68-70 High Street
Manchester

Heritage Statement



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1. Executive Summary

1.1 The following report provides a Heritage Statement for submission to Manchester City Council, as Local Planning Authority, in relation to the proposed refurbishment and alteration of Nos. 68-70 High Street, Manchester M4 1EA. The building is located within the Smithfield Conservation Area. For the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the building therefore forms part of a Designated Heritage Asset.

1.2 Historic mapping shows the Blue Bell public house located close to the present-day site at the junction of High Street with Turner Street in the early 1850s. During 1877 – 1878, High Street was extended to the north-east and this necessitated the demolition and reconstruction of the Blue Bell, resulting in the existing configuration of buildings on the site. In 1906, the public house closed to be replaced with ground floor shops, including a shop front designed by renowned shopfitters Frederick Sage & Co. Shortly after, in 1907, a hoist was installed suggesting the upper floors were in warehouse or storage use. The site has remained largely unchanged since this date and is now vacant above a ground floor retail unit.

1.3 The building at Nos. 68-70 High Street is considered to be of *medium to low significance* within the preferred terminology of the NPPF and NPPG. It is however considered to be a positive contributor to the special character of the conservation area, and a good example of the distinctive Italianate revival style of Mancunian commercial architecture, popular during the mid to late 19th century. It is considered that the proposed refurbishment of the building will have a *minor beneficial* impact upon the Smithfield Conservation Area, and therefore that the proposals accord with the requirements of the NPPF and NPPG.

2. Introduction, Methodology and Limitations

2.1 In December 2022, Williams Conservation Surveying Limited (WCS) were commissioned by Karim Holdings, instructed through Seed Architects, to carry out a Heritage Significance Appraisal of 68-70 High Street in Manchester City Centre. The purpose of this initial report was to assess the significance of the building in heritage planning terms, to identify the formal designations in place and how these would control any future development, and to consider the feasibility of a scheme of residential re-use both in practical conservation and policy terms. The Heritage Significance Appraisal has informed the scope of the present refurbishment proposals which were also the subject of pre-application advice from Manchester City Council in December 2022.

2.2 In May 2023, WCS were re-instructed by Karim Holdings through Seed Architects to produce the present Heritage Statement. This accompanies an application for Planning Permission by the client to Manchester City Council, as Local Planning Authority, for the internal and external refurbishment of the building and external alterations including the provision of new rooflights and dormer windows and the provision of a new lift overrun shaft. A Heritage Statement is required in order to assess the impact of the proposals upon the building's contribution to the special interest of the Smithfield Conservation Area.

2.3 Site data collection for the Heritage Significance Appraisal was undertaken by means of a site visit and survey of the accessible parts of the exterior of the building on 7th December 2022, comprising note taking and photography. Weather during the site visit was clear and cold with bright sunshine. Photographs were taken on an iphone 5s front camera and stored as JPEG files.

2.4 **Limitation:** At the time of the December 2022 site visit, internal access was not available to the building for site safety and security reasons. In addition, the exterior of the building was partly obscured by scaffolding. As such, a review of the interior was undertaken at that stage from photographs taken during site visits by Seed Architects on 4th July 2022 and 27th September 2022. A review of the exterior, unimpeded by scaffolding, was undertaken using historic Google Streetview data capture.

2.5 Further site data collection and an in-person re-survey of the building was undertaken on 26th May 2023 for the purposes of the present Heritage Statement. At this time the scaffolding had been removed and internal access was available to the building.

2.6 **Limitation:** A the time of the May 2023 site visit, light levels were restricted within the building and the interior and environmental conditions within the building had significantly deteriorated, impeding the re-survey process.

2.7 Archival data collection for the Heritage Significance Appraisal and Heritage Statement included an in person visit to Manchester City Archives. In addition, a range of verified online sources were accessed, including the websites of the National Library of Scotland (for historic Ordnance Survey mapping), Lancashire County Council (for other historic mapping pre-dating the creation of Greater Manchester), GM Lives, Manchester City Council, HM Land Registry, Universities of Manchester and Leicester special collections, and Historic England.

2.8 **Limitation:** At the time of the appointment and archive review, it was advised by Manchester City Archives that the original (c. 1877 – 1878) plans of the building were in existence, but that they were too fragile to produce for inspection.

3. Site Location and Description

Refer to Appendix A – Site Location Plan

3.1 The registered address of the site is 68-70 High Street, Manchester M4 1EA, and the National Grid Reference of the centre of the site is SJ 84284 98605. The site is located at the junction of High Street with Turner Street and Nicholas Croft in Manchester City Centre. The plot is roughly triangular, bounded by High Street to the west and north-west, Turner Street to the north-east, Edgehill Street to the east, and a party wall condition with No. 66 High Street to the south.

3.2 The wider environment around the site is sharply divided in character between the Arndale Centre and Arndale Car Park to the west across High Street, contrasting with the network of historic streets to the north and east. These lead into the Northern Quarter to the north and east of the site including Turner Street, Back Turner Street and Thomas Street. The Market Street branch of the Metrolink network runs along High Street and Nicholas Croft to the west of the site, between Market Street and Shudehill stations, and onwards towards Victoria to the north.

4. Statutory Designations and Consents

Refer to Appendix B – Conservation Area Plan

4.1 The site forms part of the Smithfield Conservation Area, which was designated by Manchester City Council in 1987. Conservation areas are defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as "areas of special architectural and historic interest, the

character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" and are defined by Local Authorities rather than by central Government.

4.2 Since the 2013 Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act, there has been no separate mechanism of Conservation Area Consent to control works within conservation areas. Instead, proposals for works within conservation areas are typically controlled by the Local Planning Authority withdrawing Permitted Development Rights for external works and requiring Planning Permission to be sought. More widely, the character of the conservation area will be given consideration during the decision-making process concerning applications for Planning Permission for works where the site is located within a conservation area.

4.3 Implementation of the statutory protections regime for historic buildings and areas is now guided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was last amended in 2021. The NPPF is secondary legislation issued by the Government or Executive (as opposed to primary legislation passed by Parliament or Legislature). As such, it sits under the primary legislative framework of the 1990 Act referenced above. The NPPF provides a set framework for Local Planning Authorities to determine applications made under the provisions of the Act for Listed Building Consent, or for Planning Permission for works affecting a Conservation Area.

4.4 Further advice on this topic is provided by Government in the form of the more detailed National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which was last amended in 2019. The NPPG is, by definition, guidance rather than legislation. It concentrates on the definition of terms used within the planning process as regards historic buildings and areas, or "heritage assets". A key stipulation of the NPPF is the requirement for decision making to be led by an understanding of the "significance" of the heritage asset concerned, and the NPPG provides additional guidance on how this should be defined in terms of archaeological, architectural / artistic, and historic interest.

5. Development of the Site

Refer to Appendix C – Historic Mapping, and Appendix D – Historic Architectural Plans

5.1 The site now occupied by Nos. 68-70 High Street was formerly the location of the Blue Bell public house in the early 19th century. The first references to the Blue Bell public house on High Street are found in late 18th and early 19th century trade directories. Scholes' Directory of Manchester of 1794 refers to the Blue Bell public house, High Street, however this entry refers to an address of No. 30 High Street. Further entries recording the Blue Bell show the location as being 33 High Street (Pigot and Dean, 1821) and 96-98 High Street (Pigot and Slater, 1841).

5.2 It is unclear from this evidence whether the first public house named the Blue Bell was later relocated, or whether the anomaly in numbering is a result of re-numbering of High Street over time. The earliest reference clearly aligned with the present site, however, is in Slater's Directory of 1850, which records the Blue Bell at 70 High Street. The landlord at this time was James Mather, described in Whelan's Directory of 1853 as a "Victualler and Cigar Importer".

5.3 The earliest accurate mapping of the site is provided by the Ordnance Survey five feet to one mile series of town plans, also dated to 1850, which included a series of sheets recording the layout of Manchester City Centre. At this time the current partially curved elevations of the building facing Turner Street and High Street did not exist, and High Street did not extend further to the north-

east as it does today. The site was partially occupied by the Blue Bell Public House, forming a triangular point at the junction of Turner Street and High Street.

5.4 By this time the wider street pattern to the north and east of the site was already well established, with Turner Street, Back Turner Street, Thomas Street and Back Thomas Street all visible and following the same routes which can be seen today, although these have been partially truncated by the later extension of High Street. To the rear or east of the site was Elbow Street, which would later change its name to the modern Edgehill Street in the 20th century.

5.5 Adshead's map of Manchester, dated to 1851, provides a similar level of detail although the key to the map also highlights public houses such as the Blue Bell Tavern in colour. To the south of the site is the Wheatsheaf Tavern, whilst the Blue Bell is recorded as being surrounded by a series of other "Warehouses and Places of Business" occupying narrow sites perpendicular to High Street and Elbow Street. It is possible that one of these structures survives at the centre of the modern site, as discussed in Section 6 below. Adshead's map also shows the site was bisected by a narrow alleyway running from north to south in parallel with High Street and Elbow Street, which had not yet been re-named.

5.6 During 1877-1878, High Street was extended to the north-east, bisecting Turner Street, Back Turner Street, Thomas Street and Edge Street, and terminating at the Fish Market and Smithfield Market. Annotations on Bacon's Map of Manchester, of 1878 show the "New High Street" under construction. This necessitated the demolition and reconstruction of the Blue Bell on a site partially overlapping that of the original building, but slightly to the south and with a less prominent corner at the junction of High Street with Turner Street. It was during this period that the majority of the structure now present on the site was constructed, including the prominent decorative elevations facing Turner Street and High Street.

5.7 Although architectural drawings exist for the reconstruction works, at the time of writing they were in too poor a condition to be produced by the archive for inspection. An outline existing street plan related to the proposed works does exist within Manchester City Archives and is reproduced within Appendix D below. This shows the former Blue Bell Tavern as being "land to be acquired" prior to the road improvements.

5.8 Charles E. Goad's Fire Insurance Plan of Manchester, of 1886, shows the site as redeveloped following the extension of High Street in 1877 - 1878. The entirety of the site is shown as being occupied by the Blue Bell Public House and there are no other land uses recorded on the map. As Goad's plans tended to note other land uses on the upper floors of buildings, it therefore seems likely that the public house occupied the entirety of the building at this time.

5.9 In 1906, plans reproduced at Appendix D were submitted to the City of Manchester for the refurbishment and alteration of the Blue Bell, including conversion of the ground floor into shops and provision of a new shop front. Designs for the shop front were completed by Frederick Sage and Company, a well-known practice of shop fitters and designers based in London but with a regional office at 186 Deansgate in Manchester. The owner of the Blue Bell named on the application was a Mr Benjamin Briggs of "Sunnybank", Sandwich Road, Eccles. The proposals show seven large display windows enclosed by slender columns, with a timber frieze above for signage. Although the shop fronts have since been replaced, the frieze appears to remain in situ.

5.10 Subsequently, in 1907, an application was made to the City Council to install a hoist at Nos. 68-70 High Street, the plans for which are reproduced at Appendix D. The applicant for the works was Thomas Scott, Joiner and Builder of Atherton Street and Quay Street, and the owner of the

property was again named as Benjamin Briggs. By this time the building was referred to as "The Old Blue Bell Hotel" in the application drawings, indicating that hotel or public house use had ceased.

5.11 It may be inferred that when the Blue Bell was converted to retail use at ground floor, the first and second floors were used for warehouse storage, for which a goods hoist would be required. The hoist structure remains in situ at the rear of the building, as discussed in Section 6 below.

5.12 Later map evidence for land uses on the site is limited, and although the site is visible on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch to 1 mile series map of 1915, no indication as to land use is provided. Within the re-survey of the same series of 1931, however, the site is shown divided into two separate land uses suggesting the current division between retail on the ground floor with access to other rooms above from Elbow Street (later Edgehill Street). Throughout the later 20th and early 21st centuries, despite the widespread regeneration of the surrounding area, the site has remained almost entirely unchanged with only periodic shop re-fits, and the upper floors are now disused.

6. Building Description

Refer to Appendix E –Significance / Phasing Plans and Elevations, and Appendix F – Site Photographs

Exterior

6.1 The building has ground, first and second floors facing the street with an additional basement, and a small third floor level concealed within the roof structure. The form of the building is determined by its corner site and as a result the distribution of window bays between the elevations is uneven. The formal, decorative elevations of the building comprise a single bay facing west on to High Street, five bays facing north-west onto the High Street extension, a single curved bay facing north at the junction between High Street and Turner Street, and two and a half bays facing north-east onto Turner Street.

6.2 The ground floor areas are largely occupied by retail units with modern shop fronts, although the timber entablature above the shop fronts matches that detailed in the 1906 shop front conversion drawing and may therefore be original to that date. Separating the shop fronts on High Street and Turner Street are two Italianate classical doorcases, the former is visible on the drawings of c. 1906 detailing the conversion of the ground floor of the Blue Bell public house to shops. Above each of the doorcases is a section of decorative perforate stonework.

6.3 To the first and second floors, the window bays are defined by classical window surrounds with carved stone hood moulds, dropped keystones, and bracketed stone cills (see Photograph 4, Appendix G). There is some differentiation between the first and second floors, with the principal first floor accentuated by the presence of decorative stone panels beneath the window cills, and between the cill brackets. At second floor level this detail is replaced with a single decorative band of saw-toothed brickwork. In addition, the window openings of the first floor are somewhat taller than those of the second floor.

6.4 Above the second floor is a substantial brick parapet which largely conceals the roof structure. The drawings of 1906 suggest that the parapet was previously supplemented by a decorative cornice, however this has now been removed and replaced with a plain band, likely to be of cement mortar. The same drawings suggest that there were also two chimneys stacks to the rear

of the parapet wall, positioned directly above the street, a typical feature of 19th century commercial buildings in Manchester. These chimneys have also since been removed, although three further chimneys remain embedded within the roof structure itself.

6.5 Behind the parapet is the roof structure which comprises two principal roof pitches serving the High Street and Turner Street elevations, with two secondary triangular pitches above the curved section of wall between the two streets. There are no rear roof pitches as the two main pitches meet a small flat before joining the higher roof covering the third floor. This top section is of traditional double pitched form, meeting brick gable ends. All roof coverings are of natural slate.

6.6 To the rear elevation facing east onto Edgehill Street, the layout of the façade is less formal with no decorative elements, and there is no clear arrangement of window bays. Edgehill Street is the only position from which the third floor of the building can be seen, above which is a plain brickwork gable end. To the right of this is the hoist structure of c. 1907, and the return elevation of the main façade, in which there are two blocked former windows and a blocked former round-headed door at ground level. Both the tallest section of the building containing the third floor, and the hoist structure of c. 1907, are slightly stepped back from Edgehill Street, an arrangement which can be seen in the 1886 Goad Fire Insurance Plan.

6.7 The portion of the structure occupied by the third floor is rectangular in shape and occupies a clear position within the plan of the building, aligned with the historic street layout of High Street (prior to its extension) and Turner Street. This is particularly clear from the roof arrangement as seen from above (refer to Photograph 3, Appendix G). As such it seems likely that this section pre-dates the other parts of the building, which were rebuilt in order to accommodate the Elbow Street / Turner Street / High Street improvement project in 1877 - 1878. This is supported by evidence from the brickwork of these respective parts of the building as discussed below.

Materials and Architectural Details

6.8 The main external walls of the decorative sections of the building are constructed in a soft red facing brick laid in a rat trap bond with alternating headers and stretchers seen in each course of the brickwork. At the corner of High Street and Turner Street, the wall follows a continuous curve and this is achieved within the brickwork by a bond of through headers only, allowing the rear portion of each brick to be cut to meet the required radius of the curve.

6.9 The hood mouldings of the windows at first floor level are joined and accentuated by two courses of dark blue engineering brick, a modest example of the 19th century fashion for structural polychromy, where structural elements (usually bricks) of different colours were deliberately arranged to create visually striking patterns. To either side of the windows on both the first and second floors there are finely cut decorative brickwork reveals.

6.10 To the rear (Edgehill Street) elevation of the building, three separate phases of brickwork are visible. To the tallest section of the building including the third floor, the bricks used are significantly narrower than elsewhere and are laid more roughly, supporting the hypothesis discussed above that this part of the structure pre-dates the decorative elevations of 1877 – 1878 facing High Street and Turner Street.

6.11 To the return into Edgehill Street, contemporary with the decorative elevations, the bay containing three blank openings is of rough brickwork laid in English Garden Wall bond with three rows of stretchers to each row of headers.

6.12 Between these two sections is the hoist of 1907 which is also constructed of brick in English Garden Wall bond, however in this case the bricks are considerably more modern in appearance and have been fired at a much higher temperature than the older bricks seen elsewhere.

6.13 Windows are of timber framed, vertical sliding sash form throughout, with horns to the sides of the sashes to stabilise the structure, suggesting a later 19th century date. The majority of the windows are of one over one form, having one pane within the upper sash and one pane within the lower sash. This indicates a late 19th or very early 20th century date. It is possible that these windows may date to the refurbishment and conversion of the building after it ceased to be a public house in c. 1906.

6.14 To the rear, Edgehill Street elevation, some two over two sashes remain, also with horns, suggesting a mid to late 19th century date for these features. Of particular interest to the decorative elevations are the two one over one sash windows within the curved bay at the junction of Turner Street and High Street, which follow the curve of the main wall and contain finely detailed curved glass.

Interior

6.15 The ground floor retail units fall outside the scope of this study and the following comments concern the first, second and third floors. The first and second floors are each of similar form and whilst original structural elements remain in place there are no original finishes remaining. Ceilings have been removed and partially replaced with modern suspended ceilings, which have themselves been removed leaving a lattice timber frame only in place. Floors are original and of traditional boarded timber construction with timber joists. Intermediate structural supports, where visible, are cast iron columns which have been enclosed in plywood boarding.

6.16 Internal walls have no original finishes and are largely of plain brickwork. Although fireplaces remain identifiable within the brickwork, there are no original fire grates or other features of interest present. Between the first and second floors there is a quarter turn timber staircase of mid-19th century date, this is continued with a plainer straight staircase between the second and third floor levels, contained within a timber boarded enclosure.

6.17 At third floor level the accommodation is contained within the roof space. Although there are no original finishes remaining, horizontal markings are visible across the roof timbers indicating where timber laths were previously applied in order to hold lime plaster in place. The roof timbers appear to be of high-quality imported softwood, possibly of Balkan origin, and as a result there is potential for Baltic markings to be present within the timbers, although none have been identified to date. There are no other features of note.

Stylistic Discussion

6.18 The building is a good example of the High Renaissance Italian revival style which was popular for commercial buildings of all types in Manchester in the mid to late 19th century. Many of the features seen on the decorative elevations facing High Street and Turner Street are directly taken from classical Italian precedents, notably the use of dropped keystones, decorative window cill brackets, and classical door surrounds with pilasters. The use of dropped keystones is a particular feature common to Late Renaissance Mannerism in central and northern Italy. The existing elevation drawings of 1906 show many similar features at ground floor and basement levels which are also typical of the style, and which were lost in the installation of the new shop front.

6.19 Perhaps unusual is the use of this common style of Manchester commercial architecture for what, in the first instance, was simply a reconstructed public house. The reason for this may be the demolition of the Blue Bell for the purposes of a municipal improvement scheme in 1877 – 1878 (the High Street / Turner Street / Elbow Street scheme). As such reconstruction may have been offered by the authorities in what was considered the standard style of the period in Manchester, an approach more usually adopted for warehouses and other larger commercial premises, however there is no evidence available to confirm this hypothesis. In other respects, however, there are few unusual or distinctive features of note.

Phasing and Development Summary

6.20 The map regression evidence, archival material, and visual inspection on site, suggest that there are at present three separate phases of construction within the building. These consist of the following: a small four-storey block set perpendicular to High Street and Elbow Street, likely to date to the early to mid-19th century, and to pre-date the main structure; the main three storey block facing Turner Street and High Street, dating to the extension of High Street in c. 1877 – 1878; and finally the new hoist tower on Edgehill Street (1907) and the shop front (1906) installed at the closure of the Blue Bell public house in 1906.

7. Significance Assessment

Refer to Appendix E – Annotated Significance / Phasing Plans and Elevations

7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages Local Planning Authorities to ensure that applicants understand the significance of heritage assets affected by proposals for development. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides further detail on the intended meaning of "significance" in this context, proposing that this should be considered in terms of archaeological interest, architectural and artistic interest, and historic interest. In this section, 68-70 High Street is assessed under each of these headings.

7.2 Particular consideration is also given to the contribution which the building makes to the overall significance of the Smithfield Conservation Area, the Designated Heritage Asset of which 68-70 High Street forms a part.

7.3 Significance does not lend itself to quantitative measures, however for planning discussion purposes the level of significance is determined here as being *high, medium*, or *low*. In addition, significance may be considered to be *neutral* or, in some cases, *detrimental.*

Archaeological Significance

7.4 In consideration of the age of the building and the nature of the timbers noted within it there is some potential for Baltic timber markings to be present which could be of archaeological interest. There is also some potential for further exploration of the phasing of the structure and the extent to which an earlier 19th century building survives within the later 19th century structure of 1877 – 1878. Almost all other internal features have been removed, however, and it is unlikely that such an investigation into the structure could yield any particularly important information in relation to construction technology of the period. As such, the building is considered to have limited archaeological potential *and the level of significance in archaeological terms is therefore low*.

Architectural and Artistic Significance

7.5 The identity of the original architect for the demolition and reconstruction of the building during the extension of High Street in c. 1877 – 1878 is not known. The designers (as opposed to architects) for the conversion and refurbishment of the public house in 1906, Frederick Sage & Co., were a major shop fitting firm based in London, with a short-lived office in Manchester which closed in 1910. Although many celebrated shopfronts by Frederick Sage remain in other parts of the country, few components parts of the shop front at Nos. 68-70 High Street survive. In wider architectural terms, Nos. 68-70 High Street is a good example of the Italianate Manchester commercial style with some good classical detailing, but lacks any unusual features of note. As such, *the architectural and artistic significance of the building is considered to be medium - low.*

Historic Significance

7.6 The building is not known to be associated within any persons or events of particular historic interest, and there are no known archive records of relevance in relation to the Blue Bell Tavern. The building occupies a position of modest importance in respect of the development of Manchester and the formal structure of the city centre because of its reconstruction having a pivotal role in the extension of the High Street in 1877 – 1878. As such, *the historic interest of the building is considered to be medium - low.*

Contribution to the significance of the Smithfield Conservation Area

7.7 In respect of the Smithfield Conservation Area, 68-70 High Street sits at the western edge of the designated area and is part of a series of 19th century commercial buildings on the eastern side of the High Street which mark the transition between the heavily regenerated Arndale Centre around Market Street, and the Northern Quarter which was not subject to the same comprehensive redevelopment and has seen more incremental changes in recent years.

7.8 68-70 High Street also marks the point at which Nicholas Croft and High Street diverge, with trams and the majority of road traffic following the former running north-west towards Shudehill interchange. As such, the decorative façade of 68-70 High Street is a prominent feature at the entrance to the Smithfield Conservation Area, when the designated area is approached from the main shopping and entertainment areas of the City Centre. It is considered to be a *positive contributor* to the character of the Smithfield Conservation Area.

Significance Plans

7.9 As part of this assessment, annotated Significance and Phasing Plans have been developed. The purpose of this exercise is to provide an indication of the extent to which heritage significance varies within the building, and to highlight any particular features of note. In this instance, the primary features of interest are the surviving mid-19th century portion of the building relating to the street orientation of High Street and Edgehill Street (previously Elbow Street), the fragmentary remains of the shop front of c. 1906, and the location of the hoist tower installed in c. 1907. Few features of interest survive internally.

8. Impact Assessment

Assessment structure

8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the NPPF) requires local authorities to consider the "impact" of proposals upon heritage assets. The NPPF distinguishes between those which involve "substantial harm" and "less than substantial harm". Substantial harm is usually taken to mean the demolition of a listed building or a proposal which fundamentally alters the special characteristics which original made it eligible for listing. It is not considered that the present proposals could be deemed substantial harm for the purposes of the NPPF.

8.2 To consider whether "less than substantial harm" would be incurred by the proposals, an impact assessment is required which assesses each of the principal interventions and considers their effects upon the building and its interest as a whole. There is no prescribed format for impact assessments for the purposes of the NPPF, however established best practice is to refer to the *adverse* or *beneficial* impact of each aspect of the proposals, and to assess these in gradations of *minor*, *moderate* or *major.* Alternatively, if there is no impact, proposals may be defined as *neutral* in respect of their impact upon the significance of the designated heritage asset.

The proposals

8.3 The proposed refurbishment of Nos. 68-70 High Street is detailed within the submitted planning stage drawings from Seed Architects (Project no. 3293, drawing numbers A001-A904, dated May 2023) which should be reviewed alongside the following commentary on the heritage aspects of the proposals.

8.4 The proposals, and in particular the configuration of the proposed new dormer windows, have been developed by Seed Architects following pre-application feedback provided by Manchester City Council, as Local Planning Authority, in December 2022.

8.5 The following commentary concentrates upon those aspects of the proposals which will affect the external envelope of the building, as it is these which will determine the impact of the proposed scheme upon the building's contribution to the significance of the Smithfield Conservation Area, which is the relevant Designated Heritage Asset for the purposes of the NPPF.

8.6 In summary, the proposed works comprise the internal refurbishment and subdivision of the upper floors of the building to provide 26 ensuite hotel rooms, alongside new lift and staircase access and a new reception area at ground level. The interior of the existing retail unit which occupies the majority of the ground floor level will be unaffected by the proposals. The hotel accommodation will be distributed across the existing first to third floors, with a new fourth floor of accommodation provided within the current roof void.

8.7 The third floor hotel accommodation and the new fourth floor hotel accommodation within the existing roof void are proposed to be lit by new conservation roof lights and dormer windows, respectively. The installation of this proposed new glazing would be the most significant alteration to the building externally under the proposals, and would therefore have the most notable potential impact upon the character of the Smithfield Conservation Area.

8.8 As demonstrated within the Seed Architects 3D views of the proposed scheme included within the planning stage drawings, as a result of the topography of the surroundings of the site the proposed new conservation roof lights would be largely invisible from publicly accessible areas at ground floor level. This is due to the slope away northwards from the site along Nicholas Croft and the densely packed nature of the street plan around the High Street extension and Turner Street to the north and east of the site.

8.9 As shown within the planning stage drawings, the visible dormer windows proposed within the existing roof would comprise three windows facing north-west towards Nicholas Croft and two windows facing north-east towards Turner Street. The proposed dormer structures would be clad in zinc with slimline framed contemporary style windows. The distribution of the new dormer windows would reflect the existing window bay arrangement of the original first and second floors. This would provide a high standard of new design, reflecting the existing layout of the elevations whilst clearly distinguishing the proposed new dormer windows from the surrounding historic fabric, in accordance with conservation best practice.

8.10 A secondary feature which would be visible externally under the proposed refurbishment would be a new lift overrun shaft. It is proposed that this structure would be clad in zinc. The lift reflects the position of the original hoist of c. 1907. As in respect of the proposed dormer windows, therefore, the proposed lift overrun shaft would provide high quality new design, following the existing pattern set by the position of the hoist shaft whilst clearly distinguishing new elements from original fabric in accordance with conservation best practice.

8.11 The retained features of the historic envelope of the building are proposed to be suitably repaired by specialist conservation contractors during the refurbishments works. This would include repair and refurbishment of the existing one over one sash windows to the first and second floors, repair of decorative stone dressings, replacement of missing windows to match existing, and repair of the cornice above the existing retail unit. The retained brickwork to the external envelope would also be repaired and repointed as required. In addition, improvements would be undertaken to the shop front of the retain unit including rationalisation of signage, provision of signage within the frieze of the cornice, and reopening of blocked fan lights.

Impact Assessment

8.12 The proposals would facilitate the refurbishment of Nos. 68-70 High Street, the retention and conservation of the surviving traditional building materials forming the external envelope of the building, and its ongoing productive use as part of the city centre. The proposed new dormer windows and the zinc clad extension to the lift shaft which will be visible externally are of a high design standard and will be clearly distinguishable from historic fabric. As such it is not considered that these new installations would detract from the significance of the building, and by extension its contribution to the significance of the Smithfield Conservation Area.

8.13 As such, it is considered that the proposed refurbishment and re-use of Nos. 68-70 High Street would enhance the Smithfield Conservation Area and therefore that for the purposes of the NPPF there would be a *minor beneficial* impact upon the significance of the Designated Heritage Asset. As such, the proposals are considered to comply with the requirements of the NPPF and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

9. Summary and Conclusions

9.1 The following bullet points provide a summary of our professional opinion of the heritage significance of 68-70 High Street, and the position in relation to heritage planning matters for the proposed refurbishment and development of the site:

- The building is located within the Smithfield Conservation Area and as such forms part of a Designated Heritage Asset for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework;

- 68-70 High Street developed as the Blue Bell Tavern in the mid-19th century and the public house was re-built in c. 1877 – 1878 in order to facilitate the extension of High Street;

- It is likely that the rear portion of the site pre-dates the mid-19th century reconstruction and is a separate building enclosed by the new elevation to meet the revised road layout;

- In 1906, the building was converted for use as a shop on the ground floor with a new hoist installed in 1907 to facilitate a presumed warehouse use on the first and second floors;

- Although few original features remain internally, the first and second floors of the main elevations retain decorative brickwork and stonework, and good quality sash windows;

- 68-70 High Street is a good example of an Italian Renaissance revival style widespread across many types of commercial architecture in Manchester in the mid-19th century;

- The building is considered to be of medium – low significance in respect of both archaeological, architectural / artistic, and historic interest;

- In respect of the Smithfield Conservation Area, the building is considered to be a positive contributor to the special character of the area;

- The building is now the subject of proposals for internal and external refurbishment to facilitate re-use as hotel accommodation. This includes the provision of new dormer windows serving accommodation within a new fourth floor layout, and a new lift overrun tower to the rear.

- The proposed alterations are of a high standard of design, reflecting the existing layout of the original fenestration and hoist location in the new windows and lift overrun shaft whilst clearly distinguishing between historic fabric and modern interventions.

- The impact of the proposals is considered to be *minor beneficial* in respect of the effect upon the significance of the Smithfield Conservation area and it is not considered that any "harm" would be incurred to the designated heritage asset (the conservation area) as a result of the proposed refurbishment of the building.

- As such, the proposals are considered to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPG) and relevant local policies applicable to Designated Heritage Assets.

10. Sources

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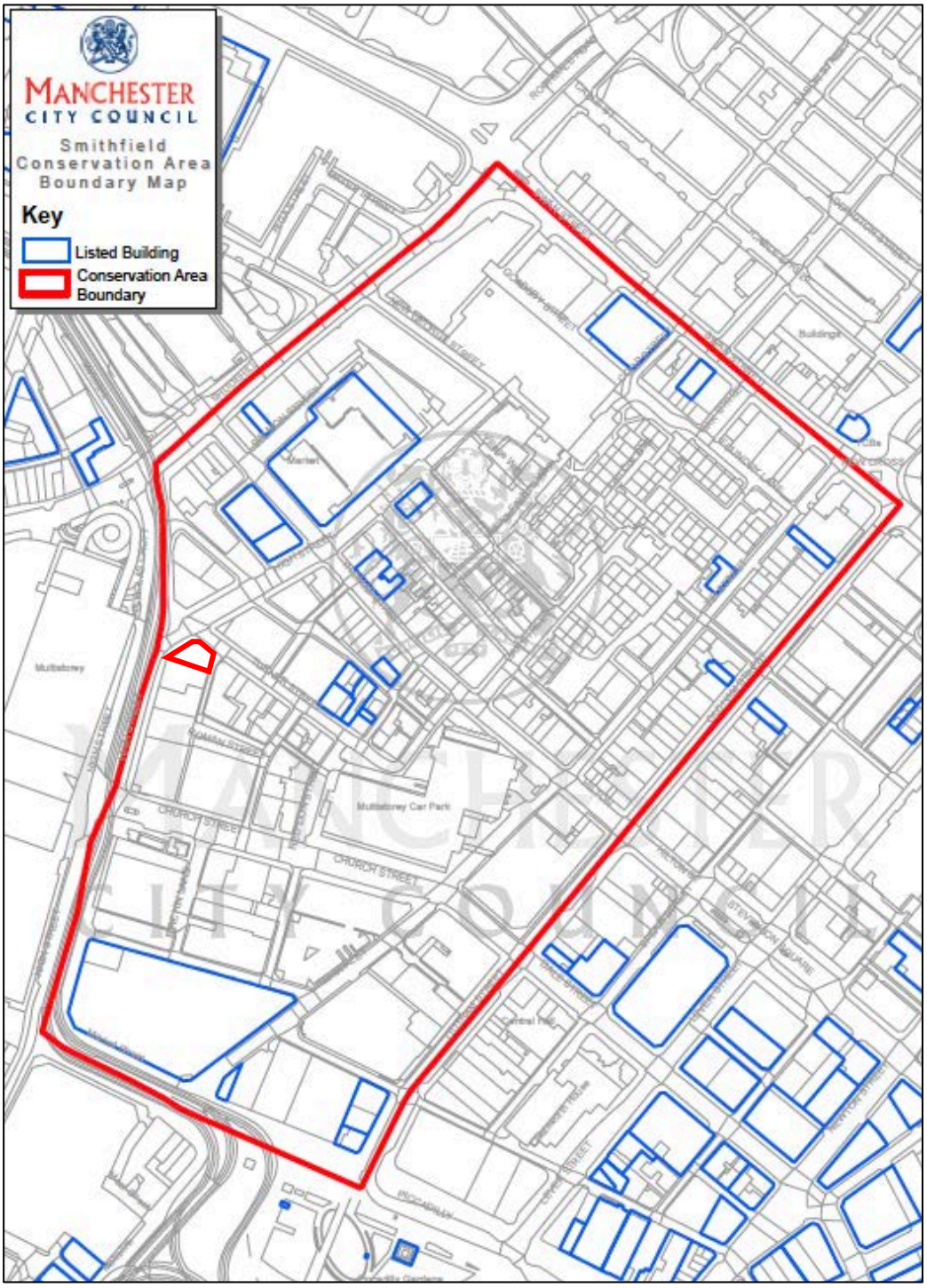
Appendix A: Site Plan



Mapping: Ordnance Survey / Historic England

Not reproduced to scale.
Site outlined in red.

Appendix B: Smithfield Conservation Area Plan



Mapping: Ordnance Survey / Manchester City Council

Not reproduced to scale.
Location of site outlined in red.

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Appendix C: Historic Mapping



University of Manchester Special Collections

Green's map of Manchester, surveyed 1787, published 1794.
Not reproduced to scale.
Approximate location of present-day site outlined in red.



University of Manchester Special Collections

Ordnance Survey Five Feet to One Mile Series (Town Plans). Manchester and Salford, 1850.
Not reproduced to scale.
Approximate location of present-day site outlined in red.

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University of Manchester Special Collections

Adshead's map of Manchester, May 1851.
Not reproduced to scale.
Approximate location of present-day site outlined in red.

Note the original location of the Blue Bell public house in pink, partially overlapping the footprint of the modern site. Other commercial buildings are also present on the site running perpendicular between High Street and Elbow Street, part of one of these buildings appears to survive within the modern structure.



University of Manchester Special Collections

Bacon's map of Manchester, 1878.
Not reproduced to scale.
Approximate location of present-day site highlighted in red.

Note the annotations on the map showing the amended road layout to the north-east of the site, indicating the "New High Street" under construction, running north-east between the site and the Fish Market and Smithfield Market.

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British Library

Chas. E. Goad's Insurance Plan of Manchester, August 1886.
Not reproduced to scale.
Approximate location of present-day site outlined in red.

Note the indent into the building from Elbow Street, which formed the future site of the hoist tower in c. 1907.

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National Library of Scotland

Ordnance Survey 25 inches to 1 mile series: Lancashire. Surveyed 1915, published 1922.
Not reproduced to scale.
Approximate location of present-day site outlined in red.

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National Library of Scotland

Ordnance Survey 25 inches to 1 mile series: Lancashire. Revised 1931, published 1933.
Not reproduced to scale.
Approximate location of present-day site outlined in red.

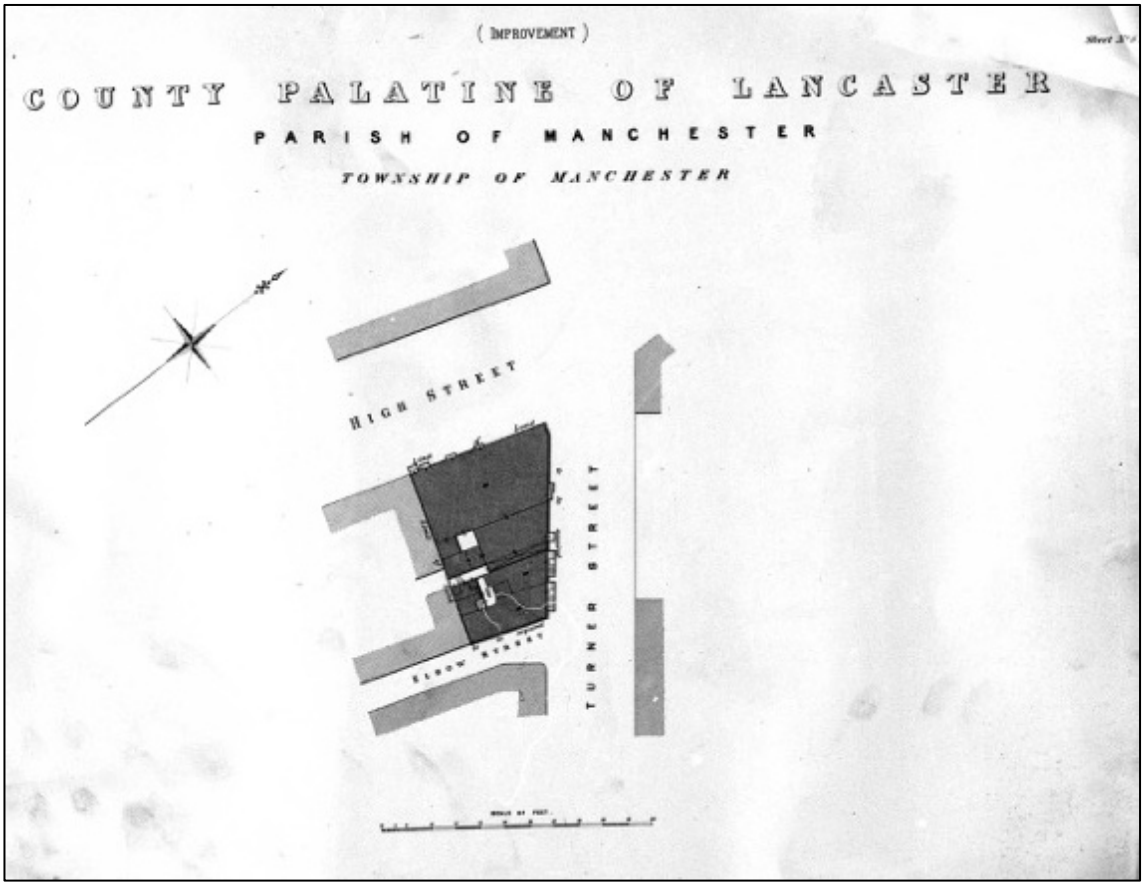
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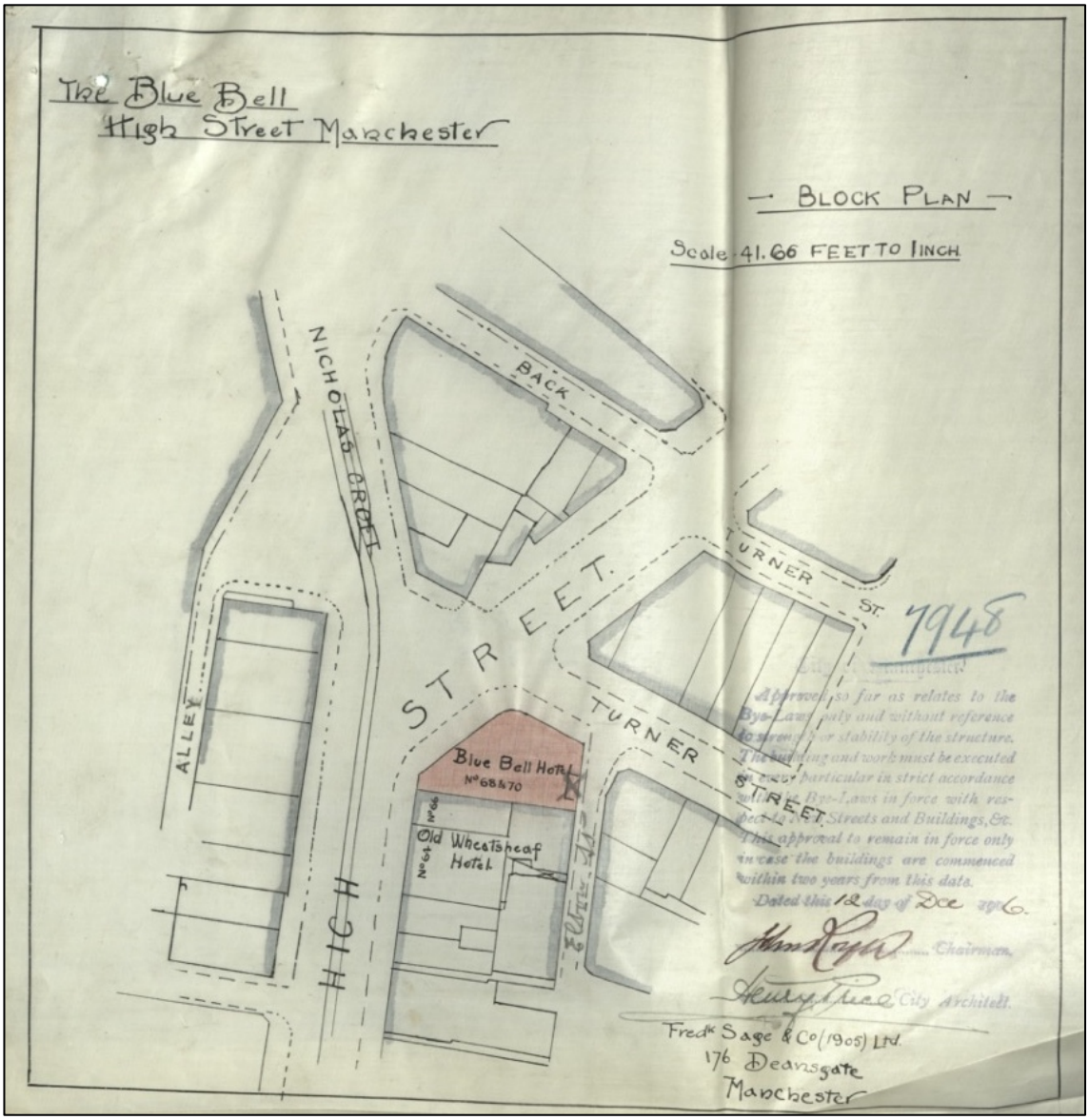
Appendix D: Historic architectural drawings



Manchester City Archives

Existing plan of the Blue Bell Tavern prior to the improvement works to the corner of High Street and Turner Street, and the extension of High Street, c. 1877 – 1878.

Note the annotation to the effect that the site is “Land to be Acquired” for the purposes of the proposed improvement scheme.

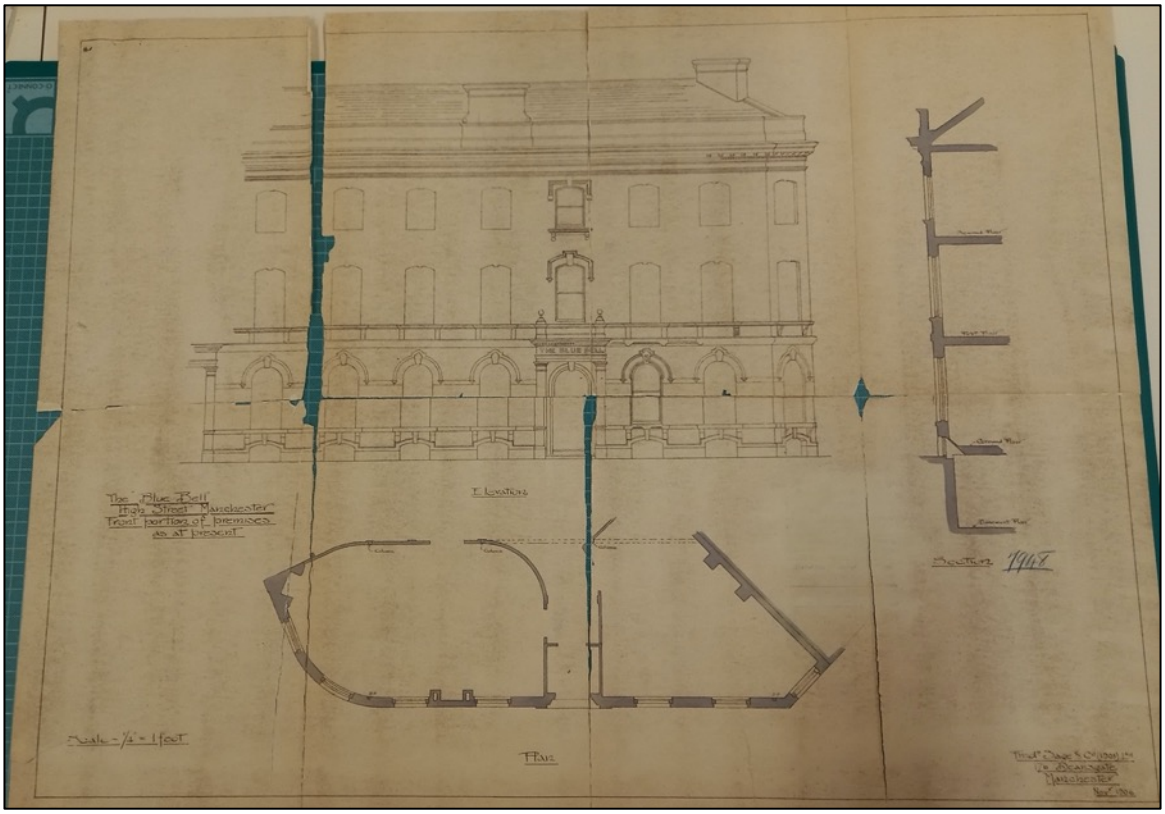


Manchester City Archives

Block Plan of the Blue Bell Public House, December 1906.
Frederick Sage & Company, Shopfitters, 176 Deansgate, Manchester.

This block plan was submitted for identification purposes along with the designs for the new shop front by Frederick Sage & Company, reproduced below. Note the pencil annotation identifying Elbow Street. The location of the hoist (proposed in 1907) has also been added in pencil, suggesting the plan was reused as part of the application for the hoist to the rear of the building.

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Manchester City Archives

Existing elevation of the Blue Bell Public House, November 1906.
Frederick Sage & Company, Shopfitters, 176 Deansgate, Manchester.

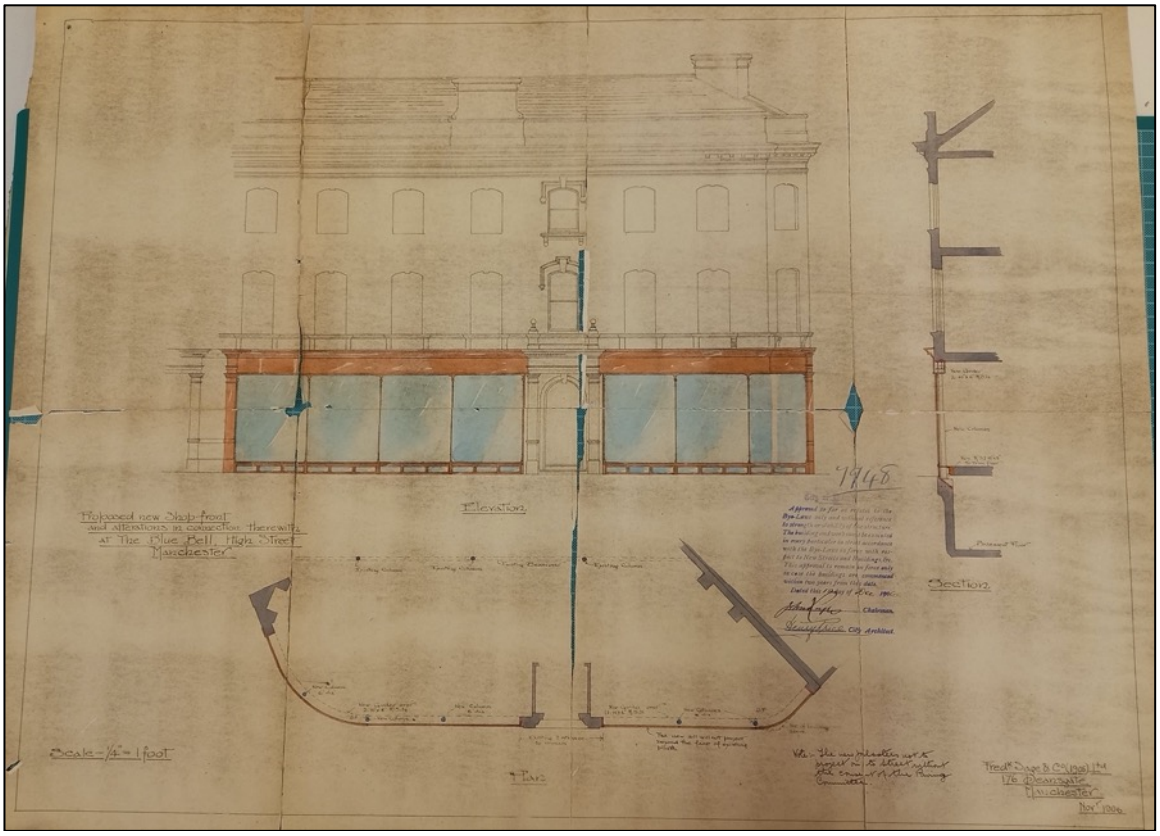
Note the parapet chimneys and cornice, which were later removed. To the ground floor, also removed for the shop front, an elegant scheme of round headed window openings can be seen matching the Italianate style decoration which remains visible today on the first and second floors. The ground floor classical doorcase is also visible, and this remains in situ.

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Manchester City Archives

Proposed elevation, November 1906
Frederick Sage & Company, Shopfitters, 176 Deansgate, Manchester

Note the substantial timber frieze above the display windows, which appears to survive intact although all other parts of the shop front have now been replaced.

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Manchester City Archives

Plan of Proposed Hoist at the Old Blue Bell Hotel, February 1907.
Thomas Scott, Joiner and Builder, Atherton Street and Quay Street, Manchester.

Note the pair of one over one timber framed vertical sliding sash windows to the third floor of the building, which remain in situ.

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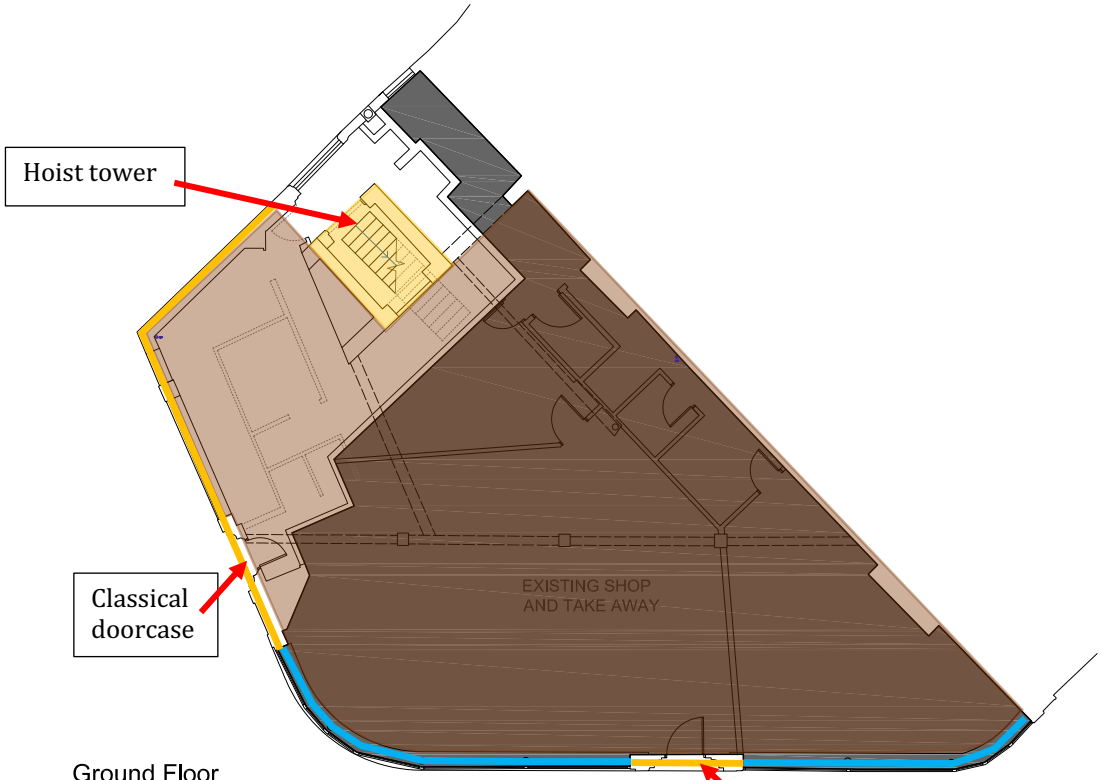
Appendix D: Annotated Significance / Phasing plans and Elevations

Baseline Drawings: Seed Architects

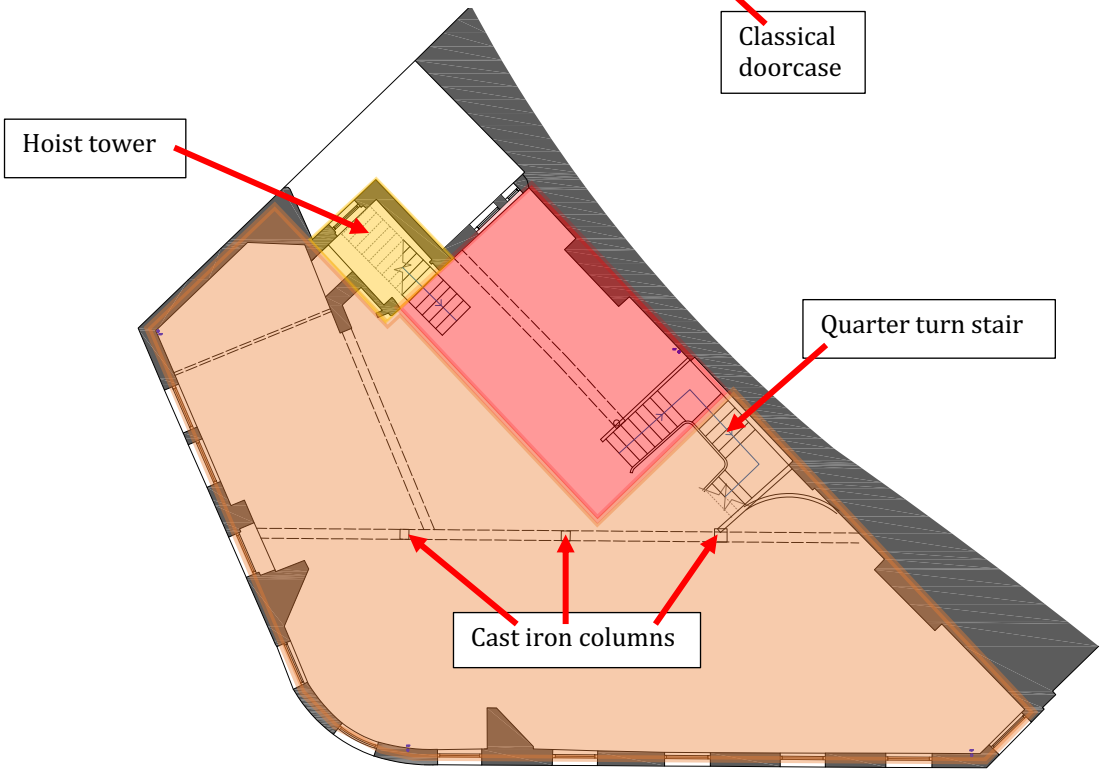
Key to Annotated Significance and Phasing Plans:

Medium – low Significance Four storey structure (mid-19th century)	
Medium – low Significance: Main building (1877 – 1878)	
Medium – low Significance: Hoist tower (1907)	
Neutral / degraded Significance Partial remains of shop front installation (1906)	
Detrimental Significance Modern shop fittings	

Baseline drawings are not reproduced to scale.



Ground Floor



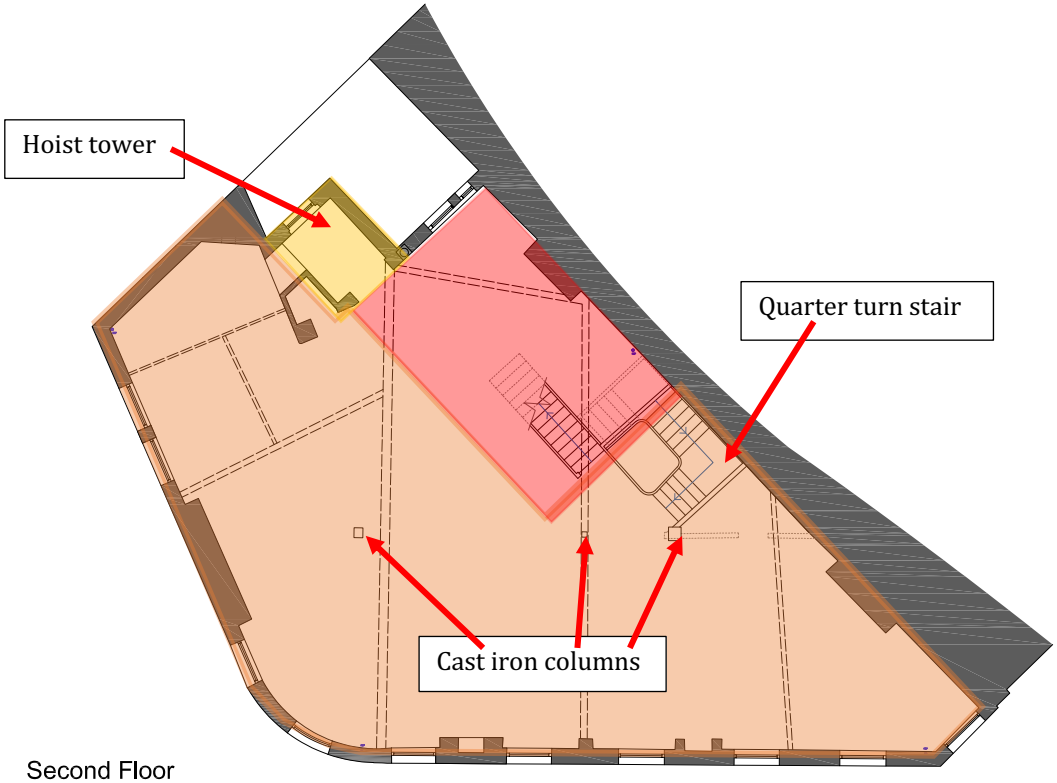
First Floor

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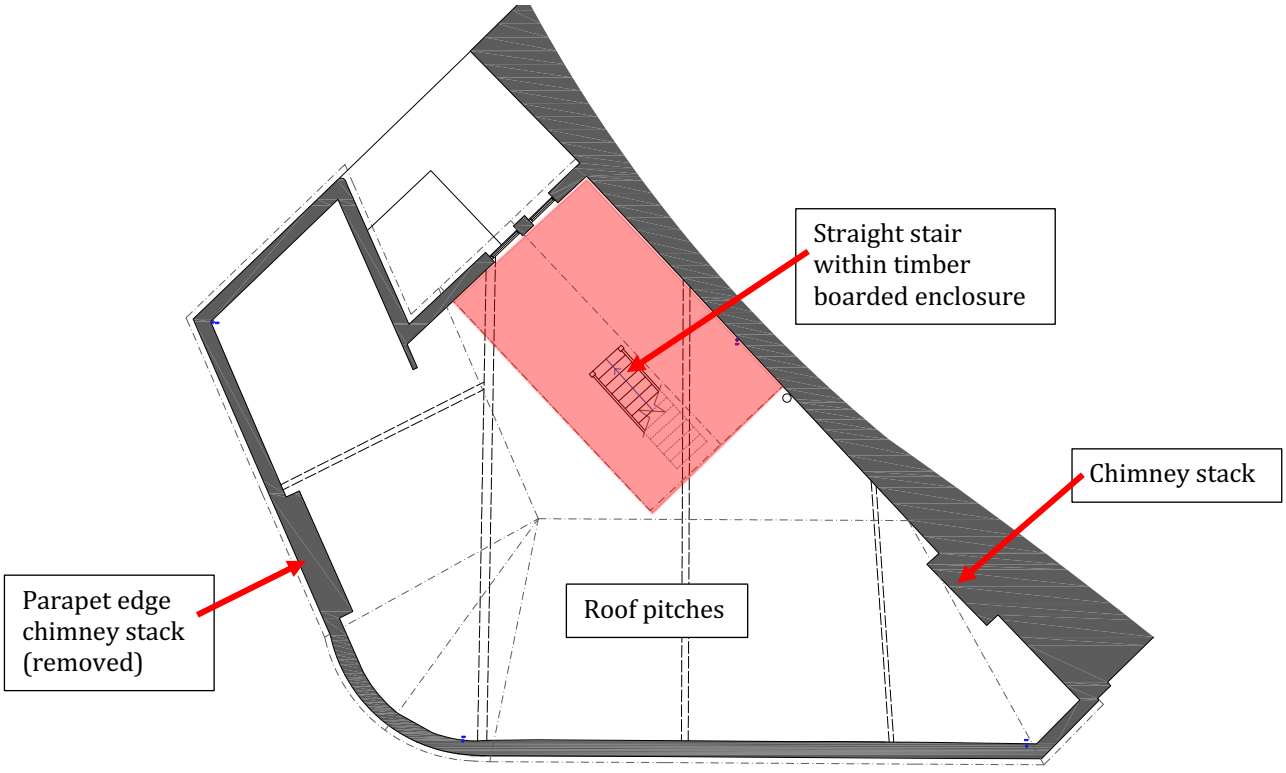
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Second Floor



Third Floor

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Appendix E: Site photographs



Google Streetview May 2019

1. Nos. 68-70 High Street as seen from the junction of Nicholas Croft and High Street, prior to the erection of scaffolding around the structure. Note the chimney stack to the rear.



Google Streetview May 2019

2. Nos. 68-70 High Street, as seen from the junction of High Street and Turner Street. Note the continuously curved brickwork at the corner between the two streets.

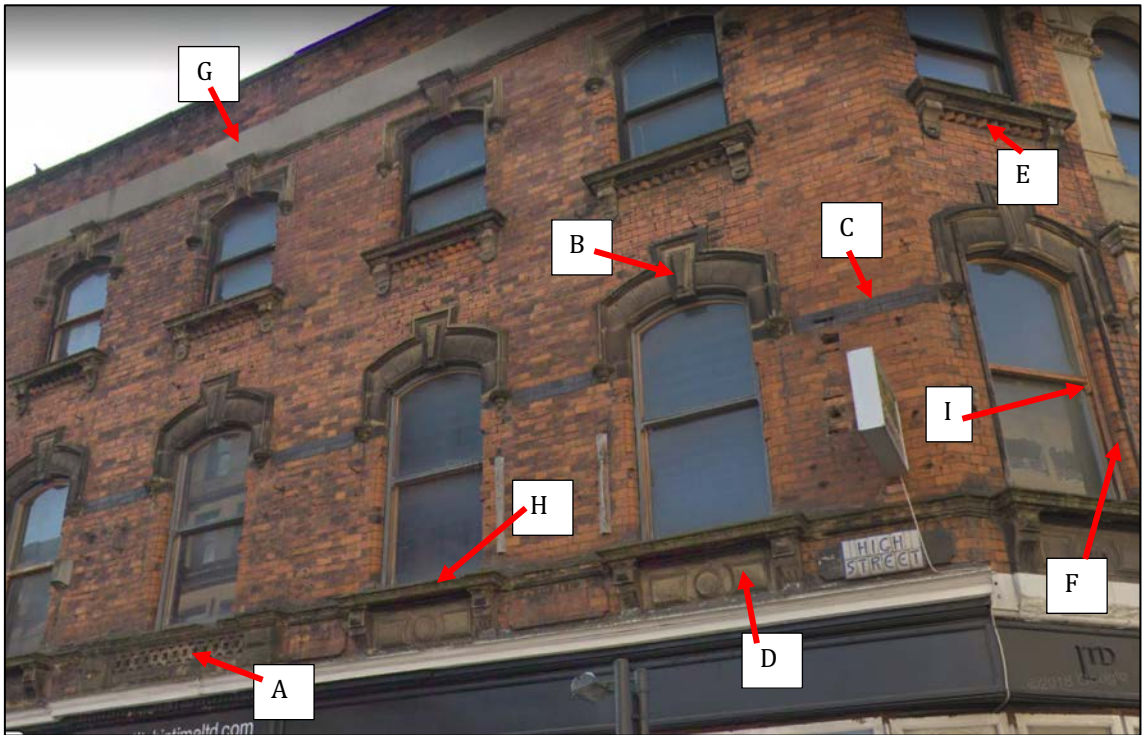


Google Streetview 2022

3. Aerial view of Nos. 68-70 High Street, as seen from the junction of High Street and Turner Street, with annotations.

Highlighted in red is the double pitched roof section above the third floor of the building towards the rear of the site, perpendicular with Edgehill Street. When viewed from above, this section of the building is evidently a separate structure following the historic layout of High Street and Edgehill Street (previously Elbow Street) and likely to pre-date the extension of High Street in 1877 – 1878. This is supported by separate evidence from the brickwork in this area.

Highlighted in blue to the elevations facing Turner Street and High Street are the locations of the former chimneys at the parapet edge, features which are visible on the existing drawings of 1906 but which have since been removed. Parapet edge chimneys were a typical feature of commercial buildings in Manchester in the mid to late 19th century.



Google Streetview May 2019

4. Typical section of decorative elevations to High Street, with annotations.

Note the following items referred to in the text discussion of the exterior:

A. Perforate stone decoration above classical doorcase;
B. Dropped keystone within decorative stone hood mould to window;
C. Double course of blue engineering brick linking first floor hood moulds (structural polychromy);
D. Decorative stone panel beneath window cills of first floor;
E. Saw tooth brickwork section beneath window cills of second floor;
F. Curved window reveal detail in cut brickwork;
G. Decorative cornice removed.
H. Decorative stone window cill and brackets
I. Sash window horn detail, developed to stablise the sash frame



WCS May 2023

5. Edgehill Street return elevation as seen from Turner Street. Note the two blocked windows and the blocked doorway at ground floor level.



WCS May 2023

6. Detail of ground floor at the Turner Street and High Street junction, with the frieze of the c. 1906 Frederick Sage shop front scheme visible.



WCS December 2022

7. Italianate classical doorcase (c. 1877 – 1878) to Turner Street elevation. The round-headed doorway is interrupted by a substantial keystone, as seen in the window openings to the floors above.



WCS December 2022

8. Second Italianate classical doorcase, to High Street elevation. This feature is visible on the existing drawings submitted in support of the 1906 shop front installation.

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WCS December 2022

9. Edgehill Street elevation as seen from ground level. The older mid-19th century portion of the building is to the rear left centre of the image behind the extraction ductwork.



WCS December 2022

10. Contextual view of the building from Edgehill Street, looking back towards Turner Street.



WCS December 2022

11. Detail of brickwork to probable mid-19th century structure to the rear of the site. Although laid in English Garden Wall bond like the later main part of the structure, the bricks are narrower, less heavily fired and more roughly laid than those to the main elevation.

The two over two sliding sash window, with horns, is likely to be a later replacement, post-dating the brickwork.



WCS December 2022

12. Detail of brickwork to the c. 1907 hoist structure adjacent. Also laid in English Garden Wall bond with three rows of stretcher bricks to each one row of headers, the bricks are larger, much more heavily fired and more evenly laid than in the older portion of the building to the rear.

Note in addition the one over one sliding sash window with horns.



Seed Architects September 2022

13. Interior of the first floor. Although original timber floorboards remain in place, the ceiling finishes have been replaced with a timber framed suspended ceiling, since removed.



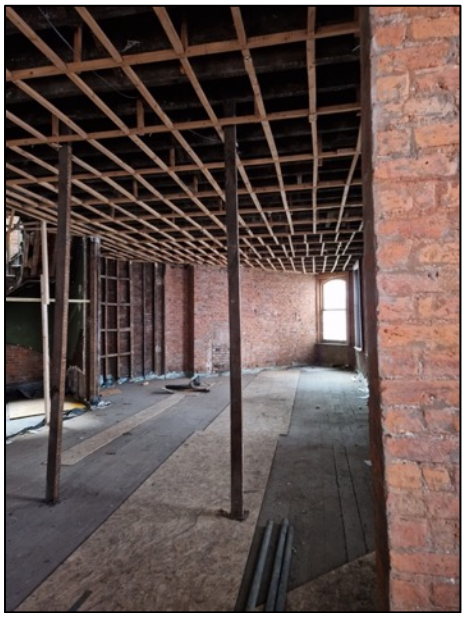
Seed Architects September 2022

14. The first floor, with the base of the staircase visible to the rear right hand side of the image. The cast iron columns of the original structure remain in place, enclosed by plywood boarding.



Seed Architects September 2022

15. A further view of the first floor with the staircase to the rear. The ears of the cast iron column (centre left) can be seen above the plywood boarding.



Seed Architects September 2022

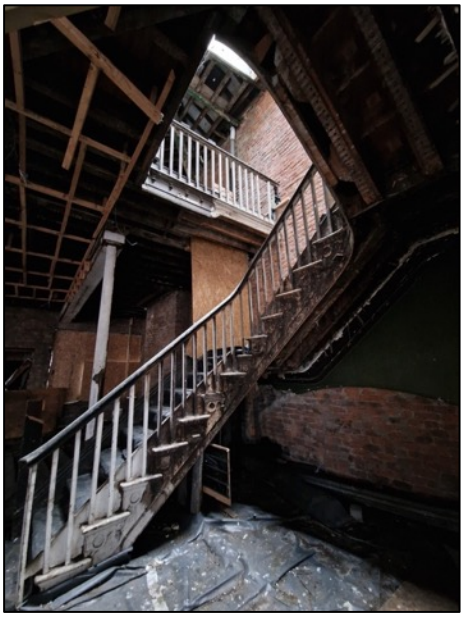
16. The first floor looking towards the single window bay facing west on to High Street.

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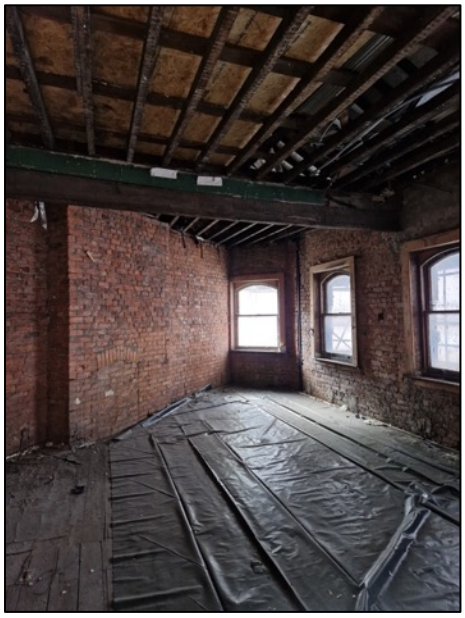
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17. Quarter turn timber staircase between first and second floors.



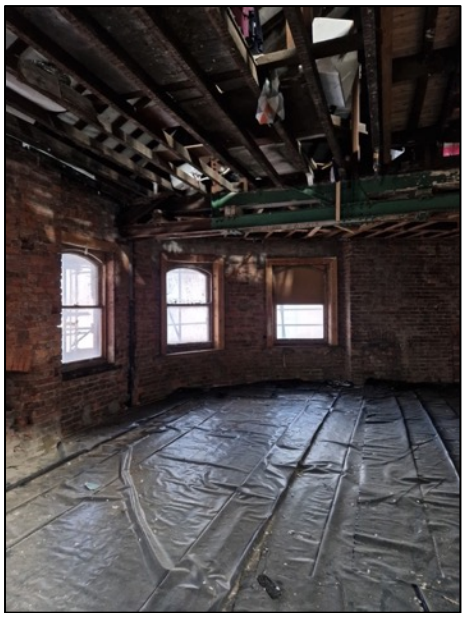
Seed Architects September 2022

18. View of the second floor looking towards the single bay facing west into High Street.



Seed Architects September 2022

19. The second floor with typical sash windows visible. The windows are of timber one over one vertical sliding sash form, with rounded heads corresponding to the external lintel detail. Note the fireplace; no original grates survive.



Seed Architects September 2022

20. The second floor looking towards Turner Street with exposed brickwork visible. No original wall finishes appear to be present.



Seed Architects September 2022

21. The second floor with the timber boarded enclosure of the upper staircase visible to the right hand side of the image.



Seed Architects September 2022

22. Upper section of timber staircase, between the second and third floors, contained within a timber boarded enclosure.



Seed Architects September 2022

23. View within the third floor, contained within the roof space. The timber appears to be an imported softwood, possibly of Balkan origin.



Seed Architects September 2022

24. Detail of the third floor showing horizontal markings to the timbers where timber laths were previously applied to support plaster finishes.

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25. Further detail of timber to the third floor.



Seed Architects September 2022

26. Timber roof arrangement to the third floor; the roof has also been strengthened with inserted steelwork.