

# Austin-Smith: Lord

Belle Vue Royal Hotel - Heritage Impact Assessment

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# Contents

## **01.0 Introduction**

- 01.1 Purpose of Report
- 01.2 Approach and Methodology
- 01.3 Existing Information and Resources
- 01.4 Authorship

## **02.0 Understanding the Site**

- 02.1 Location and Setting
- 02.2 Designations
- 02.3 Views
- 02.4 Description

## **03.0 Historic Development**

- 03.1 History of Aberystwyth
- 03.2 Context - Brief History of Resort Developments
- 03.3 Seaside Development of Aberystwyth
- 03.4 Belle Vue Royal Hotel

## **04.0 Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance**

- 04.1 Legislation and Planning Policy
- 04.2 Cadw Guidance

## **05.0 Assessment of Significance**

- 05.1 Summary of Significance
- 05.2 Criteria for Assessing Significance
- 05.3 Assessment of Heritage Values

## **06.0 Description of Proposals**

- 06.1 Introduction
- 06.2 Summary of Proposals

## **07.0 Impact Assessment and Statement**

- 07.1 Impact on Setting
- 07.2 Impact on Significance





# 01 Introduction

# 01.0 Introduction

## 01.1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Austin-Smith:Lord on behalf of Vince Morgans to support a Listed Building Consent application for proposals to undertake alterations to the Belle Vue Royal Hotel on Marine Terrace following fire damage and partial demolition. The Belle Vue Royal Hotel sits within the Aberystwyth Conservation Area.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel was listed on 18th September 1984 at Grade II for group value with the other late Regency Era buildings that make up Marine Terrace. The listing was amended on 24th November 1987, when a number of other buildings on Marine Terrace were added to the list.

The Heritage Impact Assessment has been produced to assess the impact of the proposals on the the significance of the Grade II Listed buildings. It has been formulated using the assessment methodology contained within The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2017, Planning Policy Wales, in particular Chapter 6: The Historic Environment and local planning policies within the Ceredigion Corporate Strategy 2012-2022 and the Ceredigion Local Development Plan 2007 - 2022. It also takes account of the relevant Technical Advice Note: Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment and Cadw guidance, most notably their best practice publication Heritage Impact Assessments in Wales and Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Conservation Principles).

By assessing the proposals for the Belle Vue Royal Hotel in the context of historic understanding and statements of significance this HIA will test the impact of the proposed changes to Deva on its significance. Utilising the aforementioned guidance this Heritage Impact Assessment will capture the impact of proposals in relation to the buildings significance and outline the mitigation methods favoured.

This Heritage Impact Assessment will supplement interior and exterior photographs within which the proposals can be assessed for their impact on the historic fabric. The intention behind this project is to secure the long term future of the building, which has sat vacant for an extended period, and this document will capture and clarify the proposals will have on the building so they can be appropriately assessed.

## 01.2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The Heritage Impact Assessment has been set out in a series of logical sections with supporting appendices. The sections are sequential and each build upon the previous section explaining more about the process of understanding the historic asset.

The Understanding the Site Section 2.0 seeks to summarise the background context of the site including setting, views and context.

The Historical Development section 3.0 provides key information regarding the development of the historic asset, its surroundings and phases of development.

The Assessment of Significance Section 4.0 builds upon the extent of understanding and seeks to make judgements about the importance of the asset using a “value based” assessment technique. This approach is an established principle within international conservation practice.

The Description of Proposals Section 5.0 gives an overview of the for change and the general proposals.

The Impact Assessment Section 6.0 reviews the significance, proposals and impact of proposals for each space on a case by case basis.

The Heritage Impact Statement Section 7.0 summarises the findings and our recommendations.

## 01.3 EXISTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

A desk-based study was undertaken to provide baseline information for this assessment. This involved consulting Coflein, scheduling and listing reports as well as previous Heritage Impact Assessments produced by others.

## 01.4 EXISTING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Conservation Architects within the Cardiff Studio of Austin-Smith:Lord.



# **02** Understanding the Site

## 02.0 Understanding the Site

### 02.1 LOCATION AND SETTING

Aberystwyth is a coastal town in mid-Wales and the largest settlement in the west of Ceredigion. It is both a prominent seaside resort and a well-known centre of education, due to the presence of the near 150 year old University. The town is strongly influenced by its local geography, bounded on its primary aspect by the Irish Sea, its northern end by the cliffs of Constitution Hill and to its south by Pen Dinas Hill Fort. Aberystwyth Harbour is located to the south of the rocky outcrop on which the medieval Aberystwyth Castle sits, at the confluence of the Rivers Ystwyth and Rheidol.

The town's hinterlands are a fertile area of coastal farmland bounded to the east by the Cambrian Mountains. The wider urban area has a population of over 18,000, and is governed by Ceredigion County Council. Aberystwyth Town Council is the community council.

The medieval settlement was laid out as a walled town on the landward side of Aberystwyth Castle, itself constructed directly on the sea on a rocky promontory on the north side of the mouth of the River Rheidol. Since the end of the 18th century, the town has expanded along the sea front, with tourists keen to take advantage of Aberystwyth's dramatic setting and spectacular views over Cardigan Bay. Throughout the course of the 20th century, the town has further expanded inland with Aberystwyth University and the National Library of Wales dominating Penglais Hill. The town centre is focussed within the original boundaries of the walled town.

Marine Terrace was one of a series of planned developments following growing interest in the picturesque and sea bathing in the 18th century. Following the construction of Sir Uvedale Price's Castle House on the sea-front between the medieval settlement and the castle, New Street and then Laura Place, a small square with fashionable residences had been constructed by 1810, with assembly rooms opened in 1820 to provide entertainment to visitors. By the 1830s, Marine Terrace had largely taken on its present form.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel sits at the end of the first phase of Aberystwyth's seafront, to the south of Terrace Road, where the terrace gently curves from a northwest to a west facing aspect.

The front of the building is flanked by similar properties that make up Marine Terrace, typically Regency Era buildings with later Victorian alterations including dormers and canted bay windows. While the building is of the same age and architectural style as its neighbours, it is almost unique on the Terrace through its lack of bay windows, which sets it apart. It is also highly identifiable by its signage, which has been present in its current location since at least the late 19th century, albeit in various fonts.

The setback of 18-20 Marine Terrace, and the twin gables flanking Ty Belgrave mean the Royal Belle Vue is easy to locate and dominates the view when approaching from the south.



The rear and front setting of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel. The front elevation has been hoarded since the 2018 fire, and the gabled cross wing to the north demolished.



## 02.2 DESIGNATIONS

### Listed Buildings

Listed Buildings are buildings of special architectural and historic interest which make up Wales' historic environment. They are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended and updated by the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which entails for all alterations or demolition works to require Listed Building Consent from the local planning authority before they can proceed.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is listed Grade II (List entry number 10281). The location of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel, within the Regency Era seafront development, means that there are many other listed buildings of a similar nature in the vicinity. These play an important part in the setting and character of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel, and should be considered in the impact assessment. The following buildings in the vicinity are identified as Designated Historic Assets:

#### Grade II

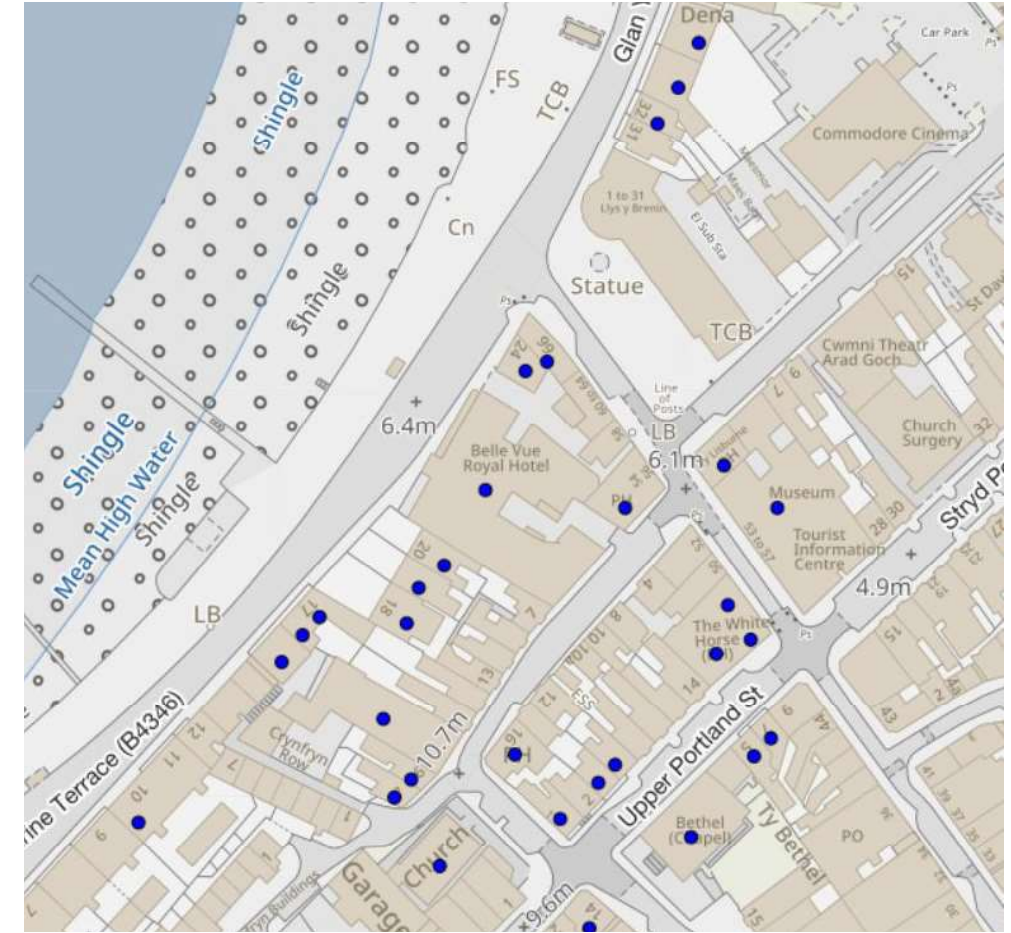
- 24 Marine Terrace (Ty Belgrave)
- 66 Terrace Road (Grosvenor House)
- 56 Terrace Road (The Libertine Cocktail Bar)
- 18, 19, 20 Marine Terrace

### Conservation Area

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is situated within the Aberystwyth Conservation Area. Aberystwyth Conservation Area was first designated in 1969 and has been subsequently extended in 1981 and 1994.

Cadw published a document "Aberystwyth: Understanding Local Character" in 2013. The immediate purpose of this study is to inform plans that are coming forward as part of the strategic regeneration of Aberystwyth. By helping to define the special character of the town, it will also offer a common platform for all policies and programmes that will contribute to sustaining and enhancing local character. The Marine Terrace and The Promenade character area identified within Cadw's publication within which Old College sits is entirely within the Aberystwyth Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area covers the core of the early medieval settlement including Great Darkgate Street and Bridge Street, and the Castle, the 19th century expansion along Marine Terrace and the late 19th century housing developments to the east of the old town.



Search from Cof Cymru showing Designated Historic Assets in the vicinity of Deva



### 02.3 VIEWS

The principal facade of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel is the Marine Terrace elevation, that which overlooks the promenade. The seafront was developed in several sections, with the first phase comprising a number of dwellings to the southwest of Pier Street. The Promenade was then extended north of Terrace Road as shown in John Wood's 1834 Plan of Abersytwyth. The Promenade was widened in 1860, and further extended north to Constitution Hill by 1866, and as far as South Road in the opposite direction by 1904.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is arguably the most notable building on Marine Terrace itself, identifiable through its signage, and repetitive detailing on the upper levels. Although originally formed from separate buildings like its neighbours, unlike its neighbours, it has no bay windows on the upper floors, which sets it apart as a single volume, the mass accentuated by the set-back of nos. 18-20 to the south and the gabled cross wing to the north.

The rear elevation addressing Corporation Street is in contrast to that of Marine Terrace. The low two storey building that would have originally provided stable accommodation for the hotel is unassuming, despite its current commercial use. Although its form and detailing is simpler than the adjacent terraced housing, these are not uniform and as such the hotel is inconspicuous. There are views into the rear courtyard of the hotel, however, the accretive nature of the outriggers give the site anonymity.



Top to bottom: Marine Terrace looking north, view of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel, Marine Terrace looking south, all images taken from Google Street View June 2017 prior to the fire

Top to bottom: Corporation Street from Terrace Road, view to the Belle Vue Royal courtyard, view towards Terrace Road June 2023



## 02.4 DESCRIPTION

The Royal Belle Vue Hotel was constructed in multiple phases throughout the 19th century.

The principal block parallel to the seafront is the earliest phase, with the plot first identified on William Couling's 1809 town plan. The Belle Vue was first identified on the St. Michael's Rates Assessments in 1825, however, the site was first leased in 1815 indicating that the building existed as residential accommodation for the first ten years. John Wood's 1834 town plan identifies the hotel site as a rectangular block comprising three properties with two small outriggers to the central block and two small buildings facing Alfred Place (now Corporation Street). It is unclear when the building was first extended, but 1848 descriptions include reference to offices, lock-up coach houses and excellent stabling close at hand. This may reference associated buildings on Terrace Road on the present museum site. The commercial and coffee rooms are described as attached, however, it is likely these are sea facing, and attached in this instance means associated with the hotel. Certainly by 1864, it was described as "enlarged" with a billiard room, smoking room and chess room added and 1886 OS plans show the site fully developed with the exception of the covered yard.

Prior to the 2018 fire, the building incorporated a gabled cross wing originally built as part of the Ty Belgrave development. This portion of the hotel was subsequently demolished. This description focusses on the extant building.

### 2.5.1 Exterior



Marine Terrace



Corporation Street

The Marine Terrace elevation is the principal facade.

Facing Marine Terrace, the building is three storeys with an attic and basement and is ten bays wide in a 3 plus 7 arrangement, the eaves of the main building stepping up. The 7 bays to the right are further grouped in a 4 plus 3 arrangement; overall the facade gives legibility to the hotel's origin as three residences.

The basement level is largely obscured being set behind an area topped with a modern enclosed loggia to bays 1-6, a porch to bay 7 and railings to bays 8 to 10.

At ground floor level, the original arrangement has been removed and a single storey flat roofed loggia with modern uPVC glazing installed spanning the area below. Bay 7 features a projecting porch clad in slate with a scalloped lead cap. The remaining bays house three uPVC sash windows in a 2 over 2 arrangement. The original wall is finished with rusticated stucco surmounted by a plat band.

The first floor level features ten tall uPVC sash windows in a 2 over 2 arrangement set within stucco architraves with scrolled and moulded keystones. The third floor replicates the arrangement, but the windows are shorter, and bays 2, 5 and 9 are blind. The wall is finished with stucco and terminates in a bracketed eaves.

The roof is finished with slate, with bays 4-10 having pitched dormers with uPVC sash windows in a 2 over 2 arrangement. The dormers are finished with scalloped barge boards and finials. There are four rubble chimney stacks defining the original three-property arrangement.

Facing Corporation Street, to the right is a modern steel vehicular gate flanked by curved piers finished with stucco. To the left is a modest two-storey building with a modern shop front and match-boarded garage doors at ground floor level and three paired sash windows in a 3 over 3 arrangement at first floor level.





Within the compound, the space comprises a rectangular open court enclosed on three sides by buildings, with a narrow vehicular route out to Corporation Steet.

To the north-west is the original Regency main block. At ground floor it has been extended with a modern flat-roofed rendered structure fitted with uPVC windows. Set above and behind this, the original rear elevation is visible, constructed in rubble with timber sash windows, the openings of various types and eras, but typically with flat arches. Some historic openings, related to historic staircase locations have been infilled with brickwork. Two openings contain decorative stained glass. The elevation has two box dormers and pipework of both plastic and cast iron. There is a steel escape/ maintenance stair to the right hand side. The roof is finished in slate with red clay ridge tiles and incorporates several rooflights. Chimney stacks are constructed in coursed rubble.



Main Block rear elevation at ground and high level



Ballroom Wing south elevation at ground and high level

To the north-east is the ballroom wing which dates to the second half of the 19th century. This comprises a traditionally constructed three-storey hotel wing finished in stucco, with two story link to the main block. The hotel wing is concealed by a two-storey timber-framed structure with hipped slate roof, jettied on steel supports at first floor to house the ball room. At ground floor there is a projecting entrance flanked by a modern window opening to the right hand side. The left steps back to the original wall line, with a modern window in an earlier opening. There are remnants of rusticated stucco at low level. At first floor level, the ball room has three bays, the end bays featuring mullioned and transomed timber windows with multi-light fixed casements. The central bay is blank. The stepped nature of older plans indicate the current configuration is unlikely to be original.





Top: Ballroom Wing east elevation. Bottom: Ballroom Wing north elevation

South Wing north elevation at ground and high level

The east elevation of the ballroom wing is visible on approach from Corporation Street. To the right is the three storey hotel wing finished in stucco, terminating in a modest cornice with parapet to the hipped roof at high level. There is a single window to each storey on the left bay terminating the corridor. The upper windows are fitted with modern casements. The ground floor is only partially visible over the boundary wall, however, the window opening appears to be fitted with three 1 over 1 sashes with timber mullions. The ballroom section of the elevation is similar in style to the south facing elevation. The ground floor has a modern uPVC window and is finished with stucco, the first three courses being rusticated. At first floor, the ballroom is constructed as a timber frame which jetties to the south. There is a mullion and transom window fitted with multilight units.

The north elevation of the ballroom wing is presently visible due to the demolition of the cross-wing. The elevation is three storeys with five bays at each level. Windows are deep set with modern uPVC windows. The elevation is rendered terminating in a simple cornice at eaves level. Chimney stacks are in-line with the facade, stacks constructed in yellow stock brick.

The south wing of the hotel is visible from within the rear courtyard. Construction is similar to the main block. At ground floor it has been extended with a modern flat-roofed rendered structure fitted with uPVC windows. Set above and behind this, the original south wing elevation is visible, constructed in rubble three bays wide. The windows have rendered surrounds and are fitted with a mixture of timber sash windows and modern uPVC casements. Chimney stacks are constructed in both coursed rubble and render. The central stack has been modified to support a timber clad structure. The roof is finished with slate and blue clay ridge tiles. There are five rooflights, three with opening timber lights, two have been replaced with polycarbonate.





Top: Link block between coach house and South Wing. Bottom: Coach house courtyard north elevation

Top: Coach house courtyard east elevation. Bottom: Coach house north elevation

To the rear of the hotel is a two-storey coach house which encloses a covered yard on three sides with jettied gables. With the exception of the northernmost wing, the building is open at ground floor level with a first floor supported on brick piers and steel columns. The southern boundary forms the party wall with 20 Marine Terrace. The eastern facade faces onto Corporation Street. There are three elevations facing into the courtyard.

The north-facing courtyard elevation includes an infill link to the hotel South Wing, the end gable of the east wing of the coach house and the infilled covered yard structure. The link comprises a single pair of part louvred wooden doors with flat roof set in front of a slate clad catslide roof. The east wing of the coach house is constructed of full height painted rubble stone to the east with uPVC windows, a roughcast jettied gable with uPVC window supported on brick piers to the north, and painted rubble stone with sash window supported on steel columns to the south. Set behind the covered courtyard at first floor level is a masonry facade supported on steel columns with sash windows.

The east-facing courtyard elevation comprises weatherboard structure with slate roof set behind the covered yard connecting into a cross wing with masonry outer walls and a jettied end gable with brick infill at ground floor level with door and casement window and roughcast at first floor with a pair of 3 over 3 sash windows.

The accretive nature of the building implies an original open ground floor structure possibly with stabling with accommodation over surrounding an open yard which was later infilled with brickwork and a flat roof.



2.5.2 Basement







### Main Block

The main block comprises the original three houses with a single storey rear extension.

At basement level, the original structural floorplan of the three houses is most intact. There are a series of small cellular rooms, some with original doors and windows. The three buildings are connected by a long covered passage running the full length of the block formed from the historic area that was enclosed when the single storey extension was added at ground floor level.



There are quarry tiles of uncertain date in one room, however other floors are finished with modern concrete screed. There is a mixture of older panelled and modern flush doors. There are two staircases to the ground floor. Finishes are a mixture of painted and unpainted masonry (both original and modern), and painted plaster of both lime and modern gypsum types. The basement is heavily serviced. The spaces are generally unused, most rooms have most recently been used as storage or beer cellars.







### Ballroom Wing

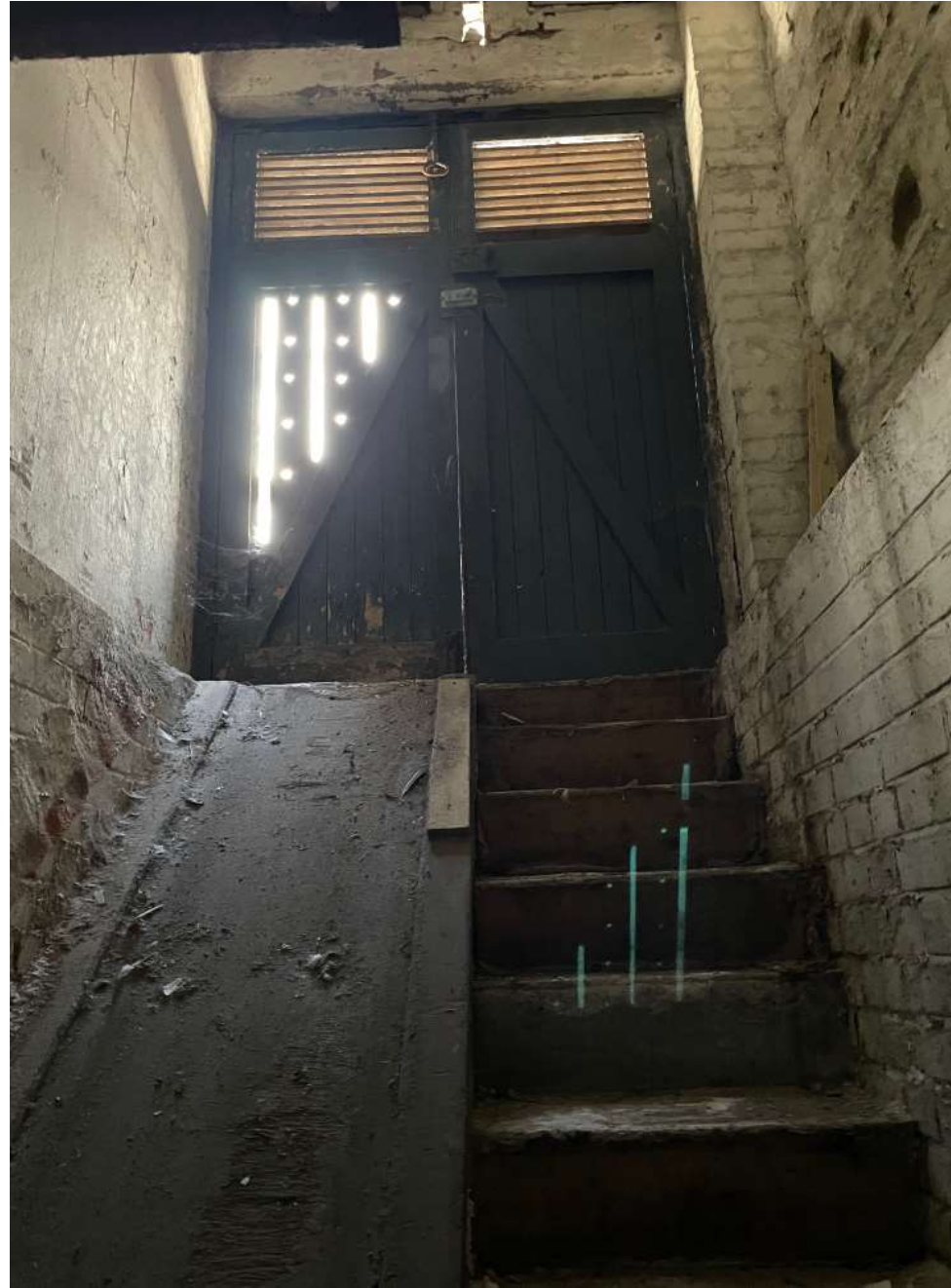
The ballroom wing projects from the main block to the north-east.

At basement level, the space has been most recently used as a bar/nightclub with modern fittings. The space has been heavily altered to suit this use.

There are no significant surviving features. The spaces are generally finished with concrete screeded floors, and painted masonry walls. There are fixtures and fittings from the latter half of the 20th century.







**South Wing**

The south wing is made up of three stores connected by a covered passage formed from the historic area connecting with that of the main block. To the east is an access stair with a keg chute leading directly to the rear courtyard and a narrow passage underneath the link above.

Floors are finished with modern concrete screed. There are modern flush doors. Finishes are a mixture of painted and unpainted masonry (both original and modern), and painted plaster of both lime and modern gypsum types. The spaces are generally unused, most rooms have most recently been used as storage or beer cellars.





2.5.3 Ground Floor







### Main Block/ South Wing

The ground floor of the main block houses the principle public rooms of the hotel including the hotel bar, reception and restaurant. These spaces have been empty since the fire.

The ground floor has been heavily modernised in the second half of the twentieth century, most notably to accommodate the loggia overlooking the seafront. Each of the three original houses has been altered. The central residence contains the main entrance hall, reception, bar and principal staircase.



On entering the enclosed porch, a set of fully glazed doors provide access into the main entrance hall. The entrance hall has been opened to the full depth of the original house with the reception desk set within the modern single storey extension to the rear. To the south is access to the Ocean Room via a modern opening, and access to the kitchen corridor. To the north, wide arched openings with original plaster and timber linings provide access to the hotel bar and to the principle staircase. The bar opening is fitted with a late 19th/ early 20th century half-glazed panelled timber scree, retrofitted with modern glazing in the style of leaded lights.

The staircase is an open-well type with angled curtail steps at the base. The balustrade dates from the late 19th or early 20th century and has heavy timber newel posts, with panelled balustrading to the main flights and spindles between half-landings. A blind arched opening with panelled reveals indicates there was once direct access from the stair into the bar space. A double-height leaded stained glass window lights the staircase.



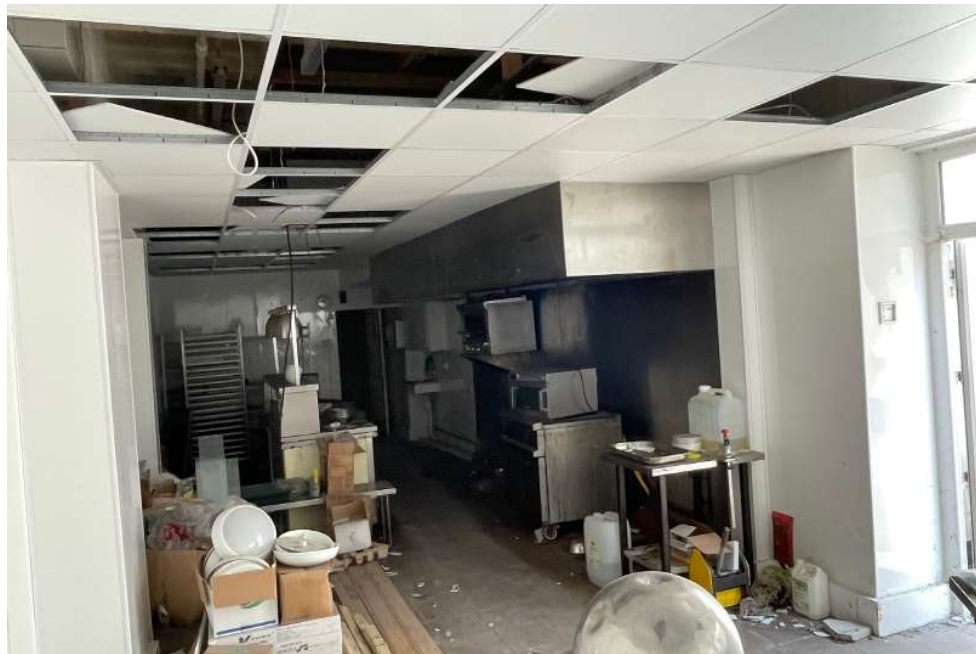
The bar has been extended into a modern loggia at the front of the building. Finishes have been stripped following the fire. There are deep skirtings with varied profiles, indicating not all are original.





The south residence has been opened to create one large function room which extends the full depth of the south wing. The original staircase has been lost, however, a single flight of stairs connects to the basement, accessed from a modern single storey extension which houses kitchens.

Original features are limited to three window casings to the principal facade, fitted with modern uPVC units. To the north wall of the south wing, there are two surviving window casings, most likely when the single storey kitchen extension was constructed. Deep downstands separate the rectangular room into five irregular bays relating to the original structural floor plan.







The north residence has been opened to create a restaurant space which extends into the loggia at the front of the building. The room has been stripped of all finishes. A large steel joist and timber downstand beams indicate the original structural arrangement. A door to the rear of the room connects to the ballroom wing link currently inaccessible due to the fire damage.







### Ballroom Wing

The ballroom wing extends to the east and comprises two distinct phases separated by a corridor which terminates in a WC in the final bay. The corridor has remnants of original lath and plaster ceilings and some cornicing, but has been heavily fire and water damaged. There are deep skirtings that may be original to this phase of works.

To the north of the corridor is a large apsidal ended room formed from smaller spaces. There are original sash windows and floor boards but all other finishes are modern. At the eastern end of the corridor is a suite of WCs. At the midpoint of the corridor, a branch to the south provides access to the courtyard.

To the south of the main corridor, a modern suite of WCs and a bar/grill flank the courtyard exit. The grill connects to the main block via a modern link block.





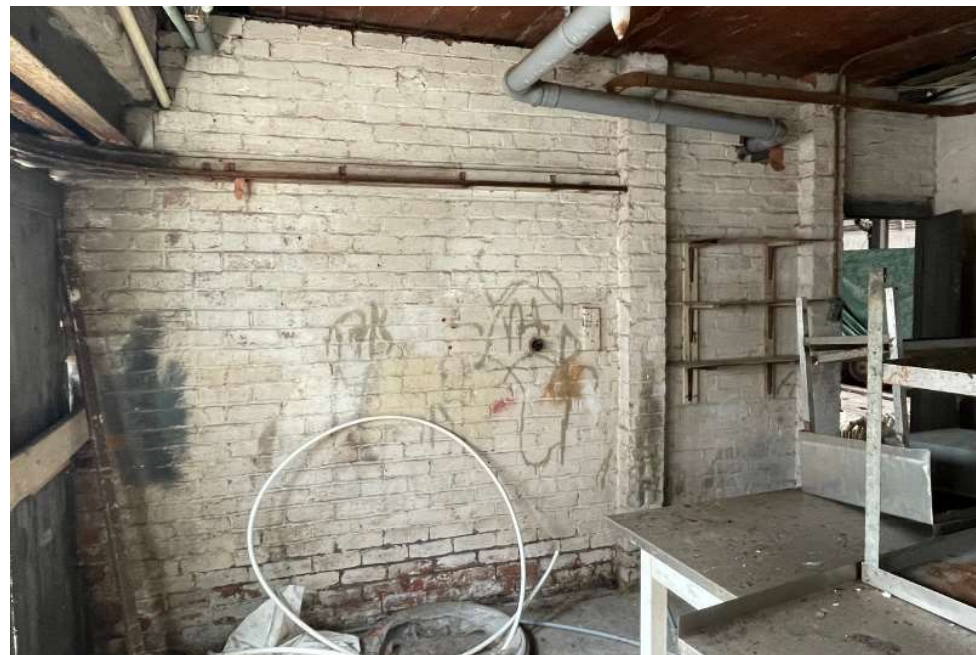
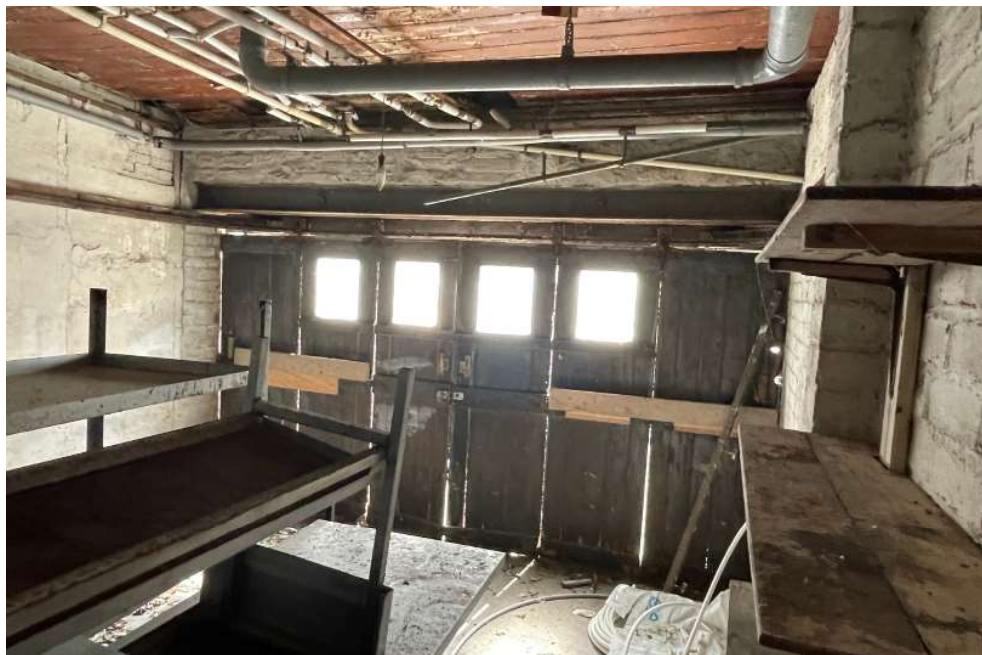


### Coach house

The coach house comprises a large open covered space at ground floor level, with two small spaces to the north subdivided by brick partitions to form a small shop, presently selling fishing tackle.

The yard has painted masonry walls to the periphery, with brick partitions. The open plan is maintained by a number of steel columns. There is a part-boarded soffit and walls are painted. The floor is finished with a modern concrete screed.

There are several doors and windows to Corporation Street of differing age.





2.5.4 First Floor







### Main Block

The first floor of the main block houses bedroom accommodation. These spaces have been empty since the fire.

The first floor loosely retains the historic residential spatial arrangement, with early alterations to connect the three original houses and latterly the missing portion adjacent to Ty Belgrave. The spaces have been further subdivided to incorporate en-suite facilities.

The south residence contains three en-suite bedrooms, one of which partially extends into the south wing. To the rear of the property is an open well staircase, which has been modified at ground floor level, lit by a sash window with decorative stained glass. The rear of the property contains corridor access to the south wing.

The staircase is likely to predate the hotel conversion matching other original staircases on Marine Terrace. The decorative door casings and architraves to the bedrooms may also be original. Skirting boards are low in height, however this is consistent with the architrave blocks and stair stringer.

Within the rooms features are limited to simple run cornices and panelled window linings. The front windows have been replaced with uPVC, however the rear windows overlooking the courtyard are timber sashes. Floors have exposed boards at present.





The central residence has had all finishes removed, with only localised patches of plasterwork remaining. The surviving timber studwork indicates two rooms overlooking the seafront and two flanking the stairwell to the rear with two corridors leading off the stairwell to the north and south.

The open well staircase replicates the detailing on the ground floor. It features heavy timber newel posts, with panelled balustrading to the main flights and spindles between half-landings. While the staircase may be original, the balustrade is a late 19th or early 20th century alteration. The double height stained glass window is the dominant feature.



As described above, finishes to the rooms have been removed opening up the floor plan. The removal of finishes shows outer walls constructed in stone rubble with timber framed internal partitions. There are infilled hearth openings in two of the rooms. Window openings retain their panelled linings. As elsewhere, window openings to the front of the building have been fitted with uPVC units, with rear rooms retaining timber sash windows.

The cross corridor has a surviving plaster ceiling without cornice. The studwork indicates arched openings between the corridor and stairwell.







As with the central residence, the north residence has had all finishes removed, with only localised patches of plasterwork remaining. The surviving timber studwork indicates one room overlooking the seafront and two small rooms flanking the stairwell to the rear, with a corridor leading off the stairwell connecting to the missing building to the north. The room to the south of the stairwell has been modified to form a corridor connecting to the ballroom wing.

The open well staircase matches detailing to the south residence, however the ground floor section has been removed and as such, the staircase starts at this level. The window opening which straddles the half-landing is boarded over.



The removal of finishes shows outer walls constructed in stone rubble with timber framed internal partitions. The outer windows to the principal elevation have had jambs reconstructed in brickwork following removal of the bay windows. Due to these alterations, the windows do not feature panelled linings. Consistent with the other residences, the windows are uPVC to the front of the property, with timber sashes to the rear.

The corridor studwork indicates arched openings which provide continuity with the central residence. This building shows most heavily the post-fire water damage, with fruiting bodies present consistent with rot.







**South Wing**

The south wing comprises a corridor running along the party wall with rooms overlooking the courtyard. The corridor connects with the main block to the west and the coach house to the east.

Both rooms and corridor are plain. Skirtings have a simple low profile and architraves are simpler than the main block. There are no cornices. The timber sash windows overlooking the courtyard have simple linings comprising wainscoting with flat reveals above and a plain architrave to the bedrooms, those to the bathrooms having been removed.







### Ballroom Wing

The ballroom wing comprises a corridor running east to west with rooms overlooking the buildings on Terrace Road. The ballroom overlooks the courtyard. It is accessed from the main block via a wide arched opening.

The corridor features a narrow staircase within a modern fire enclosure connecting the various levels. A large decorative stained glass window and fire escape overlook the flat roofed extension to the main block; the window has been boarded externally. The ceiling to the corridor has been removed, however the wall linings, deep skirtings and architraves remain. Unlike other sections of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel, this wing gives the clearest indication of being built as hotel accommodation as opposed to being converted from other uses.

Rooms are repetitive with timber sash windows set in-line with the wall face, with simple architraves. Skirting boards are also simple. The rooms lack cornices or any other decorative features.

The ballroom is a rectangular space with small stage at the west end. The ceiling is separated into three bays with deep downstands. Each bay has a shallow cornice with plain fields.

The walls are papered with picture rail in-line with the window heads. The room is lit by three large timber framed mullion and transom windows. In the stage bay there are two surviving cast iron ceiling roses.







**Coach house**

The coach house is accessed from the south wing via a short flight of stairs. The three-winged plan has been converted to form a corridor around the covered yard, with bedrooms overlooking the main courtyard, Corporation Street and the adjacent property to the south.

The corridor and rooms lack distinctive features. Rooms overlooking the covered yard and Corporation Street have timber sash windows, while those overlooking the adjacent property and the single storey extension to the south wing have been replaced in uPVC.





2.5.5 Second Floor







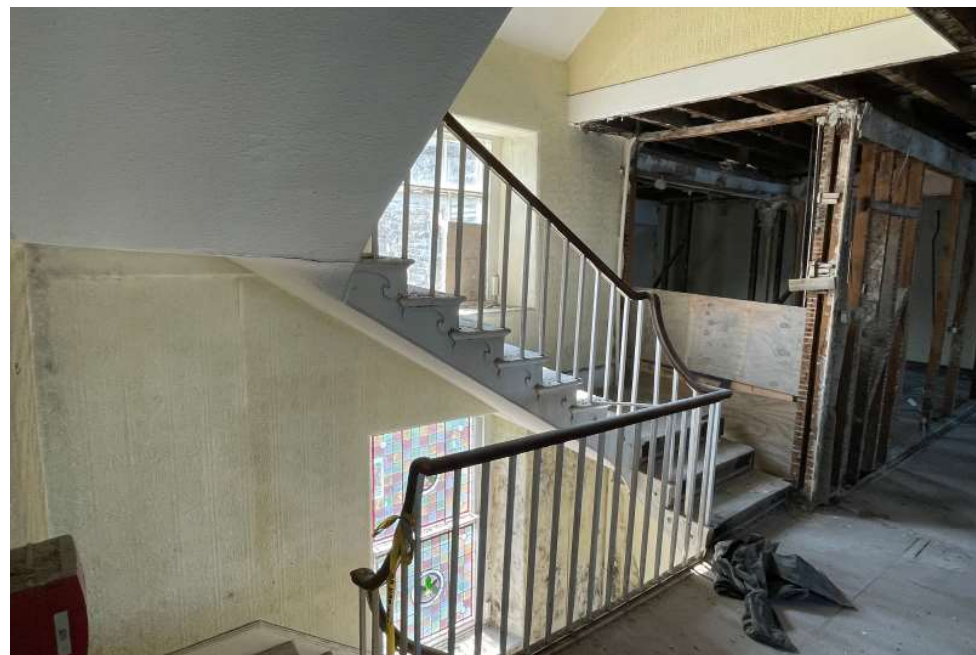
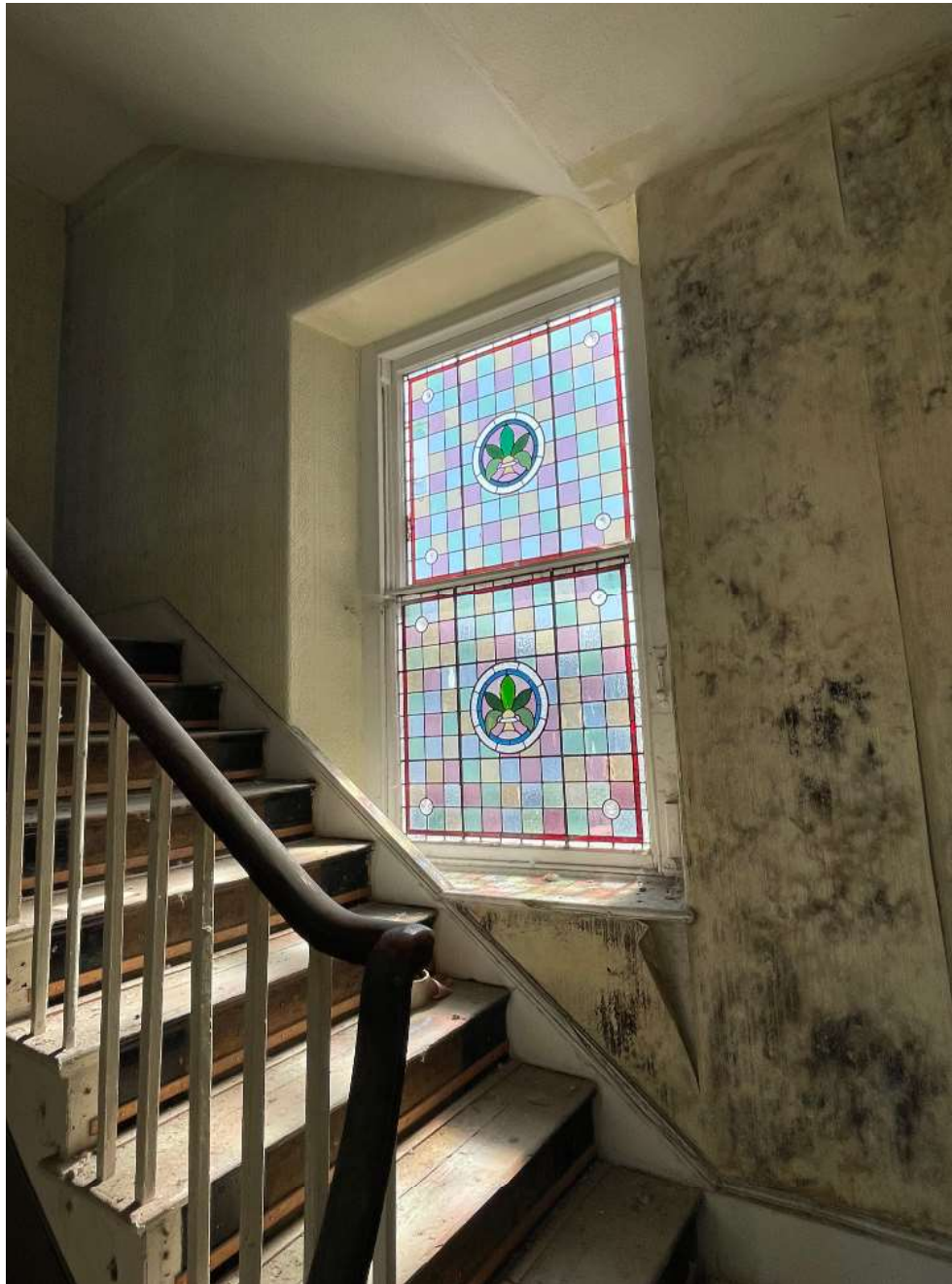
### Main Block

The second floor is limited to the footprint of the main block and the south wing.

As with the other floors, the original footprint of the three residences that predate the hotel are legible. Within the south residence, there are two rooms overlooking the sea front, with a staircase and room extending into the south wing to the rear. A corridor extends off the stairwell to provide access to the south wing.

All finishes have been removed, with the exception of the window linings and staircase, revealing external walls constructed in rubble, with timber framed partitions. The windows have original panelled linings but the window units have been replaced in uPVC. Of interest, the central blind opening retains part of the original timber sash, previously concealed within the wall linings.

The most obvious surviving feature is the open well staircase with original stick spindles and hardwood handrail. This is lit by a large decorative stained glass window.







The central residence comprises four rooms and a stairwell, with corridor extending to the north residence. The partition walls creating the corridor to the south have been removed.

All finishes have been removed, with the exception of the window linings and staircase, revealing external walls constructed in rubble, with timber framed partitions. The removal of finishes has revealed infilled fireplaces. The windows have original panelled wainscoting but the window units have been replaced in uPVC. Unlike the south residence, the blind window has been infilled with brickwork and the sash removed.



As with the south residence, the significant surviving feature is the open well staircase. The heavy balustrade with square newel posts and panelled balustrade continues from the first floor, as does the decorative stained glass window. The arched head is best appreciated from this level.







The partitions and finishes to the north residence have been removed, leaving an open plan with staircase to the rear. Due to the lower eaves height of this property, the removal of the ceiling has opened the space to the underside of the rafters and revealed two king post trusses. The staircase is enclosed at this level.







**South Wing**

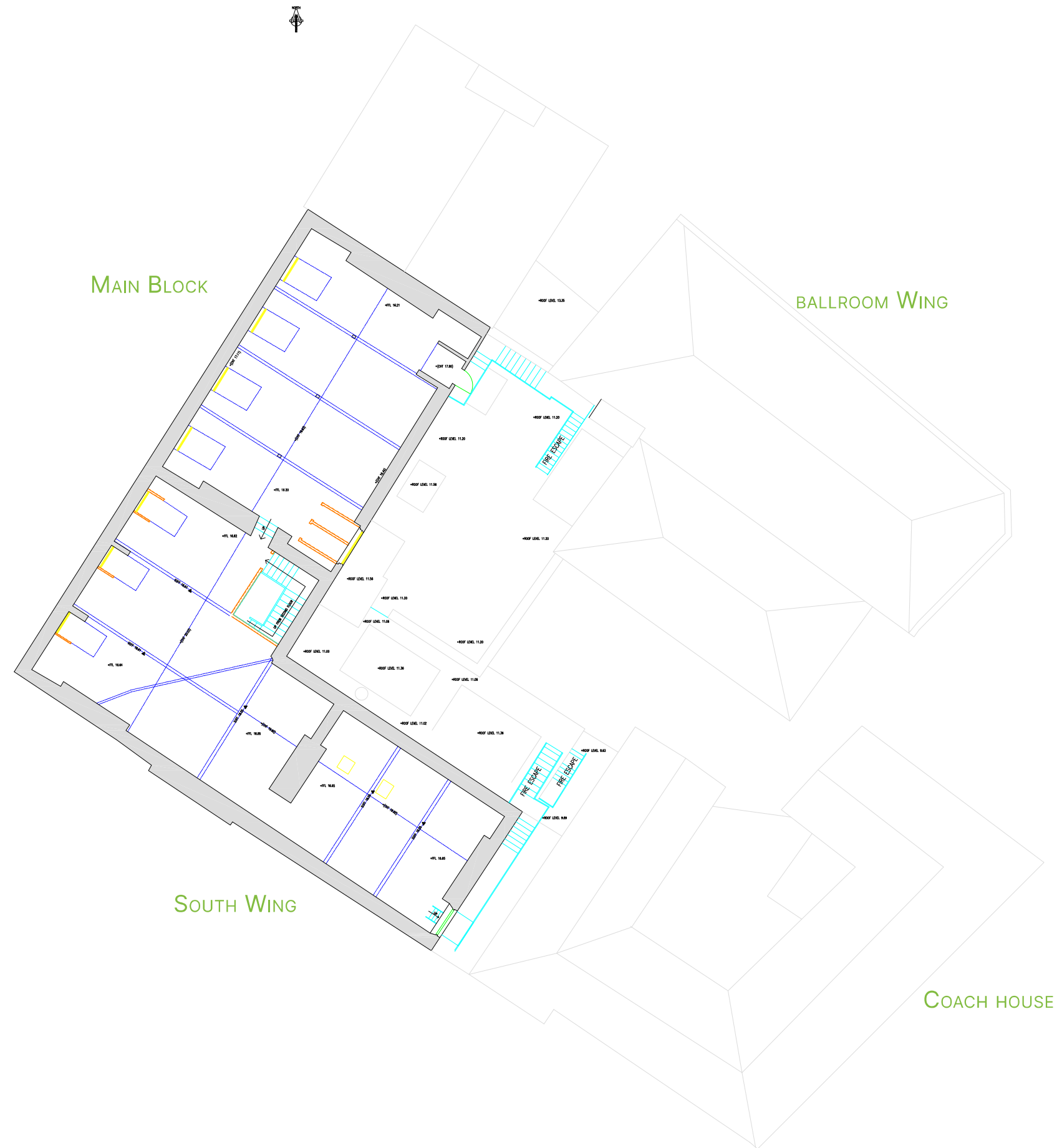
The south wing repeats the footprint of the floor below i.e. a corridor running along the party wall with rooms overlooking the courtyard. There is a modern fire escape at the east end of the corridor.

As with the the main block, linings to partitions and ceilings have been removed, although the external wall finishes remain. There is a single section of wainscot surviving in the east window.





2.5.6 Attic







### Main Block/ South Wing

The attic extends over the two southermost properties of the main block, into the south wing. The attic is accessible from the staircase of the south residence of the main block, which is enclosed at this level.

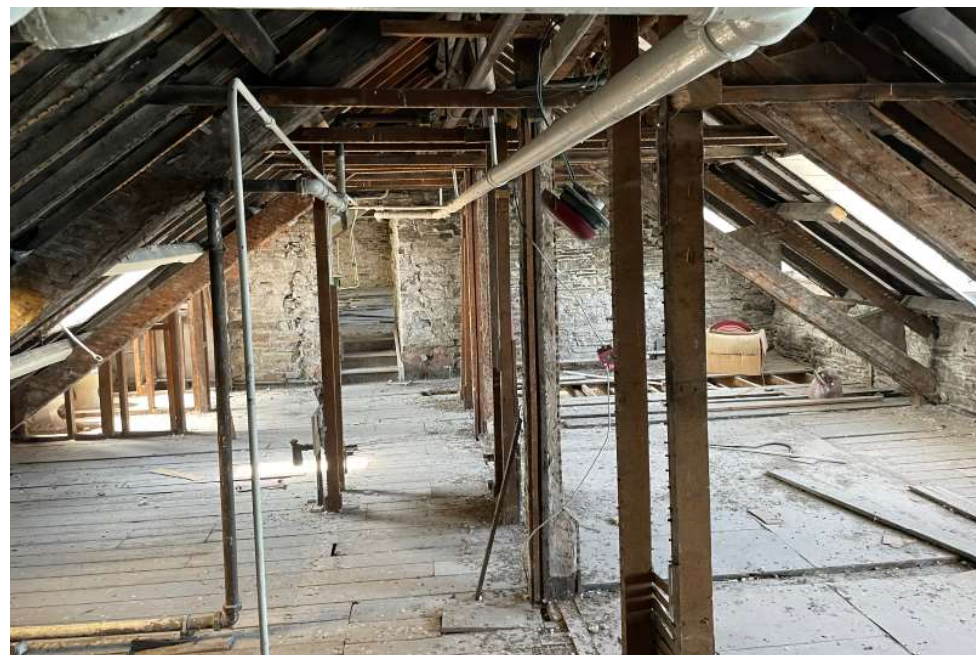
The roof of the south wing is assymetrical, the ridge being offset from centre, giving height towards the party wall. Modified attic trusses give maximum floor space within this area. The room is lit by skylights facing the courtyard.



The south residence is also roofed with attic trusses, giving an open floor plan. There are three dormer windows with boarded cheeks facing the seafront. The windows have been replaced with uPVC units.

To the central residence, the roof is constructed from king post trusses without struts, giving an open plan with posts running across the width of the property. There are four dormer windows with boarded cheeks, with uPVC units. There are several small skylights to the rear.

Fixings and lath shadows to the timbers indicate that the attics were habitable in the past.





# 03 Historic Development



## 03.0 Historic Development

### 03.1 HISTORY OF ABERYSTWYTH

Evidence that the area has been strategically important since at least the Iron Age is provided by Pen Dinas hill fort. Located to the south of town, it is the biggest hill fort in Ceredigion and one of the biggest in Wales.

Exploitation of local natural resources dates back even farther with evidence for flint-working sites around the mouth of the Ystwyth dating back as far as the Mesolithic period. There is, however, little other significant data relating to the occupation of the area until the medieval period.

The increasing influence of the Normans was first felt in the area c.1110 when a castle was constructed by Gilbert Fitz Richard on the south-west bank of the Ystwyth overlooking where it originally met the sea. This was the first of three castles to be built in or around modern Aberystwyth and the choice of this site by the Normans re-emphasises that it remained a strategically important location.

The third castle was founded in 1277 and was constructed by Edmund of Lancaster, brother of the English king, Edward I. It was sited directly on the sea on a rocky promontory on the north side of the mouth of the Rheidol. On its landward side, and integral to the occupation plan, a walled town was laid out. Within these walls, the street plan consisted of a single north-south street (Bridge Street/Pier Street) which led from a bridge across the Rheidol and which formed a cross with the east-west street (Great Darkgate Street and Upper Great Darkgate Street).

The town developed within the enclosed area and, although it acquired extensive landholdings beyond the walls, no building was allowed outside on this common land for the first five centuries after 1277. Within the walls there were also two substantial areas of common land on either side of Bridge Street and there were other open areas behind the properties on Pier Street. These areas also remained undeveloped until the end of the 18th century.

While Aberystwyth's location was politically and militarily of strategic

significance during the medieval period, it was also economically relatively isolated and this appears to have inhibited development.

In 1649, during the English Civil War, the castle was slighted and at least from this date it was used as a quarry for building stone, a practice which was eventually banned in 1835.

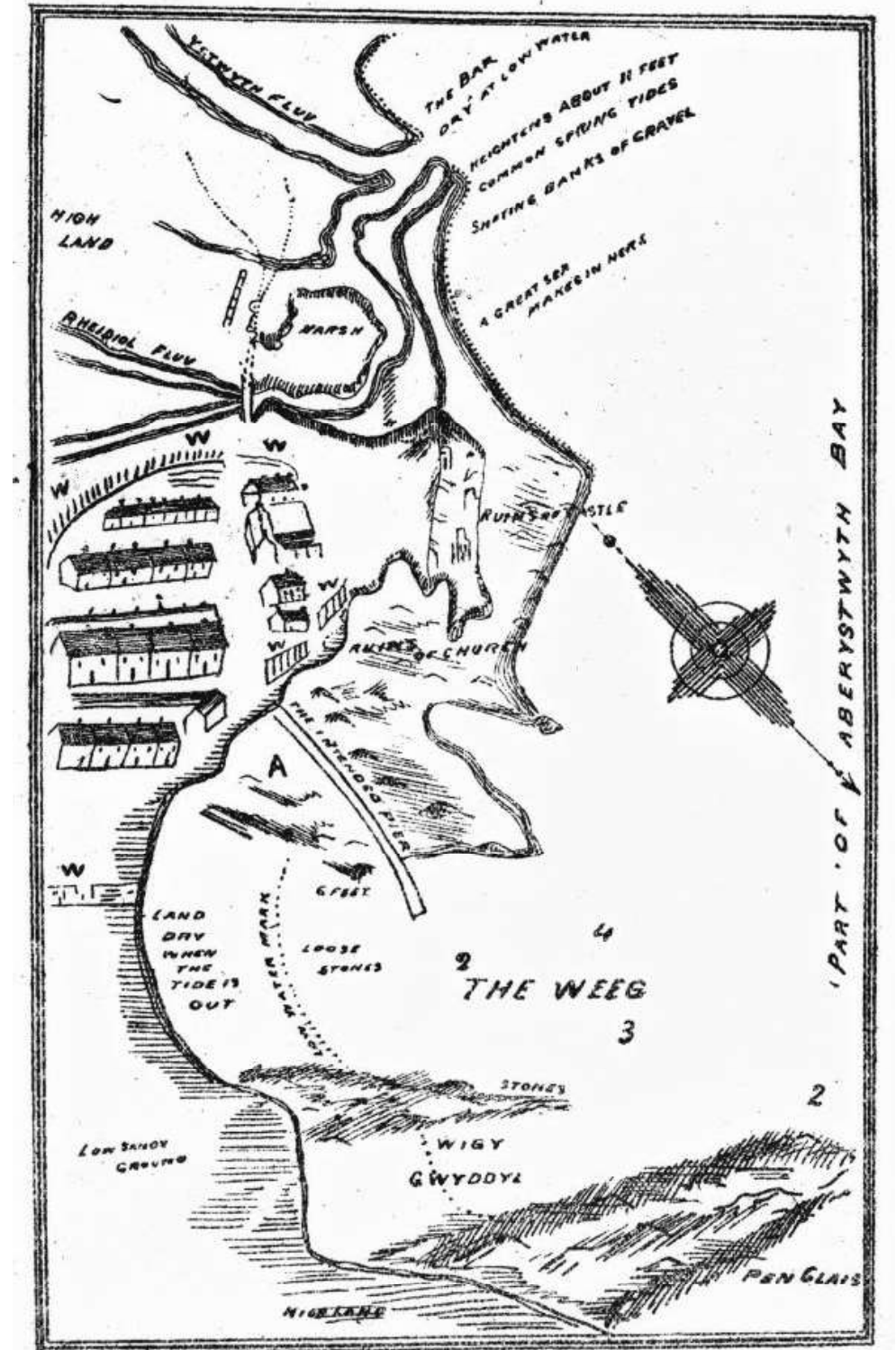
Economic fortunes appear to have improved again from this period as Aberystwyth became a centre for the mining operations in the surrounding hills. In the early 1690s, a new town hall was constructed in Great Darkgate Street which again may be an indicator of a growing or, at least, more complex local economy.

By the 1760s, there were 3,000 to 4,000 tons of lead ore a year passing through the harbor and there also was a considerable fishing fleet, which is probably why the Customs House was transferred from Aberdyfi in 1763. It was originally sited in Trefechan but moved to a purpose-built building at the north of The Weeg/Pier Street in 1773.

The layout of these new streets can be seen clearly in the Gogerddan Estate map of c.1797 and the town as a whole in the drawing of c.1790. The latter especially shows how the buildings themselves were still concentrated on the two main streets of the 13th century walled town. From this time the economy of Aberystwyth was began a radical change and this was to have an equally radical impact upon the townscape of the town as well.

Aberystwyth's transformation from a medieval market town to an industrial port was interrupted in the later-1700s and redirected by a new economic phenomenon, health tourism.

"Long before the orthodox onset of the Industrial revolution...the traditional urban order in Britain was experiencing the forces of change that were to reshape its character. An important feature of the transformation underway was the emergence of the so-called 'new towns', and among these one of the most novel and distinctive categories was watering-places – inland and coastal resorts devoted to the provision of health and leisure". (Borsay, 2000, 775)



Aberystwyth (about the year 1740) by Lewis Morris (Evans, 1902)



### 03.2 CONTEXT - BRIEF HISTORY OF RESORTS

The first phase of these new resort developments were spas based on naturally occurring springs, but in the 1700s there was a move towards a new type of water-based therapy, seabathing.

Both of these phenomena were initially led by and indulged in by the wealthier strata of society and resulted in new architectural and urban environments that became places where new forms of social behaviour were developed and displayed. Aberystwyth was to become one of the most important of these new resorts in Wales and much of the historic fabric of the town dates from this phase in its history.

The belief that bathing in or drinking naturally occurring mineral waters has medicinal values has been prevalent since at least Roman times, and many natural springs became religious sites and places of pilgrimage.

The oldest and most famous of these sites in the British Isles was Bath where the natural hot springs became the first 'spa' when they were developed by the Romans from the 1st century CE. It retained its importance during the medieval period with 'The King's Bath' constructed in the 12th century especially so that people could sit in comfort in the hot spring water. In 1562, the first medical treatise about the healing properties of the waters was published and, in 1574, Queen Elizabeth of England visited, followed two years later by the construction of 'The Queen's Bath'. The connection with royalty and the court put Bath onto the national stage and it was this relationship with royal and noble patronage that was to prove fundamental to the development of the spas in the following two to three centuries.

The term 'spa' itself originated at the town of Spa in modern Belgium which became famous for the supposed healing powers of its natural springs and can lay claim to being the first modern health resort. It attracted European royalty and nobility from at least the 16th century including the exiled King Charles II in 1654. He and his entourage continued to visit spas in England after the Restoration in 1660.

Bath was one of the most important of these and Charles's wife, Catherine of Braganza, visited in 1663 in an attempt to cure her infertility. In the previous year she had visited the spring at Tunbridge Wells for the same reason, following the example of Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, who had also come seeking a cure for infertility in 1630. Mary of Modena, second wife of James II and VII, and his daughter from his first marriage, Queen Anne, also visited Bath for fertility treatments.

The popularity of healing waters was exploited across the country with around sixteen natural springs developed as spas in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, predominantly in southern England, e.g. the springs at Tunbridge Wells from 1606 and Epsom from 1618.

Epsom is possibly the most famous of these early spas. The spring on Epsom Common quickly became a popular attraction with people coming to drink anything up to fourteen or fifteen pints of the purgative waters in one visit. Initially there were no facilities except for a small shelter but the influx of wealthy visitors soon stimulated the economy and the growth of the small town. By 1700 it was the most popular spa destination near to London and had the full range of inns, coffee houses, and shops associated with a serious urban centre.

Visitors would often stay for weeks at a time and so an assembly rooms was also built which acted as the focus for the social scene which developed to provide entertainments and activities for the visitors when they were not taking the waters. Other entertainments included a theatre, a bowling green, and, most famously, the horse racing on the Downs.

The double attractions of man-made and natural were also emphasised at Margate on the south-east corner of Kent:

"Of the various charming walks in and round Margate, the Pier is most frequented, and indeed it is replete with amusement. ... The bathing-rooms...are extremely commodious and in much request. ... The Assembly-Room, in Cecil-Square, is a splendid apartment.

Attached to it are tea, coffee, card, and billiard rooms. A master of the ceremonies presides here. The season commences on the King's birthday, and closes in October. Besides assemblies, plays, and libraries, walking and riding, parties are frequently formed for aquatic excursions to Deal, Dover, and other places. Dandelion, a fine rural spot, encompassed with venerable elms, about twelve furlongs to the south-west of the town, is likewise a principal object of attraction. Here are the remains of a mansion and strong fortification; and alcoves, shrubs, flowers, a bowling-green, an orchestra, a platform for dancing, accommodations for tea parties and loungers of every description, decorate this Elysian spot. Public breakfasts on Wednesdays and Saturdays, draw much company to Dandelion, and indeed there cannot be a more delightful retreat". (Tour to the Principal Sea-Bathing Places, and Mineral Waters, in England and Wales, 1806, 238-240)

Just to the south of Margate, Ramsgate also had an assembly rooms but its principal attraction was the 800 foot long pier, described as "one of the most magnificent and useful works of the kind in this kingdom."

Like Tunbridge, it also had a Mount Pleasant, "a house of entertainment to which parties of pleasure resort, stands on an eminence about half a mile north-west of Minster, and is universally admired for the beauty of its prospects, extending a great way along the coast, and across the Channel to Calais" (Tour to the Principal Sea-Bathing Places, and Mineral Waters, in England and Wales, 1806, 242).

The success of Llandrindod encouraged other entrepreneurs in Wales and there were similar developments in the mid-1700s at Bulth Wells, Llanwrtyd Wells and Llangammarch Wells. As was often the case, the wells at Llandrindod were situated on a bare, isolated common and the only accommodation was provided at local farmhouses and at the Llanerch Inn until a new, modern, purposebuilt inn was opened in 1746. The spa at Llandrindod flourished during the second half of the 1700s attracting the social and economic elite to a 'season' which lasted from May to mid-September.

As at Epsom, Tunbridge, Bath and every other serious spa town,



an entire entertainment sector quickly developed to service these wealthy visitors. In the morning they would go to the pump rooms to drink the waters and be entertained by the small orchestras there and for the rest of the day there were “field amusements for the healthy...balls, billiards and regular assemblies” which “varied the pastimes of the gay and fashionable.” The popularity of Llandrindod waned from the end of the 18th century when seabathing became the popular thing to do but, like many other early resorts, it had a second successful phase with the coming of the railways in the mid-1800s.

This development of amusements and pastimes was one of the principal attractions of the spa towns for the social elites who came ostensibly to improve their health but also increasingly to enjoy themselves. As these resorts grew in size and complexity, so did the social side of the ‘season’ until for most visitors it was to become the primary attraction.

The most influential of the resort spas for this was ancient Bath which, for most of the Georgian period, functioned as the main centre for the social elites outside of London. It was in Bath that the famous Richard ‘Beau’ Nash, Master of Ceremonies from 1704 until his death in 1761, created an entire code of behaviour and a season of activities that became the blueprint for all other spa resorts in the country.

Alongside the creation of spa resorts like Bath and Tunbridge, there was another form of water therapy based amenity which developed during the 18th and 19th centuries, the seaside resort:

“The fashionable seaside holiday began, in some respects, as an adjunct to the spa season, and it took several generations for the seaside to supersede the spa in the affections of the growing number of affluent seekers after health, pleasure and status in attractive surroundings”. (Walton, 1983, 9)

As with the taking of spring waters, bathing in and drinking sea water had been long believed to bestow vital health benefits. On the Lancashire coast it was an ancient tradition that bathing in and drinking of sea-water at the August spring-tide would both purify

and regenerate the body as well as heal any diseases you might have.

While there is evidence that local people who lived on the coast had been using sea bathing as a form of health treatment or disease prevention for centuries, the development of the modern seaside spa resort did not begin until the early 18th century:

“Practical evidence of elite sea-bathing can be found from about 1720. By the 1730s Brighton, Margate, and Scarborough (which combined the role of spa and seaside resort), and by the 1740s Weymouth, all show indications of accommodating the new fashion. It was these four fishing towns and ports which were to develop in the second half of the 18th century into the earliest substantial seaside resorts. From the end of the century they were joined by a proliferating body of sea-bathing centres, and by 1851 John Walton is able to identify a corpus of seventy-one coastal resorts. This was an area of urban development in which Britain led the way...” (Borsay, 2000, 777)

By the mid-18th century, maritime spas were gaining in popularity but, as with the inland spas like Bath, what really transformed their position and popularity in Georgian society was the patronage of royalty, nobility and the gentry. The two exemplars of the new seaside resorts were Brighton in Sussex and Weymouth in Dorset.

By 1780, development of the Georgian terraces that characterise the classic Brighton streetscape had started, and in 1798 work began on the famous Royal Crescent which was finally completed in 1807. Built by a local West Indies merchant, J.B. Otto, the crescent of fourteen houses was the first to be built facing the sea and to be designed in harmony with it. The crescent’s grand scale was intended to attract middle and upper-class residents, both permanent and seasonal.

The development of the seaside resort and its culture was obviously a manufactured phenomenon, but so were the aesthetics and philosophies which lay behind it. Up until the 18th century, people had largely regarded the sea as a dangerous thing with few, if any,

aesthetic values. The development of the concept of the sublime by writers such as Edmund Burke and then expressed visually by artists like Turner created a new representation of the sea that underpinned educated, urban visitors’ perceptions of what they were expecting to see and feel:

“...the sea, no longer perceived as a location of horror and danger to be shunned, but a place of pilgrimage, pleasure and wonder. The sea became for tourists a huge psychic resource, capable of stimulating in visitors...a cocktail of emotions”. (Borsay, 2000, 801)

It is against this backdrop that Aberystwyth was to develop outside of the medieval walls.





15 View of Aberystwyth *circa* 1800

View of Aberystwyth circa 1800 showing Castle House and the original St Michael's Chapel (Jones, 1977). The town is still bounded by the castle to the south and the town ditch to the north (approximately located along the line of modern Baker and Chalybeate Streets)



### 03.3 SEASIDE DEVELOPMENT OF ABERYSTWYTH

"The romantic beauties of Wales in general, the purity of the air, and the change of objects so conducive to the health of those who have been long pent up in towns and cities, intent on one unvarying train of business or amusement, together with the cheapness of provisions and accommodation, have tempted many, since travelling and sea-bathing have become so fashionable, to visit the principality; and various places on its coast have been selected as stations, during a summer excursion. One of the best frequented of these, if we exclude Tenby and Swansea, is Aberystwith, a maritime town in Cardiganshire, situate on a bold eminence, over-hanging the sea, at the junction of the Ystwith and Rhydol". (A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-bathing Places; With a Description of the Lakes; A Sketch of a Tour in Wales; And Itineraries, Printed for Richard Phillips, 6 Bridge Street, Blackfriars, London, 1806, 1)

There is no definitive evidence for when the formal practice of sea-bathing for health purposes began at Aberystwyth. The earliest written reference is in a letter dated August 9th 1765 from "J[ohn] Paynter, Hafod, to the Earl of Powis, Oakley Park near Ludlow, inviting him to Hafod and recommending the bathing at Aberystwyth" (Aberystwyth University, 2009, 36).

In 1781, Henry Wyndham clearly stated that a season had been established by the mid-1770s:

"There is a season, in the summer months, for bathing at Abersytwyth, and the beach, which has an easy and regular sandy declivity, is very suitable for that purpose. Part of the old wall of the town is remaining, but all the facing stones have been taken away. The castle has undergone the same fate, the runs of which are trifling, except of one Gothic tower, still serving for a sea mark". (Wyndham, 1781, A Tour Through Monmouthshire and Wales made in the months of June, and July, 1774. And in the months of June, and July, and August, 1777, 90)

There is even less evidence for the development of the town and its new tourism sector in the 1780s and 1790s except for the occasional

illustration and comments from contemporary visitors. One who came c.1795 observed that, "the streets are beyond comparison the dirtiest I ever saw...the beach is impassable and the bathing places difficult and uncheerful" (Lewis and Wheatley, 1996, 25). On the other hand, when the Reverend Richard Warner of Bath and some friends visited they described Aberystwyth as "a very neat market town", which, "Being a bathing place much company resorts to it in the summer season, where they find good lodgings and convenient bathing machines" (Warner, 1798, A Walk Through Wales in August 1797).

From the very beginning of the resort it seems that the 'company' at Aberystwyth included a notably high status clientele who took their bathing very seriously and spent their own money making their own facilities: The Hereford Journal noted in 1791 'several gentlemen have built bathing houses at their own expense. (Watkins and Cowell, 2006, 25-26)

One source which does provide useful data for Aberystwyth during this early phase of its development as a tourist centre is the Poor Rate Return of 1785:

"The main features of the 1785 distribution are the considerable mix of properties from each value group, with high and low often side by side, and the extensive open spaces within the old walled area, particularly the lack of development along the northern seaboard and around the harbour in the south-west. Settlement was strongly nucleated around the market cross, as is confirmed by other sources. Occupational evidence from the rate books, where it exists, also suggests a considerable mix, with mariners and merchants, gentlemen and joiners, living side by side". (Lewis and Wheatley, 1996, 22-23)

The picture here is still of a traditional local market centre, but the growth of the local economy and lead mining in particular were beginning to impact on the townscape:

"... its relative wealth was reflected in the increasing sophistication of its outward appearance. Large residences were built, especially

in Bridge Street, where a number of the local gentry had town houses, but also including others such as Crynfryn House in East-gate..." (Lewis and Wheatley, 1996, 24)

The growing requirements of a growing town were also expressed in the need to build a new church in 1787. The town's religious duties had been served by the Chapel of St Mary's possibly from as early as 1530, but its location on the seafront just north of the castle meant that by 1762 it had been undermined and largely destroyed by the actions of the sea. A new chapel, dedicated to St Michael and All Angels, was constructed inland to the east of the first site to protect it from storms (Taylor, 1971, 416):

"The first St Michaels was a small building 60 feet by 20 feet, but it was said to be adequate for the needs of the town". (Lewis, 1980, 38)

The seafront itself had remained an undeveloped stretch of land until the Customs House was built at the end of The Weeg/Pier Street in 1773. However, this changed in 1788:

"The growth of Aberystwyth outside its medieval boundaries was, however, hindered by the Court Leet's reluctance to allow the town's commons to be built on. But Uvedale Price, through the influence of Thomas Johnes, was appointed a burgess, and, in 1788, was given permission to enclose a section of the foreshore, 132 yards in length, to build a summer house for his wife, provided that it was constructed in two years, that a garden was created and a road laid out on the south side". (Webster, 1995, 6)

"Uvedale Price (1747-1829) was a wealthy landowner who had inherited the family estate at Foxley, Herefordshire. He was childhood friends with Thomas Jones of Hafod and Jones's cousin Payne Knight, and in adulthood they were to become "the triumvirate whose ideas formed Picturesque theory" (Lloyd et al, 2006, 90-91):

"Although Price became a Whig MP, his main interest was in agri-



cultural improvement and in making his estate more picturesque. Thus he contributed to Arthur Young's Annals of Agriculture and more significantly, in 1794 published his Essay on the Picturesque, which made him, in the view of one art historian, the 'most sensible, evocative and influential explicator' of the major aesthetic movement in 18th century Britain". (Webster, 1995, 1)

Price and Knight made regular visits to their friend at Hafod and often visited Aberystwyth at the same time:

"Here, Price and his wife, Lady Caroline, standing on the shore under the ruins of the medieval castle, found themselves 'always on the spot, always looking at the waves breaking against the near rocks, and at the long chain of distant mountains with the monarch Snowdon at their head'. So they thought 'how charming it would be [to] look at it comfortably from our windows in all weathers instead of being driven away "when the strong winds do blow" just when the waves are the most magnificent. Thus, they planned to build a summer house on that spot, and indulge their romantic instincts from the comfort of their armchairs!" (Webster, 1995, 6)

Having acquired the ideal romantic location, Price's aesthetic position was that buildings had to be seen in the context of the landscape of which they were a part and so the architect "should accommodate his building to the scenery, not make [the scenery] give way to the building." (Webster, 1995, 3)

When Price's Castle House, designed by John Nash, was constructed c.1791 its public access was from the eastern, landward side. On the west, a sea wall was constructed which followed the line of the facade of the house, presumably also to designs by Nash:

This was the first stretch of sea wall to be built at Aberystwyth and may have been the first massive stone construction in Aberystwyth since the building of the castle. It survives beneath the wall in front of the Old College but was buried in 1904". (Freeman, 2007, 73)

This stretch of promenade was closed off to the public by a bound-

ary wall and so created a private access to the shore as well as blocking the old shore path to the castle:

"The narrow strip of land in front of the College was private land and those who wished to walk the entire length of the coast from Constitution Hill to the harbour had to walk along King Street (behind the College), across St Michael's churchyard, and over the castle". (Freeman, 2007, 82)

This exclusivity of access was part of Price's intention from the beginning of the project – he even had the house designed so that there were no windows that allowed for the town itself to be seen.

Price's work at Castle House added a bold, new element to the townscape of Aberystwyth but also, alongwith the Hafod estate, new, distinctive attractions which helped put the town on the tourist map.

Around the same time as Castle House was being built, Thomas Johnes acquired the old castle ruins and leased them out to John Probert, steward to the Earl of Powis, who laid out a series of walks for visitors to promenade on, thereby adding another picturesque attraction for locals and visitors, "particularly healthful to many constitutions, from the invigorating sea breeze continually floating in the atmosphere around."

"For all this, in 1801 Aberystwyth had a population of only 1,758 and there were only four bathing machines for women and two for men, so it was still a small resort" (Yates, 2006, 2).

As at the other maritime resorts, the single biggest issue which had to be addressed in the early years was the provision of lodgings for visitors. As at Weymouth and the other earlier Georgian resorts, the most prized locations were the very places that had previously been shunned, i.e. on the seafront. Again, it is not known exactly when development of Aberystwyth's seafront began, but it appears to have been sometime around 1805-06 when the first houses belonging to Marine Terrace were constructed:

"The building of this terrace must have begun very early in the 19th century, for according to the accounts of the overseers of the poor, there were five houses there in 1809, one of these being the home of Thomas Jones the ropemaker, and another owned by Dr Rice Williams". (Lewis, 1980, 208) These properties were most likely laid out between Castle House and the Customs House with access to the sea, the town, the assembly rooms on Laura Place and the picturesque walks around the castle. Numbers 1 and 2 New Promenade may represent the last remaining of these five properties and as such represent some of the most significant properties on the seafront.

By 1816 the number of houses had increased to sixteen:

"The Marine Terrace began to show something of its present form in the first decade of the 19th century, for, in 1816, twelve "names of householders" on "Marine Terrace" appear in the list, as given in the Guide printed that year. The names of these earliest residents on this chosen spot were:- Wm. John Baynes; John Collins, architect; David James, mariner; Jas. James, architect; Evan Jones, mariner; Thos. Jones, ropemaker; Wm. Jones, purser, R.N.; John Jones, Rock-house, mariner; Wm. Julian, mariner; David Lewis, Cottage-house; and Mary Watkins, widow". (Evans, 1902, 122)

By 1824, the terrace reached beyond the present Terrace Road and it was described in the New Aberystwyth Guide as "the principal Promenade at Aberystwyth...which also contains the most handsome and commodious houses" (Prichard, 1824, 8-9)

The Aberystwyth Guide of 1848 recorded that there was by that date sixty "modern-built houses, let as lodgings, either entire or in apartments" stretching in a continuous curve as far as Albert Place, and three years later in 1851 it was described as "a promenade that may vie with those of Bath and Cheltenham." (Lewis and Wheatley, 1996, 27)

The Queen's Hotel was opened in 1866 at the north end of the terrace in anticipation of a tourism boom following the arrival of the





Marine Terrace, Aberystwyth, William Crane circa 1840 (Wikimedia Commons). Most of the properties at this period conform to a set of standards that give it visual coherence - three storey buildings with small pane sash windows. Bow windows were popular in the early 19th century prior to the council's imposition of canted bay windows as a preferred standard. The Belle Vue Royal Hotel can be seen in the middle ground to the right hand side of the Ty Belgrave gables. There are no dormers in this early view.



railway and Victoria Terrace completed the crescent's northward expansion in the 1870s.

The desire to be as near to the sea as possible that was behind the construction of Castle House also meant that these properties were exposed to the effects of the, not irregular, stormy weather. Castle House had its own sea wall but, for the first ten to twenty years, there was no protection for Marine Terrace resulting in, "the tide, at high water, coming within a few yards of the doors." (Evans, 1902, 122)

By the end of 1817 the decision had been made to remedy this situation and the Hereford Journal reported that a contract had been entered into for the construction of, "a beautiful and health imparting promenade to be completed by May 1818, when Aberystwyth may boast of the finest marine terrace in the kingdom" (Freeman, 2007, 74).

The project involved building a twenty feet wide promenade in front of a twenty feet wide road which ran northwards from Pier Street along the front of the Terrace. To protect this from the sea they also needed to build a sea wall which, at its south end, reached fifteen feet in height where it met with Pier Street. It is probably not surprising, therefore, that this first section of the promenade was actually not completed until sometime in 1822.

The next major phase of development took place in the mid-1860s when the Aberystwyth and Welsh Coast Railway arrived from the east in 1864 and the Manchester and Milford Railway arrived from the south in 1867:

"This marked the beginning of a building boom in the town and the promenade must have been buzzing with builders. Between 1864 and 1867 the Castle Hotel, the Pier Hotel (on the site of the second Custom House), the Queens's Hotel and the pier were built; the promenade was widened and lengthened; Bonsal's Terrace (between Rock House and the steps up to Bonsal's Row) was rebuilt and the ten houses at the north end of Marine Terrace were erected". (Freeman, 2007, 76)

It was agreed that the existing promenade should be widened and a new sea-wall built, and that it be extended all the way to Constitution Hill. By the end of the summer of 1865 construction work had been completed on the stretch between the Bath House and Terrace Road; the following year the work was completed to Pier Street and the year after that the stretch north from the Bath House completed the main promenade.

In 1864, work began on that quintessential Victorian seaside resort amenity, a pier. It opened in Easter 1865 and 7,000 people (equal to the population of the town) paid for the privilege of walking along it on the first day:

"Aberystwyth was the first Welsh seaside resort to build a pier. It was begun in 1864 to a design by the well-known pier designer, Eugenius Birch, and opened in 1865. The pier was 800 feet long and cost £13,600. ... The pier was damaged in a storm of 1866 and remained in disrepair until 1872, when a new company took it over and restored it. A pier pavilion, to seat 2000, was added in 1895-6 when a third company, the Aberystwyth Improvement Company, took over the management of the pier". (Yates, 2006, 6-7)

An 1880 guidebook to southern resorts was, like Henry Wigstead in 1797, fulsome in its praise:

"This pleasant town, the most important in Cardiganshire, claims to be the queen of Welsh watering places, and by some of its admirers, is thought unequalled as a seaside resort. It has long enjoyed a high reputation as a watering place... A recent writer has observed, "Whoever is depressed and almost hopeless, whoever has been worsted in life's battle and has lost heart, whoever is conscious of failing health, whoever has been nigh to death and finds the strength returning, but slowly, cannot do better than hie away to the Welsh town where sea breezes and mountain air are delightfully mingled." (Watering and Visiting Places of the South and West of England (including South Wales), 1880, 33)

By the start of the 20th century Aberystwyth had re-established

itself as a leading seaside resort:

"The decade has been one of great prosperity to the town...the invigorating climate has induced many visitors taking up permanent residence in our midst, the result being that a very large number of modern and substantial houses and villas have been erected within the borough as well as just beyond the confines. Almost every available building site in the borough has been eagerly taken up". (Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health to the Borough of Aberystwyth for 1902, in Aberystwyth, 2009, 51)



### 03.4 BELLE VUE ROYAL HOTEL

The history of Belle Vue Royal hotel has been researched by Michael Freeman, curator of Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth, 1991-2012 and is documented on the site [sublimewales.wordpress.com](http://sublimewales.wordpress.com). as part of a wider project to create detailed evidence for his article "Perceptions of Welshness: tourists' impressions of the material and traditional culture of Wales, 1750-1850" published in "Folk Life" Vol. 53, No. 1, (May 2015), pp.57-71.

The 'map of the Borough of Aberystwith' of c.1797 is the first reliable cartographic record of the site. The only buildings on the seafront are to the south of the Weeg/ Pier Street. Castle House is distinctive in its triangular site and the Customs House is marked "O". Development north of this is limited to two plots outside of the town walls.

More clarity is provided in William Couling's "Map of the Town of And Burgh of Aberystwyth County of Cardigan" of 1809. In this, Terrace Road has been clearly laid out, with plots allocated as far as today's Queen's Road. The footprint of both the Belle Vue Royal Hotel and adjacent Ty Belgrave with its projecting cross wings are clearly marked out but not yet hatched or numbered as constructed, as is the site of the Libertine Cocktail bar, and the stable block and rear access into the hotel site on Corporation Street.

The land on which the Belle Vue stands built was originally leased by the Aberystwyth Corporation on the 10th October 1815 (as recorded in later leases). The Belle Vue first appeared on on St. Michael's Rates Assessments in 1825. The first guide reference to the Belle Vue Hotel is in 1830, when it features in Pigot's Directory, as well as private diaries, and Captain Edward Foley's "Tour of Wales".

By the publication of John Wood's "Plan of Aberystwyth, Cardigan", in 1834, the Belle Vue Royal Hotel site is still shown distinctly as three independent plots with subdivided rear gardens and stables. Ty Belgrave is also shown as constructed, as are nos 18-20 which are set back from the street as at present. The Libertine Cocktail Bar has not yet been constructed at the junction between Corpora-

tion Street and Terrace Road.

The hotel as comprising three houses is distinctly confirmed in T.O. Morgan's "New Guide to Aberystwyth and its Environs" in 1848:

"The Belle Vue is situate on the Marine terrace, and is conducted by Mr Charles Marshal, late of Cheltenham; it consists of three houses thrown into one, connected in suits of apartments adapted for large or small families, and enjoying all the advantages of an uninterrupted sea view. Attached is a spacious and commodious coffee-room; like-wise a commercial room. The Offices close at hand comprise lock-up coach houses, and excellent stabling. [Also] attached is a well conducted posting department, and also a coach office".

The hotel appears to have been highly regarded and viewed as the pre-eminent hotel in the town by many, with the King of Saxony, the Duke of Newcastle and the Earl and Countess Amherst all visiting in 1844. Large events were often hosted at the hotel, including the official opening of the railway station, *Aberystwyth Observer*, 23rd July 1864.

By 1869, it was recorded as enlarged with a "Billiard, Smoking and Chess Room added to the establishment" Morgan, T.O. (1869) *New Guide to Aberystwyth and its Environs*. The additional space was possibly added concurrent with the arrival of the railway in 1864. Certainly by the 1886 Ordnance Survey it had taken on its current plan form.

William Crane's 1840 view of Marine Terrace shows the Belle Vue Royal Hotel adjacent to Ty Belgrave, without bay windows, projecting porch or dormers. The building appears to have been altered by 1850, it being visible in the middle distance of a photograph taken from adjacent to the castle. The image is unclear, but indicates that the dormer windows and central portico had been added to the facade. By the end of the 19th century, photographs indicate bay windows had been added to the north block adjacent to Ty Belgrave (possibly after the lease was renewed in 1884) and a cast



Late 19th century. Top: The left hand block has full height bay windows common in Aberystwyth from the second half of the 19th century. Bottom: Image shows the gabled cross range to the far right, with its own porch, bay windows have not yet been added.



Belle Vue Royal Hotel circa 1890s. The vertical glazing bars to the sash windows have been removed in favour of large panes, and the portico railings have been simplified



iron verandah to the southern block. The windows were progressively altered to enlarge glazing panes.

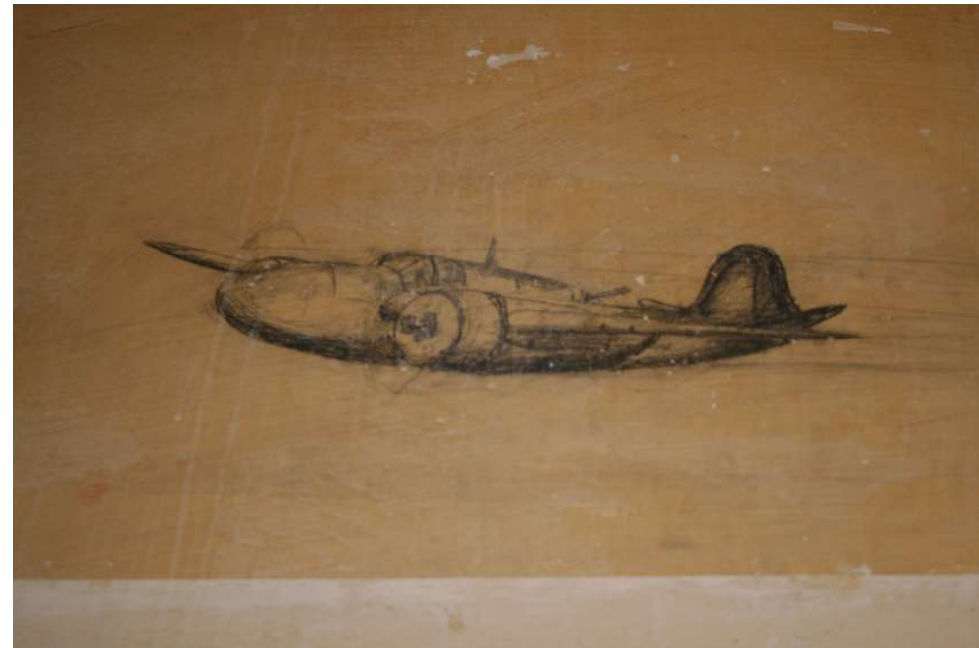
In 1889, a fire was recorded within the Aberystwyth Town Council minutes.

Throughout the course of the 20th century, the hotel remained popular as one of the largest on the seafront. During the Second World War, RAF pilots occupied the hotel. Graffiti was recorded in 2007 including cartoons of aircraft, pilots and astronomical maps and wingspan charts.

A modern loggia was added in the latter half of the 20th century, prior to 1987 when the last listing update was made, which makes reference to the loggia. This was possibly added after the hotel was purchased by the Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells. It is unclear whether the bay windows were removed prior, or as part of these works. Numerous internal changes were made during the latter half of the 20th century to create bars, install en-suites and a nightclub in the basement beneath the ballroom, creating a complex floor plan.

The portico was clad in slate at some point between 2010 and 2015. The proportions indicate that this may incorporate some of the portico added in the 19th century.

On 25th July 2018, a major fire was started at Ty Belgrave which spread rapidly to the adjacent cross wing of the Royal Belle Vue Hotel and into the roofspace of the hotel core. The core of the hotel suffered heavily from smoke damage. The cross wing was subsequently demolished and internal partitions from the hotel core removed to mitigate the effects of water damage. The Royal Belle Vue Hotel has stood vacant since this date.




35  
— WING SPANS —

30	40	50	60	70	80	85
ME 109 F FW 190	SPITFIRE HURRICANE MUSTANG TYPHOON KITTIHAWK MARTLET	LIGHTNING OXFORD HS 126 JU 87 ME 110	BEAUFIGHTER ANSON BLENHEIM BOSTON HAVOR BALTIARD FW 191 DU 217	HAMPDEN MITCHELL WE 111 DFS 230 HUDSON MACKLER JU 88	WHITLEY GO 242	WELLINGTON

Pencil drawings and graffiti relating to aircraft were found on the walls of a room in the hotel when decorators removed wallpaper. They are believed to have been made by RAF pilots billeted there during the Second World War. The drawings include both cartoons and technical information. The graffiti was recorded in 2007 and is recorded as a first-floor room situated to the rear of the hotel, parallel to the former ball-room with a window facing north-east. It is unknown whether this room is intact after the fire.

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ADVERTISEMENTS.



**BELLE VUE ROYAL HOTEL,**  
**ABERYSTWYTH.**

CHARLES MARSHALL,

In returning his most sincere thanks to the Nobility, Gentry, Commercial Gentlemen, and the Public in general, for the kind favours so liberally bestowed on him since his residence in the principality, begs most respectfully to assure them that no endeavour shall be wanting on his part to render the claims of the above Establishment equal to those of any in the kingdom.

**THE HOTEL**  
*Is most beautifully situated on the Marine Terrace, facing the sea.*

Families supplied with  
**WINES OF THE MOST APPROVED VINTAGES,**  
AND  
Spirits of the purest quality.

THE POSTING DEPARTMENT  
attended to in the most careful manner, with good Horses and steady drivers.

LIVERY STABLES AND LOCK-UP COACH HOUSES.

**THE ROYAL MAILS**  
And other Coaches to all parts of the kingdom.

Advert for Belle Vue Royal Hotel, T O Morgan's Guide to Aberystwyth, 1851





Marine Terrace from the castle circa 1850. Belle Vue Royal Hotel is identifiable by the gabled-cross range of Ty Belgrave, later incorporated into the hotel and destroyed by fire



Marine Terrace circa 1910. The end bays of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel are visible to the far right



Marine Terrace after 1934 as evidenced by the addition of King's Hall to the scene. The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is visible to the far right of the image





Map of the Town and Burgh of Aberystwyth in the County of Cardigan, Streets in the town of Aberystwyth named, William Couling, 1809 (@NLWgraphic)



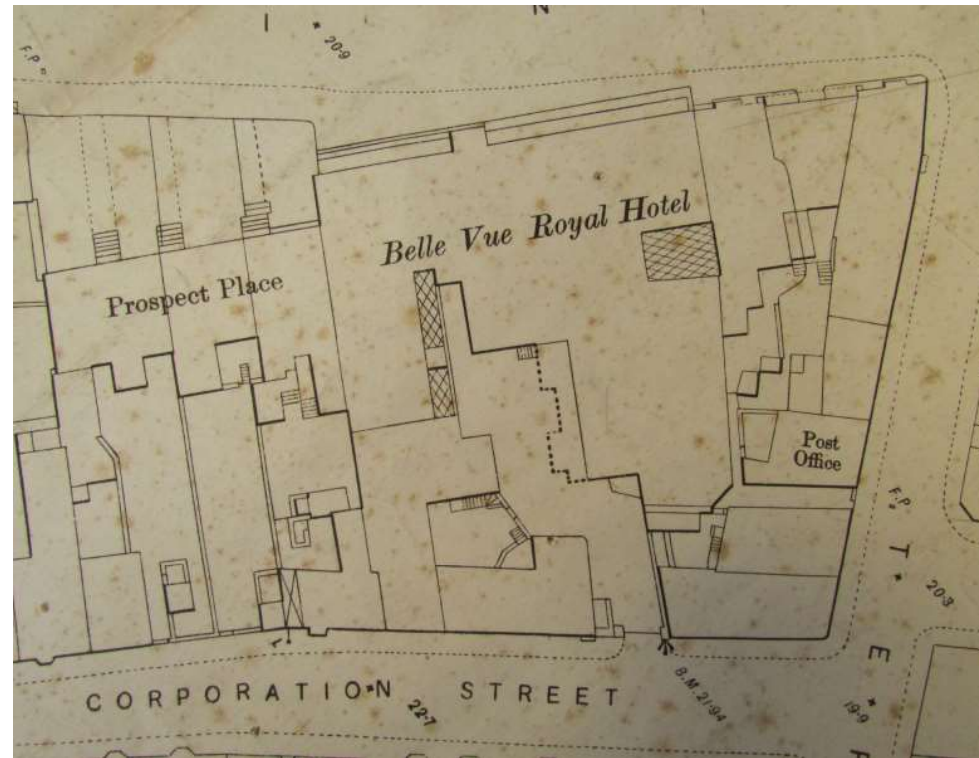
Plan of Aberystwyth, Cardigan, by John Wood, 1834 (NLW, MAP 5445)



OS 1:500/1:528 Towns VI.9.13 & 13 1886 rotated for comparison



OS 1:500/1:528 Towns VI.9.13 & 13 1886.



50 inch 1905 The Belle Vue Royal Hotel has achieved its current footprint with the exception of the glazed frontage and the covered courtyard







# **04** Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance



## 04.0 Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance

### 04.1 LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

#### **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**

The 1990 Act as amended by the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 designates Listed Buildings for their special architectural or historic interest. Listing gives them protection as alterations, additions or demolitions require Listed Building Consent from the local planning authority before they can proceed. Conservation Areas are also protected under Section 69 of the same act.

Where structures are both scheduled and listed, the ancient monuments legislation takes precedence.

#### **Planning Policy Wales**

The primary objective of Planning Policy Wales is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as intended by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Action is promoted at all levels of the planning process to maximise the contribution of planning policy to the well-being of Wales.

Planning Policy Wales provides the national planning policy framework for the protection and sustainable management of the historic environment as required by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Planning Policy Wales is intended to inform the development of proposals within the key principles of the planning system, through a series of gateways. Proposals should be assessed against Strategic and Spatial Choices, to achieve sustainable place making outcomes. The proposals should then be assessed against contributions to Active and Social Places, Productive and Enterprising Places and Distinctive and Natural Places to result in a proposal which delivers on the national sustainable place making outcome.

#### **Strategic and Spatial Choices**

Planning Policy Wales attaches great importance to the design of places:

Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise.

Design is an inclusive process which can raise public aspirations, reinforce civic pride and create a sense of place and help shape its future.

Planning Policy Wales identifies five objectives of good design:

- Ensuring ease of access for all.
- Sustaining or enhancing local character, promoting: legible development, a successful relationship between public and private space, quality, choice and variety, and innovative design.
- Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces and security through natural surveillance.
- Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources, enhancing biodiversity, and designing for change.
- Promoting sustainable means of travel.

#### **Distinctive and Natural Places**

The objectives of policies concerning the historic environment is to realise a prosperous Wales by valuing the quality of the historic environment for tourism, a resilient Wales by promoting opportunities for social and economic activity based on valuing and enabling access to the historic and built environment, a healthier Wales by enabling opportunities for connecting with the historic environment with the benefit of improving physical and mental well-being, a more equal Wales by facilitating access to the historic environment for physical and social benefits, cohesive communities by creative spaces for interaction and community activities, and a globally responsive Wales by promoting a historic environment which should be protected and enhanced for the sake of its special characteristics, as well as the way in which it contributes to the wider social, economic and cultural objectives.

Specific objectives are to:

- Protect the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Sites;
- Conserve archaeological remains, both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and the economy;
- Safeguard the character of historic buildings and manage change so that their special architectural and historic interest is preserved;
- Preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, whilst the same time helping them to remain vibrant and prosperous;
- Preserve the specific interest of sites on the register of historic parks and gardens;
- Protect areas on the register of historic landscapes in Wales.

Consideration in Planning Policy Wales is supported by a series of Technical Advice Notes, including Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment which provides guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making.

#### **Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)**

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act came into force in 2015 and seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals in order to make sure that everyone works towards the same vision.

#### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

The following supplementary planning guidance is also of relevance to the proposed development:

- Community and the Welsh Language
- Parking Standards
- Built Environment and Design



## 04.2 CADW GUIDANCE

### **Cadw, Conservation Principles, 2011**

Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales, published by Cadw, provides a comprehensive framework for the protection and management of the historic environment, wherein 'Conservation' is defined as the careful management of change to reveal and share the significance of historic assets to ensure their special qualities are protected, enhanced, enjoyed and understood by present and future generations. 'Conservation Principles' sets out the principles that:

- Historic Assets will be managed to sustain their values;
- Understanding the significance of historic assets is vital;
- The historic environment is a shared resource;
- Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment;
- Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent;
- Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.

The guidance describes a set of four heritage values, which are used to assess the significance of a heritage asset: evidential value, historical value, aesthetic value and communal value. The assessment of significance within this report uses the 'values' set out within this guidance.

### **Cadw – Aberystwyth Understanding Local Character**

Cadw published a document Aberystwyth: Understanding Local Character in 2013. The immediate purpose of this study is to inform plans that are coming forward as part of the strategic regeneration of Aberystwyth. By helping to define the special character of the town, it also offers a common platform for all policies and programmes that will contribute to sustaining and enhancing local character.

## 04.3 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

### **Ceredigion County Council Local Development Plan (LDP)**

The statutory 'development plan' for this application is currently provided by Ceredigion County Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) 2007 – 2022 which was adopted in April 2013. In Volume 2B ,the proposals maps, the site is identified as outside of the town centre boundary and sitting outside of the town centre boundary.

Policy DM 19 (Historic and Cultural Landscape) is of particular relevance, to this application stating:

'Development affecting landscapes or buildings which are of historical or cultural importance and make an important contribution to the character and interest of the local area, will be permitted where the distinctive appearance, architectural integrity or their settings will not be significantly adversely affected. Where possible development should enhance these qualities and special character.'







# **05** Assessment of Significance



## 05.0 Assessment of Significance

### 05.1 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

In summary, the Belle Vue Royal Hotel has medium heritage value, with a slightly higher level of historic value due to its contribution towards the significance of the place due to its interconnectivity with the fortunes of Aberystwyth as a seaside resort. This suggests it has some cultural importance primarily regionally and makes a moderate contribution to the setting, coherence and condition of Marine Terrace.

This significance must be caveated by a particular set of circumstances that may vary the assumed direction that a medium to high value would make alteration likely to be resisted:

- The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is currently vacant and dilapidated following a fire. With changes in visitor expectation since the late 20th century and a shift in emphasis following the COVID-19 pandemic, a strict adherence to reinstatement to the hotel's pre-fire state could put it at a risk of continued redundancy and dilapidation.
- The original pre-eminence of the hotel as a high status destination on Aberystwyth's sea-front had already eroded prior to the fire due to inappropriate change combined with a lack of vision by previous managers. Similar hotels and guest-houses have proliferated and newer chain operators have arrived in the town. Other developments are also underway which will further undermine the hotel's prominence. A proposal would be welcomed that returns the Belle Vue Royal Hotel to its position at the heart of Aberystwyth's hospitality offer and sensitively refurbishes the building to meet the needs of contemporary guests.

Whilst of medium heritage value, with a slightly higher level of historical value, a considered development scheme could enhance its significance reviving its potentially high communal value.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is listed at Grade II which recognises its special interest. It forms part of a second wave of development outside of the town walls that took advantage of Aberystwyth's

natural setting, and set the foundations for The Promenade that has remained Aberystwyth's principal attraction for the past 200 years.

The original Regency Era frontage has been altered in several phases and takes its current appearance from late 20th century alterations. Marine Terrace between Pier Street and Terrace Road is in some senses less consistent than the development beyond Terrace Road, with six distinct blocks, ranging from three to four storeys, with various step-backs and bay window arrangements. The Belle Vue Royal Hotel and Ty Belgrave are distinct in their lack of upper level bay windows and cross wings.

The nature of the property when first developed was as high status residential accommodation which overlooked the seafront, with long rear gardens. Within the first decade after the lease was issued, the three core properties had been converted to form a hotel with commercial and coffee rooms. The Royal Belle Vue Hotel was possibly the first such accommodation outside of the medieval walls, accommodation previously limited to lodgings in private residences or the two historic inns in the town. The new hotel on the seafront took of the interest in marine landscapes and bathing with a prime location.

The hotel was subject to a major expansion following the arrival of the railway in 1864, which was celebrated officially at the hotel. The expansion most likely allowed it to continue to compete with other newer establishments, particularly the Castle House Hotel under development from 1864, and the Queens Hotel which opened in 1866.

During the latter half of the 20th century, further alterations have taken place, although these are of lower quality and have diminished its aesthetic value, particularly the addition of the loggia to the seafront elevation. The aesthetic value of the hotel as part of the wider terrace has been further diminished by the fire of 2018 which has seen the demolition of the cross wing adjacent to the Belgrave and windows hoarded. The significance of the interior has

also been affected by strip out works.

The Corporation Street elevation remains largely unchanged, and while it is of lower significance than the Marine Terrace elevation, it continues to make a positive contribution to the largely residential street.

Internally, the building has been substantially stripped to mitigate the effects of smoke and water damage. Some historic fittings and decorative elements survive, including plasterwork and staircases.

Despite the detracting factors, the Belle Vue Royal Hotel retains High Significance due to its historic role in the development of Aberystwyth as a seaside resort and for its contribution to the seafront as part of Marine Terrace.



## 05.2 CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING SIGNIFICANCE

Significance can be defined as the sum of the cultural heritage values that make a building or place important to this and future generations. The aim of conservation is to sensitively manage change to a place to ensure that its significance is not only protected, but also revealed, reinforced and enhanced at every possible opportunity.

As is explained below, the recognised method of assessing significance is defined by four categories, however there is no set hierarchy and research efforts must be undertaken to determine what forms and asset or element's value. That in turn informs the proposals and interventions applied to a scheme.

All historic sites or buildings are significant for a range of reasons and it is important to fully understand what all of those reasons are, before arriving at the assessment of the level of significance of the site or building. Once that process has been undertaken more informed and balanced decisions can be made about the future uses and conservation approach being applied to development.

The “values based” assessments were first pioneered by James Semple Kerr and were embodied into the ICOMOS Burra Charter and are now an established part of Cadw's Conservation Principles. (2011).

**Evidential Value:** This derives from those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, including its physical remains or historic fabric. These remains provide the primary evidence for how the asset has changed over time. It is the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

**Historical Value:** The ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. These illustrative or associative values of an historic asset may be less tangible than its evidential value but will often connect past people, events and aspects of life with the present.

**Aesthetic Value:** The ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. This might include the form of an historic asset, its external appearance and how it lies within its setting. Understanding the aesthetic value of an historic asset will be more subjective than the study of its evidential and historical values and will involve trying to express the aesthetic qualities or the relative value of different parts of its form or design.

**Communal Value:** This derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, but tend to have additional and specific aspects; it can be commemorative, symbolic or spiritual.

In order to identify the relative contributions that these values make to the significance of a place and to assist with objective decision-making, the significance of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel is assessed using a scale of significance ratings ranging from High to Detrimental:

**High:** An aspect of value that strongly contributes to the significance of a place, forming an essential piece of its history and cultural value.

**Medium:** An aspect of value that will have some cultural importance and will make a moderate contribution to the significance of a place.

**Low:** An aspect of value that will make a slight (yet still noteworthy) contribution to the significance of a place.

**Neutral:** An aspect that has no discernible value that neither adds to nor detracts from the significance of the place. Informed change will be acceptable.

**Detrimental:** An aspect of the place that detracts from its values and therefore its significance. In material terms, removal or reversal of these aspects should be strongly encouraged.



### 05.3 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUES

The sections below set out the relative significance of the site and the elements that contribute or detract from its heritage value.

#### **Evidential Value**

This derives from those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, including its physical remains or historic fabric. These remains provide the primary evidence for how the asset has changed over time. It is the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

#### **Low - Medium Evidential Value**

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel has low to medium evidential value, as there is some potential to learn about its history through further investigations and for the contribution it makes to the significance of its place forming a key piece of Aberystwyth's history and cultural value which is of national interest, this is limited by 20th century changes to the fabric and the substantial post-fire strip out works which have revealed much about the various phases of work.

The evidential value of the property is linked to its historical value and the development history the various wings display through their construction types. The building has an interesting story which can be perceived evidentially, however, this has been eroded through late 20th century development and the fire.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel from Marine Terrace looks like a Regency era building with ground floor amendments, however, the present appearance is a result of change in the latter half of the 19th century and reversal of those changes. The rear elevations of the main block and south wing have more integrity in their presentation as unaltered on the upper levels, but the ground floor and coach house have been much amended. Internally, the building has also been subjected to change, to provided larger bar and function room spaces on the ground floor and to connect the various disparate components on the upper floors.

Whilst the building retains its original use, the nature of the hospitality industry is much changed since the building was first constructed nearly 200 years ago, and subsequent modernisations have eroded what the building is able to tell us how guests used and were entertained at the hotel in the 19th century. There are elements that have been revealed by the fire as to how various phases were constructed and later changes reversed, such as the removal of later 19th century bay windows and bricking up of reveals, or embedded sash windows made redundant by the erection of studwork to amend bedroom accommodation.

There is potential for further findings at ground floor level covered by modern linings and single storey extensions, however, the previous undeveloped nature of the site outside of the town walls means there is limited scope for archaeological finds below the courtyard.

Internally, most finishes have been removed with the exception of some areas on the ground floor and within the south wing and ballroom wing. There is unlikely to be evidence of works that are not extant.

#### **Historical Value**

The ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative.

#### **High Historical Value**

Aberystwyth initially gained attention for its Romantic sensibility, with a dramatic landscape and ruins that drew exponents of the Picturesque to construct Castle House, which itself became an attraction for its architectural principles. Initial development was planned around New Street and Laura Place as part of the Hafod estate, with assembly rooms and bathing machines being more exclusive and reflecting late Georgian taste.

The development of Marine Terrace was more speculative, with plots drawn and individual buildings erected directly on the

seafront, albeit with a common typology that reflects a brief snapshot in time. Despite major upheaval in the cities, seaside resorts such as Aberystwyth were the reserve of a landed class, and Marine Terrace was developed as fashionable accommodation. Early images show the terrace directly on the seafront, which was precisely its draw.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is one of the few buildings on Marine Terrace that has been in the public realm since close to its construction. The site was leased in 1815 and the building first appears in the rates for 1825 and is referred to by name in Pigot's Directory in 1830. As such, it has been in continuous operation as a hotel on the same site for close to 200 years. For this reason, the hotel has substantial historical value both for its contribution to the development of Aberystwyth as a tourist destination. Its historical value is much tied with its evidential value, the building being a physical record within a group of buildings that document the expansion of Aberystwyth from Medieval market town, to a major resort destination.

The railway brought mass tourism which brought a demand for cheaper accommodation and a change in the profile of visitors. As such, the residences on Marine Terrace were adapted as hotels and boarding houses, and architectural changes made to meet this demand, including installation of additional storeys and bay windows to maximise floorspace and take advantage of the views. The changes were again speculative, however, the rapid nature of change meant that interventions to Marine Terrace were consistent, meaning it retained an overall stylistic continuity.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel captures these changes, with major additions made after the opening of the railway station. The historical development of the facade is recorded in photos documenting its evolution as it changed to meet the needs of contemporary tourists.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is afforded historical significance as part of a historically valuable group of buildings. The



redevelopment of Llys Y Brenin and the adjacent public space and the new bandstand has gone a small way towards reducing the value of this setting.

The historic value of the building is afforded to being possibly the first hotel on Aberystwyth's seafront and its association with the development of a major British seaside resort.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel has his historical value for its regional cultural importance which makes an important contribution to the significance of Marine Terrace, however, the impact of 20th century alterations and the fire afford a higher flexibility and capacity for change than had the building remained unaltered since the turn of the 20th century.

### **Aesthetic Value**

The ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

### **Medium Aesthetic Value**

The primary reasons for the Belle Vue Royal Hotel's listing are its contribution to Marine Terrace and the Promenade of Aberystwyth. It has importance on a local scale and its aesthetic value makes a moderate contribution to its place.

Its design and early evolution was speculative, and it was not purpose built as a hotel, but was adapted to become one. For this reason there are idiosyncracies in its frontage and rear elevations. Despite this, the Belle Vue Royal Hotel is one of the most distinctive buildings on Marine Terrace and is easily identified in photographs of the seafront, both historic and contemporary.

Marine Terrace has a harmonious appearance, which while much altered due to additions of storeys and bay windows, has been controlled and change applied consistently to individual blocks. Unlike other buildings, the scale and form of both the Belle Vue Royal Hotel and Ty Belgrave are little changed from their early 19th century appearance, resisting pressure to add additional storeys

as has happened to the blocks closer to Pier Street and beyond Terrace Road. While bay windows were added to the northern property, these have subsequently removed returning overall consistency.

The modern loggia and porch cladding have a negative effect on the aesthetic value of the building at ground floor level, while the missing cross-wing has a negative impact on the continuity of Marine Terrace as a whole. Hoardings over missing windows also detract from the building's aesthetic value. The setting has also been altered by developments to Llys Y Brenin and changes on the seafront.

The stripped out interior diminishes the buildings aesthetic appeal, however, original features survive that may be replicated to enhance the value of the building when compared to its pre-fire presentation.

Bringing the building back into beneficial use has potential to enhance the Belle Vue Royal Hotel's overall aesthetic value and through reactivating its facade increase its contribution to Marine Terrace and The Promenade.

### **Communal Value**

The meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

### **Medium Communal Value**

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel is considered to have medium communal value making a moderate contribution to the significance of its place. Its location at the heart of Marine Terrace is a strong factor in its communal value, however, its present vacancy diminishes this value and any consideration given to reviving its communal value should be encouraged.

The Belle Vue Royal Hotel has operated continuously for nearly 200 years, and as such, many residents and visitors to Aberystwyth will have memories of the building from staying at the hotel,

attending functions and conferences, or eating and drinking at the establishment.

As well as informal visits and functions, the Belle Vue Royal Hotel has played host to civic dinners and functions including the opening of the railway in 1864.

While competition from neighbouring hotels and guest houses may have challenged the hotel's pre-eminence, it maintains an iconic presence on the sea-front due to its location on the terrace and its bold signage.

Continued news coverage relating to potential developments to reopen the hotel are a testament to local interest in the site.



# **06** Description of Proposals



## 06.0 Description of Proposals

### 06.1 INTRODUCTION

Little development has taken place at the hotel since the late 20th century, with works limited to routine decoration of the facade. The most recent change occurred in the early 2010s when the entrance porch was clad in slate.

Following a major fire in 2018, the cross-wing to Ty Belgrave was demolished and interiors were stripped following smoke and water damage. Since this time, the hotel has remained empty pending proposals to restore the property.

The proposals for the Belle Vue Royal Hotel are to redevelop the site as a hotel with 61 bedrooms, 1 suite and 3 apartments, with restaurant, bar, a spa, and associated back of house facilities and parking. The key changes identified on the plans are:

- Reconstruct the missing cross-wing within its original footprint with alterations at ground floor to form a new accessible lobby and reception for the hotel. Hotel bedrooms and suites to be provided within the upper levels.
- Remove the existing single storey extension to the rear of the original residential block and remove internal fittings to the residential block and south wing to form a new hotel bar and restaurant on the ground floor, with hotel bedrooms on the first and second floors.
- Remove 4 existing dormers and provide 3 new zinc standing seam clad box dormers with glazed balustrades to form 3 new holiday apartments within the attic.
- Demolish the ballroom wing and other single storey extensions and its replace with a new four-storey extension providing kitchen, WC and changing facilities on the ground floor with hotel rooms on the first, second and third floors.
- Demolish the coach house and replace with a three storey extension containing spa facilities at ground floor level, with hotel room accommodation on the first and second floors.



Artist's Impression



**Corporation Street Elevation**

The existing ballroom wing and coach house, as well as single storey extensions will be demolished.

A new four storey hotel block will be constructed as an extension to the main block extending to the property line i.e. to the depth of the existing ballroom wing. The block will be wider than the existing ballroom wing enveloping the courtyard, with a new internal lightwell formed over glazed lobby parallel with the south wing. The block will be rendered with zinc standing seam detail to end facades and at attic storey.

On the footprint of the existing coach house, covered yard, and driveway, a new three storey building will be constructed, linked to the new hotel buildings. At ground floor the elevation will be

treated with, a black brick facade with high level ribbon windows. A new shuttered car park entrance will be provided on the site of the existing driveway.

At first and second floors, the elevation will be constructed in black brick with zinc standing seam cladding detail panels around anthracite aluminium windows.



Proposed Corporation Street elevation as proposed showing demolitions (not to scale)



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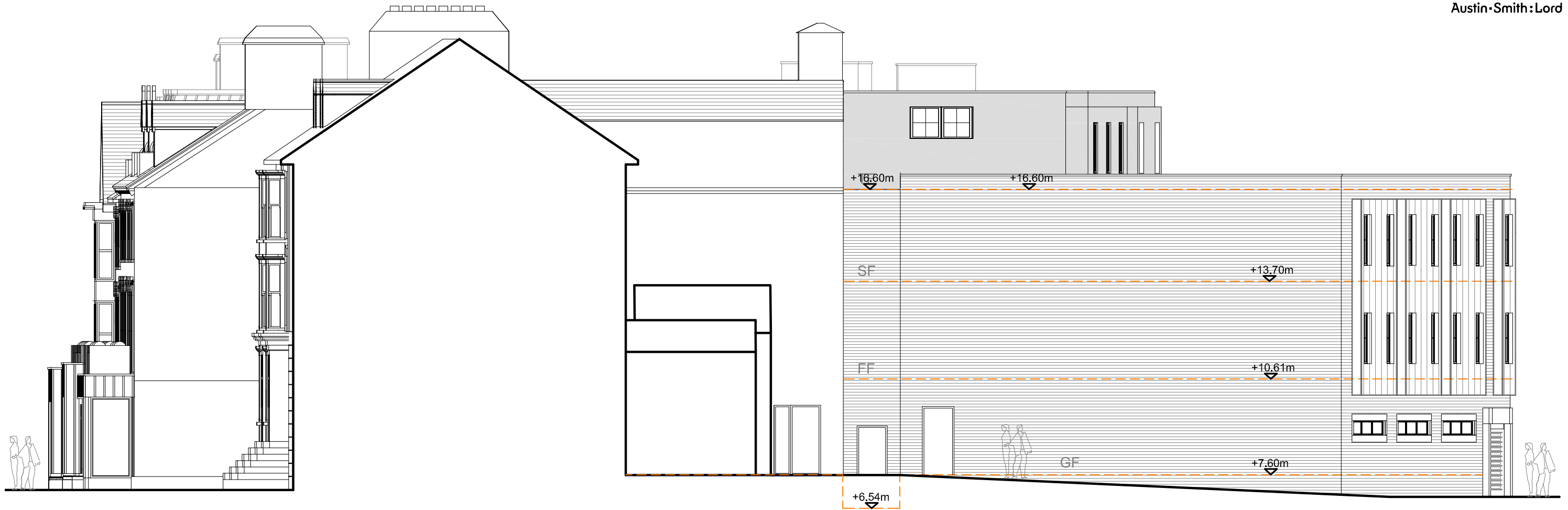
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Proposed Corporation Street elevation as proposed showing demolitions (not to scale)





Proposed boundary elevations south west (top) north east (bottom) (not to scale)



**06.2.2 Internal Alterations**

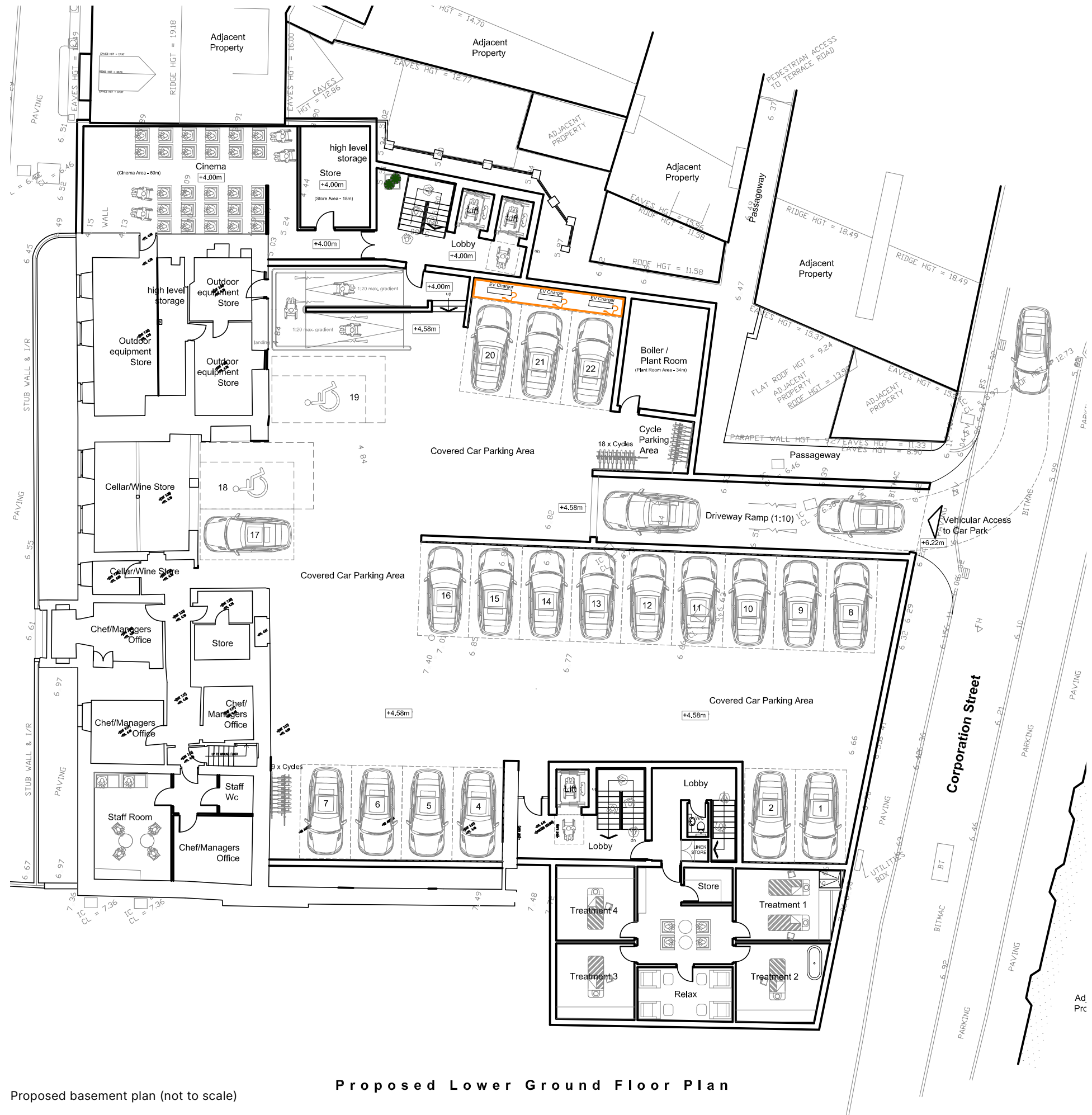
**Basement**

The basement to the ballroom wing will be demolished and a new basement formed through excavation of the courtyard, coach house, and covered yard to create new underground parking. This new basement will extend into the former areas of the main block and south wing. The basement will include ramp access on the site of the former driveway, parking for 19 cars, a new stair and lift core to all levels, spa treatment rooms, and a ramped access to the basement of the reconstructed cross wing.

The basement to the central block of the main wing will be partially removed to accommodate 3 additional car parking spaces. The remaining basement will be refurbished to provide storage and office accommodation.

The basement to the south wing will see removal of internal walls and the courtyard facing wall to provide parking for 5 cars.

A new basement on the site of the former cross wing will accommodate a cinema room, and stair and lift core.



Proposed basement plan (not to scale)

**Proposed Lower Ground Floor Plan**



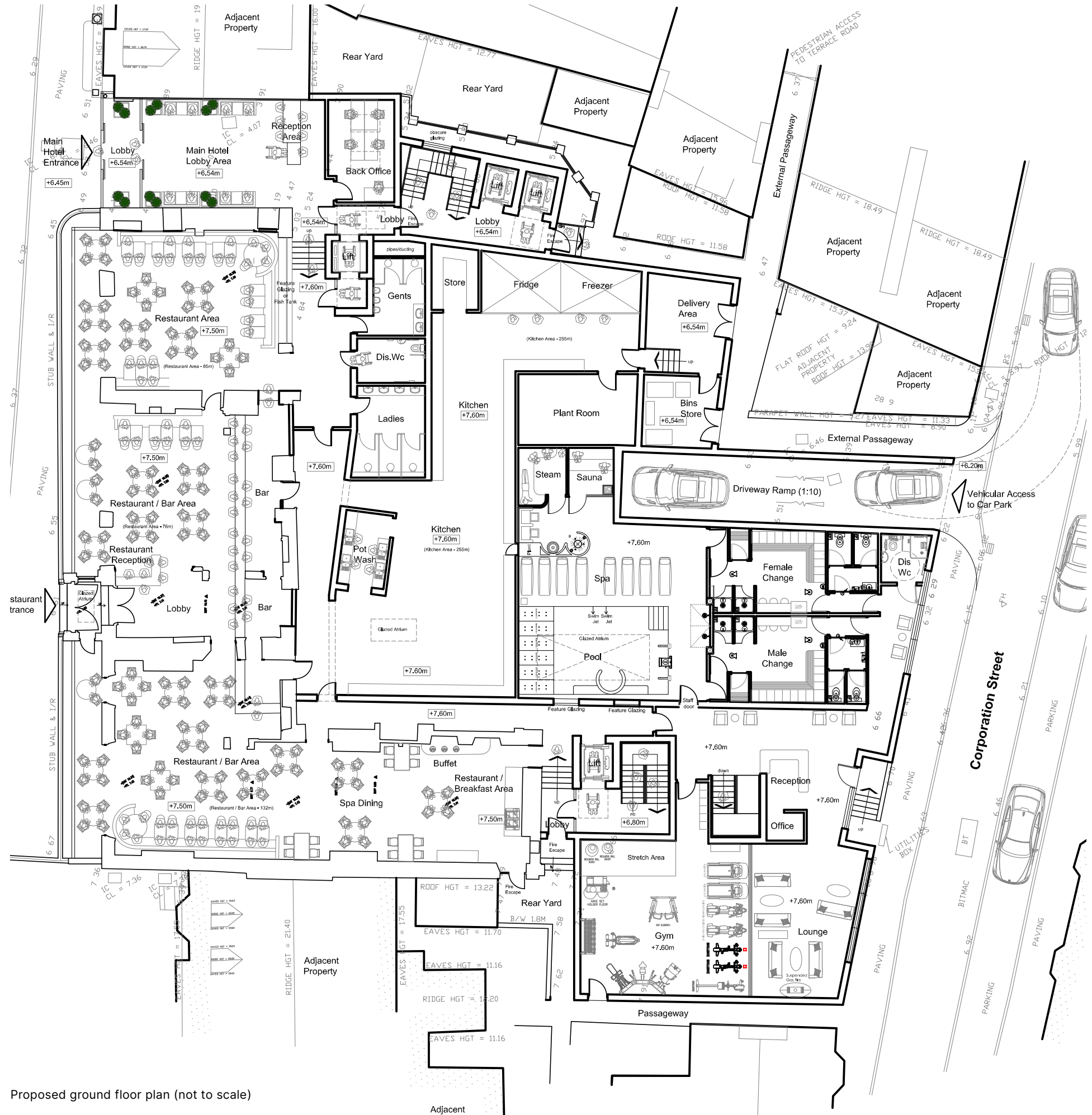
**Ground Floor**

The ballroom wing and single storey extensions will be demolished to facilitate construction of a new four storey extension extending from the north boundary to the south wing. At ground floor level, the new extension will accommodate the driveway ramp on the site of the historic drive as well as a new delivery entrance, kitchen and bin storage, WCs, circulation, staff and changing rooms and a spa reception. The former area will provide circulation around the rear of the main block and south wing.

The coach house and covered yard will be demolished to facilitate construction of a new three storey extension, filling the remaining footprint of the site. At ground floor, the extension will house spa facilities and a stair and lift core.

Within the main block and south wing, all non structural partitions will be removed, leaving the structure of the original three houses and south wing intact. The two surviving staircases at this level will also be removed, however the arches adjacent to the existing entrance lobby will be retained delineating the bar lobby. The existing loggia will be replaced with a new structure, while two windows of the south residence and the intermediate wall will be removed to extend into a new loggia area.

The new cross wing will house a lobby with barrier free street access, hotel reception, back office, and a stair and lift core.



Proposed ground floor plan (not to scale)



**First Floor**

The ballroom wing and single storey extensions will be demolished to facilitate construction of a new four storey extension extending from the north boundary to the boundary of the existing courtyard. At first floor level, the new extension will accommodate 8 new en-suite bedrooms and a staff room with associated circulation, with a new lightwell creating separation to the existing south wing and new spa block.

The coach house and covered yard will be demolished to facilitate construction of a new three storey extension, filling the remaining footprint of the site. At first floor, the extension will 9 new en-suite bedrooms with associated circulation and a stair and lift core.

Within the main block and south wing, all non structural partitions will be removed, leaving the structure of the original three houses and south wing intact. The three surviving staircases at this level will also be removed, and existing window openings used as the basis for new door openings to a new corridor constructed between the blocks and the new extensions. New partitions will create 8 new bedrooms, a housekeeping store and plant rooms. Hotel bedrooms will have access to balconies through new french doors.

The new cross wing accommodate a single en-suite bedroom, and a stair and lift core.



Proposed first floor plan (not to scale)



**Second Floor**

The ballroom wing and single storey extensions will be demolished to facilitate construction of a new four storey extension extending from the north boundary to the boundary of the existing courtyard. At second floor level the new extension will replicate the first floor plan to accommodate 8 new en-suite bedrooms and a staff room with associated circulation, with a new lightwell creating separation to the existing south wing and new spa block.

The coach house and covered yard will be demolished to facilitate construction of a new three storey extension, filling the remaining footprint of the site. At second floor, which does not presently exist in this area, the extension will replicate the first floor with 9 new en-suite bedrooms with associated circulation and a stair and lift core.

Within the main block and south wing, the proposals replicate the first floor plan. All non structural partitions will be removed, leaving the structure of the original three houses and south wing intact. The three surviving staircases at this level will also be removed, and existing window openings used as the basis for new door openings to a new corridor constructed between the blocks and the new extensions. New partitions will create 8 new bedrooms, a housekeeping store and plant rooms. Hotel bedrooms will retain sash windows at this level.

The new cross wing accommodate a single en-suite with mezzanine to the second floor, and a stair and lift core.



Proposed Second Floor Plan

Proposed second floor plan (not to scale)



**Third Floor**

The ballroom wing and single storey extensions will be demolished to facilitate construction of a new four storey extension extending from the north boundary to the boundary of the existing courtyard. At third floor level, which does not currently exist in this area, the new extension will replicate the first floor plan to accommodate 8 new en-suite bedrooms and a staff room with associated circulation, with a new lightwell creating separation to the existing south wing and new spa block.

Within the main block and south wing, non structural partitions will be removed, leaving the structure of the original three houses and south wing intact. The two surviving staircases at this level will be removed, and a new box dormer erected to the rear to create additional headroom and connections to a new corridor between the existing and new buildings. A new box former overlooking the sea front will be provided to the north residence. Within the south and central residences, four dormer windows will be removed to make way for two new box dormers overlooking the sea. New partitions will create 3 new serviced apartments.

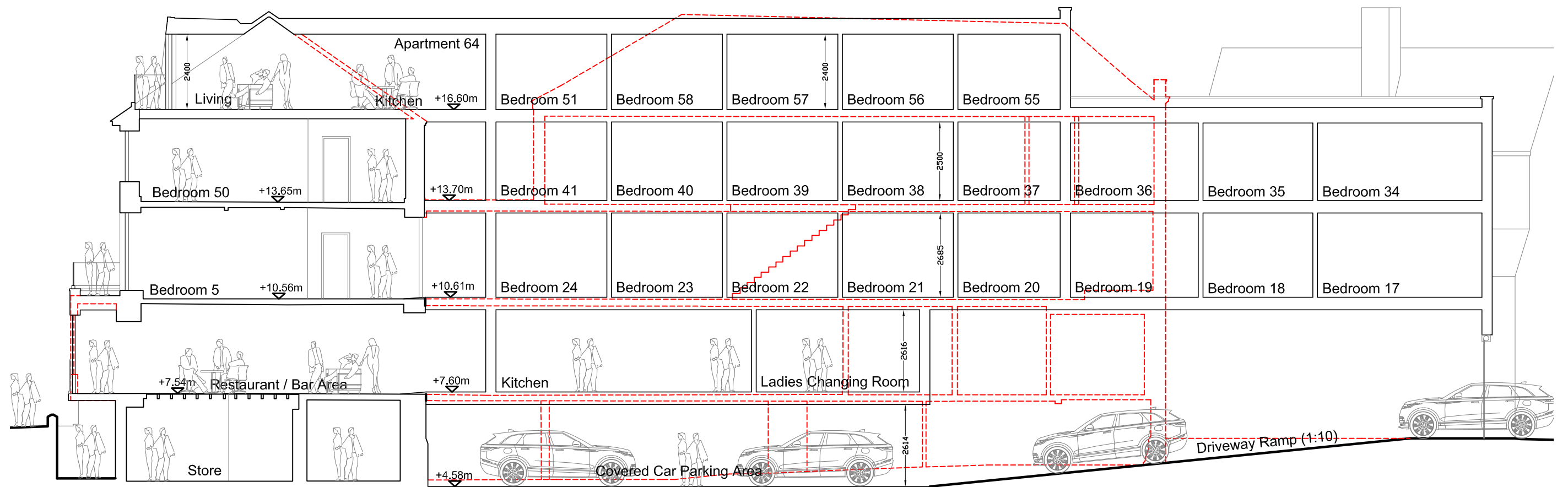
The new cross wing accommodate a mezzanine floor overlooking the suite below, plus new stair and lift core.



**Proposed Third Floor Plan**

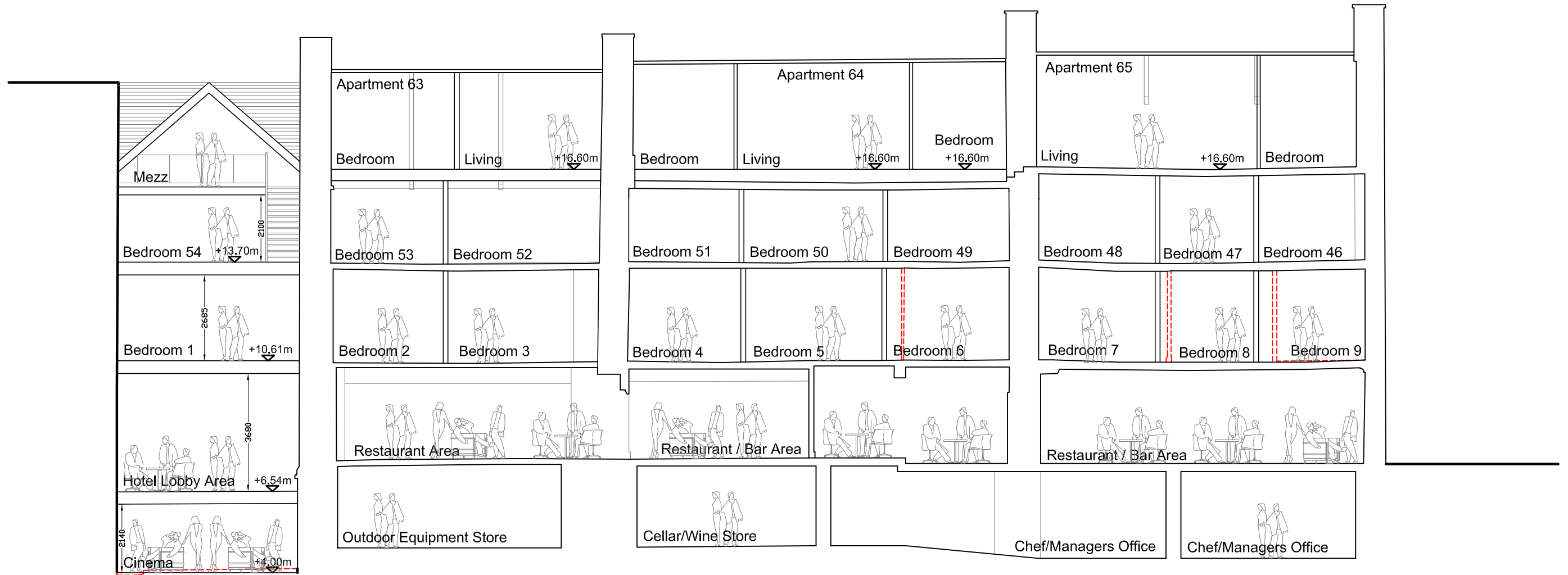
Proposed third floor plan (not to scale)





Proposed site section. This section most clearly shows changes to basement levels and at roof level (not to scale)





### Proposed Section 1

Proposed site section through main block and proposed cross wing







# **07** Impact Assessment and Statement



## 07.0 Impact Assessment

There are three key considerations in considering the impact of the proposals, namely the impact on the setting of Marine Terrace and the Promenade, Corporation Street and the conservation area, and the impact on the significance of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel itself.

### 07.1 IMPACT ON SETTING

As described in previous sections, the principal elevation of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel sits at the heart of Marine Terrace and is highly visible and forms a smaller group of distinct buildings on Marine Terrace with Nos 18-20 which are set back from the street, and with Ty Belgrave with its cross wings. Unlike other buildings, this means the Belle Vue Royal Hotel is distinctive when compared with other buildings on the terrace which were more heavily altered in the latter half of the 19th century. Change within the Belle Vue Royal Hotel's facade have been more subtle at upper level and even reversed in the case of bay windows and covered terraces.

Since the fire, the building has had a negative impact on the streetscape, with the cross wing lost and the Belle Vue Royal Hotel hoarded. Prior to the fire, the modern loggia also had a detrimental effect on the streetscape due to its poor quality and design.

In terms of the proposals, they represent a considerable change from the status quo.

The reconstruction of the missing cross wing will have a highly beneficial impact on the streetscape, however, there is opportunity to refine details on the upper levels, including reinstatement of the bracketed cornice to the pediment that existed prior to the fire, to maintain the symmetry of the Ty Belgrave group. There is also opportunity to more closely match the existing bay windows on the opposite cross wing without impacting the proposals. The new entrance lobby is necessary to provide improved barrier free access to the Belle Vue Royal Hotel and subject to detailing is arguably an improvement to the poorly detailed full width bay that existed pre fire. On balance, and subject to detail design, the reinstatement proposals for the cross wing will have a beneficial

impact on the setting and Marine Terrace.

With respect to the main block, the proposals to replace the poor quality loggia and extend it to the full width of the hotel represents an improvement on the pre-fire elevation. While the existing three bays of the south residence will be lost, based on historic photographs, these have been reconstructed, a terrace with canopy having previously occupied this space. While the reconstruction is convincing, the new loggia will bring a homogeneity to the building. While this will be in contrast to the series of porches and bay windows that are typical of Marine Terrace, the Belle Vue Royal Hotel differs as a landmark building which has a long history of a hotel, and as such, the change is likely to have a neutral to low beneficial impact overall.

The first floor windows are presently uPVC and their replacement with a timber french door will have a neutral to low beneficial impact on the building and setting, subject to detail. The provision of a frameless glass balustrade incorporated as part of the new loggia will have a neutral impact.

The installation of a new zinc standing seam box dormer to the north residence where presently there is a simple pitched roof, and the replacement of four dormers on the central and south residences with new zinc standing seam box dormers will have a greater visual impact on the esplanade overall. The existing dormers date to the mid-19th century and as such have a long association with the hotel building. When considering the impact on setting, there are a number of different roof profiles along Marine Terrace. While the dominant form comprises three storeys and an attic storey with dormers, there are individual blocks which break this rhythm and incorporate a fourth storey. These changes have typically been applied on a group basis, i.e. the group to No. 15, and several blocks to the north of Terrace Road. The proposed dormers have been designed in a manner that maintains a rhythm, with respect to the box dormers flanked by the existing dormers and is applied across the facade in a consistent manner. The proposed cheeks of the box dormers are battered in a manner that

reduces their impact on the building facade and dormer line as well as the gable end on the cross wing. Overall, they will have a low adverse impact, however, the architect has attempted to mitigate this impact through the design.

The overall design creates a unity amongst a group of disparate buildings and signposts the Belle Vue Royal Hotel as a landmark and unique establishment within Aberystwyth.

To Corporation Street, the impact on setting is even more pronounced. The demolition of the two storey coach house and its replacement with a three storey spa and hotel block represents a substantial change. At present, coach house provides a transition from the larger two and three storey commercial buildings on Terrace Road, to the small brightly coloured two and three storey domestic buildings on Corporation Street. The proposals introduces a larger building that departs from this typology. To mitigate this impact, the architect has sought to continue scale set by the Y Libertine building as it transitions from Terrace Road, continuing the ground floor storey height and keeping the second storey below the Libertine ridge line. Wider views from Terrace Road and Tai Crynfryn are unlikely to be unduly impacted. Precedent for taller buildings which departed from the typical domestic model include No 4 Corporation Street which takes the form of a three storey plus attic fronted with brick and terracotta dressings and render infill panels. The introduction of an inhabited building on Corporation Street will likely have a beneficial impact in comparison to the current vacancy.



## 07.2 IMPACT ON SIGNIFICANCE

The proposals represent the single largest investment and redevelopment of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel since the alterations of the 1860s. While fabric has been lost due to the fire and subsequent smoke and water damage, there had been losses prior to this evidenced by pre-fire room and bar photographs.

Notwithstanding the above, there is a considerable quantity of further loss proposed, which limits the retention of historic fabric to the external shell of the main block and south wing. The building's significance is recognised through its Grade II listing and has been found to be of medium heritage value with high historic value. The assessment seeks to establish whether and to what extent the proposals impact on this significance, and whether removal or change to individual components affects the overall value.

With respect to the ballroom wing, this is likely to date to the 1860s with accretive changes. The ballroom itself is in poor condition and structural assessments recommend due consideration be given to the wing's removal. The main areas of concern are noted to be the steelwork within the structure with deflection and lateral movement resulting in extensive cracking, compounded by steel cantilever sections built off timber floor joists and corrosion due to failed external wall and roof finishes.

The ballroom wing has some evidential value as the first wing that can be clearly understood in its floor plan to have been purposely constructed for hotel use i.e. long corridors with rooms off and a ballroom. It has some historic value in surviving decorative treatments and understanding of the development of the hotel after the arrival of the railway. There is historic graffiti in a hotel bedroom which has been photographed and is recorded in the NMR Site Files accessible to the public on coflein. In its current state its aesthetic value is low, although individual components have an aesthetic value. The communal value of the wing is limited due to its enclosed location, although there may be collective memory associated with the ballroom.

The demolition of the ballroom wing will have a low adverse impact on the significance of the site through the removal of a major phase of development on the site. The removal of the ballroom wing could be mitigated by production of a historic building record to an Historic England Level 2 or 3 standard.

The coach house and covered yard may incorporate components that predate the 1860s redevelopment, but appear on maps from around this period. There have been substantial alterations to the coach house and covered yard and as such they have limited heritage value and their removal will have neutral impact on the significance of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel.

The main block dates from between the issuing of the site lease in 1815 and the appearance of the hotel in the public record between 1825 and 1830. As such it represents the most significant building on the site. While the south wing does not appear on the 1834 plan, its construction type and the similarity of details such as window lintols, truss types and the area to the rear indicate it either formed part of a major redevelopment later in the 1830s, or is contemporary with the south residence and was not correctly recorded.

Much historic fabric has been lost, however, there are significant survivors including stained glass windows, original staircases, studwork, some door and window casings and plasterwork (particularly arches in the foyer). Under the present proposals these are to be removed and the existing rear window elevations modified to create bedroom access. The basement of both buildings will be altered to accommodate parking and the roof will require substantial alteration to accommodate new hotel rooms.

Given the limited survival of historic fixtures and fittings in this area, the removal of the remaining decorative features and some structural elements is likely to have a high adverse affect on the overall significance of the site, particularly the limited evidential value through alteration of roof structure and decorative elements.

The historic value will also be impacted through physical loss of fabric, although its historic association with Aberystwyth and its continued status as the pre-eminent hotel venue will continue.

The aesthetic value of the hotel and its contribution to the town will remain, albeit the aesthetic contribution individual components make to the interior of the building that mark it as a heritage building will be lost.

In terms of the communal value of the building, the refurbishment is likely to be highly beneficial given the current lack of public access to the site and the impact it has on the presentation of Marine Terrace. The collective memory of the building is that it was dated rather than historic internally due to late 20th century refurbishments. Photographs on travel websites taken before the fire show a series of plain interiors with limited historic features other than those that have presently been retained by the present proprietor.

The level of change proposed to the remaining fabric usually requires a particularly compelling need in order to proceed. In this instance, the condition of the building following the fire and the level of investment required, even with insurance, is likely to be high and require a substantial return in order to make investment in the site viable. In the hotel sector, the return is usually based on the number of bedrooms, their standard and the facilities associated with the hotel. It is also appreciated that there has been pressure on the sector since the COVID-19 pandemic.

In light of the exceptional circumstances in which the development proposals have come forward and the regeneration benefits they will provide Marine Terrace and Aberystwyth in tandem with other heritage-led developments, the proposals are acceptable. The adverse impacts may be mitigated by salvaging historic fabric such as joinery and stained glass elsewhere in the scheme, and potentially replicating this within the proposed development.



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