

Former Cinema Building

Level 4 Historic Building Record



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Former Cinema, Uxbridge

Level 4 Historic Building Record

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24 June 2024



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1.0

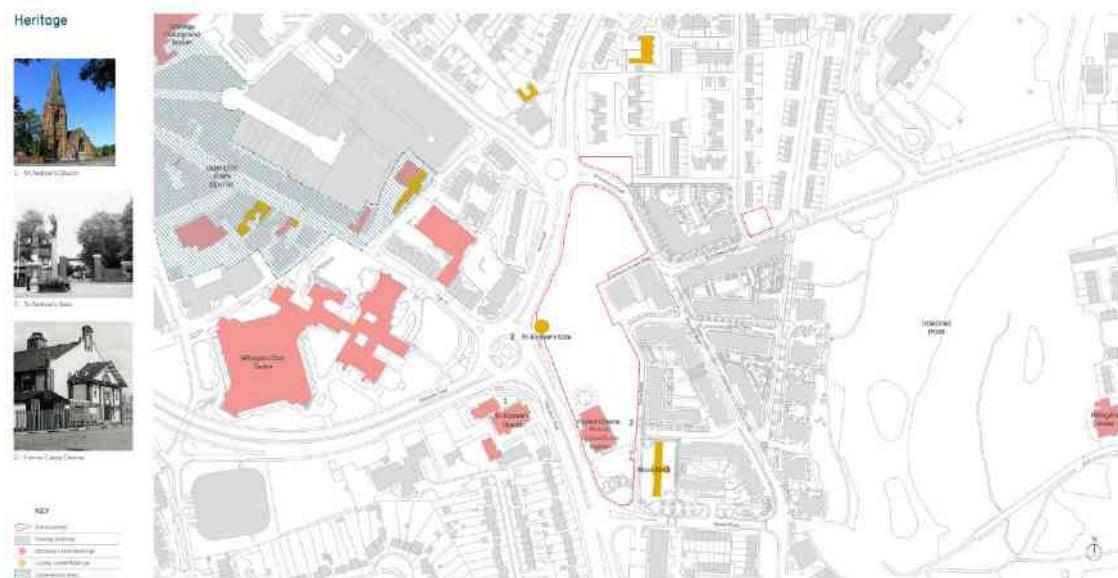
Introduction

1.1 This Historic Building Record has been produced for the Grade II listed former RAF Cinema and Squash Courts (together referred to as the former Cinema) at Uxbridge. It has been prepared for submission with the Listed Building Consent Application for the refurbishment of the vacant building to reinstate the gym use (Main Hall) and provide a café (squash courts). The refurbishment of the building forms part of a wider Hybrid Planning Application for the development of the Town Centre Extension, St. Andrew's Gate (TCE) Site.

1.2 The former Cinema (List Entry Number: 1392376) is located on the east side of Hillingdon Road, to the south of the High Street within the boundary of the former RAF base (Figure 1.1). Its National Grid reference is TQ 06039 83769.

1.3 The listing description is contained in Appendix 1.

Figure 1.1 Context of the former cinema in 2023



Source: Pollard Thomas Edwards

1.4

The former Cinema was constructed in 1919, soon after the formation of the RAF and the Uxbridge base. Designs for the former cinema were drawn up by Lieutenant J.G.N. Clift of the Royal Engineers, however, the building construction varies from Clift's original design and is more ornate in style than originally planned. It comprises the Main Hall (originally intended as a lecture hall that could be adapted as a cinema or concert hall) and the attached squash courts to the rear. The Main Hall is a brick structure with cement render to the exterior and a pitched roof originally Welsh slate and now felt; the squash courts to the rear are of poorer quality brick and render construction. The roof was originally formed of three pitches, this was changed to a flat roof in around 1960. The flat roof had deteriorated and has since been removed.

1.5

The Main Hall was converted to a gym from 1960 when internal alterations were carried out and a few years later front extensions added. The building may have been vacant from as far

back as the 1970s, when a purpose-built gym was constructed at the base. The RAF vacated the wider site in 2010.

1.6 The former Cinema was listed at Grade II on 24th January 2008. It is identified as a category A building (immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed) on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.

1.7 Planning permission was granted in 2012 (Local Planning Authority reference number: 585/APP/2009/2752) to redevelop the former RAF base, including the former Cinema, with a residential-led mixed use development. The majority of the former RAF buildings have been demolished. The former Cinema, Mons barrack block and St. Andrew's Gate remain with a large portion of the former RAF base already built out with new residential development (Figure 1.1).

1.8 The Planning Permission included consent to reinstate the gym use in the former Cinema and to convert the Squash Courts to a café.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 The methodology used to record the historic development and fabric of the former Cinema has been informed by Historic England guidance *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (May 2016). This sets out four levels of building recording:

- 1 Level 1 - a basic visual record
- 2 Level 2 - a descriptive record
- 3 Level 3 - an analytical record
- 4 Level 4 - a comprehensive analytical record

2.2 *Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volumes 1&2* (2013) by Paul Francis, are Level 4 building records completed to discharge a condition to a previous planning permission (585/APP/2009/2752) . These have been lodged with Hillingdon Library. Volume 1 covers East Camp and Volume 2 covers West Camp. Volume 2, covering the west side of the River Pinn, is primarily relevant to this historic building record.

2.3 Whilst Vol. 2 of the Paul Francis report provides a Level 4 historic building record for the former Cinema as agreed by the LPA, it is a comprehensive report that covers all the former RAF buildings to the west of the River Pinn and provides less detail on the former Cinema itself. Therefore, to avoid the need for any further pre-commencement conditions on the forthcoming Full Planning and Listed Building Consent Applications for the refurbishment of the former Cinema, in relation to historic building recording, a more detailed Level 4 record has been prepared for the former Cinema in isolation.

2.4 This Historic Building Record has been compiled from a range of site visits, sources and surveys as summarised below:

- 1 Several site visits to the former Cinema during 2022 and 2023 to examine the building and its surroundings, following the ongoing redevelopment of the former RAF base;
- 2 Review of existing archival and record information available within the Paul Francis report, including relevant information from Hillingdon Archives and RAF Museum, Hendon Archives.
- 3 A Photographic Survey of the building's interior and exterior (accompanied by photo viewpoints plans on scaled floorplans);
- 4 An online link to 360 degree photos of each room taken by Land Utility Group on 5th May 2023;
- 5 Scaled elevation drawings prepared by Purcell Architects;
- 6 Identification of the building and its surroundings in relevant Historic Mapping;
- 7 Historic England's List Description;
- 8 Other historic photography, plans and illustrations identified in the course of archival research.

2.5 A statement of the building's significance has also been included based on Historic England's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (April 2008).

2.6 The Historic England guidance *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (May 2016) states of significance at para. 3.1.6:

“Assessments of significance are value-based judgements, measured against criteria set out in the NPPF or in Historic England’s Conservation Principles. Recording at the levels described...will often underpin an assessment of significance, and reports may include a statement of significance as part of the conclusion of the record. However, the value-based judgements of a statement of significance should be clearly distinguished from the record of the building which should seek to be as objective as possible.”

2.7 The summary of significance has been clearly separated out in accordance with the above at Section 4.0.

3.0 **Historical Analysis**

Introduction

3.1 The Paul Francis Report, Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2 – West Camp, held in Hillingdon Library should be referred to for a comprehensive understanding of the history of the development of West Camp between 1919 and 1980 and the buildings and spaces within it, including a gazetteer. It comprises numerous historic photos and maps and recent photos of West Camp as a whole. The Methodology Section of the Francis Report (p3) notes that a large collection of site and building drawings in relation to West Camp have been consolidated onto a DVD, which is (presumably) lodged alongside the written report at Hillingdon Library.

3.2 The detailed information included within the gazetteer for the former Cinema has been reproduced in full here. The reference to drawing '608/18' relates to the RAF Museum Drawing 'Lecture Hall GA' dating to 1918 which has the code 12328. It is assumed that this would be included on the DVD (it is also reproduced within this building record at Figure 3.2).

3.3 This is followed by further information and research uncovered since 2013 on the history and development of the former Cinema and squash courts. This background information helps to establish an understanding of the significance of the former Cinema and squash courts provided at Section 4.0.

3.4 The information should be read in conjunction with the list description at Appendix 1; scaled drawings of the building at Appendix 2; a photographic survey (including photo viewpoints plan) at Appendix 3; and, additional historic images Appendix 4.

3.5 In addition, the 360 degree photos of each room can be [found online here](#).

Gazetteer extract from Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Vol. 2

RAF UXBRIDGE, EAST CAMP – HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

4.27 Cinema and Squash Racquets Courts (145)

Level 4 survey Drawing 608/18.

4.27a Introduction

The original design for a lecture hall at the RAF Armament School was drawn in April 1918 by Lieutenant Clift, Royal Engineers who was seconded to the Air Ministry and who became the principal military building architect between 1917 and 1919. It is presumed that it was built by Higgs and Hill Ltd in 1919 as the building is not present on a site plan dated 1918.

The actual building that was eventually built is architecturally quite different and perhaps more ornate than Clift's original design. That design had a projecting entrance annexe with a Mansard roof which is similar to his drawings for single officers' quarters. The change in design may have come about because of the end of WWI and the subsequent change of use from armament school to the RAF Depot. The original intention appears to be more of an austerity design compared with the as-built construction. It is known that Clift also designed a swimming pool for the armament school but this was never built. Although Clift's original architectural design for the frontage of the building for a lecture room / cinema was not used, the basic building layout is his, which includes the unique arrangement of having squash courts at the rear – though these may have been added later.

Clift's concepts that the lecture hall could be adapted as a cinema or concert hall and to include three squash racquet courts attached to the north end elevation were retained. It remained as a lecture hall for most of its military life but in 1960 it was converted into a gymnasium and concert hall.

4.27b Cinema and Concert Hall

The building was used as a cinema from 1919 until 1960. A pay office was located in the centre of the entrance annexe (patrons queued outside on the forecourt and were served from a window). There were two foyer entrances with three sets of seating, one each side, and a central one with a total of 19 rows with two main access aisles plus a cross aisle which connects with emergency exits on the east and west walls. The seats were staggered because the auditorium was designed without any rake or balcony. So in order to have a better view of the screen or stage, it was necessary to offset alternate rows by half a seat width.

According to the Kinematograph year book of 1922, in that year the only other cinema in Uxbridge was the Empire Hall in Vine Street. The book describes the RAF building as a lecture hall and cinema. It had one show nightly, two changes weekly. It seated 800 and a film show would cost [sic] 4d and 2/-. By 1927 the local cinemas were complaining to the Air Ministry that it was taking their patrons from the town's cinemas.

It is probably unlikely that it could seat 800 but if this was the case then at some point the number of seats was reduced as the figure in 1959 was just 594.

The projection room was on the second floor, within the roof space; there were three projector ports and three viewing ports in the wall. The stage is constructed of timber and is supported on steel columns from a basement and either side is a dressing room with access from the stage. Below the dressing rooms were the original toilets.

On 15 September 1946 the running of the cinema was taken again over by the RAF Cinema Corporation, as the building since 1945 had been in use by the NAAFI and the accounts section of No.100 PDC.

The cinema was also the venue for inter-service boxing competitions as well as for the preliminary rounds and the semi-final of the boxing contest as part of the Britannia Shield competition. This was an annual event carried out during Battle of Britain Week (13–19 September) and was open to sportsmen

RAF UXBRIDGE, EAST CAMP – HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

from all armed services of the countries that were assembled in Britain between 1940 and 1945. The first competition took place in 1945, apart from boxing, contests were held in cross-county running, fencing, shooting and swimming. The shield was presented to the nation scoring the highest aggregate number of points.



Plate 113: Cinema building on completion in 1919

The contractors are Higgs and Hill. Photo: RAFM



Plate 114: Cinema, 1965

4.27c Squash Courts

There are three squash courts which are separated from the rear stage wall by a narrow passageway. At one end are steps giving access to a gallery. It is presumed that the squash courts were built as part of the original build (they are shown dotted on Clift's original plan). It is known that they were refurbished in 1937, the plaster was hacked off and replastered with non-sweating Carters campo, and the deal flooring was removed and replaced with maple flooring on asbestos felt over the existing joists. The stairs were also removed and replaced.

4.27d Conversion to Gymnasium and Concert Hall

From 1960 plans were prepared for its conversion from cinema and concert hall to gymnasium and concert hall. In the auditorium the cinema seating and raked staging was removed (19 rows of seats), the wooden floor sanded and polished. It had also been proposed to remove part of the stage and cut it back to 14 ft, but this scheme was reversed. A new single-storey changing room and shower room extension was built against the west elevation. This was carried out in 11 in cavity brick.

Around 1965 plans were prepared for two further annexes to be built, one each on either side of the entrance annexe, the east one functioned as a store and the west one was a female changing room. All of these changes are present today.

4.27e Construction

It is constructed of a series of external stepped brick buttresses at 12 ft centres (eight bays long) with 4.5 in reinforced brick infill. The wall infilling is cement-rendered while the buttresses are fair face. These support the steel roof trusses. High-level standard 24-pane steel casements are fitted to all except the outer bays.

The gable ends of the auditorium form a brick parapet above eaves level and are finished by a false bell tower at the apex, but this was partly removed before 1968.

The front elevation faces south and here a protecting two-and-a-half storey front of house annexe contains the two main entrance points, one either side of an office. One-and-a-half storeys above this is the projection room which is within the roof space. The corners and a central panel are fair-face brick while the remainder is cement rendered. It is interesting to note that the original design of this annexe was very similar in appearance to the officers' quarters with a Mansard roof.

- NGR: TQ 06040 83740 (145 Grid H1)
- Digital Archive: 5 drawings and 40 images



Plate 115: Gymnasium and Concert Hall (145), view looking north-west



Plate 116: Gymnasium and Concert Hall (145), view looking west



Plate 117: Cinema (Gymnasium and Concert Hall) (145), view looking south

RAF UXBRIDGE, EAST CAMP – HISTORICAL APPRAISAL



Plate 118: Cinema (Gymnasium and Concert Hall) (145), interior view looking towards stage



Plate 119: Cinema (Gymnasium and Concert Hall) (145), wide-angle interior view

RAF UXBRIDGE, EAST CAMP – HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

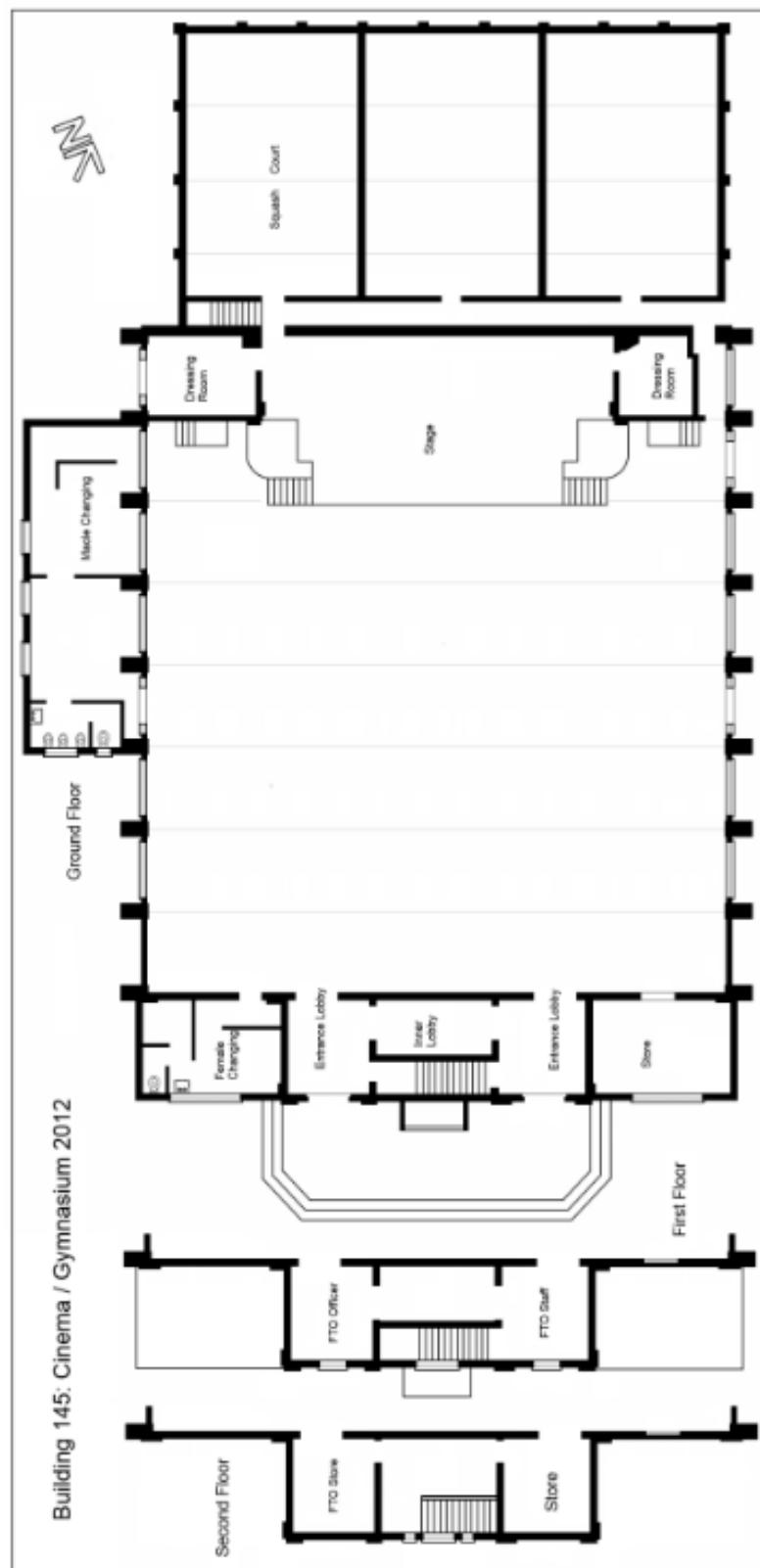


Fig 18: Cinema (Gymnasium and Concert Hall), 2012

Former Cinema Historic Context

3.6 From at least the early-18th century, the former Cinema site and wider area formed part of the Hillingdon estate, at the heart of which stood Hillingdon House. Hillingdon House was constructed to the east of the River Pinn, but the larger estate spanned both sides of the river (Figure 3.1). Hillingdon House was constructed in 1717 for the Duke of Schomberg as a hunting lodge¹. It then passed through a succession of different ownerships until it was purchased in 1810 by a Richard Henry Cox.

Figure 3.1 Survey of Middlesex, Rocque, 1754 (approximate area of the RAF base in red)



3.7 In 1844, Hillingdon House was rebuilt to the designs of George Mair, after a fire destroyed the original building. The estate remained with the Cox family until 1913, when it was sold, and was subsequently acquired by the government in 1915. Initially, it was intended to use the estate as a prisoner of war camp; however, following local objections it became, instead, a convalescent home for Canadian soldiers under the Canadian Red Cross².

3.8 In late 1917, it was decided to establish a School of Armament on the estate to instruct Royal Flying Corps (RFC) recruits in gunnery. This was soon followed by the School of Bombing in January 1918. The establishment of this new military school led to the erection of several blocks of accommodation for officers and recruits, mainly to the west of Hillingdon House and the River Pinn. This included a Staff Officers' mess, two detached quarter blocks to accommodate 124 Officers, and barrack huts providing quarters for 1,400 Warrant Officers (roughly in the location of the locally listed barrack block extant today) (Figure 3.3)³.

¹ Historic England, Pastscape: Hillingdon House

² Hazel Crozier, RAF Uxbridge, 90th Anniversary 1917-2007, 2007

³ Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study, 2013

3.9 With the formation of the Royal Air Force in April 1918, the Hillingdon Estate passed into RAF ownership, becoming an RAF base (called variously RAF Uxbridge, RAF Depot or West Camp) with an initial focus on demobilisation of air personnel following the end of the first World War followed by training and character-building of the young men of the service in the inter-war period. It was also in April 1918, at this very early stage in the development of the RAF, that designs for the former Cinema were drawn up by Lieutenant J.G.N Clift of the Royal Engineers, who was seconded to the Air Ministry (Figure 3.2). The building was originally intended as a lecture hall that could be adapted as a cinema or concert hall. A comparison of Clift's drawing and the building erected shows that the former Cinema building was constructed in a more ornate style than Clift's original design concept. Construction of the former Cinema is thought to have been undertaken in 1919 by Higgs and Hill Ltd, who were also responsible for much of the development of the buildings constructed under the RFC⁴. It is understood from the Paul Francis report, Vol.2, that the initial post First World War buildings at the base, including the former Cinema, were bespoke to RAF Uxbridge and were not of generic Air Ministry design⁵. It is not clear from the archival records but it is assumed that the squash courts also date to 1919 and were constructed at the same time as the former Cinema (see significance section below for further information).

Figure 3.2 Uxbridge RAF Armament School Lecture Hall. Air Ministry Works and Buildings 608/18

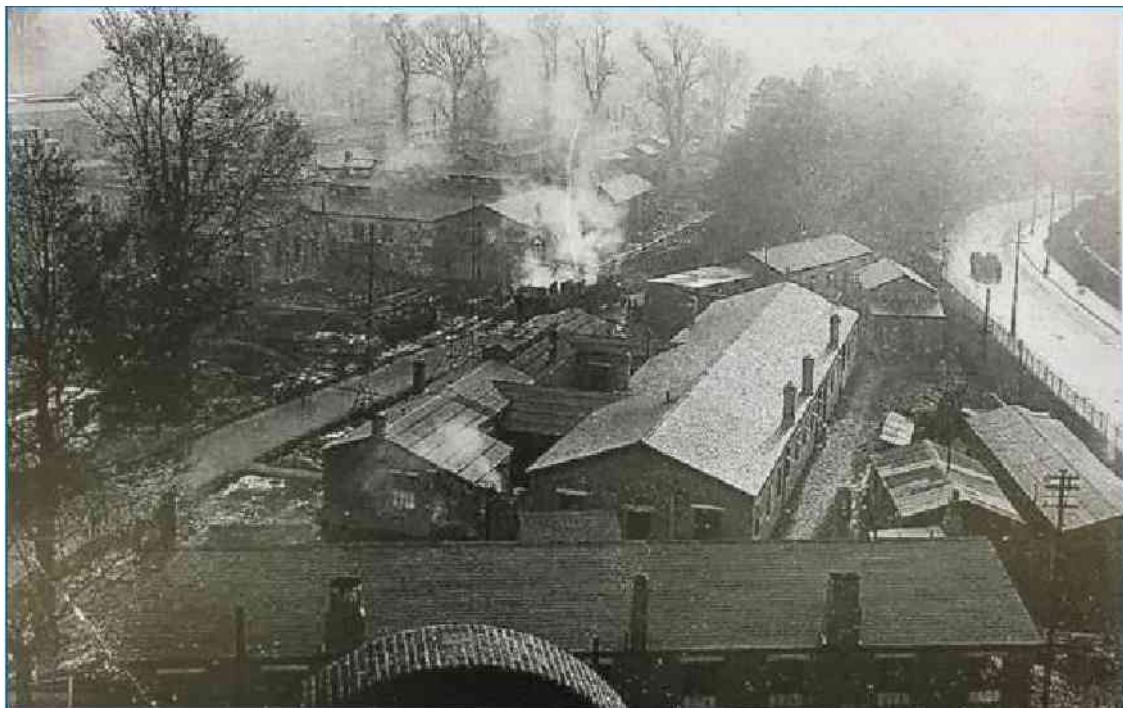


Source: RAF Museum, Hendon

⁴ Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study, 2013

⁵ Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study, 2013, p26.

Figure 3.3 View looking south from the former Cinema roof, 1919, showing the single-storey barrack blocks which populated the military base at an early date



Source: Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study, 2013 from the RAF Museum

3.10 As part of the wider post-First World War redevelopment of the base, the existing single-storey accommodation quarters were demolished, and new barrack blocks built in their place. The designs for the barrack blocks were first drawn up in 1923, by A Gilpin and C.H Andrews from the Directorate of Works and Bricks. The composition consisted of a central parade ground flanked on its north and south sides by single rows of five three-storey barracks and avenues of mature horse chestnut trees (Figure 3.4). Mons, the only extant barrack block today, was the first to be completed and was occupied in April 1925⁶.

3.11 From the 1920s, the base continued to expand, and many more buildings were constructed. By the 1940s, a further two buildings (the NAAFI/educational block and the dining room/cookhouse) were constructed creating a grouping of twelve buildings, with the barrack blocks (Figure 3.5).

3.12 Development in the mid to late-20th century largely consisted of the refurbishment and modernisation of early facilities (Figure 3.6)⁷. According to Francis, the former Cinema and lecture hall was converted to a gym and concert hall in 1960⁸. The pitched roof of the squash courts appears to have been replaced with a flat roof around the same time.

3.13 During the 1960s either side of the porch on the front, southeastern, elevation later flat-roofed single storey extensions were constructed as well as a flat-roof extension covering

⁶ Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study, 2013

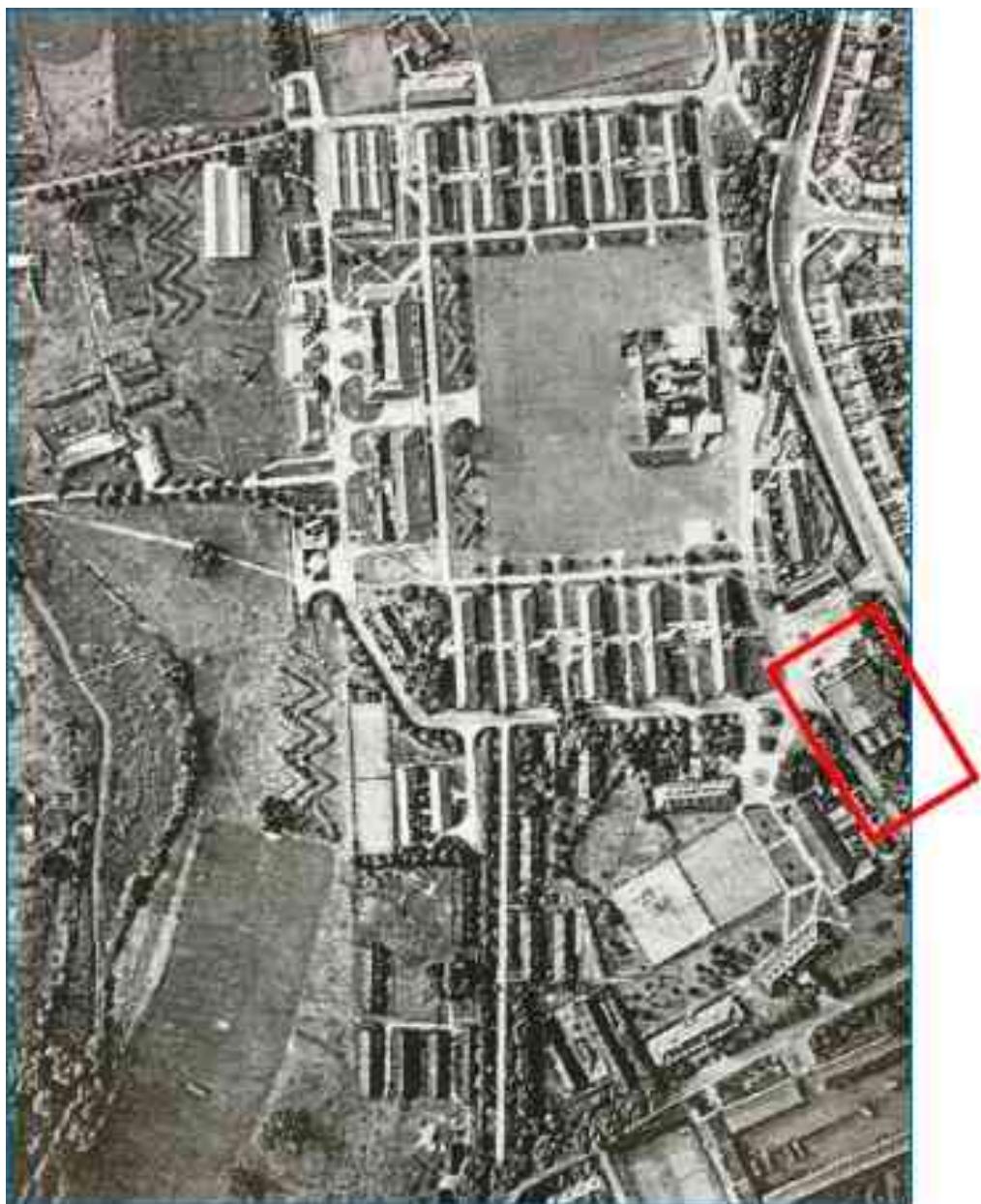
⁷ Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study, 2013

⁸ Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study, 2013, p123

the original pay office window. A further single-storey extension with an external plant room at first floor level to the Hillingdon Road elevation is also a later addition (see significance section below for phasing).

3.14 It is understood that the gym use could have ceased completely in the 1970s when a purpose-built gym was erected at RAF Uxbridge.

Figure 3.4 Aerial Photograph of West Camp (former Cinema in red) (10 September 1948)



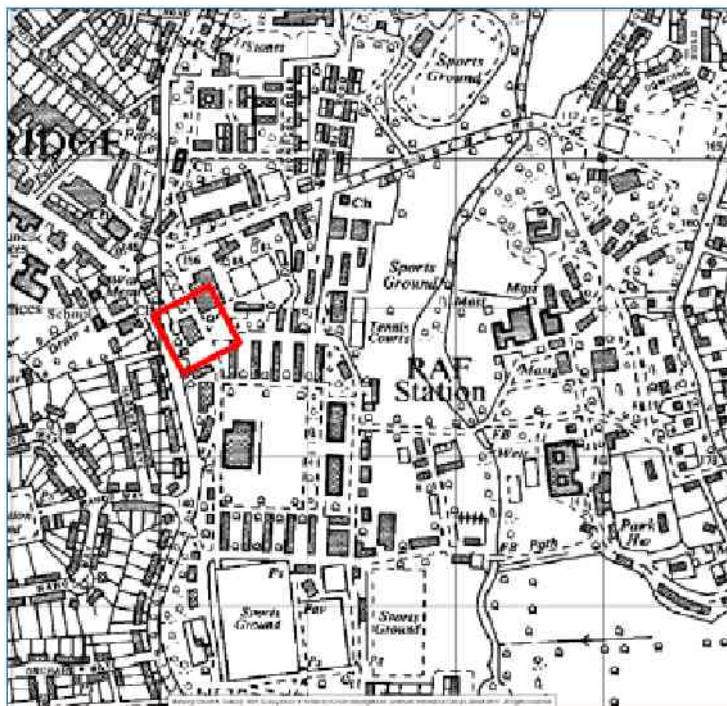
Source: Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study (2013).

Figure 3.5 RAF Uxbridge Site Plan, 1940 (former Cinema in red)



Source: Taken from: Hazel Crozier, *RAF Uxbridge, 90th Anniversary 1917-2007*, 2007

Figure 3.6 OS Map, 1970 (former Cinema shown in red)



Source: OS Maps

3.15 RAF Uxbridge remained operational until March 2010, when the base was closed as part of the scaling back of the RAF. The area has been approved for residential-led mixed use redevelopment (ref: 585/APP/2009/2752) and the majority of the former RAF buildings have been demolished⁹. The former Cinema and Mons barrack block are remaining buildings, along with the 1950s St Andrew's Gate, that serve as visual reminders of the former RAF complex to the west of the River Pinn.

3.16 The wider St. Andrew's Park development is now well-advanced and has transformed the context of the listed building from a military camp to a high-quality residential area.

Site Today

3.17 Today, the site comprises the disused former Cinema building and squash courts. There is some vegetation surrounding the building and hoardings enclosing the site. The carpark to the front of the building comprises rough tarmac with four existing trees located to the south. There is an area of hardstanding to the south of the trees.

⁹ A full building recording survey was undertaken prior to the demolition of much of RAF Uxbridge. This can be found at the Hillingdon Library (Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volumes 1&2, 2013)

4.0 **Significance**

Former Cinema (Grade II listed)

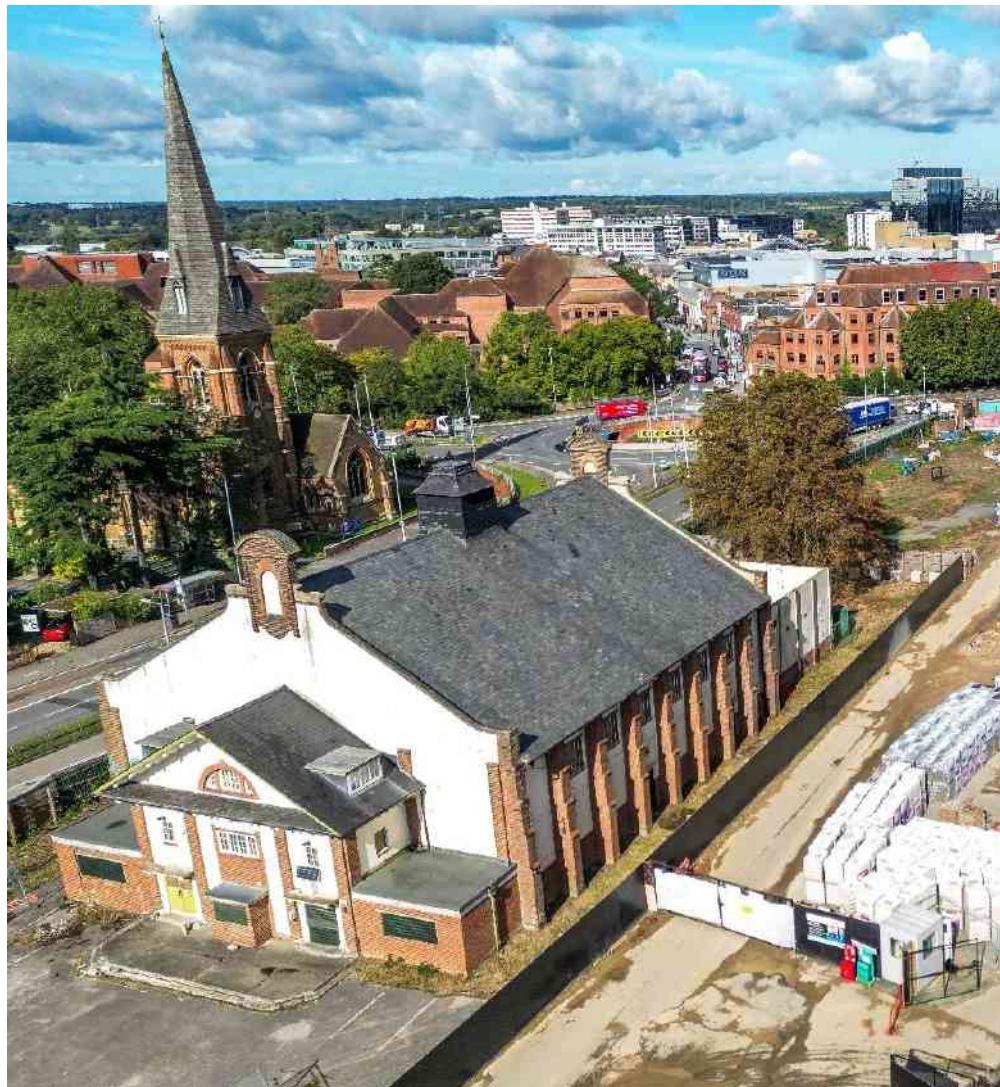
4.1 The former Cinema is located on the western side of the former RAF base, immediately to the east of Hillingdon Road (Figure 4.1). It was constructed in 1919, soon after the formation of the RAF and the Uxbridge base.

4.2 The former Cinema is of architectural and historic interest as an early RAF building dating from 1919. It is also of illustrative interest. It illustrates the development of RAF bases and the provision of social facilities to entertain the recruits and also the ongoing development of the cinema typology with this being an early inter-war classically influenced design.

4.3 The architectural and historic interest of the former Cinema is discussed in detail below.

4.4 The building was Grade II listed on 24th January 2008 (Entry No. 1392376).

Figure 4.1 Former cinema from the south east



Source: Vinci St. Modwen, 2023

Architectural Interest

4.5 The former Cinema is constructed of a series of external stepped brick buttresses at 10ft centres (eight bays long) with 4.5in reinforced brick infill. The wall infilling is cement rendered while the buttresses are fair faced brick. These support the timber roof trusses. High-level steel casement windows are fitted to the east and west elevations, these are now in a very poor state of repair with broken panes allowing water ingress.

4.6 The former Cinema consists of a main block (housing the original cinema (and lecture theatre) auditorium later used for a gym), with a porch to the front elevation, and a lower, flat-roofed block on the northern side (housing the former squash courts). The front porch is two storeys in height, with a pitched roof with dormer, and a Diocletian window in the tympanum. In the centre of the porch, at ground floor, was the former pay office window (since obscured by a flat-roof 20th century extension) with two double sets of doors on either side. The three bay elevation is defined by brick pilasters, set under a carved wooden eaves cornice. The porch is flanked by two later 20th century single-storey structures with flat roofs (Figure 4.1).

4.7 The porch is set against the blank gable wall of the main auditorium, which is flanked with offset brick buttresses. Historic photos indicate these were once topped with stone ball finials (Figure 4.2). The brick copings of the gable are swept up to meet at the apex with a segmental-pedimented brick aedicule with a semi-circular arched niche, flanked by scrolled brackets. The north gable has a very similar treatment, but is fronted by the former squash courts, contained within a double height space with very plain brick detailing. This previously had a flat roof probably of c.1960 date (which replaced the original pitched roof) which became extensively damaged and was removed. This element of the building is a functional structure of limited architectural value (Figure 4.3). The east and west elevations of the auditorium consist of eight bays separated by buttresses under a deep bracketed wooden eaves cornice to the roof. The west elevation has been extended with a part double height, part single height projection in the later 20th century. In the centre of the roof is a large timber ventilation opening; historic photos indicate that this was once topped with a cupola (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Former Cinema building on completion, 1919



Source: RAF Museum, Hendon

Figure 4.3 Former Cinema, main elevation (left) with squash courts at rear (right)



Source: Lichfields, 2022 and 2023

4.8 Film had first been exhibited in Britain in 1895, but early cinemas remained the preserve of fairground booths, converted shops or theatre 'turns'¹⁰. This changed in 1909 when the Cinematograph Act was passed, which controlled film licensing, Sunday opening and the design of cinema premises. This was in response to a number of fires (the early cellulose-nitrate film being highly flammable), and the principal requirement of the Act was for a separate, fire-resistant projection box and the provision of fire exits¹¹. This led to standardisation of cinema design, and early purpose-built cinemas are distinguished by narrow, high frontages, often quite decorative, with arched entranceways leading from a

¹⁰ Historic England, Listing Selection Guide: Culture and Entertainment, 2011

¹¹ English Heritage, Picture Palaces: New Life for Old Cinemas, 1999

small foyer to a long, narrow hall. Some of these typical features, such as the separate projection box, fire exits, small foyers and long, narrow hall, can be found in the listed building acknowledging it was designed as a combined cinema and lecture hall for use by the RAF specifically.

4.9 The planform of the building is relatively straightforward. The front-of-house part is a two-storey structure originally containing, on the ground floor, a transformer room; office with staircase, and two vestibules (and later facilities contained with mid-late 20th century extensions¹²). The first floor housed the projection room, re-winding room and store, with two ancillary spaces within the eaves space at second floor, lit by dormer windows (seemingly renewed). The main part of the building is the former auditorium, which also contains a stage and two retiring rooms, and a later shower block in an extension to the western elevation¹³. The squash courts are sited to the rear in a lower previously flat-roofed block.

4.10 The interior of the former Cinema is relatively plain and unadorned (unlike many of its contemporaries). Legible elements of the original cinema (alongside lecture hall) function are retained, including:

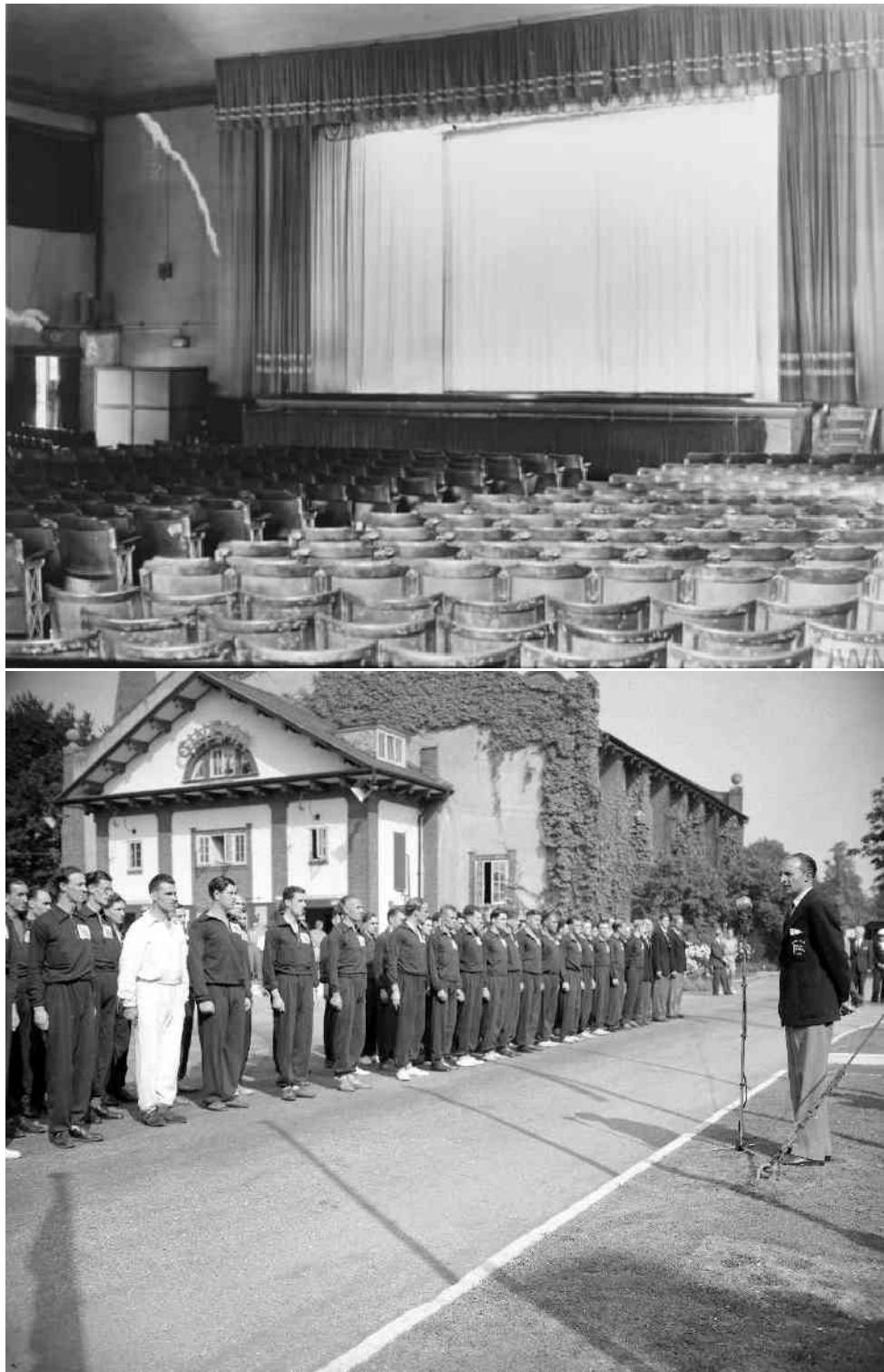
- The open space of the auditorium, with a stage / screening area at one end (Figures 4.4 and 4.5), contained within a proscenium arch, framed by Tuscan pilasters to an acanthus cornice, with the entablature supported by wreathed brackets.
- Some elements of architectural treatment in the form of a modillion cornice within the auditorium, with deep coving swept up to ceiling with central rose beneath a ventilator¹⁴.

¹² A female changing room and store dating from the 1960s after the building was converted to a gymnasium

¹³ Added in 1966 when the building was converted to a gymnasium

¹⁴ The provenance of the system of pipes fixed to the ceiling (understood to be a heating system) is assumed to be in relation to the conversion to a gym from 1960.

Figure 4.4 Top picture: The RAF Station, Uxbridge, original wartime caption: Picture issued 1945 shows the camp cinema at Uxbridge RAF station. Bottom picture: Exterior of the former cinema with signage above above entrance stating 'Cinema', 1948. Original caption: Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Browning, right, speaks to the British Olympic team during the ceremony where the British flag was raised at the Olympic Camp, at Uxbridge, England, July 28, 1948.



Source: Imperial War Museum

Figure 4.5 Existing Photograph of the Interior



Source: Lichfields 2023

4.11 The relative simplicity of the interior and its significant alteration means that it makes a more limited contribution to the architectural interest of the listed former Cinema, when compared to the exterior design. Notwithstanding this, the volume of the interior, and its associated spatial qualities with a focus on the raised stage (in poor condition); the remaining decorative elements within the main auditorium and elements of historic plan form contribute positively to the special interest of the listed building (acknowledging its heavy alteration).

4.12 The squash courts are in very poor condition with no roof. The list entry notes a stick baluster stair to a viewing gallery in the squash courts was in situ at the time of listing; this is no longer in place.

4.13 In overall terms, the former Cinema is of architectural interest as an early inter-war example of this building type, which displays a distinctive neo-Georgian style from a time when Classically influenced architecture was undergoing a strong revival. Externally, the squash courts are a functional cement-rendered 'brick box' designed to facilitate playing squash and, in overall terms, is a simple plain structure that is a secondary element in the overall composition of the listed building. The later single storey additions to the front porch and the part single height, part double height extension to the western elevation detract from an appreciation of the architectural quality of the principal elevation and, therefore, the significance of the listed building.

4.14 More widely, the former Cinema is the earliest surviving building on the site that served a leisure/recreational function, as opposed to a military function. The more ornate classical external decoration of the former Cinema is indicative of this function and was not found

elsewhere on the site, which at the time of construction was characterised by single storey huts (Figure 3.3). The list entry states that the former Cinema is “*the most impressive of the buildings erected for the RAF’s Armament School*”¹⁵, and it would have remained one of the base’s most impressive buildings throughout the history of the RAF Uxbridge.

Historic Interest

4.15 The former Cinema is of historic interest as it illustrates the early inter-war revival of the Cinema as a popular recreational activity, and is also of historic interest where it illustrates the early provisions for recreational activities by the RAF. It is also a surviving example of the wider inter-war redevelopment of the RAF base at Uxbridge.

4.16 The former Cinema was completed at the very beginning of the re-emergence of the cinema industry following the First World War. Nearly 4,000 cinemas were constructed prior to the First World War, but the onset of war put a hold on new building schemes and many cinemas were closed for the duration of war when projectionists were drafted, and films were in short supply. Though many cinemas re-opened after the Armistice, an acute housing shortage led to a ban on new, ‘luxury building’ that lasted until 1921¹⁶. The use of the former Cinema by the RAF perhaps explains its erection at this unusual time for the construction of new cinemas.

4.17 The construction of the former Cinema in 1919 also demonstrates the great importance that was now being placed on the role of sport and recreation in sustaining the morale of military servicemen. At the time, over 1,200 cadets per month were passing through RAF Uxbridge and even at this early stage in the history of the RAF the importance of ‘entertaining the troops’ was recognised.

Group Value

4.18 Whilst most of the former RAF base was demolished after 2010, the listed building has group value with those buildings and structures that were retained; most obviously the extant Mons Barrack Block immediately to the east and St Andrew’s Gate to the north. These survive as remaining former RAF buildings west of the River Pinn and are indicative of the former military use and character of the area.

4.19 Other extant buildings associated with the RAF such as Hillingdon House (Grade II) and the Group Operations Room (Grade I) also form part of this group interest and the effect of the proposed development on their significance is assessed in the separate Heritage Statement accompanying the Outline Application.

Contribution of Setting to Significance

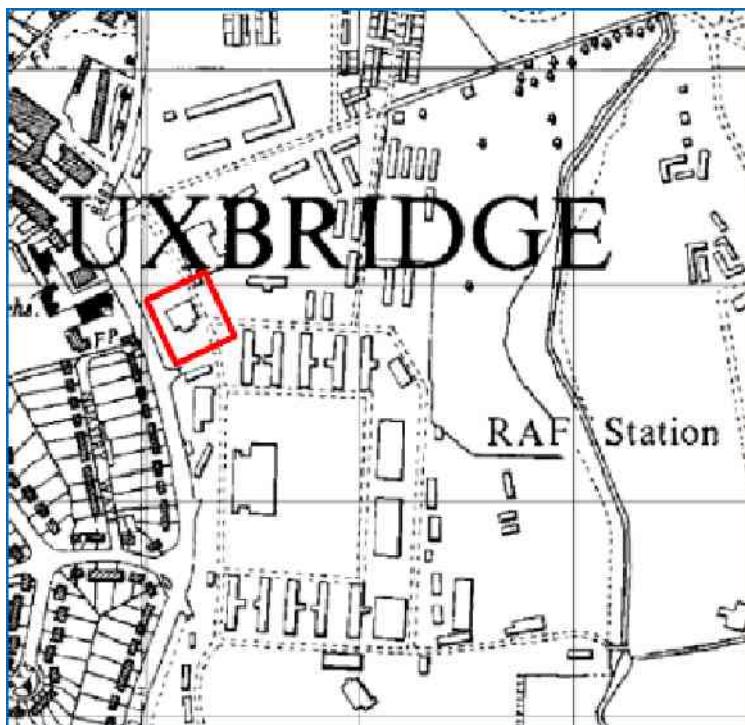
4.20 Historically, the setting of the listed building comprised the wider military base of RAF Uxbridge, including early (around 1918) single-storey barrack accommodation to the east and south. Figure 3.3 (included earlier in this report) indicates how close the former Cinema and single-storey barracks were to each other; originally there was no forecourt to the cinema.

¹⁵ Our understanding of the historic development of the base notes that the Royal Air Corps armament school ceased in 1919 when the RAF took over. The RAF began to erect new buildings such as the former Cinema.

¹⁶ Allen Eyles, Old Cinemas, 2001

4.21 Later, around 1925, these single-storey huts were replaced by barrack blocks built around the parade ground, with a tarmac area, used for parking, to the front of the former Cinema. The continual proximity of the former Cinema to RAF residential accommodation reflects its recreational use. More widely, the listed building was part of the much wider RAF complex both sides of the River Pinn (Figures 3.4 and 4.6).

Figure 4.6 Ordnance Survey map of 1960, showing the former Cinema as part of the RAF complex, prior to widespread demolition (cinema identified in red)



Source: OS Maps

4.22 As a military base, there has always been a secure boundary for security reasons. Whilst the former Cinema is the most westerly building of the former military base, and, therefore, retains some connection with the outside, civilian townscape to the east, it was separated by the boundary wall and railings. This severed any physical relationship between the military building and the wider town of Uxbridge. The building is orientated to the south away from the High Street, towards the historic entrance points into the RAF base.

4.23 Following the end of the First World War, the RAF base was redeveloped, and new construction occurred from the 1920s onwards, most notably the construction of the ten barrack blocks around the central parade ground. Whilst this altered the immediate setting of the listed building, its association as part of a wider RAF base complex remained intact. Ongoing development of the base during the 20th century continually altered, but did not diminish, this association.

4.24 Following the closure of the RAF base in 2010, and the subsequent redevelopment of the site, most of the former RAF buildings were demolished. This loss of the wider military base has substantially diminished the context in which the listed building is now appreciated. Most obviously, the one remaining barrack block to the south-east (Mons), St. Andrew's Gate to the north and the listed former Cinema are retained as evidence of RAF Uxbridge to

the west of the River Pinn¹⁷. The remaining barrack block goes some way to revealing the former Cinema's function as a recreational facility for the servicemen, whilst the locally listed Gate and boundary walling highlight the secure nature of the military base and aids legibility of the cinema as part of an insular establishment.

Figure 4.7 Aerial view of RAF Uxbridge before redevelopment 2008



Source: Historic England Aerial Photo Collection

4.25 The wider, ongoing redevelopment of the RAF base does not, on the whole, contribute to the setting or significance of the listed building. It will remain, as it historically has done, surrounded by built development, albeit civilian residential-led development of a different character. The existing immediate setting of the former Cinema is very poor, however, and, today, a detracting element of its setting. New development may have the capability of enhancing the setting of the former Cinema, if designed sensitively.

4.26 Greater change can be accommodated within the setting of the former Cinema without affecting its significance. This is because the contribution of its setting to significance has diminished through the ongoing redevelopment of the former RAF base into the St. Andrew's Park development.

Squash Courts (Grade II listed via attachment)

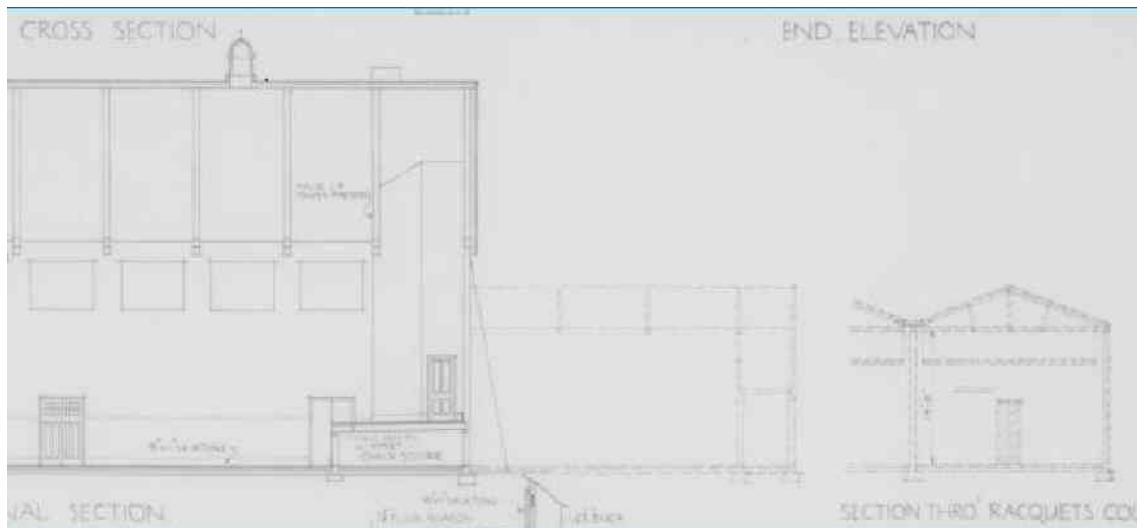
4.27 On the balance of evidence available, the squash courts were built at the same time as the former Cinema building – they are shown dotted on the original drawings (Figure 4.8). While this drawing does not reflect the full detail of the former Cinema building as originally built (i.e., the intended mansard roof to the double height entrance was not delivered) it is broadly consistent in terms of its arrangement, form, and layout.

4.28 The squash courts were originally laid out as three courts, separated from the rear stage by a narrow passageway. The Paul Francis Building Record states that the squash courts were refurbished in 1937, when the plaster was hacked off and replastered with non-sweating Carters campo, and the deal flooring was removed and replaced with maple flooring on

¹⁷ There are other locally listed RAF structures such as the Rifle Range, AM Boundary Markers and the Grade II listed Hillingdon House that form remnants of the RAF base.

asbestos felt over the existing joists. The stairs were also removed and replaced at that time¹⁸.

Figure 4.8 Extract from 'By the Royal Engineer Lieutenant J.G.N Clift for the Air Ministry's Directorate of Works. Drawing No. 608/18'



Source: RAF Museum

4.29 As part of the original design of the squash courts there was a triple pitched roof, presumably relating to the arrangement of the squash courts below – a functional response to the operational requirements at that time. The latest image that has been sourced (to date), which shows the original arrangement of the roof structure, dates from September 1948 (Figure 3.4).

4.30 At some point after 1948, the original roof form was removed and replaced by a flat roof. Evidence in building fabric also indicates that the height of the building was raised at that time (Figure 4.9), perhaps to account for the need for greater height because of the change from a pitched roof profile to a flat roof. The exact provenance of those works is not clear from the archive material available. There was, however, a wider programme of works to convert the cinema to a gym from 1960 and it is probable that the works were undertaken at that time; that date would align with the brickwork of the raised section of the squash courts and an undated historic aerial photograph (Figure 4.10).

¹⁸ Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study (2013), p125.

Figure 4.9 Existing Side Elevation of the Squash Courts



Source: Vinci St. Modwen

Figure 4.10 Aerial view of the area surrounding the parade ground (undated)



Source: Paul Francis (VSM Estates), Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2: West Camp: A Level 4 Building Recording Study (2013)

4.31

What can be confirmed, as a matter of fact, is:

- The existing roof fabric and profile is not original and was installed at some point between September 1948 and May 2008 (Figure 4.11).
- At the date of listing (24th January 2008)¹⁹, the flat roof to the squash court was in situ, albeit in a poor condition.

¹⁹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1392376?section=official-list-entry>

Figure 4.11 Historic England Aerial Photo – 26001_001 (May 2008)²⁰



Source: Historic England Aerial Photo Collection

4.32 There is little architectural interest contained within the squash courts. It is a secondary element to the main building. It is functional with very little decoration.

4.33 The squash courts are of limited historical interest. Whilst cinema was a particularly popular recreational activity for both civilians and servicemen at the time, squash was more of a rarity. The first purpose-built squash courts appeared at Harrow School in the 1860s and remained the preserve of schools and colleges until the early 20th century when it became to be played by the armed forces and clubs²¹. The construction of these courts in 1919 makes them a relatively early example of the type outside of elite educational establishments.

4.34 As with the main element of the building, the changing setting and the ongoing redevelopment of the former RAF base means that the contribution of the setting of the squash courts to its significance has been reduced. Its existing immediate setting is poor and a detracting element of its interest. It can accommodate continuing change to its setting without harming significance.

²⁰ https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/26001_001

²¹ Historic England, Listing Selection Guide: Sports and Recreation Buildings, 2011

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 This Historic Building Record (Level 4) has been completed in accordance with the methodology detailed at Section 2.0. It records the nature and significance of the Grade II listed former Cinema and squash courts at the former RAF base, Uxbridge. It builds upon the *Royal Air Force Uxbridge Historical Appraisal Volume 2 – West Camp (2013)* by Paul Francis which provided a Historic Building Record for the whole of west camp including a Level 4 Building Record for the former Cinema. The information within the Francis report has been supplemented with additional detail, drawings and photographs to provide a robust Level 4 record.

5.2 The former Cinema was constructed in 1919 soon after the formation of the RAF at the Uxbridge base. Designs for the former Cinema were drawn up by Lieutenant J.G.N. Clift of the Royal Engineers. It comprises the Main Hall (originally intended as a lecture hall that could be adapted as a cinema or concert hall) and the attached squash courts to the rear. The Main Hall is a brick structure with cement render to the exterior and a pitched roof originally Welsh slate and now felt; the squash courts to the rear are of brick and render construction, now without a roof.

5.3 The Francis report, Vol. 2, indicates that the Main Hall was converted to a gym from 1960 when some internal and, later, external alterations were carried out. We understand the building may have been vacant since as long ago as the 1970s. The RAF sold the site in 2010.

5.4 The building is of architectural and historical significance as an early RAF building dating from 1919. It is also of illustrative interest. It illustrates the development of RAF bases and the provision of social facilities to entertain the recruits and also the ongoing development of the cinema typology with this being an early inter-war classically influenced design.

5.5 This historic building record will be lodged at Hillingdon Library.

Appendix 1 List Description

CINEMA

Official list entry

Heritage Category: **Listed Building**

Grade: **II**

List Entry Number: **1392376**

Date first listed: **24-Jan-2008**

List Entry Name: **CINEMA**

Statutory Address 1: **CINEMA**

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

[Understanding list entries](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/>)

[Corrections and minor amendments](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/>)

Location

Statutory Address: **CINEMA**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: **Greater London Authority**

District: **Hillingdon (London Borough)**

Parish: **Non Civil Parish**

National Grid Reference: **TQ 06039 83769**

Reasons for Designation

EH advice and recommendation accepted

Details

804/0/10074 RAF UXBRIDGE 24-JAN-08 Cinema

GV II

Cinema. By the Royal Engineer Lieutenant J.G.N Clift for the Air Ministry's Directorate of Works. Drawing No. 608/18.

Large brick buttresses with reinforced 9 and 4.5in brick walling, externally coated with painted ironite and cement.

Welsh slate roof, retained to front porch block and replaced with felt to main block.

Plan: the front-of-house part is a two-storey structure containing on the ground floor, a transformer room, office with staircase, and two vestibules. The first floor housed the projection room, re-winding room and store. The main part of the building is the auditorium which also contains a stage and two retiring rooms. Squash courts sited to rear in lower flat-roofed block.

Exterior: SW front with porch set against blank gable wall with flanking offset buttresses, the brick copings to the gable being swept up to meet at the apex a segmental-pedimented aedicule with central semi-circular arched niche and flanking scrolled brackets. The pedimented porch has brackets to deep eaves, with red tile dressings and timber

casements to Diocletian window in tympanum; recessed bays below, of 3 bays to front and single bays to returns, articulated by brick pilasters; 4-light timber casement set in tall central brick panel (with added mid C20 porch below) flanked by single lights above double-leaf doors with bracketed flat hoods; similar casements in dormers; small flat-roofed flanking extensions of mid C20 date. 8-bay return elevations to auditorium, with offset buttresses rising to deep bracketed eaves and with steel casements to upper level; large timber ventilator to centre of auditorium roof; similar treatment to rear gable as to front. Flat-roofed squash courts to rear.

Interior: auditorium has modillion cornice, with deep coving swept up to ceiling with central rose beneath ventilator. Proscenium has Tuscan pilasters to acanthus cornice, the entablature supported by wreathed brackets. Stick baluster stair to viewing gallery in squash courts. Steel-framed roof.

HISTORY: Hillingdon House and its estate at Uxbridge were acquired by Government in early 1915, the Royal Flying Corps' Armament School taking up residence in December 1917 after its use as a hospital for Canadian troops. This building comprises the most impressive of the buildings erected for the RAF's Armament School, which had moved from Perivale to Uxbridge in January 1918, before the formation of the RAF in April of that year. By that time, over 1,200 cadets per month were passing through Uxbridge, which specialised in the important role of training personnel in aerial gunnery and armaments. The new building programme placed great importance - as was by now traditional for military barracks - on the role of sport and recreation, including inter-unit fixtures, film shows, concerts and theatre, in sustaining camp morale. The site's principal function in the inter-war period was the training of recruits, for whom barracks built around an extensive parade ground had been erected in 1928.

The original Clift design featured a Mansard type roof similar to Clift's officers' quarters design at Uxbridge.

(Bruce Barrymore Halpenny, Action Stations 8: Military Airfields of Greater London (Cambridge, 1984), pp.235-43; RAF Museum, Hendon, drawings collection)

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: **501282**

Legacy System: **LBS**

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.



Map

This map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale.
This copy shows the entry on 13-Sep-2023 at 11:00:37.

Use of this data is subject to **Terms and Conditions**
(<https://historicengland.org.uk/terms/website-terms-conditions/>).

End of official list entry

← Previous - [Overview](#)

→ Next - [Comments and Photos](#)



[Back to top](#)

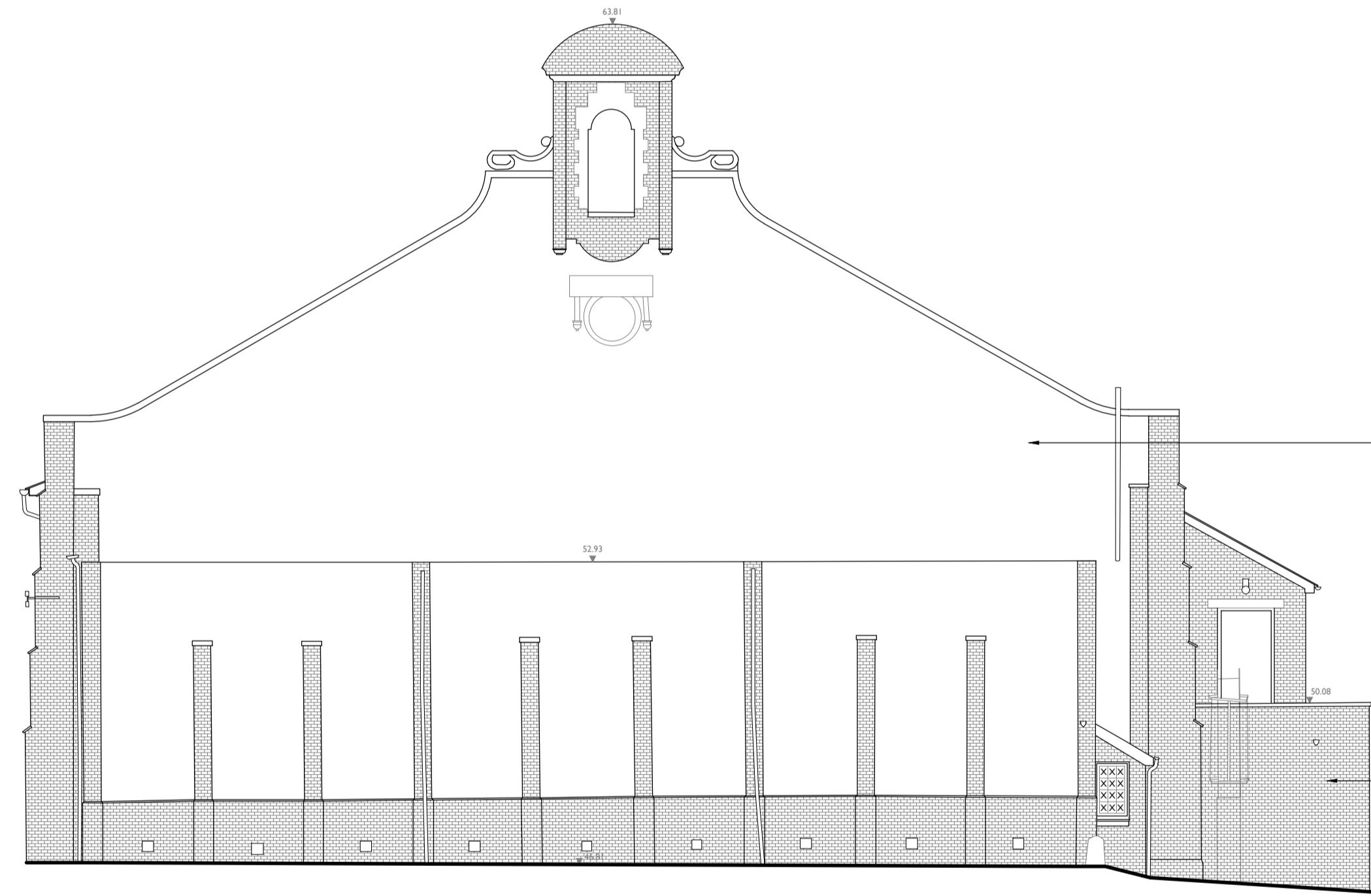
Appendix 2 Existing Elevations



1 South Elevation - Existing
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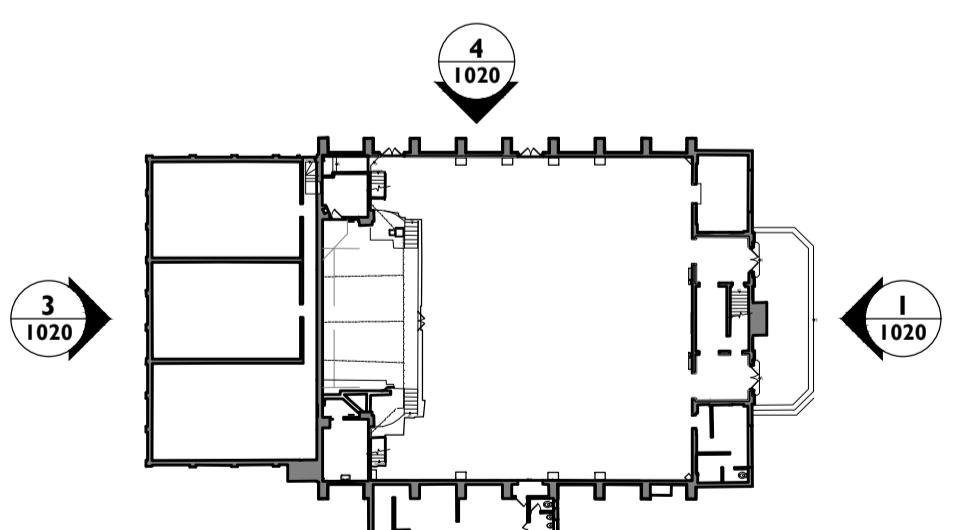
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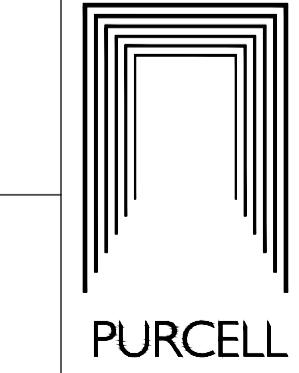
3 North Elevation - Existing
1020 1:100



4 East Elevation - Existing
1020 1:100



5 Key Plan
1020 NTS



Notes:
Drawings are based on survey data and may not accurately represent what is physically present.
Drawing may be scaled from for planning purposes only. All dimensions are to be verified on site before proceeding with the work.
All dimensions are in millimetres unless noted otherwise.
Purcell shall be notified in writing of any discrepancies.

LEGEND
X Broken window pane

General Notes:
• All temporary window coverings are not shown for clarity

REV	DATE	BY	CHK	DESCRIPTION
P03	10/05/2024	JR	AJ	Minor amendments
P02	17/04/2024	JR	AJ	Updated Issue
P01	02/02/2024	JR	AJ	First Issue

0 1m 2m 3m 4m 5m 10m

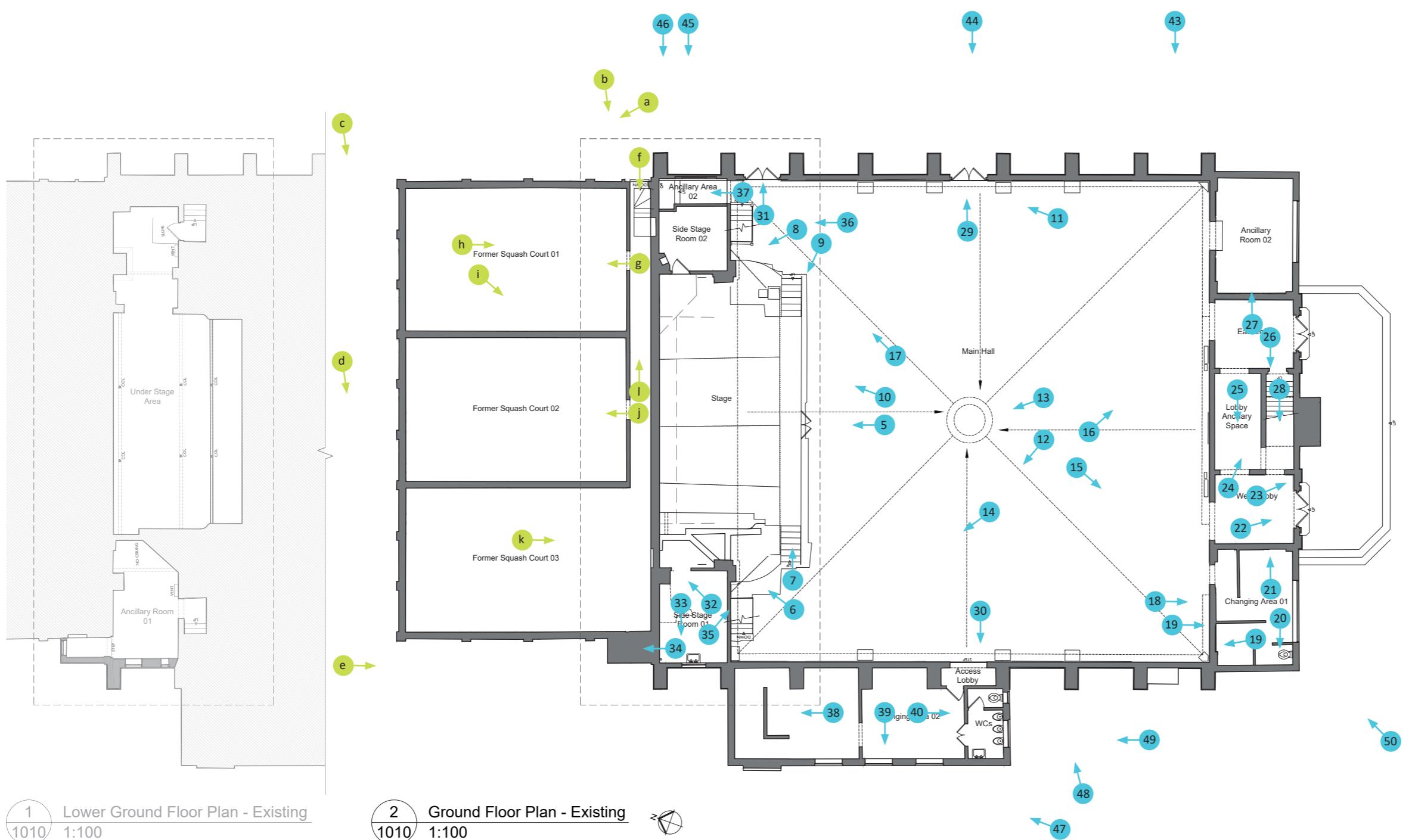
CLIENT
VSM Estates (Uxbridge) Limited
PROJECT
Former RAF Uxbridge Cinema

JOB NUMBER
243052
TITLE
Existing External Elevations

SIZE SCALE
A1L 1:100
REV SUITABILITY/REASON FOR ISSUE
P03 S2 - For Information
DRAWING NUMBER
243052-PUR-00-ZZ-DR-A-1020

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Appendix 3 Photographic Survey



C01 05/06/2024 JR AJ Listed Building Consent			
REV	DATE	BY	CHK
CLIENT VSM Estates (Uxbridge) Limited			
PROJECT Former RAF Uxbridge Cinema			
JOB NUMBER 243052			
TITLE Existing Lower Ground and Ground Floor Plans			
SIZE SCALE A1L 1:100			
REV SUITABILITY/REASON FOR ISSUE C01 A3 - Spatial Coordination Approved			
DRAWING NUMBER 243052-PUR-00-ZZ-DR-A-1010			
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Former Cinema - Exterior and Ground Floor



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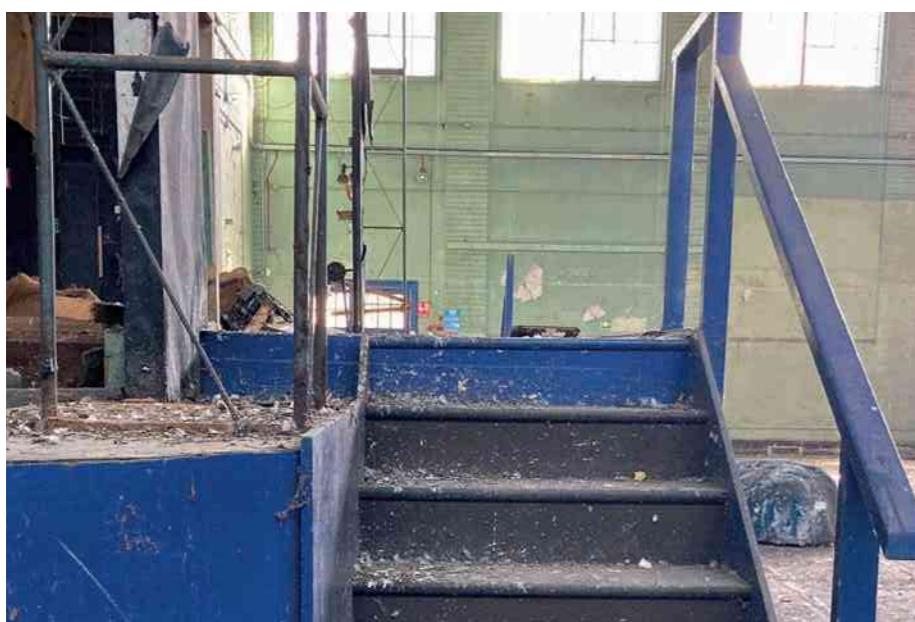
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Former Cinema – Exterior and Ground Floor



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Former Cinema - Exterior and Ground Floor



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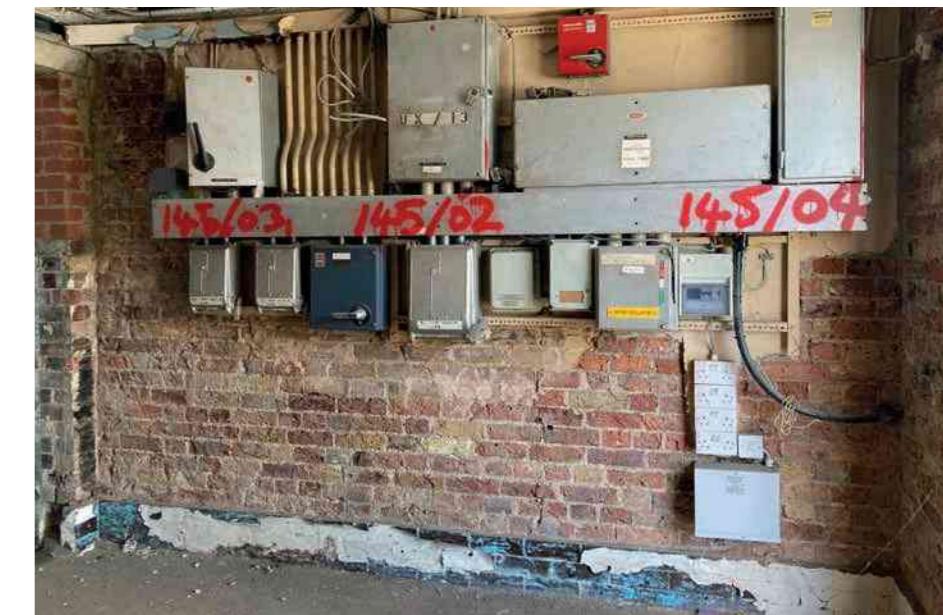
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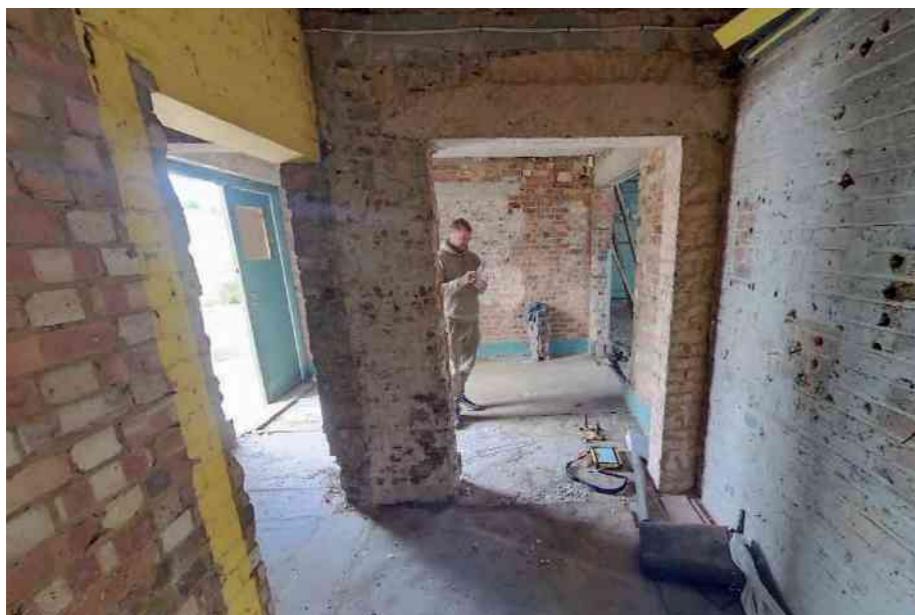
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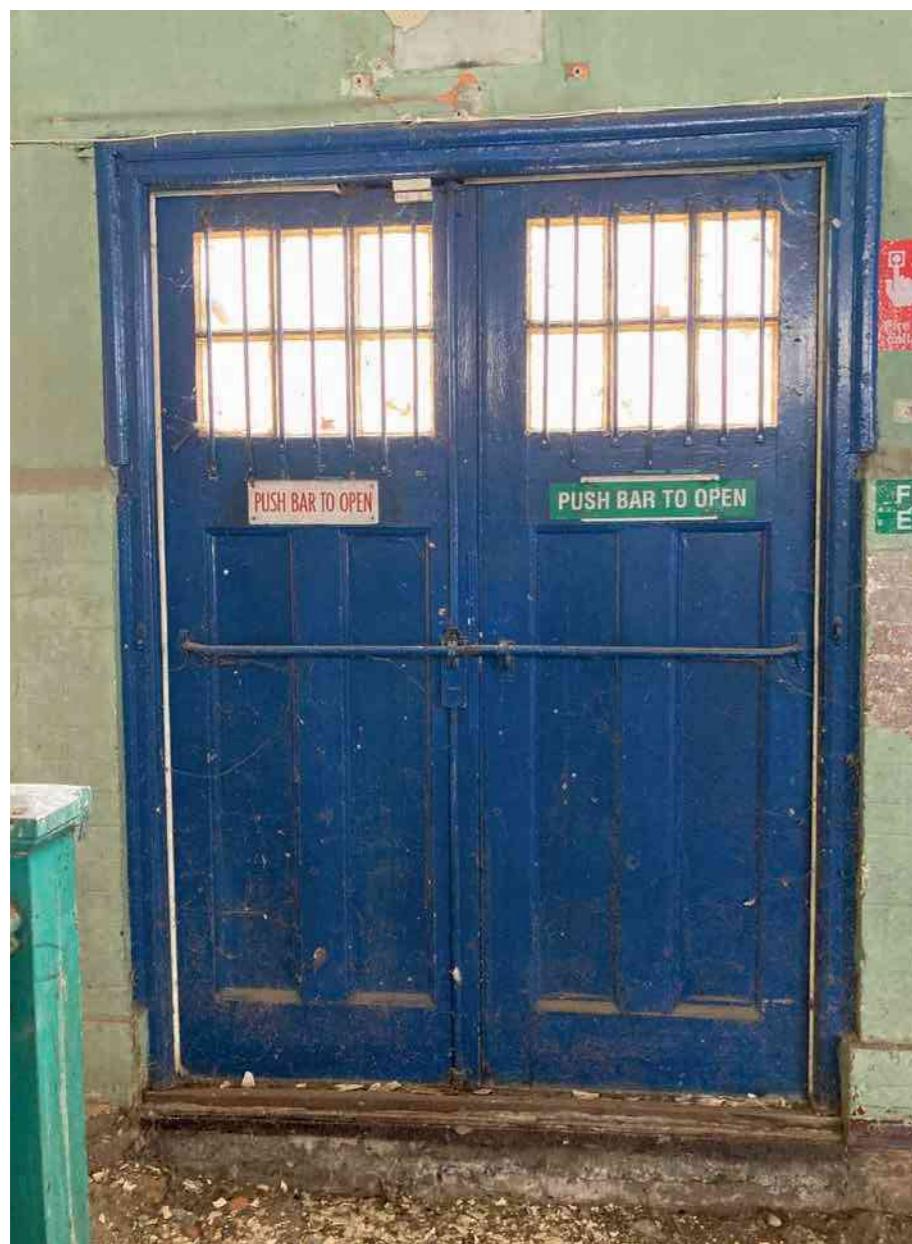


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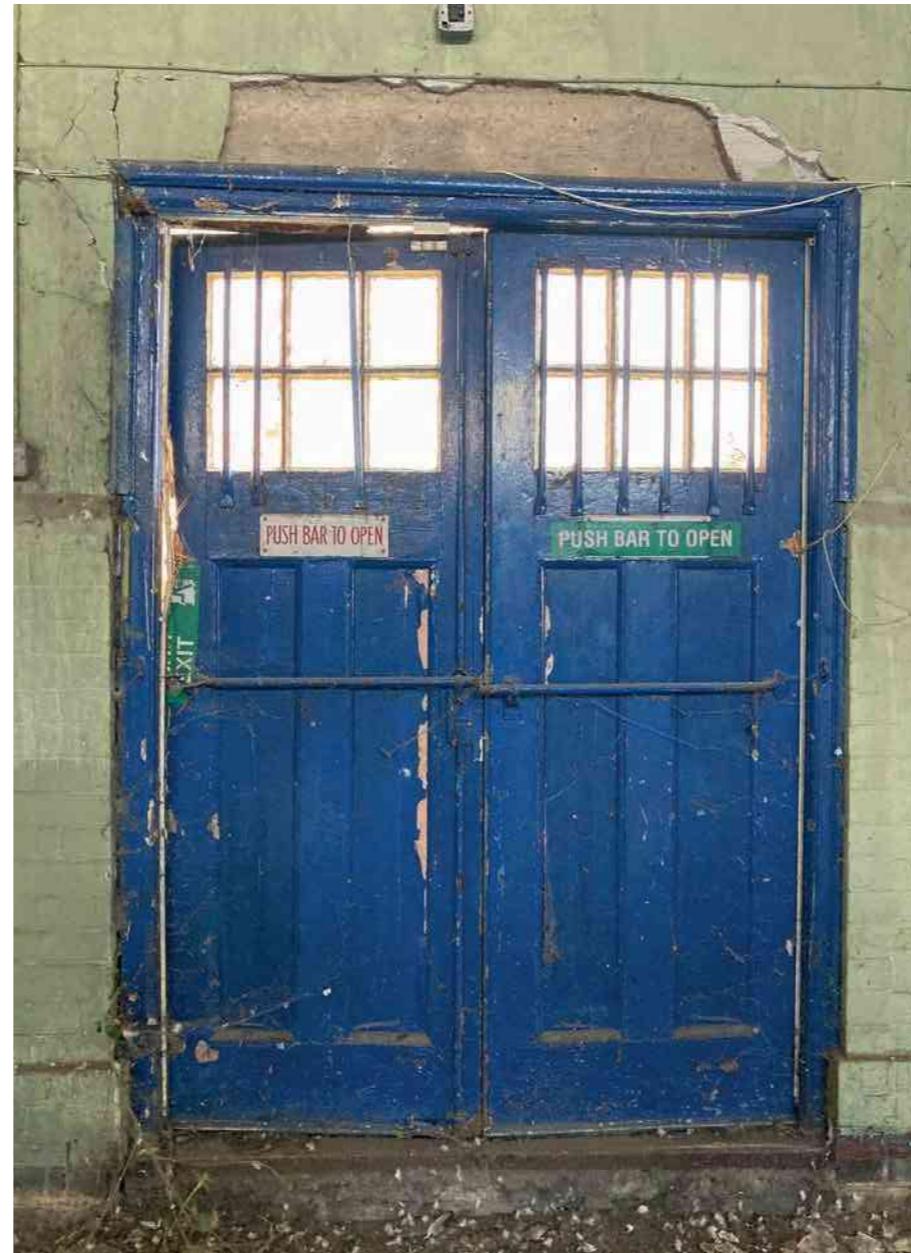
Former Cinema – Exterior and Ground Floor



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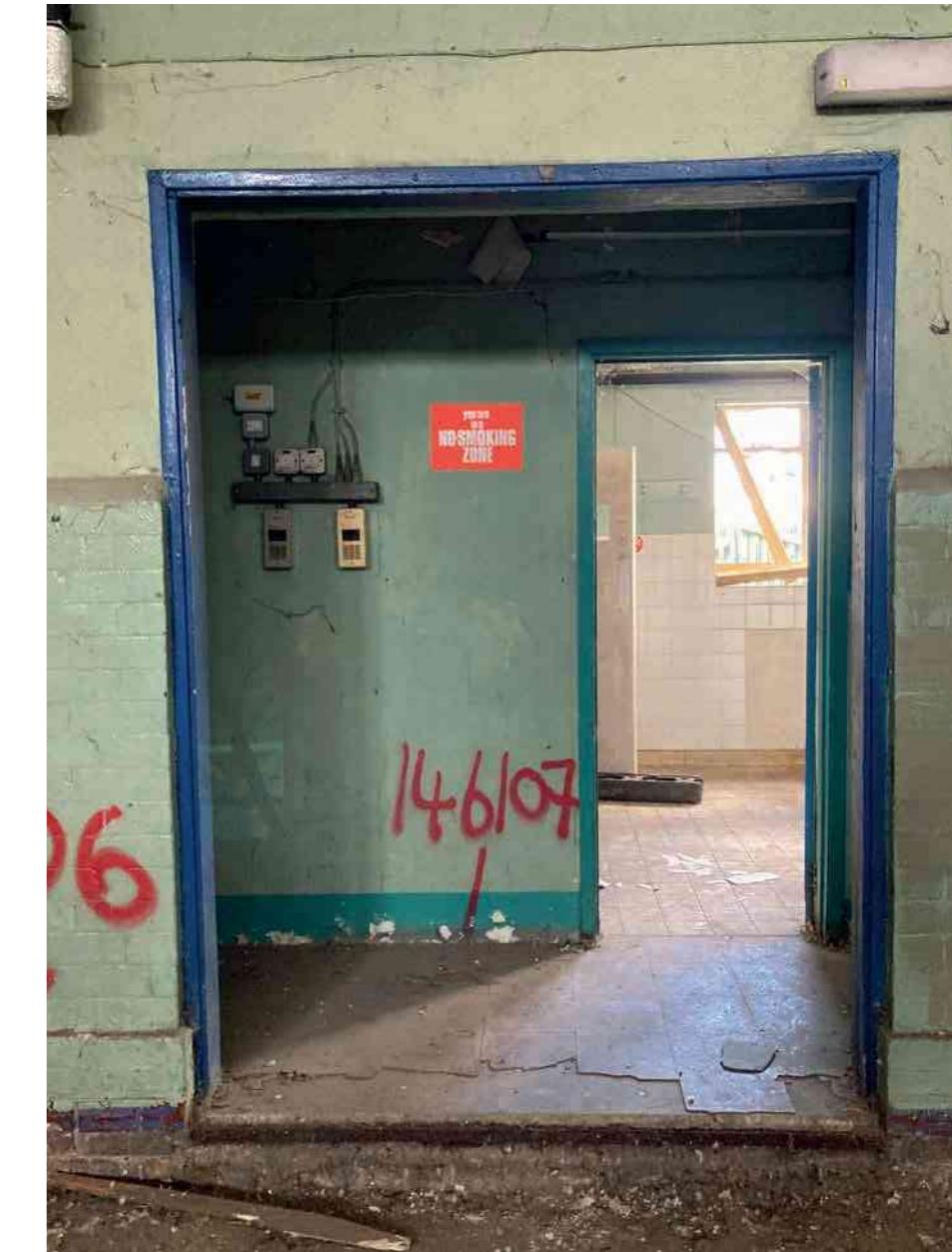
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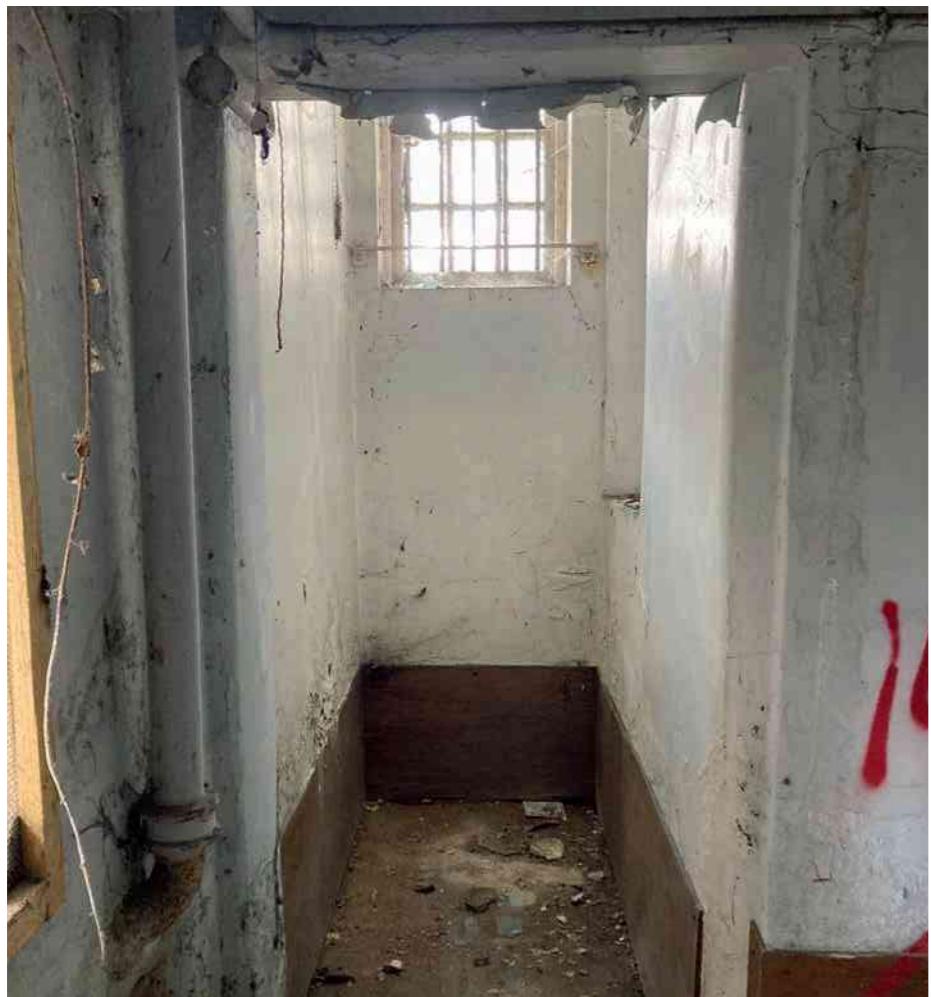


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Former Cinema - Exterior and Ground Floor



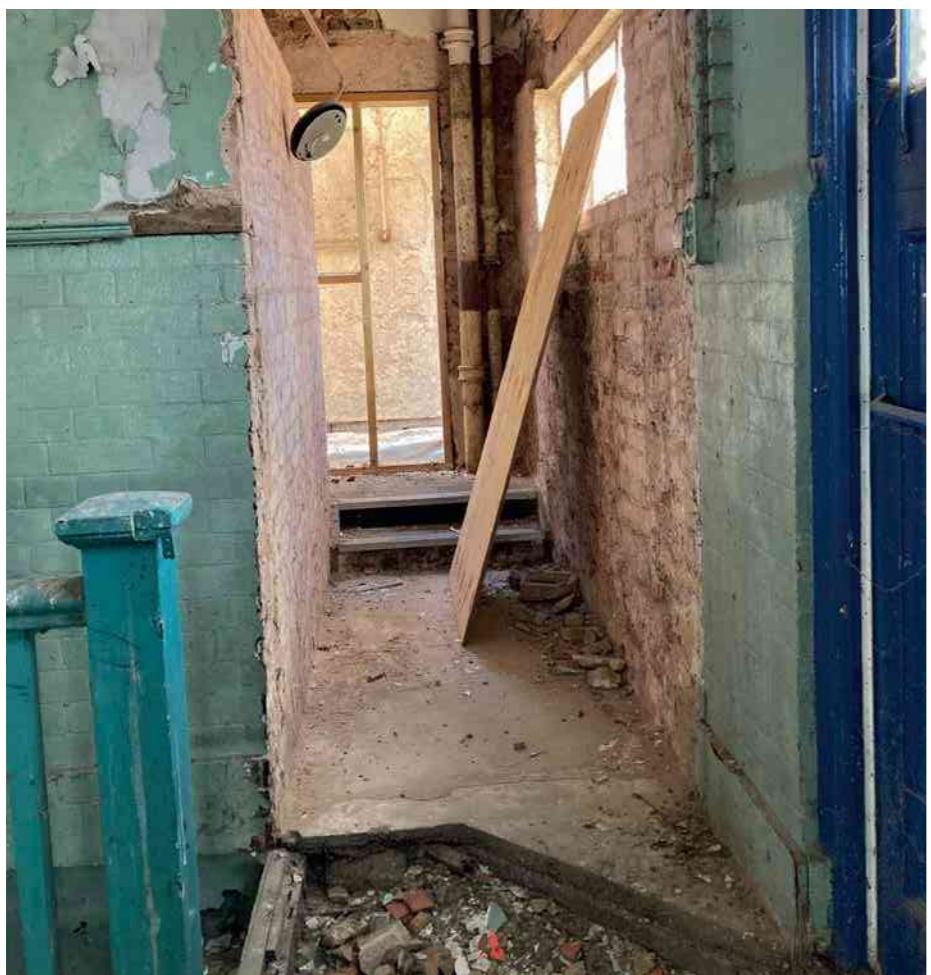
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Former Cinema - Exterior and Ground Floor



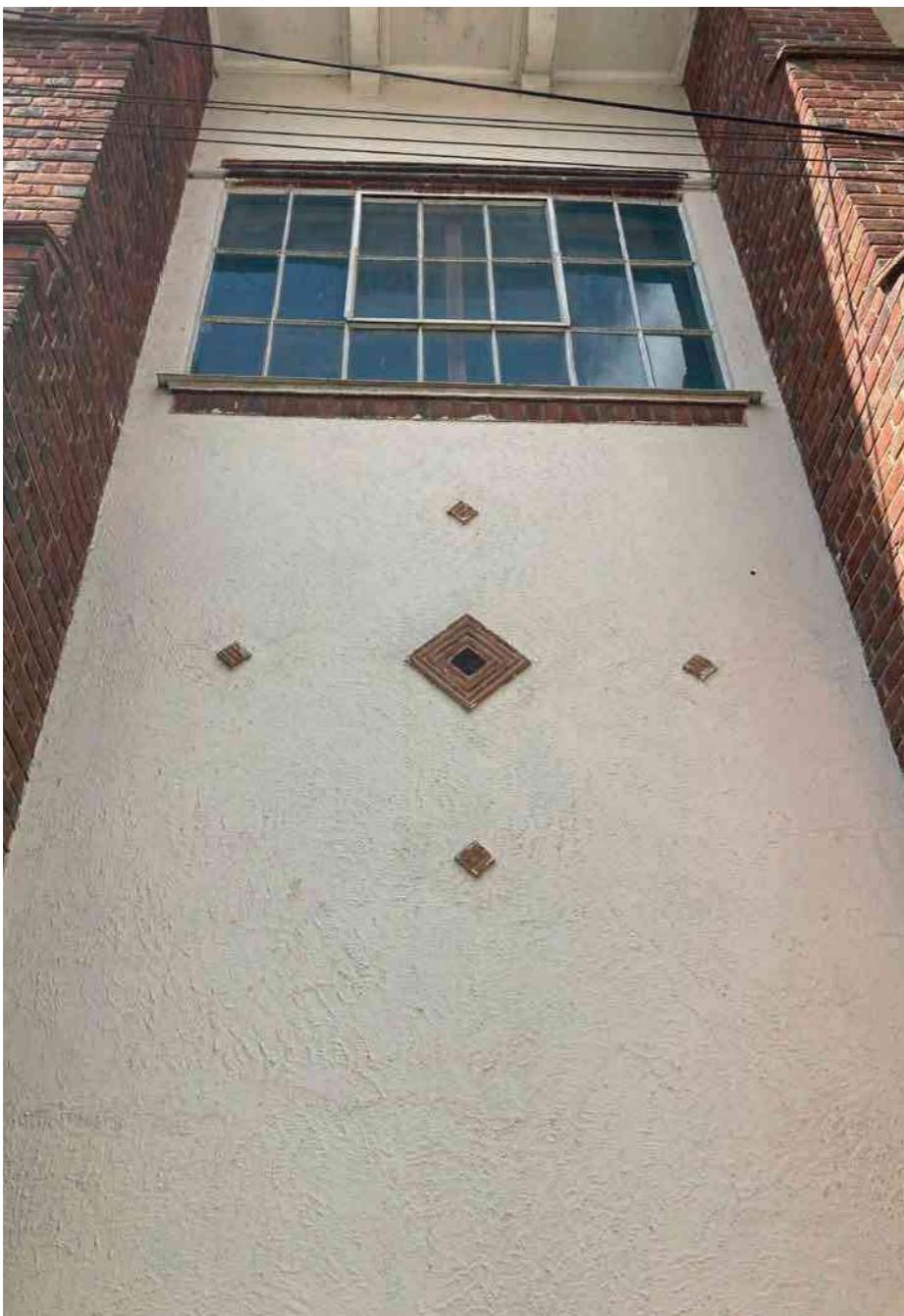
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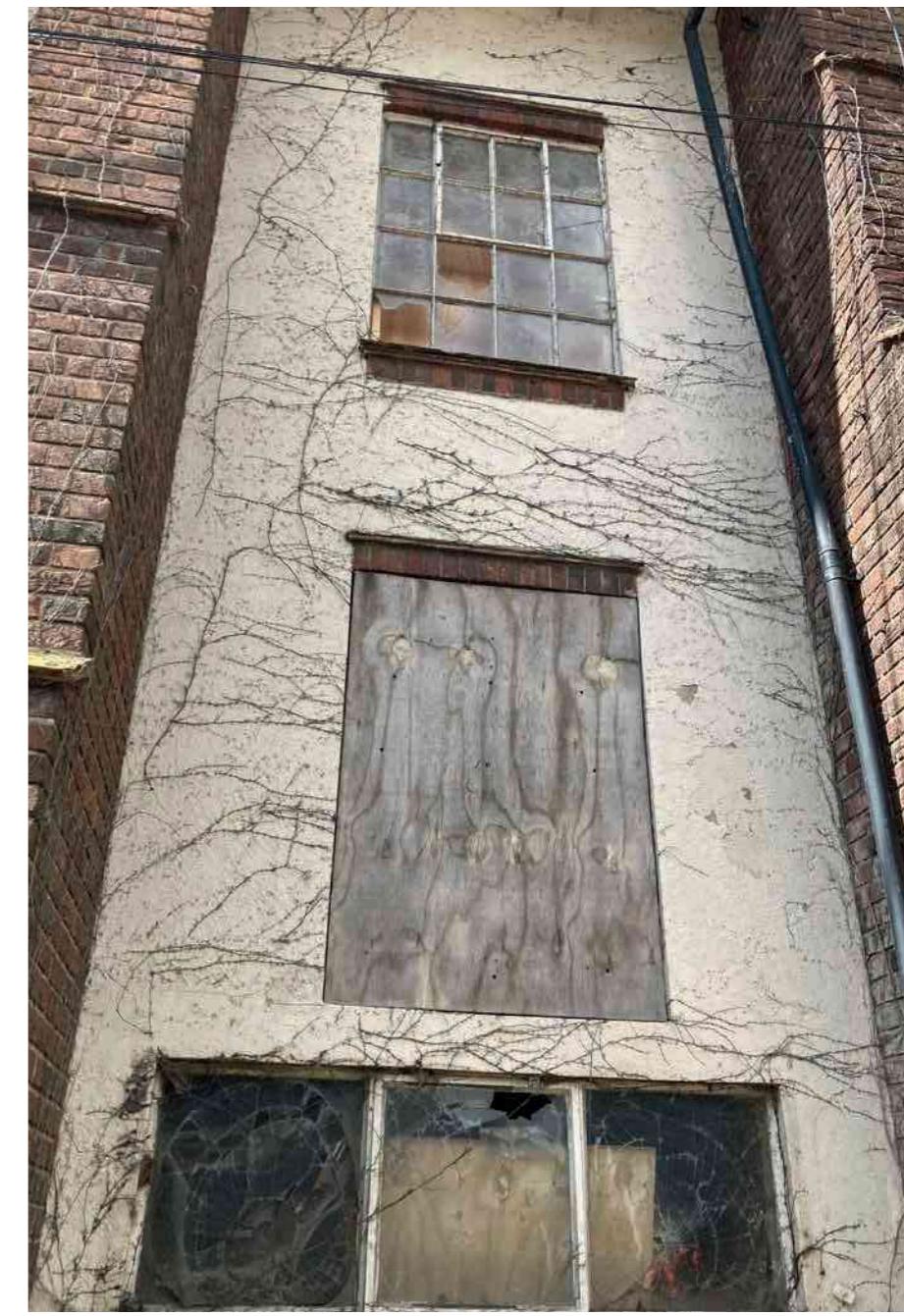
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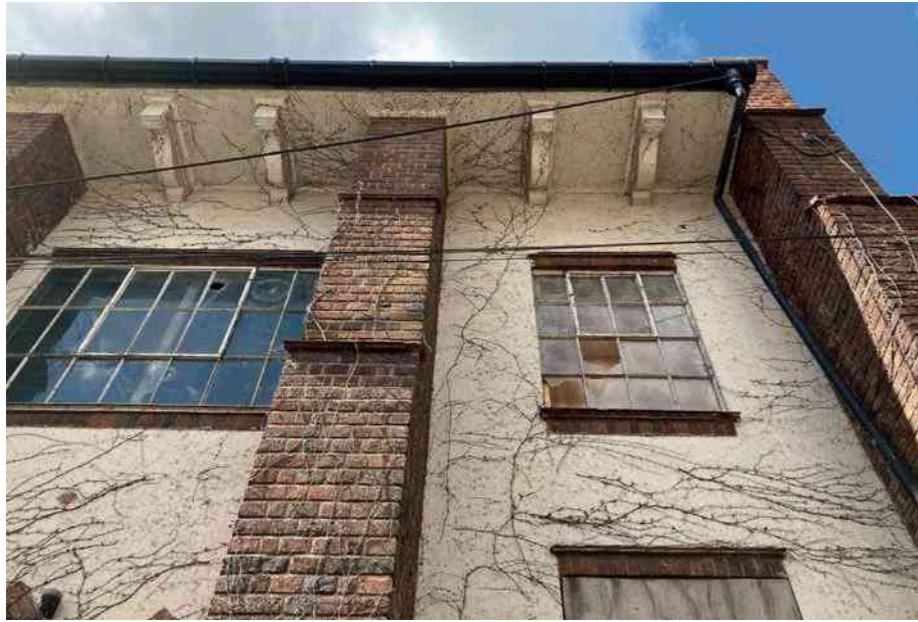


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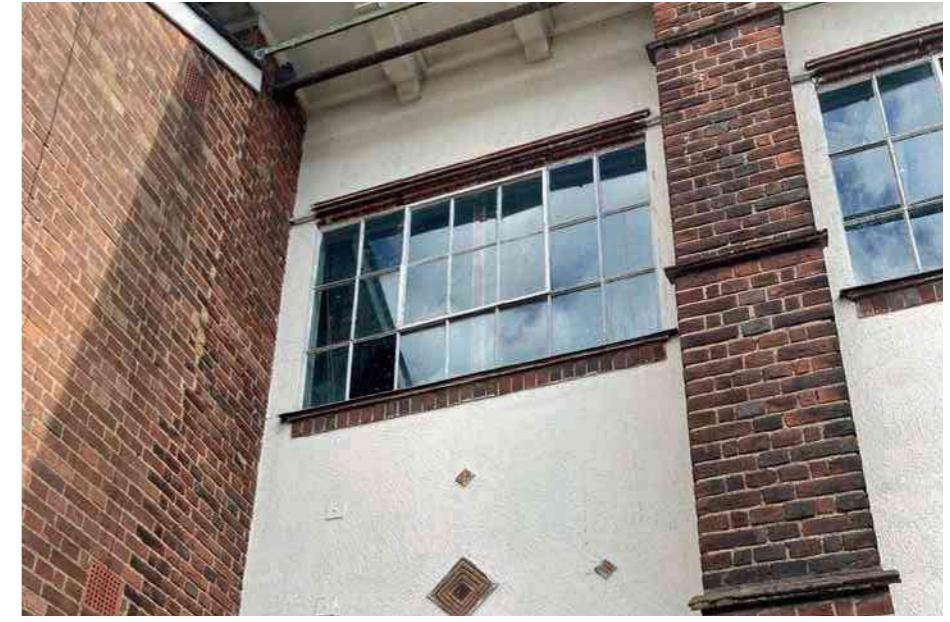
Former Cinema – Exterior and Ground Floor



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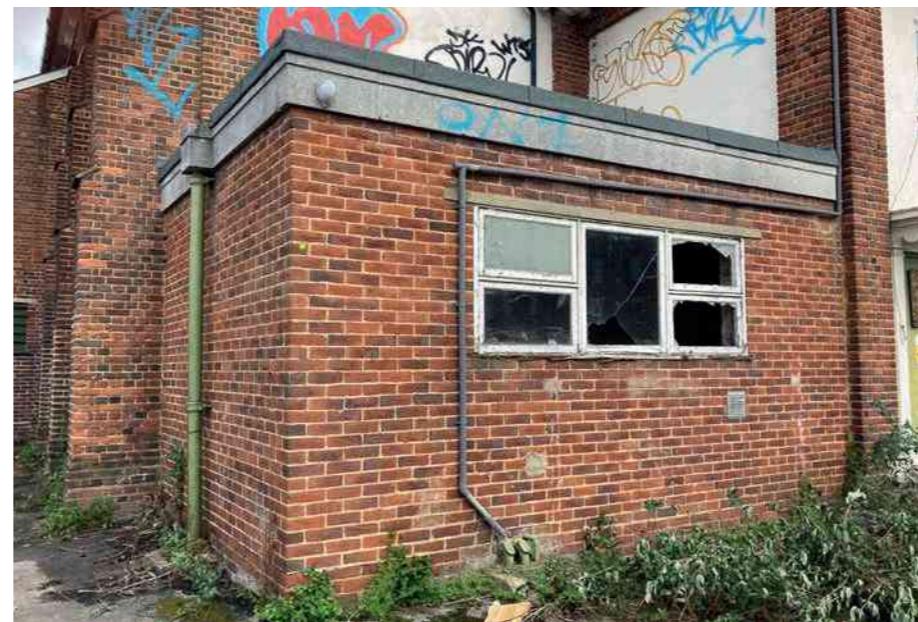
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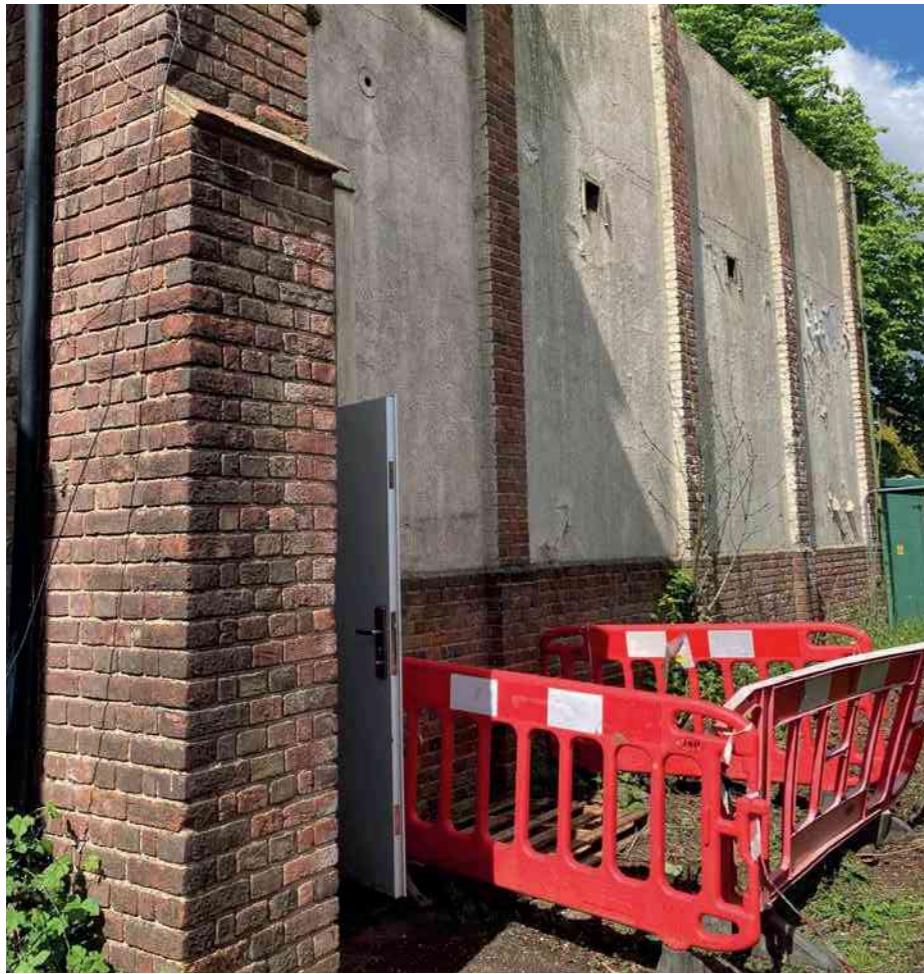


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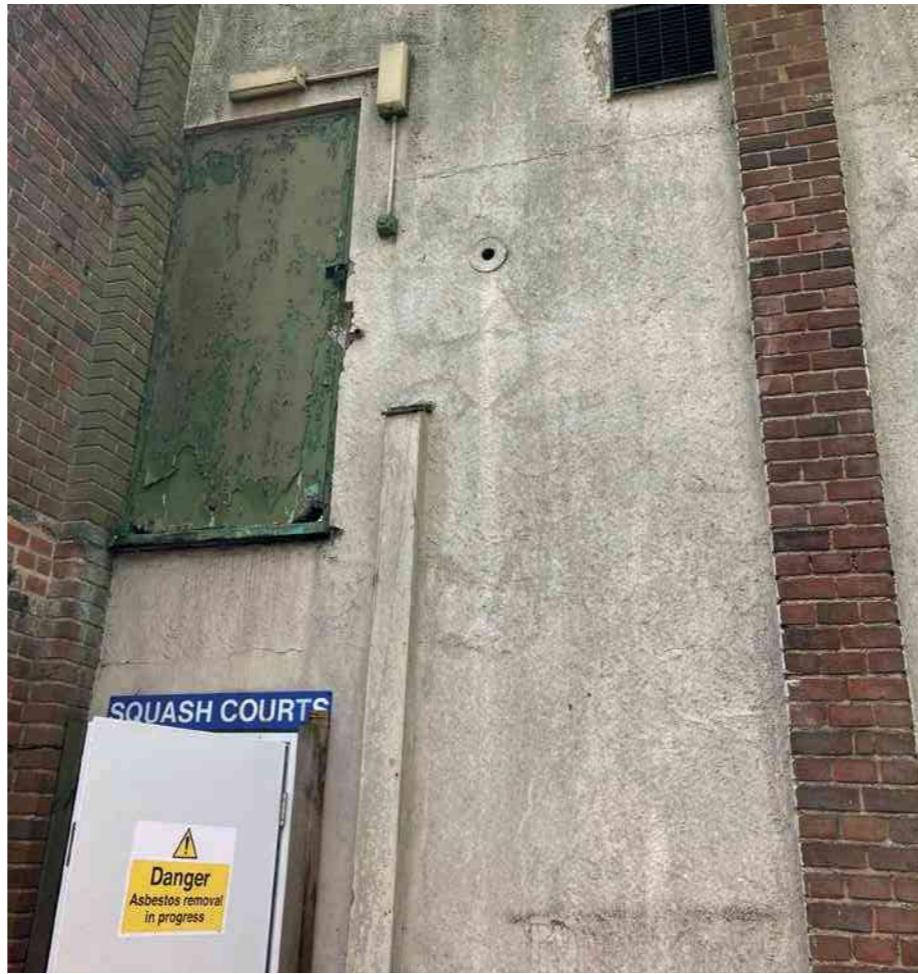


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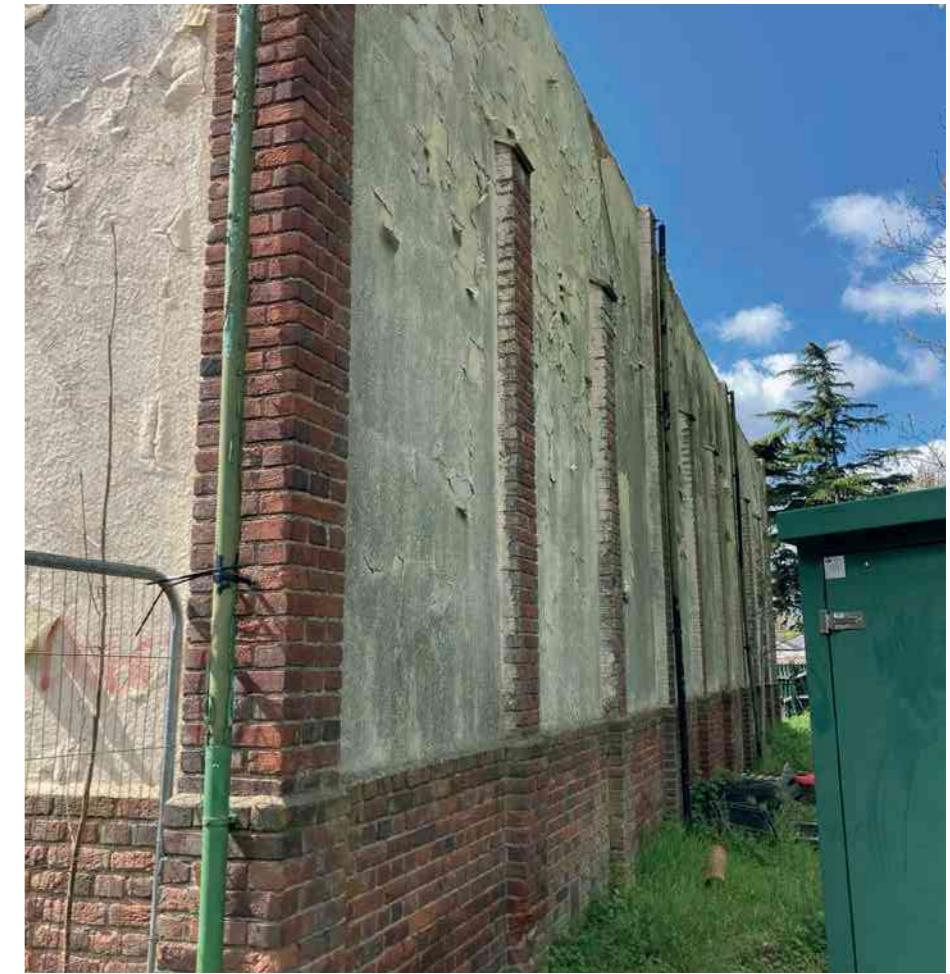
Squash Courts - Exterior and Ground Floor



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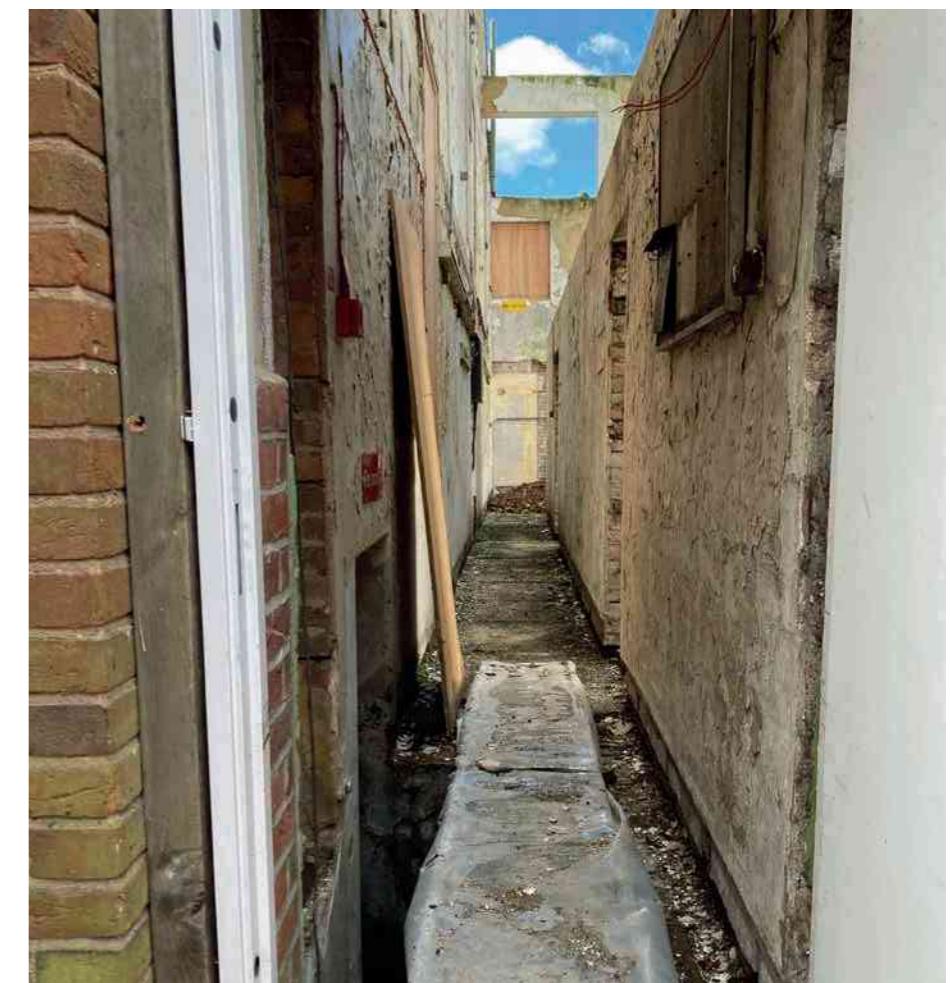
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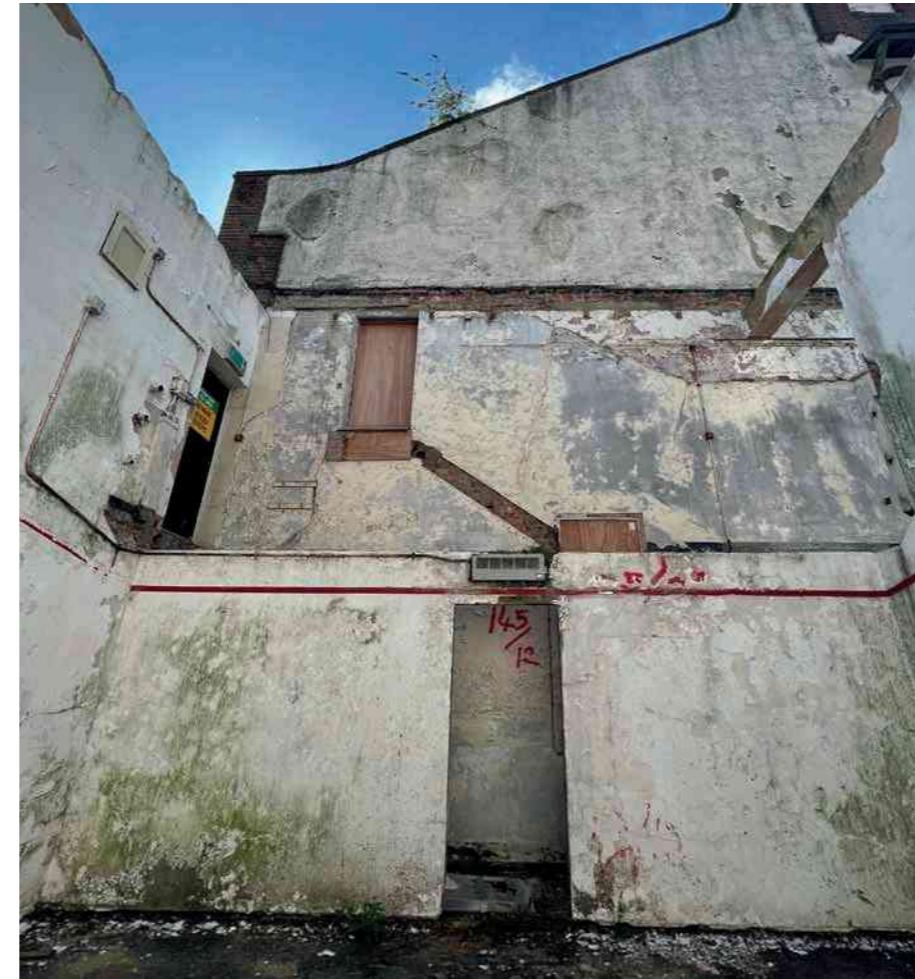


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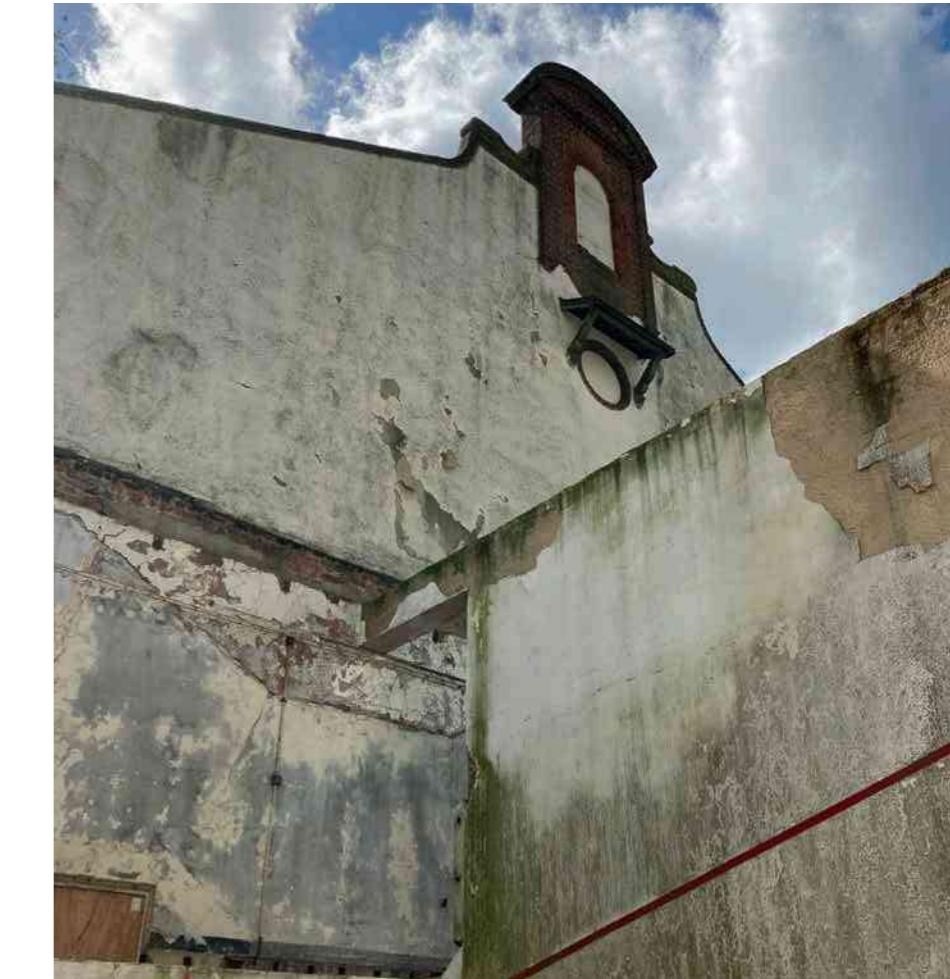
Squash Courts - Exterior and Ground Floor



g



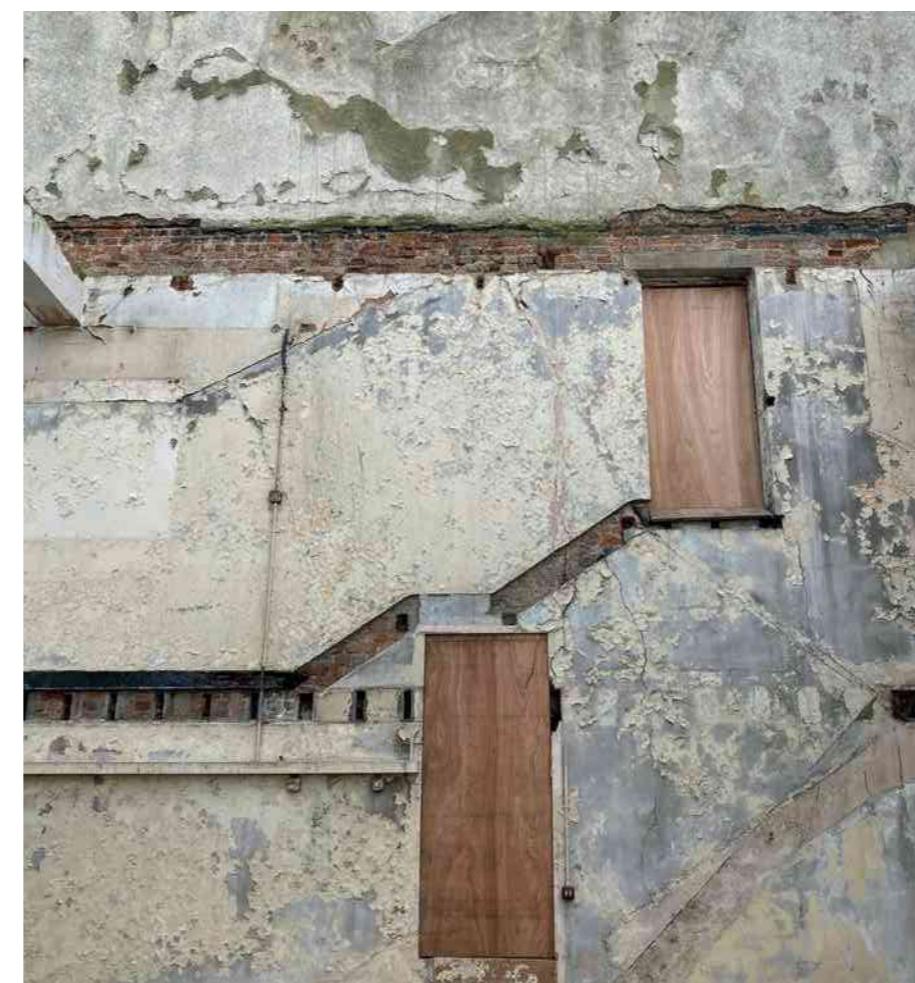
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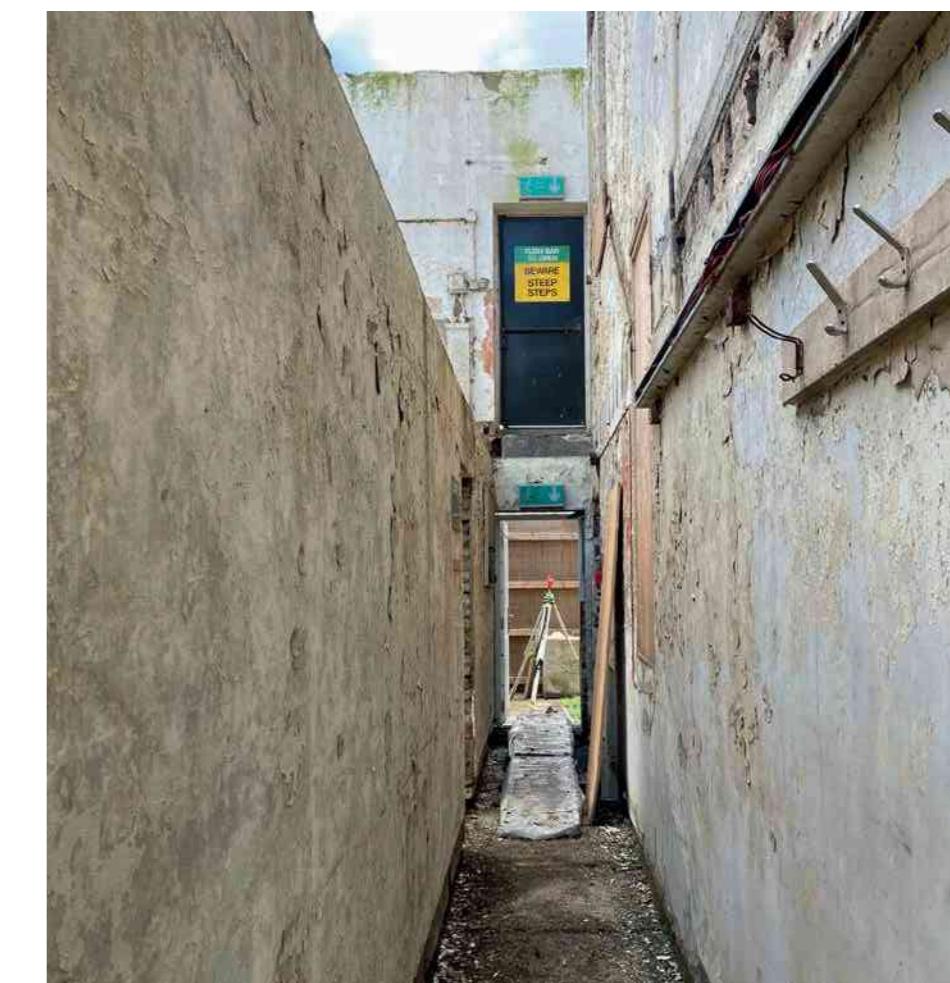
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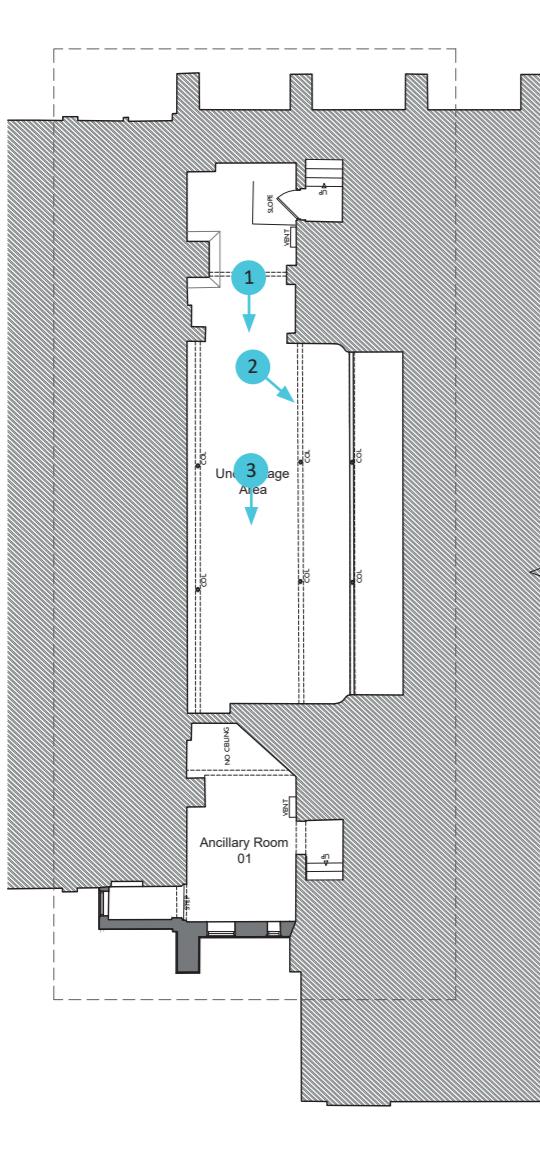
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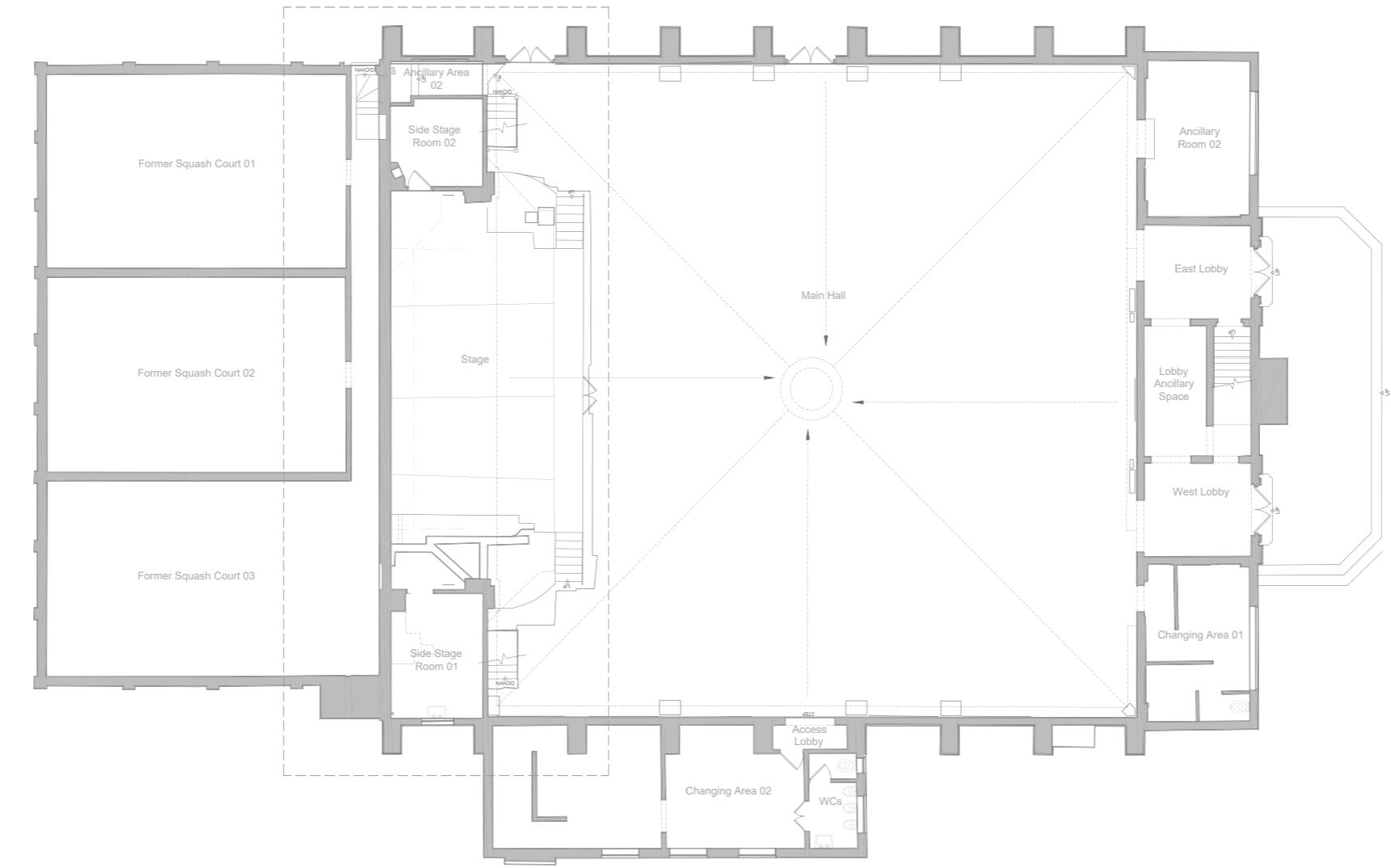
k



l



1 Lower Ground Floor Plan - Existing
1010 1:100

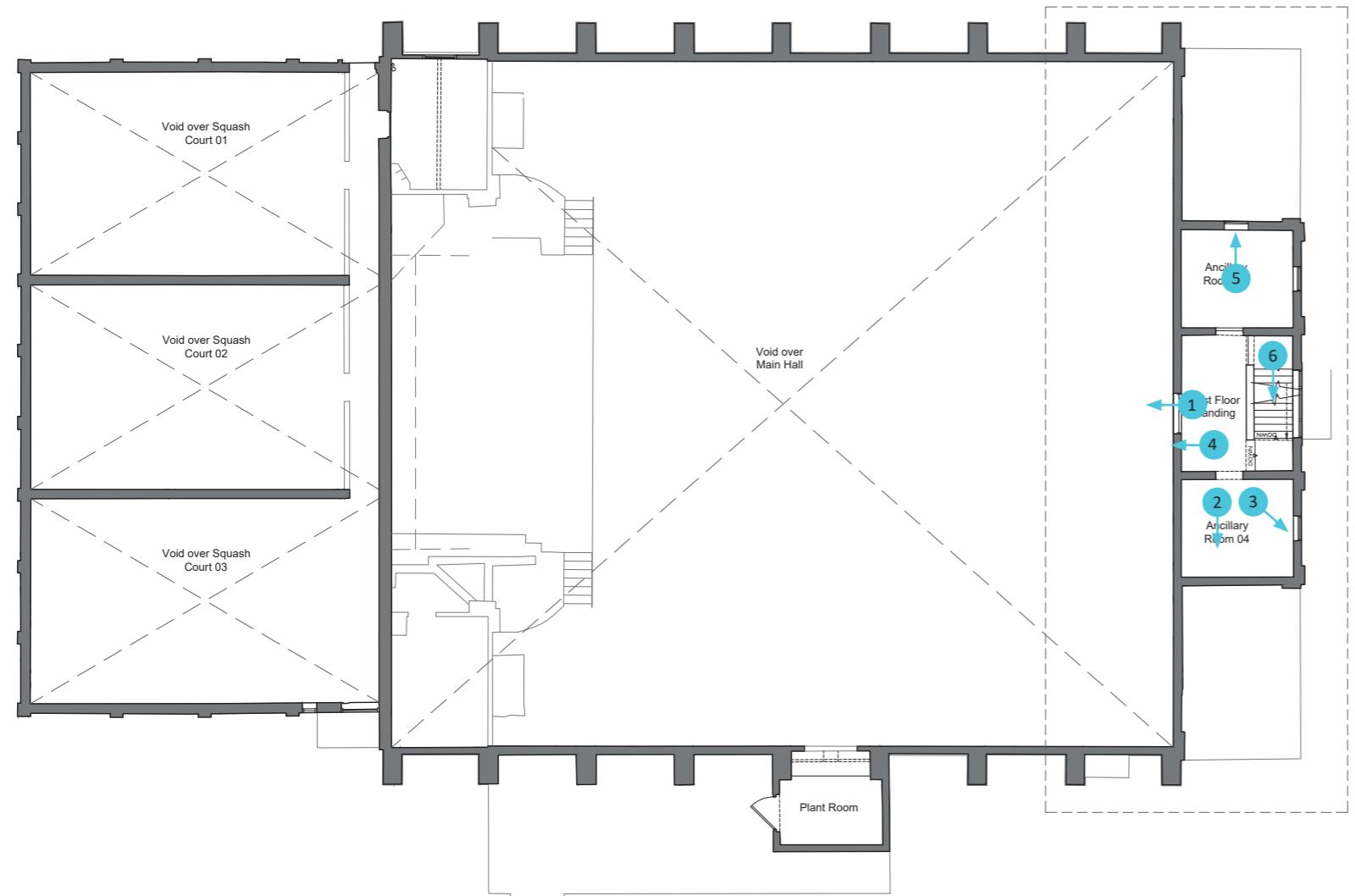


2 Ground Floor Plan - Existing
1010 1:100

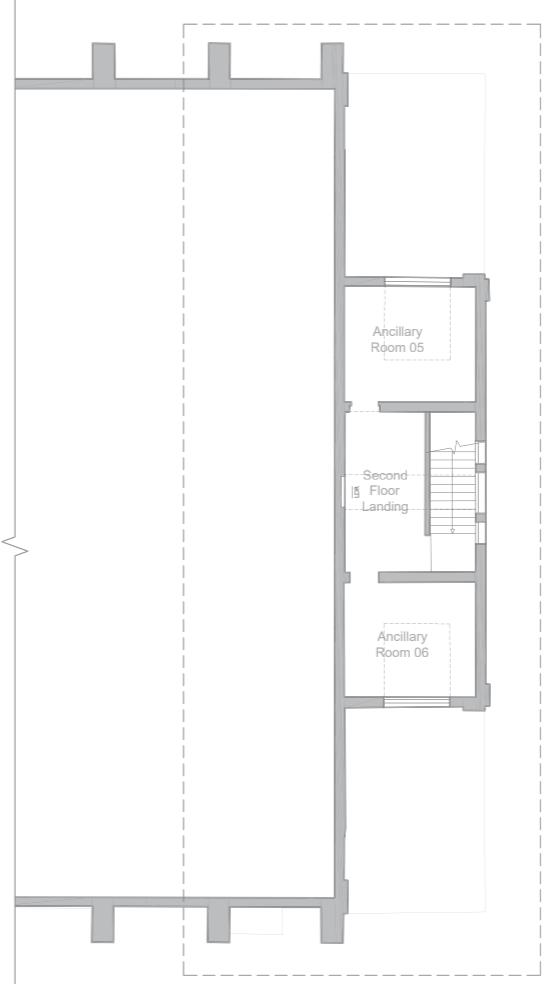
<p>Notes: Drawings are based on survey data and may not accurately represent what is physically present. Drawing may be scaled from for planning purposes only. All dimensions are to be verified on site before proceeding with the work. All dimensions are in millimetres unless noted otherwise. Purcell shall be notified in writing of any discrepancies.</p>													
<p>Key Plan not to scale</p>													
<p>KEY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red line: Listed Building Consent Application Boundary Red dashed line: Full Element of Amended Hybrid Planning Application 													
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DRAWING NUMBER													
243052-PUR-00-ZZ-DR-A-1010													

Former Cinema – Lower Ground Floor





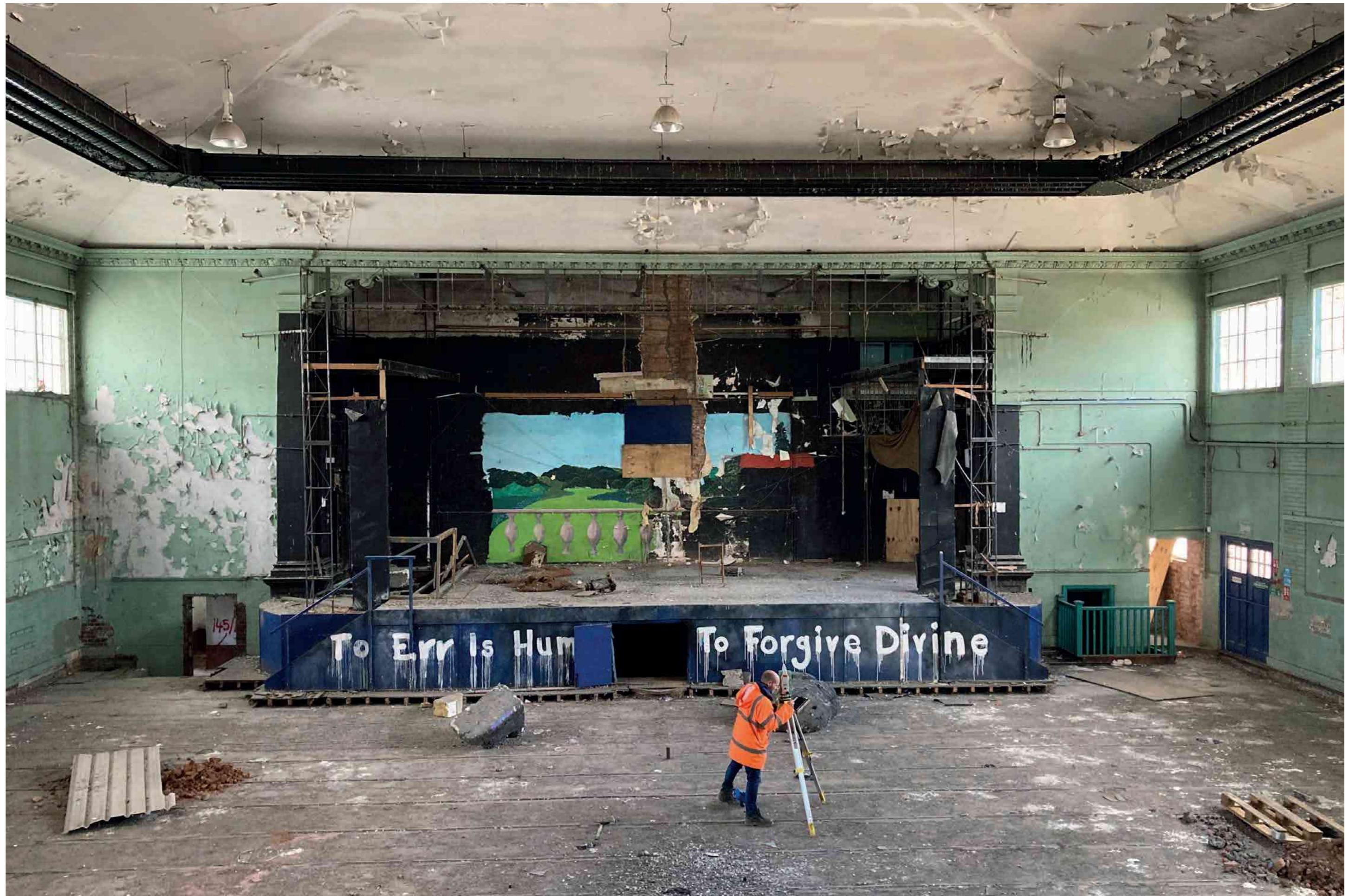
1 First Floor Plan - Existing
1011 1:100



2 Second Floor Plan- Existing
1011 1:100

<p>Notes:</p> <p>Drawings are based on survey data and may not accurately represent what is physically present.</p> <p>Drawing may be scaled from for planning purposes only. All dimensions are to be verified on site before proceeding with the work.</p> <p>All dimensions are in millimetres unless noted otherwise.</p> <p>Purcell shall be notified in writing of any discrepancies.</p>																	
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REV	DATE	BY	CHK	DESCRIPTION													

Former Cinema – First Floor



Former Cinema – First Floor



2



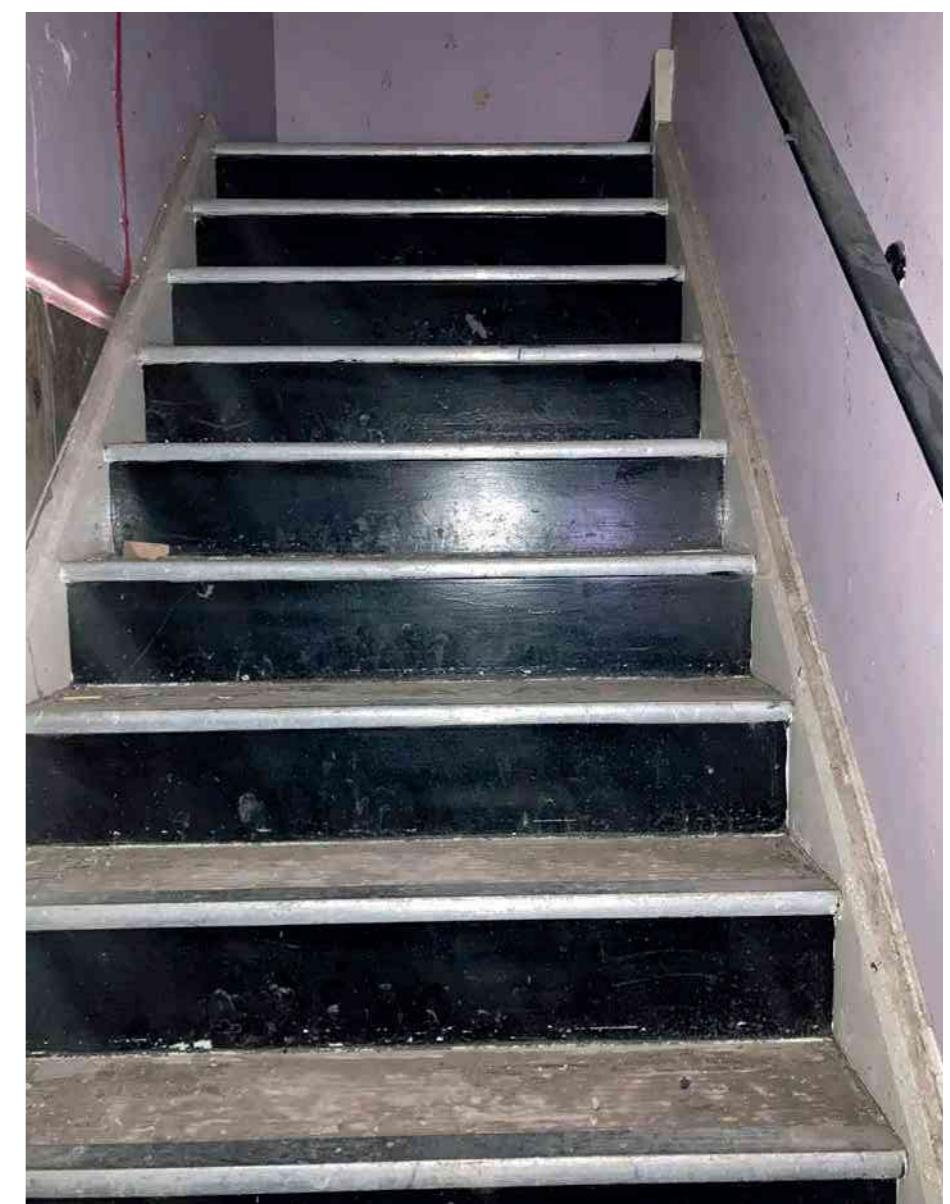
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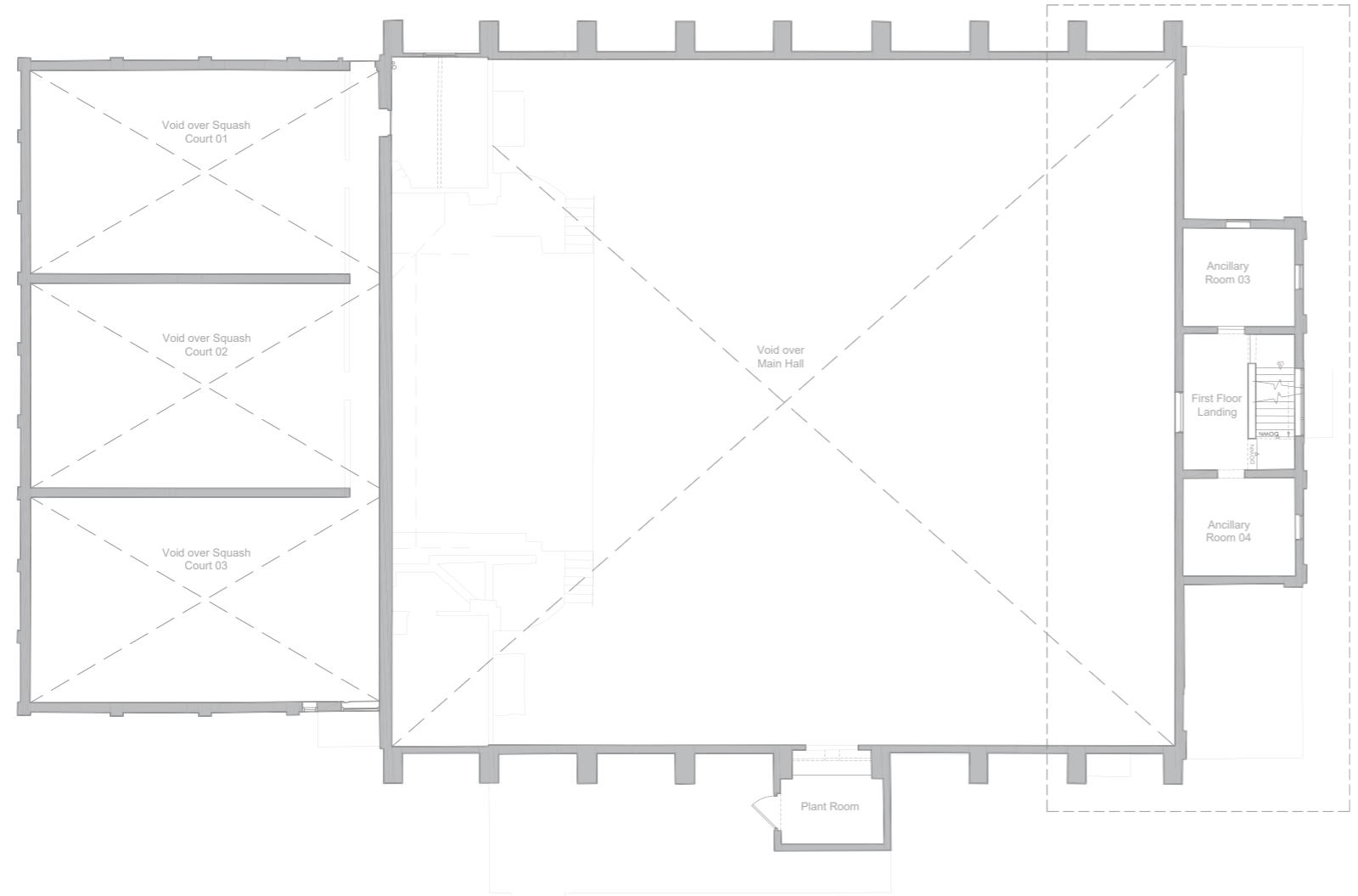
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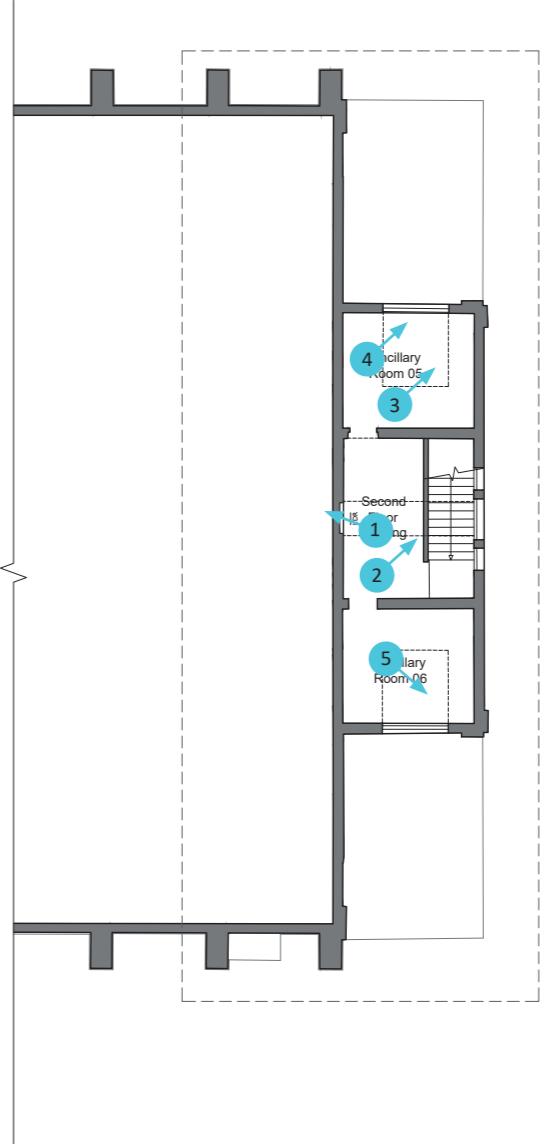
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6



1 First Floor Plan - Existing
1011 1:100



2 Second Floor Plan- Existing
1011 1:100

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C01	05/06/2024	JR	AJ	Listed Building Consent													
REV	DATE	BY	CHK	DESCRIPTION													

Former Cinema – Second Floor



1



2



3



5



4

Appendix 4 Additional Historic Photos and Plans

Figure 5.1 RAF Uxbridge and Hillingdon Court, Uxbridge, from the west, 1921.



Source: This image has been produced from a print. Historic England. Aerofilms Collection EPW006640 flown 1st June 1921

Figure 5.2 Orchard Waye, Manor Waye and environs, Uxbridge 1933



Source: Historic England. Aerofilms Collection. EPW041124 flown 1st May 1933.

Figure 5.3 Hillingdon Golf Course and the town, Uxbridge, from the south-east, 1933



Source: Historic England Aerofilms Collection. EPW041127 flown 1st May 1933.

Figure 5.4 The terminus of the LPTB Metropolitan Line, RAF Uxbridge and environs, Uxbridge, 1934.



Source: Historic England Aerofilms Collection. EPW044205 flown 1st May 1934

Figure 5.5 Historic England Archive (RAF photography)



Source: raf_540_73_ssfo_0010 flown 15th August 1948

Figure 5.6 Aerial photo, flown 7th May 2008



Source: Historic England Aerial Photo Collection – 26001_006

Figure 5.7 Aerial photo, flown 7th May 2008



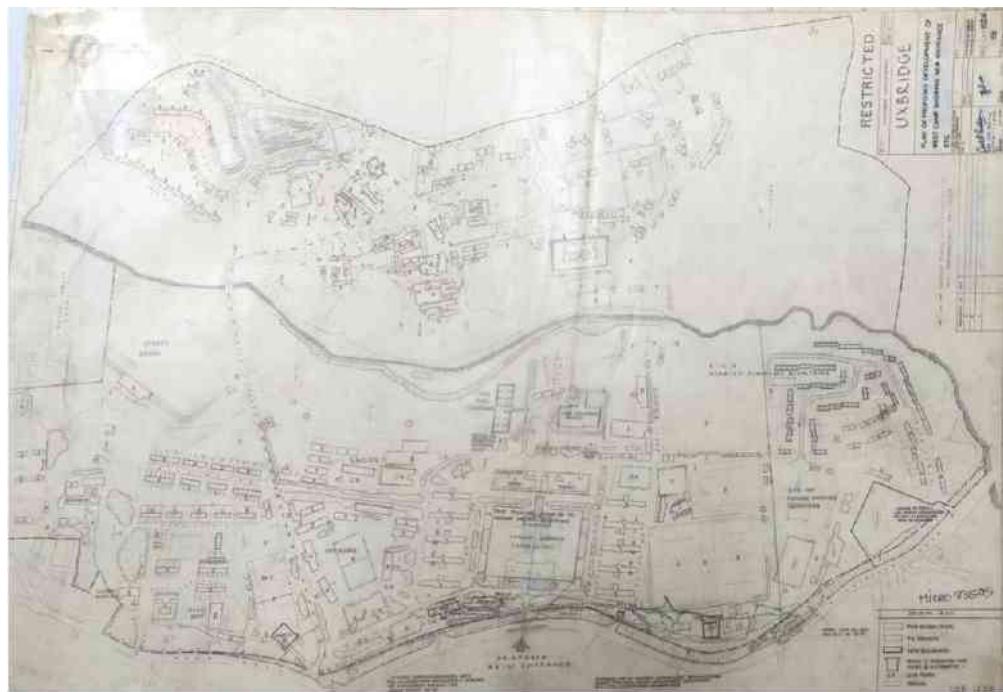
Source: Historic England Aerial Photo Collection – 26001_007

Figure 5.8 Aerial photo, flown 7th May 2008



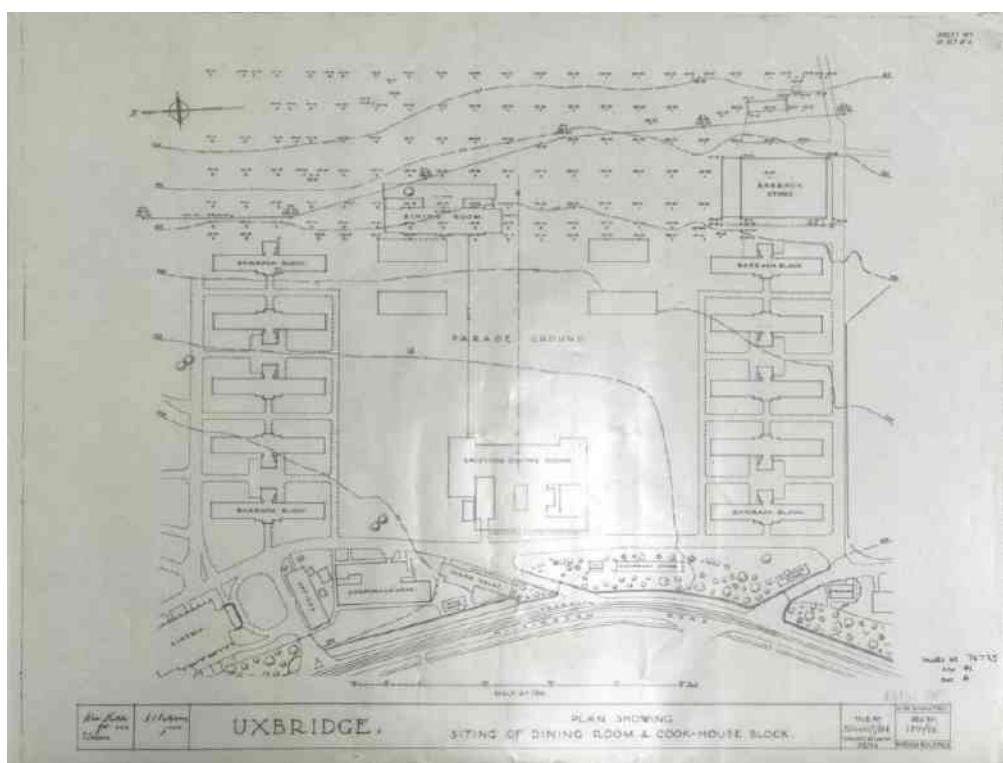
Source: Historic England Aerial Photo Collection – 26001_008

Figure 5.9 Plan of Proposed Development of West Camp Showing New Entrance Etc. 1963

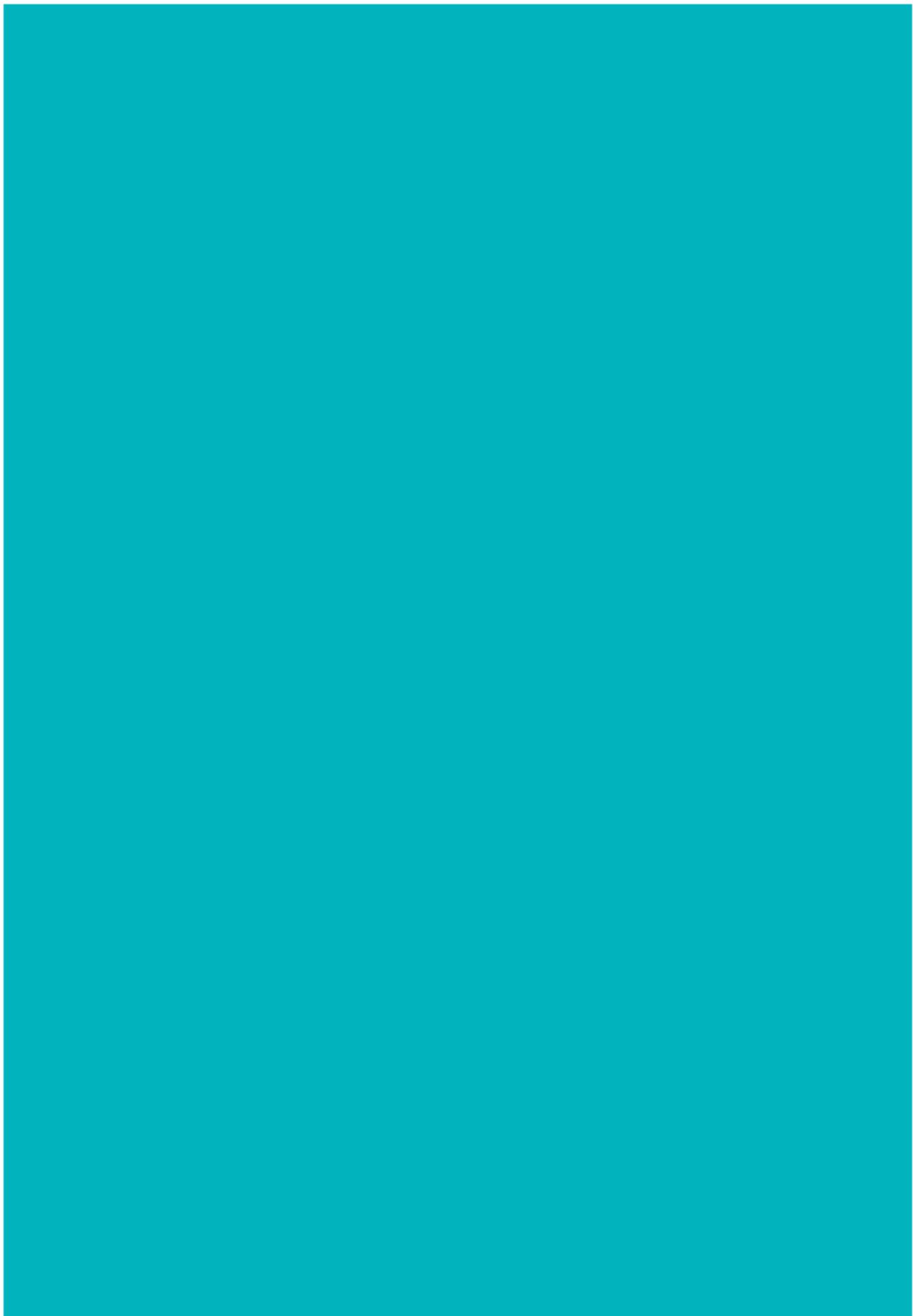


Source: National Archives ref. DEFE 221/1001

Figure 5.10 Plan Showing Siting of Dining Room & Cook-House Block, undated



Source: National Archives ref. DEFE 221/1001



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