

ROYAL MAIL HOUSE, TERMINUS TERRACE, SOUTHAMPTON

Heritage Statement



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TERMINUS TERRACE,
SOUTHAMPTON**

Heritage Statement

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ROYAL MAIL HOUSE, TERMINUS TERRACE, SOUTHAMPTON

Heritage Statement

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Royal Mail House (RMH) is an historic building on the west side of Terminus Terrace, Southampton, with its north elevation facing onto Oxford Street and its south elevation looking over Queen's Park (NGR SU4255311100). The owner of the building is seeking consent to convert the southern ground floor unit from an office to a coffee shop. The plans for the conversion are being prepared by MDH Architectural Services.
- 1.2 Forum Heritage Services has been commissioned to develop the understanding of the building and thus to identify its significance and prepare a Heritage Statement as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Heritage Statement then sets out the proposed changes and the potential impact of those changes on the significance of the building.
- 1.3 This Heritage Statement is based on an external and internal inspection of the building undertaken in August 2016 with an additional visit in April 2020 by Bob Edwards BSc PG Dip IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services, who prepared this report. In line with the NPPF, this report does not describe the whole of the interior of the building as there are no proposals for the upper floors other than the replacement of two windows to the south elevation at second floor level. However, as part of an initial assessment of the building, all parts of the building have been examined to allow an understanding of the significance of the building as a whole.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A map of Southampton dated 1802 shows that at that date the developed area of Southampton remained largely within the medieval walled town apart from developments along Above Bar Street to the north of the walled area and to the north-east where a grid plan of streets was beginning to develop, particularly to the south of the continuation of East Street beyond the city wall (Figure 1). The area of Oxford Street was predominantly an area of small paddocks and fields bounded to the east by an area called The Marsh which was unenclosed.



Figure 1 Southampton 1802 with the approximate area of the site circled.

- 2.2 The next detailed map of the area is the Engineer's Map of 1846 which captures the area of Oxford Street in the process of its development (Figure 2). The map shows the South Western Railway Terminus with its booking office building and a platform building, the main station being set almost directly opposite the junction between Oxford Street and Terminus Terrace. The south eastern end of Oxford Street was largely built-up at this date although there were three gaps in the street frontage between Terminus Terrace and Latimer Street and a large gable between John Street and Latimer Street to the north side of the street.
- 2.3 The block of properties defined Oxford Street to the north, Latimer Street to the west, Terminus Terrace to the east and Queen's Park (then known as Porter's Mead) had a near complete frontage facing south with a continuous frontage from Latimer Street up to a wide gap giving access to the rear of the buildings facing Terminus Terrace. Within Queen's Terrace there were two hotels within double-fronted buildings, the eastern hotel having its side elevation facing onto the yard area behind the buildings to the Terminus Terrace frontage.
- 2.4 Facing onto Terminus Terrace was a building which is generally been regarded as representing Radley's Hotel. However, the 1846 map only marks the southern part of this block as being a hotel. Separating the southern and northern parts of the building facing Terminus Terrace was a carriage arch and there was a further carriage arch slightly narrower than that to the Terminus Terrace frontage, between two small units facing onto Oxford Street.
- 2.5 In addition to the presence of the carriage arches, other notable features of the two parts of RMH facing Terminus Terrace is the fact that they were of differing depths; the northern block being slightly wider than the main range of the southern block which had additional elements a Terminus Terrace ached to its rear elevation. Additionally, to the centre of the

east elevation of the southern block the map shows what appears to be an entrance with a porch supported by two columns. This map raises questions as to whether, in 1846 the Radley Hotel occupied the whole of the Terminus Terrace frontage.



Figure 2 Engineer's map of Southampton, 1846

- 2.6 The Engineer's map of 1846 shows Southampton at a point when its role as a major port for passenger shipping began to grow with the development of large new dock facilities just south of the railway terminus, the increasing number of passengers departing and arriving requiring hotel accommodation nearby. The Radley Hotel, together with Railway Hotel on the north side of Oxford Street at the junction with Terminus Terrace were two best-placed hotels to serve travellers passing through the port. A mid-19th century Kelly's Directory shows that along Queen's Terrace, in addition to the hotels, most of the other houses were utilised as letting apartments reflecting the highly transitional nature of the residents of this area of the city. By the later 19th century the nearby hotels were joined by the considerably larger South Western Hotel built on the corner between Terminus Terrace and Canute Road. Many of the buildings along Queen's Terrace had been converted to office use including the offices of the Consuls of the United States of America and Panama and, within the former Radley's Hotel, the Consul of Uruguay.
- 2.7 A late 19th century lithograph view south to Radley's Hotel shows that the main entrance had moved to the present position at this date but the carriage arch on the Oxford Street frontage was still open (Figure 3). The drawing appears to show dormer windows on the north roof slope of the Oxford Street range but not on the east slope of the Terminus Terrace range. Although care must be taken with the interpretation of illustrations such as this lithograph, it does seem to suggest that there was no break in the line of the roof over the Terminus Terrace range as now exists.



Figure 3 Lithograph of Radley's Hotel looking south along Terminus Terrace. Late 19th century.

- 2.8 The series of historic Ordnance Survey maps shows that by 1881 the two carriage arches had been infilled and the projecting porch on the Terminus Terrace elevation had been constructed in the area of the former carriage arch (Figure 4). To the rear elevation of the main range facing Terminus Terrace there was a minor alteration from the arrangement shown in 1846 and little apparent change to the rear of the Oxford Street range. More substantial change to the rear occurred in the period 1881 to 1897 with much of the area between the two ranges infilled leaving a narrow lightwell (Figure 5). By 1909 the only significant change to the rear was the addition of a glazed structure, possibly just a covered walkway between the main building and the west boundary (Figure 6).
- 2.9 A late 19th century postcard shows Radley's Hotel as viewed from the south-east (Figure 7). This picture, the earliest photograph currently available of the building, shows the southern and eastern façades largely as at present except for the pediment to the projecting entrance bay on the east elevation. The photograph shows that there was a porch of a similar form to the present, but with a semi-circular headed openings to the sides.
- 2.10 The south elevation was evidently rendered at this time as today and has been subject to little change apart from the loss of the console brackets beneath the hoods to the first-floor windows, the removal of shutters to the windows and an alteration in to the lower part of the first-floor windows. Additionally, there were two small rooflights to the hipped end and the roof. The most striking difference between the building in the late 19th century and the building seen today is the roof which was then dominated by large stacks; 4 to the east roof slope each carrying eight chimney pots with lateral stacks set to the west side, each having four flues. Only the northern part of the range had flat topped dormer windows at this date, three of which survive. There is no evidence in this late 19th century photograph for the apparent former entrance in the central bay of the five bay southern part of the building as suggested on the 1846 plan. A photo of c.1900 taken from a roof behind South Western House shows the northern part of the Terminus Terrace range with the flat-topped ridge of the roof of this part of the building (Figure 8).

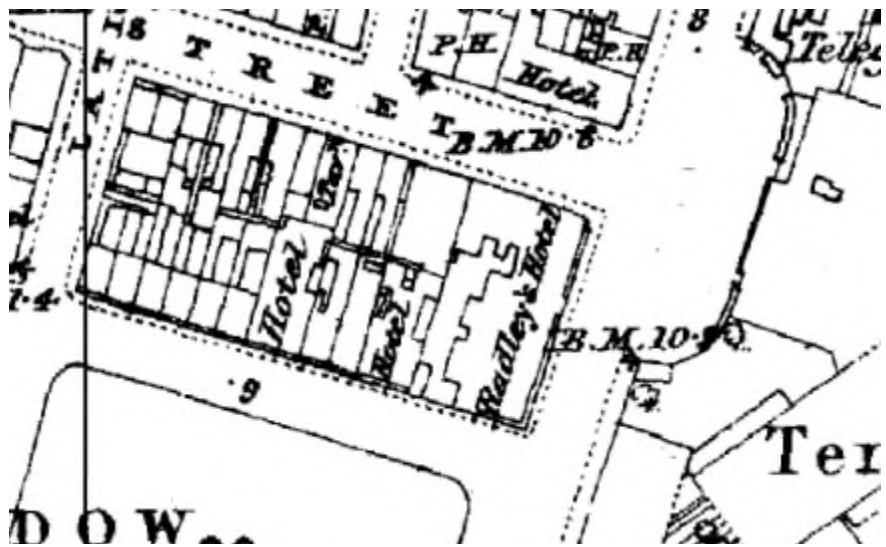


Figure 4 1st Ed 25" Ordnance Survey 1881.

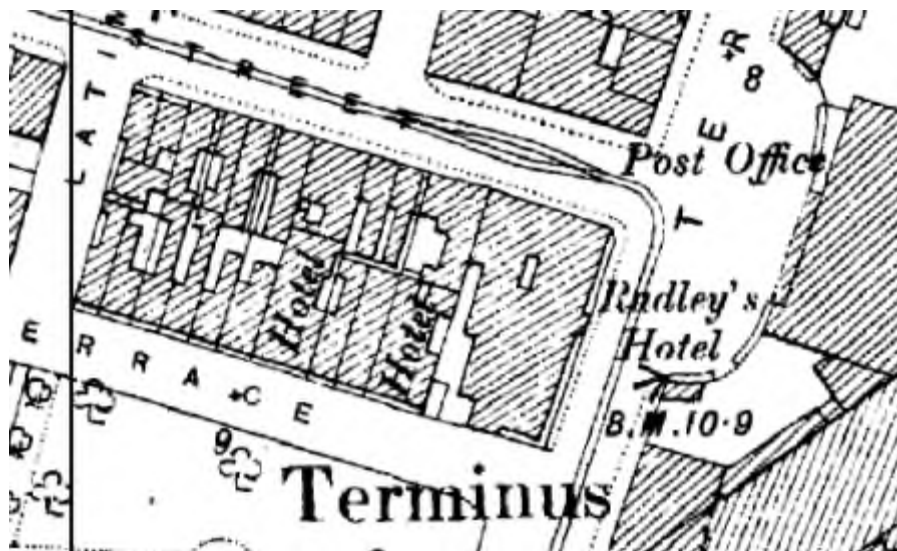


Figure 5 2nd Ed. 25" Ordnance Survey 1897

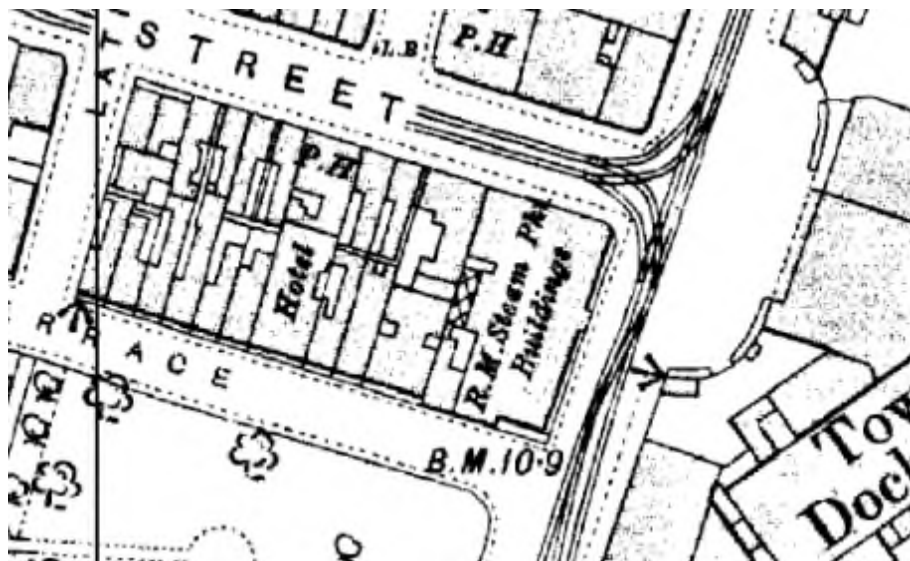


Figure 6 25" Ordnance Survey 1909 edition



Figure 7 1890s postcard of Radley's Hotel



Figure 8 View c.1900 to the north part of Royal Mail House from the roof of a building behind South Western House.

2.11

In 1907 Radley's Hotel was sold to the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. Plans relating to the conversion of the hotel to the offices of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company show that the ground floor of the whole of the range facing Terminus Terrace was opened out to form two large spaces interconnected by the entrance hall within the former carriage arch, with its pairs of columns inserted at that date to either side and the principal staircase to the west opposite the entrance (Figure 9). It is evident from the presence of stairs and structures to the rear of the building that the carriage arch had been infilled before 1907. The only part of the ground floor within the main range that retained any enclosure was the section at the

west end of the range facing onto Oxford Street but the wall defining the west side of the former carriage arch had already been removed at this date.

- 2.12 Given that the principal stairs in the main entrance hall must be a later insertion, it is likely that there were at least two main stairs serving the northern and southern parts of the Terminus Terrace range prior to the infilling of the carriage arch to form the present entrance. By 1907 any evidence for the location of these stairs at ground floor level had been erased completely. As part of the conversion works in 1907 a new service stair was added near the south end of the Terminus Terrace range where a new wall was inserted to subdivide a room at ground floor level and carried up to three storeys in height.
- 2.13 Within the area of the courtyard behind the south part of the Terminus Terrace range was a room identified in 1897 as the kitchen and scullery and which has possibly been the hotel kitchen, together with the various larders, pantries and stores required. This part of the building was subjected to the removal of some walls and the insertion of new walls altering the arrangement of spaces in 1907. This is likely to have represented a reorganisation of the hotel kitchen and store areas. A single storey element at the south end of the range was raised to two storeys and a service stair added and a secure store with extra-thick walls was also built adjacent to the south boundary of the yard, utilising elements of an existing structure.
- 2.14 With regard to the principal elevations, the main alterations were the insertion of the two large ground floor windows in the east elevation and the addition of the pediment to the projecting entrance bay. The porch appears to have been altered if not rebuilt.
- 2.15 At first-floor level there were minimal alterations to the building in 1907, the main impact being the addition of the service stair against the rear elevation of the south part of the Terminus Terrace range (Figure 10). No alterations relating to the principal stairs are apparent at this level. There are some, presumably later, pencil markings on this plan which suggests the removal and re-siting of certain walls, particularly in the north part of the Terminus Terrace element.
- 2.16 At second floor level there were only minor alterations at the south end of the Terminus Terrace range with the addition of the service stair and a staircase giving access to the servants' quarters at third floor level (Figure 11). It seems that there were no alterations made to the third floor in 1907, or at least none that required Building Control approval or notification.
- 2.17 There are various photographs of the building in the mid-20th century showing that had been limited changes to the exterior of the building between 1907 and the 1940s (Figure 12). One of the most evident changes was the addition of dormers to the roof of the southern part of the Terminus Terrace range. By the 1940s the Midland Bank occupied the room at the southern end of the building; the door into this office in the east elevation and the partition dividing it off from the larger space to the north evidently having been inserted between 1907 and 1941.

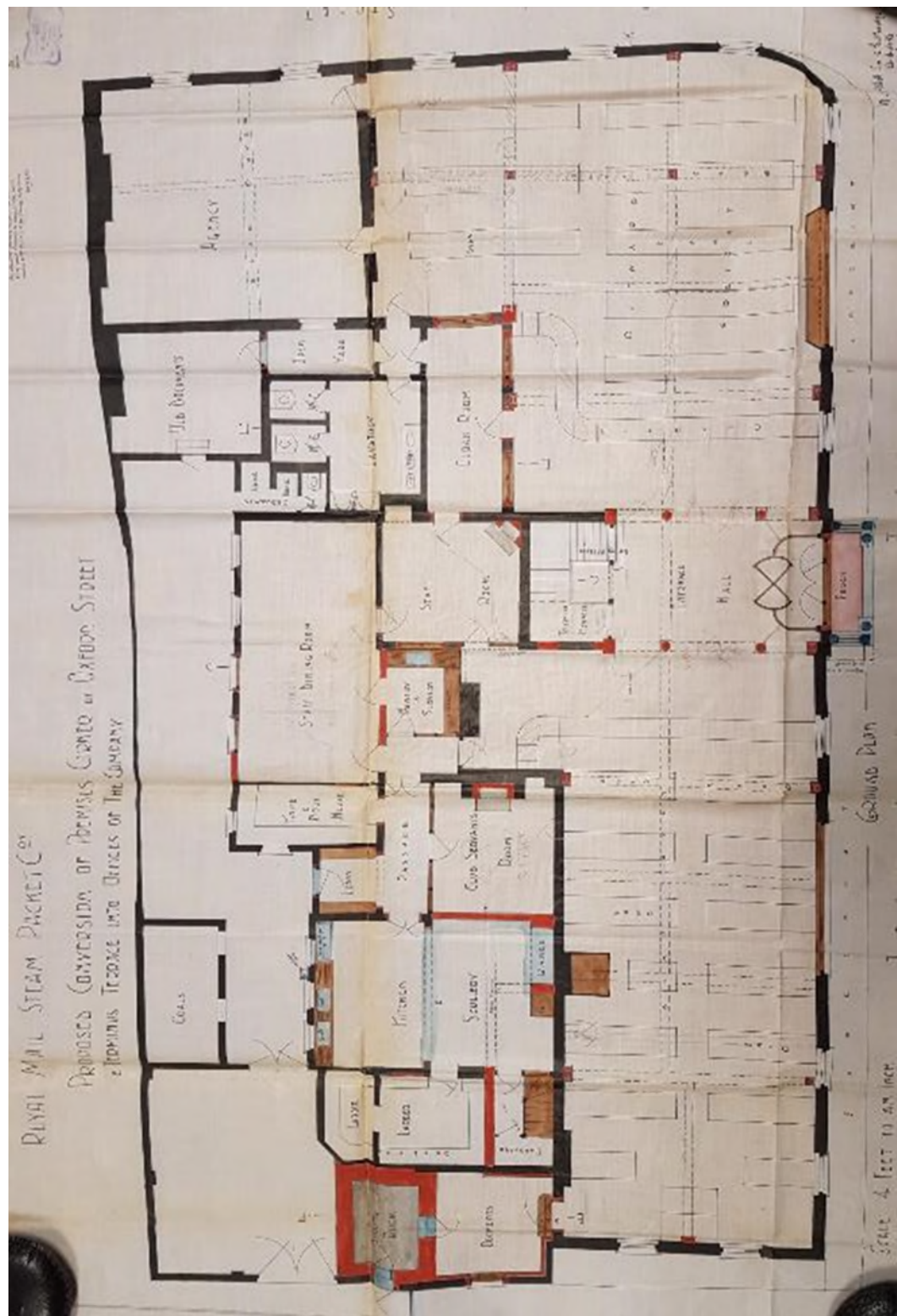


Figure 9 1907 Ground floor plan

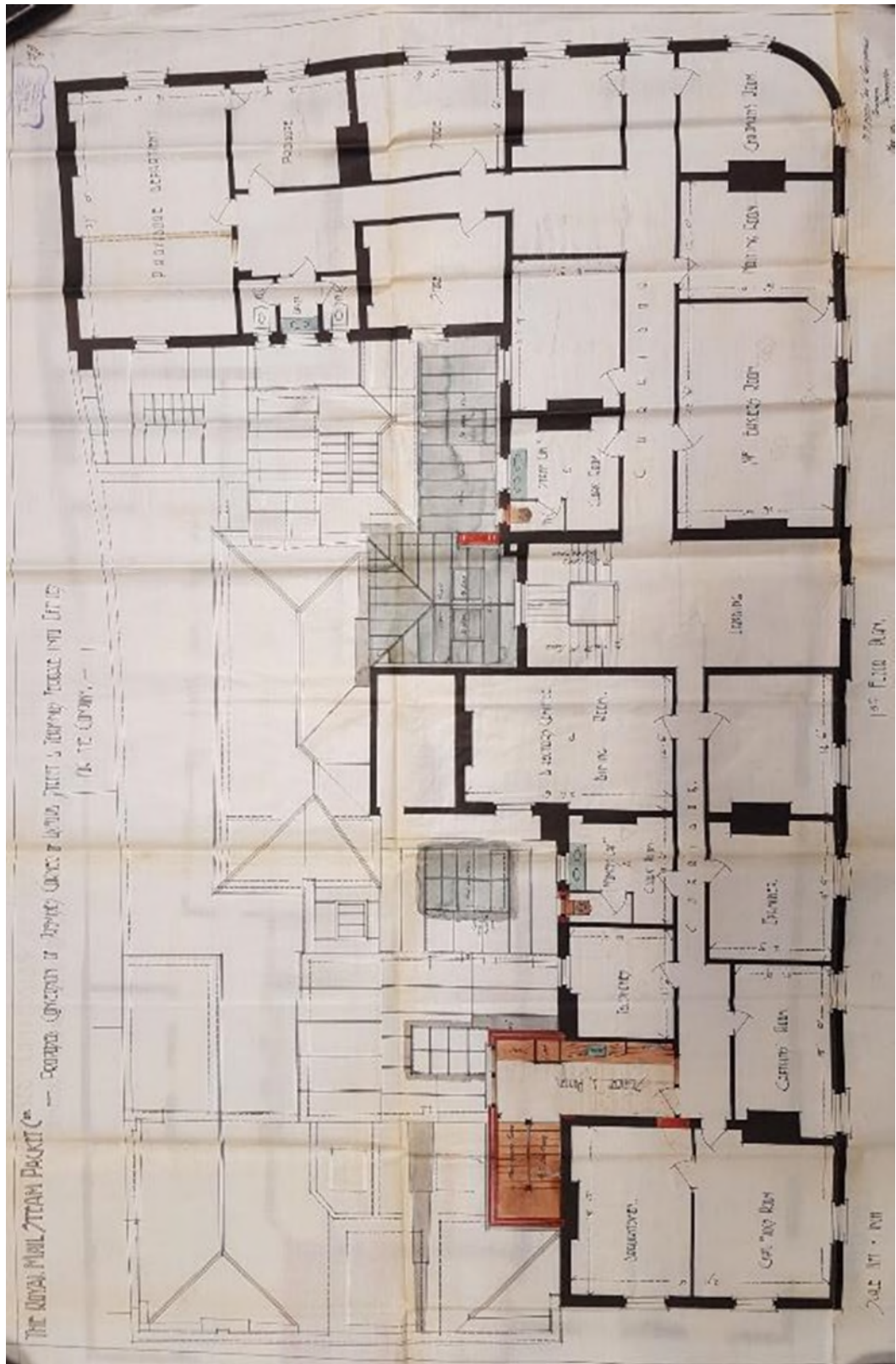


Figure 10 1907 First floor plan

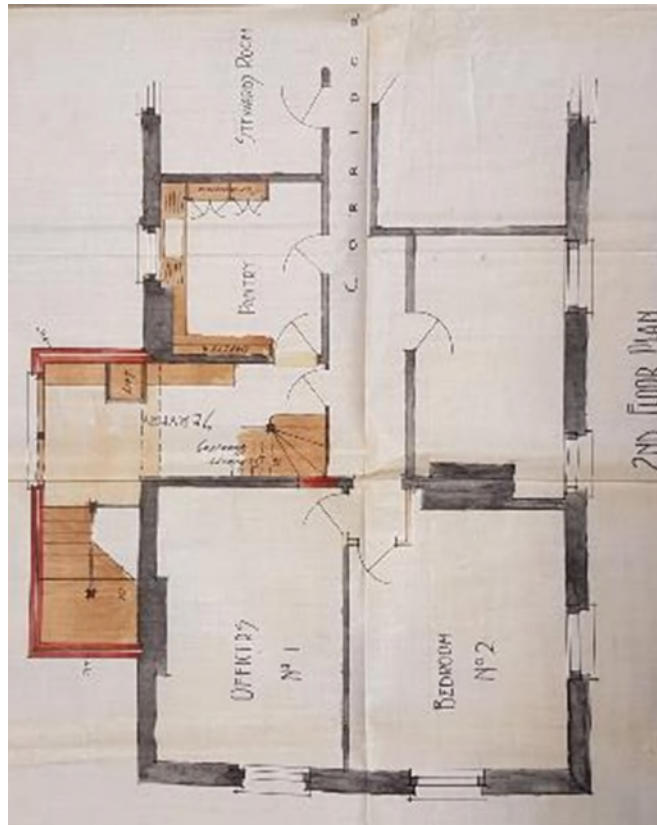


Figure 11 1907 Second floor plan, south part of east range only



Figure 12 Postcard of the Royal Mail Lines offices c.1940-50, south and east elevations.

2.18

Royal Mail House was added to the *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest* at Grade II in 1981. The building is described as:

Mid C19. Three storeys and attics red brick with grooved and stuccoed ground floor. Hipped slate roof with 6 dormers. Stuccoed cornice, long and short quoins and bands between floors. Ten windows in all, the sixth bay projecting slightly and having pediment above and porch to ground floor. Sash windows in moulded architraves, having cornices and brackets to first floor windows.

3.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Exterior

- 3.1 The principal elevation of Royal Mail House faces onto Terminus Terrace, formerly facing onto the railway terminus opposite which brought travellers down to the port from 1839-40. The building is of 3½ storeys in height and 10 bays in length defined by large six-pane casements to the first-floor with stucco architraves and hoods with scroll console brackets (Figure 13). At second floor level are smaller two-light casements, those to the southern façade being of three panes per light. The rhythm of the bays at ground floor level has been disrupted on the Terminus Terrace frontage by the insertion of two large windows in 1907, each of which replaced two windows. The first and second storeys are constructed in a red brick laid in Flemish bond with rusticated stucco to the ground floor. The sixth bay from the south, now having the main entrance, projects slightly from the facade, it's first-floor window having a pediment rather than a hood over and with a pediment projecting from the roof with a lunette window and brackets to the verge of the roof. The roof to this elevation is in two sections, the change occurring on the south side of the entrance bay; to the north the roof is gabled and of a steeper pitch than the fully hipped roof to the south (Figure 14 and also see Figure 8). A simple railing of one horizontal rail runs along the elevation both sides of the porch. At the corners and to the edges of the projecting bay are rusticated stucco quoins. The north-east corner of the building at the junction between Terminus Terrace and Oxford Street sweeps round in a curve and is blind. The frame of a former advertising panel has preserved an area of historic pointing to the brickwork which has otherwise largely been lost across the rest of the brickwork. The north elevation generally matches that of the east with an inserted door in the position of the second window from the east and a door in the western-most bay. However, the regularity of the bays, as defined by the windows is disrupted in the second bay from the west where the spaces between the windows is greater than in the other bays and the first floor window has a pediment over rather than hoods, as on the Terminus Terrace range. In this bay at ground floor level fine, vertical cracks are visible in the stucco either side of the window which reflect the presence of the former carriage arch on the north range.



Figure 13 East elevation of the Royal Mail House.



Figure 14 The roofs of the Terminus Terrace range of Royal Mail House showing the change in roof form.

- 3.2 The south elevation is of two bays width, the brickwork covered with stucco the full height of the building (Figure 15). The roof is hipped to this end. The railing to the front elevation continues to this side of the building. Close examination of the railing shows that from the opening to the door into the southern unit, most of the rails are later replacements fixed by brackets to the posts rather than being set into sockets in the posts. Only the section of the rail at the west end of the railing is fixed directly into the posts.



Figure 15
South elevation of the main range.

- 3.3 The rear, south-facing elevation of the range facing Oxford Street has brickwork laid in Flemish bond to the ground floor with slate hanging to the remainder of the elevation topped by a moulded stucco cornice. The section of wall to the ground floor has been subject to a number of interventions. Possibly the most significant feature of this section of the elevation is the large segmental arch to a former opening was approximately 3 – 4 m wide which has now been infilled with brickwork with a window to the centre. This archway would accord to the carriage arch shown on the 1846 plan of Southampton (Figure 16). To the left of this is an area of rebuilt brickwork and an inserted window having six panes to the top light and a single pane to the lower light. To the west of this window is an original window opening but

with the same form of window and the shallow segmental brick arch. A steel staircase and walkway gives access to a fire escape at first-floor level to the west part of the elevation.



Figure 16 Rear elevation of the Oxford Street range showing the blocked carriage arch opening to the right with a two-pane sash window inserted.

- 3.4 The rear elevation of the Terminus Terrace range now presents a complex assemblage of alterations and additions. The stucco cornice continues along the north section of this elevation from the north, Oxford Street range. The wall is of red brick laid in Flemish bond with six-over-six sash windows to the first floor level and slightly smaller six-over-six sashes at second floor level. These window openings are original, having queen closers to both sides. At first-floor level there is also a one-over-one sash with horns which is clearly a later addition serving a WC. The ground floor elevation of the main range is concealed by flat-roofed single storey addition. This section of the rear wall of the main range extends forward compared to the section of wall to the south which forms the west wall of the present stair compartment. The brickwork of this section of wall is also laid in Flemish bond and has large tri-partite sashes to the half-landings between each floor level. The lower window is partly concealed by the single storey addition at ground floor level and sloping glazing covering the light well adjacent to the window.
- 3.5 To the south of the stair compartment is a complex projecting element; rendered at lower level, with brick to the first floor and slate hanging to the second floor which is jettied to the north side. This element is flat-roofed but above, at third floor level is a block that projects from the line of the stair compartment elevation and has the same stucco cornice as the wall to the north of the stair compartment and a shallow hipped slate roof over. (Figure 17).



Figure 17 Rear elevation of the Terminus Terrace range, central part.

3.6

To the south of this projecting element is the slightly narrower part of the Terminus Terrace range along which the stucco cornice continues. The original brickwork of the building is visible between the slate hung projection and the service stair extension added in 1907. This brickwork is notably constructed in a different brick to the northern section described in 4.3, the brick being a duller, darker red colour which laid in an irregular Flemish bond in which two headers together between stretchers are used intermittently (Figure 18). At ground floor level there are flat-roofed, single storey elements with rendered elevations.



Figure 18 Rear elevation of the southern part of the Terminus Terrace range. The projecting brick element with the double sash windows is the 1907 service stair addition. The recessed brickwork to the left is the original rear elevation of the wider southern part of the building.

Interior

- 3.7 The 1907 alterations to convert the building to office use erased almost entirely the plan of the building from its previous hotel use; only one original internal wall now survives – the west wall to the north of the restaurant area occupying the northern part of the ground floor which had once formed the east wall of the Oxford Street carriage arch.
- 3.8 Since 1907 some limited sub-division of the ground floor has been implemented with infilling between the columns either side of the entrance hall and the creation of a separate unit to the south end of the building accessed by a new external door in the east elevation, this room being the subject of this report.
- 3.9 This southern room is accessed by a door in the east elevation, has one window to the east and two to the south. There is what appears to be a chimney breast on the west wall but the fireplace is blocked. The room has dark brown stained panelling to dado level, above which are large panels formed by applied bolection mouldings (Figures 19 - 21). Internal doors give access to the room to the north and a small store to the west.
- 3.10 The ceiling of the room is divided unequally by the same form of downstands as seen throughout the ground floor, having cornices with egg and dart mouldings and panels to the soffits of the beams. The partition wall to the north of this room is not set on the line of the transverse downstand but is a little further to the north creating a rather awkward, irregular arrangement to the ceiling across the northern part of the room (Figure 22). The transverse downstand is supported by a structural column set awkwardly in front of the window in the east elevation which was added in 1907 – this position being dictated by the need to support the chimney stack at first floor and above.
- 3.11 To the west of this room is a small store within a single-storey addition. This room has no features other than a former safe door in the west wall (Figure 23). The roof of this element has recently been replaced after collapsing and the internal wall surfaces are modern.



Figure 19 The southern room of the main range, facing north-west.



Figure 20 The southern room of the main range, facing south-west.



Figure 21
Detail of the panelling to
dada level and below the
windows.



Figure 22 Detail of the downstands to the ceiling over the northern part of the southern room.



Figure 23
Former safe door within the
small room to the rear of
the southern room.

4.0 SUMMARY ANALYSIS

4.1 Whilst the principal elevations facing Terminus Terrace and Oxford Street read as a building of a single phase of construction, there is evidence from the existing fabric that throws some doubt over the development of the construction of the building:

- The different form of roof construction over the southern five bays of the building;
- The different brick types used to the rear elevation for the walls to the north and south of the stair compartment;
- The slightly narrower width of the southern five bays and the entrance hall/stairs bay;
- The marked contrast in the width of the corridors at 1st – 3rd floor level.

4.2 In addition to these significant variations in construction, it is clear that the building has been subject to considerable levels of change from the mid-19th century. The Engineers' map of 1846 shows that there were two carriage arches, the Oxford Street arch being visible on the rear wall whilst the arch in the bay that now forms the principal entrance has left no trace. The 1846 plan seems to indicate that the original entrance to the southern five bays at least was in the third bay from the south – central to the five bay building as defined by the hipped roof over this part of the building but there is no physical trace of this doorway. The re-location of the entrance to Radley's Hotel to the former carriage arch on the Terminus Terrace range evidently resulted in the insertion of a principal staircase between ground and first floor level at least and, presumably, the loss of some of the earlier staircases. It is likely that the wider sections of the corridors at 1st floor and above indicate the locations of staircases. A further new opening was created in the 20th century with the creation of a doorway to the southern bay of the range when this became a separate office unit.

4.3 It is not possible at present to be certain that the arrangement of rooms at first and second floor broadly represents the original layout of the hotel rooms from the earliest phase of the building or whether, for example, the rooms at the south end of the building represented hotel suites that had a separate access – it would be expected that the best rooms in the

hotel would be better served than by the architecturally unresolved access from the principal landing and the dark, narrow corridors in the southern part of the building.

- 4.4 Early images of the building do not show any dormers on the roof but by the late 19th century it is evident that there were rooms in the roof space of the northern part of the building. The presence of hearth stones in at least some rooms suggest that there were rooms in the roof spaces from a relatively early date, if not from its original construction. That there was possibly rooms in the southern part by the late 19th century at least is suggested by the presence of roof lights in the hipped end to the south (see Figure 7). By the 1940s dormers had been added to the southern part of the roof as well.
- 4.5 Evidently the 1907 conversion of the hotel to the offices of the RMSP Co. had a major impact on the ground floor, resulting in the almost total clearance of all internal walls and probably even the stacks that would have heated the rooms at this level. The creation of an office space to the south, used as a bank in the mid-20th century required the insertion of a partition wall to which the same decorative mouldings as used elsewhere on the ground floor were applied. The conversion appears to have had relatively limited impact to the upper floors with only minor alterations being identified at first and second floor levels and none at third floor level. Other than some limited insertion of partitions and doors, the upper floors have seen little alteration since the 19th century.
- 4.6 To the rear of the building there has been substantial alteration and most of the service elements of the hotel have been lost or altered.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach to the management of historic buildings and areas and requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses under Section 66 – a matter the Courts have held should be afforded considerable importance and weight. Section 72, relating to Conservation Areas requires that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’.
- 5.2 The statutory approach is reflected in Policy CS14 of the Southampton City Amended Core Strategy and Policy HE3 of the Local Plan Review.
- 5.3 Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF says when considering the impact of development on the significance of a listed building, great weight should be given to its conservation whilst para. 190 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 5.4 Historic England’s *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2* (March 2015) states that understanding the nature of significance is important for understanding the need for and best means of conservation. Understanding the extent of that significance leads to a better understanding of how adaptable a heritage asset may be and provides the essential guide

as to how policies should be applied. The following descriptive appraisal will evaluate the building against Historic England's criteria for heritage values set out in *Statements of Heritage Significance Assessing Significance in Heritage Assets* (Historic England Advice Note 12, 2019):

Archaeological interest

There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Architectural and artistic interest

These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can rise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has involved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and the creation of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.

Historic interest

An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

The grading of values is considered using three categories: low, medium and high.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designations

- 6.1 Royal Mail House is a Grade II listed building and as such, it has been selected as a building of significance in a national context.
- 6.2 The building is an important feature of the Oxford Street Conservation Area, itself a designated heritage asset.

Assessment of Significance

Archaeological interest

- 6.3 Royal Mail House is a mid-19th century building (or buildings) that have been subject to a significant level of alteration at ground floor level at least. The fabric of the building will retain some evidence for these changes, for example, the former carriage arch to the rear of the Oxford Street elevation and other lost features such as the position of original stairs from the ground floor are likely to be identifiable within the floor structures. However, the importance of these features in archaeological terms is no more than medium; whilst of interest to the telling of the story of the development of the building, the identification of such features is unlikely to add to the significance of the building in a national context.

Architectural and artistic interest

- 6.4 Royal Mail House is a large and dominant building on Terminus Terrace but it has a rather restrained architectural character, particularly in comparison to South Western House built as a hotel opposite which is a quite flamboyant French Renaissance style building. The replacement of slate for concrete tiles and the insertion of the dormers, although undertaken historically, detract from the appearance of the building. However, the building does make a positive contribution to the character of the Oxford Street Conservation Area and, with little *obvious* alteration to the exterior elevations (despite the fact that there has actually been considerable change to the ground floor elevations), it is considered that it has a medium to high aesthetic value.
- 6.5 Internally the architectural decoration that was added in 1907 when the ground floor plan was completely altered to form the office of the RMS Co. is of relatively good quality (although with some awkwardness given the need for a structural post directly in front of the window within the southern room) but has been compromised by the insertion of the infill between the columns forming the entrance hall and the insertion of the small enclosure beneath the principal staircase. At ground-floor level the aesthetic value is no more than medium. At first and second floor level the aesthetic value of the southern part of the building is higher than for the rooms to the north, especially for the best rooms, although the loss of fireplaces and doors to some of these rooms does impact upon the aesthetic value to a degree meaning that the aesthetic value of the southern part of the building is considered to be medium to high. The aesthetic value of the building to the north of the principal staircase is reduced as these rooms are more functional in character and there has been a higher loss of features such as fireplaces. Whilst the office at the north-east corner on the first floor is notable for its panelling and a fireplace, overall, the architectural value of the first and second floors of this part of the building are considered to be medium. At third floor level there is little of architectural quality value and so it is considered that the heritage value overall in the attic space is low.

Historic interest

- 6.4 Royal Mail House is an important building in terms of representing the development of this part of Southampton and its association with the arrival of the railway to Southampton, being one of the closest and near contemporary hotels to the railway terminus. This growth was also associated with the development of the docks for liner passengers from the mid-19th century. In becoming the offices for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company in 1907, the building became the headquarters for an important business in relation to maritime history, the company being responsible for delivering mail to many South American countries and later, having a greater involvement in the trans-Atlantic passenger trade, particularly with the purchase of the White Star Line, one of the most famous names associated with this business. The historical interest is considered to be relatively high but is tempered to a degree by the fact that the building does not retain the evident hotel character externally to be able to identify it as a mid-19th century hotel building and internally, the conversion to office use in the early 20th century obliterated the ground floor plan, again reducing the ability to understand the original use of the building.
- 6.5 Internally, the 19th century layout and evidence for the various hotel uses of the spaces has been entirely erased by the 1907 conversion to office use. In creating a large undivided space the full length of the Terminus Terrace range, with only the entrance hall area defined

by columns, and some limited later subdivision, the ground floor is of limited historic value other than the principal staircase which appears to have been a 19th century alteration to the building and which was subsequently altered at ground floor level when the present oak stair to the first floor was introduced. To the rear there were extensive rooms and buildings which formed the service areas to the hotel and latterly to the offices that these have either been removed or altered so that the remaining elements have limited evidential value. The bank safe door is the only feature that clearly relates to the bank use of the southern room and so has some, limited, historic value

6.6 The first and second floors retain a plan form that must date from at least the later 19th century as the layout was largely present in 1907. Given that it is considered that the present principal staircase is itself an alteration, being placed within what was formerly a carriage arch, it would appear that all the original staircases between ground and second floor level have been removed. This leaves the understanding of the access and flow of the upper floors unclear, particularly in terms of access to the finer rooms of the hotel within the southern part of the building. There certainly appeared to be differences between the parts of the building to the north and south of the principal staircase reflected both in the corridors and in the quality of the architectural decoration with the southern rooms, being of notably higher quality and so representing the superior letting rooms are some of which may have formed suites of rooms. The loss of some of the fireplaces and doors to this area does impact slightly upon the historic interest but overall the rooms to the south part at first and second floor are of high historic and architectural interest, representing examples of the quality of rooms provided for higher status passengers passing through Southampton. The rooms to the north of the principal staircase have a lower level of architectural decoration (apart from the doors of the corridor at first-floor level) and the consistency in the use of the rather simple ogee moulded cornice to both floors may suggest that these rooms were refurbished at a later date. With the greater loss of the fireplaces in these rooms, the evidential value of the northern part of the building at first and second floor level is considered to be medium. Potentially, there is evidence for within the fabric, especially the floors, for the position of former staircases which would assist with understanding the original plan form, particularly of the ground floor.

6.7 There is a question as to whether the third floor, set largely within the roof space, was originally built to contain occupiable rooms, probably for staff, or whether the present spaces represent a conversion of the roof spaces. Certainly, the rooms to the north part of the building had dormer windows added by the late 19th century whilst photographic evidence shows that there were rooflights to the hip at the south end indicating that the roof space was probably more than just attic space at that date. The partitions and ceilings of the third floor rooms largely appear to be of the lath and plaster but there is a lack of any decorative features, as would be expected for what is unlikely to have been any more than the accommodation for servants. There are no surviving fireplaces but there are some hearths exposed indicating that at least some rooms were heated. If these spaces were accommodation for staff of the hotel, this raises questions as to why the principal staircase rises to the third floor level – staff accommodation would be expected to be reached via a servant's stair or stairs and the accommodation to be screened off from the public areas of the hotel. The small staircase between second and third floor level at the west end of the Oxford Street range appears to be too ornate and open to the third floor to be considered as simply a servant's staircase. An interesting feature of the roof is the way that the purlins of the northern and Oxford Street element of the roof were meant to be supported on stone corbels, often set into the chimney breasts, but few, if any, of the purlins are set on these

corbels, Does this mis-location of these roof timbers reflect poor construction, movement due to bomb blast or re-building of the roof structure? The fact that there are two roof forms over the building also poses the question – why should a single phase building, as suggested by the consistent form of the principal elevations have two separate and distinct roof forms? The historic interest of the third floor is considered to be medium.

7.0 PROPOSALS & ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Proposals

7.1 The proposal is to change the use of the southern ground floor office to form a café. This will involve the following changes:

- Enlarging both windows in the south elevation to form doorways with French doors.
- The modification of the railing to allow access to external seating
- The insertion of a WC to the north-west corner of the room and internal café fittings including a servery.
- The blocking of the door in the north wall.
- Use of the small store to the west as a kitchen.
- The addition of sun/rain canopies to the south and east elevations.

7.2 It is also proposed to replace the two windows to the second floor with new casement windows to match those of the east elevation.

Assessment of Impact

Change to windows to south elevation

7.3 The principal physical change to the building forming part of this proposal is the enlargement of the two windows to the south elevation to form two sets of French doors which will give access to an external seating area. These windows are part of the early 20th century alteration of the ground floor and windows of this form can be seen in the 1940s photograph when this southern space was in use as a bank. Whilst they form part of the evidence for the changing use of the building, it is considered that they make little contribution to the special interest of the listed building and that their replacement with appropriately designed French doors will not cause harm to the aesthetics of the elevation. Internally, the removal of small sections of the panelling beneath the windows, also of early 20th century date, will not impact upon significant internal decorative fittings. The actual brickwork to be removed represents a very small amount of historic fabric which has no intrinsic heritage value and its loss will not result in harm to the significance of the listed building.

7.4 It should be noted that the ground floor elevations of Royal Mail House have been subjected to considerable levels of alteration over time as the building has been adapted to serve different uses including the blocking-up of a door to the central bay of the southern five bay part of the building, the blocking of two carriage arches, the insertion of the door in the east elevation of the southern office unit associated with its subdivision from the larger former office space that occupied the majority of the ground floor and, in more recent times, the successful insertion of a door in place of a window in the north elevation (Figure 24). A key aspect of these alterations is that they have been generally well executed and so they do not readily appear to be alterations and so, with a similar high standard of execution, it is

considered that this proposal will similarly not cause harm to the architectural quality of the building whilst allowing this room to serve the proposed function.



Figure 24
Inserted door replacing a window in
the north, Oxford Street elevation.

Alteration to railings

- 7.5 In association with the creation of the doorways in the south elevation, it is necessary to modify the railing to allow access to the external seating area of the café. Examination of the railing shows that much of the horizontal railing between the posts to the south of the doorway in the east elevation serving this southern unit are relatively modern replacements which are secured by a semi-circular bracket screwed to the posts whereas the railing to the north of the doorway has the horizontal rail set into sockets in the post. Therefore, the adaptation of the section railing in front of the eastern window will impact upon a modern replacement. The section of railing in front of the western window does, however, appear to be fixed in the original method. The proposal is not remove these rails completely but to alter them to allow the rails to be removed during opening hours and replaced at other times so the appearance of the railing around the south and east sides of the building will be maintained. It is also proposed, as part of this adaptation of the railing, to re-set two of the posts so that they are set to the sides of the two proposed door openings rather than in front.
- 7.6 It is considered that this adaptation of the railing will have a very limited impact upon historic fabric, will maintain the general presence of the railing whilst allowing the beneficial use of this southern room and bringing in active use to this corner of Queens Square. Therefore, it is argued that this proposal will not cause harm to the special interest of the listed building.

Insertion of a WC to the north-west corner of the southern room

7.7 To allow the southern room to have a café use, it is necessary to provide WC facilities. It is proposed to achieve this through the creation of a partitioned compartment in the north-west corner of the room and will include the blocking up of the doorway to the north on the WC side, leaving the door in situ and exposed within the room to the north. The southern wall of the partition aligns with the edge of the down stand across the room. The eastern wall is set west of the short section of down stand running axially north from this crossbeam.

7.8 The plan form of the ground floor is of little heritage value given that the original arrangement of spaces was completely cleared in the early 20th century to form the offices of the RMSP Co. with the present southern room created by the 1940s with the insertion of the north wall of this space. It is considered that, given the minimal heritage value of the plan form at ground floor level, the insertion of a WC compartment within this space does not harm the plan form or character of this space. The walls creating this compartment will not rise up to the ceiling but the compartment will have a low false ceiling leaving the present ceiling unaltered so there will be no harmful impact on the fabric of the listed building.

Provision of a kitchen within the store to the west

7.9 The small store to the west is to be used as a kitchen. Other than the safe door in the west wall, there are no features of interest in this room and the wall finishes are all modern. The bank door will remain in situ, and will, if possible, be left exposed.

Sun canopies

7.10 It is proposed to add sun canopies over the windows to the south elevation and the door in the east elevation. Such canopies are commonly used on commercial premises at ground floor level and may be regarded as a temporary and reversible addition which will not harm the overall architectural value of the listed building.

Replacement of second floor windows to the south elevation

7.11 The present windows to the second floor are modern of non-traditional form and are in poor condition. Their replacement with casements of the same form as those to the east elevation (and as were present in the c.1940s – see Figure 12, above) will represent an improvement to the external appearance of the building and so will be a positive change to both the listed building and the conservation area.

Reinstatement of rooflights on the south roof slope

7.12 It is proposed to install two conservation roof lights to the south roof slope. Two rooflights were present on this slope in the late 19th century (see Figure 7). It is not known when they were removed – the roof slope is not visible in the 1940s photograph (see Figure 12). The impact of these rooflights will be minimal – they will only be visible in longer views to the building and by using the original positions, there will be no loss of historic fabric.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It is considered that the proposed alterations relating to the use of the southern room of the ground floor to be used as a café with outside seating to the south will not cause harm to the significance of the listed building given the limited heritage values of the ground floor spaces and details.
- 8.2 The replacement of the second floor windows will result in an improvement of the external appearance of the building and thus is a public benefit as it represents an enhancement of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 8.3 Accordingly, it is considered that the proposals accord with Sections 66 and 72 of the Act, NPPF, Policy CS14 of the Southampton City Amended Core Strategy and Policy HE3 of the Local Plan Review and should be approved.