



## Heritage Statement

(Revised Version)

On behalf of

**Mr T.A. Ahmad**

Concerning

**129 – 131 High Street,  
Rickmansworth,  
Hertfordshire WD3 1AN**

February 2021



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*Cover: South-east facing view of 129 – 131 High Street Rickmansworth (Border 2019)*

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## 1 Non-Technical Summary

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Border Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a Heritage Statement with regard to a proposed development at Nos. 129 – 131 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The scheme comprises the internal refurbishment of the existing buildings, the demolition of the existing single storey rear extension and the construction of a new second floor and access stair to the rear for four residential apartments at ground, first and second floor levels.

This Heritage Statement assesses the possible impacts of the proposed development on built heritage assets in and around the site. Built heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals comprise:

- **No. 133, 133a & 133b High Street Rickmansworth** – A Grade II listed house timber-framed house, originally dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century with later alterations, which immediately adjoins Nos. 129-131 High Street.
- **Nos 72 & 74 High Street Rickmansworth:** Two Grade II listed buildings located roughly opposite the site on the north side of the High Street, respectively built in the mid-1920s and the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century.
- **Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area** – The site is located within the Conservation Area as designated by Three Rivers District Council, and is characterised by the contrast of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial development around a medieval core.

It is **not** thought that the proposed development of the site would materially affect the significance of the built heritage assets listed above, as well as the wider character of the Rickmansworth Conservation Area.

As the buildings currently appear, Nos. 129-131 are commercial properties dating from the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century with extensive alterations in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (when No. 131 was converted into a bank). It is considered that the amended scheme would distinctly improve the external appearance of both buildings, while preserving their small-scale intimate character within the High Street. The replacement dormer windows in the roof of Nos. 129-131 will be identical in scale and form to those existing. The setting of the adjacent Grade II listed building at No. 133 High Street will be subject to a minor degree of change; particularly in terms of views looking towards the side and rear of the building along Bury Lane, however it is considered that the reduced height, massing and external detailing of the rear extension as now proposed will respect the setting and appearance of the listed building.

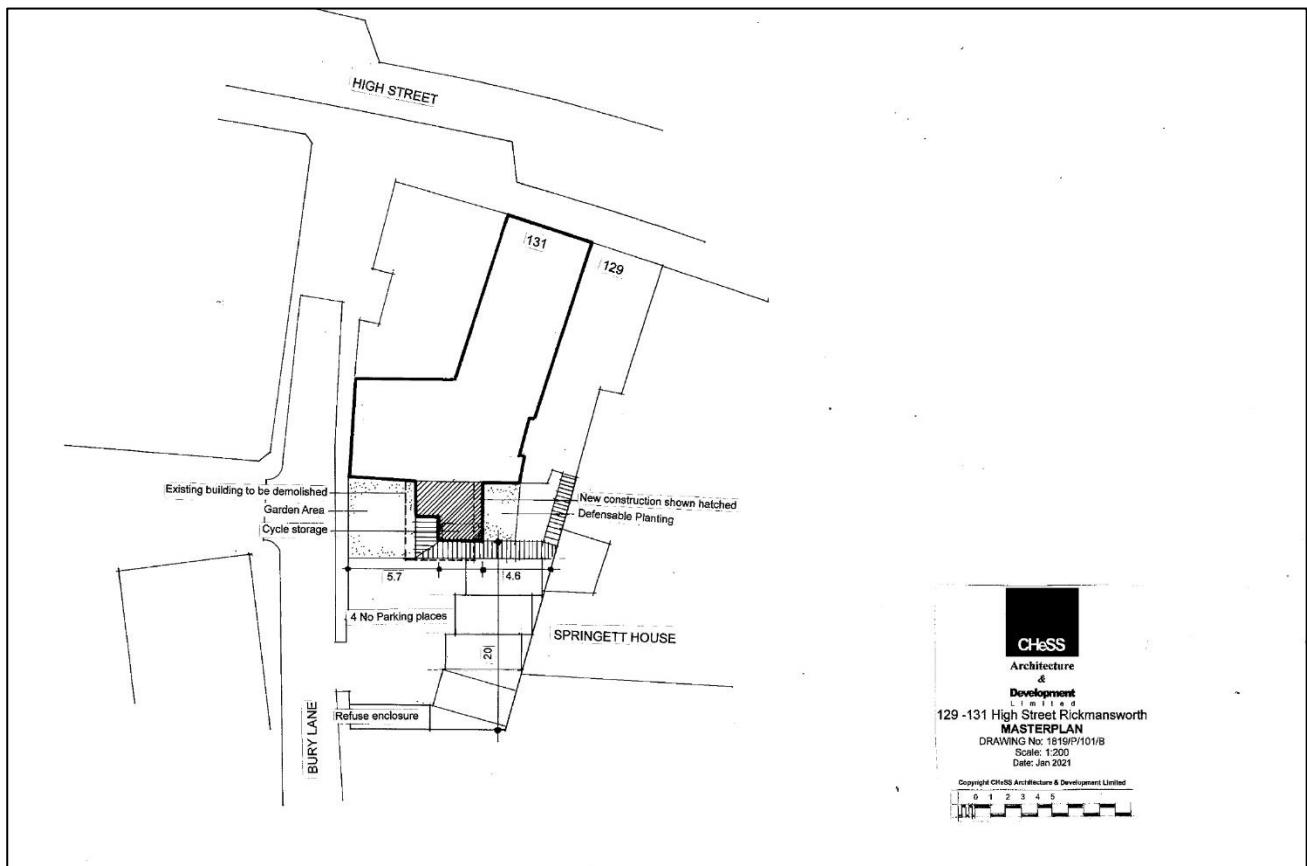
It may be argued that the proposals will also enhance views looking along the High Street and towards the rear of the property looking along Bury Lane, which are considered to be sensitive views within the Rickmansworth Conservation Area. Views looking from the High Street along Bury Lane and conversely looking from Bury Lane towards the rear of the properties fronting the High Street will be slightly changed but it is considered that the proposed rear extension will be very much in keeping with the historic character of these properties and references the buildings which formerly stood in this location, as evidenced by 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century maps and photographs. There is also potential for the proposed scheme to improve the current untidy appearance of the rear view of the property looking across the car park from Bury Lane.

**Conclusion:** The overall significance of impact has been assessed as being **Slight** and **Positive**. In view of the current building condition and the minor and largely positive impacts the proposed scheme will have upon the two properties and the adjoining heritage assets, no further built heritage work is recommended in connection to the proposed application.

## 2 Introduction

Border Archaeology (BA) was instructed by Roy Lopez Esq., CHeSS Architecture & Development Limited on behalf Mr T.A. Ahmad to carry out a Heritage Statement with regard to an application for a proposed development at Nos. 129 – 131 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (*fig. 1*). The scheme (which represents an amendment to the original scheme submitted in 2019) comprises the internal refurbishment of the existing buildings at 129 – 131 High Street and the provision of four residential departments on the ground, first and second floors (with retention of the commercial units on the street frontage), the demolition of the existing single storey rear extension and the construction of a new second floor and access stair to the rear for the residential apartments, minor modifications to the street frontage (including the shop fronts and dormer windows) and provision of rear gardens and refuse storage facilities to the rear of the property.

Note: within the limitations imposed by dealing with historical material and maps, the information in this document is, to the best of the knowledge of the author and Border Archaeology, correct at the time of writing. Further investigation, more information about the nature of the present buildings and/or more detailed proposals for development or updated plans may require changes to the document. Proposal plans referenced in this document were received on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021.



*Fig. 1: Site Location Plan with proposed new works shown with hatching  
(Reproduced by courtesy of CHeSS Architecture & Development Limited)*



## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this assessment is to identify any built heritage assets in the vicinity of the site, to establish the importance of these assets (including assessment of their character, extent and quality) within a local, regional and national context and to determine the potential impacts of the proposed development on these built heritage assets. Sensitivity to change is a key component, as such, consideration of the historic townscape character, settings and focal points have also been accounted for within this assessment.

### 3.2 Importance/ Significance

The criteria used to determine the importance of archaeological and built heritage assets in the vicinity of the proposed development site (*Table 1*) has been informed by guidelines for assessing cultural heritage assets contained in the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* Vol. 11 Section 3 part 2 (Highways Agency 2009) and relevant Historic England guidance. BA is also fully cognisant of general guidelines on the assessment of heritage assets contained in the *National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Guidance Section 16* ('Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment').

**Table 1: Factors for assessing the importance of archaeological and built heritage assets**

<b>Very High</b>	World Heritage Sites (including nominated sites). Assets of acknowledged international importance. Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged international research objectives.
<b>High</b>	Scheduled Monuments (including proposed sites). Undesignated assets of schedulable quality and importance. Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged national research objectives.
<b>Medium</b>	Designated or undesignated assets that contribute to regional research objectives.
<b>Low</b>	Designated and undesignated assets of local importance. Assets compromised by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations. Assets of limited value, but with potential to contribute to local research objectives.
<b>Negligible</b>	Assets with very little or no surviving archaeological interest.
<b>Unknown</b>	The importance of the resource has not been ascertained.

### 3.3 Heritage Statement Baseline

This methodology describes the framework for which the potential impact on designated and undesignated heritage assets and their respective settings in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development have been assessed.

The National Policy Planning Framework 2019, Chapter 16 para. 189 states: '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 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019).’

Although there are no statutory criteria for assessing the visual and physical impacts on heritage assets in England, this assessment has been informed by criteria for assessing visual and physical impact on cultural heritage assets contained in the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*, Vol. 11 Section 3 part 2 (Highways Agency 2007) and relevant Historic England (formerly English Heritage – EH) guidance for assessing heritage significance within views, namely, *The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3* (Historic England 2017), *Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2015b), *Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice* (EH 2010 [Rev. 2017]) and *Seeing the History in the View* (EH 2011b [Rev. 2012]). It also acknowledges specific guidance given regarding the significance of heritage assets and their settings outlined in the *Three Rivers District Council, Development Management Policies (adopted July 2013), DM3 5.0 Historic Environment*.

‘Setting’ is herein defined as “the surroundings in which [the asset] is experienced”. It is acknowledged that these surroundings may evolve and that elements of a setting may 1) make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, 2) affect the ability to appreciate that significance or 3) be neutral (Historic England 2017).

In more detail, the assessment process can be described as comprising the following elements:

#### *1/ Identification of the Heritage Assets and their Associated Settings*

Baseline information regarding the built heritage assets in the vicinity of the proposed development was obtained from the National Heritage List for England and the Historic England Archive. A site visit was undertaken on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and a photographic record of the site, the nearby heritage assets and their respective settings was undertaken from key vantage points.

#### *2/ Assessment of the Significance of the Heritage Assets and the extent to which their Settings respectively contribute to their Significance*

The significance of the heritage assets was assessed with reference to criteria in Section 2.6 of *Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice* (EH 2010 [Rev. 2012]) which are briefly outlined below:

**Rarity:** Does it exemplify a pattern or type seldom or never encountered elsewhere? It is often assumed that rarity is synonymous with historical importance and therefore high value, but it is important not to exaggerate rarity by magnifying differences and downplaying common characteristics.

**Representativeness:** Is its character or type representative of important historical or architectural trends? Representativeness may be contrasted with rarity.

**Aesthetic appeal:** Does it (or could it) evoke positive feelings of worth by virtue of the quality (whether designed or artless) of its architecture, design or layout, the harmony or diversity of its forms and materials or through its attractive physical condition?



**Integrity:** Does it retain a sense of completeness and coherence? In a historic townscape with a high degree of integrity the functional and hierarchical relationships between different elements of the townscape remain intelligible and nuanced, greatly enhancing its evidential value and often its aesthetic appeal. Integrity is most often used as a measure of single-phase survival, but some buildings and landscapes are valuable precisely because of their multiple layers, which can have considerable evidential value.

**Associations:** Is it associated with important historic events or people? Can those associations be verified? If they cannot, they may still be of some significance, as many places and buildings are valued for associations that are traditional rather than historically proven.

Consideration was given as to whether the setting of the heritage assets contributes or detracts from its significance, with reference to the following attributes, namely:

- 1/ Topography
- 2/ Presence of other heritage assets
- 3/ Formal design
- 4/ Historic materials and surfaces
- 5/ Land use
- 6/ Trees and vegetation
- 7/ Openness, enclosure and boundaries
- 8/ History and degree of change over time
- 9/ Integrity
- 10/ Surrounding townscape character
- 11/ Views from, towards and across the asset (to including the asset itself)
- 12/ Visual prominence & role as focal point
- 13/ Intentional inter-visibility with other historic and natural features
- 14/ Sense of enclosure, seclusion, intimacy or privacy
- 15/ Accessibility, permeability and patterns of movement
- 16/ The rarity of comparable survivals of setting
- 17/ Associative relationships between heritage assets
- 18/ Cultural associations

### *3/ Assessment of the Magnitude of Impact of the Proposed Development on Heritage Assets and their Settings*

The magnitude of physical and visual impact resulting from the proposed development on the setting of the heritage assets was then assessed, supported by a photographic survey of the area from key vantage points. Consideration was given to key attributes of the proposed development in terms of:

- 1/ Location and siting, e.g. proximity to asset, extent, degree to which location will physically or visually isolate the asset & position in relation to key views
- 2/ Form and appearance, e.g. prominence/conspicuousness, competition with or distraction from the asset, scale and massing, proportions, materials, architectural style or design
- 3/ Additional effects e.g. change to built surroundings and spaces, change to general character and tree-cover.

4/ Permanence

5/ For Conservation Areas, the assessment will focus on the preservation and/or enhancement of their historic character.

The assessment of magnitude of impact was based on the following criteria:

**High:** The development will result in substantial changes to key historic building elements, such that the resource is totally altered. The development will result in comprehensive changes to the setting of the heritage asset.

**Moderate:** The development will result in changes to many key building elements, such that the resource is significantly modified. The development will result in changes to the setting of an historic building, such that it is significantly modified.

**Minor:** The development will result in changes to key historic building elements, such that the asset is slightly different. The development will result in changes to the setting of an historic building, such that it is noticeably changed.

**Negligible:** The development will result in very slight changes to key historic building elements that hardly affect it. The development will result in very slight changes to the setting of an historic building.

**No change:** There is no discernible impact upon historic fabric or to the setting of the Heritage Asset as a result of the development,

#### 4/ Overall Assessment of the Significance of Impact on the Heritage Assets

A conclusion is then drawn integrating both the assessment of the significance of the heritage assets and their associated settings and the magnitude of impact of the proposed development to produce an overall assessment of the implications of the development proposals.

<b>Magnitude of impact.</b>	<b>Importance of heritage asset.</b>				
	<b>Very High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Negligible</b>
<b>No change</b>	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
<b>Negligible</b>	Slight	Slight	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Neutral
<b>Minor</b>	Moderate/Large	Moderate/Slight	Slight	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight
<b>Moderate</b>	Large/Very Large	Moderate/Large	Moderate	Slight	Neutral/Slight
<b>Major</b>	Very Large	Large/Very Large	Moderate/Large	Slight/Moderate	Slight

### 3.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The HS will conclude with a list of impacts, potentially ranging from Very Large to Neutral/ No change, on heritage assets in the baseline. This list is primarily to inform mitigation, whether through design or ameliorative recording of assets in advance of their alteration (if any).

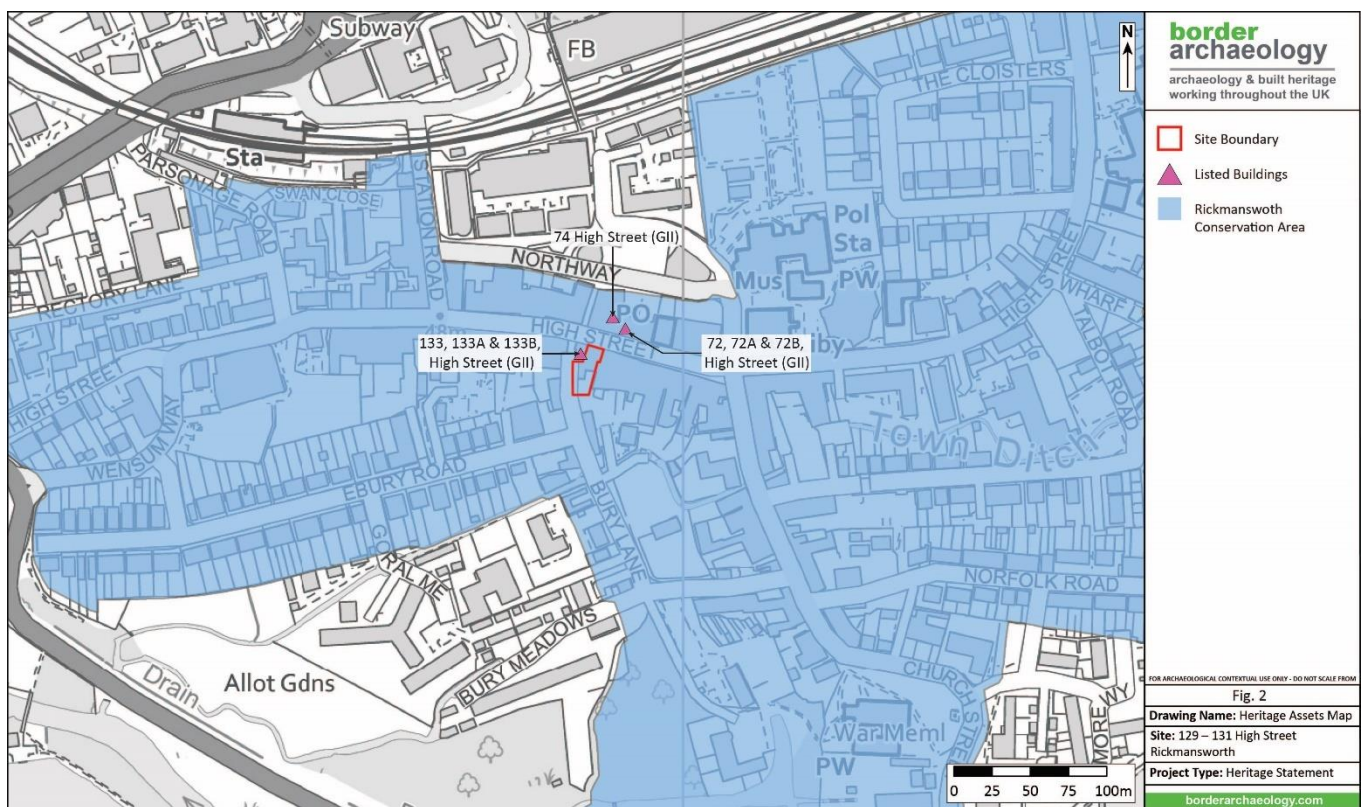
## 4 Heritage Baseline

### 4.1 Site Description

The site comprises Nos. 129 & 131 High Street Rickmansworth (NGR: TQ 0594 9345: *fig. 1*), currently consisting of two retail units with a yard to the rear. Currently No. 129 is occupied, and No. 131, a former bank, is vacant. To the immediate west of the site, is the adjoining No. 133 (including 133a & 133b), a Grade II listed building which lies on the corner of the High Street and Bury Lane. To the east of No. 129 lies no. 127 High Street, also a retail unit. The southern extent of the site is bordered by a car park for residential units along Bury Lane.

### 4.2 Heritage Assets

The site does not contain any designated (protected) heritage assets, nor are Nos. 129-131 High Street designated as locally listed buildings. However, the site does adjoin No. 133 (133, 133a & 133b) High Street, which is a Grade II listed building and it also lies within the Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area as designated by Three Rivers Council (*fig. 2*).



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### 4.3 Historic Site Development

The origins of the properties at Nos. 129-131 High Street can be traced back to the medieval period, and it is likely that they originally formed a pair of elongated, slightly curvilinear burgage plots with houses fronting onto the High Street. The S boundary of the plots was defined by the watercourse known as the Town Ditch. These burgage plots lining both sides of the High Street were probably laid out as part of a planned 'proto-urban' settlement established at Rickmansworth in the late 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century by the Abbot of St Albans, then lord of the manor of Rickmansworth (Page 1908, 372).

Documentary and cartographic evidence indicates that, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Nos. 129-131 High Street formed a single property which belonged to a wealthy local maltster called Joseph Skidmore (d.1835) a member of a successful family of merchants (and Quakers) who had held extensive lands in the town of Rickmansworth since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The Rickmansworth tithe map of 1839 (*fig. 3*) depicts Nos. 129-131 as a single property, comprising an irregularly shaped building fronting onto the High Street with an L-shaped range extending to the SW towards Bury Lane, bordering No. 133 (a Grade II listed timber framed house of 16<sup>th</sup> century date with later additions) to the S and W. This basic layout has remained intact until the present day, although the existing two-storey building appears to date from no earlier than the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with extensive additions made in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*Fig. 3 Extract from the 1839 tithe map of Rickmansworth  
(Reproduced by courtesy of the National Archives)*

In 1839, the property at Nos. 129-131 High Street was described in the tithe award as a 'House, Garden Yard and Outbuildings' (Plot No. 1493) which was then owned and occupied by Joseph's widow, Jane Skidmore. Census and newspaper records show that Jane and her family continued to reside there until her death in January 1858. By the mid-1860s, the property had been sold to a draper named Edmund Garner Johnson (d.1909), at which time the ground floor of the property appears to have been converted to use as a draper's shop while the upper floors and the buildings to the rear were occupied by Johnson, his family and servants. Late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century documents refer to Nos. 129-131 High Street as the 'Old Manor House' which may be an indicator of its former importance.

Comparison between the 1839 tithe map and later OS maps dated 1872 and 1896 (*fig. 4*) shows that substantial additions had been made to the rear of Nos. 129-131 and that a clear sub-division had been made between the two properties. It would appear likely that the earliest surviving fabric of the house, comprising the upper storey of the High Street frontage with its exposed red brick façade, casement windows with Gibbs surrounds, tiled roof and dentilled eaves cornice, dates from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 4: Extract from the OS 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 25-inch map of 1896  
(Reproduced by courtesy of the National Archives)

It may be noted that oblique aerial photographs of the High Street taken in 1949 (*fig. 5*) show a substantial two storey L-shaped building with a double-hipped roof (with a dormer window) extending to the rear of Nos. 129-131 and the adjacent listed building at No. 133. This building appears to have been demolished to make way for the present rear extension (associated with the bank) at some time in the 1950s.

The height of this L-shaped building appears to have been roughly similar to or very slightly below the roofline of the adjacent listed building at No. 133 but was certainly not higher than the roofline of Nos. 129-131.



*Fig. 5: Extract from oblique aerial photograph (1949) looking SW and showing the L-shaped extension to the rear of Nos. 129-131 and No. 133 High Street Rickmansworth, with double hipped roof (circled in red)  
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Historic England Archive)*

The Johnson family continued to occupy the premises at Nos. 129-131 High Street until 1949, when the property was sold by family trustees. Planning permission was obtained in 1949 for conversion of the property into a bank (No. 131) with an adjoining shop (No. 129) and it appears that significant alterations were made to the building shortly after this date, with the insertion of the modern glazed shopfronts at ground level, the complete refurbishment of the interior to accommodate a bank, as well as the demolition of the two-storey rear extension and the addition of a rear extension to house a safe.



#### 4.4 Building Description

- *Exterior*

Nos. 129 – 131 High Street are unremarkable mid- late 19<sup>th</sup> century, red stock brick buildings with plain tile roof with two dormer windows and a chimneystack at the west gable end. The first-floor features two small casement windows with Gibbs surrounds and gauged brick headers, above which is a dentilled eaves cornice (*Plate 1*). The window frames and surrounds exhibit evidence of later renewal in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, while the ground floor shop fronts are also clearly modern.



*Plate 1: South-facing view of the shop front of 129 – 131 High Street Rickmansworth (Border 2019)*

The rear elevations of the two properties are accessed from Bury Lane and in their present form are later 20<sup>th</sup> century additions. They comprise a ground floor and one storey rendered flat roof extension, with external metal fire escape leading into a yard/ car park. A red brick wall extending along Bury Lane and denoting the western boundary of the yard to the rear of Nos. 129-131 High Street appears to be of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date although it has been partially rebuilt and truncated to provide vehicular access (*Plate 2*).



*Plate 2: North-facing view from Bury Lane, of the rear of 129 – 131 High Street (Border 2019)*

- *Interior*

No. 129 is currently occupied as a retail unit and as such was not accessed internally on the ground floor. No. 131 is currently empty but has undergone much alteration as it was previously used as a bank, the bank vault still remaining to the rear of the property and many of the features and fittings associated (such as the teller's counter and customer booths) with a bank still extant within the property (*Plate 3*).



*Plate 3: Internal ground floor view of the front of 131 High Street, still with former bank fittings and features (Border 2019)*

At first floor level, the internal arrangements have been significantly modified in the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the front of the building are two rooms with low ceilings divided by an internal wall with an interconnecting wall, lit by two mullioned casement windows (*Plate 4*). The window frames and fittings appear to be early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in date. A substantial exposed ceiling beam with evidence of re-use was noted in both rooms (*Plate 5*). Evidence for a blocked chimneybreast was noted in the west (gable-end) wall, concealed by plasterwork.



*Plate 4: Internal view looking north showing first floor interior of No. 131 (Border 2019)*



*Plate 5: Internal view looking south showing exposed ceiling beam in first floor room within No. 131 (Border 2019)*



## 4.5 133, 133a & 133b High Street Rickmansworth

Immediately adjoining the west gable end of Nos. 129-131 is No. 133 High Street (including Nos. 133a & 133b), a gabled two storey house of timber-framed and brick construction with a tiled roof and a partially weatherboarded west gable, situated in a prominent location at the junction of High Street and Bury Lane (*Plate 6*). The extensions to the rear of Nos. 129- 131 partially border No. 133 on its southern side.

It was designated as a Grade II listed building on 3 October 1985 (List Entry No. 1173611); the listed building description, extracted from the National Heritage List reads thus:

*A Grade II listed house, now a shop and surgery, dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century with 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> century extensions. Timber frame, brick front, some weatherboarding. Tiled roof. Two bay open hall originally, two storeys and attic with 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> century ground floor shop fronts. First floor two sixteen pane sashes in moulded surrounds, gauged brick flat arched heads. Dentilled brick eaves. A two light gabled dormer. Exposed rail and posts on right return, weatherboarded gable, whitewashed brick nogging. A 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century wing to rear with ground floor cambered heads to openings. Interior: curved braces from jowled posts, probable crown post roof.*



*Plate 6: 133 (including 133a & 133b) High Street Rickmansworth, with the rear of no. 129 as viewed from the High Street, looking southeast along Bury Lane (Border 2019).*

#### 4.6 Nos. 72 & 74 High Street Rickmansworth

Located about 20m east-northeast and 15m northeast of the site, on the opposite site of the High Street, are two Grade II listed buildings at Nos. 72 (including 72a & 72b) High Street and No. 74 High Street (*Plate 7*).

Nos. 72, 72a & 72b High Street comprise a two storey house of timber-framed and brick construction, now used as shops and office premises. It was designated as a Grade II listed building on 3 October 1975; the listed building description, extracted from the National Heritage List (List Entry No. 1348227), reads as follows:

*Grade II listed house, now shops and offices. Dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, refronted in 18<sup>th</sup> century, and altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Timber frame, colourwashed brick front. Tiled roof. Three bays with rear wings. Two storeys and attic. Central entrance with moulded architrave. Flanking late 19<sup>th</sup> century rectangular shop window bays with a continuous projecting cornice. Three first floor glazing sashes. Moulded cornice. Two flat topped dormers. Stack on front pitch at left end. Stack to rear on taller ridge of long wing to rear right. Exposed timber frame panels with brick noggin, triple struts to collar clasp purlin, sashes inserted. Shorter timber framed rendered wing to rear left has a steeper pitch to its roof. Interior: original roof construction intact.*

No. 74 High Street Rickmansworth is a twin-gabled, three storey building of brick construction, originally built as shop premises in about 1927. It was designated as a Grade II listed building on 20 May 2004 (List Entry No. 1390746); the listed building description, extracted from the National Heritage List, reads thus:

*Grade II listed shop. Built c. 1927 by A.H. Lister and F.C. Bayliss. Plum, English bond brick with plain tiled roof. Three storeys. The street front has two bays to the first and second floors with three-light mullioned and transomed casements to the first floor and similar mullioned windows above. There are two gables with substantial, decorated, rectangular rainwater heads to the centre and sides. The ground floor has a half glazed door to right with a rectangular fanlight. The rear has two cross windows at first floor level to the left and a three light window at right. Interior: the shop floor level has encased steel beams to the ceiling. The roof lights at the rear of the shop which are shown in the architect's drawings have been removed. At first and second floor level the fittings shown in the architect's drawings are in situ, with the exception of the fire surrounds. A good example of the quality of design and shop fittings produced for this company; the building and most particularly the decorative shop front, remain in a very complete state of preservation.*



*Plate 7: View looking east along the High Street showing Nos. 72 (including 72a & b) and 74 High Street, situated roughly opposite the site at Nos. 129-131 High Street*

#### 4.7 Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area

Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area was designated by Three Rivers District Council in 1974, and extended in 1980 in order to include the Victorian development of the town. Rickmansworth became a town by Royal Charter during the reign of Henry VIII and as such was allowed to hold a market every Wednesday, which was later moved to a Saturday (Page 1908, 371). The core of the medieval settlement was evidently focused along the High Street, as evidenced by narrow burgage plots distributed to the north and south of the street, with its southern boundary defined by a watercourse known as the Bury Ditch. The development of Rickmansworth in the post-medieval period was heavily influenced by its proximity to the Rivers Chess and Colne, both of which provided power for the cloth and print industries which grew up around there. As neither of the rivers were navigable, with the growth of industry came the construction of the Grand Union Canal in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and later, the arrival of the Metropolitan Line in 1887 (Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust 1993).

The character appraisal for Rickmansworth describes it as being defined and shaped by the various communication routes that surround it, with the rivers, Metropolitan Line and Grand Union Canal operating as borders defining and enclosing the town. As such, it has maintained its medieval core centred around the High Street and Church Street. The basic line of the High Street has been retained with Solomon's Hill and Bury Lane still evident, though now pedestrianised. The building stock along the W end of the High Street is predominantly of late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century date and mostly of two-storeys, retaining a small-scale picturesque character, with a number of earlier survivals, including No. 133 (a timber-framed house of 16<sup>th</sup> century origin with later alterations) and No. 72 High Street, a group of shops of 17<sup>th</sup> century date re-fronted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, both of which are Grade II listed.



## 5 Proposed Development

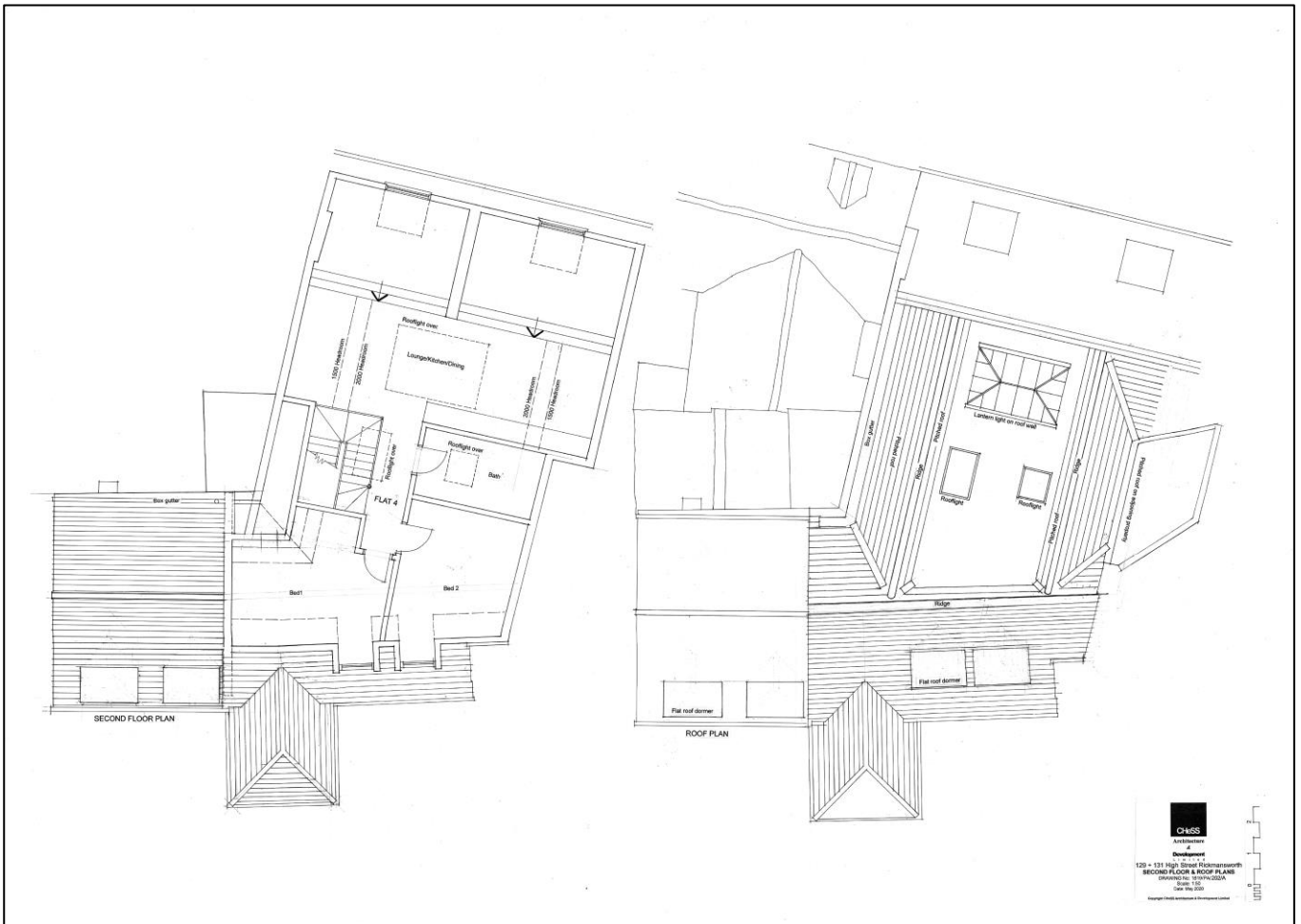
The proposed development comprises the renovation and alteration of nos. 129 – 131 High Street Rickmansworth from commercial/ retail premises to mixed use ground floor commercial, with four residential apartments at ground, first and second floor level (*figs. 6-9*).

The proposed works entail the demolition of the existing single storey rear extension (built in the 1950s following the conversion of No. 131 into a bank) and the construction of a new second floor and access stair to the rear for the residential apartments, minor modifications to the street frontage (including the shop fronts and dormer windows) and provision of gardens and refuse storage facilities to the rear of the property.

Following consultation with the Conservation Officer at Three Rivers Council, significant amendments have been made to the original scheme as submitted in 2019. In particular, the large rectangular flat roofed extension as originally proposed to the rear of the property has been markedly reduced in scale and height, with a noticeable drop in roof level to the W where the building extends to the rear of Nos. 133 High Street. The form of the proposed rear extension housing the access stair has also been modified and is now rectangular in plan with a pitched tiled roof which is more in keeping with the vernacular built form of adjacent properties along the High Street. With regard to the refurbishment of the shop frontages, it may be noted that the replacement dormers will be identical in form and scale to those currently existing.



*Fig 6: Proposed ground and first floor layout plans  
(Reproduced by courtesy of CHESS Architecture & Development Limited)*



*Fig. 7: Proposed second floor and roof plans  
(Reproduced by courtesy of CHeSS Architecture & Development Limited)*



*Fig 8: Proposed front and side elevations  
(Reproduced by courtesy of CHeSS Architecture & Development Limited)*





*Fig 9: Proposed rear elevation  
(Reproduced by courtesy of CH&SS Architecture & Development Limited)*

## 6 Impact of Proposed Development

### 6.1 The Site

The site is currently used for commercial and retail purposes, with one of the retail units currently vacant. The site lies within the Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area and adjoins a Grade II listed building, 133 High Street.

Nos. 129 – 131 are not listed and do not appear to contain fabric of particular importance in architectural or historical terms, although the site they occupy may represent a burgage plot or plots of medieval origin. In terms of their current appearance, they reflect the development of the town centre which took place in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly following the arrival of the Metropolitan railway in 1887. Owing to later 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations however, the original shop fronts at ground floor level have been replaced. Based on its current condition and the limited survival of historic fabric of note, it is therefore considered that Nos. 129 – 131 High Street may be considered to be of **low to medium** significance in heritage terms.

Overall, the impacts of the proposals are considered to be **minor**, as the shop fronts will not change noticeably from their current form, aside from much needed renovation and updating, to the benefit of the condition of the building. The dormer windows in the front elevation will be refurbished but retain their current scale and detailing. The existing modern single storey extension to the rear of the building (added when the premises were converted into a bank in the 1950s) will be demolished; however this extension is not considered to be of significance in heritage terms. It may be argued that the proposed alterations and additions to the rear of Nos. 129-131, in terms of their reduced scale, massing and external detailing (in particular the varying rooflines and dormer windows) sensitively references the two-storey L-shaped extension which formerly stood in this location prior to its demolition in the 1950s. It is not thought that the impact of the proposals will affect the *significance* of the buildings on site, with the impacts considered to be **slight/ neutral** and **positive**.

### 6.2 133, 133a & 133b High Street Rickmansworth

The adjoining building, 133 High Street Rickmansworth is Grade II listed with its origins in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, residing in the Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area. As one of the earliest surviving buildings along the High Street, it is therefore considered to be of **medium to high** significance in heritage terms.

It is not thought that the proposals will affect the *significance* of the Grade II listed 133 High Street. It is considered that the proposals will have a **minor** localized effect on the setting of the listed building, with particular reference to views looking towards the side and rear of the building along Bury Lane, however it may be argued that the reduced height, massing and external detailing of the rear extension as now proposed (particularly with regard to the reduced height and appearance of the western portion of the upper floor accommodation) will not noticeably obtrude upon the setting and appearance of the adjacent listed building.

In overall terms, it is thus considered the impact of the proposals on the listed building may be regarded as **slight** and **positive**.

### 6.3 Nos. 72 & 74 High Street Rickmansworth

Nos. 72 & 74, 74a and 74b High Street Rickmansworth are all Grade II listed buildings that lie within the Conservation Area. As such they are considered to be of **medium to high** significance in heritage terms. Changes to the dormer windows and shop fronts at Nos. 129 – 131 High Street will be **negligible**, as viewed from the listed buildings opposite, with no discernible changes to their setting. The impacts of the proposals will not affect the significance of the listed buildings, and as such are considered to have a **neutral/slight** impact.

### 6.4 Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area

The Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area exists to protect an area centred around the medieval core of Rickmansworth, and its subsequent formation influenced by its various transport/ communication networks that surround it. The High Street and adjoining streets to the north and south reflect a mixture of commercial and residential development, containing an assortment of buildings (several of which are Grade II listed) ranging in date from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with potential for enhancement in the areas of Solomon's Hill and Bury Lane. As a designated asset it is considered to be of **high** significance as an historic small town of medieval origin, the original plan form of which still remains intact and legible in spite of later development.

It is not thought that the proposals will materially affect the significance of the Conservation Area, nor will they alter the small-scale, intimate historic character of the High Street. As viewed from the High Street, the proposed alterations to Nos. 129 – 131 High Street will be **negligible to minor**; the street frontages will be refurbished however their overall appearance will remain essentially unchanged. Significantly, the replacement dormer windows will be identical in form and detailing to those existing. There will be a slight localized change to views looking southwards from the High Street along Bury Lane however it may be argued that the reduced scale and roofline of the rear extension as now proposed will significantly limit changes to these views.

Views of the picturesque, varying rooflines of the properties fronting onto the High Street as experienced from Bury Lane will also be slightly changed by the proposals but it is considered that the design of the proposed rear extension and access stair will be in keeping with the architectural character of these buildings and sensitively references the buildings which formerly stood in this location, as attested by historic maps and photographs. It is also considered that there is potential for the proposed scheme to significantly improve the current untidy appearance of the rear view of the property looking across the car park from Bury Lane.

The overall impact of the proposals upon the Conservation Area is considered therefore to be **slight** and **positive**.

## 7 Conclusion & Recommendations

It is considered that the proposed development of the site would **not** detract from the significance of the Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area or the significance of the adjoining property at 133 High Street, a Grade II listed building. As the building currently appears, it is in a fairly poor state of condition both internally and externally and requires renovation, repair and maintenance work.



It may be argued that the revised scheme as now proposed would greatly improve the exterior appearance of both buildings, especially to the yard at the rear of Nos. 129 – 131, and is thus considered to have a positive impact on the setting of the adjacent listed building at No. 133 and the Rickmansworth Town Centre Conservation Area as whole (specifically in terms of views experienced looking from the High Street along Bury Lane and corresponding views from Bury Lane towards the High Street).

In light of the **slight**, and in the main, **positive** impacts the proposed development will have upon the site, no further built heritage work is recommended in connection with the proposed application.

## 8 Copyright

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## 10 Cartography

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(All maps were obtained from the National Archives unless otherwise stated)

1839: Tithe map of Rickmansworth Parish

1872: OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 25-inch map

1896: OS 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 25-inch map

1937: OS 4<sup>th</sup> edition 25-inch map

1962: OS 1:2500 National Survey map

1973: OS 1:1250 National Survey map

(Oblique aerial photographs of Rickmansworth town centre dating back to c.1930 were consulted using resources held at the National Archives and the Historic England Archive)

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