The Gates, Durham

County Durham

Historic Building Assessment

April 2015

for

Nathaniel Litchfield & Partners on behalf of Milburngate Durham Ltd

No.5 Framwellgate broidge (formerly 129 Milburbgate), looking SE

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by Thomas Addyman

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Acknowledgements

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Many thanks too the staff at the County Archive, Durham County Council, and to Jill Parkes, Principal Archivist, in particular.

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1. Introduction

i. General

This report provides an assessment of a group of historic buildings and structural remains located at The Gates shopping centre in Durham, a study that is intended to inform an ongoing process of for the redevelopment of the site by Milburngate Durham Ltd. Addyman Archaeology were contacted by Nathaniel Litchfield & Partners (contact, James Taylor, Associate Director) on behalf of Milburngate Durham Ltd. This assessment forms a document in support of the wider Heritage Statement, prepared by Simpson & Brown Architects (contact, John Sanders), for the same site and its surrounding area. The reports should be read in conjunction with each other.

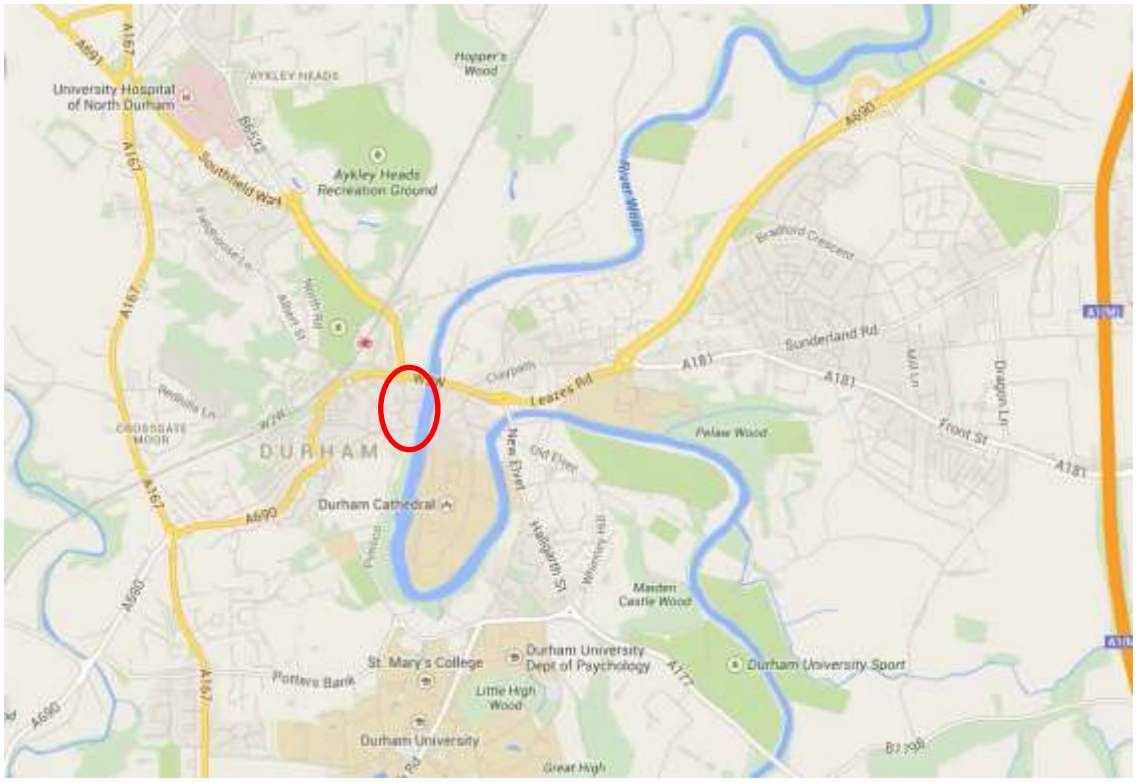

Figure 1 City of Durham - location of site ringed in red (Google Maps)

ii. The site

When The Gates complex was built in the early 1970s the overall site had been mostly cleared of the pre-existing historic townscape and some of the few buildings that remained were also cleared. The re-development process effectively obliterated much of the historic Milburngate, only the very south end of which survives now as a rather uncomfortable cul-de-sac. The site generally was so comprehensively redeveloped (including deeply-excavated basement parking areas, etc.) that the only pre-existing features to survive were an isolated group of street frontage properties at the very south end of the site (and whatever archaeological remains they may overlie). These structures occupy the western bridge-head area of Framwellgate Bridge on its north side, and the very southern end of the east side of the former Milburngate.

The bridge-head saw the convergence of four historic approaches on the western side of the medieval city; clockwise from the south these were South Street, Crossgate, North Street and Milburngate. Dating to c.1402 Framwellgate Bridge itself is a major survival of the medieval townscape, a structure Listed Grade I.

Figure 2 Location of historic structures relative to the site boundary and surrounding townscape (Google Maps)

Five historic buildings still remain within the site area, on the north side of Framwellgate Bridge. These are currently known as Nos.1-5 Framwellgate Bridge, running westwards from the bridge head. However Nos. 3-5 actually lie on the historic Milburngate and were formerly known as Nos.129, 130 and 131 Milburngate respectively, running from north to south.

Figure 3 Overlay of the surviving historic buildings at the site and the existing site boundary upon the 1857 OS town plan, surveyed at 1:500 scale (DRO – DP(27.01.13)A)

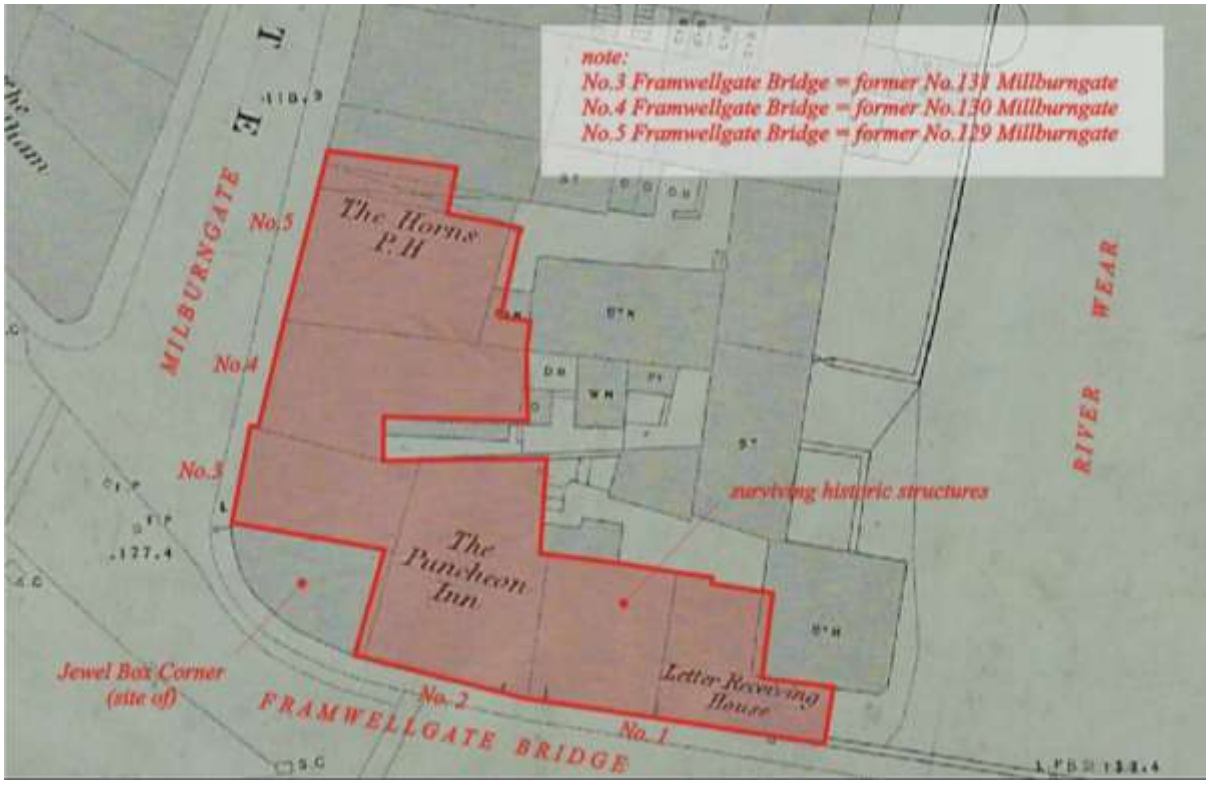

Figure 4 Location of the surviving historic structures at the south end of the site – the street numbering is the modern designation, all 'Framwellgate Bridge', though Nos. 3-5 were formerly on Milbrungate

Plate 1 General view of the project area, the southern end of The Gates shopping centre complex adjacent to Framwellgate Bridge, looking west

Plate 2 Junction of Millburngate and Framwelgate Bridge, looking northeast

iii. General methodology

The purpose of this assessment was to better understand through site inspection and limited investigation the nature and architectural evolution of the surviving historic buildings that lie within The Gates shopping centre project area. The site inspection accessed available areas which included all parts of the exteriors, and the interiors of No.1 Framwellgate Bridge and No.5 Framwellgate Bridge (the former 129 Milburngate), an early structure of timber-framed construction. A detailed understanding of the latter was one of the main focuses of the work and included formal survey record of selected parts. A detailed assessment of No.1 had the specific aim of understanding the surviving extent of early fabric and the relationship of the structure to the bridge head.

The site was visited by Thomas Addyman on 16 July and, in more detail on Thursday 27 November 2014. The latter visit coincided with a limited opening-up exercise carried out by MGM, mason contractors, of North Shields (contact, Brian Young, Director) whereby the a section of walling to the rear of one of the historic properties was investigated.

2. No.1 Framwellgate Bridge

i. General

No. 1 Framwellgate Bridge is the first property on the north side of Framwellgate Bridge at its west end. At street level it is consists of the commercial premises occupied until late 2014 by Thorntons and, on the west side of that a former commercial premises that had been broken through at ground floor level to form the southern pedestrian entrance to The Gates shopping centre. While this is a single historic property at street level at least it seems to have long been in separate, mostly commercial, occupation. The 1857 OS town plan, surveyed at 1:500 scale (*DRO* – DP(27.01.13)A) records the building as the *Letter Receiving House – figure 4*, above.

Plate 3 The south (street) frontage of No.1 Framwellgate Bridge

ii. Exterior

Overall the structure is of five bays width, of three storeys, built of brick with a comparatively low-pitched roof slated in Welsh slate. The brick employed is of hand-made narrow low/medium-fired terracotta. The central bay of the south-facings street frontage has a double-height oriel window. The ground floor has clearly been rebuilt in modern time with brick, forming slightly projecting fascia (by about 0.20m – 0.25m) to create the ground-floor frontage, and then covered with tiles in the area of the entrance to The Gates Shopping Centre.

The five bays are not entirely symmetrical, with two larger windows in the bay to the west of the central oriel (containing 8-over-8 paned sashes, opposed to the 6-over-6 elsewhere) and different spacing between windows. Apart from the oriel which seems to be a secondary insertion the façade appears to have been built at one time. The asymmetrical arrangement perhaps suggests a more complex earlier structural history; however there is no point within the building where this possibility can presently be investigated. Overall the building is of c.1800 - early 19th century character although the windows have been replaced, in what seems to have been a careful repetition of the 19th century glazing patterns.

Plate 4 and Plate 5 The east side and rear of 1 Framwellgate Bridge, showing the junction of the superstructure and the masonry-built sub-structure, looking west and south respectively

The building does not come to a full gable next to Framwellgate Bridge but is of half-width, the last bay of the structure having evidently been purposefully constructed as a stair tower. However as will be described below the base of this part of the structure, below bridge parapet level, is masonry-built and apparently largely or wholly part of a pre-existing structure, possibly mostly of medieval construction and likely associated with the bridge.

The eastern side wall and rear walling of the property that backs on to the existing entrance court to The Gates is presently rendered in cement and painted white. One historic photograph of the mid-20th century shows the east side of No.1 – a larger area of the upper walling of the main range's east elevation is free of render; here the general wall fabric is visible where it is now obscured, *plate x*. this appears to be of homogenous and regular construction but whether of brick or stone is not clear.

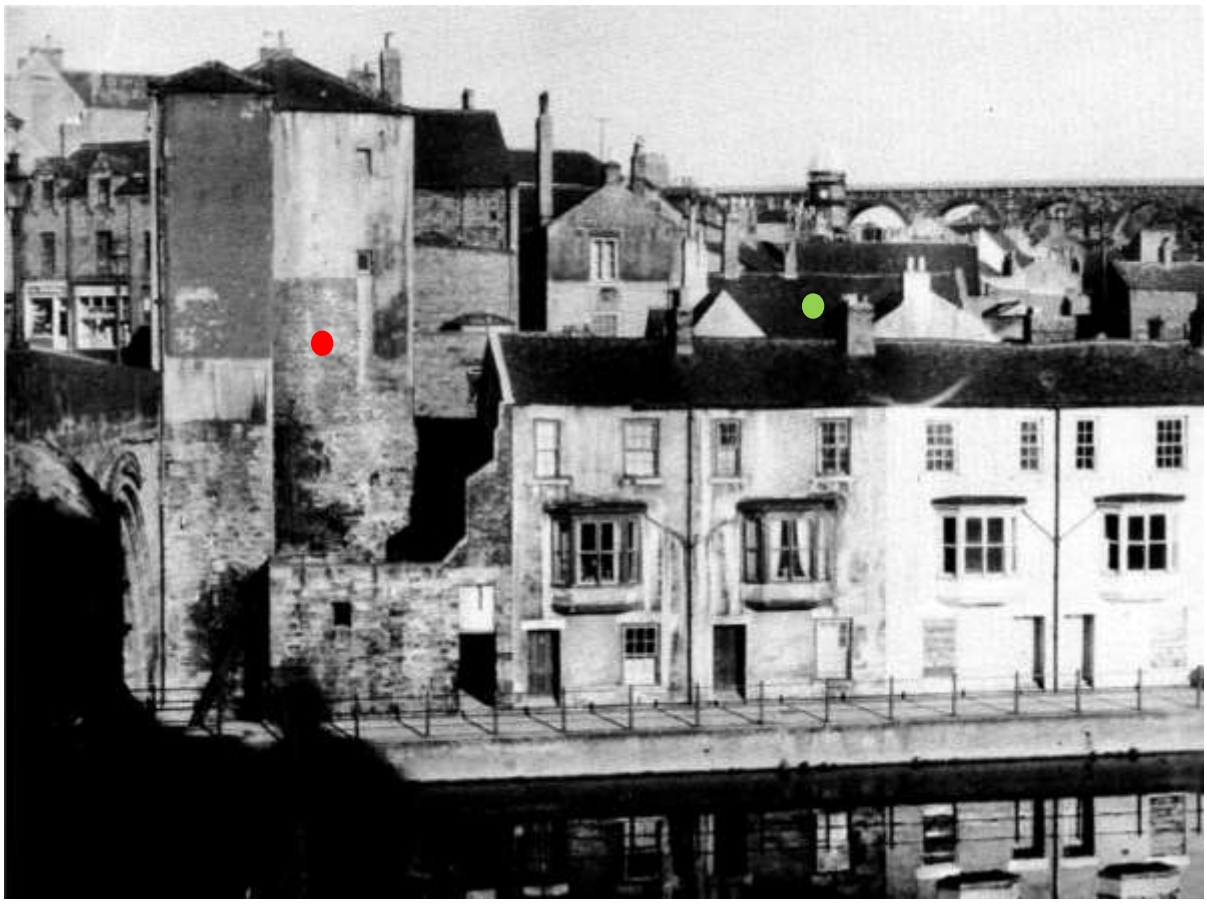

Plate 6 General view of the project area before taken c.1970, before re-development; exposed walling indicated by red; roof of No.5 indicated by green (Nelson, 1974, 17)

In terms of the overall fabric only the external walls and the principal cross walls between the stair tower and the rest of the building and the one dividing the remaining interior space in to two double-bay spaces contain original fabric. These all appear to have been built of the same mortar-bonded brick visible at the frontage (this can be most directly demonstrated by walling visible within the loft space). At ground floor level the two walls flanking the existing entrance passage through to The Gates centre are of modern construction.

iii. Interior

The interiors of No.1 Framwellgate Bridge retain almost no early features of historic significance and any that may survive are much obscured. Early interior surfaces generally are almost wholly covered

over by later linings, partitions and finishes. Very little original fabric was visible or accessible and even, as noted, the window joinery had evidently been wholly renewed, though with some attention to replicating the historic glazing patterns. The existing interior joinery is modern, entirely of mid-late 20th century date, judging by the door handles. The upper floors were mostly fitted out for office use; however part of the first floor had latterly been used for storage and as a cold room for Thorntons.

The stair also has a post-1950s character which suggests that the interiors of this building were completely stripped out and re-planned at the time that the Gates Shopping Centre first phase was built.

Inspection was made of the roof space. Here it was possible to determine the form and details of the roof structure, which was found to be largely intact historic fabric. Overall this had been formed of sawn pine of narrow rectangular section. The stair tower is hipped to the east, with hip rafters and common rafters rising from a wall plate to meet at a narrow ridge-piece. It is possible that this roof was in part a secondary rebuild, this suggested by the use of extruded bricks of later 19th century character at the head of the cross wall rising up within the roof space on the west side.

Plate 7 and Plate 8 No.1 Framwellgate Bridge - details of the stair tower roof structure

The main roof is supported by king-post trusses of typical later 18th century-early 19th century type. From the jowled bases of the king posts rise upward braces. The junction of the king-post and tie is secured by substantial iron stirrups, bolted on. Purlins support the common joisting of the upper structure. These roofs had been stripped of slates, sheeted and re-slated at the time that The Gates shopping centre was built.

Plate 9 and Plate 10 No.1 Framwellgate Bridge - details of the king-post roof structure of the main range

iv. Sub-structure

Self-evidently the lower parts of No.1 Framwellgate Bridge incorporate earlier structural fabric, this immediately apparent to the east, where the upper walling of rendered brickwork abruptly gives way to rubble sandstone masonry. The junction occurs at the base of the parapet of the bridge. The visible area of masonry rises for almost the full height of the bridge itself, over two stories overall. It comprises a number of individual builds. The upper part of the structure seems to be a rebuilding of whatever had existed previously. The rebuilding seems to be associated with the existing building above, the purpose to create a suitable construction platform for the brick superstructure. Sandstone available seems to have been recycled, this evident from the mixed nature of the quoining at the exposed NE angle and the rubble more generally, where stone both of a pale purplish hue and of a honey colour are both apparent. The break in construction between this work and the pre-existing masonry below is particularly noticeable on the north side. The lower walling in this area is of quite different character, being formed of squarer blocks. Part of the lower section is formed to a curvature the possible significance of which remains unclear, *plate 11*.

The corresponding break is less clearly defined on the east side. Here the mid wall area has seen various patchings and repairs though is predominantly of squared blocks of similar character or somewhat larger. There seems to be some indication of former features in this area – aligned stones, possible blockings, etc. though given the extent of patching it is presently hard to make much of these without detailed survey.

Plate 11 The lower parts of the existing stair tower of No.1 Framwellgate Bridge (centre-left), showing the exposed section of its north side; to right is the base of the main block of No.1; looking SSW (bridge at left side)

However much of this may be of medieval date, suggested by the fact that the rubble masonry is not dissimilar to that of the adjacent lower parts of the arch spandrel (the upper parts of the facings of the spandrel and the bridge parapet above seem to be a later rebuilding).

The lower wall area on the east side is probably of medieval date and likely associated with the construction of the Framwellgate Bridge, thus of the early 15th century. The lower five courses are of well-cut ashlar blocks laid to courses and surmounted by a further course of large slabs that approximately correspond to the spring of the outer order of the bridge arch. This high quality masonry may have been employed as facings where the abutment/breakwater was most vulnerable to the flow of the river. Whether there had been an angled northern continuation of this walling – forming a semi-breakwater – is not presently possible to determine. However a return at the north end of the lower walling may define the extent of the medieval fabric in that area; beyond this is less well constructed runbblework and an area of brick. These in turn are overlain by the surviving lower parts of a later structure that had been retained when The Gates centre was built and now serve as the sub-structure of the stair down to the riverside walk. This secondary structure is represented on early Ordnance Survey plans.

In summary the lower parts of the stair tower are likely to be medieval and to have formed and integral part of the abutment of the early 15th century Framwellgate Bridge, a Grade I listed structure. The surviving masonry remains do not extend high enough as presently visible to determine whether they had also formed part of a gate-house structure at the bridge head.

Clearly much of this part of the structure is presently obscured by later construction, its lower extent by the existing riverside walk, and its northern side by the successive build-up over hundreds of years against the bridgehead. Further north, below the foot of the existing north wall of No.1 Framwellgate Bridge at courtyard level, it is possible that the masonry of the earlier structure will survive to a greater height than is more visible further east.

Plate 12 Opposite abutment of the western arch of Framwellgate Bridge, looking east; note the two southern ribs (to right) are part of a bridge-widening scheme of the mid-19th century

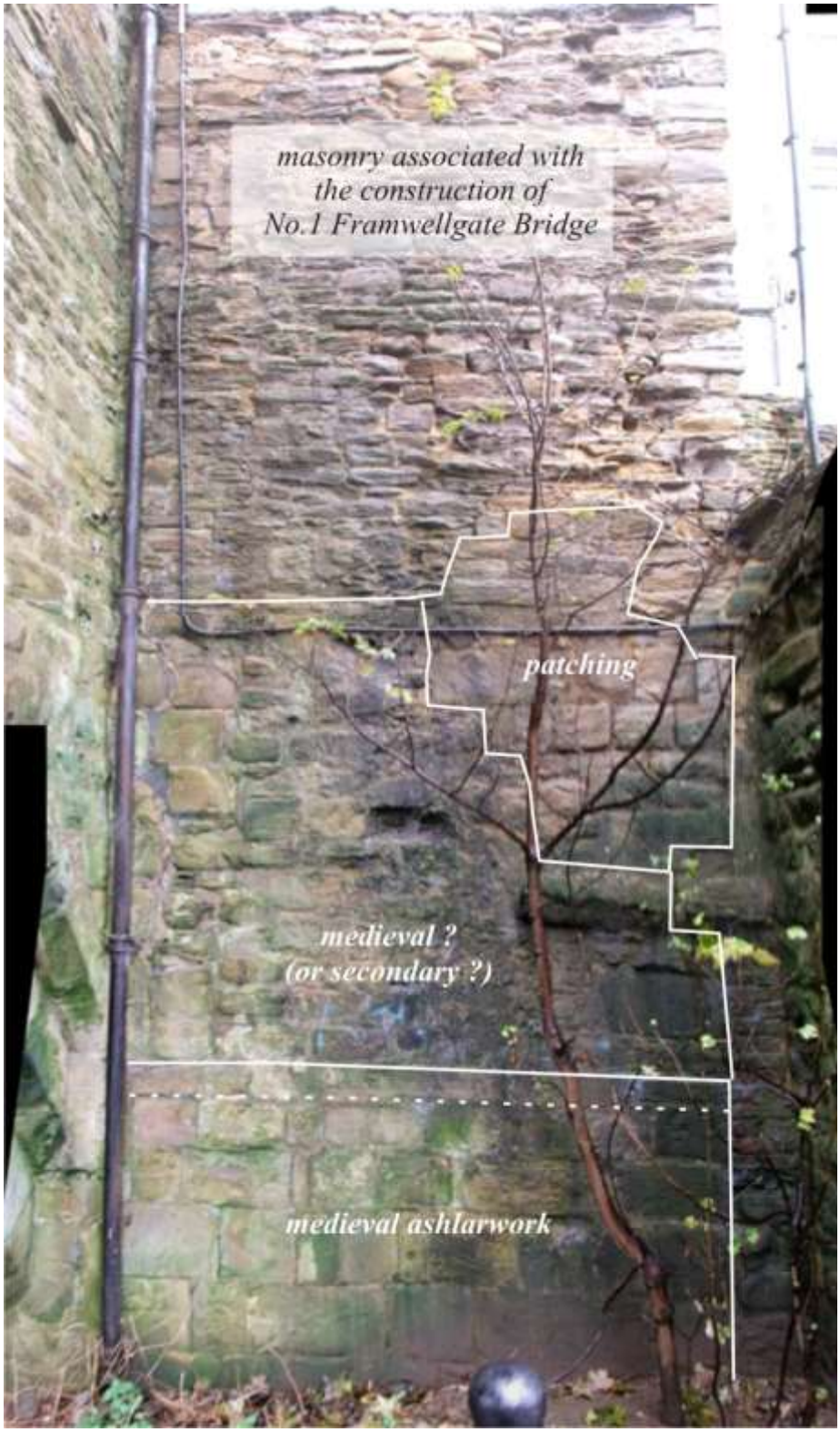

Plate 13 The east-facing side of the bridge abutment (bridge arch springing from left) showing indicative phasing / phase breaks (pending more detailed survey)

Just beyond the bridge abutment to the north its masonry is overlain by the lower parts of a further historic structure. Rubble-built with regular quoining, this appears to the remains of a 19th century structure. This will not be affected by proposed development.

Plate 14 Secondary structure just beyond the bridge abutment, partly overlying it, looking NNW

3. No.2 Framwellgate Bridge

i. General

Given access restrictions No.2 Framwellgate Bridge was not subject to detailed historic building assessment. The 1857 OS town plan, surveyed at 1:500 scale (DRO – DP(27.01.13)A) records the building as *The Puncheon* public house.

ii. Investigation

A limited opening-up exercise carried out by MGM, mason contractors, on 27 November 2014. A section of walling to the rear of No.2 was investigated, work that carried out under archaeological supervision, and recorded. The purpose of the exercise was to determine whether building fabric of an historic nature still survived in areas that might be considered for the formation of new openings in relation to the proposed scheme for the redevelopment of The Gates site. These areas included the western side wall of the existing broad pedestrian passage forming the southern entrance approach into The Gates centre off Framwellgate Bridge, and the rear (north) wall of No.2 as accessible within the court area beyond. Both areas were examined by means of cutting out a 0.5m high horizontal strip of the existing cement render at about chest height. The render was cut back to expose the masonry substrate of the wall behind.

Investigation of the side wall of the entrance passage revealed it to be constructed wholly of cemented brickwork where exposed. This was evidently work relating to the 1970s Gates centre redevelopment.

Plate 15 and Plate 16 South entrance to the Gates – pedestrian passage; investigation on the side wall of No.2

Investigation of the rear wall of No.2 revealed historic brickwork along the length of the exposure. The bricks were mortar-bedded brickwork of 19th century character. A notable irregularity of the vertical plane of the wall-face, more pronounced towards the west end of the wall section, was further investigated by extending the investigation area upwards for a further 0.5m. This revealed that the brickwork terminated, giving way to mortar-bedded sandstone rubble construction. It was concluded that the brickwork was either a re-facing or making-good exercise, replacing earlier stone rubble facings.

Plate 17 and Plate 18 South entrance to the Gates – pedestrian passage; investigation on the side and rear wall of No.2

4. No. 5 Framwelgate Bridge (formerly 129 Milburngate)

i. General

Albeit heavily modified No.129 Milburngate is one of the more significant surviving buildings of Durham's historic townscape, though there is some disagreement as to its dating. *Pevsner and Williamson* (2002, 250) describe the structure as *a much restored C14 building, timber-framed above (close vertical stud, stone beneath, with a C15-16 rear wing*, while Durham County Council's HER listing suggests it to be of 16th century date and the City of Durham Listed Building Record Card of September 1975 suggests it to be *of 17th century appearance, with alterations*.

Though heavily modified it is nonetheless an instructive example of a comparatively small group of early timber-framed structures remaining within the city. Before the erection of Milburngate Shopping Centre (now The Gates Centre) in 1974-6 this structure had fronted on to the historic thoroughfare of Milburngate, the last (southernmost) remnant of which survives as the Lower Walkway within the surrounding shopping centre complex.

The building has had an extremely chequered history. By the time of the construction of the Milburngate Centre it was not obviously apparent externally that this was an early timber-framed building at all, having shop-fronts below built flush with the upper storey, and being rendered above. However in terms of its long, low massing and steeply-pitched roof an early origin might have been suspected.

The 1857 OS town plan, surveyed at 1:500 scale (DRO – DP(27.01.13)A) records the building as *The Horns* public house, see *figure 4*. In a photographic view of c.1905 the surviving part of 129 Milburngate can clearly be seen to have been part of a more substantial overall structure – by this time subdivided and respectively occupied by A T Douglas, grocer and by Messrs. *Burkett's*, the latter displaying the sign, *The Original Italian Ice Cream - plate 17*. At this stage the northern part of the structure still retains a sandstone tiled roof of diminishing courses; the southern roof area is slated.

Plate 19 Early photographic view, c.1905, looking down Milburngate (Durham City : New Discoveries)

Plate 20 129-131 Milburngate, looking NE, c.1960 - No.121 to left (DRO - DR00972)

Other early photographic views show the structure from various vantage points. In a view from the east of c.1970, *plate 6*, above, the full former extent of the roof can be seen as can parts of two rear ranges; the now-demolished northern rear range had been comparatively broad and had a low-pitched roof suggestive of an 18th or early 19th century date.

The Durham County Council archive retains correspondence relating to the building from the time of the construction of the Milburngate Shopping Centre, c.1974-6.[1] The proprietor applied to demolish the structure, which was evidently in poor condition. This led to formal assessment of the structure and its listing at *Grade II*. The List description is as follows,

> *Timber framed building of C17 appearance with alterations. Two storeys, one window. High pitched, swept slated roof. Left end chimney. Walls now rendered. One-bay gable-ended wing behin, jettied on first floor. Doors and windows missing at time of survey, pending, renovation. Some exposed timbers and wattle-and-daub filling inside.*

[1] City of Durham : Design and Conservation File PH1/300/493

After some negotiation the building was eventually restored – c.1975-6. A group of photographs taken at the time provide an impression of the extent of the works and the condition of the surviving oak framing elements[2], *plates 21-23*.

Plate 21 The upper part of the west frontage (DCC) *Plate 22 The NE angle of the rear range (DCC)*

Plate 23 assembling the framing of the new north gable wall (DCC)
Plate 24 re-roofing No.5 in progress

ii. Early fabric - the frontage range

The frontage range originally faced westwards on to Milburngate, running parallel to it. Today only the southern half of the range survives and this, as noted, in a much-mutilated form. While externally all of the visible lower walling of the structure is modern, it is the heavily restored half-timbering above that signifies this to be an historic structure, *plates 19* and *20*. Internally some of the lower walling to the rear, internally and to the south are likely to be partly or mostly of early construction, *figure 5*.

[2] DCC photographic collection Acc: 7697 ND/Du Box 12

Figure 5 Plan of ground floor of No.55 showing suggested phasing (this remaining to be confirmed by investigation)

Plate 25 and Plate 26 No.5 Framwellgate Bridge (the former 129 Milburngate) – (left) the street (west) frontage, looking NE (right)the rear of the building looking SE

Surviving early framing elements are all of oak. In summary two complete roof trusses remain within the frontage range; these are fully visible internally (frames *IIII* and *V* – described below). Whether remnants of further framing survive at the next bay to the south – the probable south gable wall – is not currently apparent, this area is now obscured by plaster internally and overlain by the adjacent building (No.4 Framwellgate Bridge) externally. The existing north gable wall of the structure is wholly a rebuild of the 1970s, erected on a new alignment.

The original framing of much of the upper wall survives on the street frontage on the west side, this mostly complete between the remaining cross-frames (the central bay as existing), *plate 21*. The early wall plate extends further southwards, beyond frame *V*. The well preserved section between the two original cross-frames retains an early window opening, later blocked. The southern jowl-post (the northern side of the existing southern window) displays multiple peg-holes that suggest the former presence of a bracing element.

Plate 27 The framed upper part of the principal (west) frontage, with embedded jetty beams visible below

Though the floor structure is not visible internally at the western frontage its part-survival is demonstrated by common joist beam-ends visible at the street frontage. Exposed externally these in turn demonstrate the structure had once been jettied. A further framing element still visible and apparently *in situ* is a probable section of the jetty-plate itself, appearing as an inner lintel to the existing shop window. An outer lintel next to it may be recycled in its present position.

The cross-frame trusses are of *tiebeam-and-principals* form of a type well represented in the region, though usually dated to the later sixteenth and seventeenth century – excepting one at Escomb that is dated to the later 15th century (Roberts, 2008, 38-40). The two surviving trusses in No.5 are braced with a collar and support two pairs of side purlins upon which common rafters are laid, many of which are still the originals within the central and southern bays. The trusses retain assembly marks on their upper (northern) faces and are in sequence – *IIII*, to the north, and *V*. These obviously indicate a structure of at least 5 trusses' length. However the evidence from the surviving framing (the southwards–extending wall plate and studs of the frontage beyond truss *V*, purlins, common rafters, etc) demonstrate the existence of a further truss/cross-frame at the line of the property division to the south that corresponds well to the bay spacing of the surviving trusses. This had almost certainly been the southern gable wall of the early structure, thus giving a total of 6 trusses / cross-frames and 5 bays over all. Though obscured by wall plaster internally some elements of the southern truss / gable wall may still remain, now embedded. The likely planning of the early structure is suggested in *figure 9*, below.

Plate 28 Principal range roof structure – northern surviving truss (truss IIII) and secondary flue stack of plastered brick, looking SSE

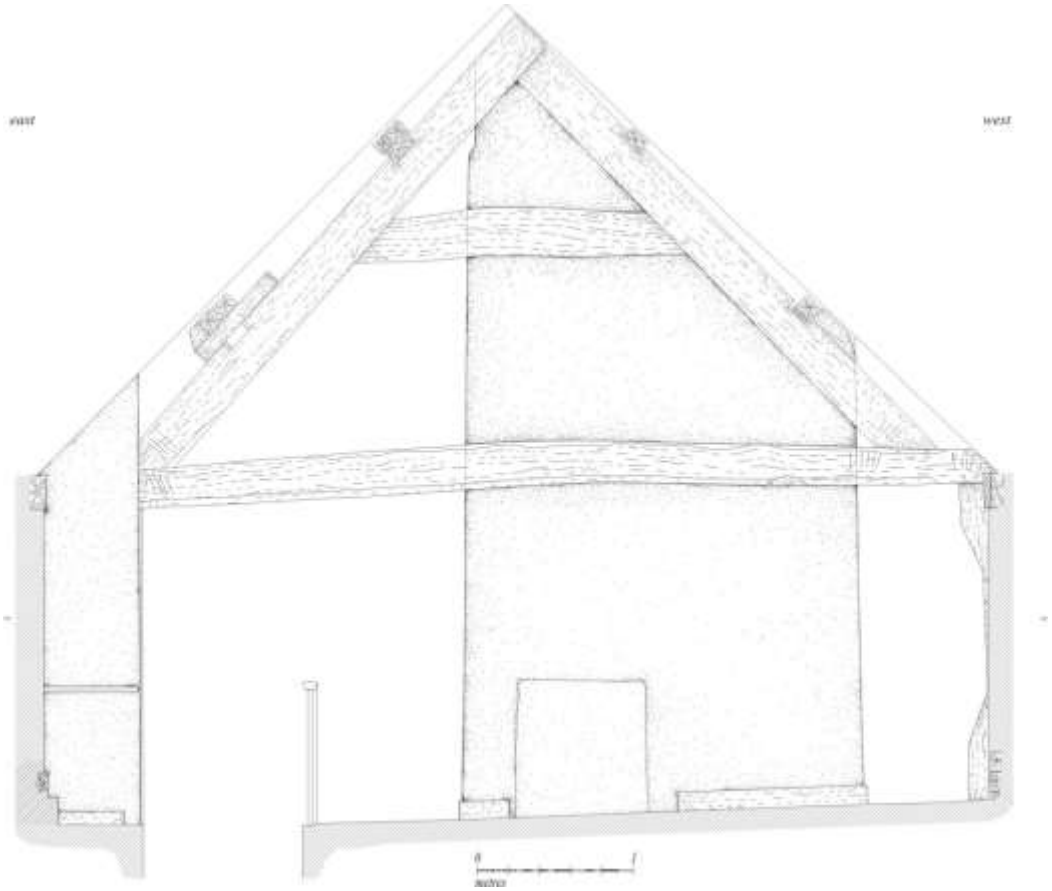

Figure 6 Principal range roof structure – northern surviving truss (truss IIII),upper (north) side

Plate 29 and Plate 30 The rafter-tie-beam – jowl-post assembly at the west pitch of the two surviving trusses, with respective assembly marks visible – 'IIII' and 'V'

Plate 31 Principal range roof structure – northern surviving truss (truss V), note floor structure mortices; looking WNW

Truss *V* preserves vertical studs rising from the tie-beam, these for a wattle and daub partition. Mortice sockets on the south side of the tie indicate the former presence of a floor structure, probably of the original phase of construction, on that side.

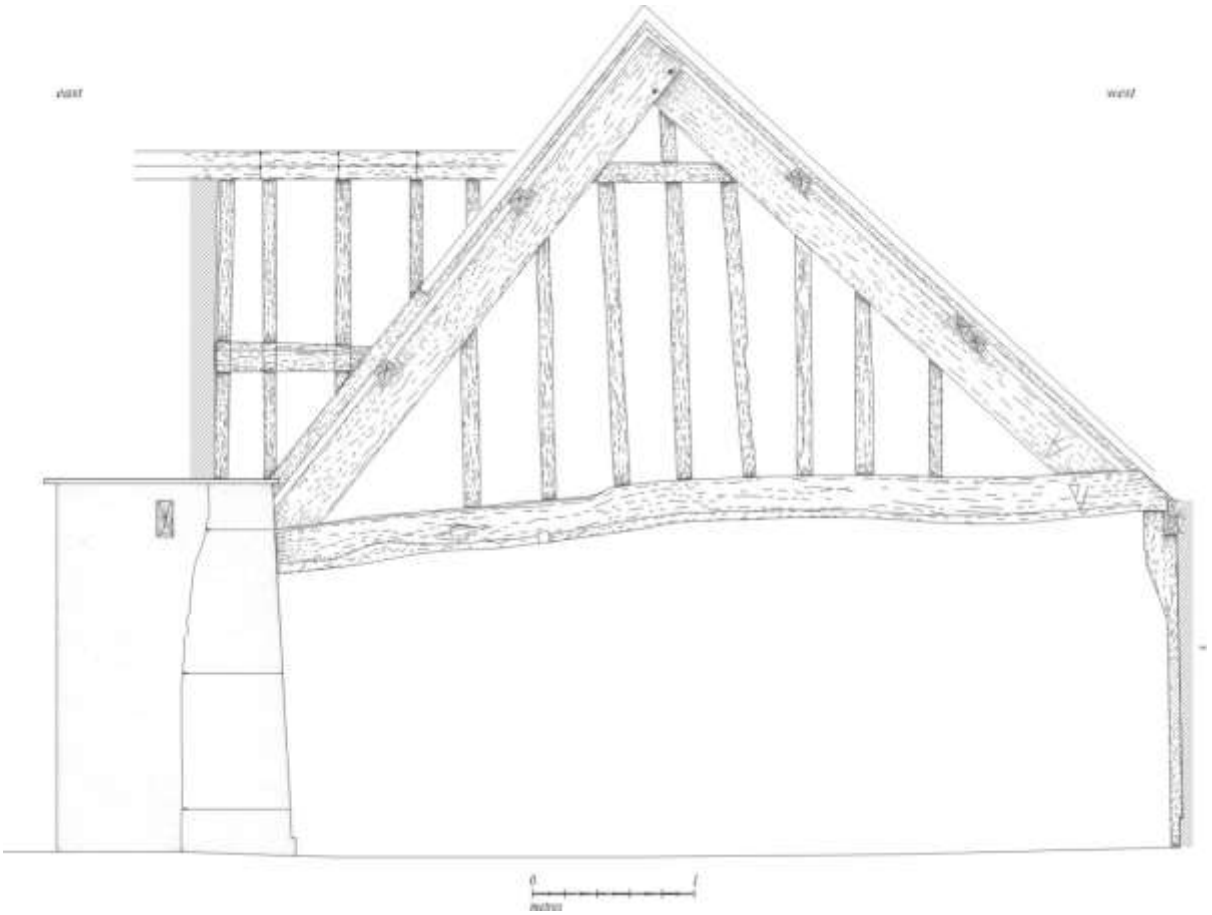

Figure 7 Principal range roof structure – northern surviving truss (truss V),upper (north) side, showing rear range roof running in

The visible lower walling of the early range to the west and north is all of 1970s date. Some early elements may survive in the area of the rear (east) and south walls though no actual fabric is currently accessible, being obscured by later linings, plaster, etc. It is at present unclear whether the lower walling had originally been timber-framed or in part of rubble masonry construction, particularly to the sides and rear. The lower street frontage was more likely to have been timber framed, as suggested by the surviving probable jetty plate.

iii. Early fabric - the rear range

Though the rear range is itself of early date it seems certainly to have been a secondary addition to the frontage range. This is most apparent by the way in which its roof structure runs in, requiring the truncation of the common rafters of the rear pitch of the frontage range. Its structure, which is considerably narrower than the frontage range is of two bays' length and is timber-framed at the upper level.

The possible extent of survival of early fabric at the lower level is uncertain though the north wall is obviously a modern rebuild. Elsewhere the walling is wholly obscured by later partitions and modern plasterwork. It is possible that the lower walling had been of masonry, but this remains to be

confirmed. At the upper level the structure was timber-framed of oak. In spite of the rather draconian restoration the structure suffered significant elements of the early framing still remain, including much of the east gable wall, which was diagonally braced, some less extensive parts of the side walls (mainly studs), and the central truss. The latter is mostly complete and had contained a partition the studs for which still remain in place, though the wattle and daub infill is long since gone. The truss' tie-beam displays common joist sockets for flooring extending to either side, and the surviving early jowl-post on the north side preserves a groove for wattling indicating an internal partition wall on the line of the truss.

Plate 32 The eastern gable wall of the rear wing, looking WSW

Plate 33 Rear range roof structure showing the central truss and secondary fire-stack, looking west

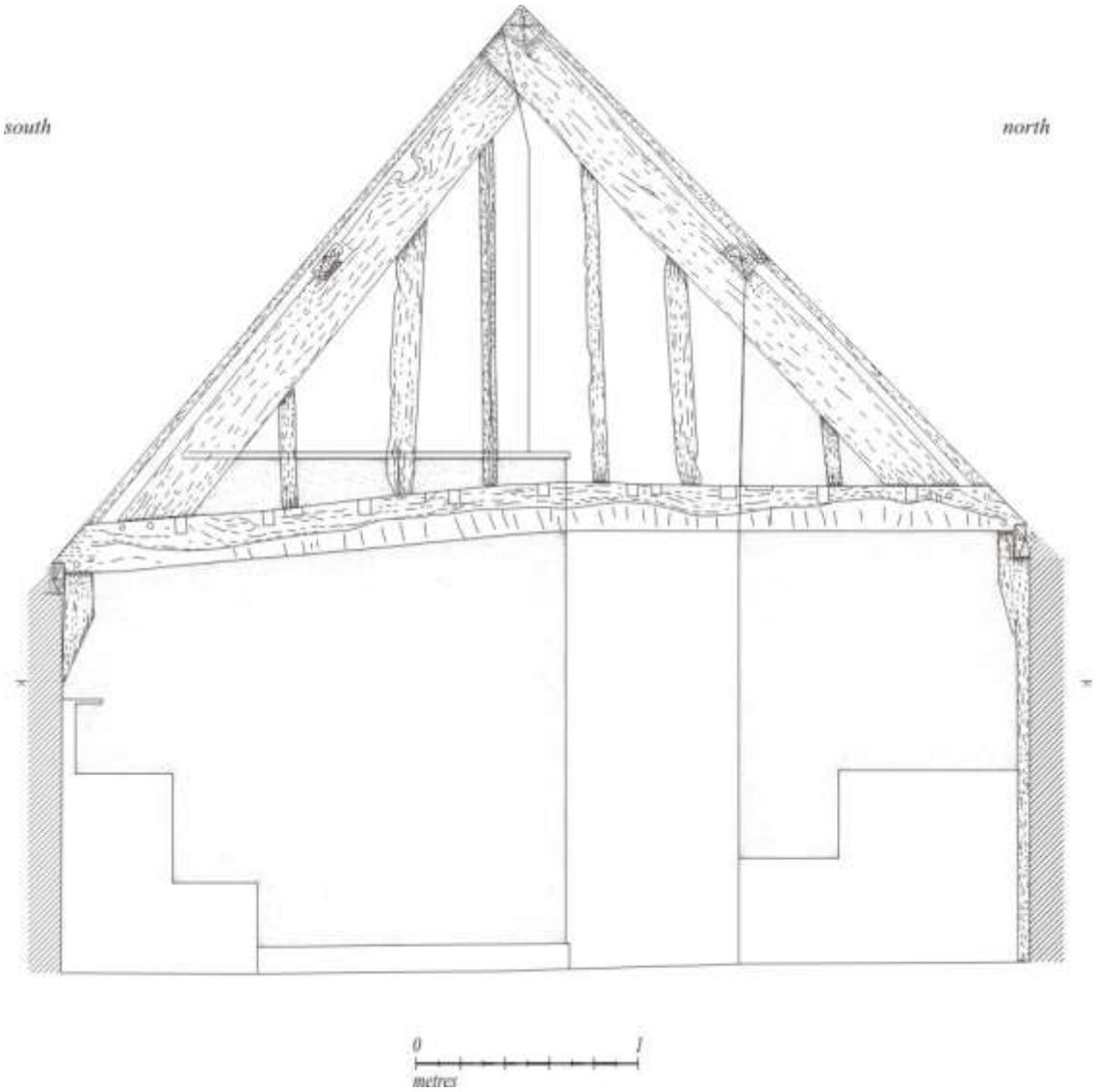

Figure 8 Rear range roof structure, section, looking west

Figure 9 Plan of the upper level of No.5 Framwellgate Bridge (former 129 Milburngate) showing survival of early timber elements, and interpretation

iv. 17th or 18th century

The framing of the roof structure of the early building is interrupted by two substantial fire-stacks. One of these rises within the frontage range between the two surviving early trusses and off-set to the west of the roof ridge line, *plate 28*. This is effectively a free-standing structure; though obscured by plaster the indications are that this is largely or wholly brick-built. A south-facing fireplace exists at ground floor level; this may well be a contraction of a broader pre-existing opening; the grate within is of mid- to late-19th century date, *plate 29*.

The second fire-stack rises from the rear wall of the frontage range and runs up through the southern pitch of the roof of the rear range at its junction with the roof of the main range, see *plates 26* and *27*, above. Internally the bricks from which it is constructed are visible, these are narrow hand-made bricks, low-fired and orange-red hue. The visible brickwork of the stack rise from a more substantial chimneybreast that perhaps suggests an earlier fabric; however this is now wholly obscured by later plaster, linings, etc. This flue seems to have served two fireplaces though these is now covered over.

Plate 34 (right) secondary fire-stack rising within the principal range upper level; looking NW
Plate 35 (left) the fireplace and lower part of the stack as visible at ground floor level; looking NW

v. Works of c.1974-6

With the construction of the new shopping centre the northern parts of this building were removed, along with remaining frontage properties beyond. Reduced to a mere two bays the remainder of the structure saw some heavy remodelling. A new additional bay was added to the north of the truncated range and a slightly canted gable wall created, this timber-framed at the upper level. The lower level was provided with cemented masonry walling of sandstone rubble. The historic nature of the building

was sufficiently recognised for its remaining parts to be retained as a heritage feature, the surviving timber-framing elements were left exposed externally. See cover photograph.

The new works at the upper level were carried out in the form of repair to the existing timber-framing and the addition of new timber-framing elements, though the work was somewhat heavy-handed. Other early elements retained included two fire-stacks – one rising within the centre of the frontage range and the other against the rear wall of the range at the southern part of the junction with the rear range. The upper parts of these chimney stacks were rebuilt.

Plate 36 The rear of No.121 as newly restored in 1976 (DRO - DR00975)

In spite of the extensive interventions enough survives of the timber-framing elements for a reasonable idea of the architectural character of the early building to be formed.

vi. Note : Comparable structures in the immediate vicinity

As noted previously there are comparatively few timber-framed buildings now remaining in Durham, though doubtless the more or less fragmentary remains of many lie obscured by later fabric. Two jettied, timber-framed ranges of obvious significance had existed a little further down-slope, appearing prominently in a number of early views of Milburngate, but were demolished in the 1930s. No 5 (129 Milburngate) seems likely to have been of similar character.

Figure 10 Post-card, c.1930 showing surviving timber-framed, jettied buildings further downslope on Milburngate, demolished in the 1930s (DRO - DR00694)

Plates 37, 38 Other timber-framed structures in Durham, at Crossgate and Claypath

Plate 39 jettied building on Silver Street

vii. Recommendations

The timber-framed building is an important survival of the early vernacular architecture of the City of Durham. A full record and assessment of this building ought to be a priority. Through a full understanding the proposed scheme for the wider site will be better informed.

It is thus recommended that a general historic building survey of No.5 in its as-existing state be carried out. An investigative exercise could be very usefully undertaken at an early stage to inform the project of the possible extent of further historic fabric within the building. This would involve opening up certain areas, such as the rear wall of the frontage range internally, the south gable wall of the frontage range internally at both levels, revealing parts of the floor structures of both the frontage range and rear range; determining the nature of the lower level walling of the rear range and the possible extent of surviving early fabric. A programme of dendrochronological (tree-ring) dating of the remaining early would be regarded as highly desirable and would be an important addition to the corpus of timber-framed structures dated in the NE and in County Durham in particular.

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