

Statement Heritage

Guildhall, 13 Pike Street, Liskeard PL14 3JE

Heritage Impact Assessment – works requiring Listed Building Consent

SH Ref LISKGUIv1.0

09/04/2024

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NHLE1206610 GII* *Guildhall*



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This statement was prepared at pre-application stage by Daniel Ratcliffe BA MA MCIfA in March 2024.

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Thanks are extended to the client for their commissioning of this document and for their co-operation and assistance in its production.

Summary

This assessment presents recording of and research into the Guildhall, Liskeard in order to inform proposals for restoration and access improvements. The building is GII Listed.*

The current Guildhall dates to 1859 and was at least the third building on the site to provide civic, judicial and market functions under one roof, the earliest recorded dating to around 1574.

The Victorian rebuilding was first proposed by Henry Rice in 1853, soon after his appointment as Borough Surveyor, but negotiations with the Home Office (responsible for the court which by then operated from the building) over funding took some years. In consequence of their funding the Home Office provided their in-house Surveyor of County Courts, Charles Reeves, as lead architect, and the building shares the Itallianate style which Reeves established for the many courts he designed, and indeed those of successive Home Office architects. Rice provided designs for internal fittings for the ground floor meat market, and, later, for a dias platform for a Council Chamber.

Externally the building projects the civil and economic heritage of Liskeard alongside the national projection of judicial authority.

Internally the building originally provided a main hall, being used by the County Court (and later Magistrates) and a smaller Reading Room, being converted in 1867 into a Council Chamber – but also probably used as a retiring room or second courtroom. As is characteristic of Victorian court buildings separate entrances were provided for judges and for the public, each leading via separate stairs to the first-floor halls.

Whilst the staircases of the building, the sense of internal space within the two principal rooms, and some of the original internal fixtures of the building survive, the original dias platform of the main courtroom has been lost, as have a number of fireplaces. The original meat market fittings were replaced by the mid-20th century by the current shop-units, which subdivide and conceal the original surface finishes here.

The building's first floor spaces appear to have served its original uses for approximately 100 years, but by the mid-20th century it is clear from a number of newspaper reports that the building was increasingly seen as unfit for modern requirements, being characterised as cold, dark and having difficult acoustics. Proposals to invest in significant upgrading of the facilities of the building were put together in the early 1960s, but proved beyond the means of the Town Council, and were not favoured by further investment from the Home Office. Probably in consequence both the Town Council and the Magistrates appear to have largely migrated to more modern and comfortable premises by the 1970s.

Since the 1970s the building appears to have been put largely to ad-hoc use as a community and occasionally civic events space, for storage, and most recently as rented commercial accommodation for an architects practice and gymnasium. Lighting, heating, access and ventilation arrangements remain outdated and unsuitable for modern use without significant investment.

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Common acronyms and specialist terms found in *Statement Heritage Reports*.

Architectural terms are generally taken from the Oxford Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture [online version here](#); the glossaries provided by Pevsner Architectural Guides [here](#) and within RW Brunskill's 'Vernacular Architecture'.

Archaeological terminology is generally compliant with Historic England Thesauri available [here](#).

Historic England's 'Introductions to Heritage Assets' and 'Designation Selection Guides' are particularly useful for thematic discussions of heritage asset classes. These may be freely downloaded [here](#).

Adaptive Reuse. The process of reusing a heritage asset for a purpose other than it was originally designed for.

Archaeological Evaluation. The field testing of land by either remote sensing or direct interventions (digging) to establish the presence / absence, extent, type, date, significance and potential of archaeological features.

Archaeological Interest. The potential for a heritage asset (building, landscape or monument) to hold evidence of past human activity worthy of investigation.

Authenticity. The degree to which the relationship between a heritage asset, and the information sources on which its heritage values are ascribed, is 'truthful and authentic' (adapted from the *Nara Document on Authenticity*, ICOMOS, 1994).

AOD. Above Ordnance Datum. Heights given in 'AOD' are quoted in metres relative to '[Ordnance Datum Newlyn](#)'.

BCE. Before Common Era. Used in preference to the notation 'BC' when giving dates from the Gregorian Calendar.

CE. Common Era. Used in preference to the notation 'AD' when giving dates from the Gregorian Calendar.

CIfA. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. Professional institute. Individually MCIfA (Member); ACIfA (Associate); PCIfA (Practitioner).

CSHER/HER. Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record. The definitive record of the designated and undesignated historic environment of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, managed by Cornwall Council.

CLP. Cornwall Local Plan. <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/22936789/adopted-local-plan-strategic-policies-2016.pdf>. Planning determinations are expected to be in conformity with local planning policy.

CRO. Cornwall Record Office. References prefixed CRO indicate the local record office reference number of archive documents.

Designated / Protected Heritage Asset. A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

DTM. Digital Terrain Model.

GI, GII*, GII etc. Listed Buildings and Registered Parks and Gardens are graded according to their importance. GI and II* are the highest grades triggering consultation by *LPAs* of Historic England and specific protections under the NPPF.

HE. Historic England. The Government's statutory advisory body on the historic environment.

Heritage Asset. A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing) (NPPF).

Historic Environment. All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora. (NPPF)

HIA. Heritage Impact Appraisal. A document assessing the presence / absence, significance of, and impacts to heritage assets, usually prepared in preparation of LPA consent processes.

HLC. Historic Landscape Characterisation. A technique of historic landscape analysis based on the identification of areas sharing common features, patterns and attributes related to their historic development.

IHBC. Institute for Historic Building Conservation. Professional institute.

Integrity. a measure of the wholeness and intactness of [a heritage asset] (UNESCO World Heritage Operational Guidance).

Legibility. the degree to which the values of a heritage asset are 'clear enough to read' (OED).

LPA. Local Planning Authority.

Mitigation. Measures to limit or avoid the harm of an action. Specifically used within archaeological work to refer to the processes of converting *archaeological interest* to an archive to advance understanding of a heritage asset, sometimes known as *preservation by record*.

NA: National Archives. References prefixed 'NA' indicate the reference number of archive documents held in the National Archives.

NHLE: National Heritage List for England. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>. The definitive record of protected (designated) heritage assets in England.

Non-designated Heritage Asset. 'Buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets' (NPPF). Buried archaeological remains may fall into this category, unless their significance is 'demonstrably equivalent to Scheduled Monuments' (NPPF footnote 63).

NPPF. National Planning Policy Framework. Central Government framework for planning in England.

OS. Ordnance Survey.

OS NGR. OS National Grid Reference.

OUV: Outstanding Universal Value. Used within World Heritage Site practice to describe the heritage values that make it worthy of inscription as such.

Preservation by Record. See *mitigation*.

Preservation 'in aspic'. The aesthetic presentation of a heritage asset as if its decay were frozen in time.

Preservation 'in situ'. The simplest and best form of archaeological mitigation is to leave the evidence undisturbed, i.e. through an informed foundation design.

Setting. The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.(NPPF)

Significance. The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. (NPPF)

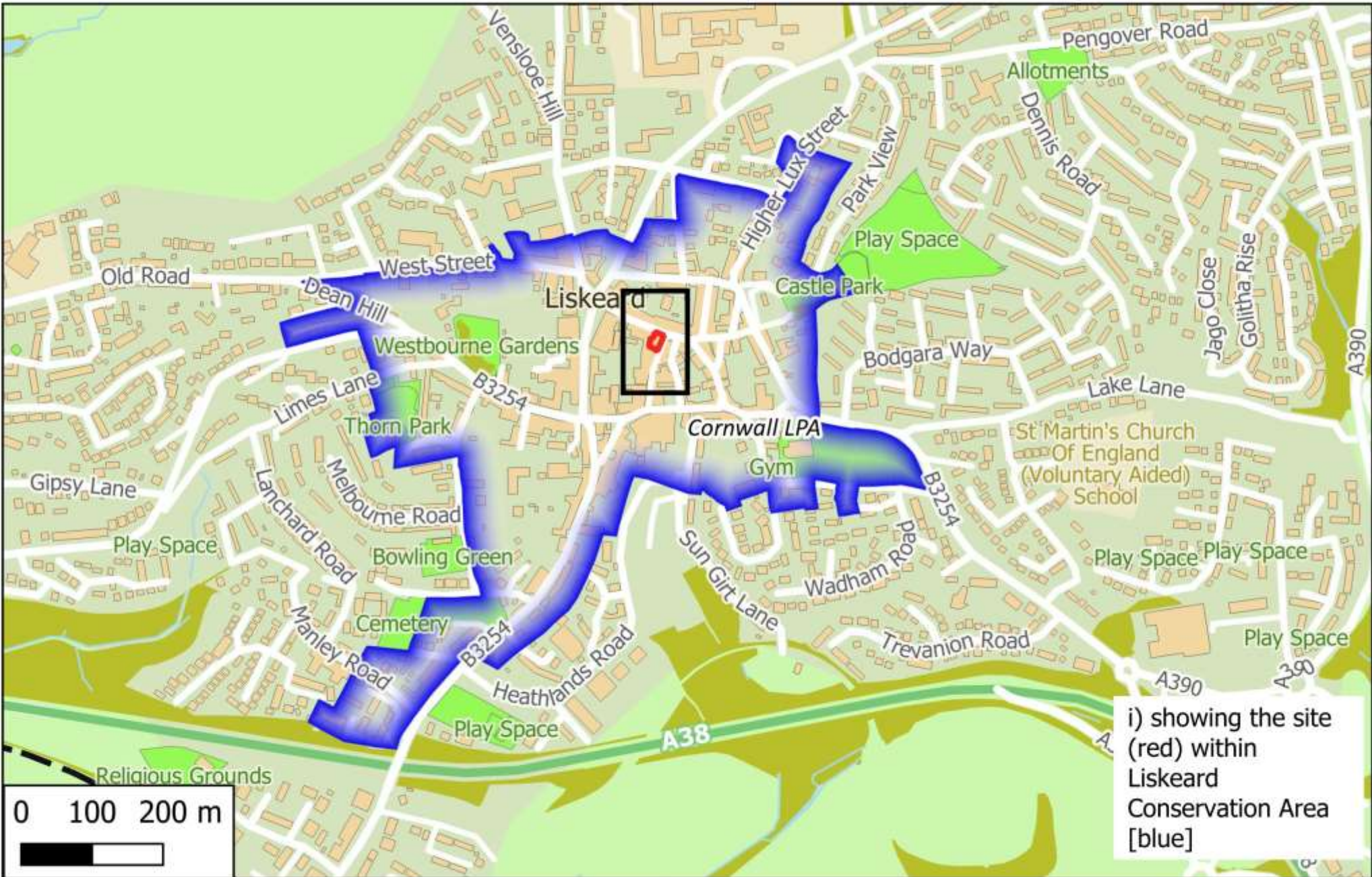
SPD. Supplementary Planning Document. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) build upon and provide more detailed guidance about policies in the Local Plan. Legally, they do not form part of the Local Plan itself and they are not subject to independent examination, but they are material considerations in determining planning applications.

WHS. World Heritage Site.

ZTV. Zone of Theoretical Visibility. A computer-generated prediction of the visibility of a point or group of points within a 'bare earth' model of a landscape (i.e. one in which trees and buildings are imagined to have been removed). Such models deliberately over-estimate inter-visibility in order to increase the confidence by which non-visibility can be predicted.

1 Introduction

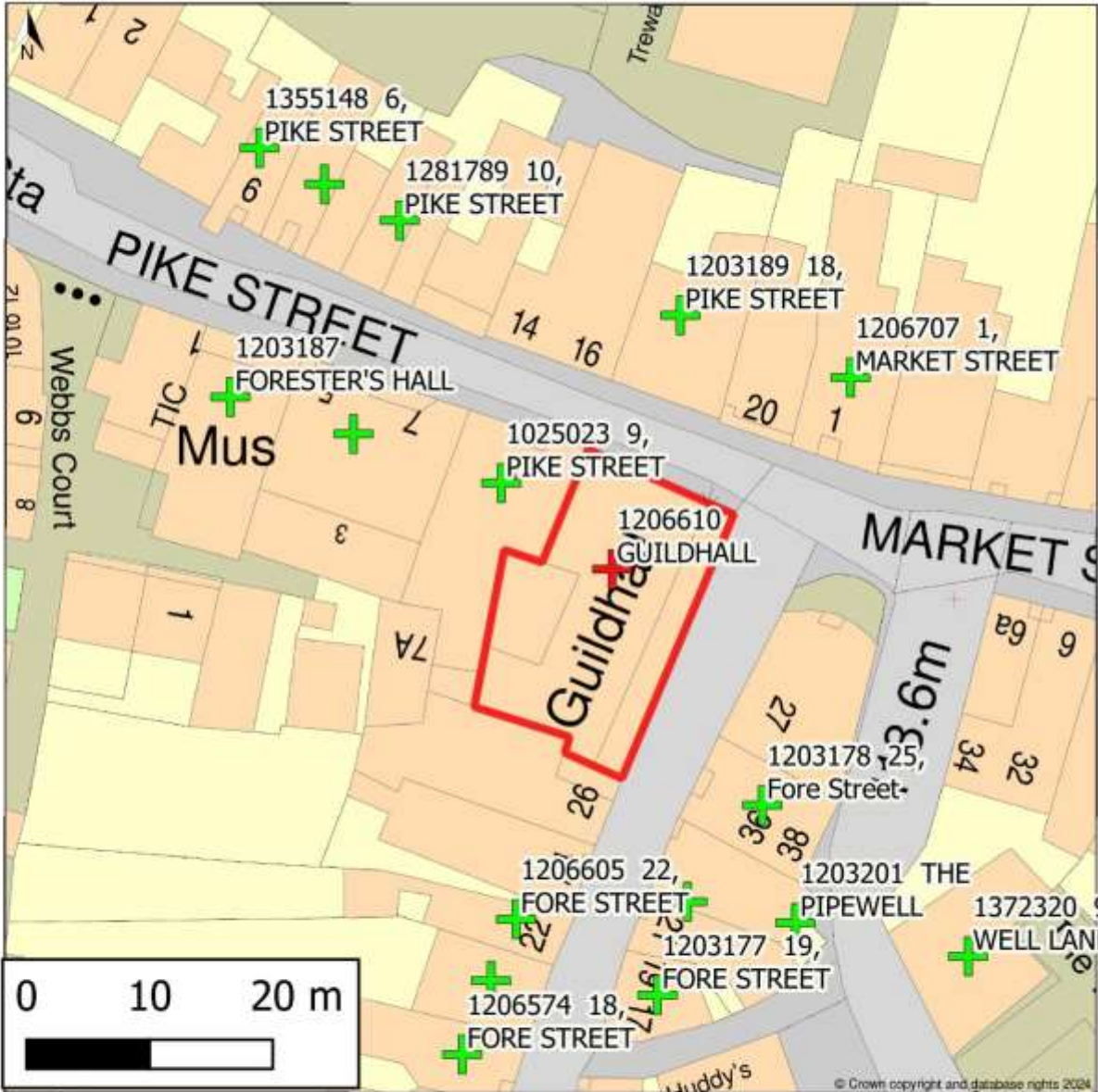
- 1.1. This report has been commissioned by the client to better understand the heritage values of the Guildhall in Liskeard with a view to informing and identifying the impacts of proposed works requiring Listed Building Consent.
- 1.2. The location of the building is shown at **figure 1**. The site lies within the historic and modern ecclesiastical parish of *Liskeard*.
- 1.3. The property was built as a town hall and county court with marketplace beneath in 1859-68 on the site of an earlier building of the same function. It is GII* Listed (NHLE 1206610). The owners of the building, Liskeard Town Council, wish to renovate and refurbish the building, adding a lift and kitchen to support ongoing sustainable use as a public hall and events space, whilst reconfiguring modern ground floor shop-units.
- 1.4. The aim of the current report is to illustrate and explore the historic and architectural special interest of the building to inform proposals. Methods are informed by Historic England's best practice notes (Making Changes to Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2016) and Understanding Historic Buildings (2016), Statements of Significance (2019)) and the approach to design set out in Cornwall Council's Design Guide (draft) (2021): The report:
 - Identifies the context of the building and relevant statutory designations
 - describes, via a map regression exercise of large scale (1:2500) Ordnance Survey historic maps, the development of the surroundings including the approximate date of the buildings within the Site's immediate setting;
 - draws on archive and bibliographic sources to describe its history
 - ascribes, and assesses the results of, our own field-based recording and analysis of the building and surroundings;
 - describes the significance of the assets assessed;
 - considers the typical, potential impact to the significance, and heritage values, of the assets affected, as relevant to a proposal for refurbishment and reuse
 - considers mitigation and design recommendations.
- 1.5. Geologically. The bedrock beneath *Liskeard* is the *Saltash Formation – Slate and Siltstone*, a Devonian slatestone being the predominant vernacular walling material of the town, but local granites, particularly from *Bodmin Moor*, and elvans have been widely used for architectural details such as plinths, lintels, strings and quoins, with examples of more distant imports such as *Portland* and *Bath* limestones, and polychromatic brick used for architectural effect on high status buildings. Historic roofs are mostly of North Cornwall slate, also used extensively as slate hanging on weather exposed elevations.



Buy A Plan



The Town Clerk, Store At, Guildhall, 13, Pike Street, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 3JE



ii) Showing listed buildings around the site (green = GII; red = GII*)

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1: Location

Site Plan (also called a Block Plan) shows area bounded by: 225152.93, 84516.93 225242.93, 84608.93 (at a scale of 1:500). OSGridRef: SX25196456. The representation of a road, track or path is no evidence of a right of way. The representation of features as lines is no evidence of a property boundary.
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2 Designations (see figure 1)

- 2.1. The site lies entirely within the **Liskeard Conservation Area**, first designated by the Local Planning Authority in 1977, with the most recent appraisal and management plan being undertaken by Cornwall Council in 2012¹.
- 2.2. The current statutory basis for Conservation Area designation is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires Local Planning Authorities to designate ‘*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*’. Planning permission is required for ‘relevant demolition’² within a conservation area. In exercising its planning functions the Act requires that ‘*special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*’ (1990, s72)
- 2.3. The Act also places a positive duty on LPAs to review and formulate policies for the management of Conservation Areas (1990, s71). This duty is typically discharged through the commissioning of ‘Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans’ on which local people are consulted, prior to formal adoption as part of the Local Plan.
- 2.4. Buildings are added to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest by the Secretary of State for Digital Culture Media and Sport. The current statutory basis is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Special interest is determined on a national basis according to non-statutory Principles of Selection available from the Department DCMS³. Listed Building Consent is required for all works to a listed building which affect its character as a building of special interest.
- 2.5. The **Guildhall** is listed at Grade II*. GII* buildings are described by the Secretary of State as *particularly important buildings of more than special interest*. GII* buildings represent around 5% of the national total. The full list description for the building is as follows: *County court and town hall with clock tower. 1858. By Reeves of Reeves & Butcher⁴. Coursed dressed freestone with granite dressings; hipped slate roof with projecting granite eaves on modillions; axial brick stacks; cast-iron ogee gutters. Corner site plan with 5 bays to Fore Street and 3 bays plus clock tower to Pike Street. Italianate style. 2 storeys plus attic and 3 stages of clock tower above eaves level. Rusticated rock-faced dressings to ground floor and vermiculated rustications to corner piers flanking Fore Street front. 5 windows to Fore Street; 3 windows to Pike Street. Round-arched horned sashes with margin panes within moulded ordered stone architraves on moulded sills linked to plain string and tall keyblocks linked to moulded sill band of squat attic storey with deeply recessed windows with margin panes; roundels over corner. Ground floor is open loggia round arcade to Fore Street with original cast-iron gates on left and window with spoked fanlight to similar opening to Pike Street. Clocktower has 2 round-arched lights to each face: 1st stage above roof has cast-iron grilles; 2nd stage has squat engaged columns with rear Ionic capitals; moulded string above and clock face to each side under open segmental pediments linked to moulded cornice on paired stone consoles; all surmounted by weather vane. INTERIOR: original*

¹ The document is published in draft as part of the evidence based for the Liskeard Neighbourhood Plan and it is uncertain if the current document was formally adopted by the LPA in its own right

<https://www.planliskeard.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Liskeard-Conservation-Area-Character-Appraisal-and-Management-Plan.pdf>.

² Demolition of a building with a volume of 115 cubic metres or more. Demolition of any gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure with: A height of one metre or more if next to a highway (including a public footpath or bridleway), waterway or open space, or a height of two metres or more elsewhere

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-of-selection-for-listing-buildings>

⁴ Various sources attribute the building jointly to *Henry Rice*, borough surveyor to Liskeard. Rice’s signature is on a number of drawings for internal fixtures, but the building was jointly funded by the Home Office

open-well open-string staircase with mahogany handrail scrolled over newel; quatrefoil tracery supporting 2nd flight and landing above. Council chamber with panelled ceiling and other features not inspected. A fine and prominent example of its type, by a noteworthy local architect.

Listed buildings and surrounding character

- 2.6. The 2012 draft *Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan* identifies 6 distinct character areas. The *Guildhall* lies within *The Market Core* character area comprising what was probably the core of the town by the late 14th century, by which time the market area of the town is thought to have migrated from its original location immediately to the west of the church to the area to the east of *Fore Street*, the south of *Market Street* the west of *Church Street* and the north of *Pondbridge Hill*. This area remains '*part of the principal shopping area in the town with a busy thriving atmosphere*' (Cornwall Council 2021, 30).
- 2.7. The clock tower of the *Guildhall* is a dominant feature of the streetscape of *Fore Street* in approaches from the south, of *Pike Street* in approaches from the west and of *Market Street* in approaches from the east, so acting as a focal point for each of these streets. The medieval origin of the streets is legible through their sinuous building lines, often narrow widths and in the variation in building heights and styles, reflecting many centuries of piecemeal redevelopment within their typically narrow plot boundaries.
- 2.8. The building's frontage with *Fore Street* (typically in southwestern usage the street 'before' the market), contains its arcaded frontage originally providing access into a meat market or 'shambles' and faces the site of a further *Market House* built in 1822, mostly demolished in 1957 (MCO54284) and replaced with a brick fronted commercial building. The only part of the building surviving is an 1865 classical frontage by *Henry Rice* at 25 *Fore St* (NHLE1203178) with three round-headed openings and a modillion bracketed pediment (GII NHLE1203178). Further along *Fore Street* numbers 11-22 form a fine heterogenous group of mixed date, mostly with 19th or 20th century shopfronts at street level but with rendered townhouse frontages at first floor – many by *Henry Rice*. The oldest of these first and second floor frontages are those of numbers 11 and 22 both probably (NHLE1281820) merchant houses of the late 17th century, others have mostly 18th and 19th century characteristics, although internal inspection may well reveal earlier phases. The buildings at the core of this group (14-18 on the west side) and (11-16 on the east side) were all refronted to the designs of *Henry Rice* in c1855 (Vaughan-Ellis *et al* 2010).
- 2.9. The building's frontage with *Pike Street* includes a further former access into the *shambles* and the access into its clocktower and offices. Again these buildings sit within what are potentially medieval or early modern narrow urban plots, probably developed into two- and three storey townhouses by the 18th century, and again *Henry Rice* drawings indicate he was responsible for the refronting of most of them (numbers 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 all listed GII), in the mid-19th century (*ibid*) as he was for numbers 1, 7 and 11 *Market St* to the north east.

3 Historic Background

Liskeard

- 3.1. Except where stated, the following history of Liskeard is mostly summarised from the excellent *Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey* characterisation of the town by Bridget Gilliard (2005) which was funded by *English Heritage*, *Objective One* (EU HMG), and the SW Regional Development Agency.
- 3.2. *Liskeard* was an established seat of royal power prior to the Norman conquest, the earliest reference being to *Lys Cerruyt* (court of *Cerruyt*) indicating use by a Brythonic noble or even a King of *Dumnonia* such as the 9th century *Dungarth* (commemorated at *King Doniert's Stone* (Scheduled NHLE1010873– 5km north of *Liskeard*).
- 3.3. In 1086 the *Domesday* survey recorded *Liskeard* as having a mill, extensive pastures and as one of only two established markets in *Cornwall*. It was granted following the conquest to *Robert of Mortain*, brother of *William I* and the first post-conquest *Earl of Cornwall*.
- 3.4. By the 13th century the town was granted a Borough charter to hold 2 annual fairs and in 1296 a further charter to become one of only 6 Cornish towns to form merchant guilds.
- 3.5. The town was granted Stannary rights to assay tin in 1307.
- 3.6. The role of the town in trade was reflected by a relatively substantial urban population of 1000 by 1340, with merchants concentrated in the urban core which spread from the Church into the area around the later medieval market area to the east of Fore Street.
- 3.7. The status of the *Fore Street* area was consolidated by the construction of the first *Common / Guild Hall* on the current site in c1574. The building also housed butchers stalls and a prison.
- 3.8. The old *Guildhall* was restored or rebuilt by the *Eliot* family in 1782 (Allen 1856, 289). This building is shown on an 1856 engraving surmounted by a probably timber framed clocktower was similar in conception to the current building, providing a first-floor hall above an arcaded undercroft (**figure 3**).
- 3.9. A new market hall, opposite the current site was developed in 1821 (MCO54284).
- 3.10. Plans for a replacement building were tabled by *Henry Rice*⁵, Borough surveyor, soon after his 1852 appointment in 1853. A prolonged period of correspondence and negotiation followed with central Government, with the aim of securing funding for its joint function as a County Court. Agreeing to jointly fund the building the project was assigned to *Charles Reeves* (1815-1866). *Reeves* was appointed as architect and surveyor to the Metropolitan Police in 1843, building 43 police stations, many with attached courts, around London. From 1846 the Home Office employed him as the first *Surveyor of County Courts*, for which he was responsible for 64 by the time of his death in 1866, typically in the *Italianate* style⁶.
- 3.11. The new building was opened on Thursday 6th October 1859 being described by the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* (7/10/1859) as a '*guildhall, county court and market*'. The main room was

⁵ Rice (1808-1876) apprenticed under Land Surveyor *Robert Coad* setting up an independent practice in 1837. Over 100 buildings on which he worked have been identified in Liskeard, where he was appointed first as *Inspector of Nusiances* and later as *Borough Surveyor*. He refronted many buildings in eclectic classical styles and was responsible for the first piped water supply and sewer system in the town.

⁶ <https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/architects/charles-reeves>

- described as a *public hall* with a *good panelled ceiling* and, at the north end, *the reading room*. *There is a handsome clock tower at the north-west corner, the basement of which forms a private entrance to the reading-room and hall; the principal entrance being at the south end of the building. The whole of the ground floor is appropriated to the meat market, and fitted up with stalls, having slate benches on brick piers.*
- 3.12. *Rice* is likely to have superintended the construction of the building, described by the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* as '*designed by Mr Reeves of London*' and appears to have been responsible for internal fittings, his signature appearing on drawings dated to 1858 for the Butcher's Stalls.
 - 3.13. The 1858 *Rice* drawing of the ground floor plan labels the *Pike Street* entrance '*Judges Entrance*'.
 - 3.14. Further drawings by *Rice* dated 1867 show the *Council Chamber* dias, suggesting that this space, probably that described as a *Reading Room* in 1859 was reconfigured to this purpose at this date.
 - 3.15. In 1901 the *Fire Brigade Committee* resolved to move the fire station to *a space boarded off in the meat market* (*Western Morning News*, 14/08/1901) described in a further account of the move as an existing shop.
 - 3.16. The current shop units may be those planned in 1951 following *proposals for the alteration of shop premises on the ground floor of the Guildhall which will include the construction of an arcade... improving the lay-out and facilities of these premises since the fire at a ground floor shop a few months ago.*
 - 3.17. By the 1960s it is apparent that the building provided 100 years older was perceived as showing its age. Magistrates complaints about the cold building are recorded in press reports from the 1920s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. A council discussion in January 1962 addressed complaints that the building's *drab surroundings, poor acoustics, and general unsuitability*, with the *County Architect* describing the buildings as *monumental in scale and lacking in those intimate friendly qualities desirable for social functions, small meetings etc. The fixed court furniture and dark sombre colours, the motley assortment of portable furniture, dark framed pictures create a cold, oppressive atmosphere. The entrance staircases are rather mean. The Judges room is cramped, ll shaped and poorly lighted. The only sanitary provision is one W.C.* (*Cornish Guardian* 19/01/1962).
 - 3.18. Improvements to the building requiring £9,000 funding were approved in December 1962, recounted in an article in the *Cornish Guardian* (20/12/1962). Alderman A.G. Westlake is reported to have described the building as "*Fagin's Den one end and a cats' hovel the other*" and proposed a suspended ceiling to improve acoustics and reduce heating costs, a kitchen, cloakrooms, Judges Room and portable furniture to enable alternative uses. The Council are reported to have been unanimous in supporting the scheme.
 - 3.19. A report within *Liskeard and Looe Area Notes* within the *Cornish Guardian* of December 17 1964 asked rhetorically '*what has happened to the Town Council's scheme for improving the court facilities. I find it has been put off indefinitely. No money.*' The report goes on to state '*Indeed there are few experiences in public work in the area more depressing than visiting it. It is either too cold or too hot. It is soiled and shabby. Justice could be dispensed with as much dignity in a barn.*'
 - 3.20. Fluorescent lighting was installed to replace '*five pendant lights*' in 1965 at a cost of £150 (*Cornish Guardian* 28/01/1965)

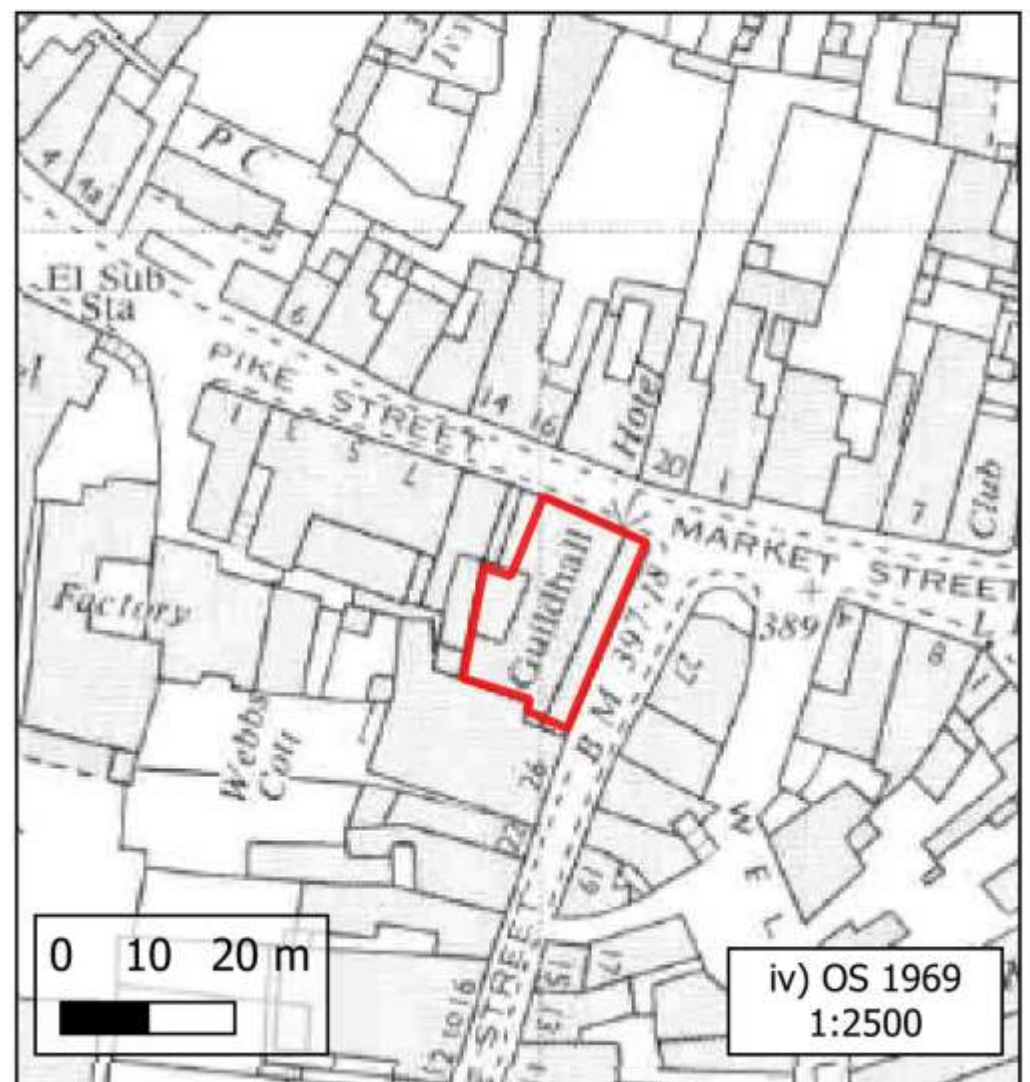
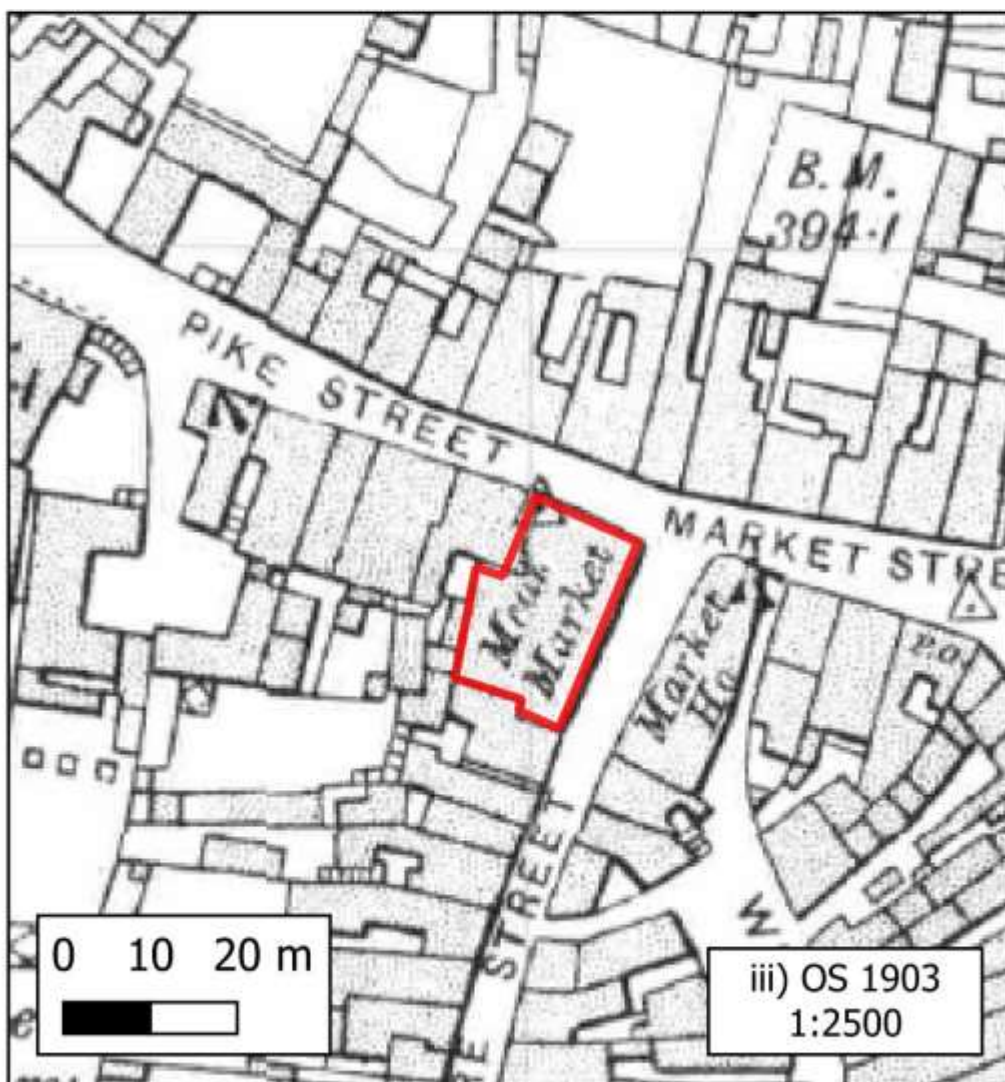
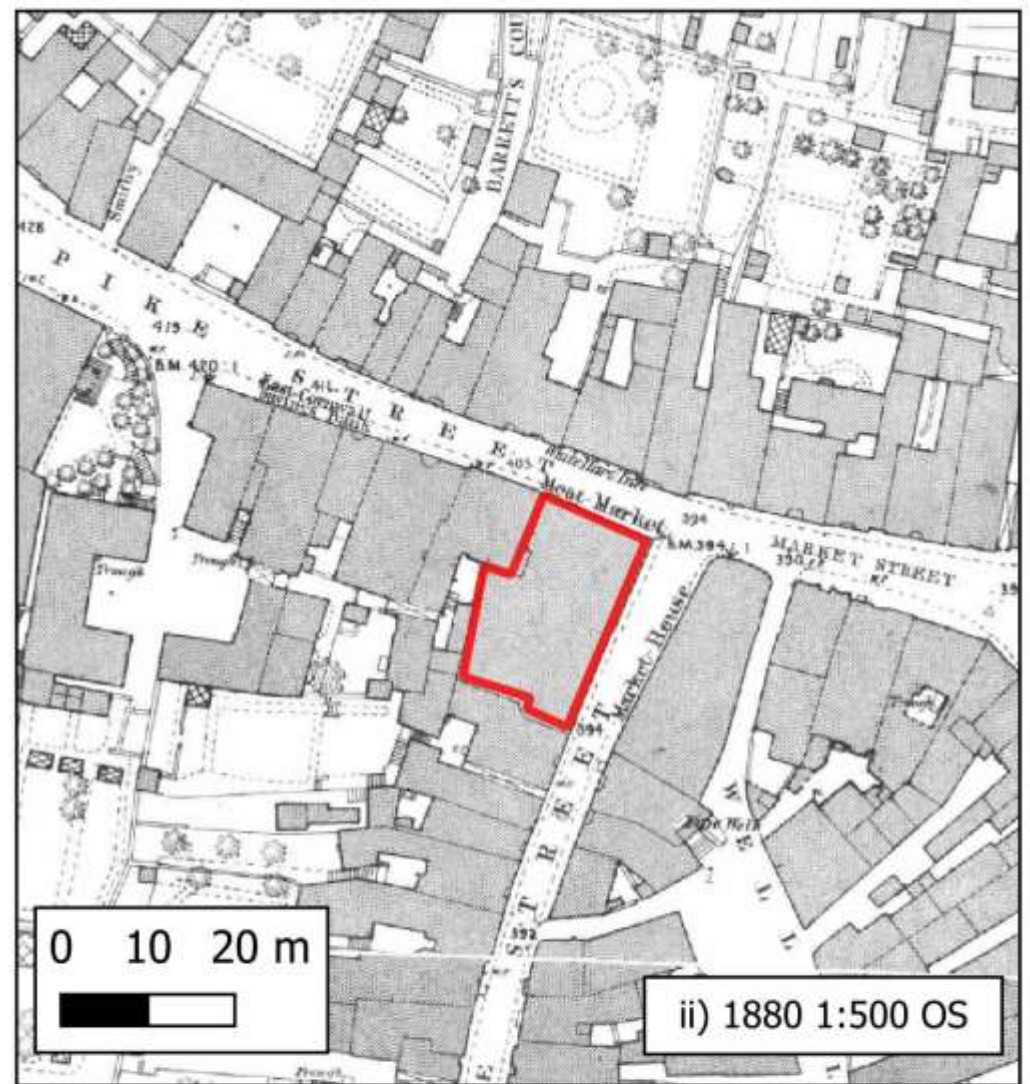
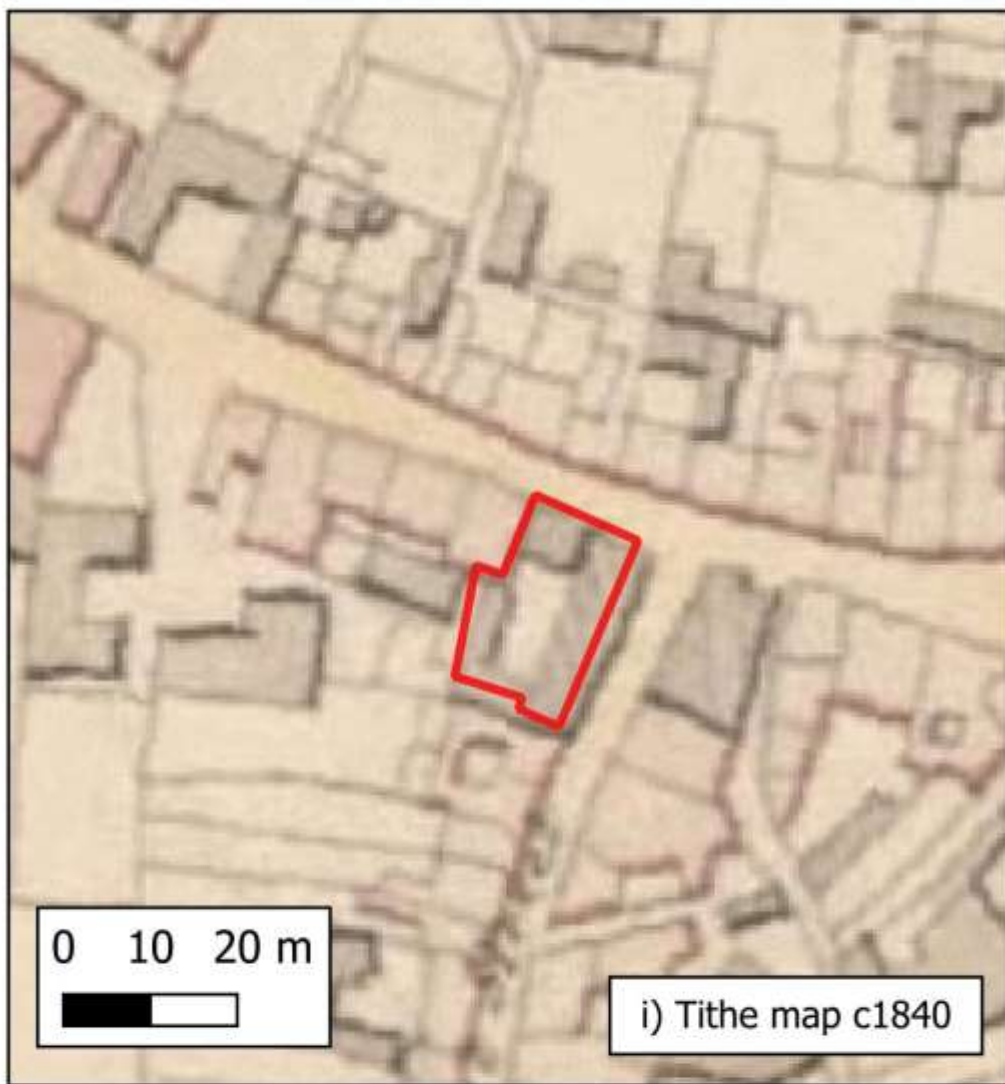
- 3.21. The lack of action in addressing the conditions at the Guildhall came to a head in 1965 when the *Cornish Guardian* reported that the County Court had applied for permission to hold its sittings in the Council Chamber at *West Street* instead of the *Guildhall* (22/07/1965).
- 3.22. A small extension was made to the rear of the building by enclosing a small yard area to provide storage and WCs for the ground floor shops at ground level, a first floor storeroom and a roof terrace to provide a protected fire-escape route from the main hall in 1993 (LBC reference E3/93/00159/LB). The works were subject to an archaeological condition securing a 'watching brief' on ground works. This was carried out by the Cornwall Archaeological Unit (note on LBC file dated 14/5/1993 indicating '*nothing significant to report*').
- 3.23. In recent years the building has been let to a variety of business including the ground floor shop units, with the first-floor spaces being let to a mixed martial arts academy and architects.

Historic Mapping

- 3.24. **c.1840 Tithe Map (figure 2i).** This mapping shows the old *Guildhall* prior to its 1859 rebuilding.
- 3.25. **1882 Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:500 Town Plan (figure 2ii).** This mapping shows the *Guildhall* to its current extents, with '*Meat Market*' labelled. The rear yard of the building is not shown, implying either that this area was not surveyed or that a cover was provided over this area.
- 3.26. **1903 OS 25 inch to the mile (figure 2iii).** The building is shown as in 1882 and labelled as a '*Meat Market*'
- 3.27. **1969 OS 1:2500 (figure 2iv).** The building is now labelled as *Guildhall*. The rear yard is now shown.

Historic Illustrations, plans and photographs.

- 3.28. **Figure 3** shows a mid-19th century engraving of the old *Guildhall* prior to its rebuilding, demonstrating that the current building followed the basic design principles of the earlier building, ie a covered ground-floor undercroft, with first floor hall and clock tower.
- 3.29. **Figures 4 and 5** show signed *Henry Rice* plans showing the *Council Chamber* dias and details of the *Butcher's Stalls*.
- 3.30. **Figure 6** show historic images of the main hall in use. Note details of the original dias (lost) here and that a number of participants are heavily dressed, including some in overcoats – corroborating newspaper reports of the uncomfortable conditions in this room. A 1940 photograph showing an outgoing *Mayoress* and incoming *Mayor* shows a fireplace behind this dias. The dias is also shown on a further 1940 photograph of the space in use as an evacuee centre. A later 20th century photograph shows the main hall dias, in use for a formal Town Council event, the original dias having been given a more modern presentation by the use of applied panelling.

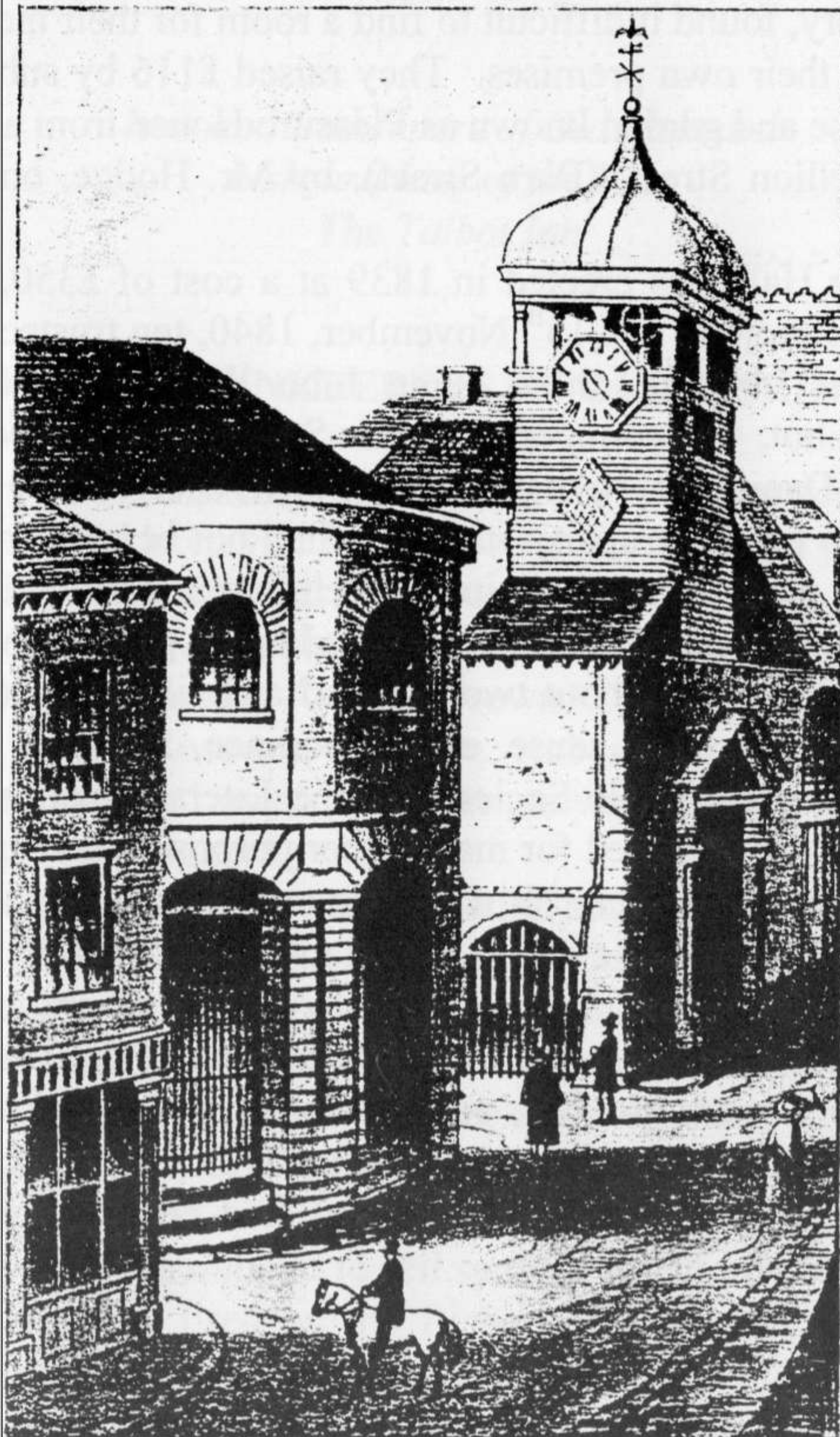


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2: Historic maps



Old Market House, Guildhall and Town Clock (1856)

Figure3: 1856
engraving of the
Old Guildhall

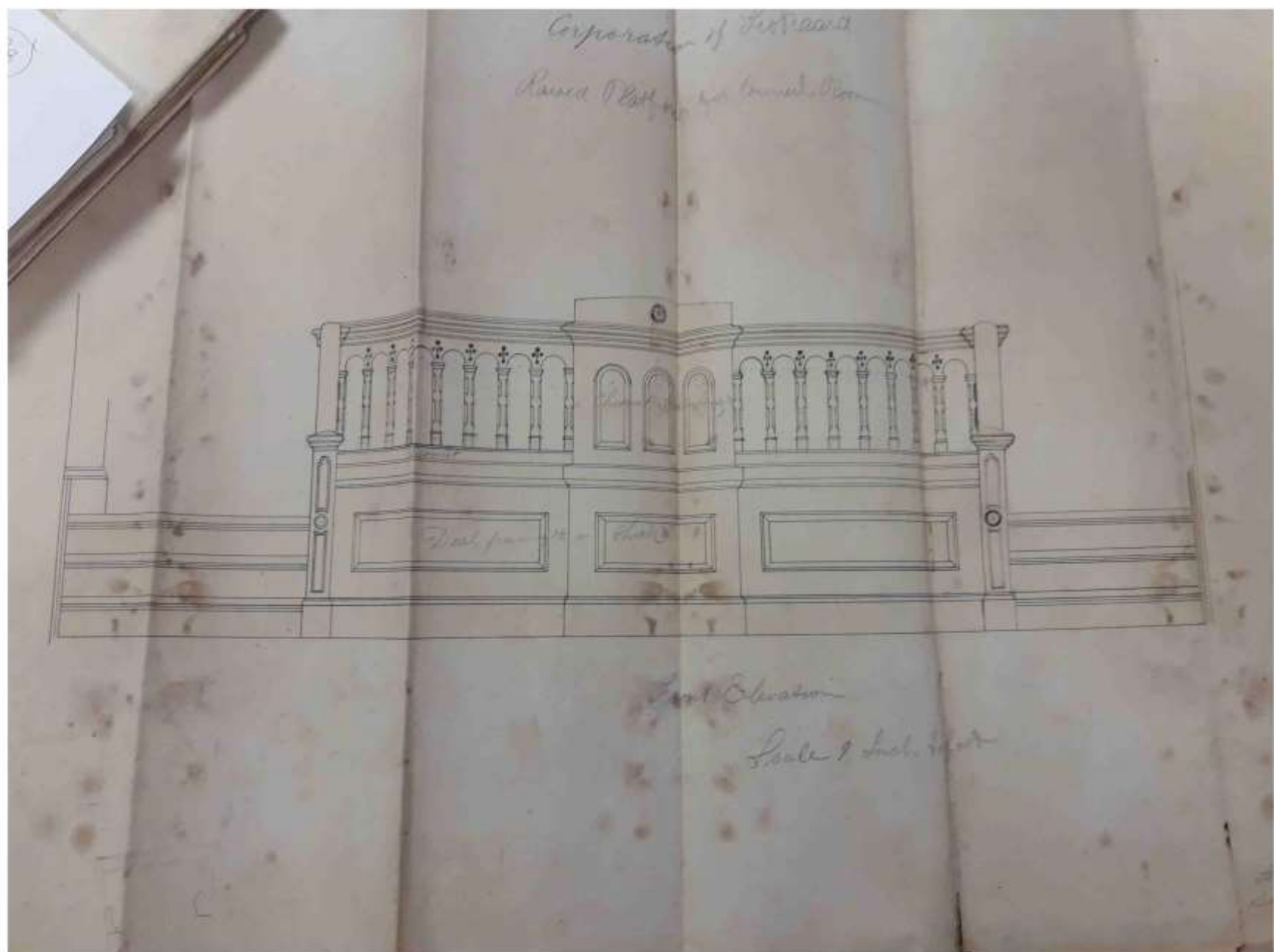


Figure 4: Henry Rice drawings of Dias in Council Chamber

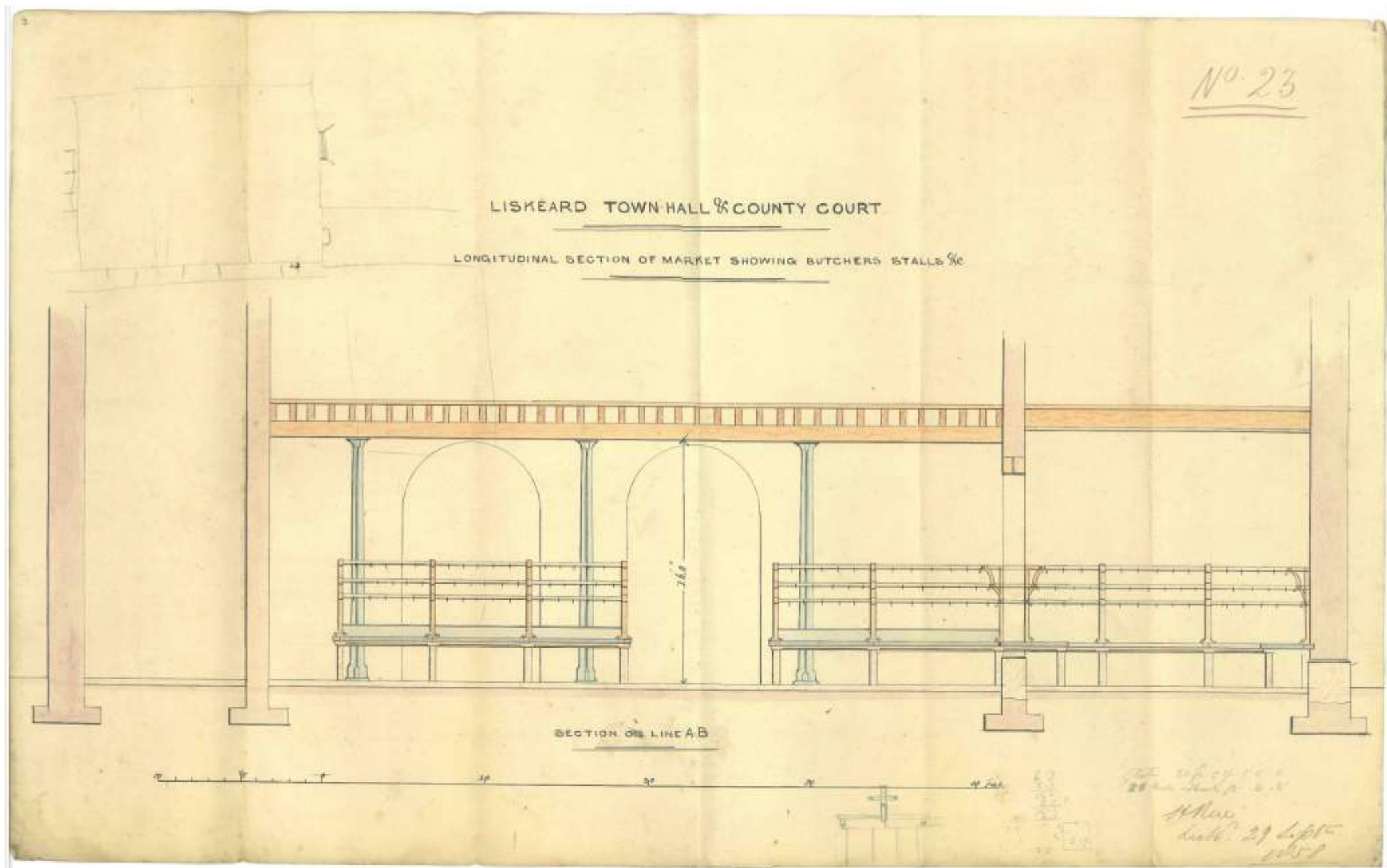
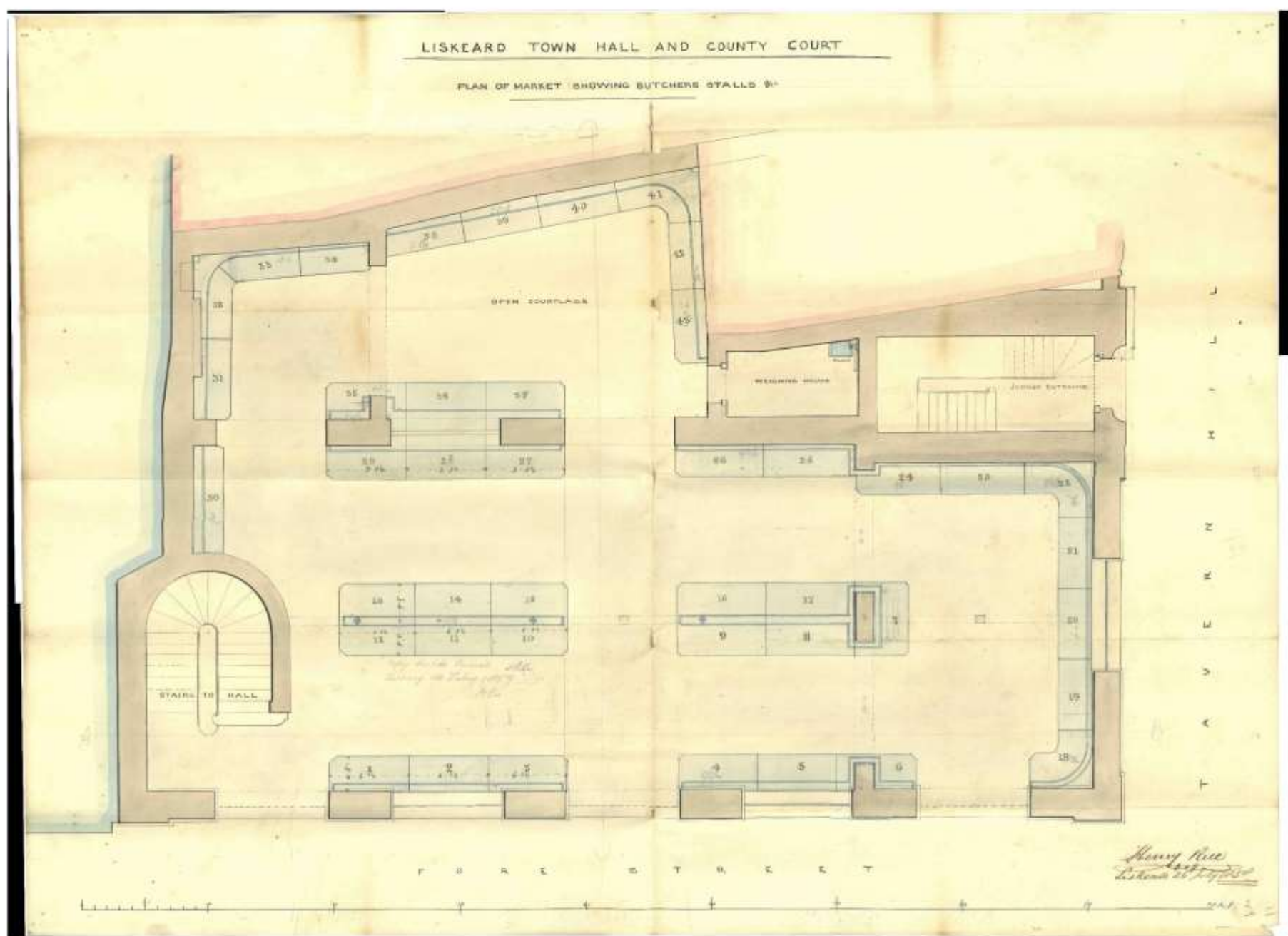
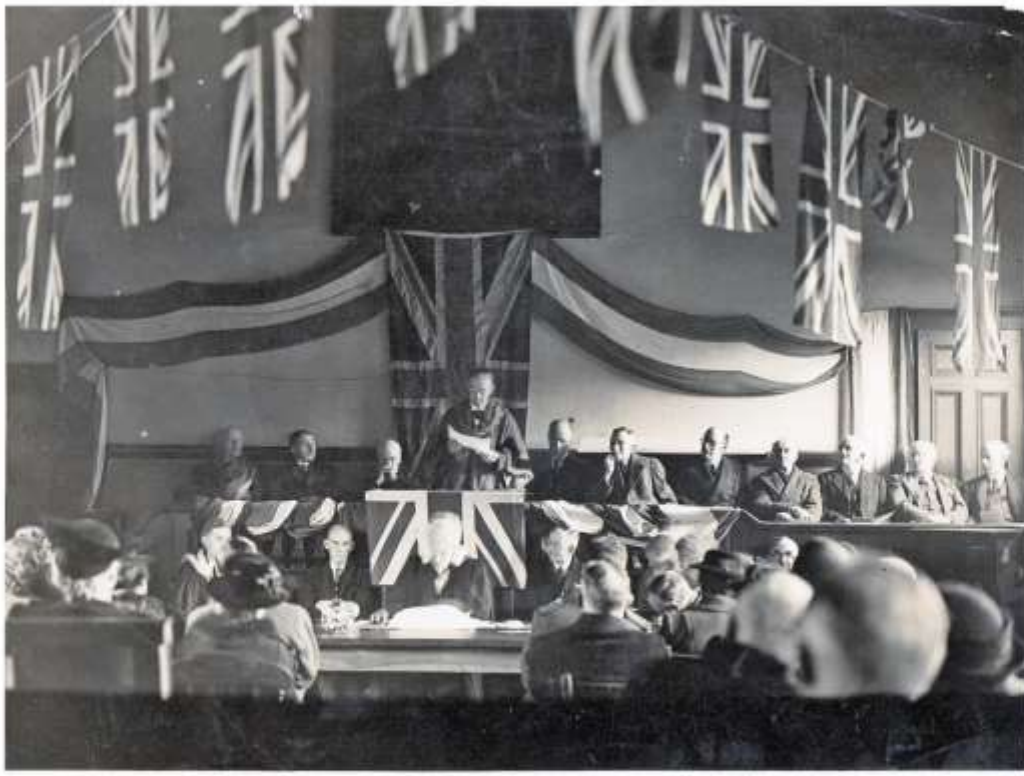


Figure 5: Henry Rice drawings of Meat Market fittings



i) Civic event, early -mid 20th century, main hall



ii) The main hall in use as an evacuation centre. George Ellis 3rd December 1940 Kresen Kernow reference GE_2_E_3620



iii) Outgoing mayoress welcoming incoming mayor. George Ellis 9th November 1940. Kresen Kernow ref. GE_2_E_3507



iv) 1985. Showing the dias of the main hall clad in modern materials

i

Figure 6: Main hall in use - 20th century photographs

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4 Site Inspection

- 4.1. The *Guildhall* and its surroundings were visited by Daniel Ratcliffe on 7th March 2024. Conditions were sunny intervals. Inspection of the building approximated to a Level 2 photographic record with indexed photography of each internal first and second floor space and elevation forming the primary record, accompanied by the annotation of existing plans (**plan 1**). Internal ground floor spaces, which are all concealed behind modern linings, were not accessible.
- 4.2. Ground and internal photography was undertaken using a Nikon D3300 DSR camera with a 24MP sensor. Our full archive for this project will be curated within Statement Heritage archives and can be accessed at the request of the client.
- 4.3. **Figure 7** presents the public elevations of the building facing on to *Fore Street* and *Pike Street*. The elevations are as described by the National List description (*Coursed dressed freestone with granite dressings; hipped slate roof with projecting granite eaves on modillions; axial brick stacks; cast-iron ogee gutters. Corner site plan with 5 bays to Fore Street and 3 bays plus clock tower to Pike Street. Italianate style. 2 storeys plus attic and 3 stages of clock tower above eaves level. Rusticated rock-faced dressings to ground floor and vermiculated rustications to corner piers flanking Fore Street front. 5 windows to Fore Street; 3 windows to Pike Street. Round-arched horned sashes with margin panes within moulded ordered stone architraves on moulded sills linked to plain string and tall keyblocks linked to moulded sill band of squat attic storey with deeply recessed windows with margin panes; roundels over corner. Ground floor is open loggia round arcade to Fore Street with original cast-iron gates on left and window with spoked fanlight to similar opening to Pike Street. Clocktower has 2 round-arched lights to each face: 1st stage above roof has cast-iron grilles; 2nd stage has squat engaged columns with rear Ionic capitals; moulded string above and clock face to each side under open segmental pediments linked to moulded cornice on paired stone consoles; all surmounted by weather vane*) with the following additional observations.
- The 5 arched arcade to *Fore Street* originally opened directly to the *Meat Market* within a ground floor undercroft. This space is now infilled with 4 no shop-units of mid 20th century date and no architectural and historic special interest.
 - Timber frames (visible on mid-late 20th century street photography) have been retrofitted around the clerestory level. These frames do not follow the rhythm of the openings behind and are of no special interest.
 - A traditionally styled street lamp is fixed to the *Fore Street* elevation. A more modern and less appropriate street lamp is fixed to the *Pike Street* elevation.
 - A green telecommunication cabinet and surrounding highway signage detract from the architectural values of the elevations. The *Pike Street* elevation retains two historic street name signs dating to the early 20th century one of enamel and one of cast iron. Both are complementary to the character of the building.
 - The large opening, originally into the *Meat Market* on the *Pike Street* elevation retains its spoked fanlight, but has otherwise been overboarded with an advertising hoarding which detracts from the architectural character of the elevation.
- 4.4. At the southwest end of this arcade is the original public staircase to the main hall (**figure 8**), access being controlled to these stairs from the street by lockable and original wrought iron gates (**figure 8i**) and from the arcade by a more modern timber fence. The open string timber stair is of dog-leg form with semi-circular newel winders and has iron square section balusters and a carved rail with volute end over a granite curtail step. Beneath the stair is a large timber bracket with gothic quatrefoil perforations.

i) northeast and northwest principal elevations. Fore Street is to left and Pike Street to right



ii) typical mid-late 20th century shopfront



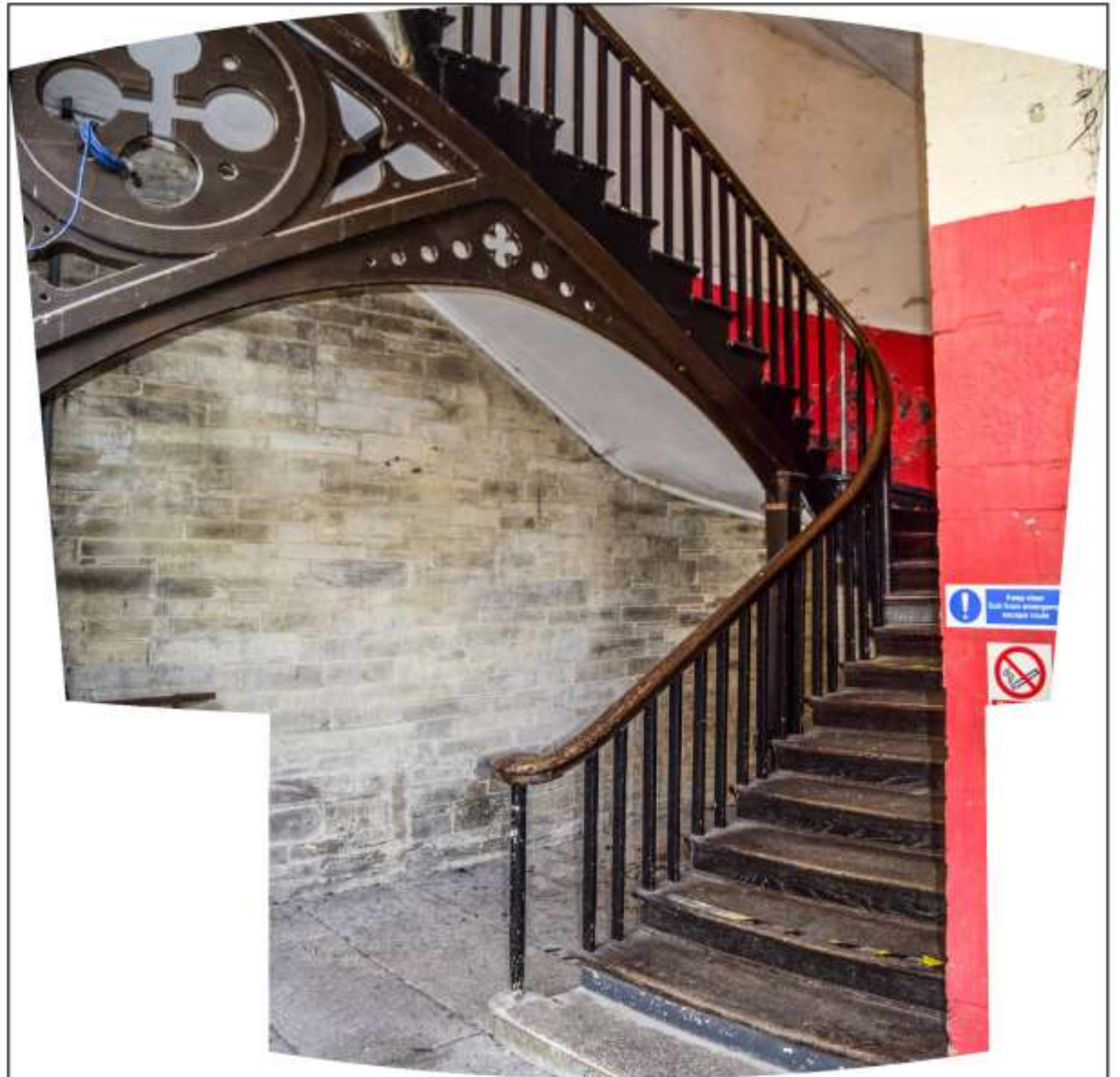
ii) mid 20th century arcade

Figure 7: External elevations

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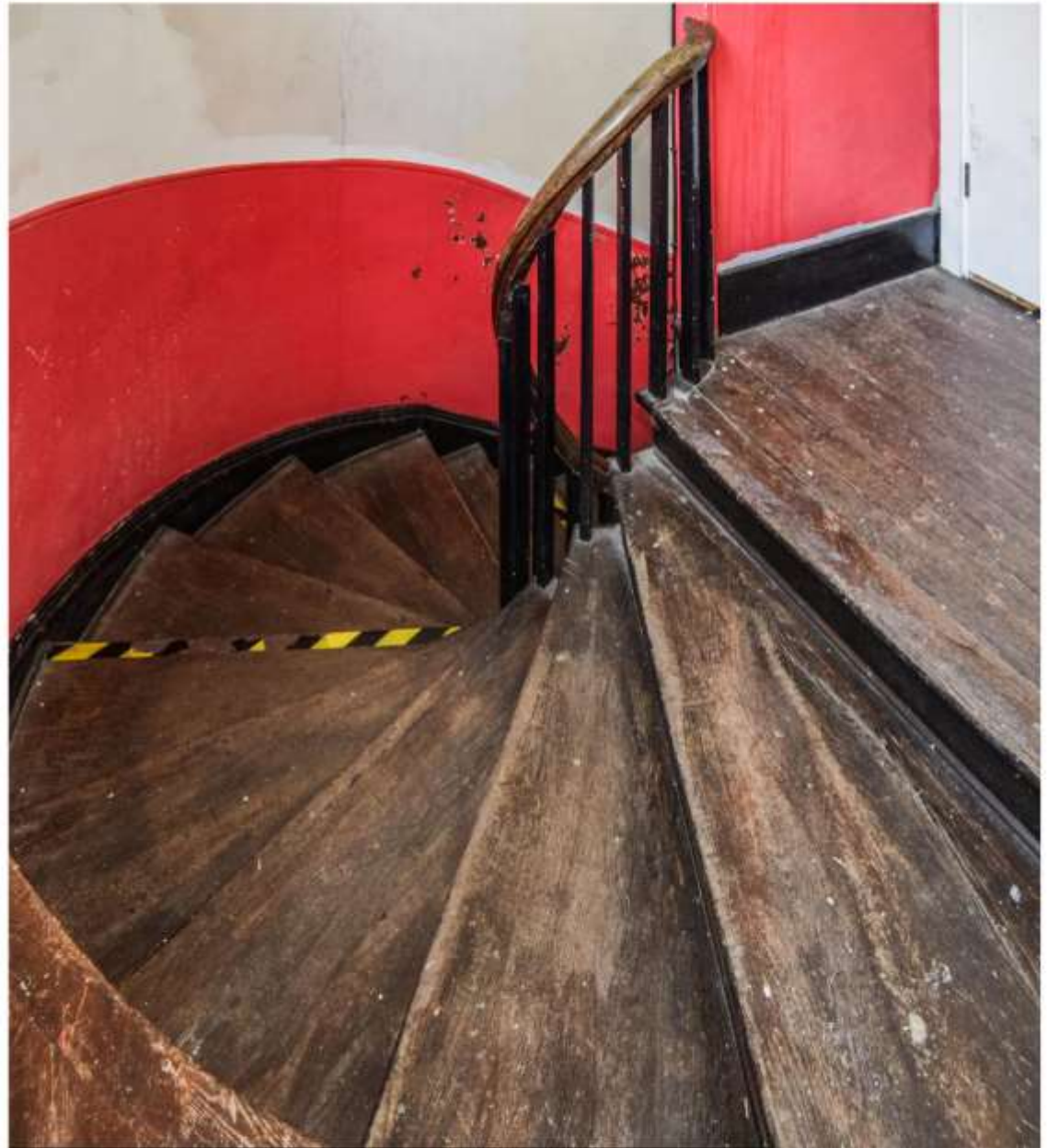
i) access to the public stairs to the main hall is controlled by original wrought iron gates.



ii) spherical panorama showing the foot of the public stair and the gothic detailing beneath it.



iii) mid ground-first floor stair



iii) mid ground-first floor stair, detail turning to first floor

Figure 8: Public stair

- 4.5. The **Main Hall** (**figure 9**) is accessed either from the *southwestern lobby* (**figure 12**) via the public stairs or via the *northwestern lobby* (**figure 11**) via a separate set of stairs from *Pike Street* likely originally serving to facilitate segregated access for Magistrates and members of the public.
- 4.6. The hall is 13.5m in length and 8.2m wide at ground floor level, lengthening to 15.3m at first floor level to the rear of the gallery.
- 4.7. The space has a moulded and coffered ceiling in 12 compartments with moulded cornices around the walls.
- 4.8. The space is lit by 6 round-headed margin-glazed sash windows (3 to either side each with the rectangular clerestory windows above, above a moulded architrave), with electric illumination provided by 4 no wall mounted fluorescent lights set between the heads of the windows. The northernmost window of the northwest wall is infilled by an original doorway to the northwest lobby, the southernmost opening of this wall has been adapted to house a modern glass door in place of its lower sash – this door connecting to the roof terrace and detailed in the 1993 LBC matters.
- 4.9. Heating is provided by 6 no electric radiant heaters mounted between the windows.
- 4.10. The north east end of the building is the original ‘high end’ of the hall, originally furnished by a dias for the magistrates bench (shown on historic photos - see **figure 6** - to have had a central lectern with arcaded balustrade with square section bottle balusters). The historic photos show a fireplace at the level of the platform, which connected to a raised door to right (connecting to the platform of the adjacent retiring room), with a further door at floor height to the left. The platform and fireplace have been removed, leaving the right-hand door suspended in mid air. The original 6 panel doors survive.
- 4.11. The southwest end of the ground floor is formed by a curved screen beneath the front edge of the gallery. This is detailed with 4 simple pilasters, with double 4 panel doors set between the central pilasters beneath fixed upper panels, replicating the 6 panel design of the other doors at the northeast end. Above the gallery rail is infilled by cast iron filigree work. A modern safety rail, sits atop the moulded original.
- 4.12. The floor of the hall is of close boarded timber, probably original.
- 4.13. The decorative condition and servicing of the hall space is poor. The ceiling is very affected by black mould, likely reflecting the use of the space as a martial arts gymnasium in recent years, poor ventilation and wholly inadequate heating.
- 4.14. Immediately adjacent to the northwest of the hall is a smaller room, described on *Henry Rice* drawings as the **Council Chamber** (**figure 10**). The space was originally described as a *Reading Room* but likely also functioned as a *Judges Retiring Room*. It is set across the northwest end of the building, being 7.8m long and 3.6m wide. The room has a smaller dias, being that designed by *Henry Rice* in 1867 and presented here at **figure 4**.
- 4.15. The ceiling is plan, with moulded cornice above a similar architrave.
- 4.16. It is lit by three round headed margin glazed windows in the northeast wall (**figure 10ii**) and a further similar window in the southeast elevation. Electric light is provided by 2 no suspended fluorescent strip lights, heating by 4 no wall mounted electric radiant heaters with walls also fitted with surface mounted electrical / network trunking, switches appropriate to modern office use.
- 4.17. The *in situ* dias, fitted at the southeast end of the space was mostly concealed during our visit (due to the ongoing use of the space as an architect’s office) but where visible matches the details shown in the *Henry Rice* drawings. Steps to the right-hand side of the dias lead to the connecting door to the *Main Hall*.
- 4.18. Wall surfaces are subdivided by original moulded architrave and dado rails. A narrow chimney breast in the southwest wall has a blocked and vented opening. There are further 6-panel doors at the west end of the southwest wall (connecting to the main hall) and centrally within the northwest wall both in broad moulded doorcases.
- 4.19. Flooring is concealed beneath carpeting, but expected to be of suspended timber.



i) Looking northeast towards the 'high' end of the main hall. The magistrates dias has been removed since the 1980s.



ii) looking southwest towards the balcony and main entrance doors



iii) [left] looking north towards the northwest wall. Note altered window (left) providing access to roof terrace fire escape route.



iv) [left] looking east towards the southwest wall.



v) [above] coffered and moulded ceiling showing cornice and clerestory windows

Figure 9: Main hall

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i) Looking southeast towards the in situ dias within the Council Chamber, which probably originally functioned as a retiring room when in use as a magistrates court. The door to right connected to the platform in the main hall.



ii) north east wall overlooking Pike Street



iii) [left] southwest wall, showing chimney breast



iv) [left] northwest wall showing door to main hall (left) and Pike Street stairs (right)



v) [above] showing cornice details of southwest wall

Figure 10: Council chamber / Retiring Room.

- 4.20. Independent access is provided to the *Council Chamber* via a **dog-leg staircase which leads from the Pike Street** entrance (**figure 11 i-iii**). This stair has timber square section stick balusters and a carved timber rail, ramped in places. The stair has a first floor landing (**figure 11 ii**) providing access to the *Council Chamber* and *Northwest lobby* via 6 panel doors, the cased doorway to the *Council Chamber* having panelled jambs as it passes through the thick external masonry of the main hall block of the building. Just below this landing is a narrow cupboard door, originally providing service access to weights, pendulum and probably a winding chain for the clock in the tower above. The stairs continue to a second floor landing, with access further up the tower to the clock provided via fixed timber ladders.
- 4.21. The **Southwest Lobby** is presented at **figure 11iv, v and vi**. This first floor space likely provided a waiting area serving the main hall. It retains a simple marble fire surround and some incomplete cornice around its ceiling at the northern and southern ends. It has been altered (reversibly) by the insertion of modern meter cupboards and by the insertion of a modern fire door at its southern end to provide access into the *Mezzanine Store*.
- 4.22. The **Northwest Lobby** is shown at **figure 12 i and ii**. It provides a landing for the *Public Stair* (now behind a modern fire door), a waiting room for users of the *Main Hall*, access to the continuing stair to the second floor balcony and circulation onwards to a first floor space now subdivided as a simple cloakroom (**figure 12iii**) and WC. These spaces have been altered and subdivided, but original panelled doors survive to the first-second floor stairs, into the hall and to a small cupboard fitted into the space between hall screen and lobby.
- 4.23. The **Gallery** is shown at **figure 12iv** and is as described above.
- 4.24. A small first floor room accessed from the **Gallery** via a panelled door case serves today as a store for the Town Council (**figure 12iv**) housing a historically valuable archive collection including rate books, cash accounts, mortgages and later 20th century photographic negatives. Its only internal detail is a blocked and vented chimney breast.
- 4.25. The **Mezzanine Store** detailed in 1993 LBC matters is shown at **figure 13**. It has concrete beam and block floor and ceiling structures (**figure 13i**) with the tops of ground floor arched openings of the historic building exposed. It has most recently been used as training space for a gymnasium. The space is subdivided by modern concrete block walls and accessed by a modern timber stair from the first floor. The roof of the store is shown at **figure 13ii, iii and iv**) providing roof-top views of the south west elevation of the hall, and of the southeast elevation of the upper stages of the tower.



i) Pike St Stairs between mezzanine and first floor levels



ii) doors from Pike Street stairs into the Retiring / Council Room and northwest lobby



iii) Door originally providing access to weights for clock just below the first floor landing



iv) Lobby to northeast of main hall - looking northeast



v) modern meter cupboards in northeast corner of lobby



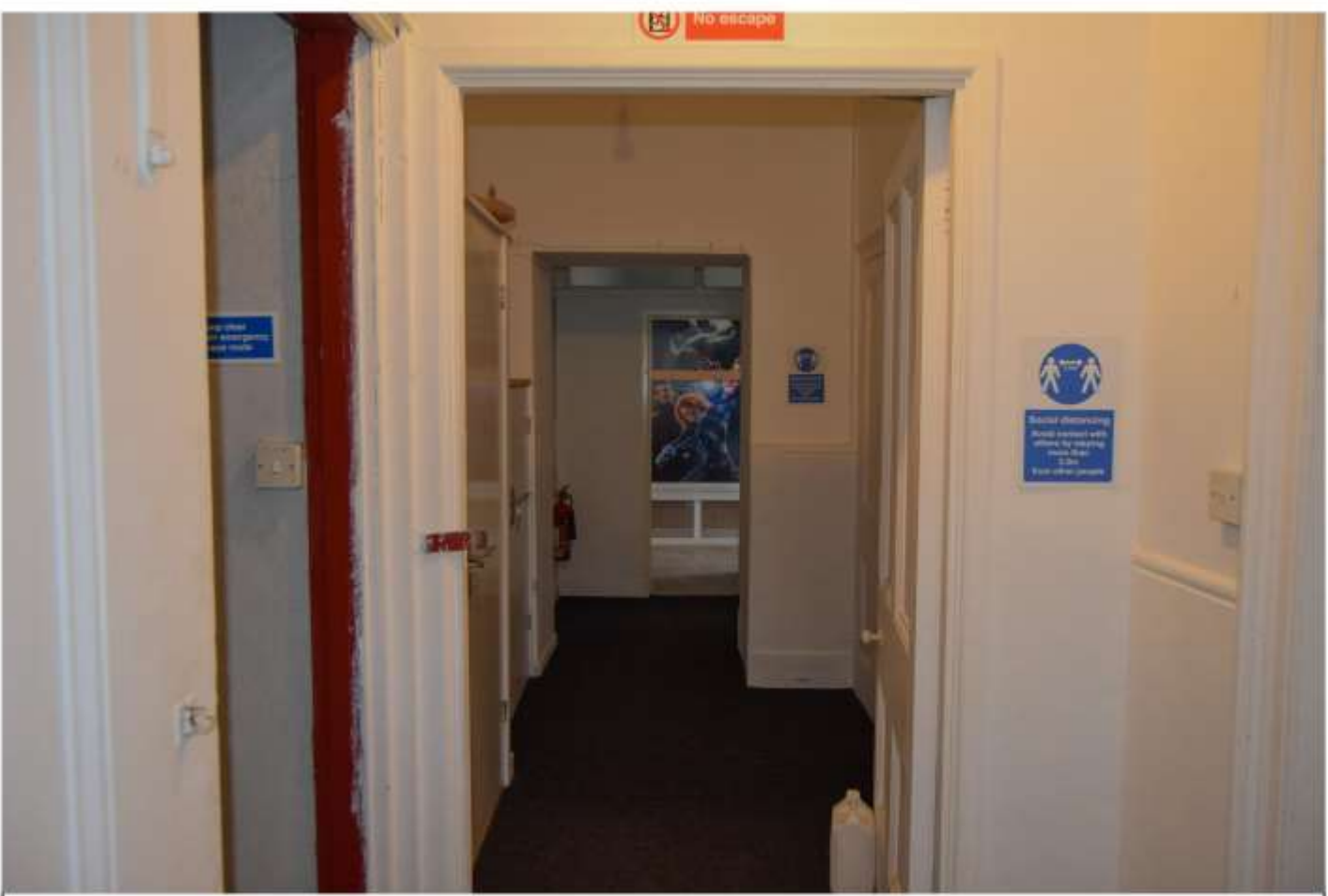
vi) looking southwest along lobby to modern door accessing stairs to mezzanine store

Figure 11: Pike Street stairs and northwest lobby

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Photos © 2024 Daniel Ratcliffe



i) Stairs and sliding door from first floor SW lobby to balcony



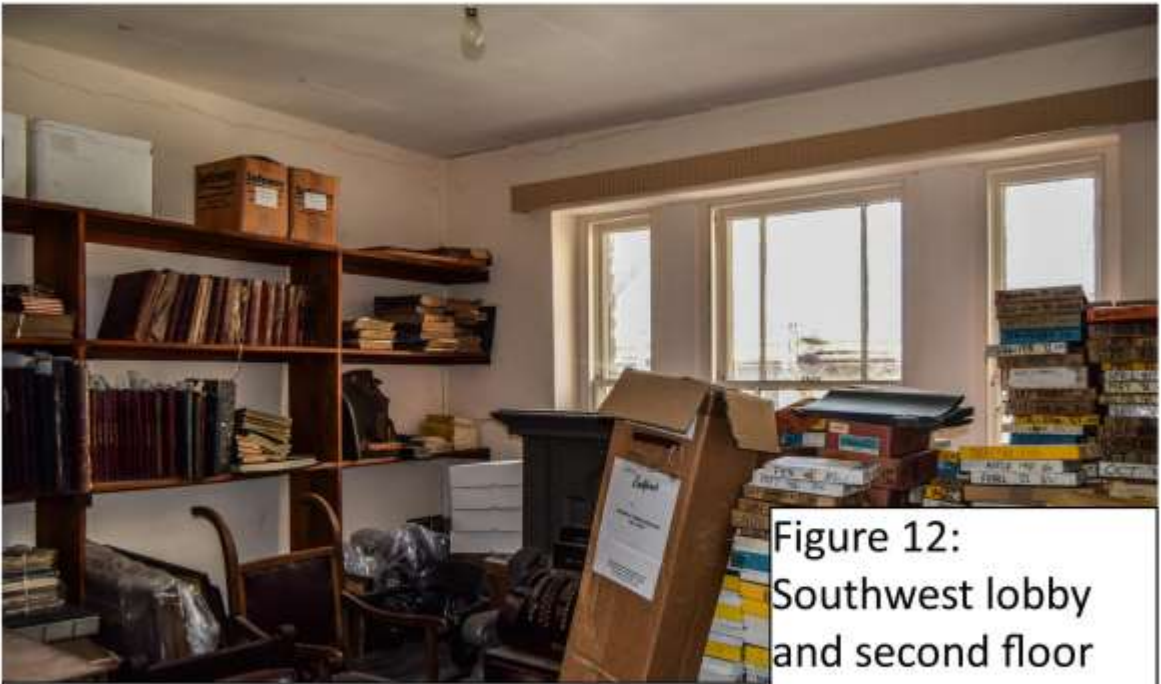
ii) looking northwest along southwest lobby



iii) Cloakroom, looking northeast



iv) Balcony looking northwest



iv) Town council store, second floor

Figure 12:
Southwest lobby
and second floor
spaces



i) Mezzanine store, looking southwest



ii) roof terrace, showing windows of southwest wing



ii) clock-tower as viewed from roof terrace



iii) northwest elevation of main hall



iv) adapted window providing access to roof terrace



v) looking northwest from roof terrace

Figure 13:
Mezzanine store
and roof terrace

5 Statement of Significance

5.1. *Historic Values:* A *Guildhall* providing legal, administrative and commercial functions has been documented on the current site since at least 1574. The current building is at least the third iteration of the building illustrative of the centrality of *Liskeard* as a medieval borough with an extensive medieval hinterland holding *Stannary* status (the right to assay tin) from 1307. A previous building was rebuilt on the site in 1782, similar in conception to the current building in providing a first-floor hall above an undercroft embellished by a clock tower. In its original conception the building combined the historic roles of buildings on this site of town hall, meat market and judicial court.

- The current building was constructed in 1859, ostensibly to the designs of *Charles Reeves* (1815-1866) the prolific *Surveyor of County Courts*. *Reeves* likely worked, at least in part, alongside *Liskeard* Borough Surveyor, *Henry Rice*, who is jointly credited for the work in most sources. *Rice's* name appears on signed plans for the *Butchers Stalls*, of a meat market, now lost, which originally occupied the ground floor undercroft and originally open rear yard, and of drawings (dating to 1867) of fittings for the first floor *Council Chamber*, although his influence on the elevations of the building may have been limited.
- The building originally provided a meat market (within the undercroft / ground floor), public hall (courtroom) and a reading room. By 1867 the reading room was converted into a Council Chamber.
- Part of the ground floor was converted for use as a fire station in 1901. During the early 20th century the meat market was subdivided as shops. A fire in 1951 resulted in the rebuilding of the current ground floor shop units.
- The use of the building for Council meetings and County and Magistrates Courts mostly ceased in the 1960s, following long standing complaints from users that the building was dark, cold, and that space for judicial robing and retiring was unavailable. By 1965 the Courts were appealing to the Town Council for use of their Council Chamber, by this time housed on *West Street*. Most references to uses of the building from the 1970s onwards are to community or ceremonial events. More recently the bulk of the building has been let on a commercial basis.

5.2. *Architectural Values:* The building's architectural style is representative of the many Italianate buildings designed by *Charles Reeves* in his role of *Surveyor of County Courts* nationwide, whilst representing strong continuity with the form of the earlier building on site. The involvement of *Henry Rice* (who as *Borough Surveyor* much improved the look of the town and is a notable regional architect in his own right) in the building's specification, delivery and internal fittings adds to its architectural interest. It is the only example of *Reeves* court buildings to have been listed at Grade II*.

- The building's details, clock tower, clock and its use of *Cheesewring* granite facings communicate the civic importance of the building at the time of its construction. The windows of the building, and the iron gates to the *public stair* are original and add to its interest.
- The plan-form of the building preserves legibility of the original court function in providing segregated circulation for court officials and members of the public, each having their own entrance and stairs (both retaining original balustrades to the first floor rooms to *Fore Street* and *Pike Street* respectively).
- The interiors of the building have survived less well. Important surviving elements are the two staircases, the coffered ceiling of the main hall, the balcony its rail and the pilastered screen beneath it, the *in situ* dias of the Council Chamber / Reading Room, surviving internal panelled doors, and original iron supports within the Ground Floor. The most significant

- losses have been the removal of the main hall dias, the loss of the original *Henry Rice* butcher's stalls (and the open character of this space) and the loss of fireplaces from main hall, council chamber, and Town Council storeroom. The mezzanine extension to the rear of the building (and associated works to the building) dates to c1993 and is of no special interest.
- 5.3. *Setting and contribution to the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area.* The Clock Tower and external elevations of the building make the Guildhall one of the most prominent and memorable elements of the town centre, acting as a landmark along views from *Fore Street*, *Pike Street*, and *Market Street* as well as in views towards the town from surrounding rising ground. The building constitutes a principal component of the Conservation Area and of the setting of surrounding Listed Buildings.
- 5.4. *Archaeological Values:* The site of the building, which has been continuously occupied by guildhall's since the 16th century and lies within the medieval core of *Liskeard* was attended by the Cornwall Archaeological Unit in 1993, monitoring ground works associated with the works to construct the mezzanine store. These works affected an area shown on 1859 plans described as an *open coutledge* (ie a yard). The works observed no deposits of archaeological interest. The ground floor of the building, and the raised dias within the former Council chamber have not been recorded by the exercise informing this Statement of Significance due to current contents and fittings. Stripping / clearance of these areas would present an opportunity for archaeological recording of these parts of the building.
- 5.5. *Communal Values:* The building and its site have contributed to the community and civic life of *Liskeard* for over 500 years. It will feature in the memory of many current inhabitants of the town, not least as a landmark within the surrounding streets, but also through hosting many community events.
- 5.6. *Local Distinctiveness:* The building makes extensive use of local granite from the *Cheesewring* quarry and is connected to the locally prominent architect *Henry Rice*.

6 Policy Requirements

6.1 The **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** places duties on Local Planning Authorities that:

- *In considering whether to grant planning permission affecting a listed building or its setting, have special regard to the desirability of preserving [or enhancing⁷] the building or its setting (s66)*
- *In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of ... [Conservation Areas]. (s72)*

6.2 The courts have found that these sections of the act amount to a presumption against harm to the significance of listed buildings, their settings and the character and appearance of Conservation Areas to which '*considerable importance and weight*' must be given⁸

6.3 Both national and local planning policy makes clear that conservation of the historic environment is an important objective of the land use planning system. The system is *plan-led*. Decisions taken by the Local Planning Authority are expected to be taken in accordance with the *Cornwall Local Plan*, (unless other material considerations clearly and convincingly justify otherwise), and the *National Planning Policy Framework*. Both the NPPF and Cornwall Local Plan will be considered in their entirety by decision makers, however we have identified important principles within them relating to this case within this section.

6.4 P196 of the *National Policy Framework* (NPPF) sets out the Government's aspirations instructing that *Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. The strategy should take into account:*

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.*

6.5 The NPPF defines a 'heritage asset' as *A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.*

6.6 The NPPF states that *heritage assets range from site and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance [including designated sites]. These assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.*

⁷ Following the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 the reference to *preserving* is to be read as '*preserving or enhancing*' LURB 2023 s102 (3)

⁸ Barnwell vs East Northamptonshire DC 2014

- 6.7 The NPPF sets out a hierarchy of importance in regards of designated assets, making clear that World Heritage Sites are in a category of *assets of the highest importance* which includes Scheduled Monuments and GII and II* Listed assets.
- 6.8 Conservation Areas are treated as ‘designated heritage assets’ by the NPPF, and as such ‘*great weight*’ is accorded to their conservation (NPPF P205) regardless of whether that harm is assessed as being ‘*substantial, total loss or less than substantial harm*’. P205 makes clear that ‘*the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be*’.
- 6.9 NPPF 212 states *Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas ..., and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.*
- 6.10 P207 sets out the limited circumstances in which *substantial harm or total loss*. Such harm should be allowed only to deliver *substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss* or in very specific and rare circumstances as set out. Harm to GII* assets *should be wholly exceptional* (NPPF P206).
- 6.11 P208 states that *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*
- 6.12 NPPF P213 states *Not all elements of a Conservation Area ... will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area ... should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 207 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 208, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area ... as a whole.*
- 6.13 The NPPF Practice Guide states that “*non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets.*”
- 6.14 Non-designated heritage assets do not benefit from the presumptions against harm and ‘great weight’ indicated by the NPPF towards designated assets. The NPPF instead states that “*The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and loss and the significance of the heritage asset*”
- 6.15 Archaeological remains, unless comprising standing remains of sufficient historic or architectural interest to justify *preservation in-situ* (monumentalisation), or are *demonstrably of equivalent significance to Scheduled Monuments* are generally difficult to put to *viable use* and so, whilst their *preservation in situ* is always preferable where feasible, their conservation rarely outbalances the benefits of development in planning decisions.

- 6.16 NPPF 211 states that *Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.* This requirement is typically put into practice through the use of a planning condition requiring the submission of a ‘written scheme of investigation for a programme of archaeological recording’. Historic buildings are usually expected to be subject to a requirement that an archival photographic record is made and archived prior to works, whilst developments with the potential to disturb buried archaeological works are normally required to make provision for the observation, recording and where appropriate excavation and long term curation of archaeological deposits.
- 6.17 The *Cornwall Local Plan* (Policy 24) endorses the aims and approach of the NPPF but introduces additional positive weight to applications which *sustain the cultural distinctiveness and significance of Cornwall’s historic, rural and coastal environment by protecting, conserving and where appropriate enhancing the significance of designated and non-designated assets and their settings.* This emphasis on the specific cultural distinctiveness of Cornwall is noted to include *the industrial mining heritage.*
- 6.18 Policy 24 requires that assessments *identify the significance of all assets that would be affected by the proposals and the nature and degree of any effects, and demonstrating how, in order of preference, any harm will; be avoided, minimised or mitigated.*
- 6.19 Policy 24 goes on to state that *Any harm ... must be justified. Proposals causing harm will be weighed against the substantial public, not private, benefits of the proposal and whether it has been demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use, find new uses, or mitigate the extent of the harm and the significance of the asset; and whether the works proposed are the minimum required to secure the long-term use of the asset.*

7 Capacity / Impact Assessment

7.1 This section of the report is written at pre-application stage, and is informed and refers to 'Option 3c' as presented within the draft *Design and Access Statement* dated 22/3/2024 supplied to Statement heritage on 9/04/2024. For the purpose of impact assessment we would identify the following key impact groups from these drawings.

- i) Stripping out of the existing shop-units and non-original subdivisions at ground floor and replacement with the subdivisions and replacement with new subdivisions and fittings to provide 3no retail units, each with accessible WC's and storage / back offices and an accessible list.
- ii) Creation of a larger arcade (relative to the current arrangement) secured by mild steel gates to match the existing gate into the public stairs.
- iii) Conservation, repair and refurbishment of the main hall to be re-used as an events space.
- iv) Removal of the modern partition forming cloakroom and WC in the first-floor southwest wing and reconfiguration of this space as a Kitchen and Accessible WC.
- v) Installation of a passenger lift landing in the Council Chamber / Robing Room.
- vi) Creation of new partitions to the northwest end of the Council chamber (Robing Room) to form a Green Room (for events), Store and vestibule between these spaces and the Main Hall
- vii) Installation of Male and Female WCs in the current Mezzanine.
- viii) Complete replacement of all lighting and electrical services throughout the building and installation of heat recovery plant within the attic space of the main hall to heat first and second floor spaces and provide mechanical fresh air ventilation.

Principle of scheme and conservation philosophy.

7.2 The *Guildhall* was designed as a civic building, delivering public administrative and trade functions (the administration of justice and civil government and the provision of retail space).

7.3 It is clear from the evidence base gathered for this report that the current building has suffered, for at least 60 years or more, from underuse and underinvestment stemming from the expectations of modern use during the 20th century. It is no coincidence that the building fell out of its original uses in the mid-20th century, the high point of architectural modernism, and a period of technological revolution. Ultimately rather than invest in this building, designed in a time of classical reference, solid fuel, gas lighting and open markets, its original user groups preferred to move to purpose built modern facilities elsewhere. Today the building suffers from poor and inadequate lighting, heating and ventilation systems and significant obstacles to equality of physical access, preventing its use by the public (and so the full appreciation of its historic and architectural special interest, although the ground floor space continued to provide (for its time) modern retail space and its external attributes continued to express the civic pride of the town.

- 7.4 Today the appreciation we have as a society for the best examples of past building (as expressed by the statutory heritage protection system – here by the identification of this building at GII* - ‘more than special interest’) provide very substantial planning weight to the desirability of adaptation to new uses. Government planning policy sets out that uses are expected to conserve or enhance the attributes that make up the special interest of such buildings, whilst accepting that change and adaptation will be necessary to ensure that new uses will be sustainable, both in terms of minimising requirements for further harmful or eroding works, and in ensuring the wider aims of sustainability are delivered.
- 7.5 The proposal at hand seeks to achieve this through ensuring that the main hall can continue to be used as a high quality accessible, flexible and useable events space at the very heart of historic Liskeard. The ‘unique selling point’ of the facility may be its heritage and grandeur, with its architectural special interest having the potential to lead the close designs of any such proposals. The conservation or enhancement of those features contributing most strongly to the building’s special interest must be delivered by these proposals.
- 7.6 It is central to such works that the building deliver the aims of the Equality Act in terms of providing equitable access, ensuring that no-one is unfairly excluded from the enjoyment of our shared heritage.

Impact assessment and recommendations:

- i) *Stripping out of the existing shop-units and non-original subdivisions at ground floor and replacement with the subdivisions and replacement with new subdivisions and fittings to provide 3no retail units, each with accessible WC’s and storage / back offices and an accessible list.*
- a. Impact: The current shop frontages date to the mid-20th century and are not considered to be of any special interest. Internally 3no cast iron pillars survive from the original structure design. Otherwise it is understood that all internal fittings and linings are modern. Assuming retention of the cast-iron fittings, and any other original features which may lie hidden behind later linings, the removal of mid 20th century shop fittings should be considered not to affect the special interest of the building.
- b. Impact: We have not as yet been provided with drawings of the proposed new shop frontages. The subdivision of the space can be considered of neutral impact. It is noted that design plan 3c retains, respects and integrates the existing cast iron pillars which will provide some legibility of the original design
- c. Recommendation: It is recommended that photographic archaeological recording is carried out of the space following stripping out of modern fittings. The 3no openings in the original southwest elevation of the building (which will lie within shops 1 and 2) are probably detailed with granite quoins and may be suitable for being left exposed within the internal design of the shops, which would have the opportunity to add historic character to these spaces. The structural character of the ceiling of this space is not known. Should a vaulted ceiling survive it may have the capacity to further enhance the

character of these units – however *conservation*⁹ would be achieved by simple reinstatement of modern ceilings.

- ii) Creation of a larger arcade (relative to the current arrangement) secured by cast iron gates to match the existing gate into the public stairs.
 - a) Impact. These interventions will increase the area of (semi) public realm within the ground floor of the building, providing an attractive space within the town centre. There is precedent for gates on the openings of the *old guildhall* here, although it is unknown if similar gates have ever existed on this iteration of the building. Neutral impact – mild enhancement.
 - b) Recommendations: it is recommended that the design of the new gates is based on a cast or 3D scan of the existing gate.
- iii) Conservation, repair and refurbishment of the main hall to be re-used as an events space.
 - a) Impact. This work will restore the currently moulded ceiling, and other decorative features. It has the potential to deliver substantial enhancement of this space.
 - b) Recommendations: it is recommended that historic paint research¹⁰ informs the redecoration of the space, particularly in regard of the ceiling and the gallery rail. The results should inform decision making and also be appended to the archive copy of this (or any subsequent) heritage report. A more appropriate (perhaps glass) safety solution to the gallery rail height should be identified. A decision will need to be taken as to the treatment of the lost platform at the north end of the space. Reinstatement of a small (perhaps a semi-demountable) stage would enhance the legibility of the *high end* of the building, and particularly the historic connecting door to the robing room, as well as providing flexible use options.
- iv) Removal of the modern partition forming cloakroom and WC in the first-floor southwest wing and reconfiguration of this space as a Kitchen and Accessible WC.
 - a. Impact. The current partition is not of architectural historic or archaeological interest. The proposed layout will restore the integrity of the window of this space into a single space. The works support the proposed use of the building. The works deliver modest enhancement of the architectural values of this space and support the optimal viable use of the main hall.
 - b. Recommendations: no recording is required of these works.
- v) Installation of a passenger lift landing in the Council Chamber / Robing Room.
 - a. Impact. This intervention will (alongside the impacts discussed under point vi. below) subdivide and intercede into the historic Council Chamber / Robing Room across a historically blocked chimney breast. The intervention may be considered as *minor less than substantial harm*, which should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (NPPF P208).

⁹ The *Lakeland* principle that ‘special regard’ is discharged by *conservation* alone and that *enhancement* is desirable but not required applies here.

¹⁰ <https://www.buildingconservation.com/directory/prodlist.php?category=Paint+analysis>

The rationale for the location of the lift in this location is clearly set out within the Design and Access Statement and it is considered that this appropriately determines that the lift should be legible and clear to users along the shop-frontages of the arcade. This delivers the foundational principle of equality of access, in delivering a solution as attractive to all users, regardless of physical ability rather than treating those that can only use this solution as an after-thought. The harm to the building is considered a 'reasonable adjustment', mitigated by its location across an already blocked fireplace and by the design of the landing for the lift which will read as an inserted pod within the historic space.

- b. Recommendations: Historic recording of the space, following the clearance of current commercial contents should be undertaken to produce an archive record prior to works.
- vi) Creation of new partitions to the northwest end of the Council chamber (Robing Room) to form a Green Room (for events), Store and vestibule between these spaces and the Main Hall.
 - a. Impact. The works are described in the Design and Access statement as being delivered by partitions which rise to the full height of the space. The reduction in the historic space of the room should be assessed as *minor less than substantial harm* and assessed under NPPF P208 – ie it *should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*
 - b. Recommendations. It is recommended that the inserted partition should be carefully installed to respect (avoid damage to) the historic mouldings around the ceiling. It is not recommended that cornicing should be placed around the top of the new wall – this will enable the work to be clearly read as an intervention. It is recommended that bespoke panelled doors are used for the new rooms, with glazed fire-rated visibility panels, which will again allow the interventions to be read as respectful but legible modern work. As stated above the room in its current volume should be subject to archival photographic recording prior to works but following clearance of internal contents.
- vii) Installation of Male and Female WCs in the current Mezzanine. This work is not considered relevant to the special interest of the building.
- viii) Renewal of M&E systems.
 - a. Impact: Such work is considered very clearly necessary to address historic shortcomings of the existing arrangements, reduce fire-safety risks, improve the ventilation of the building (so promoting better conservation of the building, improve its carbon footprint and promote the useability of the building. Wherever possible harms should be avoided by design and the aim should be to leverage enhancement of the architectural values of the building through these works. However where physical impacts are unavoidable this should be clearly documented and balanced according to the NPPF P207 principle.
 - b. Recommendations: Specific impacts will be contingent on design, which should minimise physical damage to significant components. We would highlight the guidance

made available by Historic England on lighting in historic buildings [here](#)¹¹ and recommend the use of experienced specialists to develop these designs. In regards to the proposal to introduce vents in the historic ceiling that this will, for instance, require further details of the technical construction of the ceiling. Historically ceilings of this date often incorporated decorative cast iron grates for ventilation systems or concealed such apertures within moulding details. If possible it is recommended that vents are sited on the vertical faces of the ceiling trays around the edges of the ceiling, facing away from the centre of the space, to reduce visual impacts.

¹¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/building-services-engineering/internal-lighting-in-historic-buildings/#:~:text=The%20design%20of%20new%20lighting,new%20lighting%20scheme%2C%20if%20feasible.>

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<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringgeology/geologyofbritain/viewer.html>

NHLE- Historic England 2024 *National Heritage List for England* (database) available at

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

CHSER - Cornwall Council 2024 *Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record* (database) online

Kresen Kernow (County Record Office for Cornwall) – online indices

Historic Maps – Landmark Information Group (commercially licenced historic ‘County Series’ OS maps) / National Library of Scotland; British Library (OSD collection); Harvard University (Thomas Martyn 1748); The Geneologist (Tithe Mapping and Census Data)

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