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**AN HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY
OF INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS AT THE
CORNER OF EASTERN BOULEVARD
AND RYDAL STREET, LEICESTER, 2007**



The University of
Nottingham

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A report for The Developments Factory

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SUMMARY

- This historic building report (Level 2 recording standard) was commissioned by rg+p Ltd on behalf of The Developments Factory, with regard to a factory site on Eastern Boulevard in Leicester. Planning permission has been granted for conversion to domestic use of the older part of the building, and the demolition of the later north part. This is subject to building recording taking place before and, if necessary, during the works.
- The building, recently occupied by the Karadia Trims business, was probably first used by W. A. Thompson & Co., shoe manufacturers. It was built shortly after Eastern Boulevard was laid out alongside a length of the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Canal in the closing years of the 19th century. The building was still known as Thompson's when soldiers were billeted in it during World War Two. It has probably been used by several hosiery businesses since then.
- The building is a typical three storey with basement factory of the period. It represents a fine example of the functional tradition - well built with restrained decoration and thoughtfully designed to house all stages of an industrial process under one roof. It is built from good quality brick, some finely moulded (and without stone dressings), and the gabled roof is slated with skylights. The floors are supported by central columns supporting girders and timber joists.
- The original part of the building has a street entrance near the south-west corner, that lead to offices and a showroom on the raised ground floor. On the east side the building extends outwards in the central three bays to allow for staff access and facilities, and the movement of goods by a lift shaft and through a loading bay and gantry from the first floor. Two added outbuildings were used as a canteen and a stand-alone toilet block.
- The north extension is single storey with a double gable roof. Its south and south sides are clad in iron sheeting. This structure, built probably in two stages during the mid-20th century, was used for packaging and for warehouse storage. Being of no historic or architectural merit it is to be demolished.
- The original building is relatively little altered from its original design and thus retains its character. Although not protected by listing it is to be rightfully retained and sympathetically converted to new domestic use.

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: exterior	page 8
4. Building description: interior	page 10
5. Comment	page 12
6. References	page 12
Acknowledgement	page 13

Illustrations:
Figures 1-8
Plates 1-21

A CD with the digital archive of photographs (DAP) of exterior and interior views, together with plans showing viewpoints is attached to back cover.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Position of the Karadia Trims mill building near the centre of Leicester. Scale 1:100,000

Fig. 2 The Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, as showing on an Ordnance Survey map of 1912 (here highlighted by the red arrow). Scale 1:2,500.

Fig. 3 Outline plan of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, entry points and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

Fig. 4 Plan of the basement floor of the original part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

Fig. 5 Plan of the ground floor of the original part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

Fig. 6 Plan of the single-storey warehouse north extension part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

Fig. 7 Plan of the first floor of the original part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

Fig. 8 Plan of the top attic floor of the original part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

PLATES

Plates of the exterior of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. **1:** view of the south-west corner; **2:** the east side showing the extended part and an office bay window; **3:** the single-storey north warehouse extension. *DAP: Digital Archive Photo. Number*

Plates of the exterior of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. **4:** detail of brick-work, tiling and a downpipe on the west frontage; **5:** a metal plate with

distinctive lettering; **6:** view along the east frontage; **7:** metal cladding on the south side of the warehouse extension. *DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number*

Plates of the basement area of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. **8:** view from the north-west corner showing the open space and a possible trackway on the west side of the floor area; **9:** one of the window bays with a reversed relieving arch showing to base; **10:** scissor-bracing to the floor joists. *DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number*

Plates of the ground floor area of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. **11:** panelling in the south-west corner of the main building, indicating the former office area above the street entrance; **12:** one of the steel columns supporting the next floor; **13:** view of the interior of the north warehouse extension. *DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number*

Plates of the first floor and attic areas of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. **14:** view of the first floor working area; **15:** high-level doorway and west end of gantry; **16:** remaining weighing machine on attic wall; **17:** view of roof structure and raised platform in attic. *DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number*

Other buildings in the vicinity of the Karadia Trims building: **18:** the Benjamin Russell & Son hosiery complex of 1910 and 1924-25; **19 and 20:** the former Liberty Shoes Factory, built 1918-19; **21:** Rydal Cottages, built 1897.

1. *Project background*

This report was commissioned by rg+p Ltd on behalf of The Developments Factory, with regard to a factory site on Eastern Boulevard in Leicester. Until recently used by Karadia Trims, a concern producing trimmings for the garment industry, the older part of the building is now to be converted into domestic accommodation (most probably for use by students attending the nearby University of Leicester), and the newer north part demolished. The site is alongside the *The Straight Mile*, a combined course of the River Soar, the Grand Union Canal and a mill stream laid out shortly before 1900; the Eastern Boulevard runs parallel to this. It was initially thought that the factory was originally used for hosiery manufacture.

Planning permission has been granted for the change of use, subject to building recording taking place before and during the works. Although not listed, the building is deemed to be special architectural or historic interest. A study is required to ascertain the building's age and original uses and to inform the Local Planning Authority about the likely impact of its change of use. The recording is required to be to a Level 2 standard as specified in RCHME (now English Heritage) guidelines – see below.

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 or building conversion. These follow guidelines to be found in the conservation planning documents *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16, Department of the Environment 1990) and *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas* (PPG 15, Department of the Environment 1993). The methodology also accords with *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire and Rutland* and the *Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Codes of Conduct and Standards*.

Level 2 Record.

Where specific briefs are supplied by planning authorities with regard to industrial buildings, they often require a mainly descriptive and partly analytical survey of the buildings concerned, together with a record in photographic and accurately measured drawn form, with examples annotated to illustrate salient points. Such a record may be similar to that described as 'Level 2' of the RCHME's *Recording Historic Buildings: A Descriptive Specification* (2nd edition 1991).

This report represents a full Level 2 record made up principally of site and floor plans, photographs and a description. The floor plans are based on detailed architectural plans produced by Midland Survey Ltd and kindly supplied by rg+p Ltd. As detailed elevation drawings and sections already exist no attempt has been made to replicate these; pdf copies of these will be included in the site archive. The present report includes an archive of digital photographs, provided here on an accompanying CD (attached to back cover). The CD includes plans showing their viewpoints. Several of the views are included in the report to illustrate pertinent points and their viewpoints are shown on the floor plans. There is also an archive of a similar number of colour film negatives, along with plans showing viewpoints. Colour film has been recommended for both modern colour and black and white printing methods. The site archive will be deposited with the Museums section of Leicestershire County Council Environment and Heritage Services. The archive number is LCCEHS: A13.2007.

The site has planning permission No: 20050548. The TPA site code is EBL.

2. Historical background

Eastern Boulevard lies beside the River Soar - Grand Union Canal (formerly the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Canal), to the south-west of Leicester city centre (Figs 1, 2). According to Kelly's Directory of 1908 'the old Soar has been deepened, widened and straightened in its course through the borough.' As part of a major programme of works involving canal cuts, flood prevention measures, new roads and bridges close to and over the river, Eastern and Western Boulevards were also laid out. The latter, Kelly stated, were 'each 50 feet in width (and) have been constructed so as to form main lines of communication between Braunstone Gate, the Newarke Bridge, Mill Lane and Walnut Street.' Just when this occurred is not clear but it was probably shortly before 1900. The factory building may have been an early speculative development on the new road, requiring and anticipating a tenant from one of the major industries in the city.

At the position of Eastern Boulevard by Mill Lane, Kelly's 1908 Directory lists W. A. Thompson & Co. shoe manufacturers. Earlier, a certain William Thompson, bootmaker, had been based in Leamington Street (Kelly 1891); this may have been the same individual or a relative. A later directory of 1916 lists W. A. Thompson & Co. on Eastern Boulevard at the corner of Ullswater Street, and Russell Benjamin & Sons, hosiery manufacturer, at the corner with Mill Lane (Kelly's Directory for Leicestershire and Rutland 1916). As the latter building, opened in 1911, still stands between Mill Lane and Ullswater Street (Plate 18), the Karadia Trims building must therefore have started as Thompson's shoe factory.

The building's north gable wall has indications of bricks perhaps used to show lettering and the Thompson name may once have been clearly visible.

The building is shown on a One Inch scale Ordnance Survey map of 1906 (The Godfrey Edition Sheet 156, Leicester & District) and was probably built soon after the Eastern Boulevard was laid out in the late 1890s. Some houses close to the factory in Rydal Street are dated to 1897 (Plate 21). A map of 1912 shows the Karadia Trims building at larger scale with its fire escape staircase at the north end (Fig. 2). There are no separate outbuildings and its single-storey north extension had yet to be built. The building was still known as Thompson's when the Leicester Regiment was billeted in it during World War Two. The building has probably been used by the hosiery businesses since then. One reminder of this was the finding beneath floor-boarding of a fragment of packaging bearing the name 'Tenbralair Jockey Trunks.'

The original part of the Karadia Trims building is one of many three storey with basement factories built before 1900 in Leicester and suitable for use by either of the two staple industries in the city, namely hosiery and boot and shoe manufacture (Palmer and Neaverson 1992, 170). The latter industry developed as a factory system in Leicester from the late 1860s with the advent of sewing machinery (Swann 1997). The building is a typical Leicester factory of the period, made of high quality brickwork with cornices and window detailing that includes moulded brick and terracotta ornamentation. Being of fairly functional design and by an unknown architect it has not warranted listing protection. However, a later building to the south on Eastern Boulevard, the Liberty Shoe Factory (Plates 19, 20), was listed yet demolished in 2002. With the gradual demise of both hosiery and the shoe industry within Leicester and rising land values, both buildings and sites on Eastern Boulevard are now favourable locations for accommodating students at the nearby university. The neighbouring Benjamin Russell building has already been converted to such use.

3. Building description: external

The original part of the building (A on Fig. 3) is 11 window bays long and four wide, built in pier and panel style, and with a gabled slated roof (Plates 1). It has a high basement and three storeys above this, the top one being open to the roof timbers and to skylights. The structure is built of red and blue brick, laid in English bond on the main street frontage and a mixture of English and Sussex bonds to the rear; there is little evidence for stone being used on the exterior. Finer reddish brick is used on the public west and south frontages, and a more

mixed lighter-toned brick on the other sides (Plate 2). The cornices are dentilled and, with the window surrounds, feature some fine moulded bricks (Plate 4). The original cast-iron framed windows are tall and rectangular but the top windows on the west and south sides are rounded. The brick panels between the windows are pierced by central ventilation grills. There are also two down-pipes with decorative heads on the west side (Plate 4).

The street frontage has the public entrance in the 11th bay. This is set within a large round arched entry with restrained classical-style surround. The wooden doors and a nearby sign (Plate 5) are probably original and the present signboard above the entrance may mask an original title. The south and north gable ends differ. The south on Rydal Street is similar to the west frontage, whilst the north face (now partly obscured by the later north extension and some large boarding) was probably unbroken apart for exits to an external fire escape staircase.

The east side features a centrally-placed 3-bay long extension which contained the principal worker's staircase to all floors and, to the sides, a lift and separate male (south) and female (north) toilets. At the bottom of the stairs there was an unlit strongroom. The north basement toilets was stripped of its cubicles, extended and reused as a boilerhouse. The central stair block has an east-facing gable, whilst the toilet blocks face north and south respectively; the lift shaft has a pyramidal-shaped roof.

The south end of the east side features a single bay window (Plate 6) and an upper chimney stack, indicating the position of the offices, from which the arrival and departure of personnel and goods could be monitored. The fourth bay along has an projecting loading bay at basement and ground-floor levels and a gantry for a travelling hoist that extends from the first floor. The yard outside is narrow and cramped, entered from an entry on Rydal Street which has metal bollards, featuring the name of the Leicester foundry Gimson & Co.

At the north end of the building there is a narrow single-storey outbuilding with a flat roof and a probable enclosed water-tank above the entry (Block C on Figs. 3, 5). This was probably the canteen, with a separate kitchen-bay at the north end. What was probably a contemporary outside toilet block on the same alignment (block D) has been incorporated into the single-storey north extension of the factory, area B.

The north extension is also 11 bays long and 4 wide, although a straight joint showing on the west side suggests it was built in two stages, 5 bays to start with and 6 added later. The structure is brick-built, the first phase in Flemish bond, the second in English bond. The roof is double-gabled with corrugated asbestos covering and the east and south sides of the building are clad with iron sheeting (Plate 7). Two large delivery doors (one since infilled) in the north end

on Ullswater Street (Plate 3) suggest that the north extension was probably the packaging and storage section / warehousing part of the factory. When either phase was added is unknown.

4. Building description: internal

Basement, original part of building (Fig. 4)

The basement level is largely open and its floor is about 1.8m (6 feet) below the ground level outside. There is apart an enclosed area in the south-west corner which contains pipe-work and is situated beneath the staircase off the main street entrance. This may have been the original power-room where gas entered the building. A study of Goad insurance plans from c.1900 has shown that most factories making shoes and boots in Northampton were by then gas-powered (Menuge 2001, 107). Another wall crossing the west floor area a bay beyond this may have been added as a blast-wall during WW2. The power-source was later moved to the eastern extension into a toilet block and electricity possibly used instead of or in addition to gas. Block D may have replaced the toilets when this happened.

The basement has a brick floor which features parallel lines of timber running most of the length of the west area and part of the east side; in places concrete has replaced some of the timber (Plate 8). These 'trackways' may have carried the weight of the feet of conveyor belts. In other places wooden blocks have either replaced bricks or indicate the positions of light machinery. Heavy machinery was situated in the northernmost bay, as indicated by several concrete slabs in the floor. Although the basement may well have been where the 'rough-stuff' cutters were situated there is little indication of overhead line shafting amongst the pipe-work beneath the ceiling. There are, though, openings in the north-east corner ceiling where lifting and lowering of materials etc may have occurred.

Most of the east floor area was probably kept open to allow clear access to the staircase, toilets, lift and a loading bay. The latter features a ramp and a slab for supporting the weight of machinery. The basement had fire exits in both end walls and a system of fire sprinklers. Noticeable features in the basement include reverse relieving arches showing towards the base of the wall panels (Plate 9) and criss-cross or scissor bracing between floor joists under the ceiling (Plate 10).

Ground floor areas (Figs 5, 6)

The ground-floor of the original building is raised above the outside surface level and is reached by a flight of stairs off the street entrance on Eastern Boulevard. The first three bays at the south end were used for offices on the east side with probably a showroom / shop opposite, where some wall panelling still survives (Plate 11). The whole floor area was heated by radiators and the indications are that only light industrial duties were carried out here. Metal columns running down the centre of the building support girders and tend to become narrower in girth the higher the floor level (Plate 12). There are indications of a former window in the north wall showing through the paintwork.

The northern extension (area B) has a fairly featureless interior at the same level as the outside streets. It is reached by steps up from the basement and others down from the first floor of area A. There is also an entrance from the street and delivery doors at the north end. Toilets in the south-east corner include block D which was probably pre-dates the rest of the building. The building may well date from the mid-20th century.

First floor areas (Fig. 7)

This floor has an oak board floor and a modern ceiling. There are modern partitions at the south end but there are indications in the floor and on the wall of a former supervisor's office in the north-east corner. The floor area is otherwise open (Plate 14) with little evidence from the floor that there may have been machinery or presses used in the 'clicking' process (the cutting of uppers, linings etc), a procedure usually carried out at mid-floor level. The original flooring may have been replaced. A doorway above the east-side loading bay may also be a later addition, with part of a gantry projecting into the room to take a mechanised travelling hoist (Plate 15).

Top floor (Fig. 8)

The top floor is largely open and being lit on all four sides and by skylights provided a well lit working area. This area would have been used for any closing or finishing work, with resulting goods removed by the lift to floors below. There is a remaining weighing machine on the east wall (Plate 16) and one of the wall-vents (with its sliding cover) shows in the south wall. The timber floor area shows differences in the boarding which may reflect a division of tasks carried out. A central raised platform with a fence surround and reached up a wooden flight of steps was probably used by overseers (Plate 17).

5. *Comment*

The original part of the building has altered little since it was built over a century ago. Its internal layout and doors, windows and ventilators are largely intact. The power system has changed and remaining indications of former machinery are now mainly left in the flooring only. This is probably not surprising as it has been used by two different industries and as wartime billets. The main changes have been to the use of individual rooms in the east extension and by the two-phase north extension. The latter has little to merit its retention and is now due for demolition. However, the original building retains its original functional character and is a fine, well-built reminder of a distinct phase of Leicester's industrial past. As one of the very first buildings on Eastern Boulevard it deserves to be retained and sympathetically converted to new use.

A number of fittings are worthy of retention, preferably still in the building or, if not, taken up by reclamation specialists. These include most of the doors, which include fine wooden plank examples and fire-doors. There are also such things as a weighing machine and bathroom fittings, but these are not necessarily all original. Wherever possible existing flooring details should be retained (especially in the basement), albeit covered up by new materials. The building also retains most of its original windows and whether these can be adapted to modern standards is worth considering.

6. *References*

Kelly's Directory for Leicester and Rutland, 1891

Kelly's Directory for Leicester and Rutland, 1908

Kelly's Directory for Leicestershire and Rutland, 1916

Menuge, A., 2001. 'Technology and Tradition: the English Heritage Survey of the Northamptonshire boot and shoe industry.' In *TICCIH2000* (The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage Millennium Congress) Transactions. The Association for Industrial Archaeology, 101-109.

Palmer, M. and Neaverson, P., 1992. *Industrial Landscapes of the East Midlands*. Chichester: Phillimore.

Swann, J., 1997. *Shoemaking*. Princes Risborough: Shire Publications Ltd

Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1899

Acknowledgement

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the staff of Karadia Trims during the site visit prior to the compiling of this report.



Fig. 1 Position of the Karadia Trims building near the centre of Leicester. Scale 1:100,000

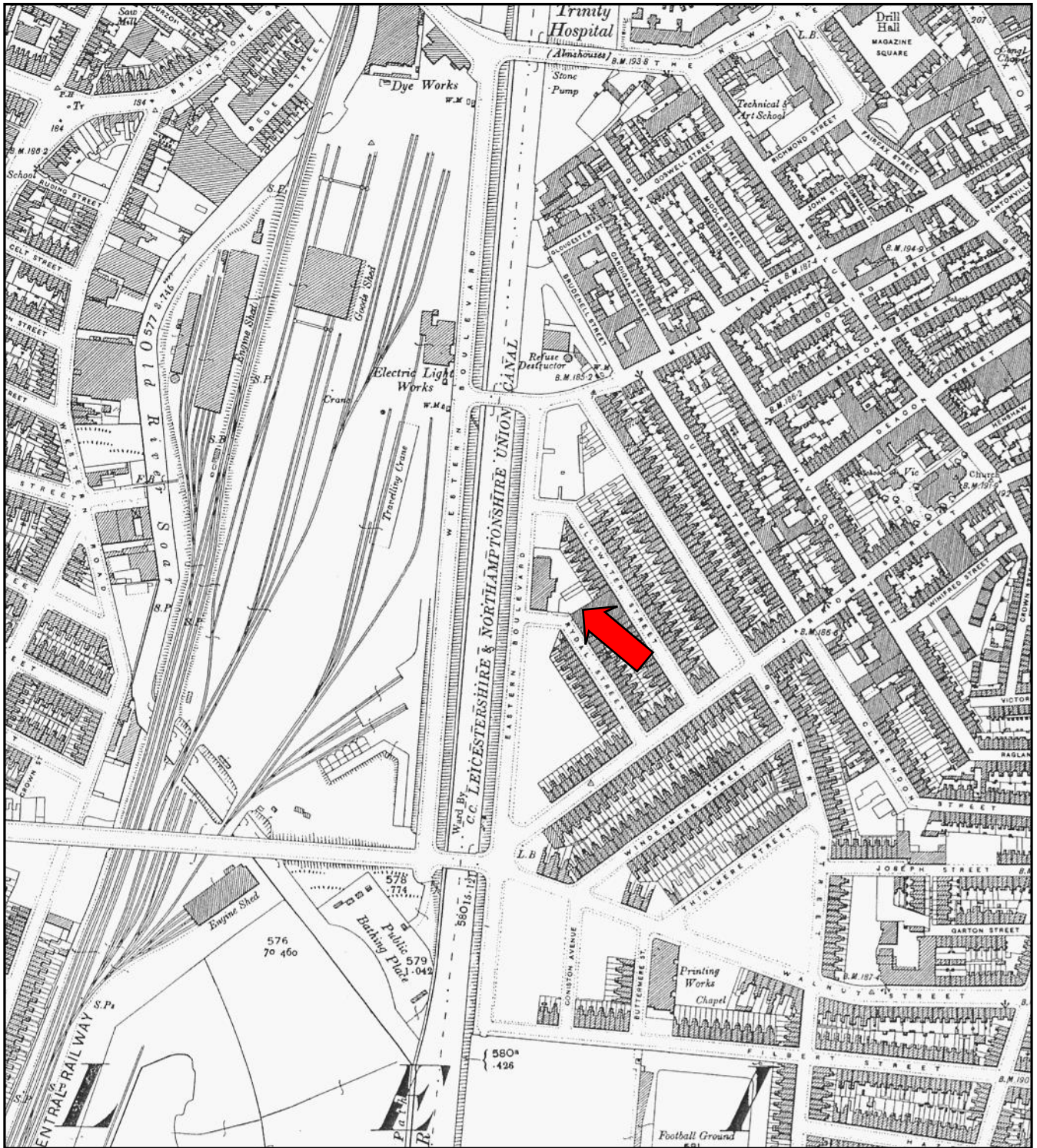


Fig. 2 The Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, as showing on an Ordnance Survey map of 1912 (here highlighted by the red arrow). Scale 1:2,500.

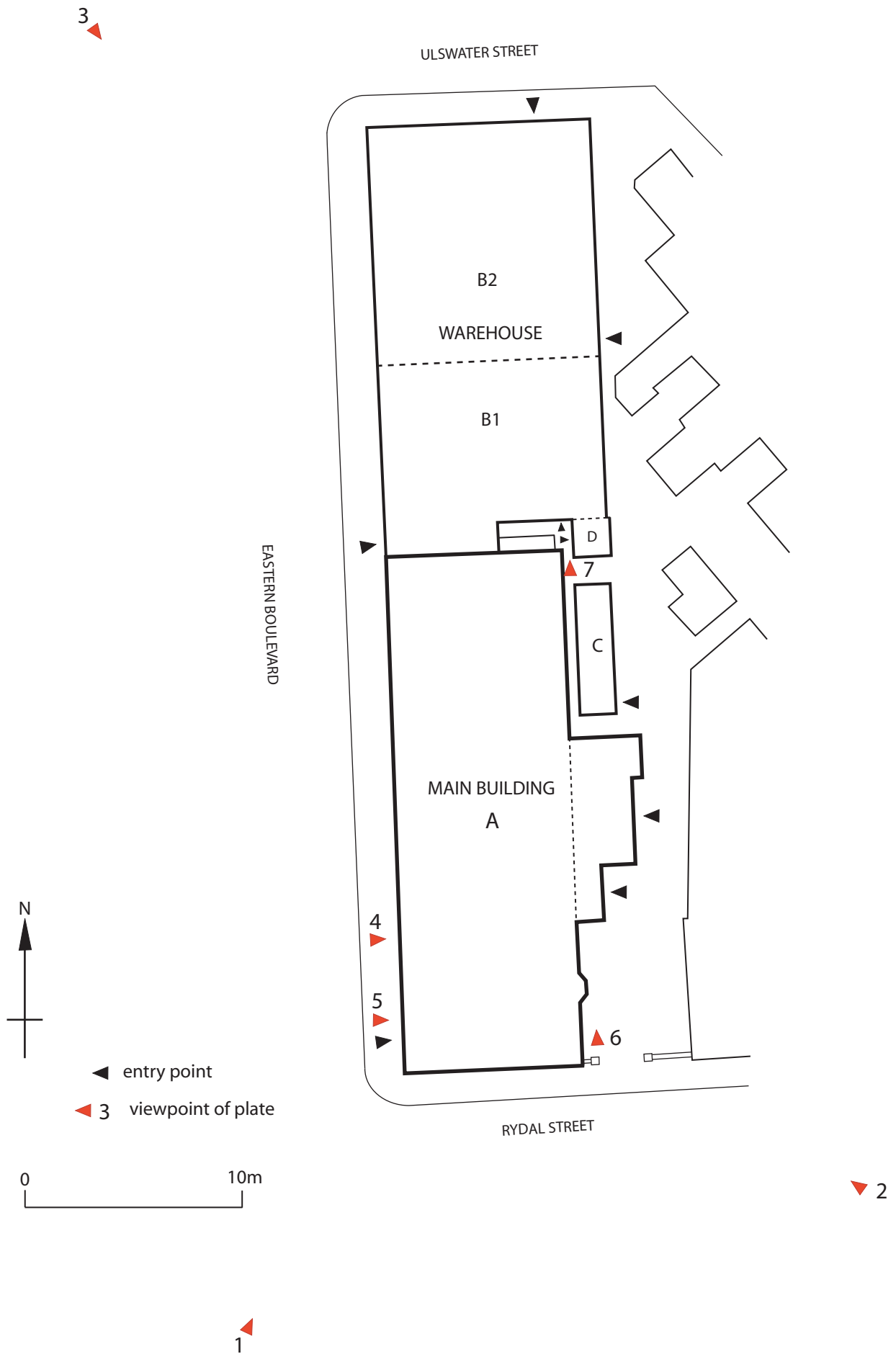
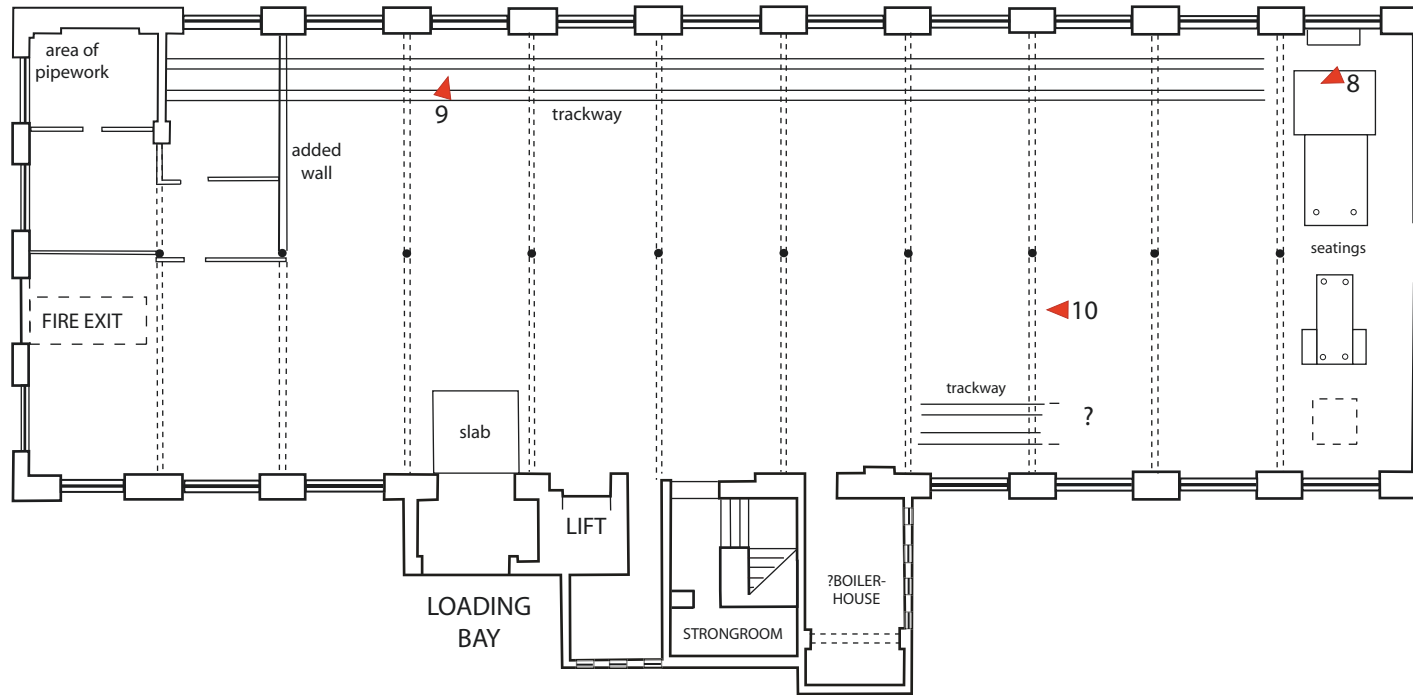


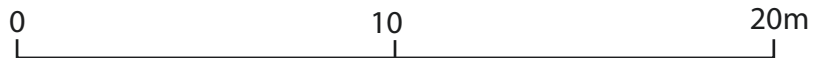
Fig. 3 Outline plan of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, entry points and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.



◄ 4 viewpoint of plate

----- CEILING BEAM

• COLUMN



KARADIA TRIMS BUILDING:
 PLAN OF BASEMENT OF
 MAIN BUILDING
 Scale 1:200

Fig. 4 Plan of the basement floor of the original part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

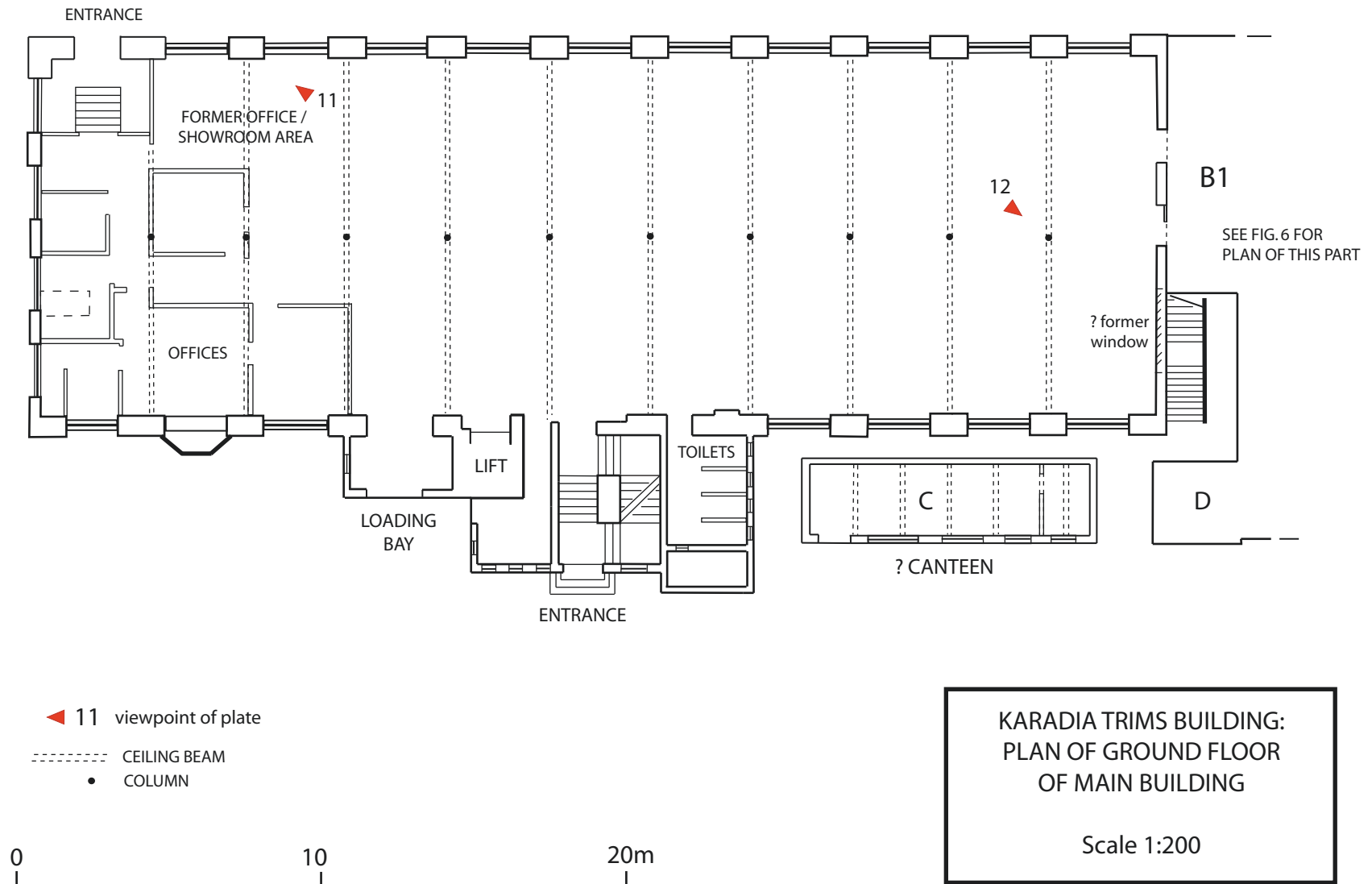


Fig. 5 Plan of the ground floor of the original part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

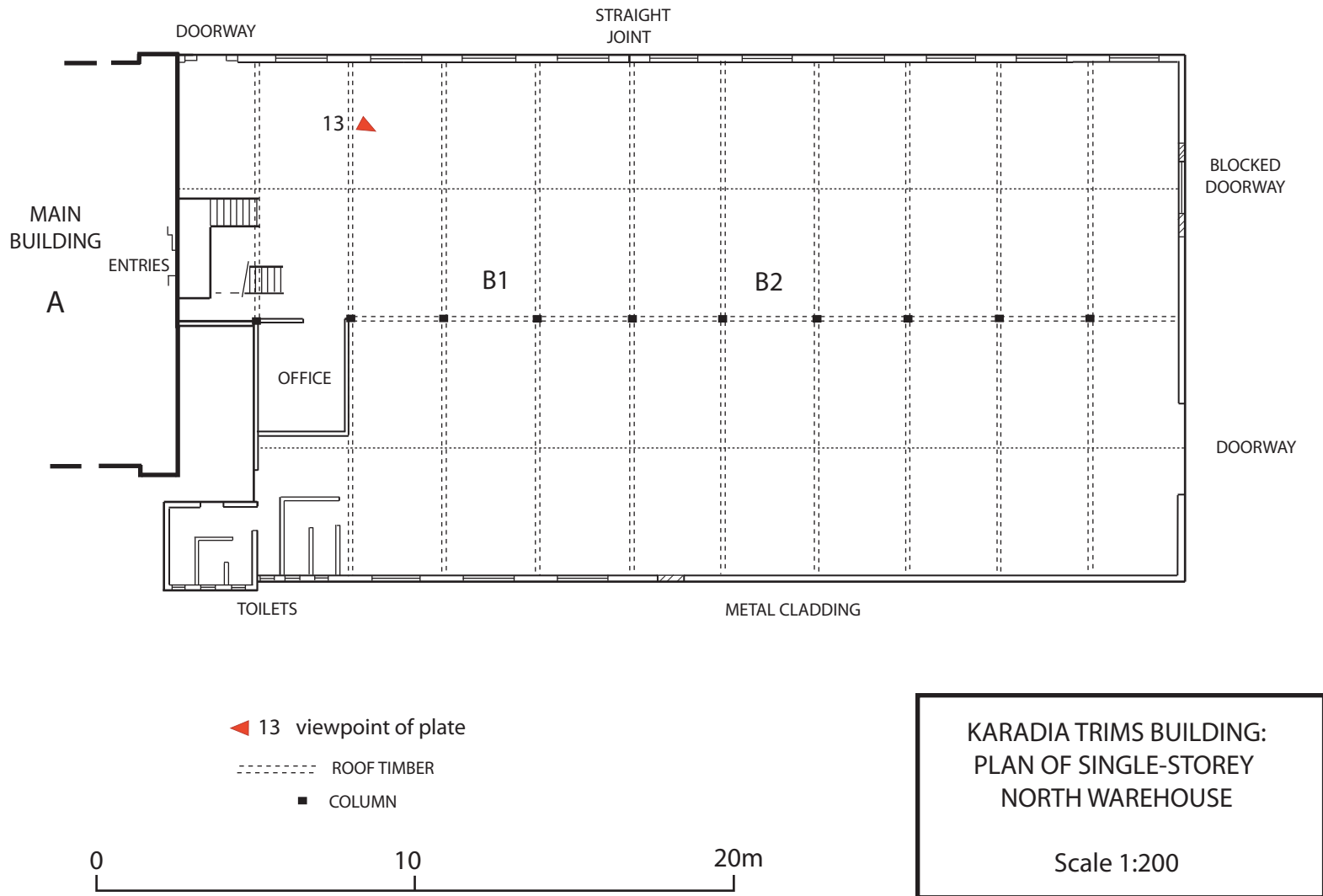
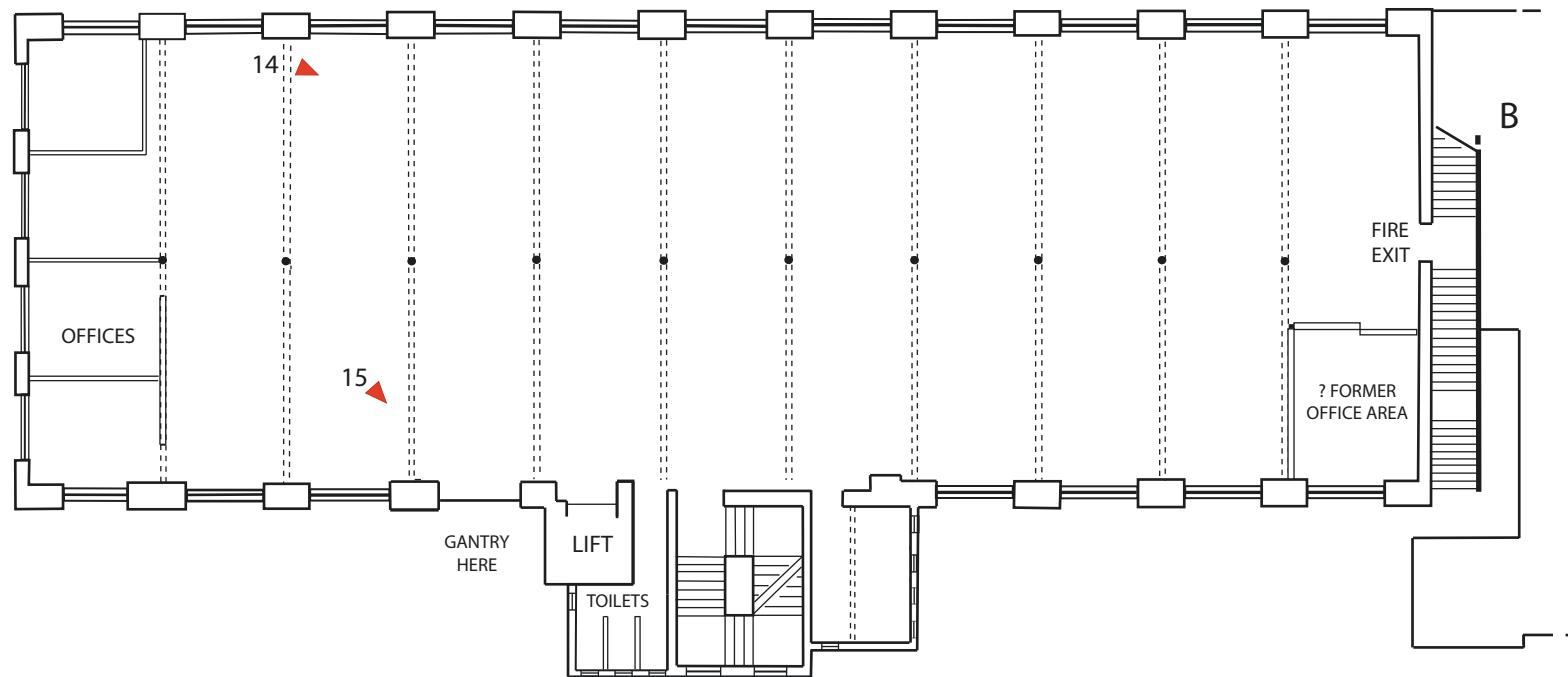


Fig. 6 Plan of the single-storey warehouse north extension part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.



◄ 14 viewpoint of plate

----- CEILING BEAM

• COLUMN

0 10 20m

KARADIA TRIMS BUILDING:
PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR
OF MAIN BUILDING

Scale 1:200

Fig. 7 Plan of the first floor of the original part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.

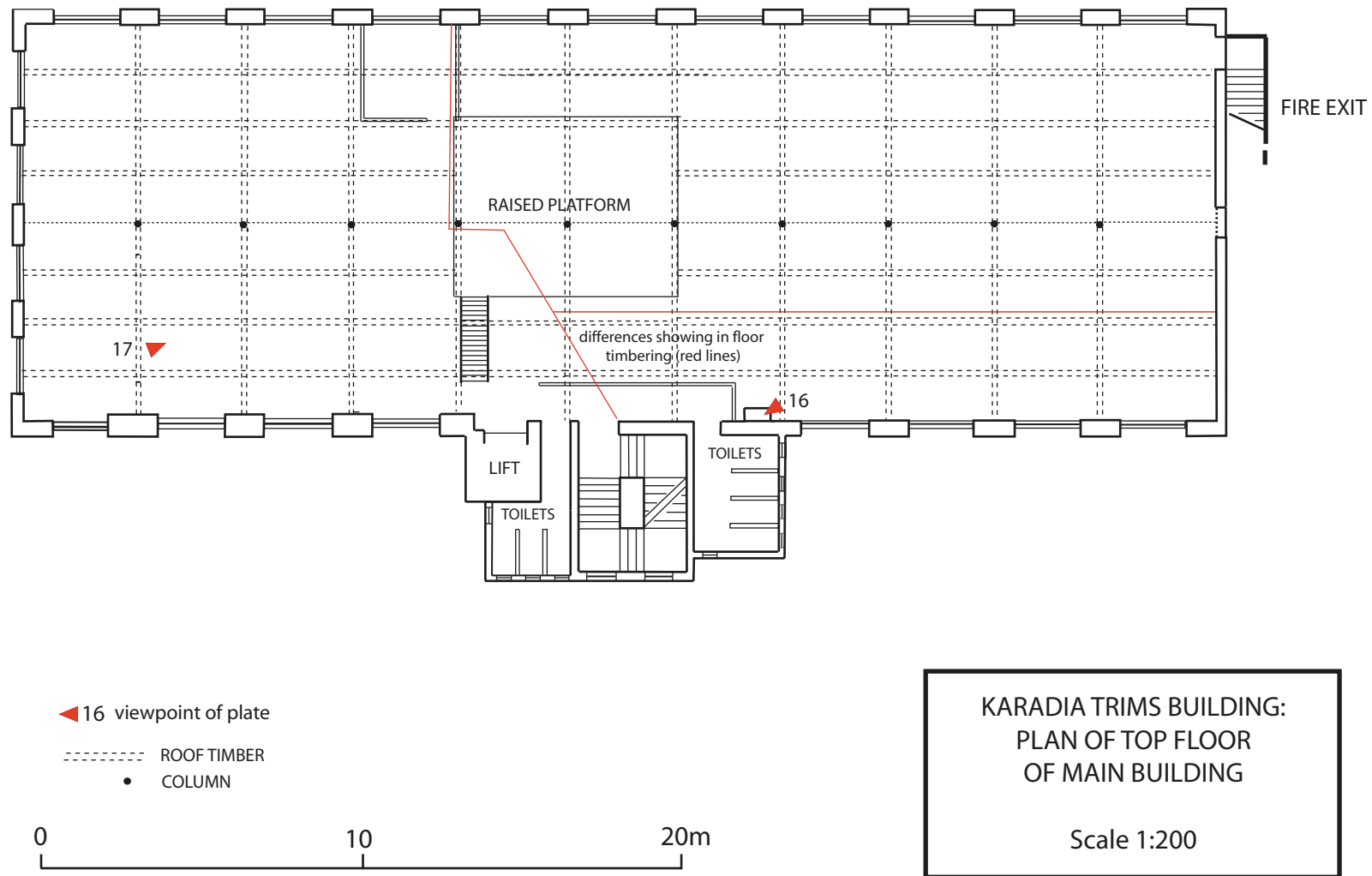


Fig. 8 Plan of the top attic floor of the original part of the Karadia Trims building on Eastern Boulevard, Leicester, showing the component parts, various distinctive features and viewpoints of plates. Scale 1:500.



PLATE 1 (DAP 1)

PLATE 2
(DAP 4)



PLATE 3 (DAP 21)



Plates of the exterior of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. 1: view of the south-west corner; **2:** the east side showing the extended part and an office bay window; **3:** the single-storey north warehouse extension.
DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number

PLATE 4
(DAP 12)

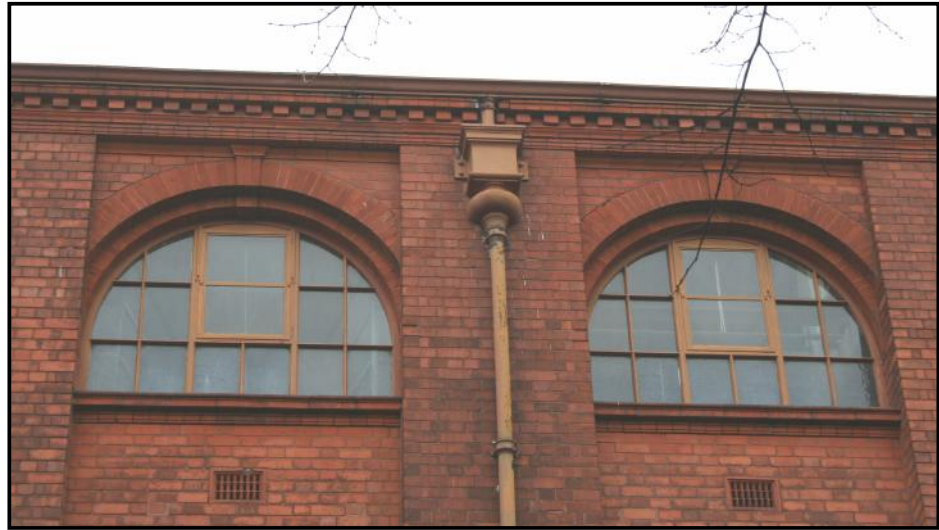


PLATE 5 (DAP 9)

PLATE 7 (DAP 55)

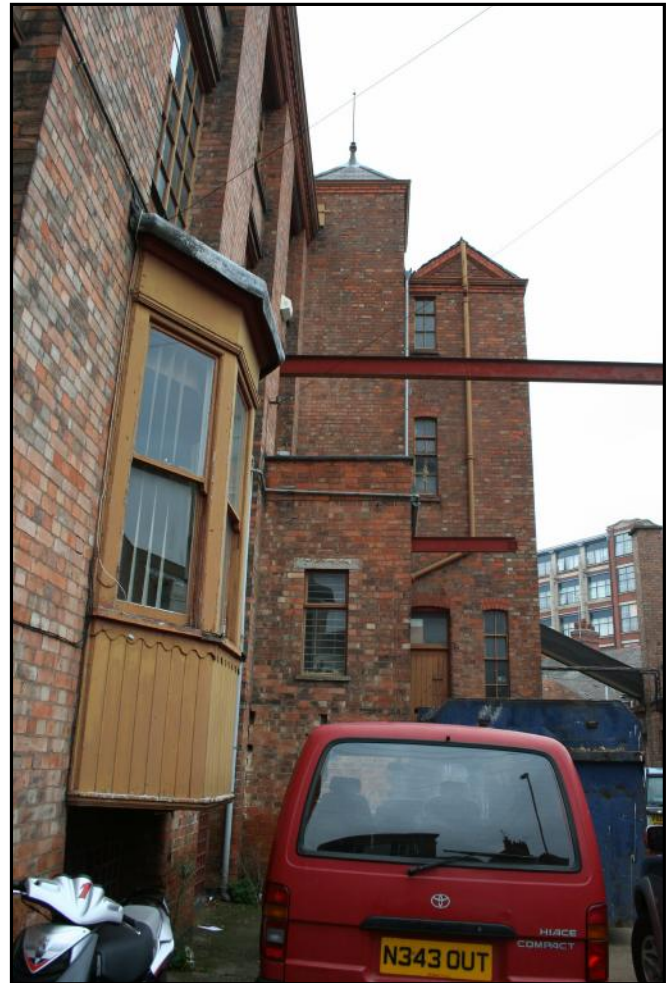


PLATE 6 (DAP 32)

Plates of the exterior of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. 4: detail of brick-work, tiling and a down-pipe on the west frontage; 5: a metal plate with distinctive lettering; 6: view along the east frontage; 7: metal cladding on the south side of the warehouse extension.
DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number



PLATE 8 (DAP 63)

PLATE 9
(DAP 90)



PLATE 10 (DAP 75)



Plates of the basement area of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. 8: view from the north-west corner showing the open space and a possible trackway on the west side of the floor area; 9: one of the window bays with a reversed relieving arch showing to base; 10: scissor-bracing to the floor joists. *DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number*



PLATE 11 (DAP 127)

PLATE 13 (DAP 175)

PLATE 12
(DAP 112)



Plates of the ground floor area of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. 11: panelling in the south-west corner of the main building, indicating the former office area above the street entrance; **12:** one of the cast-iron columns holding the girders that support the next floor; **13:** view of the interior of the north warehouse extension. *DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number*



PLATE 14 (DAP 130)

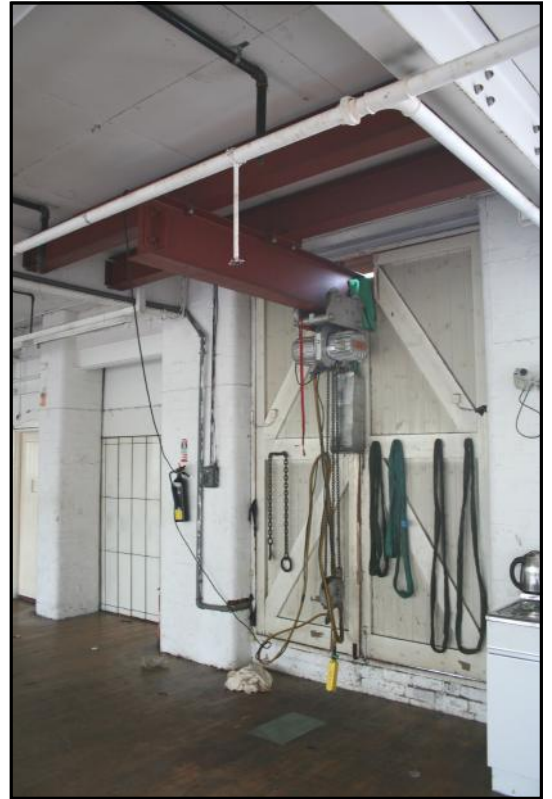


PLATE 15
(DAP 135)



PLATE 16
(DAP 160)

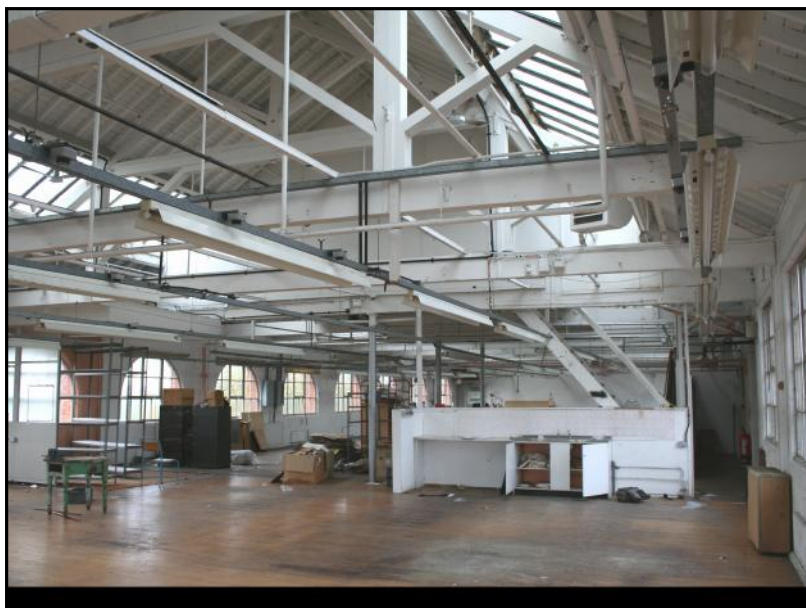


PLATE 17 (DAP 175)

Plates of the first floor and attic areas of the Karadia Trims building in Leicester. 14: view of the first floor working area; **15:** high-level doorway and west end of gantry; **16:** remaining weighing machine on attic wall; **17:** view of roof structure and raised platform in attic. *DAP: Digital Archive Photo. number*

PLATE 18



PLATE 19



PLATE 20



PLATE 21

Other buildings in the vicinity of the Karadia Trims building: **18:** the Benjamin Russell & Son hosiery complex of 1910 and 1924-25; **19 and 20:** the former Liberty Shoes Factory, built 1918-19; **21:** Rydal Cottages built 1897.