



2305-01

OLD TOWN WAREHOUSE,
FAVERSHAM

RIBA STAGE 1
PREPARATION & BRIEF REPORT

JULY 2026

REVISION 00

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Figure 1. Existing timber roof structure viewed from the first floor.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Old Town Warehouse, Faversham (Historic England List Entry No. 1116391), is a Grade II* listed medieval timber framed warehouse situated on Town Quay adjacent to Faversham Creek. Dating from the early fifteenth century, the building is of exceptional significance as one of the oldest surviving secular buildings in Faversham and one of the few surviving medieval waterfront warehouses in Kent. Its special interest derives from its rarity, age, survival of substantial historic fabric and close association with the maritime and commercial development of Faversham. The building remains a prominent reminder of the town's historic relationship with the creek and its importance as a trading port.

Following its transfer into the ownership of Faversham Town Council in 2025, the building is currently vacant and in need of repair. The Council's aspiration is to secure its long term conservation, arrest further deterioration and identify a sustainable future use that delivers public benefit whilst respecting its heritage significance.

This RIBA Stage 1 Preparation and Briefing Report has been prepared following a review of available historic research, archaeological assessments, condition surveys, structural investigations, environmental information and community consultation undertaken by Faversham Town Council. The report draws upon the archaeological assessment prepared by Canterbury Archaeological Trust (2025), condition surveys undertaken by Anthony Swaine Architecture Ltd (2024 and 2025), structural investigations prepared by Morton Partnership (2025) and environmental assessments prepared by Daniel Martin Associates (2025), together with the findings of recent public consultation.

Building upon the strategic objectives established during RIBA Stage 0, the report defines the project brief by identifying the building's opportunities and constraints, establishing design principles, exploring emerging options for future use, and setting out the requirements that will inform the development of a preferred scheme during RIBA Stage 2.



Figure 2. Detail from a sixteenth century parchment roll showing Town Quay and the Old Town Warehouse within the historic Port of Faversham. Source: British Library / CAT Archaeological Assessment.



Figure 3. The Old Town Warehouse, viewed from north

2.0 PROJECT BRIEF

The strategic objective of the project is to secure the long-term conservation and sustainable reuse of the Old Town Warehouse as a significant heritage asset within Faversham's historic waterfront.

The project has been developed around the following objectives:

- Conserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II* listed building.
- Address the factors contributing to the building's deterioration and establish a sustainable framework for its long-term conservation and reuse.
- Establish a sustainable future use that delivers public benefit whilst respecting the building's significance.
- Improve public access to, and understanding of, the building and its role in the maritime and commercial history of Faversham.
- Support community, cultural and educational activities that contribute to the vitality of the Town Quay area.
- Improve accessibility and inclusivity whilst minimising impact on the building's historic character.
- Consider the wider Town Quay setting and waterfront context in shaping the building's future use.
- Support the phased repair and adaptation of the building to enable sustainable public use and long-term conservation.



Figure 4. Existing building viewed from Conduit Street



Figure 5. Existing building interior showing the entrance area and partitioning associated with the Sea Cadets' use of the building.

3.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

Faversham Town Council undertook public consultation to help inform the future conservation, adaptation and use of the Old Town Warehouse. The consultation demonstrates a high level of local interest in the building and provides valuable insight into community aspirations for its future.

Local Interest and Engagement

- More than 85% of respondents live within two miles of the site, demonstrating a strong local connection to the building.
- More than 86% of respondents considered public access to the building to be important or very important.
- The consultation demonstrates strong support for the conservation and continued public use of the building.

Future Uses

- Heritage and maritime interpretation emerged as the most strongly supported future use of the building.
- Community meeting space, arts and cultural activities, and café or social uses also received significant support.
- Respondents identified support for event and wedding functions, which may provide opportunities for income generation and contribute to the building's long-term financial sustainability.

Key Priorities

Heritage preservation and community involvement emerged as the highest ranked values to guide future development.

The consultation indicates strongest support for a heritage-led approach that combines conservation, community access, cultural activity and sustainable long-term use.

These findings should inform the development of future proposals and help ensure that the building continues to serve both as a significant heritage asset and a valued community resource.

The consultation also indicates strong support for maintaining a visible connection between the building's historic maritime character and any future use.

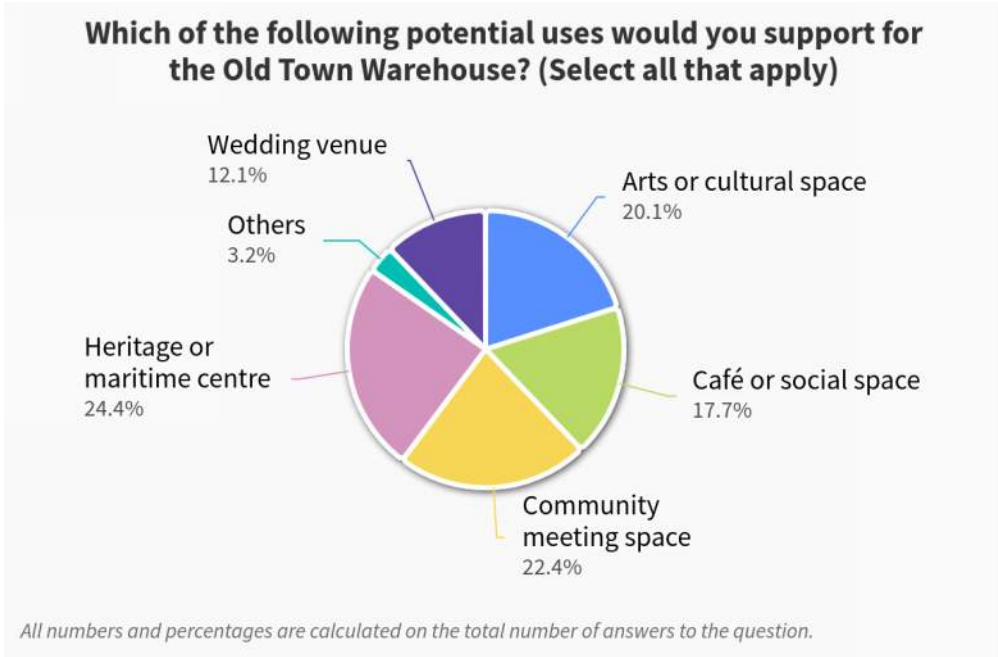
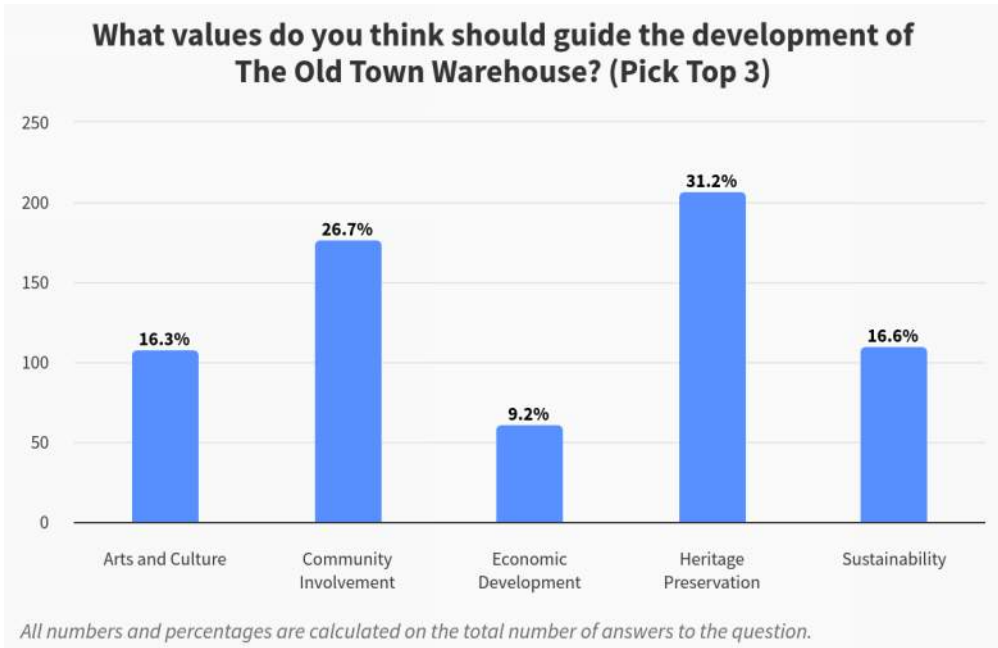


Figure 6. Summary of public consultation findings undertaken by Faversham Town Council. (extract)

4.0 SITE ANALYSIS

The review of the building, its setting and the available survey information has informed an assessment of the principal opportunities and constraints that influence its future repair, adaptation and use.

These findings have informed the design principles and emerging options presented in the following chapters. These constraints encompass heritage, structural, environmental, drainage and operational considerations that will require further investigation as the project progresses.

Heritage Significance

The Old Town Warehouse is a Grade II* listed building of exceptional significance. Dating from the early fifteenth century, it is one of the oldest surviving secular buildings in Faversham and one of the few surviving medieval waterfront warehouses in Kent. The building retains substantial historic fabric, including significant elements of its timber frame, and provides important evidence of the town's historic relationship with maritime trade and the creek. The building also makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Faversham Conservation Area and forms a key component of the historic Town Quay waterfront.

The building has undergone a series of alterations throughout its history, including adaptations associated with its twentieth century use by the Sea Cadets. Whilst these changes form part of the building's ongoing story, some later interventions are considered to be of lesser significance and obscure an appreciation of the building's earlier form and function. Future proposals should therefore assess opportunities to rationalise later alterations where appropriate and enhance understanding of the building's historic character and development.



Figure 7. Repair and restoration works to the Old Town Warehouse in the early 1960s. Source: Anthony Swaine Architecture Ltd Collection.



Figure 8. Repair and restoration works to the Old Town Warehouse in the early 1960s. Source: Anthony Swaine Architecture Ltd Collection.

Building Condition and Heritage Risk

The building has been vacant for a prolonged period and has been the subject of a number of condition and structural investigations. Whilst surveys indicate that significant areas of the principal timber frame and roof structure remain substantially intact, they also identify deterioration affecting elements of the historic fabric, particularly at low level where moisture related decay has affected sole plates, timber posts and associated structural elements.

The evidence reviewed suggests that deterioration is not solely the result of age or lack of maintenance, but is closely linked to wider environmental factors including flooding, drainage, moisture retention, elevated external ground levels and the building's exposed waterfront location. Existing reports identify these issues as fundamental to the building's ongoing deterioration and highlight the importance of addressing the underlying causes of decay as part of any future repair strategy.

A number of structural elements remain concealed and have not yet been fully investigated. Further opening-up works and targeted investigations will therefore be required to confirm the extent of deterioration, better understand concealed conditions and inform future repair proposals.

Whilst the building is not currently included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, the findings of recent surveys indicate that it remains vulnerable to further deterioration if remedial works are not undertaken in the short term. The building's condition reinforces the need for timely intervention to secure its long-term future.

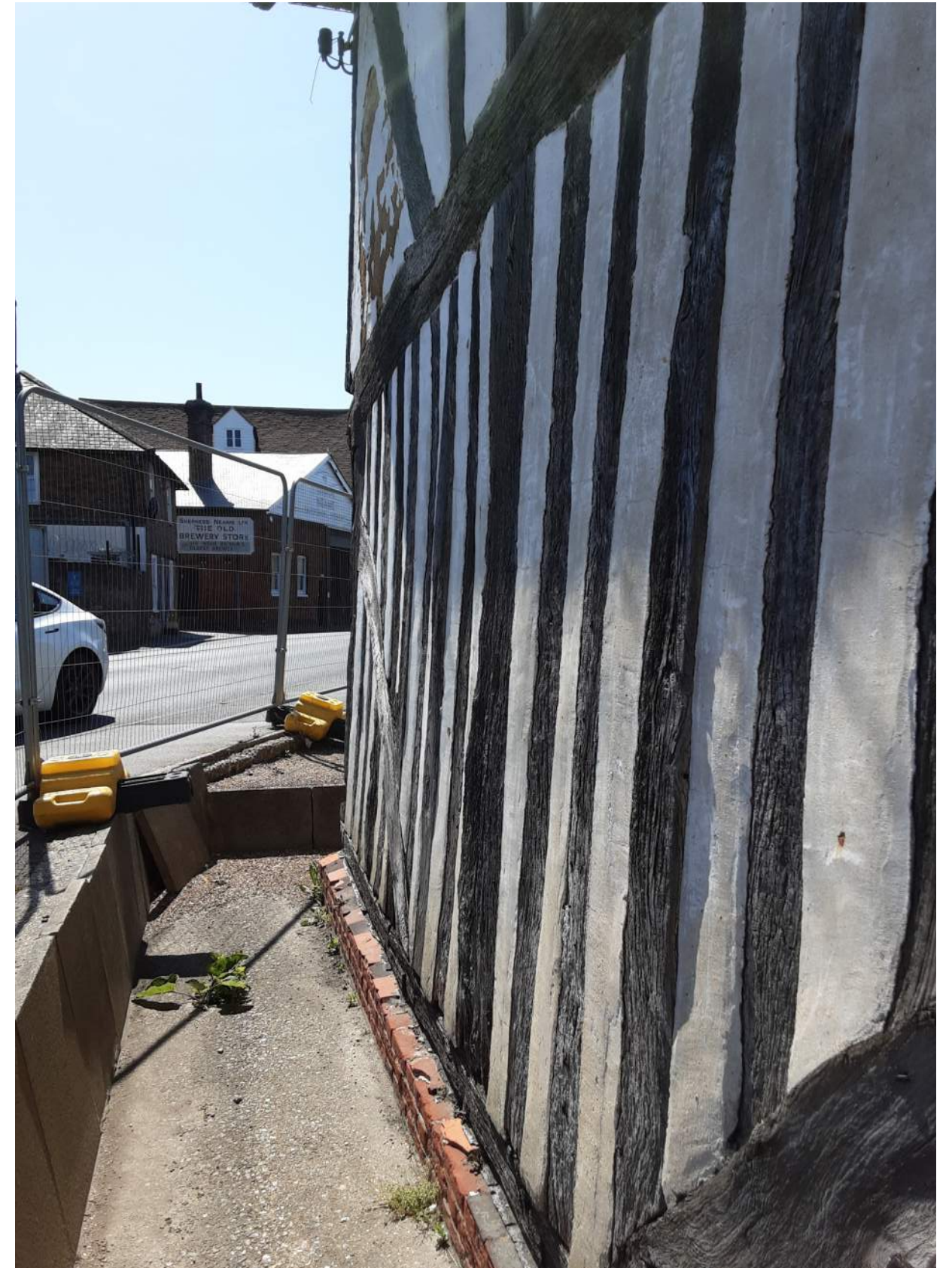


Figure 9. Sole plates, brick dwarf wall and sunken channel adjacent to the building, illustrating the relationship between ground levels and the lower timber frame.

Flooding, Drainage and Environmental Conditions

The building occupies a low lying waterfront site adjacent to Faversham Creek and lies within Flood Zone 3. Existing reports note that the building sits below surrounding ground levels and identify flooding, tidal influences, poor drainage and prolonged moisture retention as key factors contributing to the deterioration of the historic fabric, particularly at low level.

The relationship between the building, surrounding ground levels, drainage infrastructure and the creek edge will require further investigation. Future proposals are likely to require specialist civil and drainage engineering input to inform flood resilience, surface water management and environmental improvements whilst maintaining the building's historic character and relationship with the waterfront.

Addressing these issues will be fundamental to the building's long-term conservation and reinforces the need for timely intervention to address the underlying causes of deterioration.

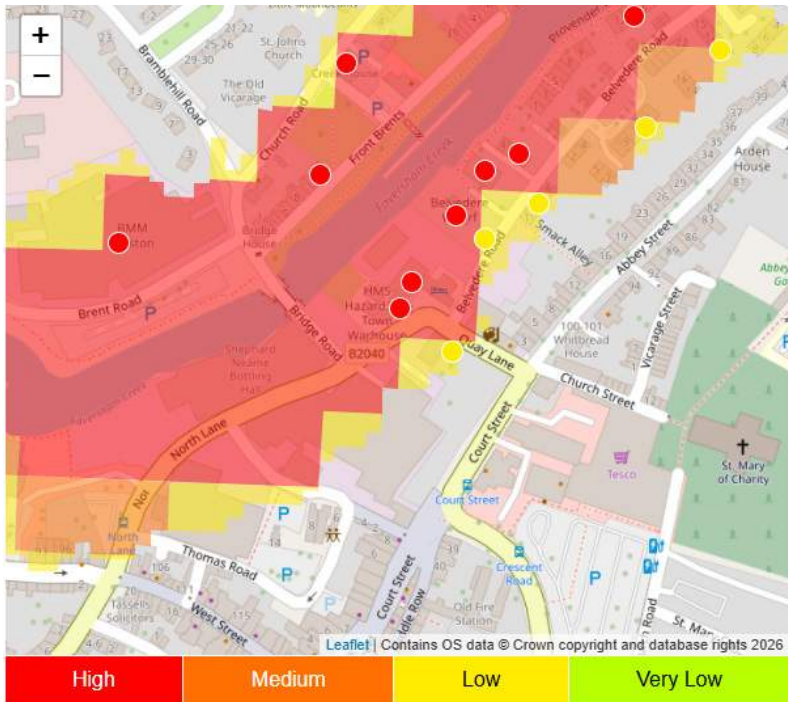


Figure 10. Flood susceptibility mapping showing the Town Quay area and the location of the Old Town Warehouse. Source: <https://www.getthedata.com/flood-map/faversham>

Accessibility and Building Regulations

Improving accessibility has been identified as a key project objective. However, the building's medieval form, limited footprint and surviving historic fabric present significant challenges in accommodating modern accessibility requirements and wider Building Regulations obligations.

The building sits below surrounding ground levels and access to both the ground and first floors involves changes in level. Circulation between floors is currently provided by a steep ladder stair introduced during the building's twentieth century adaptation for Sea Cadet use, whilst access and means of escape have also been supplemented by a modern external metal staircase. These arrangements illustrate the challenges associated with accommodating modern circulation requirements within the existing structure. The constrained waterfront location also presents practical challenges relating to arrival, servicing and inclusive access, which will require further consideration as future proposals are developed.

The provision of step free access, accessible sanitary accommodation, a compliant stair, lift and appropriate means of escape will therefore require careful consideration. Given the constrained nature of the building and the significance of the surviving historic fabric, accommodating these requirements internally may prove challenging. Future proposals will need to carefully balance accessibility, functionality and conservation objectives, potentially exploring external interventions where appropriate whilst minimising impacts on the building's significance, character and setting.



Figure 11. Existing metal staircase providing access to the first floor.

Use, Services and Long-Term Viability

The building was not designed for modern public occupation and provides a relatively limited amount of usable accommodation within a highly significant historic structure. Future proposals will need to carefully consider how the available space can accommodate heritage interpretation, community activities, cultural events and commercial functions whilst respecting the significance of the historic fabric.

A particular challenge will be the integration of building services and supporting infrastructure required to facilitate future occupation. Heating, ventilation, power, lighting, drainage, sanitary accommodation and other operational requirements will need to be accommodated in a manner that supports the proposed uses whilst minimising impact on the building's historic character, spatial qualities and surviving fabric.

The long-term conservation of the building will ultimately depend upon establishing a viable and sustainable use. Consultation findings indicate support for a combination of heritage, community, cultural and event-based activities, whilst stakeholder discussions have identified potential opportunities for functions and weddings that could contribute towards ongoing income generation. Future proposals will therefore need to balance public benefit, conservation objectives and financial sustainability in order to support the building's long-term maintenance, management and occupation.



Figure 12. Existing ladder stair providing access between the ground and first floors, introduced during the building's twentieth century adaptation for Sea Cadet use.

Site Analysis: Constraints and Opportunities



Figure 13. Site Analysis: Constraints and Opportunities

Existing Building Constraints and Opportunities Analysis

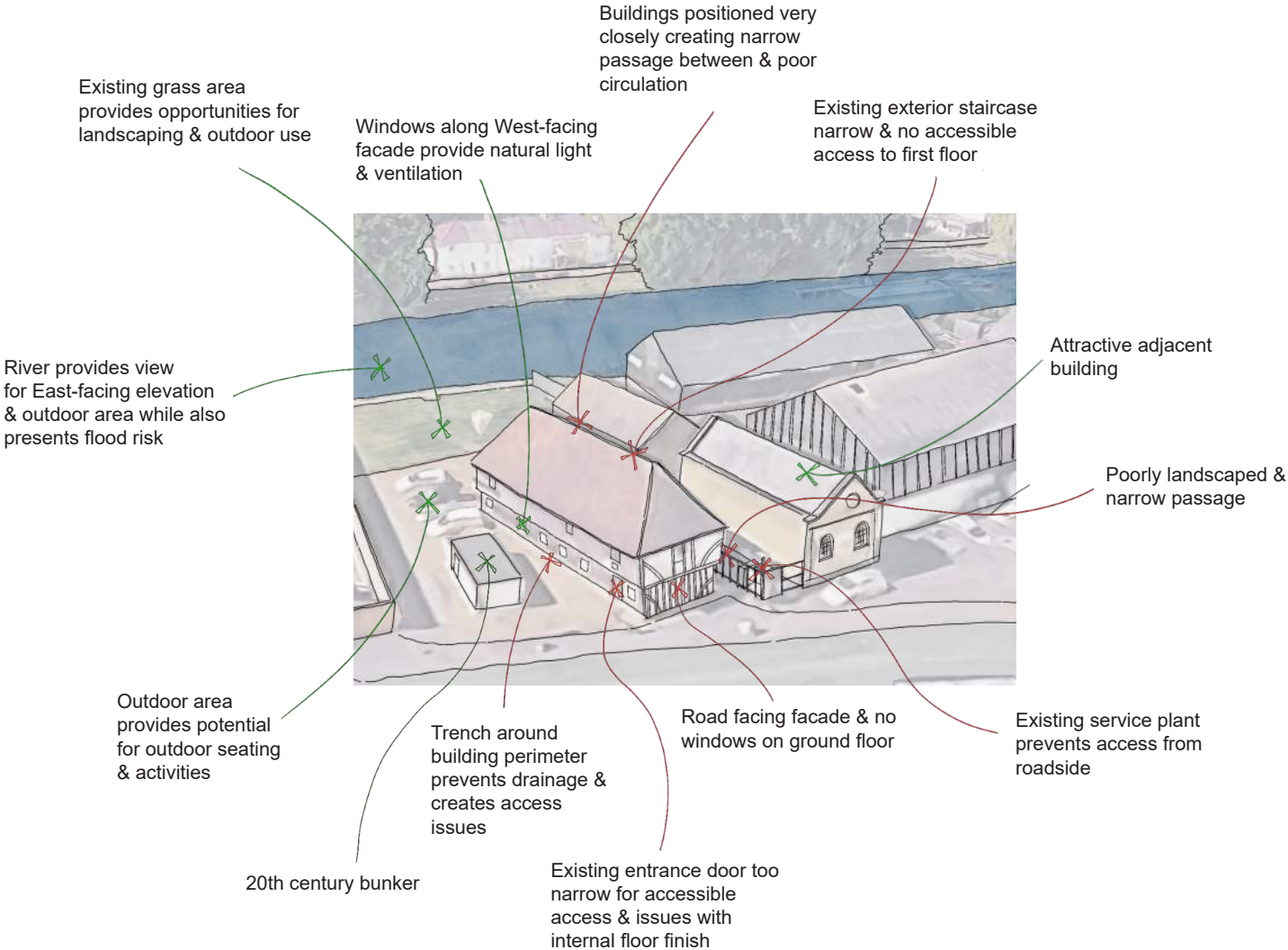


Figure 14. Existing Building Constraints and Opportunities Analysis

Strength and Weakness Analysis

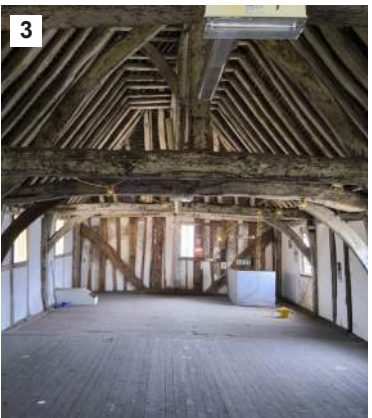
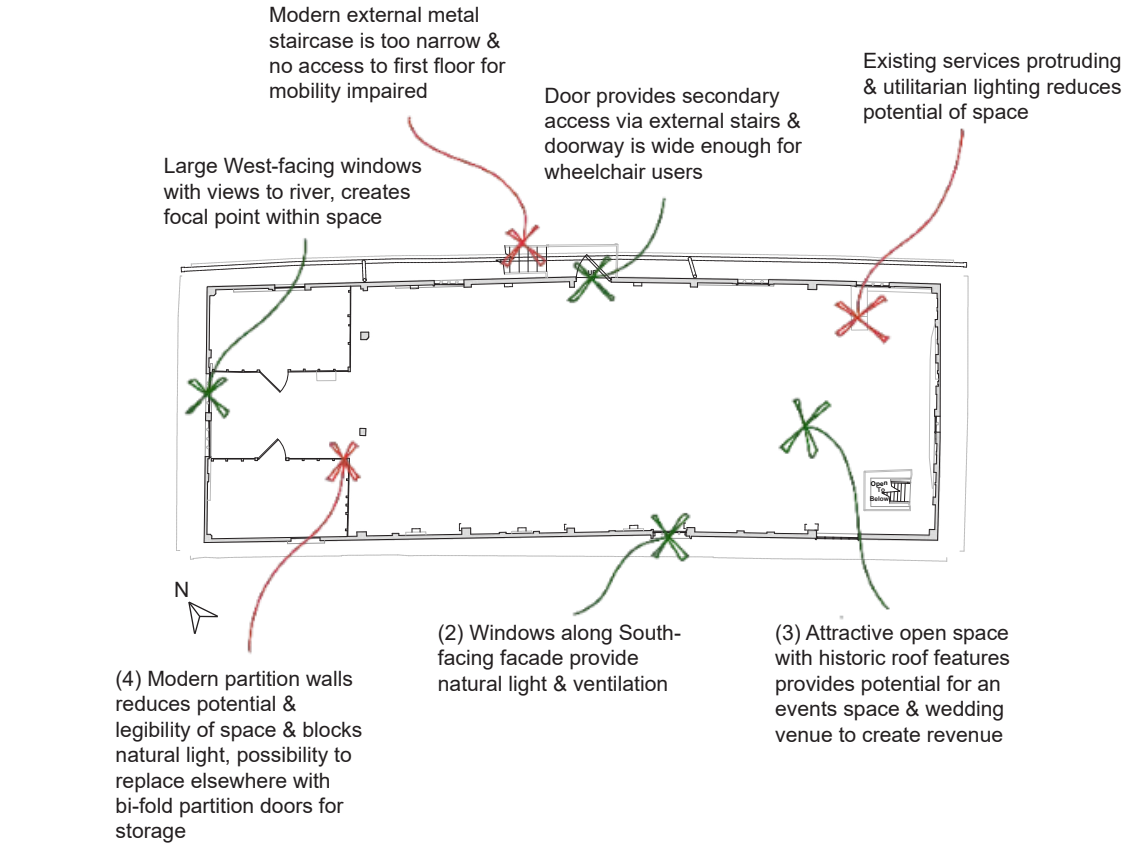
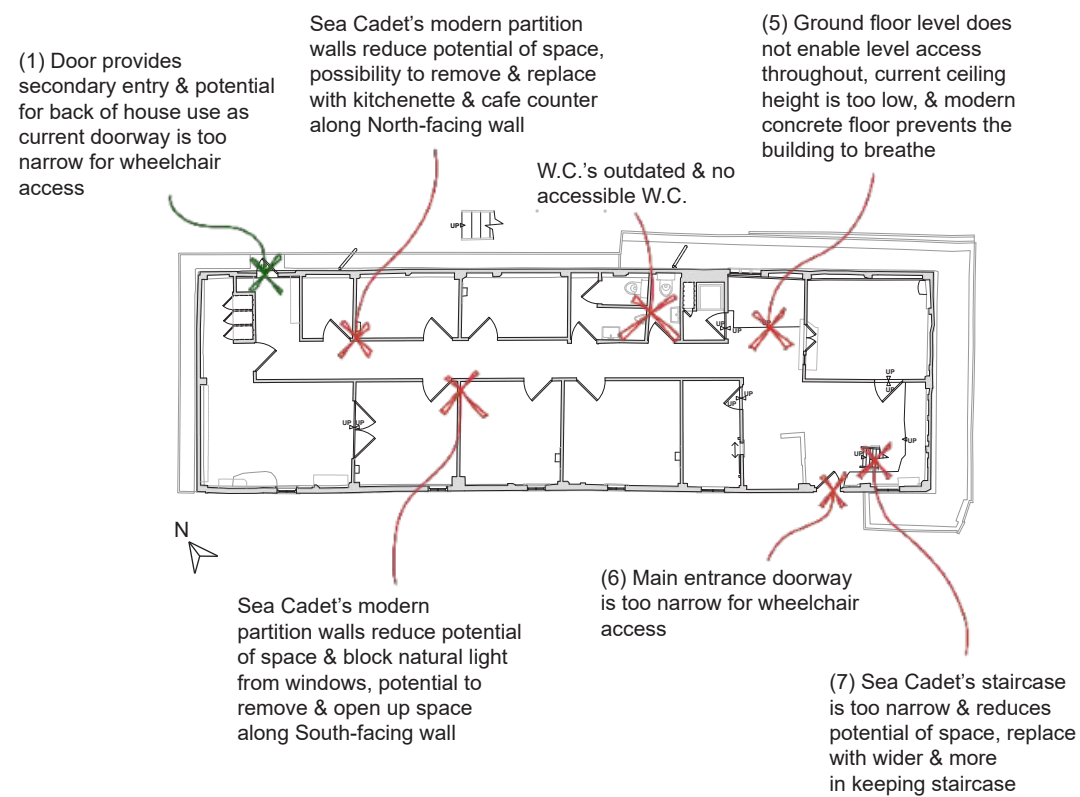
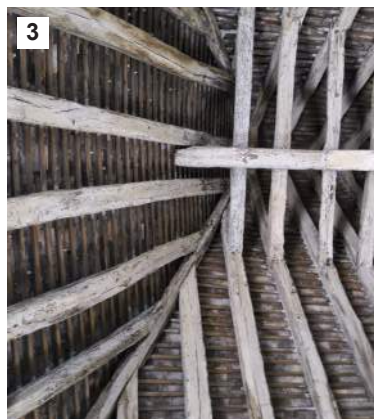


Figure 15. Strengths and Weaknesses

5.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The emerging proposals have been developed in response to the building's significance, condition, physical constraints and the aspirations identified through community engagement. The following principles will guide the development of the preferred scheme during subsequent design stages.

Conservation and Understanding

The building retains substantial elements of its medieval timber frame and historic form. Further investigation and opening up works provide an opportunity to better understand the development of the building, reveal concealed historic fabric and inform a conservation led repair strategy. There may also be opportunities to remove or rationalise later alterations of limited significance where these detract from an appreciation of the building's historic character and function.

Heritage Interpretation

The building provides an exceptional opportunity to interpret Faversham's maritime, commercial and industrial history. Its prominent location adjacent to the creek allows the story of the town's historic trading activities, waterfront development and relationship with the wider landscape to be communicated through the building itself. Future proposals could incorporate heritage interpretation, exhibitions, educational activities and public engagement initiatives that enhance understanding of the building and its significance.

Community, Cultural and Event Uses

Public consultation demonstrates strong support for a combination of heritage, community and cultural uses. Future proposals should provide flexible accommodation capable of supporting exhibitions, educational programmes, community events, cultural activities and wider public engagement. Consultation responses and stakeholder discussions also indicate support for functions and wedding events, which have the potential to contribute towards income generation and support the building's long-term operational sustainability.

Environmental Improvement and Resilience

Addressing the underlying causes of deterioration presents an opportunity not only to conserve the building but also to improve its resilience to future environmental challenges. Improvements to drainage, surface water management, flood resilience and environmental conditions could help safeguard the historic fabric whilst creating a more robust and sustainable basis for future occupation.

Town Quay and Waterfront Setting

The building occupies a prominent position within Faversham's historic waterfront. Future proposals provide an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the building, Faversham Creek and the wider Town Quay environment through improved interpretation, public access and public realm enhancements. The project has the potential to contribute positively to the wider regeneration and appreciation of this important historic area.

Sustainable Use and Long-Term Stewardship

The building's significance, public profile and strong level of community support provide a sound basis for developing a sustainable future use. By combining heritage, community, cultural and commercial activities, there is an opportunity to establish an operational model capable of supporting the building's ongoing maintenance, management and conservation, securing its long-term future as a valued heritage asset and community resource.

6.0 OPTION STUDIES

The emerging options presented below have been developed in response to the findings of RIBA Stages 0 and 1, including the review of the building's significance, condition, opportunities and constraints, together with the aspirations identified through earlier community engagement. The options are founded on the principle of conserving the building's historic character by retaining the medieval structure and removing later modern partitions, where appropriate, to improve understanding and legibility of the historic warehouse.

As a result, the options differ primarily in the proposed use of the building rather than in the extent of physical alteration. They explore different balances between heritage interpretation, community use, cultural activities and commercial functions whilst following the same conservation-led approach. The options should therefore be regarded as illustrative only and are intended to inform discussion rather than represent a preferred scheme.

Before any adaptation or new use can be implemented, the building will require essential stabilisation, repair and conservation works to address the structural, environmental and moisture-related issues identified through the investigations undertaken to date.

The next stage of the project will develop a preferred concept design together with a conservation-led repair strategy. The long-term conservation of the Old Town Warehouse will also depend upon improvements to its immediate setting, including surrounding ground levels, drainage, landscape and its relationship with Town Quay and Faversham Creek. A coordinated landscape and drainage strategy should therefore be developed alongside the preferred scheme during RIBA Stage 2.



First Floor: Wedding Venue



Ground Floor: Cafe

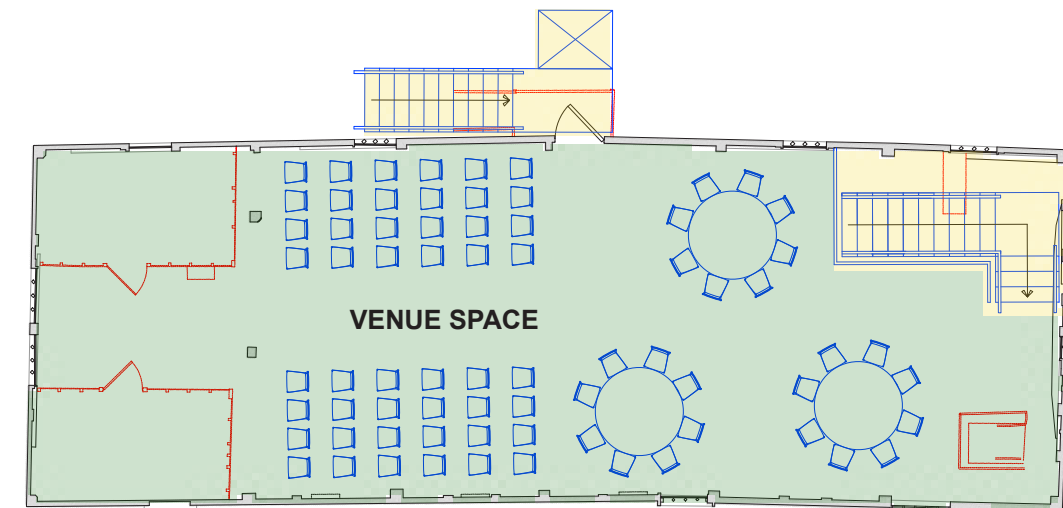
OPTION 1

Greater emphasis on heritage interpretation and exhibition space with a café

Option one proposes to demolish the ground floor modern partition walls to create a flexible exhibition space / small maritime museum centre and a small cafe with a kitchenette. The existing W.C.s are replaced with two W.C.s and one accessible W.C. on the ground floor. The existing narrow interior staircase is replaced with a larger & more in keeping staircase. The existing modern metal exterior staircase is replaced with a wider & more in keeping exterior staircase & platform lift to enable accessibility to the first floor. This option proposes to demolish the first floor modern partition walls to create one large venue space for weddings and other events.



Option 1: Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Option 1: Proposed First Floor Plan

LINE TYPE KEY	
—	Existing
---	Demolition
—	Proposed
USE KEY	
	Circulation
	Cafe
	Flexible
	W.C.
	Store

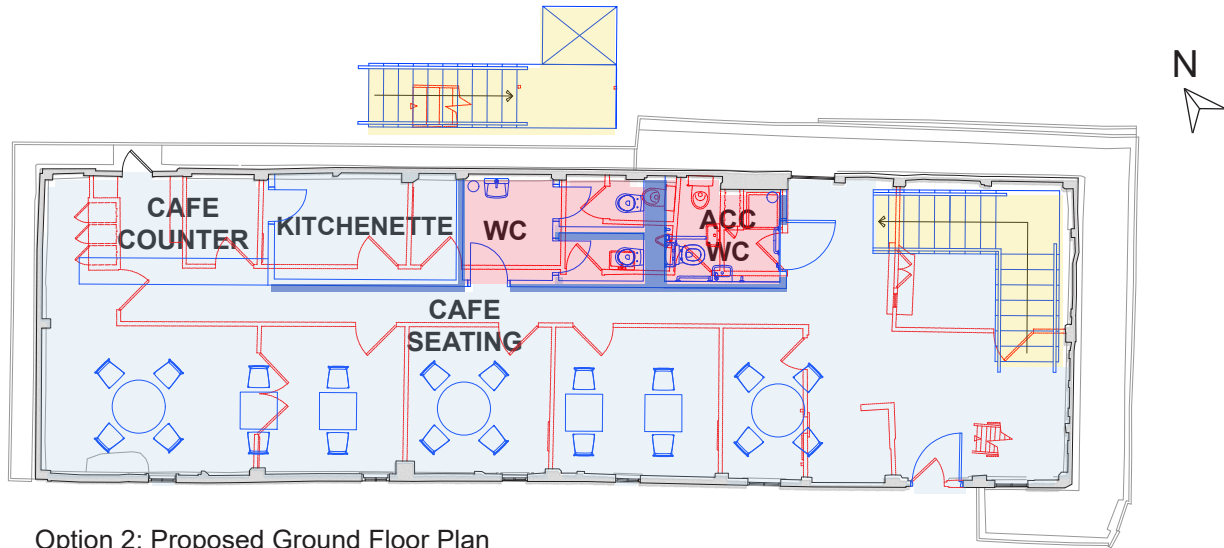


Option 1: Proposed Section

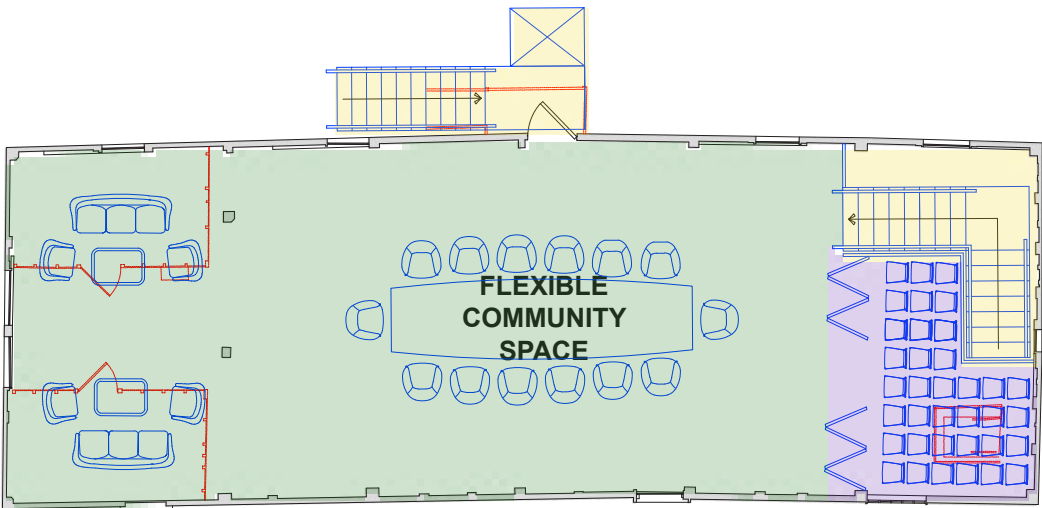
OPTION 2

Greater emphasis on flexible community space with a café

Option two proposes to demolish the ground floor modern partition walls to create a community cafe with a kitchenette. The existing W.C.s are replaced with two W.C.s and one accessible W.C. on the ground floor. The existing narrow interior staircase is replaced with a larger & more in keeping staircase. The existing modern metal exterior staircase is replaced with a wider & more in keeping exterior staircase & platform lift to enable accessibility to the first floor. This option proposes to demolish the first floor modern partition walls to create a large flexible space for community use such as meetings, activities, & events. Bi-fold doors provide flexible storage space.



Option 2: Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Option 2: Proposed First Floor Plan

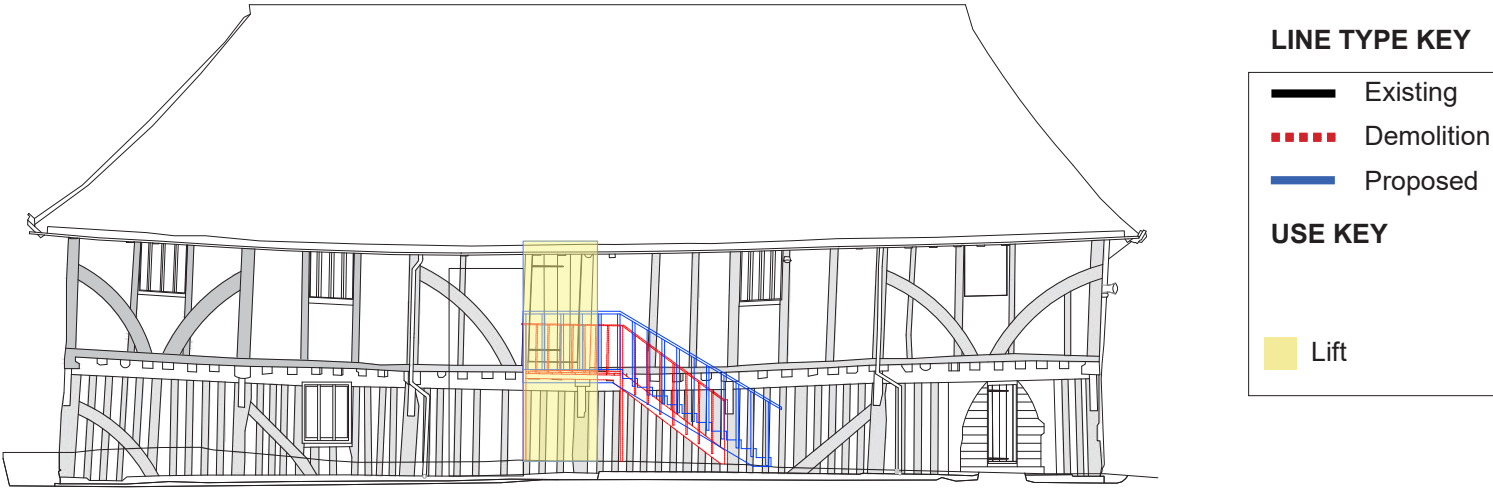
LINE TYPE KEY	
	Existing
	Demolition
	Proposed
USE KEY	
	Circulation
	Cafe
	Flexible
	W.C.
	Store



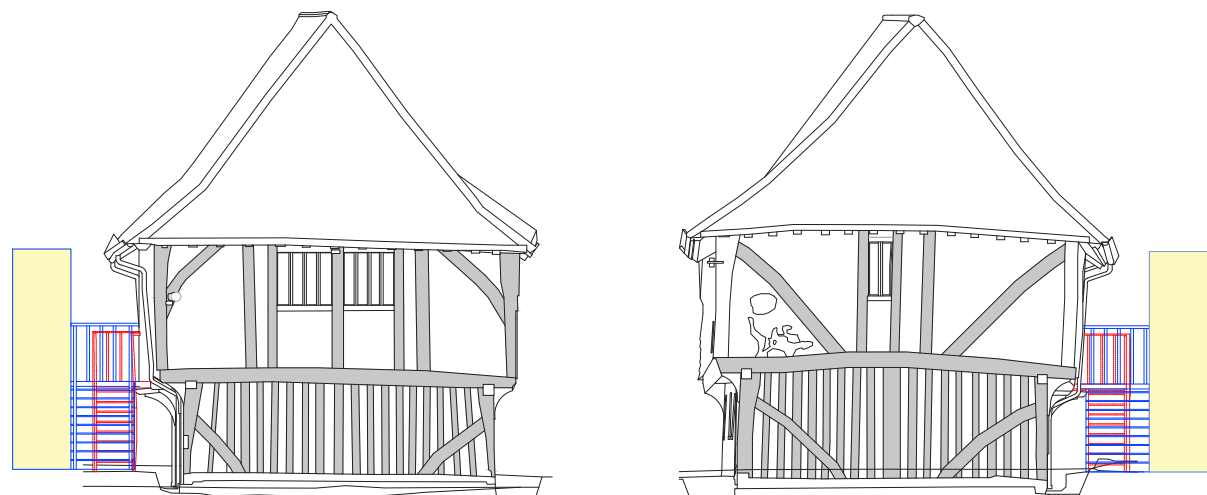
Option 2: Proposed Section

External Accessibility

The existing building is currently inaccessible for wheelchair users. Both option one and two propose to replace the existing modern metal staircase with a wider and more in keeping timber staircase. Additionally, a new platform lift will enable accessibility to the first floor. The form, materials, scale and appearance of any external accessibility interventions will require careful development during subsequent design stages to minimise impact on the significance and setting of the Grade II* listed building.



Proposed North-Facing Elevation



Proposed West-Facing Elevation

Proposed East-Facing Elevation



Figure 16. Precedent Study: External Oak Stair and Access Landing



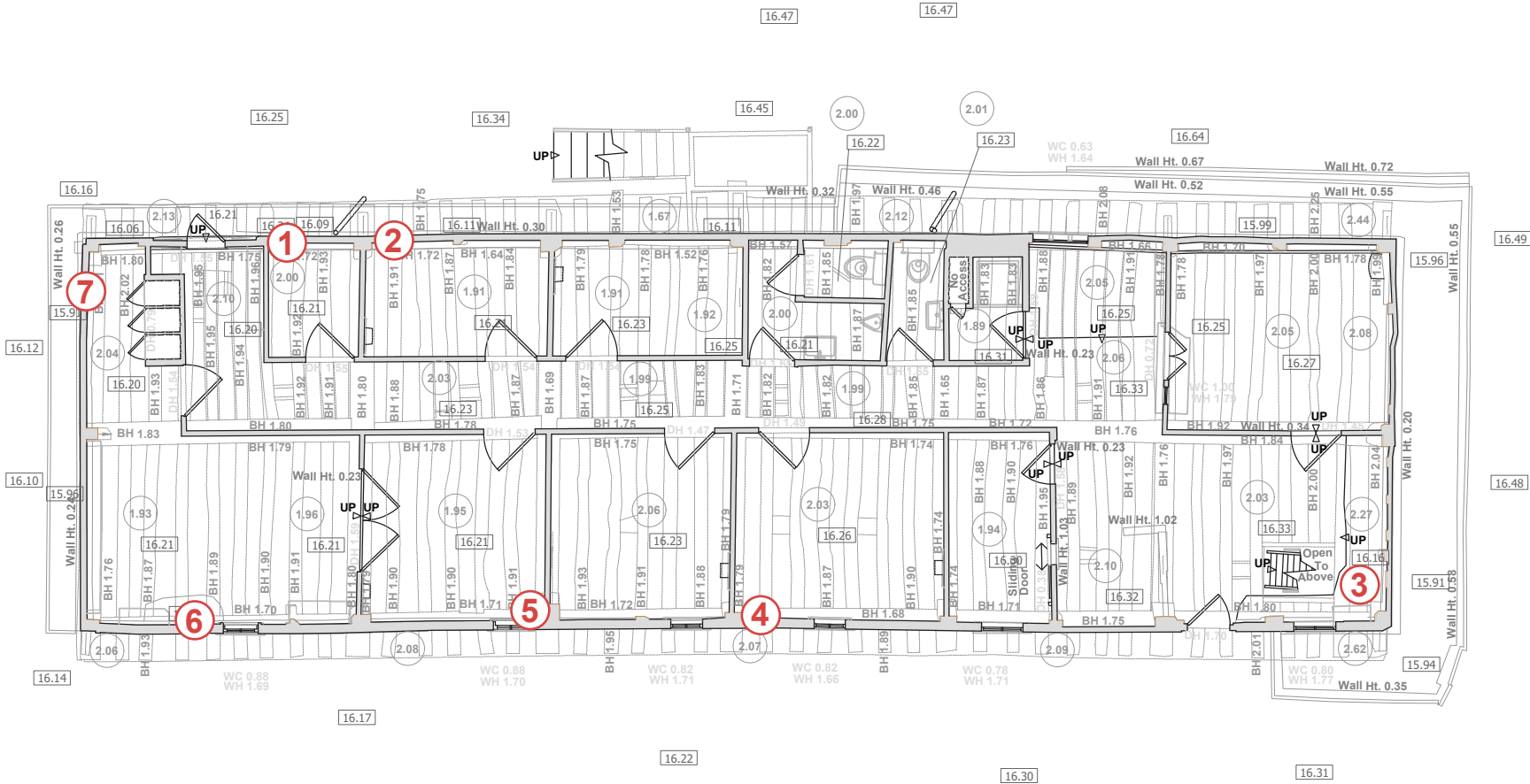
Figure 17. Precedent Study: External Platform Lift and Access Deck



Figure 18. Precedent Study: External Platform Lift and Access Deck

7.0 EXPLORATION WORKS UNDERTAKEN

An initial programme of exploratory investigations has been undertaken to develop a better understanding of the building's construction, condition, and causes of deterioration. The findings have informed the options appraisal and will continue to guide the development of a conservation-led repair strategy during the next stage of the project, alongside any further investigations that may be required.



(1) wall



(2) wall



(3) floor



(4) wall



(5) wall



(6) floor



(7) wall

8.0 NEXT STEPS

The work undertaken during RIBA Stages 0 and 1 has established a clear understanding of the building's significance, condition, opportunities and constraints, providing a sound basis for progressing the project to RIBA Stage 2.

Future proposals should address not only the repair of the building itself, but also improvements to the surrounding landscape, drainage and ground conditions to support its long-term conservation.

The next stage of the project should focus on:

- Reviewing the findings of the recent opening-up works with the structural engineer to confirm the extent of repair works and determine whether any additional targeted investigations are required.
- Developing a conservation-led repair strategy that addresses structural, environmental, drainage and moisture-related issues affecting the building.
- Reviewing the findings of the Stage 1 community engagement and confirming the preferred balance between heritage interpretation, community use and commercial activities.
- Refining the project brief and developing the preferred scheme through RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design.
- Developing proposals for accessibility, building services, fire strategy and statutory compliance in a manner that respects the significance of the Grade II* listed building.
- Continue working with Faversham Town Council to refine the preferred scheme, informed by community engagement and stakeholder feedback.
- Preparing a Listed Building Consent application for the Phase 1 stabilisation and repair works.

The outcome of RIBA Stage 2 should be a preferred concept design that provides a clear and deliverable strategy for the repair, adaptation and long-term sustainable reuse of the Old Town Warehouse, balancing heritage conservation, community benefit and operational viability.



Figure 20. Repair and restoration works to the Old Town Warehouse in the early 1960s. Source: Anthony Swaine Architecture Ltd Collection.



Figure 19. Recent opening up and investigation works to improve understanding of the building's construction.

9.0 SUMMARY

This report has established the strategic brief for the conservation and sustainable reuse of the Old Town Warehouse. Through a review of the building's significance, condition, available survey information and community aspirations, it has identified the principal opportunities and constraints that will inform future design development.

The option studies demonstrate that the building has the potential to accommodate a range of compatible uses, including heritage interpretation, community activities, cultural events and commercial functions, whilst respecting its special architectural and historic interest. The preferred balance between these uses will be informed through continued engagement with Faversham Town Council and the local community.

Subject to the review of the recent opening-up works and continued development of the conservation repair strategy, the project is well placed to progress to RIBA Stage 2, where the preferred concept design will be developed in support of the building's long-term conservation and sustainable future use.



Figure 21. Existing interior of first floor.



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