

Heritage, Design and Access Statement

Proposed Internal Alteration – Repositioning of Ground Floor Staircase to Mezzanine

26 King Street,

Gravesend,

Kent

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1. Introduction

This Heritage, Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of an application for Listed Building Consent for minor internal works at **26 King Street, Gravesend**.

The proposal involves the repositioning of an existing non-original metal staircase between the ground floor and mezzanine level. The works are entirely internal and are designed to improve circulation and functionality while preserving the architectural and historic significance of the Grade II listed building.

2. Site and Heritage Context

26 King Street is a Grade II listed former County Court building located within the King Street Conservation Area, Gravesend. The building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area through its civic architectural form, high-quality ashlar stone façade, and historic townscape presence.

The statutory listing recognises the building for its architectural and historic interest as a purpose-built nineteenth-century public building. Its significance is derived principally from its external form, materials, fenestration, architectural detailing, and association with its original civic function.

3. Listed Building Assessment

26 King Street was listed at Grade II on 3 July 1975. The statutory list entry reference number is **1089061**.

The listing description identifies the building as dating from circa 1870 and describes it as a one-storey ashlar building with stone dressings beneath a slate roof. Architectural features of note include a balustrade with a quatrefoil motif, a triglyph frieze, and four coupled pilasters. The principal elevation includes two round-headed doorcases with decorated spandrels, fitted with double doors and fanlights incorporating swag moulding and the date. The façade also includes a plinth and three pointed mullioned windows, two with two lights and the central window with three lights.

The building was purpose-built as a County Court and forms part of Gravesend's nineteenth-century civic development. While the external architectural composition and principal structural form remain the primary sources of significance, the building has been adapted over time to accommodate changing uses. As a result, a number of internal elements reflect later phases of alteration and do not contribute to the special interest for which the building is listed.

4. Description of the Proposed Works

The application seeks Listed Building Consent for a minor internal alteration, namely the repositioning of an existing ground floor metal staircase providing access to the mezzanine floor.

The proposal is entirely internal. There are no external alterations, no changes to the listed façade, and no impact on the building's setting or the wider Conservation Area.

The staircase is a later, utilitarian addition introduced as part of a previous phase of adaptation and is not an original or historically significant feature of the building.

5. Design Principles and Approach

The design approach is informed by the following key principles:

- Respect for the heritage significance of the Grade II listed building
- Minimal intervention into historic fabric
- Reversibility of the proposed works
- Clear distinction between historic and modern elements
- Improved internal functionality and circulation

The repositioned staircase will remain modest in appearance and clearly identifiable as a modern intervention. It will not introduce any decorative or historic detailing that could detract from or confuse the historic narrative of the building.

6. Significance of Affected Elements

The area of works relates solely to non-original internal fabric. The existing metal staircase is not referenced in the statutory listing description and does not contribute to the architectural or historic interest of the building.

All principal elements of significance, including the external fabric, architectural detailing, and surviving original features, will remain unaffected by the proposal.

7. Heritage Impact Assessment

The repositioning of the staircase will result in:

- No loss of historic fabric
- No alteration to significant architectural features
- No impact on the external appearance or setting of the listed building

The works are fully reversible and will be undertaken using appropriate methods to ensure the protection of adjacent listed elements.

By improving internal circulation and spatial efficiency between the ground floor café space and the mezzanine seating area, the proposal supports the continued viable use of the listed building. This accords with best practice heritage guidance, which encourages sensitive adaptation to secure long-term occupation and maintenance.

Given the limited scope of the works and the non-significant nature of the affected element, the proposal results in **no harm** to the significance of the listed building, in accordance with the NPPF and local heritage policy.

8. Access

No changes are proposed to external access arrangements, entrances, thresholds, or routes.

Internally, the repositioned staircase will:

- Provide a clearer and more efficient circulation route between floors
- Improve legibility of movement within the building
- Maintain existing means of escape and fire safety arrangements

Given the constraints of a historic listed building and the limited nature of the proposal, the works represent a reasonable and proportionate improvement to access and usability without introducing barriers or causing harm to heritage significance.

9. Conclusion

The proposed development comprises a minor, internal, and reversible alteration involving the repositioning of a non-original metal staircase.

The works preserve the architectural and historic significance of the Grade II listed building while facilitating its continued and appropriate use. The proposal results in no harm to heritage assets and accords with national and local planning policy.

The development is therefore considered acceptable in heritage, design, and access terms and suitable for the grant of Listed Building Consent.