

3.0 Significance

3.1 Assessing Significance

Assessing 'significance' is the means by which cultural importance of a place and its component parts is identified and compared, both absolutely and relatively. The purpose of this is not merely academic. It is essential for effective conservation and management, because the identification of areas and aspects of higher and lower significance, based on a thorough understanding of a place, enables policies and proposals to be developed which protect, respect and, where possible, enhance its character and cultural values. The assessment can assist the identification of areas where only minimal changes should be considered, as well as locations where change might enhance the understanding and appreciation of the site's significance. Any changes will need to be carefully designed to ensure that significant features are not compromised, and will be judged within the legislative context governing the historic environment.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places the concept of significance at the heart of the planning process when considering the historic environment. The definition of 'significance' enshrined in the NPPF is:

"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."

This heritage statement considers significance based on the NPPF's classification but also uses English Heritage's Conservation Principles (2008) document. It is important to acknowledge this text which broadly outlines similar heritage values that make up the significance and also helps with definitions. In Conservation Principles these are summarised as: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value. The full definition of these can be found in Appendix 3 and they contribute to the overall evaluation of the City Hall and Hall for Cornwall's assessment of significance.

Following established conservation practice, the significance of built heritage assets is described using the following terminology:

Highly Significant: Original features that contribute to the historic and architectural interest of the heritage asset; or non-original features which are sufficiently high quality and age that they maintain a high degree of architectural or historic interest.

Significant: Original features which contribute to the historical and architectural interest of the heritage asset but which are not in themselves (or as a group) of particular importance; or non-original features which contribute to maintaining the overall architectural or historic interest of the asset.

Neutral: Features of little or no interest, which does not contribute positively to the historic and architectural interest of the asset. This can include original fabric where this is of minimal special interest and is located in an area that has undergone notable change.

Detracts: Features that obscure or detract from the significant of the heritage asset.

As noted in the introduction, this report contains no assessment of the archaeological significance or potential of the site. However, for the sake of completeness, a search has been carried out and The Historical Environmental Record is included in Appendix 1.



Fig 28. The Hall for Cornwall's Back Quay Foyer (ABA)



Fig 29. The Auditorium at the Hall for Cornwall (ABA)

3.2 Summary Significance of the Hall for Cornwall

The City Hall and Hall for Cornwall complex is a mid-nineteenth century municipal building of visible quality. The building's importance lies in its prominent size, good design and the almost unaltered elevations to Boscawen Street and Back Quay (Figs 26-27). Furthermore, considering the City Hall's historic interiors and their good state of preservation and distinctive purpose, the complex is listed at Grade II*. The designation means that it is considered a site of special interest and warrants every effort for its preservation, particularly of the significant interiors of the City Hall. This is all the more pertinent as almost all of the internal fabric and layout has been lost from the Hall for Cornwall itself, caused by a century of refurbishments and regular changes of use. In these spaces, the significance is neutral with some elements detracting from significance. Using the NPPF definitions, the significance of individual elements of the City Hall and Hall for Cornwall complex, as well as its relationship to the wider city of Truro has been identified as follows.

Archaeological Value

A helpful definition of NPPF's archaeological value can be found in the EH Conservation Principles, albeit under the title 'Evidential Value.' It is described as the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity and has archaeological considerations. Although this initial heritage statement deals with the standing historic building complex only, it is important to note the possible archaeological significance of the site. Although it is not in an archaeological priority zone, as one of the longest inhabited sites in Truro, particularly the area beneath City Hall on Boscawen Street, it may have archaeological importance. This was confirmed during the 1996 excavations by the Cornwall Archaeological Unit of Cornwall Council. Entitled 'A Report to the Hall for Cornwall: Archaeological Investigations at City Hall, Truro 1996' it was written by Eric Berry et al and published in January, 1997 and can be accessed at the Hall for Cornwall. This research was done in preparation for the construction of the Hall for Cornwall itself and was limited to that area only and while little evidence was found relating to the pre-nineteenth century town, it did build up a clearer picture of the evolution of that half of the site and the hall. The report also concluded that additional research could be done and the City Hall complex had potential as an archaeological site. The archaeological value of the site is, therefore, **Significant**.

Architectural and Artistic Values

Once more, Conservation Principles offers a beneficial definition of these NPPF values under the term 'Aesthetic Value' defined as the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. This can also be the result of the conscious design of a site, including artistic endeavours that enhance its qualities. At the City Hall Complex, the external elevations of the City Hall to Boscawen Street and the Hall for Cornwall to Back Quay are associated with the development of the Italianate architectural style in the nineteenth century and embody all of the design qualities associated with this movement in composition, craftsmanship and material choice of the building. The authenticity of the elevations also enhances the Truro Conservation Area and makes them of **High Significance**.

A conscious design is apparent in both the elevations, as well as the surviving layout of the City Hall and some parts of the Hall for Cornwall. The fact that they are designed and realised by a known architect of relevant reputation and whose work is recognised in other parts of Cornwall as well as London adds to the architectural and artistic value of the City Hall Complex. The interiors of the City Hall are of high value (Figs 32-33) although the loss of the historic staircase in the north east stair well is regrettable. Furthermore, the intellectual program of the design is still obvious in most of today's spatial arrangement. Even though the



Fig 30. The council chamber in the City Hall section of the complex with original finishing (ABA)



Fig 31. The town hall space in the City Hall section of the complex also with original finishing (ABA)

functions of some spaces have changed there is a clear sense of a maintaining the integrity of the design concept. The interiors of the City Hall are of **High Significance**.

Nonetheless, the complex has changed and this is evident in the Hall for Cornwall. On the first floor, historic panelling and room arrangements survive (Figs 34 – 35). These are considered **Significant** (Figs 34 – 35). Other spaces, however have been almost entirely gutted. This is particularly obvious in the section between the City Hall and the Hall for Cornwall; today's auditorium space (Fig 29). This coupled with the unsympathetic development of the foyer on the ground floor (Fig 28) of the Hall for Cornwall have inserted an inaccurate finish to the space. The auditorium and foyer, therefore, have **Neutral Significance**. The mezzanine level inserted in the foyer area dates from the same, late twentieth century period, but does little to sustain or enhance the significance of the heritage asset. The mezzanine level **Detracts** from significance. In fact, many of the unsympathetically in-filled sections, such as the tourist office or café in the City Hall section appear awkward insertions rather than a beneficial evolution. The partitioned spaces of the Cafe, Tourist Information Office and City Hall Reception Area **Detract** from the significance.

Historical and Communal Value

Again, Conservation Principles offers a succinct summary of historical value that is applicable here, saying that it derives from the ways in which the people, events and aspects of life in the past can be connected through a place to the present and can be illustrative or associative. Although there are multiple examples of town and market halls in Cornwall, the City Hall complex is the grandest in the county and the only one of its kind in Truro. It illustrates a municipal function that provides an insight into a past society and its activities, as a historic market site as well as a continuation of Cornwall's theatrical tradition. Its state of good external preservation overall and the partial survival of its interiors, particularly in the City Hall half of the complex, also means it has historical value in its surviving built fabric (Figs 30 - 31). Lastly, the fact that it is used for essentially the same purpose as originally intended, with the City Hall continuing its administrative civic function, the covered market still functioning as a place to gather, meet and trade and the Hall for Cornwall section an entertainment venue. Because it gives a sense of the developing civic hall tradition, linking today's complex all the way back to the seventeenth century town hall and covered market, the complex has a historical value of **High Significance**. Furthermore, as the centre of civic life for over 100 years and the focus of trade and commerce for several hundred years it has many associations with people considered notable in the history of Truro and wider Cornwall (Fig 25) and whose families are still in Truro. The building's importance grew when Truro gained city status in the late nineteenth century; it was a place for 'fun' and a sign of growing sophistication for a town becoming a city. The communal value of the building complex is, therefore of **High Significance**.

3.3 Significance Drawings

The plans at the end of this section present a visual summary of the relative significance of different parts of the building as set out above. This analysis draws on findings to date; further information may come to light through site investigations and later development work. The plans are prepared as an aid to communicate levels of significance and should not be considered as a definitive summary. Furthermore, it is important to note that this report does not focus on the minutiae of built fabric within individual rooms; specific elements within coloured areas may have individual and differing levels of significance. The graphic convention ascribes strong colours to architectural fabric and a lighter shade of the same colour to general spaces and open areas. The lighter shades also address decorative finishes and surfaces. Please note that the colouring of the significance is intended as a general guide only, particularly at this early stage of the project.



Fig 32. The market hall beneath the City Hall section of the complex showing survival of the original fabric; columns, ceiling & floor (ABA)



Fig 33. The original stairwell up to the City Hall (ABA)



Fig 34. Original panelling in the meeting room on the first floor of the Hall for Cornwall (ABA)



Fig 35. Original panelling & fenestration in the meeting room on the first floor of the Hall for Cornwall (ABA)

Christopher Eales, Architect (1809/10-1903)

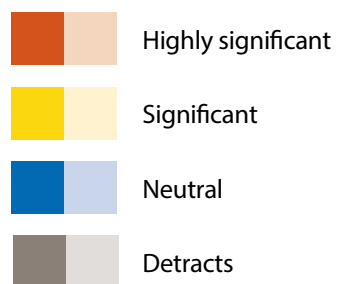
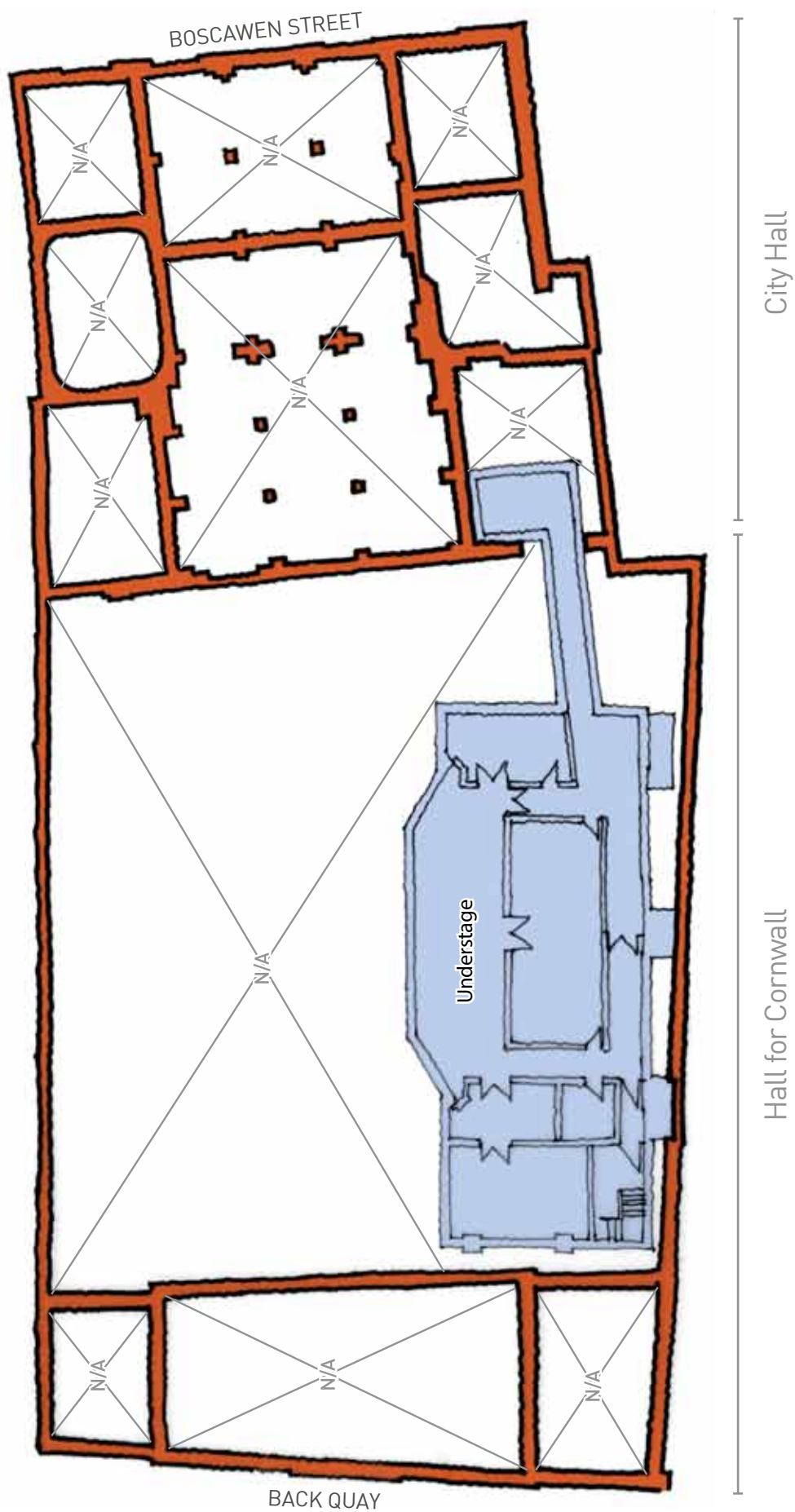
Whilst a little known architect today, Eales' obituary published in the 'The Builder' on 21 March 1903 suggests a prolific designer whose work was regularly featured in the magazine. Eales' career encompassed over half of the nineteenth century and his oeuvre includes residential projects in London as well as small number of buildings of surprising scale and quality in Cornwall. Truro's City Hall complex was an early work, completed during his partnership in the London based firm of 'Messrs Cope and Eales' although attribution to this and his other Cornish buildings refers to Eales only. It was not, however, his first project in the county, nor was it his first town hall and market building. In 1844, Eales completed St Austell's Market House (GII*) and although smaller it is very similar to Truro's City Hall in terms of construction, style and function (Fig 36). The only other project on record in the area is St Paul's Church, Charlestown (GII), today located within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape, a World Heritage Site Property Boundary. Consecrated in 1851, it was Eales' only church project. Later in life he went into practice with his son, Frederick Ernest Eales F.R.I.B.A, establishing the the firm 'Mssrs. Christopher Eales and Son', based in Somerset Chambers in Welbeck Street, London. His projects from this time include No.8 Dean Street (GII) in Soho in 1878 and 297-305 Queenstown Road and 177-179 Battersea Park Road, both in Battersea, unlisted buildings of unknown date. The firm also completed designs for residential flats West of Hyde Park, most notably the unlisted Oxford and Cambridge Mansions in the 1880s (Fig 37). Christopher Eales died at the age of 93, in his residence at No.9 Welbeck Street, London.



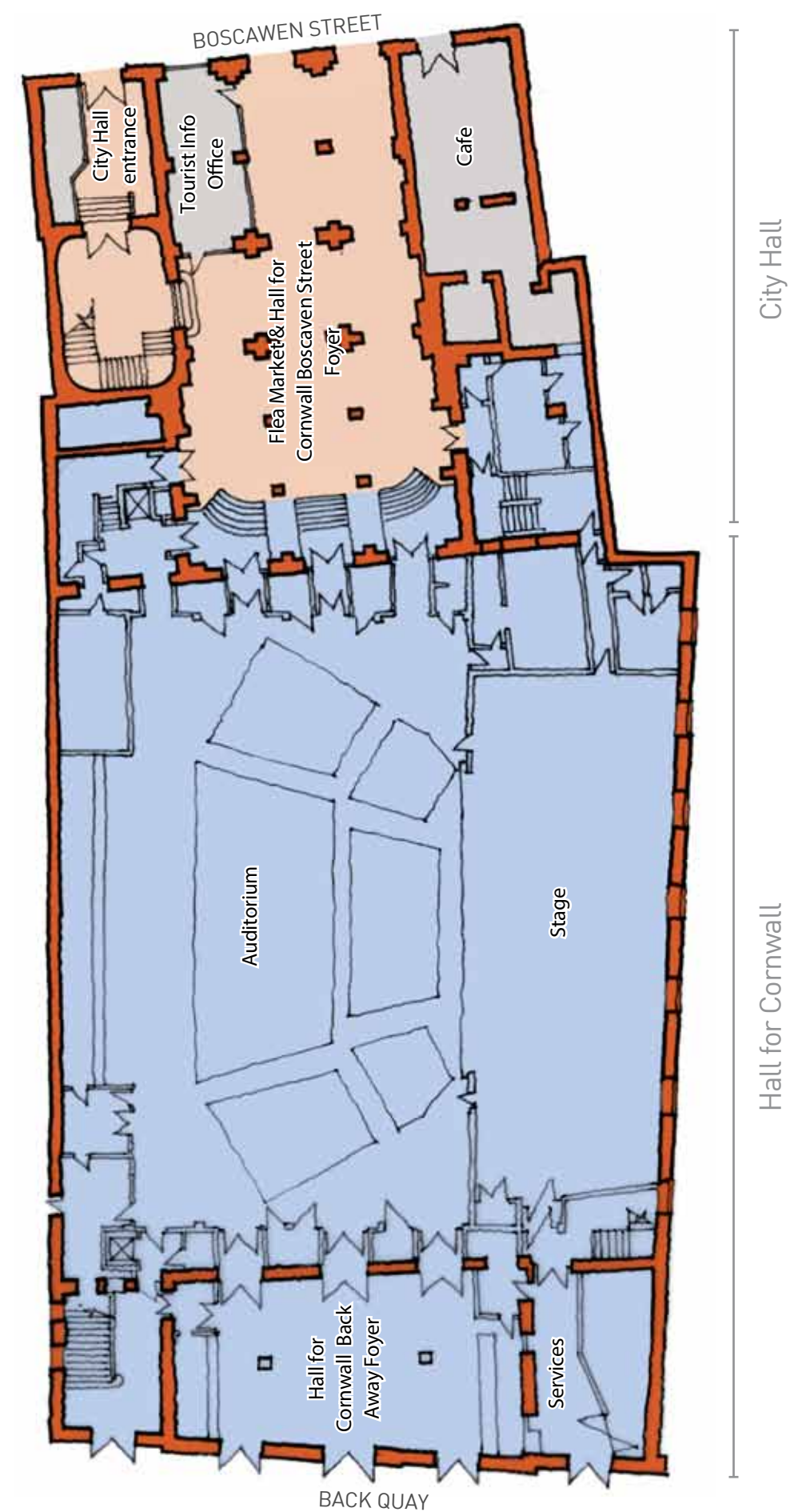
Fig 36. St Austell Market House designed by Christopher Eales in 1844 (ABA)



Fig 37. The Oxford and Cambridge Mansions on the corner of Old Marylebone Road and Transept Street (ABA)

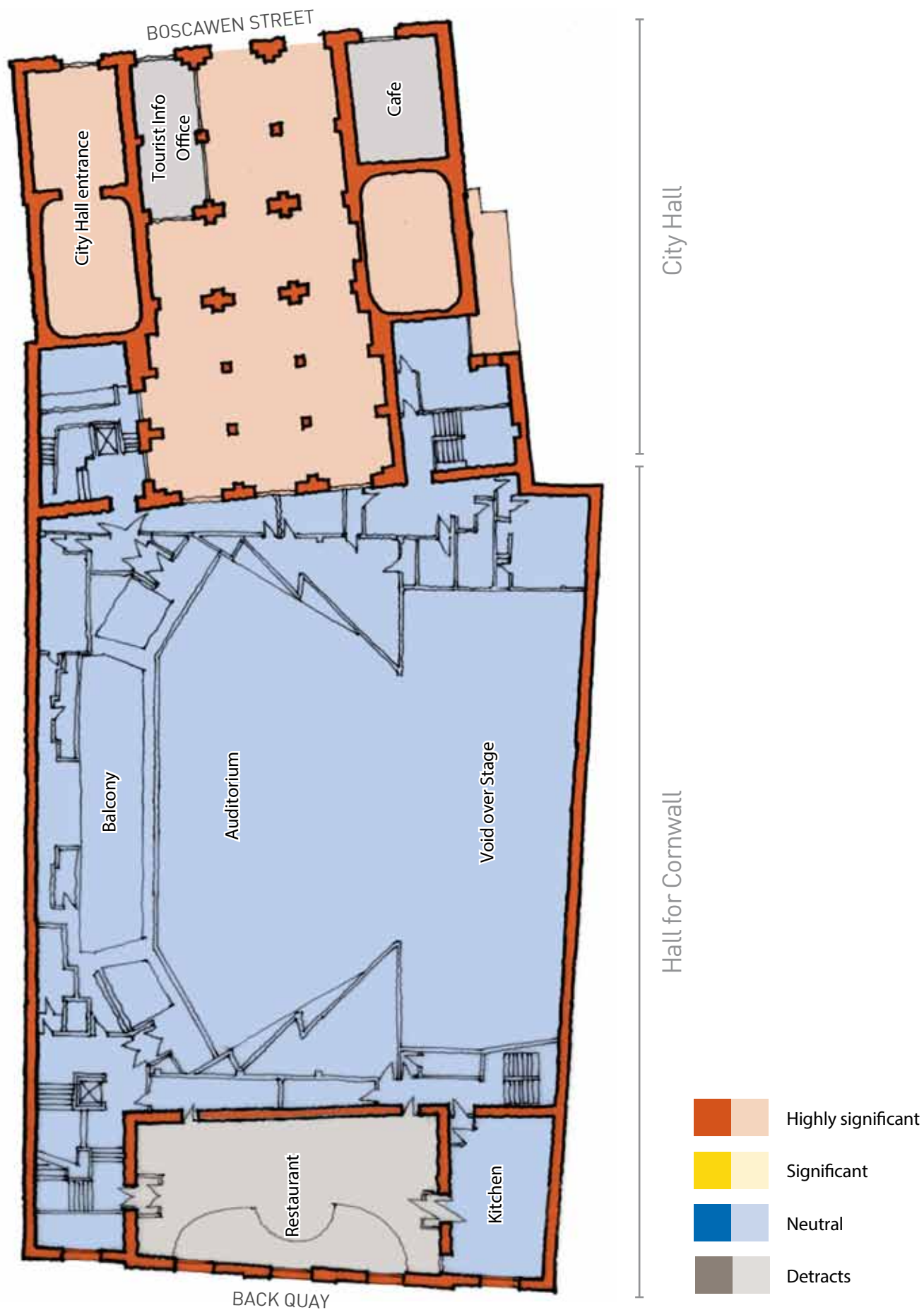


Lower Ground Floor

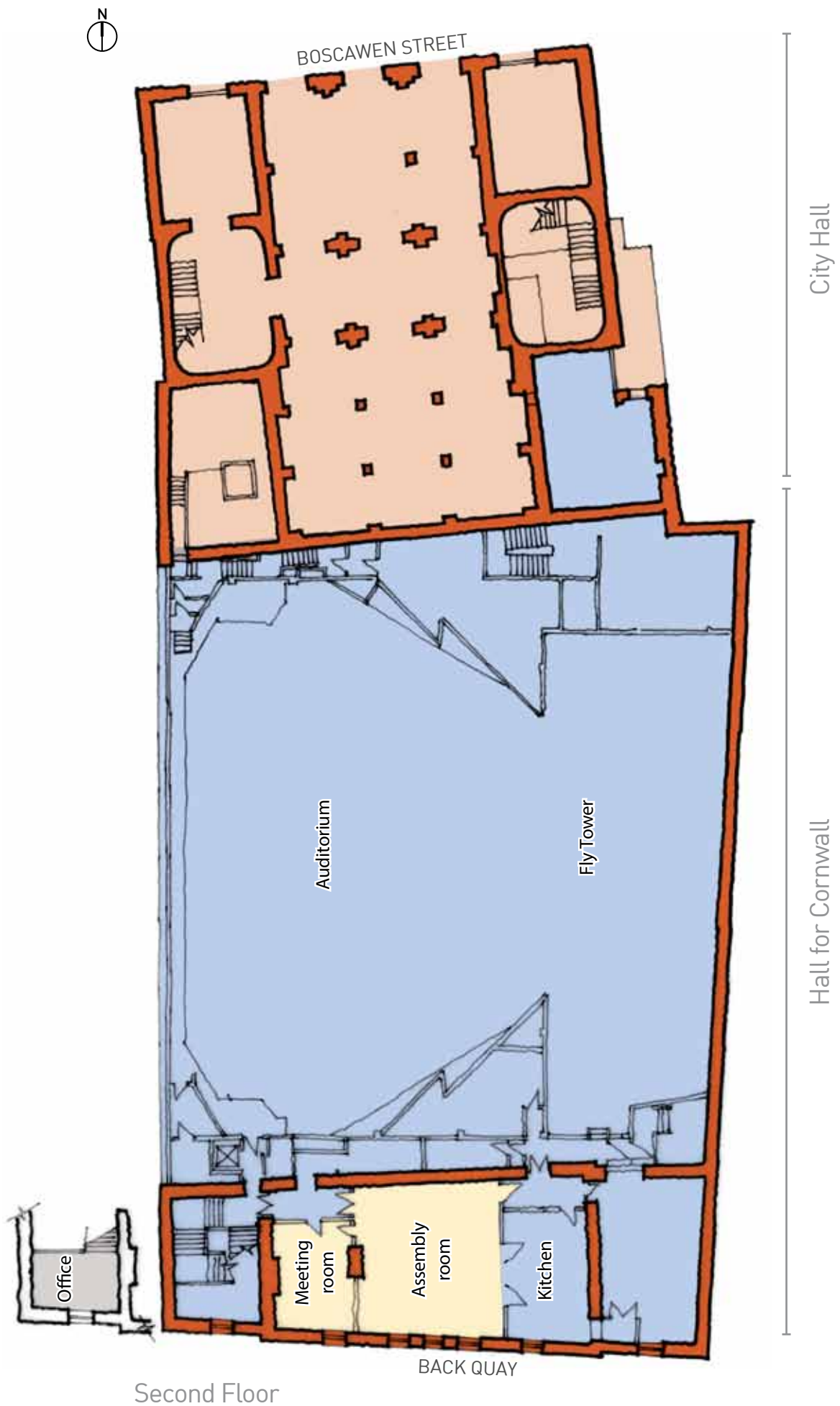


Ground Floor

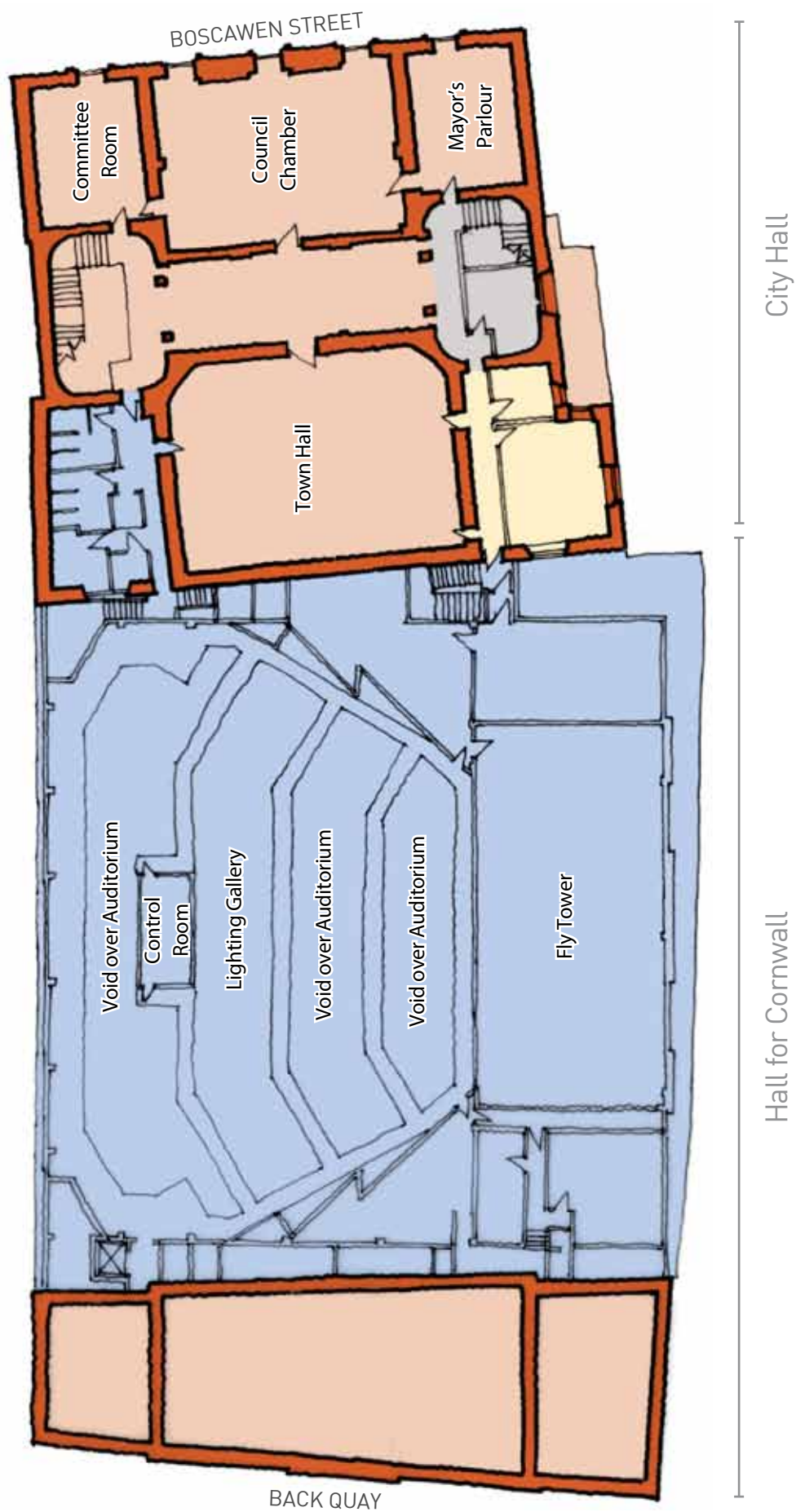
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First Floor



3.0 Significance



Upper Floor

4.0 Conclusion

The City Hall complex is a versatile and robust building confirmed by its short but unusually varied history both in terms of its architectural evolution and functional eclecticism. Perhaps most interesting of all is that, despite many changes, the sense of place still feels authentic.

Prior to its refurbishment in the 1990s, the Hall for Cornwall was used as a mixed venue, hosting small scale, touring performances as well as civic meetings, agricultural occasions and community events. Throughout this time the City Hall function on the first floor continued. During the conversion to the Hall for Cornwall there were funding shortfalls and very public exchanges in the local press and media, including even a debate about whether the Cornish wanted a county theatre at all. Today it is a different story as local residents and the wider Cornish population are proud of the venue. With a capacity of almost 1000 seats, it is possible to present large scale touring productions of musicals and dramas as well as one night shows on hire to local amateur theatre and music groups. The Hall for Cornwall has become part of Truro's and Cornwall's identity. The Hall also has a vibrant education department which is admired for its outreach work. In the future, the company has ambitious plans to develop its offering as well as increasing its digital capacity. Today, it is obvious that the 1997 scheme is not working as it was envisaged and The City Hall and Hall for Cornwall are a significant building complex not working to their full potential.

Historic drawings exist and give us an idea of the internal finishing and architectural detailing that was intended. There is an opportunity to realise the original scheme in terms of internal and external finishing by, for example, recreating colour schemes, reinstating stairs or in-fills to portals. Even more importantly there is a local and wider county need for a cultural resource like the Hall for Cornwall. This complex needs a unifying scheme that will be innovative enough to make the best use of the spaces whilst being sympathetic in its treatment of this important and proven heritage asset.

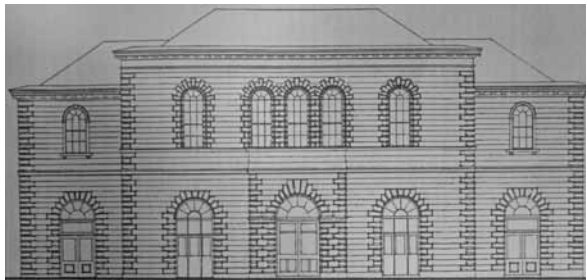


Fig 38. Hall for Cornwall
Back Quay Elevation
(Cornwall Records Office)



Fig 39. City Hall Boscawen
Street Elevation (Cornwall
Records Office)

5.0 Sources

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