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**NOS. 11 & 12, HIGH STREET
WISBECH
FENLAND DISTRICT
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**SURVEY AND ANALYSIS
HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT**

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Location Map: 11 to 12 High Street, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire



Map Scale: 1:1500
 Print Date: 24 October 2006

- Listed Building
- Un-mapped
- Mapped
- Listed Building
- Un-mapped
- Mapped


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NOS. 11 & 12, HIGH STREET, WISBECH

The request for this report was received from Ian Harper, Historic Buildings Architect for English Heritage, Eastern Region.

A site visit was carried out on Wednesday 27th September 2006 in the company of Ian Harper and David Rhodes the Conservation Officer for Fenland District Council.

Both these adjoining buildings are listed at grade II. No. 11 has been listed since 1976, and both stand within the 'Wisbech' Conservation Area. No. 11 is described in the list description as 'early C18', and No. 12 as 'late C18 or early C19'. Both buildings were included on the Historic Buildings at Risk Register for 2001 with Risk Priority Grades 'A'. A section of the roof of No. 11 has recently collapsed into the building and both buildings have had to be scaffolded to prevent further collapse. Both buildings have been vacant and unused for the past 10 years.



***Figure 1. The main north-west front, now covered in scaffolding.
Pete Smith 5/10/2006***



***Figure 2. The rear south-east front, from the roof of the ground floor rear extensions.
Pete Smith 5/10/2006***

The list description contains no references to interior features and presumably these buildings were not inspected internally when they were originally assessed for listing.

Both buildings are four storeys high with a basement. They both have shops on the ground floor which have been extended at the rear to cover virtually the whole of the available sites. Both ground floor facades have been replaced with 20th-century shop fronts and the interiors have been completely opened up and all the fittings and decoration stripped out.



*Figure 3. The ground-floor shop interior.
Pete Smith 5/10/2006*

This pair of shops represent the combination of two architectural traditions. The four-storey front section is topped with a parapet which hides shallow pitched and hipped roofs, whilst the rear section is three storeys high with a steeply pitched roof containing an attic with skylights. The front range, visible from the street, was designed in the then modern Georgian style whilst the rear range, hidden from public view retained the

more traditional 17th-century vernacular style with its coped side gables and large roof. The surviving fabric suggests that both these sections were built at the same time - in the early 18th century - with the more fashionable style and larger rooms at the front and the more old fashioned section at the rear divided up into smaller rooms and containing the staircase. But it is possible that these sections were built at slightly different dates; the rear around 1700 and the street front in around 1730.

No. 11 retains its original early 18th-century brick façade on the three upper floors. It has brick bands which define the floor levels, and high quality rubbed brick lintels. The original flush frames for the sash windows survive though the sashes themselves have been replaced with 20th-century plate-glass sashes with horns. The brick parapet has been re-pointed and a small section of it was lost when the roof collapsed. The rear wall of this building has been rebuilt or at least re-faced in old bricks in the 20th century, two of the original sash windows appear to have been retained or re-used.

No. 12 has a late 18th or early 19th-century painted brick façade with two windows to each floor. The original set-back sash frames survive though the sashes on the first and second floor have been replaced with 20th-century plate glass sashes with horns. The original glazing bar sashes survive on the top floor. The original inner skin of this wall, built in the early 18th century, appears to survive behind the present front. The rear wall of this building has been rebuilt in the late 20th century, some original windows have been re-used.

Internally on the ground floor the internal walls have been removed and a number of brick piers now support the steel girders which support the floor above.

The recent internal inspection suggests that both these buildings were probably built at the same time - in the early 18th century - though No. 12 had its façade rebuilt or refaced in the late 18th or early 19th centuries. Internally the exposed brick gable walls appear to be of a similar date. The plans of these buildings are also very similar with two main rooms at the street front and two smaller rooms with flanking winder staircases at the rear. These buildings share a single central chimney stack which is clearly visible from the rear. This stack is constructed of small hand-made bricks, and was built as a single shared structure. The internal dividing walls on the upper floors do survive though most of the doors have



Figure 4. The first floor interior showing the recently collapsed roof internal beams.
Pete Smith 5/10/2006

been replaced. Timber partitions survive dividing the rear rooms from the staircases. No original fireplaces were found. The relatively broad timber winder staircases survive largely unaltered. The internal divisions on the upper two floors of No. 11 have been seriously compromised by the recent collapse of the roof. Most of the upper rooms have surviving chamfered beams, three to each room on the upper floors. The roofs are somewhat unusual. The front sections of these buildings are roofed with double shallow pitched hipped roofs which are not visible behind the brick parapets. These roofs appear to have been replaced with sawn timber structures in the 19th century. But the rear section is roofed by a more steeply pitched cross roof with no hips - it has raised and coped gables visible from the rear. The timbers of this pine roof are now exposed and they have a staggered purlin form. This roof structure has a number of mortice holes visible which do not relate to the present structure and suggest that this roof was constructed of re-used timbers. It seems likely that this rear roof was constructed in the early 18th century re-using older timbers.

The attempt to join two different roof types has caused the rear slope of the rear roof to sag and put pressure on the rear wall of the building. This probably explains why the rear walls of both these buildings had to be rebuilt at some time in the 20th century. The roof itself has been strengthened at the same time.

The facades of these buildings make an important contribution to the urban landscape of this historic market town. Like many listed buildings sited at the heart of such urban conurbations these two buildings retain their plan form and most of their external structure only on the three upper floors, the ground floors having been lost to the pressures of commercial retailing. The repairs, which will need to be carried out to the roof, could result in the loss of some original structural timbers. The single most important element of these listed buildings is the façade of No. 11 and every effort should be made to retain as much of this original structure as possible.

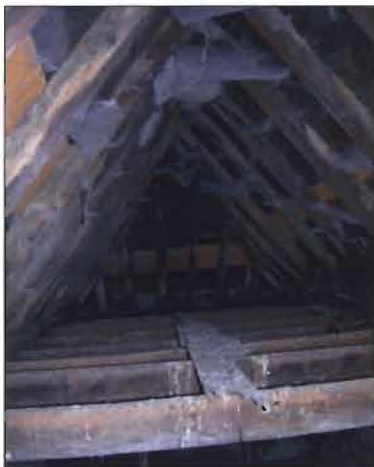


Figure 5. Interior of front roof.
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Figure 6. Detail of front roof.
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Figure 7. Interior of rear roof.
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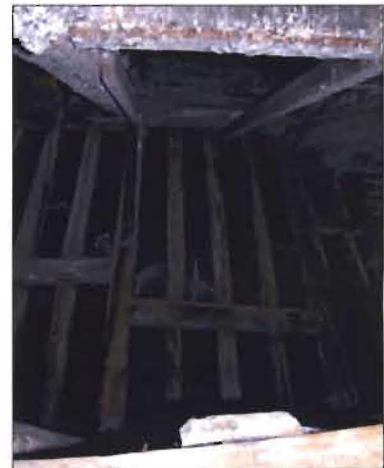


Figure 8. Detail of rear roof.
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