DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 21st JULY 2025

Case No: 24/01497/FUL

Proposal: Change of use and partial demolition of former Public

House to nine residential units

Location: 7-9 Market Square, St Neots

Applicant: Bewick Homes Ltd

Grid Ref: 518158 260259

Date of Registration: 19.08.2024

Parish: St Neots

RECOMMENDATION - APPROVE

This application is referred to the Development Management Committee (DMC) as the case officer's recommendation is contrary to that of St Neots Town Council.

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

Site and Surroundings

1.1 The site is located within the town centre of St Neots on the northern side of the Market Square, directly opposite the Market Place. The Market Square frontage is bordered on either side by commercial premises with the Nationwide Building Society and a rear car cark to its west and an Estate Agents to its east. The property backs onto the residential development and commercial properties known as Priory Court on Priory Lane which has flats located on the first and second floors. The eastern boundary of the site is shared with the Cross Key Mews.

Proposal

1.2 This application seeks approval for the change of use of Nos. 7 and 9 Market Square, St Neots from a public house (formerly the Brook and Bartender) to 9 residential units. The proposal also involves the partial demolition of the existing building and the provision of an 89m2 commercial (Class E) unit retained at ground floor level, fronting Market Square.

- 1.3 The proposal includes a total of 5No. studios, 1No. 1-bed flat and 3No. 2-bed flats ranging in size from 38sqm to 84sqm. Seven of the proposed units would be arranged around a newly formed rear courtyard accessed from both Market Square and Priory Lane with the conversion of the first and second floors of Nos 7 to 9 Market Square forming a further two units.
- 1.4 The property comprises two separate Listed Buildings (Nos. 7 and 9 Market Square) which are Grade II Listed along with their extensions to the rear. The adjacent properties No's 3 to 15 (odd) form a group and are also Listed. The buildings were first listed in 1971 (List Entry Nos: 1129890 and 1129891) and are located within the St Neots Conservation Area. A small part of the rear of the site along the western boundary lies within the Scheduled Monument of St Neots Priory. The site features prominent frontages to the Market Square and is located within the Primary Shopping Frontage, Primary Shopping Area and Town Centre of St Neots. The property is situated within the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan boundary and is in Flood Zone 1.
- 1.5 No's 7 and 9 are three storey buildings on the Market Square frontage. They have extensive, more modern extensions to the rear which include a two-storey block extending along the western boundary, a two and single storey extensions extending along the eastern boundary and a large expanse of roof and plant covering the central portion of the site. The site was last used as a Public House on the ground floor with staff rooms and accommodation located on the upper floors. Access is from Market Square with a secondary gated pedestrian access to the rear off Priory Lane through Priory Court. The site has no vehicular access.
- 1.6 The site is currently vacant with the pub/restaurant closing in 2021 following Covid and is showing significant signs of dilapidation with the two listed buildings requiring extensive work to bring them into reasonable repair.
- 1.7 The Local Planning Authority is also determining a Listed Building Consent application for same development (Reference: 24/01498/LBC), including an assessment of the proposed internal alterations.
- 1.8 This application has been accompanied by the following documents:
 - Planning and Heritage Statement;
 - Design, Access and Heritage Statement;
 - Terminal Schedule of Dilapidations;
 - Archaeological Evaluation;
 - Updated Foundation Design: Impacts and Mitigation;

- 7 & 9 Market Square Structural Report;
- Flood Risk Assessment:
- Ecological Impact Assessment: Bats;
- Preliminary Roost Assessment;
- Unilateral Undertaking in relation to a wheeled bin contribution.
- 1.9 Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives economic, social and environmental of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'
- 2.2 The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
 - delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
 - conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment
- 2.3 Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website National Guidance

3. PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
 - LP1: Amount of Development
 - LP2: Strategy for Development
 - LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
 - LP5: Flood Risk
 - LP6: Waste Water Management
 - LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
 - LP11: Design Context
 - LP12: Design Implementation
 - LP14: Amenity
 - LP15: Surface Water

- LP16: Sustainable Travel
- LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
- LP21: Town Centre Vitality and Viability
- LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
- LP25: Housing Mix
- LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
- LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

For full details visit the government website Local policies

- 3.2 St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 adopted February 2016
 - Policy A3: Design
 - Policy PT1: Sustainable Travel
 - Policy PT2: Vehicle Parking Standards for Residential Development
 - Policy P4: Flooding
 - Policy SS1: Introduction
 - Policy SS2: Utilising Historic Buildings
 - Policy SS3: Service and Provision
- 3.3 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:
 - Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
 - Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
 - Developer Contributions SPD 2011
 - Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
 - Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
 - Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)
 - St Neots Conservation Area Character Statement (2006)
- 3.4 The National Design Guide (2021):
 - C1 Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
 - I1 Respond to existing local character and identity
 - I2 Well-designed, high quality and attractive
 - B2 Appropriate building types and forms
 - M3 Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
 - N3 Support rich and varied biodiversity
 - H1 Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
 - H2 Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
 - H3 Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 Given the heritage and use of the property there is a wide planning history associated with it. The history from November 1974 onwards is available to view on HDC's Public Access Site. The most recent, relevant history is detailed below:
- 4.2 24/01498/LBC Change of use and partial demolition of former Public House to 9 residential units Pending consideration and also reported to this Committee.
- 4.3 0200674FUL Change of use from A1/A3 to A3 (restaurant/pub) with staff accommodation. Erection of new shopfronts Approved
- 4.4 0200675LBC Erection of new shopfronts and alterations to form pub/restaurant Approved.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 St Neots Town Council Object to the proposed development due to the loss of retail space, lack of off-street car parking and the overdevelopment of the site potentially leading to substandard living conditions and a negative impact on the listed building and conservation area. The Council are concerned about the impact of creating flats in the front historic 18th and 19th Century core of the listed buildings.
- 5.2 Historic England Has concerns about the application on heritage grounds due to the lack of supporting information and assessment currently provided.
 - Officer Note Additional supporting information including Archaeological evaluation and mitigation has now been provided in line with these concerns and Historic England have been reconsulted but at the time of writing this report no further comments have been received.
- 5.3 Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority No objections to the proposed development. No significant adverse effect upon the public highway should result from this proposal. Notes this is currently a car free development and this is not proposed to change, although 11 cycle spaces are proposed within the change of use proposal. The LPA will need to consider

- if the surrounding parking areas are adequate to cater for any vehicular parking associated with the site.
- 5.4 Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Following the receipt of amended and additional information, no objections, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted. Welcome the approach to preserve the archaeology in situ beneath the current building. Archaeological evaluation demonstrated good survival of the priory floor, wall footings and deposits particularly towards the rear of the current building. Recommend the depth of the buffer over the known archaeology is mitigated through the use of 2 conditions. The first to secure the Archaeological Management Plan for the preserved deposits. The second to secure the archaeological monitoring of the foundation works and recording of any further archaeology encountered.
- 5.5 Huntingdonshire District Council's Urban Design Officer No objections. Following the receipt of amended and additional information, the application is supported in design terms, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring further details of the privacy screen to bedroom 2 window of plot 4.
- 5.6 Huntingdonshire District Council Conservation Officer Does not support these proposals unless there is sufficient public benefit. Identified a less than substantial level of harm to arise from the proposal and should the LPA consider there to be adequate public benefits as a result of the proposal to make acceptable, conditions should be imposed on any planning permission granted. Further comments are included below.

6. REPRESENTATIONS

6. No third-party representations were received during the course of the application.

7. ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.
- 7.2 As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 47 of the NPPF (2021). The development plan is defined in

Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".

- 7.3 In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan (relevant to this applications) consists of:
 - Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
 - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
 - St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (2016)
- 7.4 The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.
- 7.5 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
 - The Principle of Development
 - Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets
 - Residential Amenity
 - Highway Safety and Parking provision
 - Flood Risk and Drainage
 - Biodiversity
 - Accessible and Adaptable Homes
 - Water Efficiency
 - Developer Contributions
 - Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
 - Other Matters

The Principle of Development

- 7.6 The site is located within the St Neots Town Centre, which the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 identifies as a Spatial Planning Area. The proposal would result in the change of use of a public house into nine residential units at 7 9 Market Square, St Neots. As such, Policies LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas), LP21 (Town Centre Vitality and Viability) and LP22 (Local Services and Community Facilities) of the adopted Local Plan are considered relevant in this instance.
- 7.7 Policy LP7 of the Local Plan states that a proposal for housing development, which is additional to those allocated in this plan will

be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement. Furthermore, a proposal which includes a mix of uses will be supported where each use accords with the applicable requirements detailed within Policy LP7.

- 7.8 Paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against our housing requirement. A substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements was introduced on 12th December 2024 in the revised NPPF and associated NPPG (the standard method).
- 7.9 As Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 is now over 5 years old it is necessary to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) based on the housing requirement set using the standard method. NPPF paragraph 78 also requires provision of a buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. As Huntingdonshire has successfully exceeded the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test a 5% buffer is required here. The five-year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,501 homes. The current 5YHLS is 4,430 homes equivalent to 4.03 years' supply.
- 7.10 As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.
- 7.11 Notwithstanding the above, given the proposed residential units would be situated within a built-up area of the Spatial Planning Area of St Neots, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP7 in this regard.
- 7.12 Policy LP21 (Town Centre Vitality and Viability) of the Local Plan states that a proposal for a shop, restaurant/cafe or drinking establishment will be supported within a primary shopping frontage to encourage uses which support the vitality and viability of the location whilst maintaining its essential retail nature. Furthermore, the town centre of St Neots will be supported as a

sustainable location for shopping, working, service and leisure uses which attract a wide range of people throughout the day and evening to strengthen the centre's role as a vibrant, accessible focus for meeting local needs. Paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework recognises the need for a suitable mix of uses and the role that housing has on the vitality and viability of town centres.

- 7.13 Policy SS1 states that proposals for residential use above ground floor level will be favourably considered providing that the proposal will not result in the loss of an existing town centre use. Policy SS2 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan states that the Town Council will support the re-use of historic buildings within the town centre for town centre uses.
- 7.14 While the proposal would result in the creation of residential units at ground floor level, the proposal would also include the introduction of a commercial unit at ground floor level addressing the public highway of Market Square to ensure an active frontage and the retention of a main town centre use along the primary shopping frontage. As such, the principle of a commercial unit and residential development in this location are considered to be acceptable.
- 7.15 Policy LP22 of the Local Plan states that the loss of a local service or community facility will only be supported where:
 - (d) an equivalent service or community facility will be provided in a location with an equal or better level of accessibility for the community it is intended to serve; or
 - (e) it demonstrates that there is no reasonable prospect of that service or facility being retained or restored because either
 - (i) there is insufficient community support for its continuation; or
 - (ii) reasonable steps have been taken to effectively market the property for its current use without success.
- 7.16 This application has been accompanied by a Marketing Brochure and the applicant has stated that the property was marketed between December 2018 and November 2023 with no offers that would enable the public house to continue or re-open. It is also worth noting that the establishment provided food and drink during the day and evenings and also became a nightclub in the evenings to try and increase trade. However, it experienced anti-social behaviour which resulted in under 21's being banned and lost trade. The nightclub closed as a result and the pub also continued to lose trade and eventually closed in 2021 following Covid due to the lack of community support and the competition from other public houses in the near vicinity. Given the duration of marketing with no offers, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the application demonstrates that there is no reasonable prospect of the service being retained or restored. It is also acknowledged that

- the current layout is unusual and not easily adaptable to other commercial uses.
- 7.17 Furthermore, it is worth noting that in relation to criteria (a), there are a number of public houses in the immediate vicinity that provide an equivalent service to that being lost as a result of the proposed change of use.
- 7.18 As such, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable in this instance, subject to all other planning matters being addressed.

Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

- 7.19 No's 7-9 Market Square are Grade II Listed Buildings which are also located within the St Neots Conservation Area and are adjacent to the Scheduled Monument of St Neots Priory.
- 7.20 Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.
- 7.21 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local Planning Authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 7.22 Para 212 of the NPPF sets out that '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.' Para 213 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification...' The NPPF goes on to state that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including securing its optimum viable use.
- 7.23 Para 219 states that 'Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to

- enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.
- 7.24 Local Plan Policy LP34 aligns with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.
- 7.25 Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings, topography and landscape. This is also reflected in Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD.
- 7.26 Section 12 of the NPPF (2024) seeks to achieve well designed places, noting that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 7.27 The National Design Guide (2020) sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. It covers the following: context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan. Of particular note to the current proposals is guidance relating to design and how this understands and relates well to the site within its local and wider context, how the history of the place has evolved and that local sense of place and identity are shaped by local history, culture and heritage, how a proposal responds to existing local character and identity, whether proposals are well designed, high quality and attractive and whether they are of an appropriate building type and form.
- 7.28 This application seeks approval for the change of use of the existing public house to nine residential units along with a commercial (Use Class E) space at 7-9 Market Square, St Neots. The proposal also involves the part demolition of the existing building to the rear and various internal and external alterations.
- 7.29 The proposal property contains the historic three storey buildings to the front, the modern two storey rear extension and the single storey roofed-over ground floor between them, which also includes the ground floors of all the buildings. The application proposes the retention and restoration of the listed buildings and the retention and conversion of the majority of the brick-built extensions to the rear to form a number of separate dwellings. The

flat roof extension to the rear is proposed to be removed together with a small part of the eastern rear building that currently contains the toilets for the public house. A new courtyard will be created providing access and amenity space to seven of the new residential units. This is considered to be a common feature in the vicinity of the site.

- 7.30 The listing descriptions of both 7 and 9 Market Square refer to the frontages of both Buildings and contain no information in respect of the internal features or the rear elevations and extensions. Also noted is the fact that they form part of a group of buildings with Numbers 3 to 15. The significance of both buildings therefore lies in the contribution they make to the historic and architectural value of St Neots Market Square. Both buildings have been extensively extended and remodelled both internally and to the rear over the years. The listing records that both properties have modern ground floor shopfronts and entrances.
- 7.31 The location of the property is identified in the St Neots Conservation Area Character Statement as the Medieval core settlement area and the Market Square is described as one of the memorable images of the town.
- 7.32 The Council's Conservation Officer notes that the change of use of most of the property to residential is not considered to be harmful to the significance of the Listed Buildings as they retain the likely historic domestic use of the historic upper floors as well as maintaining the domestic use of the upper floors of the modern rear extensions.
- 7.33 However, the proposal would see the loss of the existing commercial use to the front of No. 9 and its change to an entranceway and the Conservation Officer does not consider this to retain the significance or character of the building as a historic three storey commercial building on a historic market square. In addition, the removal of the commercial use of the ground floor of the buildings to the rear of Numbers 7,9 and 11 changes the contribution of the buildings around Market Square. The buildings which form the Market Square, as well as its backlands, record the importance of St Neots as a trading and commercial centre from the 17th Century onwards as well as the heart of the medieval core. While it is recognised that the historic rear buildings themselves have been replaced by late 20th century rear extensions, the proposed change of use removes the remaining historic contribution of these buildings to the Market Square. For these reasons the Conservation Officer considers that the proposed change of use of the ground floor would be harmful to the significance and character of the Listed Building and to the significance, character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

- 7.34 The proposal would include the demolition of the existing roofedover single-storey element at the rear of the site and one of the rear extensions. The elements proposed to be demolished are not considered to contribute to the historic or evidential values which form the significance of the Listed Buildings as they are modern additions to the site and by extension do not positively contribute to the St Neots Conservation Area. The proposed replacement buildings are considered to follow the linear form as the existing and align with the historic buildings at the front of the proposal site and are therefore considered to be acceptable.
- 7.35 During the course of the application, additional information, amended plans and a structural Engineers Report have been submitted in an attempt to overcome the Conservation Officers concerns.
- 7.36 The concerns expressed by the Conservation Officer about the potential harm of the proposal to the significance of the Listed buildings because of the condition of the buildings and their structural support has now been addressed by the submitted structural Engineers report and is considered acceptable.
- 7.37 Amended plans have also been received to retain the existing doorway on the principal elevation of No 9 and include a new window type feature that aligns with the windows of the upper floors removing the previously proposed metal gates. The amended plans also remove the original proposal to replace the existing windows on the front elevation of Nos. 7 and 9 and instead retain and repair them. Conditions would be imposed on any planning permission granted requiring the submission of detailed scaled drawings and methodology of proposed works and repairs including full details of the proposed works to the frontage, windows, materials, methods and finishes.
- 7.38 The proposed finishing materials include the use of uPVC doors, concrete roof tiles, uPVC rainwater goods and double-glazed windows, which are not generally acceptable for use on a Listed Building. The property is partly historic and partly modern and therefore details of all proposed materials and features are needed to fully assess the potential impact on the listed building. As such, a condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to secure specific details and samples of finishing materials. Furthermore, a separate condition would be imposed requiring the submission of detailed scale elevation and section drawings of all proposed windows and doors, including glazing bars, sills and lintels and reveals and full details of materials and finishes.
- 7.39 With regard to the hard and soft landscaping of the proposal, it is proposed to retain and expose the existing block paving within the new rear yard, with the introduction of a lawned area as well as

raised planters within the courtyard. The proposed plans indicate tree planting on the lawned area – however, specific details have not been provided. The proposed hard and soft landscaping is considered to be acceptable in principle and a condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to secure specific details, ensuring any trees and planting are of native species.

- 7.40 Notwithstanding the submission of additional information and amended plans to improve the front elevation of No. 9, the Council's Conservation Officer has still concluded that the proposal would result in a less than substantial degree of harm to the significance and character of the Listed Buildings of Nos. 7 and 9 Market Square, St Neots due to the loss of a commercial use and change of appearance to the ground floor of No. 9 (including its use as an entranceway) as well as the loss of the historical use of the rear extensions at Nos. 7 and 9. However, it is acknowledged that in principle a change of use of part of the proposal property may be supportable and there may be public benefit from the proposed change of most of the property to residential use.
- 7.41 Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 7.42 The proposal is currently vacant and the applicant has explained that the current layout is unusual and not easily adaptable to other commercial uses. The proposal would therefore bring two Grade II Listed Buildings in St Neots Town Centre, which have been vacant for some time, back into use (including a commercial use at ground floor) and would also help contribute to the five-year housing land requirement. The Local Planning Authority are therefore satisfied that the public benefits of the proposed development would outweigh the harm identified by the Council's Conservation Officer in this instance. Furthermore, it is recognised that amended plans were received during the course of the application to seek to address concerns raised by the Council's Conservation Officer and reduce the level of harm.
- 7.43 Overall, on tilted balance, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policies A3, SS1 and SS2 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Residential Amenity

7.44 Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

Amenity of neighbouring properties

7.45 Given the town centre location and proposed uses, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any detrimental impacts on any neighbouring residential property. Furthermore, the proposed external and internal alterations are considered to be minor in scale and would not result in any detrimental overbearing, overshadowing, overlooking or loss of light impacts on any neighbouring residential property.

Amenity for future occupiers

- 7.46 Policy LP14 states that a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development.
- 7.47 The buildings to the rear run parallel to each other and accordingly units 1,2,3,5,6 and 7 are all orientated into the central court. Whilst the majority of units are considered to be acceptable in terms of overlooking, Unit 4 is a two storey property and is arranged with the principle living room window and bedroom 1 window facing north overlooking the planted area and courtyard. However, it also includes side windows at first floor level facing the front elevation of Studio Units 6 and 7. There is concern the bedroom 2 window in Unit 4 is located approximately 4.1m directly opposite the living area window of Studio Unit 7 resulting in direct inter-looking and a loss of privacy to future occupants. Amended plans were therefore received during the course of the application, to include angled privacy screens on the bedroom 2 window to direct views through the courtyard. A condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to secure specific details of the angled privacy screens and ensure their installation and retention.
- 7.48 The Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD notes that privacy between buildings and streets should be achieved by creating a 'defensible space' establishing a continuous restricted zone of at least 1m deep along the pavement immediately adjacent to the property to prevent individuals from walking and standing immediately alongside windows. In order to protect the amenities of future owners/occupiers of the ground units, raised planters are proposed to the front of properties within the courtyard. A condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to ensure their retention and maintenance.

- 7.49 The proposal includes a total of 5No. studios, 1No. 1-bed flat and 3No. 2-bed flats ranging in size from 38sqm to 84sqm. It is also worth noting that the proposed residential units would all accord with the Technical House Standards National Described Space Standards for 1-bed/1-person, 1-bed/2-person and 2-bed/4-person units. Outdoor amenity space is provided within the mews court which will remain private and only for the use of the residents.
- 7.50 Overall, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Highway Safety and Parking Provision

- 7.51 Policy LP16 (Sustainable Travel) aims to promote sustainable travel modes and supports development where it provides safe physical access from the public highway. Policy LP17 (Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement) states a proposal will be supported where it incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates accessibility for service and emergency vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.
- 7.52 The existing site is car-free with no vehicular access or off-street car parking and this would remain unaltered as a result of the proposed development. The proposal seeks to provide nine residential units three two-bedroom flats, one one-bedroom flat and five studio flats.
- 7.53 Policy PT2 of St Neots Neighbourhood Plan states that all development proposals which include an element of residential development, including change of use to residential, must provide adequate space for vehicle parking to meet the expected needs of residents and visitors. Given the town centre location with services and facilities of a day-to-day nature in walking distance, no existing vehicular access or off-street car parking, a number of public transport links encouraging more sustainable modes of transport (including cycle parking provided within the development) and a number of public car parks in close proximity, it would be unreasonable for the Local Planning Authority to refuse planning permission in this instance on the basis of a lack of off-street car parking provision.

- 7.54 It is also worth noting that the applicant has confirmed that, as-per the existing arrangement, service vehicles would use the existing public loading layby directly outside the property.
- 7.55 With regards to cycle parking, it is proposed to install a two-tier cycle storage unit with space for 12 bikes. As such, the proposal would be in accordance with Policy LP17 of the adopted Local Plan and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide which requires the provision of one cycle storage space per bedroom. A condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to secure its provision and retention for the duration of the development.
- 7.56 Overall, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with the aims of Policies LP16 and LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policies PT1 and PT2 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.57 National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 seek to steer new developments to areas at lowest risk of flooding and advises this should be done through application of the Sequential Test, and if appropriate the Exceptions Test (as set out in paragraphs 170-179 of the NPPF (2024).
- 7.58 This application has been accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. The application site is situated in Flood Zone 1 based on the Environment Agency Floods Maps and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024). This results in a low probability of fluvial flooding and is not subject to the sequential and exception tests as set out within the NPPF.
- 7.59 The proposal would not result in any increase in surface water drainage rates and no increase to the downstream risk of flooding. The proposal seeks to dispose of surface water via soakaway and foul water via the main sewer. Officers are satisfied that full details of the surface and foul water drainage can be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements in this instance.
- 7.60 The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk and surface water and therefore accords with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policies A3 and P4 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

Biodiversity

- 7.61 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.
- 7.62 This application has been accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment: Bats and a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA). The PRA found that the onsite structure currently has some minor suitability to support nesting birds and had some potential to support roosting bats. It also identified that there is high value foraging/commuting habitat for bats in the vicinity and therefore the development had some potential to adversely impact the suitability of the adjacent habitats for commuting/foraging bats with any increased lighting. The report recommended that Phase 2 bat surveys were undertaken to establish the presence or otherwise of bats in the building and within its vicinity.
- 7.63 The Phase 2 Bat survey was carried out in July 2024 and showed no evidence of bats being present within the site but recommended that there is scope to enhance the site for roosting bats through the introduction of bat boxes. The report also recommends that a lux contour lighting plan should be prepared to ensure that the development does not adversely impact the foraging/commuting corridor. Conditions will therefore be imposed to this effect.
- 7.64 It should be noted that as of the 2nd of April 2024, a mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is applicable, as per Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. An application for minor development (1 to 9 dwellings) must be accompanied with a statutory biodiversity metric tool which will demonstrate how the application will avoid or reduce any negative impacts on biodiversity. The hierarchy of BNG ensures developers evaluate on-site BNG opportunities before exploring alternative solutions, unless the application is exempt as per the exemptions listed in PPG guidance. In this instance it is considered that the development would be exempt from the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain Legislation as it involves a change of use where there is no or only a de minimis impact on onsite habitat.
- 7.65 Given the proposal would include the introduction of soft landscaping as shown on the site layout plan (raised planted railway sleep beds, grass planting and trees), the Local Planning

- Authority are satisfied that the proposal has the capacity to result in a biodiversity net gain, subject to the submission of specific details that can be secured via a suitably worded condition.
- 7.66 Overall, the proposal is broadly deemed to be in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings

- 7.67 Policy LP25 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that all housing developments in the district offers a genuine choice of Accessible and adaptable dwellings that meet the requirements of residents:
 - f. ensuring 100% of new dwellings, across all tenures provided, meet Building Regulation requirement M4 (2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' (or replacement standards).
- 7.68 In this case, given the constraints of dealing with an existing building it would not be considered reasonable to attach such a condition.

Water Efficiency

7.69 Policy LP12 (j) of the Local Plan to 2036 states that new dwellings must comply with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency set out in Approved Document G of the Building Regulations. A condition will be attached to any consent to ensure compliance with the above, in accordance with Policy LP12 (j) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Developer Obligations

7.70 Part H of the Developer Contributions SPD (2011) requires a payment towards refuse bins for new residential development. A Unilateral Undertaking Form in respect of wheeled bins has been received by the Local Planning Authority dated 20th February 2025. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the Developers Contributions SPD (2011).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

7.71 The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

Other Matters

Archaeology

- 7.72 The development lies in an area of high archaeological potential within the footprint of St Neots Priory and as such, further Archaeological Evaluation and an updated foundation design: impacts and mitigation were submitted during the course of the application. Following the receipt of this information, Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeology Team have raised no objections to the proposed development in principle, subject to the imposition of conditions to agree a Scheme for the Archaeologically sensitive areas within the site and Written Scheme of Investigation.
- 7.73 In addition to the Archaeological desk based assessment and archaeological evaluation which have now been submitted, Historic England have also commented that the proposed development lies partly within the scheduled monument of St Neots Priory and accordingly Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent is required. An informative will therefore be imposed to advise the applicant of this requirement.

Conclusion

- 7.74 The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it is:
 - * Acceptable in principle
 - * Would not be harmful to the character or appearance of the area;
 - * Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
 - * Would not be detrimental to highway safety in the locality:
 - * Is acceptable with regards to the impact on biodiversity;
 - * There are no other material planning considerations which lead to the conclusion that the proposal is unacceptable.
- 7.75 Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.
- 8. RECOMMENDATION APPROVAL subject to conditions to include the following
 - Time limit
 - Approved plans
 - Materials to be agreed
 - Specify use
 - Works to No. 9 frontage

- Window repairs details
- New windows and doors details
- Angled privacy screens
- Raised planters retention and maintenance
- Cycle parking
- Soft and hard landscaping
- Biodiversity enhancements
- Biodiversity lighting plan
- Archaeology preservation
- Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation
- Water Efficiency

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs

CONTACT OFFICER:

Enquiries about this report to Christina Riley, Development Management Team Leader, South Team – email christina.riley@huntingdonshire.gov.uk



I	No.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes
- 1	140.	INCICI CITCO	Development	SITT C DCCISION	140103

The f	ollowing application/	s are for listed building consent		
S1	24/01497/FUL	Twigden	OBJECT	The Council has reviewed the
AND THE	24/01498/LBC	7 - 9 Market Square, St Neots		planning proposal documents,
	The state of the s	Change of Use, and partial		including consultee comments
		demolition of former Public House		submitted by Historic Buildings &
		to 9 residential units		Places (HB&P), and shares their
		The Cultification of the Artist Advisors (Artist Artist Ar		concerns. In particular, the Council
				are concerned about the impact of
				creating flats in the front historic
				18th and 19th-century core of the
				listed buildings. Reference is made
				to Chapter 16 of the National
				Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
				(2024), which emphasises the
				importance of preserving heritage
				assets.
				Policy Considerations
				Huntingdonshire District Council
				Local Plan
				The proposal does not align with
				the Huntingdonshire District
				Council Local Plan, in particular:
				8.39: The purpose of this
				policy is to ensure that
				development proposals
				protect and conserve the
				district's heritage assets
				and where possible
				enhance them and their
				settings.
				Policy LP 34: Heritage
				Assets and their Settings;
				Conversion, Alteration, or
				Other Works to a Heritage
				Asset; Conservation Areas
				and Archaeology. St Neots Neighbourhood Plan
				The proposal is inconsistent with
				the following policies:
				Policy SS1: Proposals
				involving alterations to
				listed buildings or those
				contributing to the
				conservation area's
				character should retain
				existing facades where
				appropriate. Residential
				use above ground floor
				level is acceptable only if it
				does not result in the loss
				of an existing town centre
		· ·		or an emoting term centre



No. R	eference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes
			JATE DECISION	Policy SS2: The re-use of historic buildings within the Town Centre for town centre uses is supported. Any alterations must be sympathetic to the building's historic and architectural significance. Policy PT2: Development proposals, including residential conversions, must provide adequate parking to meet the need of residents and visitors. Key Concerns 1. Loss of Retail Space: The proposed change of use from retail to residential a prime retail location on Market Square is concerning. This shift will contribute to the erosion of retail units in the Town Centre, negatively impacting its vitality. 2. Lack of Parking: The development does not provide sufficient parking which may lead to increased pressure on existing parking facilities. 3. Overdevelopment: The proposed nine dwellings constitute an overdevelopment of the site, potentially leading to substandard living conditions and a negative impact on the listed building and conservation area. Whilst the Council is not opposed to residential development on the site it believes the development of the site it believes the development of the site it believes the development of the site and the impact of the loss of retail space, which is in a prime location, will have a negative impact on the Town Centre and on listed building and conservation area.

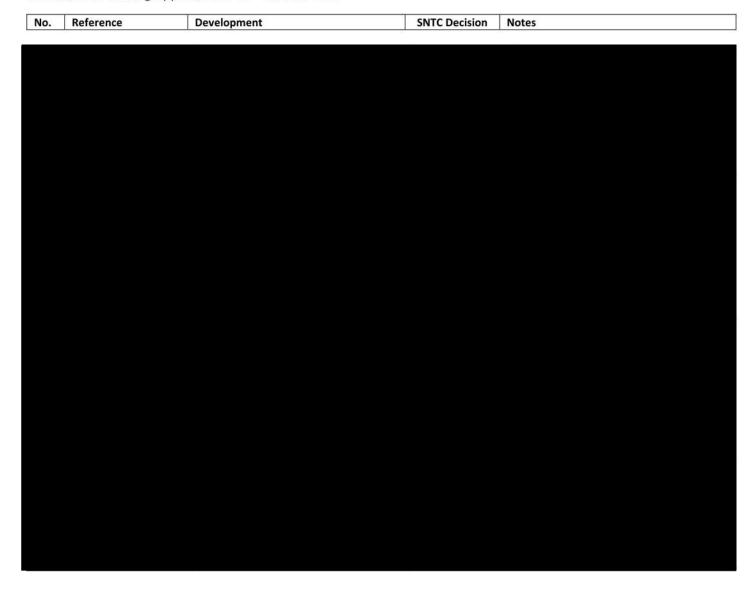


Schedule of Planning Applications –25th March 2025

o.	Reference	Development	SNTC Decision	Notes
		7		The Council would prefer to see a
				revised proposal to better align
				with local and national planning
				policies, ensuring a balanced
				approach that safeguards the
				town's heritage while supporting
				sustainable development. This
				would include a reduction in the
				number of dwellings to provide
				better quality and size of
				accommodation along with the
				retention of retail units on the
				properties and the different form and the properties of the proper
				ground floor.
e t	following applicat	ion/s are in a conservation area		



Schedule of Planning Applications –25th March 2025



Chairperson

Development Management Committee Application Ref: 24/01497/FUL

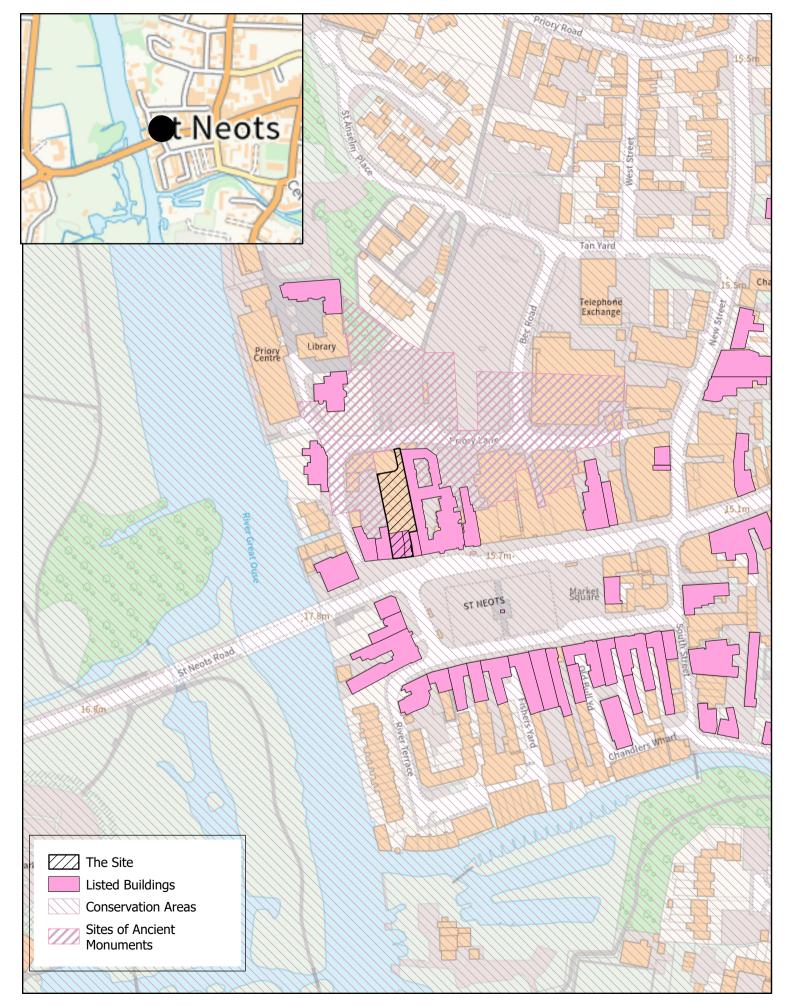


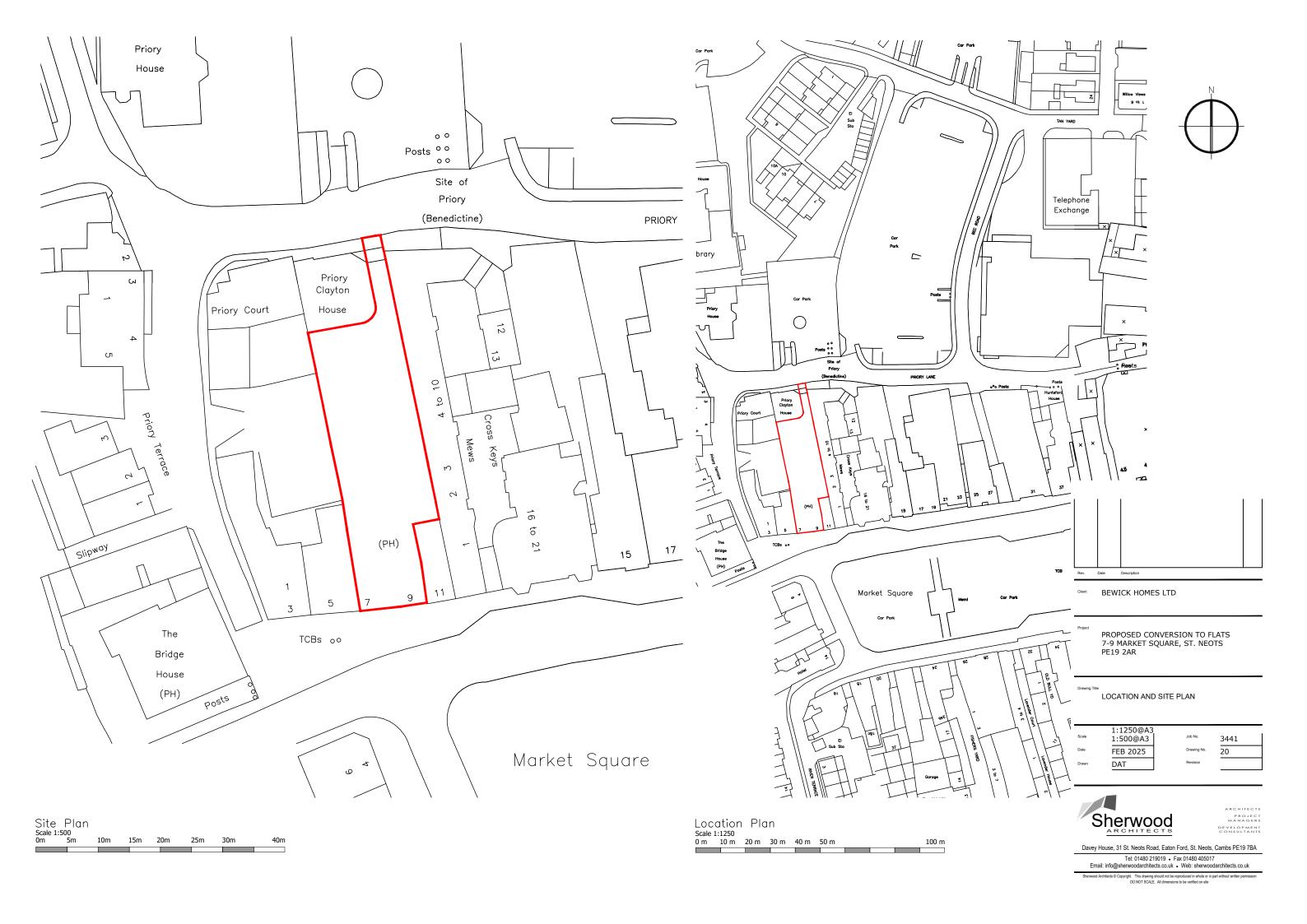
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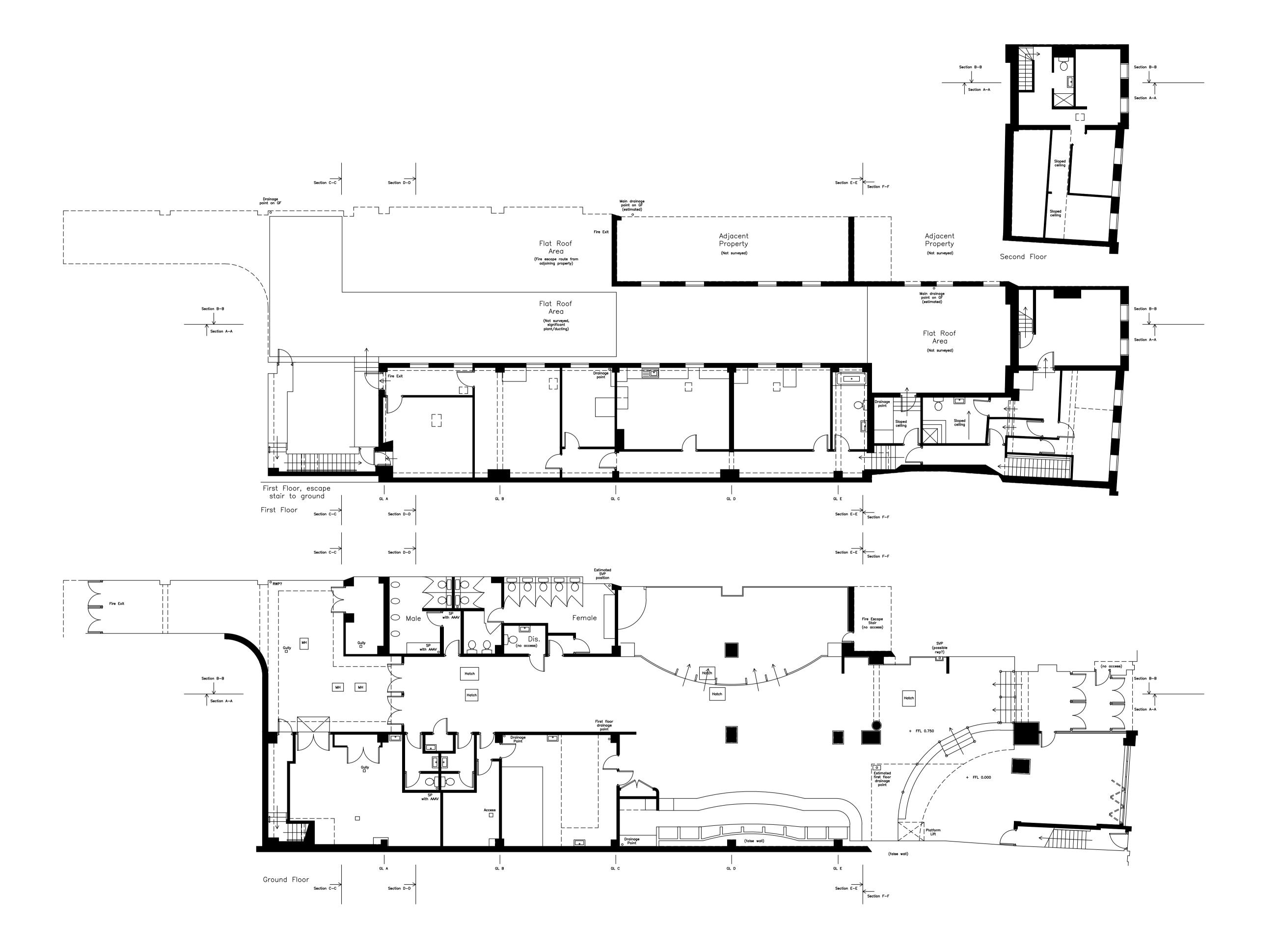
Date Created: 09/07/2025



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PROPOSED CONVERSION TO FLATS 7-9 MARKET SQUARE, ST. NEOTS PE19 2AR

Drawing Title EXISTING FLOOR PLANS

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 Job No.
 3441

 Date
 FEB 2025
 Drawing No.
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Scale @ 1:100

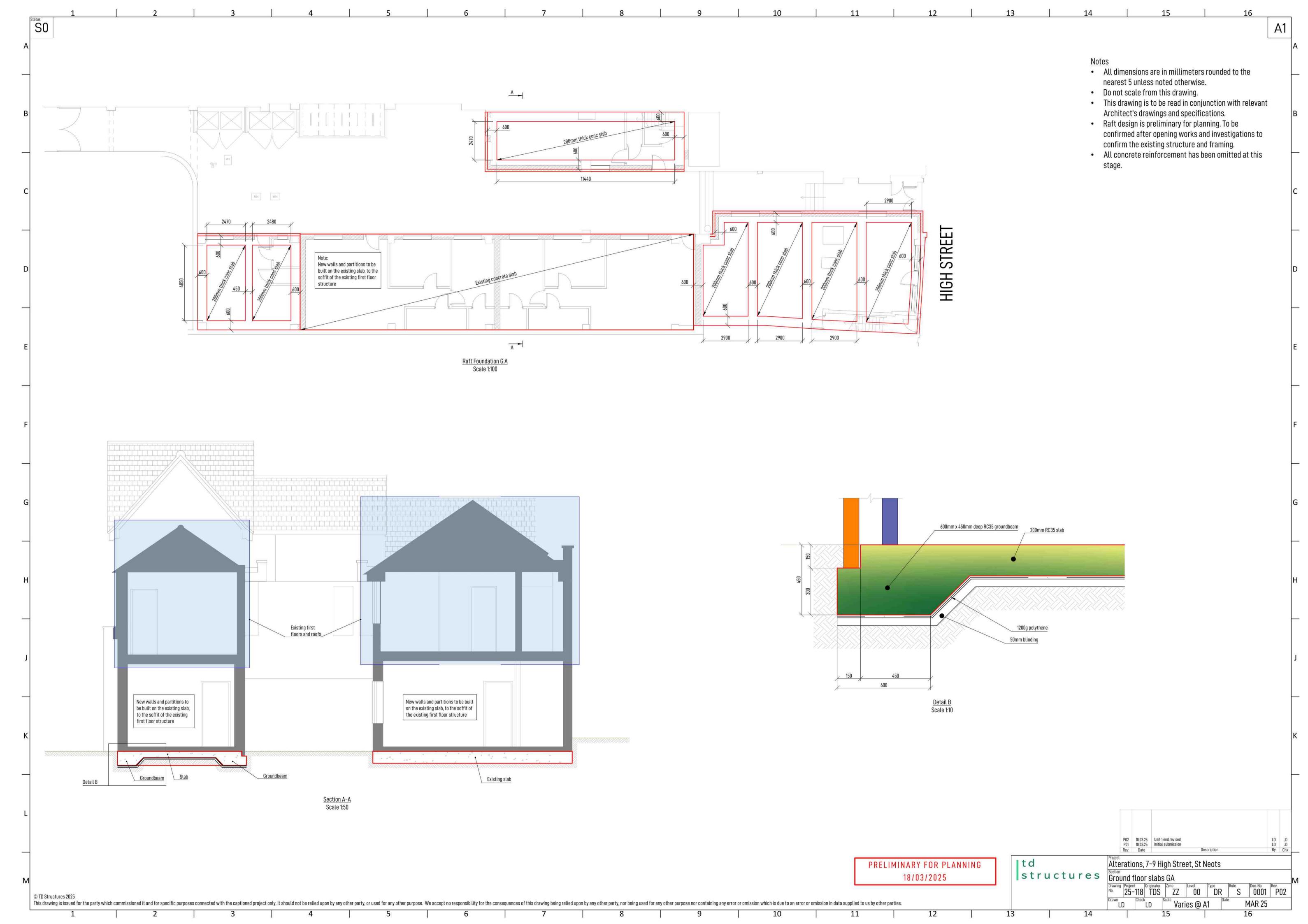
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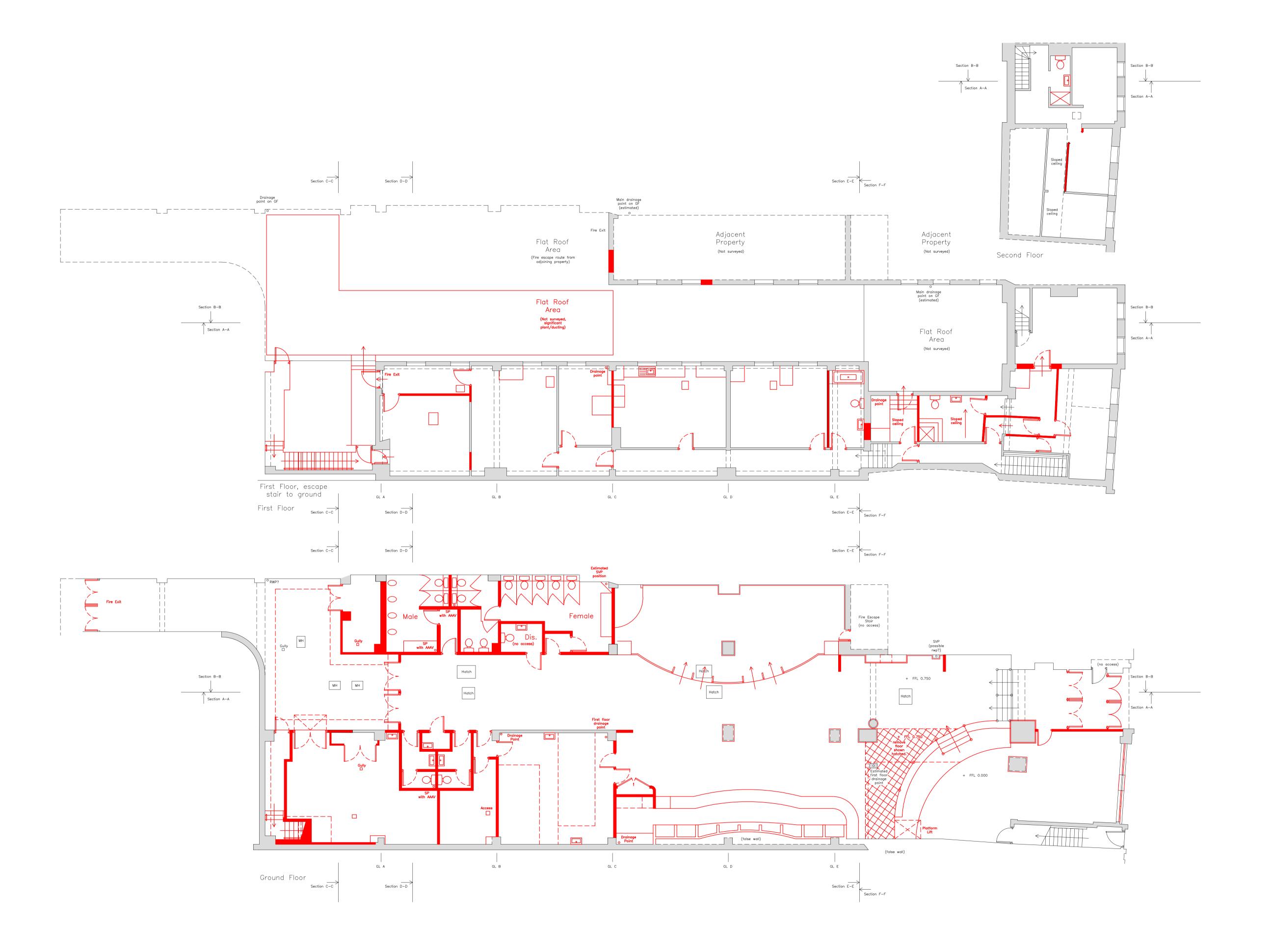
ARCHITECTS

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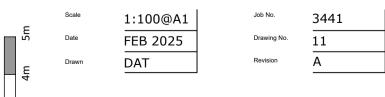




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PROPOSED CONVERSION TO FLATS 7-9 MARKET SQUARE, ST. NEOTS PE19 2AR

DEMOLITION PLAN





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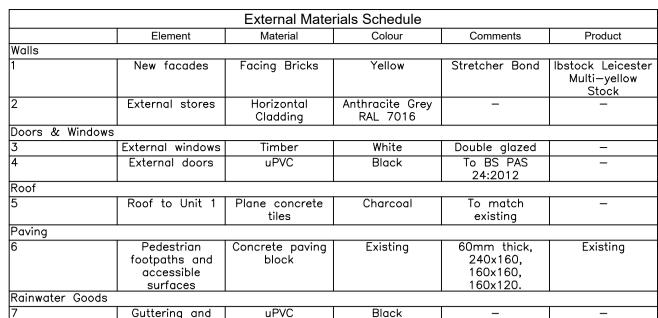
Davey House, 31 St. Neots Road, Eaton Ford, St. Neots, Cambs PE19 7BA

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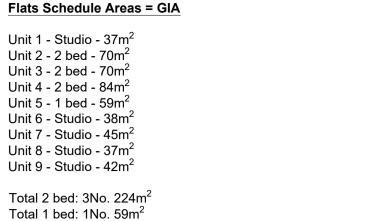
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First Floor

Section C-C

	E1 – Protection	n against sound from other	parts of the bu	uilding	<u>Flats</u>
	E1 – m	ninimum acoustic performa	nce standards		Unit 1 Unit 2
	Airborne sound insulation DnT,w + Ctr dB		Impac	Impact sound insulation	Unit 3 Unit 4
			L'nT,w dB		Unit 5
	(the highe	r the figure, the better)	(the lower the figure, the better)		Unit 6 Unit 7
	New build	Material change of use	New build	Material change of use	Unit 8 Unit 9
Valls	45	43			Total
Floors & Stairs	45	43	62	64	Total Total



Protected lobby to escape

stair (no flat access allowed)

Section E-E Section F-F

Protected flat access lobby

(7.5m maximum distance)

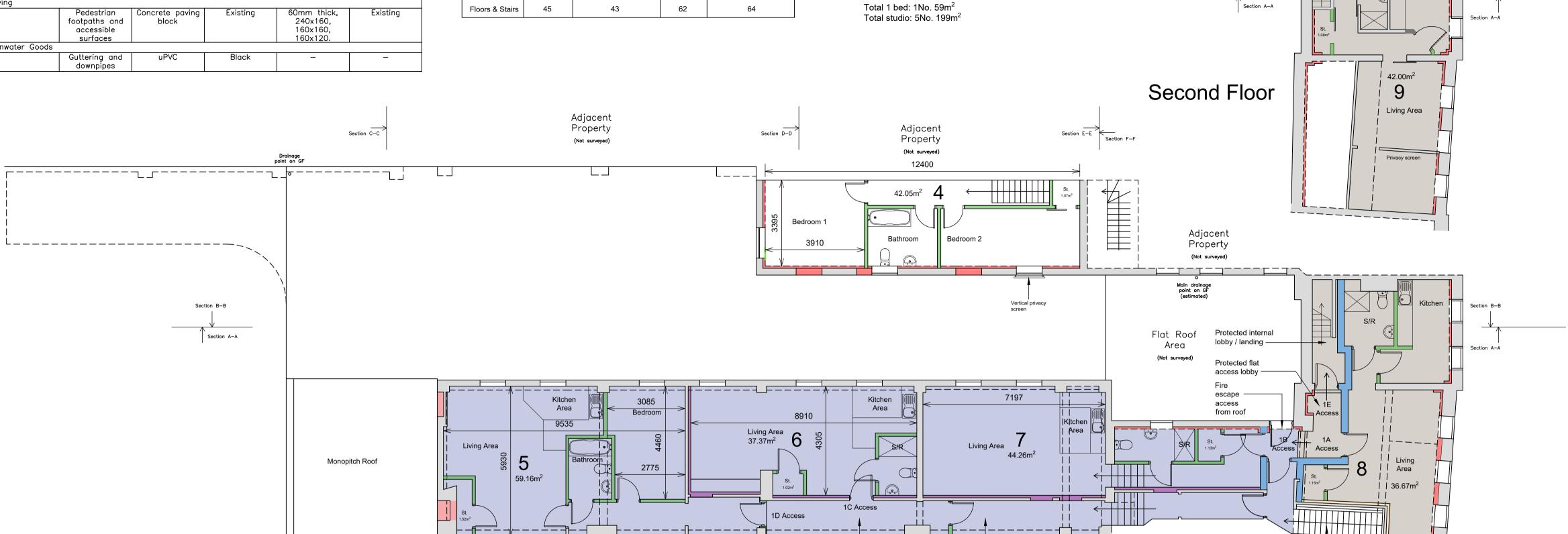
Protected internal

Section B-B

Protected escape stair to

final exit at ground floor

lobby / landing —



Section D-D



Existing Walls

Upgraded external solid walls
Existing plaster finish (if Sound) otherwise new
parge coat with thermally engineered SWIP studs at
600 c/c with Earthwool SWIP batts between with
SWIP vapour control layer and 12.5mm plasterboard

New external walls

103mm facing brick with 150mm cavity filled with sheepswool optimal thermal conductivity of 0.0385 W/m2k with 100mm Celcon Standard Grade, with 12.5mm plasterboard on dabs with 3mm multi-finish skim.

New internal walls

100 x 50mm timber studs fully sound insulated with
an absorbent layer of unfaced mineral wool batts or
quilt (Min. thk. 25mm, min. density 10kg/m³) 12.5mm
board density 10kg/m² Skim finish

board density 10kg/m². Skim finish.

New separation walls

90mm timber studs with 90mm cavity with 19mm Gyproc plank and 12.5mm Plasterboard + skim.

Upgraded separation walls
Existing plasterboard on the studwork should be removed from one side of the partition and the area between the

existing studs filled with 50mm maxislab. maxi resilient bars should then be placed at the top and bottom of the wall and then at 600mm centres from the bottom upwards. maxiboards are fixed to the maxi resilient bars using 3.9 x 30mm maxi screws.

If the plasterboard on the otherside of the studwork is in good condition it can remain, with an extra layer of 12.5mm fire rated plasterboard fixed directly through the existing plasterboard, into the studwork.

if the existing boards are damaged, they should be replaced by two layers of 12.5mm fire rated plasterboard,with offset joints for best results.

Existing intermediate floor
Assumed to be 250mm min. in-situ concrete slab, 2400kg/m³ density without screed.

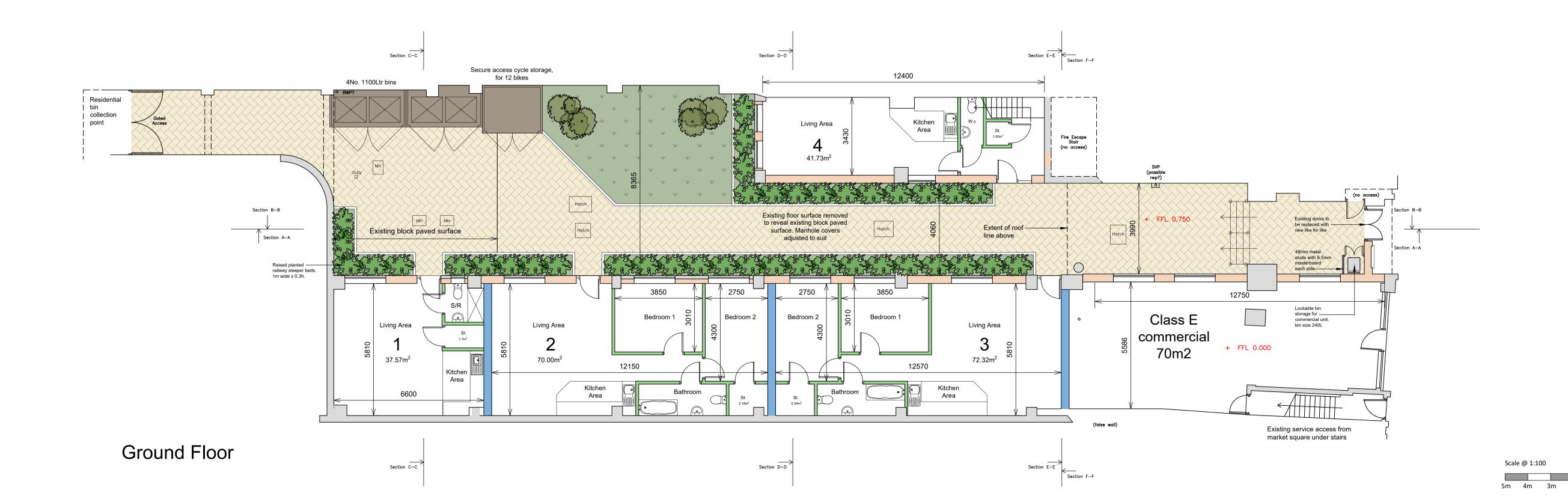
Upgrade to intermediate floors
Existing floor to be upgraded with Cellecta FIBRE fon
MDF 12 floating floor treatment.

Upgrade to intermediate ceiling
Existing ceiling to receive casoline MF ceiling system
with min. 75mm service void to be over boarded with 1
layer of 10kg/m² gypsum based board and finished with a
3mm plaster skim coat which upgrades the floor to 60
minutes of fire protection. Acoustic sealant is to be used
around the perimeter of the room.

Existing intermediate floor
Assumed to be solid timber joists with existing
floorboards (All gaps to be sealed with flexible mastic.)

Upgrade to intermediate floors
Existing floor to be upgraded with Cellecta DECK fon 17T floating floor treatment.

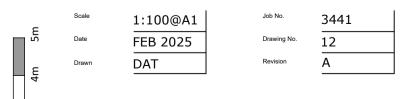
Upgrade to intermediate ceiling
Existing lath and plaster ceiling with min. mass of
16kg/m² to receive casoline MF ceiling system with min.
100mm service void fixed to underside of existing ceiling.
50mm FIBRE fon Micro 50 or 100mm mineral wool
(10kg/m³) fitted between grid and 1 layer of 8kg/m²
gypsum based board and finished with a 3mm plaster
skim coat which upgrades the floor to 60 minutes of fire
protection. Acoustic sealant is to be used around the
perimeter of the room.





PROPOSED CONVERSION TO FLATS 7-9 MARKET SQUARE, ST. NEOTS PE19 2AR

Drawing Title PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS





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