50+ years

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BANFF CASTLE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

HERITAGE STATEMENT 2024

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HERITAGE STATEMENT

Introduction

The following Heritage Statement is in support of the proposed internal alterations as required by the recent Fire Risk Assessment.

Summary

The present A Listed Georgian house designed by John Adam in 1750 sits on the site of the former 13th century castle. Currently managed as a community and arts facility by Banff Castle Community Association, Banff Castle hosts a variety of public events and groups and is a key landmark and community hub within the historic town.

Comprising a main block and rear wing, the 1st floor of the rear wing has been sub-divided into several smaller spaces with the main room formerly used by Talking Banffie recording studio.

In April last year the BCCA commissioned a Fire Risk Assessment to be carried out on the Castle and ancillary buildings. One of the main areas of concern identified by the FRA was the 1st floor rear wing. With the current arrangement of interconnected rooms accessed by several doors, it is in the opinion of the Fire Risk Assessor that this would present severe problems in the event of a fire as the escape route is hindered by the current sequence of escape.

In addition to this, a number of doors around the principal access stair are non-compliant and the current detection system does not offer sufficient protection to the building or user groups.

As such the following interventions are proposed:

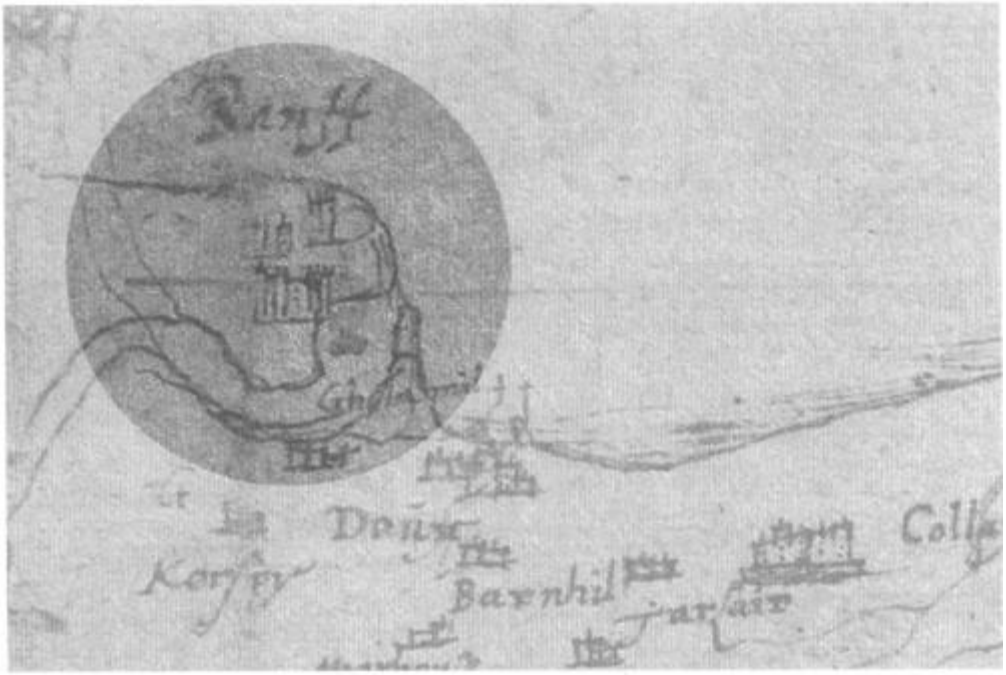
- The doors giving direct access to the access stair are upgraded to a more compliant standard. Given the listed nature of the property this is limited but will include installation of compliant fire rated ironmongery, door closers, signage and perimeter seals.
- Installation of a compliant L2 detection system comprising addressable fire alarm panel, zone control and interlinked smoke and heat detectors to all principal rooms and void spaces as well as call points to the main stairwell and final exit doors
- Reinstatement of the historic layout to the 1st floor rear wing by removing redundant lobbies, doors and stores to create a more open, flexible space that complies with means of escape

The benefits of this exercise are:

- Installation of compliant fire strategies that will mitigate the current fire risk to the listed building and various user groups
- Improved escape plan including detection, lighting and signage that will make the building easier to manage and navigate
- Opportunity to create a multi-purpose conference suite with modern audio visual facilities that can be used to generate income that will contribute to the upkeep of the Castle
- Reinstatement of period details within the new conference room that safeguard historic fabric and give this new facility identity and presence
- Will free up space at the accessible ground floor for more inclusive activities currently taken up by meeting and conference space

This will help safeguard the future of a key community and historic asset.

History



Extract from Timothy Pont map c1583-1601 showing coast of Banff including the castle.

Banff Castle is a large heritage site in the centre of the town, occupying a prominent position overlooking the bay which is bisected by the outlet of the River Deveron.

The earliest built heritage is a large well-preserved motte (or man-made mound) which is likely to have originally had a defensive timber structure on top. This was replaced by a substantial stone castle in the mid 12th century. The castle was demolished in the mid 18th century, and in around 1750 a town house was built adjacent to the medieval castle site. This retains the name of Banff Castle.

19th century photo of Banff Castle courtesy of BCCA

The buildings are Grade A Listed under LB21957, and the original motte and remaining curtain walling is a scheduled monument under SM2927

The original castle keep was demolished as part of the 18th century remodelling but likely occupied the large grass area in front of the present mansion house. The house, still known as Banff Castle, was built in 1750 to a design by John Adam, son and brother to the noted William and Robert Adam respectively. An elegant Georgian pavilion typical of the mid 18th century is in an excellent state of preservation.

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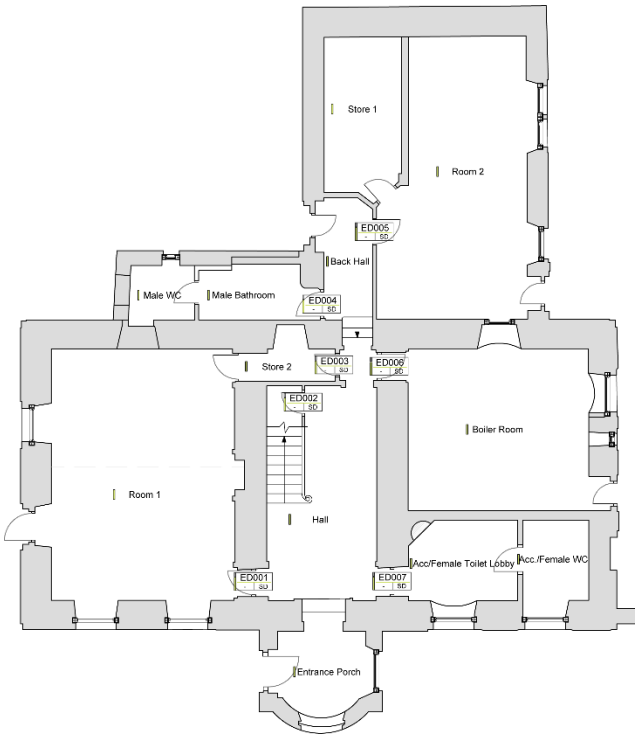
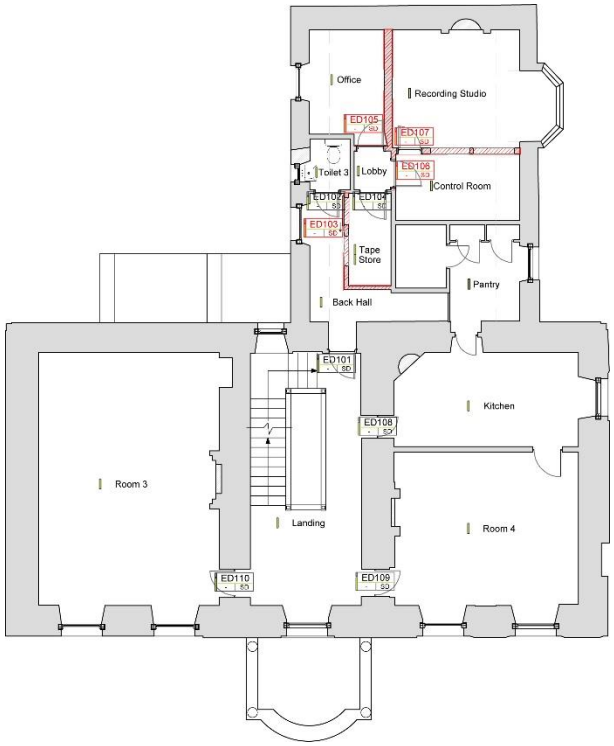
Existing Plans



Existing Ground Floor Plan

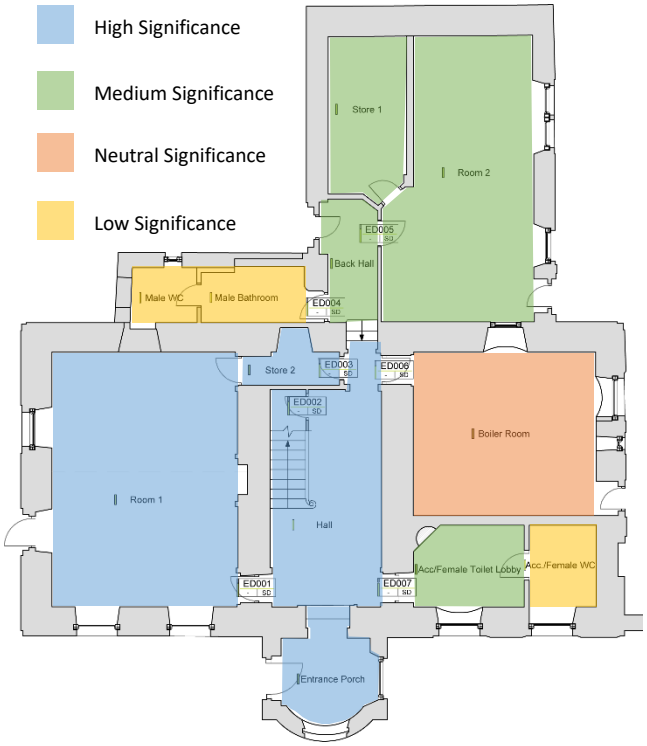


Existing First Floor Plan

The main building is largely unaltered and retains a number of original features including panelling, doors and plasterwork. The proposed interventions to the first floor wing at the back of the main house involve the removal of non-original partitions and doors.

View of the existing first floor Recording Studio

Significance



Existing Ground Floor Plan

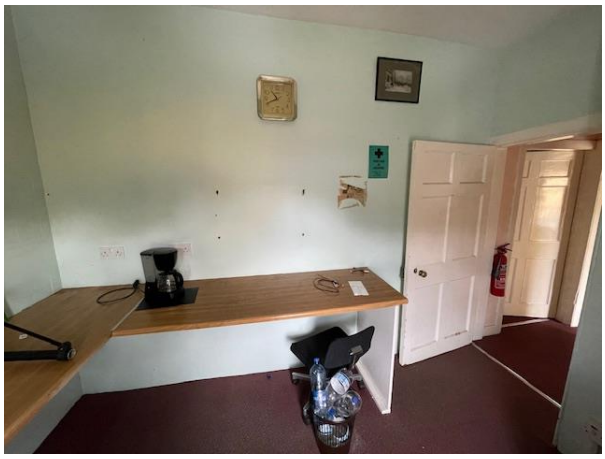
Existing First Floor Plan

As already stated, in the main, the building is remarkably well preserved with many external and internal original detailing such as stonework, harl, slate to the outside and timber panelling, doors, fireplaces and plasterwork internally – especially to the large public rooms to the main house largely intact and original.

The rear wing appears to have been extended in the 19th century including the addition of a first floor with east facing oriel window.

Later alterations include the formation of an accessible toilet at ground floor, the formation of a ground floor toilet block to the rear and subdivision of the first floor rear wing to form a recording studio with ancillary storage.

View of rear wing at rear lobby



View of rear wing office

View of rear wing back hall

View of rear wing oriel window

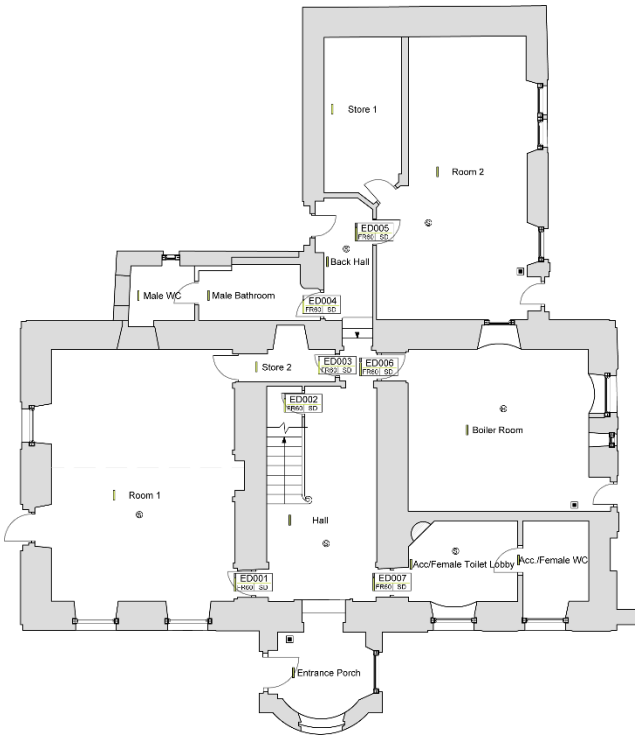
View of former ground floor reception room

View of former first floor drawing room

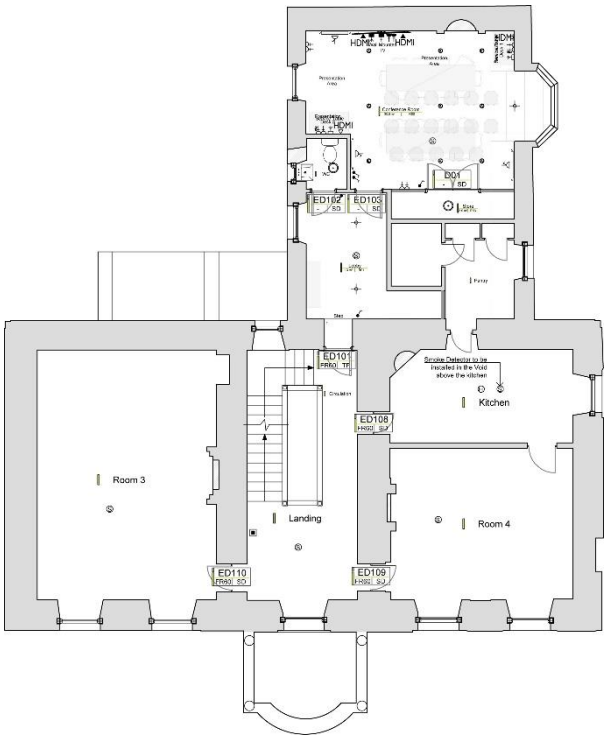
In terms of significance there has been some cosmetic change to the property since its conversion from domestic residence to community facility in the 1940's which impacts on areas of significance.

An extensive exercise of restoration and renovation to the main Georgian house was carried out in the 1990's and is reflected in the current amenities and condition of the principal public spaces. At this time improved electrical and fire detection systems were installed but are now non-compliant with current regulations for public buildings. It is understood that the first floor recording studio was installed at this time.

Proposals



Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan

As identified at the outset the proposed changes are in relation to concerns raised in the recent Fire Risk Assessment and include:

- Upgrade to the existing stairwell doors to improve the fire rating
- Upgrade to the existing detection system to L2 standard
- Remove redundant partitioning to the first floor rear wing to reinstate the original room configuration including repairs to the oriel window.

Intervention

It is understood that we are working within the confines of a historic listed building, but the proposed interventions are essential for the safety and security of not just the building users, but the building as a whole.

In terms of the proposed remedial works to the existing panel doors, this will involve surface mounted ironmongery, signage and intumescent smoke seals to minimise any disruption to historic fabric and detailing. Surface application of the upgrades will require screw fixing, but this will avoid checking or rebating into existing timber and can, if ever changed back into a residential property be easily removed and repaired.

Surface mounted door closer

Surface mounted seals

Surface mounted sign

In terms of the upgrade to the existing fire detection system this will involve routing of new power and pyro cabling. Where possible existing containment routes are to be utilised (sine there are limited appliances already installed). Where existing containment is not practical surface mounted trunking is to be used to avoid disruption to existing plaster mouldings. Again, if ever changed back into a residential property this can easily removed and repaired.

D-Line single core trunking

With regards the alterations to the rear wing at first floor this involves removal of redundant non original partitioning and doors to open up the rear space to form a new conferencing facility. As well as removing elements of low (and even negative) significance this also improves the setting of the historic oriel window mentioned in the listing. Although the new lighting and sockets will involve routing within the existing walls, this is already evident as part of the historic interventions but can now be rationalised and consolidated under the proposed new use. Sequence of escape is also improved which was a fundamental requirement of the Fire Risk Assessment.

Proposed conference room centred on Oriel window

Conclusion

Paramount to the proposals is the improved fire safety of the building. The legacy of this will be to safeguard a significant cultural and historic asset as well as improved safety for the various user groups.

The independent Fire Risk Assessment carried out on Banff Castle by LM Fire Limited in April of this year identified a high risk of fire to the premises with a corresponding medium risk to life as a result. As such there is an urgent need and demand to address these risks.

Addressing these risks will involve intervention and change to the fabric of the building. Where possible these interventions have been designed to minimise any adverse effects to the historic fabric, particularly in areas of high significance.

Other than where redundant, non-original partitions and doors are being removed, the majority of interventions are reversible and in the opening up of the rear wing spaces will enhance a listed asset. It is hoped that these proposals are welcomed.