



LISTED BUILDING APPRAISAL AT 81 LONDON ROAD, MAIDSTONE, KENT

Date of report 17.07.2024

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Front cover: Site photograph of the site (2023)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In July 2024 Dr Paul Wilkinson of SWAT Archaeology carried out a historic building appraisal of 81 London Road, Maidstone in Kent (Figures 1-3). The buildings are presently occupied and after undergoing development (Plates 1-14).

This report is in response to MBC objections following the planning application for the listed building consent for internal and external works to facilitate conversion of main (2/3 storey) building to 14 (no) self-contained flats, including fenestration alterations (re-submission 23/503160/LBC (completed)).

1.2 Planning background

The site has a planning application 23/500244/FULL for conversion of main (2/3-storey) building to 14(no) self-contained flats, including fenestration alterations; conversion of outbuildings to 2(no) dwellings including fenestration alterations and alterations to roof of existing storage building; and rearrangement of parking area and associated works.

1.3 Description of development

This listed building consent is described as: *Listed building consent for internal and external works to facilitate conversion of main (2/3-storey) building to 14(no) self-contained flats, including fenestration alterations (Resubmission 23/503160/LBC (Completed)).*

The councils Conservation Officer has objected to the submission on heritage grounds for the following (summarised) reasons:

Designation and context: Property is Grade II listed, originally listed as Fanum House, though building has been renamed to Medway House. Property is a large, late C18 building, with listing description noting that it was formerly built as the Seven Stars Hotel. Building has been subject to numerous extensions and alterations, but front, historic core retains internal features such as plaster coving and details, doors/architraves, and the fine staircase. Much of rear extensions have had internal walls removed (if there were any) to create large open-plan office spaces. Smaller additions have been formed to create stairwells and facilities to suit use of an office block. It should be noted these buildings have UPVc double glazed windows &

doors, and these will need to be replaced with timber windows of suitable style for the buildings. At present these are considered as illegal works.

Information submitted provides extremely limited details of property. It has not recognised original features or floor plan that are retained within original building, which were identified on site visit. Whilst it is recognised that rear extensions are of some size and of limited significance (c.1970s), the historic core retains significance through its fabric and floor plan.

Form: The proposed plans look to amend: -Internal (to historic core) Ground floor- Unit 6: No change - Unit 1: Relocate kitchen to smaller room & sub-divide main room to create entrance lobby & 2 bedrooms

First Floor - Changes to what was Unit 13, including creating new lobby in main stairwell to create entrance to Unit 14

Second Floor: No proposed changes -External - Amendments to windows in 1970s extension

Impact on significance:

•Internal (to historic core)

Ground floor - Unit 6: No change - Unit 1: Relocate kitchen to smaller room & sub-divide main room to create entrance lobby & 2 bedrooms. Proposed sub-division on main corner rooms to create a lobby & 2 bedrooms is not supported as this causes harm to space which retains historic features.

First Floor - Changes to what was Unit 13, including creating new lobby in main stairwell to create entrance to Unit 14. This is NOT acceptable as this result is in a loss of plan form and harmful to understanding of space.

Proposed relocation of bathroom is supported in principle – but concerns over SVP and its location should be clarified. Proposed sub-division on main corner rooms to create a lobby & 2 bedrooms is not supported as this causes harm to space which retains historic features.

Proposed works to historic core of building are considered to cause harm to fabric and form of building, and there is no justification for proposed harm. The impact would result in a loss

of understanding of two main rooms within historic core, impacting not only the space but the original details (coving, etc., within property).

Proposed works to alter windows within later extension is deemed to cause no harm. Further concern is raised that application is noted as 'completed'. Retrospective consent cannot be sought for LBC, and so these works are deemed as illegal.

Level of harm: Less than Substantial. Any consideration of public benefit should be undertaken by Case Officer.

Conclusion: Refuse - I raise an objection to application on heritage grounds.

1.4 In response:

The coved plaster ceiling still exists and therefore suffers no harm. The new ceiling as part of the present development is lower than the original plaster ceiling and the original plaster decoration is preserved in situ (Plates 9-14).

The first floor development of a new lobby is out of site of the main stairwell and cannot be seen from the main stairwell and the main stairwell has benefitted from removal of wood panel pillars and reception desk- see attached photographs (Plates 1-6).

1.5 Heritage Listing

Externally I would question the heritage listing as the two two-storey bay windows (Plates 1-3) are not shown on the 1929 and 1936 OS maps or indeed the Luftwaffe aerial photograph of 1940.

2.0 HISTORICAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The development site is located on the west side of London Road and the south side of Queens Road with The Maplesden Noakes School and the Maidstone Grammar School for Girls about 500m to the east. Immediately across the road (London Road) to the east is the Allington Baptist Church and to the south Somerfield Terrace. The site itself started life as the Seven Sisters Hotel, then Fanum House and is now called Medway House (MAP 1-7).

The KCCHER description of the building is from the English Heritage. *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest* (SKE 16160).

The following text is from the original listed building designation:

LONDON ROAD 1. 5278 (South West Side) No 81 TQ 75 NW 8/141 (Fanum House) 30.7.51. II Large late C18 building originally the Seven Stars Hotel. 3 storeys and basement red brick. Parapet with pediment-shaped outline in the centre portion above the centre window bay. Circle of ornamental bricks in the tympanum of this pediment. String course above each floor. 7 windows including 2 curved bays of 3 windows each on all floors. Glazing bars intact. Centre 1st floor window round-headed. Centre 2nd floor window circular. 5 semi-circular steps leading up to the doorway. Deep round hood over the doorway, its frieze enriched and with dentilled cornice. Rectangular fanlight below the hood. 4 panel double doors. Modern addition in neo-Georgian style to the south containing 2 storeys and 3 windows. Ground floor addition of 2 windows to the north. Listing NGR: TQ7497156185

2.4 Statutory Designation

The buildings are listed as a Grade II listed building with main construction periods 1767 to 1974 and the KCC HER number is TQ 75 NW 223.

2.5 Significance of the Buildings

The significance of the buildings is that they illustrate the development of a building with later 20th century impressive architectural details but with the main build dating from the mid-18th century. The two bays and front entrance are modern and should not be listed.

2.8 Setting

The PDA (Proposed Development Area) comprise a detached main building, ancillary buildings and car parking and these areas have been mapped and are attached (Figures 1-9).

2.9 Historic Mapping Background

2.9.1 The Ordnance Survey plan of 1929 show no bay windows (Figure 1).

2.9.2 The Ordnance Survey plan of 1936 again show no bay windows on the east facing façade (Figure 2).

2.9.3 The Luftwaffe aerial photograph of 1940 show no bay windows on the east façade (Figure 3).

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

3.1 External

The original building is a brick built three storey building with cellars. Built of red brick laid in a stretcher bond the frontage is architecturally impressive with a ground floor central doorway accessed by five stone semi-circular steps to a four-panel double door with a deep round timber hood with frieze and above a glazed rectangular fanlight. Above the doorway a round headed first floor timber window with glazing bars and above the white painted string course a second floor circular timber window within a circle of ornamental bricks in the tympanum capped with a pediment shaped moulding painted white (Plates 1-4).

3.2 Either side of the central doorway are a three-storey curved red brick-built bay with a white painted string course above each window with three double hung sash windows with stone cill lighting each floor (Plates 1-4).

4. Conclusion

The coved plaster ceiling in Unit 6 still exists and therefore suffers no harm. The new ceiling as part of the present development is lower than the original plaster ceiling and the original plaster decoration is preserved in situ (Plates 9-14).

The first floor Unit 13 development of a new lobby is out of site of the main stairwell and cannot be seen from the main stairwell and the main stairwell has benefitted from removal of wood panel pillars and reception desk- see attached photographs (Plates 1-6).

Dr Paul Wilkinson PhD., MCIfA., FRSA, Member IHBC



5. References

Historic England, 2017 *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*.

SWAT Archaeology 2022 *Specification for an Archaeological Building Recording at 81 London Road, Maidstone, Kent*

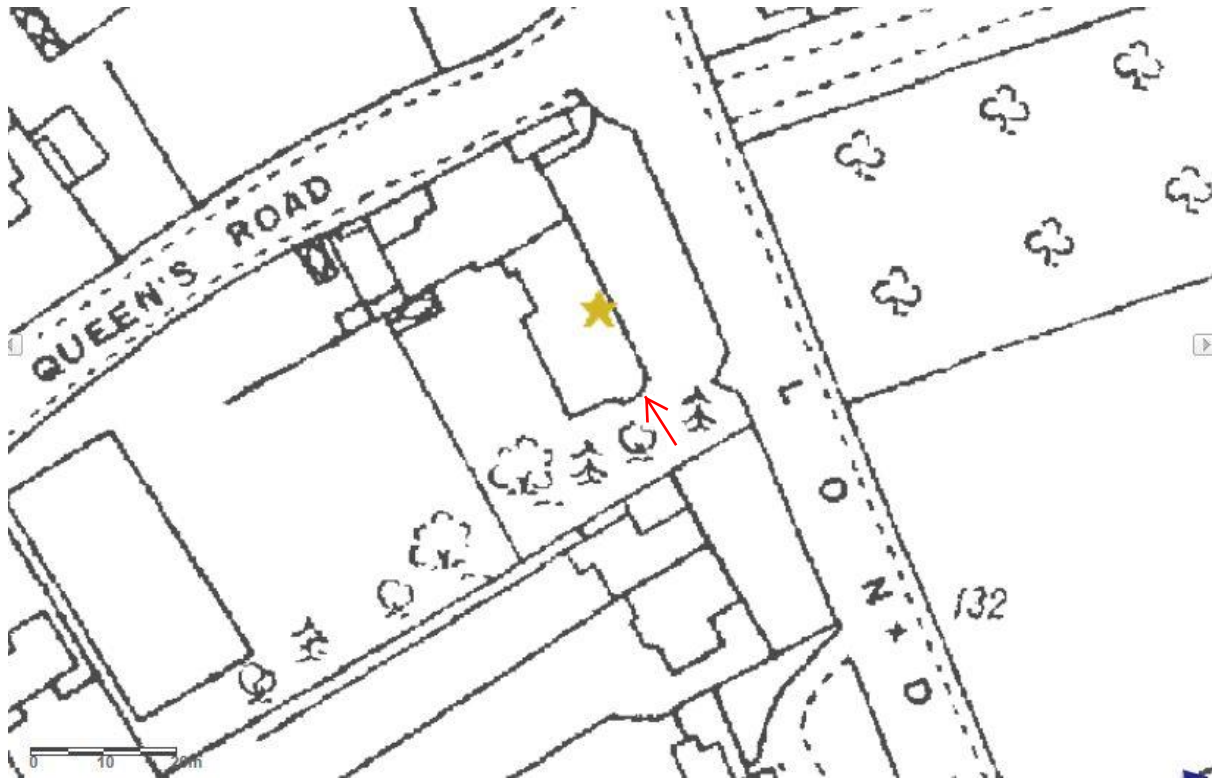


Figure 1. Site as mapped by Ordnance Survey in 1929 (gold star) showing the corner bay to the left (red arrow)

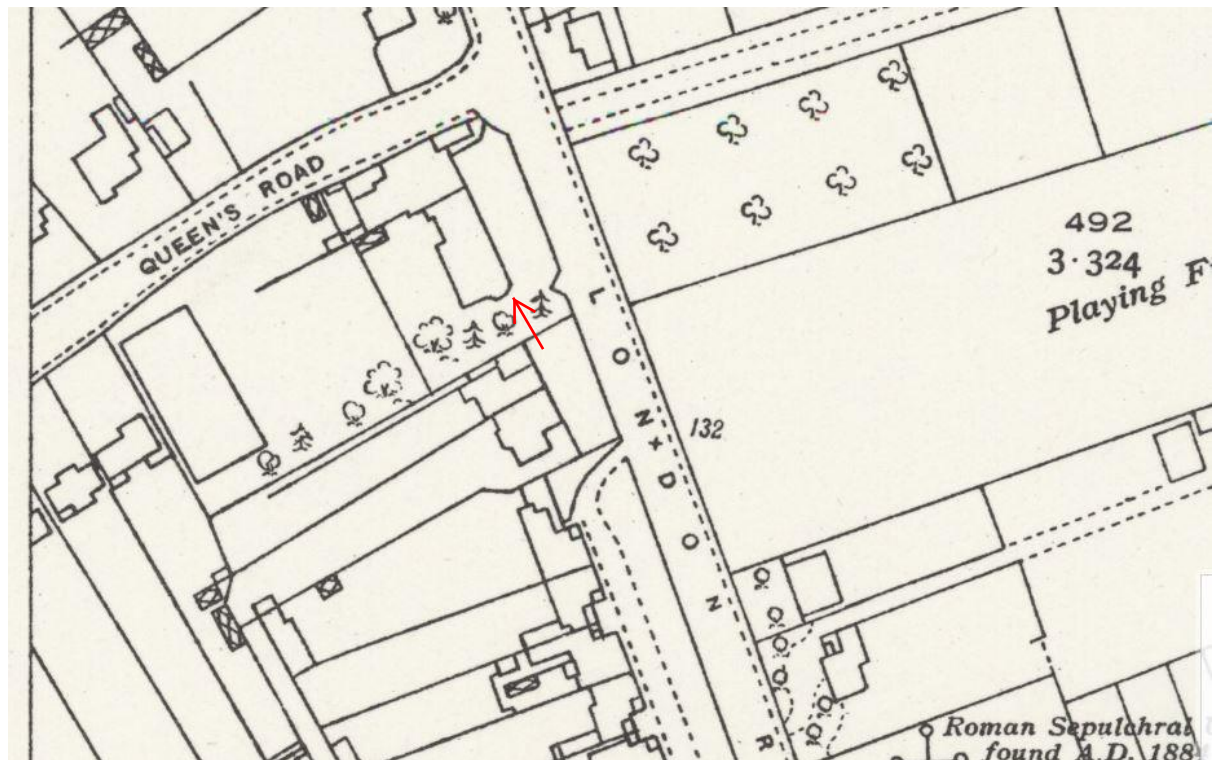


Figure 2. Site as mapped by Ordnance Survey in 1936 showing the corner bay (red arrow)

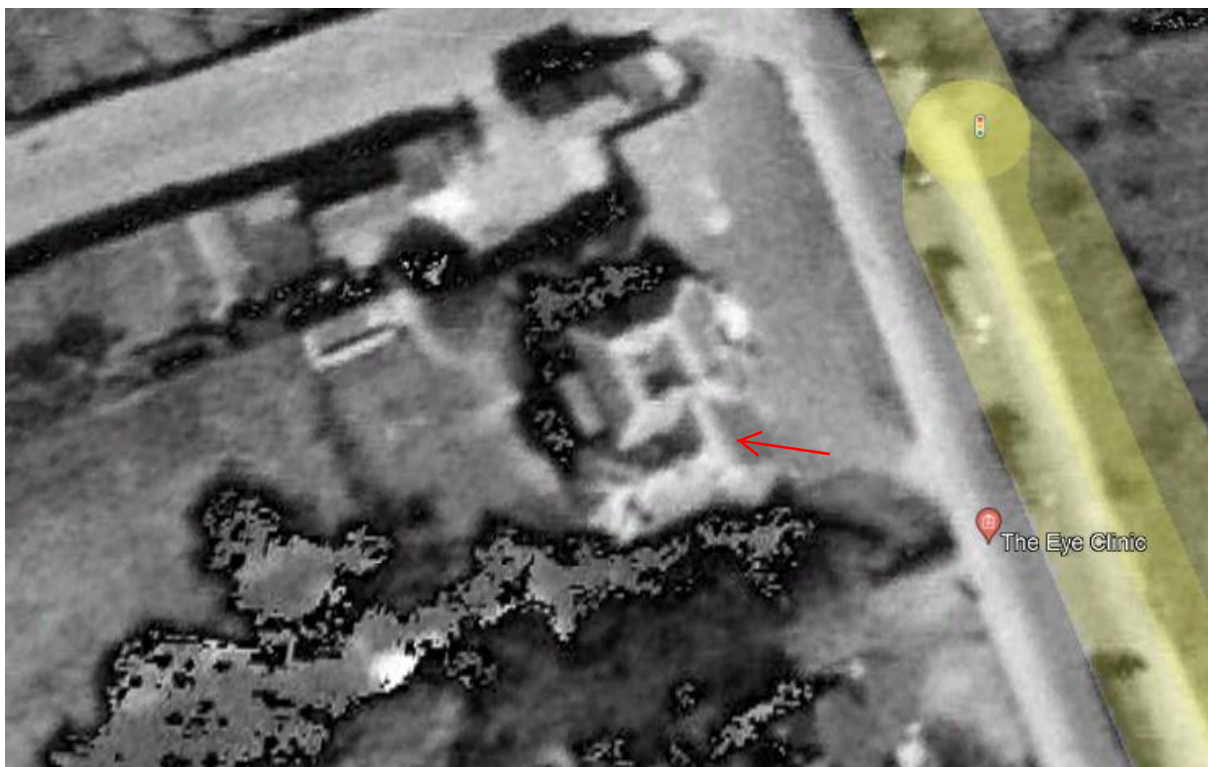


Figure 3. Aerial photograph taken in 1940 by the Luftwaffe and showing extension to the left (red arrow) but no double frontage bay windows

PLATES



Plate 1. Historic view of facade with later build to the right (Google Street View 2011)



Plate 2. Front facade and later build to the right (photographed May 2023)



Plate 3. North-east facade and shown on the Luftwaffe photo of 1940 with the build to the left but no double bays on frontage and no extension to the right.



Plate 4. View of entrance hall and desk prior to development (looking west) 1m scale

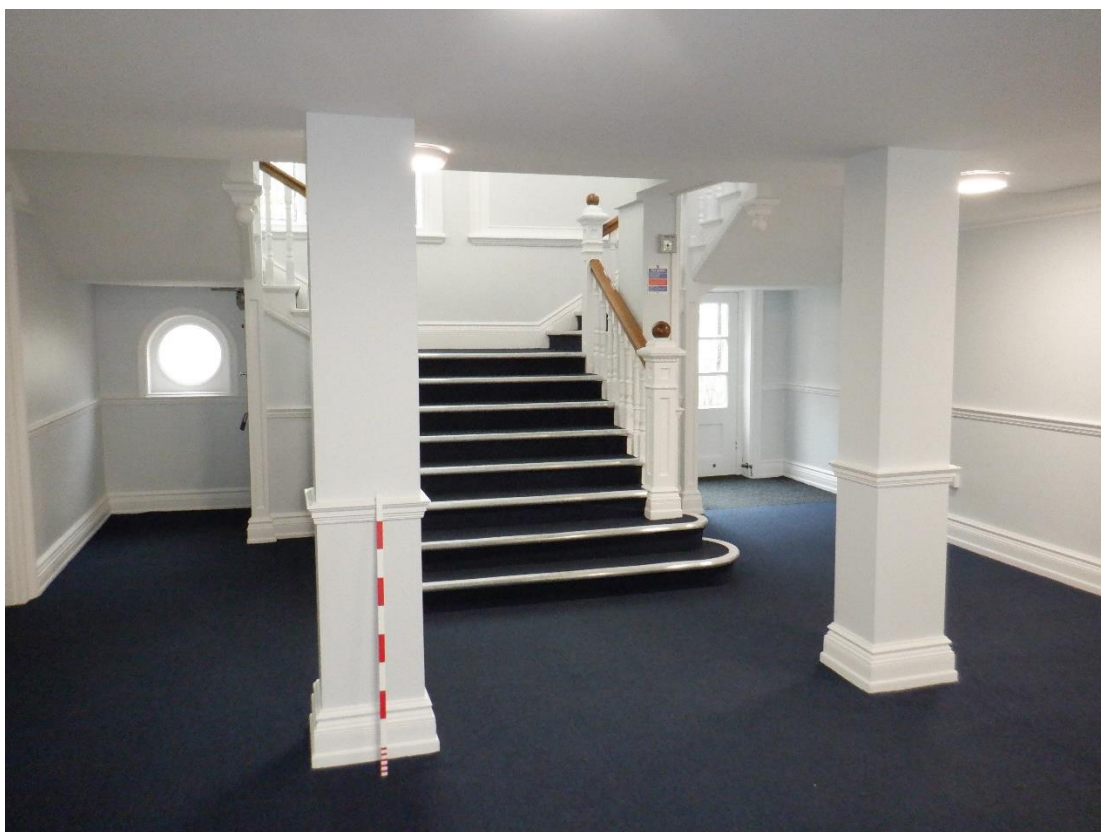


Plate 5. Entrance and stairs photographed June 2024 after development

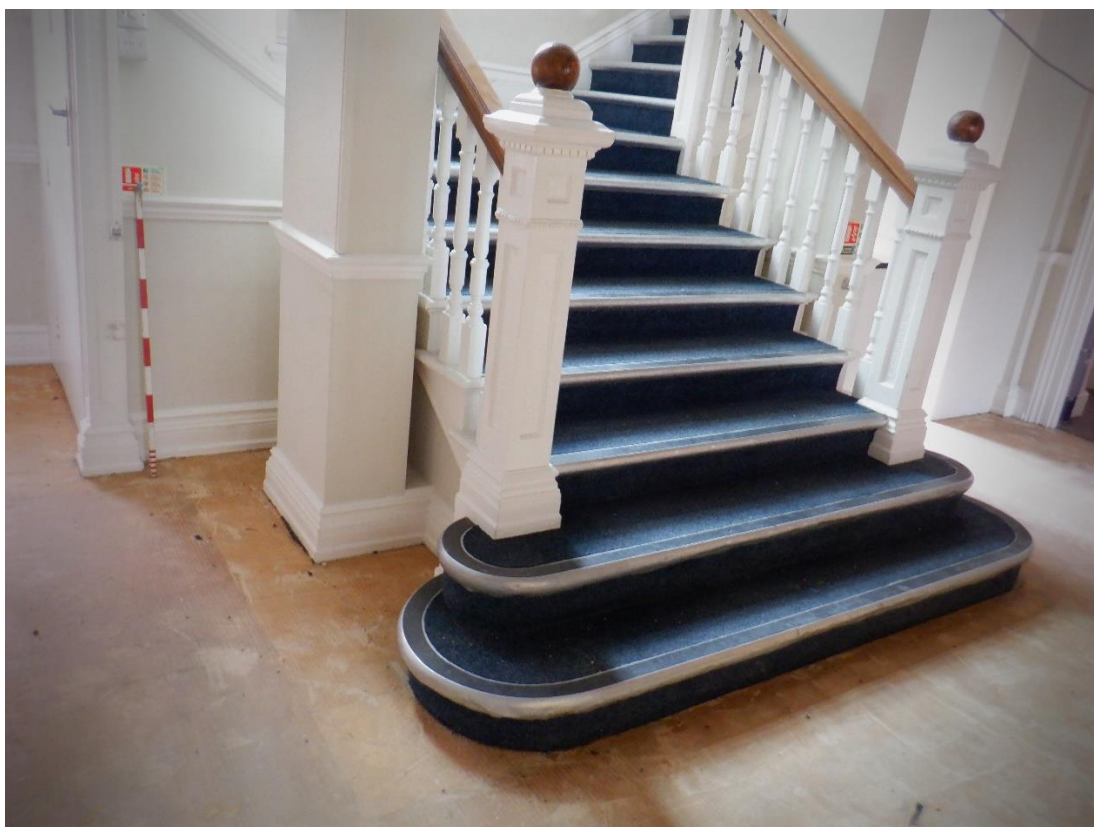


Plate 6. View of stairs in entrance hall. 1m scale

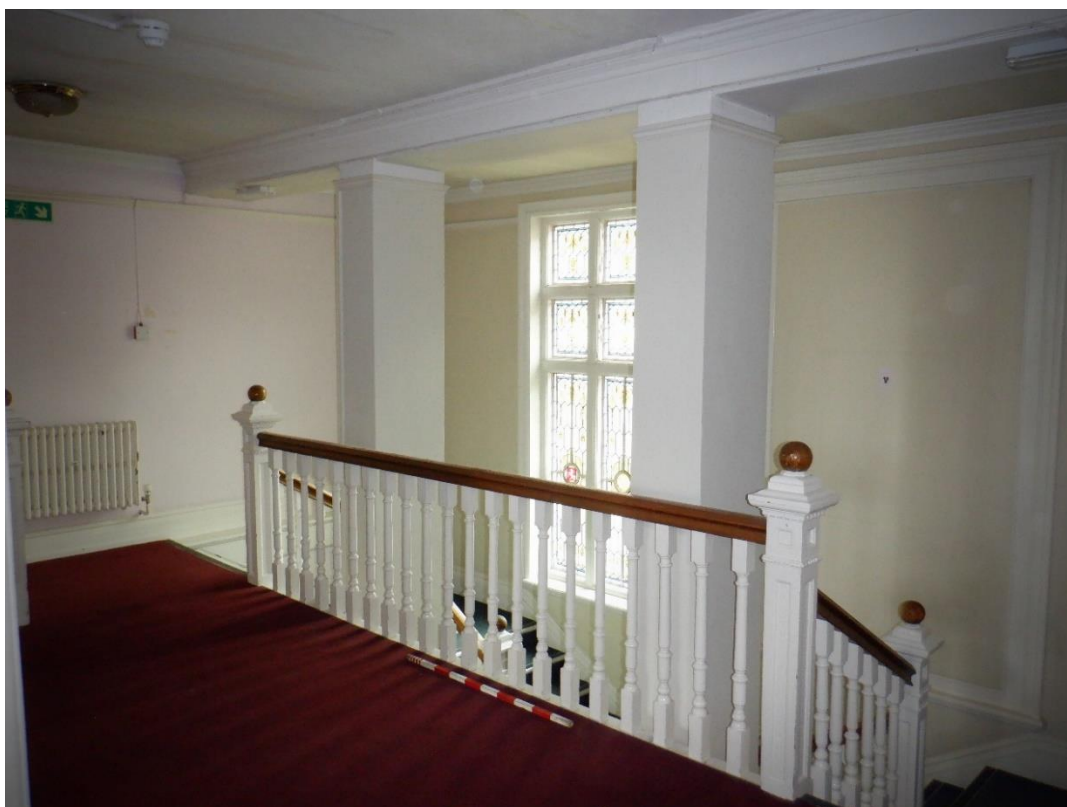


Plate 7. View of stairs first floor landing prior to development



Plate 8. First floor landing after development



Plate 9. View of south-east corner office in original build (1m scale)



Plate 10. Plaster decoration with ceiling rose, coving, cornice and panel moulding



Plate 11. Detail of plaster ceiling mouldings



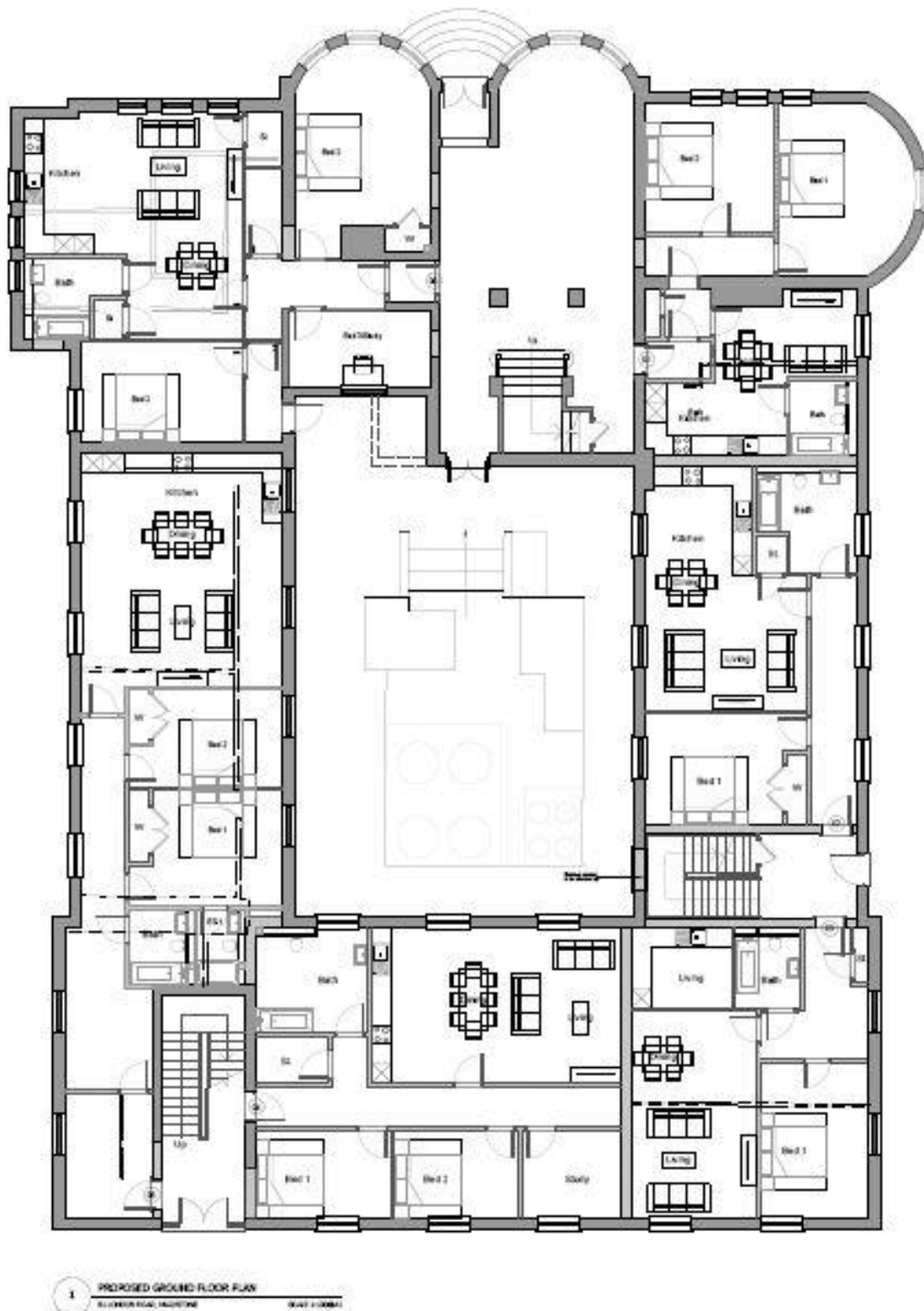
Plate 12. Detail of plaster ceiling rose



Plate 13. Detail of plaster ceiling moulding



Plate 14. Detail of plaster ceiling moulding



Plan 1. Ground floor

