

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT
&
DRAFT IMPACT ASSESSMENT
Hanover House, Montpellier Walk

for **Foundation Architecture Ltd**

15 December 2020

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HERITAGE ASSESSMENT AND DRAFT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Hanover House, Montpellier Walk

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Summary

Significance of Existing Asset

The subject building forms the northern end of a statutorily listed group designated as grade II*.

The building's exceptional heritage significance resides primarily in the contribution of its very fine exterior architecture as a focal piece of town-planning, at the heart of Cheltenham's cultural and commercial centre.

A detailed analysis of the various phases of alteration and conversion reveals the building's exterior to be less 'original' than had perhaps been thought at the time of its listing, being the result of at least three distinct building phases. Nevertheless, the resulting building is exceptional in terms of its contribution to urban design, fully warranting the grade II* designation.

With respect to the buildings' interior, the c1840 building, with its split-bay main rooms and smaller corner rooms at first and second floor levels, together with the north-west staircase, contain good original fabric of architectural and historic significance as heritage assets. The main (split-bay) rooms suffer from later, insensitive alterations which harm their legibility and current architectural merit.

In relation to the interiors of the 1905 southern building and the 1928 'link', the interior architecture is functional and the later works have altered and removed much of the earlier build. Although part of the listed building, the interiors of these later phases contain relatively little of merit as a heritage asset.

The upper floors are currently vacant and somewhat dilapidated.

Impact of Proposed Development

The Scheme Design proposals developed from Option E, showing the conversion of the upper floors to residential use, has the potential to be carried out without any harm to the heritage significance of the building that is not significantly outweighed by the benefits in term of the potential enhancement of the internal spaces and the securing of the building's viability and future maintenance.

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT AND DRAFT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Hanover House, Montpellier Walk

1 Introduction

1.1 Appointment

Jonathan A Law & Associates (JALA) were appointed, on 27th October 2020, to carry out a Heritage Assessment of the property known as Hanover House, Montpellier Walk, Cheltenham together with an Impact Assessment of proposals for the conversion of the upper floors (1st and 2nd) to residential use.

1.3 Limitations of Assessment

The physical inspection was carried out on a single visit on 4 November 2020 and limited to visual inspection only. Limited access was available to inspect the main roof void, the roof was not accessible.

Due to the Covid-19 'lock-down' from 5 November access to local and national archival resources was restricted to use of online resources.

2 Heritage Assessment

2.1 Listing

Statutory Address:

NUMBERS 1 TO 23 AND HANOVER HOUSE (PREMISES OF THE NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK), 1 TO 23, MONTPELLIER WALK

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

Entry Name:	Numbers 1 to 23 and Hanover House (Premises of the National Westminster Bank)
Listing Date:	12 March 1955
Grade:	II*
Source:	Historic England
Source ID:	1387359
English Heritage Legacy ID:	475315
National Grid Reference:	SO 94453 21911
Location:	Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50
County:	Gloucestershire
District:	Cheltenham (District Authority)
Town:	Cheltenham
Electoral Ward/Division:	Lansdown
Built-Up Area:	Cheltenham
Traditional County:	Gloucestershire
Lieutenancy Area (Ceremonial County):	Gloucestershire
Church of England Parish:	Leckhampton St Philip and St James
Church of England Diocese:	Gloucester



Location map - (Blue icon as centre of group)

Details

CHELTENHAM

SO9421NW MONTELLIER WALK 630-1/17/578 (West side) 12/03/55 Nos.1-23
(Consecutive) and Hanover House (Premises of the National Westminster Bank)

GV II*

Terrace of shops with flats over, now mainly storage. c1836-45, with caryatids of 1840. Designed by WH Knight; at least 3 caryatids are by Rossi of London, serving as models for others by WG Brown of Tivoli Street, Cheltenham; National Westminster Bank converted by Eric Cole c1970. Ashlar over brick with mansard slate roof and terracotta caryatids.

PLAN: L-shaped with opening to lower, shorter part.

EXTERIOR: 2 storeys with attics, mostly 1 window each (Nos 19-23 have 2 windows. Ashlar detailing includes pilasters with sunk panel to most party walls; tooled, eared architraves to first floor 2-window ranges; cornice sweeps up; balustraded parapet. First floor has 6/6 and tripartite 6/6 between 2/2 sashes where original. 8/8 and 6/6 sashes to mansard, further attic dormers with casements. Mainly 6/6 sashes, those to bow are curved on section; also to roof dormers. Rear: elevations to Montpellier Street are good 3-storey, ashlar, first-floor windows have pediments.

INTERIOR: noted as retaining some original plasterwork and joinery.

HISTORICAL NOTE: although dated 1836 to the south end, Blake points out that no other evidence suggests such an early date, it is not shown on Griffith's 1838 Map and the earliest reference occurs in 1841 to "2 additional shops". By 1841 the north end of the Walk, opposite Montpellier Arcade (qv) had been built, forming a covered entrance to the tree-lined walk, leading from the Old Well and Imperial Spa to Montpellier (on which the shops were to be built). Rowe illustrates the north end of the Walk with bow and indicates that the shops along this side were occupied by Mr Merrett, Cook and Confectioner; Mrs Hacker's Magasin of Modes; and Mr Draper, Tailor; Rowe does not indicate any other shops had been completed in this development. Rowe describes, 'the bow front on the left of the entrance... occupied by two handsome shops, the windows of which are

separated by Caryatids - elegant Grecian figures, representing Athenian virgins, dressed in their Panathenaic costume'. Montpellier Walk was originally known as the Grand Promenade. This unique row of shops was described by Verey as, 'A charming example of intimate Classical architecture' and is an outstanding example of its type, both for its significance as commercial architecture of the period and the C19 terracotta revival. The rear elevations of Nos 1-23 form a group with Regency House and Nos 2-8 Montpellier Street (qv).

(The Buildings of England: Verey D: Gloucestershire: The Vale and The Forest of Dean: London: 1970-: 140; Sampson A and Blake S: A Cheltenham Companion: Cheltenham: 1993-: 18; Country Life 16.1.1926; Rowe G: Illustrated Cheltenham Guide 1850: Cheltenham: 1845-1969: 26; Blake S: 'The Building of the Montpellier Shops': Cheltenham Local History Society Journal: 1984-).

Listing NGR: SO9461021479

Sources

Books and journals

Rowe, G, Illustrated Cheltenham Guide 1850-1969:18

Sampson, A, Blake, S, A Cheltenham Companion, (1993), 18

Verey, D, The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire 2 The Vale and The Forest of Dean, (1970), 140

'Country Life' in 16 January, (1926), 26

Blake, S, 'Cheltenham Local History Society Journal' in The Building of the Montpellier Shops, (1984)

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

End of official listing

2.2 Historic Development

Historic Context - Cheltenham and Montpellier

Until the discovery, in around 1718, of a mineral-rich spring in the fields stretching across the Cheltenham valley to the south of the town, Cheltenham was a nondescript if rather linear Market-town on the coaching route between Gloucester and London. At some point, as the story goes, field labourers realised the significance of pigeons flocking to drink the salty spring water issuing from the edge of the low-lying fields. The declared health-giving properties of the waters were, however, only locally and faltering exploited through most of the 18thC.

In 1788, however perhaps tempted by an invitation from one of the 58 new Town Commissioners, a Royal visit to the Old Well considerably raised the town's profile as a Spa, making it suddenly rather fashionable and popular as a summer resort (unlike neighbouring Bath).

The extraordinary freeing up of land following the Enclosure Act of 1801, and contemporary improvements in transport and communications allowed a more thorough and systematic exploitation of the local water resources with and the introduction of significant external investment through the early 19thC years, despite the intervention of the Napoleonic Wars.

The growth in population of Cheltenham in the early Regency years is staggering and reflects this entrepreneurial 'gold-rush'; rising from 3,000 to 20,000 between 1801 and 1826 - with the precipitating speculative development resulting in a remarkably planned, garden-city.

Henry Thompson, a London and Liverpool banker, bought around 3-400 acres of the Delabee Estate in 1803, renaming it Montpellier and paying a premium in 1804 adding a further 30 acres. The Montpellier estate would grow to form the core of the fashionable 19thC Cheltenham's tourist offering, with his adjoining Lansdown estate later developed by J B Papworth (under his son's patronage) into one of Cheltenham's key new English Garden suburbs, full of wide, tree-lined streets Greek Revival houses and generous, verdant open spaces.

Thompson's first spa, Hygeia House, opened in 1804, and the original Montpellier Spa opened (as a wooden cabin and veranda, in 1809. The spa proved so popular that, in 1817, Thompson employed G A Underwood to replace the original building with a new Pump Room and colonnade. In 1824 his son, Pearson Thompson, employed J B Papworth as the estate architect; his first task, in 1825-6, was to improve the rather low-ceilinged Pump Room with a new domed Rotunda; the new Pump Room forming a focal point leading down from the High Street at the head of the Promenade.

Opposite the new Pump Room to the south-east, the open ground was laid out by Thompson and Papworth, when, in 1830 Papworth was abruptly replaced as Thompson's architect, by Robert W Jeppard. He it was who completed the garden as an amenity crossed by Rides and Walks and generously planted with formal flower gardens, catering for the fashionable visitor (an alternative to a constitutional stroll along the Brighton sea-front).

The Montpellier Arcade, also designed by Jeppard and erected in 1831-32, immediately to the north of the site, with its covered shops, was contrived with a two-storey arched entrance giving directly onto Montpellier Walk, a tree-lined approach to the Pump Room and leaving a rather obvious gap that would eventually be developed.

The Development of Montpellier Walk

Doubt as to the precise date for the construction of Montpellier Walk has given rise to much debate (as has uncertainty over the architect). What is certain is that throughout much of the 1830's, the site remained empty - the space through to Old Well Lane illustrated in 1840 (The Visitors Handbook to Cheltenham, H Davies) thickly planted with trees.

David Verey, in his Pevsner-edited volume Gloucestershire: The Vale and the Forest of Dean, is unarguably correct in stating that “The Walk is a charming example of intimate classical architecture... c .1840”, but on less certain ground in attributing the design to W H Knight.

the “Plan of the Town of Cheltenham - 1843” (while noting that the survey may have been carried out over an extended period prior to publication), is nicely precise in showing the buildings between Old Well Lane and the Promenade (extending as South Road), and does appear to show, quite clearly, the northern-most section of Montpellier Walk between Montpellier Arcade, (whose southern façade lines through with Montpellier Spa opposite,) and quite separate from the Pump Room.

Whereas one might assume the curved northern bays to be a termination to the main avenue, an earlier attribution to the northern end is useful. The stylistically later Nos 24-25 Montpellier Walk at the southern end, taken with the physical evidence for an interrupted process of development for the linking shopping terrace that comprises Nos 4-23 Montpellier Walk, then represents a completion rather than a rude rebuilding. While the upper elevation of No 24 shouts 1860, the pedimented attic panel carries the date 1836 - a reference surely to the inception of the project?

As a piece of town-planning, the north end of Montpellier Walk is clearly the most considered element of the design. The question as to why the caryatids were considered appropriate, since stylistically at least, their use is rather late. For an answer, it is perhaps interesting to consider Soane’s alterations to Sir Robert Taylor’s Rotunda in the Bank of England. From 1795 the high dome of the Rotunda carried 12 Coade stone caryatids supporting the circular lantern - open to view by the jobbers and stockbrokers. However, during the 1830s the bank’s reorganisation meant that the hall fell out of the public gaze, serving for the cashing of dividend warrants. Such a loss might have been deeply felt by gentlemen bankers such as Pearson Thompson and his obliging architect/surveyor.

Busy carrying out designs for Thompson throughout the 1830’s R W Jerrard would seem the obvious candidate to be the architect for the town planning of Montpellier Walk and at least the early building phases.

Although proposed as the architect by David Verey, W H Knight would have been 22 in 1836, just married and according to his Cheltenham Echo obituary “in his younger days had worked in the offices of Mr Thomas Haines, Builder” in Winchcombe Street. His mature work, from the 1850s until his death in 1895 included many churches and institutions usually carried out in a strongly Gothic Revival style. It seems eminently more plausible that he became involved in the completion of the terrace with Nos 24-25.

This view is largely supported by Alan Brooks in the revised Buildings of England volume (2002), who attributes the entrance to Montpellier Walk to RW Jerrard and C Jerrard, begun in 1843 (?), though not completed until c 1860 - possibly with the involvement of W H Knight.

George Rowe’s Illustrated Cheltenham Guide 1845, confirms this picture of a completed ‘entrance’ building separated from the Pump Room and colonnade: ascending the gentle slope along the Promenade past the Queen’s Hotel,

“on our right we have the splendid entrance to the Montpellier Grand Promenade. The bow front on the left of the entrance is occupied by two handsome shops, the windows of which are separated by Caryatides - elegant Grecian figures, representing Athenian virgins, dressed in their Panathenaic costume.

“The outer shop is occupied by Mr. MERRETT *Cook and Confectioner*. It is most chastely ornamented, and well-furnished with every choice refection. The most *recherché* skill in the arts of *cuisinerie* are made available at this establishment for furnishing the most sumptuous “delectations for ‘Ladies fayre and gallants gaie,’” who may honour our fashionable town with their presence.

“The adjoining shop is the *Magasin de Modes* of Mrs. HACKER. an establishment presenting unusual capabilities for producing the most fashionable styles of Ladies’ attire. A regular communication with *La Belle France*, enables the proprietor to produce the earliest novelties emanating from the *corps diplomatique* of Parisian taste.

“Before entering the enclosure where “fashion chiefly holds her court,” we notice, on our extreme right, the tasteful shop of Mr. DRAPER, Tailor, Etc., who has also a *pass par tout* to the French Metropolis, who, by this means, can produce the newest fashions, and having obtained great experience in some of the most celebrated Continental houses, can produce garments unexceptionable in cut and style.

“Passing through the portal, over which is written “Montpellier Spa”, we come to the grand Promenade. This truly beautiful walk is walled on either side by verdant foliage, and is terminated by the North Colonnade of the Pump Room, over which is seen the majestic dome of the Rotunda, surmounted by a flag staff, which, on commemorative occasions, flings out to the passing breeze its emblazoned bunting.”

And so on.

The text confirms that, by 1845, the northern end of Montpellier Walk had been developed and fully occupied, with the three shops around the ‘portal’, effectively establishing the original date of the subject buildings; or at least, their historically most important frontages.

By contrast the H Davies 1840, publication, *The Visitor’s Handbook to Cheltenham*, states “Passing the Queen’s Hotel, the road leads up a slight ascent to the gates of the Montpellier property, the private rides and drives of which commence at this point. A few paces to the right is the entrance to the grand walk, or promenade, at the upper end of which are situate the Pump Rooms, Library, Etc. of the Montpellier establishment.” But whether this ‘entrance’ is the current passage between buildings is unclear and the date of 1841 given by Blake as the earliest reference to “2 additional shops” is entirely consistent with either possibility.

We therefore have a possible ‘inception’ date of 1836 with a 5-year window until the 1841 reference - 1836-1841 - a working date of c1840 is reasonable and a more constrained definition must be considered, for our purposes, academic.

Historic Alterations and Extensions

From reference to historic photographs, archival records of ‘planning’ applications submitted to the Cheltenham Borough Council between 1895 and 1947, and inspection of the basement plans, the extent and (to a degree) the layout of the rear building can be deduced.

The National Provincial Bank of England was established in Gloucester in 1834. It gained Bristol City Bank in 1835 through the break-up of the Northern and Central Bank and expanded rapidly with 32 branches by 1836. We know that it had a branch in Cheltenham at 398 High Street by 1873.

In 1902 the bank submitted an ‘outline’ application to the council for a new building in Montpellier Walk. On 26th October 1902, the Street and Highway Committee considered the application (ref 1593) showing the site, then known as the Montpellier Coal Exchange, on which it was proposed to build a new Branch Bank, and requesting permission to bring forward the building to the dotted line on the plan, marked “building line,” on each of the three sides of the property. The Committee resolved, “To accede to this request as regards the West side only, but in no other direction.”

On 19 December 1904 a ‘full’ application was considered by the council (ref 233) for “New bank premises, Montpellier Walk.” It was resolved that the plans be approved, and tellingly, the minutes confirmed that “as regards to Plan No. 233 the Council approved the proposed height of the building under Sec. 46 of the Cheltenham Improvement Act, 1889.” It is not unreasonable to conclude, therefore, that the existing rear building dates to 1905.

The existing basement provides a good indication of the extent of the original shorter building in this location. The surviving internal layout also strongly suggests that a street entrance and staircase serving the upper floors would have been present on the east elevation between the north-eastern shop and the Coal Exchange. A crucial early photograph (undated but certainly taken between 1905 and 1928) confirms that this was the case. Initially the bank was restricted to the new two-storey rear building, the upper floors above the shops still enjoying their original residential use.

In 1924 the bank was renamed the National Provincial Bank Ltd.

On 28 February 1928, the council was again asked to consider an application for the site; ref 2464 - National Provincial Bank Ltd, Alterations to Bank (Conversion into Bank), 12, Montpellier Avenue. The Plans Sub-committee resolved the application "be approved subject to the drainage and sanitary work being carried out to the satisfaction of the Sanitary Inspector".

Now, it is not clear from this text whether the 'conversion' applied to the ground floor or upper floor or both. Without access to the council's post 1947-planning archives at this time (Covid-19 lock-down) it is necessary to resort to some further deduction. The reference to sanitary inspection is useful, since the significant toilet provision is sited at first floor level within the linking section. While we know that several phases of alterations and extension have occurred to the rear of the shops giving onto the Walk, (some possibly alterations carried out during the original construction,) it seems clear that the significant rebuilding of the central portion of the street elevation was carried out at this time; the entrance door/landing window, blank window and attic dormer shown in the earliest photograph, replaced by the pairs of sash windows at ground and first floors, flanked respectively by attached Doric and Ionic columns. Thus the building was beyond doubt linked through at the upper level and, given the extent (and the unifying nature) of the building work, it seems highly likely that from 1928 the ground floor banking use displaced the two shops.

Verey's note that the building "formerly a chemists' shop and converted by Eric Cole" supports this scenario and is plausible; Eric Cole set up a branch office in Cirencester in 1930, having previously been a partner with LW Barnard & Partners, based in Cheltenham. On 14th March 1922, Eric Cole, Architect, gained approval from Cheltenham council's Housing Committee, to affix a name-plate outside his home at 28 Milton Road, so his involvement at this date appears uncontroversial - as does the date of 1928 as the conversion of both the ground floor and upper floors to banking use.

The quality of the design of the new central street-facing elevation also supports Eric Cole's involvement. These 'conversion works' were necessarily comprehensive; it is likely that the rebuilding of the curved parapets, replacing the inherently unstable bottle balustrading with a more solid pierced design, also occurred at this time.

The dating and extent of other lesser alterations - chiefly to the rear of the shops and the extended terrace - is difficult to define with any certainty. A watercolour, dated 1948, shows a tantalisingly different arrangement to the rear than presently appears; painted with clarity but at very small scale. We know that the rear dormer slope of the original building was brought back, possibly during the original construction to create a deeper building. We can also see, from the pattern of settlement and the parallel arrangement of ceiling beams at ground floor level that the building has been altered, at least at ground floor level, but how much of this relates to the 1905 or 1928 building works, and how much to later (e.g. 1970's National Westminster refurbishment) is presently unclear.

Ask Restaurant took a lease on the building in 1999, with the freehold purchase of the property being completed in 2016.

A photograph showing a very sad and vacant National Westminster exterior in the process of redecoration likely dates to around 1999.

2.3 Existing Condition

Survival of Internal Layout, Fittings and Finishes

As David Verey noted, the one of the key philosophies behind the rapid development of Cheltenham in the Regency period, particularly following the local economic crisis caused by over-speculation at Pittville, was 'economy without meanness'. Individual developments vied to attract the attention of the prosperous and tasteful visitors; the stress placed on their external appearance. The interiors were usually simply decorated with marble fireplaces, mahogany door surrounds and plaster cornices; beyond the external set-piece, the arrangement of the rooms could be 'varied'.

It is also interesting to note the criticism expressed by Thomas Pope in his posthumous 1835 publication, *An Historical Essay on Architecture*. During his life he had been one of the country's leading Arts patrons and a chief advocate of the architecture of the Greek Revival style. However, he strongly criticised the buildings that had resulted for their "inappropriateness of form and inferiority of materials". Some, he said "by building homes in the shape of temples, have contrived for themselves most inappropriate and uncomfortable dwellings".

From an inspection of the main building's first floor rooms and their surviving finishes, those general criticisms are here well-applied. The generous bow-front of the north elevation is divided internally with a longitudinal party wall - the curved bay reduced to a quadrant, the party wall carrying elongated back-to-back chimney breasts - the primary rooms thus providing very inelegant spaces, which the surviving cornices low-cilled sash windows and deep painted skirtings cannot resolve. Only the north-west staircase, (with its cut-stone treads, plain balusters and sweeping mahogany handrail) and the small north-east corner rooms, (both at first and second floor levels) retain any sense of Regency elegance.

The later structural opening up and breaking through of the rear of the main building further reduces the historic internal merit of both upper floors.

At first floor level original run-plaster cornices and lathe-and-plaster ceilings survive in the two split-bay rooms as well as the north-east corner room, which also retains a simple corner fireplace surround and original window and door architraves. None of the window sashes are original. Areas of (probably original) floor boarding survive heavily patched, while large areas within the main rooms have been replaced with sheet boarding.

At 2nd floor (attic) level the survival is equally fragmentary. No ceilings or cornices remain but three original windows do survive (to the north-west corner room and the eastern semi-bayed room). A simple, painted stone fireplace surround (blocked) has been retained in the north eastern corner room and an Art Nouveau inspired painted timber fire-surround is present in the western split-bay room, adjacent to a recent lightweight office partition. The sloping form of rear mansards have been internalised - almost certainly evidence of a design change made during the building's original construction (the 'link' between the two terraces being the one element that could provide a deep floorplan on the narrow site). A roof access hatch provides a view of the central roof structure, the rear slope extended with a near flat section beyond the ridge line to achieve the top of the extended mansard head-plate. The floors are covered.

A short passage with kitchen and toilets connects the front building to the rear building at each level, dating from the building works of the 1928 scheme - with its very fine linking bays of attached columns externally - but with trifling merit internally.

The rear building dates largely to 1905, with only minor alterations necessitated by the 1928 breakthrough. The ground floor lobby entrance and staircase at the south end is tightly planned with a margin-light borrowed light window facing the entrance (was it originally a reception window?), with margin lights, thin mahogany detailing and a coved plaster cornice, the space stylistically largely intact and curiously satisfying, the staircase punching through on the left hand side. The arrangement of end-to-end staircase flights is unfortunate but perhaps necessitated by the narrow

plan. It appears likely that the upper flight (constructed with a larger goings) dates to the 1928 alterations; subsequent access to archives may confirm this.

The ceilings to the upper floors have lost any original plaster cornices. Skirtings, architraves and window details are consistent with the late 19th/early 20th C development of classical banking style, the high window cills to the second floor serving a room clearly intended for back-room desk-bound bank-clerks. The floors are covered.

No original doors survive; all appear to be later, fire-rated doors.

Condition of Fabric

The upper floors are vacant and unheated, and have been partially stripped out of furniture and services, while other areas where ground floor services and fittings have been carried through to the first floor areas are presently revealed. Some areas are currently utilised for unplanned storage and welfare serving the ground floor restaurant and staff.

In the main building there is evidence of water penetration from above, particularly associated with the parapet gutters with some damage to the cornices and plastered wall and ceiling finishes.

In the rear building the preferential deterioration of the plasterwork along the undersides of the second floor's steel ceiling joists show the building's construction heritage (structural steel was introduced after 1888) as well as problems with condensation through cold-bridging.

Notwithstanding the water ingress noted above in relation to some gutters, the external fabric is generally in fair condition with no damage noted to the mansard slating or associated flashings and masonry generally in a good state of repair. Some minor deterioration noted to the window joinery.

Original Fittings and Finishes

What does survive of the original 1840's finishes to the upper floors is limited to the north-west staircase the three northern rooms at each level; the four large split-bay rooms and the two small corner rooms. Survival is so limited that, rather than schedule original items, they might be listed:

First Floor

- Plaster and lathe ceilings and cornices to the three rooms
- Blocked corner fireplace and surround to north-eastern room
- Door lining and architrave to north-eastern room

Second Floor

- Blocked corner fireplace and surround to north-eastern room
- 3No lamb's tongue sash windows to eastern half
- Skirting and architraves to north-eastern room

In relation to the 1905 and 1928 builds the survival of the original fabric is good, but surviving joinery and mouldings is largely limited to windows and the lower flight of the in-line staircase. Doors and many door linings and architraves appear to have been altered and replaced through later fire-upgrading. Some non-descript skirtings survive at first floor level. No cornices are present beyond the ground floor entrance.

2.4 Assessment of Heritage Significance

Without doubt the overriding intention of the building's design was as an 'eye-catcher' - a pure piece of architecture-as-town-planning - entirely consistent with the view of Cheltenham's speculative development through the Regency period, and, as we have seen one of the final pieces in the jigsaw of the town centre. The pair of generous bays framing the entrance to the grand promenade is a very strong motif, which, combined with the just-larger-than-life-sized female caryatids succeeds (perhaps beyond expectations) to provide, as Verey notes, "an intimate classical architecture". The original c1840 south-end building, shorter and likely lower, would always have played a lesser role in the public architecture and was very probably originally the Coal Exchange.

The building was given statutory protection, listed as Grade II*, in 1955, some 27 years after all the major alterations described had been completed. Although the loss of the Coal Exchange remains a mourning unspoken, the competence of the 1905 building and the success of the 1928 scheme in unifying the whole means that the building, as a whole warrants its current listed status.

Users' needs over the years have given rise to minor changes to the northern frontages, mainly to the ground floor window and door treatments, and numerous traces of various different trading names to the entablature.

Internally

c1840 Building

In terms of the building's significance as a heritage asset, the architecture of the interiors of the original northern building in terms of layout, fabric, fixtures and fittings are valuable as heritage assets but do not in any way bear the significance of the exterior.

The main split-bay rooms and the smaller corner rooms at first and second floor levels, together with the north-west staircase contain good original 19th century fabric, of architectural significance as heritage assets. The main (split-bay) rooms suffer from later, insensitive alterations (e.g. the loss of the original southern end wall and recent office partition,) which harm their legibility and architectural merit. There is an opportunity to reduce this harm and enhance the heritage asset with any future intervention.

Almost nothing remains of the original fabric at ground floor level within the retail spaces, beyond the external walls and the much-altered cross party wall and certainly no finishes or fixtures survive.

1905 and 1928 Builds

In relation to the interiors of the 1905 southern building and the 1928 reforming of the 'link', the interior architecture is functional and generally plain, with no plaster cornices and simple skirtings, though the windows and window architraves are generally authentically moulded and apparently original. It would appear that the 1928 works, as well as altering the staircase, have altered and removed much of the earlier build.

Although part of the listed building, the interiors of these later phases contain relatively little of architectural or historic merit as a heritage asset, the building's contribution largely relating to its exterior.

Figures



Figures: Page 1

Top left and right: Plans of the Town of Cheltenham from 1809 and 1843, respectively

Centre left: Planted grand promenade leading to Montpellier Pump Room 1840

Bottom: First view of new shops from the Illustrated Guide of 1845



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Top left: Undated view of north-east corner, possibly late 19thC

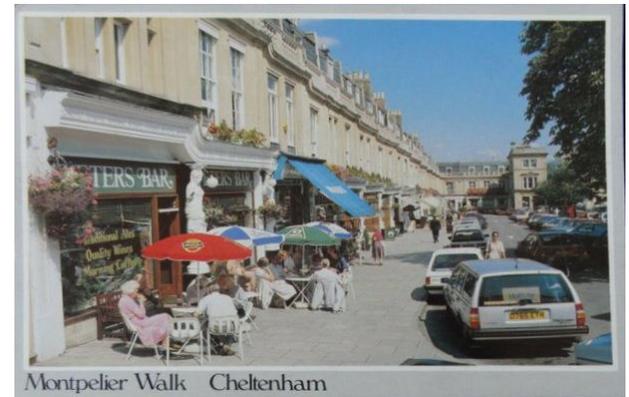
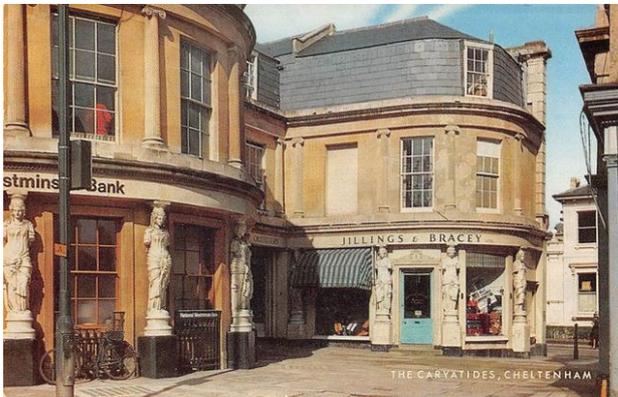
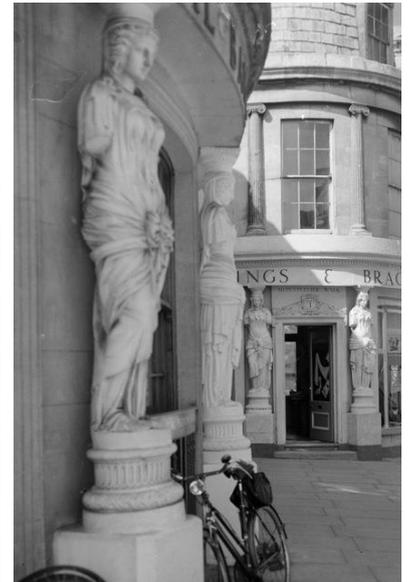
Top right: Wider view of north-east corner, showing the link section prior to the 1928 conversion - with original staircase landing window over an entrance door

Right: Enlarged section of 1935 aerial photograph, capturing a view of the whole of Montpellier Walk and the Pump Room

Lower right: 1950's postcard showing street view of fully converted and adapted building's street frontage

Bottom: 1948 watercolour detail showing courtyard elevation varying from current view (note view of complete first floor window on right)





Figures: Page 3

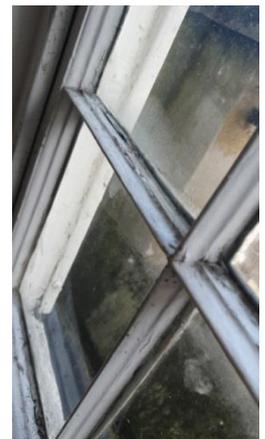
Top row: Renown photographs of the buildings dating to 1940s and 50s - Eric de Mare and John Piper

Centre row: Postcards dating to 1970's and 80's

Above: Publicity still from 1986 film The Whistle Blower

Above right and right: Two photographs dating to 1999, the year Nat West vacated the premises





Figures: Page 4

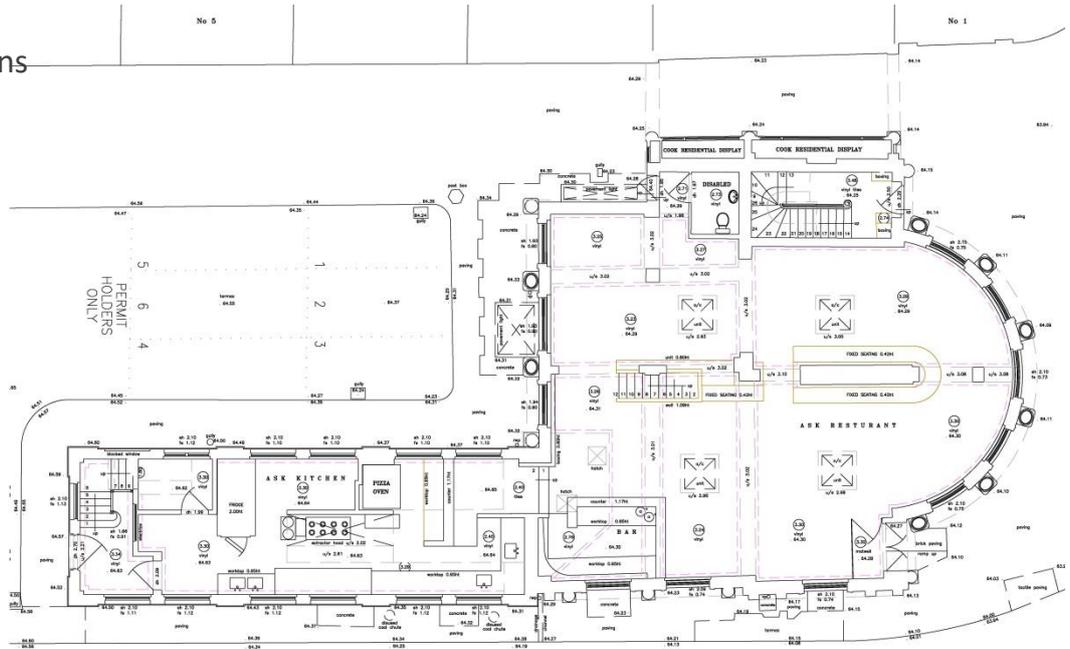
Top two rows: general external photographs of the current building condition

Above and right: Survey photographs showing run plaster cornice and grey marble fireplace surround and staircase landing on first floor, surviving lamb's tongue sash on second floor and view of 1st floor 'roof terrace' with glimpse of retained cornice from Coal Exchange in top right hand corner.

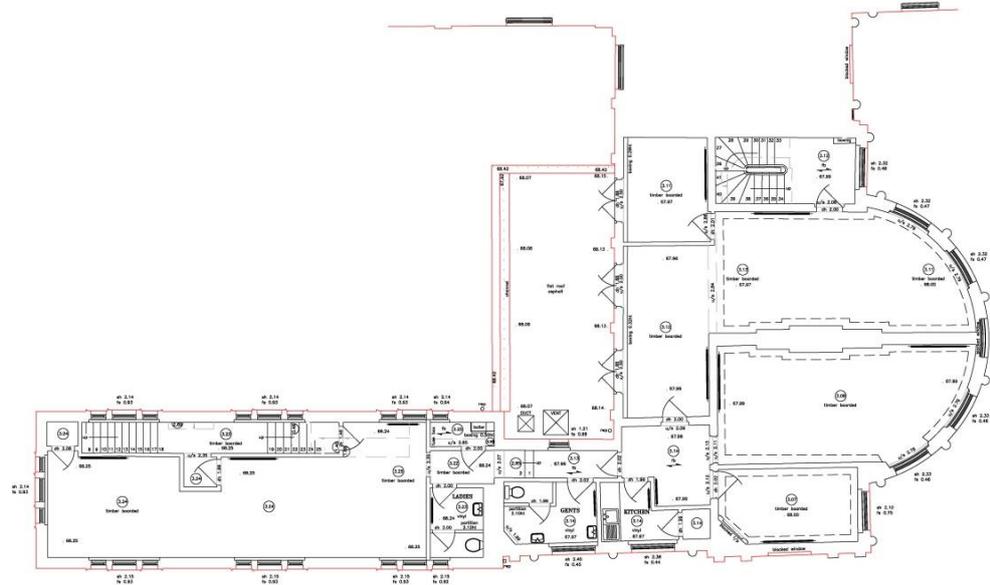


Existing Plans
(N.T.S.)

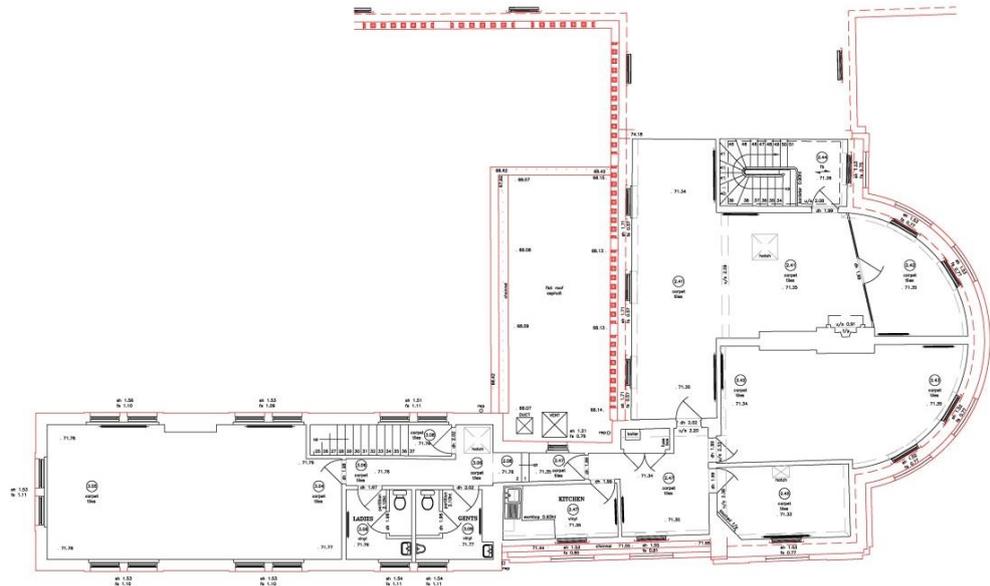
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



3 Proposals

Design/Layout Options for Residential Use of Upper Floors

Foundation Architecture has been instructed by the building owner to bring forward options for the conversion of the upper floors back to residential use.

Initial options (Options A-C) were developed to present to Cheltenham Borough Council as a pre-application review to assess the principal issues in relation to planning policy on Change of Use.

These options, developed prior to the undertaking of the Heritage Assessment, highlighted the problematic issue of circulation across the upper floors, laid out to meet current residential standards (e.g. means of escape) without the original second staircase, which until 1928 (situated in the link between the original front building and the 1905 back building) served the upper floors on the eastern side.

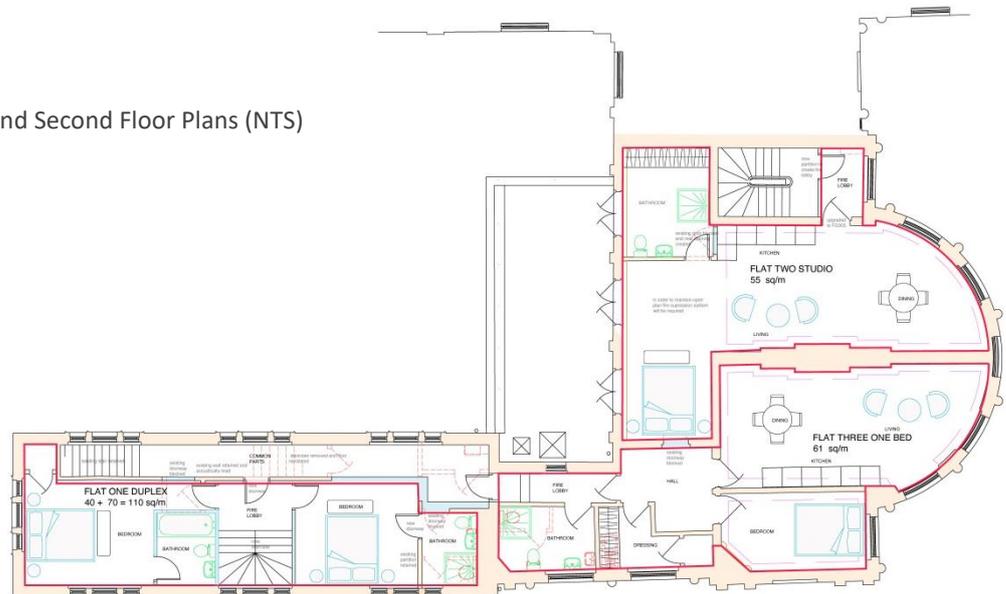
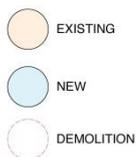
A further option (Option D) was developed, which allowed for a new staircase (between 1st and 2nd floors) in this 1928 'link' location, and, following desk-top comment from the council's Conservation Officer, a further option, Option E was developed.

It is Option E, therefore, which is reviewed below.

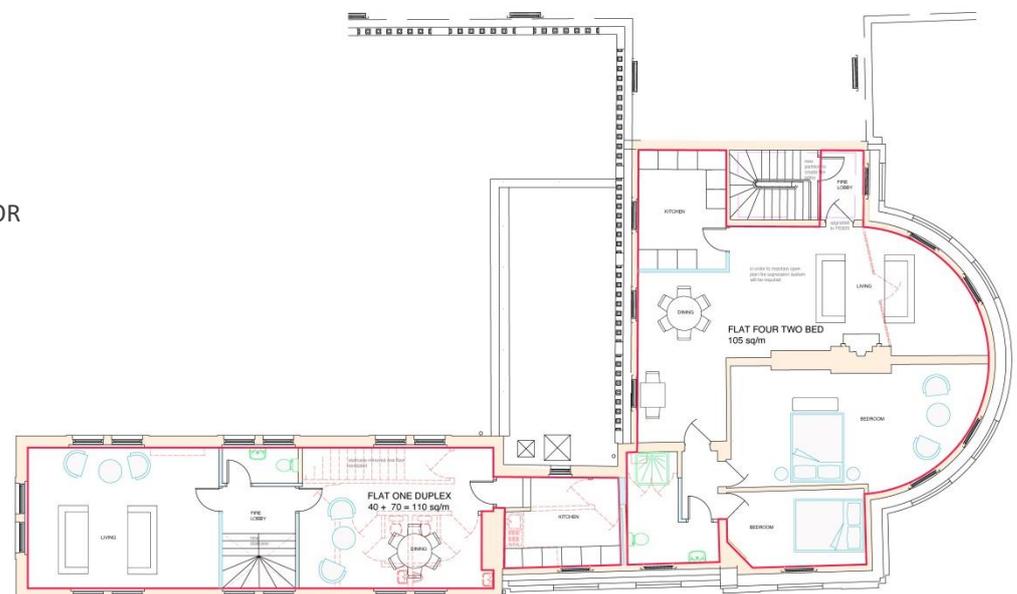
Option E

Below: First and Second Floor Plans (NTS)

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



4 Impact Assessment

The Option E plans show the internal spaces reorganised to form four new dwellings. The 1905 southern entrance and staircase giving access at first floor level to a 1-bedroom flat and a two 2-bedroom duplex - the latter having its own internal staircase rising to second floor level. The c1840 north-west entrance and staircase give access to a studio flat at first floor level and a 2-bedroom flat at second floor level.

Option E has been developed as a Scheme Design for submission as an application for Planning Approval and Listed Building Consent, proposes a layout with the following key interventions:

1. Physical alterations to the existing building fabric are restricted, almost entirely, to the 1905 rear building with the removal of the upper staircase, the insertion of a new staircase within the duplex. The lines of the existing cross party-walls and 'historic' main living spaces of the original front building have been respected. No new external openings are proposed. Two internal doorways are blocked. The following comments are offered:
 - a. In relation to Flat Two and Flat Four the reinstatement of some part of the main rooms' missing north walls would be preferred, perhaps with large lined openings with architraves as 'doorways' within plastered walls and (at first floor level) visually supporting the existing cornice.
 - b. The cantilevered chimney breast within the 1905 block at second floor should be retained, including the corbel block at high level over the staircase.
2. The new south-eastern staircase serving the duplex between 1st and 2nd floors is formed through the 1905 floor structure and will pass across the existing first floor window:
 - a. This is a feature often seen in historic buildings (where internal function trumps external uniformity) and is in principal acceptable.
 - b. The new staircase will be visible from the exterior and should therefore be designed to a high quality, with particular attention to the line of the outer string (or treads) as it/they pass across the window.
3. The proposals allow for new smoke lobbies to be formed onto the existing north-west staircase landings, allowing the key main rooms on that side to be retained free of intrusion:
 - a. Subject to the need to provide fire-resistance, these lobbies should be detailed as lightweight and reversible, 'SPAB-ian' elements, part-glazed to allow natural light to the main staircase, possibly including a glazed clerestory taken up to the retained ceiling cornice. The existing staircase handrails and spindles should be retained.
4. The proposals allow for new partitions with new internal doors to form parts of the new layouts:
 - a. The new details of new partitions, doors, architraves and skirtings should be designed to a high quality specification.
5. The proposals allow for the services to be replaced to suit the new layouts:
 - a. While it is advantageous that new servicing should be concealed, care should be taken to ensure that existing finishes are not damaged. No fittings should be recessed into original lathe and plaster ceilings.
 - b. Details should be provided of the principal above ground drainage layout to ensure that damage to significant fabric can be avoided.

In principal the proposals alterations have only a very slight impact on the physical fabric of the c1840 parts, and some minor impact on the later phases. Any harm that could be attributed to the loss of original fabric can be minimised through careful detailing, (e.g. the detailing of new partitions to retain existing skirtings and cornices, and the trimmed opening for the new staircase) and is likely

to be more than offset by the potential enhancement, through careful design, of the very unsatisfactory existing main spaces.

Further, and of material significance, is the prospect that, through the bringing back of the currently vacant spaces to a viable residential use, the future maintenance of the overall building can be secured.

5 Conclusion

While the building's heritage significance resides for the most-part in the contribution of its very fine exterior architecture as a focal piece of town-planning at the heart of Cheltenham's cultural and commercial centre, the original fabric and finishes of the surviving c1840 interiors, although partial, do constitute a heritage asset of some architectural significance. The interiors of the 1928 'link' building as well as the 1905 rear building, as altered by the 1928 works, are more utilitarian in nature and contain only limited architectural value, thus contributing only marginally to the heritage merit of the building as a whole.

Subject to the satisfactory development of detailed proposals, the option for the conversion of the upper floors to residential use can be carried out with 'less than significant harm' to the heritage significance of the building that is likely to be significantly outweighed by the benefits in term of the potential enhancement of the internal spaces and the securing of the building's viability and future maintenance.

6 Recommendations

Assuming agreement can be reached with Cheltenham Borough Council on the principal of conversion, and statutory approvals gained for the proposed scheme of conversion of the upper floors, further specialist historic consultancy input should be retained to ensure the discharge of any Conditions the council may see fit to apply and that the implementation of the Design Scheme maximises ongoing protection of the significant fabric.

References and Acknowledgements

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- Eric de Mare, Historic England Archive aa98_04279
- Clearance Sale photo, 1999, © Helen Iwanczuk