

Bridgwater Town Hall
Report on Options for a New Reception and Lift for Level Access Through the Building
July 2022



REV B – July 2022



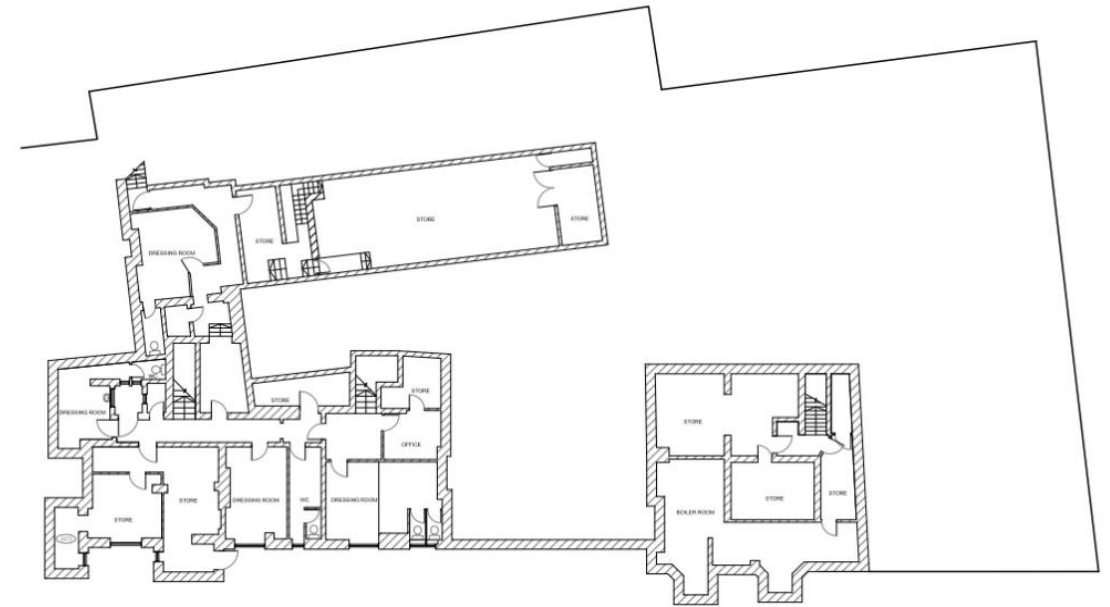
1. Background/ Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared by Philip Hughes Associates who have been appointed by Bridgwater Town Council to assess Bridgwater Town Hall and make recommendations on how the underutilised and vacant spaces of the building can be more successfully integrated with the rest of the building.

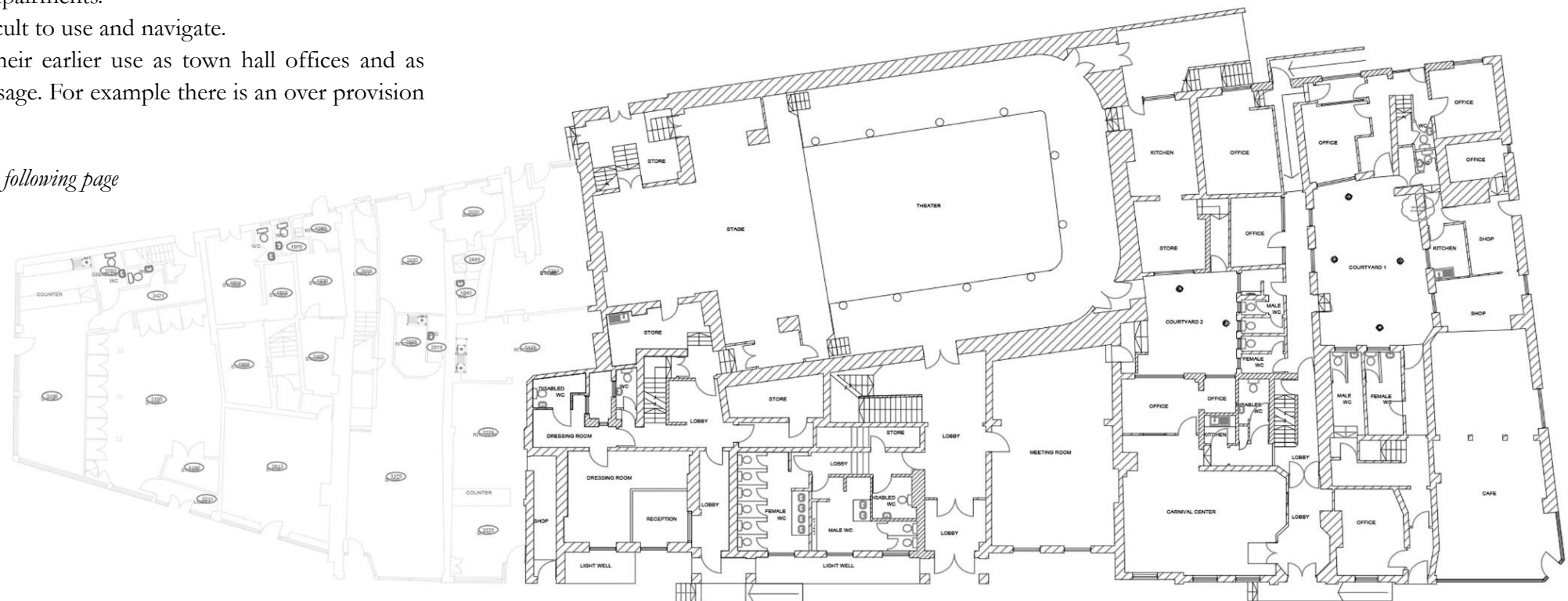
1.2 It is recognised that the building has a number of shortcomings that currently restrict the buildings use and these are also discussed in the report. A number of issues prevent the effective use of the building, as follows:

- There is no single point where visitors can enter the building. It is hoped that an environment can be created where everyone feels welcome, comfortable and can easily access information services.
- The lack of a single entrance makes the building difficult to manage.
- The current arrangement of rooms in the east of the building are difficult to use with their current configuration.
- The upper floors (and some areas of the ground floor) of the building are not accessible to those with physical impairments.
- The spaces as sub-divided are difficult to use and navigate.
- The rooms are arranged to suit their earlier use as town hall offices and as such are not suitable for modern usage. For example there is an over provision of toilets.

Plans of the building are shown on this and the following page



BASEMENT PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

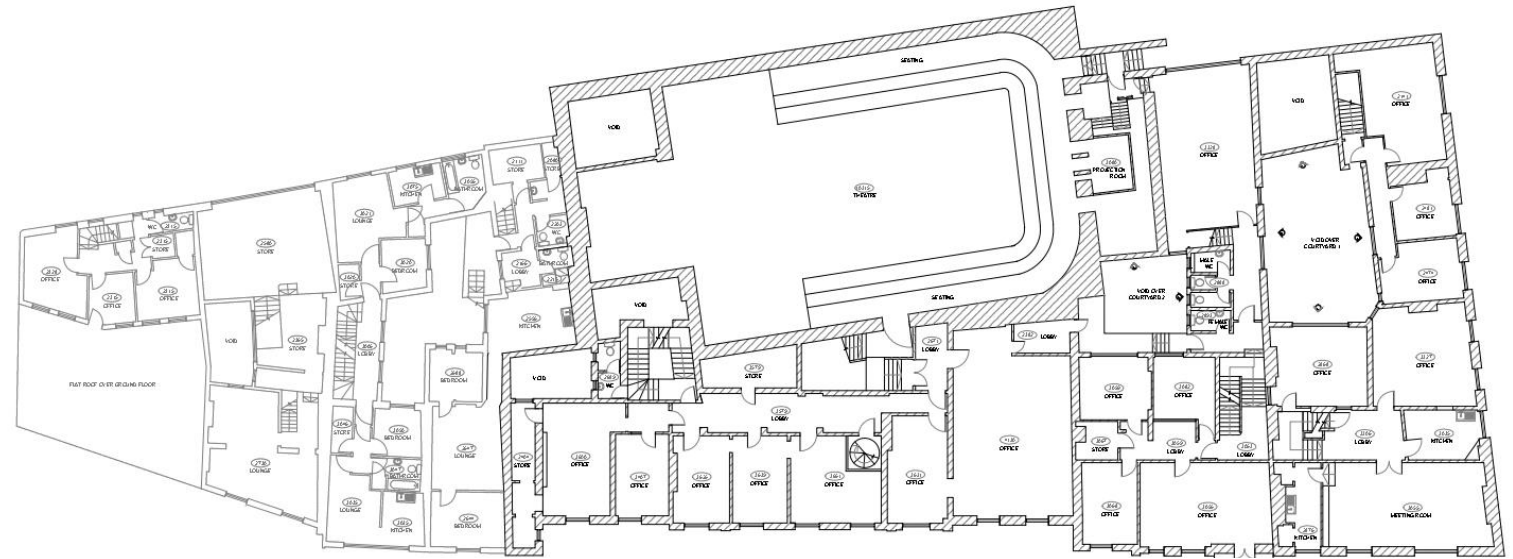


1. Background/ Introduction

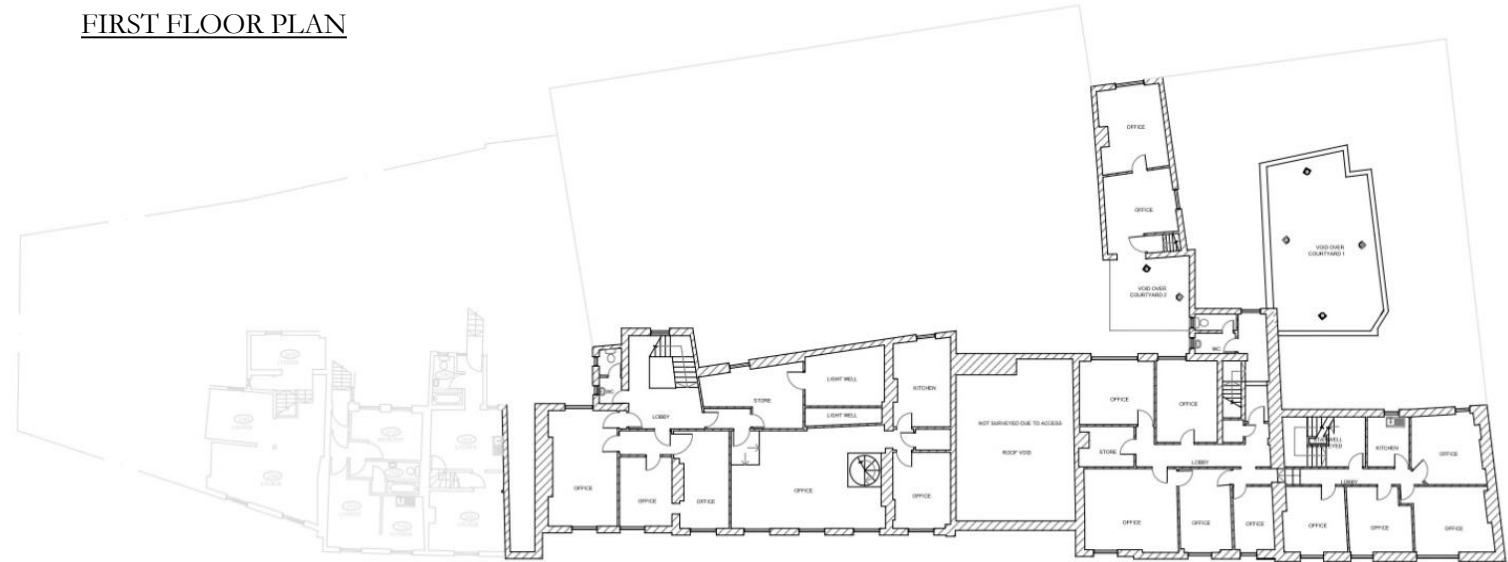
1.3 The Town Clerk, David Mears, and the Project Manager, Steph Mott, have briefed us of the need to examine the building with the aim of achieving the following:

- Provision of a new reception area that serves the vacant and underutilised spaces at the east end of the building.
- Examine the possible locations for a new passenger lift that would allow level access to as many areas of the building as possible.
- Make recommendations for improving the flow of movement throughout the building generally.
- Review existing meeting rooms and advise on proposals for refurbishing these to a more modern standard.

1.4 This report does not discuss the use of any spaces relating to the Theatre (including the Charter Hall) nor of the spaces immediately above the BOS café at the east end of the building which are the subject of separate reports.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



2. Description of the building

2.1 Bridgwater Town Hall comprises two collections of buildings that are both Grade II listed – these are the ‘Town Hall and Municipal Buildings and Attached Railings, Clare Street’ (list entry number 1280140) and ‘34 High Street’ (list entry number 1197389).

2.2 The Town Hall and Municipal Buildings and Attached Railings comprises the buildings that include the white stuccoed Regency building, the Town Hall Theatre and Charter Hall.

2.3 34 High Street comprises the building to the east of the Town Hall abutting Mansion House Lane.

2.4 In addition there is a range of buildings between the Town Hall and 34 High Street that were constructed in the 1950s and to the rear of 34 High Street further buildings that may have be former cottages.

Chronology of the Town Hall and 34 High Street

1354 – A guildhall was recorded on Fore Street.

15th century – early buildings on 34 High Street including the two rooms on the ground and first floor with moulded beams and cruck framing respectively.

17th century – Noah’s Ark Inn (with associated brewhouse and cider and beer cellars) sited on 34 High Street. Associated brewhouse and cider and beer cellars

1720 – A new Assizes Hall is built on the north portion of the Town Hall site abutting Clare Street (now Mansion House Lane) to the rear.

18th Century – No. 34 as we see it today is believed to be built.

1822 – The Bridgwater Corporation moves to the grand jury room at the Assizes Hall. It is thought that the guildhall was demolished shortly after this.

1823 – A new building designed by Richard Carver in a Regency style is constructed to accommodate judge’s lodgings, and witness and jury rooms alongside the Assizes Hall in 1823.

1823 – The Bridgwater Corporation moves in to the Carver building.

1824 – The neighbouring buildings (nos 38 and 40 High Street) are rebuilt by Carver. No. 34 is also refronted at this time in brickwork.

Mid-19th century – The inn on 34 High Street closes and the buildings are converted to retail use including a saddlery in the mid-19th century. There is an attached cottage and

stable to the rear.

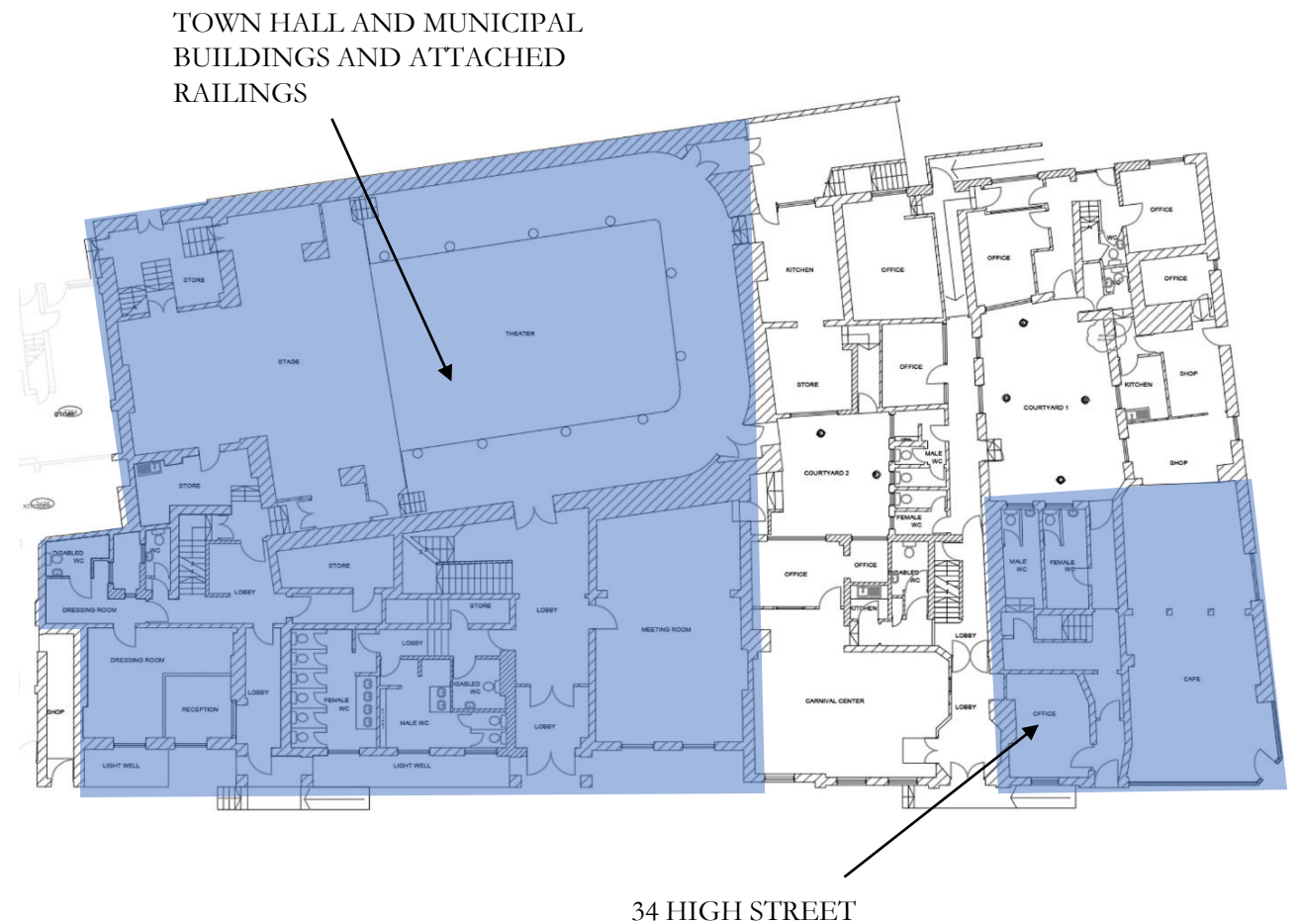
1865 – The assizes hall is replaced by a new town hall range designed by Charles Knowles in 1865 which subsequently became used as a concert hall and theatre by the end of the 19th C.

1880s – Part of the Town Hall was used as a police court and a free library.

1929 – No. 34 High Street is in the ownership of the Bridgwater Corporation.

1950s – A limestone fronted building of new town hall offices is built on the former site of 38 and 40 High Street.c

The diagram below shows the boundaries of the two listed buildings as identified by Historic England.



2. Description of the building

Building Description

To aid description in this report we have split the building in to four sections; The Town Hall offices, The Theatre, The 1950s Section and 34 High Street, which are described below:

2.4 The Town Hall

The section of the building forming the main elevation on the High Street is in a late Regency style with a stucco render. It is formed of nine bays with the central five bays stepped forward with pilasters and recessed panels. There are two projecting porches set within the central section. The left-hand porch gives access to the areas used as Town Hall offices with access to upper floors, the basement and theatre stage from an internal staircase.

Internally this part of the building is arranged over four floors including a basement. Much of the basement is thought to survive from the earlier buildings on the site.

2.5 The Theatre

The rear theatre part of the building is in a Venetian Gothic style and is constructed of brick with red Wembdon sandstone at the lower level and limestone bandings and quoins.

The entrance to the theatre is to the right hand porch of the Regency section which gives access to a lobby from which the Charter Hall, theatre auditorium, toilets and stairs to the upper theatre gallery can be accessed. At first floor, above the Charter Hall is the former Council Chamber.

2.6 The 1950s section

The front elevation of the 1950s section of the building is constructed of limestone split in to three bays with projecting pilasters.. To the rear of the 1950s-building there is an enclosed courtyard and the buildings are finished in a painted render.

The building is accessed from the High Street with a ramp and steps from which a corridor extends to the central staircase and enclosed courtyard. A range of buildings at the rear appear also to date from the 1950s and also give access to the theatre projector room and incorporate escape stairs from the theatre balcony.

2.7 34 High Street

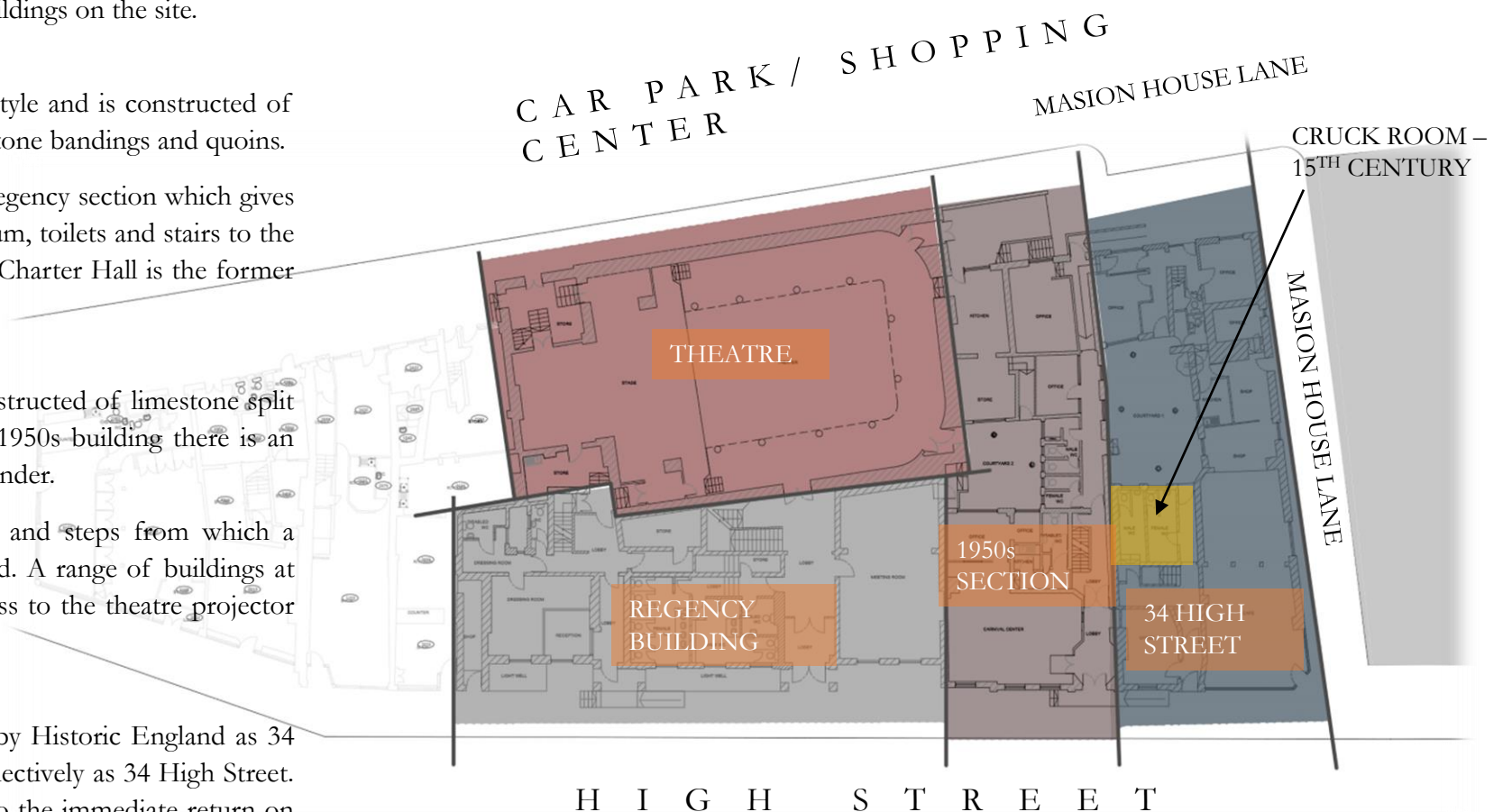
For this report we are describing the buildings that are listed by Historic England as 34 High Street and the buildings to the rear of 34 High Street collectively as 34 High Street. 34 High Street is finished in red brick to the High Street and to the immediate return on

Mansion House Lane. The corner plot is occupied by the BOS café who also occupy the rooms to the rear facing on to Mansion House Lane.

The buildings to the rear of 34 High Street are finished in painted render with steel framed windows with clay pantile roofs.

The front building is accessed from the High Street and leads to a central staircase. Immediately behind this at ground floor and first floor above there remains a much earlier structure with moulded beams at ground floor and elm cruck trusses at first floor.

The listing citation notes that the stair, which has square balusters and a moulded handrail from first floor level dates from 1824. At first floor are former council meeting rooms and offices while at second floor the stair gives access to two attic rooms divided with wooden partitions.



PLAN SHOWING AREAS OF THE BUILDING



3. How the building is currently used

3.1 Within the four areas described the building is used as follows:

- **By the Town Council** – largely located on the west side of the building with public access at ground floor from the left hand porch, council offices and the Council Chamber on the first floor and offices let to private companies on the second floor. The ground floor room immediately behind the reception desk is used as a dressing room by the Town Hall Theatre.
- **The Town Hall Theatre** – located in the middle of the building. Access is from the High Street leading to the foyer, toilets and the auditorium space to the rear. At basement level the majority of the spaces are occupied by the Theatre and used for dressing rooms and storage of seating for the auditorium. The upper level of balcony seating to the auditorium is accessed by the staircase at the rear of the foyer. The Charter Hall on the ground floor is also accessed from the foyer space.
- **1950s section** – the portion of the building constructed in the 1950s extends back across the site from the High Street to Mansion House Lane to the rear and includes an inner courtyard immediately to the east of the theatre auditorium. On the north side of the auditorium are the kitchens which serve and support the Charter Hall. The room immediately facing on to the High Street at ground floor is used by the Carnival Centre while other rooms at ground, first, second and third floor are vacant or used for storage.

The basement below this section houses the boilers which provide heating for the entire building.



BASEMENT PLAN






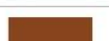


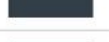



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



3. How the building is currently used

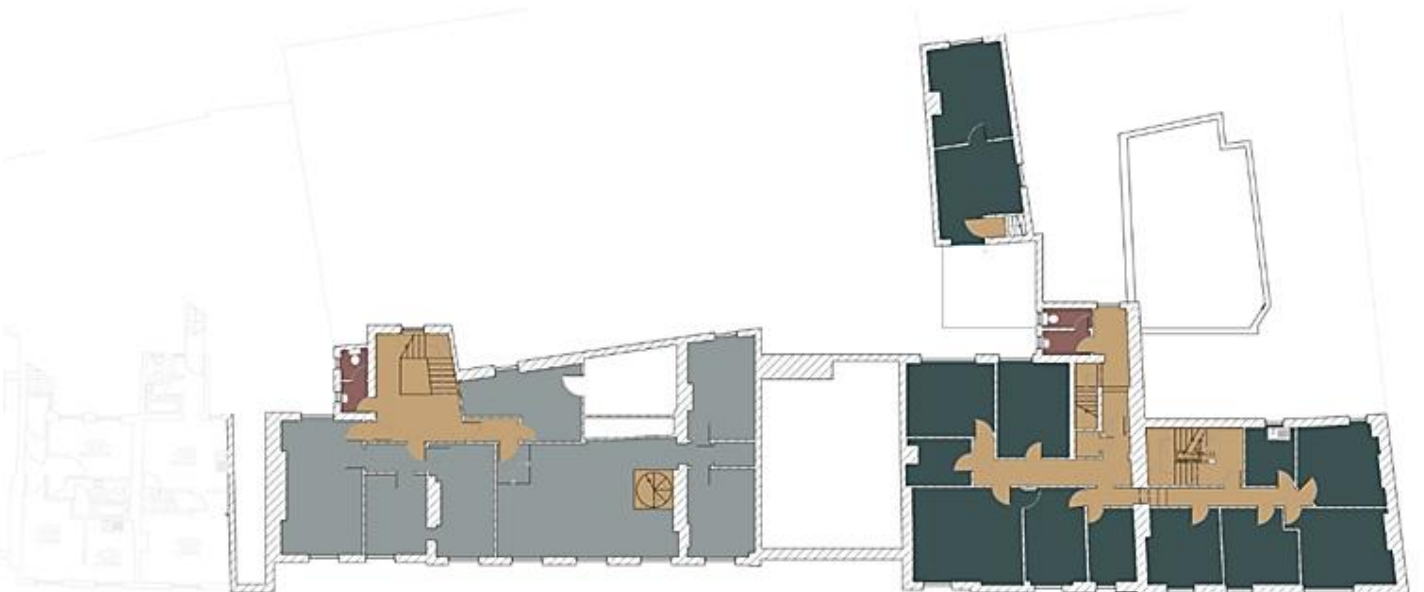
- **34 High Street** – the BOS café is at ground floor on the corner of the High Street and Mansion House Lane. To the rear the first floor offices are occupied by the local Labour Party (with separate access from Mansion House Lane to the rear). The remaining rooms above the BOS café are largely vacant (one room of the former council office spaces on the first floor is used by a local charity for vulnerable people). There is a further inner courtyard between these spaces.

34 High Street and the 1950s section are connected at ground floor at the front and rear of the buildings.

	CATEGORY	GROUND FLOOR	FIRST FLOOR	SECOND FLOOR	BASEMENT
	AUDITORIUM / FOYER / CHARTER HALL	476.5 SQ.M.	341.75 SQ.M.	-	77.8 SQ.M.
	THEATRE - TOILETS	45.05 SQ.M.	-	-	-
	THEATRE - DRESSING ROOMS	7.6 SQ.M.	-	-	132.8 SQ.M.
	TOWN HALL OFFICES / STORAGE	100.5 SQ.M.	61.04 SQ.M.	-	76.35 SQ.M.
	COMMERCIAL / OFFICE	72.5 SQ.M.	201.65 SQ.M.	99.65 SQ.M.	-
	SERVICES	-	-	-	36.65 SQ.M.
	VACANT	25.1 SQ.M.	189.77 SQ.M.	144.37 SQ.M.	-
	TOILETS	44.64 SQ.M.	15.6 SQ.M.	10.6 SQ.M.	8 SQ.M.
	CIRCULATION	203.65 SQ.M.	180.45 SQ.M.	64.15 SQ.M.	50.6 SQ.M.
	BOS CAFE	132.1 SQ.M.			



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



4. Provision of level access at ground floor

4.1 The Town Hall's composition of a number of different buildings built at different times that have then been connected together has resulted in the floors being set at a series of different levels.

4.2 Adjustments have been made to improve access to ground floor areas by the addition of ramps to the High Street entrances of the Town Hall offices and the 1950s section and to the rear entrances from Mansion House Lane to the rear of the theatre auditorium and the 1950s section. The threshold at the entrance to the Town Hall Theatre foyer is set at street level and also has level access.

4.3 At ground floor there are four broad areas that have level access, as described below and illustrated in the diagram opposite.

- **Town Hall offices entrance in the west of the building** – accessed by the ramp from the High Street.
- **The Town Hall Theatre foyer, auditorium and Charter Hall** – accessed by the level threshold from the High street and from the ramp from Mansion House Lane. The accessible toilet is set at the same level as the foyer while the male and female toilets have stepped access and are set at the same level as the Town Hall offices entrance.
- **The majority of the 1950s section** – this area can be accessed by the ramps from the High Street and from Mansion House Lane to the rear. The Carnival Centre is accessed by a further ramp up to the room from the entrance corridor from the High Street, though this has a gradient of 1:6 and is not compliant with building regulations. There is an accessible toilet at ground floor alongside the central stairs that is set at the same level as the entrance corridor. Changes in the layout to separate the Carnival Centre have resulted in this accessible toilet being enclosed within their space with a resultant step down to it.
- **34 High Street** – this areas has level access from the High Street entrance to the corridor and reception room at the front. Beyond this there is a step down in the corridor and the north and south courtyard doorways have small 50mm steps at their thresholds. Access from the rear door (which leads to the rooms used by the Labour Party) is currently not accessible as there is a 100mm step at the threshold.

4.4 Improvements to level access could be made with the following adjustments

- **Town Hall offices entrance in the west of the building** – none. All areas currently have level access.
- **The Town Hall Theatre foyer, auditorium and Charter Hall** – level access could be made to the male and female toilets with the addition of internal ramps but this could not be introduced without a significant reduction in the space allowed for the toilets.
- **The 1950s section** – It is not possible to achieve level access to the kitchens to the rear. The store/ office at the north end of the corridor could only be made level access with the addition of a ramp in the room. The wall separating the accessible toilet from the corridor should be removed to allow level access from the entrance corridor to this area.
- **34 High Street** – With the addition of a ramp to remove the step in the corridor and adjustments to external finishes in the courtyard level access could be made to the rear of the building. The addition of a ramp, linked to the existing ramp up to the rear entrance to the 1950s section would also allow level access to these areas from the rear entrance.



5. Level changes to upper levels of the building

5.1 The diagrams on this page show the different levels across the building to the upper floors. Areas of the floors with different levels are shaded in different colours and indicative relative levels are given. Please note that these are to be confirmed with an accurate measured survey.

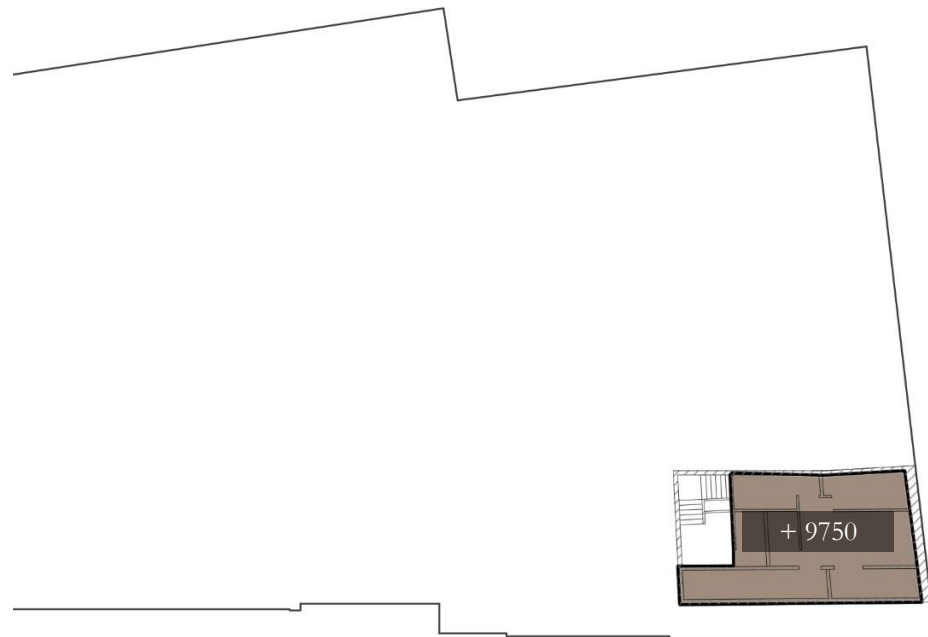
- Regency Building – the first floor is a single level including the Council Chamber while the second floor is at two levels with a step up in the large office space.
- 1950s Section – at first floor this is arranged as two levels with the front section approximately 540mm higher than the rear.
- 34 High Street – The 18th century part, rear buildings and the cruck frame room are all at different levels.



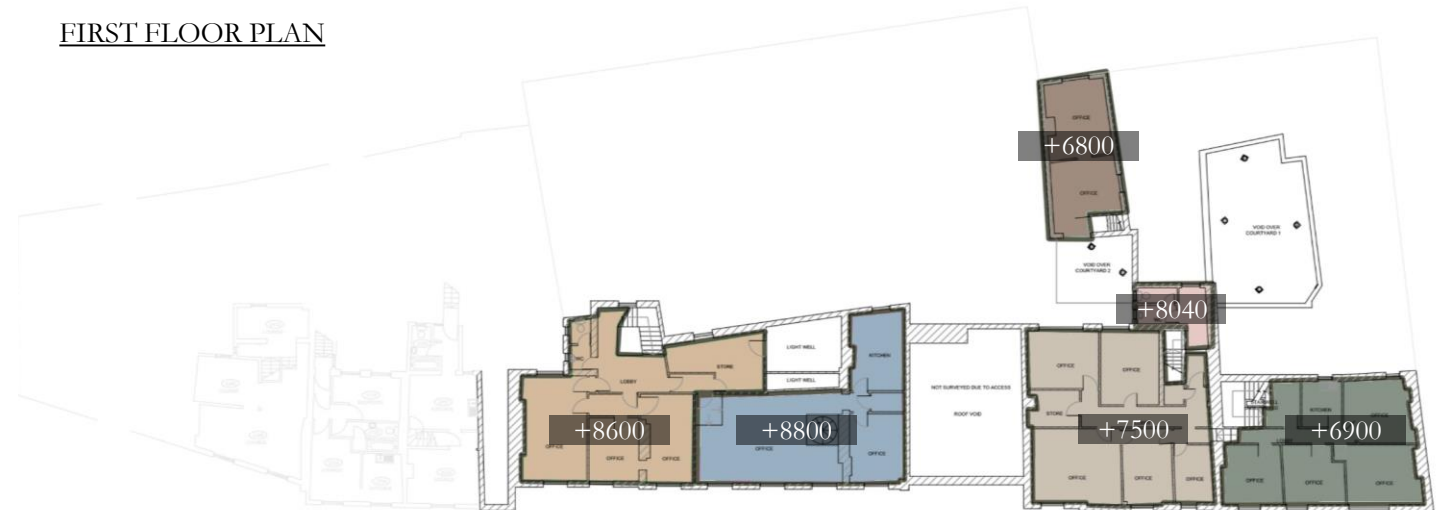
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



6. Provision of level access to upper floors of the building

6.1 To provide level access to the upper floors a passenger lift or lifts needs to be incorporated within the building. For maximum efficiency any new passenger lift should be introduced in a position where the different levels within the building meet and ideally where there is a vertical void within the building that would simplify and reduce the cost of its installation.

6.2 A simple lift has the car doors on one side only but it is possible for lifts to have doors on up to three sides. This allows a lift that can appreciate multiple level changes within a building by opening the doors on different sides where there is not a sufficient change in level to have the openings one above the other.

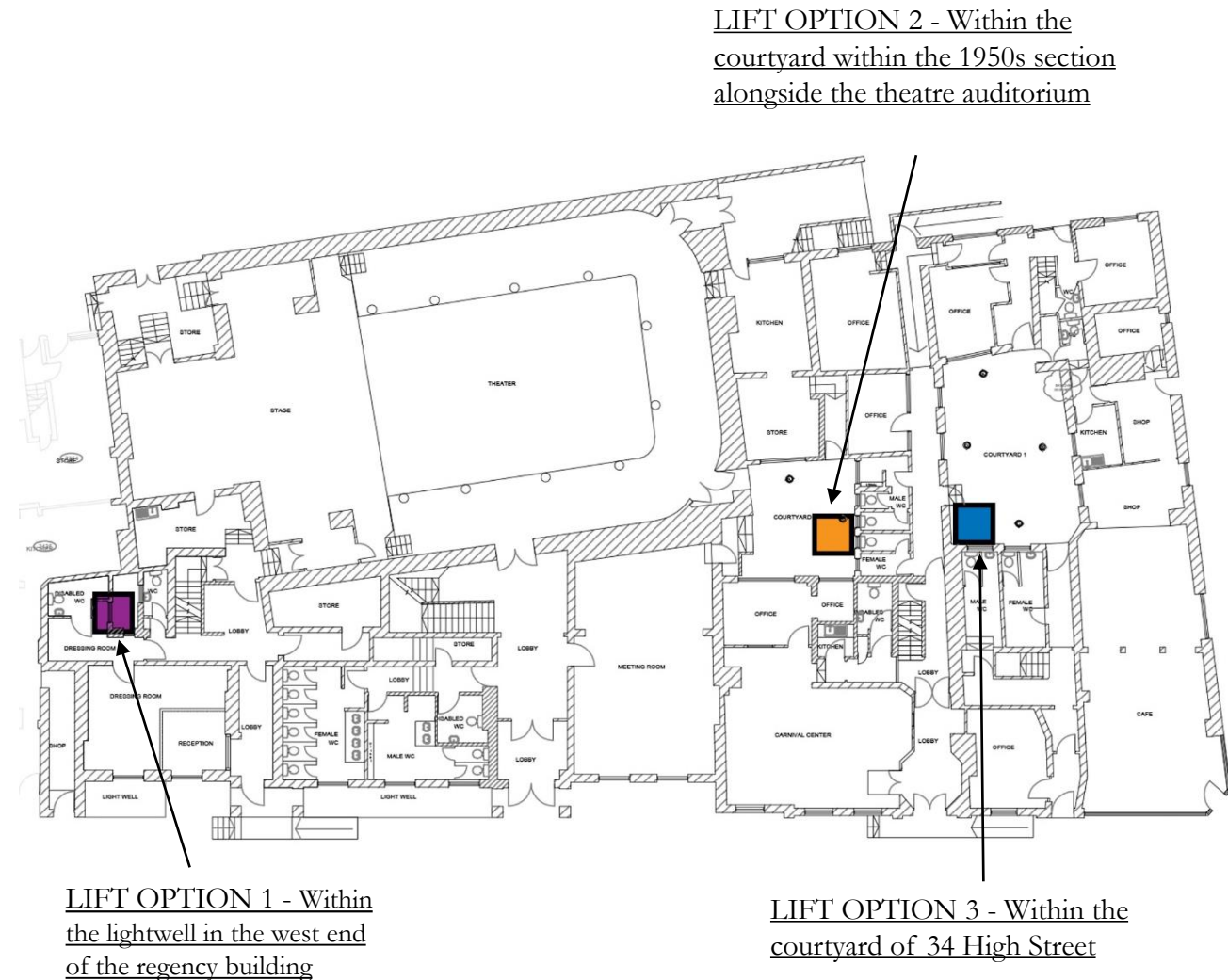
6.3 We have identified three possible areas where a lift could be inserted which make use of a vertical void (either a courtyard or lightwell) within the building, as follows:

1. **West end of the Regency building** – the lift is situated in a closed off lightwell in the west of the Regency building. The lift provides access to the basement, ground, first and second floors of the Regency building. For this location a single sided lift would be required.
2. **Courtyard within the 1950s section** – the lift is situated within the courtyard within the 1950s section and would provide level access to the first floor of the 1950s section, the first floor of the Regency building, and the second floor of the 1950s building. For this location a lift with doors on three sides would be required.
3. **Courtyard of 34 High Street** – this would provide access to the first and second floor of the 1950s section only. For this location a three sided lift would be required.

6.4 All lifts will require a formed concrete lift pit at their base which will require excavation and likely underpinning of any existing nearby walls. A structural engineer will need to be engaged to determine the suitability of the building for this and to investigate the structural stability of any existing walls or structure as well as determining

6.5 Accurate survey information, including positions of internal and external walls and floor levels of the building, are required to determine the dimensional suitability of each location

6.6 A separate lift motor room or cupboard will also be required near to the lift shaft. Each of the three options are described in more detail on the following pages



LIFT OPTION 2 - Within the courtyard within the 1950s section alongside the theatre auditorium

LIFT OPTION 1 - Within the lightwell in the west end of the regency building

LIFT OPTION 3 - Within the courtyard of 34 High Street



7. Lift Option 1 - within the lightwell in the west end of the Regency building

7.1 The diagrams opposite explain what parts of the building could be accessed by this lift. The lift in this location can provide access to the front areas of the basement under the Regency building, ground and first floors of the Town Hall council offices and the Town Hall privately let offices on the second floor (excluding the offices with a raised floor on the east side).

7.2 This lift is the only one of the three options proposed that gives access to the basement level below the Regency building.

7.3 This lift would require the removal of the covered storage space at basement level. To the floors above the space it occupies is a void and the inserted roof over the storage area would need to be removed.

7.4 The lift would be single sided with the single doorway on the south side of the lift. The lift would need to have a minimum internal dimension of 1.1m x 1.4m to comply with part M of the building regulations to allow wheelchair use.

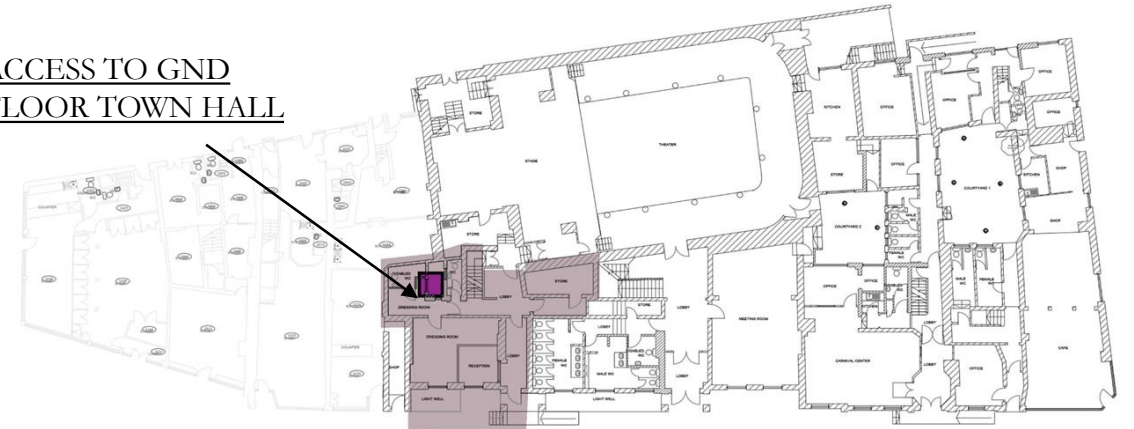
7.5 A new lift usually needs a clean and dust free lift shaft and this often necessitates the construction of a new shaft when inserted within a new building. Accurate measurements of the lightwell will be needed, particularly at basement and ground level to check if the lift shaft can be accommodated. It is possible if the lightwell is not large enough that some alteration would be needed to one or two sides of the lightwell to increase the available shaft dimension.

ACCESS TO
BASEMENT



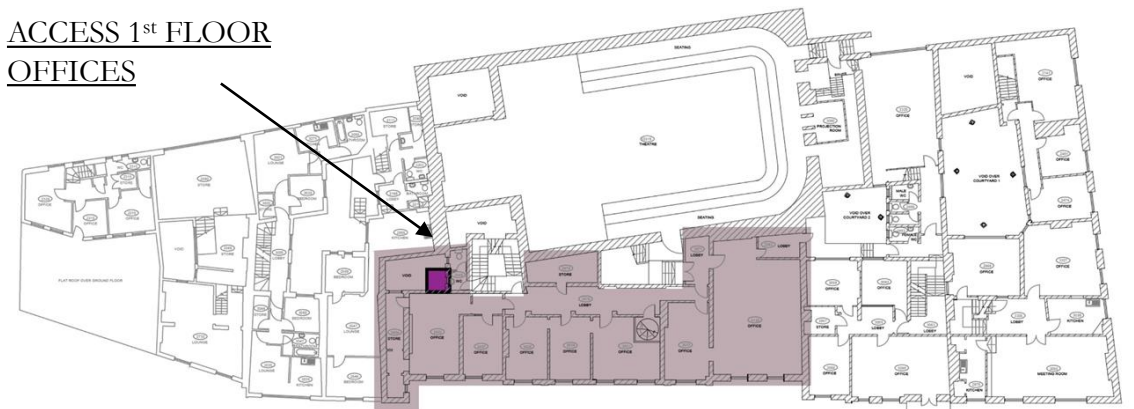
BASEMENT PLAN

ACCESS TO GND
FLOOR TOWN HALL



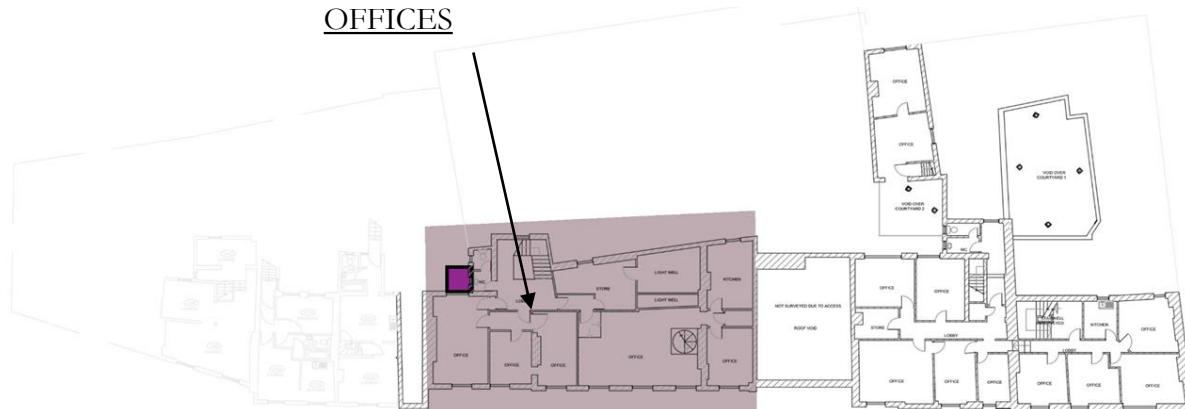
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

ACCESS 1ST FLOOR
OFFICES



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

ACCESS TO 2ND FLOOR
OFFICES



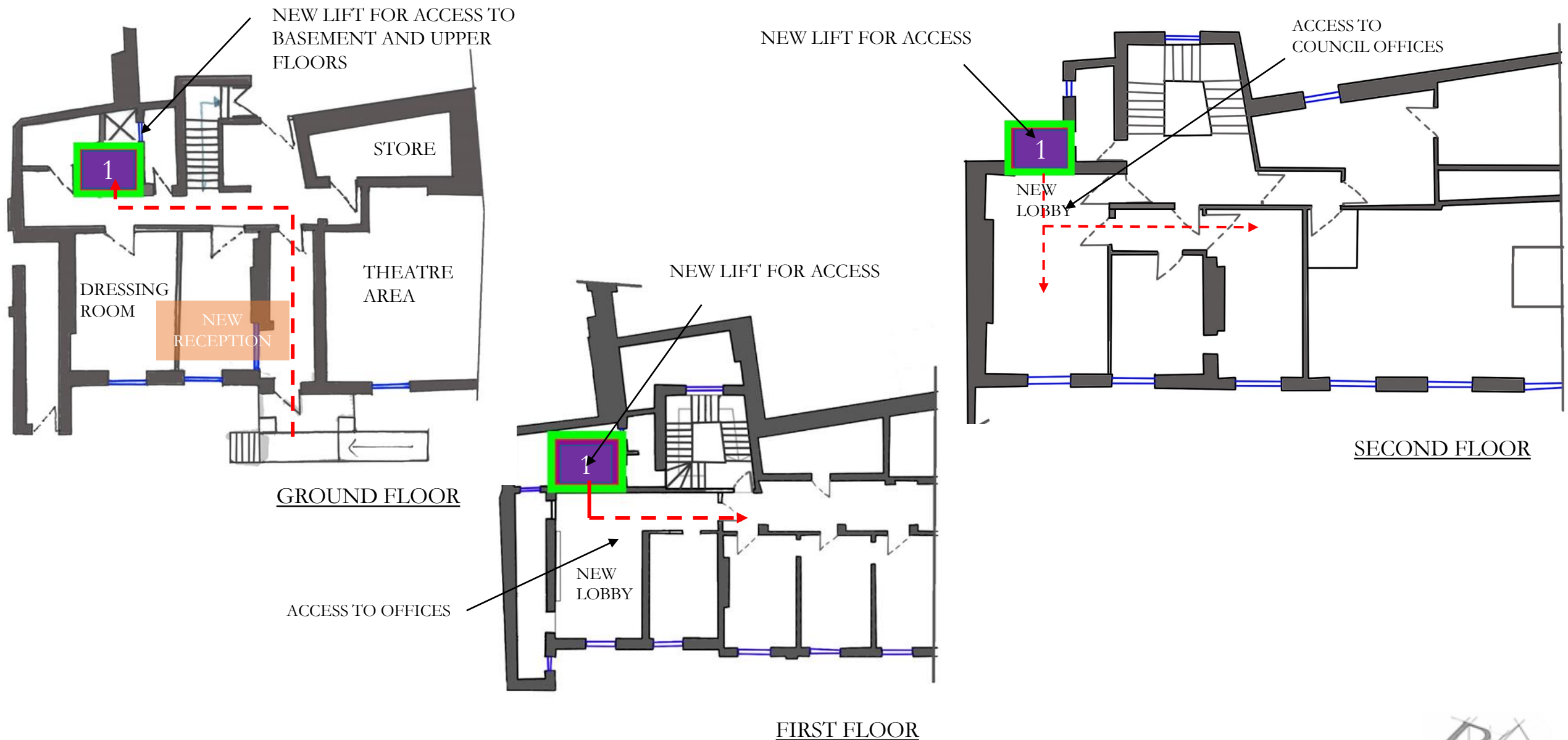
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



7. Lift Option 1 - within the lightwell in the west end of the Regency building

7.6 The arrangement of lift option 1 on the ground, first and second floors is shown on this page.

7.7 At ground floor and basement floors it occupies the lightwell. At first floor and second floors it opens in to the west meeting room and office respectively. These could be separated with the addition of a partition to create a lobby outside the lift.



8. Lift Option 2 - within the courtyard in the 1950s section courtyard

8.1 The proposed new lift in this location would be inserted within the enclosed courtyard within the 1950s section and to the east of the theatre auditorium. The lift in this location can provide access to the first floor of the 1950s section, the first floor of the Town Hall offices and the front of the 1950s section at second floor. The lift could also potentially provide access to the basement plant room areas in the 1950s section if the shaft was excavated down to this level.

8.2 The lift would sit within the courtyard space and would require removal of the concrete walkway that connects the Town Hall offices with the 1950s section at first floor this would be replaced with a new walkway to suit the required lift landings.

8.3 The lift would need to have doors on three sides of the lift car to allow it to appreciate the three levels of the Town Hall offices and the front and rear parts of the 1950s section.

8.4 At first floor new landings, connected with steps to allow access on foot between levels, would need to be inserted to connect the lift car doors to the adjacent spaces. A new landing would also be required at second floor.

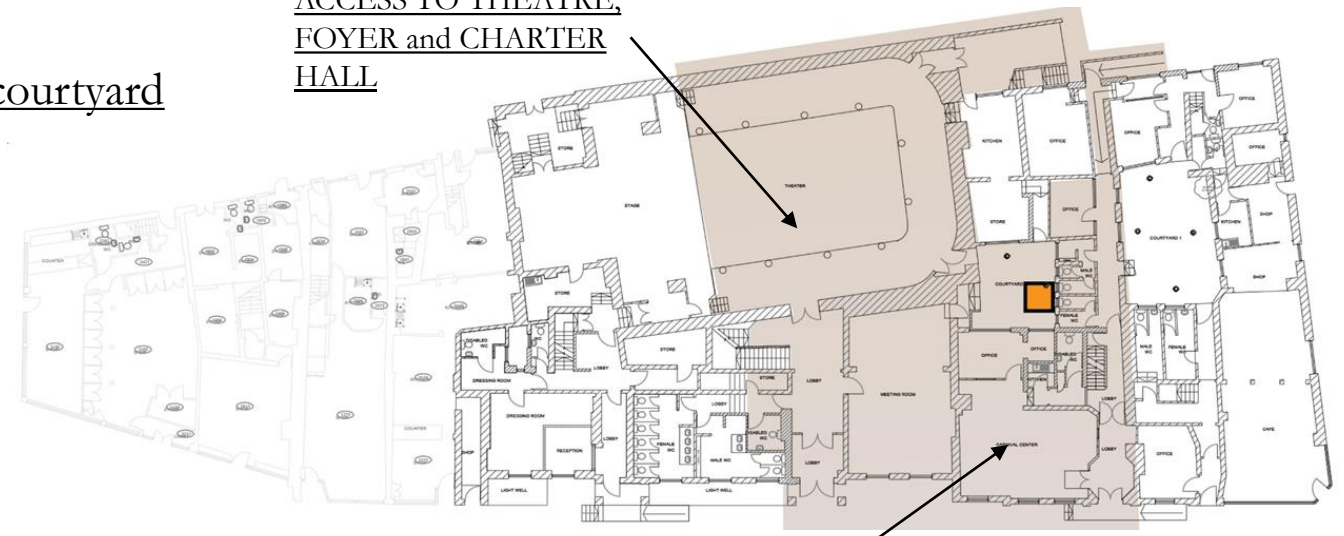
8.5 Toilets are currently located to the east of the lift on all floors and partial removal of these would be necessary at first floor to accommodate the lift door that would be required on this side for access to the rear of the 1950s section.

8.6 Access in to the front part of the 1950s section at first and second floor would be made by enlarging an existing window to create a doorway.

8.7 Access to the rear of the 1950s section at third floor could be made of a walkway or bridge across the courtyard was formed to the two rooms here.

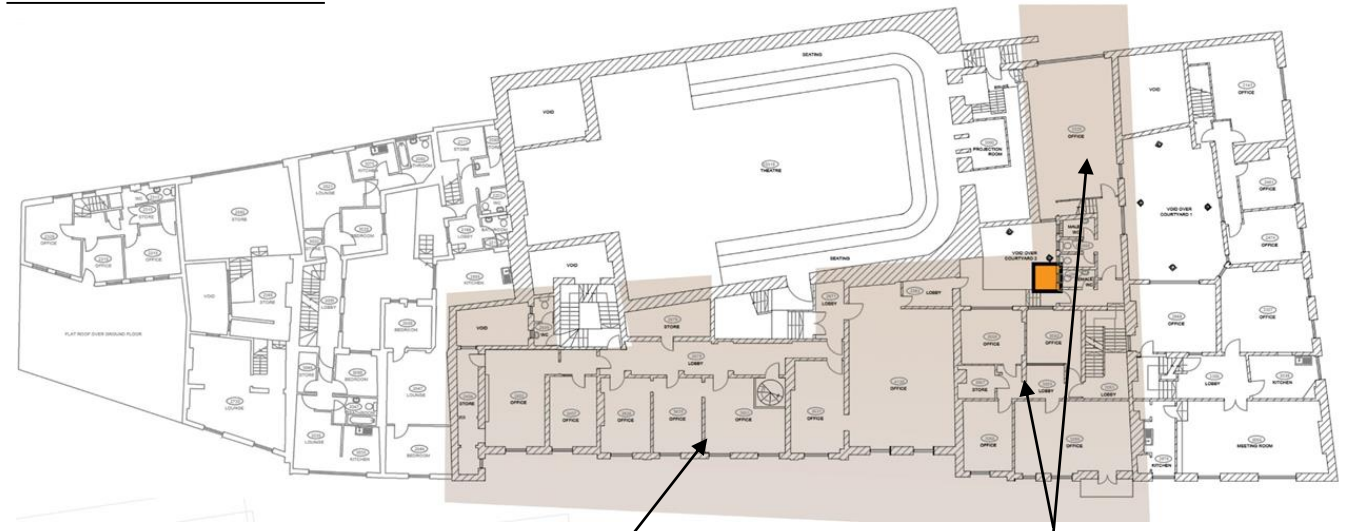
8.7 The lift in this location does not give access to either the 1st, 2nd or 3rd floors of 34 High Street above the BOS café.

ACCESS TO THEATRE,
FOYER and CHARTER
HALL



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

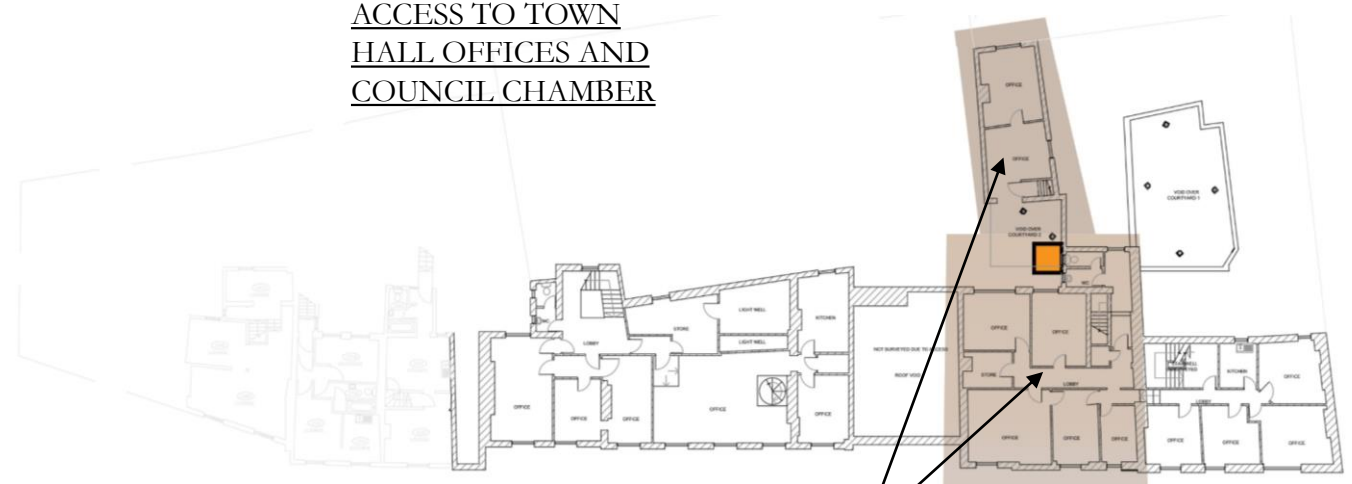
ACCESS TO 1950S
SECTION



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

ACCESS TO 1950s SECTION

ACCESS TO TOWN
HALL OFFICES AND
COUNCIL CHAMBER



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

ACCESS TO 1950s
SECTION



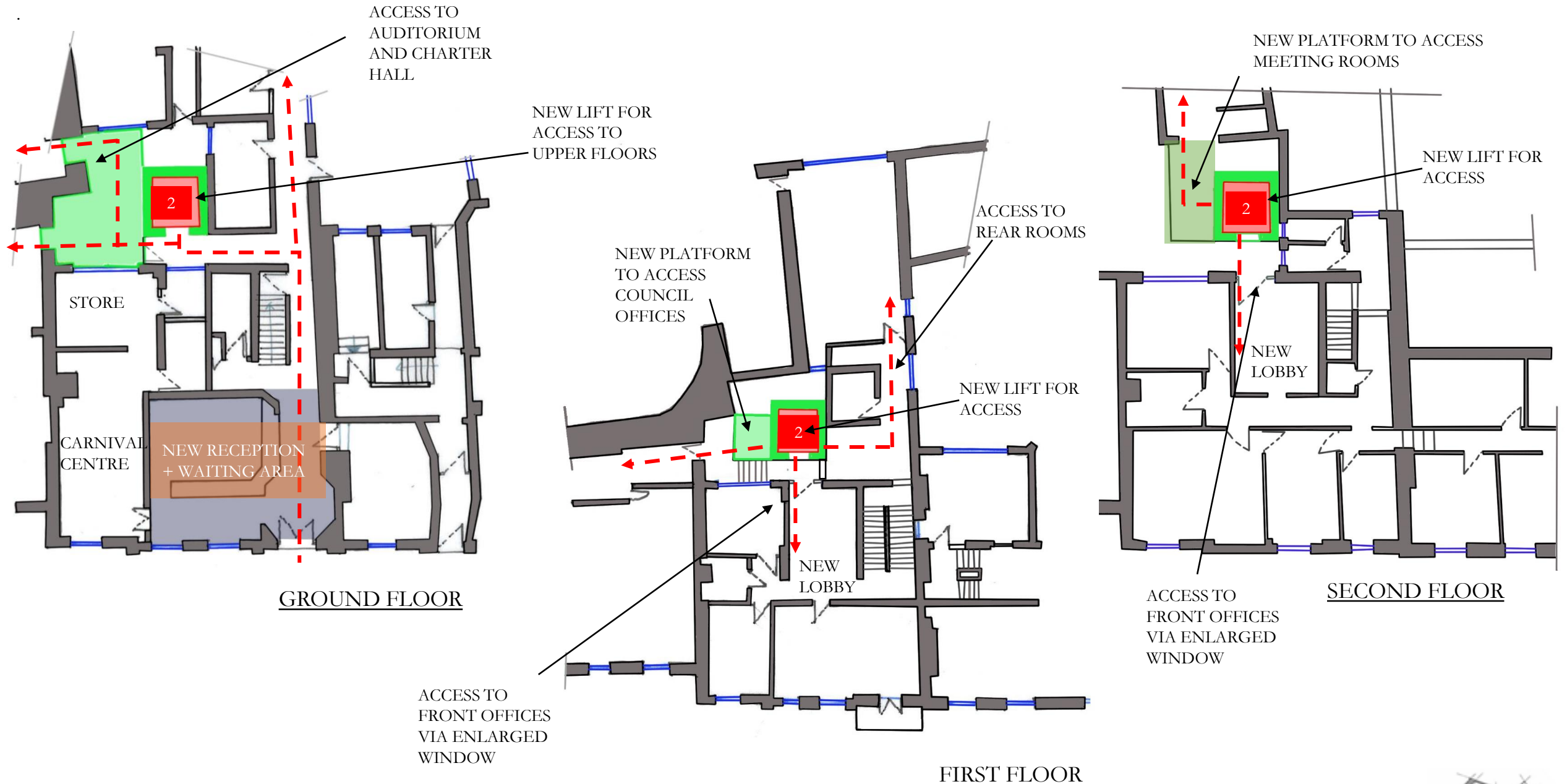
8. Lift Option 2 - within the courtyard in the 1950s section courtyard

8.8 The arrangement of lift option 1 on the ground, first and second floors is shown on this page.

8.9 The lift is situated in the courtyard as shown. At ground floor it can be accessed from the 1950s section. It could also be accessed from the Theatre auditorium and the Charter Hall.

8.10 At first floor a new walkway is constructed between the 1950s section and the Regency Building to provide stepped access as well as landing platforms for the lift.

8.11 At second floor new landings are required to connect the lift to the front and rear of the 1950s building. For access to the third floor in the 1950s section a similar platform is required.



9. Lift Option 3 - within the courtyard of 34 High Street

9.1 The proposed new lift in this location uses the courtyard within 34 High Street. The lift in this location potentially allows access to the first floor of the rear of the 1950s section and the front of the first floor of 34 High Street. Access may be possible to the front of the 1950s section at second floor but this needs to be determined once an accurate survey is obtained.

9.2 The lift can be accessed either from the entrance corridor from the High Street entrance to the 1950s section or from the courtyard of 34 High Street.

9.3 The lift would need to have doors on three sides of the lift car to allow it to potentially appreciate the three levels at first floor of the 1950s section, the front of 34 High Street and the cruck framed room in 34 High Street.

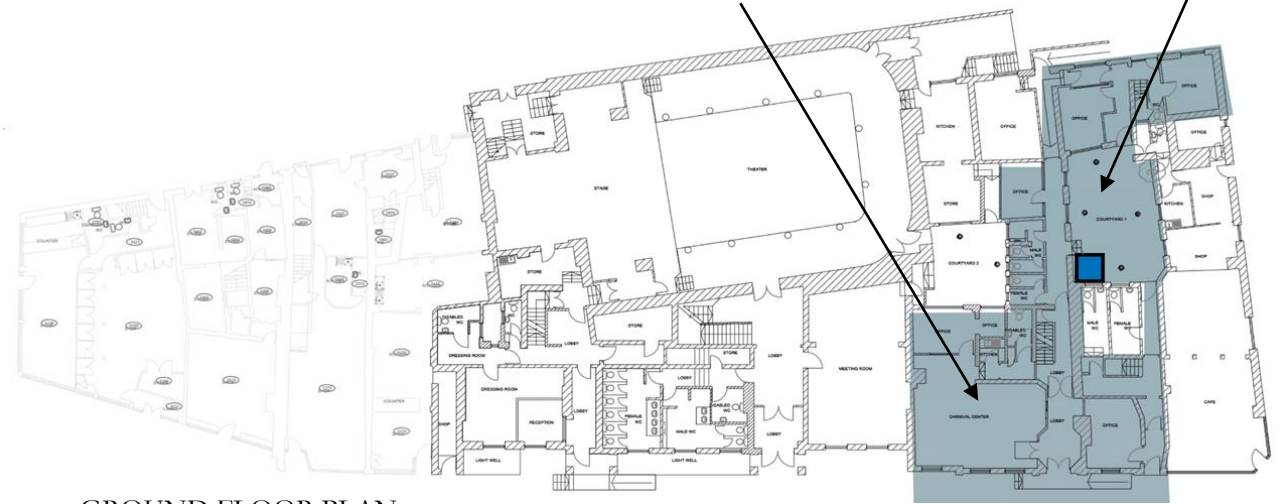
9.4 At second floor a new opening through the wall on the west side of the lift would be required for access to the 1950s section here.

9.5 Access to the second and third floors of the 18th C part of 34 High Street could be made by adding enclosed walkways that connected across above the roof of the cruck frame room. The access for the third floor would need to connect through the sloping pitched roof here. The feasibility of this would need to be checked on receipt of a measured survey.

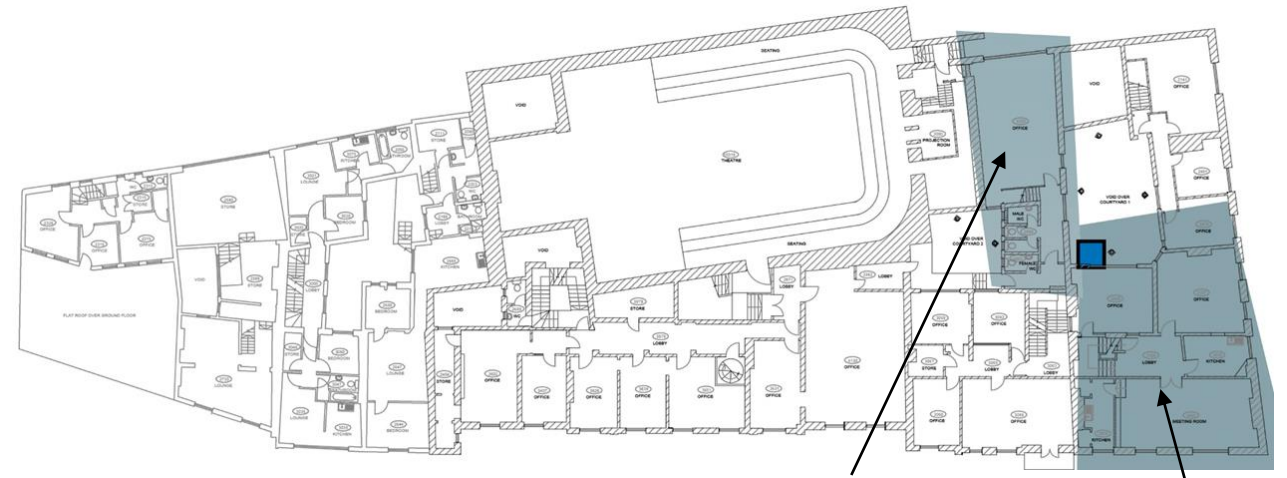
9.6 Level access might be possible to the cruck frame room if a doorway was formed through the north facing external wall of this wall. However we think that this might cause significant harm to the fabric here and further investigation would be necessary to determine if it was feasible.

ACCESS TO 1950S SECTION

ACCESS TO REAR 34 HIGH STREET



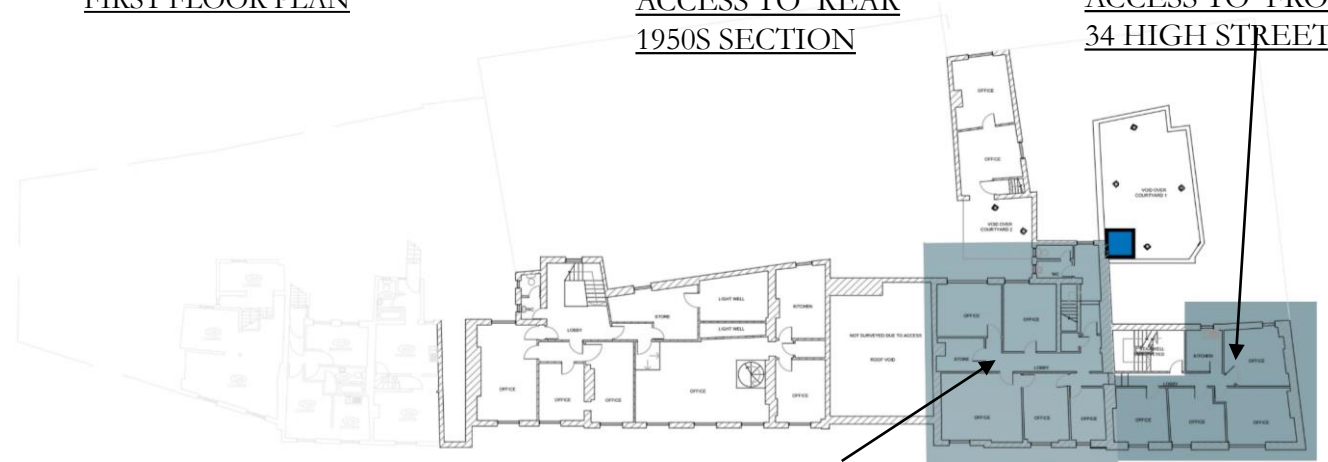
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

ACCESS TO REAR 1950S SECTION

ACCESS TO FRONT 34 HIGH STREET



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

ACCESS TO FRONT 1950S SECTION (TBC - MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE)



9. Lift Option 3 - within the courtyard of the 18th C section

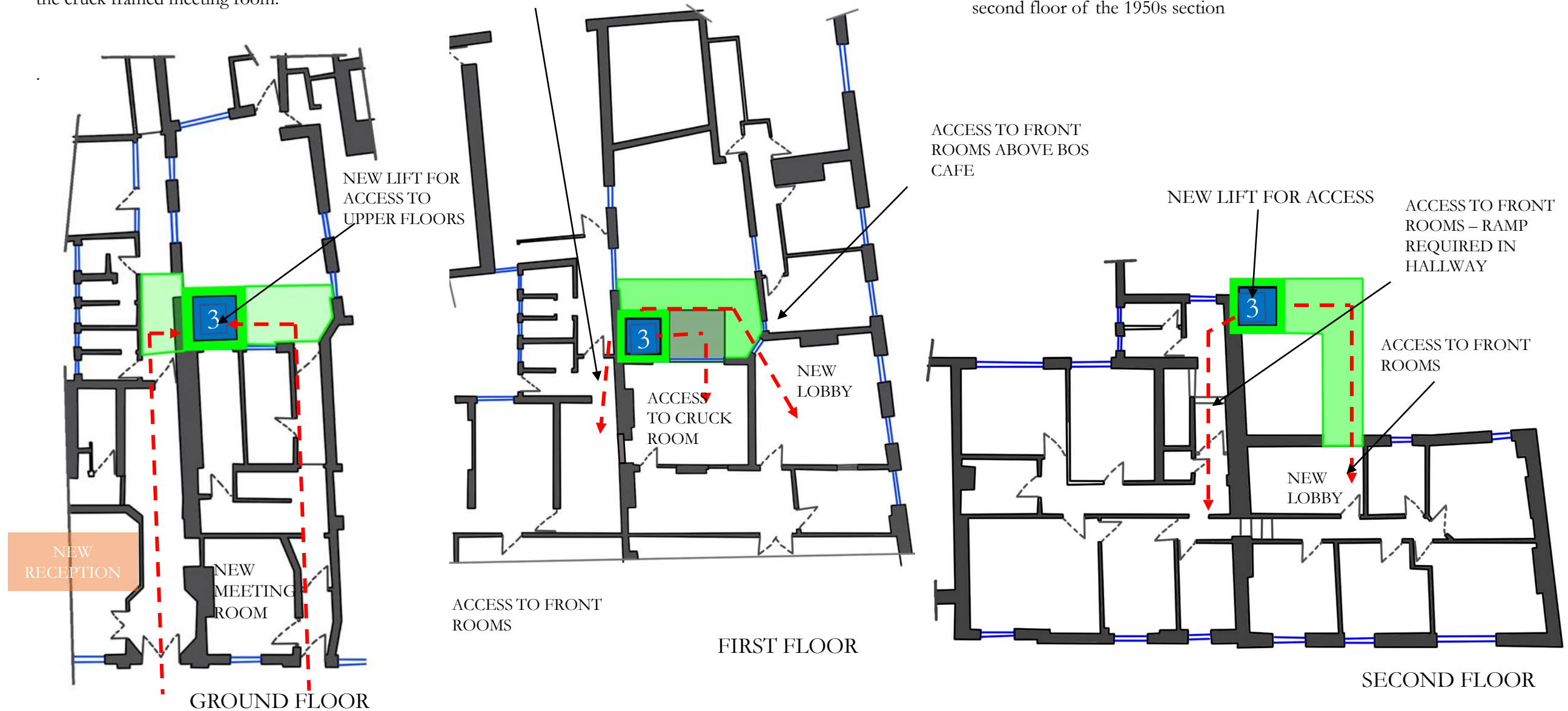
9.7 The arrangement of lift option 3 on the ground, first and second floors is shown on this page.

9.8 At ground floor the lift is located in the courtyard of the 18th C building and access to it is possible from either of the High Street entrances to the 1950s section and 34 High Street

9.9 A new opening through the wall on the west side of the lift at first floor would be required for access to the 1950s section. For access to the front of 34 High Street new walkways would need to be added to connect through to the two different levels. The platform for access to the front of 34 High Street would obscure the windows of the cruck framed meeting room.

9.10 The positioning of the walkway in front of the cruck frame meeting room's windows and walkways above the cruck framed room have a significant negative impact on 34 High Street, in particular to the cruck framed room. This approach is therefore highly unlikely to gain Listed Building Consent.

Without these connections the lift can only provide access to the first floor of the rear of the 1950s section and a small section of second floor of the 1950s section



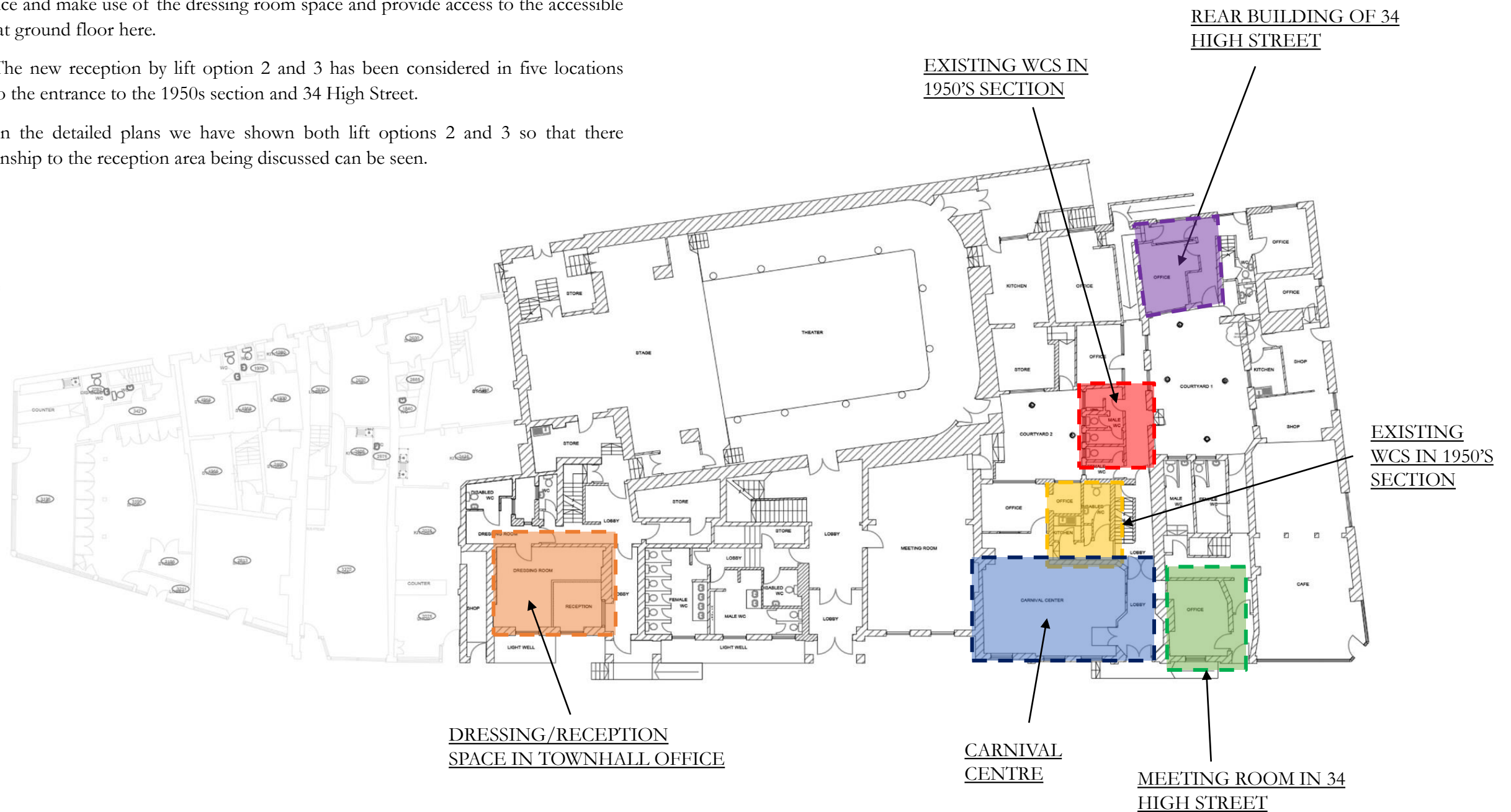
10. New reception area and lift organisation

10.1 We have looked at the provision of a new reception area in a number of locations locations that would suit the new lift options 1, 2 and 3.

10.2 The new reception by lift option 1 would use the existing Town Hall offices entrance and make use of the dressing room space and provide access to the accessible toilet at ground floor here.

10.3 The new reception by lift option 2 and 3 has been considered in five locations near to the entrance to the 1950s section and 34 High Street.

10.4 In the detailed plans we have shown both lift options 2 and 3 so that there relationship to the reception area being discussed can be seen.



11. New reception and lift in the west end of the Regency building

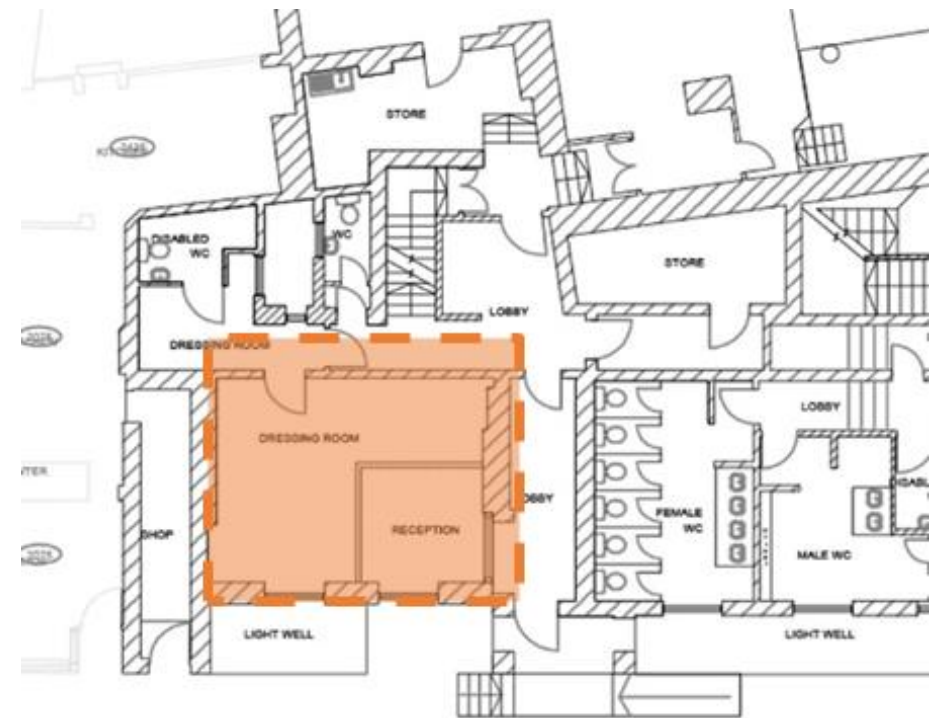
11.1 The existing Town Hall offices entrance provides an entrance for both access to the Town Hall offices on the upper floor and for the public who can access the small reception desk in the entrance lobby.

11.2 This arrangement appears to work well for staff who work in the Town Hall offices but perhaps less well for members of the public who have only the small entrance lobby to congregate in.

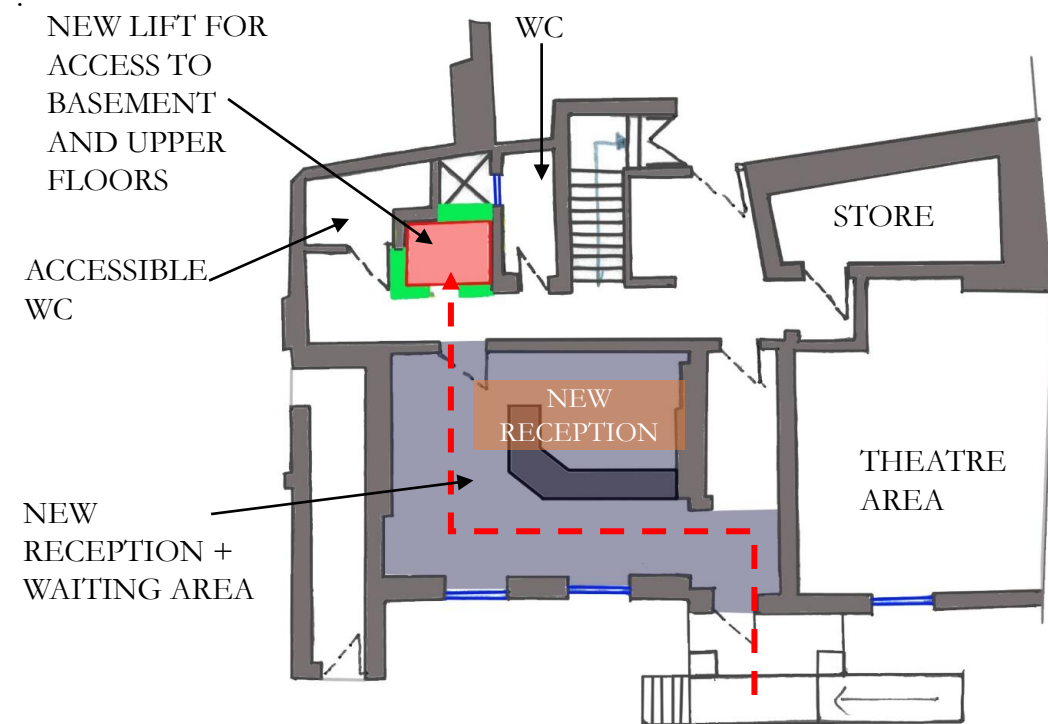
11.3 A sensible improvement to this space would be to enlarge the reception area by using the room that is currently one of the dressing rooms for the Town Hall Theatre as the main reception space that could then be used for visitors to wait in for appointments/ meetings with Town Council staff.

11.4 This room could be opened up to the lobby immediately next to the lift and the accessible toilet to provide a complete suite of rooms that could accommodate visitors and staff alike.

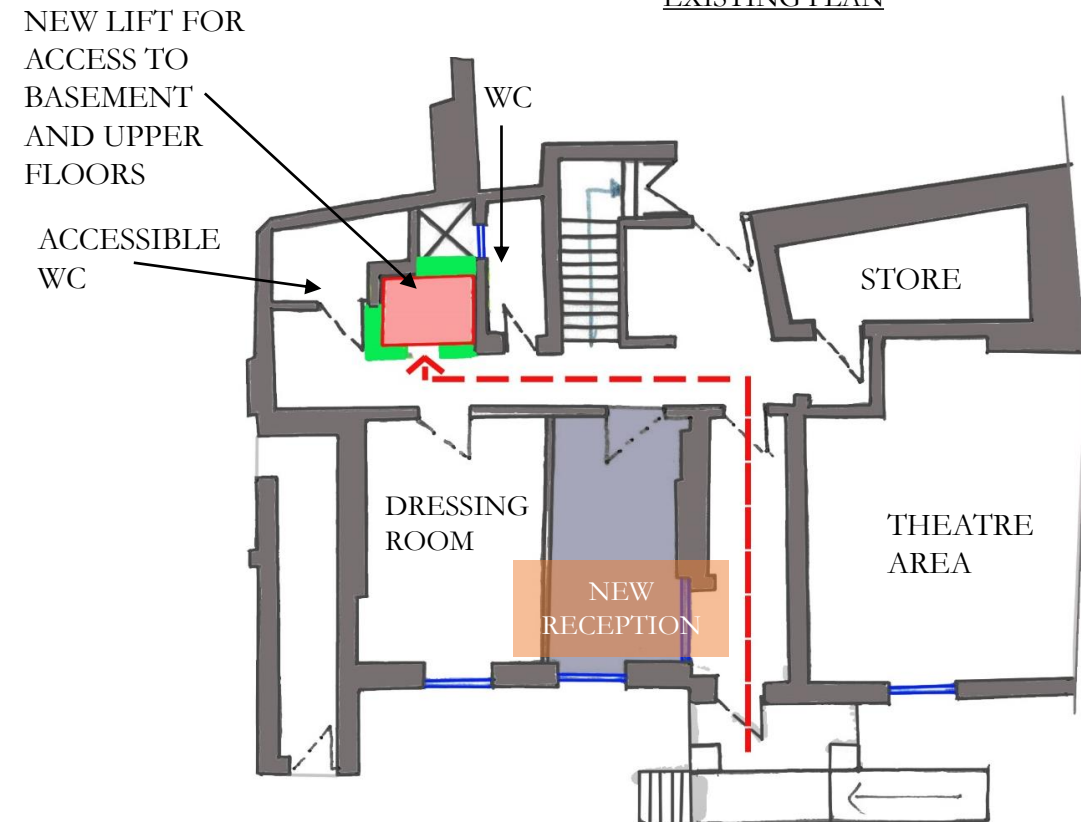
11.5 The diagrams on this page show two options for the arrangement of the reception room: Option A shows the dressing room sub-divided while Option B shows the whole of the dressing room space used.



EXISTING PLAN



PROPOSED PLAN (OPTION B)



PROPOSED PLAN (OPTION A)

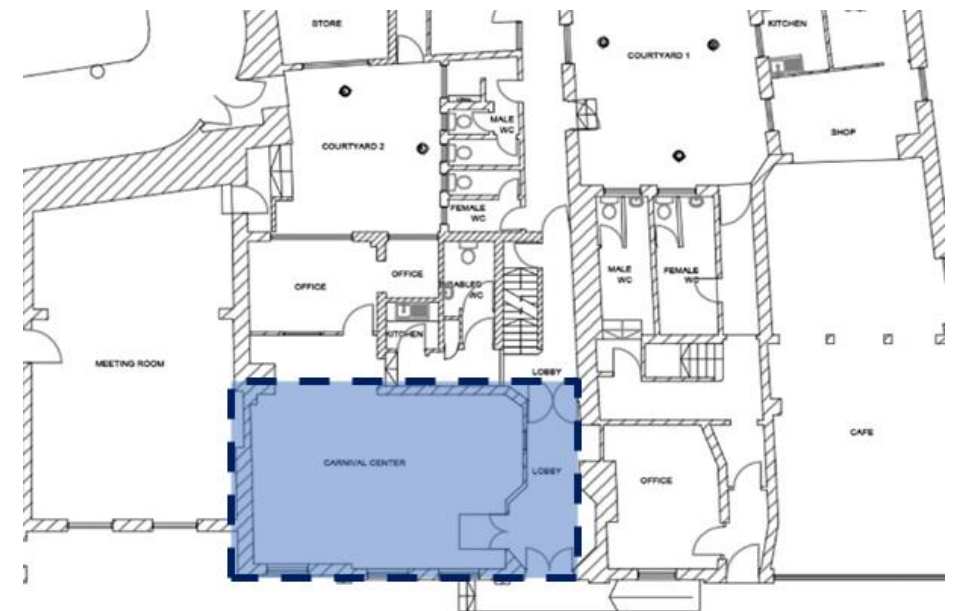


12. New reception in the 1950s section of the building

12.1 The rooms in the front of the 1950s section offer a range of spaces that could be used for the new reception area. The four areas for the new reception that we have looked at are detailed on the following pages

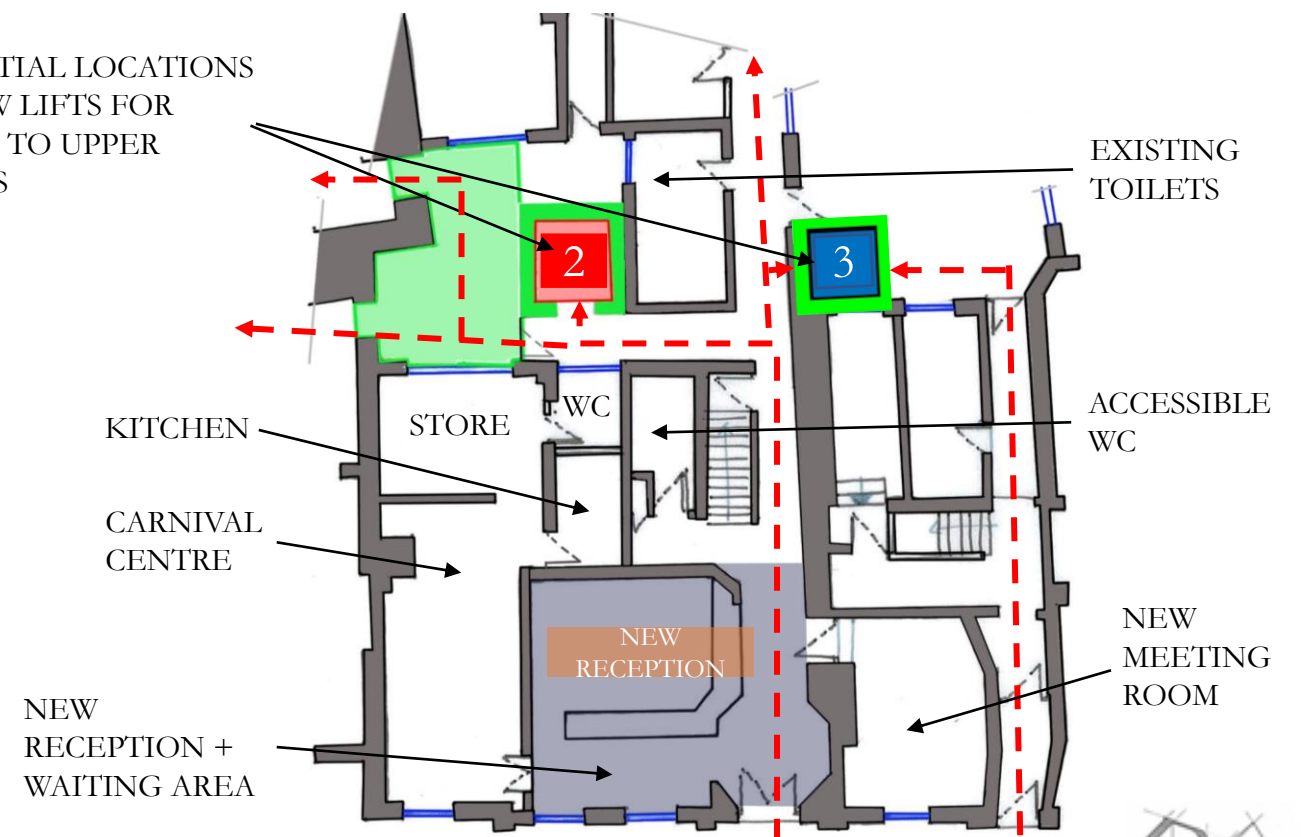
1. Reception located in in the front part of Bridgwater Carnival room.

- This position allows the new reception to be located in a position where it can be seen from the High Street.
- The reception is well placed to control access in to the building.
- A space can be created for visitors to congregate and meet with Council Staff.
- The partition separating the accessible toilet could be removed to allow this to be used by visitors and staff.
- The adjacent room in the front of 34 High Street can also be used for meetings but it does not have level access.
- The Carnival Centre is currently at a higher level and this would need to be removed or the ramped access adjusted to give level access. Further investigation is needed to establish if this is feasible.
- The reception reduces the space given over to the Carnival Centre and their access would be through the new reception space.



EXISTING PLAN

POTENTIAL LOCATIONS
OF NEW LIFTS FOR
ACCESS TO UPPER
FLOORS



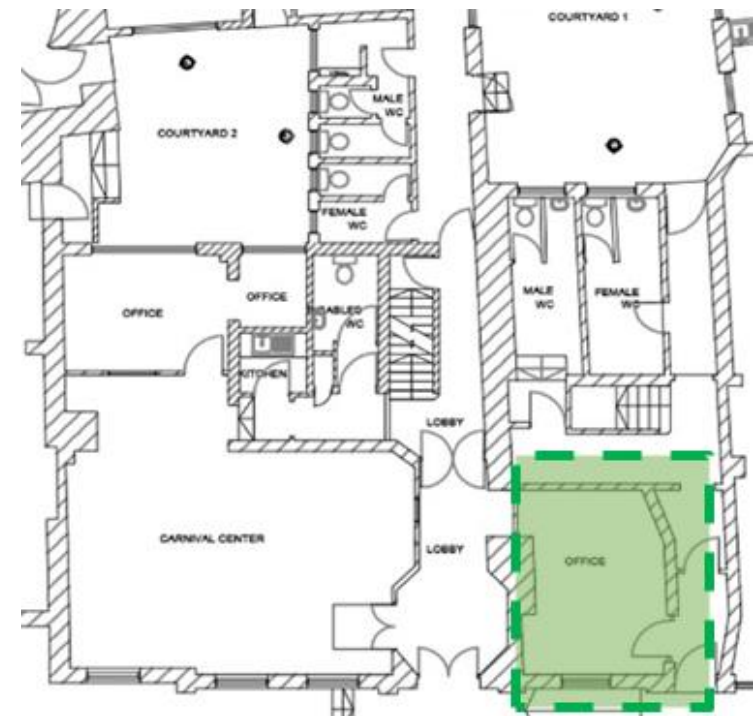
PROPOSED PLAN



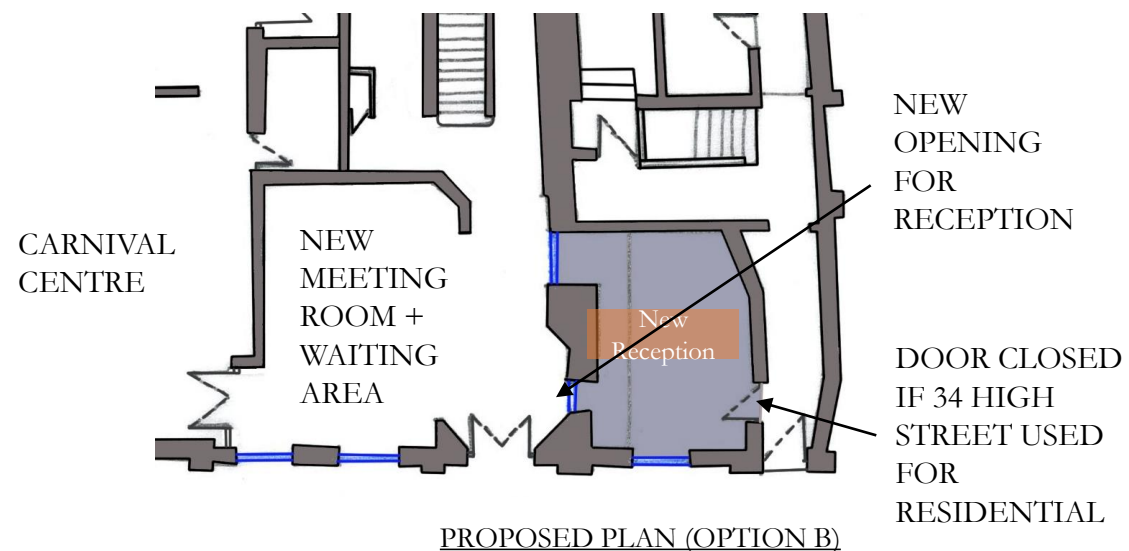
12. New reception in the 34 High Street

2. New reception located in the meeting room in the 18th C section

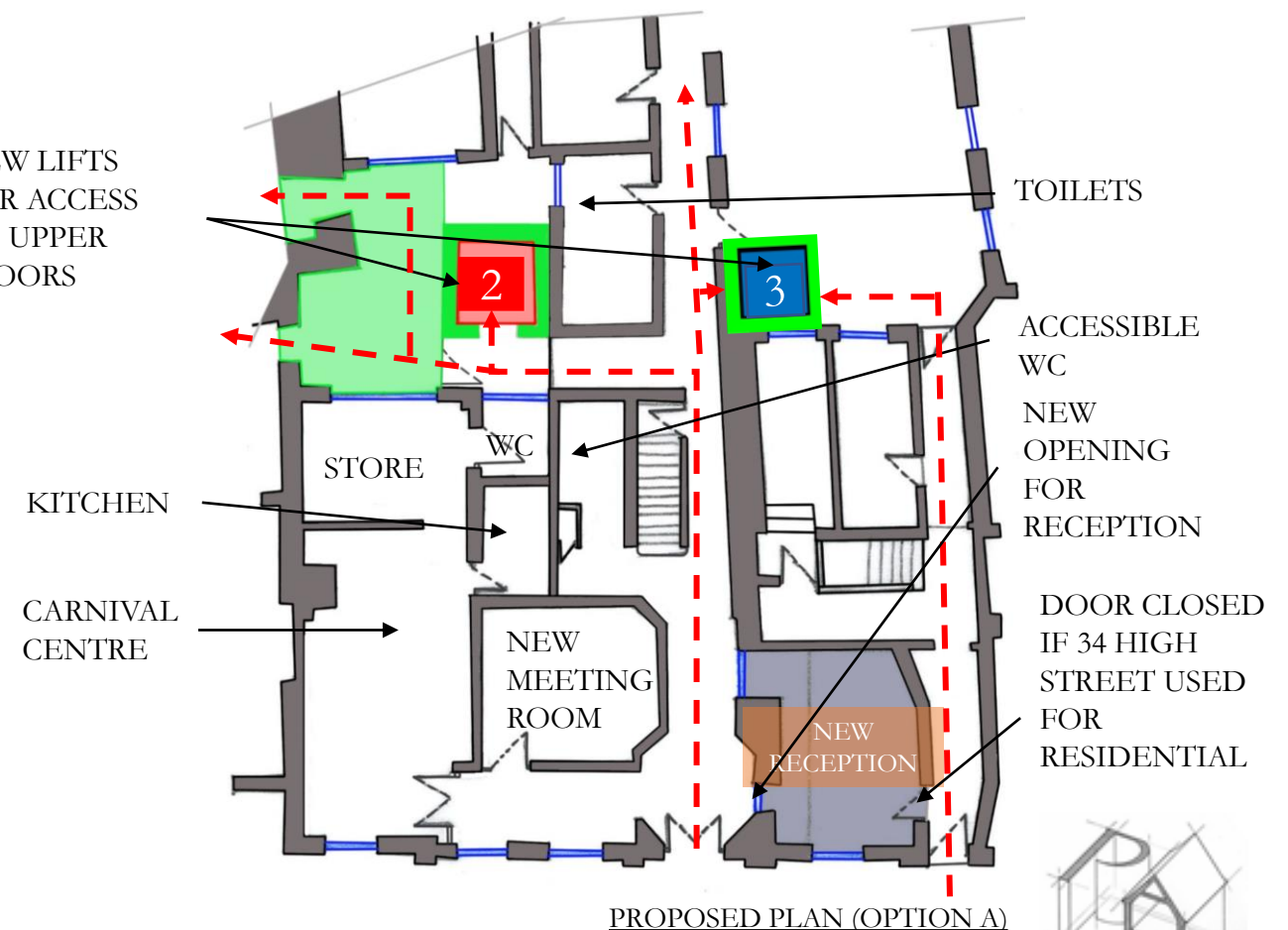
- This position allows the new reception to be located in a position where it can be seen from the High Street.
- The reception is well placed to control access in to the building. The reception desk could be situated in a new opening formed in the wall immediately inside the entrance doors.
- The existing door between the entrance to 34 High Street and the new reception is shown on the plans below but this would need to be closed if 34 High Street was converted to residential use.
- The partition separating the accessible toilet could be removed to allow this to be used by visitors and staff.
- The Carnival Centre could remain as it is currently arranged or it could be reduced in size to allow a waiting/ meeting room to be incorporated. Two options are shown for the arrangement with the Carnival Centre. Option A has a small enclosed meeting room while option B has a larger open space to the entrance.
- The new reception would be set at a lower level than the entrance corridor which might make the interface between visitors and staff awkward.



EXISTING PLAN



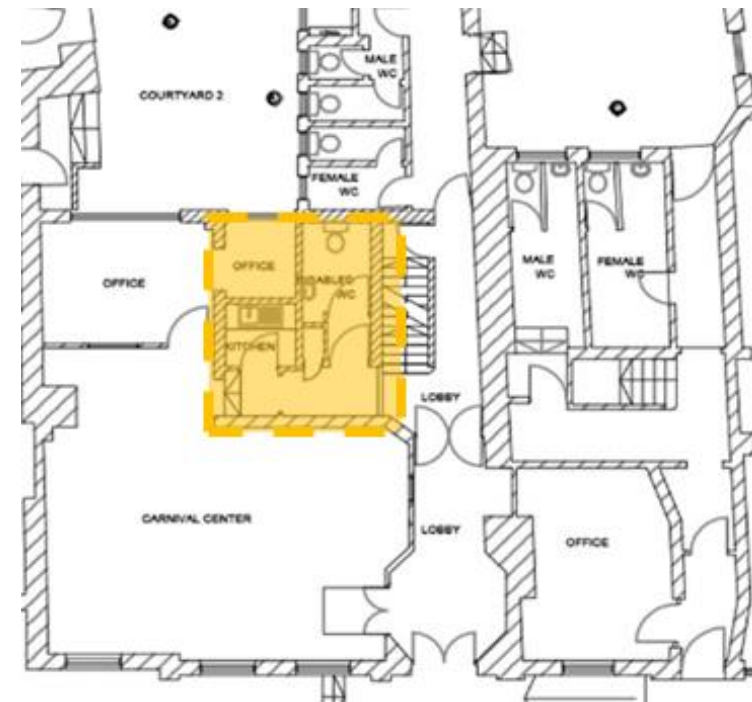
NEW LIFTS
FOR ACCESS
TO UPPER
FLOORS



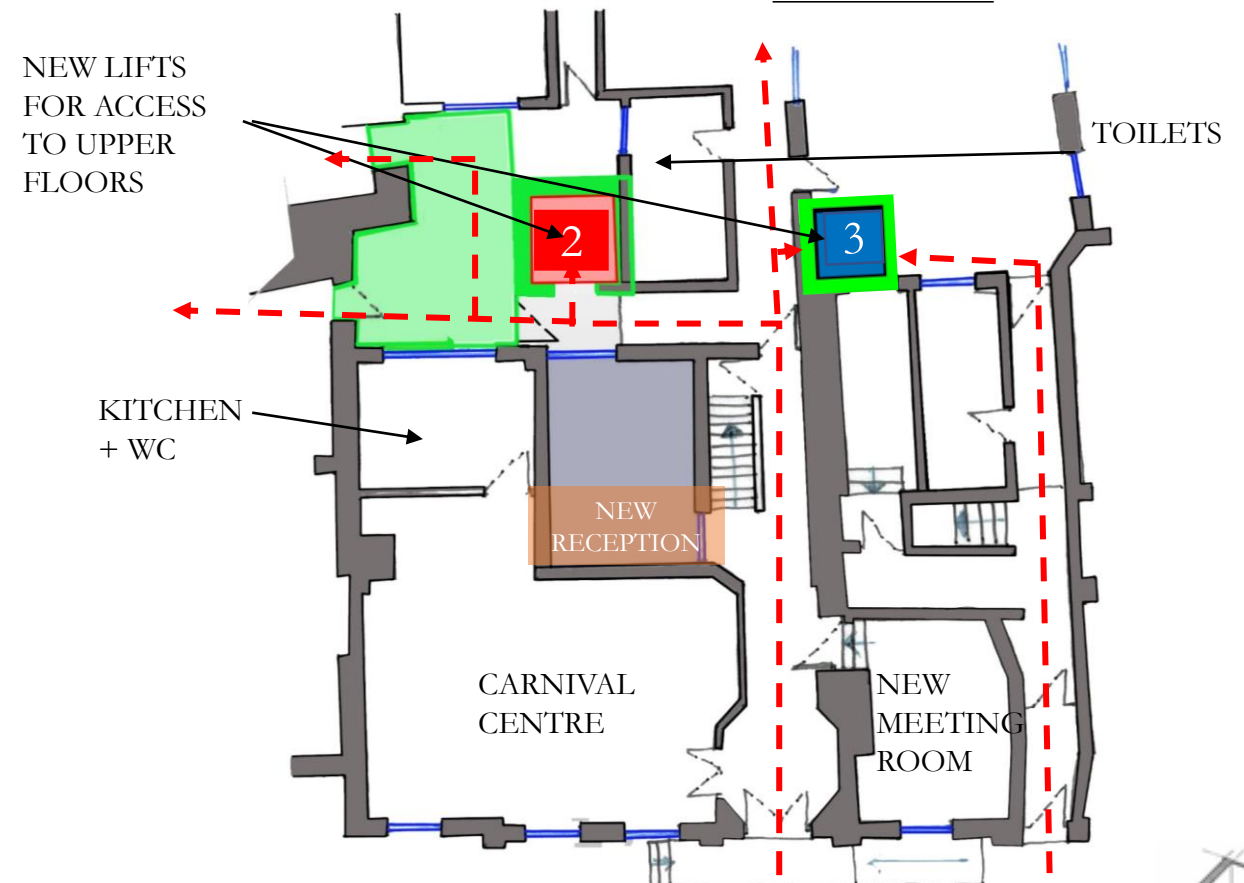
12. New reception in the 1950s section of the building

3. New reception located in the disabled WC and kitchen area used by the Carnival Rooms.

- The new reception is distant from the High Street and therefore has low visibility.
- The new reception is near to the new lift and could control access to it.
- Visitors could bypass the reception and access the upper levels via the main staircase.
- There is no immediate space that could be used by visitors for meeting/ congregating.
- The reception room in the front of 34 High Street or part of the Carnival Centre could be used for meeting but these are distant from the reception area and reached before it.
- The reception area has no natural light.



EXISTING PLAN



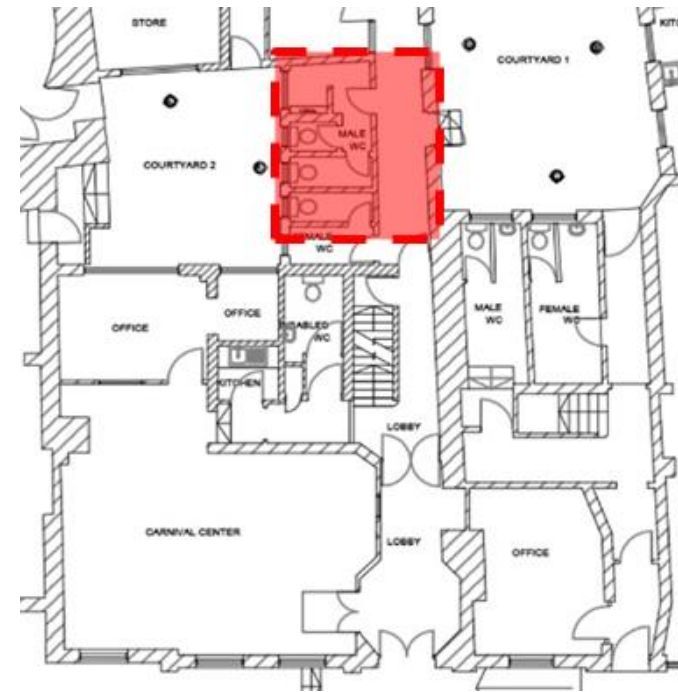
PROPOSED PLAN



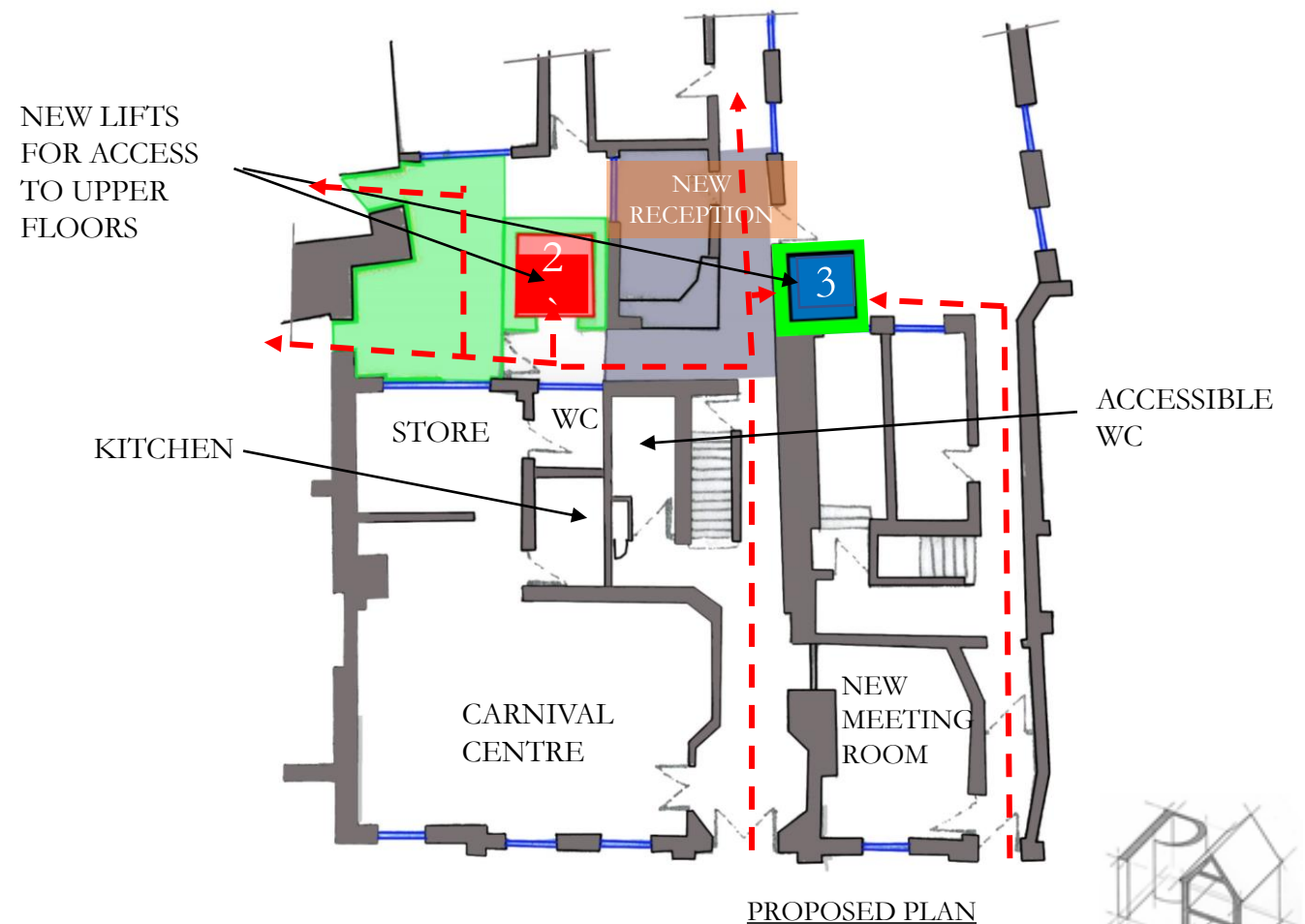
12. New reception in the 1950s section of the building

4. New reception located in the area alongside the proposed new lift location.

- The new reception is distant from the High Street and therefore has low visibility.
- The new reception is near to the new lift and could control access to it.
- Visitors could access the upper levels via the main staircase before reaching the reception.
- There is no immediate space that could be used by visitors for meeting/ congregating.
- The meeting room in the front of 34 High Street or part of the Carnival Centre could be used for meeting but these are distant from the reception area and reached before it.
- Existing toilets would need to be removed to allow the reception space.



EXISTING PLAN



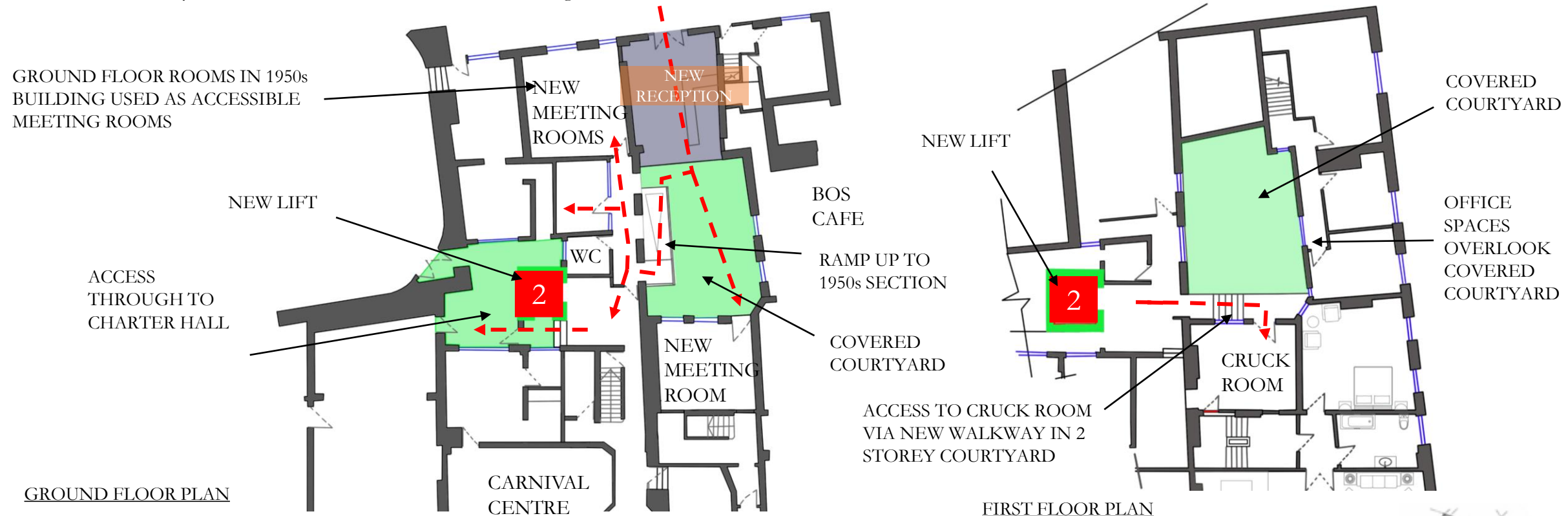
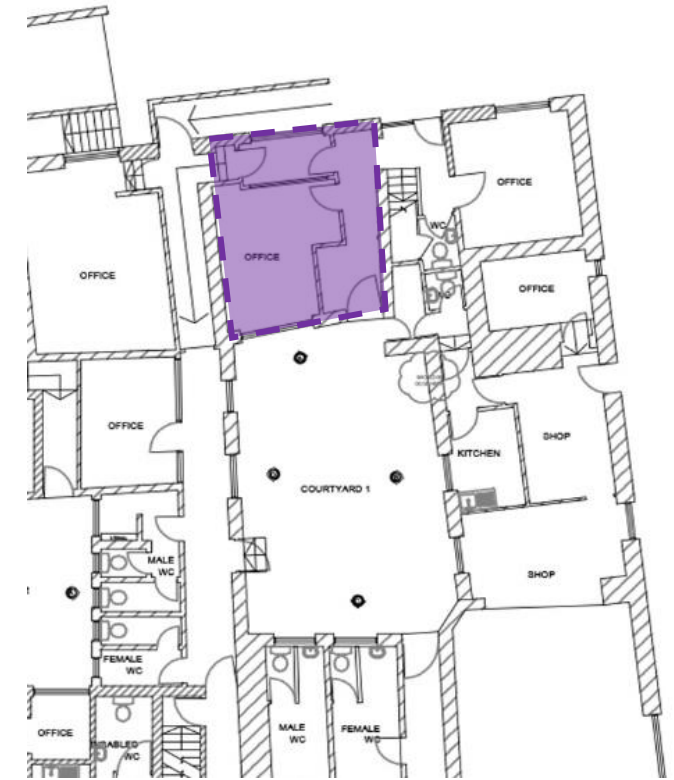
PROPOSED PLAN



12. New reception to the rear of 34 High Street

5. New reception located in the single storey building to the rear of 34 High Street

- The new reception is not on the High Street with access from Mansion House Lane and therefore has low visibility.
- Behind the reception the courtyard to 34 High Street would be covered to create a single or double storey internal space from which meeting rooms and the lift and stairs to upper floors could be accessed.
- The reception could be moved in to the covered courtyard space to give closer control of access in to the lift and other spaces.
- Existing rooms in the ground floor of the 1950s section could be used as meeting rooms with level access from the courtyard via a ramp.
- The toilets below the Cruck Room could be removed and this made in to a single space for use as a meeting room or office that can be entered from the courtyard.
- A new disabled toilet could be introduced by the new lift and meeting rooms in the 1950s section.
- Level access is possible to the lift via a ramp in the covered courtyard.
- Access to the cruck room at first floor could be made from an added platform within the courtyard from the landing outside the lift
- The rooms used by the Carnival Centre at the front of the building are retained.



13. Conclusions and Recommendations

Level Access into the Building and the New Lift for Access to Upper Floors

13.1 The building is already well provided with means of gaining level access in at ground floor from entrance level. Furthermore some small adjustments could be made to improve accessibility to the rear of 34 High Street. Unfortunately within the current arrangements some parts of the building, notably the kitchens at the rear of the 1950s section and the theatre WCs, are difficult to adapt to allow level access.

13.2 Lift access to the upper floors has been proposed in three locations (options 1, 2 and 3). We believe that option 3, located in the courtyard to the rear of 34 High Street, is not a viable approach because it has the potential to cause harm to the listed building (due to its impact on the Cruck Room and the rear of 34 High Street, particularly at the upper floor levels) and because it limits access to a relatively small area of the building compared to the other two options.

13.3 Option 2 provides the most beneficial levels of access to upper floors; giving access to the entire first floor of the Regency Building and the floors of the 1950s section. It also has a relatively low impact on the listed building by being introduced into an area of relatively lower importance where modifications are expected to be more acceptable. It is also centrally located and, in conjunction with the placement of a new reception, has the potential to link the different parts of the building together. Option 2 also allows a currently unoccupied part of the building to be brought back in to use.

13.4 Option 1 provides level access to a number of key areas, including the basement and the second floors of the Regency Building, which cannot be reached by either of the two other options.

13.5 Full access to the building cannot be achieved with just one lift. Given the drawbacks of lift option 3 and the limited area that lift option 1 allows access to we would recommend that lift option 2, when inserted in conjunction with a new public reception, should be considered as the preferred option. However lift option 1 should not be dismissed and could be considered for inclusion as a second lift within the building that might be installed in a subsequent phase of work to improve the existing facilities in the Regency Building.

New Reception

13.6 Two options (A and B) for a new reception in the west end of the building are discussed in this report. Option B presents an approach that might be taken if this was the only reception in the building (for public access and staff access to Town Council offices) and is therefore much larger than option A. However it is not sufficiently large to be both the public reception and the staff access point and therefore the smaller staff access reception option A in conjunction with a larger reception elsewhere in the building is the preferred approach.

13.7 Five options (1 to 5 inclusive) are considered for the location of the reception elsewhere in the building. One of the main criteria for the new reception is that it has good visibility from outside the building; options 3 and 4 locate the new reception areas within the plan of the building and it is felt that these two approaches would not be successful in creating the required presence. Both are also rather limited in space which would restrict their ability to offer the services that are wanted.

13.8 As well as being visible from the street it is also felt that it is essential that the reception is visible from and accessed from the High Street both for the benefit of the reception itself but also for the need to maintain activity and footfall on the High Street. Option 5 provides the most opportunity for re-use of the spaces around the rear courtyard of 34 High Street but has its entrance from the rear of the building and is therefore not a recommended approach.

13.9 Options 1 and 2 are both entered from the High Street and are visible from the High Street. They both require some reorganisation of the space currently occupied by the Carnival Centre but they both provide the required key spaces for a reception, separate meeting room and disabled WC as well as a secure entry point to the rear of the building and the proposed lift lobby. We feel that either of these two options in conjunction with the new lift option 2 could be successfully implemented for the new reception.

