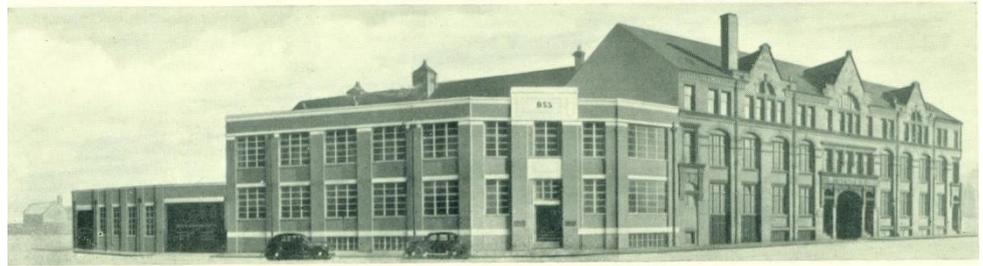


Historic Building Record



Fleet House, Lee Circle, Leicester

On behalf of Lee Contracts

October 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During September 2016 the former offices and factory of the British Steel Specialties Factory at Fleet House, Lee Circle, Leicester were recorded to a level 3 standard by Archaeology Collective. The record was requested in order to form part of the application package for proposals on the site being put forward by Lee Contracts. The proposals would see demolition of the extant buildings on the site and redevelopment.

Fleet House was constructed in c.1900 as a range of warehouses and workshops around a central courtyard with carriage entry in the centre of the front elevation to Fleet Street (later redeveloped into Lee Circle). The building housed several companies, some of which had previously occupied smaller premises on the location of the new building. The building was built in red brick with stone and terracotta detailing in a typical late Victorian style.

Over the course of the 20th century the building was expanded to the west and north and eventually British Steam Specialties became the only occupant. In the last decades of its use the central courtyard was filled in at ground floor level and the building lost all of its manufacturing role becoming the central administrative and distribution building for the company.

Internally the building retained no historic features and all internal finishes and decoration was modern. Isolated examples of blocked historic windows and openings were visible in the basement and in some places on the ground floor but the original form and appearance of the building had been comprehensively altered. No evidence remained from any of the manufacturing processes which might have been carried out in the building during the early 20th century.

The results of the record were presented in an illustrated report and this and the digital photographic archive were deposited with the Leicester City Historic Environment Record; copies of the report were deposited with the Leicester Arts and Museums Trust and the Archaeological Data Service.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Heritage Collective on behalf of Lee Contracts. It presents the results of a programme of historic building recording carried out at Fleet House, Lee Circle, Leicester, LE1 3QQ. The site is located at national grid reference: SK 459064 304935 (Appendix 1.1).
- 1.2 Fleet House is included on Leicester's Local Heritage Asset Register as LL/095 – Former British Steam Specialties Factory. It is not statutorily listed or directly adjacent to any listed buildings, and it is not within a conservation area.
- 1.3 The principal section of Fleet House is an approximately square red-brick building of three storeys constructed around a formerly open courtyard. It was built between 1899 and 1902 (shown on historic OS maps) and initially housed a number of different companies, including British Steam Specialties Ltd. Directory entries suggest that this company were trading from premises on Fleet Street since 1899. The post war period saw the terraced streets around Fleet House cleared and redeveloped and Lee Circle created. By this period the British Steam Specialties company occupied the majority of the earlier warehouse building as well as extensions to the west.

Project background

- 1.4 The building record was carried out at the request of Leicester City Council (LCC) in advance of a planning application covering the building as it is a locally listed heritage asset. The record was prepared alongside a Heritage Statement (HC 2016) which considered the building's significance and the impact of the proposals as well as policy background, and an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (AC 2016a) which considered the potential for below ground remains to be present within the site.
- 1.5 The methodology for undertaking the record is described in more detail within section 2 of this report and was set out within a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by Archaeology Collective (AC 2016b) which was approved by LCC's City Archaeologist Grahame Appleby.

- 1.6 No specific brief was prepared by the local planning authority and consequently the WSI defined the aims, objectives, methods and details for the building recording.

- 1.7 The archive for this project, comprising this report and a disc of high resolution digital images, is to be deposited Leicester City Historic Environment Record and with a copy to the Leicester Arts and Museum Service and with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) via the OASIS scheme under reference: archaeol34-299853.

2.0 AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Aims and project objectives

- 2.1 The aim of the building recording programme was to understand the building's history and development as well as evidence for its use and function from an analysis of the current and historic form of the standing structure.
- 2.2 The survey aimed to produce a level 3 record as defined in Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016, 25-29). The specific proposals for the site were yet to be formally defined but it was understood that the proposals would include demolition of all extant structures on the site. A level 3 record was requested for this building reflecting its local significance and the likely proposal for total demolition.
- 2.3 A level 3 record is an 'analytical' record suitable to preserve an understanding of the building before it is demolished. It comprises a full description of the building with analysis of use, development and origins with conclusions based primarily on observations made of the built fabric itself.
- 2.4 These aims were achieved through on-site survey, an analysis of the structure in light of the known history, which was gathered through desk and archive based research carried out for the Heritage Statement (HC 2016), and condensed in section 4 below; and through the production of this report.

Methodology

- 2.5 The building record at Fleet House, Lee Circle, Leicester was carried out before any works over two days in August 2016. Conditions were fair and access was afforded to all areas of the building where health and safety considerations did not limit safe access (see below section on limitations).
- 2.6 The site inspections involved the compilation of a series of annotations to plans and site notes, this report, represents the most final collection of all site observations. No individual context sheets or similar will form part of the archive.

Research

- 2.7 A thorough programme of research was undertaken for the Heritage Assessment (Heritage Collective, 2016) submitted with the application. Selected historic maps are included at Appendix 4 to illustrate the evolution of the site and wider urban context.

Drawings

- 2.8 Floor plans, elevations and sections supplied by the client have been used as the base for the interpretive figures provided in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 2.9 No additional drawings were compiled during the recording. The building contained no surviving areas of historic decorative detail internally and those details preserved in the external façade were judged to be captured adequately in photographic record.

Photography

- 2.10 Photographs were taken on a high resolution fixed-frame Nikon D700 SLR camera fitted with fixed lenses of 35 or 50mm aperture as appropriate. A selection of the photographic archive illustrates the text and is included at Appendix 4. The photographs forming the archive are listed in a catalogue which will accompany the digital files.

Statement of Limitations

- 2.11 The building remained fully furnished as a modern office including wall coverings, carpets tile and linoleum floor coverings and suspended ceilings throughout, with only a few areas within service and basement areas with exposed historic fabric. This prevented any observations being made about the underlying structural fabric internally. This inability to see the underlying fabric meant that the precise point at which different elements of the building's phases joined could not be determined other than through consultation of the plan form of the building alongside documentary and cartographic evidence.
- 2.12 The basement was fully dark with no lighting provided. This severely limited photographic recording though inspection and observations were made throughout with the aid of torches.

Effect on the record

- 2.13 Despite the above limitations the broad phasing of the building was established with a good degree of certainty. Although very few details of the appearance of the original building, particularly internal appearance, appear to have survived the form of the building as constructed remained legible within the later alterations.
- 2.14 The physical evidence of the industrial and manufacturing history of the building had been comprehensively removed by later alterations and conversion to an office. It is highly unlikely that evidence for these aspects of the history would be preserved in the floors or walls of the building but should a soft strip of the building be undertaken there may be some elements surviving which could be recorded in the future.

3.0 DESCRIPTION

Site location

- 3.1 The site lies on the north side of Lee Circle, a large circular meeting point of several roads to the north east of Leicester city centre. Its boundaries are defined to the south by the Fleet Street and Lee Circle, to the west by Byron Street and north west by Dryden Street. The northern boundary is defined by Old Milton Street and the eastern edge by open areas of car park and the rear of properties which front to Wharf Road (see Appendix 1).
- 3.2 The building lies to the western side of the site, which is otherwise in use as a car park with a higher ground level directly east of the building, accessed from Fleet Street and Lee Circle
- 3.3 The building comprises several discrete structural sections which related broadly to phases of extension to the building (see Appendix 1.2 and section 4). They can be defined as:
- Fleet House – the oldest portion of the building comprising a three storey, approximately square building fronting to Lee Circle/Fleet Street. A later rear extension to the north side of Fleet House is covered in the same section.
 - The Bryon Street section – a lower 1930s extension to the west wrapping around the corner of Fleet Street to Bryon Street.
 - Dryden House – a 1980s extension forming the north western part of the building, this phase also included the infilling of the area at the rear of the Byron Street section with a glazed roof and mezzanine level.
- 3.4 The following description presents the external appearance of the building and its materials followed by internal descriptions covering the layout of the building and any observed evidence of historic fabric or phasing. The general internal finishes and character is described first as the majority of the interior was entirely modern in character. Annotated floor plans can be found in Appendix 2 with photographs in Appendix 3. Rooms have not been assigned individual numbers but the last functions of the rooms were marked on the as existing plans and are used within the text to identify particular areas discussed.

Building exterior

3.5 The structural blocks identified above will be described in the following sections.

Fleet House

3.6 The front of Fleet House was a wide three storey elevation with five bays of fenestration to either side of a wide central bay containing a former vehicle entrance arch and two narrower pedestrian entry arches. The windows at ground and first floor level were set into tall recesses beneath shallow arches with enlarged 'keystones'. The front had three storeys with the third being slightly smaller with smaller windows, three of which extended up in rounded arches within three gables. The main roof ran in a single pitch parallel to the street with gables to east and west. The outer bays of the ground floor contained a door to the right and blocked door, now a window, to the left, steps led from the pavement level up to the actual door reflecting the higher internal ground floor level. The smaller entrance on either side of the wide central arched entrance also rose up to the higher internal ground floor level. The main entrance featured a fascia above the door arches with the initials 'BSS' in metal.

3.7 The elevation was principally of orange/red brick set in mixed bond accommodating the comparatively small areas of brickwork in comparison to projections and windows. Areas beneath the windows were Flemish bond, areas in pilasters were English bond. Dressings and decorative details were a fine grained cast concrete or stone composite material; they featured at windows, storey bands and the main doorways. Additional ornament was provided with moulded and projecting bricks and at pavement level the elevation had a band of glazed brown bricks extending up to the sills of the ground floor windows.

3.8 The eastern elevation was much simpler with no ornament or decorative treatments. The brickwork was laid in English Bond (alternating courses of headers and stretchers) and was a less regular colour than the brickwork in the front elevation. The elevation was divided at a point where the alignment of the rear part of the building turned further to the west, at the dividing point the elevation stepped inwards with a series of smaller windows with cambered heads. The left hand part of the elevation, adjoining the front elevation, featured a gable on the left hand side with a ridge roof running northwards. A painted sign parallel to the front roof slope read: 'The British Steam Specialties

Ltd. Valves – Tubes – Fittings and Engineering Accessories’. This front part of the elevation featured twelve windows, two to each floor, widely spaced and flush to the wall. There was evidence in changes in the mortar and lack of brickwork lintels that they had been inserted into the building. In the northern, rear part of the elevation the fenestration was less regular and reflected the four storeys within the building at the rear provided by a lower ground level. The right hand side of the rear elevation stepped outwards reflecting a larger second floor and ground and first floor extension also marked by different brick fabric. On the walling at first floor level were scars from two north-light roof structures, with poorly faced fletton brick below. A similar suggestion of a formerly adjoining roof structure was visible at the Fleet Street side of the elevation.

- 3.9 The rear of the building faced approximately north. The principal elevation of the Fleet House section was stepped back in three faces, ground and first floor with a flat roof, second floor beneath a shallow pitched lean to roof and the third floor which featured two gables, one at either end of the elevation. At the far right hand side of the elevation was a block containing a fire escape stair which extended up to the third floor beneath a shallow sloped roof.
- 3.10 The Fleet House part of the building featured an internal courtyard, enclosed at ground floor level, but with exposed elevations at first through third storeys. These elevations were brick with composite stone material and brick dressings as on the front elevation. Pilasters with decorated caps rose between each window to second floor level. Windows on the upper most floor were smaller. At the angles of the courtyard and in the centre of the east and west sides were smaller windows set in pairs.
- 3.11 The courtyard roofs were sheet metal with large plexi-glass or plastic skylights. The roofs over the older sections were roofed with grey slate.

Byron Street Section

- 3.12 The Byron Street section of the building featured an angled entrance with short single window bay junction to the main Fleet House front elevation and a five bay elevation running along Byron Street. This section was two storeys high with blocked basement windows at pavement level and a parapet concealing the roof. Basement level and the base of the parapet were marked with

continuous stone bands. The windows were divided by shallow pilasters. The entrance featured double wooden doors beneath a stone panel with 'BSS' metal sign initials. At parapet level above the entrance was a stone panel bearing the inscription B.S.S. Ltd in the centre between two recessed and moulded panels. The brown glazed brick of the main Fleet House elevation was continued at pavement level here. The main elevation was red brick in English bond.

- 3.13 The Byron Street section did not have a visible rear elevation as it sat at the corner of the plot and all external rear parts were enclosed in later structures.

Dryden House

- 3.14 Dryden House was a two storey rectangular block with a slight angled return at the junction between Byron Street and Dryden Street. Adjacent to the junction with the Byron Street block was a concertina metal doorway. A stone band ran the full length of the building suggesting the division between ground floor areas, which featured no windows, and the first floor areas, which had a single row of square windows without lintels or frames. The roof was concealed. The brickwork was in stretcher bond and had no other ornament or decorative treatment.
- 3.15 At the rear of Dryden House were a series of smaller enclosures, partly open, enclosing boilers, vents, tanks and other service equipment. A metal fire escape rose up the northern side of the building giving access to roof levels.
- 3.16 At the junction between Dryden House and the rear of Fleet House was an angled and irregular block with a first floor fire escape stair, no regular fenestration and mixed brickwork.

Interior

General Characteristics

- 3.17 The building remained fully furnished as a modern office, there were very few areas where historic finishes to walls, floors or ceilings were visible.
- 3.18 In general, the floors were a mixture of carpet tile within office and circulation spaces, linoleum tile or ceramic tile used in WCs, kitchen and other service

areas. Concrete was used in the loading bays and access points at the rear and within Byron Street Section. The floors throughout the building appeared to be solid mass and though none were exposed it is assumed that the floors were fire-retardant concrete or other solid mass floor construction.

- 3.19 The walls within the offices were plastered without ornament or decorative finishes. All plaster surfaces appeared modern – no evidence of any historic 19th century plasterwork (lath and plaster) was seen anywhere in the building. Smaller office subdivisions were part glazed and constructed of either pre-fabricated panels or modern gypsum plaster board over timber stud work. Similar construction made up WC areas. Service areas on the northern side of Fleet House, and in the basement, featured plain brick or painted brick walls, also painted or plain concrete block walls indicating later insertions. Kitchen areas featured plain glazed tiles (modern) or stainless steel panels reflecting the former location of cookers or ovens.
- 3.20 There were no 19th century historic windows observed within the building. All the windows within the front elevation of Fleet House and within the courtyard elevations were aluminium double glazed units inserted in 1994 (see historic background). Windows elsewhere in the building were 20th century in date and appeared contemporary to the phase of the block in which they were located.
- 3.21 Ceilings throughout the building were suspended fire-retardant panels with modern strip lighting in mirrored cases. Where there were tiles that had been lifted the ceiling above appeared to be plain plaster with intermittent downstands, which were assumed to represent boxed in beams – the nature of the underlying structure was not exposed at any point.

Basement

- 3.22 The basement lay beneath the southern, front, part of Fleet House and beneath the Byron Street section. The different locations were recognisable in the change from concrete flooring beneath the Byron Street Section and hard black engineering brick flooring beneath Fleet House.
- 3.23 The basement beneath the Byron Street section was a single large open space with black brick walls and a visible timber ceiling structure with 'X' braced joists. A triangular enclosure underneath the main entrance had a steel door and was

inaccessible. At the north western end of this basement was a smaller brick room with steel gas-tight doors, a smaller enclosure had been created in this space with concrete block walling

- 3.24 The basement beneath Fleet House was divided into two halves connected by a narrow tunnel beneath the main front arched entrance to Fleet House. The basement had been subdivided to form a boiler room, a caretaker's office workshop and store and several large storage and archive areas in the eastern section. The subdivisions creating these areas were mainly timber and plasterboard, or part glazed, or concrete blockwork. Earlier structures were brick.
- 3.25 At various points there were blocked openings visible as shallow arched recesses which would have opened into lightwells within the inner courtyard. Similar openings were present and boarded over towards Fleet Street where the basement lights were visible on the external elevation at pavement level.
- 3.26 At the northern end of the basements were openings leading to inserted lifts rising to the upper floors of the buildings. The brickwork around the openings to these lifts suggested that they were inserted into historic areas, perhaps areas of earlier stair between basement and ground floor areas. The current stair access into the basement was modern and located in the central portion as a continuation of the stair rising from close to the main reception area. A secondary stair led from the area between Fleet House and the Byron Street section.
- 3.27 Two small historic WCs, with missing fixtures, were located in the central area of the basement, beneath the area of the ground floor entrance to the former courtyard. These WCs also featured small blocked windows.

Ground floor

Fleet House

- 3.28 The ground floor of Fleet house was divided into three sections, the entrance atrium, foyer and conference rooms, an upper ground floor level filling the southern half of the building and a lower ground floor level to the northern half of the building.

- 3.29 The reception foyer to the building was located directly opposite the principal wide entrance, formerly the entry into the courtyard. The reception desk was at a lower level than the external street. Behind the reception was a large conference room with a moveable central partition, both this area and the reception were lit from above. Stairs within the reception area provided access into the front portion of the building. This section contained a main stairway to all levels of the building in the south western side and a series of open plan offices, smaller meeting rooms and subdivisions and corridor spaces.
- 3.30 In the middle of the eastern side of the building was a further stair giving access to all levels of the building but the basement, this stair area was located at the point where the eastern elevation bent to the west. On the western side of the building were WCs and storage areas. The stair itself was a modern metal structure.
- 3.31 The north western side of the ground floor was divided to provide service areas including multiple WCs, a kitchen area, storage rooms, a lift and access to the rear of the building. At the north eastern corner of Fleet House was a corridor where the remains of three blocked openings were preserved and visible within the southern wall.
- 3.32 The north and north eastern part of Fleet House was occupied by a large open plan office and by a post and distribution room represented by extant cupboards and cages all labelled with the regional areas of the country, franking machinery, printers and stationary supplies. The post room was divided into two parts by a series of large square columns, this represented the original rear structural line of the building.

Byron Street Section

- 3.33 The ground floor of this part of the building comprised a single large open plan office with smaller subdivisions at north and south ends. At the southern end was a stair and lobby area leading down to the Byron Street entrance. This was clearly a secondary or staff only access point and had no reception facilities. The Byron Street ground floor area was accessible only from the south western part of Fleet House.

- 3.34 To the rear of the Bryon Street front section and Fleet House was an irregularly shaped area comprising the former canteen. It was a loosely triangular shaped section with a first floor mezzanine balcony beneath a glazed roof.

Dryden House

- 3.35 The ground floor of Dryden house was an almost entirely dark area with no external fenestration apart from three windows lighting offices at the angled eastern section. The main part of this section was occupied with a large server room. To the south of this was a covered loading bay and a series of smaller irregular shaped rooms including a stair in the central part of the building. Parts of the walling in the loading bay were brick, with other areas of concrete block. This suggested that elements of earlier structures were incorporated to this block when it was created.

First floor

Fleet House

- 3.36 The first floor of Fleet House was split over two levels, higher to the southern half of the building and lower in the northern half. The junction between the two floor levels was where the stairs were located on the east and western sides of the building. The lift shafts and WCs were also located off the stair landings. A third flight of stairs was located in the southern portion of the building where it was connected to corridor areas and further WCs.
- 3.37 The first floor was otherwise filled with large open plan office spaces with smaller offices and stores created from light weight partitions.
- 3.38 The northern part of the building featured a series of larger brick columns or piers, and downstands in the ceilings representing the original rear line of the building and the later extension to the north. Rooms mainly led directly to each other without intervening corridor space. The only corridor area was in the south western part of the building between the east and southern stair cases and also giving access into the Byron Street section and then on to Dryden House.

- 3.39 The courtyard elevations were visible over the roof of the ground floor reception. In the centre of the southern courtyard elevation were a series of four small blocked windows and a larger blocked window with an inserted doorway giving access to the roof.

Byron Street section and Dryden House

- 3.40 The first floor of the Byron street section consisted of a single 'L' shaped room with a central line of boxed in columns or posts. A central doorway gave access to the Dryden House first floor which had a lower floor level.
- 3.41 Dryden House had an irregular first floor layout with a single office adjacent to the Byron Street section and then a narrower corridor portion with smaller flanking offices and access to a flight of stairs in the centre of the building leading to a large open plan area at the northern end of the building. The northern end of the building included a small kitchen area and WCs.

Second floor

Fleet House

- 3.42 The second floor of Fleet House featured the same staggered floor levels seen on the first floor with the higher portion being in the southern part of the building and lower portion to the north. The division between floor levels was at the location of the stairs, where there were also the lift shafts and WC facilities.
- 3.43 The offices and rooms in the southern part of the building were larger and ran into one another. In the northern part of the building there was a central corridor and access area running throughout the building with glazed and lightweight partitions defining smaller offices on either side. A block containing a metal fire escape stair extended further northwards at the north western corner of this level.
- 3.44 The Bryon Street section and Dryden House did not extend to this level.

Third floor

- 3.45 The third floor occupied only the northern part of Fleet house. The eastern stair continued in a large open well in a similar character to lower down and had a large landing with the lift doors and WC. The rooms at this level comprised two large open plan offices with smaller subdivisions in the eastern side of the floor. The eastern stair was, similar to its lower sections, an enclosed stair which rose from the second floor in a single narrow flight. The fire escape stair also projected further north in this area beneath a shallow sloped roof.
- 3.46 A ceiling hatch in the northern section of the building gave access to one area of roof space. This revealed part of the original roof structure still intact.
- 3.47 Three king post trusses were partly visible within the roof space, which had been encased with fibre board. The king-posts had square uprights with expanded feet. Angled braces ran from the shoulders of the post feet up to the principal rafters which were fixed to the heads of the king-posts with three-part iron straps. At the base of the posts were empty rectangular holes, some plugged with timber wedges which suggested a concealed coach-bolt securing the post to the tie-beam beneath, which was not seen because of the flooring to the attic space. Long purlins rode over the principal rafters supporting common rafters; above the common rafters were boards beneath the roof covering. Much of the attic had been boarded and covered, and the trusses within this space varnished, behind the boarding, and at the western side of the attic space the rafters and a single truss were painted or white-washed and this appears to have been the original finish. The common rafters at the western end of the attic appeared to rest directly on the brick walls, a wall plate may have been present but it had been rendered or bricked over internally.
- 3.48 No other areas of the roof were accessible but the profile of the roof over Fleet House was fairly consistent suggesting that this king-post form may survive over much of the building.

4.0 HISTORIC BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This section of the report focusses specifically on Fleet House and its immediate surroundings and is drawn from the Heritage Statement (HC 2016).

Cartographic and archival evidence

- 4.2 An analysis of historic cartography suggests that construction of the part of the premises referred to here as Fleet House began between 1892 and 1902. Prior to this, at the time of the first edition OS map surveyed in 1886 (Appendix 4.1), the site was occupied by numerous smaller structures: terraced buildings fronting onto Fleet Street and Dryden Street, and a series of irregular buildings and open spaces, perhaps yards, behind. At that time, Fleet Street and Dryden Street extended further west and south respectively, meeting at a square rather than canted corner. A Goad insurance plan of 1892 identifies at least some of the buildings fronting onto Fleet and Dryden Streets as two storey brick dwellings, and two of the structures set behind as boot factories.
- 4.3 By the time of the 1902 OS map (Appendix 4.2) the layout of the terraced properties on the west edge of the site (Dryden Street), and at the west end of the south edge of the site (Fleet Street), had undergone little change. However, by this time a line of properties on the north side of Fleet Street and the area behind them had been redeveloped as a series of large buildings around a central yard. These appear to have comprised an 'C'-shaped structure fronting onto Fleet Street, with a central access through to the yard. The existing layout of plots seem to have contributed to the asymmetrical arrangement and different axis at the rear of the site as recorded. The central portion of the building shown on the 1902 map appears to extend in separate blocks beyond the line of the building observed during the record.
- 4.4 The buildings surrounding the central courtyard were put up for sale in 1912, described as factories and warehouses let to tenants:

'A VERY HANDSOME BLOCK OF WELL-LIGHTED Manufacturing and Warehouse Premises OF FOUR STORIES, WITH Covered Gateway and Granite Paved Court Yard, SITUATE IN FLEET STREET, Wharf Street, occupied respectively by Messrs. Wacks & Co., Clothiers, Messrs Skinner & Co., Printers, The British Steam Specialties Limited, and Messrs Keene &

Co. Ltd., Christmas Card Manufacturers, on short leases (copies of which can be seen at the Auctioneers' Offices), at rents amounting in the aggregate to £555.

This fine building of Factories and Warehouses was erected a few years ago in a most substantial and up-to-date manner, with emergency staircase, is in the hands of responsible tenants, let at reasonable rents, and situate in a district where there is plenty of labour.

*It has a frontage of 115 ft. 6 in. to Fleet Street, and contains an area of 1,878 7/9 SQUARE YARDS OR THEREABOUTS.'*¹

- 4.5 The plan accompanying the particulars (Appendix 4.3) depicts the premises with a more regularised outline than that suggested by the 1902 OS map. With the addition of a further strip on the north side of the north range, only those areas directly flanking the courtyard are shown belonging to the same site. The plan illustrates the building with large open warehouse spaces with entrances on to the central courtyard and to adjoining stairs in the central part of the building. It also shows the central courtyard and an open yard beyond the north range. It is presumed that this plan illustrates ground floor of the building.² The position of adjoining buildings is also indicated.
- 4.6 It is unclear who the buildings were constructed for or who their architect or architects were. However, it seems that they were built with the intention of continued multiple occupancy. A Goad plan revised to c. 1923 (Appendix 4.4) names the complex Fleet St[reet] Buildings.³ An address which is named in trade directories in 1904 and 1925 as occupied by a number of companies including British Steam Specialties Ltd (see table of occupants for the building at section 4.20).
- 4.7 The Goad plan revised to ca. 1923 depicts the east range and majority of the south range as occupied by a clothing factory; the area west of the centre of the south range as a hosiery factory; the west range as H[ard] W[are]

¹ 8D62/Box28/35, Sale particulars of freeholds: 6 houses, Jubilee Road; hosiery and engineering works, Jubilee Road and Bedford Street; extensive new factories & warehouses, Fleet Street; land, Prospect Road and Sylvan Avenue; building plots, Barkby Road; house and garden at Thurmaston, nr Leicester, for auction 6 November 1912.

² 8D62/Box28/35, Sale particulars of freeholds: 6 houses, Jubilee Road; hosiery and engineering works, Jubilee Road and Bedford Street; extensive new factories & warehouses, Fleet Street; land, Prospect Road and Sylvan Avenue; building plots, Barkby Road; house and garden at Thurmaston, nr Leicester, for auction 6 November 1912.

³ DE 4702/22/3, Goad plan of Leicester, sheet 24, 'March 1892' printed onto sheet; sheet annotated 'June 1923'.

WH[ole]S[al]E, probably identifiable as British Steam Specialties (see table of occupants); and the centre of the north range as a printer. On the west side of the site are depicted a small number of additional structures, including that formerly labelled boot factory, interspersed with yards or open spaces. At least part of Dryden Street and Fleet Street were still lined with two storey brick dwellings, though again the corner where these streets meet is not depicted on the Goad plan.⁴

4.8 The footprint of buildings in this area appears to have remained generally unchanged for both the 1927-29 OS revisions⁵ and, with the exception of the removal of some of a small number of the properties fronting onto Dryden Street, the edition of 1938⁶ (Appendix 4.5). By this time, however, large numbers of nearby buildings seem to have been demolished, with large gaps on the north and south sides of Fleet Street, Alfred Terrace and Lee Street, the north side of Old Milton Street, and the east and west sides of Alfred Street and Dryden Street. This may have been carried out as part of the process of slum clearance, which perhaps subsequently included the rest of the east side of Dryden Street between Old Milton Street and Fleet Street, and the north side of Fleet Street between Dryden Street and Fleet Street Buildings.⁷ Lee Street car park was established on the site of slum property.⁸

4.9 The western side of the site appears to have been reshaped by 1946 where the footprint and partial elevation of a corner entrance building was shown on a plan for an extension in the location of the later Dryden House.⁹ The newly extended footprint is illustrated on the 1953 OS (Appendix 4.6), which labels a large 'engineering works (steam fittings)' extending from Dryden Street through the west and southwest portions of Fleet House.¹⁰ Goad plan revision slips of 1951 label the structure H[ard] W[are] W[are]H[ouse] and suggest British Ste[el] Specialties occupied all of this redeveloped area.¹¹ Meanwhile, the southeast corner of Fleet Buildings was a lumber store while the north range

⁴ DE 4702/22/3, Goad plan of Leicester, sheet 24, 'March 1892' printed onto sheet; sheet annotated 'June 1923'.

⁵ OS map, XXXI.10, revised 1927-8, published 1930.

⁶ OS map, XXXI.10, catalogued as 1938.

⁷ V. Holyoak, *But for These Things – Leicester and its People in WWII* (Troubador Publishing Ltd, 2014), <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=DwwgAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA161&dq=slum+clearance+leicester&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiM1KXyjYLOAhXnIcAKHUtcALIQ6AEINzAD#v=onepage&q=slum%20clearance%20leicester&f=false>.

⁸ 'The ancient borough: St. Margaret's', in *A History of the County of Leicester: Volume 4, the City of Leicester*, ed. R. A. McKinley (London, 1958), pp. 350-361. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/leics/vol4/pp350-361> [accessed 16 July 2016].

⁹ Planning application: TP9570

¹⁰ OS map, plan SK 5904, surveyed or revised 1953, published 1954.

¹¹ Revision slips for sheet 24, July 1951. British Library, C.15 Leicester, Volume of revised Goad plans.

was a printer.¹² A description of the firm written ca. 1955 describes the expansion of its premises (see section 4.17).

- 4.10 By 1954 at least part of the south range of Fleet Buildings was a H[ard] W[are] store on the first and second floors and a gauge factory on the third floor, suggesting that British Steam Specialties had taken over a larger area.¹³
- 4.11 In 1955 a handbook and guide to Leicester included an image of the Fleet House frontage with the new angled corner building to Byron Street (Appendix 4.7). A lower structure on the location of the later Dryden House is visible on the left.

Later 20th century

- 4.12 Permission for retaining the temporary building on the northwest corner of the site was approved in 1959. Drawings submitted with the application show intentions to alter it at this time, for instance replacing steel windows with hardwood windows.¹⁴ A number of planning applications submitted by British Steam Specialties also appear to be associated with the changes carried out around the 1950s, including an application relating Dryden Street to alter part of the elevation to provide a new trade counter (1950), and applications to retain a temporary extension to the works (1956 and 1957).
- 4.13 Permission was conditionally approved in 1980 for a four storey extension to the printers' works on the north side of Fleet Buildings, apparently to infill a longitudinal gap.¹⁵ This work was never carried out but in 1989, an application was approved for a two storey extension to the rear of the print works.¹⁶ An amendment to the approved plans was submitted in 1990 seeing the enclosure at second and third floors of the fire escape stair.¹⁷
- 4.14 Meanwhile, in 1981 permission was conditionally granted to British Steam Specialties to erect a two storey extension to offices/warehouses to provide a new computer room and offices; this was proposed for the northwest corner of the site, with relatively plain elevations.¹⁸ Redevelopment of this area is

¹² Revision slips for sheet 24, July 1951. British Library, C.15 Leicester, Volume of revised Goad plans.

¹³ Revision slips for sheet 24, Jan 1954. British Library, C.15 Leicester, Volume of revised Goad plans.

¹⁴ Planning application, 009570.

¹⁵ Planning application, 19801627.

¹⁶ Planning application, 19892408.

¹⁷ Planning application, 19900514.

¹⁸ Planning application, 19811722.

reflected in a comparison of maps of ca. 1974 and ca. 1985, which show the gap on the Dryden Street frontage as having been eliminated and the corner onto Dryden Street/Old Milton Street as altered to become stepped rather than canted. The later map labels this northwest area Dryden House.¹⁹

- 4.15 In 1994, permission was given to the BSS Group for altering the windows of Fleet House, replacing timber windows in the Fleet Street elevation and timber and metal windows to the enclosed courtyard with white aluminium tilt and turn units.²⁰ This was followed in 1995 by the approval of an application to infill the central courtyard and access archway to form a new main entrance, reception area, office, meeting rooms and lecture room.²¹

BSS (British Steam Specialties)

- 4.16 BSS (formerly British Steam Specialties) was founded in 1899, supplying equipment for steam, gas, air, water and oil installations and meeting the needs of maintenance engineers.²² An advertisement dating from ca. 1901 describes the firm as 'makers of steam traps, separators &c' with the office being at Fleet Street, Leicester.²³
- 4.17 A later advert from 1921 lists different types of valves including 'valves for reduction of pressure in steam, gas, water and compressed air supplies', giving the address as Wharf Street, Leicester, though later adverts of (for instance) 1945, 1958 and 1960 give it as Fleet Street, Leicester.²⁴ Having started as a small venture, by ca. 1955 the business was exporting internationally. Around that time its premises were described as having:

'now been extended to many times their original size, and additionally there is a separate works, having a modern foundry and machine tool equipment, which is devoted to the manufacture of gunmetal and cast iron valves, steam traps and indicators, reducing valves and much other specialised equipment for a multiplicity of industries. The works premises are

¹⁹ OS map, plan SK 5904, revised 1974, Crown copyright 1974; OS map, plan SK 5904, revised 1985, Crown copyright 1986.

²⁰ Planning application, 19941137.

²¹ Planning application, 19950702.

²² Leicester official handbook, n.d., ca. 1955.

²³ Grace's Guide to British Industrial History, http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/British_Steam_Specialties.

²⁴ Grace's Guide to British Industrial History, http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/British_Steam_Specialties.

*continually being extended and they contain perhaps one of the finest equipped plants of a comparable size in the Midlands.*²⁵

- 4.18 The company also manufactured 'Boss' white jointing compound and had a repairs department.²⁶
- 4.19 In 1961 the firm had 400 employees. It was floated as a public company in 1963 before changing its name to BSS around 1986. The company acquired Havelock Controls in 1998.²⁷
- 4.20 In 2010, BSS became part of Travis Perkins plc. Its own brand range of goods, BOSS, includes valves, controls, technical heating and pumping equipment.²⁸

Other Occupants

- 4.21 The following table contains a list of occupants at Fleet House Buildings and charts the gradual expansion of BSS from its original location in a different building on Fleet Street to the occupation of the entire site.

Occupants		
Date	Address	Occupier
1870 ²⁹	Fleet Street	<i>British Steam Specialties/Fleet Street buildings/Fleet House not listed</i>
1891 ³⁰	Fleet Street	<i>British Steam Specialties/Fleet Street buildings/Fleet House not listed</i>
1900 ³¹	Fleet Street	<i>British Steam Specialties/Fleet Street buildings/Fleet House not listed</i>
1904 ³²	Fleet Street buildings-	1 Neal Joseph, boot manufactr 2 Speedwell Clothing Co 6 Sedgley, Tyler & Co. boot mfrs British Steam Specialties Limited, mechanical engineers (H. W. Waudby, manager)

²⁵ Leicester official handbook, n.d., ca. 1955.

²⁶ Leicester official handbook, n.d., ca. 1955.

²⁷ Grace's Guide to British Industrial History, http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/British_Steam_Specialties.

²⁸ 'About Us', BSS Industrial, <http://www.bssindustrial.co.uk/About-Us>.

²⁹ ?L.T.P.S. *Leicester Directory*, 1870.

³⁰ *Kelly's Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland*, 1891.

³¹ *Kelly's Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland*, 1900.

³² *Wright's Leicester Directory*, 1904.

1925 ³³	Fleet Street buildings-	1 Wacks & Speedwell Clothing Co. Ltd. wholesale clothiers 3 Skinner A. H. & Co. Limited printers Leicester City Hosiery Co. Ltd hosiery manufacturers British Steam Specialities Ltd engineers' factrs (H. W. Waudby, manager)
1947 ³⁴	Fleet Street, 68 Wharf street to Byron Street	Woodford & Wormleighton Ltd knitted goods mfrs Haworth James (Leicester) Ltd printers British Steam Specialities Ltd steam plant engnrs' fetrs
1966 ³⁵	Fleet Street, 68 Wharf street to Byron Street	Leicester Boot & Shoe United Club & Institute Ltd (The) Haworth James (Leicester) Ltd lithographers British Steam Specialities Ltd steam plant engnrs
1966 ³⁶	Dryden Street, somewhere between Old Milton Street and Pike Street	British Steam Specialities Ltd (garage)

³³ Kelly's Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1925.

³⁴ Kelly's Directory of Leicester, 1947.

³⁵ Kelly's Directory, 1966.

³⁶ Kelly's Directory, 1966.

5.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

- 5.1 The property at Fleet House was originally constructed at the turn of the 20th century to house a number of industrial, manufacturing and warehouse functions, some of which had been housed in other premises in the area before the construction of the building.
- 5.2 The building was a three storey brick structure with an ornate façade fronting to the south and arranged around a central carriage archway leading to a courtyard in the centre of the building. Internally the spaces within the building appear to have been large and open, with the upper storeys probably open to the roof where its king-post trusses would have been exposed. Other buildings lay directly adjacent to this large structure with separate occupants, some evidence of their early form is readable in the eastern elevations of Fleet House, particularly the presence of a north-light roofed building to the north east, also reflected on the 1923 GOAD plan.
- 5.3 Internally the original character of the building has been comprehensively removed by the most recent office redevelopment.
- 5.4 By 1946 an area to the west of Fleet House had been cleared of smaller properties and redeveloped with a larger building connected through to the western portion of Fleet House. As indicated on the 1953 OS map, this whole area was now occupied by British Steam Specialties as an Engineering works. The building today retains no evidence of the processes or machinery that may have been housed here. The remainder of Fleet House remained occupied by other companies including a print workshop at the northern side.
- 5.5 This multiple occupancy appears to have continued through until the last decades of the 20th century when the application to extend the northern part of the building referred to the 'print works' not to BSS in 1989.
- 5.6 By 1995, however, it appears that the whole building was conjoined with applications for BSS to infill the central courtyard creating a single reception entry, and the replacement of the windows to the front and courtyard elevations. The internal character of the building was entirely appropriate for an office re-fitting of this time.

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16D69/276, Price list. British Steam Specialities Ltd., Fleet Street, Leicester. Wrought iron tubes and fittings for gas, water and steam. June 1928

DE 3730/173, Blue print for 'Pilot Type Equilibrium Valve' under patent of British Steam Specialities Ltd. of Leicester by David Bentley (Leicester) Ltd., n.d. c.1915

DE 4702/22/3, Goad plan of Leicester, sheet 24, 'March 1892' printed onto sheet; sheet annotated 'June 1923'

DE 7685/1, Goad plans of Leicester, revised to ca. 1957-58 [does not include sheet 24]

DE 5121/29-30, Photograph, painted wall sign, Fleet Street, perhaps 1996

DE 3736 Box 10, Photograph, Fleet Street, St ?Ledger Tavern, n.d.

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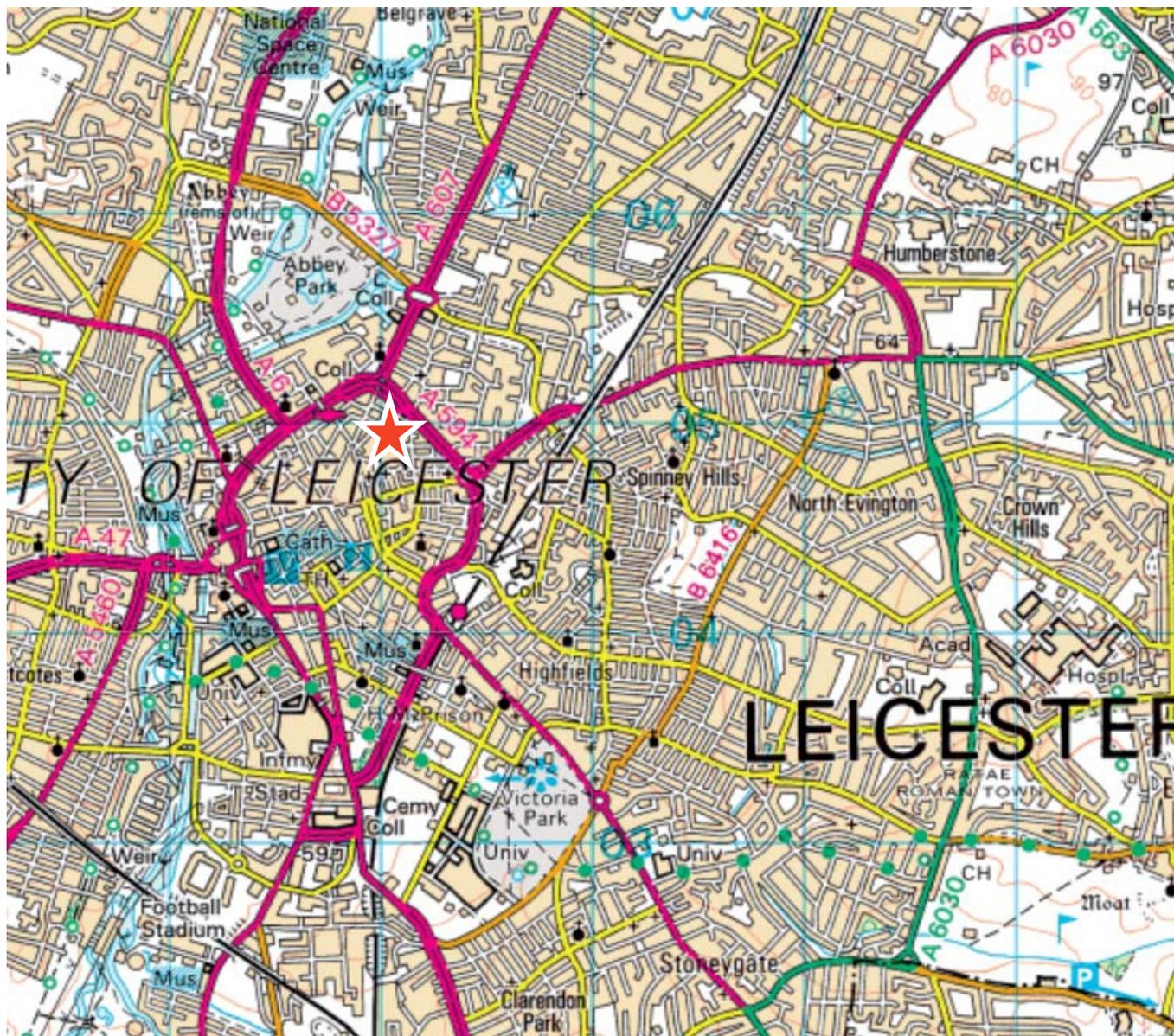
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Leicester official handbook, n.d., ca. 1955

APPENDIX 1: Site Location



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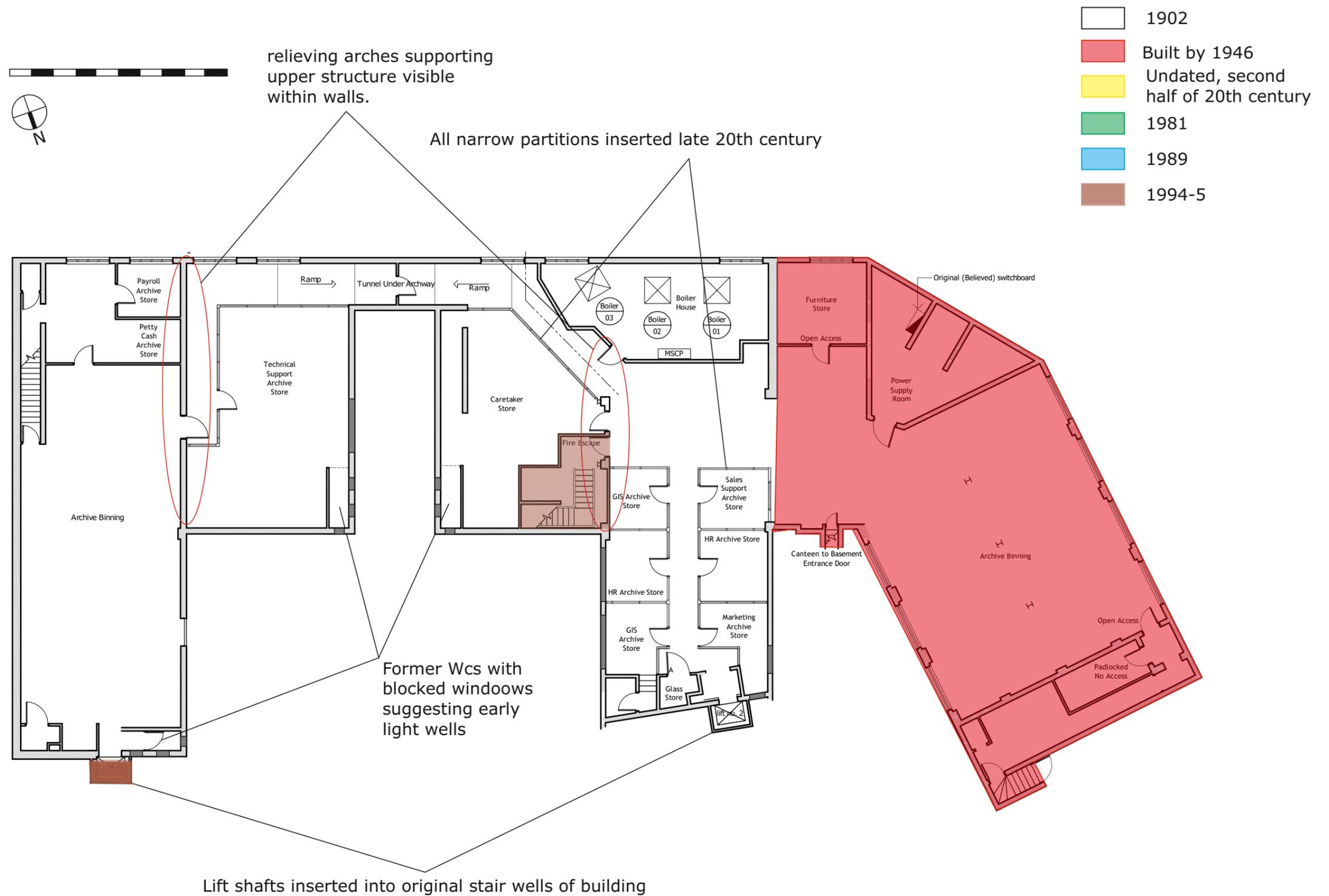
Appendix X: Site Location



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Appendix 1.2: Site Location
(not to scale)

APPENDIX 2: Building Plans



Appendix 2.1: Basement floor plan

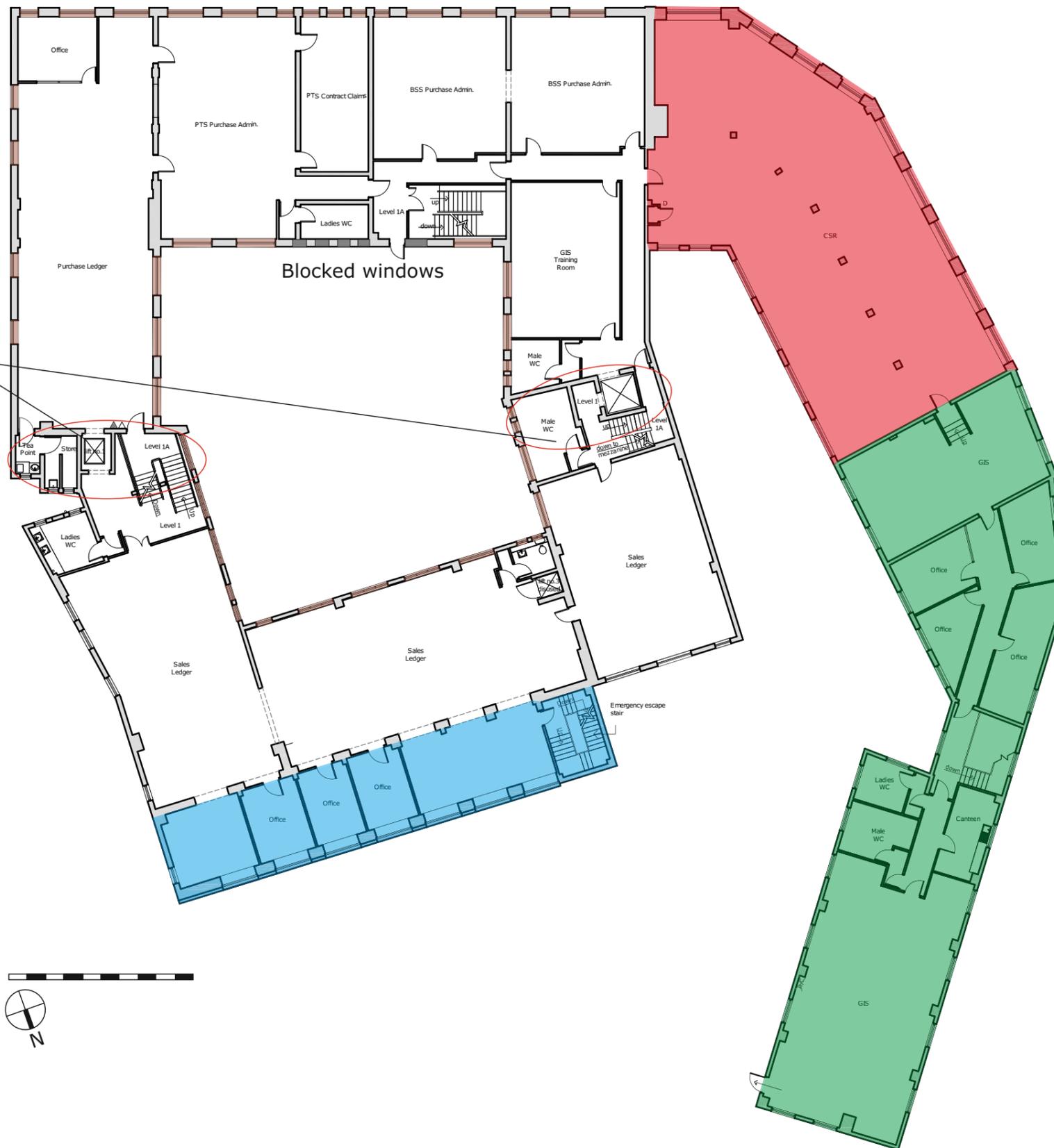


Appendix 2.2: Ground Floor Plan

All fenestration in main block replaced.

Windows on this side inserted 1986, renewed 1994-5

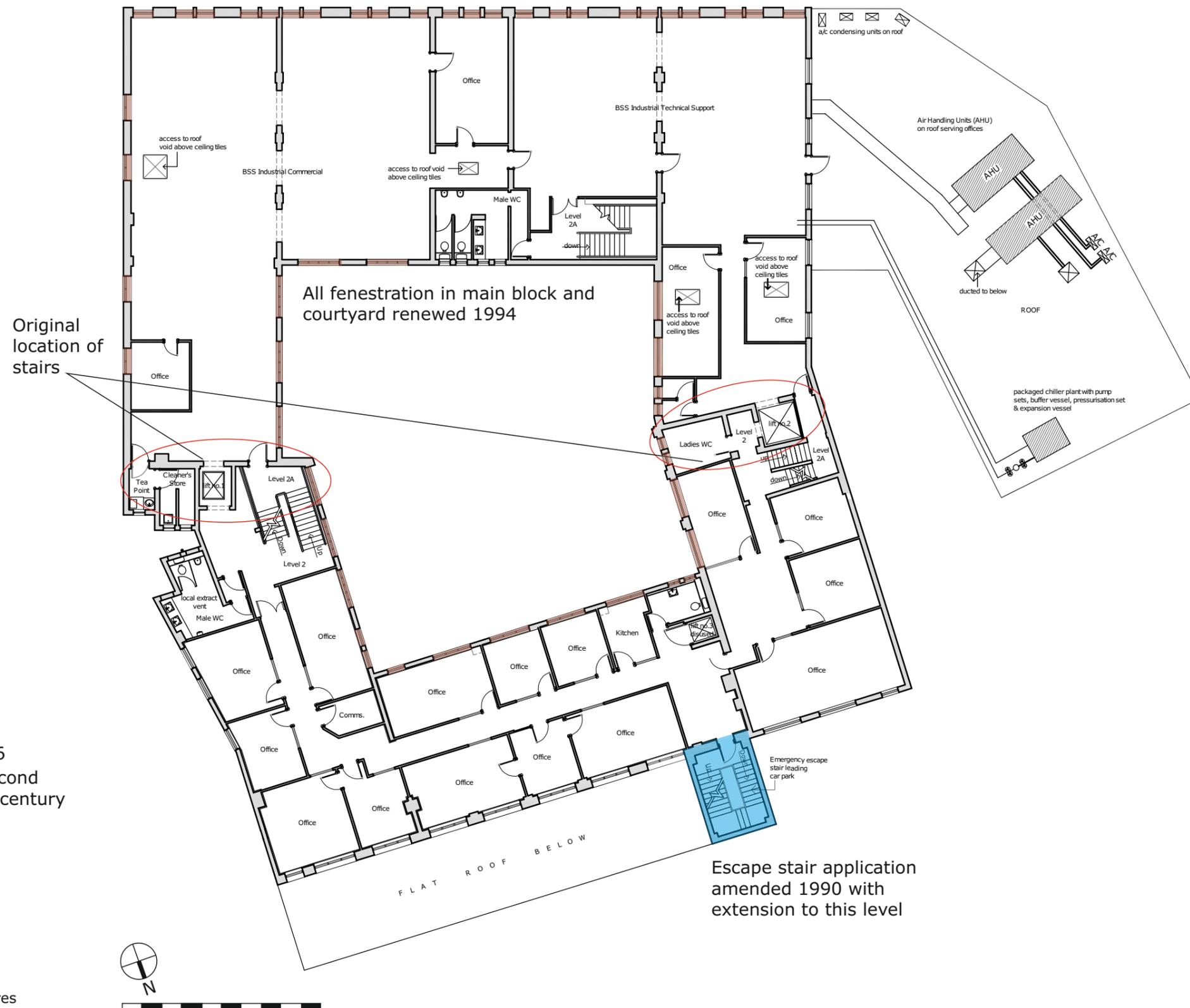
Original location of stairs



- 1902
- Built by 1946
- Undated, second half of 20th century
- 1981
- 1989
- 1994-5

NB: all interior finishes and decor are modern, phasing relates to structural blocks not to individual internal features

Appendix 2.3: First Floor Plan



Appendix 2.4: Second Floor Plan

Original location of stairs



Appendix 2.5: Third Floor Plan

APPENDIX 3: Site photographs (September 2016)



APPENDIX 3.1: Front elevation of Fleet House. NE



APPENDIX 3.2: Fleet House eastern elevation with BSS advertising banner at roof line. NW



APPENDIX 3.3: North eastern corner of Fleet House showing scars from formerly adjacent north-lit roof. W



APPENDIX 3.4: Rear elevation of Fleet House with 1989 extension. SE



APPENDIX 3.5: The Byron Street section and entrance. NE



APPENDIX 3.6: Junction between the Byron Street section and Dryden House with loading bay. NE



APPENDIX 3.7: Dryden House rear and side elevations. SE



APPENDIX 3.8: Dryden House rear elevation. W



APPENDIX 3.9: Southern central courtyard elevations and roof covering ground floor. S



APPENDIX 3.10: Courtyard northern side. N



APPENDIX 3.11: Ground floor, reception area in former courtyard.
N



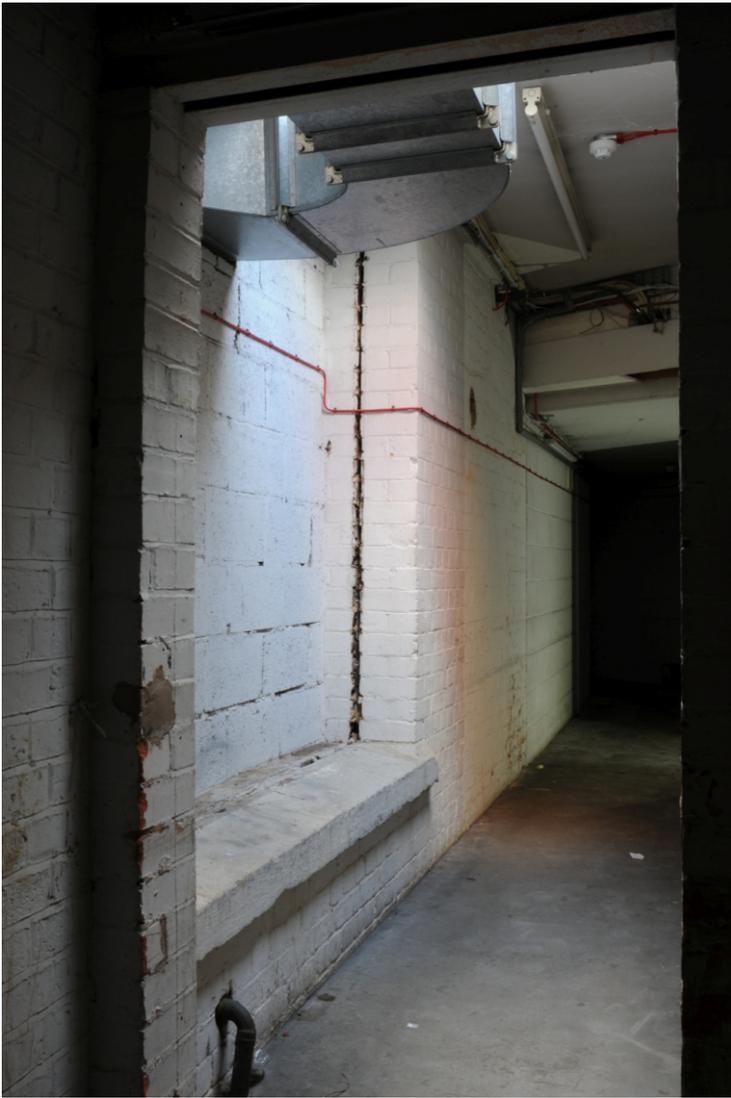
APPENDIX 3.12: Ground floor, from the reception area in the former courtyard looking towards the man entrance in the former carriage entrance. S



APPENDIX 3.13: Cafeteria area and mezzanine, in the area between Fleet House and the Byron Street section. NW



APPENDIX 3.14: Ground floor, the post room. Pillars represent the junction between Fleet House (to the right) and the extended section of 1989. E



APPENDIX 3.15: (left)
Corridor at the rear of Fleet House with blocked windows indicating the original rear wall. SW

APPENDIX 3.16: (below)
First Floor, typical open plan room within Fleet House. N.





APPENDIX 3.17: (above)
First Floor, open plan room
within the Byron Street section
of the building. NW



APPENDIX 3.18: (left)
Internal modern office
partitions and corridor space
within Dryden House, first
floor. S



APPENDIX 3.19: (left)
Modern stair rising in the southern part of Fleet House against the courtyard elevations. NW.

APPENDIX 3.20: (below)
Typical open floor plan office space, second floor. N



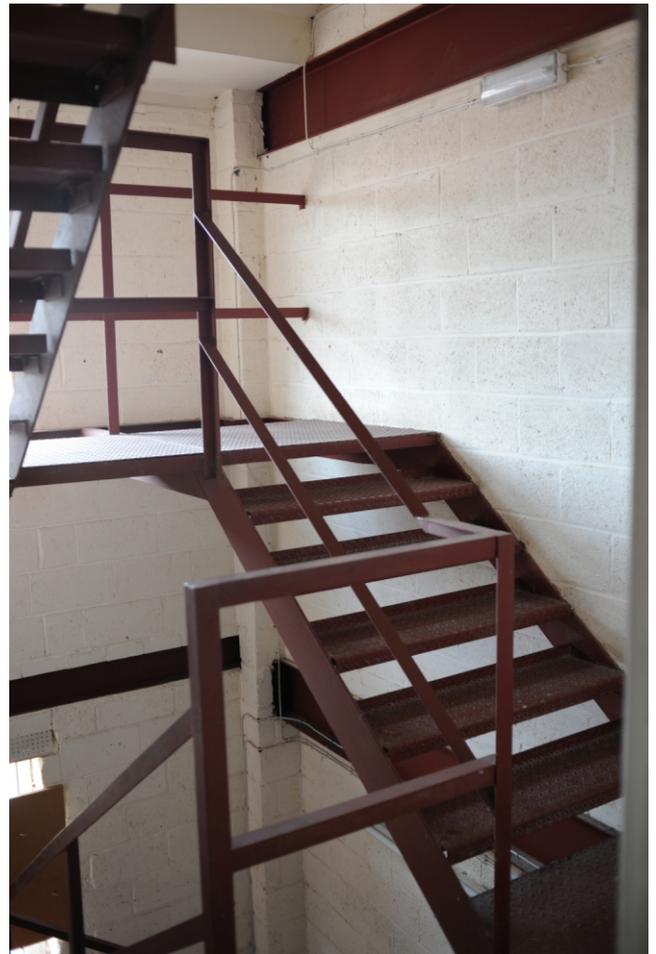
n west



APPENDIX 3.21: (left) stair rising through the eastern range of Fleet House, structure between first and second floor. SW.

APPENDIX 3.22: (below) first floor, junction and steps between the Byron Street section and Dryden House. SE





APPENDIX 3.23: (Left) Second floor office partitions in Fleet House, northern range. W

APPENDIX 3.24: (Right) Fire escape stair added in 1989/90.



APPENDIX 3.25: BOSS/BSS sales examples left behind in second floor office. Typical of the parts manufactured by the company.



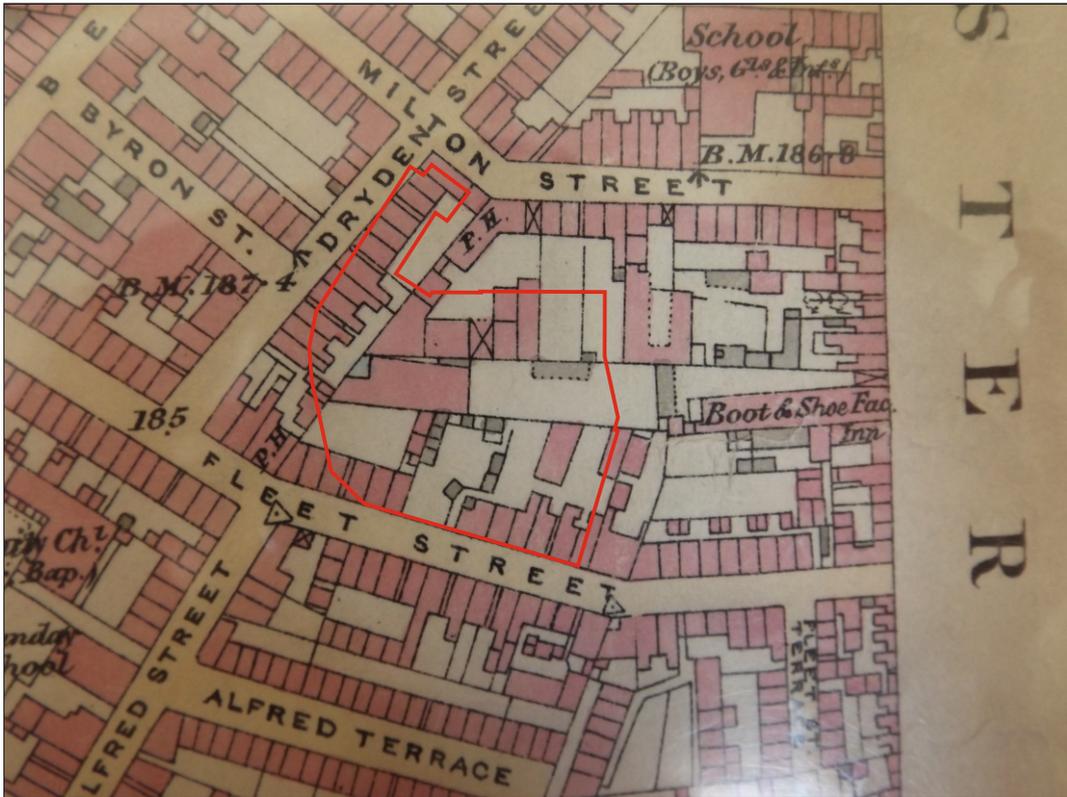
APPENDIX 3.26: (Above) typical third floor office space, slightly lower ceiling height.

APPENDIX 3.27: (left) king post trusses in roof space over Fleet House northern range. W

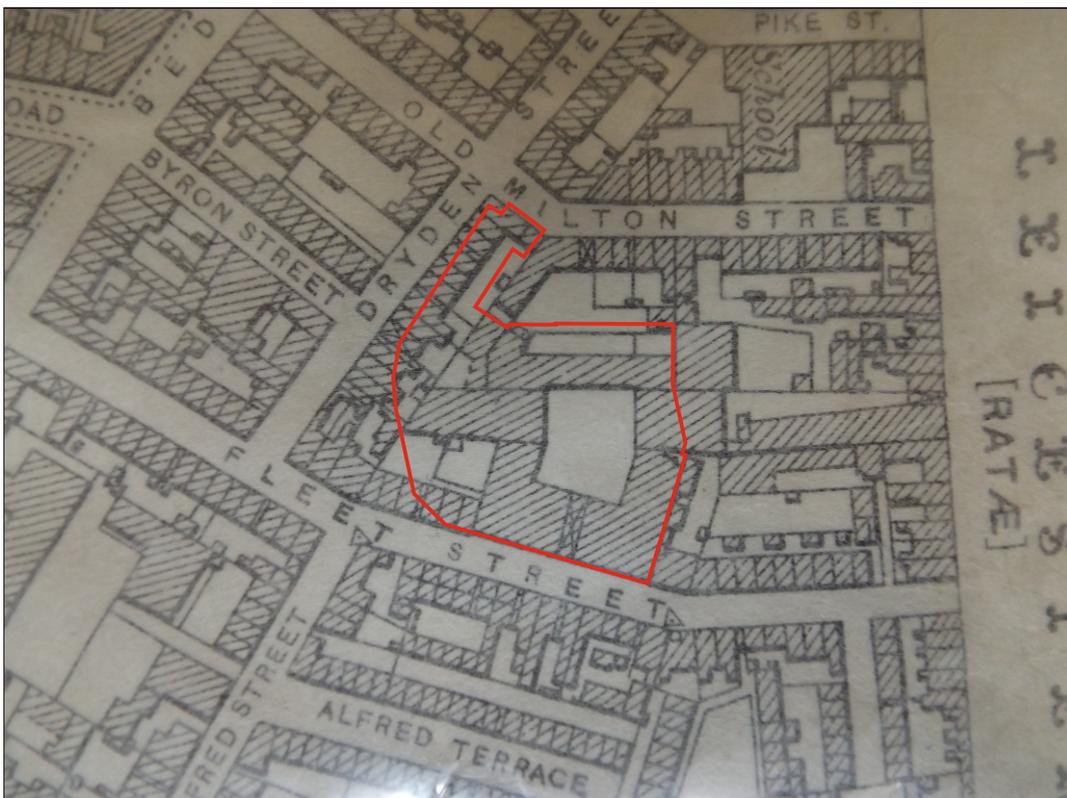


APPENDIX 3.28: Painted or white washed boards on underside of roof structure, suggesting that the roof was originally open to the third or second floor warehouse spaces.
S

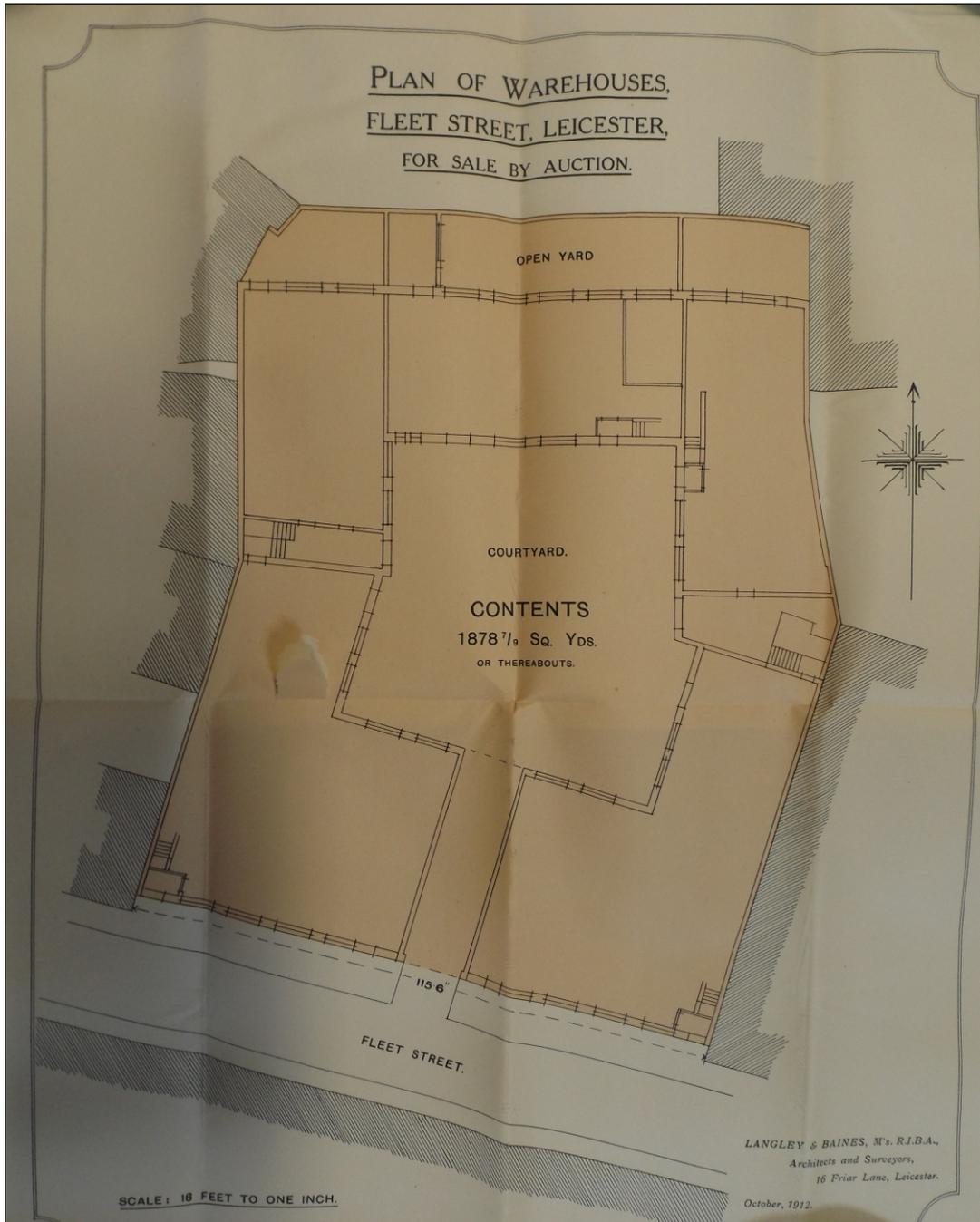
APPENDIX 2: Historic Maps



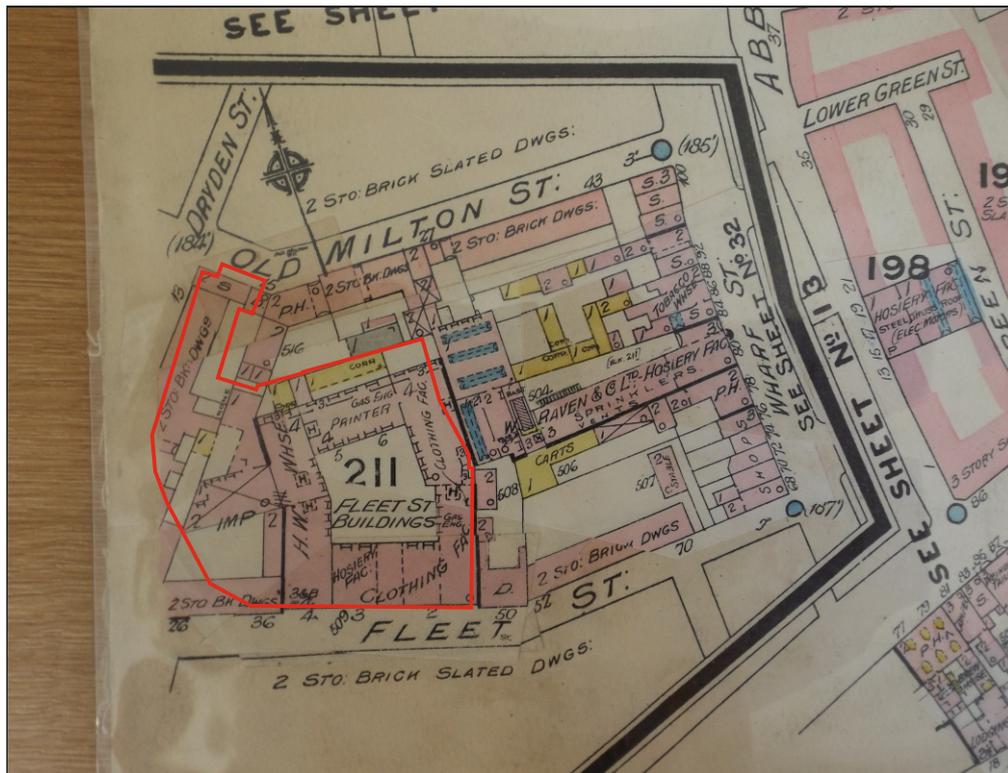
Appendix 4.1: Extract from the 1886-1889 OS map sheet XXXI.10. (not reproduced to scale, today's building outline in red)



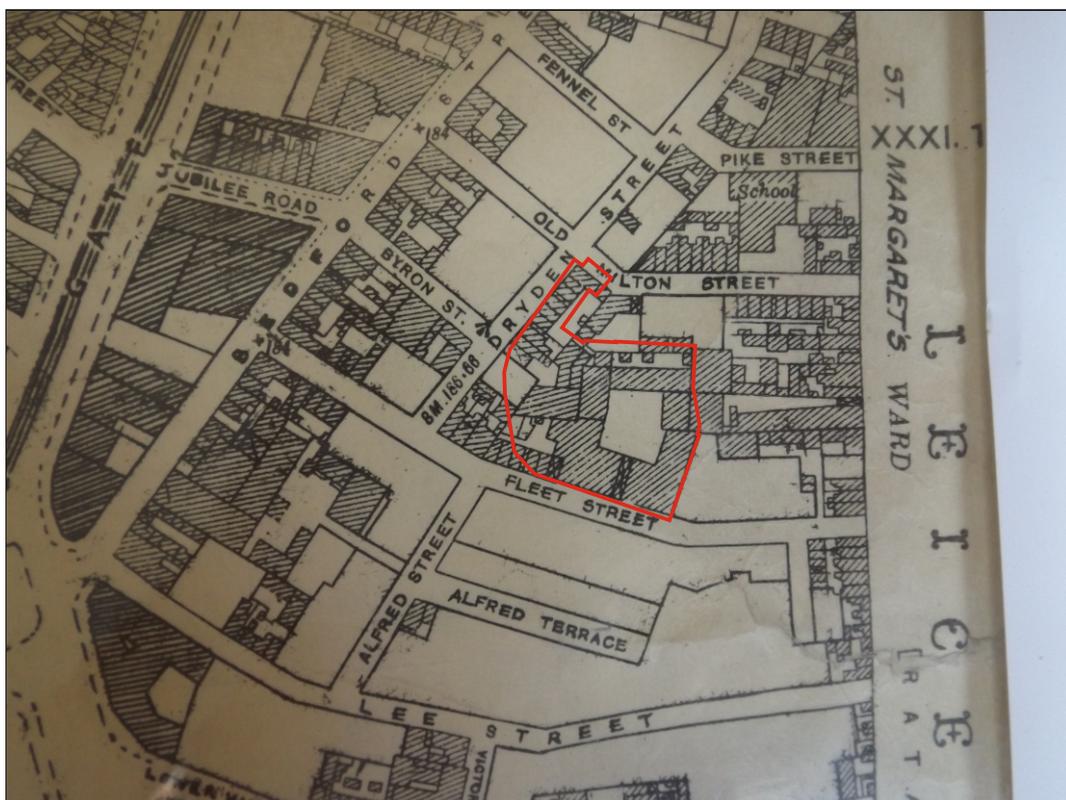
Appendix 4.2: Extract from the 1902-1904 OS sheet XXXI.10 (not reproduced to scale, today's building outline in red)



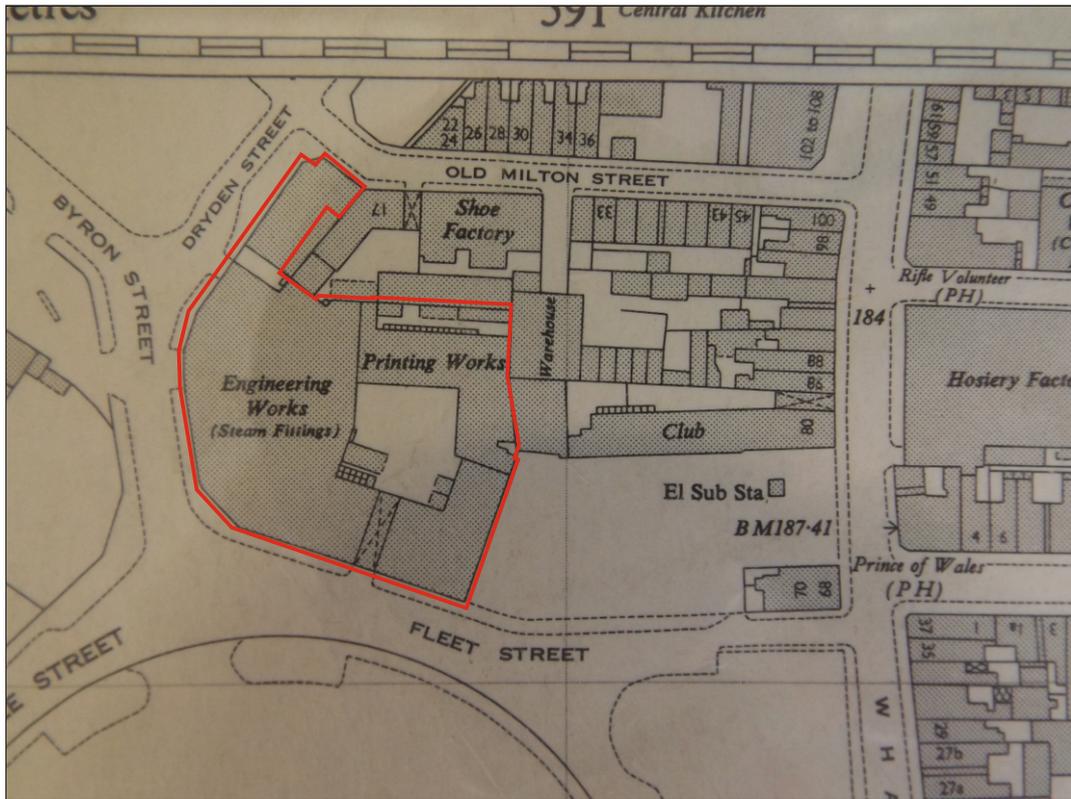
Appendix 4.3: 1912 Plan accompanying sales particulars (Leicester Record Office: 8D62 Box 28/35)



Appendix 4.4: Extract from the 1923 GOAD plan (not reproduced to scale, today's building outline in red)



Appendix 4.5: Extract from the c.1938 OS sheet XXXI.10 (not reproduced to scale, today's building outline in red)



Appendix 4.1: Extract from the 1953 OS sheet SK 5904. (not reproduced to scale, today's building outline in red)

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