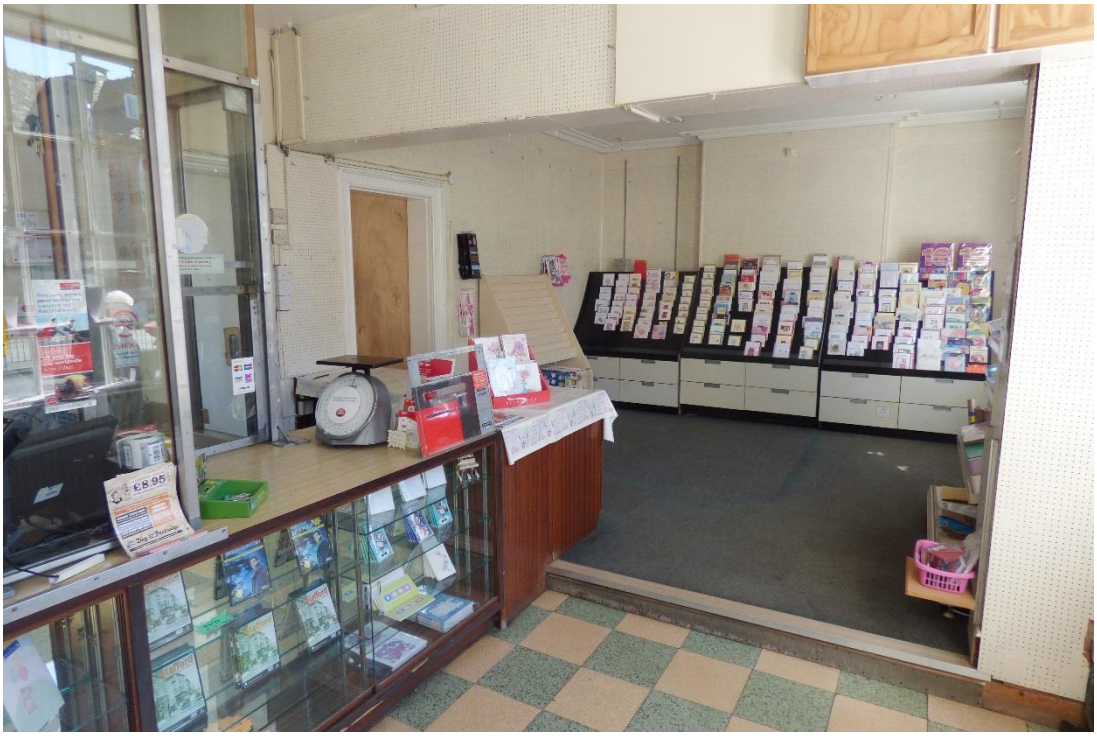

Figure 5: View from the left hand side of the ground floor commercial unit looking towards the modern post office counter and opening previously discussed.

8.4 The proposals look to reinstate the dividing wall on the ground floor. This has likely to have existed previously and a subdivision is demonstrable on the principle elevation.

8.5 The commercial use at the ground floor will be retained in the left hand side unit, in the right hand side of the unit change of use is sought to create residential floor area. This is in-keeping with the way the floor plan was likely arranged historically.

8.6 The existing commercial unit will be internally refurbished and redecorated to make it more attractive to prospective investors. New stud walls will be constructed to allow the formation of a WC with sanitaryware and Kitchen. An existing door will be removed and re-used within the new walls.

8.7 The newly formed residential accommodation will be refurbished internally.

9.0 Relevant planning policies

9.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) requires that planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

9.2 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council are currently working on 'The Local Plan 2016-2031', the Council intends to publish the Preferred Options Local Plan for public consultation during the Summer 2017. Currently the Core Strategy 'Key Documents' set out the Council's town planning policies for guiding development and protecting the environment in Staffordshire Moorlands for the purposes of the 2004 Act. Additionally, Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) notes have been used during the design development stages of the proposals, however, in some instances this guidance is contrary to current national policy and philosophies.

9.3 National planning policy guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underpin the general strategy for new development with which all development plans must be in broad conformity.

9.4 Finally, as the application building is listed, conservation policy should be used to assess the proposals. The document: 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' will be referenced as this provides up-to-date guidance on development within the historic environment.

9.5 The proposals have been assessed against these policies in the following sections:

9.6 Local Plan

9.6.1 The Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy defines the strategy at the heart of the new plan making. This strategy sets out the overarching spatial planning framework for the long term regeneration. Relevant policies include:

9.6.2 Policy SO8, this states that the LA aim to promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the District.

Assessment: A proposal that ensures the future use of the former post office whilst retaining a commercial use within the historic shopfront is positive for a number of reasons. The building will continue to have a positive aesthetic contribution on the High Street by virtue of

maintenance, furthermore the public use will reinforce the previous communal values. The building has a positive effect on the conservation area and the proposals do not require any external alteration.

9.6.3 Policy SO9, this requires positive development to conserve and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, heritage, biodiversity and geological resources.

Assessment: The proposals have no negative effect on the principal high street façade, additionally the internal arrangements respect the former building floor plan and therefore there is an imperceptible effect on evidential heritage values.

9.7 National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

9.7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) key message is that the "presumption in favour of sustainable development" is considered to be "the golden thread running through both plan-making and decision making" which should be applied by local planning authorities when assessing and determining planning applications.

The relevant sections of the NPPF would be:

Section 7: Requiring good design
Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

9.8 Section 7

9.8.1 Policy 56 of the NPPF relates to 'requiring good design', policy states: 'The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning'.

9.8.2 Policy 58 states design should: 'respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.' It also asks that designs are visually attractive as result of good architecture.

9.8.3 Assessment: The proposals respect the history and character of the listed building and the high street. By reinforcing the use of a prominent building in the conservation area the aims of Policy 58 are achieved.

9.9 Section 12

9.9.1 Policy 126 of the NPPF specifically notes that heritage assets are 'most at risk through neglect' or decay. It also notes 'the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness'. This has already been discussed in the section above. This policy reinforces this area of discussion.

9.9.2 Policy 131 states there is 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'. The proposal will actually reinstate the two ground floor uses which were likely in use until the ground floor opening was formed to create a larger open plan ground floor commercial layout.

9.10 Historic England Guidance

9.10.1 Historic England have adopted the guidance document 'Conservation Principles policies and Guidance'. When dealing with historic buildings guidance seeks to 'conserve' a buildings 'significance'. Significance relates to the buildings special interest and is likely to be the reason for protection if there is any. It should be noted that policy relates to 'conservation' and not 'preservation'.

9.10.2 Conservation is 'The process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations'. In other words, change is not something that should be avoided. In many cases change is what is required to ensure a buildings future, as is the case with the proposals.

9.10.3 Key areas of guidance include **'Integrity'**, by retaining much of the structures original fabric the integrity of the structure will remain within the proposals. **'Reversibility'** is also a consideration, much of the adaptation that is occurring within the proposals would be reversible; not that it would ever be desirable to do so.

10.0 Conclusion

10.1 To conclude, the proposal fully accords with planning policy, best practise design guidance and conservation philosophy.

10.2 The proposals cause very minor invasion to historic fabric and by internal renovation to enhance the existing building condition the proposals will conserve a heritage asset by providing it with a viable use for the future.

10.3 The proposals are likely reinstating a subdivision that existed, in this way no loss of evidential value is caused. Aesthetic values are unaffected currently within the proposals, however a subsequent new tenant in the commercial unit will likely result in additional maintenance and improvements to the principal façade, thus having a positive effect on the conservation area and host building.

10.4 For the reasons rehearsed above the effect of the proposals on the host building are **imperceptible** according to Historic England's effect on heritage values. For this reason, the author of this report has **NO OBJECTIONS** to the proposals.

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