

12-14 TAVERN STREET, STOWMARKET, SUFFOLK

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE



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AHP Architectural
History
Practice

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. THE APPLICATION SITE	4
3. ILLUSTRATED DESCRIPTION	8
Floor plans	9
Exterior.....	12
Interior (no. 12).....	15
Interior (no. 14).....	22
4. SIGNIFICANCE.....	28

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by the Architectural History Practice (AHP) on behalf of Saint Construction, owners, at the request of Ben Willis of Vision Design & Planning Consultants. It has been prepared to inform the preparation of a proposed scheme of alterations to 12-14 Tavern Street, in association with the conversion of the property from office back to residential use.
- 1.2 12-14 Tavern Street, Stowmarket together comprise a pair of listed buildings located within the Stowmarket Conservation Area. Most recently used as offices, the property is currently unoccupied and in need of a sympathetic and sustainable new use. Residential use is considered to represent the optimum viable use, and this Statement of Significance has been prepared to guide the development of proposals, so that the identified areas or features of high significance are safeguarded and where appropriate better revealed.
- 1.3 The statement meets the requirement of NPPF para. 194 that:
- In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
- 1.4 The statement has been prepared by Andrew Derrick BAHons AADiplCons IHBC, director of AHP, and follows a site inspection on 27 January 2023. The impact of proposals on identified significance is not addressed in this document, but is addressed by Vision Design and Planning Consultants in a separate document forming part of the planning submission.

2. THE APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 Stowmarket is one of nine places in Suffolk mentioned as having a market in the Domesday Book of 1086. Before 1135 the parish church had been granted to the abbey of St Osyth, Essex by Henry I, and in 1268 Henry II presented the manor to the abbot.
- 2.2 Historically, the main route through the town ran southeast-northwest, taking in the Market Place, which was later (at the time of the town's eighteenth and nineteenth century prosperity) provided with a corn exchange and assembly rooms. The medieval parish church stood in its churchyard close to the crossroads to the north, with (what is now) Station Road heading off to the east and Tavern Street to the west.
- 2.3 Tavern Street retains a number of historic properties, mostly occupying the street frontage. The property known as 12-14 Tavern Street (NGR TM 04768 58704) is a largely timber framed structure, of probably early seventeenth century origin, but much altered in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- 2.4 The tithe map of 1840 (fig. 1) shows the property on the edge of a green shaded area which represented land exempted from tithe; this area can be taken to represent the medieval core of the town. The tithe award gives the owner and occupant of the garden (plot 226) at that time as Elizabeth Burch. This is likely to be Elizabeth Elliot Burch, daughter of Samuel Burch, who was baptised at Stowmarket parish on 23 December 1875.¹ The fact that only one owner is named (for the garden area at least) suggests that the property formed a single residence in 1840.
- 2.5 Samuel Burch died 1824, and in 1850, 'premises in Tavern Street late the property of Samuel Burch deceased' were acquired by Messrs John Munford, Joseph A. Lankester and John Wells Stevens.² It is possible that the property was remodelled at this time (the sash windows and eaves brackets have a mid-nineteenth century character). At about the same time, a new County Court and Police Station were built in Tudor Gothic style on the adjoining site on Tavern Street.
- 2.6 The large-scale Ordnance Survey map of 1884 (fig. 2) shows the layout of the property in some detail. No longer-extant additions are shown to the rear of no. 12 (the right-

¹ Information from www.thegenealogist.co.uk

² Suffolk Record Office HC564/4/2/23

hand one of the pair), beyond which is a yard serving the courtrooms and police station. The rear garden is shown undivided, with a set of steps (which survive today) and paths and planting (which do not, although there is a mature tree). A full-width conservatory is shown running across the rear elevation. This map therefore also suggests that the property remained at this time a single house.

- 2.7 By contrast, the 1903 OS map (fig. 3) shows a subdivision of the rear garden, with a small separate garden area created for no. 14 (the left-hand one of the pair). However, this is not shown on the 1924 revision (fig. 4).
- 2.8 The map evidence therefore only gets us so far in terms of understanding ownership divisions. Further research is needed, but has not been possible in the time available; for present purposes it may suffice to note that although the property has the appearance of two houses, the map evidence suggests that it has been one since 1840 or earlier, with no. 12 possibly serving as a semi-separate 'service' end.
- 2.9 In more recent years the property has been used as offices. This has involved some loss of internal features and the subdivision of internal spaces but, while unsympathetic, these alterations have been generally light-touch and are readily reversible. Rear additions to no. 12 and the full-width conservatory have been removed at some point, and a smaller conservatory built at the rear of no. 14.

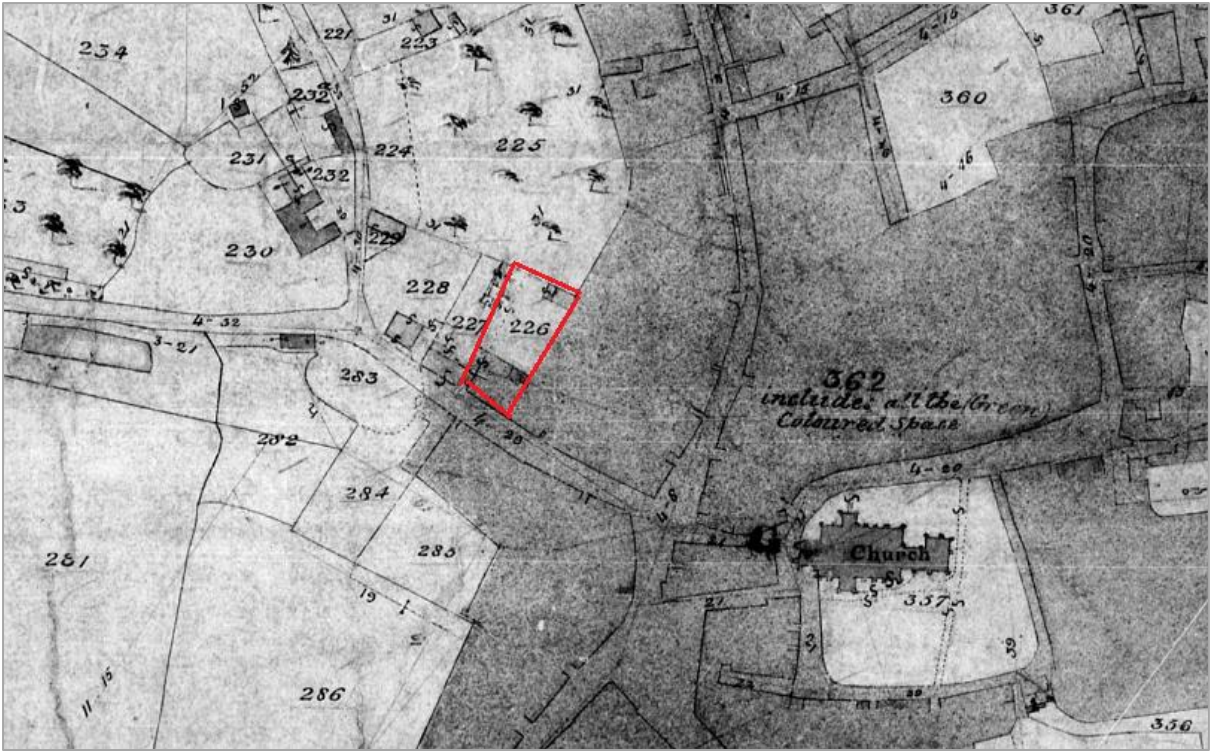


Fig. 1: Detail from tithe map, 1840, with application site highlighted



Fig. 2: Detail from Ordnance Survey large-scale town map, Suffolk sheet LVI.7.11, surveyed 1884, published 1885 (National Library of Scotland).

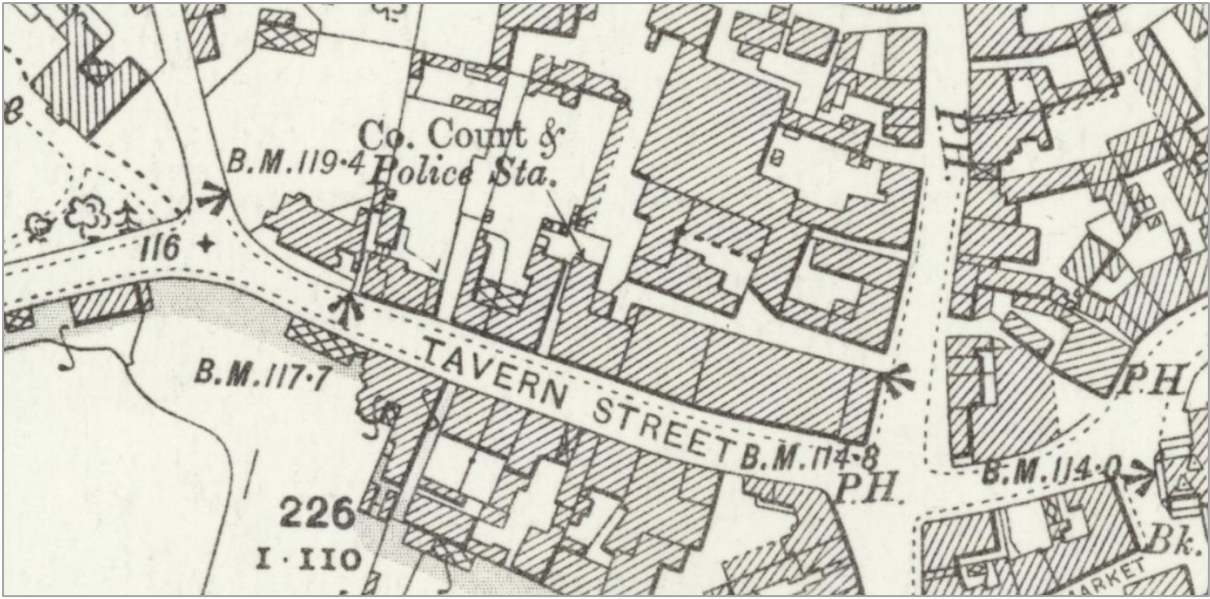


Fig. 3: Detail from Ordnance Survey 25 inch map, Suffolk sheet LVI.7, revised 1903, published 1904 (National Library of Scotland).

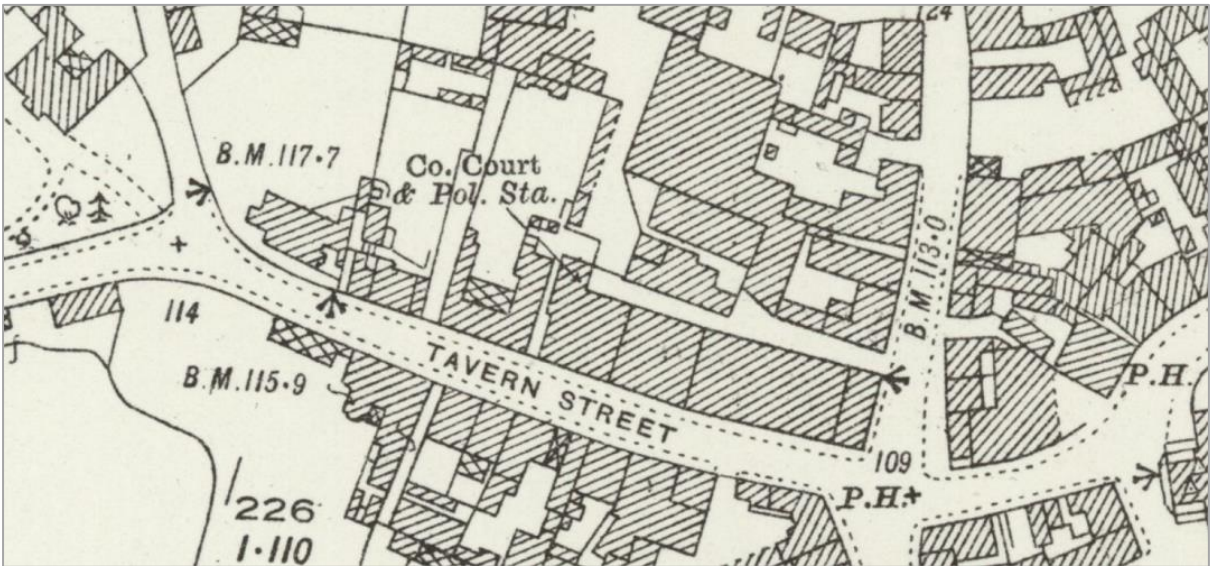


Fig. 4: Detail from Ordnance Survey 25 inch map, Suffolk sheet LVI.7, revised 1924-5, published 1927 (National Library of Scotland).

3. ILLUSTRATED DESCRIPTION



Fig. 5: Front elevation to Tavern Street, no. 14 to left

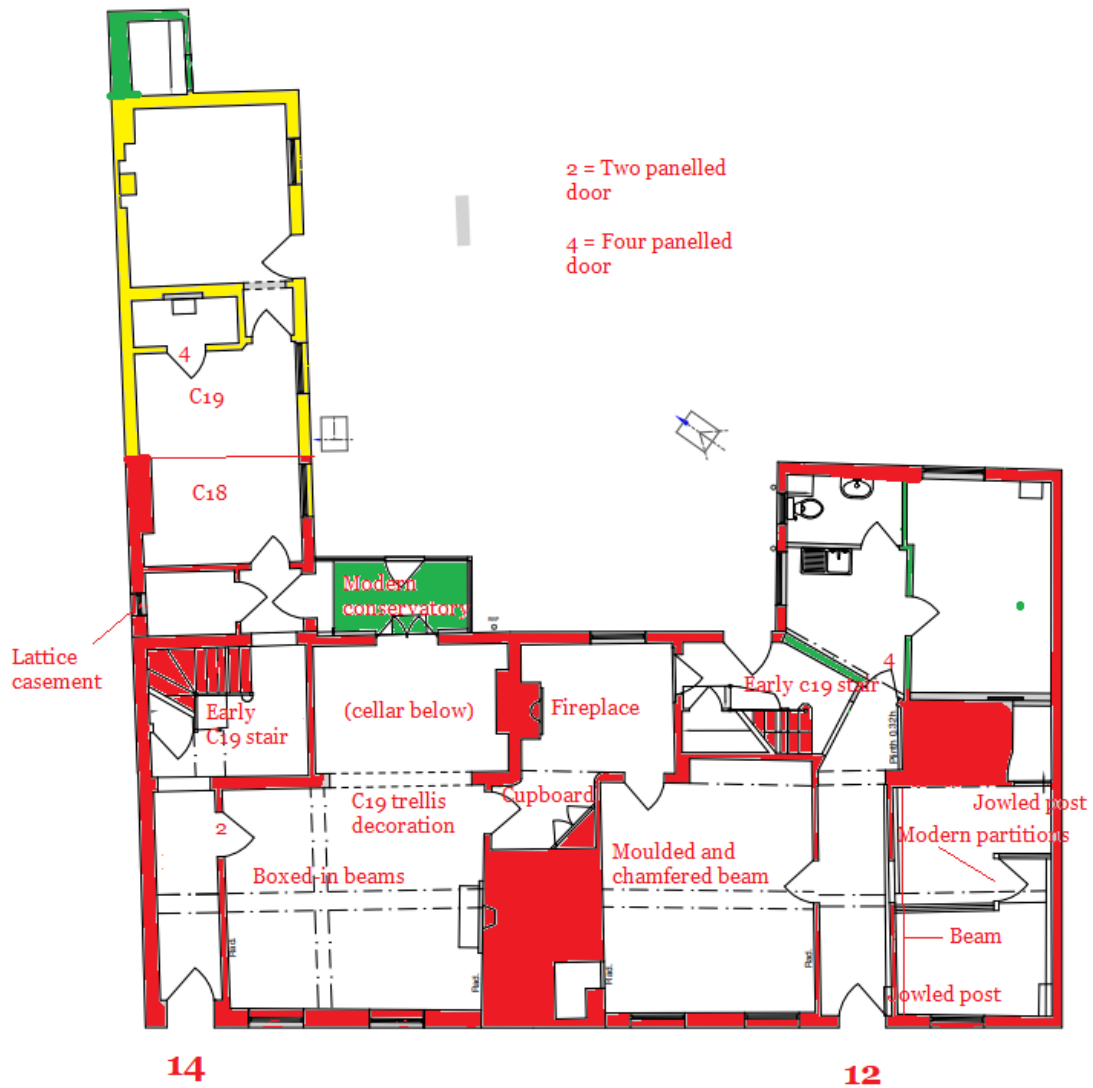
- 3.1 12-14 Tavern Street was first listed (as one list entry) in 1950 (list entry no. 1209763). The current list entry reads as follows:

2 houses, now offices. Early C17 timber-frame, reworked late C18. Plastered and colourwashed. Plain tile roof. 2 storeys. No.12 in 3 irregular bays. C20 central 6-panelled door and overlight within moulded doorcase. One 8/8 sash to right and 2 to left, the glazing bars irregularly spaced. 3 identical first-floor sashes. No.14 of 2 irregular bays. Recessed door to left of elevation within moulded doorcase. 2 sashes each floor of same pattern as No.12. Eaves cornice on multiple brackets. Gabled roof. Saw-toothed brick ridge stack at junction of properties. Rear has 2 cross wings and 2 gables in main wing.

- 3.2 The property is described in the list entry as of two storeys, but there is also one second floor room in no. 12, and a cellar below part of no. 14. The front range has a three-cell plan, with later subdivisions, separated by a large off-centre stack.

- 3.3 Ground, first and second floor plans are at figs 6-8, with annotated photographs following at figs 9-42.

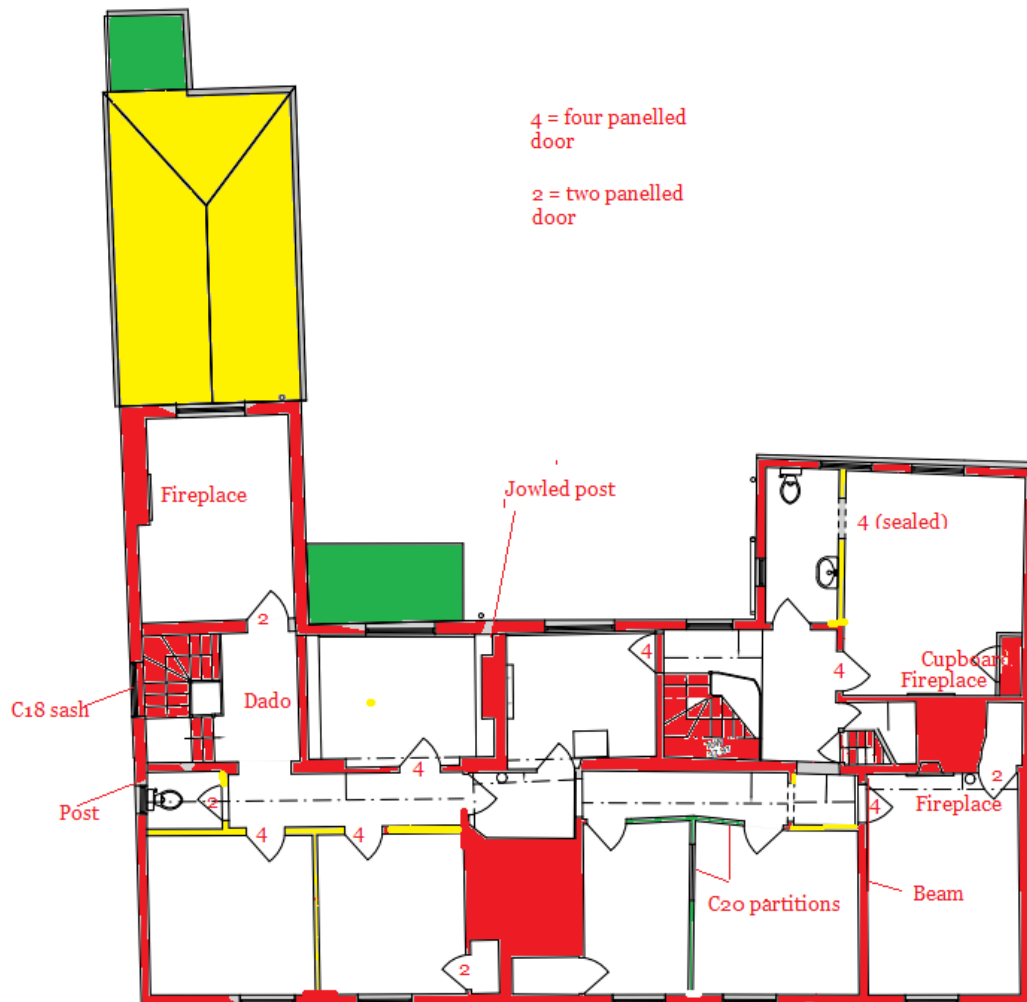
Floor plans



Existing GF Layout

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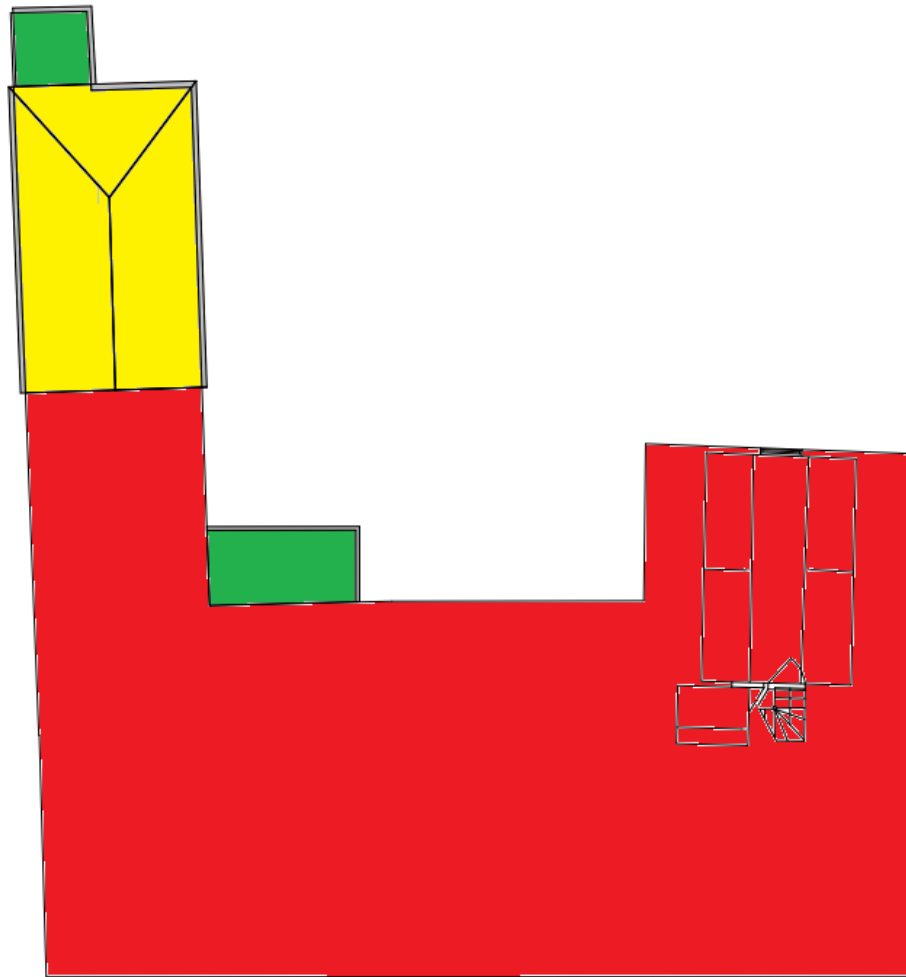
Fig. 6: Ground floor plan (Vision Design and Planning Consultants), with annotations and colour coding added. Red = high significance, yellow = moderate significance, green = low significance.



Existing FF Layout

Scale: 1:100

Fig. 7: First floor plan (Vision Design and Planning Consultants), with annotations and colour coding added. Red = high significance, yellow = moderate significance, green = low significance.



Existing SF Layout

Scale: 1:100

Fig. 8: Second floor plan (Vision Design and Planning Consultants) with colour coding added. Red = high significance, yellow = moderate significance, green = low significance.

Exterior



Fig. 9: Front elevation of no.12. The large central stack with saw-tooth brickwork and the steep tiled roof are the only obvious pointers to the building's C17 origin. The present appearance is largely of mid-C19 character, of three bays plus off-centre door (the panelled door itself a late C20 replacement) with moulded surround, rectangular fanlight and stone steps. Smooth rendered walls, bracketed eaves, flush frame glazing bar sashes with marginal lights.



Fig. 10: No 14 is similarly detailed, with a narrower frontage. Retains its C18/C19 six-panel front door.



Fig. 11: Facing the side access is a C18 two-storey rear range to no. 14, of painted brick and with a large flush framed 6-over-6 glazing bar sash window lighting the staircase. Below are two metal casement windows with diamond lattice panes, the nearer (lower) one lighting a stair to the small cellar, the further one a ground floor WC.



Fig. 12: Beyond the C18 rear range is a single-storey C19 service range, also of painted brick and with a concrete pantile roof. It presents a blank face to the side approach.



Fig. 13: Rear elevation of no. 14, with single-storey C19 service range to right. This links to the brick C18 rear range, of brick with hipped roof (now covered, like the whole of the rear elevation, with concrete tiles). The C18 range has a first floor 4-over-8 glazing bar sash, while on the ground floor flank elevation is a C19 plate glass sash. Above this sash, the scar of the flashing of the full-width conservatory shown on the old maps can be discerned. This conservatory has been replaced by a small conservatory to no. 14 only. The rear elevation of the front range is timber framed and gabled, with bargeboards and 4-over-8 sash at first floor level.



Figs 14 and 15: Second gable on rear of front range of no. 12 (left), also with first floor 4-over-8 sash. Alongside is a 6-over-6 sash (not visible in this photo) and below is a C19 plate glass sash. Fig 15 shows the gabled rear wing of no. 12, with a mixture of C19 sashes and casements and C20 windows. Older maps show rear additions (probably only single-storey) attached to this part of the building.

Interior (no. 12)



Fig. 16: The ground floor entrance hall of no. 12 has a late Georgian character, overlaying the earlier timber frame (here visible in the beam spanning from front to back, top right). There may be original studwork in the wall to right. Beyond the shallow archway is a modern splayed partition, with the kitchen area beyond and the stair to left.



Fig. 17: The room to the left of the entrance hall has a simple cornice and moulded skirting of C19 character. The fireplace opening has been blocked. Above is a C17 roll moulded and chamfered oak beam, painted white (see also fig. 18)



Fig. 18: Detail of C17 beam in room to left of entrance hall



Fig. 19: Late C20 partitions in the room to right of entrance hall



Fig. 20: A papered-over jowled post in the southwest corner of the room to right of entrance hall



Fig. 21: Exposed timber framing alongside the chimney breast in the northeast corner of the room to right of entrance hall.



Fig. 22: The stair to first floor is of late C18 or early C19 character, with closed string, square balusters, turned newel and moulded handrail, all painted.



Fig. 23: Boarded-up C19 timber fireplace in rear ground floor room of front range



Fig. 24: C19 corner cupboard in space giving off rear ground floor room of front range



Fig. 25: Door to ground floor rear range, where there is a raised (tiled floor). The kitchen area has modern partitions and no visible historic features or finishes.



Fig. 26: First floor landing



Fig. 27: C19 cupboard and blocked fireplace, rear wing first floor

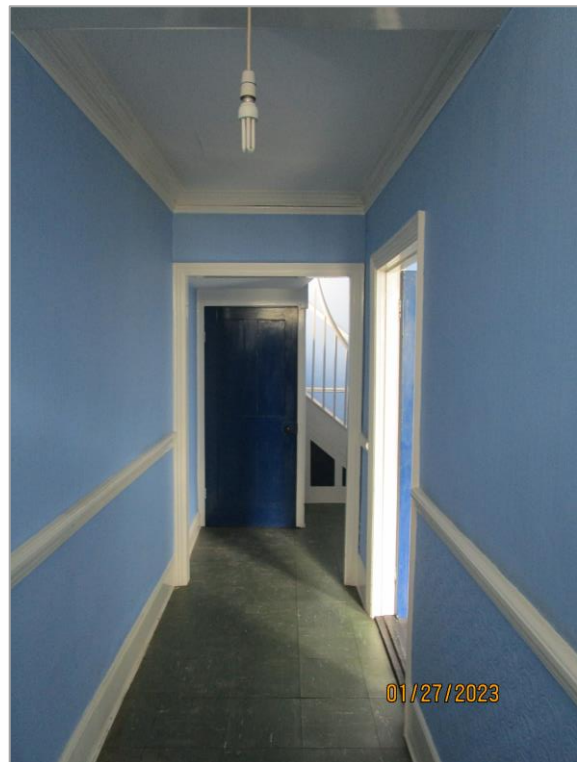
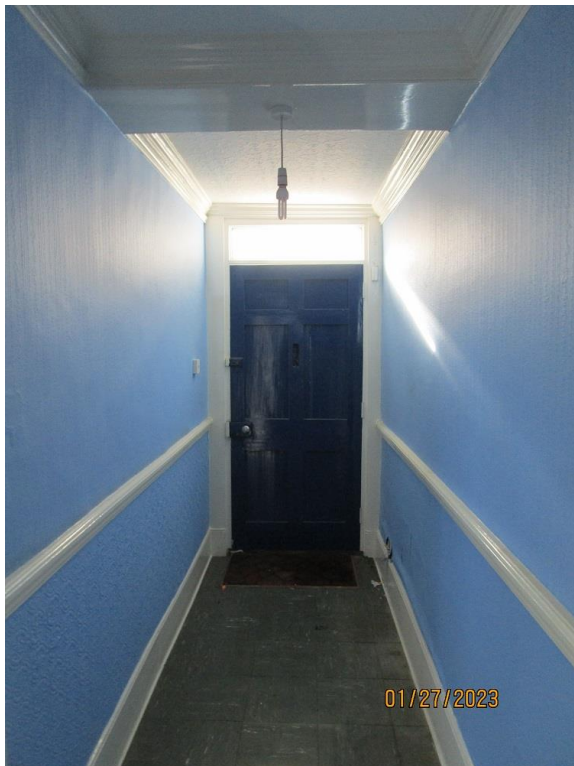


Fig. 28: Four-panelled door, elaborate cast iron C19 fireplace (minus top of surround) and cupboard with two-panel door, first floor front bedroom.



Fig. 29: A second floor room is reached via a steep stair with two-panel door at the top.

Interior (no. 14)



Figs 30 and 31: Ground floor hallway, with moulded dado and cornice, and boxed-in beam.



Fig. 32: The large room to the right of the hallway has boxed-in beams with C19 mouldings to the boxing, timber fireplace with roundels and C20 tiled inset, boarded floor, dado rail (probably C20) and embossed paper lining the ceiling. Decorative surround to alcove to left, shown in more detail at fig. 33.



Fig. 33: Decorative timber surround (late C19) to opening to rear room on ground floor. Beyond, French doors now lead to C20 conservatory. Below this rear room is a cellar (fig. 34)



Fig. 34: The cellar is reached by a winding stair under the main stair and has a brick floor, whitewashed brick walls and the remains of a cast iron heating apparatus in front of the stack. Recesses for wine racks or storage on south side. The floor joists above have been renewed in the C20.



Fig. 35: The stair to first floor is of late C18/early C19 character, with closed string, stick balusters, turned newels and swept handrail, all painted. The dado rail on the wall is probably modern. The stair is lit by a large multi-pane sash window. Below the stair is a winding stair to the cellar.



Fig. 36: Lattice casement window in ground floor WC



Fig. 37: Interior view of rear single-storey range

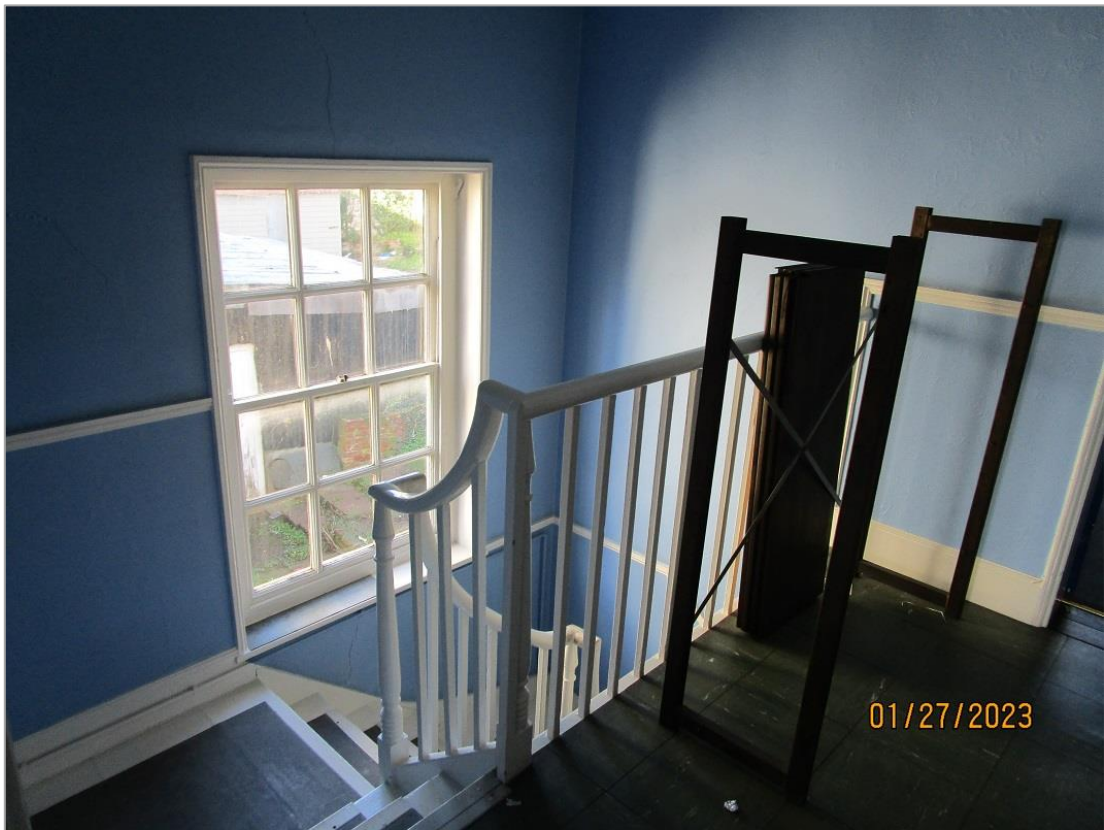


Fig. 38: First floor landing



Fig. 39: Two-panel door and boarded-up fireplace in C18 rear range, first floor.



Fig. 40: Chimney breast, jowled post and boxed-in beam, first floor rear room, front range



Fig. 41: Two-panel and exposed post in first floor WC.



Fig. 42: Front bedroom with two-panel door to cupboard to right of chimney breast

4. SIGNIFICANCE

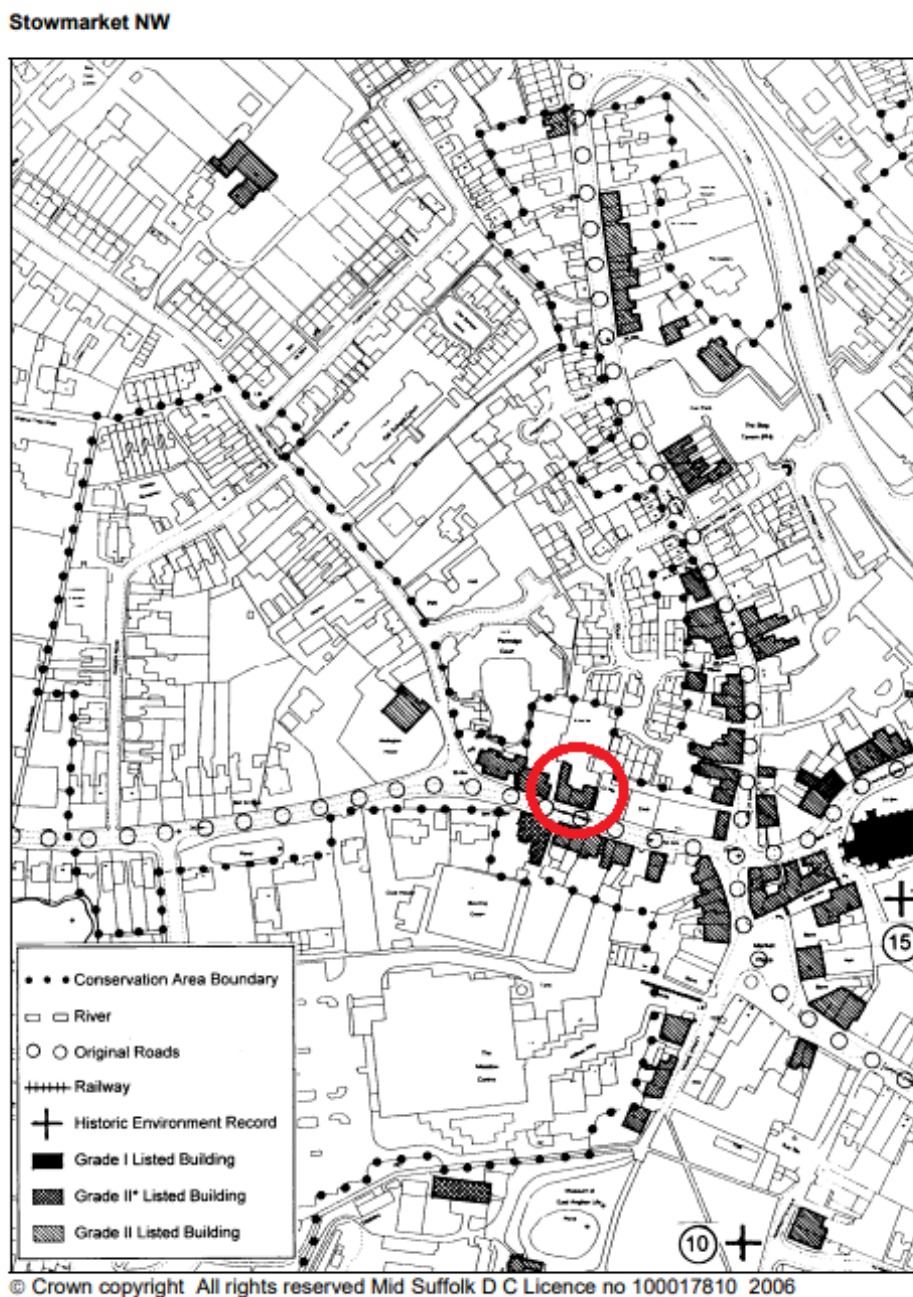


Fig. 43: Map of Stowmarket Conservation Area (northwestern part), Mid-Suffolk District Council, 2009, with 12-14 Tavern Street highlighted.

- 4.1 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF, July 2021, pp. 71-2) defines heritage significance 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’.

- 4.2 Nos. 12-14 Tavern Street is of high archaeological, architectural and historic significance. The building lies close to the historic town centre, and there may be significant below-ground archaeological deposits. Other than the listing details there is no information on the property or site in the Suffolk Historic Environment Record, but it would be prudent to assume that any works involving significant ground disturbance will require an archaeological watching brief.
- 4.3 See colour coded plans at figs 6-8. The following elements are of high significance:
- The surviving seventeenth century fabric, notably the roll moulded and chamfered beams at ground floor level, other exposed areas of framing and the fine brick chimney stack. Further original fabric is likely to remain, obscured or overlaid by later additions and alterations.
 - Many of those alterations and additions are themselves of high significance. The current front elevation, complete with its mid-nineteenth century sash windows and doorcases, makes a prominent and positive contribution to this part of the Stowmarket Conservation Area (fig. 43).
 - Also of high significance are the eighteenth century range with its sash windows and unusual lattice casement windows (one lighting the cellar built at that time), the two timber staircases, and some nineteenth century features, such as the first floor cast iron fireplace at no. 12 (others are likely to remain behind current boarding) and the decorative surround to the rear ground floor room of no. 14.
 - The single-storey range to the rear of no. 14 is a later addition, and is of only moderate significance.
 - Twentieth century alterations and additions such as the concrete tiles on the rear roof slopes, rear conservatory at no. 14 and modern internal partitions of low significance, and detract from the ability to appreciate the finer qualities of the heritage asset.
- 4.4 The proposal to return the building to residential use is welcome in principle, as this represents its historic as well as its optimum viable use. Proposals for adaptation should seek to retain all elements identified here as of high significance, and where possible remove or mitigate the impact of elements which detract from the buildings' significance. Subdivision of principal spaces should be avoided where possible, and where unavoidable should be non-destructive and reversible. Opportunities should be taken to better reveal concealed elements of high significance, but not be at the expense of later layers of high significance.

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