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## **Sittingbourne Adult Education Centre, Sittingbourne**

**On behalf of:** Frankham Consultancy Group

**Date:** October 2020

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**Cogent Heritage Ref:** 0151

# Contents

<b>PART I: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PART II: ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PART IV: IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>PART V: CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>33</b>
APPENDIX 1: LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE	35

# PART I: Introduction

1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Ignus Froneman of Cogent Heritage, on behalf of Frankham Consultancy Group and in consultation with Mark Carter Associates Design. The report assesses the effects of the proposed conversion of the grade II listed former Sittingbourne Adult Education Centre, including internal and external changes to the building, associated landscaping and the replacement of the adjacent utilitarian c. mid 20th century sheds with new single storey dwellings.
2. The grade II listed former Sittingbourne Adult Education Centre is the only listed building and heritage asset relevant to the proposed development. The location of the listed building is shown as a blue triangle on the map extract below, from Historic England's National Heritage List (**Figure 1**) with the application site highlighted in red.

## Purpose, scope and structure of the statement

3. The purpose of this document is essentially twofold. It firstly provides an assessment of the special interest of the listed building (a designated heritage asset), to a proportionate degree of detail to enable an understanding of the potential impacts, in accordance with paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
4. The proposed works are then described and the impacts are assessed against the significance of the listed building, in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 189 & 190.



**Figure 1:** Map extract from Historic England's National Heritage List showing listed buildings (blue triangles) in the vicinity of the application site (the location of which is highlighted red).

5. This report accords with Historic England's guidance on heritage assessments *Statement of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets* Historic England Advice Note 12 (October 2019). However, only desk-based/online research into the building was carried out; more in-depth archival research was not possible due to closures because of Covid 19 restrictions. The assessment also accords with Historic England's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (GPA 3). The legislation and policy framework applicable to this application is set out at **Appendix I**.
6. The assessment was informed by a site visit, when the building was subject to an external and internal inspection. This inspection occurred on 22 May 2020. The inspection was non-intrusive, meaning that surface treatments and coverings (e.g. render, plasterboard, carpets etc.) were not lifted or removed to expose underlying fabric and the roof/floor voids were not inspected. Most parts of the building was accessible, with the exception of a few limited areas. The photos in this report were taken on the site visit and have not been altered, aside from cropping. The photos include elevated views of the exterior and site, which were taken with a drone.

## Pre-application submission and feedback

7. The latest pre-application feedback (July 2020) relates to a very similar proposal as now submitted, with key points from the feedback in relation to heritage matters summarised below:
  - i. The principle of conversion of the building into is broadly accepted.
  - ii. The application would need to be accompanied by a viability statement so that a properly informed assessment can be made on the net degree of conservation gain which it would be reasonable to expect from such a proposal.
  - iii. The proposal results in some harm to the plan form of the building (the infilling in of the courtyard between the headmasters house and the service wing) and the conversion of the double height central hall space into a flat with a mezzanine level.
  - iv. No provision is made within the envelope of the building for the storage of bins and bicycles which suggests a freestanding outbuilding is required. Any such building would need to be of a high standard of design and utilise high quality facing/roofing materials, and unless intended to form a new special feature in the setting to the building, would also require discrete siting.
  - v. The original access to the building off Riddles Road still exists and is blocked off by some modern concrete bollards, which could be removed to allow for limited access to the front of the building.
8. This submission is now accompanied by a viability statement, which illustrates the need for the conversion and development, as proposed, in order to make the development viable. This is also relevant to the areas where harm is identified; that is necessary in order to make the proposed conversion a viable proposition, and justifies the proposed interventions.

## **PART III:** Assessment of significance



# PART III: Assessment of significance

## Historic background

9. The 1867 Ordnance Survey map (**Figure 2**) records the area as entirely rural, before the development of the school, or any other nearby development.
10. The 1896/7 Ordnance Survey map (**Figure 3**) shows the school, at that time set in a rural context. It is labelled "Barrow School" in reference to the Barrow Trust, which was established from the estate of William Barrow (d. 1707), a local farmer, for the benefit of the poorer inhabitants of the village.

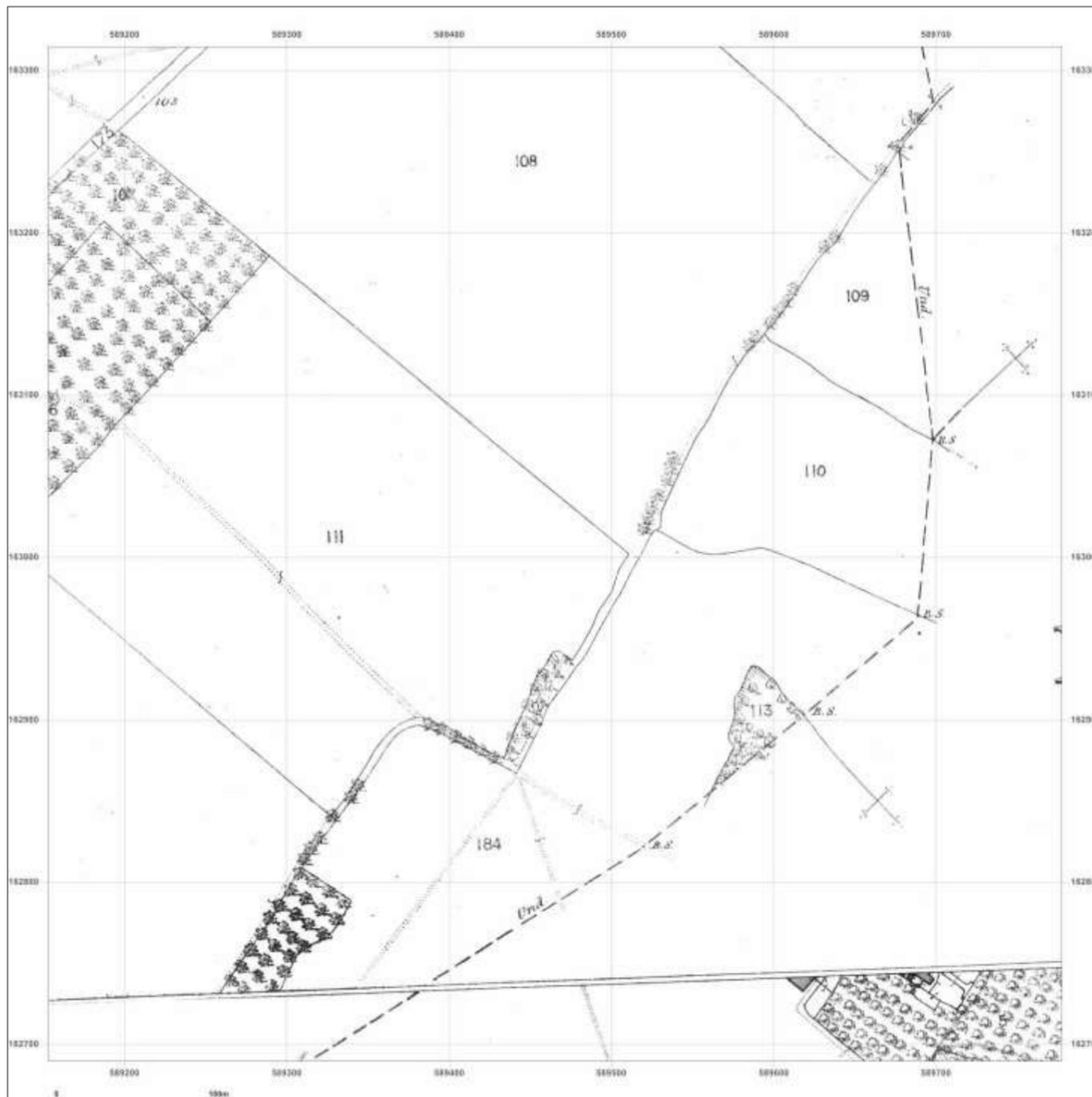


Figure 2: An extract of the 1867 Ordnance Survey map.

11. The trustees of the Barrow Trust became the new school's governors, and they amassed £9,500 for the new school, which was sited on a seven acre site that belonged to the Trust. The Barrow Boy's School, Borden, was established as an independent day and boarding school, designed to have 50 boarders and 150 day pupils. The School formally opened in October 1878, with only 23 pupils (nine of them from the village of Borden) and one full-time member of staff (the headmaster, Rev. William Henry Bond). A full-time assistant master was recruited in 1880, followed by a second full-time assistant master in 1883.
12. The 1896/7 Ordnance Survey map (**Figure 3**) shows the school with a smaller footprint to the NW, where it was later extended (this can be seen on the 1908 Ordnance Survey map

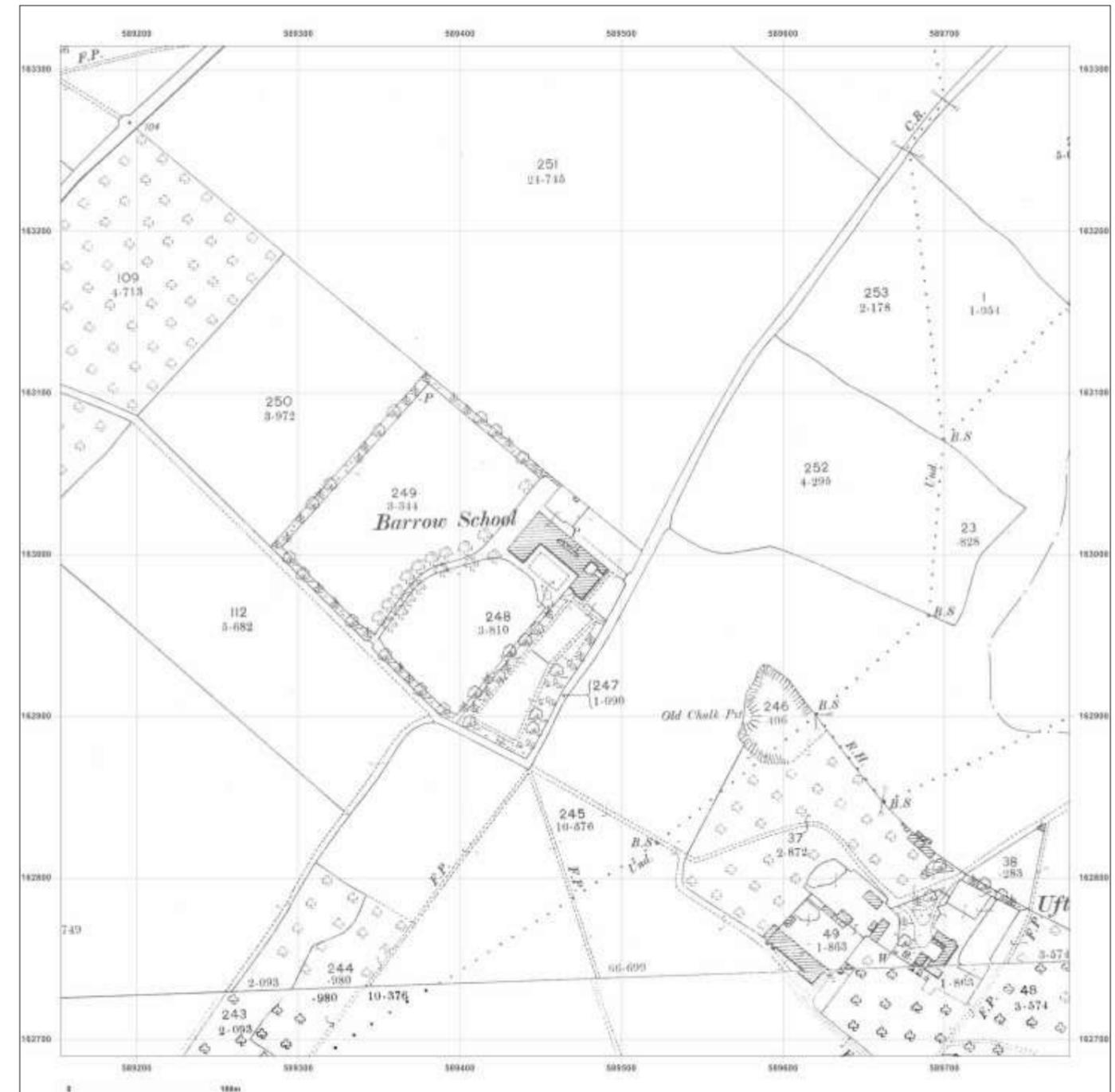


Figure 3: An extract of the 1896/7 Ordnance Survey map.



## PART III: Assessment of significance

15. The Kent Farm Institute relocated in 1958, although the 1966/9 Ordnance Survey map (**Figure 6**) still labels the site as the Kent Farm Institute. The building was then used for teacher training and in 1979 it became the Sittingbourne Adult Studies College
16. An undated, pre-1908 photo of the school from the west (**Figure 7**) is the first pictorial evidence of the building; the image can be dated because it shows the original configuration, before the addition of the NW extension by the 1908 Ordnance Survey map (**Figure 4**). The curved access track can just be seen on the left hand side of the image, and it is notable how the headmaster's garden was removed from the school by a hedge/ planting. But the most striking thing about the photo is undoubtedly the tall bell tower at the (presumed) main entrance, which has now been lost.

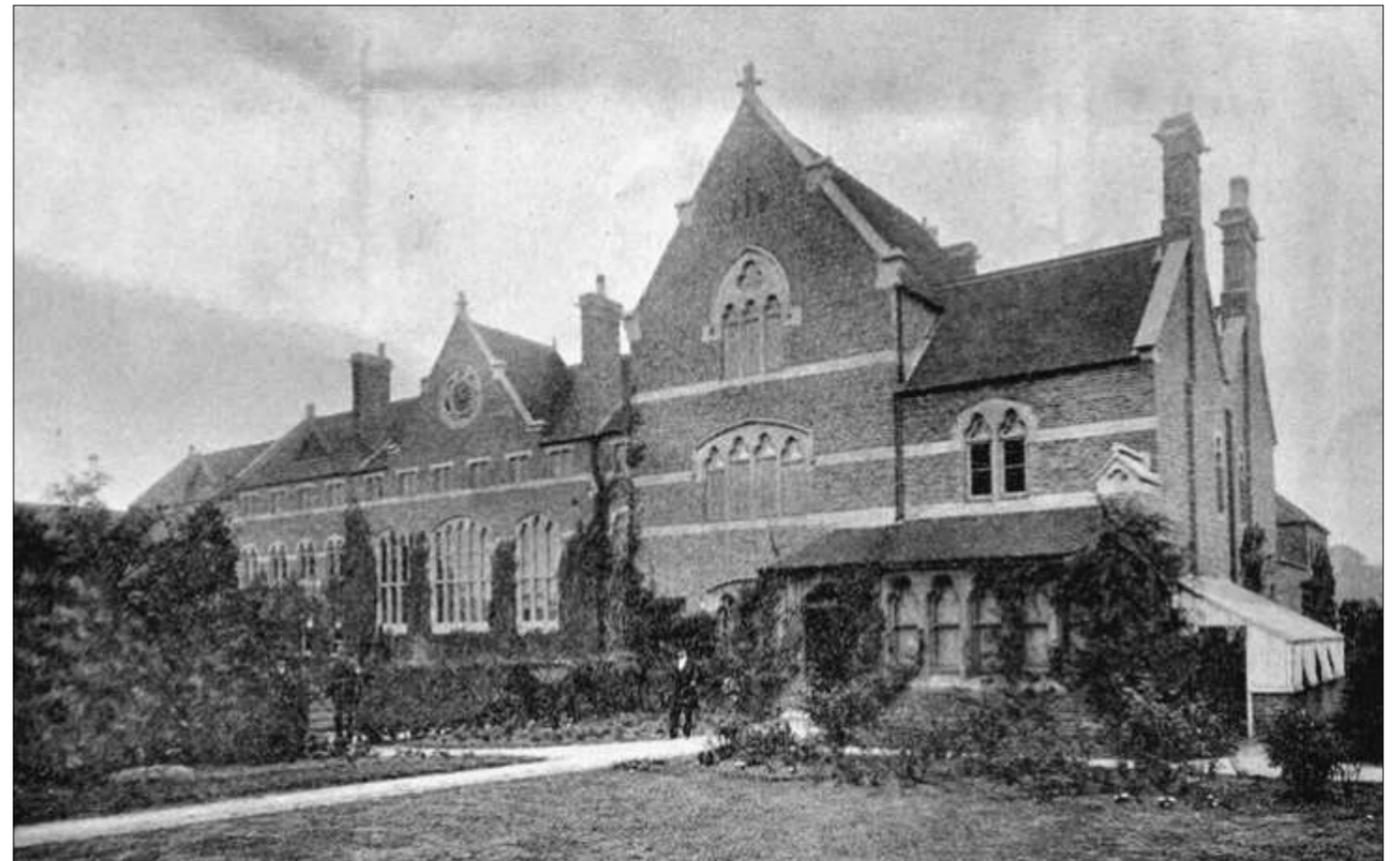


**Figure 6:** An extract of the 1966/9 Ordnance Survey map.

17. The photo at **Figure 8** shows the school from the headmaster's garden; judging from the growth of the creepers, the photo seems to have been taken around the same time as the one at Figure 7. It is notable that there seems to have been a lean-to structure attached to the headmaster's garden, which appears to have had a brick base.



**Figure 7:** An undated, pre-1908 photo of the school.



**Figure 8:** A undated, pre-1908 photo of the school from the SE.

## PART III: Assessment of significance

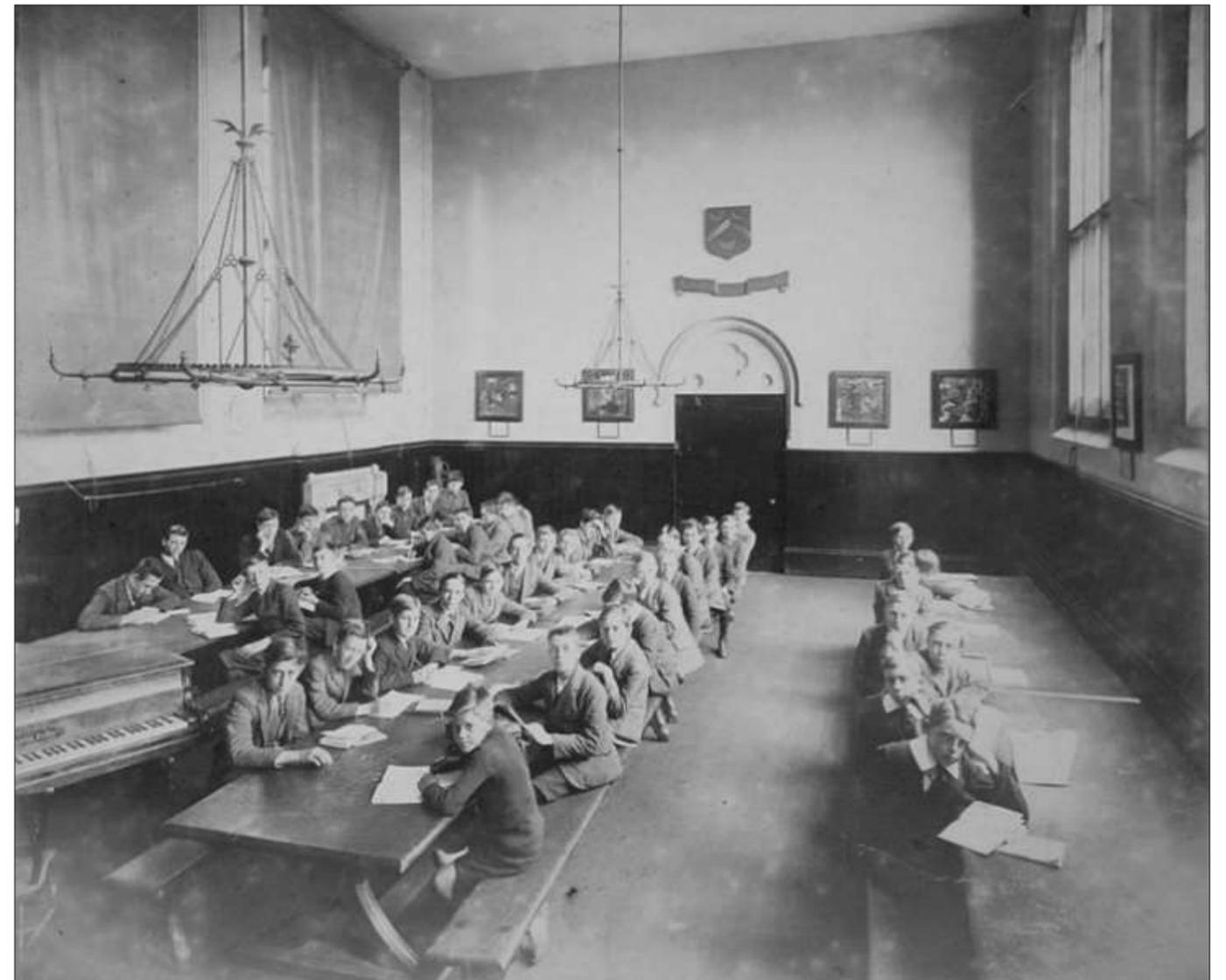


**Figure 9:** A undated, early 20th century photo of the school.



**Figure 10:** The school, c. 1928.

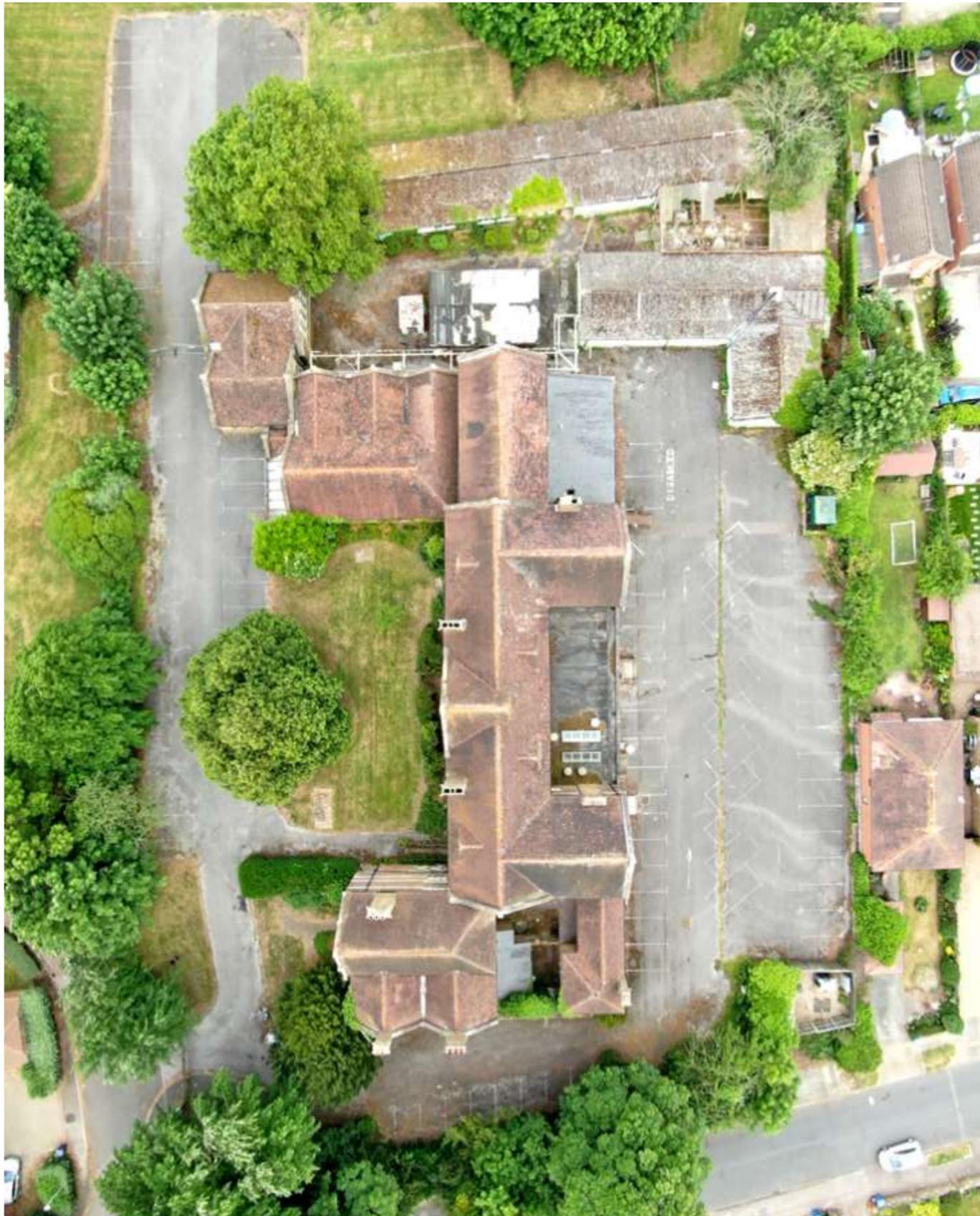
- Neither of the other two images of the school (one undated and the other in commemoration of the school's 50-year tenure in 1928) at **Figures 9 & 10** show notable changes, and they both show the striking tall bell tower, which acted as something of a counterfoil to the headmaster's house.
- An undated photo, which must have been taken during the school's tenure, judging from the piano and the pupils, shows the hall as a sparsely decorated space with only the dado panelling and one of the chimneypieces, in addition to the wall-mounted crest and framed images on the NW wall. Two large chandeliers lit the room. There was a hood with plate tracery above the door at the NW end of the hall. It is notable that the windows to both sides of the hall were of the same proportions, with equal sill heights to both sides of the room, something that was lost when the present-day infill rear extension was added.



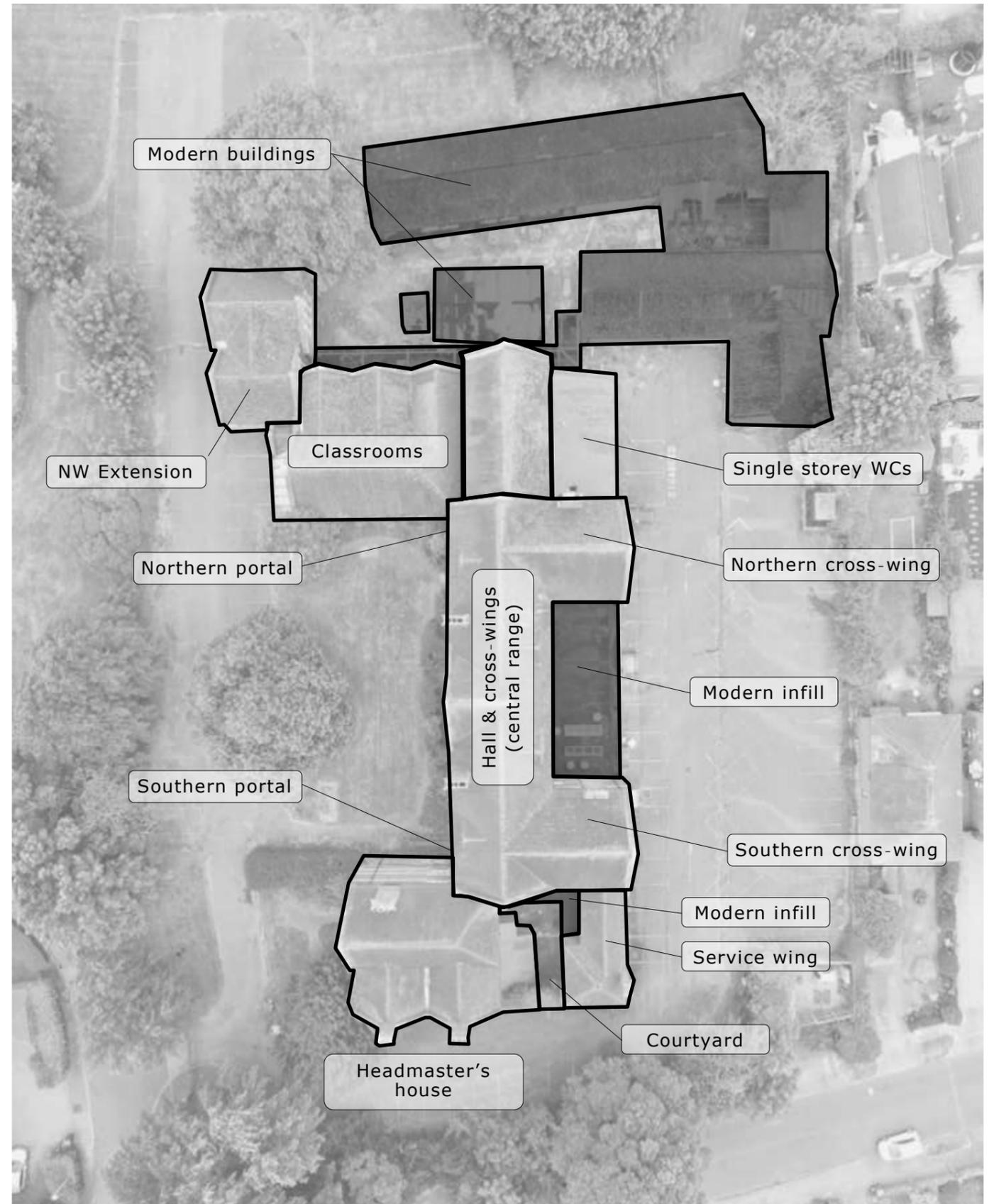
**Figure 11:** A undated photo of the hall.

## PART III: Assessment of significance

20. The un-annotated drone photo of the school and the modern outbuildings below shows the existing situation.



21. The drone photo of the school and the modern outbuildings below is annotated to correspond with the terminology used to describe the different components of the school in the rest of the assessment.



# PART III: Assessment of significance

## Assessment of significance

22. The building was listed on 11 July 1987, with the list description updated almost exactly a year later, on 13 July 1988, according to Historic England's online National Heritage List. The main descriptive text from the list description is quoted in full below:

*"GII School and integral headmaster's house, in use as an adult studies establishment. Built in 1878 as Borden Grammar School. Stock brick with limestone dressings. Red clay plain tile roof with moulded ridge tiles and stone coped gable ends with finials. The tall brick shafts of the chimney-stacks have stone cornices with gargoyle-like features at the corners.*

*Plan: Large school and integral headmaster's house in Gothic style. The main central range contains a hall rising through two storeys with dormitories in the attic above which continue over the two storey range to the left (north west) and over the wing to the rear left. There are single storey school rooms projecting to the left at the front in staggered ranges. At the right hand (south east) end a cross-wing contains the headmaster's house at the front and a service range at the back which encloses a small back yard. In circa mid to late C20 a single storey extension was built infilling the space between the two rear wings.*

*Exterior: Asymmetrical south west front of three storeys, one and two storeys and attic and single storeyed bands of stone at window sill and impost levels. Former headmaster's house on the right is a three storey projecting gable-ended wing with grouped lancet windows with cusped heads under hoodmoulds, the second floor window in the gable has plate tracery with trefoil piercing under a pointed arch. On the ground floor a single storey bay with five cusped lancets between a buttress on the right and an integral porch on the left, its trefoil-headed doorway having carved spandrels. Set back to the left of the headmaster's house the main range of four: three: four bays, the gabled centre is advanced slightly and has large three and five-light mullion-transom windows rising through two storeys with cusp-headed lights and depressed two-centred arch hoodmoulds. In the gable a clock within a rose window (maker Gillett and Bland of Croydon 1878). To the left and right of the centre there are Gothic windows, one-light on the ground floor, two-light on the first floor and smaller attic windows above continuing across below the central gable. At left and right ends of main range gabled portals with double chamfered two-centred arches. The central gable is flanked by two tall stacks and gabled wooden ventilators in the roof. Projecting on the left, school rooms in single storey staggered ranges with gable ends facing the front each with a two-centred arch tympanum over the end window. The rear (north east) has projecting gable-ended wings to left and right and at centre large three and five-light windows and gabled ventilators in the roof above with a gabled bellcote above them at the centre. Between the two rear wings the space has been infilled with a C20 single storey extension.*

*Interior: Plain institutional character with some alterations for its various uses since it ceased to be a school but the large central hall has two lateral fireplaces (curiously situated under the large windows) of Gothic design each with a frieze of quatrefoils containing initials WB (William Barrow) and cast-iron grate with a blue and white tile surround. In the dormitories the roof is partly exposed showing the trusses braced with iron tie-rods.*

*History: The school was built in 1878 as Borden Grammar School for boys with money from the 'Barrow Charity'. William Barrow died in 1707 leaving an estate of £12,000 to be distributed among the poor of Bowden, a village near Sittingbourne. In circa 1930 it was*

*occupied by the Kent Farm Institute until the 1960s when it was used for teacher training and in 1979 it became the Sittingbourne Adult Studies College."*

23. In this case the relatively detailed list description provides a good summary of the building's key features of significance. The significance of the building is now summarised in terms of the four strands of heritage significance as described at Annex 2 of the NPPF.
24. **Artistic/Archaeological interest:** The building, despite some obvious aesthetic interest, is not of significance because of artistic interest (design merits are dealt with under architectural interest). Neither does the building have any notable archaeological interest.
25. **Historic interest:** The building has illustrative historic interest as a well-designed Victorian charitable boarding school, designed in an imposing Gothic style that has survived relatively intact (at least externally). Judging from the reasonably good design quality, it is possible that it was designed by an architect of some note, although the architect has not been established and the associative value remains unknown at this time. Any associate value with the Barrow Trust is low, and of local importance only. Internally, the building is disappointing and with very few features of note; this part of the building has a very low degree of illustrative historic interest.
26. **Architectural interest:** The exterior is discussed first, before the interior (floor by floor), followed by consideration of the contribution of the building's setting to its significance. The school has an imposing façade and it was clearly designed to be seen on approach from the west (e.g. **Figure 7**); it is not a coincidence that the historic photos are all of the main façade. The Gothic design gives the building an ecclesiastical quality (this would have been very much accentuated by the now lost bell tower—**Photo 1**), although the formal symmetry of the central hall and flanking parts of the central range (**Photo 2**) give a clue as to the more institutional use.



**Photo 1:** The single storey staggered school room ranges, including the NW extension. The red arrow shows the location of the former bell tower.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 2:** A drone photo of the main (SW) frontage of the hall and flanking wings, from the west.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



Photo 3: The rear elevation, from the east.

## PART III: Assessment of significance

27. The hall with its flanking parts/cross-wings conform with the typical arrangement of Victorian schools and there is nothing in the plan form or general arrangement that sets the building apart, or add to its interest. The later NW extension (**Photo 3**) was carried off in a similar style and blends well into the overall composition, having been tacked onto the classrooms range, which already had a slightly different form compared with the rest of the building.
28. The back of the school (**Photo 2**) is subservient to the front, but nevertheless shows self-conscious design and formal composition in the symmetry of the hall and the flanking cross-wings. However, the symmetry then disappears beyond the cross-wings, on the north side of which is the heavily altered single storey toilet block (**Photo 6**) with classrooms above, where former window openings have been blocked. On the south side is the more domestically proportioned service wing. The single storey 'infill' structure between the cross-wings and abutting the halls is modern, although the Ordnance Survey maps show historically there would have been a structure in this location, perhaps classrooms.
29. The modern infill structure has overlapped the hall windows, as can be seen from the photo of the hall at **Figure 11**. It has an unsightly flat felt roof with roof lights and vents (**Photo 5**). The extent of alteration to the building is more apparent at the rear elevation than the front, where the original windows have almost all been replaced (aside from the remnant hall windows and the first floor windows to the service wing), chimneystacks have been truncated and former windows have been blocked (**Photo 6**). The elevation is also disfigured by clutter and addresses a vast, unsightly tarmac car parking area.



**Photo 5:** The roof of the rear infill extension.



**Photo 4:** A detail of the rear elevation showing the non-original windows and the infill extension (on the right) as well as the tarmac car park and the clutter to the elevation.



**Photo 6:** The northern part of the rear elevation showing the clutter to the elevation and the heavily altered single storey lean-to. The red arrows show blocked windows.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 7:** The covered walkway frame, attached to the NW elevation.



**Photo 8:** Detail of the former main entrance at the single storey staggered school room ranges.



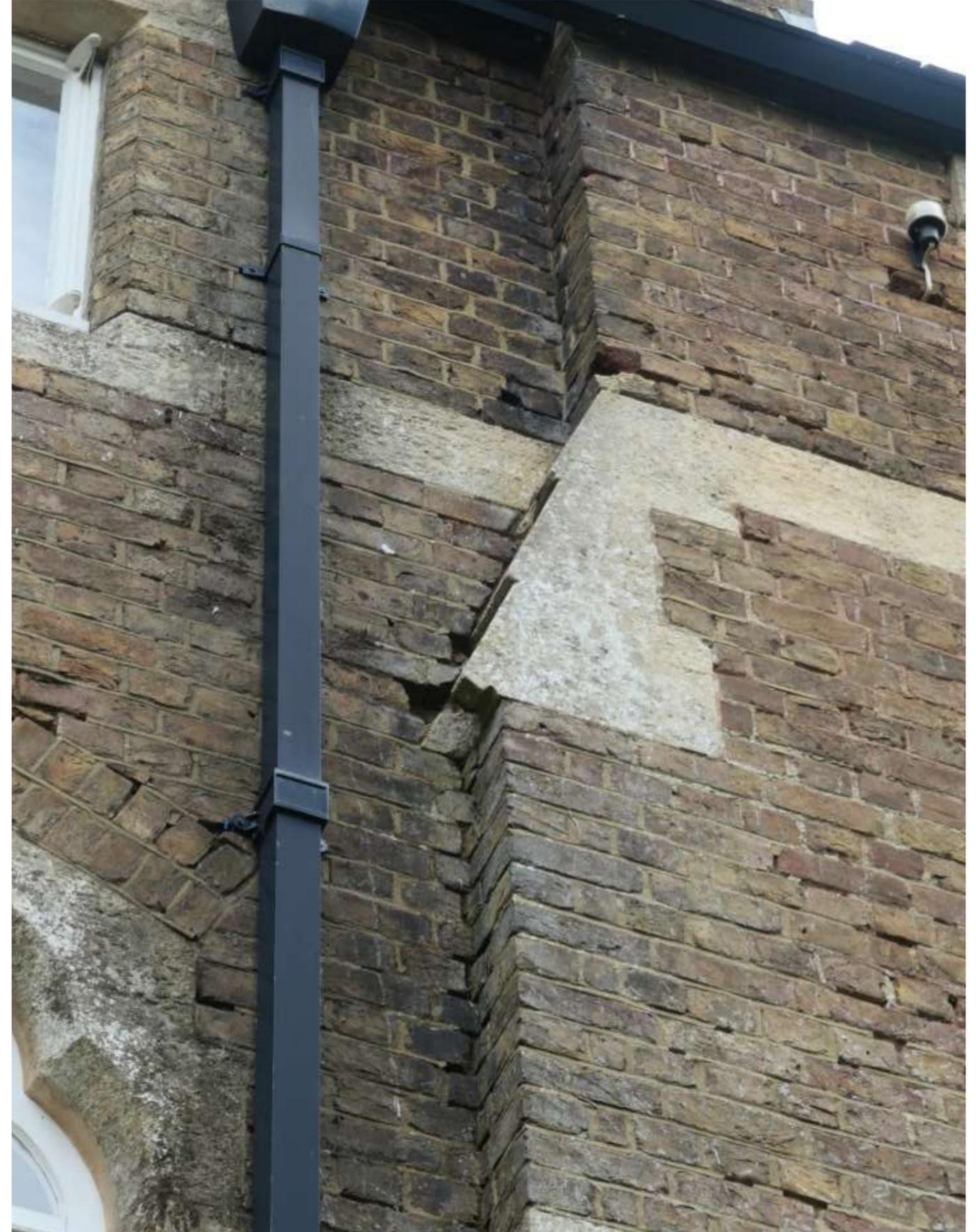
**Photo 9:** Modified openings to the façade of the main frontage, adjacent to the hall.

30. A covered walkway frame, together with the modern modular units that it linked to, largely obscure the building's NW elevation (**Photo 7**), where the windows are replacements, as is common across most of the building (with only a very few exceptions). The elevation here has not been modified to a great extent, except for the unsympathetic insertion of a doorway at the end of the covered walkway (**Photo 7**).
31. The façade of the main entrance at the single storey classroom range is disfigured by modern clutter and the stonework here has degraded noticeably (**Photo 8**). With the bell tower now gone, this no longer reads as a main entrance.
32. The façade of the main hall and flanking ranges appears largely intact, although a doorway has been created at the northern end, by modifying a former window opening (the right hand red arrow on **Photo 9**). The doorway to the adjacent gabled portal has been blocked (the left hand red arrow on **Photo 9**) and the portal structure is overgrown, affecting the sense of symmetry it would have had with the southern one, which is still an entrance. As elsewhere on the building, the windows are all modern. The only exceptions are the hall windows, which have rudimentary steel frames to the opening lights and glazing bars (the steel shows corrosion damage), but the glass panes are otherwise set directly into the stone and some of these are now coming loose (e.g. **Photo 10**, which shows one of the more accessible rear windows).
33. Although the elevation is largely unaltered, the roof vents (which would have been timber louvered) have been tiled over, as at the rear, and there are obvious signs of disrepair (**Photo 11**). The original 1878 clock by Gillett and Bland of Croydon is a good feature (**Photo 12**), although the paint on the clock face is showing signs of flaking/degradation and the stonework of the rosette it is set within is now pitted with erosion.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 10:** A detail of the hall window, from the roof of the rear infill extension.



**Photo 11:** Detail of damage to the façade of the main frontage, adjacent to the hall.

## PART III: Assessment of significance

34. The headmaster's house has a pleasing, but more domestic character (**Photo 13**). It sits slightly at odds with the rest of the school, with a 'tacked-on' feel despite the use of matching materials and details. There are some modern replica sashes to the lancet windows at the ground floor of the headmaster's house, instead of the ubiquitous and somewhat clumsy replacement casements seen elsewhere on the building. There is still a section of hedge that separates it from the school, something that has endured from the original configuration.
35. The scar of the little lean-to to the SE of the headmaster's house, which is recorded on the old photo (**Figure 8**), can still be seen as a white 'shadow' on the flank (**Photo 14**) and this appears to have overlapped one of the windows.



**Photo 13:** The façade of the headmaster's house.



**Photo 12:** Detail of the original clock to the hall gable.



**Photo 14:** The side (SE) elevation of the headmaster's house.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 15:** The courtyard at the headmaster's house. The red arrow shows the location of the missing rear bell.



**Photo 16:** The courtyard between the headmaster's house and the service wing, with the modern timber structure highlighted red.

36. The service wing of the school is separated from the back of the headmaster's house by a small courtyard, enclosed by a wall (**Photo 15**) and now partially taken up by a modern infill structure (**Photo 16**). The SE elevations of the headmaster's house/service wing are largely plain, enlivened only by the odd window and this subservient part of the building, which also faces a tarmac car parking area, has limited interest. The gable of the school's central range was once fitted with a rear bell (the red arrow on **Photo 15**), the brackets of which are still *in situ*, along with a hole for the ropes, although the canopy is no longer intact—but a clear scar shows its form.

## PART III: Assessment of significance

37. **Interior:** As the photos on the following pages illustrate, the interior of the building is largely absent of notable/historic features. The few original features are mostly within the headmaster's house, along with a simple dado panelling and a pair of fireplaces in the hall, notable for the 'WB' initials that link back to William Barrow, and oddly placed under the large windows without any immediately apparent chimneybreasts or flues. There is also an original main staircase, though hardly remarkable for the period or institutional use of the building, and a few cast iron chimneypieces dotted throughout the building. It is clear that some of the rooms have been subdivided for the recent/former use of the building, and a lift has been inserted at the north. Some of the school rooms have remained as large spaces, but these tend to be unremarkable and featureless.
38. The following section briefly considers the building floor-by-floor, starting with the small basement under the headmaster's house.
39. **Basement:** The small basement under the headmaster's house is reached via a plain staircase. It has exposed brick walls and is unremarkable, save for some slate shelves, typical for the period (**Photo 17**).
40. **Ground floor:** The rooms at the SW of the headmaster's house, closest to the entrance, contain original corning, skirting and joinery (**Photo 19**), with a black marble chimneypiece to one of the rooms, probably original (**Photo 18**). There is a discernible plan form of rooms accessed off the central passageway; high status rooms at the front and plain ones at the back. The staircase looks to be original, but it is unremarkable.



**Photo 18:** The ground floor southern room with black marble chimneypiece in the headmaster's house.



**Photo 17:** The small basement with slate shelves under the headmaster's house.



**Photo 19:** The ground floor left hand room (on entry) in the headmaster's house, with corning and joinery.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 20:** The hall, looking towards then front windows.



**Photo 21:** A detail of a chimneypiece, dado and skirting in the hall.

41. The hall (**Photo 20**) is still an imposing double volume space, but conversely it is rather plain and in some respects bland and disappointing; some schools of this period would have had well-detailed and ornate features to the hall. This one is largely devoid of features, other than the two fairly plain chimneypieces (albeit with pleasing detailing and bearing the initials of the Barrow Trust's founder—**Photo 21**) and the very plain dado panelling of vertical boards. As has been noted, the windows to the rear have been modified by heightening them, no doubt when the rear infill structure was added; this has affected the integrity and authenticity of the space.
42. Elsewhere, original features are limited. There is a simple cast iron chimneypiece to one of the rooms in the service wing (**Photo 22**), possibly a later addition but it could be original, and another (with corncicing) to the small room immediately north of the hall (**Photo 23**).
43. There has evidently been changes to the plan to the south of the hall, where the main staircase seems to have been moved. The present staircase is, in any event, non-original and may date from the time of the Kent Farm Institute (**Photo 24**). There is a glazed screen in this area which is also of c. early-mid 20th century date. The northern staircase is original, but unremarkable in the context of Victorian/school stairs (**Photo 25**). Generally the area to the north of the hall has been modernised and changed, with very little (if any) original character or features (**Photos 26 & 27**). The lift has been inserted in this area. Some of the toilet stalls in the lean-to are probably early 20th century in date.
44. The classroom range is arranged as two large rooms, with an entrance lobby, circulation space and small ancillary rooms. Again, the character here is modern, with false ceilings etc. (**Photo 28**), and devoid of features of interest. The same can be said of the NW extension in this area (**Photo 29**).



**Photo 22:** A plain cast iron chimneypiece in the service wing.

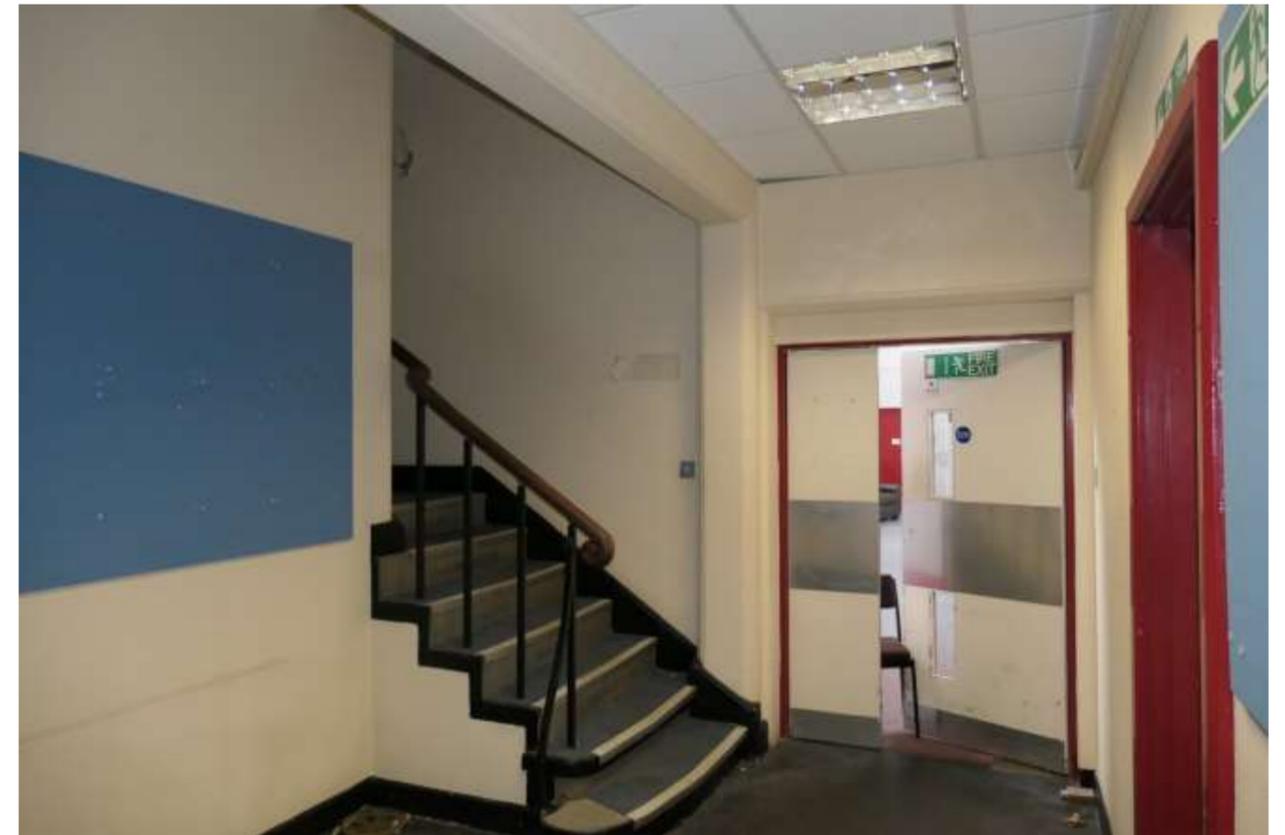
## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 23:** A plain cast iron chimneypiece and cornice to the room north of the hall.



**Photo 24:** The replacement staircase to the south of the hall.



**Photo 25:** The original staircase to the north of the hall.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 26:** The modern character to the area at the NW end of the building.



**Photo 28:** The large modern classroom in the classroom range.



**Photo 27:** A modern classroom to the north of the hall.



**Photo 29:** A large modern classroom in the extension to the classroom range.

## PART III: Assessment of significance

45. First Floor: There are few features of interest at the first floor, where the character of the building is largely modern, and where it is hardly possible to recognise the building as a former Victorian school.
46. The headmaster's house has had partitions and screens inserted. There is a non-original early 20th century chimneypiece to one of the rooms (**Photo 30**), as well as an original Victorian one (**Photo 32**), and along with the plain staircase, now partially enclosed in a fire screen (**Photo 31**), these are the only original/historic elements. The service wing is likewise unremarkable, with a plain Victorian staircase up to two largely modern and featureless rooms (**Photo 32**). The sash windows appear to be original, however.
47. Aside from one other Victorian chimneypiece, similar to the one at **Photo 32** and in a reconfigured room to the south of the hall, there is one plain cast iron chimneypiece to the southern of the cross-wings (**Photo 34**). These, together with the continuation of the original main staircase from the ground floor, are the only original features. For the most part, the first floor has a modern, institutional feel (e.g. **Photo 35**).



**Photo 31:** The staircase room in the headmaster's house with a modern enclosure.



**Photo 30:** A room in the headmaster's house with a c. 1920s polished wood and tile chimneypiece.



**Photo 32:** The interior of the room in the southern cross-wing. The red arrow highlights the location of a plain cast iron chimneypiece.

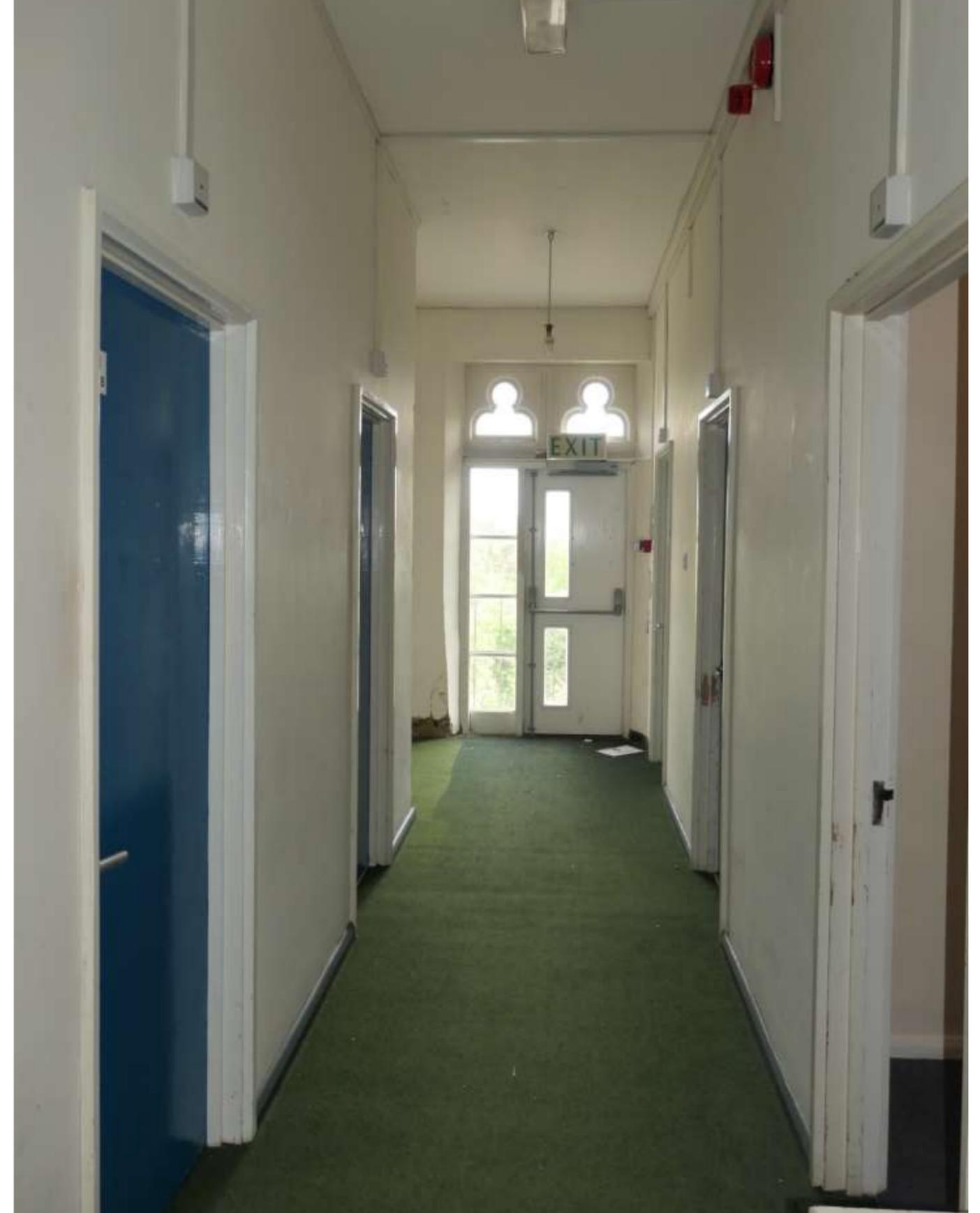
## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 33:** The main room in the service wing.



**Photo 34:** The interior of the room in the southern cross-wing. The red arrow highlights the location of a plain cast iron chimney piece.



**Photo 35:** The northern cross-wing.

## PART III: Assessment of significance

48. Second Floor: Like the first floor, there are few features of interest at the second floor, where the character of the building is largely modern. Like the first floor, it is hardly possible to recognise the building as a former Victorian school, although the partially exposed roof structure gives a clue, which is absent at the first floor.
49. The headmaster's house has clearly been reconfigured, with the present room configurations at odds with the fireplaces, of which there are two original Victorian ones (e.g. **Photo 37**). The staircase, as described earlier, and unremarkable as it is, is the only other original feature.
50. There is one plain cast iron chimneypiece to the north of the dormitory above the hall, and the cross-wings are largely given over to open plans (**Photos 38-40**). Exceptions are the areas at the two main staircases, which are more compartmentalised and where the modern institutional character of the building is strongly felt (e.g. **Photo 36**).



**Photo 36:** The view along the corridor to the north of the dormitory above the hall.



**Photo 37:** One of two similar chimneypieces in the headmaster's house.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



Photo 38: The room at the north end of the building.



Photo 40: The northern cross-wing room.



Photo 39: The dormitory above the hall.

51. **Summary of significance:** The building has illustrative historic interest as a well-designed Victorian charitable boarding school, in an imposing Gothic style that has survived relatively intact (at least externally). The school has an imposing main façade and it was clearly designed to be seen on approach from the west. The Gothic design gives the building an ecclesiastical quality that would have been enhanced and accentuated by the now lost bell tower. The later NW extension was carried out in a similar style and blends well into the overall composition. The back of the school is subservient to the front, but nevertheless shows self-conscious design and formal composition in the symmetry of the hall and the flanking cross-wings. The single storey 'infill' structure between the cross-wings and abutting the halls is modern, although the Ordnance Survey maps show historically there would have been a structure in this location, perhaps classrooms. The modern infill structure is of no interest. On the south side is the more domestically proportioned service wing and headmaster's house. Despite the external alterations, and in some cases degradation of the exterior, it is evident that a great deal of the building's special interest, or significance, is derived from the exterior.
52. Internally, the building is disappointing and with very few features of note; this part of the building has a very low degree of historic or architectural interest. Some of the classrooms can still be recognised as such, but there is nothing in the plan form or general internal arrangement that sets the building apart as significant, or add materially to its interest. The few surviving features are evidence of the building's original design and decorative treatment, but none of these are remarkable, and perhaps the only ones of more than passing interest are the initialled fireplaces in the hall. The highest concentration of historic features, including joinery and plasterwork, is in the headmaster's house.

## PART III: Assessment of significance

53. **Contribution of setting to significance:** The original setting of the school has been severely compromised, with the present-day setting very different from that recorded on the early Ordnance Survey maps. This is well illustrated on the drone photo below (**Photo 41**).

54. Aside from the modern housing to three sides of the school's grounds—which was originally rural and much larger—the listed building is now effectively surrounded by an apron of tarmac, with the exception of the front courtyard.



**Photo 41:** A drone photo of the immediate setting of the school (approximate north indicated by the black arrow).

## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 42:** A drone photo of the immediate setting of the northern end of the school, from the east.



**Photo 43:** A drone photo of the immediate setting of the northern end of the school, from the east.

55. The only other area where there is no immediate apron of tarmac car parking is the NW, but this is the location of the poor quality and very dilapidated modern buildings that appear to have served as additional classrooms after WWII (they first appear on the 1966/9 Ordnance Survey map—see **Figure 6**).
56. These buildings were constructed very close to the listed building (e.g. **Photos 42 & 44**), no doubt to enable ease of movement between them and the main school, but that has encroached on the setting of the listed building in a most unfortunate way. It is now difficult to get any real sense of space or separation between the listed building and these poor quality structures, which hem in the listed building to the NW. Whilst this is far from ideal, the low quality and dilapidated state of the structures also severely detract from the quality of the listed building's setting and the sense of stature of this imposing building. Although it is fortunate that the structures are contained in a localised area away from the main frontage of the listed building, and they are to some extent shielded by the NW extension, it is plain that they markedly detract from the contribution of the building's setting to its significance.



**Photo 44:** A drone photo of the modern buildings to the NW of the school, looking SW.

## PART III: Assessment of significance



**Photo 45:** A drone photo of the modern buildings to the NW of the school, looking SW.



**Photo 47:** A drone photo of the modern buildings to the NW of the school, looking NE.



**Photo 46:** A drone photo of the modern buildings to the NW of the school, looking NE.



**Photo 48:** A drone photo of the school, juxtaposed with the modern buildings in the foreground.

## **PART IV:** Impact assessment

## PART IV: Impact assessment

57. The proposed development comprise essentially four aspects:

- i. The setting of the listed building.
- ii. The principle of the conversion.
- iii. The external changes.
- iv. The internal changes.

### The setting of the listed building

58. The best way in which to summarise the proposed changes in terms of the setting of the listed building is a reversal of fortune, compared with the existing baseline of a lacklustre tarmac car parking and poor quality, dilapidated buildings, built hard up against the listed building. These structures, together with the areas of tarmac, significantly detract from the setting of the listed building. The neglected, functionally redundant and discordant group of modern structures is no less than an eyesore. The areas of tarmac make for a hard, unwelcoming and unforgiving space around the building and right up against it.
59. The proposals will see the transformation of the group of modern buildings into two good quality, traditionally designed new low-rise buildings, pulled back as far as possible from the listed building and with landscaping in the area between them. This would make for a much more visually integrated and better quality, soft landscaped space, defined by high quality new buildings. The area around the building will be carefully landscaped, with planting and quality hard landscaping.
60. Whilst the replacement buildings will inevitably obscure some of the views of the listed building, this would not be very different from the existing situation, and the arrangement would still allow more space, and greatly improve the quality and character of this area, resulting in a much improved setting.
61. The overall result in terms of the setting of the listed building would be a positive transformation when compared with the status quo. This would be considerable enhancement and a notable heritage benefit that weighs strongly in favour of the proposed development.
62. It also proposed to place discretely positioned bin stores and two bicycle shelters within the new landscaped area to the rear (NE) of the building. These are modest structures in an area where new landscaping is proposed; it is anticipated that the detailed design and materials of these would be made subject to a condition. Well-designed and detailed small bike shelters positioned away from the listed building in a landscaped area would not cause harm to the significance or appreciation of the building, and overall the proposed setting of the building would remain a marked improvement when compared with the vast existing tarmac parking area.
63. Due to issues with land ownership, it is not possible to propose the reinstatement of the original access off Riddles Road, as was suggested in the pre-application feedback.

### The principle of conversion

64. Before dealing with the proposed alterations in more detail, it is necessary to first take into account the principle of the conversion, and the associated effects (e.g. restoration).
65. The proposed conversion of the building will bring forward a solution that would secure the viable repair and re-use of the somewhat neglected, derelict and damaged listed building, which is now at risk of further damage (this could be through continuous decay or vandalism/arson attacks).
66. It is clear that, unless a viable institutional use for the building can be found, bringing the listed building back into beneficial long term viable use could not be realised without involving considerable change and adaptation to the interior. The conversion of Victorian school buildings, such as this one, to uses such as hotel or residential, is not uncommon. The proposed residential conversion is a suitable use that would secure the long term future of the building, including a good maintenance regime (which would be in the direct interest of home owners). This submission is accompanied by a viability statement, which illustrates the need for the conversion and development, as proposed, in order to make the development viable.
67. Starting from first principles, the National Planning Practice Guidance states that public benefits may include 'heritage benefits', such as:
- i. sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
  - ii. reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset; and
  - iii. securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.
68. In this case the conversion would certainly sustain, and in some respects enhance, the significance of the listed building and the contribution of its setting. Its sadly dilapidated external envelope would be repaired, and its setting would be considerably enhanced. The risks to the building as a result of continuous dereliction would be removed. It will have a viable, and compatible, long term use that would continue to remove risks to the building through neglect or lack of maintenance. These are heritage benefits that weigh strongly in favour of the proposed development.
- ### The proposed external changes
69. The proposed external changes, aside from repairs already mentioned, are relatively limited. The clutter, such as the large steel fire escape staircase at the back of the building, and the walkway connecting with the modern structures, will be removed. The poor quality modern infill extension would be replaced with a better quality one that is glazed and set back from the cross-wings, better articulating this as a modern structure and revealing the Victorian form of the building. A green roof to this structure is proposed, and this would be an additional enhancement, compared with the present felt roof (see **Photo 5** on page 13).
70. Compared with the existing situation, the above changes would enhance the architectural interest and legibility of the building.

## PART IV: Impact assessment

71. The proposed infilling of the courtyard between the headmaster's house and the service wing (**Photo 16** on page 17) would change part of an original arrangement and it is proposed to replace the wall (**Photo 15** on page 17) with glazing.
72. It must be recognised that the courtyard today is already a compromised space, occupied by a modern infill structure and a poor quality lean-to element. It is very enclosed and not useable in its present state. The proportion of the new roofed area is minimal in the context of the existing situation. The new infill area would be low and unobtrusive. It is an area that has very limited visibility, and it is perhaps the plainest part of the whole building. As such it is a logical place for an infill type intervention. The proposed glazed wall would distinguish it clearly as modern intervention and this would avoid issues of visually 'merging' the service wing and the headmaster's house. Both of these components of the building are 2/3 storeys. The three-dimensional separation and form of this part of the building would be preserved by the courtyard infill. Given all of the above, this intervention could be considered neutral, but at most the change would have a minimal effect on the overall significance of the listed building.
73. The original northern entrance portal would be reinstated, and the current doorway would be restored as a window (see **Photo 9** on page 14). Because this enhances the main entrance of the building and restores something of the original symmetry, this is a notable enhancement. Internal changes are considered separately, but it is worth noting that this new communal entrance would give onto a public space, where the original staircase can be used and where an exhibition space, showing the history of the building, would be incorporated. The fireplace and cornice here (**Photo 23** on page 20) can be retained/reinstated.
74. It would also be possible to reinstate louvres to the roof vents, with scalloped barge boards and finials, as recorded on old photos. It is anticipated that some of the non-original windows would also need to be replaced and, where that is done, the new windows would be sashes to match the original design. Both of these would enhance the significance of the listed building.
75. **Overall conclusions on external changes:** The external changes proposed would be almost exclusively beneficial to the building, and materially enhance its significance. At worst a very low degree of counterweighing harm (if indeed any) can be ascribed to the proposed infilling of the courtyard between the headmaster's house and the service wing, and this is in an area that is localised and generally both subservient and hidden from view.

### The proposed internal changes

76. The internal changes proposed are relatively extensive, given that the building would need to be compartmentalised into different flats, each with its own entrance and a kitchen, bathroom(s) and bedrooms. Unsurprisingly, this will involve some limited removal of existing partitions (both original and non-original), and a change in its present institutional character. The larger former classrooms/dormitories would become subdivided, although where possible the new layout has been designed to place the larger communal living spaces in these areas, so as to retain a sense of the larger spaces. Both of the main staircases are to be retained for communal use and vertical circulation. Aside from these general changes, the following section consider some specific areas of the building, or specific proposals.
77. **The headmaster's house:** The headmaster's house retains the highest concentration of original configuration and associated decorative features; this part of the building has a more domestic character and the proposal has been designed to retain this area as best as practically possible (i.e. Flat 1 at the ground floor; Flat 11 at the first floor and Flat 15 at the second floor).
78. **The hall:** The hall was historically an important part at the heart of the building, although the space is relatively plain, and has been compromised by the changes to the rear, where the once taller windows have been truncated. As a result, the hall is considered to be less sensitive than might otherwise have been the case.
79. It is proposed to insert a lightweight and self-supporting partial mezzanine structure (with integrated staircase) at the level of the existing truncated windows. The size of this structure has been reduced by as much as possible, with a void of 2 metres between the structure and the existing wall. A glass balustrade is proposed, to avoid spatial obscuration and retain a sense of openness to the space. The proposed new bedroom walls to the gallery will be set 3 metres away from the external wall. Together, this would retain a sense of the large double height space within the flat (Flat 5). The proposed flat in the hall would be a unique and attractive property, and this property is critical to the feasibility of the overall development; it is not possible to retain this area as an open/communal space. The submitted viability statement has demonstrated that this element is necessary for the conversion to be viable.
80. **The communal entrance at the northern portal:** This would be a public space, where the original staircase can be used (half of the proposed flats would be accessed via this space). An exhibition space, showing the history of the building, would be incorporated here. The fireplace and cornice (**Photo 23** on page 20) would be retained/reinstated.
81. **Overall conclusions on internal changes:** The internal changes proposed include compartmentalising the building into different flats, each with its own entrance and a kitchen, bathroom(s) and bedrooms. This will involve some limited removal of existing partitions (including original ones) and the addition of new partitions. The larger classrooms would become subdivided, although an effort has been made to retain a sense of the larger rooms. The approach to the headmaster's house and the hall, in particular, has been carefully considered and harm has been avoided where possible. However, there would ultimately be some harm to the building associated with the new mezzanine in the hall, and the compartmentalisation of/changes to the plan form.

## PART IV: Impact assessment

82. When calibrating the degree of harm, it is necessary to consider the inherent interest of these internal areas, and their present character, as well as the general role and contribution of the interiors to the overall significance of the listed building. As has been highlighted in the assessment of significance, a great deal of the significance of the building derives from its exterior. There are few internal features of any note, and the plan form is not inherently significant; whilst the reason for the listing is self-evident from the exterior, the plain and altered interior does not have the same level of significance. That is not to say the interior is without interest. The hall and the classrooms and the general internal arrangement have retained, to a greater or lesser degree, something of a Victorian school. That adds to the interest of the building. On the other hand, the relatively plain and (in many places altered) interior is not what makes this building architecturally or historically special, or inherently significant as a heritage asset. Therefore, when calibrating the effects of changes to the interiors, it is necessary to bear in mind the lower significance, and low sensitivity, of the interior.
83. In this context, the changes to the interior, including the changes to the plan form, compartmentalising the building into different flats, the addition of new partitions, the changes to the headmaster's house and the new mezzanine in the hall, would have a limited effect.

## **PART V:** Conclusions

## PART V: Conclusions

84. The listed building has illustrative historic interest as a well-designed Victorian charitable boarding school, in an imposing Gothic style that has survived externally relatively intact (though there have been some changes and some loss of original features). The school has an imposing main façade and it was clearly designed to be seen on approach from the west. The Gothic design gives the building an ecclesiastical quality that would have been enhanced and accentuated by the now lost bell tower.
85. The back of the school is subservient to the front, but nevertheless shows self-conscious design and formal composition in the symmetry of the hall and the flanking cross-wings. The single storey 'infill' structure between the cross-wings and abutting the halls is modern, although the Ordnance Survey maps show historically there would have been a structure in this location, perhaps classrooms. The modern infill structure is of no interest. On the south side is the more domestically proportioned service wing and headmaster's house. Despite the external alterations, and in some cases degradation of the exterior, it is evident that a great deal of the building's special interest, or significance, is derived from the exterior.
86. Internally, the building is disappointing and with very few features of note; this part of the building has a very low degree of historic or architectural interest. Some of the classrooms/dormitories can still be recognised as such, but there is nothing in the plan form or general internal arrangement that sets the building apart as significant, or add materially to its interest. The few surviving features are evidence of the building's original design and decorative treatment, but none of these are remarkable, and perhaps the only ones of more than passing interest are the initialled fireplaces in the hall. The highest concentration of historic features, including joinery and plasterwork, is in the headmaster's house.
87. The original setting of the school has been severely compromised, with the present-day setting very different from that recorded on the early Ordnance Survey maps. Aside from the modern housing to three sides of the school's grounds—which was originally rural and much larger—the listed building is now effectively surrounded by an apron of tarmac, with the exception of the front courtyard. The only other area where there is no immediate apron of tarmac car parking is the NW, but this is the location of the poor quality and very dilapidated modern buildings. These poor quality structures were constructed very close to the listed building and they encroach on the listed building. The low quality and dilapidated state of the structures also severely detract from the quality of the listed building's setting and the sense of stature of this imposing building.
88. The proposals will see the replacement of much of the tarmac car parking with landscaping, and the transformation of the group of modern buildings to two good quality, traditionally designed new low-rise buildings, pulled back as far as possible from the listed building and with landscaping between them. This would make for a much more visually integrated and better quality space, defined by high quality new buildings. The area around the building will be carefully landscaped, with planting and quality hard landscaping. The result will be a positive transformation of the setting of the building. This would be considerable enhancement and a notable heritage benefit.
89. The proposed conversion of the building will bring forward a solution that would secure the viable repair and re-use of the somewhat neglected, derelict and damaged listed building, which is at risk of further damage.
90. Starting from first principles, the conversion would sustain, and in some respects enhance, the significance of the listed building and the contribution of its setting. Its dilapidated external envelope would be repaired and its setting would be considerably enhanced. The risks to the building as a result of continuous dereliction would be removed. It will have a viable, and compatible, long term use that would continue to remove risks to the building through neglect or lack of maintenance. These are heritage benefits that weigh strongly in favour of the proposed development.
91. The external changes proposed would be almost exclusively beneficial to the building, and materially enhance its significance. At worst a very low degree of counterweighing harm (if indeed any) can be ascribed to the proposed infilling of the courtyard between the headmaster's house and the service wing, and this is in an area that is localised and generally both subservient and hidden from view. However, the enhancements to the exterior overwhelmingly outweigh any harm, leaving a compelling net enhancement that weighs strongly in favour of the proposed development.
92. The changes to the interior, including the changes to the plan form, compartmentalising the building into different flats, the addition of new partitions, the changes to the headmaster's house and the new mezzanine in the hall, would have a limited effect.
93. On balance, the harm (both externally and internally) is relatively limited and contained. Like the harm, the heritage-specific benefits and enhancements of the proposed development require considerable importance and weight. The limited degree of harm needs to be balanced against the considerable heritage benefits to the setting, and the benefits associated with the conversion of the building, and the enhancements to the exterior. Overall, it is clear that the benefits by far outweigh the limited harm as an inevitable consequence of the conversion of the building. Steps have also been taken to remove or reduce harm where possible.
94. It is considered that the proposals are not only acceptable, but there is a robust, compelling, and policy-based case for the proposed development on heritage grounds. Officers are invited to comment on the proposals as part of the pre-application engagement, to ensure that any perceived issues with the scheme can be addressed prior to a full submission.



## Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

### CHAPTER 9

A Table showing the derivation of the provisions of this consolidation Act will be found at the end of the Act. The Table has no official status.

### ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

#### PART I

#### LISTED BUILDINGS

##### CHAPTER I

##### LISTING OF SPECIAL BUILDINGS

Section

1. Listing of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.
2. Publication of lists.
3. Temporary listing: building preservation notices.
4. Temporary listing in urgent cases.
5. Provisions applicable on lapse of building preservation notice.
6. Issue of certificate that building not intended to be listed.

##### CHAPTER II

##### AUTHORISATION OF WORKS AFFECTING LISTED BUILDINGS

###### *Control of works in respect of listed buildings*

7. Restriction on works affecting listed buildings.
8. Authorisation of works: listed building consent.
9. Offences.

###### *Applications for listed building consent*

10. Making of applications for listed building consent.
11. Certificates as to applicant's status etc.
12. Reference of certain applications to Secretary of State.
13. Duty to notify Secretary of State of applications.
14. Duty of London borough councils to notify Commission.
15. Directions concerning notification of applications etc.
16. Decision on application.

A



## National Planning Policy Framework

# APPENDIX 1: Legislation, Policy and Guidance

## Legislation

1. Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. For the purposes of this application, the relevant consideration is Section 66 of the 1990 Act. Section 66(1) of the Act states:  
*"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."*
2. The Act does not require the preservation of listed buildings *per se*, which is confirmed by the *South Lakeland DC v Secretary of State for the Environment and another* (1992 House of Lords appeal), i.e. legislation *"does not in terms require that a development must perform a preserving or enhancing function."* Rather, it places a statutory duty on decision makers to ensure that the special interest of listed buildings is properly taken into account as material considerations when determining applications affecting their special interest, or their settings. Case law has established that the preservation of the setting of a listed building requires considerable importance and weight (i.e. the *Barnwell Manor* judgement) and that, generally, a decision-maker who has worked through the paragraphs of the NPPF in accordance with their terms will have complied with the statutory duty set out in the 1990 Act (i.e. the judgement in *Jones v Mordue & Others* [2015] EWCA Civ 1243).

## The National Planning Policy Framework

3. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) was published in February 2019 and constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision makers. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the local development plan, unless it is silent or material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration.
4. Section 16 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment, in paragraphs 184 to 202. The NPPF places much emphasis on heritage 'significance', which it defines in Annex 2 as:  
*"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."*
5. Paragraph 184 of the NPPF states that heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance. It goes on to state that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.
6. Paragraph 185 encourages local planning authorities to prepare local plans that should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. One of the

factors to be taken into account is the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. The positive contribution that new development can make is another of these factors to be taken into account.

7. According to paragraph 189, local planning authorities should require applicants 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.
8. Paragraph 190 requires a similar approach from local authorities, who should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
9. According to paragraph 192, a number of considerations should be taken into account in determining applications. The first is the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. The second is to recognise the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make. The third reiterates the well-established concept that new development can also make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
10. According to paragraph 193, which applies specifically to designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to a heritage asset's conservation (the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This reflects the provisions of the 1990 Act in that it applies irrespective of whether it involves total loss, substantial harm, or less than substantial harm to significance.
11. Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. It then deals with substantial harm to, or total loss of significance of, different types of designated heritage assets.
12. Paragraph 195 continues on the subject of substantial harm. Paragraph 196, on the other hand, deals with less than substantial harm. Harm in this category should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
13. The National Planning Practice Guidance<sup>1</sup> (NPPG) describes public benefits as *"anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives"*.
14. According to paragraph 200, local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

<sup>1</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment/why-is-significance-important-in-decision-taking/>

# APPENDIX 1: Legislation, Policy and Guidance

## The Development Plan

15. The Development Plan is the Swale Borough Local Plan 2017.
16. Policy CP 8 is entitled "*Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*" and it requires, amongst others, development proposals to:
  - i. sustain and enhance the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to their significance;
  - ii. accord with national planning policy in respect of heritage matters, together with any heritage strategy adopted by the Council; and
  - iii. bring heritage assets into sensitive and sustainable use.
17. Policy DM 32 is entitled "Development involving listed buildings" and it requires development proposals to preserve the special architectural or historic interest, setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest of a listed building. Specifically, the following area noted:
  - i. design, including scale, materials, situation and detailing;
  - ii. the appropriateness of the proposed use of the building; and
  - iii. the desirability of removing unsightly or negative features or restoring or reinstating historic features.