BRACKLEY TOWN COUNCIL
20 High Street, Brackley, Northants NN13 7DS
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To: Cllrs Baker, Cartmell, Judd, Kew, Langford, Sharps, Thompson, Tiller, Watt, E Wiltshire, and Young.

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of the **Direct Responsibilities and General Purposes Committee** to be held on **Monday 18 September** following the Planning and General Works meeting in Brackley Town Hall, Market Place, Brackley, NN13 7AB.

13 September 2023

KHale

Town Clerk

AGENDA

Members of the press and public are invited to attend

200/23 Apologies for absence

Members are asked to receive and, if appropriate, approve apologies.

201/23 Declaration of interest

Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in items on the agenda, and the nature of that interest, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, and Brackley Town Council's Code of Conduct.

202/23 Public participation

This section of the meeting gives members of the public who are present an opportunity to speak. You may speak on any item which appears on the agenda for this evening's meeting. The session will last for a maximum of 15 minutes with any individual contribution lasting a maximum of 3 minutes. Members of the public should address their representations through the Chairman of the meeting.

203/23 Approval of minutes

Members are asked to receive and approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Direct Responsibilities and General Purposes Committee held on Monday 17 July 2023

204/23 Replacement of "Ski Stepper" at St James Lake – report attached

To consider the replacement of the ski stepper at St James Lake

Recommendation: To replace with a new unit

205/23 **Town Hall – Quinquennial Inspection Report – attached**

Members are asked to receive the Quinquennial Inspection Report for the Town Hall dated July 2023.

Recommendation: to accept the recommendations for repairs listed within the report. Budget to be taken from Ear Marked Reserves, Town Hall.

206/23 **12 Month Review of Bench at Jenny's Pond**

Agenda item 199/22 Direct Responsibilities, 26 September 2022. It was resolved to leave the bench in situ and to review the situation again in 12 months' time.

Recommendation: As there have been no further issues, the bench to remain but review on a regular basis and brought back to the committee if there are issues in the future.

207/23 **Bleed Kit Locations**

Members' views are sought as to where the bleed kits can be. Suggestions are next to the defibrillators on our venues at: public toilets in the town centre, the Old Fire Station and Egerton Hall.

Members' instruction is requested.

208/23 **Stability Testing (cemetery) for other parishes**

This was discussed by the staffing committee who agreed to estates time for this as a chargeable service.

Recommendation: To offer this service to other parishes as long as it does not attract overtime payments for our staff.

209/23 **Matters for Information**

210/23 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

It is proposed that, in accordance with Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press is excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

211/23 **Swallow Close/Falcon Way**

Pink report

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Minutes of the **Direct Responsibilities and General Purposes Committee** held on **Monday 17 July** in Brackley Town Hall, Market Place, Brackley, NN13 7AB.

Present: Cllrs Baker, Cartmell, Judd, Kew, Langford, Sharps, Thompson, Tiller, Watt, E Wiltshire, and Young.

Officers: Town Clerk, Operations Manager, Facilities Manager

138/23 Apologies for absence

None

139/23 Declaration of interest

None

140/23 Public participation

None

141/23 Approval of minutes

On the proposition of Cllr Cartmell, it was **RESOLVED** to:

Approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Direct Responsibilities and General Purposes Committee held on Monday 19 June 2023.

142/23 Matters for Information

The bath is being fitted in the loft on Thursday 20 July. Agenda item will come forward for the disposal of the cooper bath in September.

Events – Pop up Forest School – 15 August 2023
Classic Cars – 20 August 2023
Happy Circus – 22 August 2023
Community Show – 23 September 2023

Notification from our solicitors late on the 12 July, that the resident involved in the land grab situation has been served with a Notice of Issue from the courts. The resident has until the 15 July 2023 to reply. We are waiting to hear from our solicitors as to the outcome of this.

Direct Responsibilities **458/23 – Egerton Hall Extension** – look to appoint an architect for the extension at Egerton Hall.

We have now done this and he has produced 3 options, we need to get one agreed through council so that we can progress this project. Waiting until September is a big delay if we want to get this done in this financial year.

Direct Responsibilities **462/23 – Unregistered Land** – Clerk to work with Land & Property Registration

This project has highlighted a significate area of land, of important to BTC which should have been passed to BTC in 1977. I want to push this forward but I need a decision from Council as to the extent of the land that we go for.

Therefore – an extra ordinary meeting for the 24 July 2023, 2 item agenda to be issued on the 19 July.

143/23 Exclusion of Press and Public

On the proposition of Cllr Kew, it was **RESOLVED** that:

In accordance with Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press is excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

144/23 Town Centre Toilets

On the proposition of Cllr Sharps it was **RESOLVED** to:

Fit cameras supplied by Radstone Security and the toilets are not opened until the CCTV is installed.

Cllr Thompson – out of P&C

Meeting Closed: 19.54

Signed: Dated:

Agenda No: 204/23

BRACKLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Direct Responsibilities and General Purposes Committee
Monday 18 September 2023

Purpose of report: To consider the replacement of "Ski Stepper" at St James Lake

Recommendation: To replace with a complete new unit

Main issues and considerations:

The bearings have failed in the current ski stepper and as they are sealed units this has led to significant wear to some of the shafts and frame parts. Having spoken to the manufacturer, they have suggested the best course of action is to replace the complete ski stepper.

The item forms part of the fitness trail at St James Lake and is around 6 years old (warranty period was 2 years).

Financial implications:

Replacement Ski Stepper including carriage £2,475. Budget available in Open Space Equipment and Repairs

Staffing implications:

Around 2 hours of estates' team time to fit the new unit to the existing foundation

Other implications:

None perceived

Background papers:

Quote attached

Author
Mark Stopps
Estates Manager

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HAGS-SMP Ltd
Clockhouse Nurseries
Clockhouse Lane East
Egham
Surrey, TW20 8PG

SALES QUOTATION

Quote #	Quote Date	Page
2301244\000	01/08/2023	1

Invoice To:

Brackley Town Council
20 High Street
Brackley
Northamptonshire
NN13 7DS
UK

Deliver To:

Brackley Town Council
20 High Street
Brackley
Northamptonshire
NN13 7DS
UK

ENQUIRY FROM Mark Stopps **QUOTED BY** JF **CUSTOMER ID** B0117

LINE	QTY	UNIT	PART ID	DESCRIPTION / COMMENTS	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE
				Supply and deliver a Ski Stepper (Colours - Green & Titanium) - Ground anchor not required		
100000	1.0	EA	FS001N(002)	GYM - Ski Stepper	2,250.00	£ 2,250.00
200000	1.0	PD	C-VL	CARRIAGE - VALUE	225.00	£ 225.00
					Total Price	**£2,475.00**

TERMS:

THIS QUOTATION IS VALID FOR 30 DAYS.

PRICES BASED ON UNRESTRICTED ACCESS WITH VEHICLE (LARGE TRANSIT / TIPPER) ACCESS WITHIN 30 METRES OF SITE ENTRANCE.

PRICES SUBJECT TO FULL SITE SURVEY
ALL RATES/PRICES BASED ON FULL JOB SPECIFICATION

PLEASE NOTE: THE ABOVE PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE VAT

RENA PITSILLI-GRAHAM - ARCHITECT

BA Arch, Dip Arch, GradDiplCons(AA), RIBA, AABC

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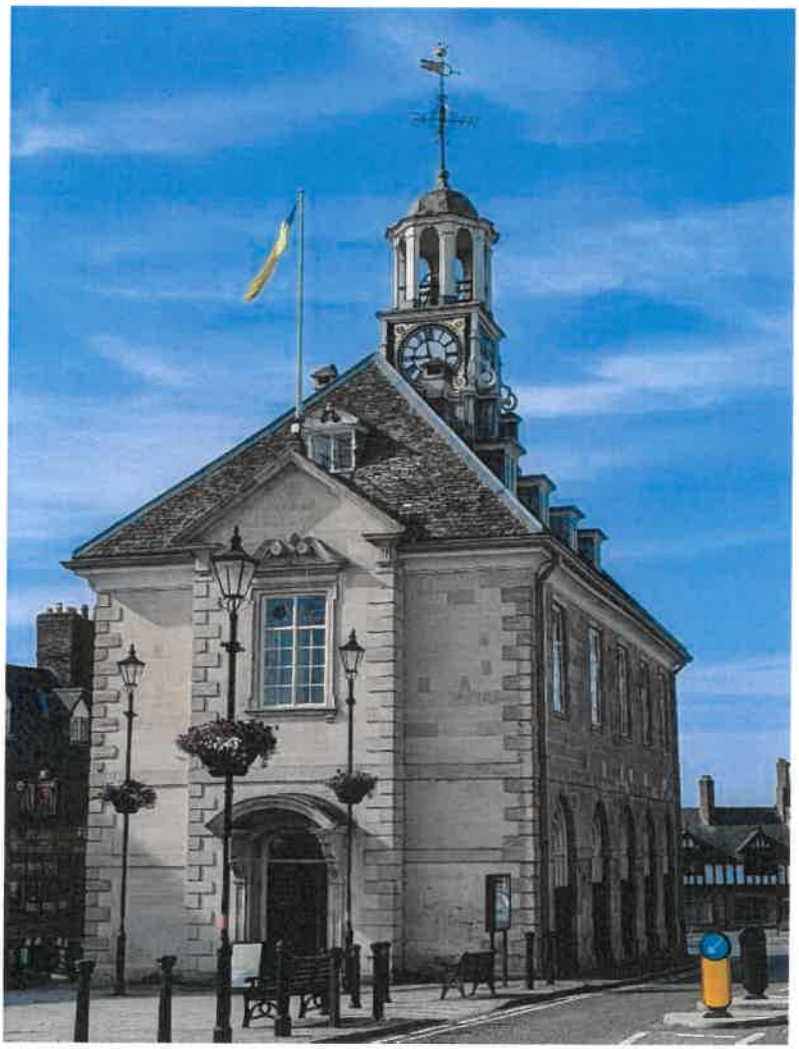
QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION REPORT with Recommendations for Repair



BRACKLEY TOWN HALL

First Quinquennial Inspection July 2023

For Brackley Town Council

116/19R/rpg

BRACKLEY TOWN HALL – First Quinquennial Inspection
For Brackley Town Council July2023

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Photographs referred to in the report sheets

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1. Introduction

The Report

1.1 The report was commissioned by the Town Clerk of Brackley Town Council based on the recommendation made in the Maintenance Plan for 5 yearly inspections to be carried out.

1.2 It is a summary report to give an overview of the condition of the Hall and to make recommendations for its repair in terms of urgency and priority. It is based on the format of the Quinquennial inspection reports required by the "Inspection Of Churches Measure", 1955, which has proved an excellent tool for planning the care and repair of churches and can apply equally well to other historic buildings.

The Scope and Limitations of the Report

1.3 The report focuses on significant defects affecting the external envelope, (roofs and walls) and internal finishes.

1.4 The report is based on the findings of an inspection made from a hydraulic hoist to view the roof from all sides and other easily accessible places. The flag pole gantry was viewed from the hoist. The lift motor room was not inspected. Covered, unexposed or inaccessible parts of the building have not been inspected and it is not possible to report that any such part of the building is free from defect or decay.

1.5 No manhole covers were lifted. Details of other areas not accessed and other limitations on the inspection are given in the main body of the report.

1.6 The report is not a Specification or a detailed Schedule of work for the execution of the recommended work and should not be used as such.

Orientation

2.1 The building is rectangular in shape. The long axis of the building is approximately 10 degrees to the north west; see Fig 2 Site Plan in Section 2. However, for the purposes of this report the Market place elevation is taken as directly north. Compass points are referred to in the report as N, S, E, W, NE, etc

Architect, Date of Inspection, Weather

1.7 The inspection was carried out by Rena Pitsilli-Graham. The weather during the inspection was fair.

Previous Inspections

1.8 This is the first quinquennial inspection since the major repair and refurbishment project was completed in 2018. There are no previous QI inspections.

1.9 The electrical inspection carried out in January 2023 was made available to us. Refer to Section 8 of this report.

Building Records – Building Manual and Log Book

1.10 The Conservation Plan Ref 1054_D028 31.03.2015, contains a wealth of information on the history and development of the building. A Maintenance Strategy document was produced as part to the HLF submission.

1.11 The Building and O&M Manual was submitted by the contractor at the end of the building project. An electronic copy was handed to the inspecting architect on a USB stick. Sections 1-3 were missing. This is of no consequence.

1.12 The Manual and other documents should be kept in a secure place. They should be updated regularly and be made available to the Inspecting Architect at the time of future inspections. New Town Council personnel must be made aware of their existence. Damage to the building fabric can occur from the use of wrong materials in repair or day to day maintenance.

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Descriptive Information and Report Structure

1.13 The description of the historical development and architecture of the building within section 2 is based on the Conservation Plan, authored by the inspecting architect. Footnotes are used in the report to provide additional important information on the history and development of the building.

1.14 A glossary of terms used in the report is shown in Fig. 1 with additional explanations below.

1.15 The Report sections are as given on the contents page. The recommendations are listed in priority categories in Section 17 to enable the planning of the repairs. For ease of reference the report categories are noted at the end of the report items in italics. Refer to section 17 for the notation.

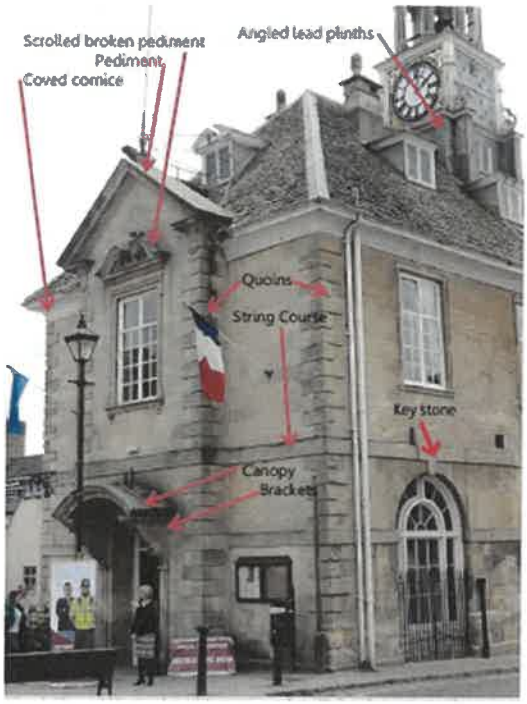

Fig. 1 Common architectural terms for the building

Additional Terms used in the Report:

Stone Masonry Terms

Ashlars- Smooth finished stones with squared edges used as a facing for walls.

Dressings – Worked flat stones to surround a doorway or window opening.

Offset plinth- A stepping out at the base of the wall or buttress with the junction formed usually with a shaped, dressed stone.

Quarries – In reference to glass. A small square or diamond shaped, glass pane usually set in lead framing to make a large pane.

Leaded lights – Windows made with small pieces of glass held together with lead cames (H shaped strips of lead into which the pieces of glass are fitted. Stained glass is made in the same way.

Timber carpentry Terms

Queen post truss – A queen-post truss with two upright posts, placed about one-third of the way from each end of the truss, connected across the top by a beam and diagonal brace to the outer truss rafter. The central square between the two verticals is unbraced in short spans.

Abbreviations used in the report

LH/RH - Left hand/ Right hand
RW Goods – A general term to describe rainwater goods meaning gutters, hoppers and downpipes.
SVP- Soil and Vent Pipes

General Conservation Concepts

Conservation and Stabilising repairs mean repair using the lime method whereby eroded stones are conserved with the application of soft lime putty mortars to fill cracks and cavities, limiting the ingress of water and thus arresting or slowing the process of natural decay.

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2. General Information

Location

2.2 The Town Hall is located on a sloping site in a tight urban space, in the town of Brackley, Northamptonshire. The main road runs to the W side of the building with a smaller access road on the E and very narrow pavements along the roads on both sides. The historic market place stretches to the N. To the S there is a small square. The newly formed semicircular steps with a small terrace form a setting for the building on the main approach to the town from the S.

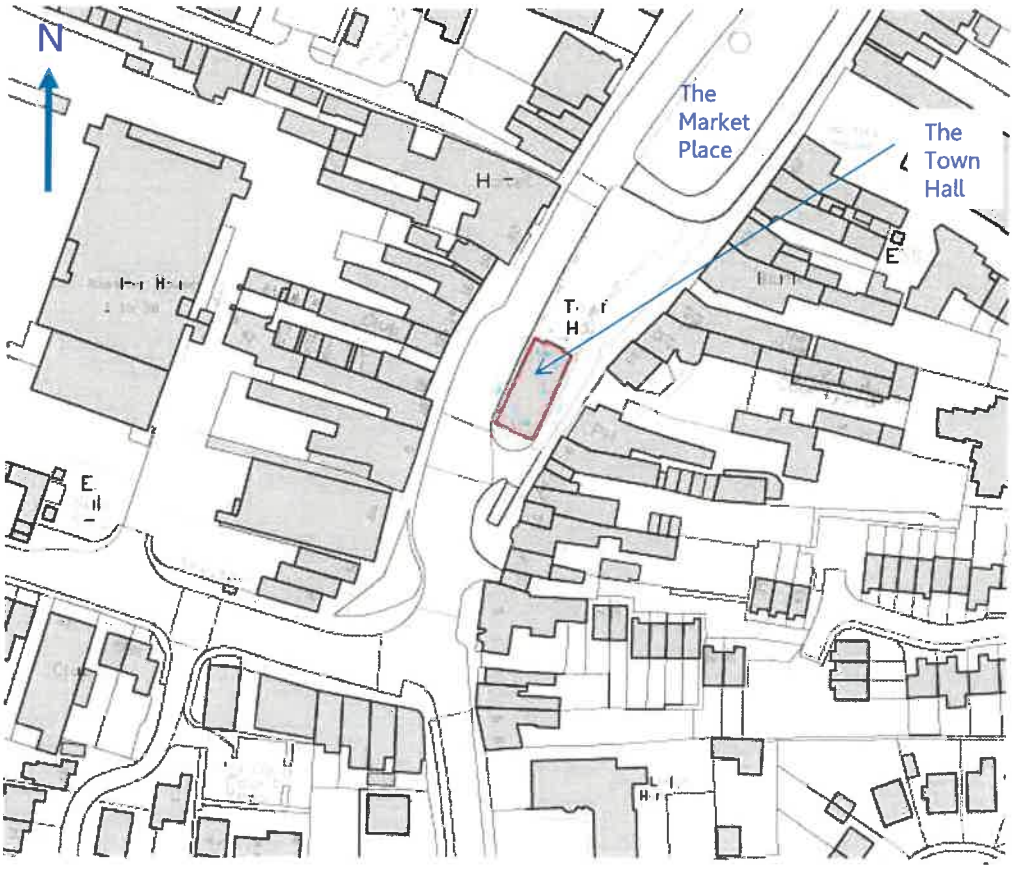

Fig. 2 . Site plan – extract from drg 1054 T1000 courtesy of Haverstock

Local Authority, Listing

2.3 The local authority is Brackley Town Council in the County of Northamptonshire. The building is listed Grade II* List Entry Number: 1190100

Architectural Development and Description of the Building

2.4 Brackley Town Hall (BTH) was built by Scroop Egerton, 4th Earl of Bridgewater for Brackley Corporation. The original building contract of 19th September 1704 survives and names John Wootton, a local Brackley mason, as the builder working to a draft (drawing). The clear and well-proportioned original design as well as the Baroque feel of the cupola, whose form and design appears to have been there from the start, suggests that an architect, rather than a mason, was involved in producing the drawings.

2.5 The possible links to Sir Christopher Wren or Nicholas Hawksmoor are explored in the Conservation Plan.

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2.6 The building was originally 4 bays long by 2 bays wide, two storeys high with an open arcade on the ground floor, a steeply pitched roof surmounted by an impressive 3-stage clock turret and weathervane; Fig. 3. The ground floor would have provided a covered market place and the upper floor would have been a place of assembly also serving as a courtroom. Evidence of the stair shown in an 1837 plan, was not found but during the recent work the bases of three central stone columns that would have supported the upper floor were discovered[1]. The attic may have been used for storage.

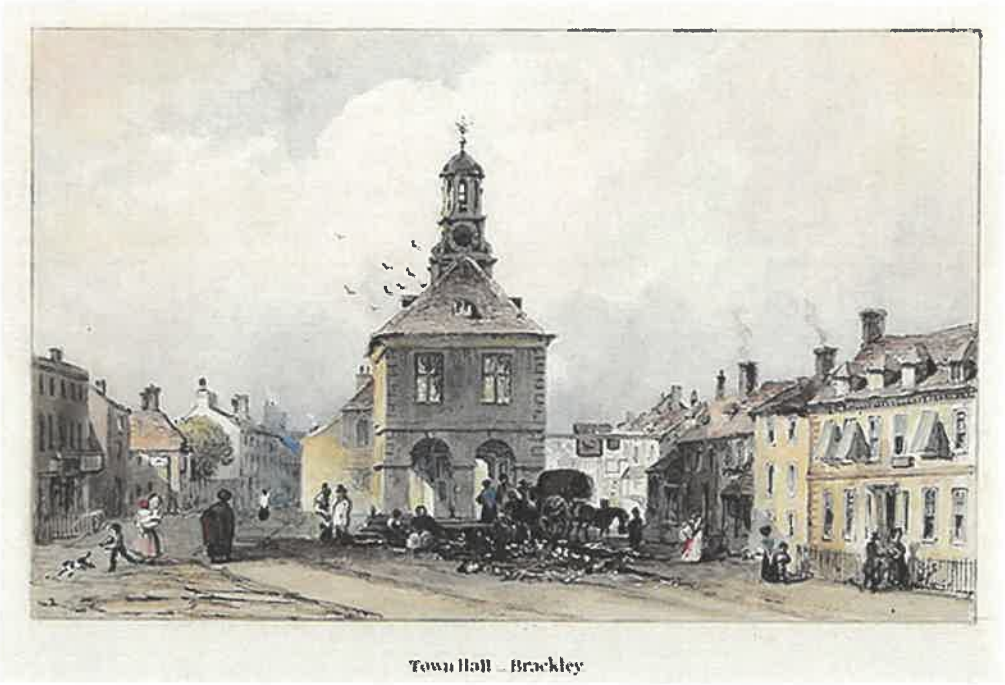

Fig. 3 Town Hall - Brackley by George Sidney Shepherd 1836

2.7 The building continued very much unchanged until the mid-19th century when the arcade was enclosed, first with railings, shown in an early 19th century print and later by the introduction of the windows we see today. The 1837 plan shows two prisoner holding cells and a Constable's room in the NW corner, but it is not clear when these were introduced.

2.8 Documentary evidence suggests that in 1876, the upper room was paneled below dado level with oak timber taken from St Peter's Church Brackley.

2.9 The first, major building phase in the life of the building after its construction in 1704 came in 1883-84 when it was extended by one bay to the N. It is almost entirely certain that the building work was paid for by Francis Charles Granville Egerton, 3rd Earl of Ellesmere. The architect of the 1883 work is not known but circumstantial evidence suggests Charles Bather of Shrewsbury as a strong possibility. He was involved in the redevelopment of many buildings in Brackley for the Earl.

2.10 The 1883 work respected the original design and symmetry of the building. The N bay is seamlessly slotted into the flank walls. The cupola form was retained and moved to the centre the of extended roof. The current clock dates from this restoration although the historical prints testify that there was always a clock on the cupola.

[1] The history of the uncovered floor and evidence of the Constables room and holding cells refer to "Archaeological observation and recording at Brackley Town Hall, 2017" Report by ISHeritage Ltd ENN108799

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2.11 The internal changes on the ground floor were more drastic. The stone pillars were replaced with the present double row of cast iron columns. The first floor timber structure was adapted although some 1704 beams were retained.

2.12 Although the form of the roof was retained, dendrochronology has shown that the current roof structure dates from1883.

2.13 The primary purpose of the N extension was to accommodate a staircase, but this was replaced by another timber stair in 1903. A few years afterwards the absence of a second fire escape stair, which prevented some events being held in the upper floor, led to an external metal stair being introduced in 1913. This was replaced in the 1950s and was still in place in 2017, when it was finally removed.

2.14 During the years spanning 2012-2018 a major programme of repair and repurposing of the Town Hall took place. Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other organisations enabled this to take place. The architects for the work between 2014-2018 were Haverstock as the lead consultant with Rena Pitsilli-Graham Architect as the conservation accredited architect. The design changes were aimed at increasing the use of the building and creating an income stream for future maintenance and repair.

2.15 The building work commenced in late 2016 and completed in late 2018. The 1903 internal staircase was removed and replaced by new steel stair wrapping around a new lift for step free access to the first floor. The toilets previously housed in the 1883 extension were relocated to the centre of the ground floor, their place taken by a small, Town Council office. The ground floor was fitted out as a café. New doors were made to open onto the newly created terrace to the south.

2.16 The first floor hall in the original 4 bays remained and was repaired and redecorated. A new kitchen was provided in the 1883 bay to serve it. In the attic, the joists were floored over and a studio flat created with a small bathroom and kitchen area. The new plant room was housed in the 1883 bay above the kitchen and the lift plant room on the opposite side above the lift. New services were introduced throughout.

2.17 The wall finishes were fully repaired and the roof recovered.

Constructional Details

2.18 The original building is constructed of the local Helmdon stone, faced in ashlar with rubble walling on the inside face. Limited use of a darker more durable stone is made at the base of the building and in the original ground floor paving[2]. The 1883 extension was primarily built with Bathstone although some of the original Helmdon stone N quoins were relocated to the new corners of the building. In the 20th century repairs to the stonework were carried out in Ketton and other stones. For the 2017 repairs, on the advice of the geologist, Guiting stone[3] was used to repair the Helmdon stone.

2.19 The roof has traditionally been covered with local stone slates. Lead is used for the ridge and hip flashings as well as for the flat roofs and cheeks to the dormers.

2.20 The Clock Turret forms the iconic feature of the building, towering above the roof. It is constructed in timber and the lower two stages and the cupola roof clad in lead.

2.21 The first floor 4-light windows are in timber and are also unchanged in form. Paint analysis has suggested that some of the timbers may date back to 1707. Centrally hinged pivot windows in the upper lights are glazed with rectangular glass quarries. The lower lights have timber glazing bars.

[2] Dr Stephen Parry consultant geologist was not certain of the stone type but thought "a source within either the Marlstone Rock Formation (Early Jurassic Lias Group) or the Northampton Sand Formation (Middle Jurassic Inferior Oolite Group) seems most likely. Outcrops of both stratigraphic units are found in relative proximity to Brackley, to the west and north" Quote from email to us of 01.10.2014.

[3] from the Guiting/Coscombe Quarry, Ford, Temple Guiting near Cheltenham.

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2.22 The ground floor windows are also in timber with side hung casements in the narrow outer lights. The central light and fan lights are fixed.

2.23 Further details of original construction including those of the 2017-18 repair project are given in the main body of the report.

Accommodation

2.24 The attic level is given over to the studio flat, (let out for holidays), the plant room, lift motor room and upper flight of stairs. The first floor contains the main hall, a small kitchen and staircase and lift. The ground floor contains the café, toilets, a small community area, a small office and stair and lift.

3. Roofs

General Description

3.1 The roof form has remained unchanged with dormer windows very like the ones seen in early prints and with the cupola structure straddling the ridge in the centre.

3.2 The roof is steeply pitched with hipped ends, covered with local stone slates. Due to funding limitations approximately 75% of the existing slates were reused secured with a single nail as recommended in the Historic England guide on slate roofing. Only large and heavy slates were double nailed.

3.3 The lead to the ridge and hips was renewed and raised above the roof slates to allow through ventilation above new insulation introduced within the roof build up from. There is continuous eaves ventilation and under apron flashings where the main roof slopes abut chimney stacks and the clock cupola structure.

3.4 There are 4 dormer windows on the E and W sides with lead covered flat roofs and cheeks. which were also insulated from the inside face. Ventilation was introduced at the front edge of the dormer roofs and at their abutment to the main roof under the slates. Small V shaped ventilation cowls were introduced on the dormer cheeks.

3.5 There are single dormers at the N and S sides with scrolled broken pediments in timber projecting above the lead flat roofs. The pediment detail was part of the 1883 work. The urns between the pediment scrolls were replaced with hardwood timber.

3.6 On the N side, a small shallow roof behind the 1883 pediment, set at right angles to the main slope is covered with lead forming lead valleys. The section is also ventilated with V shaped ventilators and ventilation slots beneath the slates along the valleys.

3.7 Two stone chimney stacks at the N end were repaired. The E stack houses the new boiler balanced flue extract pipes. The E stack was ventilated but does not contain any services.

3.8 The cooker hood extract and SVPs from the attic kitchen toilet and bath tub are taken through the roof structure into the hollow lead covered plinths at the base of the cupola, discharging through louvred metal grilles on the hidden side facing the roof slopes. It was not possible to inspect these.

3.9 Behind the N pediment a timber gantry protected by metal railings leads to the flag pole set on top of the stone gable. Access is through the opening light of the dormer window above. The gantry was repaired in 2017 and protected with a zipped mesh against pigeons. New louvred grilles were introduced beneath the gantry to ventilate the kitchen extract from the first floor, supply on one side and extract on the other.

Roof Condition

3.10 As a whole, the roof finishes are in good condition but a few defects exist, some of which were dealt with temporarily, during the inspection. Details are as follows:

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North Slope

3.11 On the N side of the roof below the dormer lead apron a number of damaged slates above the gantry leading to the flagpole can be seen. The lead clip to the lead apron is also disturbed; photo 1. The cause is foot traffic when accessing the flagpole. The slates need to be repaired. A longer term solution would be to replace the slates with another piece of lead apron. This would need to be carefully detailed and executed in order to retain the roof ventilation detail.

3.12 The lead in the valley either side of the pediment is beginning to be affected by acid run off from the moss colonising the roof; photo 2. This is not significant at present as the lead is quite thick. The areas should be monitored. It would be helpful if the moss was carefully brushed off the slates above the valley during regular gutter clearance to limit this process.

West Slope

3.13 A small slate beneath the lead covered ridge was missing. It had slipped and was retrieved from the lead gutter behind the stone chimney stack; photo 3. This needs to be refixed to weather the roof and prevent the gap being colonised by wildlife.

3.14 Another slipped tile to the side of the lead covered pier above the second dormer was wedged temporarily during the inspection with a lead offcut picked up from the dormer roof; photos 4 and 5. It needs to be firmly secured.

South Slope

3.15 A missing slate was noted at low level on the W side. This was temporarily replaced during the inspection but a replacement with a matching stone slate is needed. There is a slipped slate higher up below the lead hip roll, also on the W side, which needs to be secured; photos 6 and 7.

3.16 Another slate is missing from beneath the dormer apron and this to be replaced; photo 8.

East Slope

3.17 The stone slates are in good condition overall. In the N section of the roof there is a slate with a missing corner and another where the lower half is missing. The latter should be checked and replaced.

3.18 The roof finishes should be monitored during regular gutter clearance.

The Clock Turret

3.19 The Clock Turret is an interesting architectural composition; fig 4. The angled plinths at the four corners rising from the steep slated roof provide visual anchorage as well as structural stability. The base of these elements was recovered in new lead in 2017.

3.20 The historic lead cladding to the plinths with a fluting at the front and a dog tooth detail down the side was repaired. These elements are generally in good order except for the loosening of the lead clips at the bottom of the cladding in many areas around the base. This is due to the clips being turned too tight against the main lead sheet without any space for the lead sheet to expand; photo 9.

3.21 Disturbed lead clips can also be seen in other locations around the cupola, such as the base of the triangular lead sheets on the S side; photo 7. The clips should be readjusted throughout to allow a gap of 4-5mm mm between the fold and the edge of the sheet. At the same time a few missing tacks to the dog tooth detailing should be replaced.

3.22 The E and W sides of the lead clad base contains leaded light windows. On the W side the windows are fixed but there is an opening casement on the E side. The decorations on this window are failing and redecoration is needed.

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3.23 The Clock stage of the Turret is framed at the corners by tall, scrolled timber brackets supported from the angled plinths at the four corners. I suspect these were replaced at some time in the 20th century before the 2017 repairs. The timberwork is in good condition but all the brackets support algae and need to be cleaned and redecorated.

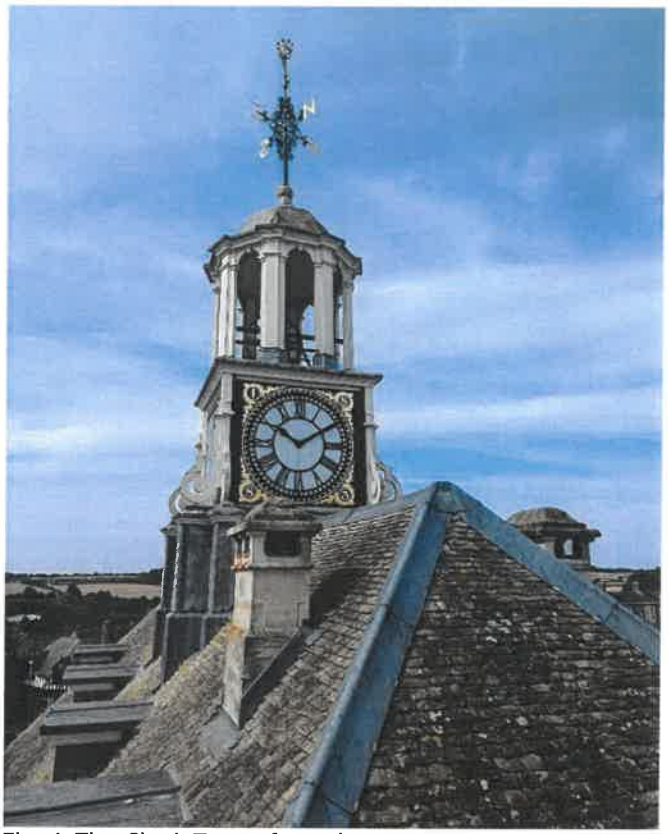

Fig. 4. The Clock Turret from the north

3.24 The N and S faces contain the clocks. The clock panels are in polycarbonate and the metal numeral rings are painted black with the clock hands gilded. The areas around the clock rings are aluminium trays, also painted black with gilding used to pick out decorative corner motifs framing numbers making the 1883 date. The clock facets appeared sound.

3.25 On the E and W sides the timber framed structure is clad in lead, with lead dots. At the top of the panels a small adaptation was made to incorporate a horizontal vent. This replaced an earlier unsightly vent in the centre of the panel, which was removed and the lead work made good. Although it could not be examined closely the leadwork appeared sound.

3.26 The lead on the cupola roof was repaired in 2017 with a stainless steel edge drip detail supporting a separate lead flashing fixed to the eaves all round. It was not possible to inspect the cupola leadwork closely but it appeared sound. Moss growing on the panels facing N is not significant but it should be brushed off, when access for decoration is arranged, to allow close inspection of the lead.

3.27 Similarly it was not possible to inspect the weathervane and although it too appeared in good condition a closer inspection when access is available should be carried out.

3.28 The cupola roof is supported on 8 timber columns with arched openings in between. The timber work was repaired in 2017 and redecorated. It was not possible to inspect it closely, but the paint decorations are failing in various locations particularly on the N and E sides.

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3.29 Within the cupola access was gained through the hatch in the roof. The column bases and the new roll mouldings have lost their paint cover in many areas. Some timber decay may be present on the NW and NE posts. These need to be checked and repaired prior to redecoration.

3.30 Redecoration is needed as soon as practicable. The bird protection netting installed on the inside of the columns will need to be released to allow redecoration.

3.31 Some of the lead clips protecting the post bases need to be adjusted and pushed back.

3.32 The cupola houses two bells. One is struck by the clock when it chimes the hour. This has been rehung and rotates fully. Another fixed bell, thought to have been brought to the building to act as a fire bell was damaged and recast by Taylors Bell Foundry. Also on the cast is a record of the HLF funding to the project.

3.33 The bells are supported on metal frames fixed to the cupola posts and also on the timber floor of the cupola below. In the latter case the base of the frames is protected with lead sleeves. Rust is emerging at the base of one metal frame above the sleeve; photo 10. It needs to be treated and redecorated.

3.34 The lead on the floor of the cupola appeared in good condition.

Other High Level Elements

3.35 It was not possible to examine the chimney stacks in detail from the hydraulic hoist. The stonework appeared sound. A brown staining noted on the stonework of the E stack is most likely caused by boiler flue condensate, which can be acidic and corrosive; photo 11.

3.36 The consultant engineer to the project (MTA) has advised that this shouldn't be happening and that the condensate should drain back into the flue, suggesting that the angle of the bend inside the chimney isn't set right or has possibly shifted over time. He suggested adjusting the boiler flue angle if possible or fitting an extension piece to take the flues out of the openings at the front of the chimney.[4]

3.37 Ideally the flue should be adjusted so that the condensate drains back as extending the flue to drain on the roof risks damaging the stone slates. Alternatively the stonework may be protected by the introduction of a sacrificial lead flashing, which would need to be detailed carefully and be renewed from time to time.

3.38 The decorations of the metal railings to the gantry are holding well. The metal scrolls to the flagpole base need redecoration. The paint on the aluminium flagpole is scuffed where the flag strings rub against it. This is not significant at present.

3.39 A small timber step on top of the gantry beside the flagpole is decayed. Its purpose is not clear and this should either be removed or replaced.

3.40 The leadwork on the dormer roofs and cheeks was not inspected in detail but it appears sound. The small plastic caps intended to hold the pins for anti-bird wires are fixed on the dormer roofs but the wire has not been installed; photo 4. There does not appear to be a problem with pigeons perching on the dormers but there is no need to remove the caps as they are not visible from the ground.

3.41 On the E side the lead clips holding the vertical sheets to the dormer cheeks of the second and third dormer from the S have been pushed out by the expansion of the lead as described for the clock turret lead above. These also need to be adjusted.

3.42 The dormer windows are glazed with leaded lights separated by a central mullion. Side hung metal casements open outwards in some of the windows. All were repaired during 2017.

[4] The contractor was instructed to extend the flues outwards by it appears this is not sufficient to throw the condensate away from the stonework.

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3.43 On the W side of the roof, there is a cracked glass quarry in the top RH corner in the second dormer from the N side. This is not significant at present but should be monitored for further deterioration.

3.44 The decorations on the dormers on the N and W sides are failing on the cill and at the base of the timber side frames.

3.45 The decorations on the S dormer are in better condition although failure is observed on the broken scrolled pediment.

3.46 The decorations to the new timber urns between the pediment scrolls have failed completely on both the N and S dormers and redecoration is needed soon; photo 12

3.47 The decorations on the dormers on the E side were in slightly better shape but beginning to fail on the edge of the cills and base of the side frames. Redecoration should take place along with the remaining dormers.

3.48 On the dormer serving the attic flat toilet on the W side the paintwork on the frames above the iron pintols holding the loop brackets to the opening casement has failed; photo 13. This should be investigated during redecoration for possible timber decay.

4. Rainwater Disposal and Drainage

General Description and Condition

4.1 All the rainwater goods were replaced in 2017 with larger sections.

4.2 The lead covered cupola roof and the lead flat roofs to the dormers have dripping eaves.

4.3 The main roof slopes discharge into eaves ogee section gutters all round the roof and into 4 rectangular section downpipes, 2 at each end of the long E and W elevations. They drain into gullies on the pavement and from there into the public sewage system.

4.4 Similarly, the foul drainage from the new toilets, wash hand basins etc. drain into the public below ground drainage system. No problems were reported with the drainage system.

4.5 The cast iron gutters need redecoration as rust is emerging both inside and out.

4.6 Although the decoration of the downpipes is in better condition than that of the gutters, these should be redecorated at the same time.

Gutter Clearance and Maintenance of the Rainwater Disposal system

4.7 As a rule gutter clearance needs to take place twice annually, after leaf fall in the autumn and tree flowering in the spring. We understand that the Town Council organises the gutter clearance in house using a hydraulic hoist once a year.

4.8 The gutters were cleared during the inspection and despite the absence of trees nearby there was significant amount of debris in the gutters all round. The areas on either side of the pediment on the S elevation were particularly congested with debris supporting grass. Debris collects at the head of the gutters as they do not receive sufficient amounts of rainwater to wash it away. Consideration should therefore be given to clearing these areas more frequently.

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5. Walling and External Finishes

This section also covers timber and metal finishes. The dormer windows are covered in Section 3.

General description

5.1 The walls are constructed with ashlar stone blocks raised on a shallow plinth. A slightly projecting, wide stringcourse separated the ground from the first floor. A deep lath and plaster coving below eaves level wraps round the building. This is the original detailing extended in the 1883 extension.

5.2 The ground floor windows originally open arcades at ground floor level are now infilled with 3 part Venetian windows, raised on low stone walls and set behind railings. There are opening side hung casements in the outer narrow lights. The glass is handmade set into lambs tongue glazing bars.

5.3 The first floor windows retain their 1704 configuration of 4 lights divided by a central mullion and transom set approximately 2/3 up the height of the window. The lower lights are fixed with simple section glazing bars, replacing what may have been leaded lights. A metal framed centrally pivoted opening light is set in the upper section of each window. Some of the historic prints indicated stained glass in upper lights. During the recent repair project new stained glass was made after a design competition within the local community. Each panel has a separate theme related to the Brackley and the town hall.

5.4 Further details of the architecture and construction are given on an elevation by elevation basis below.

North Elevation

5.5 This elevation is the work of 1883. It is classically symmetrical respecting the 1704 design. It is given prominence as the main entrance to the building by a stone pediment set on top of slightly projecting central bay with quoins on either side. A stone, semicircular canopy supported on stone brackets above the doorway is covered with lead. The window above has a broken scrolled pediment above the architrave, again stressing the pre-eminence given to this side in 1883, but the 4 light window fenestration respects the 1704 windows on the other three sides.

5.6 The stonework and pointing is good condition and the repairs 2017 are performing well.

5.7 A vertical crack is opening up in the lath and plaster coving to the W side of the pediment, and a small area of blown plaster can be seen close to the pediment. Photographs taken during construction show that most of this section of coving was replastered. The vertical crack may be at the junction between the retained and new section of plaster; photo 14.

5.8 On the opposite side there is a horizontal crack at the base of the coving; photo 31. The entire coving on this N elevation needs to be checked for soundness and repairs made. This should be carried out by a mason/plasterer experienced in the use of lime mortars using the same mix as the 2017 repair.

5.9 The putty in the centre of the lower two lights on the first floor window is missing; photo 15. The paint decorations are failing on the cill and on the metal framed centrally pivoted opening light. A slight crack is emerging between the timber frame and stone reveal which should be filled during redecoration.

5.10 The pointing to the lead upstand detail on top of the canopy is cracked and missing in a few sections; photo 16. It needs to be raked out fully, the lead re-wedged if necessary and the joint repointed.

5.11 The front face of the pediment is protected by anti-bird netting. Sadly contrary to correct practice the fixings for the net have been made into the stonework and not the joints.

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West Elevation

5.12 This elevation is divided into 5 identical bays marked by the windows.

Ground Floor

5.13 The stonework and pointing is in good condition overall. At low level, however, there is deterioration of the stonework, the 2017 lime mortar repairs and pointing due to salt action. This problem was identified prior the recent repair project and although poulticing did take place to draw salts out residual salts remain in the depth of the wall migrating to the surface in the right conditions. Salting the road and pavement in winter is continuing. Salt efflorescence is emerging through the softest areas of the wall such as friable, porous stone or soft lime mortars.

5.14 Details of the areas of decay are given below starting from the N side. The description also includes notes on the windows in each of the bays.

Bay 1

5.15 A failed mortar repair on the second stone up against the window reveal on the LH side is not significant at present. In the window recess one open joint above the Marlstone plinth should be pointed.

5.16 Slight salt efflorescence on the RH stone reveal, is also reflected internally; see item 7.3

5.17 The paintwork is failing on the bottom rail of the window. An open joint between the window frame and the stone reveal all the way up on the RH side, should be pointed.

Bay 2

5.18 An eroded stone just above the offset plinth in the centre of second pier, next to a mortar repair, would benefit from shelter coating to stabilise its surface.

5.19 The pointing in the two stones above (second and third up from the plinth) has failed and should be reformed to protect the mortar repair below. At the same time open joints further along toward the window should also be pointed.

5.20 The mortar repair to the 4th stone up from the plinth on the RH side of the pier has failed revealing the undercoat. This should be reformed. A large stone immediately above presents a very friable surface and would benefit from shelter coating.

5.21 The stone window cill is eroded but sound. A minor open joint in the centre of stonework below cill should be pointed.

Bay 3

5.22 There are many open joints on the offset plinth and in new stones on the third pier, which need to be pointed.

5.23 A stone in the third course up from the plinth has a friable surface and would benefit from shelter coating.

5.24 A failed mortar repair on the cill has exposed friable stone beneath and should be remade. The stonework below the cill is very eroded and would benefit from further mortar repair. Below a new replacement stone, an open vertical joint needs to be pointed.

5.25 The lime mortar pointing below the timber window cill is failing and repointing is needed.

5.26 The decorations on the timber cill and the lower frame are failing. Redecoration is needed.

Bay 4

5.27 There are eroded stones on the offset plinth of the 4th pier. No action is needed as the water is draining. These and the stones above which display eroded seams should be monitored at the next inspection.

5.28 Rising moisture and salt efflorescence are causing decay in many open joints on the pier plinth. These need to be pointed again with lime mortars.

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5.29 The lime mortar pointing below the timber window cill has failed and repointing is needed.

5.30 The 2017 mortar repairs on the stonework below the window cill mostly survive but beginning to delaminate in a few areas. They should be reviewed at the next QI inspection.

Bay 5

5.31 Open perpendicular joints can be seen above and below the offset plinth to pier no.5. Mortar repairs are also failing around the joints. On the RH pier return a repair to the top of the offset plinth stone has failed. Repointing and repair is needed.

5.32 The putty pointing below the timber window cill has failed and repointing is needed.

5.33 The vertical pointing between the stone cill and the piers on either side has failed and needs to be reformed. Below the cill there is minor erosion on the stonework. One open joint should be pointed along with the other work recommended.

5.34 The metal railings to the window are set in a marl stone base. Below that a course of Helmdon stone appears as the site slopes to the S. Minor stone erosion and pointing failure in this area, should be dealt with along with other recommended repairs.

5.35 The mortar repairs at the base of the last pier have failed on the RH side of the downpipe and the joints are opening up. Repair is necessary.

First Floor

5.36 The 2017 mortar repairs in the upper stage of the wall appear to be holding confirming that it is the problem of salts causing failure lower down.

5.37 The decorations on the metal framed centrally pivoted opening lights in the first floor windows are failing throughout the elevation and need to be redecorated.

5.38 The glazing putty has failed in one location on the second window from the N and needs to be replaced.

5.39 The putty pointing between the timber frame and the stone reveal in the third window from the N is failing particularly at low level and needs to be reformed.

5.40 There is a slight crack in the lath and plaster coving above the second window from the N but this is not significant at present. It should be monitored at the next inspection.

South Elevation

5.41 The S elevation is divided into 2 bays. In 2017, the ground floor window cills were lowered to create openings to a new semicircular terrace raised on 5 steps, also fanning out in a semicircle. Slabby sandstone supplied by CED Stone[5] was used for the terrace and steps. Key events in the history of the building are carved on the risers.

5.42 The steps are generally sound. A wide open joint at the back of the topmost step needs to be raked out and pointed as it is beginning to support vegetation.

5.43 Two small weeds were removed by the inspecting architect from the corners of the window recesses on the terrace. These areas should also be checked and pointed.

5.44 Minor damage on step edges is not significant. The steps have bedded in very well.

5.45 The 2017 mortar repairs are generally performing well except in the lowest section of the walls, where rising damp is causing some failure.

5.46 An unsightly, failed mortar repair on the LH reveal of the W opening should be reformed.

5.47 On the central pier another 2017 repair on the offset plinth has failed. A face repair to a stone above the steps to the RH side is also beginning to fail. These can be reviewed at the next inspection but it may be prudent to repair them along with similar work.

[5] https://www.cedstone.co.uk/landscape/product-range/slabby-sandstone-rockery

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5.48 The t&g vertical joints in flat panels at the base of the new doors made are opening up and should be filled during redecoration; see also item 7.26.

5.49 The decorations are failing on the horizontal surfaces of the window cills, frames and glazing bars. The metal fixings of the railings are rusting a little, where they are fixed into the timber frames on either side of the doorways. Redecoration is needed.

First Floor

5.50 No defects were noted on the upper floor and the decorations on the windows appeared in better condition than those on the N and W elevation. However, redecoration should take place at the same time.

East Elevation

5.51 The E elevation is a mirror image of the W except that the N window cill was lowered for a fire escape door. The original railings were adapted to form an emergency exit gate.

Ground Floor

5.52 The stonework and pointing is generally in good condition with fewer problems at low level than witnessed on the opposite side. The report below starts from the N side again and progresses to the S.

Bay 1

5.53 The stone repairs on the pier are doing well.

5.54 The new timber door appears sound with the joints quite tight, which would fail to explain the apparent water ingress noted internally; see item 7.11. The paint on the new door, however, is beginning to flake and the door should be redecorated.

Bay 2

5.55 Pier no.2 has characterful "rusticated" stones, which are still a bit of a mystery. Both the natural stone and new mortar repairs on this pier are in good condition.

5.56 The pointing below the timber cill is failing and should be repointed. Although the window decoration is generally better, redecoration should take place with other similar items.

Bay 3

5.57 Stone pier no.3 is in good condition.

5.58 The pointing below the timber cill is failing and needs to be remade.

5.59 The cementitious repairs on the stonework below the marlstone base to the opening were not removed in the recent project and are still sound.

Bay 4

5.60 The stonework on pier no. 4 and below the stone window cill is in good condition. A new stone cill was introduced here in 2017.

Bay 5

5.61 The stonework on pier no.5 and below the stone cill is in good condition.

5.62 Although the decorations to the window are generally fair the paint is peeling in sheets on the RH side light, possibly due to poor initial preparation. Redecoration is needed.

5.63 The mortar repairs at the base of the last pier to the S are starting to fail behind the downpipe. They should be monitored and reviewed at the next QI inspection.

First Floor

5.64 The stonework and pointing are in good condition.

5.65 The decorations on the windows appear in slightly better condition than on the N and W sides but the metal framed central pivot lights are beginning to rust. Redecoration should take place at the same time as elsewhere on the building.

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5.66 The glazing putty has failed in one location on the centre window and should be replaced during redecoration; photo 17.

Other Metal Work

5.67 The decorations on the historic railings to the ground floor window openings on the E and W elevations and on the new handrails on the S side are holding very well.

6. Glazing and Ventilation

6.1 The glass is in good condition apart a minor defect described in item 3.43. above.

6.2 Ventilation is provided naturally with mechanical ventilation confined to toilets and kitchens. The roof level ventilation outlets were described in section 3. The vents from the café and the ground floor toilets were taken through the top section of the arched window openings in the centre on E and W sides. Louvres were introduced discreetly behind the glazing bars without affecting the overall architecture of the elevation.

7. Internal Finishes and Fittings

7.1 The interior was completely refurbished and redecorated during the last major project. The finishes are descibed in detail below.

Ground Floor Rooms

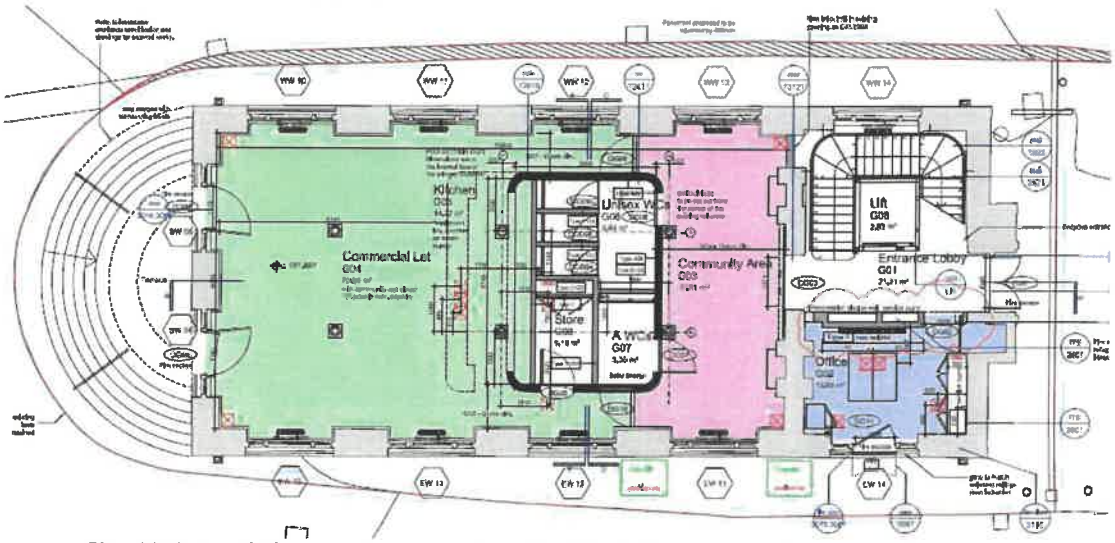

Fig. 10 Ground Floor Extract from drg1054-C1501E courtesy of Haverstock

The Entrance Hall

7.1 This is the pivot for access to all areas in the building. It opens directly to the N square through a set of double panelled doors. Along the E wall there display cabinets with notes on the history and significance of the building and also the intruder alarm fire panel. Double glass sliding doors in the S wall lead to the main ground floor area of the original building. On the N wall beside the entrance there are 3 marble plaques recording the names of the Mayors of Brackley.

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7.2 The floor is paved with new Marlstone pavings and a large entrance mat traversing the length of the hall. The new stone floor is bedding down well. The pointing has been lost in a few joints to the S side of the lift, but this is of no consequence. A small chink in one of the slabs in the same area is also not serious.

7.3 The area under the stairs is open. The W wall in this area has suffered historically from salt efflorescence caused by the salting of the pavement and road outside. During the building works salt laden plaster was removed and new plaster applied. However, residual salts in the stone masonry are still coming through and causing the new plaster to fail in the SW corner; photo 18. On the S window reveal the paint is failing and the plaster sounds hollow. The plaster further below the window cill has also failed; photo 19. The plaster behind the radiator was not tapped but it appears sound.

7.4 As the area under the stairs is not seen by the public, the loss of plaster is not critical for the presentation of the building. If the situation does not stabilise, one option would be to remove the plaster altogether. Salts would still come through on the stone rubble as they do externally but these could easily be dry brushed off.

7.5 A slight vertical crack all around the window frame is not significant at present. The decorations on the glazing putty is failing but this is very minor. There is slight staining on the main door reveals but this is obviously due to constant use. The overall condition of the hall is good.

7.6 The steel stair rises from the ground floor entrance hall to a second floor within the 1883 extension. It wraps around the lift enclosure. The balustrade was specially designed with a perforated panel to the shape of the pear drop from a local lace pattern. The staircase is in good condition throughout its height. The interior of the lift is also in good order.

Small Office

7.7 The room is now mostly used for wedding registers. Along the N wall fitted cupboards contain the electrical intake distribution board, the gas and water incoming mains and the British Telecom connection. The cupboards were not inspected. The room has been fitted with a small kitchen sink in the NW corner but I understand it is rarely used.

7.8 In the ceiling above the fitted shelves along the W wall there is a horizontal crack and a vertical crack in the NW corner above the bulkhead above the sink. These are probably due to shrinkage of new materials and not significant but should be filled during redecoration.

7.9 In the SW corner there is a small arched recess. The metal frame of a rail holding ceremonial robes is tightly fitted against the arch and damaging the plaster and decorations. Some adjustment is needed.

7.10 The 19th century window cill to the E side was lowered to form a fire escape. The centre light was replaced with a new door opening outwards. A slight crack on the RH reveal below the window arch is not significant at present. Cracks between the window cill and the frames of the side lights, may be due to shrinkage of the cill boards. The cracks are worse on the LH side but both should be filled when the room is redecorated; photo 20.

7.11 A slight crack in the gunstock joint of the horizontal rail on the lock side of the door may be admitting moisture as indicated by a trickle stain; photo 21. This should be monitored during heavy rain coming from the E.

7.12 The paint decorations are failing on the bottom frames of the side lights but otherwise the condition of the window is good.

7.13 Small areas of staining on the hessian carpet and slight scuffing in the wall paint by the side of the door should be addressed given the formal use of the room.

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The Main Ground Floor Area

7.14 This area occupies the original 4 bays of the historic Town Hall. One of the aims of the 2017 project was to open up the space so that the full length and width of the original Hall could be appreciated. The new toilets and café servery sit as a pod with curved corners in the second bay from the N with wide corridors on either side.

7.15 A Community Area occupies the northernmost bay of the original Town Hall. On the N wall there are the remnants of two fireplace openings introduced in the 19th century with flues rising up through the building. The chimney stacks were described in section 3. The area is entered from the entrance hall through a set of double sliding doors. The opening is protected with a fire shutter. The toilets are accessed from this area.

7.16 To the rear of the pod the café seating area occupies the two bays to the S.

7.17 The pod is detailed with vertical oak timber studding scooped out at the top and painted a contrasting colour, blue in this case. Slight white blooming is noted on the lower section of the oak timbers at low level on the E side. The cause seems to be the intumescent finish used on the timbers. No action is recommended other than monitoring.

7.18 The new plaster ceiling has a fire separation to the floor above. The exposed metal columns supporting the first floor are treated with intumescent paint.

7.19 The floor throughout this area is paved with reused original marl stone slabs and new ones to match. Gaps in the original pavings were infilled with tiles laid on edge and mortar. The walls are exposed stonework. We were informed that the pointing in the floor needed to be reformed following the completion of the project. During our inspection the floor was in good condition with only minor open joints described below.

7.20 The walls throughout this area are exposed stonework, which was cleaned and repaired in 2017. It is generally in good condition but some defects were noted. The description that follows starts from the NW corner and moves anti-clockwise around the room.

7.21 Salt efflorescence can be seen at low level on the RH side of the W window recess, in the Community area. The stonework below the window cill is powdering and debris is collecting on top of the offset plinth below, behind the radiator; photo 22. Both are symptoms of the residual salts emerging or new entering the wall from the outside.

7.22 The stone on the LH reveal of the same window recess is also powdering and debris can be seen on top of the surface mounted electrical socket.

7.23 Similar powdering stones are noted on the RH reveal of the second window on the W side and stone dust on the offset plinth below but this is less than the previous window. The powdering reduces even more on the LH reveal.

7.24 The stone dust should be hoovered and the area monitored to gauge the rate of decay.

7.25 No powdering was observed at the base of the last two W windows. The reduction of the visible symptoms of salt efflorescence as one moves S and the ground slopes further away from the building is the same inside as recorded externally.

7.26 Signs of water ingress were noted at the base of the flat panels of the new doors to the S side; photos 23 and 24 The pattern of dripping is similar to that noted on the door to the small office. The staining should be wiped and the areas monitored for recurrence of these signs. Any open joints must be sealed during redecoration and the doors monitored.

7.27 The stonework around the window recesses on the E side does not display any salt efflorescence again reflecting the situation externally.

7.28 The paintwork on the second window from the S is flaking on the LH side and the glazing putty is missing. Repair and redecoration is needed. The base rail of the LH light should also be checked for decay.

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7.29 In front of the same window there are open joints in the floor. Repointing is not urgent.

7.30 The stonework around and below the third window from the S is in good condition. The window recess is used for minor storage from the by café.

7.31 The third stone up from the offset plinth, on the LH reveal of the E window in the Community area (NE corner of the Hall) is powdering. On the same pier facing the room 3 more stones present a powdery surface. The first is just above plinth, a second small stone is approx. 1.5m from the floor and a third large stone immediately above. The cause is not clear. The fabric may still be settling and drying out after the repair works. The area should be evaluated at the next QI inspection.

7.32 The finishes in the two toilet areas are in good condition and nothing untoward was noted.

First Floor Rooms

Main Hall

7.33 The main Community and Civic Hall occupies the entire area of the historic Town Hall. Much needed storage and a fire lobby was created at the N end using the free standing pod with a separate ceiling.

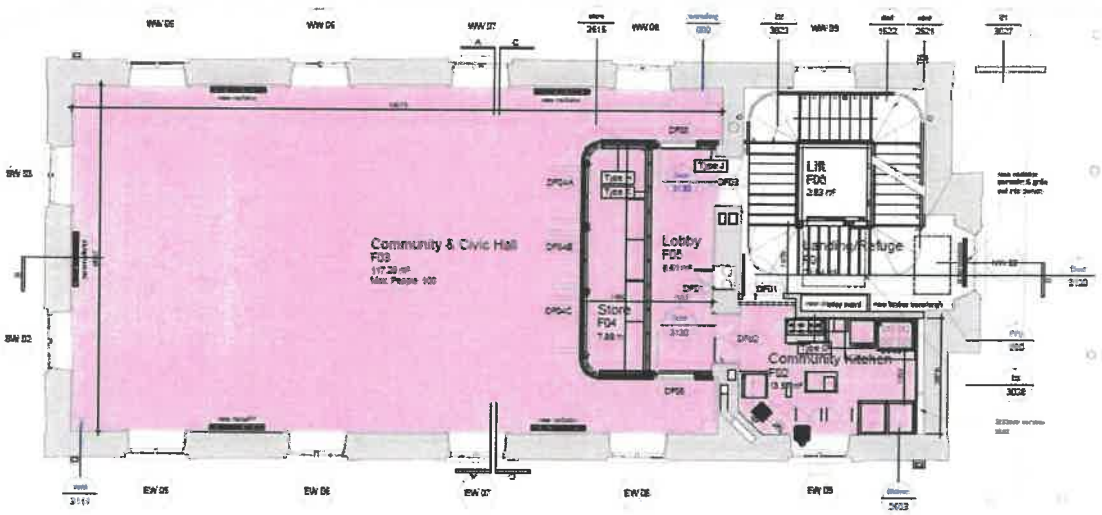

Fig. 8 First Floor Extract from drg 1054-C1502 courtesy of Haverstock

7.34 The floor in this room was recovered with new oak boards, which are performing well. The 1853 panelling was stripped and polished. New heavy curtains were introduced for warmth and for darkening the room for slide shows. We understand that the space is well utilized. A projection screen was mounted on top of the pod roof in a discreet manner.

7.35 The pod is detailed in the same manner as the one of the ground floor but with red paint in the coved upper section of the studding. There is a slight white bloom on the surface of the oak studs at low level on the E and W sides as noted on the floor below; photo 25. No action is recommended at present other than monitoring.

7.36 The blooming on the oak panelling was most pronounced in the NW corner at the end of the contract but I was pleased to see that this has improved.

7.37 The middle and E doors leading to the stores in the pod are slightly sticking but this is not significant at present.

7.38 One of the timber boards in the window seat, first window from the S is damaged possibly by someone standing on it. It should be repaired.

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7.39 Some flaking paint can be seen at high level, on the LH reveal of the second window from the S on the E side. Interestingly the same defect can be in the exact same position on the window on the opposite side. In the coved ceiling above the E window there is slight detachment of the paint. The causes are unclear and the position of these minor paint failures may be coincidental.

7.40 The decorations on the windows should be made good and the peeling paint on the ceiling monitored

7.41 On the E window, brown staining was noted lower down on the same reveal; photo 27. Defective glazing putty externally may be admitting some moisture The area should be thoroughly checked during redecoration.

7.42 The wall decorations in the lobby on the N side of the pod are scuffed a sign of the heavy use of the room. Although not significant, the areas should be redecorated.

7.43 Otherwise the decorations in the main hall are still in good order.

Community Kitchen

7.44 This room is directly above the Small Office described below. The finishes, fixtures and fittings are in good order.

First Floor Stair Area

7.45 The wall decorations are slightly scuffed opposite the stair landing. Although not significant redecoration would maintain the good appearance of the interior. Otherwise the condition of this circulation space is very good.

7.46 Some flaking paint on the LH side of the first floor window sill to the side of the stair should be taken in with other redecoration recommended above.

Attic Rooms

7.47 The stair rises to the base of the roof of the 1883 extension in the northernmost section of the building. The brace of one of main trusses was removed to allow the stair and lift to be introduced. The truss joints were reinforced with metal plates. Here the roof rafters are exposed with acoustic panels in between.

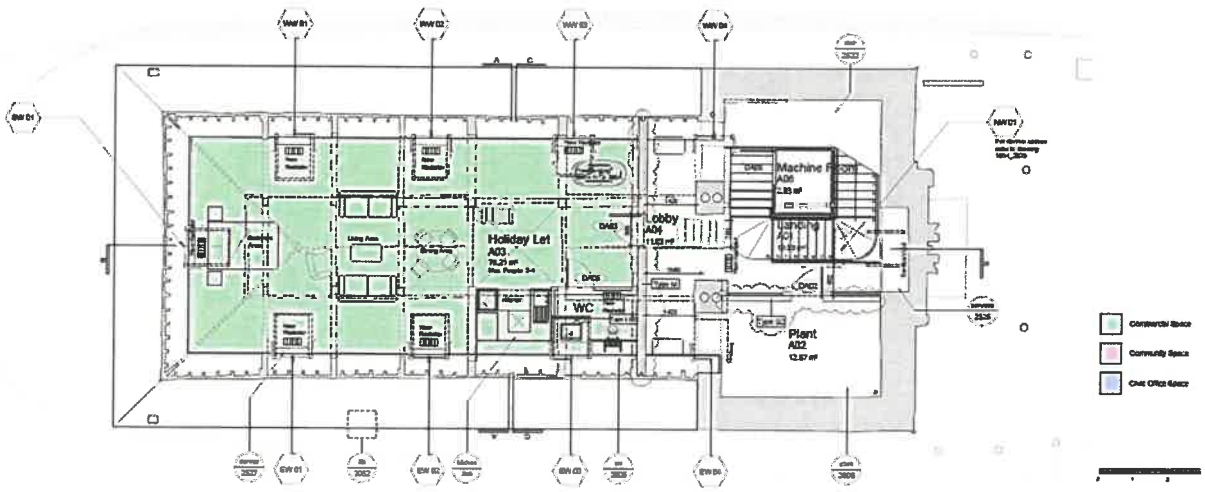

Fig. 7 – Attic Rooms Extract from drg1054-C1503A courtesy of Haverstock

7.48 The new stair and landing is lit from the N dormer. The dormer also provides access to the flag pole gantry. The window is set on an automatic opening mechanism for smoke release in case of fire. We understand that this has never allowed the window to close properly which was slightly ajar at the time of the inspection. Efforts should continue to correct the automatic opening mechanism to prevent heat loss and possible water ingress.

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7.49 On the E side of the stair landing the boiler room is set above the kitchen area on the floor below. Separate boilers serve the flat and the remaining building. A small cover to the Carbon monoxide monitor wiring is missing and should be re replaced; photo 28.

7.50 Otherwise the condition of the room appeared in good order.

7.51 A narrow set of timber steps from the 1883 work ascends steeply from new stair landing to the attic floor. A new forged steel handrail was fixed to the side of the timber stair to ease access.

Holiday Let Flat

7.52 The area within the 1704 section of the Town Hall was converted into a holiday let flat. The flat N wall was set away from the original N wall of the building to leave a small lobby and the chimney flues exposed which bear the names of the rooms they served carved in stone. The lobby is lit from the two northernmost dormers on either side. A short balustrade with the perforated local paisley pattern motif was set to the W side of the lobby to safeguard the opening between the chimney flue and the main roof slope.

7.53 The queen post roof trusses exposed within the flat date from 1883 but are in good quality oak and not deal[6]. They may have followed the 1704 configuration of trusses.

7.54 In 2017, a new floor was introduced on top of the truss tie beams, sound proofed and fire separated from the hall below. Despite part of the rafter depth being taken up by new insulation and plaster finishes these and the purlins are still visible and form a key feature of the flat.

7.55 The flat is lit by dormer windows, 3 each on W and E sides and one on the S.[7]

7.56 Exfoliating paint on LH reveal of the dormer window in the toilet is not significant but should be covered at the next redecoration.

7.57 A small access panel is surface fixed in the inclined ceiling plane on the E side, between the second and third dormer from the S. The panel provides access for rodding the vent pipe to the bath tub, which rises up through one of the lead covered plinths to the clock turret. Below the panel a small stain is visible on the plaster; photo 29. The panel should be removed and the area inspected for a possible leak. The stain should be painted out and the area monitored.

7.58 There is minor scuffing to LH side of the dormer beside the kitchen area to the E. This may be impact damage. Otherwise the decorations and finishes in the flat are very good.

Internal Spaces within the Clock Cupola

7.59 The clock pendulum room is in the lower stage of the turret, accessed via a sturdy timber ladder from the flat below. An insulated hatch has been introduced at the head of the stair. The clock pendulum is in a timber box suspended above the floor which is boarded. It was littered with tiny ladybird carcasses at the time of the inspection.

7.60 The room is lit from the E and W sides by leaded light windows. The metal catch on the opening casement of the E window does not engage into the frame correctly and the seal against the reveal has come adrift; photo 30. Adjustment is needed to allow the casement to close and seal the gap, which is admitting insects. Water ingress is also likely.

7.61 The N and S sides of this space are largely within the apex of the main roof. The timber wall boarding was cut and set forward to allow the triangular roof areas to be insulated to maintain the insulation of the roof envelope within the flat.

[6] Term used for Victorian softwood

[7] The chalk marks made on the timber window lintels by the architects in order to identify in survey photographs taken in 2014 still in place.

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Clock Chamber

7.62 This is accessed from the pendulum room from a ladder on the W side. The clock is maintained by Smiths of Derby (SoD) twice a year. SoD were also responsible for the refurbishment of the clock during the recent repair project.

7.63 Water ingress was experienced in the pendulum room and in the flat below, shortly after completion of the project and the scaffold was struck, arising from the failure of the contractor and the subcontractor to execute the specified weathering detail to the lower half of the clock faces. After much deliberation and lengthy conversations between the lead architect and the contractor, the solution put forward by SoD was to capture the water in an internal lead tray and divert it to the outside through a small lead pipe. I understand that this has been effective in preventing water ingress further down.

7.64 Hedgehog type brushes were set over the outflow pipes to catch dead insects and prevent a blockage. We understand that the brushes are cleaned monthly. It is important to continue regular clearance and rodding the small pipes through. Note that limiting the entry of insects into the cupola chambers might reduce the frequency of clearing.

7.65 The trap in the ceiling of the clock chamber leading up to the base of the cupola was renewed with a new lead cover and set on a gas strut. It is easy to open but resists closure. As the cupola floor is not regularly accessed this is not critical.

Services Installations –General Note

7.66 The comments in this report are based on a visual examination only. No tests of services have been undertaken. Reference to test reports seen or recommendations for testing are made below as appropriate.

8. Electrical Installation and Lighting System

8.1 Any electrical installation should be tested at least every quinquennium by a registered NICEIC electrician, and a resistance and earth continuity test should be obtained on all circuits. The engineer's test report should be kept with the building logbook. Any alteration or extension of the electrical installation must be carried out by a suitably qualified electrician and an NICEIC test certificate obtained and kept with the O&M Manual. See Section 1.

8.2 The system was fully tested by TS Electrical (Buckingham) Ltd in January 2023. A number of defects found led to the installation being classed as unsatisfactory. A copy of the report was sent to the architects in February 2023 and was forwarded to the M&E engineer, who replied fully to the report in an email on 22 February 2023 who commented as follows: "A number of the items as picked up in the recent electrical test and inspection are defects from the original installation however, items 2, 14, & 18 are potentially from later additions and Items 1,4,8, & 16 are likely due to the effects of time and use". He then went on to address each of the items in the electrical report.

8.3 The Town Council commissioned the remedial works and the installation has now been passed as Satisfactory.

8.4 Lightning within the building is provided by a variety of luminaires appropriate for each space. We were not aware of any problems.

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9. Sound System

9.1 We understand that the induction loop system is not working as the technology is out of sync with current hearing aids. We recommend that this issue is addressed for the avoidance of discrimination against those with hearing problems.

10. Heating Installation

10.1 A proper examination and test should be made of the heating apparatus by a qualified engineer each summer before the heating season begins. The system and boiler are annually serviced.

10.2 Heating is by low pressure hot water radiators using gas fired boilers. New cast iron column radiators were installed throughout the building with a powder coated finish. The paint on some radiators had cracked and these were taken away and re finished. Currently there are rusting joints on the radiator in the Small Office and on the staircase landing in the attic. It should be possible to paint these areas provided they are correctly prepared and primed. In addition if not already the case a leak inhibitor should be introduced to the system.

10.3 We are informed that in the boiler room the hot water heater was replaced and moved to another position in order to be able to have access to the reset button.

11. Lightning Protection

11.1 Any lightning conductor should be tested regularly by a competent specialist engineer in accordance with the British Standard BS 6651 (1999). We understand that the earth rods are tested annually. It is advisable to vary the time of the inspection by a month each year as the earth resistance varies seasonally. The record of the test results should be kept with the Building Manual.

11.2 A full inspection of the system to include the physical condition of the installation should take place at least every 5 years.

11.3 There are 4 round upvc coated aluminium down conductors set behind the 4 downpipes at each corner of the building. The main terminal is the weather vane with the down tape descending down the E face of the Clock Cupola before diving under the lead apron flashing. It travels under the roof coverings over the roof ridge and down to the 4 down conductors described above. Where visible the down conductors appeared sound.

12. Fire Precautions

12.1 There are fire curtains to the community area and the small office on the ground floor and also on the kitchen door at first floor level. These together with the smoke detectors are tested twice yearly. The fire extinguishers are tested once a year. The fire alarms and emergency lighting are tested weekly.

13. Equality Act 2010, Disability Discrimination Acts 1995, 2005

13.1 From 1 October 2010, the Equality Act replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply.

13.2 The Town Council is aware of the requirements of these Acts that they have implications for the building in terms of access, provision for the hearing and sight impaired, and those with mental disability particularly as it is to be open to the public.

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13.3 There is level access into the building from the S side and the lift facilitates step free access to main public room on the first floor. An accessible toilet has been provided in the recent repair project. Accessibility issues stretch beyond the needs of physical access and toilet facilities and affect many more members of the community than wheelchair users.

13.4 Updating the Induction Loop system should be considered.

14. Safety and Security

Security

14.1 The Town Hall is open to the public daily. The main access to the Café bistro on the N side of the building is from the main S entrance.

14.2 The Town Council office and other sensitive areas are kept locked. The building is fitted with intruder alarms, which are serviced on a 6 monthly basis.

Health and Safety

14.3 Access for maintenance to high level elements such as the bells within the cupola and to the flag tower has been made safe following the recent project. Access for gutter clearance is undertaken from a hydraulic hoist which is eminently sensible.

14.4 The anti-pigeon measures appear effective and no pigeons were noted on the building.

15. Pavings, Paths, Railings etc

15.1 Due to the building's location there are no real external areas apart from the new semicircular terrace to the N side of the building.

15.2 The pavements on the E and W sides were re-laid with the same slabby sandstone used on the S terrace when the pavements were taken up for new drainage connections.

15.3 The railings fixed to the building and to the new terrace have been covered in section 5.

16. Conclusion

16.1 On the whole, the condition of the building fabric is good and it is pleasing to know that the new uses of the Café Bistro and Holiday let as well as the rental income from the main hall are providing sufficient funds for the building's upkeep.

16.2 The defects emerging fall into broad categories:

a. Residual and continuing salt problems in the E wall inherent in the siting of the building against a main thoroughfare through the town.

b. The decision to reuse most of the extant roofing slates rather than replace all, due to the financial constraints of the repair project of 2017.

c. Latent defects emerging following the recent works

d. Natural wear and tear falling into a maintenance cycle.

Taken in turn the categories above can be expanded as follows:

Salt efflorescence

16.3 This is noted primarily on the W wall at low level, which is close to the main road. It is interesting to note that the symptoms significantly reduce on the opposite E side, which receives less traffic. There appears to be no effective solution to this problem as salting

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the pavement even in reduced amounts is likely to continue. The Town Council are concerned about being found liable if they specifically ask for salt not to be used in frosty conditions.

16.4 The worst effects of salt efflorescence are seen in the first and second bay, on the E side of the building both inside and out, reducing towards the S as the road and pavement slope in that direction and the ground floor of the building is higher above the pavement.

16.5 Regardless of public liability concerns, the Town Council should reopen a conversation with the local authority responsible for road maintenance on possible mitigation measures that could be taken to limit the use of salt.

16.6 However, it should be noted that even if salting outside ceases, the salts already in the walls will continue to migrate outwards though the wall surfaces depending on relative humidity conditions inside and out. No effort should be made to stop this process by the use of impervious materials such as cement render as the salts and associated problems of stone decay will only be pushed higher up the wall.

16.7 The failure of the lime mortar joints and mortar repairs indicates that the process of water and salt migration is taking place through the right path. Lime pointing in the joints should be considered expendable. If a hard impervious material is used in the joints the moisture and salt migration will take place through weak and porous stone causing greater damage.

16.8 The report recommends that the areas of decay at low level on the walls should be repaired so that water ingress is limited. The repairs may fail again through the mechanisms explained above and this repair must be seen as a regular maintenance item.

16.9 It is vitally important that a mason experienced in the use of soft lime mortars is engaged to carry out this work. On no account should cement mortars be used.

Stone Slates

16.10 As a whole, the roof finishes are in good condition. Only a handful of slates were found to have lost their fixings. This is not unexpected given the fact that a percentage of stone slates were reused and their age is uncertain.

16.11 However the failed slates need to be replaced or secured as soon as practicable as failure to do so will lead to water ingress and greater damage.

Latent Defects

16.12 Minor cracking and loss of adhesion was noted on the lath and plaster coved cornice on the S side of the building. This will need to be repaired to prevent further deterioration.

16.13 The glazing putty has failed externally on a small number of windows and in other areas it is cracked and further failure may arise. It should be checked throughout during redecoration and renewed where necessary.

16.14 The opening casement to the leaded light window on the W side of the Pendulum Room in the Clock Cupola was one of the defects identified at the end of the last project. It was corrected prior to the issue of the Making Good Defects Certificate but the defect has recurred. As this is one of the main paths for insects to enter the clock turret chambers as well being a path for water ingress, a more lasting solution needs to be found.

16.15 The clips to the lead sheets in various locations on the roof are tightly turned up and are being pushed outwards by the expansion of the lead. Although not a major item they should be adjusted when access for other repairs is available.

16.16 The new doors made for three openings on the ground floor may be admitting some moisture through opening up of joints. The staining needs to be wiped clean and the doors monitored. In any case, the joints need to be filled during redecoration.

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Natural Wear and Tear and Maintenance.

16.17 The decorations on the windows throughout the building are failing in the most vulnerable areas such as cills and top surface of horizontal glazing bars.

16.18 The decorations on the cupola are also failing in many places. This is the most exposed element of the building. The decorations to the gutters are also failing inside and out.

16.19 The maintenance plan recommends redecoration of timber and rainwater goods every 7 years. The Town Council must plan this work to take place as soon as practicable.

16.20 Some paint failure was also noted internally on certain ground and upper level windows detailed in the report. Redecoration is less pressing here.

Planning the repairs

16.21 Perhaps one of the greatest challenges in undertaking repairs to a landlocked building is access. The problem of arranging scaffold around the building on such a tight site was considered and planned for during the recent repair project. A similar exercise may be needed in order to be undertake for the recommended repairs although this should be a lighter access scaffold rather than the full working scaffold in 2017.

16.22 The alternative would be to engage a hoist with a greater reach than the one employed during the QI inspection We understand that this can be parked in the areas to the N and S side of the building without the need to limit the traffic on the main road. Roped access should be the last option.

16.23 The scaffold option may facilitate continuity of work, ease of application and quality control of repair. A decision would need to be made by the Town Council based on their resources and the demands of working in a busy market town.

16.24 The repair work to stonework and mortar joints and to the plaster cornice requires skilled masons experienced in the use of lime mortars and it is important a company with the necessary skills is appointed for this task.

16.25 Were the repairs to be grouped into one package of work it would be easier to appoint a contractor with the skills to undertake all aspects of the recommended repairs.

17. Recommendations

A The recommendations that follow are listed in order of priority to assist in the organisation of repair work and planning for the future. Relevant items in the main body of the report are given in brackets. Some item numbers may appear in two categories if they require one type of action before another or regular maintenance in future.

B Purely descriptive item numbers do not appear in the list of recommendations.

C Although some items may be listed under the 2-year category it may be more practical to carry them out with the 1-year category group if it is expedient to do so in order to make efficient use of scaffold access or the employment of specialist trades.

D The repairs recommended in the report are not anticipated to require listed building consent as they are a like for like repair and maintenance items.

Specification for recommended work

E It should be noted that the recommendations that follow are not a schedule of work or a specification. An architect or other suitably qualified person with experience of work to a building of this age and construction type should prepare the specification and Schedule of work for the recommended work. Should preliminarily cost estimates be required prior to work being undertake a more detailed description may be needed.

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17.1 Items requiring Prompt attention

17.1.1 Repair the roof slates (3.11, 3.13, 3.14-3.17)

17.2 Items requiring attention within one year

17.2.1 External high level redecoration (3.22, 3.23, 3.28-3.30, 3.33, 3.38, 3.44-3.48, 4.5, 4.6, 5.17, 5.26, 5.37, 5.49, 5.50, 5.54, 5.56, 5.62, 5.65)

17.2.2 Clean moss off and closely inspect the cupola lead and weathervane (3.26, 3.27)

17.2.3 Remove or replace decaying timber step on the flagpole gantry (3.39)

17.2.4 Investigate whether the iron pintols are catching on the dormer windows frame when it opens (3.48)

17.2.5 Check and repair plaster to coving (5.7, 5.8)

17.2.6 Check and repair glazing putty and pointing between timber frames and stone surrounds. Fill open joints in new joinery externally (5.9, 5.17, 5.29, 5.38, 5.39, 5.48, 5.66, 7.26)

17.2.7 Adjust lead clips to Clock Turret base, dormers and other elements. Replace missing copper tacks to the lead dogtooth (3.20, 3.21, 3.31, 3.40)

17.2.8 Inspect E chimney stack and adopt measures to ameliorate the effects of corrosive boiler flue condensate (3.35-3.37)

17.2.9 Adjust window in pendulum room to close correctly (7.60)

17.3 Items requiring attention within two years

17.3.1 Repair pointing to entrance canopy lead cover ((5.10)

17.3.2 Reform failed lime mortar repairs and pointing (5.15, 5.18-5.25, 5.28, 5.29, 5.31-5.35, 5.46, 5.47, 5.58)

17.3.3 Rake out and point open joints on the new steps on the S Terrance (5.42, 5.43)

17.3.4 Internal redecoration (7.5, 7.10, 7.12, 7.13, 7.28, 7.39, 7.42, 7.45, 7.46, 7.56)

17.3.5 Repair glazing putty internally before redecoration (7.28)

17.3.6 Check ground floor window second from the S on the E side for decay (7.28)

17.3.7 Repair damage to window seat (7.38)

17.3.8 Check first floor window second from the S on the E side for water ingress/ defective putty (7.41)

17.3.9 Correct the automatic smoke release mechanism to the N dormer window (7.48)

17.4 Items requiring attention within 5 years - None

17.5 Items which would be desirable

17.5.1 Adjust garment rail to stop plaster damage to recess (7.9)

17.5.2 Clean carpet in small office (7.13)

17.5.3 Reinstate induction loop (9.1, 13.4)

17.6 Further Investigation and Monitoring Items

17.6.1 Monitor the condition of the lead valleys either side of the pediment (3.12)

17.6.2 Monitor the condition of the stone slates during regular gutter clearance (3.18)

17.6.3 Monitor cracked glass in dormer window on W side (3.43)

17.6.4 Clear gutters on the side of the pediment twice a year (4.8)

17.6.5 Monitor condition of stonework at low level (5.27, 5.63)

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17.6.6 Monitor slight crack in lath and plaster coving on the E side (5.40)

17.6.7 Monitor joints in new joinery for possible water ingress (7.11, 7.26)

17.6.8 Monitor white bloom on pod oak timbers (7.17, 7.35)

17.6.9 Monitor the rate of decay of internal stonework (7.31)

17.5.1 Monitor ceiling paint on main hall ceiling (7.39, 7.40)

17.7 Maintenance Items

17.7.1 Regularly brush off moss from roof slates during regular gutter clearance above the N pediment (3.12)

17.7.2 Maintain regular clearance of lead outflow pipe below the clocks internally (7.64)

SIGNED: RPitsilli

RENA PITSILLI-GRAHAM BA, DipArch(Edin) AADipBldCon. RIBA, AABC

DISTRIBUTION: Ali Moses and Mark Stopps of Brackley Town Council – electronic copy only

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APPENDIX 1- PHOTOS

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1. Damaged slates below the N dormer above flagpole gantry

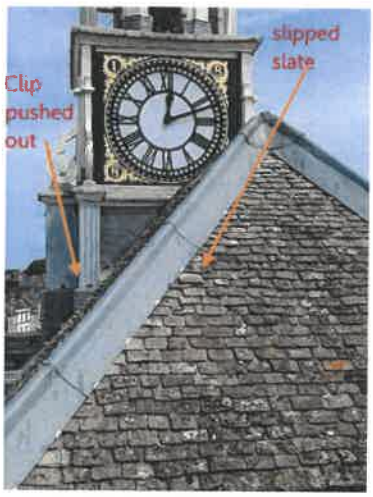
2. Lead valley to W side of N pediment

3. W roof slope

4. W roof slope

5. Slate temporarily wedged

6. S slope- Missing slate temporarily replaced



7. S slope and S Clock Turret face

8. S slope

9. Clock Turret from the SE

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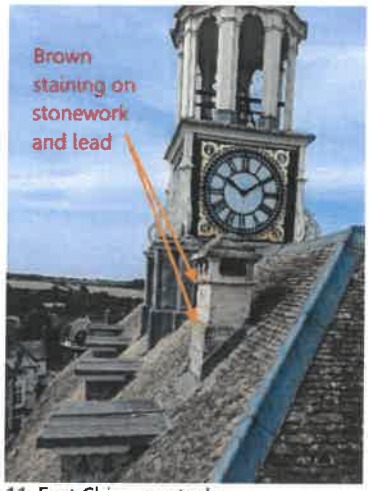
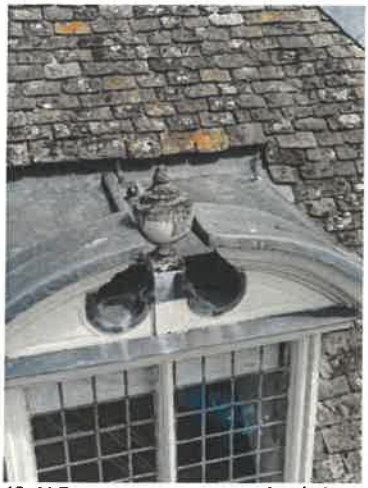
10. Clock Cupola Floor – Bell support rusting

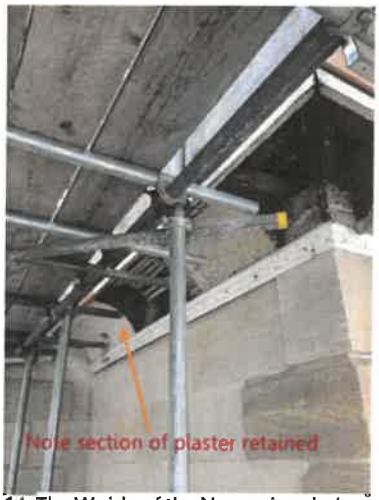


11. East Chimney stack



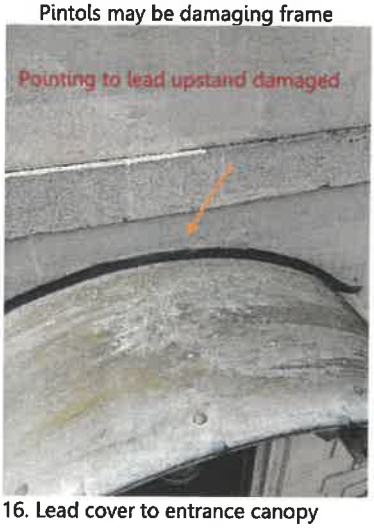
12. N Dorner- new urn completely bare

13. E side of the roof
Pintols may be damaging frame



14. The W side of the N covering during the repair project; see also photo 31

15. N window with missing putty to glass



16. Lead cover to entrance canopy

17. W side window with missing putty to glass

18. Damaged plaster W side below stair

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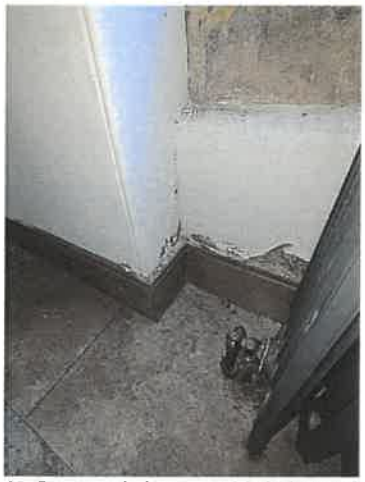
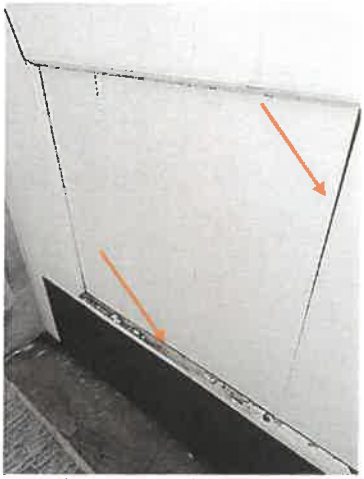


19. Damaged plaster W side below stair

20. Office window

21. Fire escape door to office

22. W window in Community Area- Salt efflorescence at low level and powdering on top of plinth



23. E door on S side; open joint and possibly water ingress staining

24. W door on S side; possible water ingress through gunstock joint.

25. Slight white bloom on pod timbers on first floor

26. Damaged window seat on first floor E side.

27. E window on first floor; possible water ingress through defective putty

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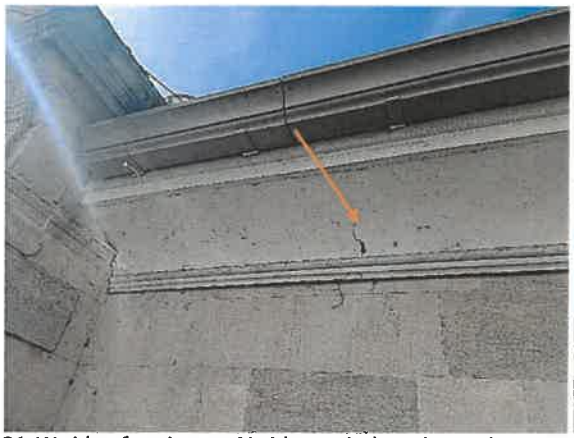
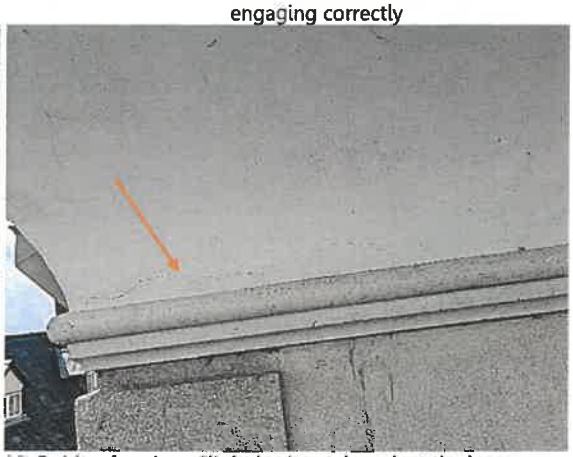
28. Missing cover to carbon monoxide sensor in boiler room

29. Staining below access panel in attic flat

30. E window to pendulum room; defective seal and frame not engaging correctly



31. W side of coving on N side; vertical crack opening up. See also photo 14.



32. E side of coving- Slight horizontal crack at the base.

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