

Application Summary

Application Number: Section 62A Planning Application: S62A/2024/0034 and S62A/2024/0042/LBC

Address: 57 The Old Port House, Prince Street

Proposal: A change of use to the 3rd & 4th floor from a hostel to a hotel.

Case Officer:

Consultee Details

Name: Conservation Section

Address: City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

Email: Conservation@bristol.gov.uk

Date: 31/5/24

Designated assets: Grade II Listed I the Grove, Old City and Queen Square Conservation Area

Summary

- 1.1 This application includes a significant number of unconsented Listed building works on the “existing” plans. As such, the application is largely retrospective. Furthermore, the current use of the upper floors as a hostel does not appear to enjoy consent. While the additional works intended to create a hotel make only a limited change to the current use and planform, they fail to acknowledge that the current state and use is unlawful or that a degree of harm has already been caused to the architectural and historic character of the buildings. The deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in making any decision; therefore, the previous condition of the building should be considered as a baseline from which to assess the impact of the current proposals as far as possible.
- 1.2 It is clear that the unlawful works have undermined the open character of the warehouse floors, obscured masonry arcading between phases, obscured architectural details, and damaged the appreciation of the buildings industrial interiors. External alterations replacing windows in UPVC or metal have eroded the traditional character of the exteriors and the Conservation Area.
- 1.3 In the planning balance we are required to place great weight in the conservation of designated heritage assets. The application makes no recognition of the scale and impact of unconsented works, subsequently giving no clear or convincing justification for why they should be accepted retrospectively. Whilst there is public benefit in bringing a building into viable new use, the unjustified level of harm already caused undermines any genuine benefits to the public at large.
- 1.4 We strongly recommend that this application is refused in line with national legislation, and national and local planning policies, designed to protect the historic environment. This includes, but is not limited to, The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 16 of the National Planning policy framework, Bristol Core Strategic Policy BCS22, and Development Management Policy DM31.

The Heritage Assets

Conservation Recommendation

- 2.1 There are three elements of the site relevant to consider here. The Listed building is the corner block, formerly 1 The Grove. It is clear in the description that the extent of the Listing extends specifically to the 3-bay element adjacent and facing The Grove, though structurally this appears to be a different phase to the corner block.
- 2.2 Not described in the Listed building description is the northern block of six bays facing Prince Street. It's shown on 1890s Goad Insurance Plans as forming a unified part of the same complex of buildings under the occupation of J & R Bush. Without further evidence to demonstrate separate ownership at the date of Listing or 1.1.1948, the Prince Street block is considered to fall under curtilage Listing with the attached blocks.
- 2.3 As an ensemble it is an important element in the maritime character of Bristol docks. It has a strong architectural character given partly through the use of hardwearing and roughly finished natural pennant stone, and partly through the monolithic walls with small openings. It reads readily in the streetscape as a warehouse building type.
- 2.4 Internally, dockside warehouses of this type were intended for storage. Generally, they are open-plan, with substantial floor structures designed to take high loading when in operation. The need to maintain flexible open storage areas required the use of strong but slender structural supports. Within the application buildings this is accomplished with cast iron columns running up through the building. Where the building was extended over the 19th Century new blocks were connected through mighty external walls by introducing arcaded openings. In keeping with the utilitarian function of the building, the pitched roofs were left largely functional and exposed to the top floors.
- 2.5 Along with other nearby warehouses, the application site contributes to the City and Queen Square Conservation Area through its imposing scale and robust industrial appearance.

Unlawful works:

- 3.1 Existing plans and elevations show a series of alterations for which no Listed building consents exists. These works have been executed particularly within the existing third floor and fourth floor of the principal Listed corner block, and the third floor of the curtilage listed Prince Street block; the fourth floor of this block has consent for partial subdivision for staff accommodation for the former pub use below, but this is not as intense as the present arrangement for that area. These unconsented works are likely to have led to the erosion of the open warehouse character of these spaces, the legibility of the building's use as a warehouse, and the obscuring of architectural and historic details.
- 3.2 Having reviewed the planning history of the site, only the following planning history is relevant in this assessment:

80/03428/P_C

Conversion of existing buildings into Public House and stores on the ground floor and small office units on all upper floors (LBC 1692/80)

This consent approved a change of use to the upper floors, but retained the open character of the spaces on third and fourth floors. A new passage was introduced to access a new rear stair on both floors of the Prince Street and corner blocks. At this point voids and a lift were proposed within a quadrant of the Prince Street block.

Conservation Recommendation

Approved section drawings show the top floor, today's 4th floor, was open to the roof rafters.

82/02416/P_C

Change of use of 3rd floor (*present 4th floor*) from warehousing to staff accommodation.

This application approved the subdivision of only the fourth floor of the Prince Street block. The consents included the retention of the exposed roof trusses and limited subdivision to two 2-bed staff apartments, and one studio. The corner block had no proposed alterations.

Other planning and Listed building consents identified in the Design and Access Statement relate to areas not affected by the current proposal and are therefore immaterial.

- 3.3 No planning or Listed building consents exist for the instillation of UPVC or metal-framed double-glazed windows anywhere within the Listed properties or within the Conservation Area. Diagrams showing the Local Authority's understanding of the extent of the unlawful works are appended to this report.
- 3.4 As far as the building use is concerned, the planning history supports an assessment that the 3rd and 4th floors of the Listed corner and Grove blocks should be in office use, and the same floors of the Prince Street block should be in use as office, with the upper floor being accommodation for bar staff associated with the ground floor use. The use of any part of the building as a hostel does not appear to have consent.
- 3.5 In summary, the extent of the works on the top two floors of the application property are unlawful and are considered to have harmed the protected architectural and historic character of the Listed warehouse interiors. In paragraph 202., the NPPF requires the following of decision makers:

"202. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision."

- 3.6 As the hostel use and associated subdivision have led to the deterioration of the significance of the heritage assets the current layout and condition cannot be taken into account in any decision. Therefore, the correct approach in considering the proposals is to make an assessment considering the buildings in their last previously consented form as far as ascertainable. We should assume that earlier planning and Listed building consents placed significant weight in the protection of these features on the third and fourth floors:
- Open and exposed roof trusses and rafters
 - Open masonry arches between and within blocks
 - Wide open floorspace historically associated with warehouse storage
 - Exposed and expressed iron columns between floors supporting huge timber beams across the building
 - Open masonry arcades linking the three blocks internally
 - The traditional character of timber windows inserted in the historic openings

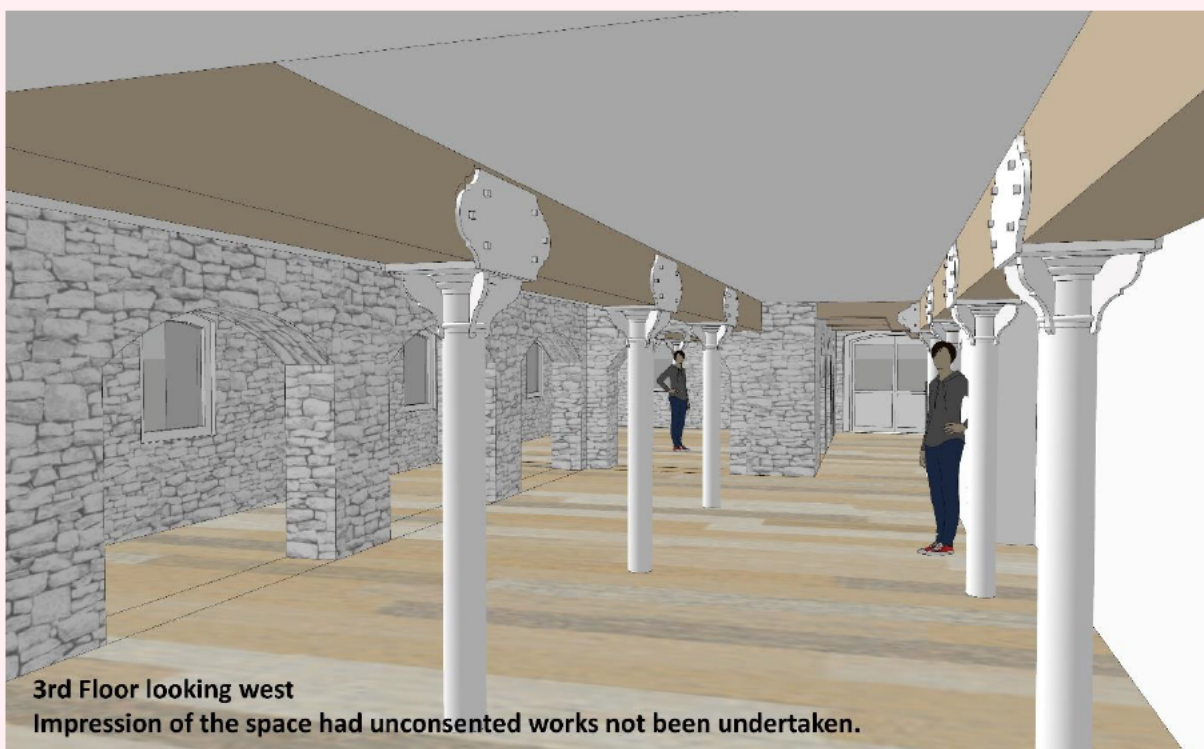
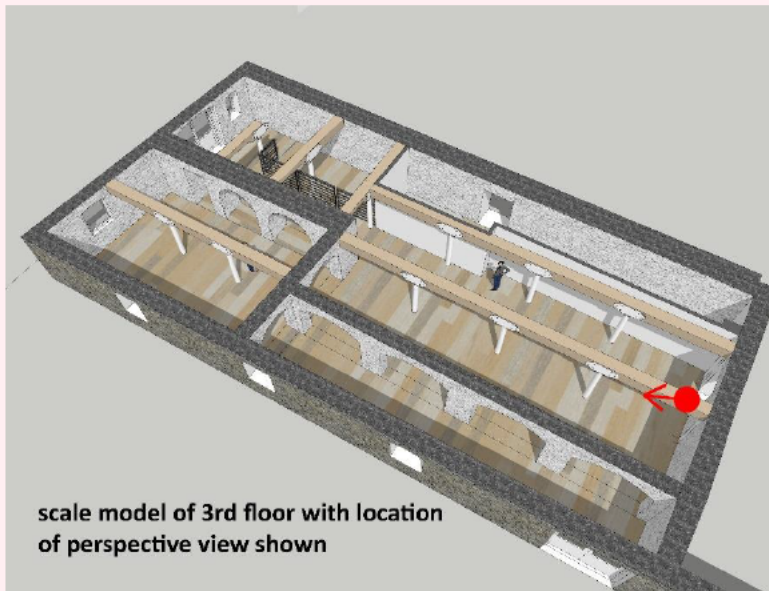
It is of particularly importance that the Listed building description identifies specifically the "open plan" of the building, a characteristic now lost through unlawful subdivision.

- 3.7 The current conversion of the building as a hostel has been executed very poorly. The rooms are poorly arranged with circulation so convoluted that the building has been condemned by the fire brigade as dangerous for occupation. The current conversion and internal appearance makes no

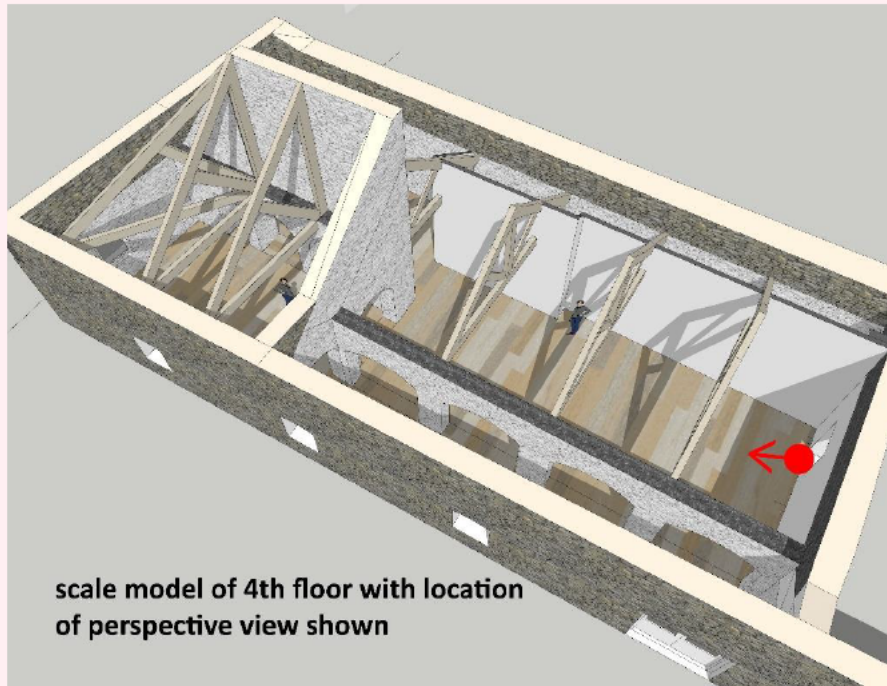
Conservation Recommendation

contribution to the significance of the building interiors, their architectural or historic character, and has negatively impacted it.

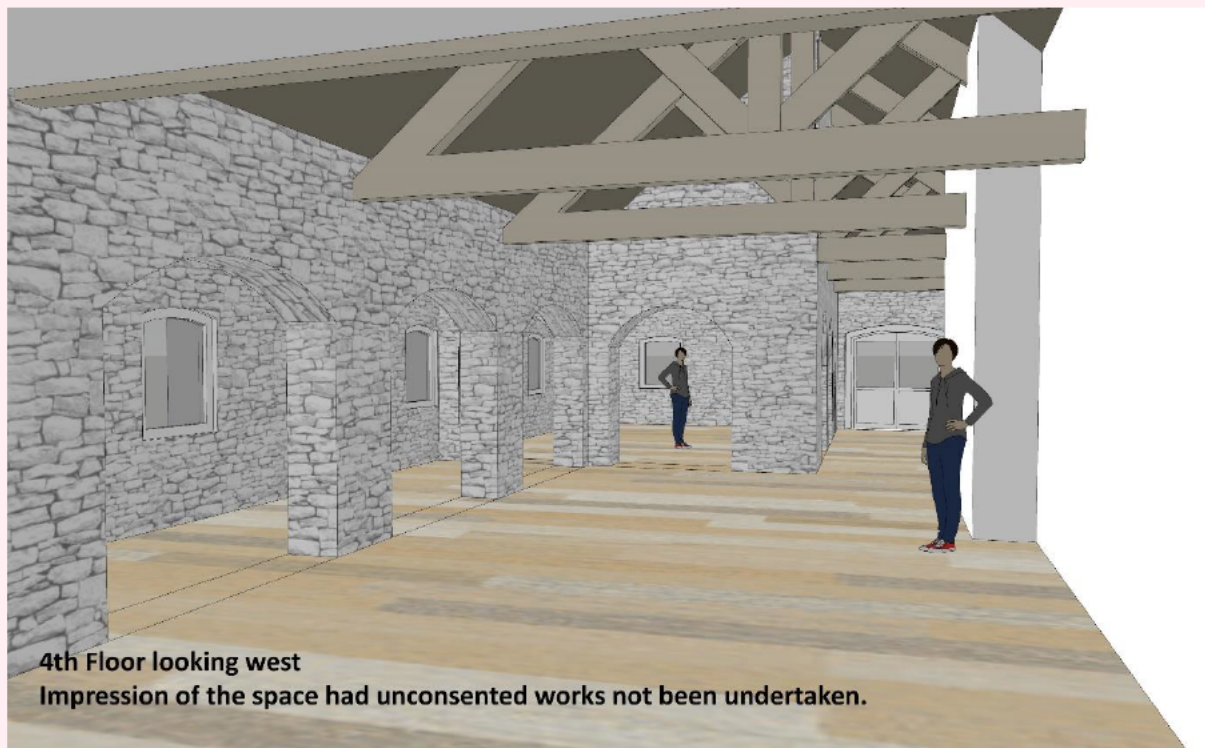
3.8 The following images have been generated using all available information to illustrate how the third and fourth floors of the Listed corner block - I The Grove - should appear. They are based on scaled measured drawings and are intended to explain how the “open plan” floors appeared after the completion of consented works, and before unlawful subdivision to form a hostel.



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scale model of 4th floor with location of perspective view shown



4th Floor looking west
Impression of the space had unconsented works not been undertaken.

Heritage statement:

3.9 The submitted heritage statement demonstrates no understanding of the planning history where it's relevant to the building's evolution and previous consents. It assumes the as-found condition and use is lawful, and subsequently that there is no significance accorded to obscured roof, wall, and column details, or to the open industrial character of historic open warehouse floorplans. The assessment of significance and impact is therefore inaccurate.

3.10 The application lacks an appropriate level of information on the full extent of the current or previous internal condition across both third and fourth floors. The NPPF requires heritage

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statements to be proportionate to the extent of the proposed works. It is not possible to make an assessment of the significance and potential impact from the low degree of information presented. There are just eight internal photographs and no indication of where these are taken. In this situation we would usually request a site visit, but with the application being made through the Planning Inspectorate we are forced into the position to provide consultation comments on very limited information. We consider that the supporting heritage statement is inadequate to support development and the application lacking in information necessary to make a full assessment.

Assessment and potential mitigation

Is there harm posed by the development? (NPPF para 200):

- 4.1 The proposals effectively seek retrospective consent to extensive unlawful works to the Listed buildings. We consider these works have caused significant negative impact on the Victorian warehouse character, details, and appearance internally. Externally, where windows have been replaced with poor quality plastic or metal alternatives, the traditional character and appearance has also been eroded.
- 4.2 The proposed layout for hotel use requires significant further subdivision of the open plan warehouse floors on top of the unlawful works. The additional need for new sanitary accommodation for every room would pose further permanent irreversible harm to the interiors, further obscuring features such as the cast iron columns and floor beams shown on plans. There is no demonstration that servicing through the floors below has been considered for soil pipes, or what the impact would be to other parts of the building below.

Has clear and convincing justification been given for the harm? (NPPF para 200):

- 4.3 The impact of proposals hasn't been given clear and convincing justification, in part because they fail to recognise the extent of unlawful works. The harm posed is therefore unjustified. Clearly, there are ways in which the buildings could be brought back into use that do not pose such a negative impact. Alternative layouts or uses could ensure that historic features are worked around and celebrated as part of development rather than obscured. Areas of the plan could be kept exposed and unobstructed to protect the open plan character, and the existing roof trusses joists could be better used as features within circulation and private rooms. There is no explanation supplied for how the design proposals have been developed in a way that considers historic features and character, or how designs have worked to better to reveal their significance.

What are the purported public benefits? (NPPF para 202):

- 4.4 It is not possible to attribute public benefits to the scheme where the degree of unconsented works and lack of clarity over the impact of these is unclear. Bringing the building into a viable new use, one that ensures the future preservation of the heritage assets is, of course, in the public interest, but accepting the degree of harm identified as having already been undertaken and granting retrospective approval without reference to it would not. Where damaging works to a Listed building have been undertaken deliberately and without consent, accepting them through the current application would undermine the legislative framework designed to protect their significance. Any economic or other wider benefits that may arise from the new hotel use are not supported with an evidential basis.

Do public benefits outweigh harm where that harm has clear and convincing justification? (NPPF para 202)

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- 4.5 We are required to place “great weight” in the conservation of designated heritage assets. The degree of harm posed by the unconsented works is significant, but unjustified. Any measure of public benefit attributable to the current proposals does not offset the harm already posed by those works.

Recommendations

- 5.1 We strongly recommend that this application is refused in line with national legislation, and national and local planning policies, designed to protect the historic environment. This includes, but is not limited to, The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 16 of the National Planning policy framework, Bristol Core Strategic Policy BCS22, and Development Management Policy DM31.
- 5.2 We strongly recommend that a planning enforcement case is opened to establish the true extent of the works already undertaken and their impact.

- KEY:**
- Existing
 - Proposed
 - Demolished



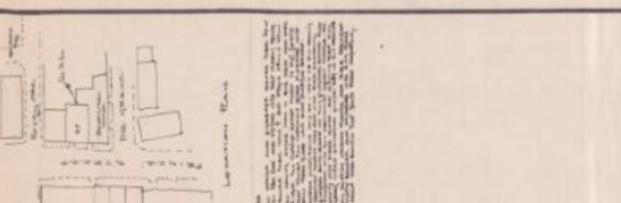
WORKS WITHOUT LISTED BUILDING OR PLANNING CONSENT

- built fabric
- spaces

Conservation Recommendation

APPENDIX A

RELEVANT CONSENTED PLANNING & LISTED BUILDING PLANS



Location Map

PROPOSED CONVERSION OF 57, PRINCE ST. & SEED WAREHOUSE, THE GROVE, BRISTOL, TO PUBLIC HOUSE & OFFICES FOR INN LEISURE LTD.

DESIGNERS: Leslie A. Day & Associate
 ARCHITECTURAL & INTERIOR DESIGNERS
 HEALTH CENTRE CHAMBERS
 10, BALFOUR STREET, BRISTOL, GLS 1 5DQ
 02537 2823

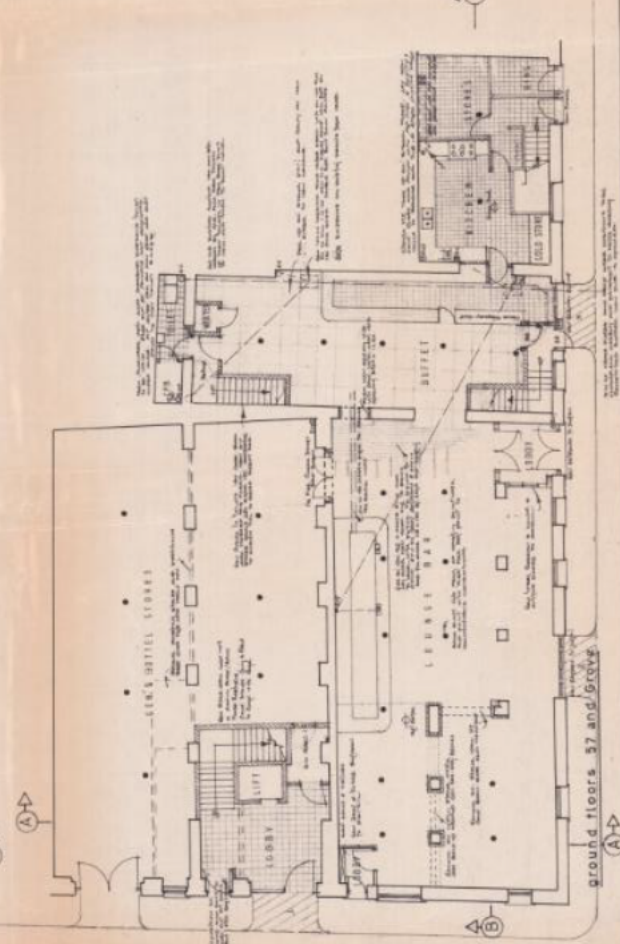
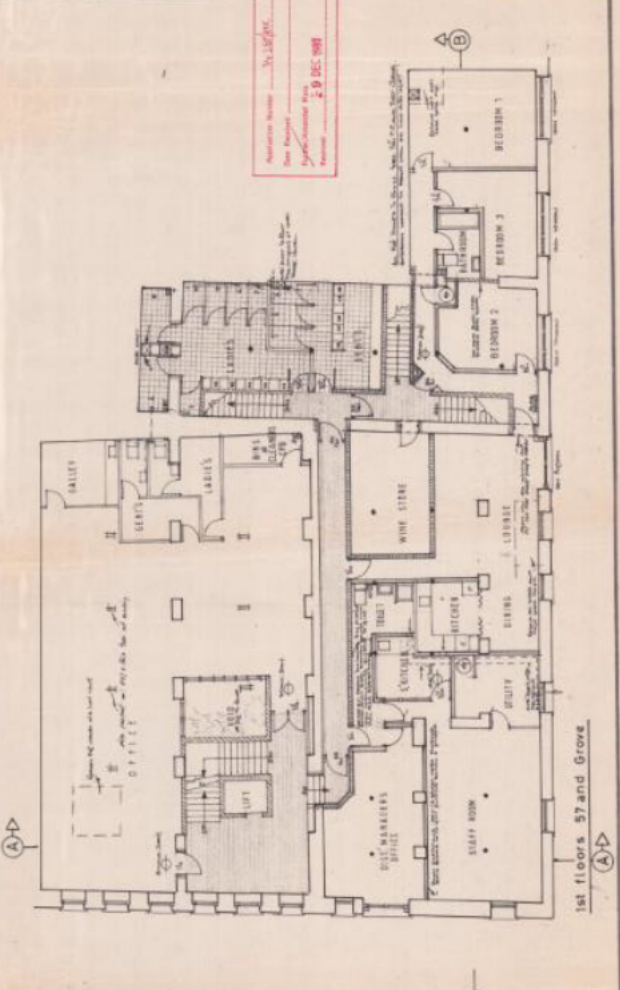
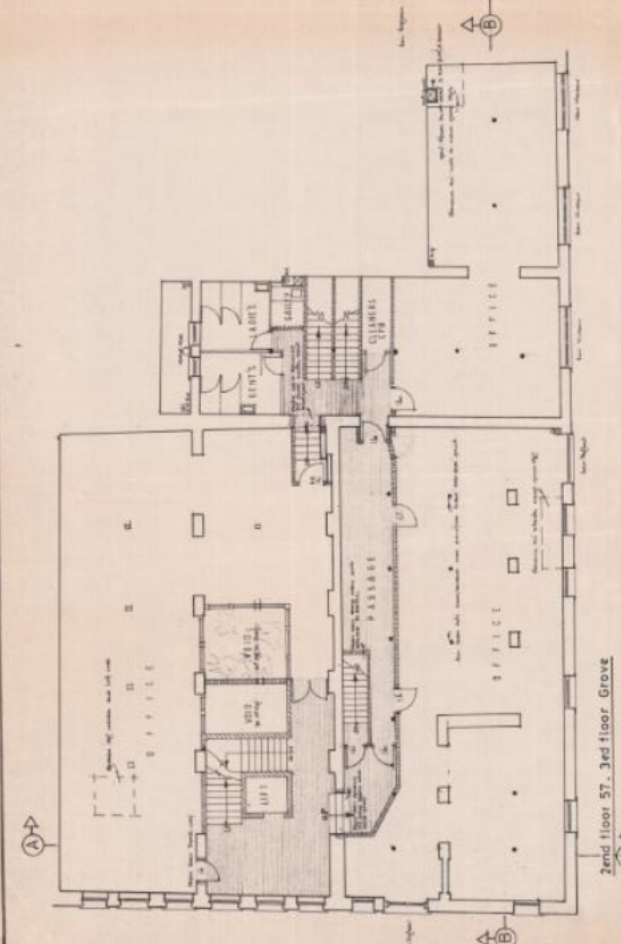
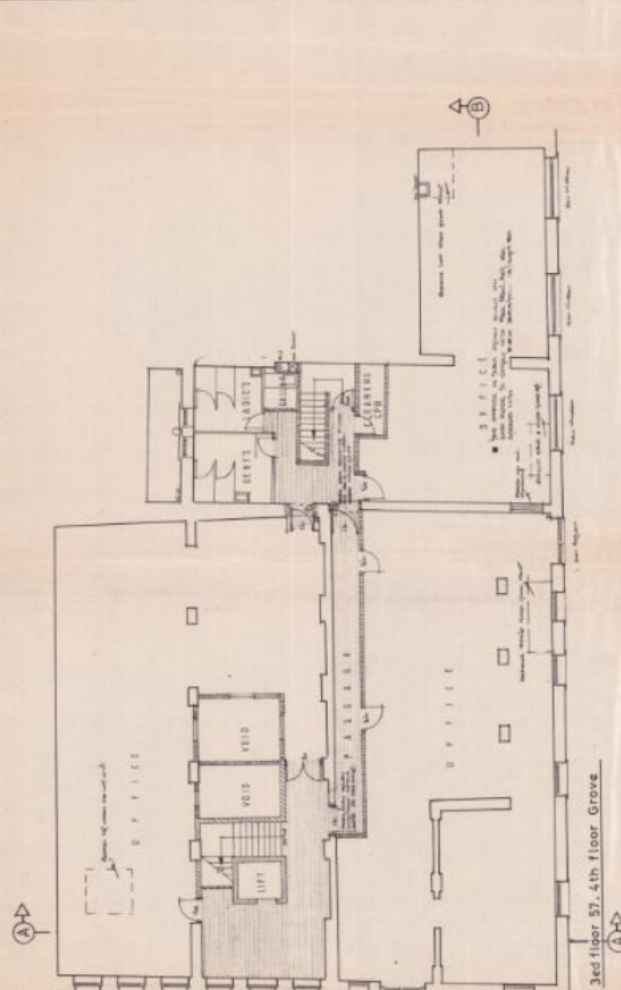
FLOOR PLANS

SCALE: 1:100
 DRAWING NO. 8030/1

CONTRACTORS TO CHECK ALL SITE DATA BEFORE WORKING ANY SITE BIRMS

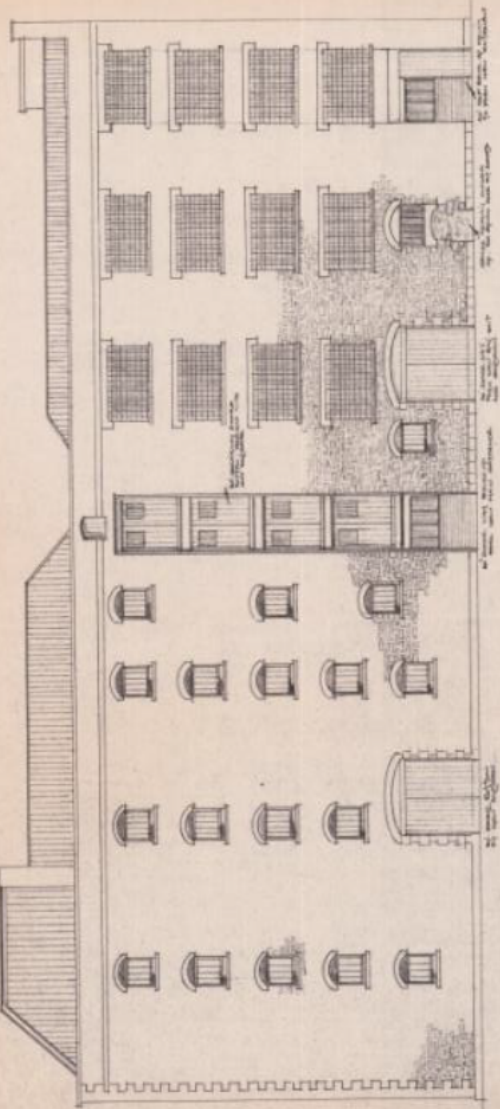
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GROVE ILL. 1

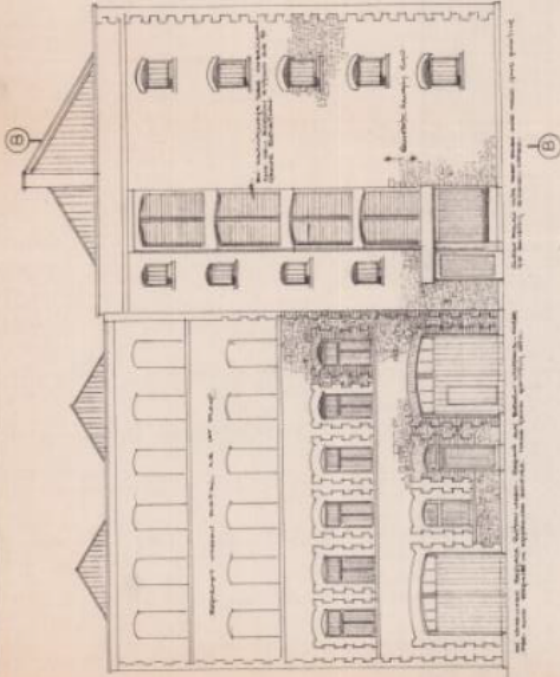


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 Date Received: 19 DEC 1981

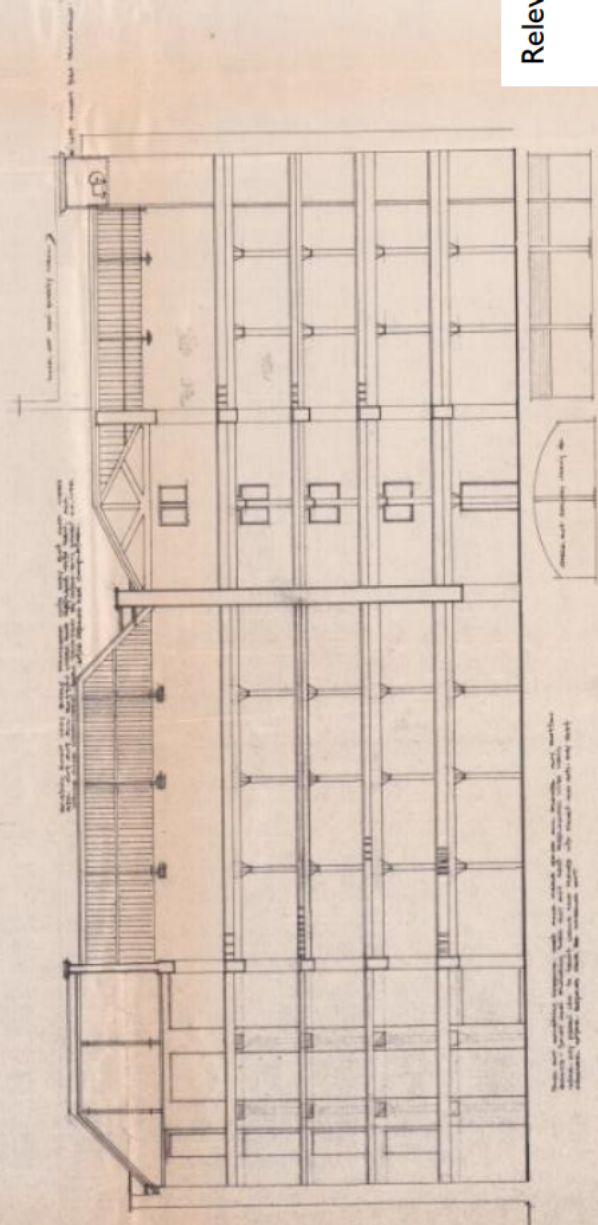
Relevant plans from 80/03428/P_C



elevation to the Grove



elevations to Prince St



section thro' building at B-B

PROPOSED CONVERSION OF
57 PRINCE ST. & 1, THE GROVE
BRISTOL TO PUBLIC HOUSE
AND OFFICES for
INN LEISURE LTD.

EXISTING BUILDING DETAILS

scale 1:100

date 19.10.80

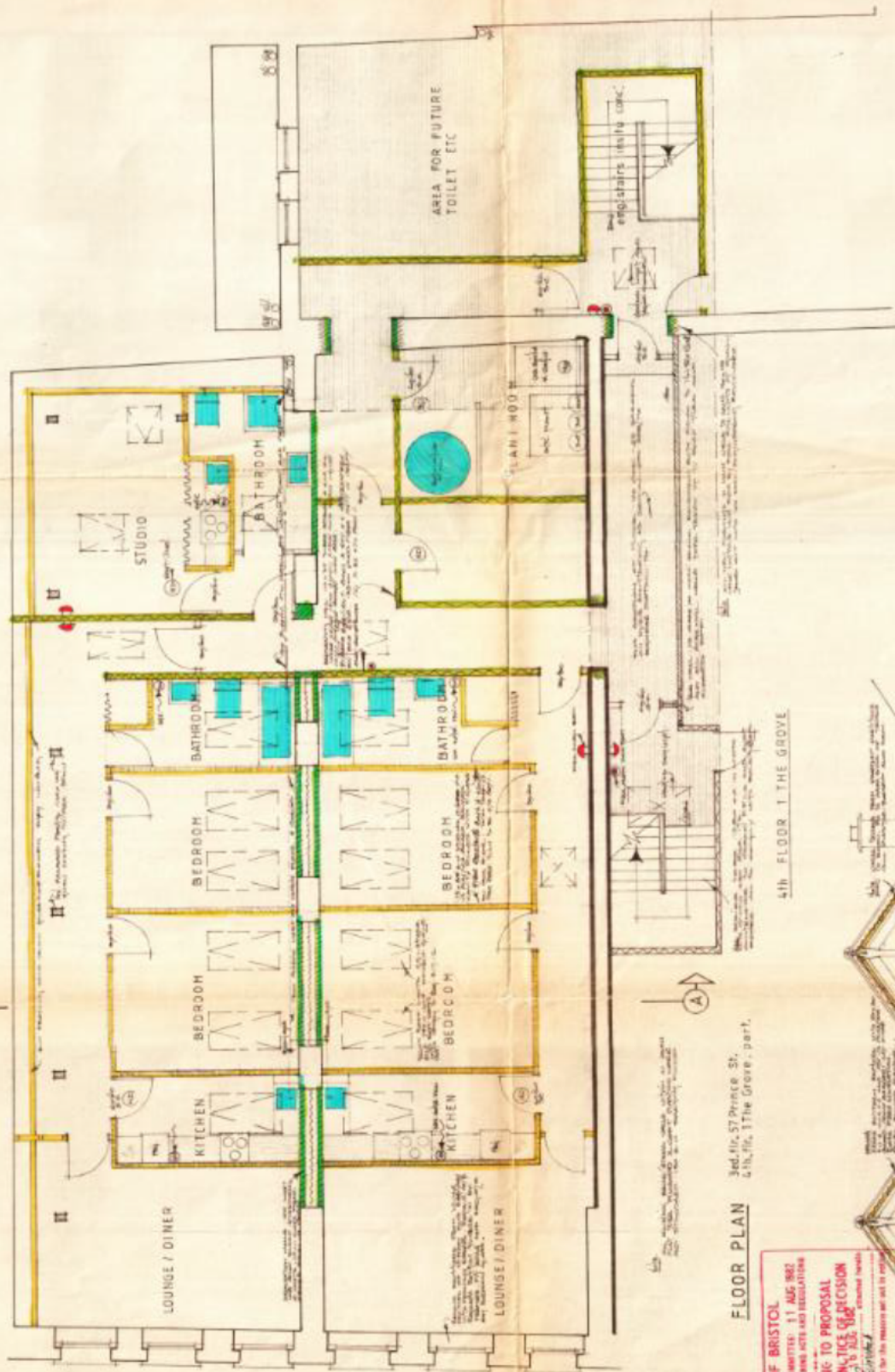
drawing n. 8030.0

leslie a. day + associate
Architectural Interior Designers
HEALTH CENTRE CHAMBERS
SOMERSET SQUARE
NAILSEA
BRISTOL
BS19 2EX
tel 853546

Application Number 80/03428/P/C
Date Received 19.10.80
Type of Building Public/Commercial Premises
Floor Area 9,000 sq ft

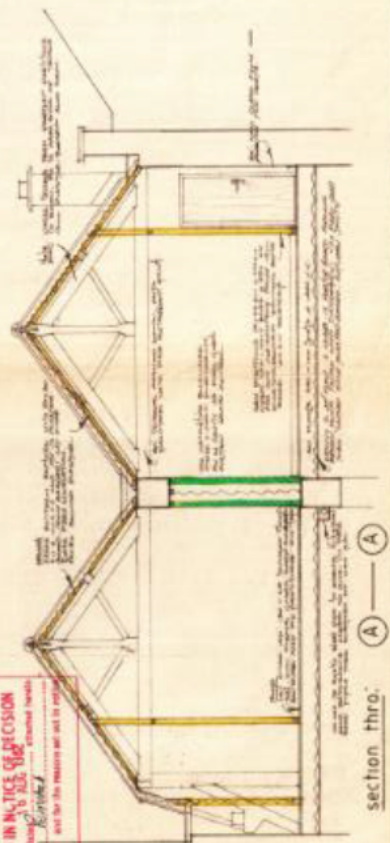
ILL. GROVE. EX. BUILDING.

Relevant plans from 80/03428/P_C



FLOOR PLAN 3rd fl., 57 Prince St.
4th fl., The Grove, part.

CITY OF BRISTOL
PLANNING AND TRADING DEPARTMENT: 11 AUG 1982
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section thro. A-A

57, PRINCE ST. BRISTOL.
PROPOSED MANAGEMENT
ACCOMMODATION ON THE
THIRD FLOOR.
client, INN LEISURE LTD.

scale 1:50
date 8.4.82
drawing n. 8210-P5

leslie a. day + associates
architects and interior designers
HEALTH CENTRE CHAMBERS
SOMERSET SQUARE
NAILSEA
AVON BS19 2EX
Tel 853546

ILL. 57 PSL S.O.

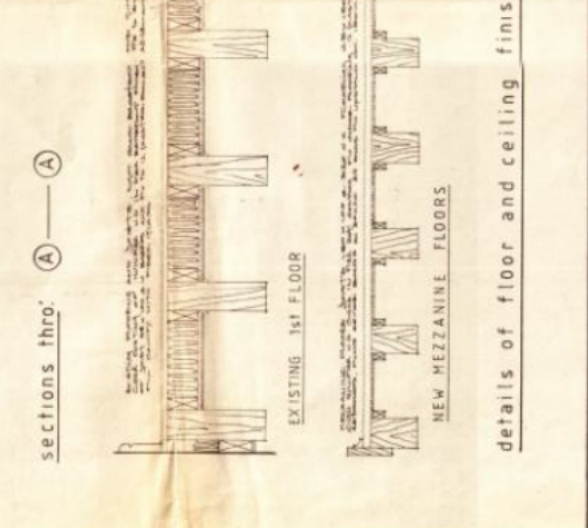
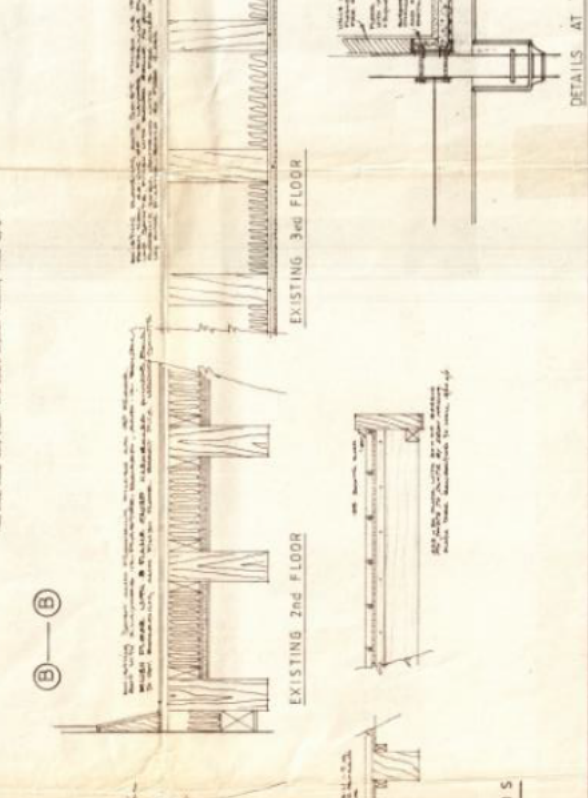
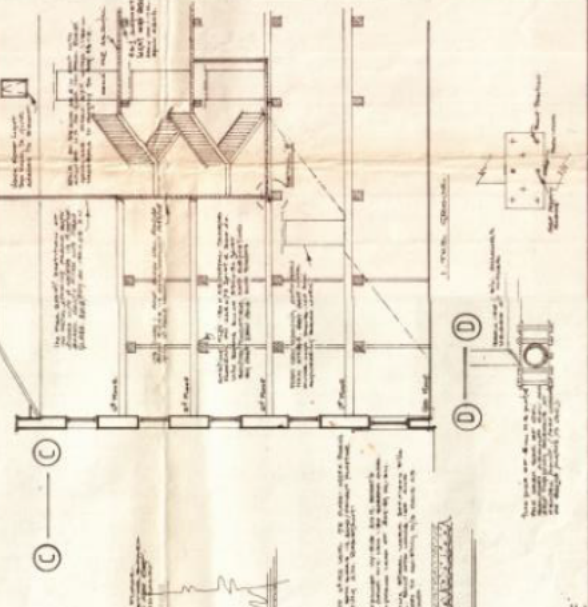
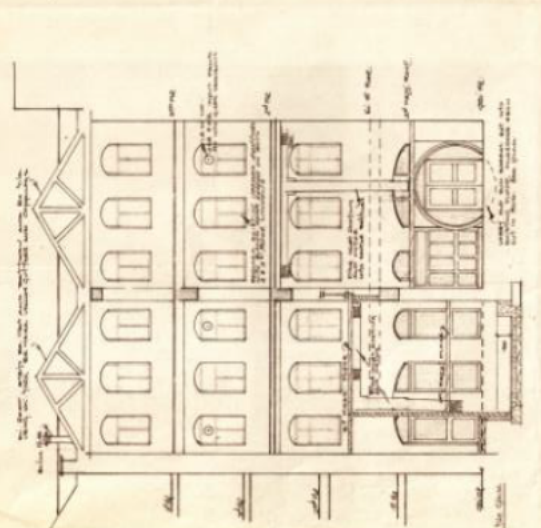
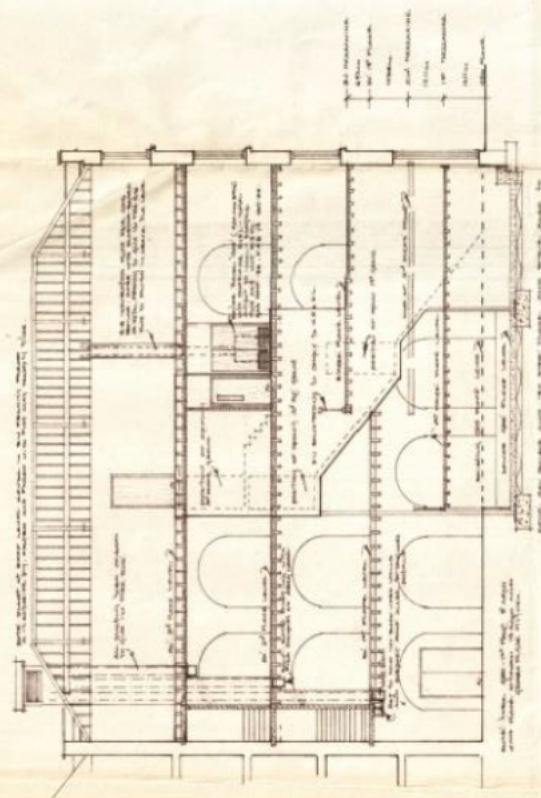
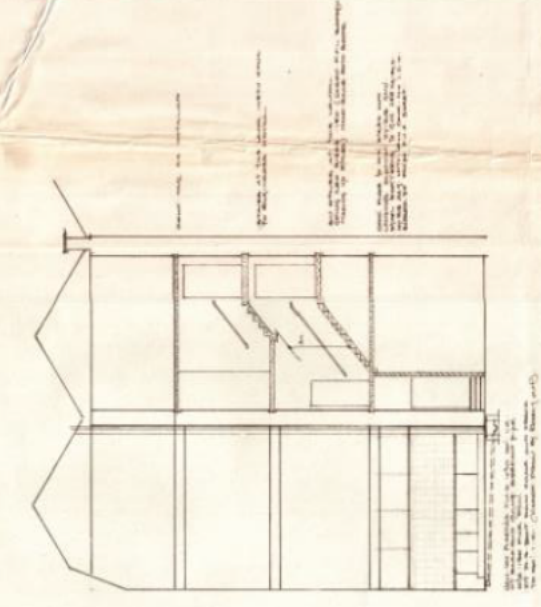
Relevant plans from 82/02416/P_C

CITY OF BRISTOL
 Avon County Council
 Application Number **82/02416/P**
 Date Received **29 JAN 1982**

PROPOSED WINE BAR AND RESTAURANT AT 57 PRINCE ST. AND 1, THE GROVE, BRISTOL for Inn Leisure Ltd.
 Section Details
 scale 1:10, 1:20, 1:50
 date 14.1.82
 drawing no 8210-P2

leslie a. day + associate
 Architectural and Interior Designers
 HEALTH CENTRE CHAMBERS
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 NAILSEA
 AVON, BS19 2EX
 tel 853546

ILL-P.S. 02.



sections thro' A—A

B—B

C—C

EXISTING 1st FLOOR

EXISTING 2nd FLOOR

EXISTING 3rd FLOOR

NEW MEZZANINE FLOORS

details of floor and ceiling finishes

DETAILS AT 'F'

Relevant plans from 82/02416/P_C