

Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme

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Design & Access Statement (incl Heritage Impact Assessment) **8 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil**

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Addendum: Revisions to new extension - see Page 10
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8 High Street (Bowens Court) lies within the Pontmorlais area at the northern end of the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area. The character area of Pontmorlais described in the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Appraisal (June 2009) is concentrated around the Pontmorlais High Street and the more commercial end of the High Street to the south.

The whole of the town centre area was developed during the late 18th and early 19th century as a result of rapid industrial development and population growth. The Pontmorlais area played an important strategic role in the expanding areas of Merthyr, situated as it was between the industrial hubs of Penydarren and Dowlais with the town centre to the south.

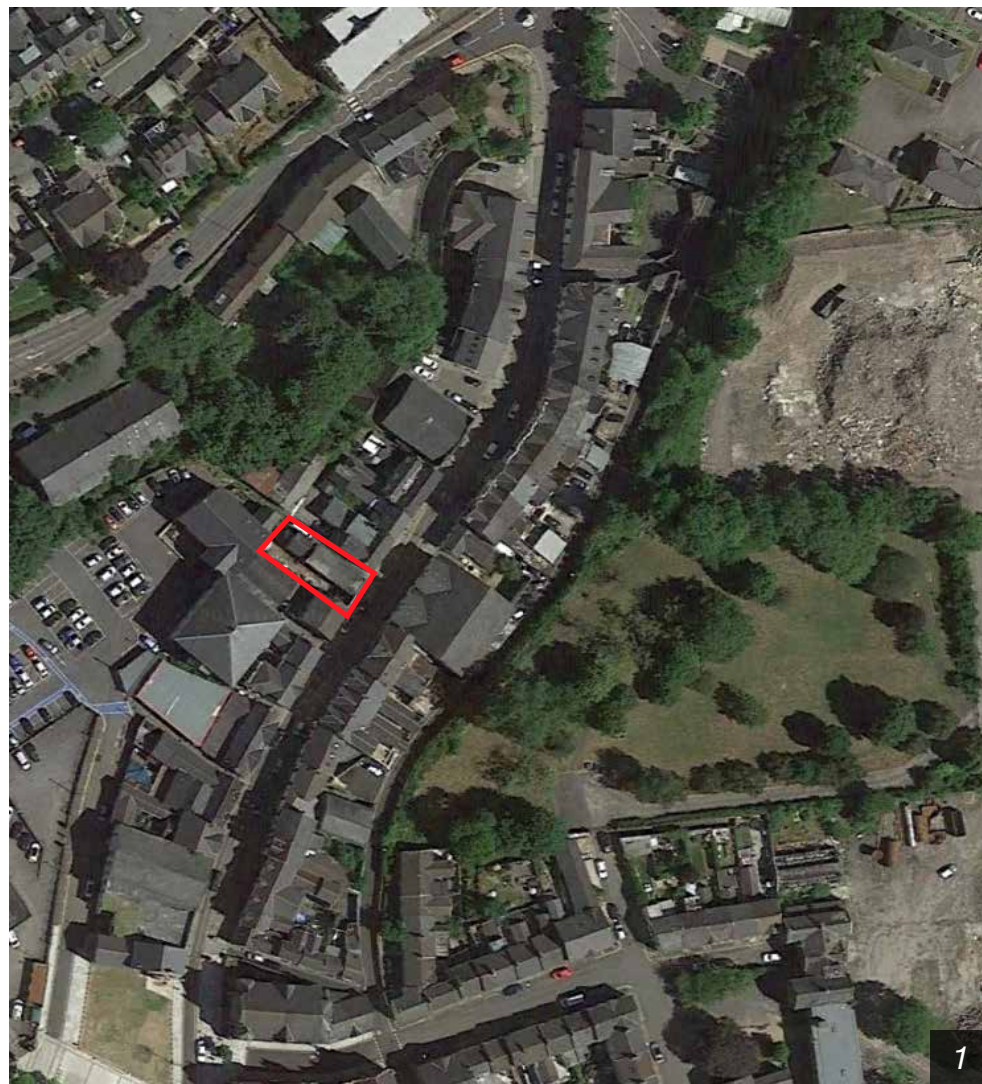
The importance of the area during these growth years is reflected in the rich variety of architectural styles that developed during the late 18th, 19th and into the early 20th century, all representative of the significant investment made in the area during this period.

The various uses accommodated in the buildings: commercial, civic, social and spiritual also reflect the vibrancy of the area during this era.

The decline of the iron and steel industries has inevitably impacted on employment opportunities and hence investment in the area. This, together with inappropriate 20th century development and changes in the way consumers use the high street have further contributed to the slow erosion of the fabric of the Pontmorlais area.

However, a substantial variety of buildings do still survive within the Pontmorlais area and although a number of buildings are run down through lack of investment and beneficial use or have suffered from inappropriate alterations over time, the character of the area is still evident and is an important asset for Merthyr Tydfil.

01 introduction



8 High Street, Pontmorlais, Merthyr Tydfil



1. Google satellite view - site outlined in red
2. OS extract with site area outlined in red

02 townscape heritage initiative & the brief

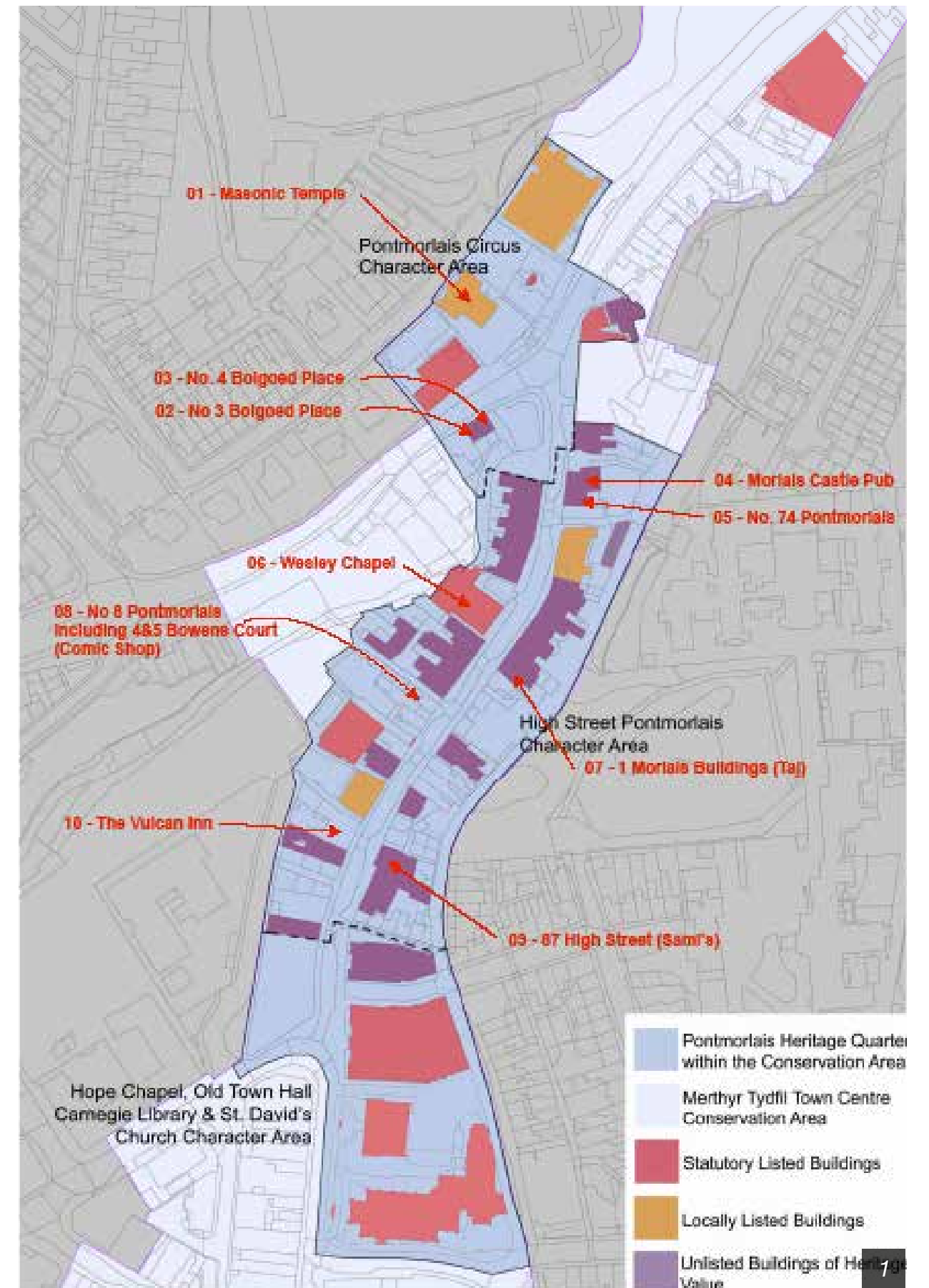
The current proposals have been developed as part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) for the Pontmorlais area. The Heritage Lottery Fund Initiative in partnership with CADW and the local authority is aimed at regenerating run-down historic conservation areas through historic building repair. The programme is specifically designed to address problems in areas of particular social and economic need to improve the quality of the environment for all who live, work or visit there; to restore the appearance of the historic town and to encourage regeneration.

A recent Townscape Initiative Scheme has seen the regeneration of a number of properties within the Pontmorlais High Street Area which has already had a positive impact on the surroundings.

Focusing on the repair and reinstatement of historic fabric, eligible works typically include reinstatement of traditional shopfronts, timber sash windows, natural slate roof coverings, decorative ridge tiles, chimneys and rainwater goods, although the scope of works varies from property to property.

The objectives of the THI Scheme are consistent with the recommended strategies for improvement as set out in the Pontmorlais Conservation Area Management Plan (Insalls Report 2011) and with the relevant policies of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (2006-2012) in particular strategic objective 11 – *to ensure the continued protection and enhancement of the natural, cultural, built and historic environment*

1. Key buildings in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area (north) as identified in the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009)



Although the site is not listed, 8 High Street and 3, 4 and 5 Bowens Court have been identified as having significant impact on the conservation area. While at present dilapidated, the building is considered to have the potential to make a beneficial contribution to the environmental and cultural heritage of the Borough and through the current THI scheme the council is seeking to preserve and enhance these historic buildings.

The buildings are located part way down the High Street on the corner of Old Mill Lane and frame a courtyard off the High Street.

The site is currently divided into two sections. The front portion onto the High St has previously been in use as a shop, but this has not been in use for 12 months. The earlier frontage has been obscured by an unattractive late C20 featureless rendered facade.

To the rear two intact vernacular buildings (3 & 4 Bowens Court) have not been in use for 20 years and are in a significant state of disrepair, the further section has been substantially demolished.

03 site & context

1. View of the shop front on the High Street

2. View of the courtyard within Bowen's Court



04

condition of existing buildings

No.8 High Street is the end of a terrace of 4 buildings fronting onto a courtyard (Bowen's Court) currently accessed from the High St via a timber door. No.s 3 & 4 Bowens Court and a partially demolished building at the end (presumed to be No.5 Bowens Court).

The existing roofs are weatherproofed with sinusoidal cladding, possibly asbestos based.

High St Elevation

There is significant cracking visible in the High Street facade where the building meets parapet wall enclosing courtyard. The render is badly stained and copings have open joints. Beneath the modern canopy parts of an earlier shopfront may be salvagable.

The downpipe at the corner with Old Mill Lane is incomplete and ends at head height with no gully at ground level.

Bowens Court

The courtyard elevations of the buildings have been rendered with a sand cement render which is badly fractured and in some areas has fallen off exposing the stone behind it. A full inspection of the facade is impossible because of the large amount of vegetation growing over the face of the building into the courtyard

The buildings are of traditional masonry construction and are totally dilapidated. Bricks have been used within the wall to form surrounds for openings.

Portions of this elevation have been rebuilt with

concrete blockwork at some point

No.5 Bowens Court (assumed)

This building is a partially demolished, the exposed (formerly party) wall shows significant cracking

North elevation

The north elevation to Old Mill Lane exhibits a large crack within the rubble stone wall

Windows and doors

Most existing windows are timber though these appear not to be original and are in fact recent casements or fixed lights within the envelope. A number of these have their panes broken and will need replacing, many of the doors are missing.

Fittings will be re-used where possible



1. 8 High Street - Parapet wall concealing original roof form behind, RWP missing lower section.

2. 8 High Street - vertical crack in wall at approximate location where courtyard wall meets original front wall.

3. Bowens Court - Sand Cement render meeting more modern blockwork wall, vegetation covering large parts of elevation

4. Bowens Court - Partially demolished end of terrace

5. Existing fireplace internally

The current proposal is to reinstate the historic form of the buildings and to remove the inappropriate alterations that are deemed to be harmful. The proposed alterations are based on existing details as well as the scant historic photographs.

The subsequent re-purposing of the building as a cafe / bar with micro brewery attached is also important to provide a new lease of life to the building. The courtyard space will be brought back into the public realm with outdoor chairs and tables visible from the High St once the wall at the end has been removed.

Office/staff space is intended to be included upstairs and new sanitary facilities included in the refurbishment, including an accessible WC at ground level.

The essential renovations required to return the building into servicable use include:

External envelope:

- Removal of the parapet & reinstatement of the roof & building line & fenestration (including shopfront) as per historic photographic evidence.
- Repairs to roof structure including removal of asbestos sheeting & re-slating in new welsh slate with new cast iron rainwater goods
- Removal of the adjacent two storey wall to open exiting courtyard to the street (gates to be reinstated)
- Removal of cement renders & other modern finishes – replacing with lime renders where historic evidence exists for them
- Repairs to standing walls to Bowens Court cottages (stabilising but not rebuilding of missing/partially demolished walls) and creation of new access to Old Mill Lane.
- Reinstatement of window & door openings with appropriately detailed timber joinery.
- Reinstatement of chimney stacks at roof level
- Reinstatement of stone paving to opened up

courtyard

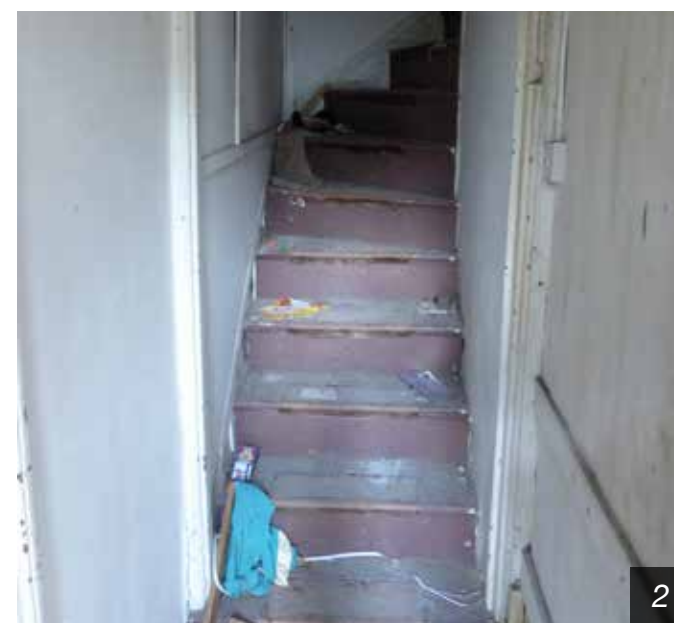
- Creation of new staircase and timber clad enclosure with new door to courtyard
- Access hatch to basement refurbished and retained with underside of stair acting as porch

Internally:

- Removal of party walls at ground level to create larger space for bar/cafe use
- Removal of suspended ceiling tiles and repair/reinstatement of plaster ceilings
- Removal of party walls at first floor level and creation of new fire partitions around staircase
- Removal of finishes and repairs/reinstatement of timber first floor and ground floor structure and boardings
- Staircases removed in favour of new building regulations compliant stair situated in modern enclosure within courtyard (see above)
- Repurposing of basement as storage space
- Removal of modern partitions, sanitary fittings etc

Services:

- Strip out/ Renewal of all small power, lighting, heating & hot & cold water & drainage services



05 proposed alterations & repairs

1. Existing window lining within....

2. Existing stairs to be removed within

3. Infilled fireplace within....poor condition of existing plaster

4.

5.

06 heritage impact

Whilst changes to buildings reflect the way a building is used over time and can have significance in their own right, the false parapet wall and derelict nature of the building is considered to have a detrimental impact on the conservation area.

Very little historic imagery has been found of the building, however it is proposed that the works will remove the inappropriate and unsightly features such as the false parapet wall to the High St and the removal of the corrugated roof sheeting. Any paint will be stripped from the stone to reveal its natural colour (subject to trial investigations to establish viability and condition of substrates). The potentially damaging cement render will be replaced with a more sustainable lime render.

The corrugated roof sheeting will be removed in favour of natural slate, and the missing and broken doors and windows will be replaced with traditional hardwood sash windows and timber doors.

Any existing aesthetic details will be repaired or matched to historic features where evidence exists, and the restoration of chimney stacks will match the design and proportions of local examples and as such will improve the appearance of the building.

Opening up the courtyard to the High St and providing activity within it will improve the visual interest along the High St in a similar fashion to other open courtyards adjacent to the nearby buildings.

These changes will contribute to the aesthetic

quality of the street and the Pontmorlais heritage quarter as a whole. The works will bolster the future of the buildings, helping the owners to maintain their buildings through provision of a new economic use.

07 access

The proposals will affect access to the building by including a new staircase outboard of the main section of the building. This will allow access to the first floor of all buildings whose rooms will be connected internally.

A new door used as a fire escape and access to the courtyard is also based at the foot of the stair with glazed panels allowing for vision through and around the base of the stair.

The proposed alterations will provide additional life and interest within the courtyard with tables and chairs set out and used for eating and drinking.

At night the gates to the courtyard will be closed and locked.

1. Historic photograph showing the High Street and features of 8 High Street



Reference material

Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2006-20121 (MTDBC)

Merthyr Tydfil – Understanding Urban Character (CADW)

Pontmorlais Heritage Quarter – Conservation Area Management Plan (Donald Insalls 2011)

Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Areas Character Appraisal (MTDBC 2009)

Heritage Impact Assessments in Wales (CADW May 2017)

Design & Access Statements in Wales (CADW April 2017)

Alan George online archive

Francis Frith online archive

(Special thanks to Gareth Rogers & Victoria Parry from MTDBC for providing various maps and photographs from their records.)

08 reference material

Rev A

Addendum: Proposed revisions to new extension

The existing proposals were approved on 15th January 2019 – MTCBC Ref P/19/0009

The existing Design, Access and Heritage Statement are still considered relevant and therefore this Addendum statement should be read in conjunction with the original document.

Reasons for the changes to the Approved Scheme:

The works to the existing building envelope are partly grant funded as part of the Pontmorlais Townscape Heritage scheme whereas the internal works and works to form the new extension are partly funded by an alternative grant scheme.

In developing the application for the grant funding for the new extension, a number of small design changes have arisen primarily on the courtyard facing side. These include:

Changing the roof material of the new extension from profile metal to natural slate. Pre-application comments received from MTCBC Planning & conservation officer prior to the submission of the previous application stated a preference for slate and so it is assumed that this alteration will be considered an improvement to the approved scheme.

The approved first floor screen ran full width of the new extension but has been reduced in size but is otherwise a similar detail. A new external Juliet balcony has been included whereas the previous application had assumed internal guarding. Guarding will be required to comply with Building Regulations.

Two conservation grade rooflights have been added. These will add additional light to compensate for the fact that the glazed screen is smaller, but will also be required to provide natural ventilation to the first floor when it is not viable to open the sliding/folding screen.

The proposed timber cladding and glazed screen at ground level have been replaced with lime rendered blockwork and a traditional sash window which matches those in the existing building. Whilst the original intention was that the extension should have a distinctly different character to the existing buildings, the use of traditional materials and finishes is not considered inappropriate in this context.

As well as the alterations to the courtyard side, the building owner has decided that the external wall on the Mill Lane facing side will be built from the rubble stone arising from the partial demolition of the dilapidated areas of the existing cottages. This will match the existing rubble stone walling on the Mill Lane side.

A very small amendment to the approved scheme is also included on the current application. In developing details and a fire escape strategy that satisfies Building Regulations, the position of the escape door at the foot of the new stair enclosure has been revised to exit facing the street. This is considered to be an improvement to the approved access/egress from the building.

Heritage Impact of the proposed alterations

As the overall scale and massing of the proposed new extension are in line with the original approved scheme and are subservient in scale to the host building, the alterations are considered to have no net positive or negative impact on the existing building or the Conservation area.

As described, the proposed alterations to the roof material from profiled metal to slate, could be considered to be an improvement. The alterations to the glazed screen and windows are minor and are therefore considered to have no net positive or negative impact on the existing building or the Conservation area.

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