

NUNNYKIRK HALL

Nunnykirk | Morpeth | Northumberland

D&A AND HERITAGE STATEMENT



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Change of Use

This Design & Access and Heritage Statement accompanies a planning application for Change of Use by Dr John and Mrs Lindsay Jacques in relation to Nunnykirk Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 4PB.

The proposed development consists of the Change of Use of this Grade I Listed Building from its previous use as an independent residential school (Class C2) to a single family dwelling for the 'Main House' and three (3) separate apartments in the Service Wing for residential purposes (Class C3(a)), not involving any external alterations to the property itself and its site, along with very limited internal alterations comprising principally the removal of C20 additions. The prior application for Change of Use from private dwellinghouse to private residential school (Ref: A/76/A/66) was received on 24th February 1976 and permitted on 19th March 1976.

Designed by the locally renowned architect John Dobson in 1825, this provides an exciting opportunity to sympathetically restore the property to its original intended use as a country house.

In light of the properties historical national significance, the property will be restored with minimal alteration of the original configuration of both the main house and service wing. No additional partition walls or dropped/false ceilings will be added, thus maintaining the character of the building. Where several minor partition walls have been added over the last decade or so, whilst it was a functioning school, such as for privacy purposes in the toilets and boarding rooms, it is proposed that these late additions are removed, as outlined and presented in this statement document. Thus, restoring those rooms to their original size and shape, and exposing fully such features as the room's cornicing.

1.2 Previous Experience

The current owners, Dr John and Mrs Lindsay Jacques, have considerable experience in renovating and restoring such buildings. Over the last ten years, they have successfully transformed a very similar property in terms of size and character, Garforth House, York, to a single family house, which was formerly a school (1918-1968) and then commercial offices. Garforth House, 54 Micklegate, is an exceptional and substantial five-bay, five storey Grade I Listed Building, situated in the centre of York on one of its most prominent streets. The house was built in 1755-1757 for the Garforth family of Wiganthorpe Hall by one of the most important and influential architects of his time, John Carr of York (1723 – 1807). As with Garforth House, the minor alterations proposed here for Nunnykirk Hall are designed to preserve and enhance the special architectural or historic character of the building, and to be of an appropriate design, using traditional natural materials and skilled workmanship. Any replacement of the fabric will be kept to a minimum in order to maintain the character and value of the building. Methods introduced during the restoration of Garforth House, such as for energy efficiency purposes, are now regarded as an example of 'Best Practice' and are being used elsewhere for listed buildings in York and surrounding areas.

The current owners of Nunnykirk Hall intend to allow access to the public through similar events to the ones they have undertaken at Garforth House, which include an annual school reunion, tours with the York Civic Trust and The Georgian Society and, more recently, 'York Unlocked' (<https://york-unlocked.org.uk/buildings-in-picture>; see Appendix 1).

1.3 Heritage Impact

As discussed, the proposed Change of Use from an independent residential school to a single family dwelling will not involve any external alterations to the property and site, thus having a neutral impact on the setting of the listed building and its surroundings.

In terms of the physical works, this will comprise of very limited internal alterations comprising principally the removal of C20 additions, such as a few partition walls, which are outlined in Section 5 under 'Proposed Works', opening up several of the smaller rooms to their original size and shape, prior to the relatively recent work carried out whilst the property was a school. There will be no impact from the change of utilities and their location, as the ground floor comprises of a former kitchen, which will remain the same, and any new toilets and bathroom suites will only utilise the rooms throughout the entire building that are currently already used for that purpose. Hence, there should be no requirement for additional soil pipes etc. on any external part of the building.

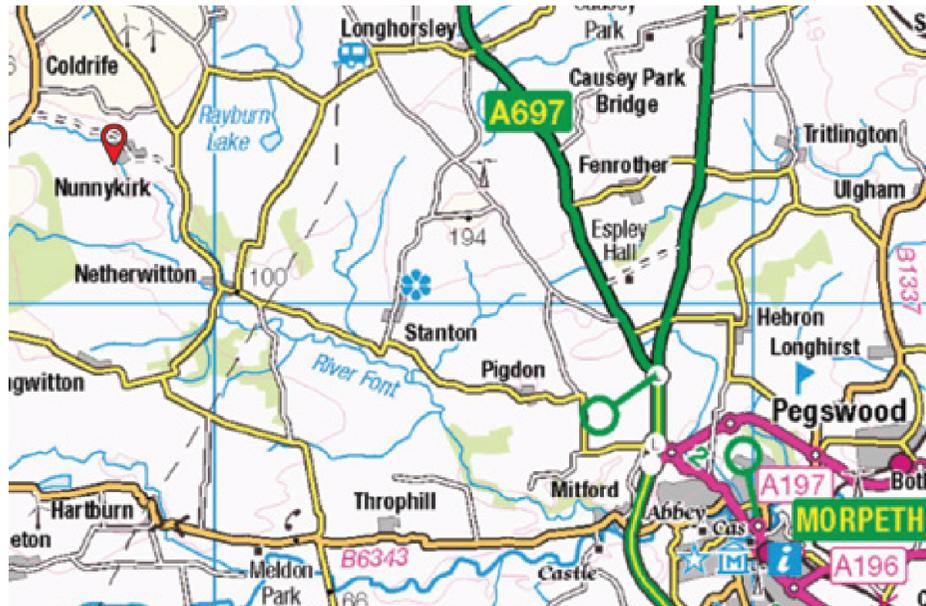
In summary, the proposed minor removal of C20 additions, such as partition walls, will reinstate the internal original configuration of several rooms both in the main house and service wing. Where necessary, inappropriate materials will be replaced with historically appropriate ones, enhancing the aesthetic heritage values of the property. All the proposed works will have a significant positive impact on the building, and help preserve the character and original intended use of the property for years to come.

This Design & Access and Heritage Statement should be read in conjunction with supporting drawings provided with the application.

2. LOCATION & SITE ACCESS

Privately situated in a wooded valley adjoining the River Font, the property is approximately 10 miles northwest of Morpeth and 8 miles south of Rothbury, occupying a rural location.

In the village of Nunnykirk, the property can either be approached from the road that leads from Morpeth to Netherwitton and on to Rothbury, or the A697 turning off at Longhorsley onto West Road, which is signposted to Netherwitton. The entrance to the property lies approximately two miles north of Netherwitton, with the entrance signed “Nunnykirk” on the west side of the road. A private driveway leads past several residential dwellings before reaching the property after 0.75 miles.



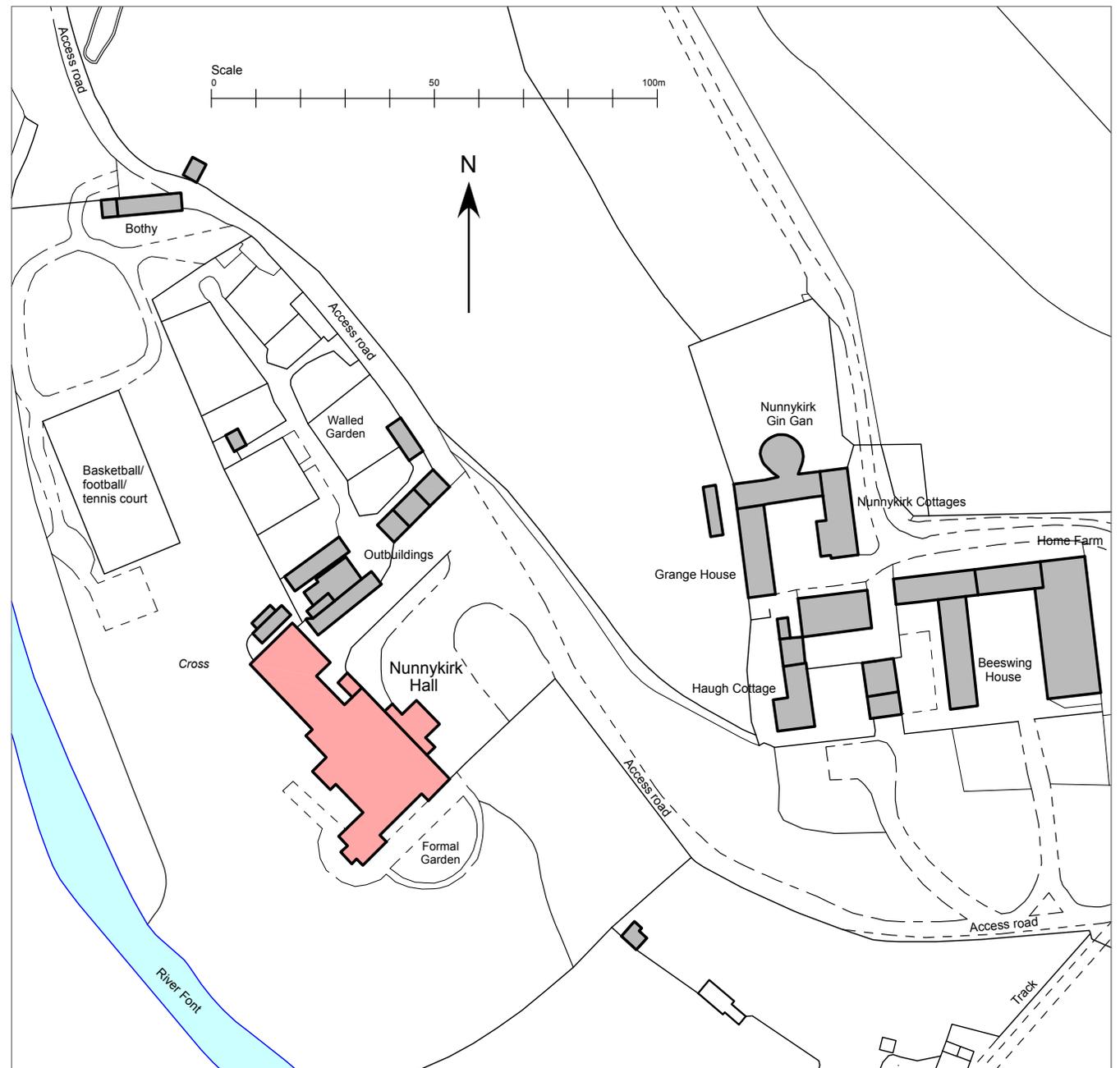
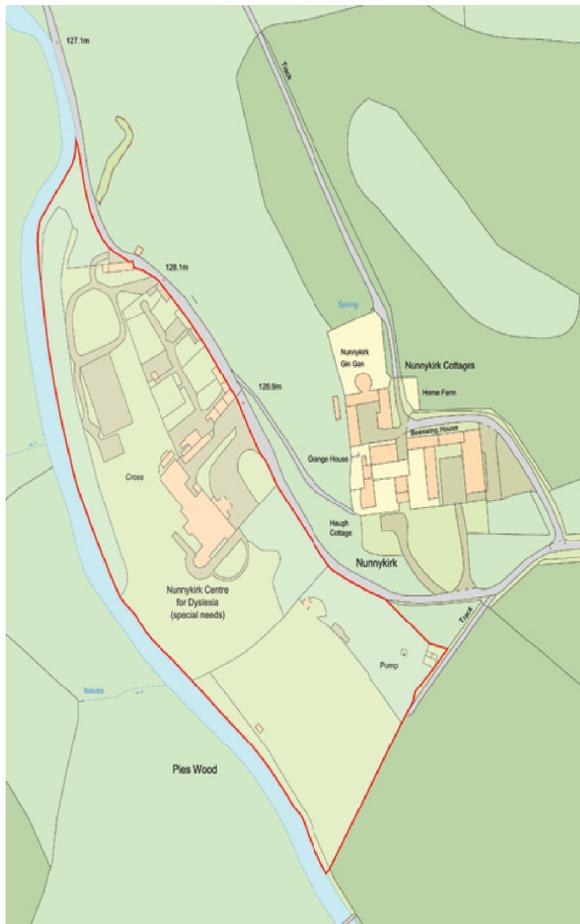
Location map for Nunnykirk Hall based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationary Office. Crown Copyright reserved (100022432).

Site access map for Nunnykirk Hall based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationary Office. Crown Copyright reserved (100022432).

3. SITE PLAN

Site plan for Nunnyskirk Hall based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationary Office. Crown Copyright reserved (100022432).

The entire site, including property, outbuildings and land, is defined by the red outline shown in the map below.



4. THE PROPERTY

Nunnykirk Hall is a Grade I Listed Country House. During the last 46 years, it has been occupied as an independent residential school occupied under a tenancy agreement by Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia, which subsequently closed last year.

The property which had been in the ownership of the Orde family since 1716 occupies a delightful position at the head of a wooded valley with frontage onto the River Font. The current building, as it stands today, was built in 1825 by the renowned northeastern architect, John Dobson, and has been described as “the finest of all Dobson’s early houses” (Pevsner).

The property lies within attractive and mature landscaped gardens mainly laid to lawns and includes a large walled garden, former bothy, hard tennis court and recreational playing field.

4.1 Site History

The Nunnykirk Cross discovered in the wall of a cottage demolished in the 19th century and now within the collection of the Great North Museum implies that there have been dwellings on the site of Nunnykirk since Saxon times. This pre-dates the ecclesiastical settlement founded at Nunnykirk by the Abbot of Newminster in 1138, which is believed to have consisted of a chapel, tower and other edifices, which are now entirely gone.

After the dissolution of the monasteries, the site passed through the Grey family, coming into the Orde’s family in 1716 when purchased by Edward Ward, who proceeded to build a fine Queen Anne house on the site. In 1825, his greatgrandson, William Orde, commissioned John Dobson to completely remodel the house, creating the property in existence today. The shape of the original early-18th century house can still be clearly seen from the south.

In the 1920’s and 1930’s, the house was leased out, and then requisitioned by the army during the Second World War. The Orde family returned to occupy the house after the war had ended and remained at the house until 1977, when the house was leased out as an independent residential school.

4.2 Nunnykirk Hall

With an attractive Ashlar construction under a Lakeland slate roof, Nunnykirk Hall essentially forms two parts, the “Main House” and “Service Wing”, as depicted on the floorplans, (see Pages 9 to 11) and comprises of accommodation on three stories with the principal rooms facing south and west. The accommodation in total extends to approximately 20,091 sq ft (1866 m²). Whilst the property was used as an independent residential school (1976-2022), despite the ground and first floor reception rooms being largely used as classrooms and the bedrooms as dormitories, the property still retains many original period features including feature fireplaces, ornate plaster work, cornicing and excellent woodwork with doors and shutters veneered in a variety of native and foreign woods - a testament to the restrictive measures in place for a Grade 1 Listed building, ensuring that the character as a building of special architectural and historic interest is preserved.

Main House - Outside

The main features of the outside of the main house include:

Entrance Front: two (2) storeys, five (5) broad bays. The centre and outer bays break forward slightly. The centre bay is represented by a large Ionic porte-cochere, with two (2) columns in antis, set against a loggia of three (3) pairs of Ionic columns, which span the centre of the three (3) bays, lead to the outer hall. The entire front has banded rustication that breaks to form voussoirs over the ground floor openings. Twelve- (12-) and six- (6-) pane sashes. Cornice and parapet with panels carved with scrolls, palmettes and anthemias. Hipped roof.

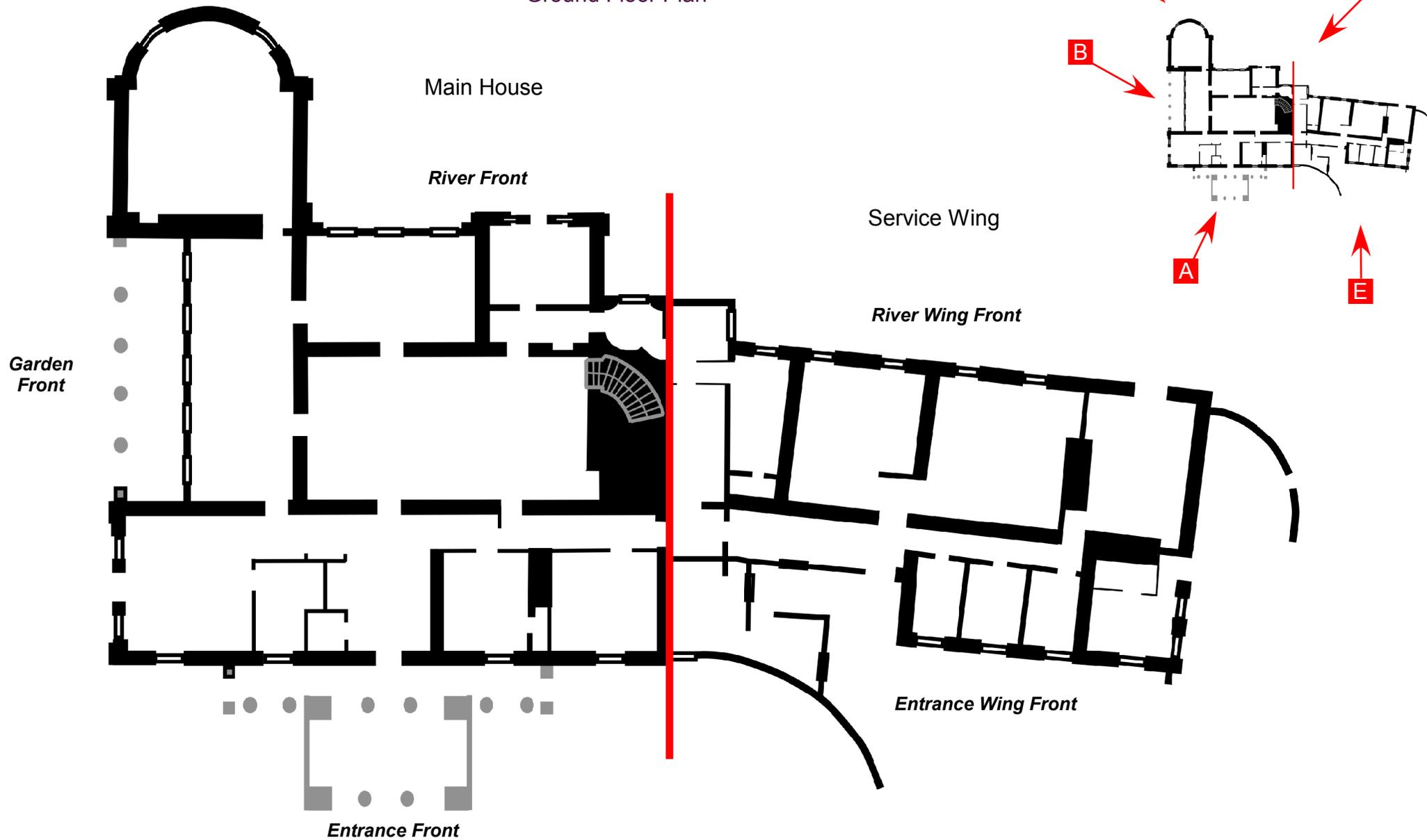
Garden Front: three (3) storeys, six (6) bay centre, with projecting two (2) storey one-bay wings. The centre has similar banded rustication which is echoed in the angle pilasters of the wings. Single-storey loggia of four (4) Ionic columns in antis. Full-length twelve- (12-) pane sashes on the ground floor. Wood cross windows on the 1st floor and six- (6-) pane sashes above. 2nd floor sill string, palmette frieze, dentil cornice and panelled parapet with scrolls. Projecting wings have full-length tripartite windows on the ground floor and shorter tripartite windows above. Parapets with scrolls and palmettes.

South Front: large two (2) storey, three (3) bay bow window.



Main House - Outside
South Front

Ground Floor Plan



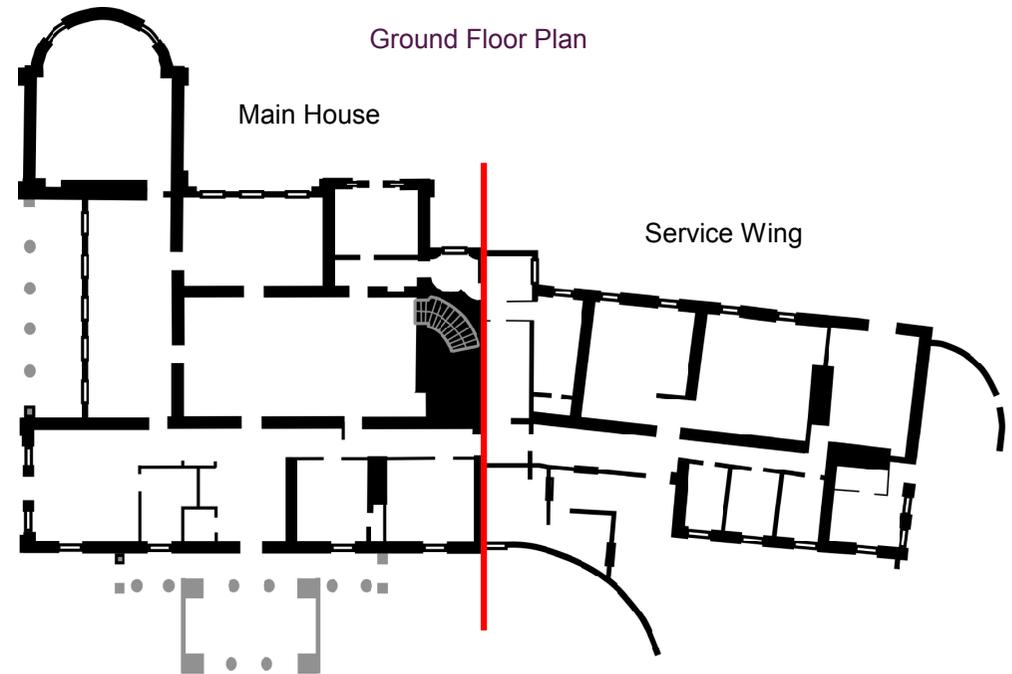
Main House - Outside



Service Wing - Outside

The main features of the outside of the service wing include:

Three (3) storey, six (6) bay service wing, which has thirty- (30-) pane sashes in total on the ground and 1st floors, and sixteen- (16-) pane sashes above.



Main House - Interior

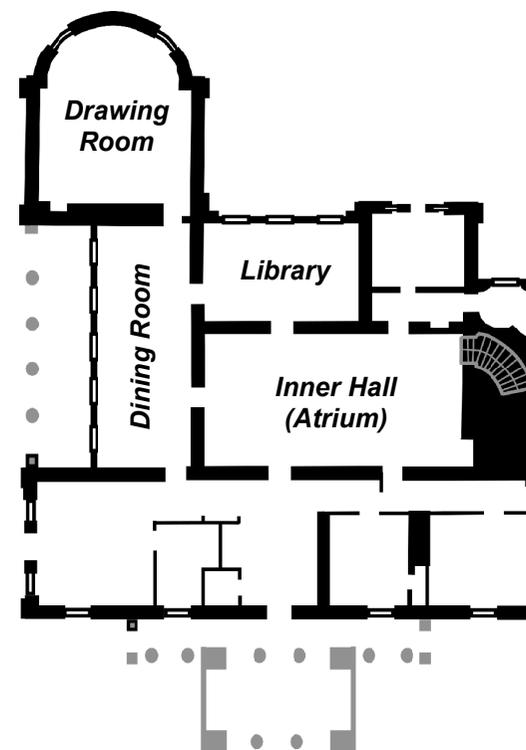
The main features of the interior of the main house include:

Inner Hall: the centrally placed inner hall is a particular feature of the house with an impressive coffered dome in the ceiling, cast iron balustrade and semi-circular staircase. A notable feature of the hall is the organ given to Charles Orde in 1873, built by Forster and Andrews of Hull.

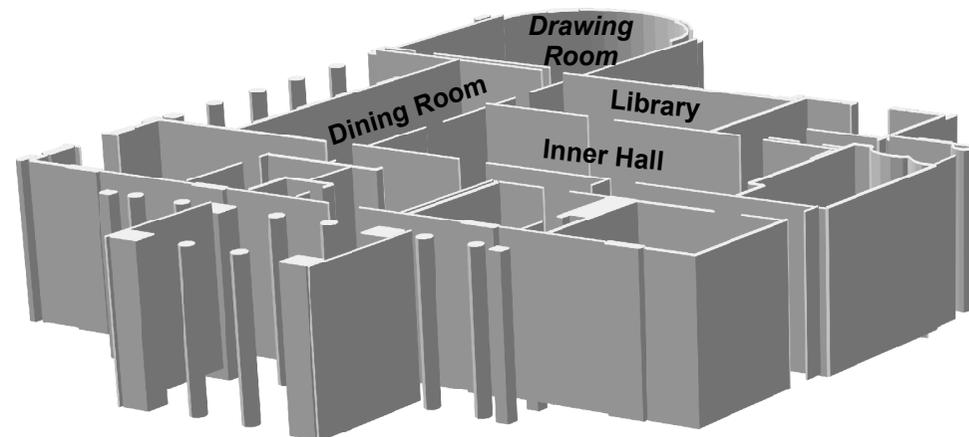
The Drawing Room: the drawing room with a large bow window has an impressive reticulated ceiling, white marble fireplace with eagle and snake in the lintel, and large gilded pelmet with an eagle (both listed).

Dining Room and Library: both are very well-proportioned reception rooms still retaining many original period features. The dining room, in particular, has its ornate plaster work ceiling intact, and feature fireplaces. Both rooms retain their corning in full and excellent veneered woodwork for both the doors and window shutters.

The remainder of the ground floor rooms comprise former kitchens, offices and service rooms used for various purposes by the school (1976-2022).

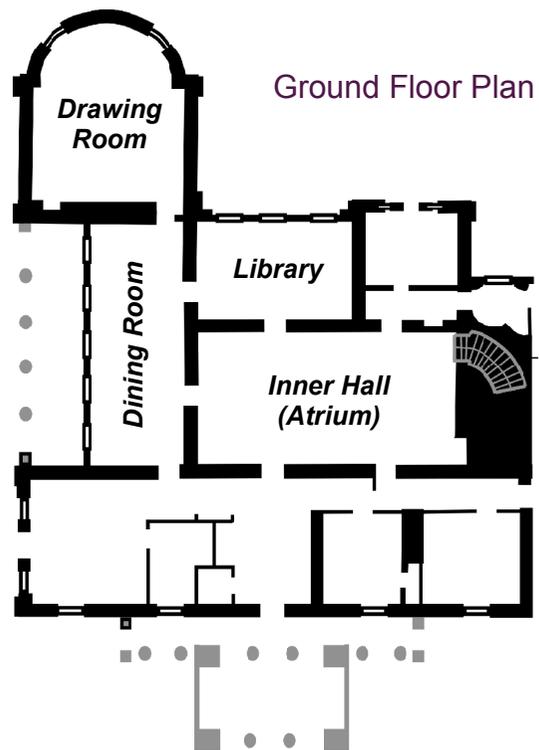


Ground Floor Plan



Main House - Interior

Drawing Room



Inner Hall - Upper - showing coffered dome



Drawing Room - gilded pelmet with eagle



Inner Hall - Lower - showing organ



Dining Room



5. PROPOSED WORKS

The proposed works are presented below and illustrated on the following plans for each floor of the property. The rooms have been numbered on the floor plans for reference, with the service wing of the property designated with a 'W' in front of the number to differentiate those rooms from the main house.

The removal of relatively recent C20 additions are highlighted in red, together with any proposed additions (e.g., fire doors), and notes accompany the floor plans.

5.1 Main House

The 'Main House', as defined on Pages 16 to 22, comprises of three (3) floors, and the original shape and size of the rooms have not been changed since the remodelling of the property in 1825 by John Dobson, which was commissioned by William Orde. Where rooms have been modified, these are late C20 additions, such as partition walls, and communal toilets and showers, that were added whilst the property was let as an independent private residential school from 1977 through to 2022. Thankfully, these C20 additions are limited throughout the property. For instance, on the 'Ground Floor' of the main house, only one room, in terms of its original size and shape, has been altered, and that is the 'Cedar Room' (9; see Pages 17 and 18); with a flimsy "makeshift" partial partition wall that does not reach the ceiling added to create a corridor to a relatively small toilet. This was clearly added so that anyone using the toilet did not disturb pupils in the Cedar Room classroom. As proposed on Page 18, this minor partition wall will be removed to reinstate the Cedar Room to its original shape and thus exposing the continuity of the cornicing that continues around the room.

On the 'First Floor' of the main house, the only minor proposed works are to the current bathrooms and toilets in Rooms 12 to 15 (see Pages 19 and 20), which currently contain showers, wash hand basins, and urinals. These, together with some of the modern partition walls, will be removed, and the existing water feeds, waste and soil pipes will be used to introduce new bathroom suites and toilets, as shown on Page 20. Minimal changes are proposed in an existing bathroom in Room 25 to create an en suite for the 'Master Bedroom' (Room 24; see Page 20).

On the 'Second Floor' of the main house, no alterations to the current configuration of the rooms are required. The only minor works proposed is to add a bathroom suite to Room 30 (see Page 22), utilising the existing water feeds, waste and soil pipes. This room sits directly above Room 25.

No other proposed works are required with regards to its current internal layout, which is somewhat remarkable for a property of this age and its use over recent years as a residential boarding school.

No changes are proposed to the basement of the main house.

5.2 Service Wing

The 'Service Wing', as defined on Pages 16 to 22, also comprises of three (3) floors and, as with the main house, where rooms have been modified, these are again late C20 additions added whilst the property was an independent residential school. Again, as with the main house, there are only a few very minor additions, as detailed below, and on Pages 17 to 22.

The proposed works outlined through Pages 17 to 22 are designed to create three (3) separate apartments, one on each floor of the wing - Apartments 1, 2 and 3, on the ground, first, and second floors, respectively. Due to the size of the wing, and the internal space of each floor, it is conceivable that more apartments/flats could be generated; however, we are very conscious that this could/would have a detrimental affect on the original layout and flow of the original configuration of the rooms and their intended use, and this would unquestionably result in more work and additions to the property, with regards to electrical rewiring, plumbing for central heating, additional partition walls, and the introduction of new bathrooms and kitchens. In light of this, as mentioned above, it is proposed that each floor of the wing will only provide one apartment, thus three (3) apartments in total, which have been used as such in the past prior to the property being used as a residential school. Michael Orde (pers comms, 2023) has kindly provided some details on this as follows:

The house and surrounding land was occupied by the army during WWII.

Following the war, my grandfather, Sir Charles Orde, returned to live in Nunnykirk, following his retirement from the FCO.

In 1950, my parents, David & Audrey Orde got married and lived in the top floor of the wing.

As their family expanded during the 1950s, they installed an internal staircase connecting the 1st and 2nd floors of the wing and lived in both floors until 1966.

In 1966 they moved into the front of the house and my grandfather was installed in a flat on the 1st floor of the wing.

From 1966, the top floor of the wing was separately occupied by my grandfather's housekeeper.

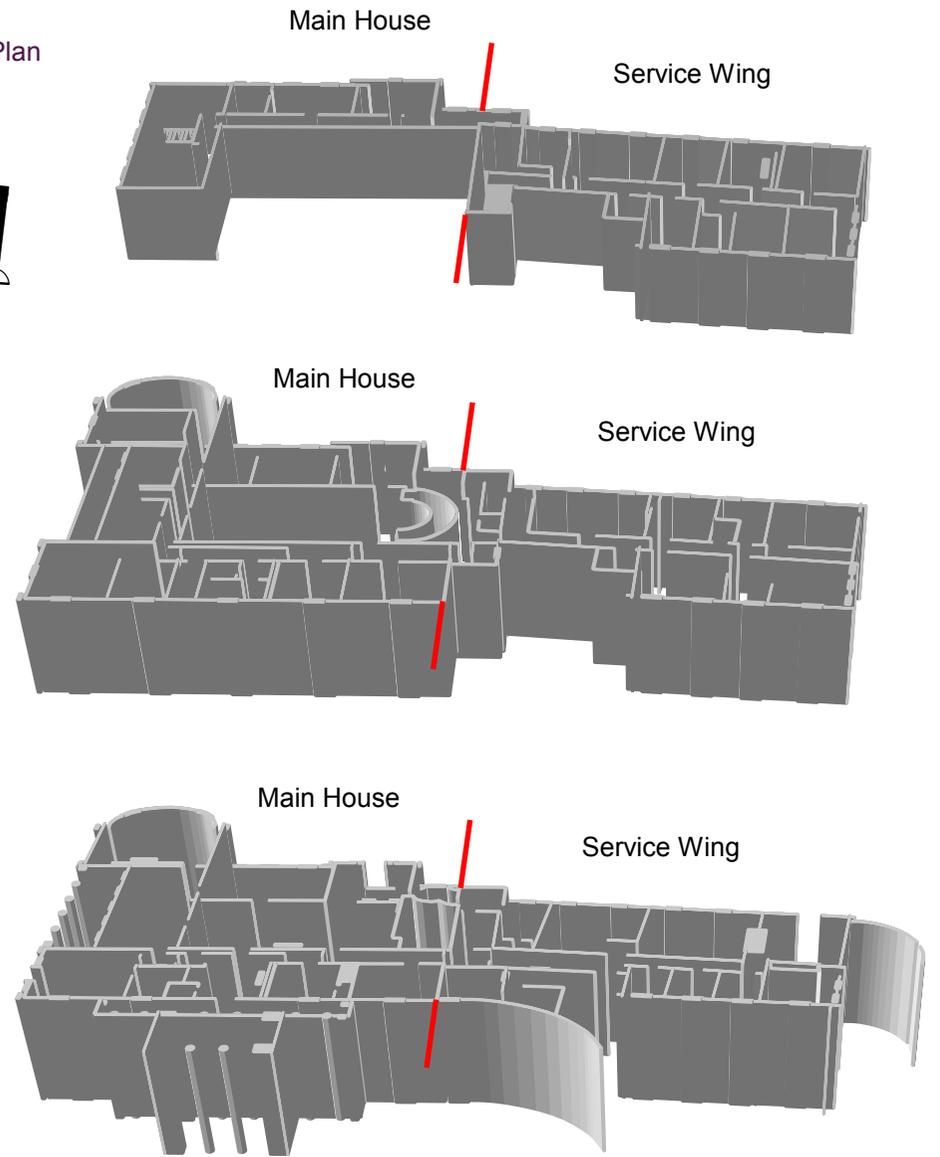
Whilst the house was let to the school from 1 January 1977, my grandfather and his housekeeper remained in occupation of their flats in the wing until his death in 1980.

At that point the flats in the wing were occupied by the school and they had a member of staff living in the 2nd floor flat until only a few years ago.

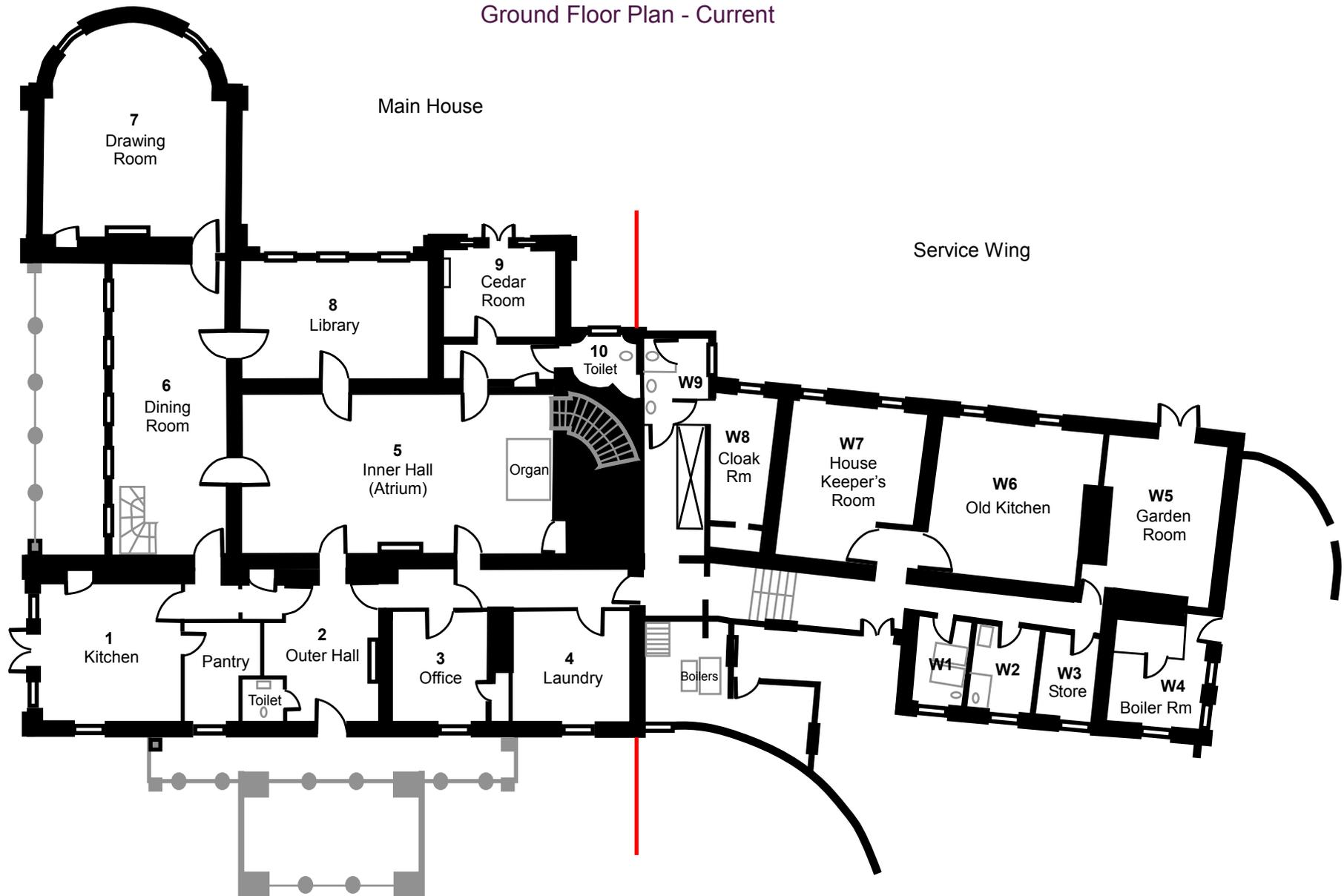
Minor C20 alterations on the 'Ground Floor' of the wing include blocking up an original door in an alcove between the 'Old Kitchen' (W6) and 'Garden Room' (W5), on the 'Ground Floor', as a means of creating two separate classrooms; with the Garden Room, with direct access to the rear garden, being used as a science lab. It is proposed that a door is reinstated in the alcove (see Pages 17 and 18), thus restoring the original layout and access through the two rooms. Room W1, which is currently a bathroom will remain the same, whilst the adjacent Room W2, currently also a bathroom will be used as a bedroom. It is proposed that the Garden Room (W5), with its existing water feeds and waste, would be the kitchen for the apartment.

On the 'First Floor' of the wing, the only proposed works is the reinstate the bathroom in Room W11, utilising the existing soil pipe, with the rest of the room being used as a kitchen (see Page 20).

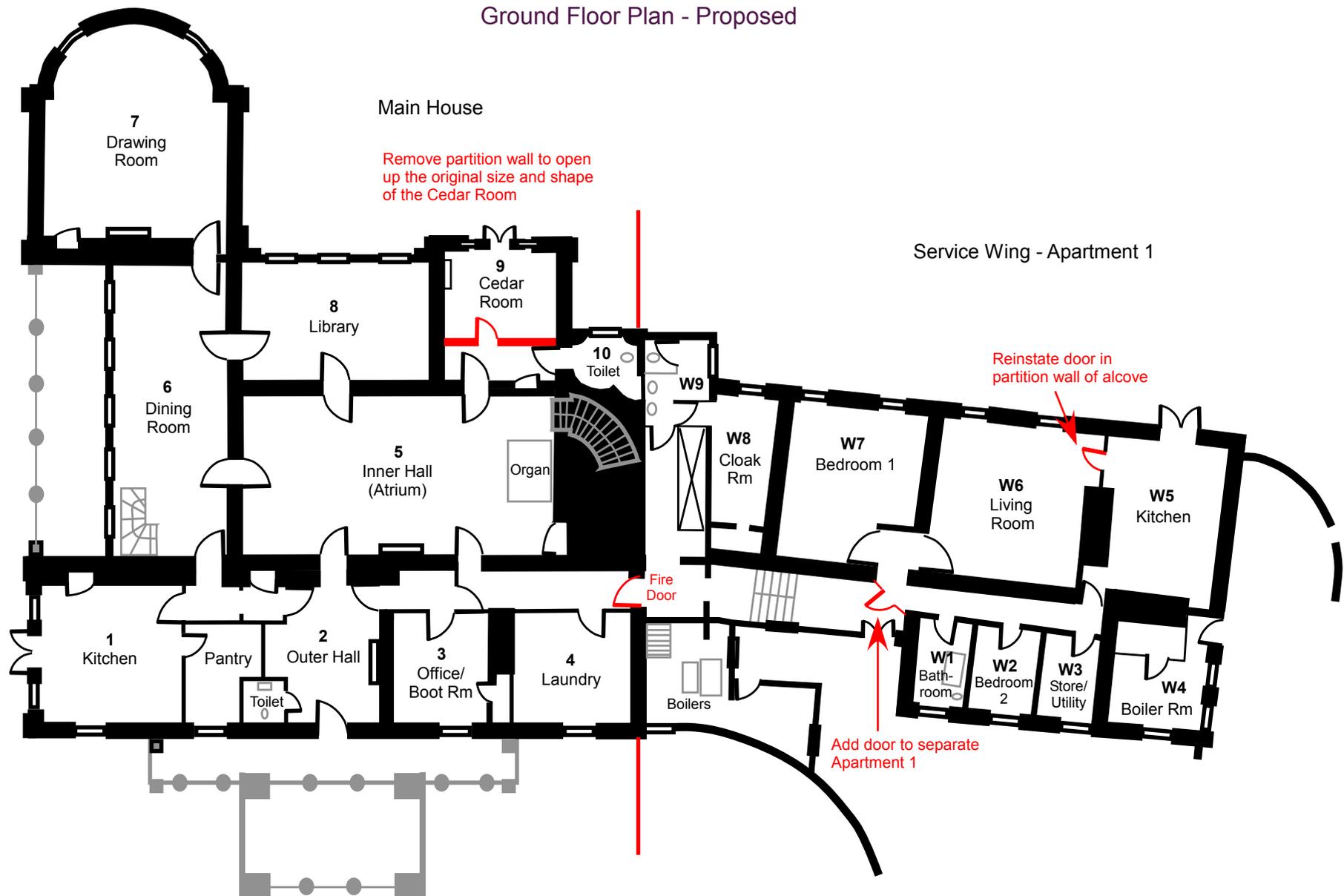
On the 'Second Floor' of the wing, the proposed work is again confined to only one room throughout the entire floor/apartment, and that is to remove the C20 partition walls, bath and wash hand basins, as a means of opening up the room to its original size (Page 22).



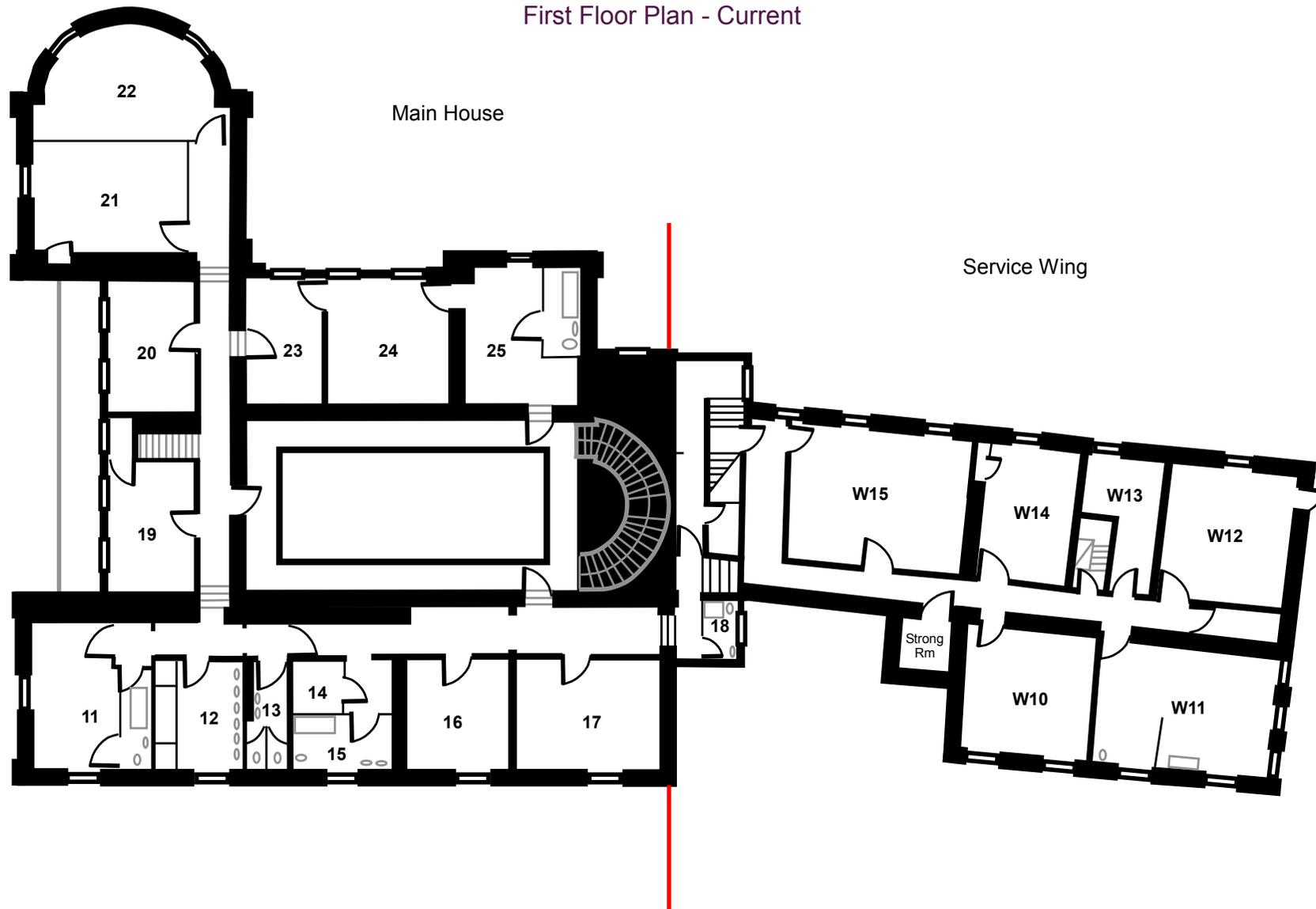
Ground Floor Plan - Current



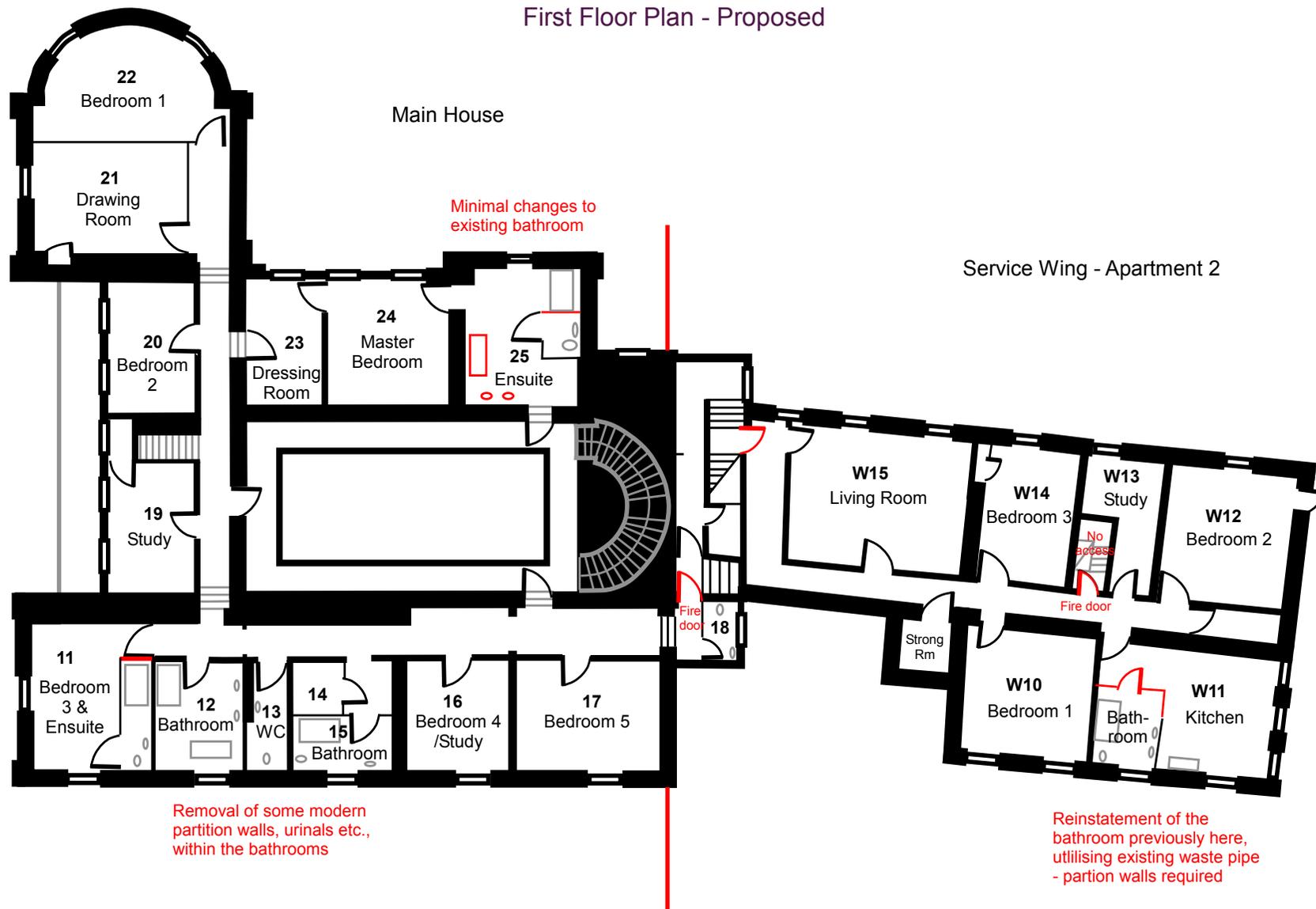
Ground Floor Plan - Proposed



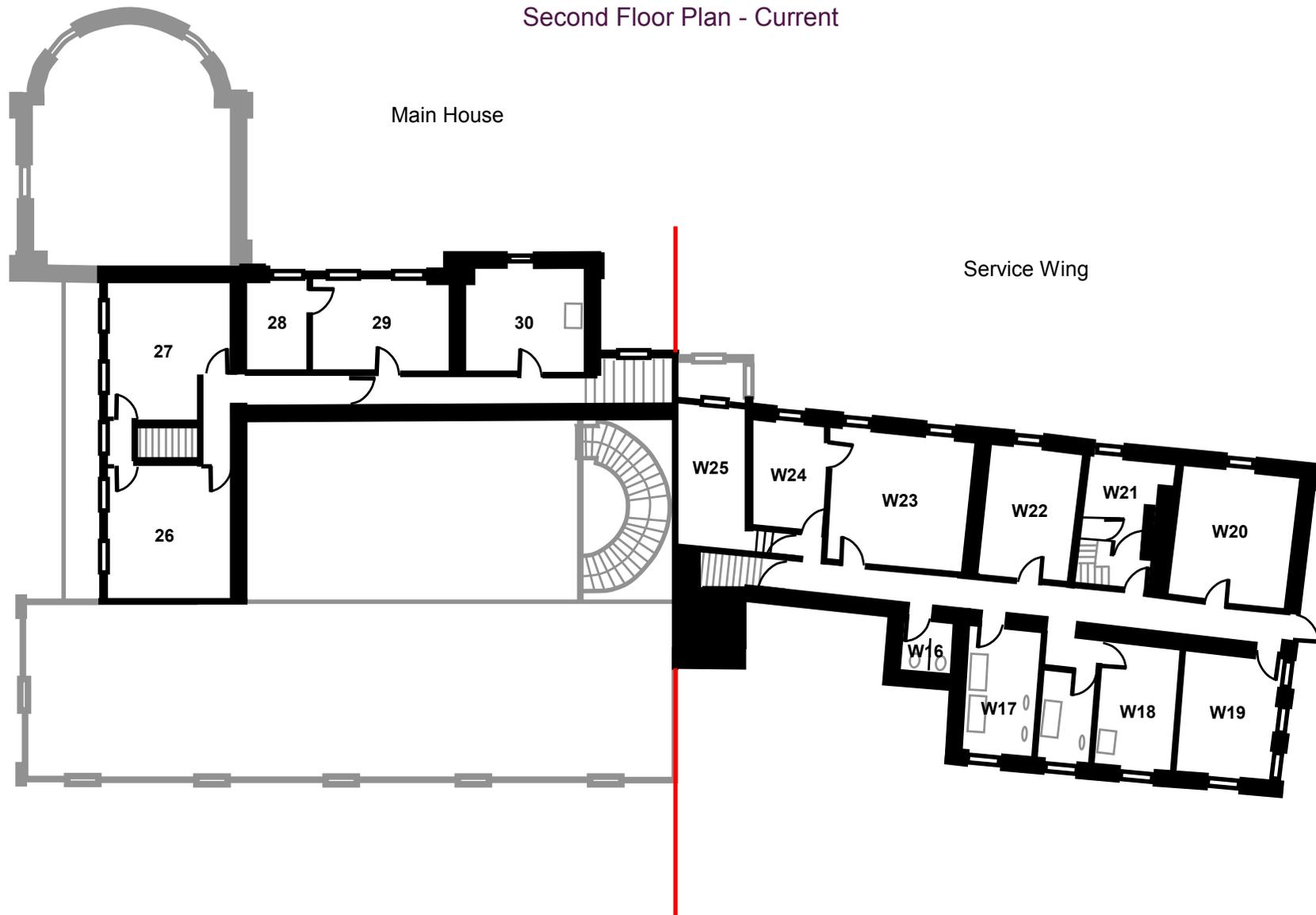
First Floor Plan - Current



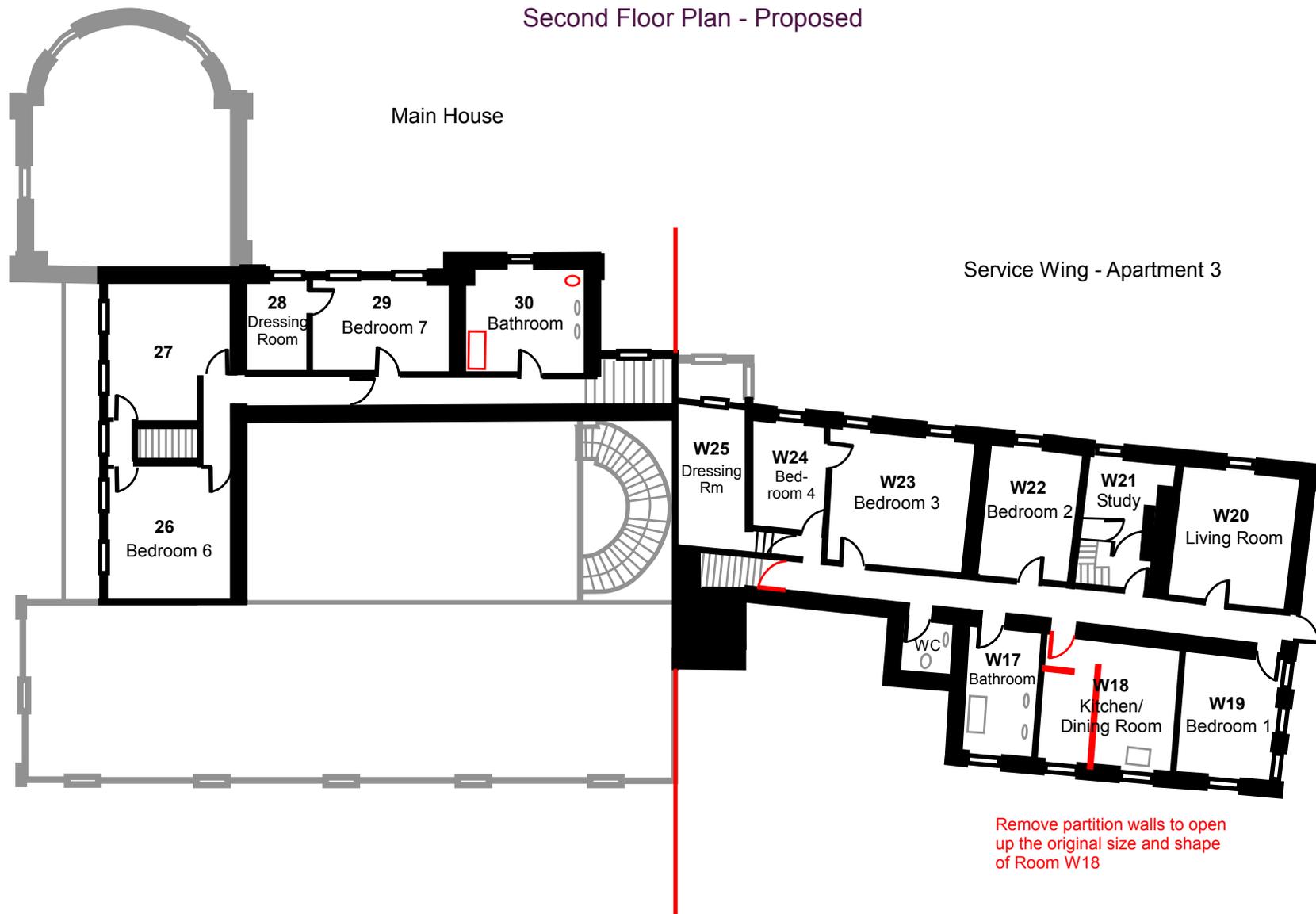
First Floor Plan - Proposed



Second Floor Plan - Current



Second Floor Plan - Proposed



6. APPRAISAL & CONCLUSIONS

Nunykirk Hall is one of a select group of Grade I Listed Buildings within the County of Northumberland. Nationally, Grade I buildings comprise 2.5% of all Listed Buildings, and are regarded as being of exceptional interest, and sometimes of international importance.

No work is involved which would affect the archaeology of the site, nor are any alterations to the external appearance of the property proposed.

The works proposed here to the interior of both the 'Main House' and 'Service Wing' concern the stripping out of non-original, relatively recent additions to the building, such as a few partition walls, communal showers, toilet cubicle partitions and urinals. Where removal of such structures is involved and, where necessary, the floors and walls will be reinstated to the original condition in matching materials. Adaptation of existing bathrooms to form modern bathrooms involves removal of modern structures and use of the existing infrastructure with minimal impact on the historic structure. In the same way, the new kitchens will be sensitively fitted, without affecting historic artefacts.

The change of use from a vacant independent residential school to a single family dwelling for the Main House and auxiliary accommodation in the Service Wing, which of course was its original use when built, will help to secure the future of the building. It has been shown that this can be achieved by sensitively restoring Nunykirk Hall to its original use without affecting the historic fabric of the building, whilst undoing more modern and inappropriate alterations carried out by previous users. Reversion to a single dwelling for the Main House and back to separate apartments on each floor of the Service Wing by a family committed to restore the building to the highest standards, will help to ensure the long-term preservation and maintenance of this very important Grade I Listed Building.

APPENDIX 1

Extracts from a BBC article (15th October, 2022; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-63256385>) on 'York Unlocked'.

York: Historical off-limits buildings unlocked to public

Up to 60 historical buildings in York which are usually private are opening their doors to the public for free.



One of the rooms inside the Grade I listed Georgian Garforth House, which was once used as a school and is now a private residence.

APPENDIX 1 (Cont.)

Extracts from a Gardian article (10th October, 2022; <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/oct/10/five-york-most-interesting-buildings-york-unlocked>) on 'York Unlocked'.

Five of the best buildings to peek into at this weekend's York Unlocked

The open house event will see 60 historic buildings in the city free to visit. A local expert picks his must-sees.

Garforth House, 54 Micklegate

Micklegate is a harmonious parade of medieval churches and Georgian houses, of which the grandest is Garforth House, completed in 1757 for the Garforth family. The architect was probably John Carr, who was quite a big noise in Georgian York. He had a hand in Fairfax House on Castlegate (now a museum) and the main stand at York racecourse still bears his imprint.

For 10 years, Garforth House has been the family home of John and Lindsay Jacques. It was offices when they bought it, but between 1918 and 1968 it had been a small, private (but not particularly posh) girls' school. Every year, the Jacqueses invite the former pupils to visit the house. "They always giggle when they come in through the front door and climb the main staircase," Lindsay told me, "because they were never allowed to do that in their schooldays."

The cantilevered staircase – a rare wooden one – is the star attraction, together with the recessed Venetian window illuminating it, and the ornate plasterwork above. In the gracious first-floor dining room, there's a ghostly plaster head above the marble fireplace. The attic rooms where the servants lived ("Not for small people," said John) and the stone labyrinth of the basement are also rather haunting.

The cantilevered staircase,
chandelier and ornate ceiling
at Garforth House.



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