

**AN HISTORIC BUILDING
SURVEY OF THE ILKESTON
MAGISTRATES' COURT HOUSE,
PIMLICO, ILKESTON, DERBYSHIRE**



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SUMMARY

- An historic building report by Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by DLG Architects on behalf of Derby College. It is in relation to an application for Conservation Area Consent (Planning Application No. ERE/0412/0042) for the demolition of an existing civic building and the building of a new College building on the same site. The existing building, the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House, was designed by R. W. Kenning, former Derbyshire County Architect, and was opened in 1976. It lies within the western part of the centre of Ilkeston, with Pimlico on the west side and New Lawn Road on the east side. According to an article in *Architecture East Midlands* in 1977 the building was designed to have a 'simple dignity rather than an imposing scale,' to reflect its residential setting.
- Although the building is not listed it lies within a Conservation Area and the planning condition for demolition refers to Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 and requires historic building recording be undertaken prior to demolition. This was to be a largely Level 2 descriptive record (with a photographic and drawn record), with an element of Level 3 analysis and historic background research.
- The site was visited on the 13th and 29th November whilst contractors were on site and carrying out preliminary stripping out before demolition. Architects' drawings were made available by Derbyshire County Council and some research was also carried out.
- An earlier archaeological desk-based study concluded that although the site may once have been on the western edge of the medieval extent of the town, the site remained largely undeveloped up until the 20th century. The site may have been partly quarried in the 18th century and then used for horticulture in the 19th century. The site was still mainly allotments up until the mid-1970s.
- The building is moderately large with a floorspace of 415 sq. m., and is of low height, mostly single storey with a flat roof. It is of traditional load-bearing construction, built from a mixture of brick, both facing and common, and blockwork, with a largely timber framework of joists, and bracing supporting the roof. At the north end the building has a basement area used for cells and police, and for adjacent plant.
- The Court includes four courtrooms with adjacent magistrates' retiring rooms, public waiting and ancillary spaces, together with office accommodation for general administration, for the clerk to the magistrates and for the probation service. The four main sectors are connected by through corridors.
- When first opened the building held a county court which was able to deal with civil cases and disputes. The decision to close the Magistrates' Court House at Ilkeston was made in 2010 (one of 93 courts around the country) after a review concluded that the building was underused and expensive to maintain.

LIST OF CONTENTS

Summary	page 2
List of Contents	page 3
List of Illustrations	page 4
1. Project background	page 6
2. Historical background	page 7
3. Building description	page 8
Exterior	page 9
Interior	page 9
4. Recent history	page 10
5. Acknowledgements	page 10

Illustrations

Figures 1-8

Plates 1-23

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

Figure 1: Location of the former Magistrates' Court House, Pimlico, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, highlighted by the arrow. Scale 1:12,500. *Contains Ordnance Survey data. © Crown Copyright and database right 2012.*

Figure 2: Plan issued by Erewash Borough Council showing the extent of the Ilkeston Conservation Area, here showing the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House highlighted by an arrow. Not shown to regular scale.

Figure 3: Ground plan of the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House, Pimlico, Ilkeston, showing the general layout and functions of general areas, offices and courtrooms, along with site entrances and exits. Scale 1:200. *Based on plans provided courtesy of Derbyshire County Council.*

Figure 4: Plan of basement area of the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House. Scale 1:100. *Based on plan provided courtesy of Derbyshire County Council.*

Figure 5: Plan of Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House showing functional zones and position of basement in relation to the ground floor area. Scale 1:200. *Based on plans provided courtesy of Derbyshire County Council.*

Figure 6: Plan showing furniture layout in the four courtrooms of Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House in 1985. Not to scale. Court No. 1A was later renamed No. 3. *Plan provided courtesy of Derbyshire County Council.*

Figure 7: Architect's drawings showing partial elevations of the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House. The lowest one, the north-west end, which shows the roof, ground floor and basement levels is highlighted here. Scale at A3 1:100. *Plan courtesy of Derbyshire County Council.*

Figure 8: Viewpoints of plates shown in report (except for Plates 19, 20), and approximate areas of raised roofing (green blocks). Not to regular scale.

PLATES

Plate 1: View of the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House looking westwards along Pimlico. This view shows the raised roof structures over the courtrooms and, to right, the upper plant room.

Plate 2: View of the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House looking eastwards along Pimlico.

Plate 3: View of the mainly flat roof of the Court House, seen from New Lawn Road.

Plate 4: Brickwork facade around one of the non-public entrances off New Lawn Road.

Plate 5: Austere brickwork showing at the north end of the Court House. The steel shutters are at the entrance to the prisoner's van dock.

Plate 6: Sign in the main hallway commemorating the official opening of the Court House in 1976.

Plate 7: Site plan on the wall of the usher's room.

Plate 8: Main gathering hall outside Courtrooms 1 and 2.

Plate 9: Reception area off the Pimlico side's main entrance.

Plate 10: Reception in the fine collecting area.

Plate 11: Contrasting brick and white blockwork finishes. The staircase in the middle leads to the upper plant area.

Plate 12: The same area looking south-eastwards to the inner courtyard.

Plate 13: One of the smaller offices in the Court House.

Plate 14: Well-lit and raised area at the north end of the building reserved for attending magistrates.

Plate 15: View inside Court No. 2, showing the raised bench at the north end, the lower seating area and, to left, the defendant's cubicle.

Plate 16: View inside Court No. 1, as seen from the magistrates' bench.

Plate 17: Less formal Juvenile Court with no fitted furniture and with carpets and soft walling.

Plate 18: One of the two stairways down to the cells beneath the north part of the building.

Plate 19: Row of cells for male prisoners.

Plate 20: One of the cells, showing standard fitted bench to the rear.

Plate 21: Area above the ceiling of the enquiry area showing upper blockwork and brick construction and a complex of ducts, cables, straps and the timber super-structure beneath the roof covering.

Plate 22: Cafeteria area with ceiling removed (showing as dark line) and tall upper structure and lighting revealed.

Plate 23: Corridor with pipework showing above timber joists and bracing.

1. Project background

This historic building report by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) was commissioned by DLG Architects on behalf of Derby College. It is in relation to an application for Conservation Area Consent (Planning Application No. ERE/0412/0042) for the demolition of an existing civic building and the building of a new College building on the same site. The existing building, known locally as the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House, but to begin with officially as the East Derbyshire Magistrates' Court, was designed by R. W. Kenning, former Derbyshire County Architect, and was opened in 1976. It lies within the western part of the centre of Ilkeston, with Pimlico on the west side and New Lawn Road on the east side (Figure 1).

The site has already been the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment. Although the building is not listed or on the draft list of the council's List of Buildings of Local Interest it lies within a Conservation Area (Figure 2) and the planning condition for demolition refers to Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 and requires historic building recording be undertaken prior to demolition. This was to be a largely Level 2 descriptive record (with a photographic and drawn record), with an element of Level 3 analysis and historic background research.

The overall study employs the methodology developed by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) for use on similar projects in the region. This methodology conforms to the standard requirements of planning authorities where consent applications are made for development, re-development, building conversion, major restoration or demolition. These follow guidelines to be found in the National Planning Procedure Framework (2012) which supercedes conservation planning document *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS 5, Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

The procedures follow closely those laid down in English Heritage's *Understanding Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice* (2006). The methodology also accords with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Codes of Conduct and Standards* and the paper *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001).

The report

This report is the result of several specific information-gathering tasks:

- A site visit was made by the author and Matt Hurford of TPA on the 13th November 2012 to compile a photographic record. At this stage contractors were on site and about to commence the stripping out of the building's interior. The photographic record consists of over 100 external and internal digital photographic views and the

negatives and prints from two black and white films (for long-term archival storage). These, together with plans showing viewpoints, form the major part of the site archive.

- A request was made to Derbyshire County Council (DCC) for access to or copies of architects' plans of the building. This was granted and a visit was made to DCC offices in Matlock on the 20th November. A selection of original hand drawings on microfilm were scanned and put on a CD. Several of these have formed the basis of figures within this report. The plans in the report are digitised copies made by the author.
- Following acquisition of plans of the building, a brief return visit was arranged for the 29th November to check these and to make some comparable internal measurements; by this stage access on site was severely restricted as asbestos was being removed.
- Background research, including a visit to the Derbyshire Local Studies Library in Matlock.

The TPA site code is MCI. The archive number provided by Derby Museum and Art Gallery is [DBYMU 2012-254](#). The archive will be deposited by April 2013.

2. Historical background

The archaeological desk-based study (*Former Magistrates Court, New Lawn Road, Ilkeston, Derbyshire. An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*. On Site Archaeology Ltd, 2012) concluded that although the site may once have been on the western edge of the medieval extent of the town, the site remained largely undeveloped up until the 20th century. Whilst the line of the road known as Pimlico shows on maps dating back to at least 1598, the site may have been partly quarried in the 18th century and then used for horticulture in the 19th century. Early Ordnance Survey maps show land demarcations and a few isolated buildings but the site was largely utilised for allotments during WW2. It had largely remained clear of buildings whilst houses were constructed on adjacent plots in the 1920s and 1930s. The site was still allotments and featured a borough depot before the Court House was built in the mid-1970s.

The opening of the Magistrates' Court House was noted in the professional journal *Architecture East Midlands* (No. 72, September –October 1977, page 9) as it was shortlisted for a civic design award at the time. This reported that the design of the building had been a collaboration between the DCC County Architect R. W. Kenning, the Interior Designer for Courts and Court Hall Roger Simpson and Accoustic Consultant Peter Lord. The construction was overseen by Quantity Surveyors Messrs Carter, Glover & Partners and the building undertaken by General Contractor Ford & Weston Ltd, both companies based in Derby.

The initial brief had been formulated by DCC and the Home Office. Design work commenced in early 1972, with work starting on site in 1974. The

building was completed in September 1976 and was officially opened on the 10th December 1976 by the Lord Lieutenant for Derbyshire, Col. Sir Ian Walker-Okeover (Plate 6). The total cost including the internal furnishing was £542,500.

3. Building description

The Magistrates' Court in Ilkeston is situated in a residential area close to the Market Square and the Town Hall, and is included within the western edge of the town's Conservation Area. According to the *Architecture East Midlands* article the building was designed to have a 'simple dignity rather than an imposing scale,' to reflect its residential setting. Brick screen walls and extensive landscaping were used to reflect the residential characteristics of the immediate area and the nearby public gardens (Plates 1, 2). This probably followed the so-called *contextual* theme of architectural design, where a structure was in tune with its surroundings and its shape conformed gently to the contours of its site. It appears to have been accepted by local residents as not detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area, a point also made by Pevsner in his book on the buildings of Derbyshire.

The building is of traditional load-bearing construction, carrying a timber joisted roof with the addition of steelwork over the larger spaces. Load-bearing walls have been expressed both internally and externally as a feature of the design. The public spaces, the courtrooms and the secure accommodation are fully air conditioned. The magistrates clerk's office and the probation suite are heated by radiators and fan assisted heaters. The whole system is served by a gas fired boiler (*Architecture East Midlands*).

Inspection of the interior showed that the building is built from a mixture of brick, both facing and common, and blockwork, with a largely timber framework of joists, and bracing supporting the roof. Brick facing shows in public areas, whilst office spaces and corridors have exposed white-painted blockwork. Hardwearing glazed brickwork is also used at the entrances. Whilst offices and the magistrates' retiring areas benefit from windows providing daylight (Plate 14) the courtrooms, interview rooms, secure rooms and corridors are so-positioned where windows are either not needed or where side lighting is not possible.

Ceilings are generally at a height of c.2.5m, with a cavity space above of c.1.2m to the wooden roof support timbers. The cavity spaces contain ventilation ducts, light fittings and service cabling (Plates 22, 23). The upper ceiling was probably formed from chipboard or fibreboard, with layers of felt and with asbestos on the underside. The large reception and gathering hall entered from the Pimlico entrances have higher ceilings at nearly 4m, and some ornamental lighting and wall decoration (Plates 8, 9, 21).

Exterior

The site slopes to the north and may have been sunken at that end due to former quarrying. Whilst the building is moderately large with a floorspace of 415 sq. m., it is generally of low height, mostly single storey with a flat roof (Plate 3). The design is intentionally functional and restrained, and perhaps comes across as bland to some viewers. The exterior is largely composed of plain brickwork, a mixture of smooth-faced and rustic-faced types, and an irregular arrangement of windows that light offices (Plate 4); an inner courtyard provides daylight to other offices and a waiting area.

At the north end the building has a basement area used for cells and police, and for adjacent plant that includes a gas boiler for heating the entire building and water tanks (Plate 5). The south end has an enclosed garden area for the use of administrative staff and probation officers. The west side on Pimlico has the main public entrances, one into a spacious reception area, another into an area designated for the payment of fines. The east side has separate entrances for magistrates, staff and for juvenile offenders and those on probation.

Interior

The Court includes four courtrooms with adjacent magistrates' retiring rooms, public waiting and ancillary spaces, together with office accommodation administration, for the clerk to the magistrates and for the probation service. Figure 6 shows the general arrangement of demarcation between:

Area A: Legal functions, including courts, rooms for magistrates, solicitors, interviewees and witnesses.

Area B: Public spaces for gathering, waiting, taking refreshment (served by volunteers from the WRVS) and for paying fines.

Area C: Administration of building, fines, records and court functioning.

Area D: Probation service and juvenile justice.

Whilst Area A is one continuous space, a complex of internal corridors serve the other areas, allowing full movement around the building. The courtrooms have separate entrances for the public through lobbies at one end, with separate entries for the defendant and for magistrates on different sides. Secure areas and staircases to cells (Plate 18) are positioned between the two pairs of courtrooms.

Two formal adult courts (Courts Nos. 1 and 2) are timber panelled and have fixed benches and tables for the clerks and a raised dais for magistrates (Plates 15, 16). A multi-purpose court (No. 3) and a specialist juvenile court are less formal and made use of portable furniture at the same level; the floors are carpeted, with carpet rising on the rear walls (Plate 17). These courts were capable of meeting the requirements of traffic, domestic and children's courts. The juvenile court with public waiting and ancillary spaces were designed as a self-contained unit with its own entrance. All the courts have direct access to the cell area and the magistrates' retiring suite at the north end of the building.

Each courtroom appears to have had a suspended ceiling containing with what may have been light diffusers, distributing light from a high canopy set on the roof. These appear to have garnered light from the south-east direction (Plate 3). The four canopies and a low roof over the upper plant area broke up the overall flatness of the roof (Figure 8).

4. Recent history

Magistrates' courts were first established in 1949 with the Justices of the Peace Act. Before this summary criminal courts were known as Police Courts or Petty Sessions and the new act formally separated summary justice from policing. A new distinctive building type came into existence. The Chesterfield Court House (1963-65, by J.S. Allen and Roy Keenleyside; listed Grade II) shows the type at its most imaginative (*Designation Listing Selection Guide: Law and Government Buildings*. English Heritage 2011).

When first opened the building at Ilkeston held a county court which was able to deal with civil cases and disputes. These cases were later moved to Derby and Nottingham. The decision to close the Magistrates' Court House at Ilkeston was made in 2010. It was amongst 93 courts around the country (out of over 500) which were included in a far-reaching closure programme. A review carried out in 2009 concluded that the Ilkeston court which sat between Monday-Thursday and which dealt mainly in traffic, family cases, private prosecutions and local council work was underused and expensive to maintain (*Ilkeston Advertiser* 20/12/2010). Custody cases were no longer heard at the court due to the cells being deemed as no longer being up to HMCS standards.

5. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank colleague Matt Hurford for his contribution to the project, the site manager James Lundy (of Bowmer & Kirkland Ltd) for allowing site access, David Beard and Ray Mullaney for arranging access to the architects' drawings at DCC and finally the former architect Roger Widdowson for his advice.

ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

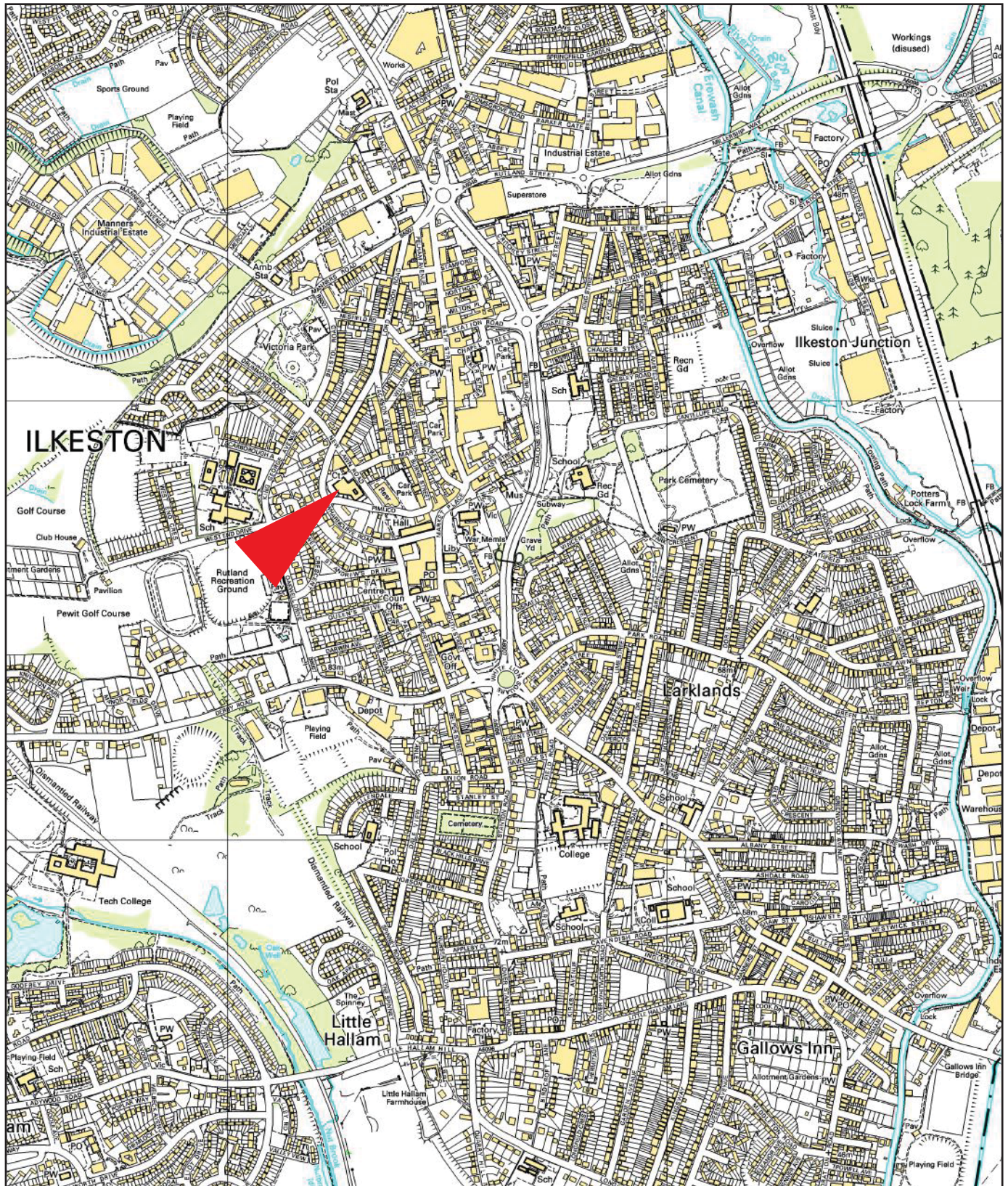
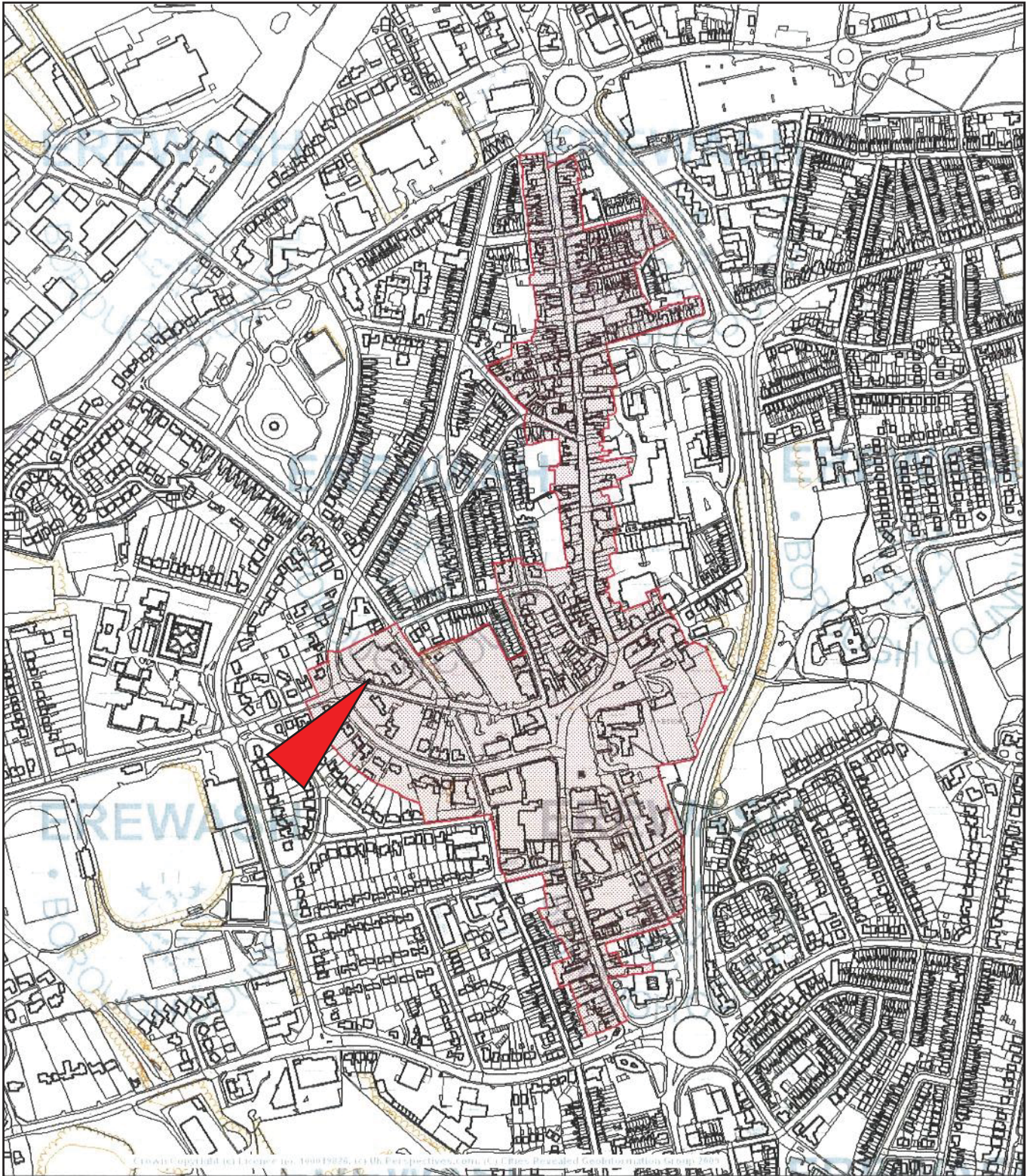


Figure 1: Location of the former Magistrates' Court House, Pimlico, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, highlighted by the arrow. Scale 1:12,500. Contains Ordnance Survey data. © Crown Copyright and database right 2012.



Title: Ilkeston Conservation Area

Figure 2: Plan issued by Erewash Borough Council showing the extent of the Ilkeston Conservation Area, here with the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House highlighted by an arrow. Not shown to regular scale.

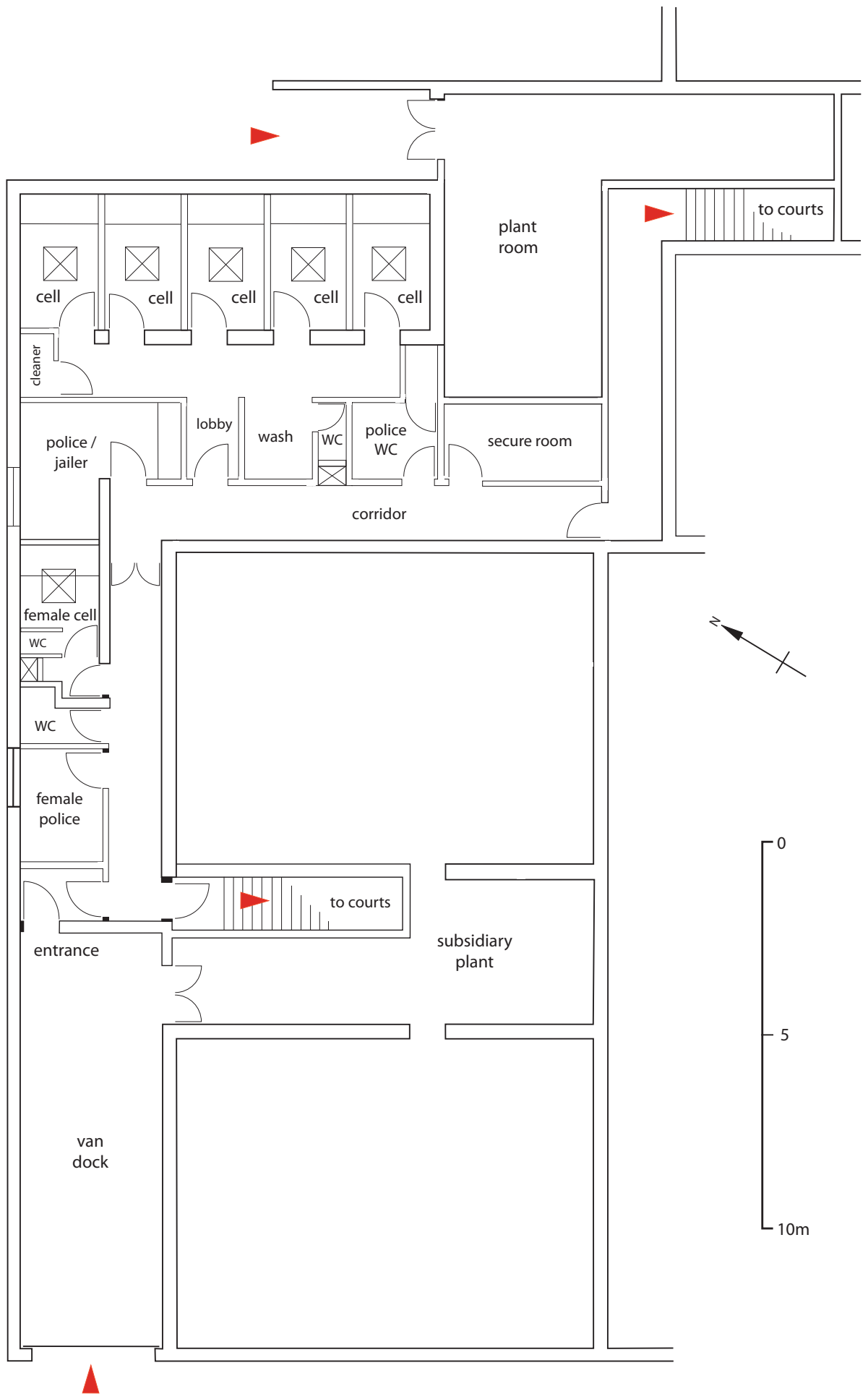


Figure 4: Plan of basement area of the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House. Scale 1:100. Based on plan provided courtesy of Derbyshire County Council.

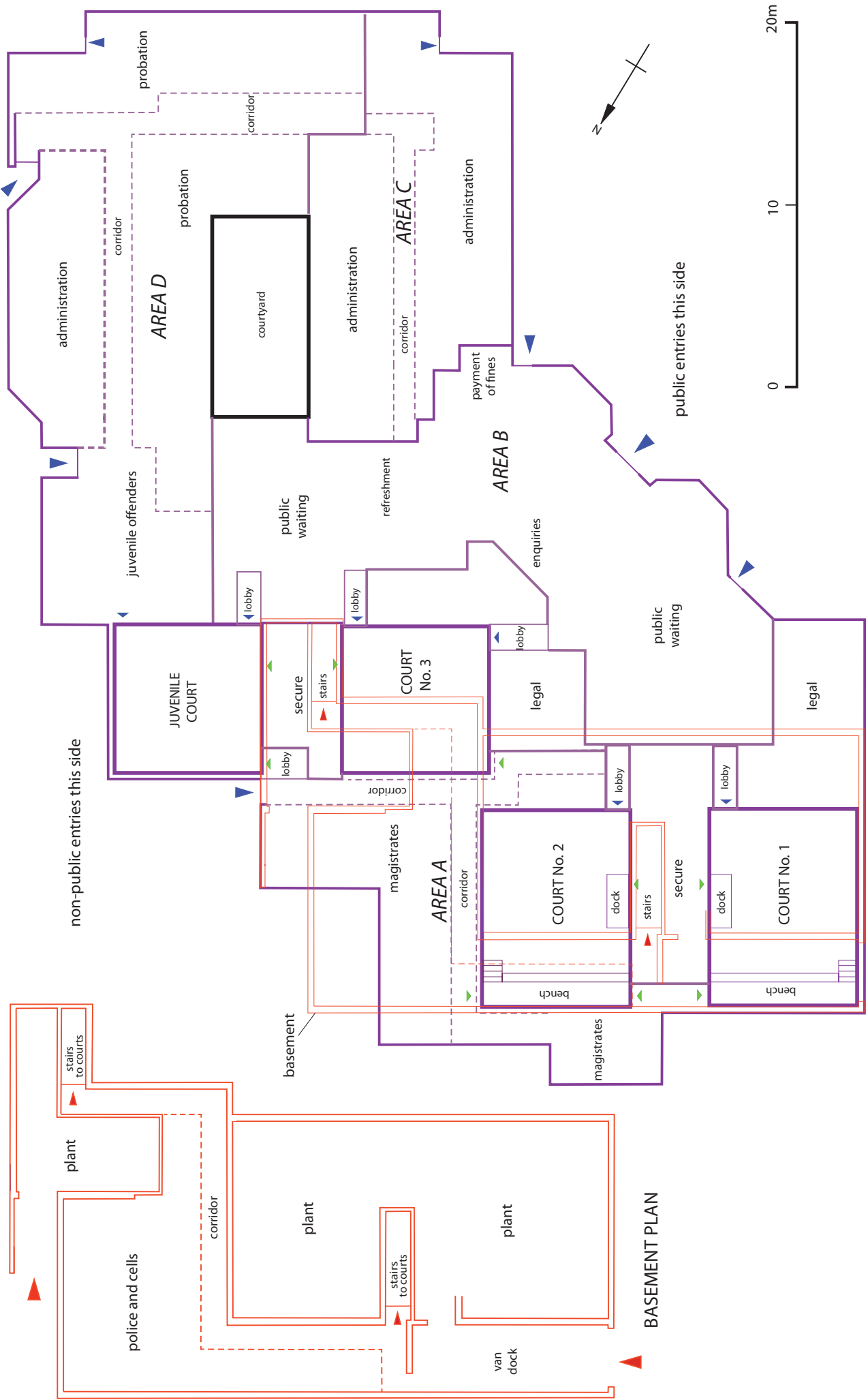


Figure 5: Plan of Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House showing functional zones and position of basement in relation to the ground floor area. Scale 1:200. Based on plans provided courtesy of Derbyshire County Council.

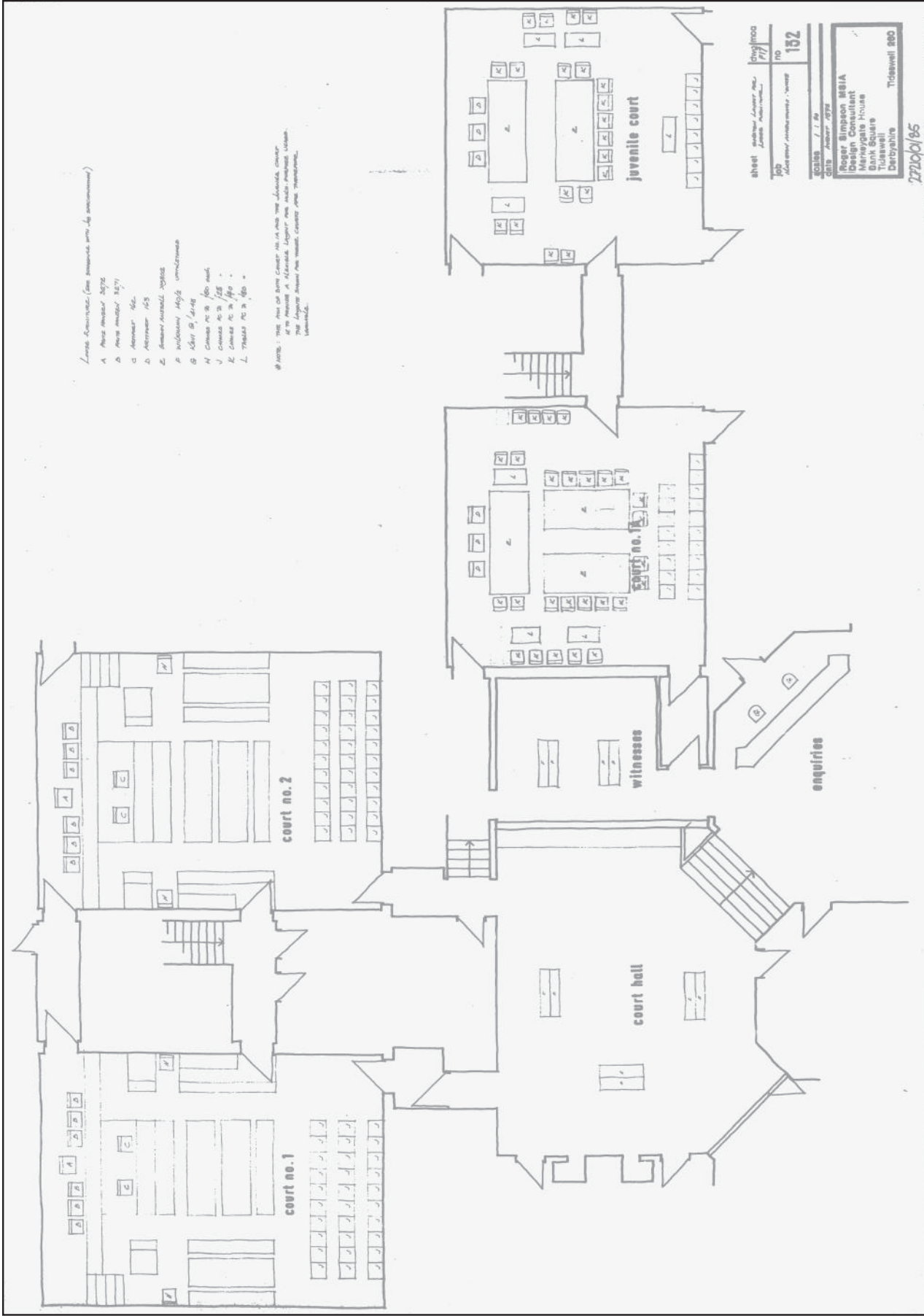
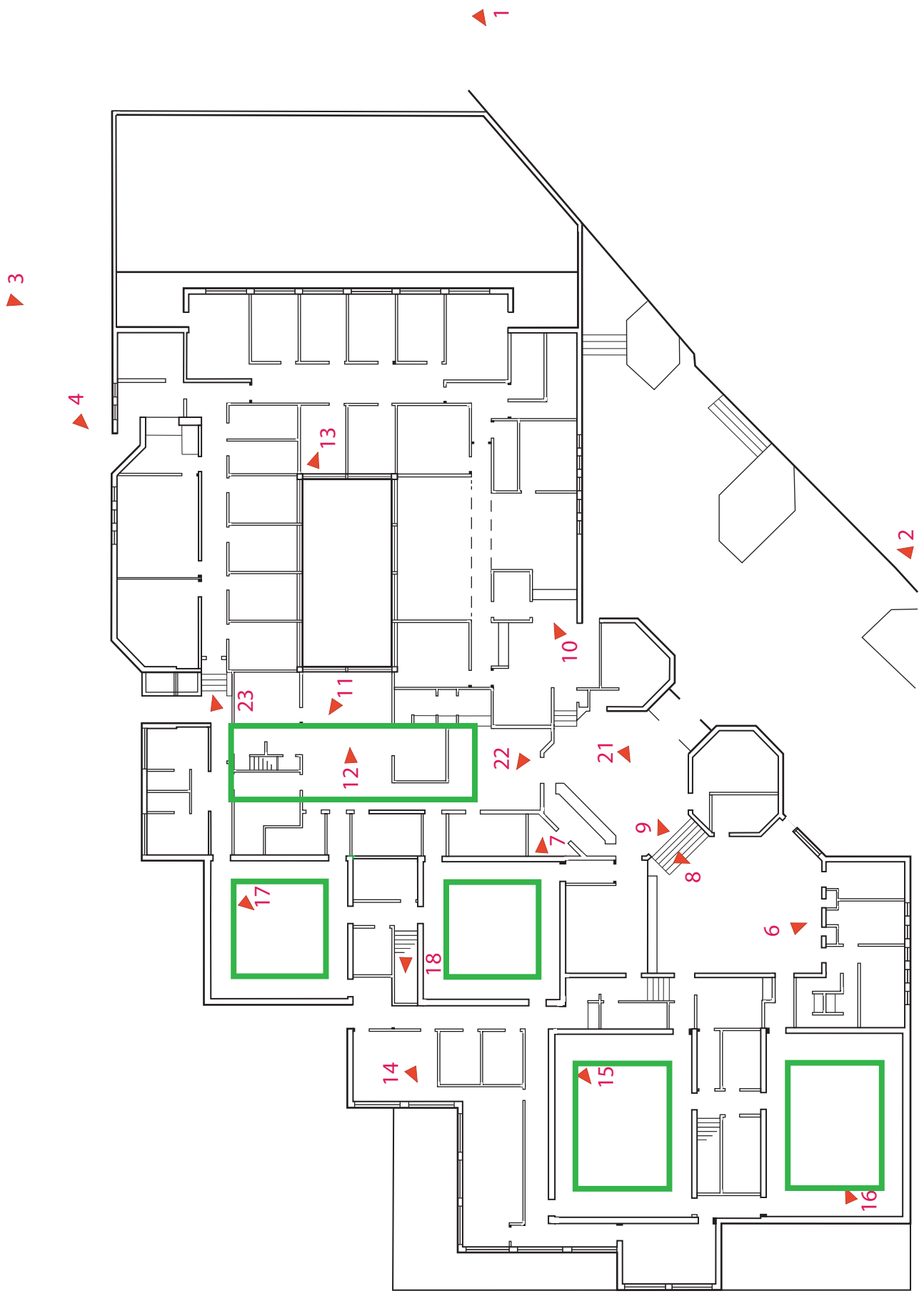


Figure 6: Plan showing furniture layout in the four courtrooms of Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House in 1985. Not to scale. Court No. 1A was later renamed No. 3. Plan provided courtesy of Derbyshire County Council.



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PLATES



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Plate 2: View of the Ilkeston Magistrates' Court House looking eastwards along Pimlico.



Plate 3: View of the mainly flat roof of the Court House, seen from New Lawn Road.



Plate 4: Brickwork facade around one of the non-public entrances off New Lawn Road.



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Plate 6: Sign in the main hallway commemorating the official opening of the Court House in 1976.

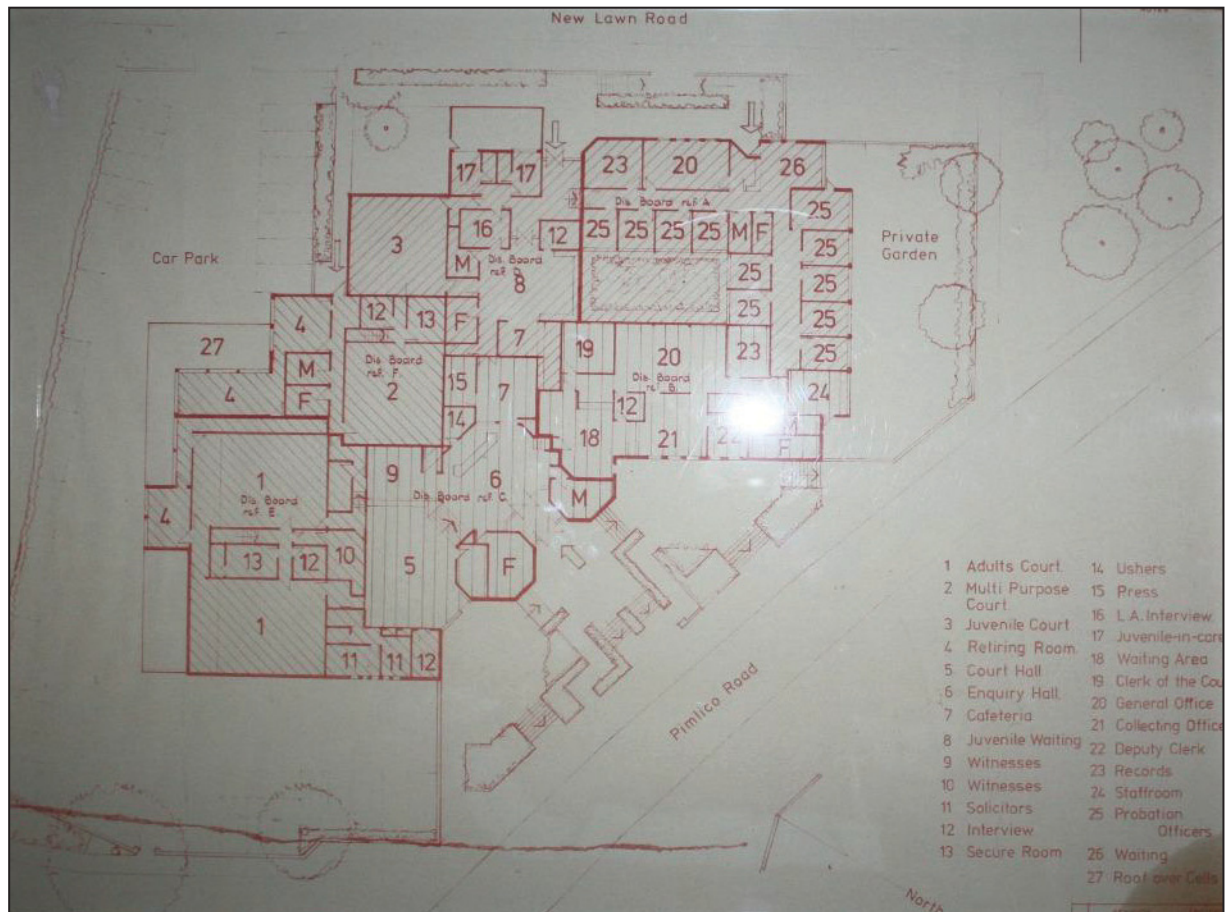


Plate 7: Site plan on the wall of the usher's room.



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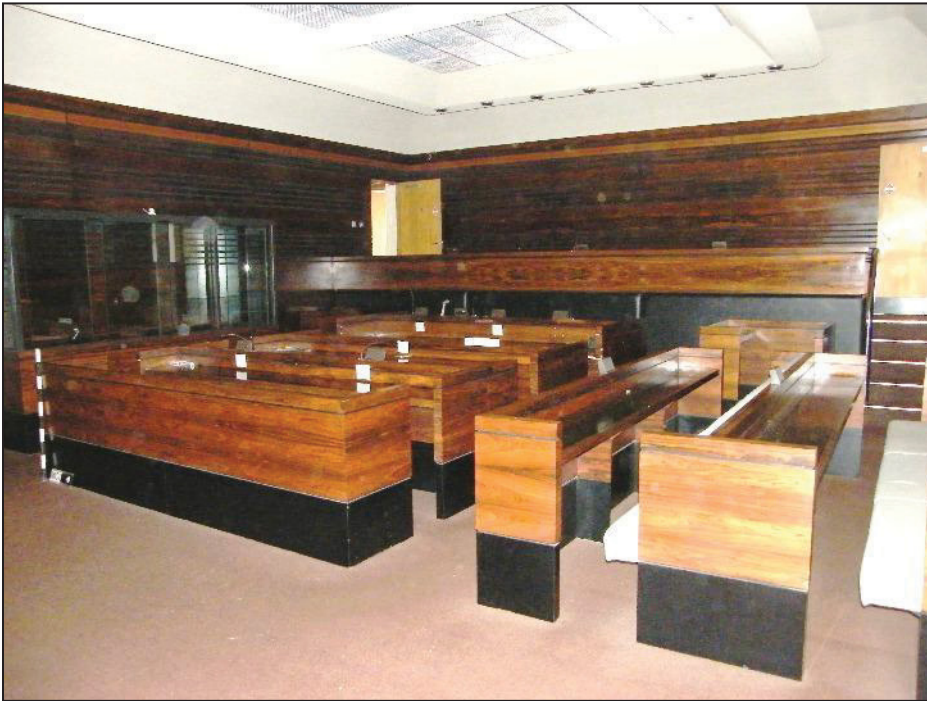


Plate 15: View inside Court No. 2, showing the raised bench at the north end, the lower seating area and, to left, the defendant's cubicle.

Plate 16: View inside Court No. 1, as seen from the magistrates' bench.



Plate 17: Less formal Juvenile Court with no fitted furniture and with carpets and soft walling.



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