

No. 65 High Street, West Malling, Kent Historic Building Recording

Client: DEBLANC STUDIOS AB Heritage Project No:10583 Date:10/07/2015

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Client	Deblanc Studios
Project Number	10583
Prepared By	Kerry Kerr-Peterson
Illustrated By	Zoe Edwards
Approved By	Andy Buckley

Rev Number	Description	Undertaken	Approved	Date
1.0	DRAFT	ККР	AB	10-07-2015

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Enquiries To:

AB Heritage Limited (Head Office)

Caerus Suite, 150 Priorswood Road,

Taunton, Somerset, TA2 8DU

Email: info@abheritage.co.uk

Tel: 03333 440 206



CONTENTS

1.	Intro	duction	5
	1.1	Project Background	5
	1.2	Site Location & Description	6
	1.3	Proposed Development	6
2.	Aims	& Methodology	7
	2.1	Aims of Works	7
	2.2	Methodology of Works	7
	2.3	Limitations	8
3.	Histo	pric background	9
	3.1	Statutory Designation	9
	3.2	Previous Archaeological Works	9
	3.3	Historic Development of the Property Complex	9
	3.4	Documentary Evidence	1
	3.5	Summary of Overall Condition of the Building Prior to Renovation	2
	3.6	Current Historic Building Recording Works	2
4.	Disc	ussion	1
5.	Refe	rences	2
	5.1	Online Sources	2
	5.2	Correspondence	2

FIGURES

Figure 1;	Site Location
Figure 2;	Annotated Plan of Former Existing Development
Figure 3;	Annotated Proposed Development Plan: Basement
Figure 4:	Proposed Development Plan: Ground Floor
Figure 5:	Proposed Development Plan: First Floor
Figure 6:	Proposed Development Sections
Figure 7:	Site Visit Photos and Orientations: Ground Floor & Facade
Figure 8:	Site Visit Photos and Orientations: Section & Street Map

PHOTOS

- Photo 1: The crown post roof within No. 65 High Street, viewed from the first floor level, taken during the refurbishment works
- Photo 2: No. 65 High Street in context along the West Malling High Street. Viewed from the south-west prior to the refurbishment works
- Photo 3: The 'Ancient House' viewed from the east, taken during the site visit
- Photo 4: The original Medieval stone fireplace with later brick stack, taken during the site visit
- Photo 5: Medieval doorways located on the east wall of the first floor, taken during the conservation works
- Photo 6: South wall of the first floor. The beams outlined in red may mark the layout of a contemporary range that ran along the position of No. 67 & 69, taken during the conservation works
- Photo 7: The front exterior of the building viewed from the west, taken during the site visit
- Photo 8: The rear of the properties shows the encroachment of the link block into No. 65 High Street taken during the site visit
- Photo 9: Timber first floor joists located behind the stucco on the front of the building, taken during the refurbishment works
- Photo 10: The plastered wooden lath stud walls and reed ceiling within the former attic space, taken during the early stages of the conservation works
- Photo 11: Modern chimney stack on the south wall, taken during the conservation works
- Photo 12: Medieval chamfered doorway on the east wall of the first floor, taken during the site visit
- Photo 13: Replacement arch brace on the first floor, taken during the site visit
- Photo 14: Tooling marks on timber in the stairs area of the building, taken during the site visit
- Photo 15: 19th Century heath and chimney stack located in the south wall of the ground floor, taken during the refurbishment works
- Photo 16: Timber wall studs and blocked window in the south-east corner of the ground floor, taken during the refurbishment works
- Photo 17: Ragstone wall and sill beam visible in the cellar, taken during the site visit
- Photo 18: Evidence of the original stone steps at the base of the modern cellar staircase, taken during the site visit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AB Heritage Limited (hereafter AB Heritage) was commissioned to carry out a programme of Historic Building Recording at No. 65 High Street, West Malling, Kent. The site is a Grade I Listed Building and is considered by Historic England to be of exceptional interest due to the high quality crown post roof and other historical timbers surviving within the building.

The proposed developments works that were carried out between July 2014 and March 2015 have been sympathetic in nature towards the historical and aesthetic significance of the surviving building, with particular emphasis on the significant surviving historic timbers throughout the building. The redevelopment has reversed a number of the unsympathetic alterations that have been carried out within the property over past centuries.

Several features of the building were exposed during the refurbishment, including timber lath stud walling, a later blocked window, and the first floor timber joists behind the stucco on the front of the building. All of these historic features have been covered over with new stud walling that has ensured that they will survive beneath the modern refurbishments.

The conservation and repair works that have been undertaken as part of the redevelopment of the building have ensured the survival and therefore enhanced the significant of the original medieval features within the building and the property as a whole. Without the works, it is likely that these features would have continued to deteriorate.

As a result of the sympathetic nature and extent of the conservation works carried out during the refurbishment works undertaken between July 2014 and March 2015, it is considered that overall the redevelopment has had a positive impact upon the significance of the features within the building and the property as a whole.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 AB Heritage Limited (hereafter AB Heritage) was commissioned to carry out a programme of Historic Building Recording at No. 65 High Street, West Malling, Kent (Kent Historic Environment Record (HER) Number TQ 65 NE 162), during June / July 2015.
- 1.1.2 The site is a Grade I Listed Building (National Heritage List for England (NHLE) ref. 1292809). It was first designated as Grade II* by English Heritage (hereafter Historic England) in 1952, and subsequently upgraded in 1996 to Grade I status. It forms part of a range of buildings that are considered by Historic England to be of exceptional interest due to the high quality crown post roof and other historical timbers surviving within the building (Photo 1).



Photo 2: The crown post roof within No. 65 High Street, viewed from the first floor level, taken during the refurbishment works

- 1.1.3 In accordance with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework and standard practice, a programme of recording was undertaken in order to provide a better understanding of the building, the development of the site, any features that may have been affected by the development, as well as to compile a permanent archive record of the building.
- 1.1.4 The recording was undertaken as a condition to the consent for the grant of Listed Building Consent (Listed Building Consent Application 13/03238/LB). This was recommended by the Kent County Council Senior Archaeological Officer (Wendy Rogers) and was required to cover the interior and exterior redevelopment of the property.
- 1.1.5 The onsite recording was carried out on the 6th July 2015 by Kerry Kerr-Peterson (Assistant Project Archaeologist, AB Heritage) & Tom Cloherty (Archaeological Technician, AB Heritage).
- 1.1.6 The property was in use as a cafe at the time of the survey, it is known to Kent County Council that the refurbishment had already taken place; therefore the historic building

recording was carried out partly retrospectively using photographs taken by the developer during the conservation works.

1.2 Site Location & Description

1.2.1 The site is situated within the historic core of the town of the West Malling and within the West Malling Central Area Conservation Area. The building is situated on the eastern side of the High Street, c. 100m to the west of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary (NHLE ref. 1008030) (Photo 2).



Photo 2: No. 65 High Street along the West Malling High Street. Viewed from the south-west prior to the refurbishment works

- 1.2.2 No. 65 is part of three properties, including No. 67 on the south side, and the Ancient House to the south-east (See Figure 1). Together these buildings originally formed one large building that including No. 69 High Street (Pearson, 1995).
- 1.2.3 The stone range of the complex, known as the 'Ancient House', dates to the late 12th Century. This building was possibly originally a priest's house related to the adjacent Benedictine Abbey and may have later been utilised as a jail (Hasted, 1798).
- 1.2.4 The Grade I Listed No. 67 High Street and the Ancient House are both now under separate ownership and are not included under this programme of historic building recording.

1.3 Proposed Development

1.3.1 The development works comprised internal and external alterations, in order to create a new cafe / restaurant, which includes construction of a new kitchen; new WCs; a replacement staircase; part exposure of the loft space; a replacement door to the shop front; new signage, and; front awning plus air conditioning.

2. AIMS & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims of Works

- 2.1.1 The main aims of the historic building recording are to contribute towards the understanding of the development of the building and to compile a permanent archive record of the building, while in particular:
 - Providing an interpretation of the photographs taken during the conservation works to provide a supplementary record of those areas of the historic fabric that were exposed during the development
 - Conducting additional photographic recording of significant original fixtures, fittings exposed during the conservation works, specifically focusing on the cellars and roof space
 - Recording any significant structural details relating to the phasing and development of the building that were exposed during the conservation works
 - Identifying and recording any features that may have been affected by the development.

2.2 Methodology of Works

- 2.2.1 The report will comply with English Heritage, 2006, Understanding Historic Buildings A Guide to Good Recording Practice (revised and expanded version of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England's 1996 document Recording Historic Buildings A Descriptive Specification (Third Edition)).
- 2.2.2 A series of photographs were taken of the interior and exterior of the building by the client during the refurbishment works carried out between July 2014 and March 2015. A copy of these photos was supplied to AB Heritage in order for interpretations to be made of the features exposed during the development.

Initial Documentary Research

- 2.2.3 Initial research was undertaken using the following resources:
 - Exploring Kent's Past, Kent County Council Historic Environment Record Online http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ExploringKentsPast.Web.Sites.Public/ accessed 22nd June 2015
 - Historic England's National Heritage List for England Online http://list.historicengland.org.uk/mapsearch.aspx accessed 22nd June 2015
 - Data supplied by the Historic Environment Record held by the Kent County Council on 26th June 2015

2.2.4 A site visit to undertake the historic building recording was conducted on 6th July 2015 by Kerry Kerr-Peterson (Assistant Project Archaeologist, AB Heritage) & Tom Cloherty (Archaeological Technician, AB Heritage).

2.3 Limitations

- 2.3.1 As mentioned previously, the conservation work had already been carried out when the recording was undertaken. Interpretations of exposed features have been made, where possible, from copies of photographs taken by the client during the refurbishment works. As a result some of the features identified in the images have been subsequently concealed by the development, and therefore were not visible during the site visit for a more detailed inspection.
- 2.3.2 Due to health and safety limitations and practicality, all on site observations were made from floor level using magnifying visual aids and therefore detailed investigation of the exposed roof timbers was restricted in extent to some degree.

3. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

3.1 Statutory Designation

- 3.1.1 No. 65 High Street, West Malling is a statutory designated Grade I Listed Building (NHLE ref. 1292809).
- 3.1.2 The property was first designated in 1952 as Grade II* and was subsequently upgraded in 1996 to Grade I status.
- 3.1.3 The significance of the building is mostly related to the historical and aesthetic value of the high quality surviving crown post roof and other historic timbers within the building.

3.2 Previous Archaeological Works

3.2.1 A thorough historic building recording was carried out by Sarah Pearson for the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) in 1995. This provided a highly detailed description of the building and ascertains the date and phases of construction for No. 65 & No. 67, plus the Ancient House, based on the evidence available at that time.

3.3 Historic Development of the Property Complex

- 3.3.1 The detailed report produced for the RCHME in 1995 determined that No. 65 High Street is part of three adjoining properties that are thought to have originally formed part of one large stone building.,
- 3.3.2 The adjoining properties are No. 67 High Street, to the south, which is currently in use as a cafe (Costa). The 'Ancient House' is located to the south-east and adjoins the rear of No. 67, is currently used as a storeroom.
- 3.3.3 The Kent ragstone built Ancient House is a nationally rare survival of a Medieval chamber block with an undercroft and formerly had an external staircase. It was constructed c. 1160-1180 and was possibly altered during the 14th Century and reroofed in the later 15th Century (Photo 3) (Pearson, 1995).



Photo 3: The 'Ancient House' viewed from the east, taken during the site visit

- 3.3.4 No. 65 & 67 High Street are both timber framed and were built together during the 15th Century. The two storey buildings have attics and were later refronted in stucco (Photo 2) (English Heritage Scheduling Record, 1952).
- 3.3.5 No. 67 was rebuilt during the 17th Century. The surviving timber framed link block joining No.
 67 to the 'Ancient House' dates to the 16th Century. This link block is possibly located on the site of an earlier hall (Pearson, 1995).

Historic Development of No. 65 High Street

3.3.6 The detailed recording of the building carried out in 1995 identified that No. 65 has a box framed two bay cross wing layout. The first floor is a two bay chamber that would have originally jettied out over the High Street. The larger east bay contains part of an original stone chimney stack on the north wall (Photo 4).



Photo 4: The original Medieval stone fireplace with later brick stack, taken during the site visit

- 3.3.7 The first floor chamber is divided by a central open crown post truss. The tie beam has been cut back in order to create the attic space above. A former extension was located on the east side of the building that was accessed via two first floor doorways on the east wall (Photo 5) Pearson, 1995).
- 3.3.8 Previous investigations undertaken by RCHME in 1995 have identified the position of an earlier roofline lying against the southern slope of the existing roof. Posts along the first floor south wall mark the outline of the contemporary range that ran along the line of No. 67 & 69 (Photo 6).



Photo 5: Medieval doorways located on the east wall of the first floor, taken during the conservation works



Photo 6: South wall of the 1st floor. The beams (digitally outlined in red) may mark the previous line of a structure that ran along the position of No. 67 & 69 (taken during conservation works)

- 3.3.9 The use of earlier floor joists for the first floor and of smoke blackened rafters, although there is no evidence for an open hall on the site, suggests that these materials have been reused from an earlier building, perhaps located on the same site or to the rear of No. 65 (Pearson, 1995).
- 3.3.10 By the late 18th Century No. 65 & 67 High Street were separate properties under separate ownership. During the 19th Century a shop front was added to No. 65 (Pearson, 1995).

3.4 Documentary Evidence

3.4.1 The report produced for RCHME in 1995 states that documentary evidence, in the form of a property deed dated 1681 refers to the complex as the Angel, which was formerly known as the Bull Inn. The Bull Inn is also referred to in documentary sources as being well established

by 1442. It is likely that the range of buildings along the street front had been constructed as an Inn that belonged to the adjacent Benedictine Abbey.

3.5 Summary of Overall Condition of the Building Prior to Renovation

- 3.5.1 Interpretations made of the photographs taken by the client during the early stages of the conservation works suggest that the interior of the building was in a poor state of repair.
- 3.5.2 The initial inspection, carried out by Premier Heritage (2014) revealed a number of leaks were identified that had resulted in some deterioration to the surrounding timbers.
- 3.5.3 Evidence was found for a small amount of recent Common Furniture Beetle activity within the crown post and other timbers within the roof of the building.
- 3.5.4 The inspection identified that historic movement of the overall roof frame had occurred as the position of the crown post is out of vertical alignment with the remainder of the roof structure. Historic activity of wood boring insects was also evident across the property.
- 3.5.5 Previous repair work was identified related to the first floor joists in the south eastern corner of the property. The floor had dropped in this area and a modern steel girder had been inserted to support the floor.
- 3.5.6 Some of the photographs taken during the conservation works have been included within the current historic building recording section of the report. This is in order to illustrate architectural details exposed during the refurbishment that have been concealed by the development.

3.6 Current Historic Building Recording Works

Exterior of the Building

- 3.6.1 The building has a gabled front facing north-west onto the High Street with a late 19th Century shop front and a hipped roof tiled with industrially produced red ceramic tiles. The upper part is stuccoed with two 19th Century wooden casement windows. The lower part consists of a painted wooden half glazed shop / cafe front with four pilasters. A wooden signage board is located above the level of the windows.
- 3.6.2 The front of the building has been relatively unchanged by the development, apart from the addition of a retractable awning (Photo 7).



Photo 7: The front exterior of the building viewed from the west, taken during the site visit

- 3.6.3 During the replacement of the wooden signage board on the front of the building, the ends of a number of the first floor timber joists were visible behind a layer of stucco that had been removed. The jetty plate had been replaced with a steel girder. The gaps between the timbers had been filled with modern industrial bricks with a buff yellow mortar (Photo 9). The ends of the timbers had been removed when the jettied front of the building was cut back, probably during the 19th Century. The ends of the timbers were recovered by the new signage board.
- 3.6.4 The upper part of the rear of the building is clad with 19th 20th Century industrially produced overlapping red ceramic tiles. The lower part consists of a small modern stretcher bonded brick extension on the east side of the building with a door leading to the rear yard. The encroachment of the link block on the north side of No. 67 High Street is evident at the rear of the properties (Photo 8).



Photo 8: The rear of the properties shows the encroachment of the link block into No. 65 High Street, taken during the site visit



Photo 9: Timber first floor joists located behind the stucco on the front of the building, taken during the refurbishment works

Interior – Attic Space

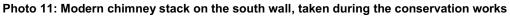
- 3.6.5 A small attic space has been created during the refurbishment towards the apex of the roof on the east side of the building to house the air conditioning equipment. A feature has been made of the apex of the roof by creating a viewing window.
- 3.6.6 The stud walls and rafters within the former attic space displayed the remains of partition walling. The areas between the stud wall posts contained the remains of lime plastered wooden laths and plastered reeds were located along the rafters in order to create the ceiling (Photo 9). The deteriorated plastered reeds on the ceiling were removed. New stud walling was inserted in front of the plastered lath walls preserving them behind it.



Photo 10: The plastered wooden lath stud walls and reed ceiling within the former attic space, taken during the early stages of the conservation works

- 3.6.7 Several modern timbers had been inserted beneath the crown plate and a number of the rafters, to provide additional support. (Photo 10). These modern timbers were removed during the refurbishment.
- 3.6.8 The attic space revealed the interior of the 19th Century stretcher bonded brick chimney stack on the south wall (Photo 11).





3.6.9 The western stud wall was filled with plastered modern breeze blocks at former attic level.

Interior – First Floor

3.6.10 The first floor had painted plastered walls between the exposed wall studs. Where areas of the plastered had deteriorated it was possible to identify that some areas of the stud walls had

been filled with plastered wooden laths and other parts had been filled with later plastered brickwork. The plasterwork was repaired during the conservation works.

3.6.11 The first floor east wall contains a doorway with a four-centred doorhead that dates to c. 1450-1475. The exterior head and jambs of this doorway have chamfered edges (Photo 12). An additional medieval former doorway is located further to the south (Photo 5). During the refurbishment this was converted into a window. Both of these doorways would have originally led to a former extension on the eastern side of the building.



Photo 13: Medieval chamfered doorway on the east wall of the first floor, taken during the site visit

- 3.6.12 Two later doorways have been inserted into the south wall (Photo 6). A later plastered ceiling had been inserted with painted narrow wooden joists. On the advice of Historic England, in a letter to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (dated 17th January 2014), this later ceiling was removed during the conservation works, in order to expose the crown post roof.
- 3.6.13 Pegs holes and slots were present on the north and south end of the central truss for a missing arch brace (Photo 13). The missing arch braces have been replaced during the conservation works and secured to the truss using wooden pegs and the original peg holes.



Photo 14: Replacement arch brace on the first floor, taken during the site visit

- 3.6.14 A stone and brick chimneypiece is located on the north wall (Photo 4). This has a stone lintel and is supported by two carved stone corbels. The canopy is a later chamfered plastered English bonded brick replacement of 16th or 17th Century date. The stack has been reduced in width on the west side (Photo 13). The upper part of the stack is a 19th Century replacement. In the attic space the rafters have been reduced to make way for the insertion of the stack and reattached to a horizontal beam running across the upper part of the stack.
- 3.6.15 A modern wooden staircase located against the north wall linked the first and ground floors. This has been replaced with a modern constructed composite staircase of wood and glass with a stainless steel handrail. Oblique tooling marks were visible on one of the timber wall stud beams in the stairs area of the building (Photo 14).

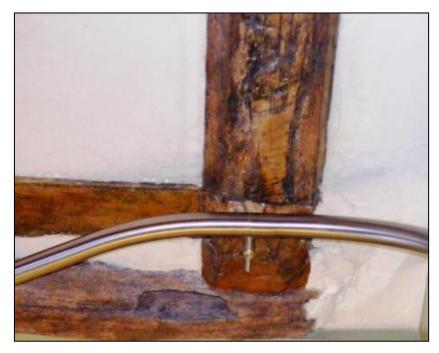


Photo 15: Tooling marks on timber in the stairs area of the building, taken during the site visit

Interior – Ground Floor

- 3.6.16 The ground floor walls at the western end of the building had painted plastered surfaces between the exposed studs. Where the plaster had been removed, it was possible to determine that at least part of the stud walling was filled with lime plastered wooden laths. This plasterwork was repaired as part of the conservation works. A steel girder had been inserted horizontally to support to floor above, supported by series of cast iron props.
- 3.6.17 A 19th Century chimney stack was exposed at the western end of the south wall. This had a narrow hearth and a curved brick overarch and had been blocked with modern breeze blocks (Photo 15).
- 3.6.18 The eastern end of the ground floor contained a modern kitchen. During the refurbishment of this area, the south-east corner revealed two conjoined sections of stud walling below the current first floor level (Photo 16). This appears to represent the encroachment of part of the upper floor of the16th Century link block at the rear of the property.
- 3.6.19 In the south-east corner of the ground floor, beneath the stud walling, part of a probable c.
 16th 17th Century projecting timber window frame was visible. The window frame had rectangular panes and flat, square stanchions. The width of the window had been extended and incorporated into a later brick bay constructed from narrow stretcher bonded bricks. There is a layer of bricks beneath the window that have been laid obliquely for decoration (Photo 16).
- 3.6.20 The window had been blocked from the adjacent property with plastered wooden laths and the patina and nail holes on the window frame suggest that it had formerly also been blocked

with wooden laths (Photo 16). The stud wall and window were concealed behind new stud walling during the redevelopment.

3.6.21 A number of the joists on the south side of the kitchen area were replaced during the conservation works with timbers of the same size, although the new joists have been concealed by the new stainless steel kitchen ceiling. It was evident from the patina of the joists and nail holes that the joists had formerly been clad with wooden laths to create a ceiling.



Photo 15: 19th Century heath and chimney stack located in the south wall of the ground floor, taken during the refurbishment works



Photo 16: Timber wall studs and blocked window in the south-east corner of the ground floor, taken during the refurbishment works

<u>The Cellar</u>

- 3.6.22 The cellar was accessed via a short modern staircase from the ground floor kitchen. The western part of the northern wall was constructed from 13 rough courses of sub rectangular shaped blocks of Kent ragstone, averaging c. 0.30m long x 0.30m wide. These were bonded with a moderately coarse buff yellow mortar. The bottom of a sill beam is visible above the stonework. Both of these have evidence of a former covering of lime plaster (Photo 17).
- 3.6.23 The eastern part of the northern wall and the exposed part of the southern wall of the stairway were constructed from modern stretcher bonded bricks (Photo 17).
- 3.6.24 The corner of the one of the original lower stone steps was visible on the southern side of the base of the modern wooden staircase (Photo 18).



Photo 17: Ragstone wall and sill beam visible in the cellar, taken during the site visit



Photo 18: Evidence of the original stone steps at the base of the modern cellar staircase, taken during the site visit

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 Overall, there is a relatively high level of survival of a number of original medieval features and later aspects of the building.
- 4.1.2 The proposed developments works that were carried out between July 2014 and March 2015 have been sympathetic in nature towards the historical and aesthetic significance of the surviving building, with particular emphasis on the significant surviving historic timbers throughout the building. The redevelopment has reversed a number of the unsympathetic alterations that have been carried out within the property over past centuries.
- 4.1.3 As advised by Historic England, in a letter to Tonbirdge and Malling Borough Council dated 17th January 2014, the most significant reversal has been the opening up of the roof space in order to make a visible feature of the crown post roof, formerly obscured by a later attic floor.
- 4.1.4 In addition, a number of the other architectural features of the building have also been highlighted within the interior of the building using spotlighting. These include the apex of the roof and the chimney stacks on the first floor.
- 4.1.5 Some original tooling marks were identified on a stud wall timber in the stairs area of the building (Photo 14).
- 4.1.6 As discussed above, several features of the building were exposed during the refurbishment, including timber lath stud walling (Photo 10), a later blocked window (Photo 16) and the first floor timber joists behind the stucco on the front of the building (Photo 9). All of these historic features have been covered over with new stud walling, which may improve survival of original features beneath the modern refurbishments.
- 4.1.7 Historic England commented in a letter to Tonbirdge and Malling Borough Council dated 17th January 2014, that they were conscious that replacement timbers were sympathetically adjoined to the historic fabric and that as many of these were retained as possible. The replacement of a number of the failed original timbers was necessary during the conservation works to ensure the structural integrity of the building was maintained. These timbers had deteriorated due to the results of water ingress and wood boring insects over a lengthy period of time. The replacement timbers are sympathetic in nature and design and have been connected to the original timbers using traditional wooden pegs and the original peg holes (Photo 13).
- 4.1.8 The conservation and repair works that were undertaken as part of the 2014/15 redevelopment of the building ensured the longer term survival of the original medieval features within the building and the property as a whole, preserving and enhancing the existing significance of the structure. Without the works, it is likely that these features would have continued to deteriorate.
- 4.1.9 As a result of the sympathetic nature and extent of the conservation works carried out during the refurbishment works undertaken between July 2014 and March 2015, it is considered that overall the redevelopment has had a positive impact upon the significance of the features within the building and the property as a whole.

5. **REFERENCES**

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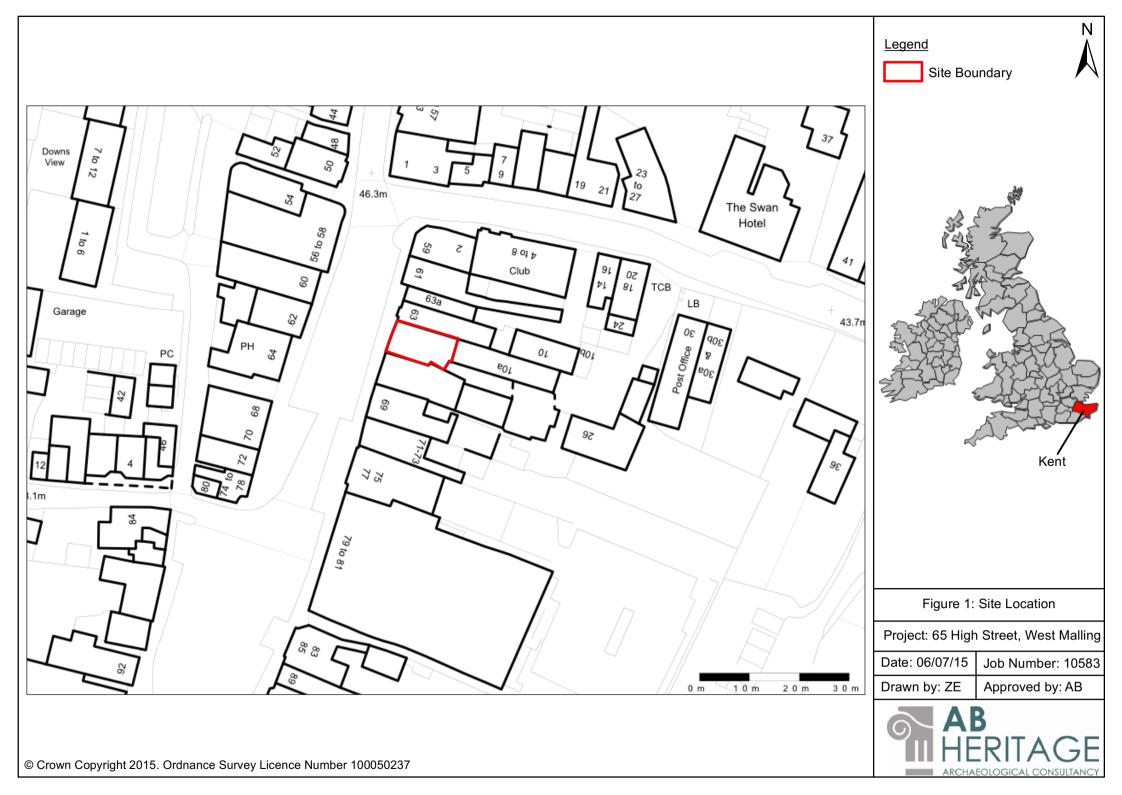
5.3 Correspondence

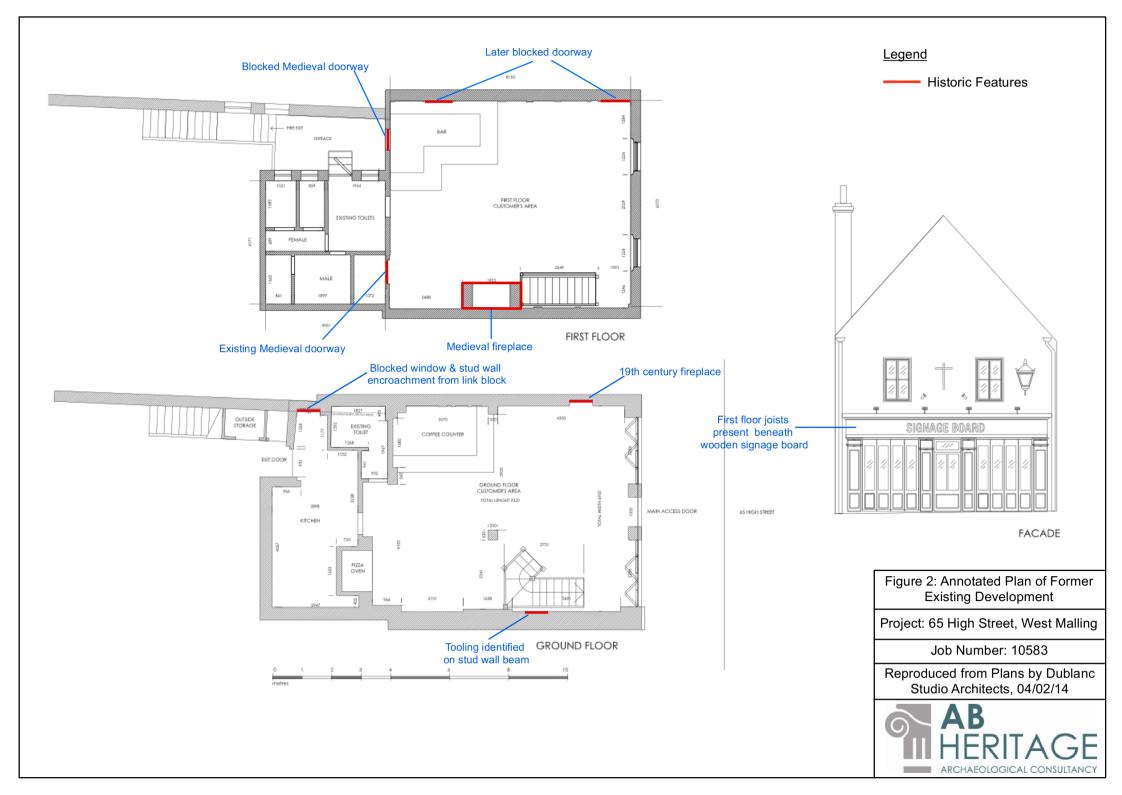
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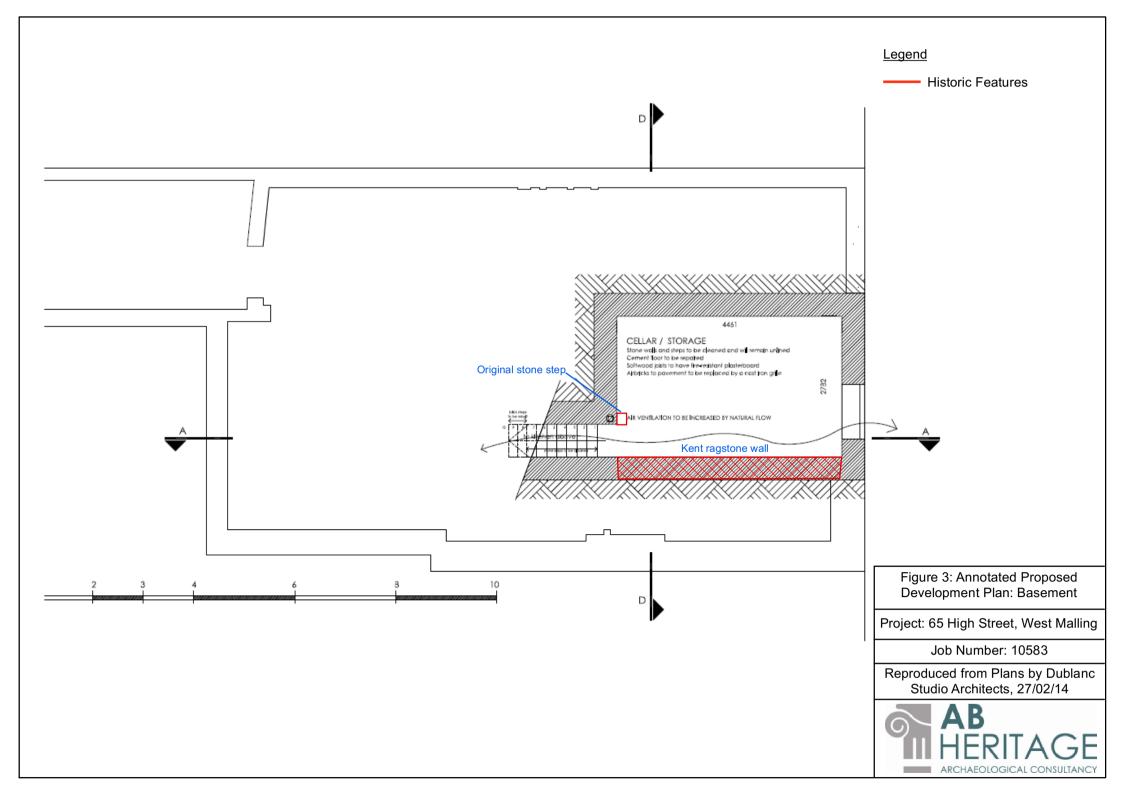
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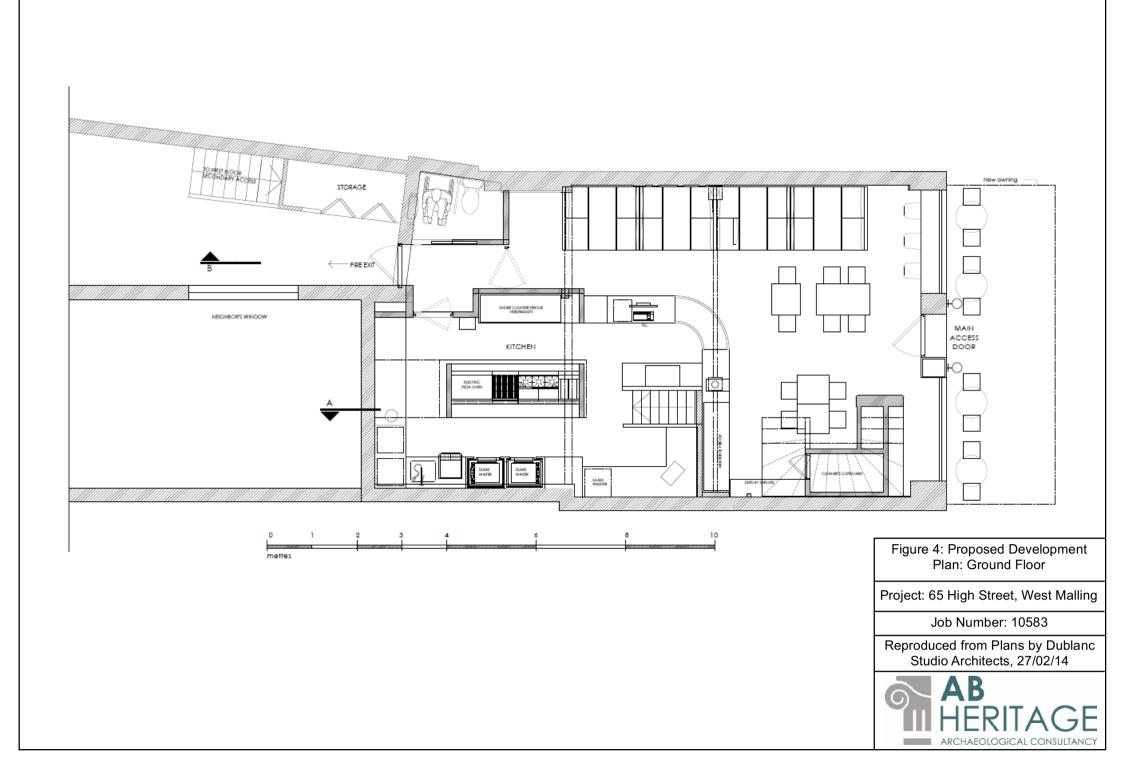
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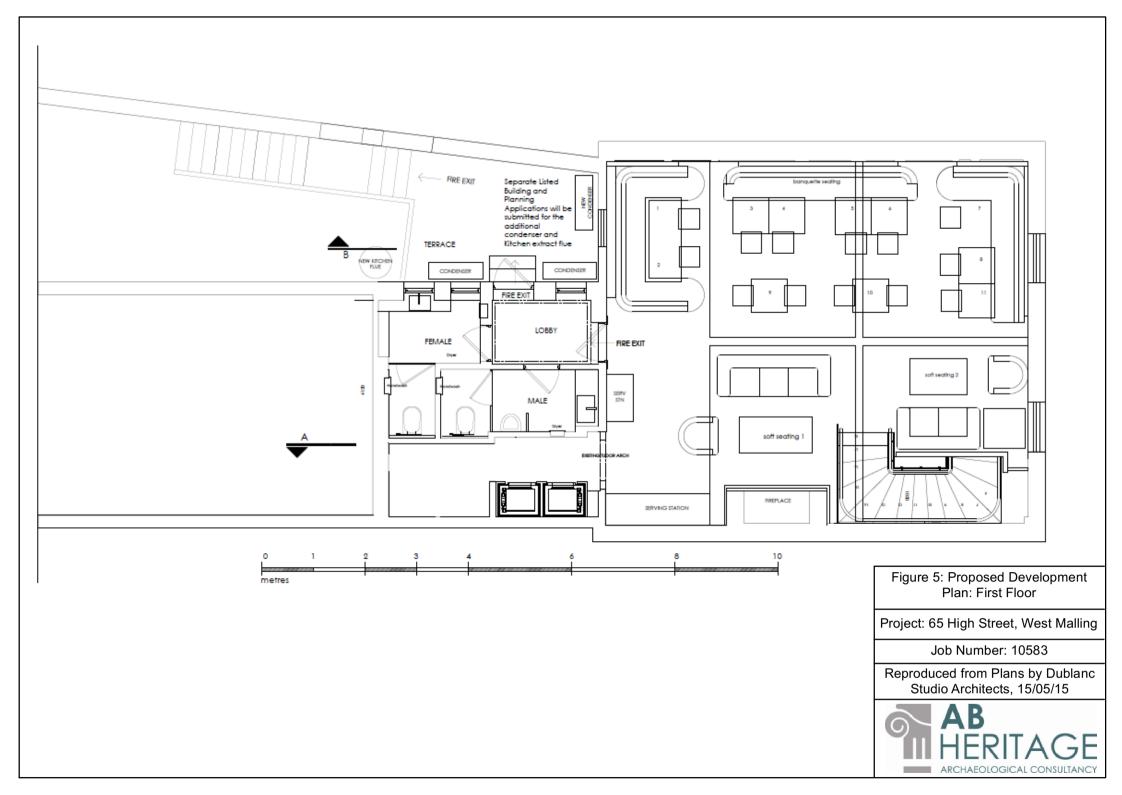
Correspondence between the Historic England Assistant Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas (Liz Pollard) and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (Marion Geary) Letter dated 21st May 2014, English Heritage South East Office

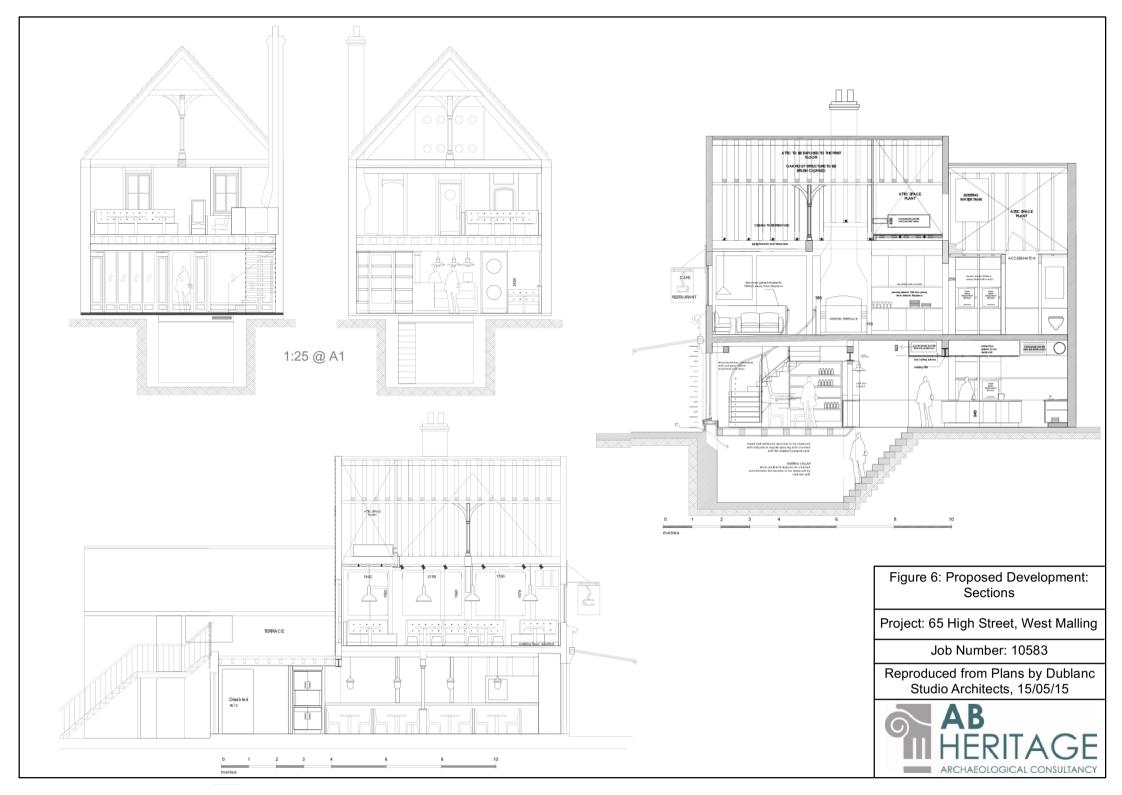


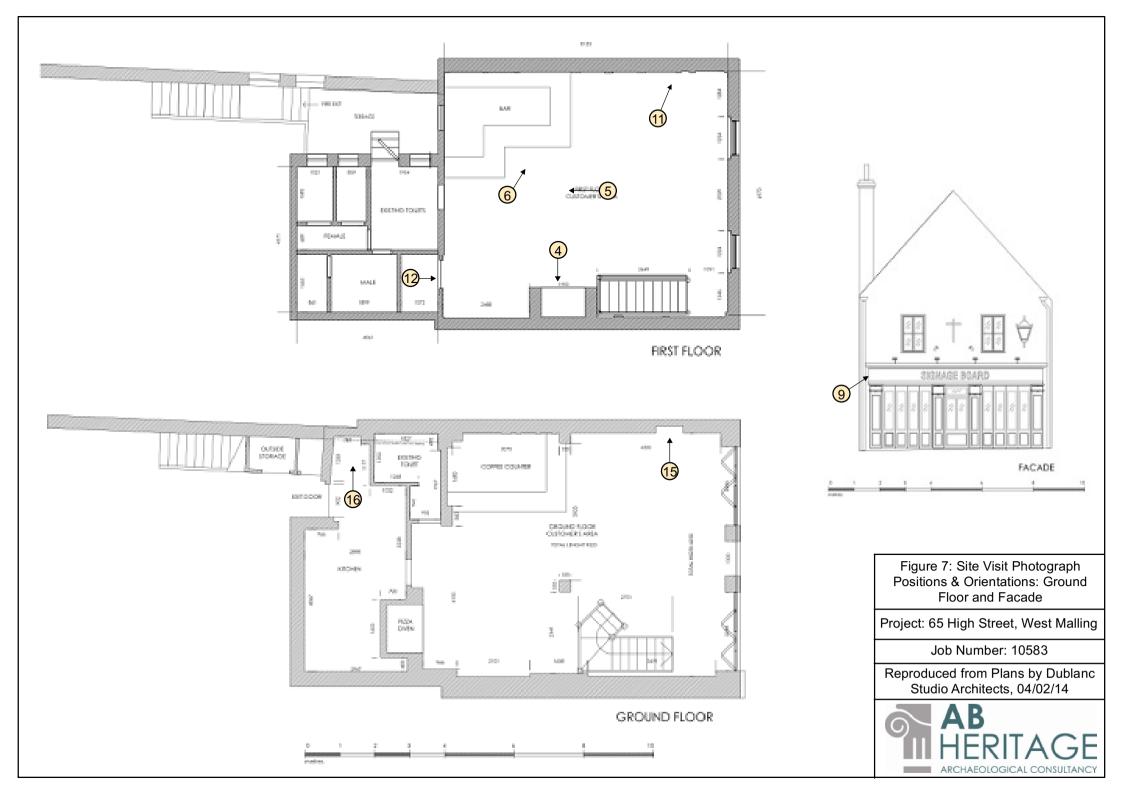


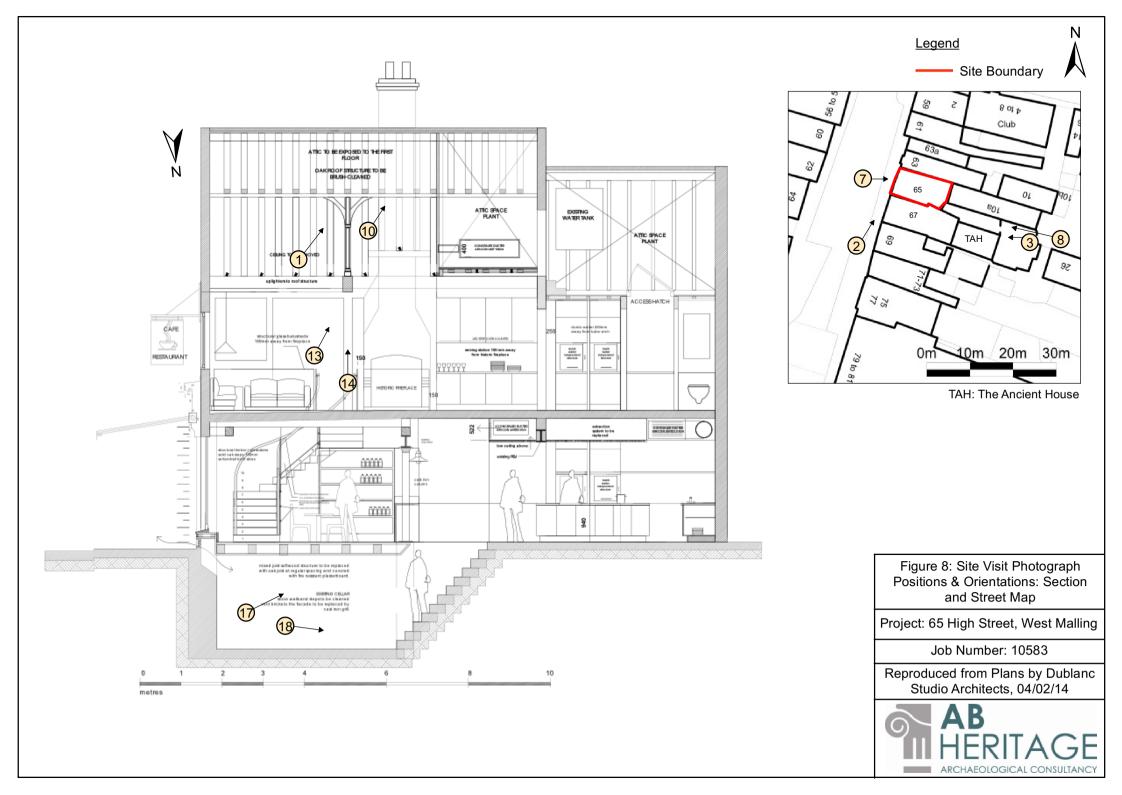














AB Heritage Limited Caerus Suite, 150 Priorswood Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 8DU Tel: 03333 440 206 e-mail: info@abheritage.co.uk