

# Moat House

## Arborfield

**LEVEL 2 BUILDING RECORDING | JUNE 2024**

On behalf of Hicks Development



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**Laurie Handcock**  
Director  
[lhandcock@iceniprojects.com](mailto:lhandcock@iceniprojects.com)  
020 3725 3853



**Rebecca Mason**  
Associate Director  
[rmason@iceniprojects.com](mailto:rmason@iceniprojects.com)  
07776 530 771



**Hugo Tomassi**  
Senior Consultant  
[htomassi@iceniprojects.com](mailto:htomassi@iceniprojects.com)  
07582 024 213

Section 1

# **Introduction and Summary.**

## Overview

- 1.1 This Historic Building Recording has been prepared by Iceni Projects on behalf of Hicks Developments to record Moat House, the Army Remount Department officers building (Moat House, Biggs Lane, RG2 9LN) as part of the redevelopment scheme (Ref: 242253).
- 1.2 The consented scheme seeks to provide 4 dwellings through the sub-division of the building.
- 1.3 Condition 3 of the Listed Building Consent (LBC) requires the preparation and subsequent discharge of a photographic record of the Site prior to works commence.
- 1.4 The condition is specifically worded as follows:

### *'Building Recording'*

*No works of stripping out, demolition or alteration work to Moat House shall be commenced until the applicant, agent or successor in title have had undertaken a historic building survey and it has been confirmed in writing by the local planning authority following receipt of written confirmation from Berkshire County Council of a copy of the finished historic building report has been deposited with its Heritage Environment Records department.*

*The building recording shall be undertaken in accordance with accordance with the methodology for a Level 2 recording as set out in Historic England's 'Understanding Historic Building: A Guide to Good Practice' (2016) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-historic-buildings/heag099-understanding-historic-buildings/>) unless otherwise agreement in writing from the local planning authority has prior to undertaking the building recording exercise, agreed to a different level of recording.*

*A copy of the final building recording document is to be provided to the Council's Built Heritage Officer and a further copy deposited with the Berkshire County Council's Heritage Environment Records department. The condition shall only be deemed to be discharged in full once the Local Planning Authority has received written confirmation from County's Heritage Environment Records of receipt of the building recording documentation.*

### *Reason*

In order to maintain a record of the features to be altered/ demolished which form part of the historic development of the site. Relevant policy: National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB24.

## Aims and Objectives

- 1.5 The aim of the building recording is to provide a detailed record of Moat House (the Site) in advance of its the consented scheme to create 4 dwellings within the building.
- 1.6 A copy of this recording will be deposited with the Berkshire County Council Heritage Environment Records.

## On-Site Recording

- 1.7 A photographic survey was carried out on 04/06/25 using a full framed digital camera shot at 24 - 50mm. The photography follows the required guidance and were shot in JPEG format with each image to exceed 10 mega pixels.
- 1.8 This survey aims to document all accessible interiors and exteriors of the Site. The record focuses on the current condition of the building and includes the preparation of a comprehensive photographic survey and written record to a standard according with a Level 2 building recording, as specified by the Condition 4.
- 1.9 This report has utilised the site survey and plans drawn up by Ascot Design.

## The Report

- 1.10 The report consists includes an account on the historic development of the Site, a statement of significance, a photographic and descriptive Record, and a drawn record.

## Bibliography

- 1.11 This document has been written drawing on extensive primary and secondary research. The bibliography is appended at appendix A.

## Authors

- 1.12 This report is produced by Iceni Projects. Specifically, it is authored by Hugo Tomassi BA (Hons) MSt (Cantab) - Senior Consultant, Built Heritage & Townscape and with guidance from Rebecca Mason BA(Hons) MSc MA IHBC -Associate Director. Review and final sign off by Laurie Handcock, Director of the Heritage and Townscape at Iceni Projects.



Site Location Plan Source: Edited from Google

## Methodology

1.13 The building recording accords with Historic England's 'Understanding Historic Buildings: Guide to Good Recording Practice' (2016). It is prepared to a Level 2 building recording:

*This is a descriptive record, made in similar circumstances to Level 1 but when more information is needed. It may be made of a building which is judged not to require a more detailed record, or it may serve to gather data for a wider project. Both the exterior and interior of the building will be seen, described and photographed. The examination of the building will produce an analysis of its development and use and the record will include the conclusions reached, but it will not discuss in detail the evidence on which this analysis is based. A plan and sometimes other drawings may be made but the drawn record will normally not be comprehensive and may be tailored to the scope of a wider project.*

1.14 The building recording adheres to the Historic England requirements by combining a photographic and descriptive record of the building which is considered to be sufficient to fulfil the requirements of Condition 4 and satisfy the condition's reasoning.

Level 2 Requirements		
Drawn record	Item 1	Sketched plan, section, elevation or detail drawings (when no more thorough drawn record is made). Sketches may be roughly dimensioned.
	Or Item 2	Measured plans (to scale or fully dimensioned) as existing. These may extend to all floors, or they may be restricted to one or a selection. The latter option may be appropriate, for example, in a town-centre building where an upper floor has been little altered. Buildings with a repetitive structure may also be planned on one floor, but a note or a sketch plan should be made to indicate the arrangement of other floors. Plans should show the form and location of any structural features of historic significance, such as blocked doorways, windows and fireplaces, masonry joints, ceiling beams and other changes in floor and ceiling levels, and any evidence for fixtures of significance.
Photography	Item 1	A general view or views of the building (in its wider setting or landscape if 2 (below) is also to be adopted).
	Item 2	The building's external appearance. Typically a series of oblique views will show all external elevations of the building, and give an overall impression of its size and shape. Where individual elevations include complex historical information it may also be appropriate to take views at right-angles to the plane of the elevation.
	Item 4	The overall appearance of the principal rooms and circulation areas. The approach will be similar to that outlined in 2.
Written record	Item 1	The precise location of the building as an address and in the form of a National Grid reference.
	Item 2	A note of any statutory designation (that is, listing, scheduling, Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, conservation area). Information on statutory designations can be found on the Historic England website. Non-statutory designations (local lists) may be added.
	Item 3	The date when the record was made, the name(s) of the recorder(s) and the location of any archive material.
	Item 6	A longer summary statement. An alternative to 4. This account should summarise the building's form, function, date and sequence of development. The names of architects, builders, patrons and owners should be given if known. Its purpose is to describe the building when no fuller record is necessary. Alternatively it may serve as an introduction to the more detailed body of a record that may follow, for users who may need a summary of the report's findings.

Table of the Level 2 requirements set out in the Historic England 'Understanding Historic Buildings: Guide to Good Recording Practice' (2016).

Section 2

## **Historic Development and Significance of the Site.**

## 2 | Historic Development and Significance of the Site

### MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

#### Historic Development of the Site and Surroundings

##### Pre-20th Century

- 2.1 During the 19th century, the Site and immediate surroundings were defined by their agricultural use as part of an open field system.
- 2.2 The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) Map of the Area (1876) illustrates the farmland with individual fields being defined by hedgerows. Two farms, Longmoor Farm and Biggs Farm, are shown to have been located within some proximity of the Site.

##### Early 20th Century

###### Remount Depot

- 2.3 By 1900 Longmoor Farm is no longer present and the Biggs Farm is referenced as 'Old Biggs Farm', whilst field boundaries appear to have been dissolved to create larger land holdings. This changes illustrate the establishment of the Arborfield Remount Depot and the evolution of the surrounding area away from 19th century arable land.
- 2.4 In 1904 the War Office established the Arborfield Remount Depot which was to function as a location to receive newly-purchased remounts (horses) and prepare them for active service. In its infancy, the land at Arborfield was leased from the Walter family and formed part of the 250 acre Bearwood Estate. The land had been previously worked by the farms of Bigg's Farm, Old Bigg's Farm, and Ellis Farm.
- 2.5 Bigg's Farm acted as the primary headquarters for the Depot and Ellis Farm provided a designated segregated area for infectious horses. Initially, the depot utilised the existing former farm buildings and only constructed a small wooden stable block at Bigg's Farm.
- 2.6 However, within two years of the Depot's establishment, the army set out to construct a purpose-built Officer's residence within the vicinity. The result was Moat House which was completed in 1906 and shortly after occupied by the Captain Quartermaster, J. Barry. The remaining elements of Old Bigg's Farm were then shortly demolished.

2.7 In 1911 - 12, approximately six years after the completion of Moat House, two blocks of loose boxes were built to the east of the Main Yard to provide 'Sick Lines' for animals.

2.8 In response to the escalating tensions and likelihood of war, the Remount Service was expanded in the Spring of 1914. The depot's size was increased, former farmland striped, and temporary stabling erected to house a further 600 horses. The new limits of the depot stretched from Langley Common Road to Common Field Lane and encompassed Langley Common Farm.

2.9 Further changes to the character of the Depot occurred as a result of the outbreak of war and saw the inclusion of additional grazing land taken from Arborfield Court, Carters Hill, Sallowfield Court.

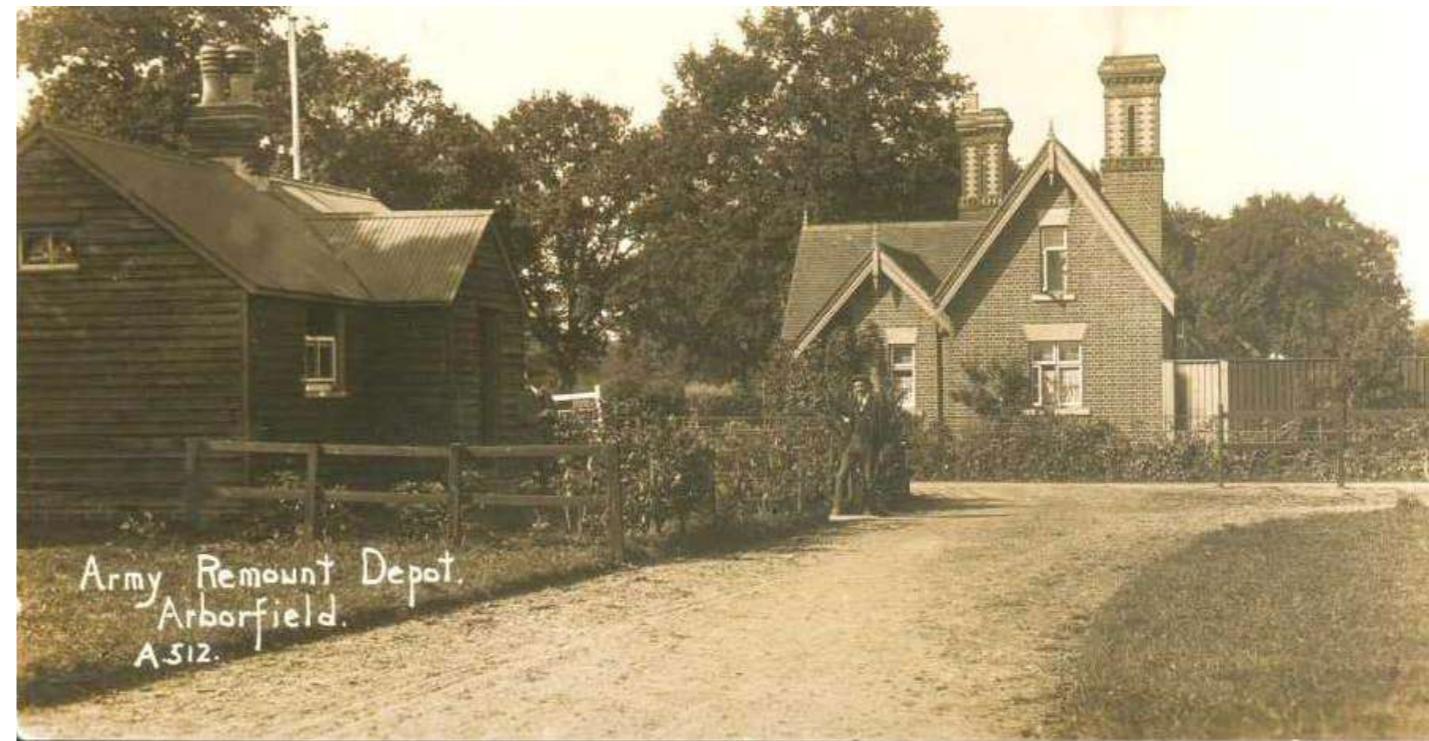


Figure 3.1 Historic photograph of the Army Remount Depot at Arborfield

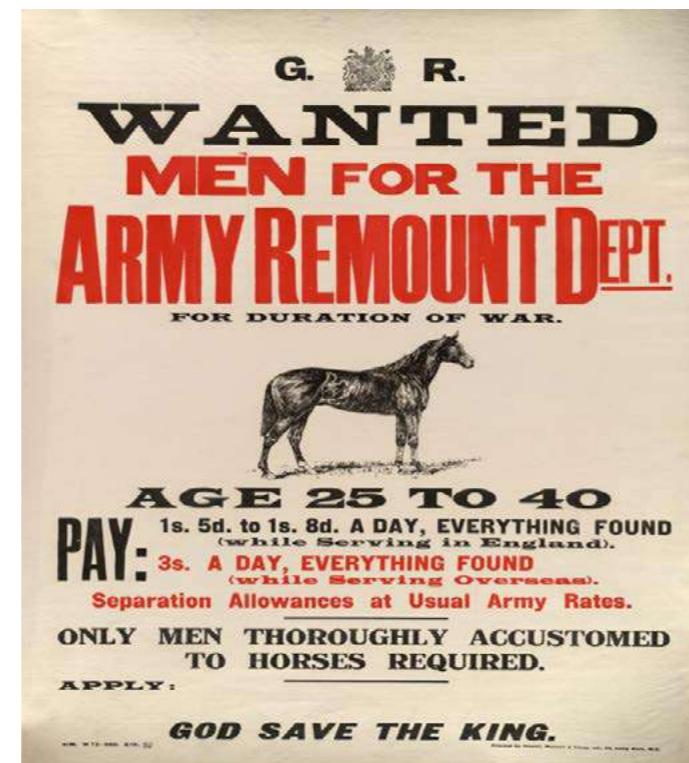


Figure 3.3 Wartime advertisement poster for the recruitment of soldiers to



Figure 3.2 Historic Photograph of Moat House during the military use of the building

## 2 | Historic Development and Significance of the Site

### Post World War One

2.10 Post war, and upon realisation of mechanical warfare, the Depot's purpose adapted to function as a holding and distribution area of draught animals. This resulted in the rebuilding of the former wooden structures in brick and more stable blocks being erected beyond the Main Yard. The Arborfield Remount Depot reached its peak in the early 1930s housing over 150 staff, comprising of over 500 acres, and homing more than 500 animals.

2.11 However, by 1937, the realisation of horse units being inadequate to mid 20th century warfare technological advancements saw the depot close, and by 1939 the equestrian centre had be re-purposed as the Army Technical School - later the Arborfield Garrison.

2.12 The Garrison was responsible for the large-scale development of the area and the transformation from a semi-rural setting into a dense settlement pattern. The 1968 OS Map (1:2,500) illustrates how the former openness of Moat house was significantly changed during the late 20th century through the establishment of housing on Buttershaw Avenue and Buttershaw Close.

2.13 Shortly after the development of the Garrison, Moat House became the museum of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) in 1958. The building continued as a museum until the REME moved the collections in 1985, Moat House then adopted an office functioned which it has remained in until the present day.

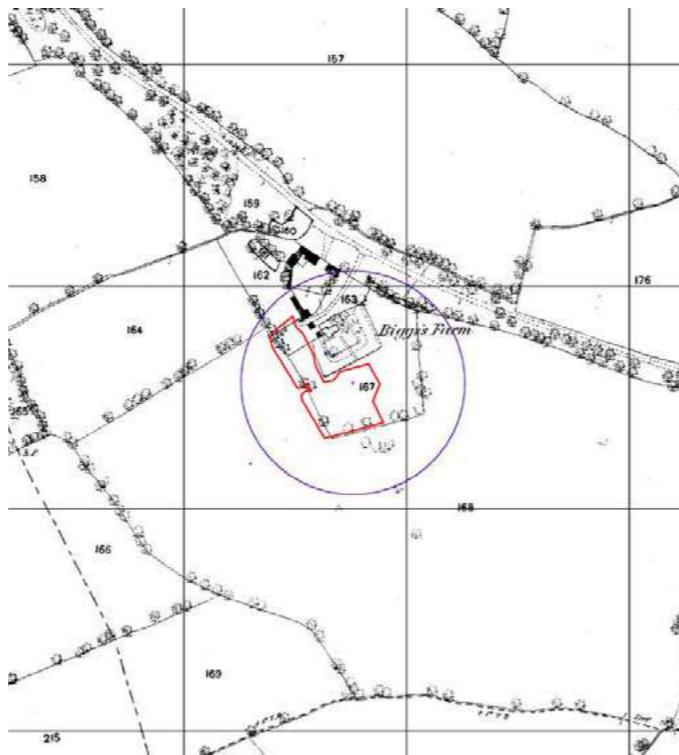


Figure 3.5 1872 OS Map with the Site location outlined (Source:Envirocheck)



Figure 3.7 1899 OS Map with the Site location outlined (Source:Envirocheck)



Figure 3.10 1911 OS Map with the Site location outlined (Source:Envirocheck)

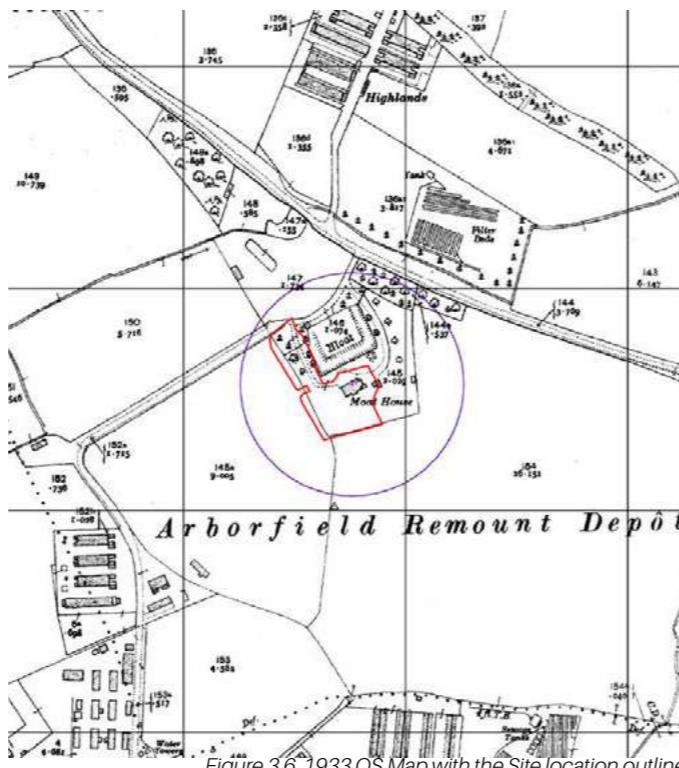


Figure 3.6 1933 OS Map with the Site location outlined (Source:Envirocheck)



Figure 3.8 1968 OS Map with the Site location outlined (Source:Envirocheck)



Figure 3.9 1978-87 OS Map with the Site location outlined (Source:Envirocheck)

## 2 | Historic Development and Significance of the Site

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD



Figure 2.1. 1946 Aerial Image of the Site (red outline) in context to the changing setting with the surviving Depot stables (blue outline) and early stages of Army Technical School with Bailleul Barracks shown (yellow outline).

## Significance Plans

2.14 The following plans aim to highlight relevant significant areas or elements of both the interior and exterior of Moat House.

## Ground Floor

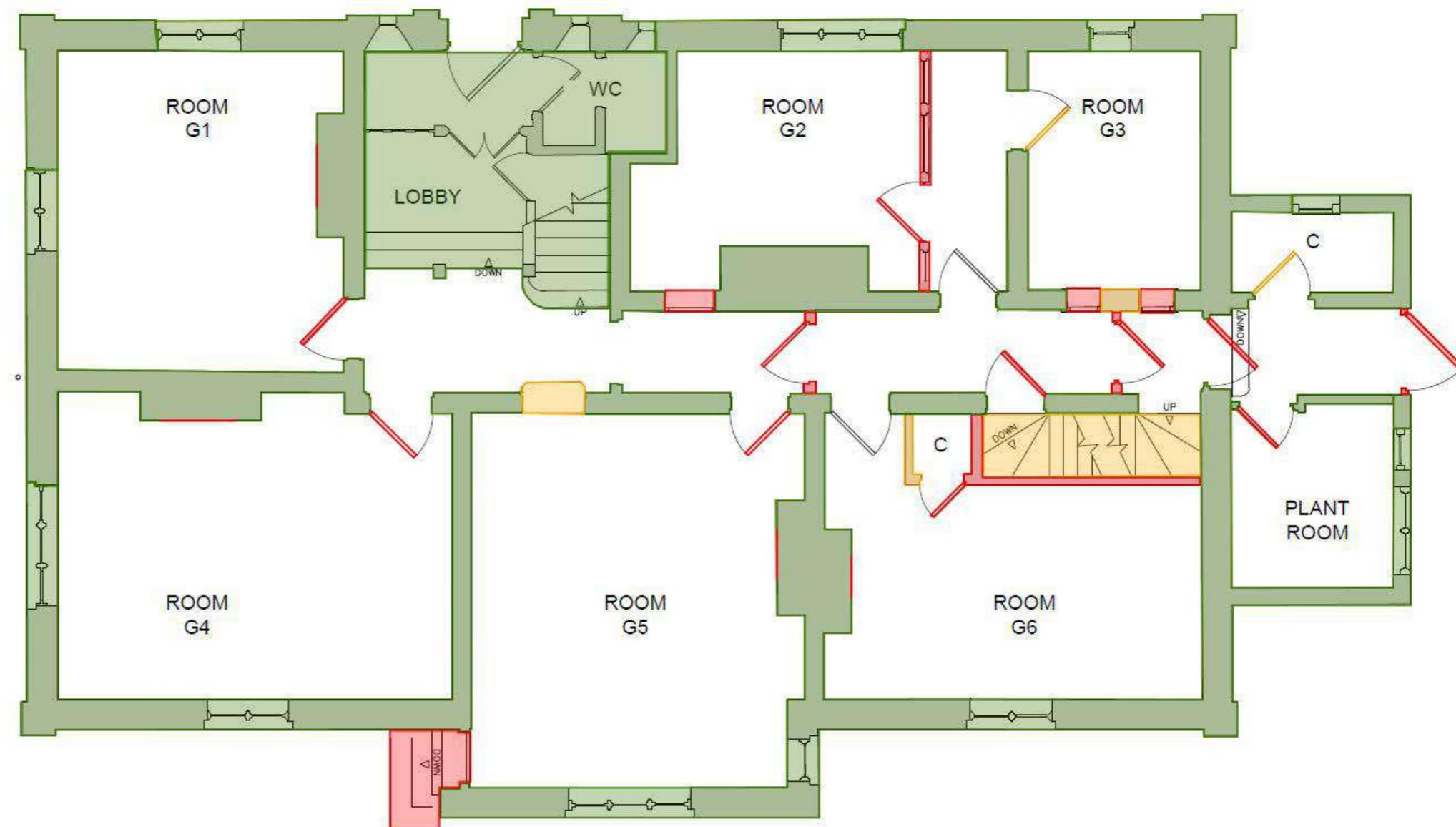
2.15 The ground floor of Moat House contains an overall primary arrangement with minor subdivision of Room G2 and the internal corridor which are of no significance.

2.16 Modern internal opening have punctuated the primary walls to increase the amount of borrowed light into the central corridor and detract from appreciation of the primary arrangement.

2.17 The fireplaces area in the primary locations and feature modern hearth surrounds which hold no significance.

2.18 Room G5 features a further external access point which has been created through replacement of a primary window opening.

2.19 The lobby area holds high significance and contains the ornate oak staircase and stage entrance.



## 2 | Historic Development and Significance of the Site

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

### First Floor

2.20 The first floor of Moat House contains an overall primary arrangement with some subdivision and the internal corridor which are of no significance.

2.21 The landing features a modern partition onto the staircase which is of no significance and complicates appreciation of the primary syntactical arrangement.

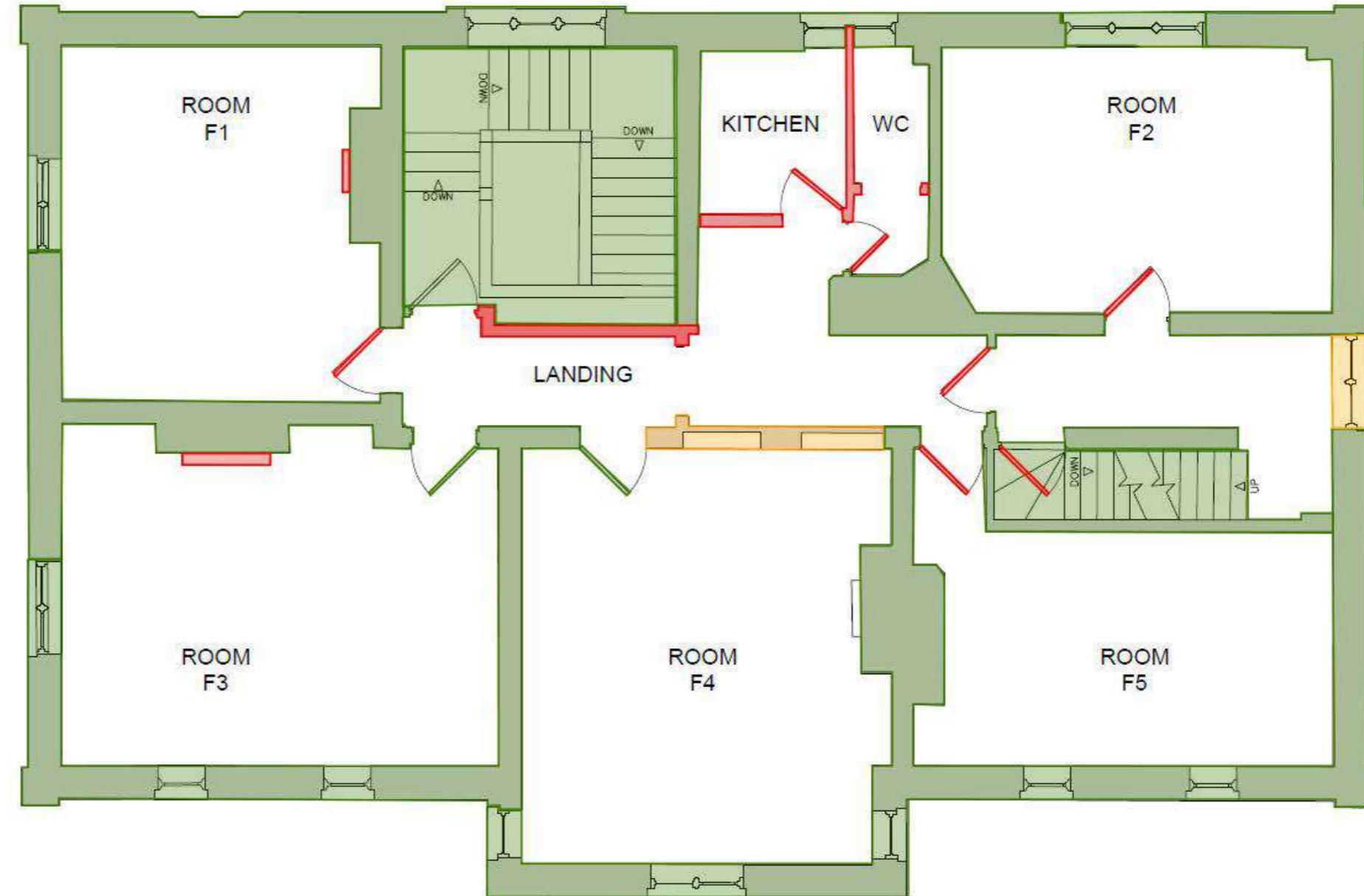
2.22 This floor contains a mix of primary oak doors with mouldings, and modern examples. The primary doors are found in openings to Rooms F1, F3, and F4.

2.23 Modern internal storage which stands within the recess of the stack is found within Room F1 and F3. These features hold no significance.

2.24 Room F4 features modern inbuilt storage within the northern partition which divides the room with the landing.

2.25 Opposite Room F4, the primary arrange has been lost due to the subdivision of the room to create a kitchen and w/c. These are features modern partitions and dropped ceilings.

2.26 The window at the end of the landing is of primary form but features modern glazing which is of no significance.



## 2 | Historic Development and Significance of the Site

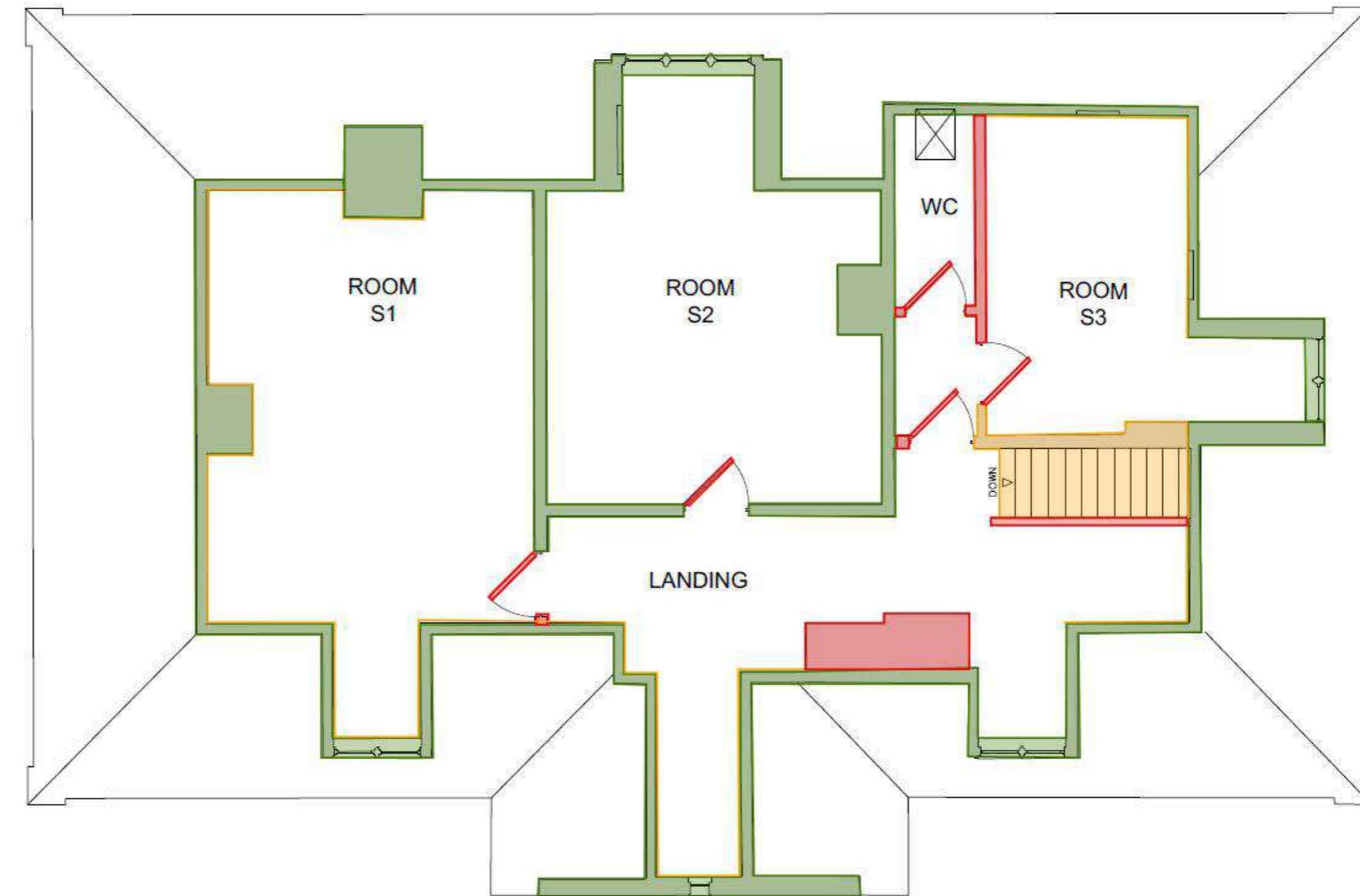
MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

### Attic

2.27 The attic of Moat House also features modern subdivision which creates a further w/c off Room S3. The associated partition and doors are modern and hold no significance.

2.28 The staircase contains evidence of modern alteration and features a non-original banister.

2.29 The area is of low significance and features air-conditioning ducting which further detracts from general appearance of the space.



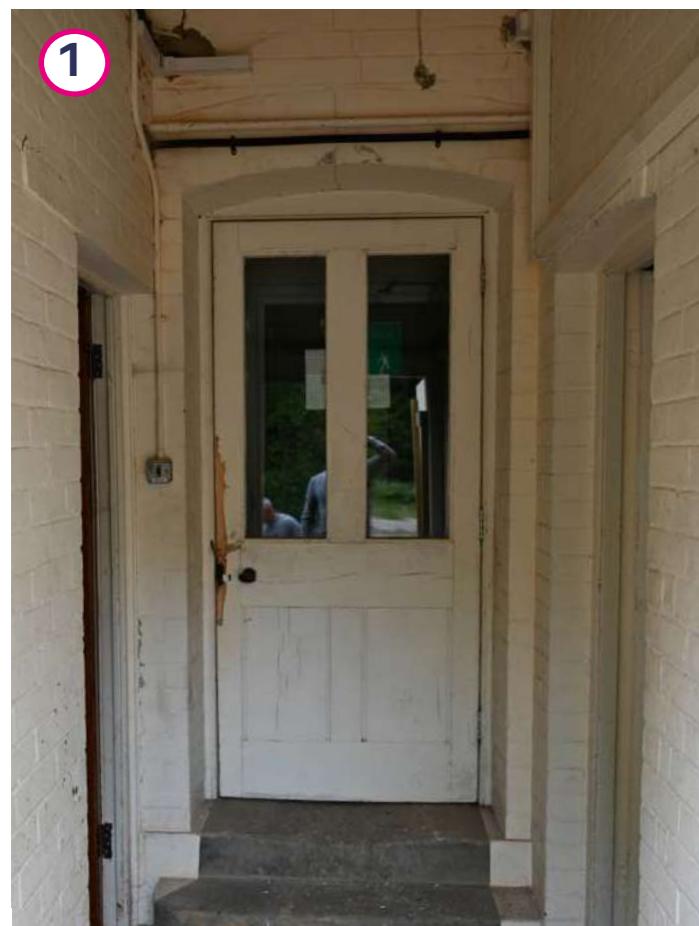
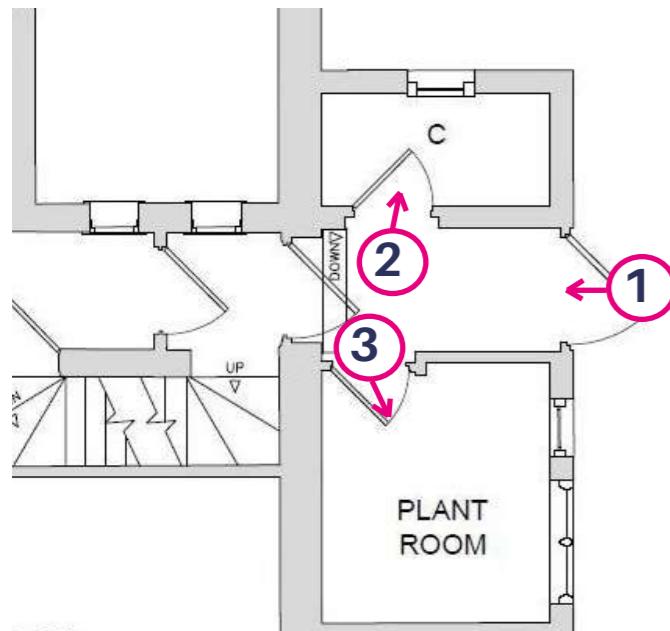
Section 3

# **Photographic Site Survey**

### 3 | Photographic Site Survey

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

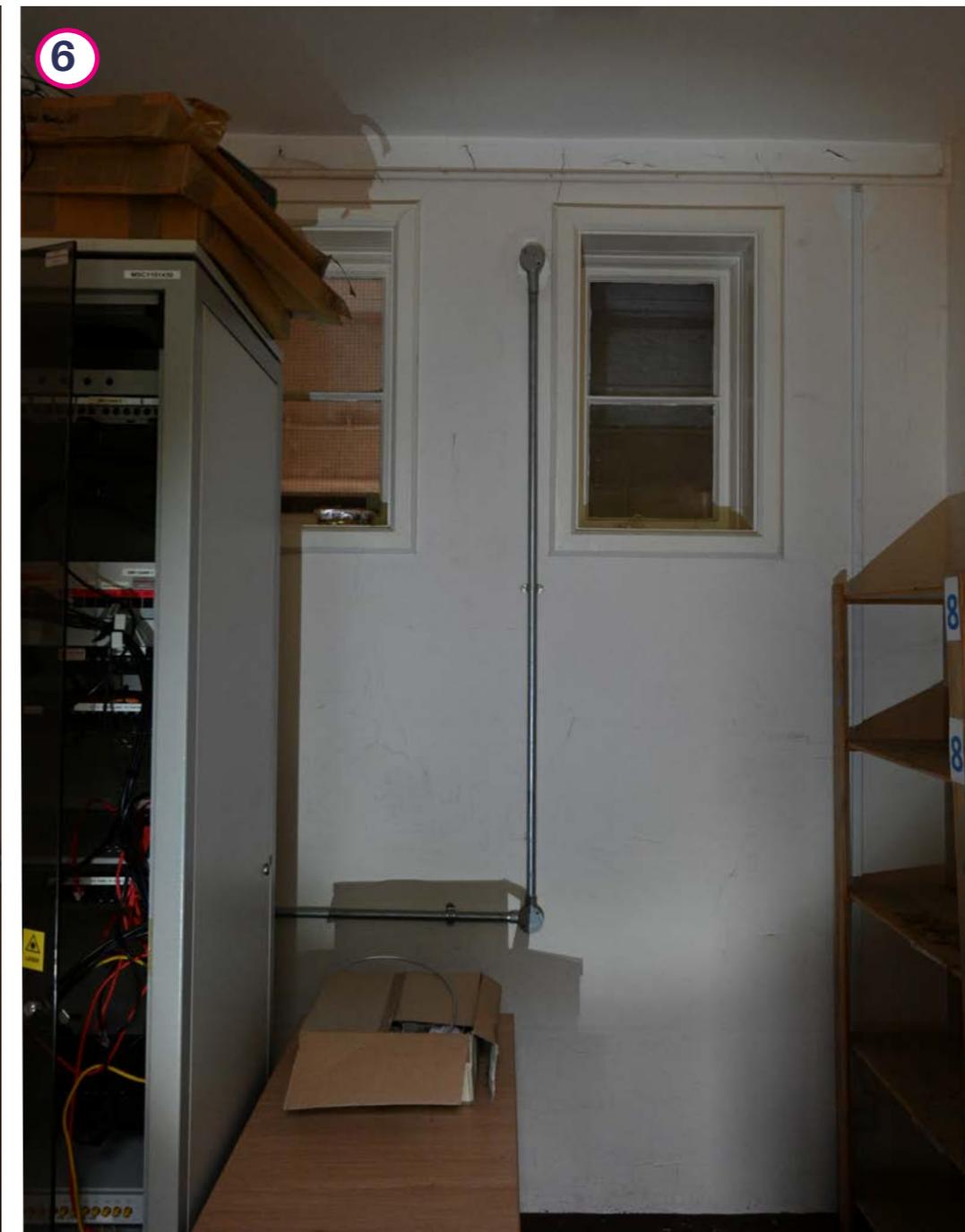
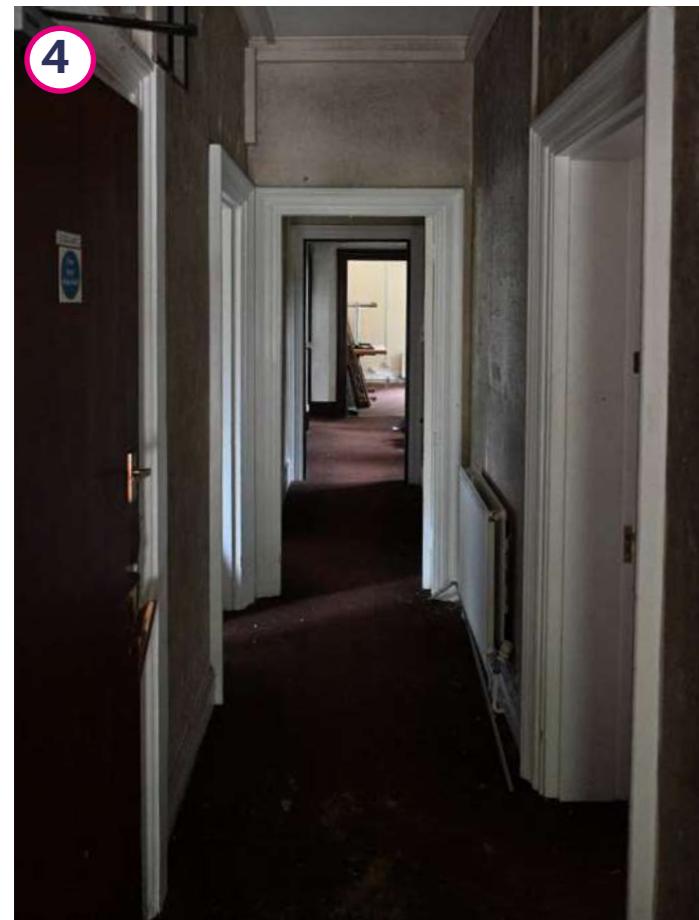
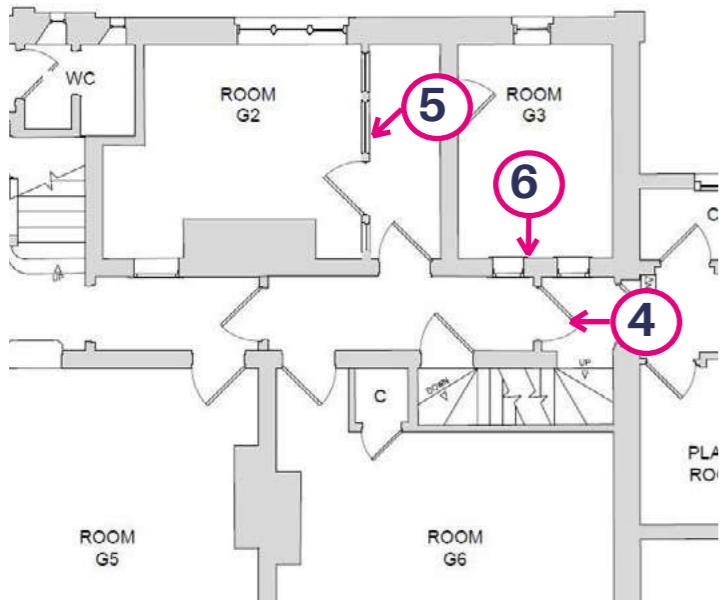
Ground Floor: Plant Room and C



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

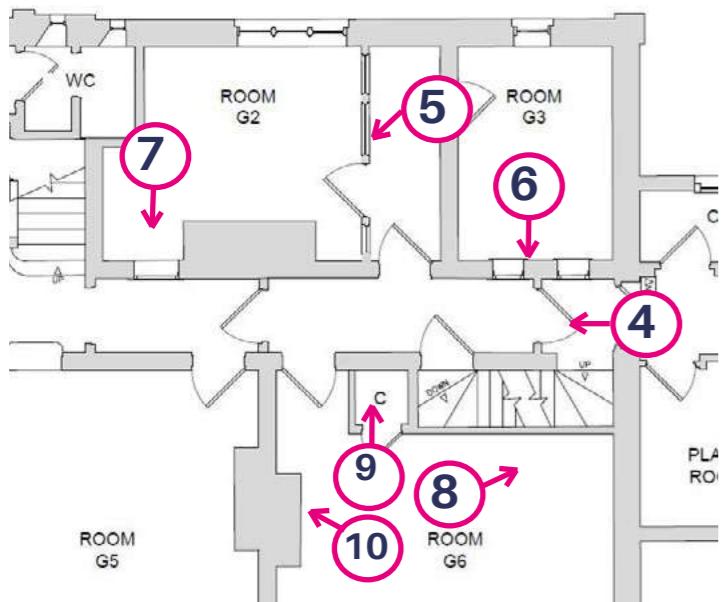
Ground Floor: Room G3



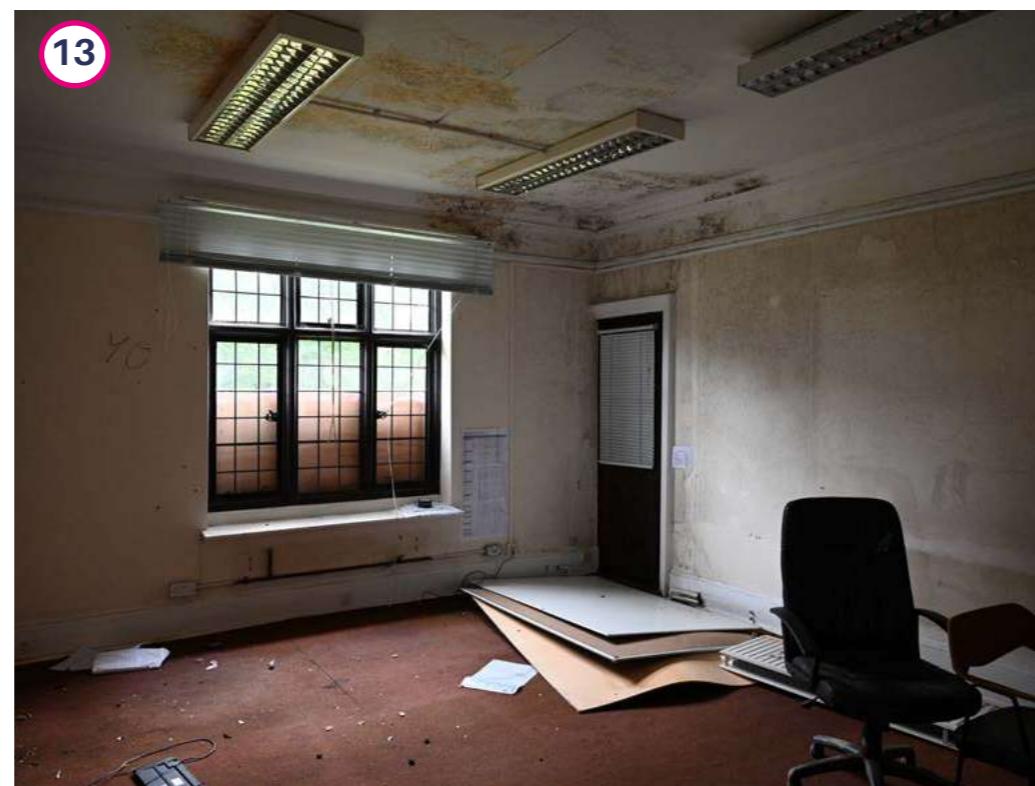
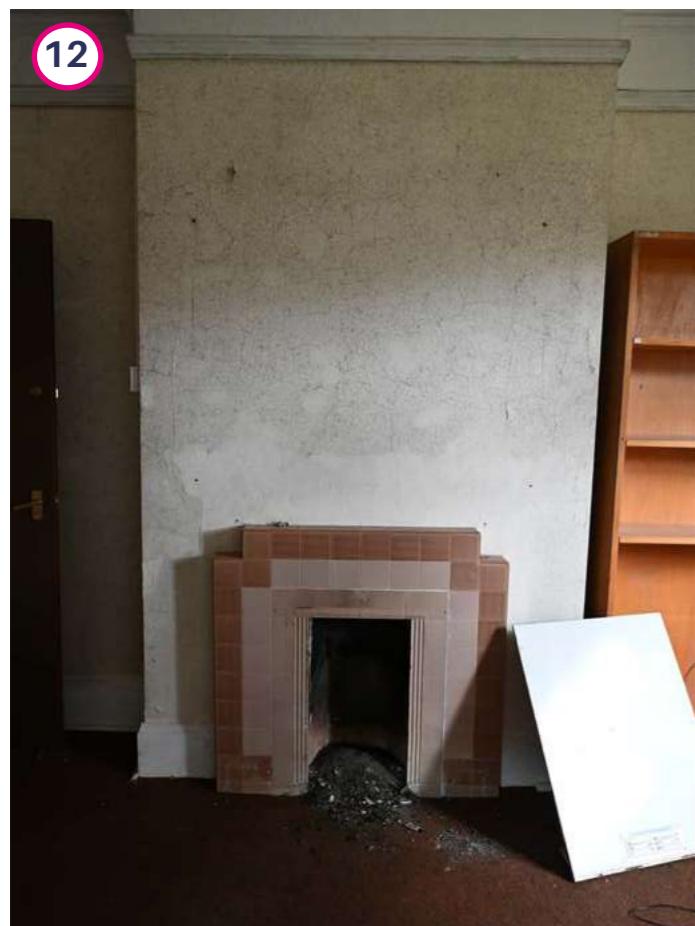
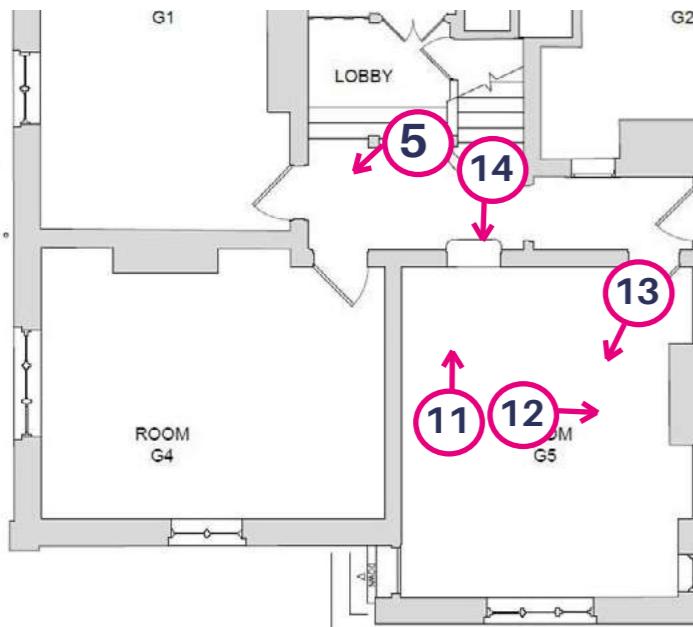
### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

Ground Floor: Room G2 and G6



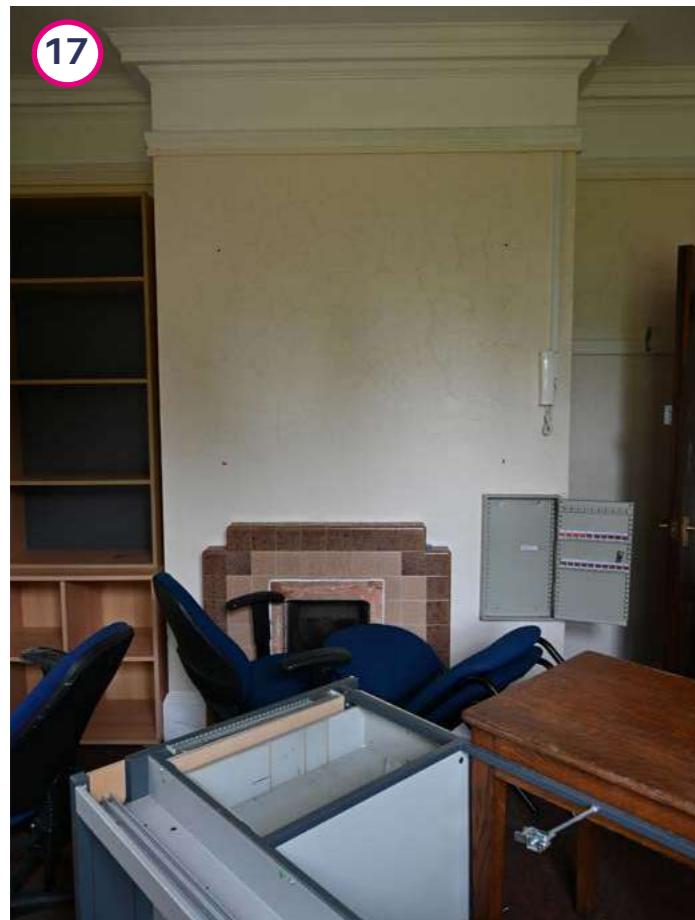
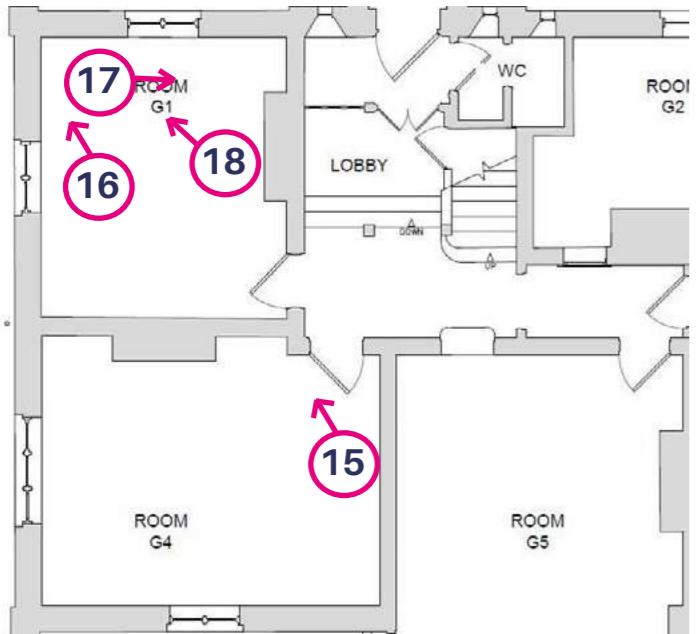
Ground Floor: Room G2 and G6



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

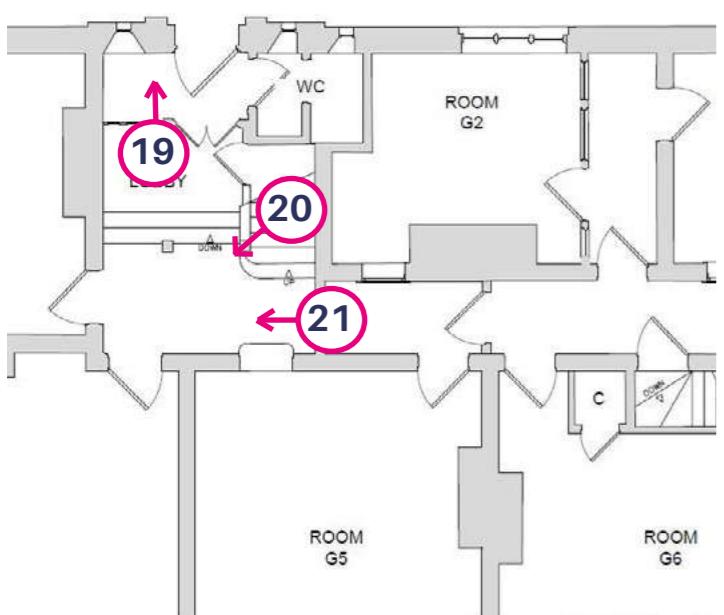
Ground Floor: Room G1 and G4



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

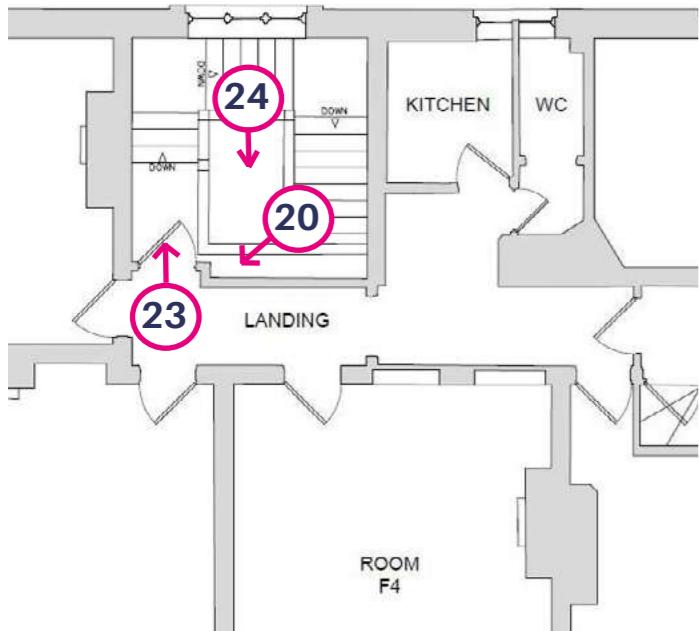
Ground Floor: Lobby



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

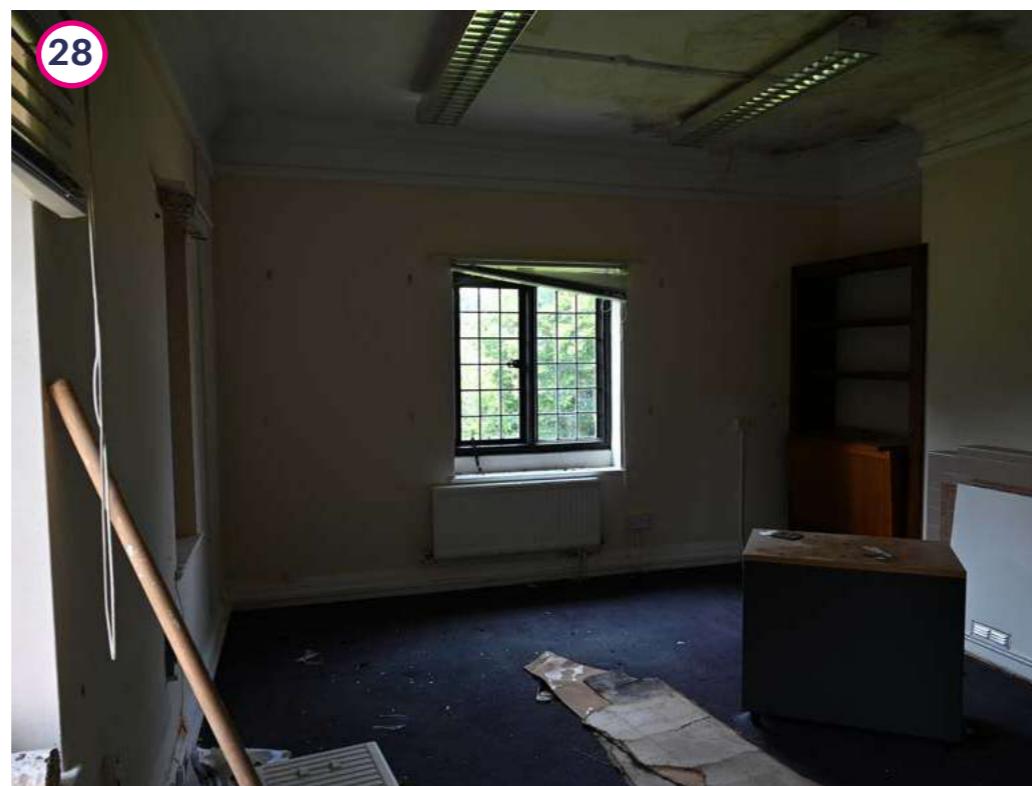
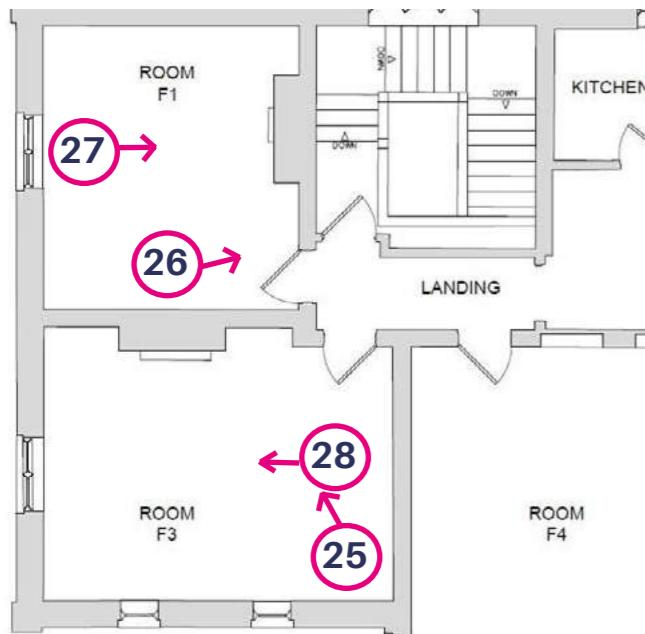
First Floor: Lobby



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

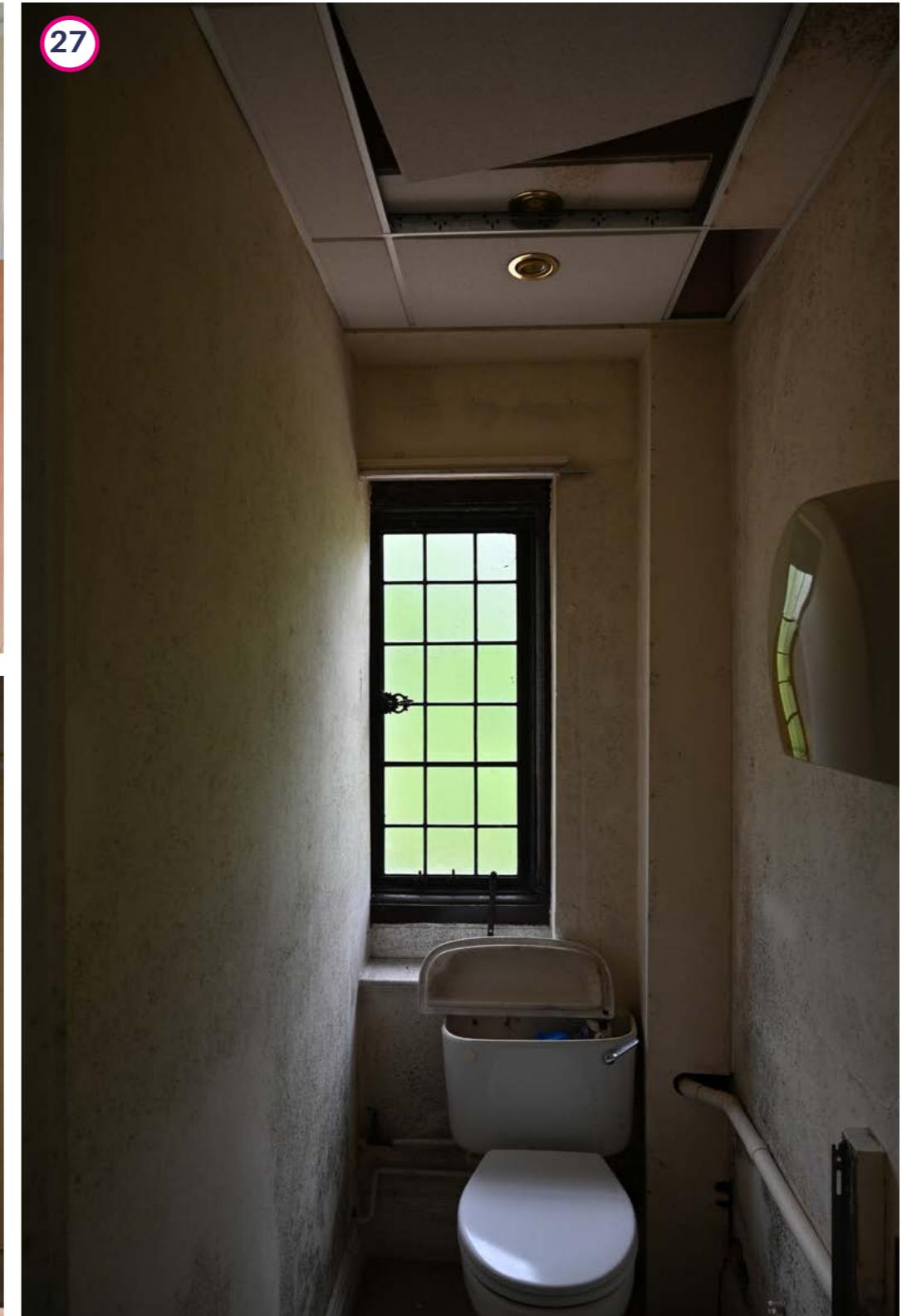
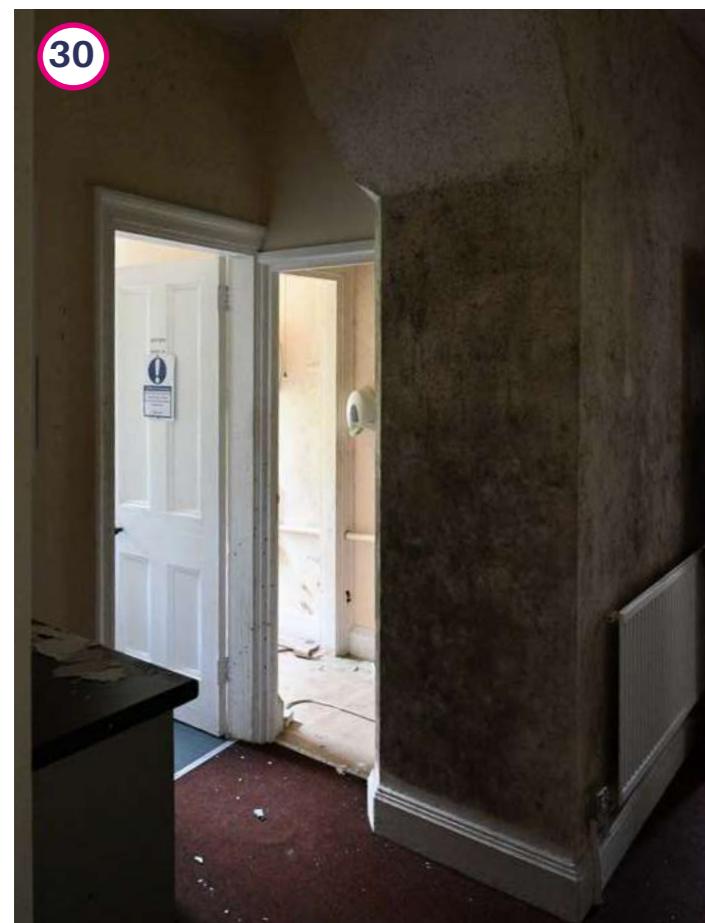
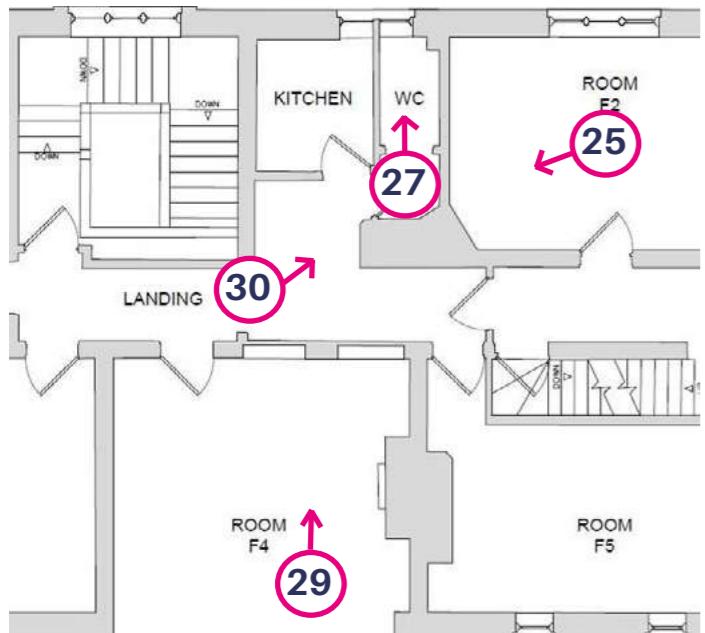
First Floor: Room F1 and F3



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

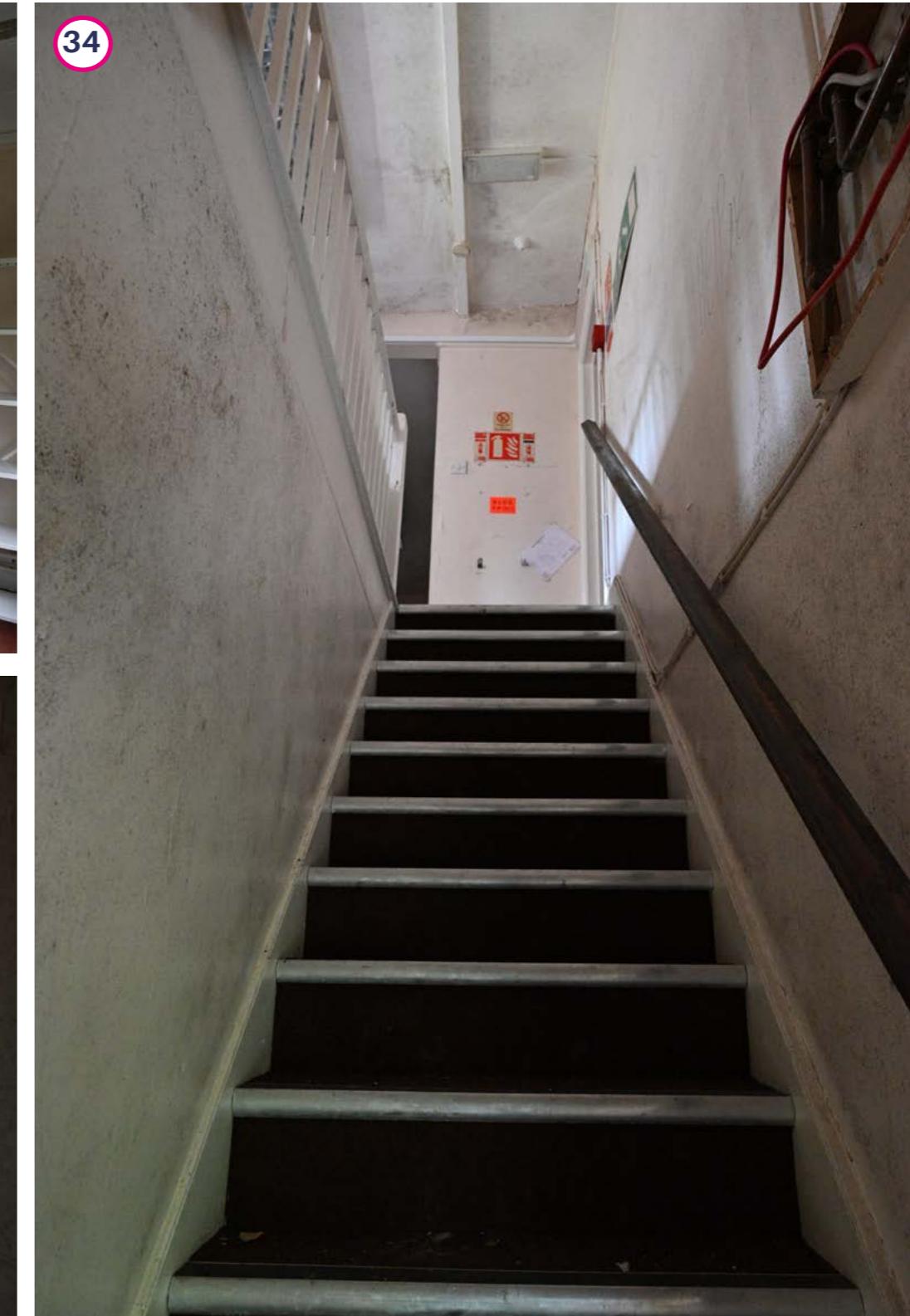
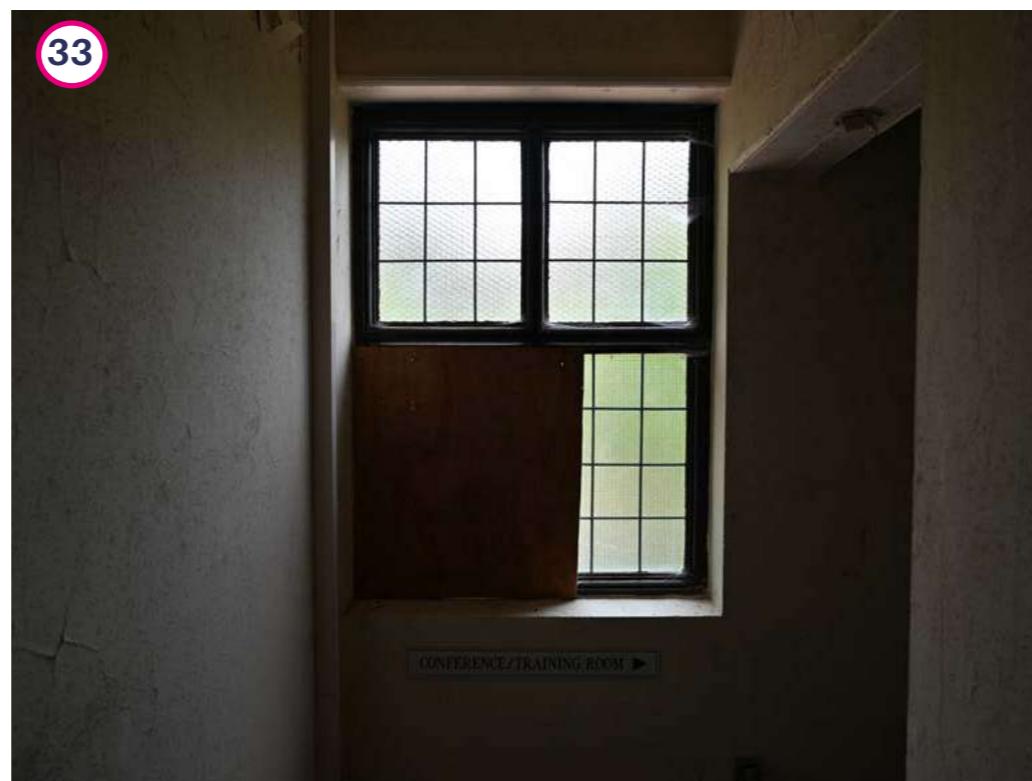
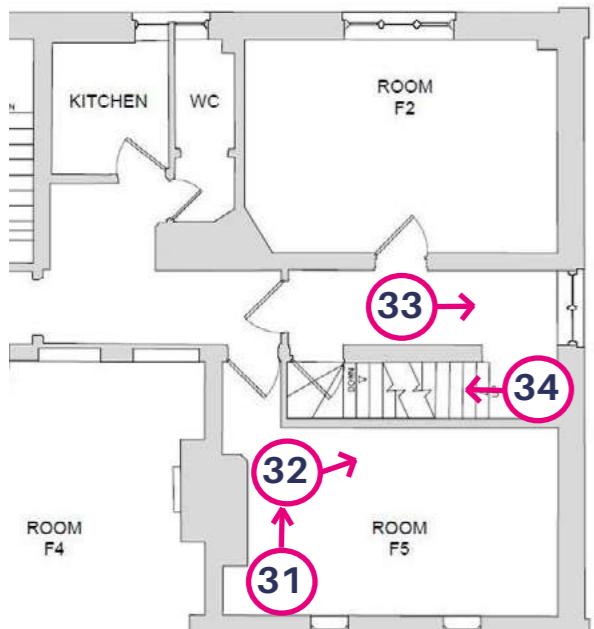
First Floor: Room F4, F2, and Landing



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

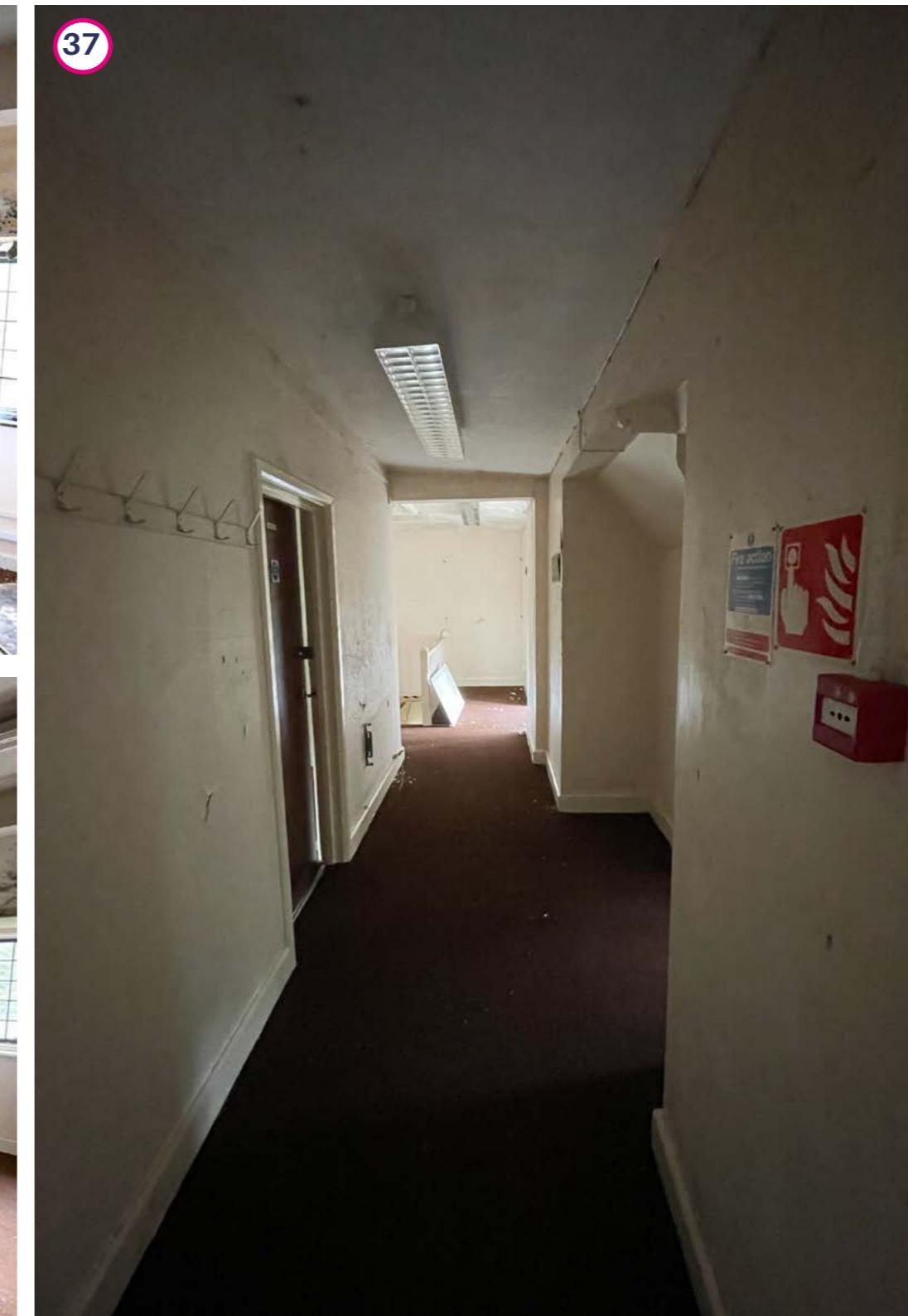
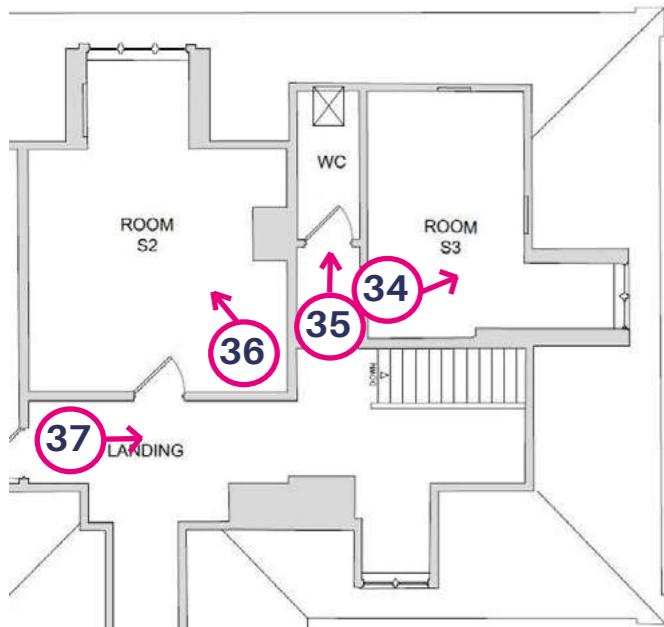
First Floor: F5 and Circulation routes



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

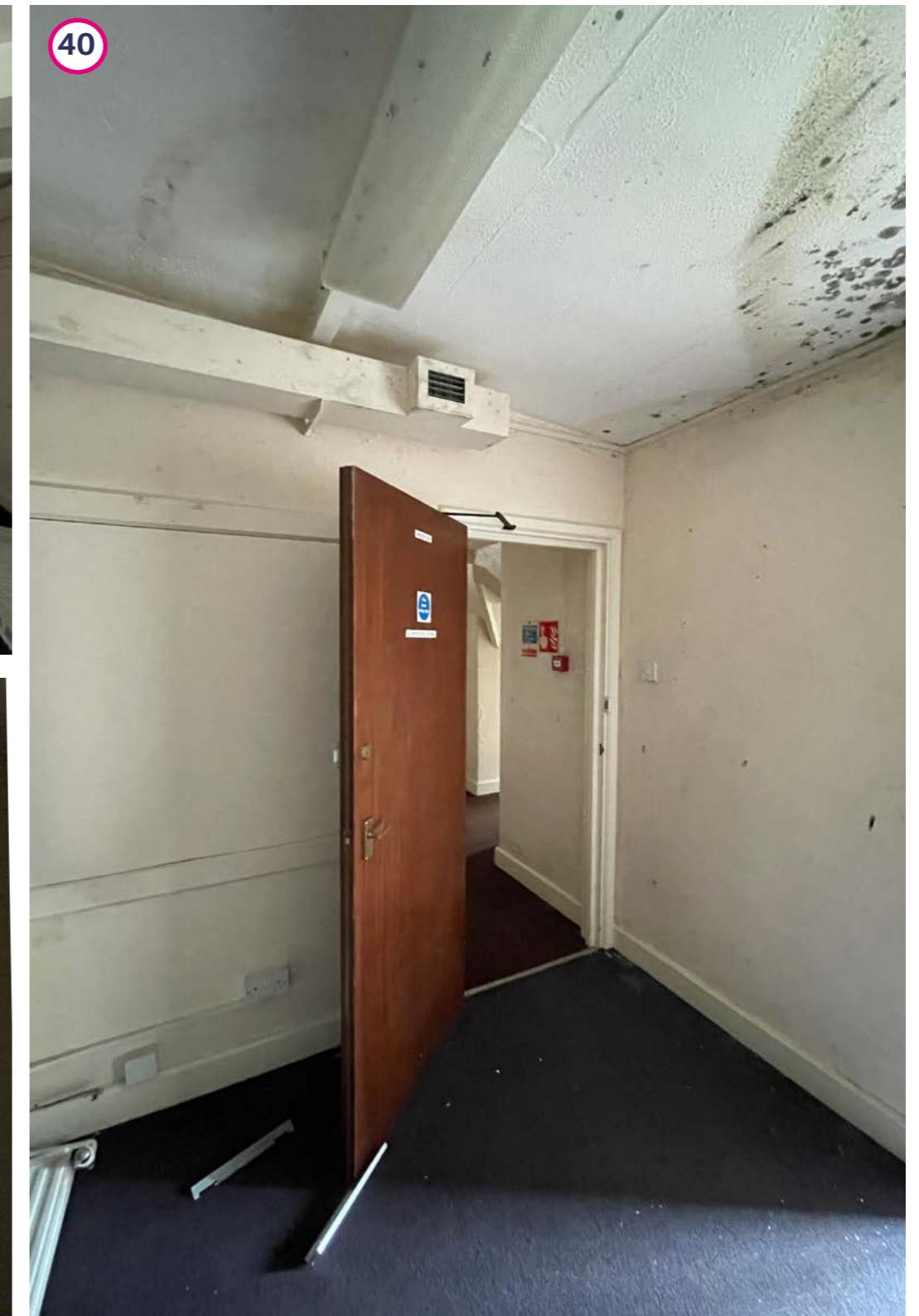
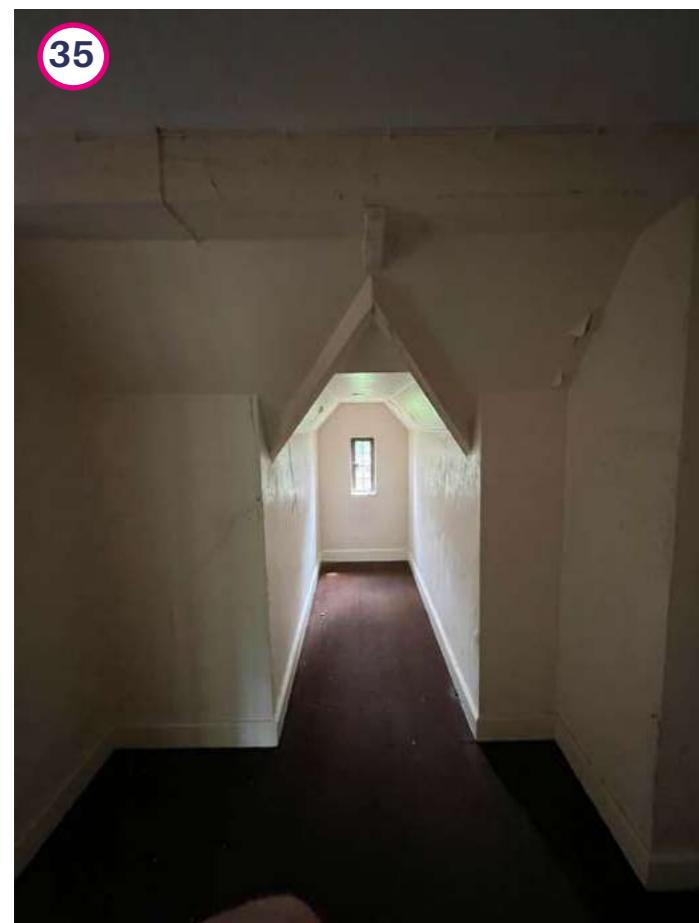
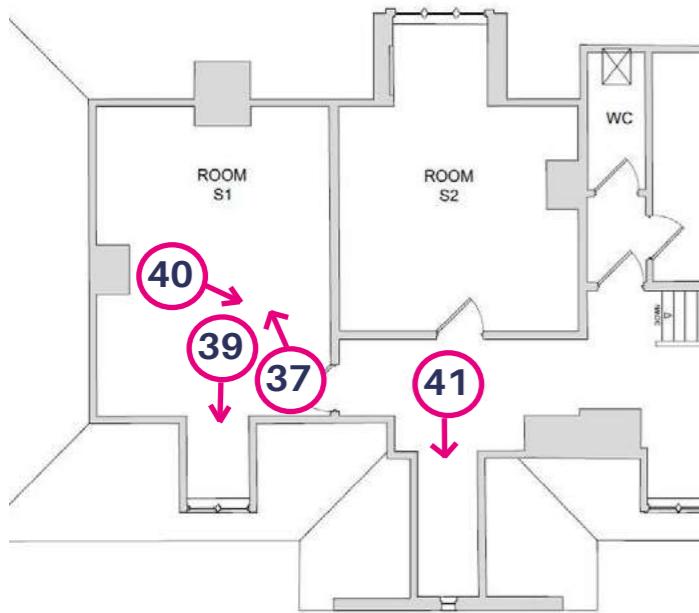
Attic F5 and Circulation routes



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

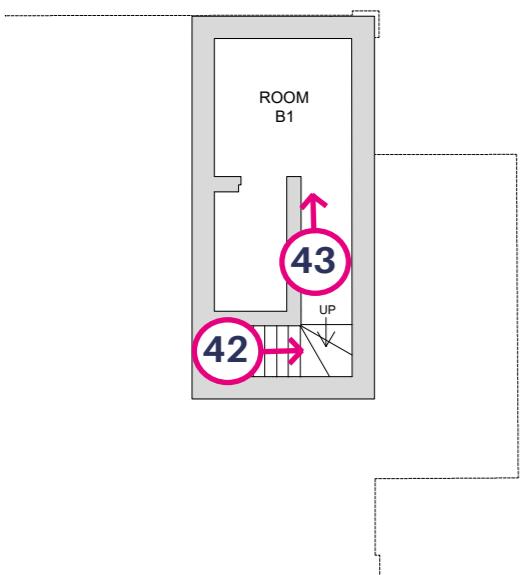
Attic: S1 and Circulation routes



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

Attic: S1 and Circulation routes



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

North Elevation



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

East Elevation



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

South Elevation



### 3 | Photographic Site Survey and Descriptive Record

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

West Elevation



# Appendix 1

# **Bibliography.**

## Appendix 1 | Bibliography

MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

- Colonel R Hume, " in Arborfield and the Army Remount Service 1904-1937, (1984)
- Arborfield Remount Depot (Arborfield Garrison), Arborfield, Berkshire, accessed from [http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results\\_Single.aspx?uid=MRM17490&resourceID=1028](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MRM17490&resourceID=1028)
- Other
- Traced architect's plans of the building, 1908. PSA Archive, stored at the English Heritage Archive, ref /00322 - 00323,

# Appendix 2

# **List Description.**

## Appendix 2 | List Description

### MOAT HOUSE | ARBORFIELD

#### Official list entry

**Heritage Category:** Listed Building

**Grade:** II

**List Entry Number:** 1419613

**Date first listed:** 28 July 2014

**List Entry Name:** Moat House

**Statutory Address 1:** Moat House, Biggs Lane, Arborfield, Reading, RG2 9LN

#### Location

**Statutory Address:** Moat House, Biggs Lane, Arborfield, Reading, RG2 9LN

**District:** Wokingham (Unitary Authority)

**National Grid Reference:** SU 769565712

The Moat House, dated 1906, built for the commanding officer of the remount depot, is listed at Grade II, for the following principal reasons:

\* Architectural interest: Moat House is a concisely composed building in a loose Jacobean style, unusual for the military, that alludes to the style of the main house on the estate, by Robert Kerr; \* Quality of detailing: the brickwork is of good quality, the storey band and cornice are crisply executed and the aedicular doorcase is a restrained but striking inclusion; \* Intactness: the building has undergone very little alteration, retaining most of its original fixtures and fittings; \* Historic interest: Arborfield's significance as one of a very limited number of remount depots is clear; it played a crucial role in mobilising the cavalry in WWI, and the Moat House is one of its few surviving buildings; \* Group value: with the scheduled moated site it overlooks, and from which it takes its name, forming the focus of the historic site.

#### History

The Army Remount Department was established in 1887; previously, cavalry regiments purchased their own horses, and though this was adequate in peace-time, it was not in war time when the need was acute and demand could not be met. Original remount depots were in Woolwich and Dublin, and were effectively distribution centres for horses obtained through a scheme of registration with private owners,

in which the Army paid a retainer for horses to be impressed in war-time. The Boer War proved that the training, administration and organisation of the service was inadequate; numerous animals were lost through disease and poor horsemanship, and demand continued to exceed supply.

Additional depots were therefore established at Arborfield and Melton Mowbray (Leicestershire): at Arborfield, in 1904 on land leased from the Bearwood Estate. The depot was commanded by Captain Quartermaster James Barry of the 1st (King's) Dragoon Guards until shortly before the First World War, in which the depots, combined, mobilised over 600,000 horses from within the UK, and imported as many again.

Increased mechanisation had, by the 1930s, made remounts all but redundant, and the department was reduced and eventually absorbed by the Army's Veterinary Service, with the depot at Melton Mowbray the final centre. Arborfield was closed as a remount depot in 1937. By 1939 the site was used for the Army Technical School for Boys, before becoming the Arborfield Garrison and home of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

The Moat House was built as accommodation for the commanding officer of the remount depot in 1906. The eclectic, historicist design is unusual for the military who tended to prefer the discipline implicit in simple classical or neo-Georgian treatment which could be applied in multiples. The Dutch gable and Jacobean detail are said to allude to Bearwood Manor, the country house of 1865-74 by Robert Kerr, but also perhaps to the presence of the historic moated site it overlooks and from which it takes its name. Moat House has been little-altered since being built; its conversion to use as offices involved the insertion of a partition wall on the first floor, while fireplaces were replaced in the inter-war period.

#### Details

Originally the house of the remount depot Commandant, dated 1906, now (2014) offices.

**MATERIALS:** red brick, in English bond, with rubbed brick dressings, a tiled roof and brick chimney stacks.

**PLAN:** the building lies to the south of a scheduled medieval moated site (NHLE 1009886). It is

rectangular in plan, with a projecting central bay on the symmetrical south-east elevation and a shallow, single-storey service bay to the north-east.

Internally the ground and first floors are arranged with rooms on either side of a spinal corridor, and in the attic, rooms are on the northern side.

**EXTERIOR:** it is a building of three bays and of two storeys with an attic. It has a chamfered brick plinth, a brick storey band, the central course laid on the diagonal, creating a chevron effect, and interrupted by plain pilaster strips at the angles. It has a continuous deep cyma and dentil eaves cornice, beneath a slightly flared, hipped roof. Tall, square stacks have moulded brick caps.

The entrance is on the asymmetrical north-west elevation. It has a shallow, broken-pedimented brick doorcase, consisting of a rubbed brick four-centre arch with a tall voussoir, flanked by narrow windows. Above is a three-light window within a flared, eared architrave on a tall base flanked by shallow scrolled brackets. The door is of three fielded panels beneath a broken pediment. There is a brick mounting block to each side of the door. At first floor, to the right, is a recessed moulded panel, dated 1906. Windows have rectangular leaded lights in ovolu moulded timber mullioned and transomed casements ranging from two to six lights, in plain brick openings with quarter-moulded brick cills. Apparently original, there is a centrally-placed three-light, flat-roofed dormer, with tile hung cheeks.

The elevation onto the private garden is symmetrical, with a projecting central bay beneath a shaped 'Dutch' gable, the windows diminishing in size per storey in Jacobean manner: a three light window on the ground floor, a two light window on the first floor and a narrow window in the gable head. Again, the flanking bays have two-light windows to the ground floor and a pair of single lights to the first floor. There are two, flat-roofed two-light dormers with tile hung cheeks, to the attic. There is a doorway concealed in the return of the projection giving access the former dining room.

**INTERIOR:** the main entrance leads into a stair hall which is dominated by an oak screen in Jacobean manner. The shape of the tapering shafts is replicated in the finials to the stair newels. The stair is of open-well, closed-string type with turned balusters, a heavy moulded rail and square newels with ball finials on tall tapering shafts.

Doorcases are moulded, and doors, where they survive, have six moulded panels. Rooms to the ground and first floors have picture rails, deep skirtings and moulded cornices. Fireplaces have been replaced and date from the mid-C20. Windows, including those in the attic, have iron stays and pigtail catches; some have been replaced.



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