

Heritage Impact Assessment - Chipping Norton Town Hall.





Front page: Northeast and southeast elevations of Chipping Norton Town Hall. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

Figure 2: West elevation of the Town Hall.
Above, shows the southeast corner of the Town Hall.
Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

Job reference. 125-23 Date: March 2023.
Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

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Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Introduction and methodology.

Victoria Hubbard MSc of Hubbard Conservation has been commissioned to write this Heritage Impact Assessment on behalf of Chipping Norton Town Council. This is in relation to the proposed **urgent works** required to repair the ladies WCs on the lower ground floor.

This report is predominantly a Statement of Significance, accompanied by a short Impact Assessment of the proposed urgent works. This would appear out of proportion, however, the Statement of Significance has been written comprehensively to save the Town Council from having to commission future equivalent reports for any future works. This measure hopes to save the town council from additional financial burdens. Therefore, any future proposed works would include the first part of this report: Statement of Significance.

The Town Hall was first statutorily listed as Grade II* on the 23rd April 1952 (**Appendix I -** List Entry Number: 1368043), and is situated towards the southern side of the Market Place in the heart of the Conservation Area.

Planning history:

- W2003/1587 validated 21 August 2003. Refurbish ground floor including disabled toilet and reception desk in entrance hall (retrospective).
- W95/0715 validated 23 May 1995. Installation of disabled toilet and tea/bar on first floor landing.
- W89/0776 validated 17 April 1989. Invalid ramp.
- W89/0775 validated 17 April 1989. Invalid ramp.

This report has been prepared in accordance with Historic England guidelines relating to *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*, Historic England, April 2008. The level of detail in the report is proportionate to the proposed works and significance of the main asset and setting in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 16, Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, 2021, in particular paragraph 194**.** '*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes,*

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.'
Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states, '*Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*' To accord with this policy this report has been written in two parts: Part one will comprise **Statement of Significance** and part two, an **Impact Assessment**.

As referred to above, the report first sets out the historic background of the heritage asset and its setting, investigating the 'significance' in accordance with Historic England's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance which advocates the understanding of 'significance' taking place before moving onto assess the impact of potential change on that 'significance'. The Impact Assessment will detail the planning proposal again in accordance with Historic England's Conservation, Principles, Policies and Guidance and paragraph 199 of the NPPF. *'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)'.*

Local constraints:

- West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031; adopted September 2018:
  - Historic Environment Policy: EH9 – Historic Environment, EH10 – Conservation Area, EH11 – Listed Buildings, EH12 – Traditional Buildings and EH13 – Historic Landscape Character.
  - West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016.

The planning system expects reports such as these to be based on evidence. Therefore, this report has been based on a site inspection that took place on 29th March 2023 where a survey was conducted. Photographs were taken on the day. Documentary research has been obtained from a variety of sources including Chipping Norton Museum, which hold a wealth of information and local history reference files. There are many worthy and helpful local history books published in the town, many of which are associated with or produced by Chipping Norton Museum. *'Chipping Norton Town Hall*

Past and Present' by John Grantham has been incredibly useful. I am a founder member of the Chipping Norton Building Record. As a group, we have undertaken a project on behalf of Historic England in the town, which is on-going after a decade and has resulted in a sizable database of information regarding the town's history and fabric. The research from the project has been produced as a book '*The Making of Chipping Norton – a guide to its buildings and history to 1750*' written by Dr Adrienne Rosen, and Janice Cliffe.

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Historic context with regard to Chipping Norton will be extremely brief as further reading can be obtained from the reliable sources mentioned above. Time will be spent on the historic context of the Town Hall.

Victoria Hubbard has a Masters degree in Historic Conservation from Brookes University, Oxford. She is the project coordinator for The Early English Fabric project in Chipping Norton on behalf of Historic England, which started in 2013 and is ongoing. The project was nominated for The Historic England Angel Awards in October 2016 in recognition of the time, effort, and determination afforded to the project. In 2012 she became one of the founder members of the Chipping Norton Buildings Record (CNBR) and is an Affiliate member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

This report has been prepared with care, diligence and as an objective assessment based on the information provided, discovered, or known at the time. This report has been produced for the sole use of Chipping Norton Town Council and their professional advisors in connection with this application and should not be relied upon by any other party or any other context. This report should be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement and plans provided by Alder King.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Part One: Statement of Significance.

Location and setting.

Chipping Norton is located towards the northern edge of the county of Oxfordshire. This historic market town is located approximately 20 miles northeast of Oxford and 13 miles southwest of Banbury. Located on historic transport routes, today the busy A361 and A44 traverse the center of the town in a north-south direction before continuing their routes towards Banbury and Burford (A361) and Oxford and Worcester (A44). The A44 cuts between the two halves of the market place; both of which occupy a steep slope, indicative of the topography of the town.

Chipping Norton is situated on the ridge of a steep hillside. The upper side of the market place (locally know as Top Side) is built above bands of limestone, which is echoed in the historic built environment. The lower side is constructed above clay.

The Town Hall is located at NGR: SP3133327054 towards the southern side of the market place, situated in the prime position at the junction of the A44 (locally know as the 'top of New Street') and the continuation of the A361 **(Fig. 3).**

Chipping Norton is likely to have been founded during the mid-to late 1100s, probably by William Fitzalan [1]. It is thought that the market place and its burgage plot development was established to the upper side of the market place during this time: mid-to-late 12th century, with the lower side being developed possibly a decade a later [2].



Figure 3: 1840 town plan, kindly supplied by Chipping Norton Museum. The highlighted area indicates the Market Hall, which was removed and sold prior to the new Town Hall being built in 1842. The new Town Hall was erected in place of the Market Hall. © Chipping Norton Museum.

[1] The Making of Chipping Norton, 2017, p. 17

[2] *An analysis of the plan and development of Chipping Norton*, Oxfordshire Antonia Catchpole, June 2015

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Historic context of Chipping Norton Town Hall.

In 1841 a 'New Town Hall' was proposed. The Guildhall was deemed as inadequate at the time and did not reflect the 'new status' of the town [3]. It was proposed that the New Town Hall should be built on the site of the existing market hall **(Fig. 4).**

The New Town Hall was designed by G S Repton and built by contractors Meades and Company at an approximate cost of £1800. J H Langston of Sarsden House [4] loaned £500 and the remainder of the costs came from selling parcels of wasteland for house development. A single stone pillar has been retained from the market hall and is now situated at the western side of the Town Hall.

The Town Hall was said to have been built 'on arches' with an east portico. A 'weighing machine' was installed (presumably to the lower ground floor) for the purpose of collecting tolls.



Figure 4: Oddfellows banner dated 1720 showing the market hall prior to the new town hall being erected. Kindly provided by ©Chipping Norton Town Hall and © Museum.

[3] Refer to *The Guildhall Report,* Chipping Norton Buildings Record, Oxfordshire Buildings Record No: 468 and Dendrochronology Report: Tree-ring Analysis of Oak Timbers Historic England report number: 3/2020 for historic significance and value pertaining to The Guildhall.

[4] G S Repton extensively remodeled Sarsden House for James Langston in 1825. Source: *A History of Churchill and Sarsden:* Ralph Mann, p. 83.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

On the 14th February 1845 it was reported that two common land stints were to be sold to enable the purchase of external railings. An agreement was recorded on the 4th February 1847 that magistrates could use the Town Hall for 'petty sessions' and other business.

The bell turret and clock were added to the north elevation in 1849. On the 23rd December 1851, it was recorded that consideration was being given to provide three cells underneath the Town Hall (presumably the lower ground floor) to secure prisoners awaiting committal to Oxford Prison. This was actioned by November 9th 1952, with an accompanying room for the constable [5].

There was a proposal to 're-vamp' the lower Town Hall (lower ground floor) in 1867 to provide a reading room, court room (with facilities for a Judge), along with another room. It was also proposed for a kitchen range or hotplate to be installed with a boiler, gas for lighting, and water pipes for the 'closets'.

A new engine house was built in 1878; therefore provision/space for the town's fire engine was no longer needed at the Town Hall. The bell in the clock tower was altered to provide a fire-warning bell.



Figure 5: Undated drawing (likely *c*19 but post 1849 due to the presence of the bell turret and clock) of the southern side of the market place with the Town Hall in the foreground. Image kindly provide by © Chipping Norton Museum.

[5] In 1862 permission was granted to build a Police Station on the triangle of land between the Banbury and London Roads.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

A gallery, with seating, was erected as a cost of £400 in 1889 at the southern end of the upper hall. It is not clear when the stage was erected at the opposing end of the hall (north).





Figure 6: Photographs of the gallery, which was built in 1889 at the southern end of the upper hall. The photograph to the left shows the gallery in 1926, before the fire in 1950 and the right hand-side photograph shows the gallery after the fire. Image kindly provide by © Chipping Norton Museum.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk



Figure 7: Photographs of the stage at the northern end of the upper hall. The photograph to the left shows the stage before the fire in 1950 and the right hand-side photograph shows the remains of the stage after the fire. Image kindly provide by © Chipping Norton Museum.

The Chipping Norton Light and Power Company began to lay electricity supplies throughout the town and in the Town Hall, replacing the gas source that was provided in 1867.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

1914 saw the start of the Great War. The Town Hall became the hub for fundraising. Photographs taken at the time [6] shows that the openings to lower ground floor were different to the existing arrangements; thus the internal floor plan would have respected the door openings at the time. Based on historic photographic evidence it would appear that there were four door openings, none of which exist today **(Figs. 8 & 9).**



Figure 8: Based on historic photographs it would appear that the existing door openings have changed. The yellow shading shows former windows and the green shading shows the former doors: *c*1914.

[6] Grantham, J., *'Chipping Norton Town Hall Past and Present'* p. 24. Photograph noted as: '*England declares war on Germany No. 4. Crowd watching the Chipping Norton Territorials going on service Aug 5th 1914'.*

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk





Figure 9: Photographs of the west elevation of the lower ground floor. The photograph to the left is dated 1922: Hospital Saturday cross county race. This photograph shows the existing northwest door as a window. The right hand-side photograph shows the central and southern end of the west elevation and is dated August 5th 1914. This photograph shows that some existing windows were in fact doorways.
Image kindly provide by © Chipping Norton Museum.

During World War II, in 1939, it was recorded that the Durham Light Infantry used the Town Hall kitchens. These kitchens also provided lunches for the school children attending the British School in New Street. In 1940 it was agreed that the kitchens and the reading room were to be used by war

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

refugees residing in the Borough. In the same year it was also agreed that the reading room and adjoining cloakroom were used as an Infant Welfare Centre. For a short period, troops were billeted at the Town Hall.

On March 3rd 1950 fire broke out in the early hours of the morning causing considerable damage; reporting the building as 'gutted'. The fire swept through the building destroying the roof structure. Items were saved from the reading room. Based on the photographic evidence shown in **Figures 6 & 7** it would appear that the stage and gallery were not completely lost, nor was the first floor structure. The photograph in **Figure 11** appears to suggest that the bulk of the damage occurred to the upper hall, as the windows appear to be undamaged at lower ground floor level.



Figure 10: Photographs of the fire damage to the Town Hall in March 1950. The photograph to the left shows the southwest corner of the building and the right hand-side photograph shows the northeast side. Image kindly provide by © Chipping Norton Museum.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Restoration of the Town Hall after the fire was completed in 1952 at a cost of £18,725, and was celebrated by a 'Re-opening Ball' held on the 9th October that year. The internal arrangement of the upper hall was reversed. The stage was rebuilt at the south end and the balcony was added to the north. It would appear major alterations were made to the lower ground floor also. In 1960 the external stonework was cleaned and restored.

In 1974 the Borough status was lost, resulting in a Town Council.

In 1985/6 there were some maintenance works that included some re-roofing, new lead gutters, stone cleaning and kitchen refurbishment.

In 1989 a disabled access ramp was installed to the north-eastern side of the Town Hall providing access from the portico. This ramp abuts the east external wall of the ladies WC's on the lower ground floor.

Further alterations were made to the lower ground floor rooms in 2003 which included: alterations to the WCs, installation of a baby changing facility, a care-takers room with a reception desk, new floors, an upgrade to the Council Chamber and the lower hall, and an enlargement and re-fit to the kitchen. In 2010 repairs were made to the east steps.



Figure 11: Photographs of the fire damage to the Town Hall in March 1950. The photograph to the left shows the roof completely destroyed. The right hand-side photograph shows west windows of the upper hall destroyed by little noticeable damage to the lower ground floor windows. Image kindly provide by © Chipping Norton Museum.

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Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Building description.
Built in 1842 in the Palladian style to the design of G S Repton, comprising limestone (some ashlar, some coursed and squared rubble) with a slate roof and parapets.

Two storey building comprising an 'upper or main hall' and a lower ground floor which includes the 'lower hall'. The upper hall comprises a stage to the southern side and a balcony to the north. Internal access is gained from the stairs at the north end, which continues to the balcony. There is a small bar and WC at this level which was installed in 1995 [7]. External access is gained from the stone steps before the portico or via the disabled access ramp.

At lower ground floor level there are two doorways, both secondary to the primary arrangement **(Figs. 8 & 9)** at opposing ends of the western elevation. There is a lobby to the northwest corner. To the south is the passage accessing the WCs, lower hall, kitchen, and Council Chamber. Also there is a managers/care-takers office with a hatch (installed in 2003) [8].



Figure 12: Aerial photograph post-1989 showing the disabled access ramp to the northeast side of the Town Hall. Kindly provided by ©Chipping Norton Town Council.

[7] W95/0715 validated 23 May 1995. Installation of disabled toilet and tea/bar on first floor landing.
[8] W2003/1587. validated 21 August 2003. Refurbish ground floor including disabled toilet and reception desk in entrance hall (retrospective).

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Roof:
The roof is covered with grey slate and has three vents to the east slope and a roof access hatch, (to the southeast of the portico). There is an ashlar chimney adjacent to the hatch at eaves level. The ashlar limestone pedimented bell turret, (with squared limestone arch encompassing the bell), and the clock were added to the north gable in 1851 (page 9, **Fig. 5**)

Elevations.
East elevation:
Ashlar limestone façade with dressed plinth stones above squared coursed rubble.

Palladian symmetrical composition, with a central tetra-style (four columns) Tuscan Doric portico with a set of seven sweeping stone steps. The central door (accessing the upper hall) has 6-panels and is set within a moulded stone architrave and stone flat hood resting of carved consoles. Flanking the portico are two round-headed niches. Between the portico and the southern niche is a door providing access to the stage. Presumably this is a secondary intervention as it breaks the symmetry, however, the door existed before the 1950s fire as evidence by historic photos.

Flanking the north and south ends are projecting rounded corners comprising flats roofs; constructed from squared and coursed limestone with iron railings above and continuing west to lower ground floor level **(Figs. 14 & 16).** These structures form the roof space of the public WCs that flank the Town Hall, accessed externally via the lower ground floor level. The historic drawing of **Figure 5** shows the Town Hall absent of such amenities, but the structures and



Figure 13: Palladian symmetrical east elevation with portico. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

iron railings were certainly present by 1950 as shown in the photographs (**Fig. 10).** The documentary evidence does not state when these were built. Iron railings were funded c1845 but the records do not make it clear where they were to be erected.

In 1989 [9] a disabled access ramp was installed to the northern side, which appears [10] to be built on top of the aforementioned public WC roof structure. (**Figs.15 and 10**. The latter shows the external northern public WC roof structure prior to the ramp installation in 1989).

The ramp is constructed from coursed and squared limestone in a dogleg formation, capped with stone slabs. The ramp comprises a gradually sloping concrete path. This path is immediately adjacent to the northeast elevation, cutting across and into the primary limestone plinth adjacent to the internal ladies WCs **(Figs. 15 & 25)**. There is a noticeable crack in the concrete path, adjacent to the internal WC's, which can be seen in the photographs in **Fig. 15**.

There are no fenestrations on the east elevation.



Figure 14: The left photograph shows the central door providing access to the upper hall beneath the portico, and the right hand-side photograph shows the southeast corner with the projecting curve to the external southern public WC. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

[9] W89/0776: validated 17 April 1989. Invalid ramp. W89/0775: validated 17 April 1989. Invalid ramp.
[10] Based on photograph evidence – **Figs.14 & 15.**

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk



Figure 15:
Top left shows the east side of the ramp.

Top right shows how the concrete ramp/path is immediately adjacent to the northeast elevation of the Town Hall's primary fabric; cutting across and into the limestone plinth adjacent to the internal ladies WCs.





Below left show the north elevation of the ramp. Based on this photograph it might appear that the original stonework of the external WC roof has remained underneath the ramp structure.

Below centre show the south view of the ramp towards the portico.

Below right shows the first part of the dogleg ramp facing north.

Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.





South gable:
Two storeys, three window range, comprising ashlar limestone with Doric pilasters and pediment to the first floor and roof, and squared and coursed limestone underneath a dressed limestone plinth course to the lower ground floor.

The windows to the first floor comprise 12/12 sash windows, absent of horns with the exception of the southwest window, underneath plain dress stone lintels and with stone cills. The windows comprise softwood and are likely to be secondary insertion post fire. The lower ground floor windows light the Council Chamber (LGF1) comprising arched timber casements with plastic opaque in-fills instead of glass underneath rounded stone arches with projecting keystones **(Fig. 16).**

West elevation:
Two storeys, 9-bays with seven windows to both first and ground floors. The elevation comprises ashlar limestone with Doric pilasters and flanking niches to the first floor and squared and coursed limestone underneath a dressed limestone plinth course to the lower ground floor.

The windows to the first floor comprise 12/12 sash windows, absent of horns, underneath plain dress stone lintels and with stone cills. These comprise softwood, post-1950s **(Fig. 11).** The lower ground floor windows comprise arched timber casements with plastic opaque in-fills



Figure 16:
Left – View across the landing of F5, towards F6.
Above – View towards the front elevation of F6. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

instead of glass; underneath rounded stone arches with projecting keystones. There are two sets of timber doors (neither in primary positions [11]). The northern door (C20) provides access into the lobby (LGF10) and has a plain glass arched fanlight. The southern set of doors appears coeval, providing access into a small lobby (LGF2) and has a matching fanlight, although all three of the arched panes of glass are different.

There is a small area of grass marking the boundary between the Town Hall and the path that houses the one remaining pillar from the market hall.

The flagpole is positioned on this side of the Town Hall (although historic photographs suggest this was on the east side primarily). The flagpole can only be reached via the eastern roof-hatch and by traversing the eastern pitch, before descending the western pitch to reach the flagpole.



Figure 17. West elevation. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

[11] Refer to pages 12 & 13, and Figs. 8 & 9.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

North gable:
Two storeys, three window range, comprising ashlar limestone with Doric pilasters and pediment to the first floor and roof, and squared and coursed limestone underneath a dressed limestone plinth course to the lower ground floor. The ashlar limestone pedimented bell turret, with squared limestone arch encompassing the bell. The clock is housed within the pediment.

The windows to the first floor comprise 12/12 sash windows, absent of horns with exception of the southwest window, underneath plain dress stone lintels and with stone cills, again likely secondary insertions post fire. The lower ground floor windows light the lobby (LGF10) and ladies internal WCs (LGF9) comprising arched timber casements with plastic opaque in-fills, underneath rounded stone arches with projecting keystones **(Fig. 18).**



Figure 18: north gable. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

Internal details:
Lower ground floor:
This level is subdivided into 10 rooms, all of which will be described by a room code. Please refer to the floor plan in **Figure 19.**

It is worth noting at this stage that the entire ceiling across the floor is suspended – C20, and that the parquet flooring (with a boarder) respects all of the C20 room alterations. Based on the documentary history and historic photos showing the historic doors and windows on the west elevation (pages 12 & 13, **Figs 8 & 9)** it would appear that the internal floor plan has altered. The current floor plan arrangement (including the stair fabric) is likely to be secondary, post; 1950.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

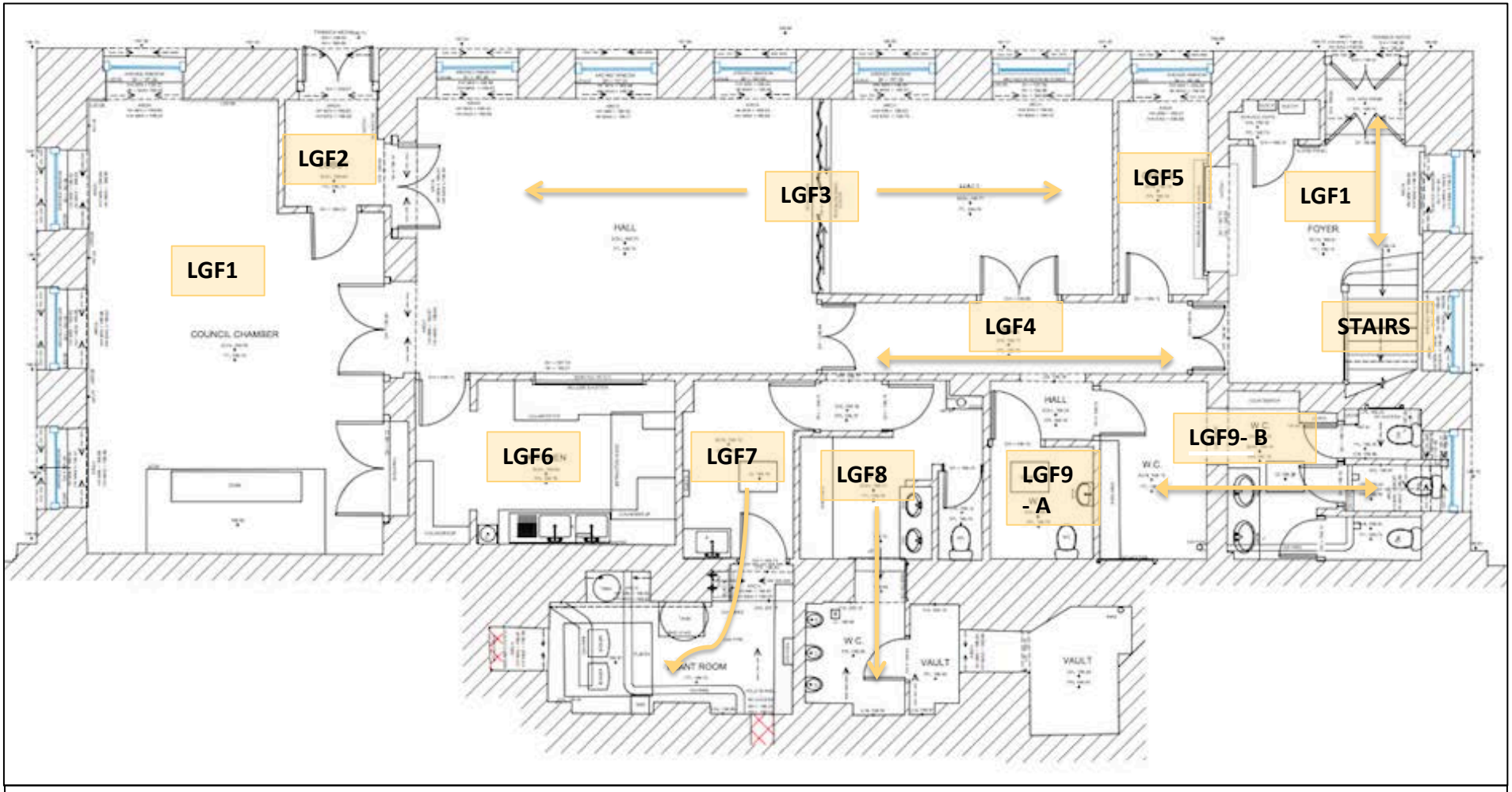


Figure 19: Existing lower ground floor plan marked with room codes.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

LGF1 and LGF2: LGF1 is known as the Council Chamber and is situated at the southern end of the lower ground floor, LGF2 is a small secondary lobby which has been constructed from the northwest corner of the room and is access externally from the southwest door **(Fig. 20).**

In room LGF1 there are three arched sash windows, no horns, with muted opaque plastic infill and window seat below. To the west the window is the same although without a window seat. To the right of this window is the C20 door into the lobby (LGF2). To the north there are two-arched timber double doors with wired-glass panels providing access into LGF3. To the right of this is a cupboard of equal size comprising timber panels to the arch with two glass doors below. The base of the cupboard has two fielded paneled doors.

The deep plain skirting is repeated in LGF2. It is understood that the east wall is a stud partition and not the existing wall fabric. The parquet floor has a boarder that respects the secondary lobby: LGF2.

The external door in LGF2 comprises timber moulded-paneled doors underneath a glazed fanlight; all three panes are different. The documentary and historic photographic evidence has shown that primarily this opening was a window and the door was the southwest window in LGF1. The partitioning wall of LGF2 cuts across the western door opening of LGF3 rendering only one door useable.



Figure 20: Top photograph shows the southwest corner of LGF1 with the inserted lobby (LGF2) jutting into the right hand-side corner of the room. The bottom photograph shows the northeast corner and the door into LGF3. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

This door echoes that of the adjacent door into LGF3 although the arch comprises paneled timber with the double timber doors (with wired-glass panels) sitting below the arch **(Fig. 21).**

LGF3 is a small hall, which has a concertinaed screen to provide two separate rooms. Lit from the western side; all of the timber arched windows have opaque plastic, and timber cills. As the documentary and historic photographic have shown, three of these five windows were in fact doors (Pages 12 & 13, and **Figs. 8 & 9).**



Figure 21:
The left photograph shows the view south and west of LGF3 towards LGF1 and LGF2. The right photograph shows the partition wall between LGF1 and LGF2 cutting across the southwest door of LGF3. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

The internal arches comprise squared and dressed (slightly rusticated) limestone. The suspended ceiling cuts across the top of each arch. The walls comprise coursed and square limestone rubble of varying sizes. Below the windows the walls are rendered.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

To the south there are two doors (as mentioned in LGF1 and LGF2) the right (west) of which is partially hindered by the partition wall of LGF2 **(Fig. 21).**

To the northeast of the room that is a door into LGF4 comprise timber double doors with small-wired glass panels. This design of door is repeated to the north end of the hall into LGF4.

On the eastern side of the room there is a service-hatch and door into the kitchen (LGF6).

LGF4 is a small passage providing access into LGF3, LGF5, LGF10, LGF9, LGF8, & LGF7. There are low skirting boards and a dado rail.

LGF5 has a C20 door. Based on the documentary history and planning application [12] it appears that the caretaker's room and reception desk were provided in 2003. As the parquet flooring and boarder respects the room, it appears likely that the entire flooring material of the lower ground floor is coeval. According the historic photographic records it would appear the window lighting the rooms was a window historically. The north wall (with the reception desk) partly cuts into the window jamb.



Figure 22:
View north of LGF3 with the door into LGF4 to the right. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

LGF6 is the kitchen. C20 tiled floor with commercially fitted kitchen. No obvious fabric of historic significance.

[12] W2003/1587 validated 21 August 2003. Refurbish ground floor including disabled toilet and reception desk in entrance hall (retrospective).

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

LGF7 comprises a room of two parts: a storeroom within the main range that extends east into a stone part barrel-vaulted subterranean area underneath the portico. Both rooms have concrete floors (painted in the first room). The suspended ceiling continues into the first room and is stone part barrel-vaulted in the east room. The vault meets the east wall of the main range, which comprises coursed limestone rubble. There is a stone pier to the east and a small aperture, which appears to provide a glimpse of the underside of the external east steps. There are two deep arches in the east wall of the main range; one of which forms the door into the other room and the other is an alcove with a brick back. Another deep stone arch occupies the southern end but is mostly obscured from view by plant equipment. Adjacent to the plant there is a slightly raised platform comprising concrete with a brick insert. The north wall comprises painted brick suggesting this might be a secondary intervention separating LGF7 and LGF8 **(Fig. 23).**



Figure 23:
View south in the subterranean area of LGF7. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

A small setback lobby provides access into LGF7 and LGF8.

LGF8 again echoes that of LGF7 taking the form of two rooms. The room within the main range has a WC and washbasin; there are no obvious features of historic significance. The second room is within the subterranean vault otherwise there is nothing significant. There is a cupboard to the north, which is a continuation of the vault but could not be accessed on the day.

LGF9 comprises two rooms. The first is the disabled WC, which is a large room with no obvious features of historic significance. The second room is the ladies WCs. Again, this is partially separated into a cloakroom to the southern end and three WC cubicles and a washbasin in the northern side. The floor comprises modern tiles. The internal walls between the cubicles cut across the window opening, as does the underside of the stairs in the western cubicle. As with the other lower ground floor windows this example comprises opaque plastic.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

The external walls of the LGF9 are mainly located below ground level and adjacent to the external area below the ramp access. There is localised efflorescence and peeling and missing paint finishes with some brown coloured staining where steel angle beads have corroded. High moisture levels have been recorded in this wall. Penetrating damp has arisen where walls are below ground level and there is a lack of vertical damp proof membrane. Properties of this age were not constructed with damp proof courses (DPCs) or damp membranes. The ramp was constructed in 1989 ago. It is understood that the damp penetration has been on going since that time.

Running water has also entered LGF9 at ceiling level on isolated occasions causing damage to the ceilings and further damp conditions in the room. This is assumed to relate to the external levels, poor junction details, and cracking to the external ramp surface **(Figs. 15 & 24).** Other than the window openings, there are no obvious features of historic significance.



Figure 24: photographs of LGF9 – ladies WCs. The right photo shows the damp and water ingress issues to the east wall. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

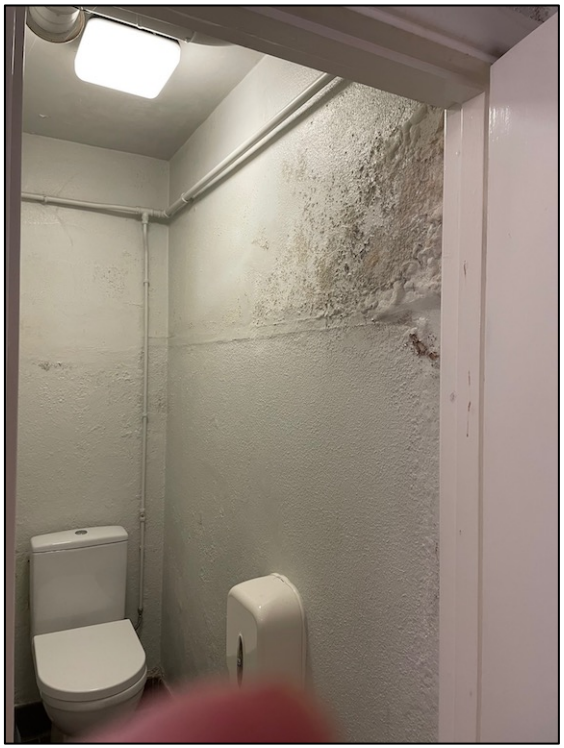




Figure 25: These photographs show the damage to the east wall from damp and water ingress. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

LGF10 comprises the small vestibule between the external northwest door and the inner lobby at the bottom of the stairs. The external door comprises double timber doors with moulded panels similar to those found in LFG2. The door itself is slightly recessed and is a secondary intervention based on the documentary history and historic photographs (pages 12 & 13 and **Figs. 8 & 9).** The arched fanlight comprises plain glass. The threshold is concrete. There is a dado rail that continues into the lobby. The lobby is entered via double timber doors with 3 panes of wired glass each; underneath a plain glass arched fanlight. The lobby is lit from the north side by two timber arched windows have opaque plastic. The stairs and handrail cut uncomfortably across the stairs. The floors are parquet and the ceiling is suspended; all C20 interventions. There is a moulded picture frame to the right of the stairs underneath a large mirror.



Figure 26: View towards the northwest external door, vestibule, lobby and stairs. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

The stairs occupy the northeast corner and comprise a dogleg arrangement with a closed string, and has 3 stick balusters to every single turned baluster; the newel is turned. The stairs rise to the first floor landing (UF5) before it rises again to provide access to the balcony.

First floor (upper floor):
This level is subdivided into 5 rooms, all of which will be described by a room code. Please refer to the floor plan in **Figure 27.**

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

The first floor (upper floor) comprises the stage (UF1), the upper hall (UF2), a small kitchen/bar (UF3), WC (UF4) and the landing (UF5).

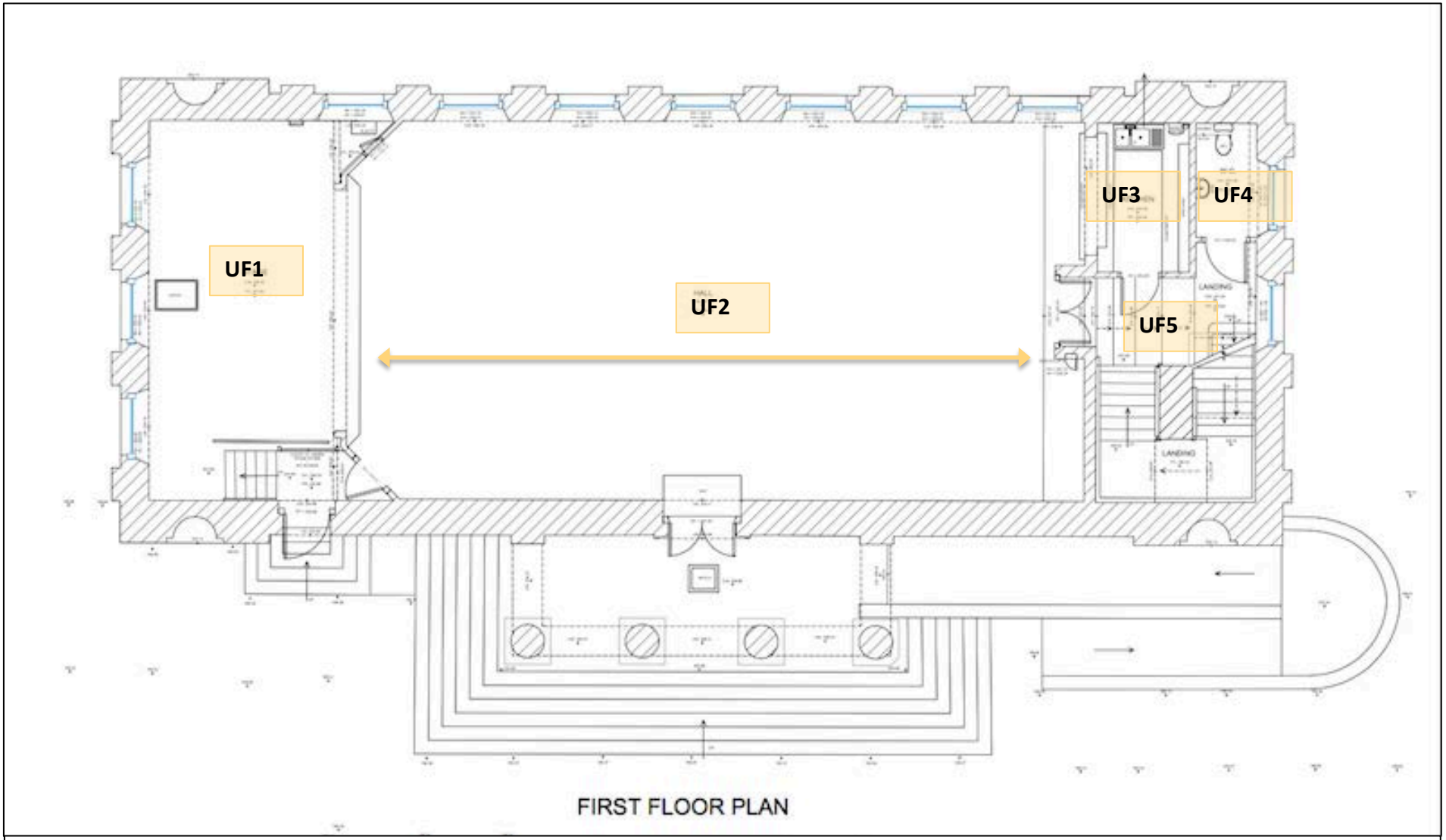


Figure 27: Existing upper floor plan marked with room codes.

UF1 comprises a raised stage at the south end of the hall accessed via a short straight flight stair to its east. The stage was rebuilt and moved from its primary location at the north end of the hall after the fire in 1950. Three 12/12 sash windows light the stage. The east and central windows are absent of horns and comprises soft wood; set within an architrave (and are in a poor state of repair). The western window appears to be a recent replacement with horns. All of the windows have splayed openings. The southernmost window of the west elevation is visible from the stage and is obscured by the west stage wall. All of these windows are post fire **(Fig. 29).**



Figure 28: Ceiling coving detail. The photograph also shows the effect of water ingress. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

UF2 is the upper hall comprising an open room lit only from the west by six 12/12 sash windows without horns and coeval with the south windows (post fire). Dado detail around the room. Presumably the timber floor was replaced after the fire due to the damaged caused by fire debris from the collapsing roof structure and water damage. The historic photographs suggest the floor itself was not destroyed in the fire. The double doors leading to the portico (as mentioned on page 17) internally appear as C20 fire doors. The north end of the hall has a small kitchen/bar (UF3) to the east side and access (via glass/timber double door) to the landing (UF5). Above this is the balcony **(Fig. 29).** The ceiling coving has rhythmic sets of three circles within two bands. There are two further bands making there way across the ceiling of different characters: one is beading and the other is fairly plain. There are signs of water ingress, which is noticeable from the balcony. **(Fig. 28)**

UF3 comprises a kitchen/bar area created in 1995 as part of planning application No: W95/0715. **(Fig. 29 & 30).**

UF4 comprises a WC, again installed in 1995 under application No: W95/0715. There is a 12/12 sash window without horns to the north.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

UF5 comprises the landing area. Stairs descend to the ground floor at this point and ascend to the balcony to the northeast corner. The area is lit by two 12/12 sash windows the north end. **(Fig. 30).**



Figure 29: View towards the south (left) and the north (right) of the main or upper hall. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

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Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

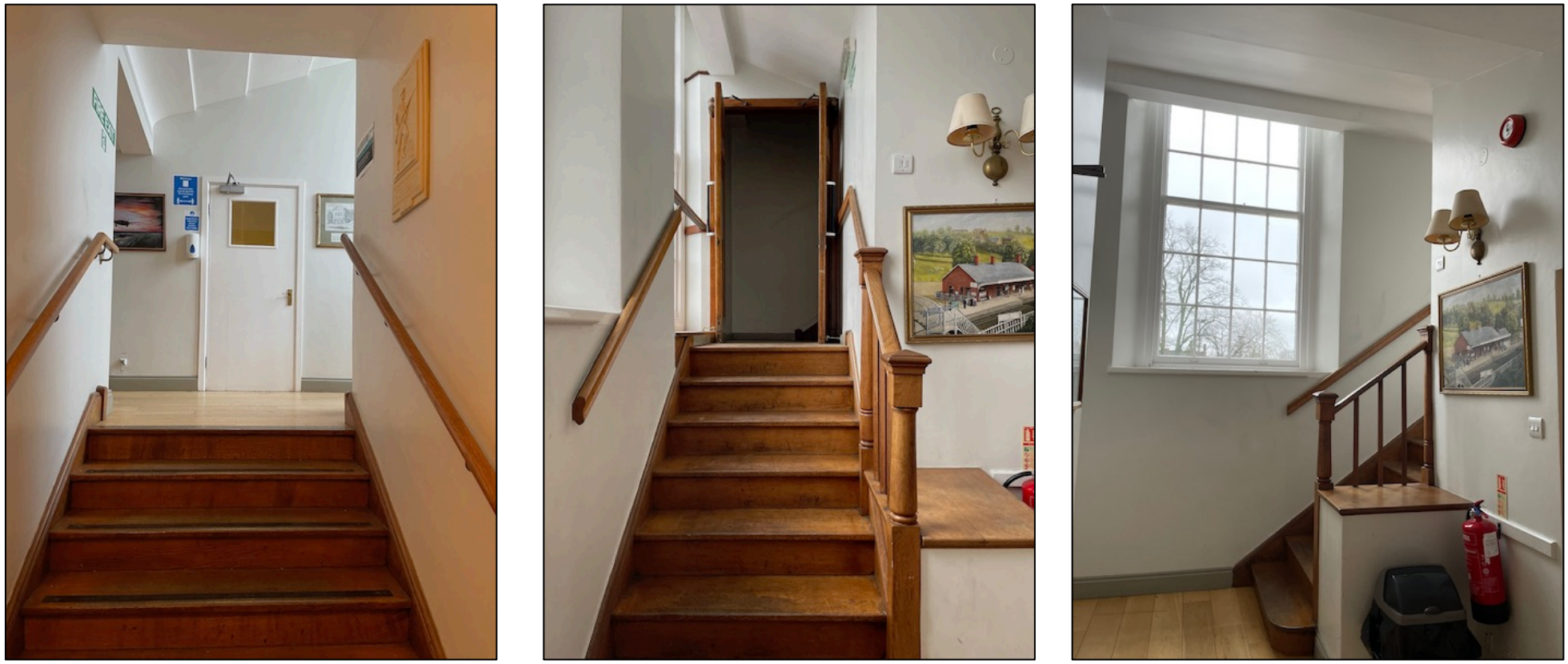


Figure 30: Left – view towards UF5 and the door to the kitchen/bar (UF3. Centre - view of the stairs leading towards the balcony. Right – view north of UF5. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Balcony is accessed via the stairs in the northeast corner. This balcony was constructed after the 1950s fire and reoriented at the north end of the hall. There are five tiers of numbered setting. The balcony rail is solid timber (with a simple timber hand rail), the western end of which cuts across the northernmost window. Indicative of its time, each seat has a small metal ashtray on the back **(Figs. 31 & 32).**

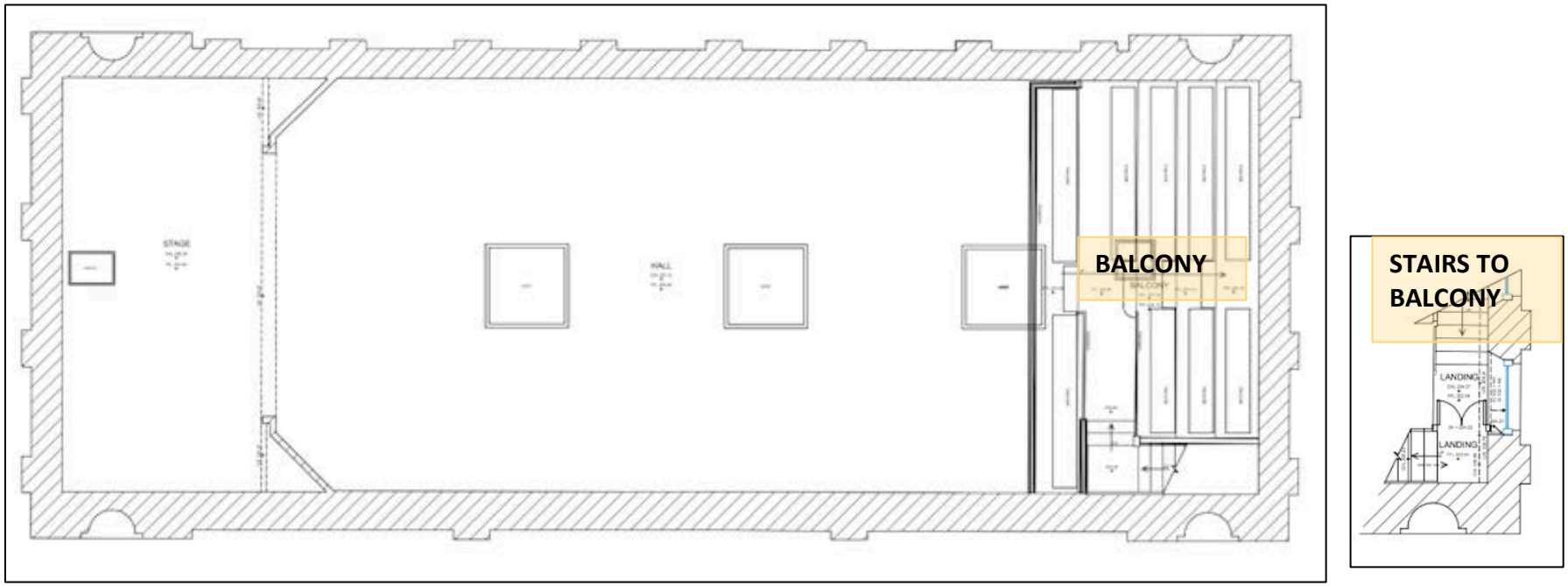


Figure 31: Existing balcony plan marked with room codes.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk







Figure 32: Left – views of the balcony and the ashtray to the rear of each seat – indicative of its day. Photograph © Hubbard Conservation.

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Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Overall conclusion and significance.

It would appear that very little remains of Repton's 1842 building; likely just the carcass. There are no obvious 19th century features or fabric inside the building. However, the building was listed on April 23rd 1952, after the fire and before the re-opening in the October of that year. Perhaps this explains why the interiors are not mentioned. The roof and windows were destroyed in the fire of 1950. After the fire, the upper hall was reoriented and the lower ground floor rooms were re-organised. It would appear that the stair fabric dates to the 1950s renovations. An external disabled access ramp was installed to the northeast corner in 1989 as part of planning application No: W89/0776 and. W89/0775.

The glass to each of the lower ground floor windows has been replaced for opaque plastic which is unsympathetic to the building and its Grade II* status. The floor of the upper hall likely dates to *c*1950 and the lower hall floor appear to be C20. The suspended lower ground floor ceiling is C20 and cuts across the heads of the windows. The ceiling of the upper hall is showing signs of water ingress. The east walling fabric of the ladies WCs on the lower ground floor is exhibiting signs of extreme water ingress.

The installation of LGF2 (lobby) presumably was intended to provide privacy to the Council Chamber (LGF1) and an entrance into LGF3. It is unfortunate that the partition wall cuts across the door into LGF3.

Summary: The Town Hall of Chipping Norton is the focal point of the historic market place, and its value to the town is without question. The historic documents show how the Town Hall has constantly served the community through good-times and bad.

The documentary history and photographic evidence has shown how much early fabric has been lost as a result of the 1950s fire. Therefore, the majority of the visible fabric today dates to that time or later.

The building is exhibiting areas of water ingress that need to be addressed. This proposed seeks to address some of these concerns.

Job reference. 125-23 Date: March 2023.
Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Part Two: Impact Assessment.

Introduction to the Proposal.

The external walls of the ladies WC (LGF9) are mainly located below ground level and adjacent to the external area below the ramp access. There is localised efflorescence and peeling and missing paint finishes with some brown coloured staining where steel angle beads have corroded **(Fig. 25).** High moisture levels have been recorded in this wall. Penetrating damp has arisen where walls are below ground level and there is a lack of vertical damp proof membrane. Properties of this age were not constructed with damp proof courses (DPCs) or damp membranes however the ramp was only constructed in 1989 [13] and we are advised that damp penetration has been on-going since that time.

Running water has also entered the ladies WC at ceiling level on isolated occasions causing damage to the ceilings and further damp conditions in the room. This is assumed to relate to the external levels, poor junction details and cracking to the external ramp surface. Opening up works and repairs to the ramp are proposed as part of the urgent works to fully investigate and remediate this situation.

Description of the proposal and impact assessment.

Existing – (see pages 17 -20, Figs. 12 - 16).

Disabled access ramp was installed in 1989 to the northern side, which appears [14] to be built on top of the roof structure of public WC. The ramp is constructed from coursed and squared limestone in a dogleg formation, capped with stone slabs. The ramp comprises a gradually sloping concrete path. This path is immediately adjacent to the northeast elevation, cutting across and into the primary limestone plinth adjacent to the internal ladies WCs **(Figs. 15 & 25)**. There is a noticeable crack in the concrete path, adjacent to the internal WC's, which can be seen in the photographs in **Fig. 15**.

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[13] W89/0776 validated 17 April 1989. Invalid ramp. W89/0775 validated 17 April 1989. Invalid ramp.

[14] Based on photograph evidence – **Figs.14 & 15. Figs.15 and 10**. The latter shows the external northern public WC roof structure prior to the ramp installation in 1989).

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

(Repeated from above) The external walls of the ladies WC (LGF9) are mainly located below ground level and adjacent to the external area below the ramp access. There is localised efflorescence and peeling and missing paint finishes with some brown coloured staining where steel angle beads have corroded **(Fig. 25).** High moisture levels have been recorded in this wall. Penetrating damp has arisen where walls are below ground level and there is a lack of vertical damp proof membrane. Properties of this age were not constructed with damp proof courses (DPCs) or damp membranes however the ramp was only constructed in 1989 [15] and we are advised that damp penetration has been on-going since that time.

Running water has also entered the ladies WC at ceiling level on isolated occasions causing damage to the ceilings and further damp conditions in the room. This is assumed to relate to the external levels, poor junction details, and cracking to the external ramp surface.

Proposed works and mitigation – Externally, the works will include the opening up of the existing upper ramp section adjacent to the external wall to investigate the below ground detail. A water proof membrane will then be applied to the face of the wall below ground only and the ramp reinstated with a new flashing detail to match the existing flashing detail.

Internally in the Ladies WC, the defective plaster finish will be removed and the wall exposed. A studded membrane system will be fitted to the internal face of the wall to enable any damp or salts to pass through the wall and not be trapped within the wall. A plasterboard and skim surface will be applied to the internal face of the membrane to provide a suitable internal surface for decoration.

Other areas of the ladies WC will be refurbished to include new floor and ceiling finishes and new sanitary fittings followed by decoration works.

The internal areas of the lower hall are to be decorated as part of the current phase of the works.

Scaffolding will be erecting to be able to inspect the roof and parapet gutters to three positions around the building. No works to the roof are proposed at this stage.

[15] W89/0776 validated 17 April 1989. Invalid ramp. W89/0775 validated 17 April 1989. Invalid ramp.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Assessment of, and significance of impact – Opening up of the upper ramp, (adjacent to the external wall) is necessary. Application of the waterproof membrane should arrest any further or future water ingress from the ramp. The ramp will be reinstated with new flashing to insure a complete watertight finish and a like-for-like aesthetic.

Removal of the internal defective plaster is essential to be able to expose the wall and should not result in the loss of historic fabric. The proposed studded membrane system should enable any damp or salts to pass through the wall and not become trapped.

The floors, ceiling, and sanity fittings have no historic value. Their replacement will be an improvement on the existing aesthetic. Re-decoration of the lower hall should not result in the loss or alteration of any historic fabric.

Erection of scaffolding is essential to be able to inspect and assess the condition of the roof and parapet gutters to three positions (north, east and south) around the building.

Conclusion and summary of impact: Policy and guidance.

In accordance with Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance, and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, 2021, paragraph 194:

- '*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.'*

The Town Hall is Grade II* which provides extra weight in terms of historic significance and value. This report has thoroughly described the asset and areas of concern. In terms of *'proportion'* to the proposed works, the report will appear out of '*proportion'*. However, as mentioned in the

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

introduction, this is a deliberate measure so that the Town Council can use the Statement of Significance in the future to save money should the need arise to apply for addition works to the building.

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031: Policy EH9, also accords with paragraph 194 by stating:

- **'***Use appropriate expertise to describe the significance of the assets, their setting and historic landscape context of the application site, at a level of detail proportionate to the historic significant of the asset or area, using recognized methodologies, and, if necessary, original survey. This shall be sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the asset's historic, architectural and archaeological features, significance and character'.*

This report first investigates the building and its setting to establish an historic understanding of its character and construction, as well as its association with the location. In this case this information is brief. As mentioned in the introduction, in-depth research with regard to the background history of the market place can be obtained from the work conducted by the Chipping Norton Buildings Record (CNBR) in association with the Oxfordshire Buildings Record (OBR) from the book '*The Making of Chipping Norton – a guide to its buildings and history to 1750*' written by Dr Adrienne Rosen, and Janice Cliffe. Also, (at the time of writing) the Victoria County History (VCH) is about to launch their study of the town. '*Chipping Norton Town Hall Past and Present*' written by John Grantham has proved invaluable whilst writing the Statement of Significance for the Town Hall. The Chipping Norton Museum holds a fantastic resource for research. The Museum is also responsible for a many publications with regard to the town, written and researched by long-term local residents with a wealth of knowledge.

In accordance with policy, the information-gleaned from the Statement of Significance informs the Impact Assessment.

Paragraph 199, of the NPPF, states:

- '*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance*'.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031; adopted September 2018, Listed Buildings, EH11, runs alongside the aforementioned policy, and continues to add:

- *'Proposals for additions or alterations to, or change of use of, a Listed Building (including partial demolition) or for development within the curtilage of, or affecting the setting of, a Listed Building, will be permitted where it can be shown to:*
- *Conserve or enhance the special architectural or historic interest of the building's fabric, detailed features, appearance or character and setting;*
- *Respect the buildings' historic curtilage or context to its value within a group and /or its setting, including its historic landscape or townscape context; and*
- *Retain the special interest that justifies its designation through appropriate design that is sympathetic both to the Listed Building and its setting and that of any adjacent heritage assets in terms of siting, size, scale, height alignment, materials and finishes (including colour and texture) design and form.*

In accordance with this policy, this proposal seeks to '*conserve and enhance the special architecture or* (and) *historic interest of the buildings fabric'*. However, to do this investigative works need to be carried out to ensure the inevitable works provide a long-term sustainable solution.

When considering the setting, Historic England's, *Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment (Second Edition) 2017* publication has been referred too, resulting in the conclusion that any proposed investigation or remedial works should not affect the setting of the Town Hall.

When considering policy EH11, the proposed **urgent works** will not affect the special interest of the Town Hall, and is fully justified by the need to arrest the water ingress damage and find a permanent and sustainable remedy.

To conclude, the significance of the Town Hall does not simply lie with its esteemed designer: G S Repton but as the hub of the town's community since opening in 1842.

The proposed works are unknown as yet, but will be revealed when the opening-up works have been conducted. Remedial works that prevent the water ingress continuing and are conducted with materials and methods conducive with the buildings conservation are essential.

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

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Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

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Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk

Appendix I –Listed descriptions of Chipping Norton Town Hall

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1183188
Date first listed: 23-Apr-1952
List Entry Name: TOWN HALL
Statutory Address 1: TOWN HALL, MARKET PLACE

Location

Statutory Address: TOWN HALL, MARKET PLACE
County: Oxfordshire
District: West Oxfordshire (District Authority)
Parish: Chipping Norton
National Grid Reference: SP 31333 27054

Details

CHIPPING NORTON MARKET PLACE SP 3027-3127 3/42 Town Hall 23.4.52 GV II* Town Hall. 1842 in the Palladian style (which had a short-lived vogue at that time) by G S Repton. Ashlar to main council chamber,coursed and squared rubble to the plinth. In the form of a temple with a portico on the E front and pediments to the N and S ends. The E front is a symmetrical composition with a central tetra-style Tuscan Doric portico and a central 6-panel door with moulded archi- trave and flat hood on carved consoles. Flanking this are round headed niches in the end bays which have slight projection. The W front is of 9-bays articulated by Doric pilasters and similar niches to the end bays. It is lit by C20 sash windows of immense-length. The N front which faces the Market Place has the same rhythm of pilasters and sashes, is 3 bays wide and its pediment is topped by a round arched bell cote. The whole is carried on a basement with round arched openings now sashed but once open. Contemporary iron railings with spear heads and vase finials to N and S ends. This rare Palladian Revival building performs a visual role in the Market Place and dominates the townscape

Victoria Hubbard MSc.
Tel. 07775598317. Email. victoria@hubbardconservation.co.uk