

THE OLD VICARAGE

HIGH STREET, ABBOTS LANGLEY,
HERTFORDSHIRE, WD5 0AS

HISTORIC BUILDING
RESEARCH

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MANORWOOD
building on tradition

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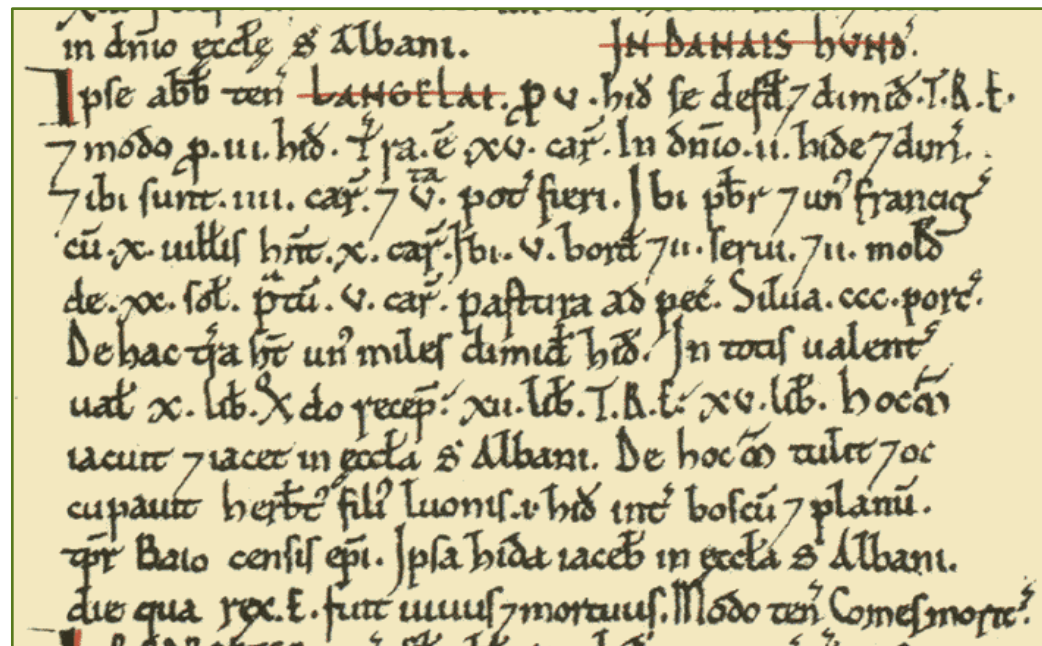
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A photograph of a historic building with a curved balcony and peeling white paint. The building is a three-story structure with a curved facade. The upper two floors are covered in white paint that is significantly peeling and cracked, revealing the underlying brickwork. A curved balcony with a black wrought-iron railing runs across the second floor. Below the balcony, the ground floor features two windows with white frames. The sky is blue with some light clouds. A green banner at the top of the image contains the text 'HISTORIC BUILDING RESEARCH: THE OLD VICARAGE'. A semi-transparent green banner across the middle of the balcony contains the word 'INTRODUCTION' in white capital letters.

INTRODUCTION

Abbots Langley is a large village located to the north of Watford in South West Hertfordshire. The medieval centre of the village, around St Lawrence's Church, is in the northern part of the settlement with extensive Victorian and 20th Century suburban development to the south and west. The village is bounded by the West Coast Mainline and Watford Road to the west, a small area of open space between the village and Watford to the south and south east and countryside to the north and north east.

There is no known evidence of a settlement at Abbots Langley prior to the 11th century. The village name derives from 1045 when, it is recorded, a Saxon, Ethelwine "the Black" and his wife Wynfelda, gave 'Langelai' (denoting a long meadow or long lea) to the Abbot and the monks of the monastery of St Albans. The Monastery played an important part in the affairs of Abbots Langley for several hundred years. 'Langelai' was recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 as having a priest, 10 villagers and 5 smallholders. The village's resources at the time included 3 hides (360 acres) and 2 watermills. The presence of a priests suggests the existence of a Saxon church, likely to have been found on the same site as the current Church of St Lawrence.



Recording of Abbots Langley in the Domesday Book (folio 8), 1086.

The oldest surviving building in the village, the Parish Church of St Lawrence the Martyr was dedicated in 1154. Although extended and altered at various points since the 12th century the Norman nave, aisles and tower all survive.

In the 14th century, plague, famine and the Black Death stalked the village, taking heavy toll. Despite brief but bloody disturbance from the Peasants Revolt in 1381, the supreme power of the Abbot in Abbots Langley survived until the reign of the Tudors.

Thus, the church of Abbots Langley was appropriated, and a vicarage ordained apparently by the monks of St. Albans, who remained patrons of the parish until the Dissolution of the Monastery at St. Albans in 1539.

Following the Dissolution, the manor of Langley was granted to Sir Richard Lee, one of Henry VIII military commanders. The site of the manor houses was leased separately to William Childe. Documentary evidence indicates that the manor house for Abbots Langley gradually declined in importance in the centuries following the Dissolution. The medieval manor house and its grounds are thought to have been located south of the church, where the slight remains of a homestead moat survive in the area opposite Kitters Green. The site is now known as the Manor House Grounds.

In 1541 the advowson of Langley was granted to William Igrave, and from that date was held with the rectory manor called Chambersbury.

There was a church house in Abbot's Langley in 1591 which was granted in that year to Sir Edward Stanley. However, it is unknown where was its location. Local folklore states that the buildings at 23-31 High Street served as the vicarage before the 18th century building appeared on the site to the north-west of the church. However, no records have been found that supports this theory.

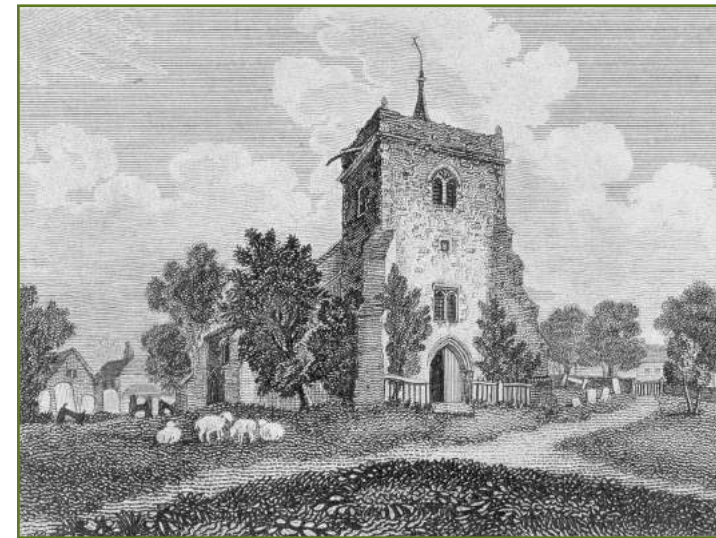
In Abbots Langley various dissenting sects have had registered places of worship since 1669 and licensed places since 1704. There are now Baptist and Wesleyan chapels here. In 1662 John King, vicar of the parish, was ejected for nonconformity. Another dissenter of note who lived here was William Strong, uncle of Edward Strong, of Hyde manor, who was one of the Assembly of Divines, an Independent, and pastor of a Congregational church at Westminster.



15th century illustration of Nicholas Breakspear as Pope Adrian IV.

Abbots Langley gains wider historical significance as the reputed birthplace of the only Englishman to ever become Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Nicholas Breakspear, who become Pope Adrian IV in 1154, is thought to have been born at Breakspear Farm, near Bedmond, in approximately 1100. He served as Pope until his death in 1159.

The Grand Union Canal to the west of Abbots Langley opened in 1797 and the London to Birmingham Railway, opened in 1838. The station at Kings Langley, known as Kings Langley and Abbots Langley station until 1974, opened in 1839. Both of these developments, while not in Abbots Langley itself, put the village close to important north-south communication routes.



'Abbots Langley Church, Herts'. Engraved by E. I. Roberts from a drawing by G. Sheppard for the Antiquarian Itinerary, 1815.

HISTORIC BUILDING RESEARCH: THE OLD VICARAGE

MAP REGRESSION



St Lawrence's Vicarage (today known as The Old Vicarage) is situated to the north-west of Abbots Langley High Street, within the setting of St. Lawrence's Church.

Map regressions are useful to assist in the understanding of an area's growth and development. Historic Maps and Ordnance Survey Maps together with written archival data can help to refine the history of a site. The earliest survey map of Abbots Langley showing the buildings footprint is the Dury and Andrews Map of Hertfordshire from 1766. Early maps such as this are useful to know whether a site existed already or not. However, the representation of buildings and exact locations are not always entirely accurate and/or detailed. The Dury and Andrews Map illustrates a group of building located on the area where the Vicarage and the Church stand. There is a rectangular walled area which seems to enclose a prominent house. However, the Map does not indicate the church at Abbots Langley (it illustrates other parish churches) and, therefore, difficult to establish the actual location of the building in it without the Church as reference.

The Abbots Langley 1839 Tithe Map provides the first detailed and accurate survey of the village. The map shows the Vicarage to the west of the church with stable buildings to the north and the remnants of the medieval manor's moat to the south. The Vicarage appears as a rectangular building with the existing southern bow window and a porch to the west (now lost).

The existing Gothic Revival porch to the south of the house was added by 1870 together with a large conservatory as can be seen in the photographs from 1912 and 1937. The latter also shows the extension of the building to the north-west which according to the historic maps occurred c. 1890.

This late 19th century block at the rear of the Vicarage was demolished in the 1960s along with part of the early 19th century addition around the time of the interregnum between Rev Raymond Wilkinson and Rev Paul Goddard. A single storeyed extension was built on place of the demolished block to create the current kitchen. During the late 1960s, a large area of the Vicarage garden, the ponds, and the curate's house (Glebe Cottage) were sold to the District Council to use the area for urban development creating St Lawrence Close.



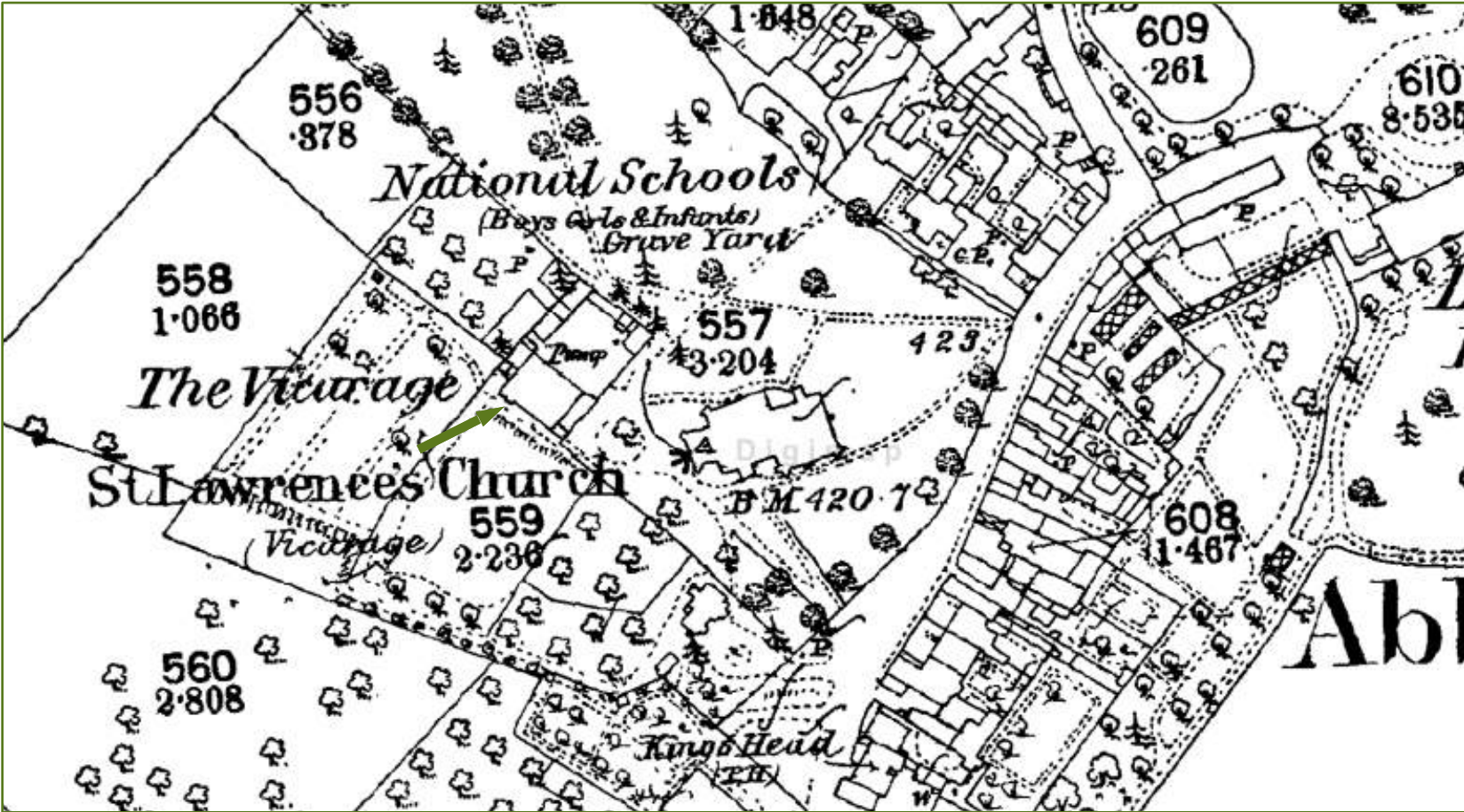
Detail of the Dury and Andrus Map of Hertfordshire showing the approximate location of The Old Vicarage, 1766.



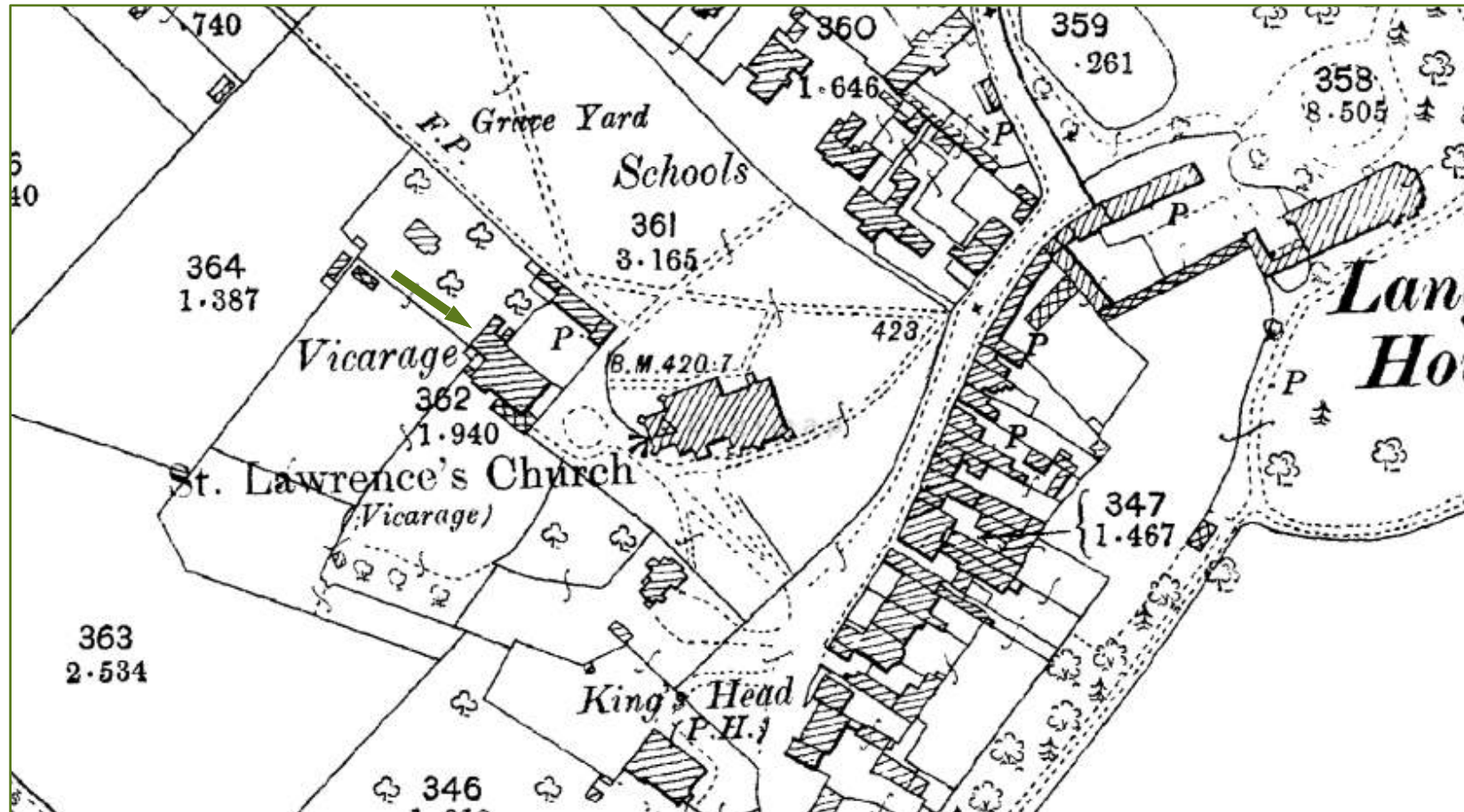
Detail of the William Faden Map of Hertfordshire showing the approximate location of The Old Vicarage, 1790.



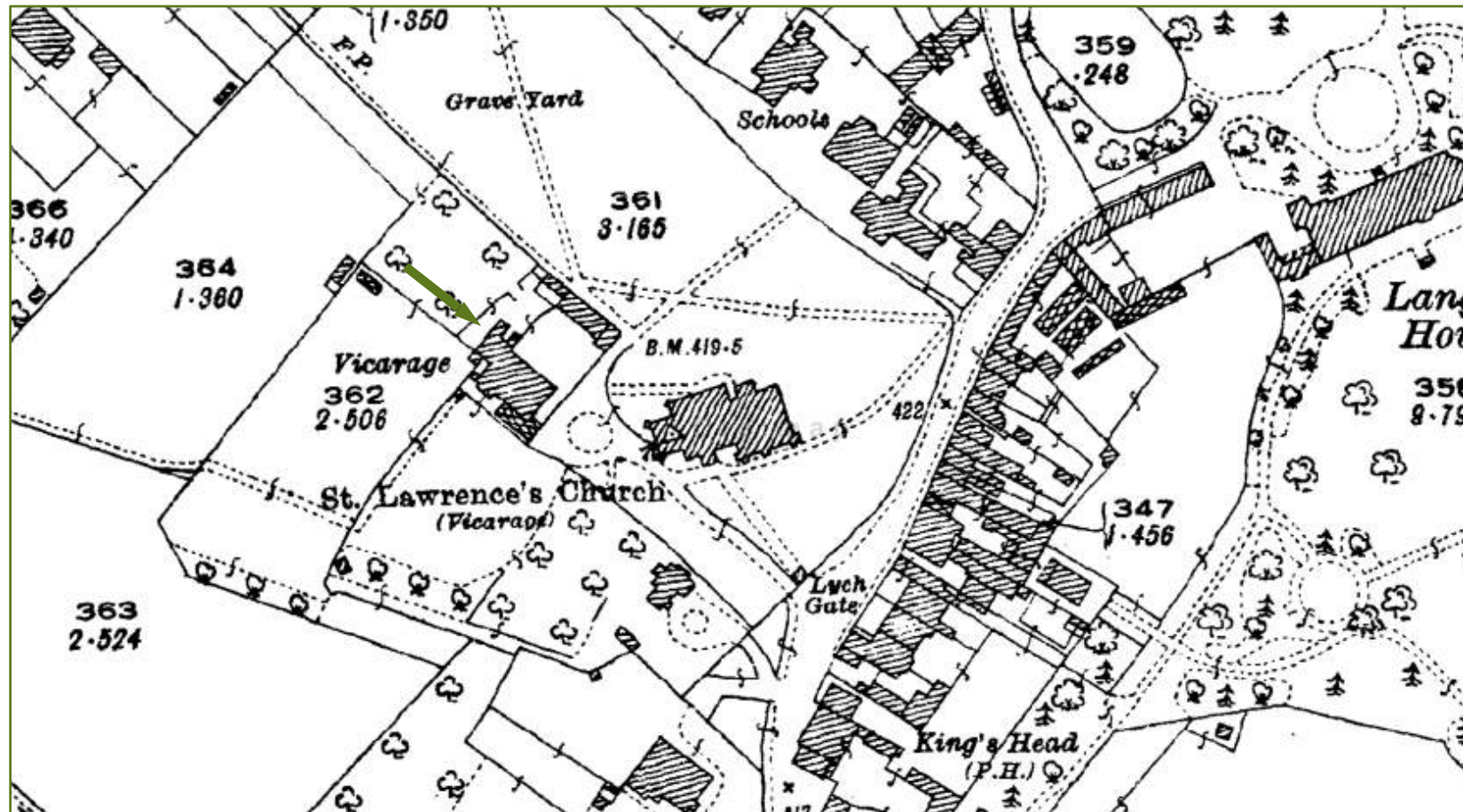
Detail of the Tithe Map of the Parish of Abbots Langley showing The Old Vicarage, 1839.



Detail of Ordnance Survey Map showing The Old Vicarage, 1871.



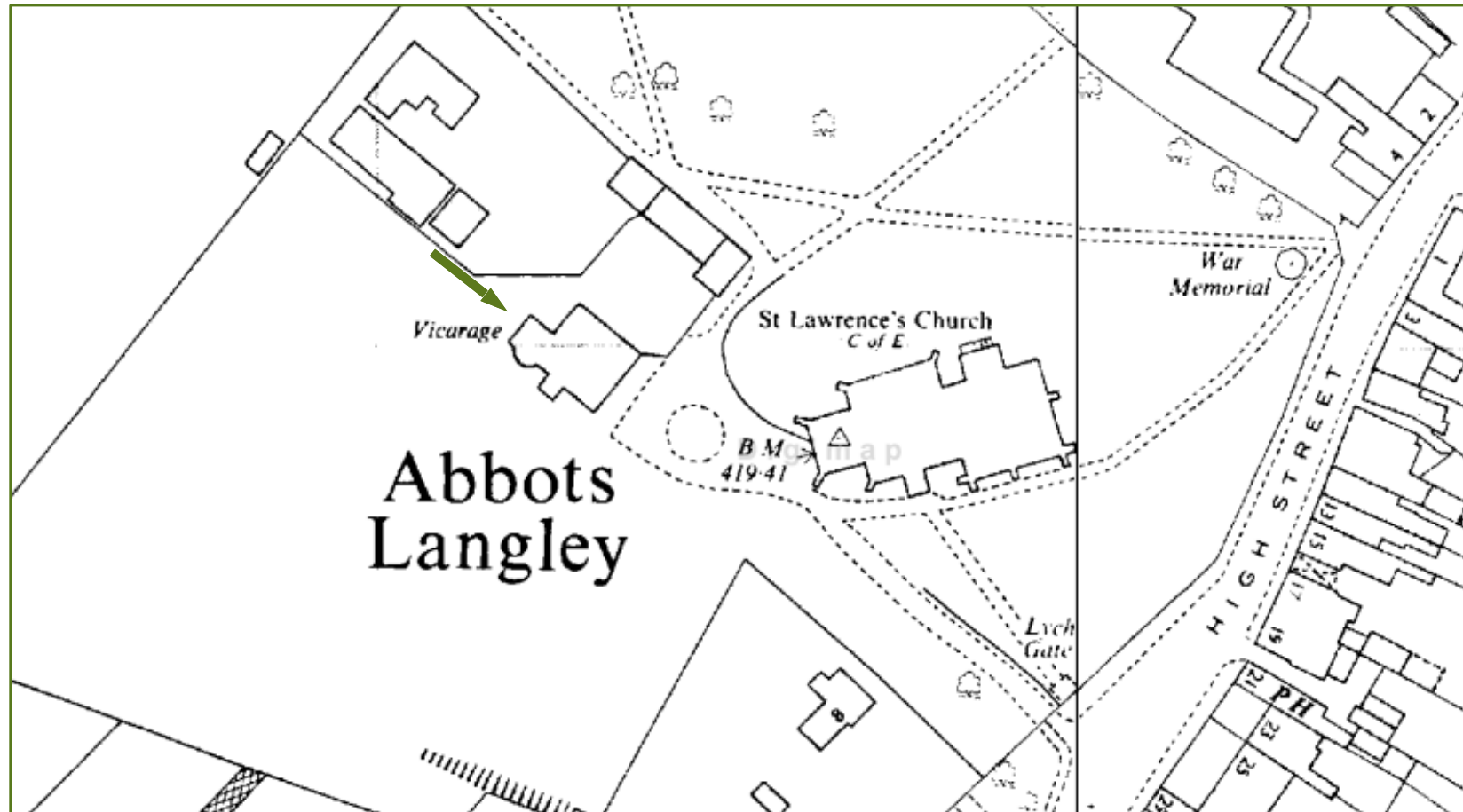
Detail of Ordnance Survey Map showing The Old Vicarage, 1896.



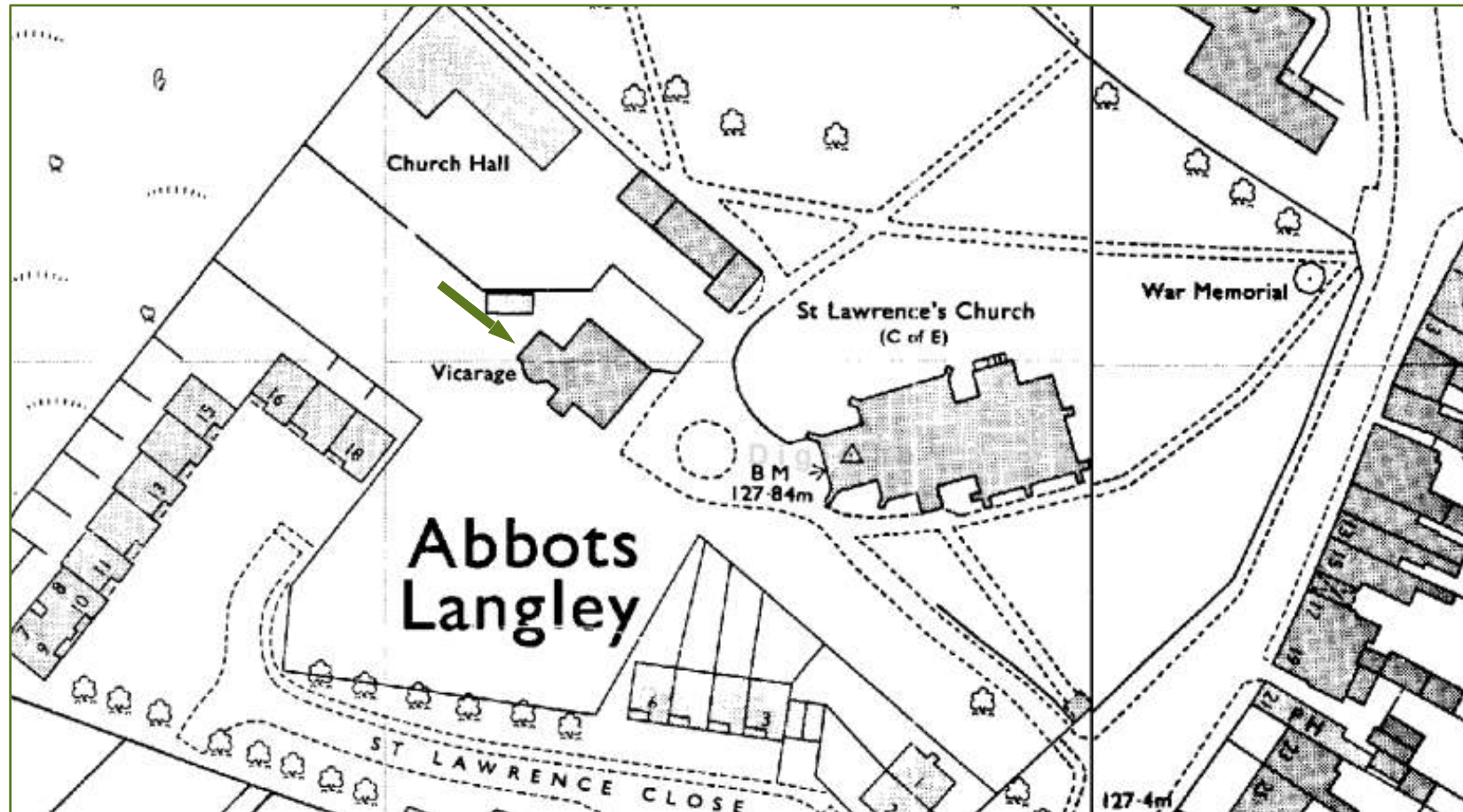
Detail of Ordnance Survey Map showing The Old Vicarage, 1923.



Detail of Ordnance Survey Map showing The Old Vicarage, 1938.



Detail of Ordnance Survey Map showing The Old Vicarage, 1960s.



Detail of Ordnance Survey Map showing The Old Vicarage, 1970s.



Satellite View of The Old Vicarage, 1999.

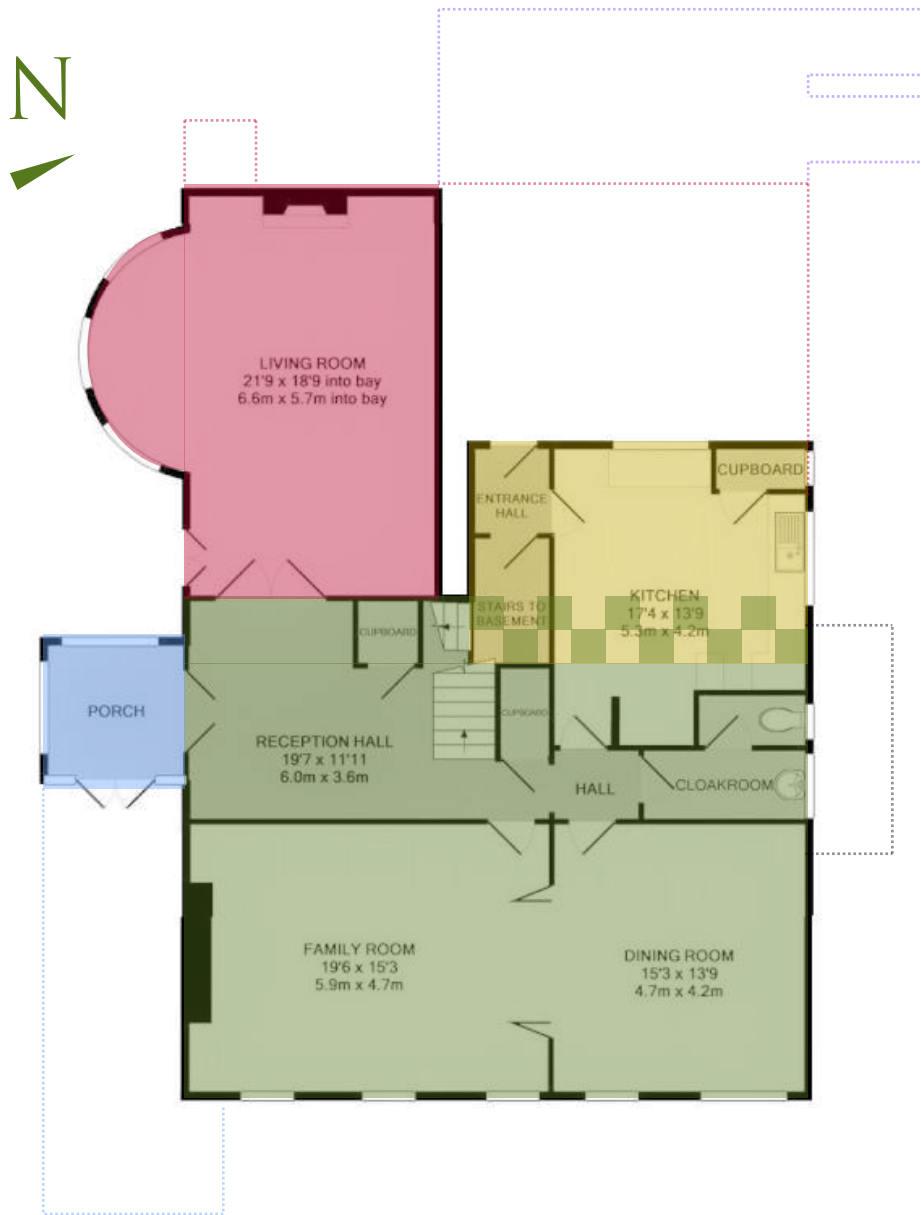


Satellite View of The Old Vicarage, 2018.



BUILDING PHASES





- Early 18th century*
- 1800-1839*
- c.1870*
- c.1890*
- 1938-1957*
- 1960-1970*

EARLY 18TH CENTURY

The former St Lawrence's Vicarage, today known as The Old Vicarage, is an early 18th century building significantly altered during the 19th and 20th century.

The Old Vicarage deploys several of the elements of Georgian style and arrangement. Built of red brick and with a tiled roof, it has an almost symmetrical front with brick stringcourses, sash windows with glazing bars and a parapet (images 1 and 2). The original symmetry of the façade was broken the windows on the right side were widened at a later point.

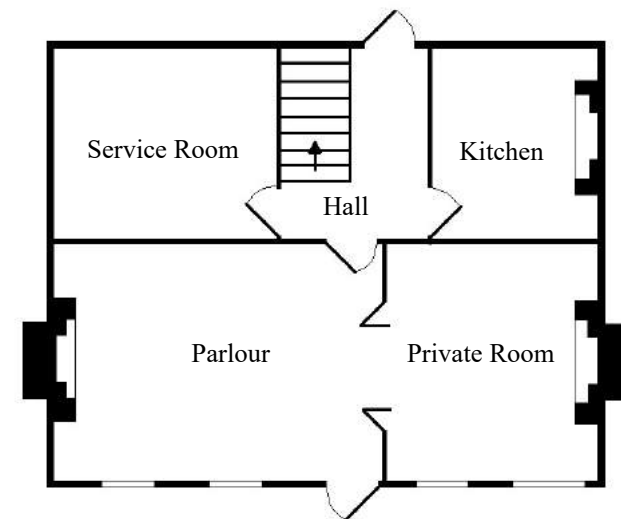
The current building's floor plan suggests that the 18th century building was a simple version of the double-pile 'deep' plan. Thus, the original house consisted of four ground-floor rooms: a principal living-room or parlour and a private room on the front; and a kitchen and another service room (diary, pantry or scullery) to the rear.

The depth and location of the partition wall between the existing Family Room and Dining Room, together with the style of the three-panelled door, indicate that the wall is part of the original internal configuration. A hall with the staircase and access to the cellar would have been located to the rear of the house, between the kitchen and the service room. There is evidence that supports that the original staircase occupied the full width of the stairwell.

The staircase faced south-east where the main access was located (now the central ground-floor window). There is no evidence of a second partition wall that created a passage or corridor between the parlour and the private room to link the staircase with the original main entrance. The idea of a former passage or corridor seems improbable when considering that they were not fashionable during the 18th century and their use did not become widely common until the 19th century. Therefore, guests would walk straight away into the parlour, whilst the second front room, smaller in size, was for private use.

Fireplaces were provided to all rooms except the service room. The original Vicarage appears to have had three chimney stacks of which two were built into the end walls and contributing to the building's symmetry (image 3). The stack from the kitchen's fireplace was removed during the 1960s/70s alterations. However, it can be seen in early photographs. Fireplaces were a status symbol reflected to the exterior by elaborated and prominent stacks. The Vicarage's surviving stacks were truncated during the late 20th century although, early photographs show they were extremely long.

Most of the interior 18th century features have been removed during later alterations. Nonetheless, 18th century plaster coving and cornices (image 5) can be found in the former parlour together with original cupboards located either side of the chimney breast (image 6). The former cellar (now the basement) also possess 18th century elements such as brickwork and niches where the bottles of wine were kept (image 7).



Hypothetical reconstruction (not to scale) of The Old Vicarage's ground floor plan in the 18th century, by the author.

EARLY 18TH CENTURY: KEY FEATURES



IMAGE 1



IMAGE 2



IMAGE 3



IMAGE 4



IMAGE 5



IMAGE 6



IMAGE 7

19TH CENTURY

The Old Vicarage was significantly altered and extended in three different phases during the 19th century. Such alterations are illustrated in historical maps. The first phase occurred between 1800 and 1839 and consisted in a large block attached to the rear of the building. The 1937 aerial view (image 9) shows the extension was roofed with two pitched roofs at different levels, suggesting the extension itself was built in two different phases. It seems likely that the existing part of the extension is the earliest whilst the part demolished during the 1960s/70s was built soon after. This theory is supported by the presence of a single-storeyed bow window, a common feature of late Georgian architecture (image 8) and a dormer window (now lost) facing the stables, which was screened when the second phase of the rear extension was built. This dormer window can be seen in the aerial view from 1957 (see page 38).

The next addition was performed by c. 1870 and was the opening of a new main access in the south-west elevation and the addition of a timber High Gothic Revival porch with a long conservatory attached, which extended to the front of the building. Only the porch survives, which was bricked and glazed later (images 10 and 11).

The latest 19th century addition was made by c. 1890. It was a two-storey block with a hipped roof attached to the back of the early 19th century extension. This last addition extended north-east with two single-storey ranges. The 1937 aerial view and the historical Ordnance Survey maps are the only existing evidence of this extension. It is probably that this last addition housed a new kitchen and the two single-storey ranges served as storage spaces.

Internally, the existing 19th century features are located in the surviving 19th century extension, the loft and the basement.

The 19th century extension retains part of the original panelling and plaster cornices and coving in the ground and first floors (images 12 and 14), although it

was altered, and some parts replaced, during the 20th century. There are remnants of original floral wallpaper and painted plaster finishes under the existing panelling. The arch-headed double door (image 13) that gives access to the extension's ground floor room also dates from the 19th century. This room was likely used as a parlour or drawing room for the warmest months as it is orientated north-west. The bow window provided views to the garden that extended south-west. The first-floor room appears to have been a fine space with panelling and a significant cast iron fireplace (image 14). This room was accessed by a stairway added to the mid-landing of the original Georgian staircase. There is also evidence of an original partition wall that divided the room into two rooms and of a blocked door to the east which gave access to the demolished part of the extension.

The cellar seems to have been extended during the 19th century and retains a coal cellar with its coal chute (image 15). The loft under the roof structure appears to have provided accommodation to servants as it was common during the Victorian period (image 16).



IMAGE 8

19TH CENTURY: KEY FEATURES

IMAGE 9



IMAGE 10



IMAGE 11



IMAGE 12



IMAGE 13



IMAGE 14



IMAGE 15



IMAGE 16

20TH CENTURY

The first 20th century alteration of the building appears in the aerial photo from 1957 (see page 38), which shows a single-storeyed extension attached to the building's north-east elevation. The photo lacks detail but it seems likely that this extension was a conservatory. The extension seems to have been built between 1938 and 1957 and demolished before the 1960s, as it is not shown in the OS maps.

The Old Vicarage was dramatically altered during the 1960s/70s in order to adapt the house to modern necessities. The current layout and appearance of The Old Vicarage are the result of such modifications.

Externally, the most significant alteration was the demolition of part of the early 19th century addition and its replacement with a single-storeyed flat-roofed extension (image 17). Most of the windows located in the north-west and north-east elevations were inserted when the new extension was built (image 18). The surviving chimney stacks were also truncated during this period, doubtlessly for being in poor condition and in the risk of collapsing.

The internal distribution of the house was also reconfigured during the 1960s/70s in order to insert modern domestic facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms (image 19). This new distribution of the space is obvious in one of the first-floor rooms within the 18th century block, where the room has been divided into a toilet, a bathroom and a cupboard, accessed by an awkward corridor (image 20). The original plaster coving of the room can be seen running through these three spaces (images 21 and 22).

Many of the doors were inserted or replaced in the 1960s/70s and there are still remnants of former door frames encapsulating the modern frames (image 23).

The existing staircase was also inserted during the 1960s/70s in place of an early staircase (image 24).

20TH CENTURY: KEY FEATURES

IMAGE 17



IMAGE 18



IMAGE 19



IMAGE 20



IMAGE 21



IMAGE 22



IMAGE 23

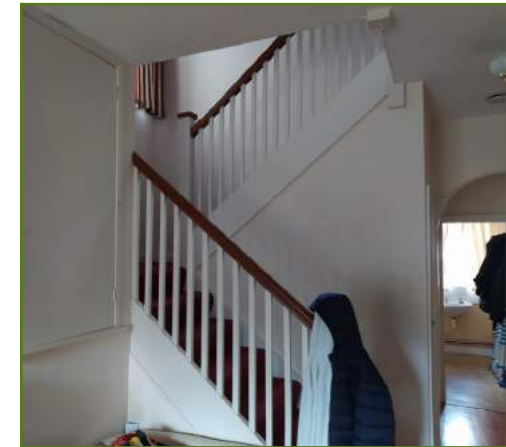


IMAGE 24

4

DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING



4 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

The Old Vicarage is an irregular building orientated south-east north-west. The building is built of rendered brick laid in Flemish bond, with a clay tiled roof hipped to the front and pitched to the rear. Access is in south-west elevation, through a late 19th century High Gothic Revival porch built of timber with later glazing and brick cover. The building is whitewashed; however, it is likely that the brickwork was originally exposed. This can be found in local examples such as the Abbot's House or Langley House (now Breakspear Place). The former shares a historical background with The Old Vicarage as part of the advowson and, although it was built in the 16th century, it was largely extended c. 1700, when the Vicarage was built. Langley House was built with the brickwork exposed but was stuccoed in 1830.



The Abbot's House in 1960.



Langley House in 1904.

The main façade is the south-east elevation, which has two rows of painted timber-framed sash windows with glazing bars and gauged brick flat-arched heads. The different frame styles indicate that several of the windows are original to the first construction, whilst the remaining were installed during the 19th and early 20th century.

Two brick stringcourses run across the façade over each row of windows, being the lowest stringcourse interrupted over the central ground-floor window. This arrangement, together with the plan form, suggests the original location of the main entrance, converted later into a window. The gap in the stringcourse is the result of a former decorative door moulding probably topped with a pediment.

The south-east elevation seems to have been originally a symmetrical early Georgian façade. However, its symmetry was broken when the windows on the right side were

later enlarged. The façade terminates in a brick parapet which extends to the side elevations.



South-east elevation of The Old Vicarage.



Detail of sash window frame.

Early photographs (see Appendix 1) show the Vicarage had multiple long chimney stacks of which only three survive. The surviving chimney stacks are located to the back and either side of the building. The existing stacks have been truncated, and the presence of modern brickwork indicates a later refurbishment or repair. This modern brickwork can also be found in the parapet and the south-west and north-east elevations.

The sides and rear of the building show part of the additions performed during the 19th and 20th century. The south-east elevation comprises the side of the original 18th century house and the 19th century extension which has a large bow window. A low brick wall goes from the porch to the front elevation, covering a L-shaped ditch which provides ventilation to the basement. This element is a mid-20th century addition as it is not shown in early photos of the Vicarage until the 1960s. The parapet runs over the whole elevation covering the 18th century roof and the slightly higher pitched roof of the extension.

The rear of the building is formed by part of the 19th century extension, which occupied the building's whole length, and the single storeyed flat-roofed 1970s addition. The demolition of half of the Victorian extension during the 1960s/70s, uncovered the gabled rear of the 18th century building. However, the back of the original building was

rebuilt during the 1960s/70s as indicated by the modern brickwork that matches the 1970s extension. The windows are modern casement windows which can also be found in the north-east elevation.

The north-east elevation shows the side of the 18th century building and the single-storeyed modern extension. This elevation has been significantly altered as indicated by the large amount of modern brickwork and the modern windows.



North-east elevation of The Old Vicarage.



Rear elevation of The Old Vicarage.

Internally, The Old Vicarage has suffered significant alterations, mostly undertaken during the 1960s/70s. Despite the removal and addition of partition walls, the floor plan indicates that the original 18th century house was a basic version of the double pile 'deep' house.

The house still retains several original features dated from the 18th and 19th century. Examples of original plaster coving and cornices can be found in the ground floor together with 18th, and 19th cupboards turned into bookcases and cabinets.

The original staircase was built on the site on which today's staircase stands. A recent survey carried out by the current owners revealed that the original staircase was wider than the existing one and that a stairway was added to its half landing to provide access to the first floor of the late Georgian extension; the current landing to this room being constructed after the 1960s demolitions.

This theory is supported by the back of the cupboard in the hallway, which was constructed out of modern brickwork suggesting this was originally an opening. There

is also evidence from under the existing staircase which suggests that the original staircase used to occupy the full width of the stairwell (under the current landing which leads to the late Georgian extension).



Modern brickwork upwards from height of original quarter landing. Evidence also of staircase being full width of stairwell incorporating what is now the cupboard.

The panelling around the same area in the drawing room was removed to reveal modern brick infill from the quarter landing height of the original staircase upwards. This explains the differences found in the panelling (join lines, method, materials and quality).



Panel join lines.



Modern brickwork found behind panelling.

4 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

The removal of the carpet in the room over the drawing room revealed evidence of new construction by a line in the floor boards and the same modern tongue and groove flooring used as the one found in the existing landing to this bedroom. The removal of some of the boards showed evidence of trimmer and landing.



Join line of flooring in bedroom over the drawing room.



Trimmer and landing found after the removal of floorboards.



Modern joists and floorboards forming landing to bedroom over drawing room.

There are 2 rooms with panelling, both located in the early 19th century extension. The ground-floor room or drawing room shows 3 different type of panelling. Part of the panelling in the ground-floor room has been recently removed to assess the damage caused by dampness and beetle infestation. Remnants of floral wall paper and evidence of painted plaster finishes which suggest the panelling was fitted some time after the construction of this range. This also explains the awkward detail of the panelling sitting

on top of the skirting and the top detail obscuring what it is believed to be the original egg and dart cornice.



Remnants of floral wallpaper found behind panelling.

The panelling in the first-floor room seems to be late Victorian with 20th century additions. The removal of part of the panelling from an area where it showed differences in construction (join lines, method, materials and quality) indicated the presence of a former doorway block with modern brickwork. It is believed that this doorway provided access to the now demolished late Georgian section.



Modern brickwork and remnants of plaster found under panelling in bedroom over drawing room.

This room has an attractive cast iron fireplace from the late 19th century and the windows retain early shutters. The fireplace was covered by a piece of plywood. The remaining fireplaces have been removed or are concealed. The discovery of the iron cast fireplace in the 19th century extension, suggests that early fireplaces might still remain in-situ.



19th century window shutters.



Concealed Victorian iron cast fireplace.

The examination of the floorboards in the bedroom over the drawing room suggested that the area adjacent to the stairwell and landing were of a different width to those of the rest of the room. This suggested that there was a separate room in line with the wall at the top of the landing before the original entrance to the bedroom was built. This also coincides with the position of an earlier window (now blocked) found on the south-west elevation.

Another area showing different detailing was found in the panelling of this room, against the wall of the early Georgian house, suggesting later alterations. The removal of part of this panelling discovered modern brickwork in the shape of a doorway suggesting direct access between what is currently bedroom 4 and the bedroom over the drawing room (currently bedroom 5).



Narrower floorboards in pale yellow from bedroom over drawing room



Modern brickwork blocking original doorway.

A blocked window was found in the south-west elevation of the original core of the house (in current bedroom 3) concealed under later plasterboard covering. Part of the original render of the window survived along with the low sill height matching the existing windows in the main south-east elevation.



Original blocked window found in south-west elevation of the original core of the building (bedroom 3).

4 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

The basement (old cellar) has also been extended during the 19th and 20th century, and it is accessed from the rear of the building under the existing staircase, which suggests the position of the original staircase. The existing brickwork has remnants of lime wash, and it is a mixture of Georgian, Victorian and modern bricks. The ceiling is supported by a mixture of early and modern timber joists and steel beams supported in turn by modern brick pillars. Original flooring is still visible under layers of dirt. The earliest part of the cellar still retains its original niches to store wine bottles and a coal chute with its coal hole at ground level.



Early timber in the staircase to the cellar.



Upper landing of the cellar's staircase



Cellar's niches.



Cellar's original floor.

Part of the loft under the roof was inhabited, probably by servants. This theory is supported not only by the existing evidence in the loft, but also by the existence of a dormer window (now lost) in the roof's eastern slope. The current access is with a ladder through a hole; however, the presence of the former stairwell indicates the existence of a narrow staircase in the same area. The roof structure is a mixture of early and modern timbers with multiple modern additions nailed to the rafters. The rafters are covered with iron nails, and there are remnants of wood slats showing the rafters were covered. Few burnt rafters suggest a fire in the house. The roof was restored a few years ago as there was a risk of collapsing. The roof structure was secured by adding large iron beams.



Access to the loft.



Former stairwell in the loft.



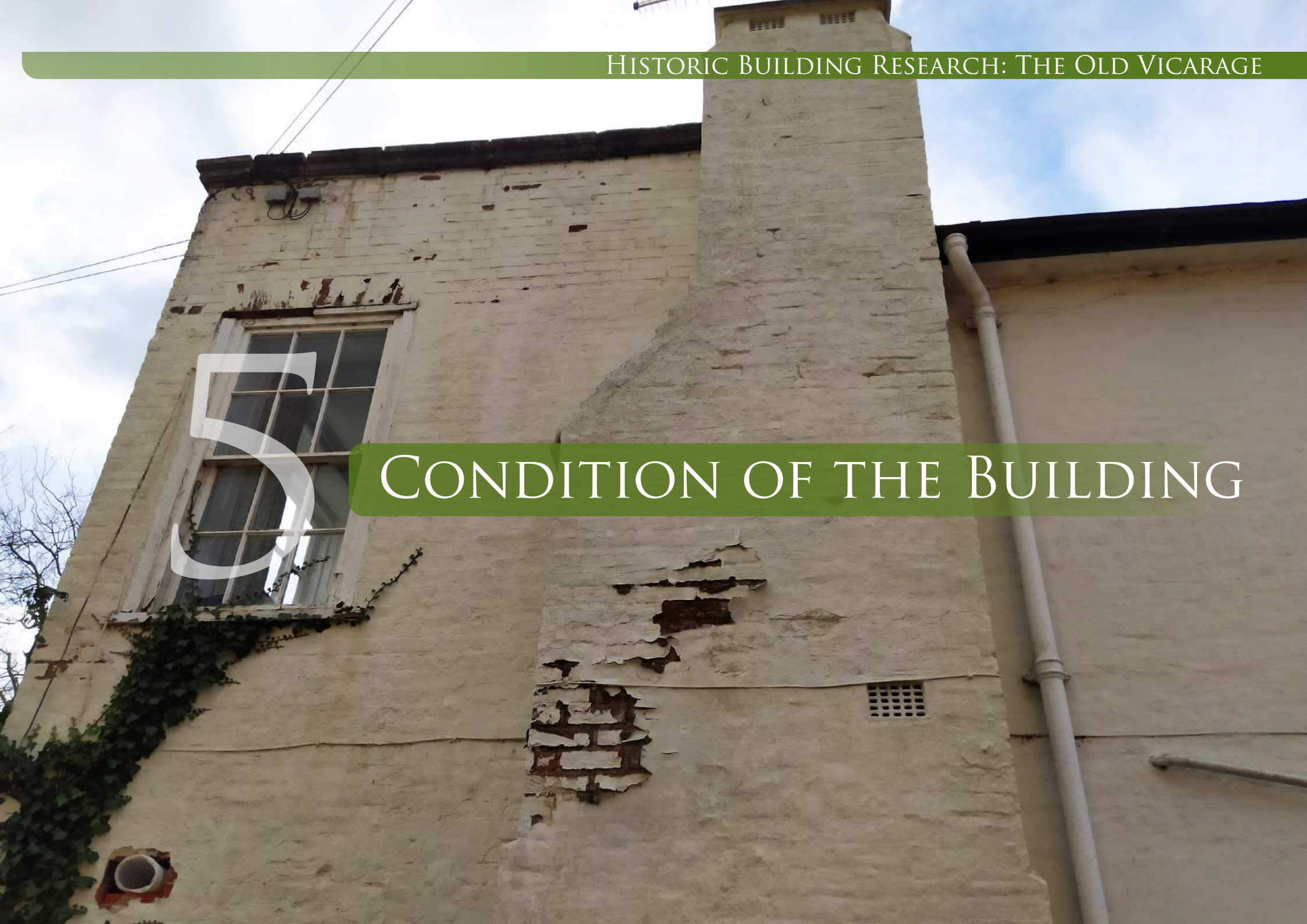
Roof structure.



Roof structure.

5

CONDITION OF THE BUILDING



General Condition

The Property is constructed in a number of phases. It is clear that each phase has led to extensive changes to previous phases and the quality of work and materials used varies significantly throughout the building.

Some work has been carried out in recent times, mainly limited to the roof structure which has been strengthened with a substantial steel frame, however other than this there are limited works which have been carried out since the 1960s.

The following gives a broad overview of the condition of the building based on a visual inspection on site. This should not be read as a detailed building survey but more an overview on the general condition of the fabric and options for its repair and replacement and should be used to inform the proposed works.

Windows and doors

All windows show, to a greater or lesser extent, signs of decay and this will lead to further water ingress and in turn further decay. The paintwork is failing on many of the windows. The same is true for the doors.

The windows are a mixture of historic windows (some apparently with original glass) and more modern replacements. The historic windows appear to be repairable but the works to some will be extensive.

There are however other doors and windows (mainly modern replacements) which are so far decayed that replacement is the only option. Some of these (in particular in the 1960s extension) are not in keeping with the proportions and style of the building.

Coving, Cornices and panelling

The cornices to the ground floor rooms remain but are heavily painted in many cases. Often a poultice application is the most appropriate paint removal method and samples should be carried out to see how effective this might be.

On the first floor there is a small section of coving in the circulation area. The panelling to the ground and first floors is a mixture of historic and new. In many cases

it is clear that it has been planted on afterwards as the panelling is proud of the cornices. There are also more simple profiles to many of the panelling suggesting it to be of lesser age and quality.

Much of the panelling is loose from the walls and it appears there is damp behind much of it. The only way to address this is to remove the panelling and address the damp behind before re-fitting the panelling. In doing so, the opportunity exists to review the various phases of panelling and agree which have historic interest and should be retained and which can be removed.

The recent removal of part of the panelling of the ground-floor room to assess the damage caused by dampness and beetle infestation, has revealed original floral wallpaper and painted plaster finishes.

The shutters and shutter casing around many of the Georgian windows remain, although some appear to be later additions.

Render

Parts of the building have been rendered with a cement-based render. This appears to be used on the north eastern wall of the early 19th century extension.

The use of a cement render here which is not breathable or flexible will have led to water ingress into the 19th century solid brick walls and whilst the render has not “blown” it should ideally be removed as it will trap moisture against the walls and lead to further decay.

If choosing to re-render this elevation, then a lime-based render should be used and a suitable specification agreed.

Brickwork

The majority of the construction is brickwork which has been painted over. It is clear, however, that there are a number of phases of brickwork and the different bonds, mortar styles and quality of brick are clear.

The parapet above the first-floor sash windows on the Georgian house are of modern brick, presumably built when the extensive works were carried out to the roof to facilitate access for the steel frames.

The 1960s extension is of lesser quality brickwork and the wall above this and flanking it to the north east are again in modern brick.

There will be some scarring of brickwork from various alterations and insertions of windows, etc; but these are generally hidden by the paint.

The building was likely never painted originally. The use of a modern paint, whilst providing the building with a harmonious appearance is causing significant damage to the brickwork.

The paint used appears to be a modern polymer (plastic) based paint. Whilst these paints are designed to keep water out on modern buildings, they will not allow historic buildings to breathe causing moisture to be trapped behind the paint, which, in turn, can cause decay.

It is recommended that this paint is removed entirely. This could be achieved through chemical removal, but it may be more efficient to remove with a vortex system such as DOFF or TORC.

Once removed the options for treating the brickwork can be reviewed and a suitable approach adopted.

Re-pointing is likely to be required to some of the brickwork with a lime mortar. But it is notable that there are large patches of cement mortar of a very strong mix which attempting to remove may result in damage to the bricks and may be better left alone.

If good quality brickwork can be found and its appearance can be improved through repointing and replacement of modern brick locally then it might be an option to leave the brickwork entirely exposed. This would dramatically change the appearance of the building but would be a change more reflective of its likely original appearance, much like the Abbots House to the south.

The alternative is that the walls could be repainted with a breathable external paint (clay-based paints for example are available) however more research is required to find an appropriate paint.

It is possible that parts of the building could be painted, and others left exposed. This may help define the different periods of the building better and enhance its public understanding whilst helping to hide some of the later less desirable alterations.

Timber Frame

Roof structure:

The roof structure has suffered from decay historically, but this has been addressed to some extent with the relatively recent insertion of a steel frame structure. There is, however, evidence of beetle in many of the timbers, potentially historic, which should be monitored and ideally treated by a specialist. The roof should be maintained dry and adequate ventilation provided. If the building is re roofed an opportunity to address this should be taken. Individual timbers may require replacement or localised repair and a full survey of all timbers should be carried out.

First floor structure:

The floor structures appear to have suffered considerable decay, mainly to the ends of joists in the upper floors and to nearly all of the structure in the cellar. This appears to be due to the dampness of the walls which has decayed joists ends and the very damp environment in the cellar with no ventilation.

Some floorboards have been lifted during our inspection and the general condition of the remaining joists appears relatively sound. The floors appear to be constructed of joists radiating from spine beams to masonry walls with cross timbers laid under supporting the lath and plaster ceilings.

As is often the case, joists have been cut through for services in their top half and this has weakened many. Some of the floors show significant deflection. Joist ends where rotten against damp walls will need addressing to ensure adequate bearing once the damp walls have been resolved. This can either be via replacement of the decayed

ends with new timber ends connected with shear joints designed by an engineer. The alternative is to install a new steel spanning rooms parallel to outside walls in order to pick up the joist ends just away from the wall where they are sound.

Both options are likely to involve loss of parts of the ceilings below and elements of the cornices. Where this is the case they should be replaced and repaired as outlined above.

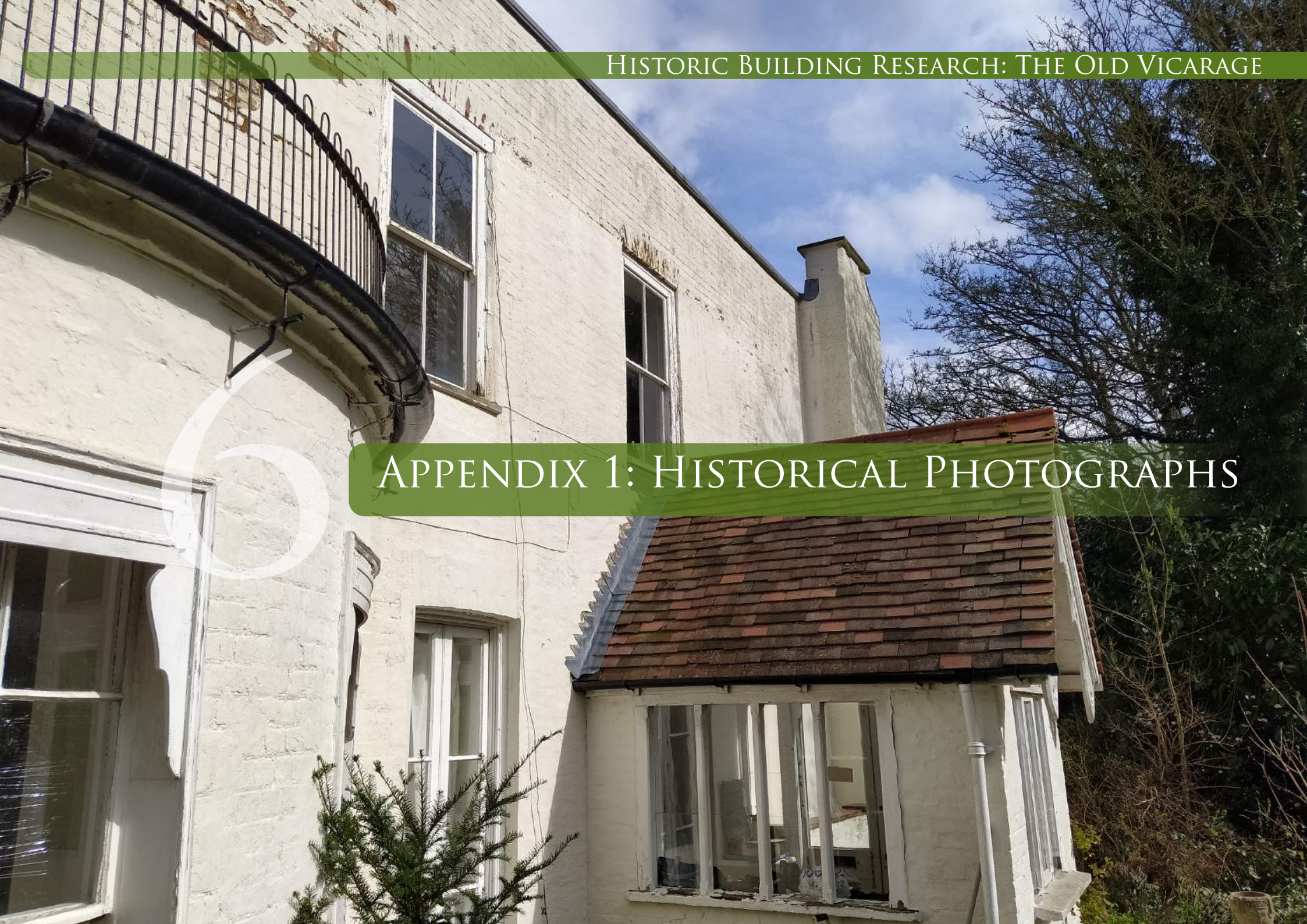
Where floors have suffered significant deflection, timber firrings can be used to raise and level floors but the relationship of the realigned floors with historic floorboards should be considered to avoid damage to floorboards through over levelling of floors.

Cellar ceilings:

The joists within the cellar require near full replacement due to the serious decay. Ideally the principal timbers (chamber beams / spine beams) should be retained as they have evidence of the original peg holes and mortices from the joists, but the secondary structure could be replaced with modern timber work and steel to form a sound structure for the floor above.

Generally, treatment of the remaining structure should be undertaken against beetle whilst the structure is exposed.

APPENDIX 1: HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS





Front view of The Old Vicarage, 1912.



Aerial view of The Old Vicarage from the north-west, 1937.



Aerial view of The Old Vicarage from the north-east, 1957.



Front view of The Old Vicarage, 1962.



The Old Vicarage viewed from the north-east, 1977.

APPENDIX 2: LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONTEXT



- 7.1 The primary legislation relating to Listed Buildings and their settings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Section 16(2) states “In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

Section 66(1) reads: “In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

- 7.2 In relation to development within Conservation Areas, Section 72(1) reads: *“Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”*
- 7.3 Policy relating to the historic environment is set out at national level within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 7.4 Policy relating to the historic environment is set out at local level within the Three Rivers Local Plan adopted on 13th July 2013.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

- 7.5 Chapter 16 (Paragraphs 184 to 202) of the NPPF updated and adopted in February 2019 constitute the Government’s national guidance and policy regarding development relating to the historic environment.

- 7.6 Paragraph 185 of the NPPF states that

“Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

- (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- (b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- (d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.”*

- 7.7 Paragraph 201 of the NPPF establishes that

“Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less

than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.”

- 7.8 The NPPF is a material consideration and states that applications are to be determined in accordance with the local framework unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.9 The NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment with much emphasis on “significance”, defined in Annex 2 as:

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.”

- 7.10 Setting is defined in Annex 2 as:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

- 7.11 Annex 2 defines Conservation (for heritage policy) as:

“The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.”

- 7.12 This definition is important as it distinguishes conservation from preservation and puts an emphasis on proactively managing change rather than reactively resisting it.

LOCAL POLICY - THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 7.13 The site lies within the boundary of the Three Rivers District Council. The Three Rivers Local Plan was adopted on 13th July 2013
- 7.14 Policy DM3 relates to the Historic Environment and is considered relevant to this proposal.

Policy DM3: The Historic Built Environment

a) When assessing applications for development, there will be a presumption in favour of the retention and enhancement of heritage assets and to putting heritage assets to viable and appropriate uses to secure their future protection. Applications will only be supported where they sustain, conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance, character and setting of the asset itself and the surrounding historic environment.

b) Listed Buildings

The Council will preserve the District’s Listed Buildings and will only support applications where:

- i) The extension/alteration would not adversely affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest both internally or externally or its wider setting
- ii) Any change of use would preserve its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest and ensure its continued use/viability.

Applications involving the demolition of a Listed Building will only be granted in wholly exceptional circumstances.

c) Conservation Areas

Within Conservation Areas development will only be permitted if the proposal:

- i) Is of a design and scale that preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Area.
 - ii) Uses building materials, finishes, including those for features such as walls, railings, gates and hard surfacing, that are appropriate to the local context.
 - iii) Retains historically significant boundaries, important open spaces and other elements of the area's established pattern of development, character and historic value, including gardens, roadside banks and verges.
 - iv) Retains and restores, where relevant, traditional features such as shop fronts, walls, railings, paved surfaces and street furniture, and improves the condition of structures worthy of retention.
 - v) Does not harm important views into, out of or within the Conservation Area.
 - vi) Protects trees, hedgerows and other significant landscape features and incorporates landscaping appropriate to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area 14.
 - vii) Results, where relevant, in the removal of unsympathetic features and the restoration or reinstatement of missing features.
- d) Within Conservation Areas permission for development involving demolition or substantial demolition will only be granted if it can be demonstrated that:

- i) The structure to be demolished makes no material contribution to the special character or appearance of the area; or,
 - ii) It can be demonstrated that the structure is wholly beyond repair or incapable of beneficial use; or
 - iii) It can be demonstrated that the removal of the structure and its subsequent replacement with a new building and/or open space would lead to the enhancement of the Conservation Area.
- e) The Council will not normally grant consent for the demolition of a building in a Conservation Area unless permission has been granted for redevelopment of the site.
- f) Permission will not be granted for development outside but near to a Conservation Area if it adversely affects the setting, character, appearance of or views in to or out of that Conservation Area.
- g) The Council will only permit development proposals including solutions to shop front security and/or use of standardised shop front designs, fascias or advertisement displays in a Conservation Area if they:
- i) Are sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
 - ii) Respect the scale, proportions, character and materials of construction of the upper part of the building and adjoining buildings and the street scene in general;
 - iii) Incorporate traditional materials where the age and character of the building makes this appropriate.

Generally, totally internally illuminated fascias or projecting signs will not be permitted. The Council will also not support applications for additional signs

that would result in a proliferation of, and excess amount of, advertisement material on any individual building or group of buildings.

h) Locally Important Buildings

The Council encourages the retention of Locally Important Buildings. Where planning permission is required for the alteration or extension of a Locally Important Building, permission will only be granted where historic or architectural features are retained or enhanced.

i) Historic Parks and Gardens

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals that would cause unacceptable harm to historic parks or gardens (both registered and unregistered), their settings or public views into, out of, or within them. Applicants are required to submit a Historic Landscape Assessment prior to the determination of the application. This may include an archaeological assessment if located within an area of archaeological importance.

j) Archaeology

Where an application site includes, or is considered to have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, it must be accompanied by an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where desk-based research is insufficient to properly assess the interest, a field evaluation. There is a presumption against any harm to Scheduled Monuments and heritage assets with archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to Scheduled Monuments. Where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance (archaeological interest) is justified, planning conditions will be included in any permission to ensure that an adequate record is made of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost. This will be secured through an archaeological written scheme of investigation (WSI) which must include provision for appropriate publication of the evidence.



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