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**F/YR25/0505/F**

**Applicant: Mr Rafique**

**Agent: Mr G Boreham  
Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd**

**Hare And Hounds Hotel, 4 North Brink, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 1JR**

**Change of use of Hotel to 6 x residential flats and erect a bin store and cycle store**

**Officer recommendation: Refuse**

**Reason for Committee: Town Council representation and number of representations contrary to Officer recommendation**

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**F/YR25/0504/LB**

**Applicant: Mr Rafique**

**Agent: Mr G Boreham  
Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd**

**Hare And Hounds Hotel, 4 North Brink, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 1JR**

**Internal and external works to a Listed Building to form 6 x residential flats and to erect a bin store and cycle store**

**Officer recommendation: Refuse**

**Reason for Committee: Town Council representation and number of representations contrary to Officer recommendation**

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## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The application site comprises a three-storey Grade II Listed Building within Wisbech Town Centre and the Wisbech Conservation Area, most recently in use as a public house with hotel accommodation. The building is in generally poor condition and has undergone substantial historic alterations. The site includes a rear courtyard, outbuilding, and vehicular access from Chapel Road.
- 1.2 The proposal seeks planning permission and listed building consent to convert the building into six self-contained flats, involving internal reconfigurations, removal of non-original structures, and various repairs and alterations.
- 1.3 While the site benefits from a sustainable location with access to services, public transport, and existing vehicular access, the scheme fails to comply with relevant planning policies in several key areas.
- 1.4 The development would result in the loss of an existing public house and employment facility without sufficient evidence that the loss is acceptable, contrary to Policy LP2 of the Fenland Local Plan.

- 1.5 The internal alterations and removal of historic fabric would cause less than substantial but significant harm to the Grade II Listed Building and its setting within the Conservation Area. The proposal does not constitute a sensitive reuse and fails to preserve or enhance the heritage asset, contrary to Policies LP16 and LP18, Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and Chapter 16 of the NPPF.
- 1.6 The proposed flats do not meet national space standards, with some units lacking adequate natural light and ventilation, providing substandard living conditions.
- 1.7 In summary, the harm to the heritage asset and the loss of community and employment uses outweigh the limited benefits of the scheme and therefore the application is recommended for refusal.

## **2 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The application site lies to the north of North Brink and is occupied by a three-storey, Grade II listed building, most recently in lawful use as a public house with hotel accommodation. The host building, in generally poor cosmetic condition, has undergone substantial extensions, changes, and alterations over a prolonged period. It is situated within Wisbech Town Centre, the Wisbech Conservation Area, and Flood Zone 3.
- 2.2 The building accommodates a public house at ground floor level, with residential use on the upper floors. The site extends from North Brink through to Chapel Road, where a vehicular access point leads to an area of hardstanding used for parking. The central section contains an outbuilding currently used for storage, alongside the parking area. The total site area is approximately 0.08 hectares.

## **3 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 Planning permission and listed building consent are sought for the conversion of the ground, first and second floors of the existing public house/hotel to form six self-contained residential flats (Four one bedroom units and two two bedroom units). The basement and third floor will remain unchanged.
- 3.2 Pedestrian access will be retained via the front entrance on North Brink and via an alleyway to the right of the property, which includes a section of flying freehold and leads to the rear gated courtyard. Vehicular access, which has existed for over 50 years, will remain from Chapel Road. Gates are to be removed to facilitate improved vehicle access. The proposed site layout includes six car parking spaces and cycle storage.
- 3.3 The main external works to facilitate the conversion are set out below:
- New rear courtyard bin store (1.8m close-boarded fence with timber gates).
  - New secure cycle store for residents.
  - Removal of non-original structures (timber canopy and lean-to roof).
  - Rear single-storey wings: new openings and timber-framed double-glazed windows (subject to Conservation Officer approval).
  - Addition of a small side window at ground floor level.

- Extractors and flue positions shown on drawings.

3.4 The proposal includes the following repair and restoration works:

- Repointing and brick repairs where required.
- Existing windows retained and externally repainted.
- Rainwater goods repaired or replaced like-for-like.
- Downpipes on side elevation replaced in black cast aluminium where necessary.
- External staircase to Flat 2 repaired.
- New hardwood door to Flat 3.
- Courtyard tarmac and alleyway surfaces made good after service installation.
- External vents in clay red air bricks, with final joinery, service, and rainwater details agreed by condition.

3.5 Revised plans were received during the determination of the application, with minor revisions to show extractors and flue positions, a small side window at ground floor level and the reconfiguring of the ground floor flats, in terms of room orientation.

Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at:

<https://www.publicaccess.fenland.gov.uk/publicaccess/>

## 4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 The site benefits from a number of historic planning applications which relate to the established commercial use and alterations to the listed building, below references applications received from 2010 onwards:

Reference	Proposal	Decision
F/YR13/0674/A	Display of non-illuminated wall mounted lettering and a non-illuminated hanging sign 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Granted
F/YR13/0675/LB	Display of non-illuminated wall mounted lettering, a non-illuminated hanging sign and a wall mounted plaque involving the removal of existing signage and fixings to front of existing building 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Granted
F/YR13/0442/LB	Display of illuminated wall mounted lettering, an illuminated hanging sign and a wall mounted plaque involving the removal of existing signage and fixings to front of existing building 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Refused
F/YR18/0715/F	Formation of a ramped access to building 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Granted
F/YR16/0845/LB	Internal alterations to a Listed Building to install new Wi-Fi units including cabling and internal sign 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Granted
F/YR18/0834/LB	External works to a Listed Building to form a ramped access 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Refused
F/YR18/0716/LB	External and internal works to a Listed Building to form a ramped access 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Granted
F/YR15/0204/LB	Internal works including formation of new extended ATM room and refurbishment 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Granted
F/YR20/1276/LB	Internal works to a listed building to install a WiFi Booster system 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Granted
F/YR13/0441/A	Display of illuminated wall mounted lettering and an illuminated hanging sign 2 - 3 North Brink Wisbech	Refused
F/YR18/0833/F	Formation of a ramped access to existing building External works to a Listed Building to	Refused

	remove external signage	
F/YR24/0931/LB	External works to a Listed Building to remove external signage External works to a Listed Building to remove external signage	Granted
F/YR18/0871/F	Removal and brick up 15 no side windows (retrospective); replace 1 no side window and 3 no front windows with UPVC and relocate 2 no un-authorised satellite dishes from side elevation to rear elevation and the removal of 2 no un-authorised roller shutters from the front elevation. H2o Sanzokuou Chapel Road	Granted
F/YR17/0549/F	Change of use to mixed use A3/A4 restaurant/bar/club (ground floor) and D2 Snooker Hall (first floor) from mixed use Sui Generis (Leisure Entertainment Centre) and D2 (Snooker Hall) involving single-storey rear extension to form kitchen and erection of 2.47 metre high fence to rear (retrospective) Snooker Hall Chapel Road	Refused
F/YR16/0783/F	Change of use to mixed use A3/A4 restaurant/bar/club (ground floor) and D2 Snooker Hall (first floor) from mixed use Sui Generis (Leisure Entertainment Centre) and D2 (Snooker Hall) involving single-storey rear extension to form kitchen Snooker Hall Chapel Road	Refused
F/YR18/0459/F	Change of use to mixed use A3/A4 restaurant/bar/club (ground floor) and D2 Snooker Hall (first floor) from mixed use Sui Generis (Leisure Entertainment Centre) and D2 (Snooker Hall) involving single-storey rear extension to form kitchen and erection of 2.47 metre high fence to rear (retrospective) Snooker Hall Chapel Road	Refused
F/YR14/0016/F	Demolition of two-storey building, timber framed building, lean-to and toilet block to rear of Snooker Hall Snooker Hall Chapel Road	Granted

## **5 CONSULTATIONS**

### **5.1 Wisbech Town Council**

Supports both the full and listed building consent application and notes that the applicant has made attempts (but without success) to attract tenants for the building, to achieve continuation of its current use

#### **External Consultees**

### **5.2 National Amenity Society – Council for British Archaeology**

The CBA welcome proposals to bring this building back to active use and support proposals to achieve a series of apartments over the ground, first and second floors. It is advised that proposals should be revised to retain significant fabric that remains extant within the building. This should entail reducing the number of units on the first floor from two to one.

### **5.3 Environment Agency**

No objection, subject to the development being carried out in accordance with the FRA.

### **5.4 Cambridgeshire County Council – Highways**

No objection

### **5.5 Cambridgeshire County Council Fire**

No response has been received at the time of writing this report.

### **5.6 Wisbech Society**

No objection – would like bigger flat as the smallest unit is not fit for permanent accommodation.

### **5.7 North Level District Internal Drainage Board**

No comment

### **5.8 The Gardens Trust**

No comment

#### **Internal Consultees**

### **5.9 FDC Conservation Officer**

Objects to the loss of the commercial ground floor on the vitality of the conservation area. Also raises further concern that the number of small flats results in overdevelopment of the building, which in turn leads to a general low level of amenity for future occupants.

There was originally an objection to the various historic features, such as built-in cupboards and historic fireplace in the security room not being shown as retained on the proposed plans. However, this has since been overcome following the receipt of amended plans.

However, whilst some aspects of the original objection have been overcome, the Conservation Officer maintains an objection finding less than substantial harm to the character and appearance and historic significance of the building. Also notes overdevelopment, resulting in poor amenity.

#### **5.10 FDC Private Sector Housing**

No objection subject to conditions to ensure compliance in terms of fire safety.

#### **5.11 FDC Environmental Health – Refuse**

No objection subject to condition, securing additional details in terms of refuse collection.

#### **5.12 FDC Environmental Protection**

No objection subject to condition, securing working times due to close proximity of existing noise sensitive receptors.

### **Representations**

#### **5.13 Councillor David Oliver**

Supports the planning application for the Hare and Hounds, an empty historic building on North Brink. They value the proposed restoration of the frontage with traditional wood-frame windows, as well as the inclusion of parking, bin, and cycle storage. They believe approval will restore the building's use and preserve North Brink's architectural character.

#### **5.14 Local Residents/Interested Parties**

Eleven letters of support have been received from parties at Osbourne Road, Church Terrace, Money Bank, Clarence Road, Henry Street, North Brink, Railway Road, Norwich Road, Ramnoth Road, Wisbech and these comments are summarised below:

<b>Supporting Comment</b>	<b>Officer Response</b>
Increase support to economy	Comments noted and discussed in the principle section of below report
Effective use of empty building	Comments noted and discussed in the principle section of below report
Other flats on the waterfront are really nice	Comments noted
Good housing mix	Comments noted and discussed in the principle section of below report
Addressing housing need	Comments noted and discussed in the principle section of below report
Better than a burnt out building like next door	Comments noted
Removes another empty building from	Comments noted and discussed in the

the waterfront	principle section of below report
Close to local amenities	Comments noted and discussed in the principle section of below report
Don't need anymore pubs	Comments noted and discussed in the principle section of below report

It should be noted that one of the letters included in the above is registered as written objection however, the comments state that they are overjoyed that it is not a public house and note that there have been notices appearing on lampposts regarding HMO's and therefore, in this context it was not considered to be an objection to the proposal.

## 6 STATUTORY DUTY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014).

Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require Local Planning Authorities when considering development to pay special attention to preserving a listed building or its setting and to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works to 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.

## 7 POLICY FRAMEWORK

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024**

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development

Chapter 4 – Decision-making

Chapter 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Chapter 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy

Chapter 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Chapter 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities

Chapter 9 – Promoting sustainable transport

Chapter 11 – Making effective use of land

Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Chapter 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

### **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

Determining a Planning Application

### **National Design Guide 2021**

Context

Identity

Built Form



Public Spaces  
Uses  
Homes and Buildings

### **Fenland Local Plan 2014**

- LP1 – A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- LP2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents
- LP4 – Housing
- LP5 – Meeting Housing Need
- LP6 – Employment, Tourism, Community Facilities and Retail
- LP8 – Wisbech
- LP14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland
- LP15 – Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland
- LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District
- LP17 – Community Safety
- LP18 – The Historic Environment

### **Emerging Local Plan**

The Draft Fenland Local Plan (2022) was published for consultation between 25th August 2022 and 19 October 2022, all comments received will be reviewed and any changes arising from the consultation will be made to the draft Local Plan. Given the very early stage which the Plan is therefore at, it is considered, in accordance with Paragraph 49 of the NPPF, that the policies of this should carry extremely limited weight in decision making. Of relevance to this application are policies:

- LP1: Settlement Hierarchy
- LP2: Spatial Strategy for the Location of Residential Development
- LP5: Health and Wellbeing
- LP7: Design
- LP8: Amenity Provision
- LP12: Meeting Housing Needs
- LP15: Employment
- LP16: Town Centres
- LP22: Parking Provision
- LP23: Historic Environment
- LP25: Biodiversity Net Gain
- LP32: Flood and Water Management
- LP35: Regeneration of Wisbech
- LP36: Residential Site Allocations for Wisbech
- LP37: Site allocations for non-residential development in Wisbech

## **8**

### **KEY ISSUES**

- **Principle of Development**
- **Loss of Employment**
- **Loss of Community Facility**
- **Living Conditions for Future Occupants**

## **9 BACKGROUND**

- 9.1 Within the supporting loss of employment justification letter provided by Morton & Hall Consulting Limited, it is advised that the property was last used as a public house on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 with the Applicant purchasing the premises in November 2024. Further details advise that the first and second floor were last used as an HMO, but this use has since ceased.
- 9.2 Additional information was sought during the determination of the application, to evidence that the premises had been advertised appropriately, additional information was received via emails on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2025 and 8<sup>th</sup> August 2025, showing the premises to be listed on Zoopla since 29.07.2025 and providing additional details and alternative premises within the vicinity.
- 9.3 It is pertinent to note that the Applicant, Mr Rafique is a Town Councillor.

## **10 ASSESSMENT**

### **Principle of Development**

- 10.1 Policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) sets out the settlement hierarchy within the District, setting out the scale of development appropriate to each level of the hierarchy.
- 10.2 The application site is located within the Primary Market Town of Wisbech whereby the majority of the District's new housing, employment growth and retail should be directed. This stance is supported by Policy LP8 of the Fenland Local Plan.
- 10.3 Policy LP5 sets out the housing targets for the District and the Council has undertaken a full assessment of the Five Year Housing Land Supply in the District and has concluded that the Council is able to demonstrate a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide for more than Five Years' worth of housing against the Council's identified requirements. This is material consideration and means that any application for new development must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 10.4 Taking into account the above, it is considered that the principle of providing residential accommodation, in isolation, is acceptable, subject to other material considerations, as discussed below.

### **Housing Mix**

- 10.5 Policy LP5, when read alongside the 2021 Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), identifies a clear imbalance in the District's housing. The policy encourages a greater provision of smaller, affordable units to meet identified local needs, while also recognising demand for three-bedroom homes in the market sector.
- 10.6 The HNA (2021) shows that in order to meet the identified needs of the District, market dwellings are expected to deliver a balanced range of unit sizes, with a particular emphasis on family housing. Specifically, 3-bedroom homes should comprise the largest share of the market provision while 1-bedroom units are to

remain limited (0–10%). The proposal will provide 6 smaller units and does not meet the identified needs of the District.

### Loss of Employment

- 10.7 Policy LP6 seeks to ensure that existing commercial uses at ground floor level within the Town/District Centre boundary be retained for an appropriate commercial use unless evidence indicates why this type of use can no longer be justified. The preamble to this policy in paragraph 3.5.17 states that the Council is committed to strengthening the role of market towns and other service centres and increasing the viability and vitality of such centres. Paragraph 3.5.18 goes on to explain that the retail strategy seeks to enhance the High Street offer of both Wisbech and March as the principle comparison goods centres within the district. Lastly, paragraph 3.5.21 goes on to expand upon this further and details that the Council considers it essential that its town centres do not worsen further and that the existing offer is maintained and improved.
- 10.8 Within the applicant's supporting statement, prepared by Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd, it is asserted that no employment loss will occur as the public house has not operated since December 2023. This reasoning is not accepted. A non-operational period of approximately 20 months is not considered a significant length of time in planning terms. Furthermore, the limited marketing information provided is insufficient to demonstrate that there is no interest in retaining the existing use, or an alternative commercial/community/leisure use. As such, the evidence submitted does not adequately justify the loss of the employment use.
- 10.9 While it is acknowledged that other similar establishments exist within the vicinity, this is typical of a High Street location and does not in itself justify the loss. Supporting comments, including from the Town Council, suggest that another public house is not required and that unsuccessful attempts have been made to attract tenants. However, such statements are anecdotal and unsupported by verifiable evidence. Given that the established use of the site contributes to employment provision within a town centre setting, and having regard to the policy objectives, the proposal is considered contrary to Policy LP6 in the absence of a robust marketing exercise or provision of an appropriate replacement facility.

### Loss of Community Facility

- 10.10 Paragraph 98 of the NPPF states that to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should...guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs.
- 10.11 Policy LP6 seeks to retain community facilities advising that proposals that would lead to the loss of community facilities (e.g. public houses, village shops, community halls, post offices) will only be permitted if:
- 1) it can be demonstrated that the retention of the facility is no longer financially viable, and an appropriate marketing exercise has been carried out, and it can be demonstrated that there is a lack of community need for the facility, or
  - 2) an alternative facility is provided.

- 10.12 Similar to the above, no marketing exercise has been undertaken to adequately demonstrate that retention of the public house/community facility is no longer financially viable. No evidence has been provided to justify the loss, to demonstrate that the facility is no longer needed, or to confirm that an alternative use could not be accommodated on site. While other facilities exist nearby, this alone is insufficient to demonstrate lack of need.
- 10.13 In the absence of robust marketing evidence or provision of an alternative community facility, the proposal fails to meet the requirements of Policy LP6 and guidance contained within the NPPF.

### **Design and Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area**

- 10.14 Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan, sets out a number of criteria which proposals are required to meet, to ensure that high quality environments are provided and protected. Most relevant to the proposal are:
- (d) makes a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the area, enhances its local setting, responds to and improves the character of the local built environment, provides resilience to climate change, reinforces local identity and does not adversely impact, either in design or scale terms, on the street scene, settlement pattern or the landscape character of the surrounding area.*
- 10.15 Further guidance is provided within the Delivering and Protecting High Quality Developments SPD.
- 10.16 The proposed change of use would alter the character of the site from its existing commercial/leisure function to residential use, which would inevitably introduce residential elements into the setting. Such changes, particularly at ground floor level, are likely to be more noticeable within the streetscape.
- 10.17 The retention and renovation of the building is in principle welcomed, provided that any works are carried out sensitively and in a manner that respects the historic fabric and the contribution the building makes to the Conservation Area.
- 10.18 With regard to the external alterations specifically, these are limited in scope and, when considered in isolation, are regarded as relatively modest interventions that would have a largely neutral effect on the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings.

### **Heritage Impacts**

#### Impact on Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area.

- 10.19 The application site sits within the Wisbech Conservation Area and relates to a Grade II Listed Building. Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) requires development proposals to deliver and protect high quality environments throughout the district. Proposals must demonstrate they make a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the area, enhancing their local setting and both responding to and improving the character of the local built environment whilst not adversely impacting on the street scene, settlement pattern or landscape character of the surrounding area. Policy LP18 addresses matters concerning the historic environment within Fenland.

- 10.20 Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 the Council has a legal duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 10.21 The impact upon the character of the conservation area would be assessed in terms of any physical changes to the building and their consequent impact on the appearance of the built and historic environment. In terms of external alterations, these are limited in scope and are not considered to result in any significant harm to the character or appearance of the building itself or the wider conservation area.
- 10.22 Taking the above into account, the proposal is considered to have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Whilst the loss of the public house use is acknowledged, the building's visual contribution to the setting will remain intact, and the external changes proposed are relatively modest in nature. The proposal therefore preserves, rather than enhances, the Conservation Area, but does not result in demonstrable harm.

#### Historic Fabric

- 10.23 Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 the Council has a legal duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a Listed Building, or any of its features, when considering whether to grant Listed Building Consent. Furthermore, in deciding whether to grant planning permission which affects a Listed Building or its setting, the Council has a legal duty to have special regard to preserving a Listed Building or its setting.
- 10.24 Policies LP16 and LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan seek to protect and enhance heritage assets. Chapter 16 of the NPPF is also relevant.
- 10.25 Paragraph 208 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) 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.
- 10.26 Paragraph 212 of the NPPF states when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Furthermore, Paragraph 213 goes on to state that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
- 10.27 There is no objection in principle to the creation of a third flat within the less historic outbuilding/garage. The proposals for Flat 6 on the second floor, which involve the removal of largely modern partitions and the insertion of new stud partitions, are also supported. The removal of the modern fireplace within the living area of Flat 4 is acceptable, provided that the chimney breast is retained. At

third-floor level, the retention of the existing loft storage without its conversion to accommodation is appropriate. Externally, the removal of signage and the overdoor canopy to the front elevation is supported and should be secured by condition if consent is granted. The removal of the walling and gates along the rear boundary, which are not of historic value, is also supported.

- 10.28 Notwithstanding the above, concerns remain regarding the layout and amenity of certain units. Flat 1 on the ground floor was previously highlighted as severely compromised, with all rooms being inner spaces with no windows. An amendment has now been made, introducing a bedroom window facing the alleyway. This improves amenity to a degree, and this will be assessed further in the appropriate section below. The insertion of a window in this position would nevertheless be supported, subject to details of gauged brick lintels and cills consistent with the historic windows being secured by condition.
- 10.29 At first-floor level, Flat 4 would be created through the alteration of what are likely to be historic doorways and the insertion of a number of partitions, the loss of historic fabric is a concern. The historic cupboards and fireplace within the security room are important features that should remain, and these are now shown as being retained on the submitted plans.
- 10.30 The schedule of works refers to the need for extractor vents and similar installations; however, these are not shown on the submitted plans. Such elements can have a substantially detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the listed building and should be considered at this stage. No additional services should be permitted to exit through the principal front elevation.
- 10.31 Whilst certain aspects of the proposal are supported significant concerns remain, the extent of internal alteration, particularly on the first floor, would result in the loss of historic plan form and fabric.
- 10.32 On this basis, the proposals are not considered to conserve or enhance the significance of the Grade II listed building and are therefore contrary to section 16 of the NPPF and Policy LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan.
- 10.33 The extent of internal intervention, particularly at first-floor level, lacks sufficient justification and would adversely affect the building's plan form and surviving historic features and is therefore considered, contrary to the objectives of the NPPF and Policies LP16 and LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan and the proposal fails to meet the statutory requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### **Residential and Neighbouring Amenity**

- 10.34. Policy LP2 of the Fenland Local Plan seeks to promote high levels of residential amenity. Similarly, Policy LP16 requires development proposals to not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring users such as noise, light pollution, loss of privacy and loss of light.
- 10.35. Furthermore, to provide an acceptable level of amenity for future occupants, the proposed flats must meet minimum floorspace requirements. These requirements are contained within the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) Technical Housing Standards document. This document has not yet been

adopted by the Council, but it is considered to be a sound guide in providing advice in respect of acceptable levels of occupant amenity.

- 10.36. Given the minor alterations to the exterior of the building the proposal is not considered to represent an unneighbourly form of development in terms of overlooking, loss of light or having an overbearing impact.
- 10.37. In relation to Flats 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, all habitable rooms are served by appropriately sized window openings, providing satisfactory levels of natural light and ventilation. As such, no concerns are raised with regard to sunlight or ventilation for future occupiers of these units.
- 10.38. However, the windows serving the bedrooms and living areas of Flats 2 and 3, located at ground floor level, face directly onto the enclosed parking area for the development. This arrangement would significantly compromise privacy for future occupiers of these units.
- 10.39. With respect to Flat 1, the unit relies on a single window facing onto the alleyway. Given the narrow outlook and close proximity of the neighbouring property, this window fails to provide adequate levels of natural light or outlook to its habitable room. As such, the living conditions for future occupiers of Flat 1 would be unacceptable. The proposal therefore fails to comply with Policies LP2 and LP16.
- 10.40. The NDSS sets out minimum internal floor area requirements as follows: a one-bedroom, one-person flat requires 37m<sup>2</sup> (if a shower room is provided) or 29m<sup>2</sup> (if a bathroom is provided); a one-bedroom, two-person flat requires 50m<sup>2</sup>; a two-bedroom, three-person flat requires 61m<sup>2</sup>; and a two-bedroom, four-person flat requires 70m<sup>2</sup>. A schedule of the proposed flats and their associated floor areas is provided below:

Unit	GIA (m <sup>2</sup> )	Number of bedrooms and persons	Shortfall (m <sup>2</sup> )
1	45	1b, 2p	5
2	43	1b, 2p	7
3	54	2b, 4p	16
4	34	1b, 2p	16
5	35	1b, 2p	15
6	70	2b, 4p	0

- 10.41. As demonstrated, Flats 1–5 fall short of the NDSS minimum requirements. The minor shortfalls in Units 1 and 2 are unlikely to cause a materially harmful impact on residential amenity on their own. However, the more substantial shortfalls in Units 3–5, combined with the absence of sufficient natural light, privacy and outlook to flats 1, 2 and 3, result in a notable reduction in living standards for future occupants. Consequently, the proposed development, arguably represents the overdevelopment of the site and would create unacceptable living conditions, to the detriment of occupant amenity, contrary to Policies LP2 and LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan.

### **Parking, Access and Highway Safety**

- 10.42. Policy LP15 requires all new development proposals to contribute to the delivery of the sustainable transport network by providing well designed, safe, convenient access for all. Development proposals should provide well designed car and cycle parking appropriate to the amount of development proposed, ensuring parking provision is provided in accordance with the standards. Appendix A sets out the parking provision required which for one-bedroom properties is 1.25 spaces per unit. However, this does state that where a site has good public transport links, a reduction in car parking provision may be negotiated, and in special circumstances nil parking provision may be appropriate.
- 10.43. The proposal would utilise the existing access off Chapel Road and will retain six vehicular spaces and 6 cycle parking spaces, to the western boundary in front of the building. It should be noted that the FLP (2014) does not contain cycle parking standards. This would result in a minor shortfall in the parking provision required for the number of units/bedrooms provided (2 spaces). However, given the sustainable location of the proposal, this shortfall in car parking provision, is considered acceptable.
- 10.44. It is pertinent to note that there is currently an under-provision in parking for the established lawful use of the premises as a public house, Appendix A requires 1 space per 3m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace, with just the ground floor area this would result in the need for a minimum of 30 spaces on site. Giving this appropriate weight, it is not considered the change of use would result in any additional pressures in respect of parking.
- 10.45. Whilst Policy LP15 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that development provides car parking in line with adopted standards, it also places emphasis on supporting sustainable transport and ensuring safe, convenient access for all. The site is located within the built-up area of Wisbech, whereby access to local services and public transport is readily available, future occupants would not be reliant on private motor vehicles for access to everyday needs and facilities. Furthermore, there is a large offering of public car parks. It is considered that this sustainable location reduces the reliance on private car use and therefore, a shortfall in provision is acceptable in this instance.
- 10.46. Given the established use of the site and that the parking provision on site remains unchanged, the proposal would not result in the intensification of the use of the access point. Cambridgeshire County Council Highways have raised no objection to the proposal on these grounds. Therefore, taking into account the above, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of in terms of parking, access and Highway Safety.

### **Private Amenity Space and Landscaping**

- 10.47. Policy LP2 of the Fenland Local Plan seeks to promote high levels of residential amenity. Similarly, Policy LP16 seeks to ensure development proposals result in high quality environments most relevant:
- (h) provides sufficient private amenity space, suitable to the type and amount of development proposed; for dwellings other than flats, as a guide and depending on the local character of the area, this means a minimum of a third of the plot curtilage should be set aside as private amenity space.



- 10.48. The proposed units would not benefit from any private or shared amenity space. There is no requirement for provision of amenity space to support the development as per Policy LP16(h), which does not provide any recommended garden standards or sizes. Furthermore, given the site location, in a sustainable area, and therefore there are opportunities for outdoor recreation within walking distance. Taking into account the above, it is considered that a lack of amenity space would be acceptable in this instance.

### **Flood Risk**

- 10.49. Policy LP14 of the Fenland Local Plan and paragraphs 170-182 of the National Planning Policy Framework set out the approach to developing land in relation to flood risk, with both documents steering development in the first instance towards land at a lower risk of flooding. This is achieved by means of requiring development proposals to undertake a sequential test to determine if there is land available for development at a lower risk of flooding than the application site and only resorting to development in those higher flood risk areas if it can be demonstrated that there are no reasonably available sites at a lower risk of flooding. An exemption to the requirement for the sequential test is made however where the development proposed is a change of use (paragraph 176), such as in this situation.
- 10.50. Paragraph 033 of planning practice guidance (PPG) on Flood Risk and Coastal Change states that 'The Sequential Test does not need to be applied for applications for Change of Use (except for a change of use to a caravan, camping or chalet site, or to a mobile home or park home site)'. Paragraph 048 of the PPG states that 'A Change of Use may involve an increase in flood risk if the vulnerability classification of the development is changed. In such cases, the applicant will need to show in their flood risk assessment that future users of the development will not be placed in danger from flood hazards throughout its lifetime.'
- 10.51. The mitigation measures proposed in Section 5.2 of the accompanying flood risk assessment undertaken by Ellingham Consultancy are such that risks to future users are mitigated. It is recommended that the finished floor level of flat 3 is a minimum of 0.3m above the surrounding ground level and there is 0.3m of flood resilient construction above finished floor level. There are no specific mitigation measures for the other flats.
- 10.52. The developer should ensure that the eventual occupiers of the dwellings are sufficiently aware of the risk of flooding, and the standard of the existing defences. The Environment Agency operates a flood warning system for properties at risk of flooding to enable householders to protect life or take actions to manage the effect of flooding on property. Floodline Warnings Service is a national system run by the Environment Agency for broadcasting flooding warnings. The occupiers of the dwellings should register to receive flood warnings.
- 10.53. Taking into account the above, subject to a suitably worded condition to ensure the proposal is carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures as identified in the flood risk assessment, there are no objections to the proposal in terms of flood risk and the proposal would be in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP14 in this respect.

## **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**

- 10.54. The Environment Act 2021 requires development proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity following a mitigation hierarchy which is focused on avoiding ecological harm over minimising, rectifying, reducing and then off-setting. This approach accords with Local Plan policies LP16 and LP19 which outlines a primary objective for biodiversity to be conserved or enhanced and provides for the protection of Protected Species, Priority Species and Priority Habitat.
- 10.55. There are statutory exemptions, transitional arrangements and requirements relating to irreplaceable habitat which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. In this instance, one or more of the exemptions / transitional arrangements are considered to apply and a Biodiversity Gain Condition is not required to be approved before development is begun because the pre-development biodiversity value is too low to require statutory net gain.

## **Other Matters**

### Fire Safety

- 10.56. It is pertinent to note that Private Sector Housing whilst raising no objection to the proposal have raised concerns and advised install a fire detection system meeting BS5838-6:2019+A1:2020 and comply with fire door and escape window requirements, particularly as flats 1–5 have higher fire risks due to kitchen locations or open-plan layouts. Kitchens should ideally be farthest from escape routes. For flat 6, a fire door should separate the kitchen/living area from the hallway. Concerns are also raised over flat 1's bedroom, which lacks natural light and a secondary escape. A bedsit layout or a 30-minute fire-resistant window between bedroom and living room, plus an FD30S fire door, is recommended. Should the application be approved, conditions could be included to ensure these standards are met.
- 10.57. Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue were subsequently consulted as part of this application and have, at the time of writing this report provided no response. Notwithstanding this lack of comment, should the application be approved, the development would be subject to building regulations which would ensure compliance with the required above mentioned fire safety measures.

### Refuse

- 10.58. Limited information has been submitted in regard to the refuse and recycling collection, should the application be approved a condition securing additional details such as, the bin store must be large enough to hold food bins as well as green and blue bins by April 2026. Plans show a separate collection area, and residents must be informed of this. Further bin store details are required, including: ground-floor access with dropped kerbs, adequate size for independent bin movement, full lid clearance, at least 2m headroom if covered, 150mm spacing around bins, door-holding mechanisms, door widths at least 20cm wider than the largest bin, and keypad entry. Developers must notify new residents of storage and collection arrangements before move-in, and provide refuse and recycling bins as part of the development, will be required to be included.

- 10.59. Given the established lawful use of the site would have required refuse collection, it is not considered that this is of material concern in the assessment of this application.

### **Planning Balance**

- 10.60. In terms of sustainability the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives; economic, social and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives)
- 10.61. This stance is supported by Local Plan Policy LP1. In terms of the economic role, the proposal could provide some benefits, such as employment during the construction phase and increased use of local businesses and services by future residents. However, the development would result in the loss of an existing employment and community facility within the Town Centre. Insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that this loss is acceptable in policy terms, which weighs substantially against the proposal.
- 10.62. Regarding the social role of sustainable development, this involves supporting strong, vibrant, and healthy communities by providing housing that meets the needs of present and future generations and creating a high-quality built environment with accessible local services. While the proposal would provide six new residential units, all are market dwellings, whereas the HNA 2021 identifies a higher need for three-bedroom market dwellings. Furthermore, the units would not meet minimum Nationally Described Space Standards, and Flats 1, 2 and 3 due to positioning of windows are considered to provide substandard living conditions. Combined with the loss of a community and employment facility, the proposal would not enhance the community's health, social, or cultural wellbeing and therefore weighs against the proposal.
- 10.63. In terms of the environmental role, the retention of a Heritage Asset within the Conservation Area is a positive consideration. However, the proposed works do not constitute a sensitive re-use of the building and would result in the removal of a significant amount of historic fabric from the Grade II Listed Building and is compounded by the overdevelopment and poor quality of the proposed residential units. Consequently, the environmental benefits are limited and do not outweigh the harm identified.
- 10.64. Overall, when considered against the three strands of sustainable development, the proposal offers limited economic and environmental benefits but significant social and heritage harms, primarily due to the substandard living conditions, loss of community and employment facilities, and harm to the historic fabric of the Listed Building. These factors weigh against the scheme and indicate that the proposal does not achieve sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF or relevant Local Plan policies.

## 11 CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The proposal would result in the loss of an existing community facility and employment use within the town centre, contrary to Local Plan Policies LP2 and which seek to support vibrant, healthy communities and sustainable economic activity. This loss would adversely affect local services, reduce opportunities for social and economic engagement, and fail to contribute positively to the social and economic objectives of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. This impact weighs significantly against the scheme and reinforces its overall harm to the local community.
- 11.2 The proposed units also fail to meet minimum space standards, resulting in substandard accommodation that would harm future occupiers' amenity, contrary to Policies LP2 and LP16.
- 11.3 The proposed change of use and associated alterations would result in a loss of historic fabric, causing less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II Listed Building. No public benefits have been demonstrated that would outweigh this harm, contrary to the NPPF and Policies LP16 and LP18

## 12 RECOMMENDATION

**F/YR25/0505/F**

**Refuse;** for the following reasons:

1	In the absence of sufficient marketing evidence or provision of suitable replacement facilities, the proposal fails to justify the loss of an existing employment-generating use within a town centre location. Given the established use of the site and the policy emphasis on supporting retail and employment functions in high street settings, the development is contrary to Policy LP6 of the Adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014), which seeks to protect such uses unless robust justification is provided.
2	The application fails to provide adequate evidence to justify the loss of a community facility. Without a clear assessment of need, alternative provision, or a marketing exercise, the proposal is contrary to Policy LP6 of the Adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014), which seeks to retain facilities that contribute to the social and community infrastructure of the area.
3	The proposed residential units fall significantly below minimum internal space standards, with habitable rooms serving flats 1, 2 and 3 not benefitting from sufficient openings to allow natural light, outlook or privacy; resulting in a poor standard of accommodation that would harm the amenity of future occupants. The development is therefore contrary to Policies LP2 and LP16 of the Adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014), which seek to promote high-quality living environments and protect residential amenity.

**F/YR25/0504/LB**

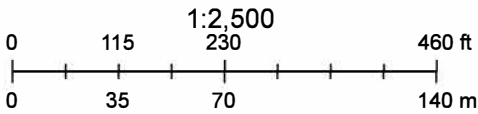
**Refuse;** for the following reasons:

1	<p>The proposed development would result in the loss and alteration of significant historic fabric within the Grade II Listed Building, including internal features. The introduction of additional flats, in particular Flats 4 and 5, would result in unsympathetic internal reconfigurations and unnecessary demolition of historic elements, causing less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset. The proposal fails to provide clear and convincing justification for this harm as required by paragraph 213 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Consequently, the scheme does not preserve or enhance the heritage asset or its setting, contrary to Policies LP16 and LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan, and Chapter 16 of the NPPF, which together require great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.</p>
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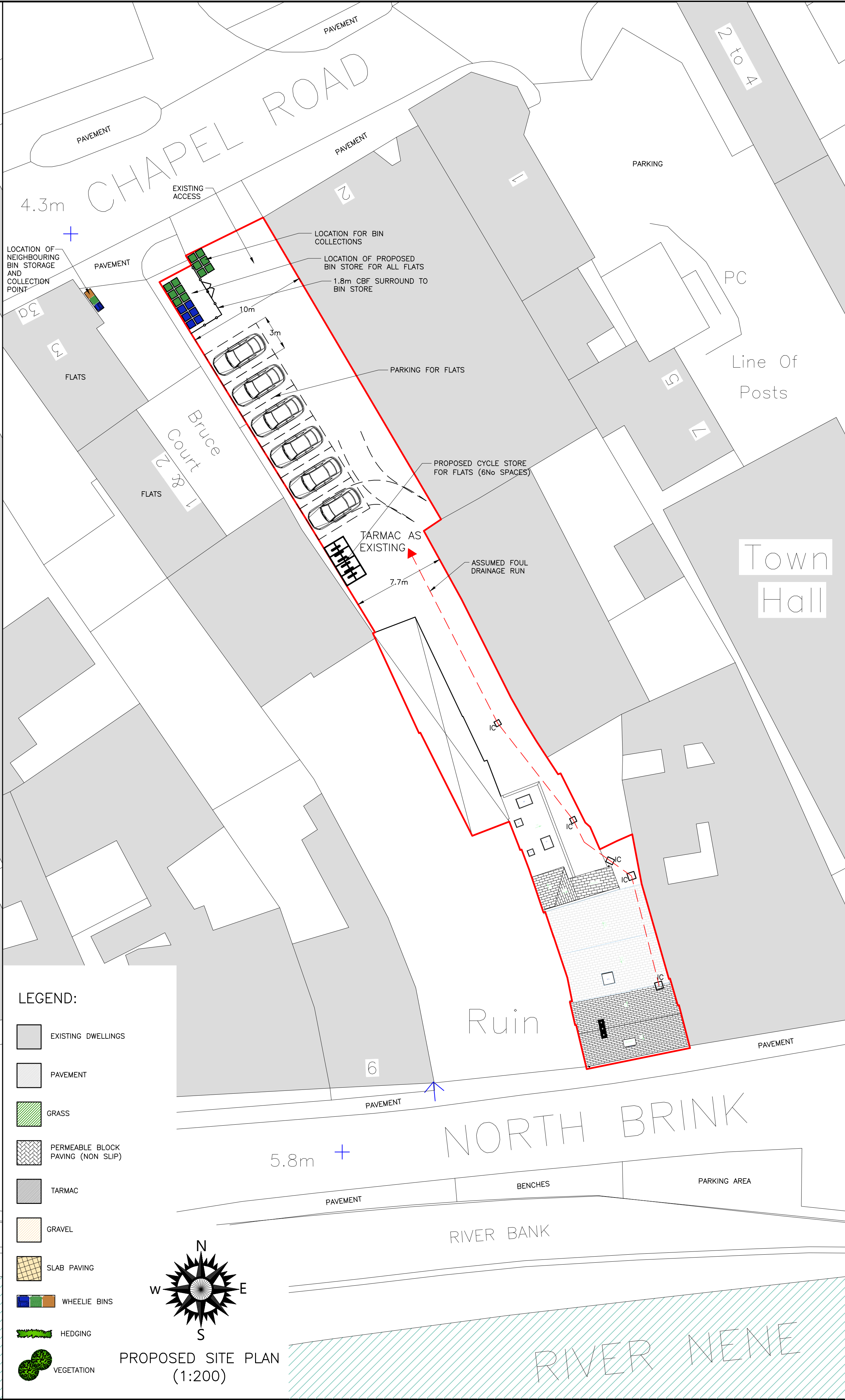
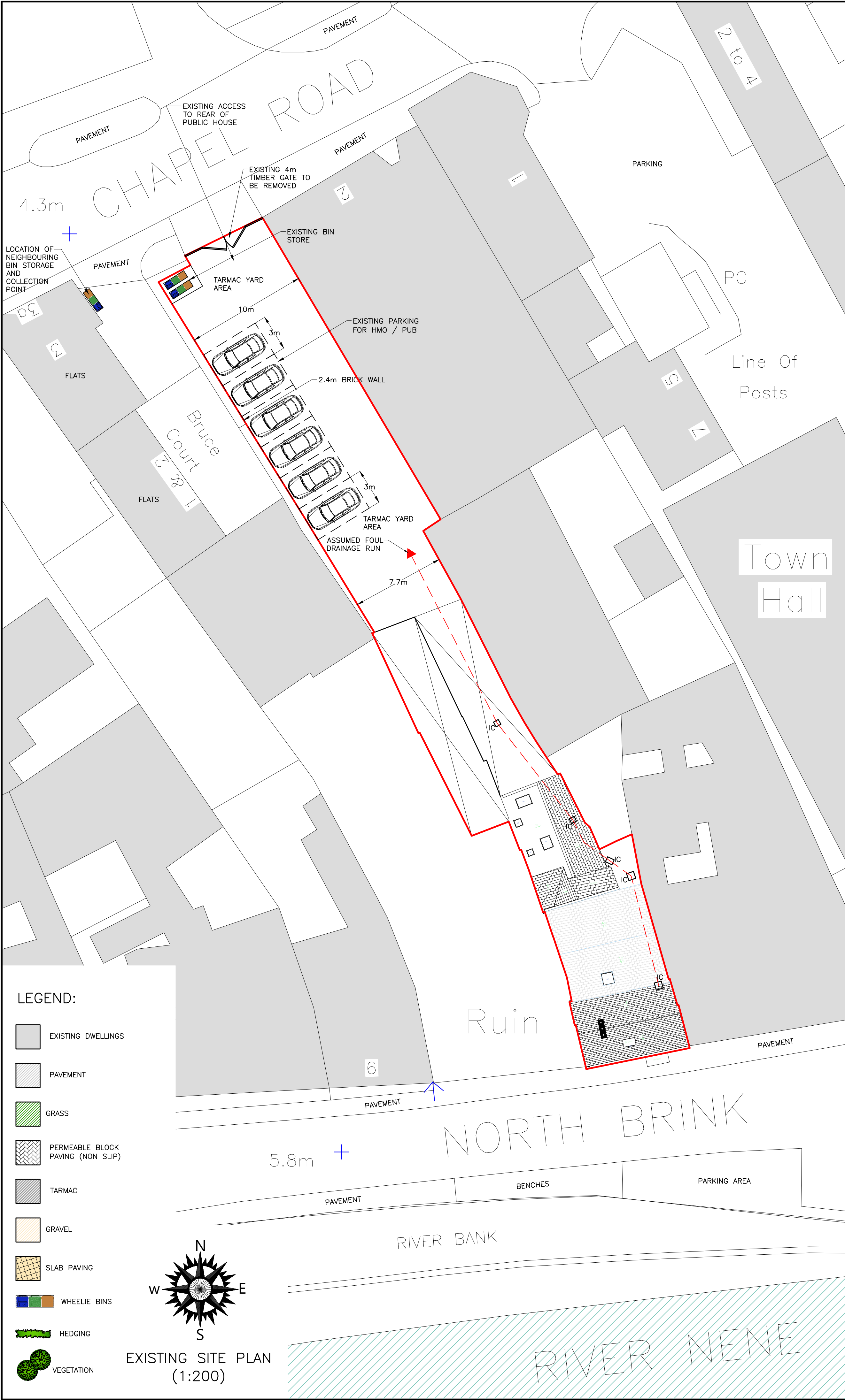


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 Fenland District Boundary







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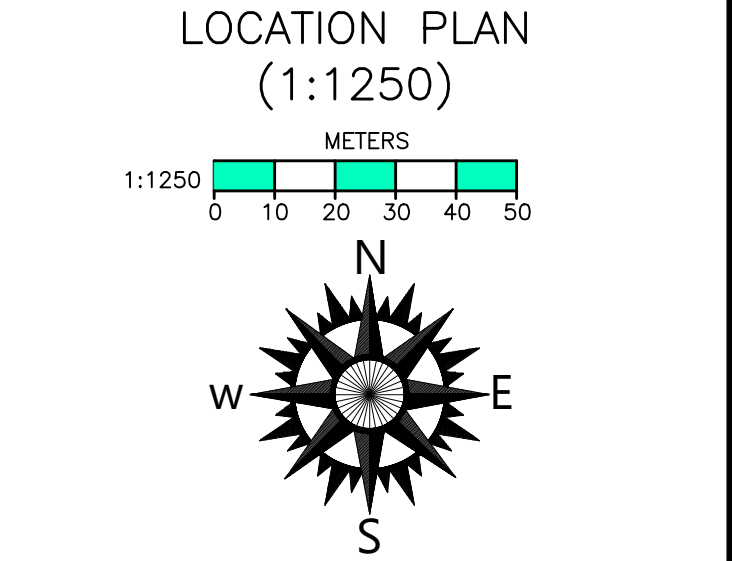
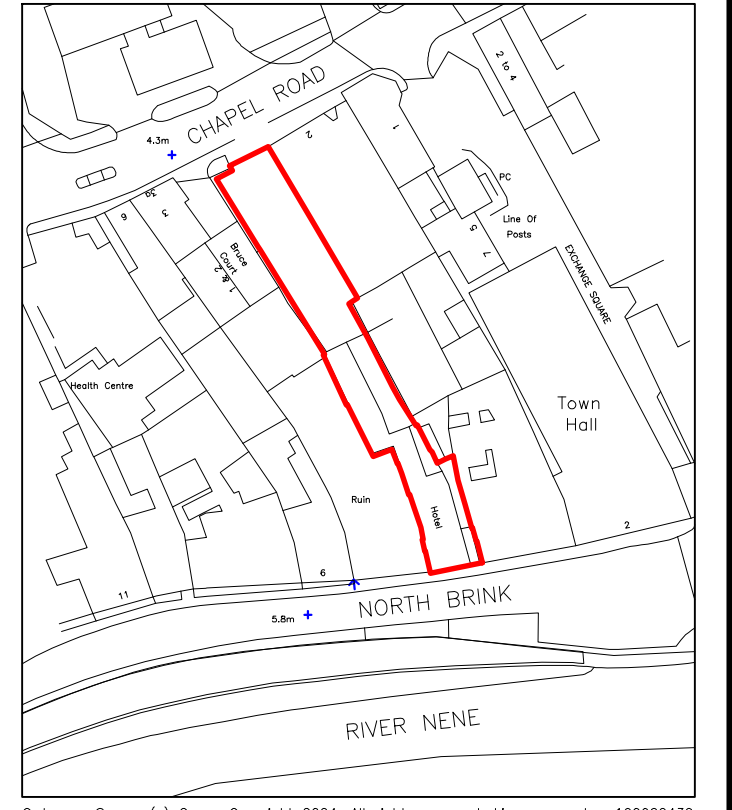
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All finishes, insulation and damp-proofing to architect's details



A	PLANNERS COMMENTS	JUN 2025
	REVISIONS	DATE

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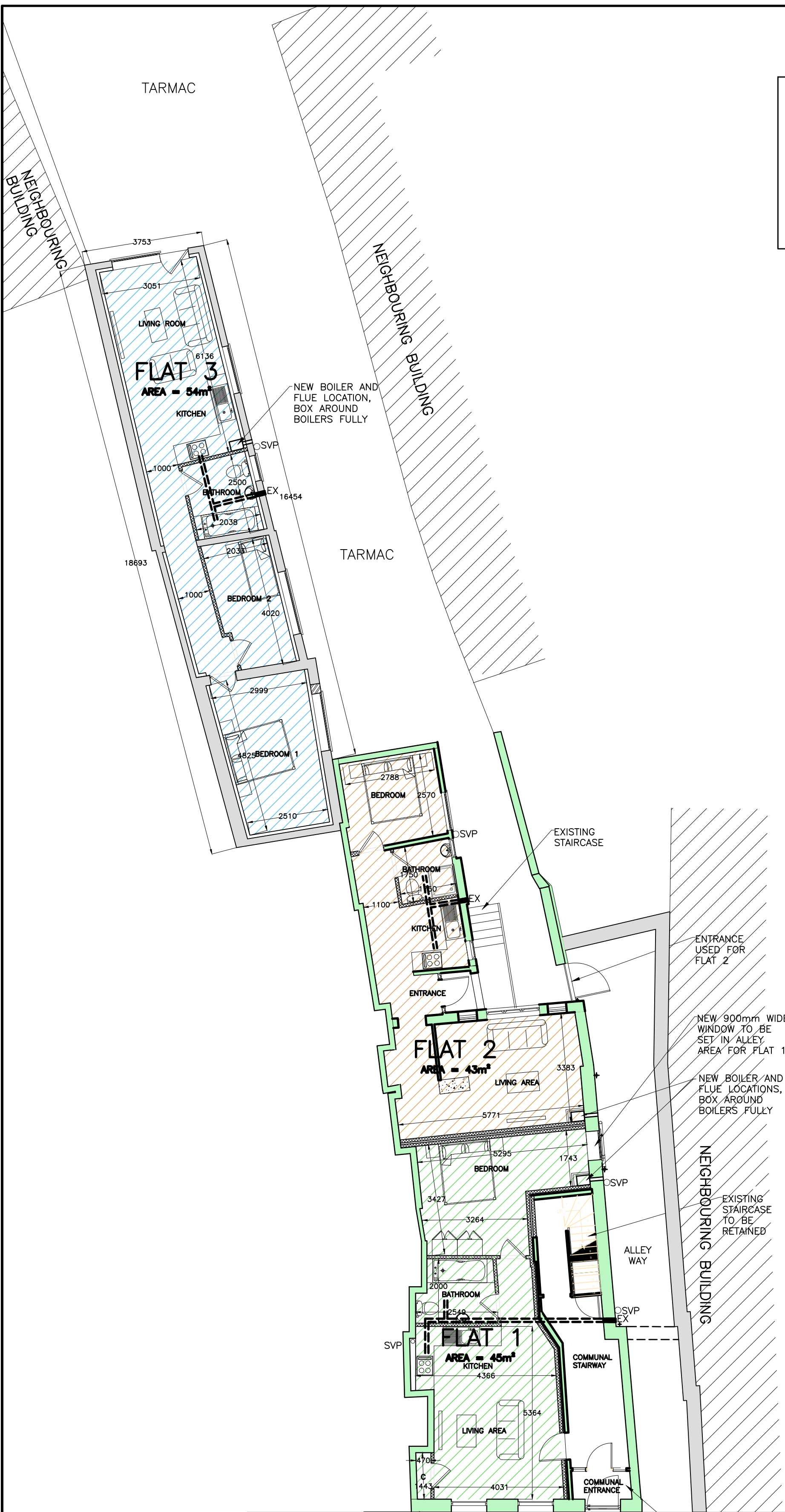
1 Gordon Avenue, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 8AJ

Tel: 01354 655454  
Fax: 01354 660467  
E-mail: info@mortonandhall.co.uk  
Website: www.mortonconsultingengineers.co.uk

Fenland District Council Building Design Awards winner

CLIENT	
Wisbech Home Property Ltd	
PROJECT	
Hare & Hounds, North Brink, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 1JR	
TITLE	
Existing & Proposed Site Plans	
DRAWN	DATE OF ISSUE
G.Boreham	
CHECKED	
DATE	DRAWING NUMBER
Feb 2025	H10091/01_A
SCALE	
As Shown	

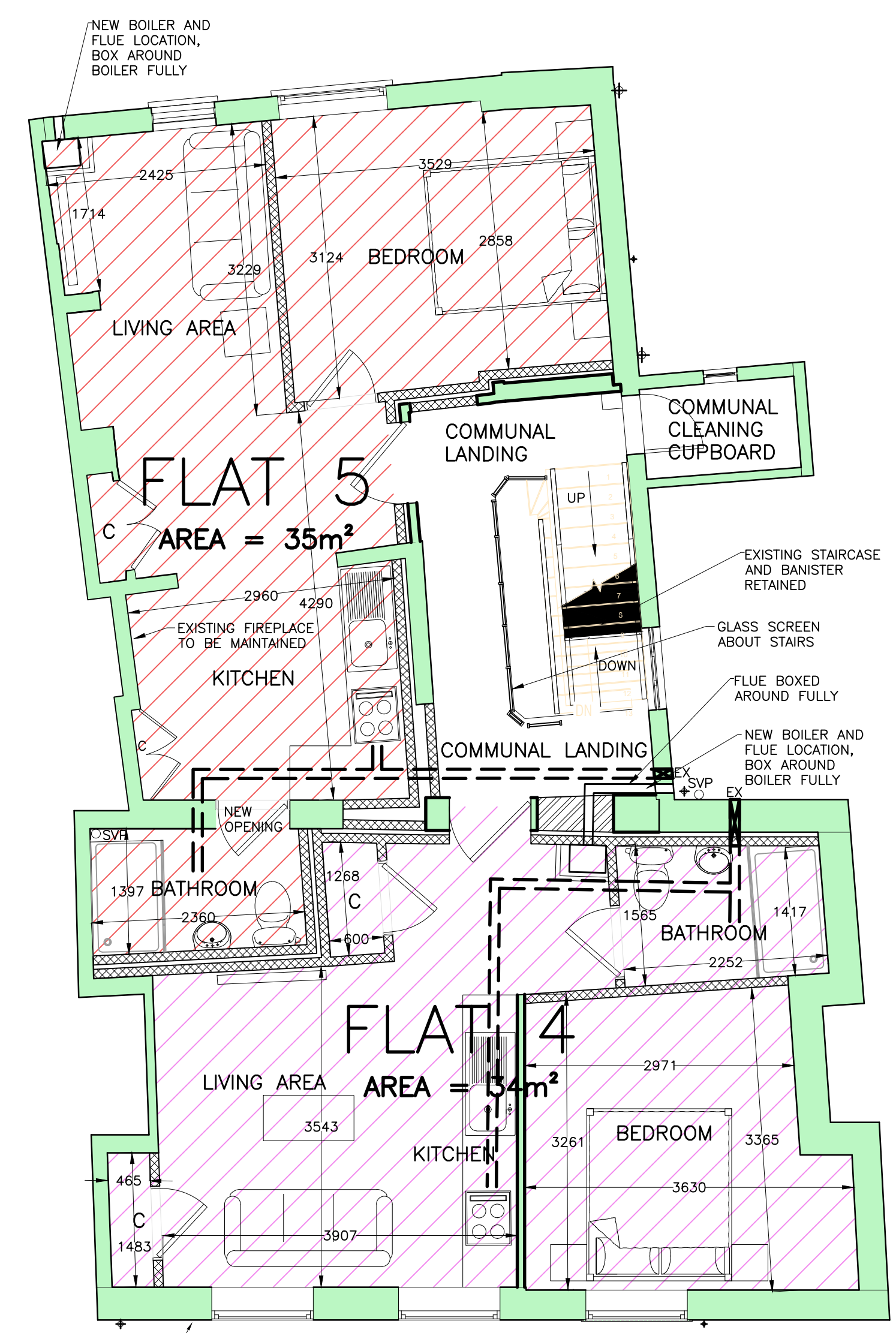




PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
(1:100)

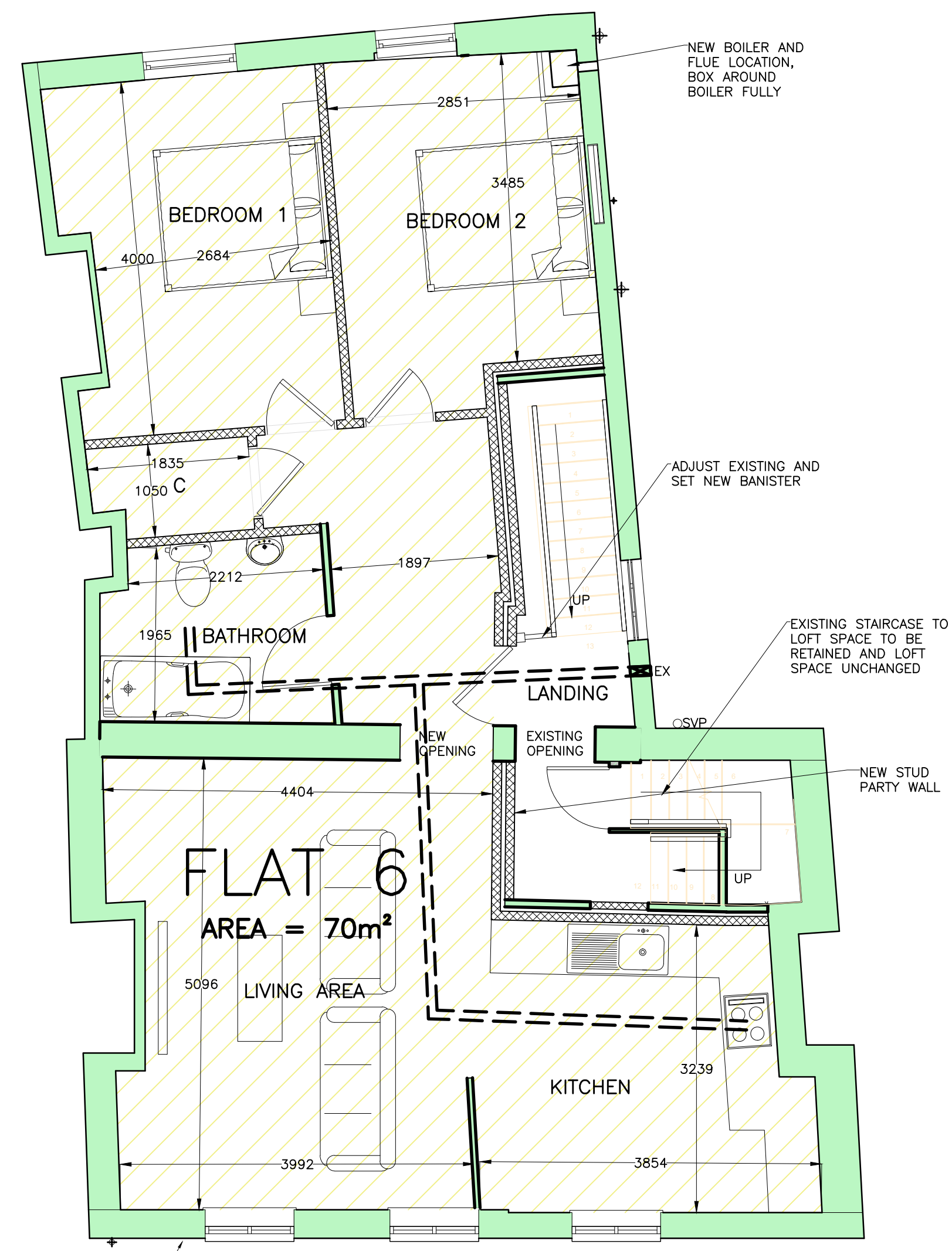
EXISTING WALL TO BE RETAINED

BASEMENT AND THIRD  
FLOOR AREAS TO REMAIN  
AS EXISTING, NO CHANGES



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
(1:50)

EXISTING WALL TO BE RETAINED

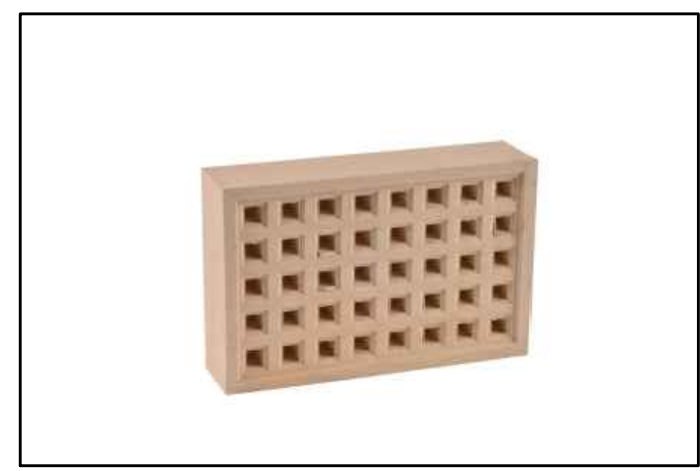


PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
(1:50)

EXISTING WALL TO BE RETAINED

LEGEND :

- FLAT ONE (1 BED FLAT)
- FLAT TWO (1 BED FLAT)
- FLAT THREE (2 BED FLAT)
- FLAT FOUR (1 BED FLAT)
- FLAT FIVE ( 1 BED FLAT)
- FLAT SIX (2 BED FLAT)



EXAMPLE OF CLAY AIR BRICK  
FOR EXTRACTOR FANS OUTLET  
(EX)

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All finishes, insulation and damp-proofing to architect's details

B A	PLANNERS COMMENTS	SEP 2025
	REVISIONS	JUN 2025

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CONSULTING STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

1 Gordon Avenue,  
March,  
Cambridgeshire,  
PE15 8AJ

Tel: 01354 655454  
Fax: 01354 660467  
E-mail: info@mortonandhall.co.uk  
Website: www.mortonandhall.co.uk

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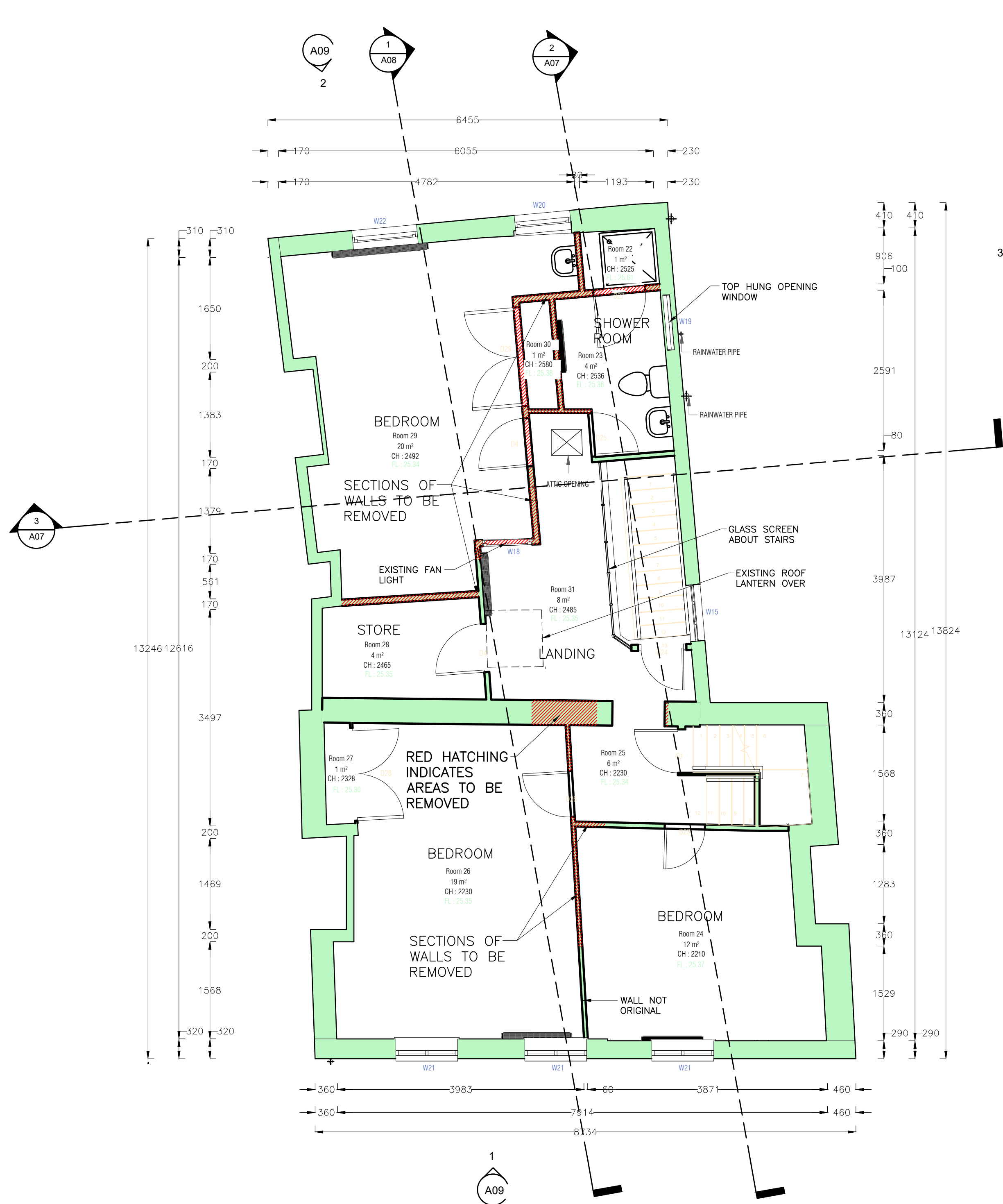
Wisbech Home Property Ltd

Hare & Hounds,  
North Brink, Wisbech,  
Cambridgeshire,  
PE13 1JR

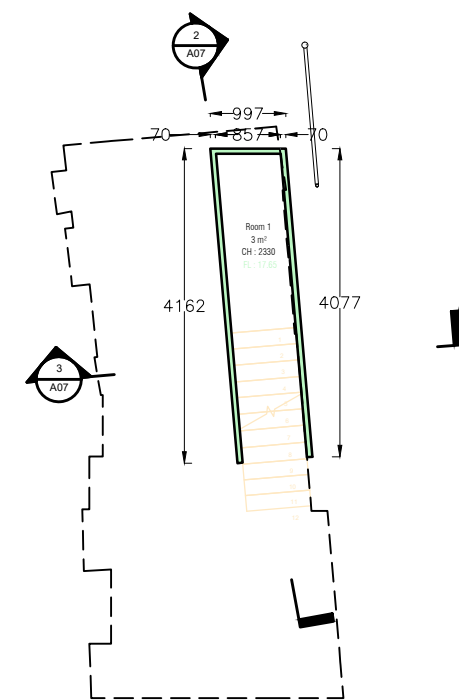
Proposed Floor Plans

DRAWN G.Boreham	DATE OF ISSUE
CHECKED	
DATE Feb 2025	DRAWING NUMBER H10091/06 <sub>B</sub>
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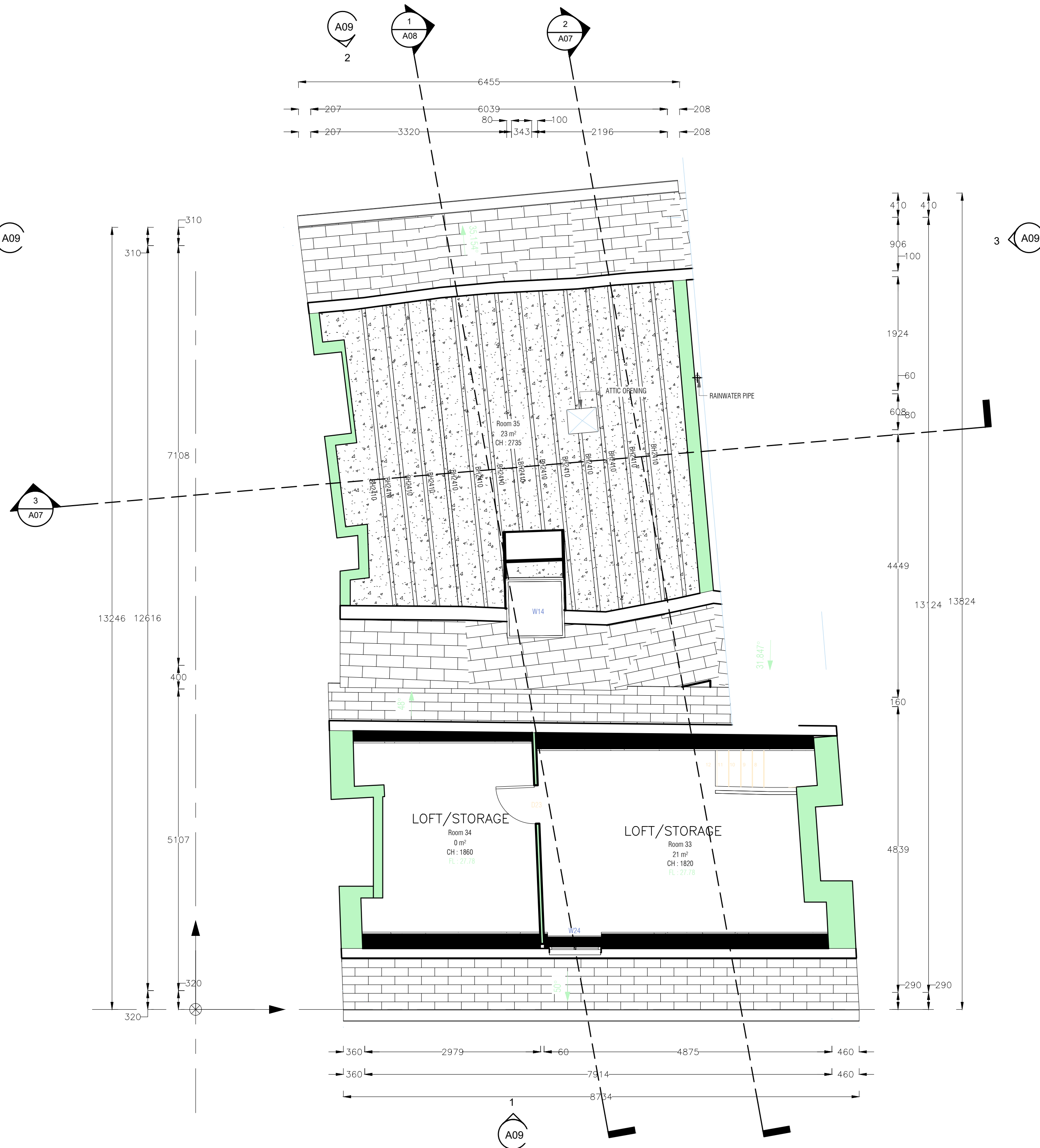




EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN (1:50)



EXISTING BASEMENT STAIRS PLAN  
(NO CHANGES)  
(1:100)



EXISTING THIRD FLOOR PLAN,  
TO REMAIN UNCHANGED  
(1:50)

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SEE DRAWING H10091/04  
FOR SECTIONS

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1 Gordon Avenue,  
March,  
Cambridgeshire,  
PE15 8AJ

Tel: 01354 655454  
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E-mail: info@mortonandhall.co.uk  
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CLIENT	
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PROJECT	
Hare & Hounds, North Brink, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 1JR	
TITLE	
Existing Second & Third Floor Plans	
DRAWN	DATE OF ISSUE
G.Boreham	
CHECKED	
DATE	DRAWING NUMBER
Feb 2025	H10091/03A
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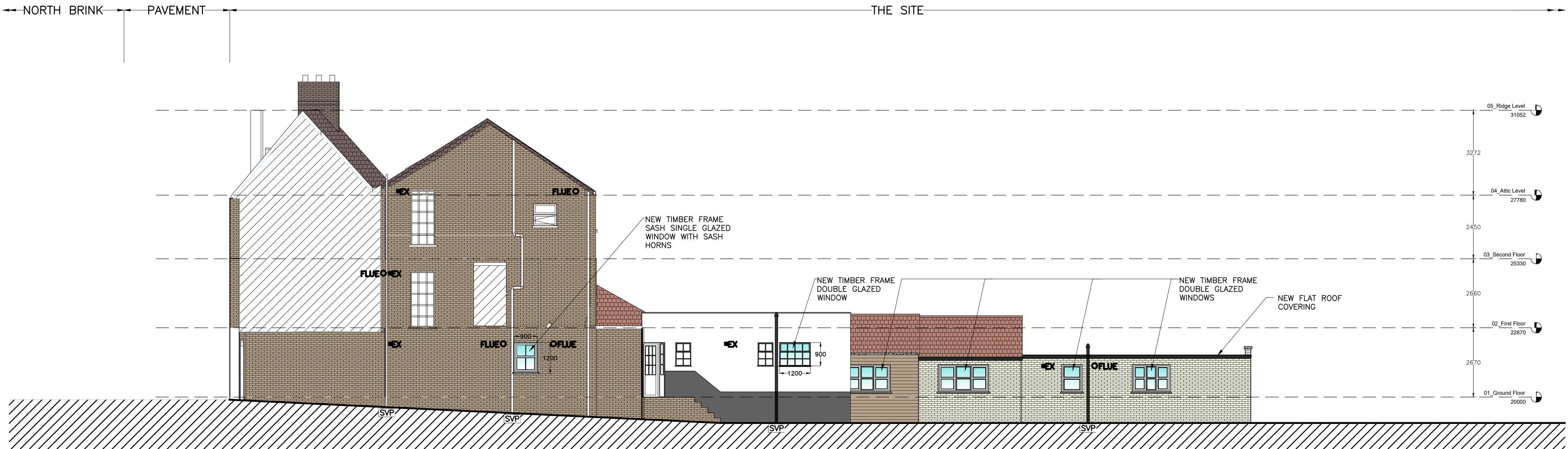




PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION  
TO REMAIN UNCHANGED  
(1:100)



PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION (1:100)



PROPOSED RHS ELEVATION (1:100)

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B A	PLANNERS COMMENTS	SEP 2025 JUN 2025	
	REVISIONS	DATE	
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CLIENT			
Wisbech Home Property Ltd			
PROJECT			
Hare & Hounds, North Brink, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 1JR			
TITLE			
Proposed Elevations			
DRAWN G.Boreham		DATE OF ISSUE	
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DATE Feb 2025		DRAWING NUMBER	
SCALE As Shown		H10091/07_B	