

**FORMER MAGISTRATES  
COURT,  
RUPERT STREET/NELSON  
STREET  
BRISTOL**

**HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY**

**CP. No: 10561**

**DATE: 28/05/2013**



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# Wardell Armstrong Archaeology

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## *Quality Assurance*

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology on the preparation of reports.

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## SUMMARY

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Wardell Armstrong Archaeology were commissioned by Watkin Jones Group to undertake an historic building survey of the Former Magistrates Court, Rupert Street/Nelson Street, Bristol (NGR ST 58734 73207) prior to the proposed redevelopment of the site to provide new student accommodation (348 bed spaces) and commercial units (Planning Application No. 13/00452/F). The proposed development would involve the demolition of the Former Magistrates Court building which has been vacant following the reorganisation of Court Services in Bristol approximately seven years ago. The building was constructed in the 1970s and is a reinforced concrete construction with cladded and overhanging elements.

The site is located adjacent to the Grade I listed, St John the Baptist Church to the south-east and the Grade II listed Westgate House to the south-west. To the north-west is the Grade II listed Sugar House and Grade II\* Meeting House. Located to the north-east of the site is Drake House a 6/7 storey 1960s building used mainly as student accommodation. The site is situated in the designated Nelson Street Regeneration Area, and is surrounded by (but not located within) three Conservation Areas (St Michaels Hill and Christmas Steps, College Green and City and Queens Square).

Although the Former Magistrates Court is a relatively modern building, Bristol City Council Archaeology Team has requested that the structure be adequately recorded photographically in order to provide a record of the building both externally and internally prior to its demolition.

The historic building survey has revealed that the former Magistrates Court was constructed of concrete with a steel framework, and with internal walls of brick and concrete. The building was designed to have seven levels, a basement, a ground floor which was utilised largely for car parking and the transportation in and out of prisoners, with the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Floors providing spaces for the court rooms, offices, waiting rooms, and prisoner and magistrate's areas.

Externally, the building is typical of its period, with concrete 'cladding' being the main architectural feature, with overhanging elements, external stairways and apsidal stair towers. It was interesting to note the lack of a dominant main entrance, as is often present in civic buildings such as this.

Internally, each of the floors appears to have continued to serve the same functions as originally planned. Public and staff areas were clearly defined particularly in the finish applied to the stairways. There was also a clear distinction between the areas utilised by the magistrate's, the public and the prisoner's; this was particularly evident by the way the magistrate's and prisoner's staircases were located beside each other but the access arrangements did not allow for either to cross paths.



Some original features survive within the building; however it has suffered from recent bouts of vandalism and temporary occupation. The panelling in the court rooms, some sanitary ware and stairwell fittings are all seemingly original to the building, and it was noticeable that in general the floor plans appear to have remained the same since construction until the property was vacated in 2007, with little in the way of obvious insertion of modern or removal of internal partition walls. This presumably is due to the fact that the building continued to serve the same functions as it was originally constructed for.

The exterior of the former Magistrates Court was subject to the 'See No Evil' street project, and as a consequence the street art has been photographed as part of the historic building survey in order to create a permanent record of this event.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Wardell Armstrong Archaeology would like to offer thanks to Iain Smith and Carl Brown of Watkin Jones for commissioning the project and providing advice regarding entry and the condition of the building.

The historic building survey was undertaken by Fiona Wooler and Alistair Byford-Bates. The report was written by Fiona Wooler, and the illustrations completed by Adrian Bailey. The project was managed by Frank Giecco, Regional Manager for Wardell Armstrong Archaeology, who also edited the report.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION AND SITE LOCATION

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- 1.1 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology were commissioned by Watkin Jones Group to undertake an historic building survey of the Former Magistrates Court, Rupert Street/Nelson Street, Bristol (NGR ST 58734 73207) prior to the proposed redevelopment of the site to provide new student accommodation (348 bed spaces) and commercial units (Planning Application No. 13/00452/F). The proposed development would involve the demolition of the Former Magistrates Court building which has been vacant following the reorganisation of Court Services in Bristol approximately seven years ago. The building was constructed in the 1970s and is a reinforced concrete construction with cladded and overhanging elements.
- 1.2 The site is located adjacent to the Grade I listed, St John the Baptist Church to the south-east and the Grade II listed Westgate House to the south-west. To the north-west is the Grade II listed Sugar House and Grade II\* Meeting House. Located to the north-east of the site is Drake House a 6/7 storey 1960s building used mainly as student accommodation. The site is situated in the designated Nelson Street Regeneration Area, and is surrounded by (but not located within) three Conservation Areas (St Michaels Hill and Christmas Steps, College Green and City and Queens Square). The Former Magistrates Court is not designated as a listed building.
- 1.3 Although the Former Magistrates Court is a relatively modern building, Bob Jones, Bristol City Council, City Archaeologist, has requested that the structure be adequately recorded photographically in order to provide a record of the building both externally and internally.
- 1.4 An archaeological desk-based assessment was undertaken by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services in 2010/2011, and subsequently updated in January 2013 (Townsend 2013); therefore the historical background of the site has already been considered, and will be briefly referred to below. This assessment noted that the building's external appearance and level of preservation internally had changed since the initial 2010/2011 desk-based assessment. The outside of the building, and that of a number of other buildings in the immediate environs, has recently undergone partial decoration as part of the 'See No Evil' project (*ibid*, 10).
- 1.5 The Former Magistrates Court is located between Nelson Street and Rupert Street in the centre of the City of Bristol, with Christmas Street defining its south-west side. To the south-east side of the building is St

John the Baptist's Church, and to the south-west is the 1930s building, West Gate (formerly Electricity House) (Figures 1 and 2).

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## 2 METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 Prior to the commencement of the historic building survey, a Project Design (or Written Scheme of Investigation) was submitted to, and approved by, Bob Jones, Bristol City Council. The Project Design set out the aims and methodology of the historic building survey of the Former Magistrates Court, Bristol (Giecco 2013).

2.1.2 As an archaeological desk-based assessment has already been completed for the site (Townsend 2013), there was no requirement to undertake additional research.

### 2.2 HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

2.2.1 A Level 2 building survey of the property was undertaken according to the standard and guidance set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008) and English Heritage. A Level 2 survey comprises a descriptive record of a building or buildings as described by English Heritage (2006, 14).

2.2.2 The survey includes:

- a written description of the building, including its plan, form, function, age, development sequence and construction materials. The landscape and historical context of the building will also be considered.
- a digital photographic record of the building and its relationship with other structures in the immediate area. A selection of the digital photographs are included within this report for illustrative purposes.
- a photographic record of the street art on the external elevations of the building, which formed part of the 'See No Evil' project. This was referred to as the UK's largest street art project which saw 72 artists, including some of the biggest names in graffiti in the world, painting on buildings along Nelson Street, Bristol, in 2011.

2.2.3 The results of the building survey have been combined with the findings of the desk-based assessment in this report, in order to provide a narrative on the origin, form, use and development of the Former Magistrates Court site, where known.

## 2.3 THE ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 An archive will be prepared in accordance with the recommendations in *'Archaeological Archives: A Guide to Best Practice in Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Curation'* (Brown 2011). The archive will include copies of all the digital photographs, including detailed views of the street art, which formed part of the 2011 'See No Evil' project. The archive will be deposited with Bristol Record Office, 'B' Bond Warehouse, Smeaton Road, Bristol.
- 2.3.2 A final bound copy of the report will be deposited with the Bristol Historic Environment Record (HER), Brunel House, St George's Road, Bristol, where viewing will be made available on request.
- 2.3.3 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology supports the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project (<http://www.oasis.ac.uk/>). The overall aim of the OASIS project is to provide an online index to archaeological grey literature that has been produced as a result of developer funded fieldwork. Details of this project have been included on the OASIS database under the identifier **wardella2-150077**.

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### 3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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- 3.1 Relevant information from the previous desk-based assessment undertaken by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services has been included here to provide the historical context to the site of the former Magistrates Court (Townsend 2013).
- 3.2 Historically, the site of the building was situated in the city parish of St John, and within the limits of the medieval core settlement of Bristol. The name 'Christmas' in the present context is thought to derive from 'Knights Smith', relating to the area once being inhabited by cutlers and armourers.
- 3.3 The medieval town was protected by stone-built defences from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, although some of these probably replaced earlier earth and timber defences associated with the original town. By around 1250AD the extent of the medieval town had reached its maximum, with a flourish of further expansion in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The presence of the Rivers Frome (diverted in the 1240s and now culverted) and Avon, combined with the local topography, appears to have been significant in terms of the original settlement and, later the defence, of Bristol.
- 3.4 The study area is situated immediately to the south of the Frome, and in between two lines of former medieval town-wall, and situated roughly on a thoroughfare (*Fromebriggestrete/Knyfesmythstrete*) between Frome Gate and St John's Gate. The medieval church of St John the Baptist lies immediately to the south. The south-east side of the study area is bounded by Nelson Street, which was formerly known as Halliers Lane.
- 3.5 Maps showing the study area, dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, depict the site as more or less covered by buildings, some of which may have been medieval in origin, or possibly later buildings erected on medieval foundations/cellars. A serious fire destroyed some of the buildings within the study area in 1876 following which rebuilding took place.
- 3.6 By the 1880s, the study area had been substantially rebuilt following the fire, but incorporated a number of earlier buildings at the south-east end of Christmas Street. A number of buildings on the south-east side of the site of the former Magistrates Court had been removed by the early 1950s, possibly as a result of bombing during the Second World War. The area appears to have been in use as a car park in the 1960s, apparently remaining so until the early 1970s and the construction of the present Magistrates Court.

- 3.7 The construction of the Magistrates Court in the early 1970s appears to have involved the demolition of standing buildings within the study area. The new building incorporated a deep basement and was founded on piling. The original piling scheme appears to have been insufficient and warranted the installation of remedial piling. The evidence suggests, therefore, that the original substructure and subsequent remedial piling would have caused considerable disturbance to the pre-existing built environment over the entire area of the new Court buildings and portions of the peripheral areas.
- 3.8 The Magistrates Court ceased to function in 2007, when Court Services were moved to Marlborough Street, Bristol. Since that date the building has remained empty and unoccupied and as a result has suffered internally from a degree of vandalism. The external elevations were utilised as part of the 'See No Evil' project, which was the UK's largest street art project with 72 artists, including some of the biggest names in graffiti in the world, painting on buildings along Nelson Street, Bristol, in 2011.



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## 4 HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 The historic building survey was undertaken on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013. At the time of survey, the building was vacant and had been so since 2007 when Court services moved to Marlborough Street. Internally, the building had clearly been subject to bouts of vandalism including the stripping of copper from wiring, the application of graffiti in several of the spaces, and evidence for temporary occupation.
- 4.1.2 The exterior elevations of the building were partly obscured by mature trees, and wooden fencing has been erected around one of the external staircases (on the Christmas Street frontage) to prevent unauthorised access. The lower parts of the building formed part of the 'See No Evil' street art project along Nelson Street.
- 4.1.3 Where internal fixtures or fittings of the same form were observed on each floor, for example original hand basins or staircase detail, a representative example has been referred to in the text with an accompanying photograph.
- 4.1.4 The only area which could not be accessed during the survey was the lower basement level which was noted to be waterlogged.
- 4.1.5 The floor plans of the former Magistrates Court are produced in this report as Figures 3 to 8.

### 4.2 EXTERIOR

- 4.2.1 The former Magistrates Court is a square building with various projections from the main elevations, which served as internal and external staircases, mezzanines and air shafts. The building is constructed of concrete with a steel framework which manifests itself by the regularly-spaced square columns which rise the height of the structure, but which are partly hidden at third and fifth floor levels by overhanging projections (Plates 1 to 6).
- 4.2.2 The tall, thin, windows in all elevations are regularly-spaced and are recessed slightly from the main elevations which have a 'cladded' effect created by grooves cut into the concrete panels, then applied with pebble-dashing. Larger windows are present to either side of the apsidal public staircases, of which there is one on the north-east elevation, and another on the south-west elevation (Plates 7 to 9).

- 4.2.3 It was noticeable that the ground floor elevations contained no windows; this is due to the fact that this level was constructed as a car parking area at the base of the building, with vehicular access noted to have been from Nelson Street (see Figure 3). Along the north-west elevation, at ground floor level, there are decorative air bricks which would have allowed natural light to penetrate into the car park, as well as provide ventilation (Plates 1 and 10). Further access points to the ground floor parking area were provided in the south-west elevation, and a large doorway in the south-east elevation (providing access into a separate 'police yard' see Figure 3). It is interesting to note that the main public pedestrian access into the building was not provided at ground floor level.
- 4.2.4 The main entry point for the public arriving on foot at the Magistrates Court was seemingly via the external stairway on the south-east corner, accessed from Nelson Street. An additional external stairway is present on the western corner, accessed from Christmas Street, although this appears to have provided entry to staff areas of the building (Plates 11 and 12, and Figure 3). The stairway from Nelson Street provided access onto a courtyard area, in front of the main doors in the north-east elevation (Figure 4). This courtyard could not be accessed at the time of the survey as the stairway shown on Plate 12 was boarded off. It is interesting to consider the muted nature of the main entrance, in terms of the lack of 'grand' entrance as would perhaps be noted in earlier examples of civil buildings.
- 4.2.5 To the north-west side of the former Magistrates Court building there is a triangular feature, which has been utilised as part of the 'See No Evil' street art project; this is an access point to a subterranean electricity substation, along with a square 'plinth' which also appears to have related to the substation below ground level (Plates 13 to 15 and Figure 3).
- 4.2.6 It was noted that on the north-west and south-east elevations there were external mezzanine levels which were present at second and fourth floor levels (see Figures 5 and 7). These will be referred to below, as access was only possible from the interior of the building at the time of survey.
- 4.2.7 As previously noted, the lower sections of the south-west and south-east elevations, including the air shaft on the south-west elevation and the apsidal stair tower on the south-west elevation, were utilised as part of the 'See No Evil' street art project. Plates 16 to 20, as well as those already referred to, provide some indication of the quality of the art; a

full photographic record of all of the artwork on the former Magistrates Court building will be included within the project archive.



*Plate 1: View looking south-west from the north side of Rupert Street*



*Plate 2: View looking south-east from the north side of Rupert Street*



*Plate 3: View looking east from the west side of Rupert Street*

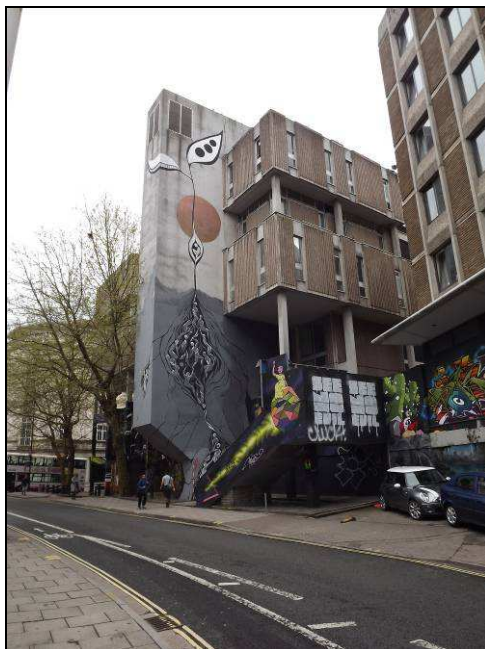


*Plate 4: View looking north from the south end of Christmas Street*





*Plate 5: View looking north from the south side of Nelson Street*



*Plate 6: View looking south-west along Nelson Street*



*Plate 7: Detail of the tall windows, with larger examples to the right which light the landings of the public staircases, south-west elevation*

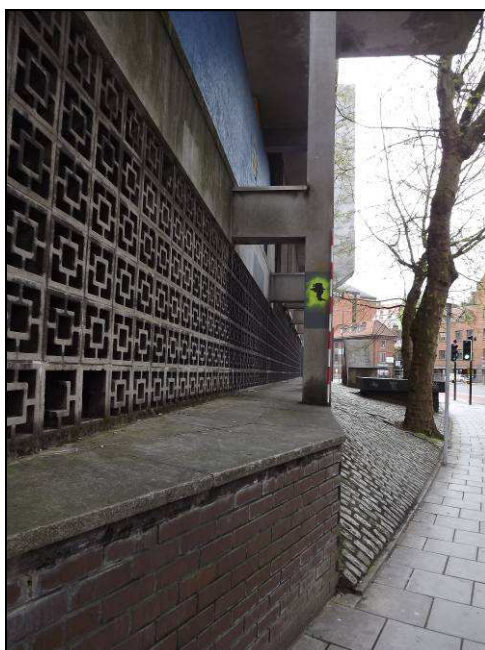


*Plate 8: Detail of 'cladding' effect created by grooves cut into the concrete panels, and pebble-dashing, as seen at second floor level, south-west elevation*

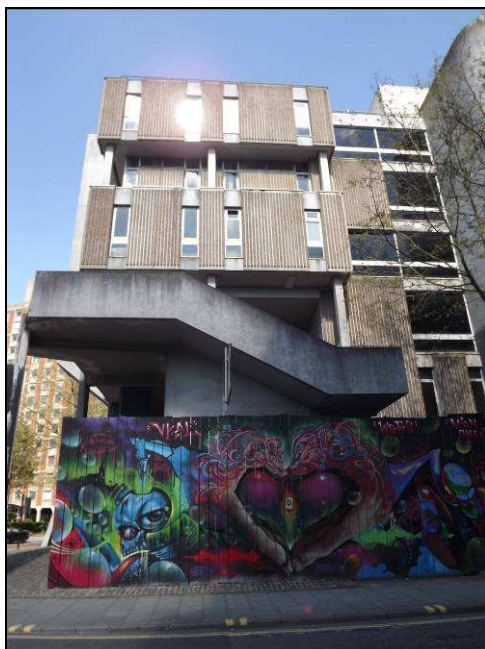




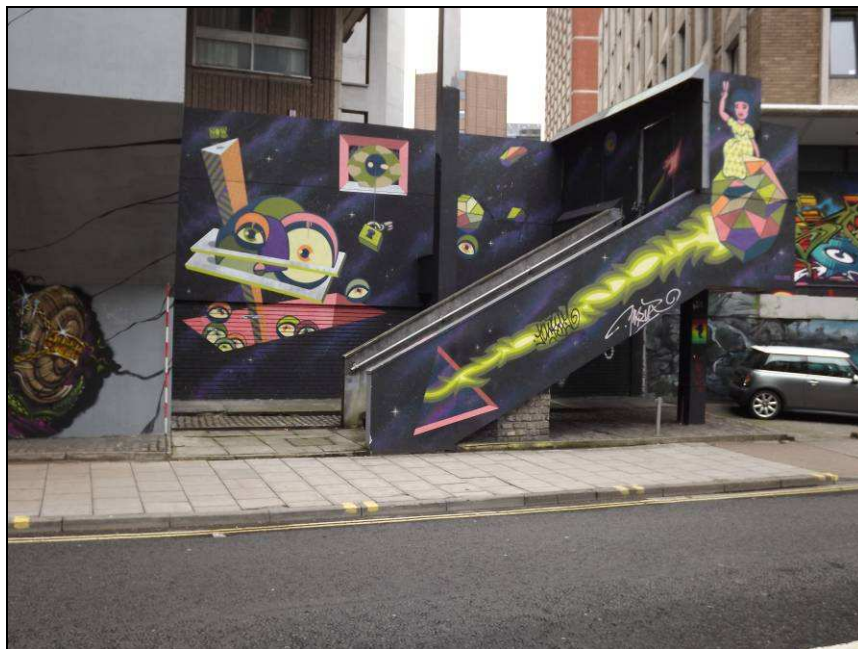
*Plate 9: Detail of the south-western apsidal stair tower, Christmas Street*



*Plate 10: Detail of decorative air bricks, ground floor, north-west elevation*



*Plate 11: Stairway on south-west corner, as seen from Christmas Street*



*Plate 12: Stairway at south-west corner, Nelson Street (Scale = 2m)*





*Plate 13: Detail of street art, substation access point, north-west elevation  
(Scale = 2m)*



*Plate 14: North-west side of substation access point, north-west side of  
Magistrates Court*

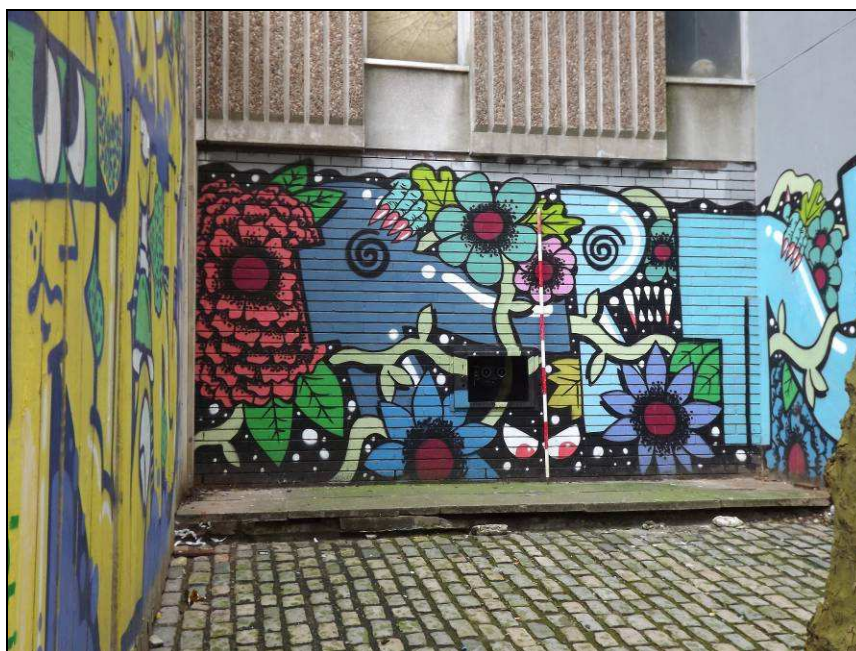


*Plate 15: View looking north-east showing the access door to the electricity substation, north-west side of Magistrates Court*



*Plate 16: South-west elevation, street art on wooden hoarding (Scale = 2m)*

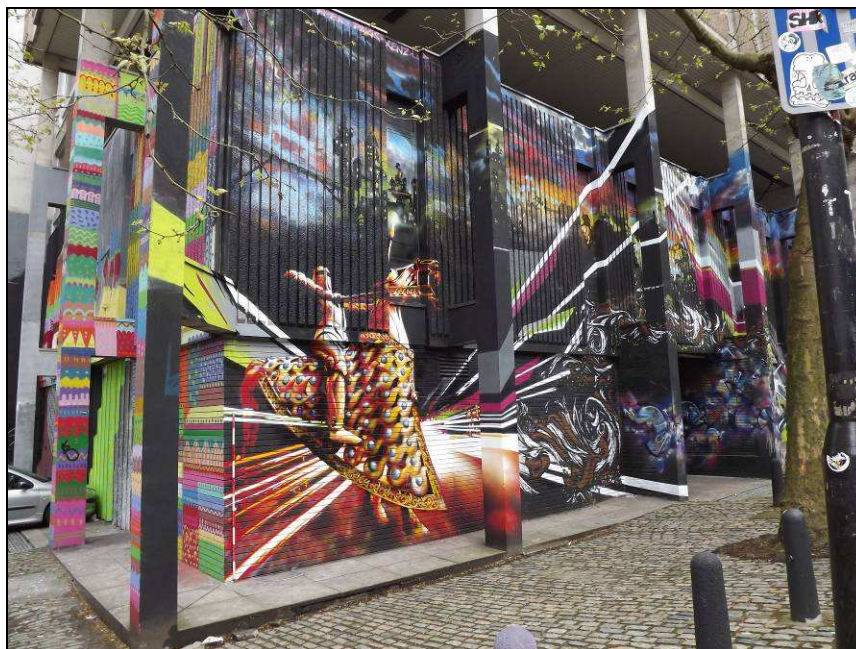




*Plate 17: South-west elevation showing section of street art*



*Plate 18: South-west elevation*



*Plate 19: South-east elevation (south end)*



*Plate 20: South-east elevation showing part of the street art*

### 4.3 INTERIOR

- 4.3.1 *Ground Floor (Figure 3)*: the ground floor served largely as an area of car parking, as shown by the painted lines on the concrete floor, two access for vehicles in the south-east elevation (from Nelson Street), and the presence of a barrier and security office still *in-situ* (Plates 21 and 22).
- 4.3.2 Figure 3 shows a segregated area in the southern corner of the ground floor, with vehicular access present in both the south-east and south-west elevations; this area is labelled as 'Police Yard' and presumably it is in this area that prisoners were transported to and from the courts. This yard provides access to a 'Prisoners Lobby' and 'Prisoners Stairwell' which ascends the height of the building, and only allows access into the courts on the upper levels, with no other access points indicating the high level of control over prisoners.
- 4.3.3 There are two public stairways that lead from the ground floor upwards, both housed in the apsidal stair towers either side of the building. One provides access from the car parking area up to the main public foyer on the first floor, whilst the other forms part of an emergency access route, with a fire door located in the south-west elevation. There are two lifts which also provide access from the ground floor to the upper levels (Plate 23). An additional staircase to the north-east side of the ground floor provides access to the basement (which could not be accessed by the public), and a further staircase in the southern corner provides access to a doorway onto Nelson Street; this staircase only appears to be present between the ground floor and the basement which may indicate it was utilised by the police, given its proximity to the segregated police yard on the ground floor (Figure 3).
- 4.3.4 *Basement (no floor plan available)*: the basement of the former Magistrates Court mostly comprised individual and some multiple-person cells, accessed by at least two staircases, one in the north-east elevation and the other, the 'Prisoners Stairwell' towards the south-east end of the building. It is possible further staircases existed, however at the time of survey due to the lack of a floor plan, and artificial lighting, it was difficult to thoroughly assess this space.
- 4.3.5 As noted, the basement was largely utilised as cells, seemingly arranged off short corridors towards the north-western side of the building (Plates 24 to 26).
- 4.3.6 It was noted that there was a stairway which provided access to a deeper level of the basement; however, at the time of survey this stairway was submerged by water and therefore access was not possible.



- 4.3.7 *First Floor (Figure 4)*: the main entrance into the former Magistrates Court was through doorways in the north-east elevation, via the external courtyard area at this side of the building. Upon entering the building, an information board provides details of the most recent uses of each floor: Floor 1: General Enquiries, Court List Board, Fine Payment and Fixed Penalties, Legal Aid and Licensing, Family Office, Warrant Office and Refreshments; Floor 2: Court 9; Floor 3: Courts 1, 2, 3 and 4, Duty Solicitor, Probation Service, Children's Room, Victim Support; Floor 4: Private Floor, No Public Access; Floor 5: Courts 5, 6, 7 and 8, Citizens Advice Bureau and Witness Service (Plate 27).
- 4.3.8 Upon entry into the main foyer of the Magistrates Court, a security office is located immediately to the right-hand side (Plate 28). The main entrance has, at least more latterly, led into a long corridor which had counters along the north-west side; these appear to be original to the 1970s building, as the wooden finishes are similar to that noted throughout the interior (Plate 29). It was noted along these counters, where the panelling has been removed, that the structure of this feature of brick laid in English Garden Wall Bond, consisting of alternating courses of stretcher (long edge of brick) to headers (short end of brick). Throughout the whole of the building it was observed, where panelling had been removed, that the internal walls were generally constructed of brick laid in stretcher bond, or were of concrete, with very little clear evidence for studwork. Where the suspended ceiling had fallen away, or been removed, it was possible to note that the ceiling of the first floor, as was the case on the other levels, was of recessed concrete blocks, characteristic of this age of building (Plate 30). The suspended ceiling, as was noted throughout the whole of the building, was utilised to conceal service pipework.
- 4.3.9 It was also evident throughout the building that the majority of the rooms on all floors were seemingly original, with no clear indication that there had been any subdivision of spaces or removal of original partition walls. Figure 4 shows the most recent layout and uses of the rooms at first floor level.
- 4.3.10 *Second Floor (Figure 5)*: each of the floors could be accessed by two sets of lifts (Plate 31) and two public staircases, located in the projecting apsidal stair towers. From first floor level, staff staircases are present in projections in the north-west and south-east elevations which provide access up to the fifth floor. It is interesting to note the difference in the finish of the public and the staff staircases; those used by the public, housed in the apsidal stair towers, have a higher quality finish with decorative handrails, balusters, glass panelling, and slate flooring

- (Plates 32 to 34) compared to the plain square balusters, metal handrails and linoleum floors of the staff staircases (Plate 35).
- 4.3.11 Features of note on the second floor included an apparent magistrates room, with raised area at its south-west end, complete with original wooden folding shutters to allow the one large room to be created into two, or to provide a degree of privacy. This room is well-lit by large windows in the south-east elevation which overlooks an external mezzanine level, that has, certainly more recently, had foliage in planters to provide a degree of greenery on that external space (Plates 36 and 37).
- 4.3.12 There is one court room on this floor (Court 9), but given its size and appearance it has been considered that this was not its original function, as it bears no resemblance to the other Courts in the building (Plate 38). It is possible that this court room may have been used for smaller, less significant crimes, or even for juveniles. It is noticeable that the 'Prisoners Staircase' does not allow access to this floor, suggesting that court rooms were not originally located on the second floor level.
- 4.3.13 An original basin with metal stand for buckets was noted on this floor in a cleaners store (Plate 39).
- 4.3.14 *Third Floor (Figure 6):* this was the first floor encountered during the survey where court rooms were located, with associated spaces such as magistrates rooms, waiting rooms, toilets and defined areas for prisoners (Plate 40). There are four court rooms on this floor, two (Courts 1 and 2) being slightly larger than the others (Courts 3 and 4). These court rooms are central to the building, with the surrounding space being utilised as corridors and offices arranged around the outside edges (Figure 6).
- 4.3.15 Public entry into each court room is from the main stairwells set within the apsidal stair towers, with a pair of lifts located immediately opposite the top of each public staircase. The doorways into Courts 1 and 2 provide access into a small lobby before entering the court itself; within the wall of this lobby there is a small cupboard which presently (and presumably originally) houses the light switches for each court as well as a telephone (Plates 41 and 42).
- 4.3.16 It would appear that at Third Floor level, Courts 1 and 2 were used for more serious cases, as it is these two courts which are associated with the prisoners staircase at the south-west end of the building (Figure 6). This appears to also be reflected in the court rooms themselves; Court 2 has a large modern glass panelled segregated area where the accused would have been sat (Plate 43). The magistrate's bench is set at a higher

level than the rest of the court room, with access for the magistrate through a doorway which is flush with the wall, and with no architrave (Plate 44). The panelling of the court rooms on Floors 3 and 5 was of the same form throughout the building, and it was noted that this panelling was fixed to studwork which in turn was attached to internal brick and concrete walls, although it appears that this brickwork was not laid particularly well. As these internal walls were not load bearing, it would appear that they were inserted simply to define specific spaces and allow the panelling to be affixed (Plate 45). It was interesting to note that the panelling was constructed from chipboard that has been applied with a veneer to give it a higher quality finish (Plate 46).

- 4.3.17 The magistrate's benches, which as already noted are set on a raised platform, were noted to be constructed of timber with a void below where it would appear a heating system was located (Plate 47). The outline of a Royal Coat-of-Arms was present in all of the court rooms, with the Coat-of-Arms themselves having been removed; at least one (in Court 1) has been removed since the desk-based assessment of 2013 (Townsend 2013, Plate 15). All of courts on the Third Floor are well-lit by large windows in the north-west and south-east walls; this has been made possible by the inclusion of a mezzanine on the Fourth Floor above, with Courts 1 to 4 extending in height into part of that floor (see Figure 7) (Plates 48 and 49).
- 4.3.18 It has already been noted that some service pipes, such as electricity and heating, were concealed above the suspended ceilings. Additional services and drainage were housed in boxed-in areas within spaces such as the toilets (Plate 50). Also of interest is the original provision of firefighting equipment such as hose reels and recesses for fire extinguishers, as well as hydrants such as that noted on the Fourth Floor (Plates 51 to 54).
- 4.3.19 *Fourth Floor (Figure 7):* the Fourth Floor of the former Magistrates Court was, certainly in its most recent usage, a level where there was no public access, and was in use as a private floor (see Plate 27). There are no court rooms on this floor as the courts below (Courts 1 to 4) extend upwards to partly occupy the central space of this level (Figure 7).
- 4.3.20 This floor was used mainly as offices around the outer corners, and within the central area where the lift shafts and magistrate's and prisoners stairways are located. Located to the north-west and south-east sides of this floor are mezzanines, the provision of which has allowed plenty of natural light to enter the court rooms on the Third Floor as noted above (Plate 55).



- 4.3.21 Original features of interest noted on the Fourth Floor included urinals in the gentlemen's toilets, the aluminum window frames of the building and the electrical heating (Plates 56 to 58).
- 4.3.22 *Fifth Floor (Figure 8)*: the Fifth Floor in general mirrors the same plan as that of the Third Floor, with the central area being occupied by four court rooms (Courts 5 to 8), and associated magistrate's rooms, stairwells, prisoners areas and lift shafts (Figure 8). The difference on this floor is that the north-west and south-east sides do not project outwards as far as those on the third level (compare Figures 6 and 8), and therefore there are not the same amount of rooms occupying the outer edges.
- 4.3.23 The public stairways, housed in the apsidal stair towers on the north-east and south-west elevations, were noted to ascend to this level at which point entry was into a foyer area defined from the stairwell by a partition wall which contains glass blocks, as was noted on each floor in this location (Plate 59). It was noted that these glass blocks provided the only form of natural light penetration into the public stairwells, as the apsidal towers do not contain any windows; therefore electric lighting would have been necessary in these stairways.
- 4.3.24 Services provided on the Fifth Floor, certainly in its most recent usage, consisted of Courts 5 to 8, waiting rooms, toilets, Witness Service and Advocates Interview Rooms (Plate 60).
- 4.3.25 The court rooms themselves were of a similar form to those on the Third Floor, all with raised magistrate's benches, panelled walls and well-lit by the large windows in the north-west and south-east walls. Court 5 has been subject to recently painted street art (Plates 61 to 63).
- 4.3.26 Features of note observed at Fifth Floor level included the benches in the prisoners lobby of Court 7, and an original sink and drainage area in the male toilets (Plates 64 and 65).
- 4.3.27 *Roof Level (no floor plan available)*: the flat roof of the former Magistrates Court was accessed by a stairway from the Fifth Floor. This part of the building contains small buildings associated with machinery and services for the building, such as the plant room for the lifts (Plate 66). It was interesting to note that surface water on the flat roof drained away through holes with decorative covers, indicating that the building contained internal downpipes within its structure for drainage (Plate 67).
- 4.3.28 From the roof level it was possible to observe near contemporary buildings in close proximity to the former Magistrates Court,

particularly on Nelson Street and immediately to the east (Plates 68 to 70).



*Plate 21: Ground floor of former Magistrates Court, showing security office and barrier in car parking area (Scale = 2m)*



*Plate 22: Ground floor car parking area*



*Plate 23: Detail of one of the lifts, ground floor (Scale = 2m)*



*Plate 24: Detail of one of the short corridors in the basement, with cells leading off to the right*



*Plate 25: Detail of one of the cell doors, basement*



*Plate 26: Detail of graffiti, interview room door in basement*



*Plate 27: Information board, Floor 1, showing uses of each floor as it was prior to closure in 2007*



*Plate 28: Security office, main entrance, first floor*

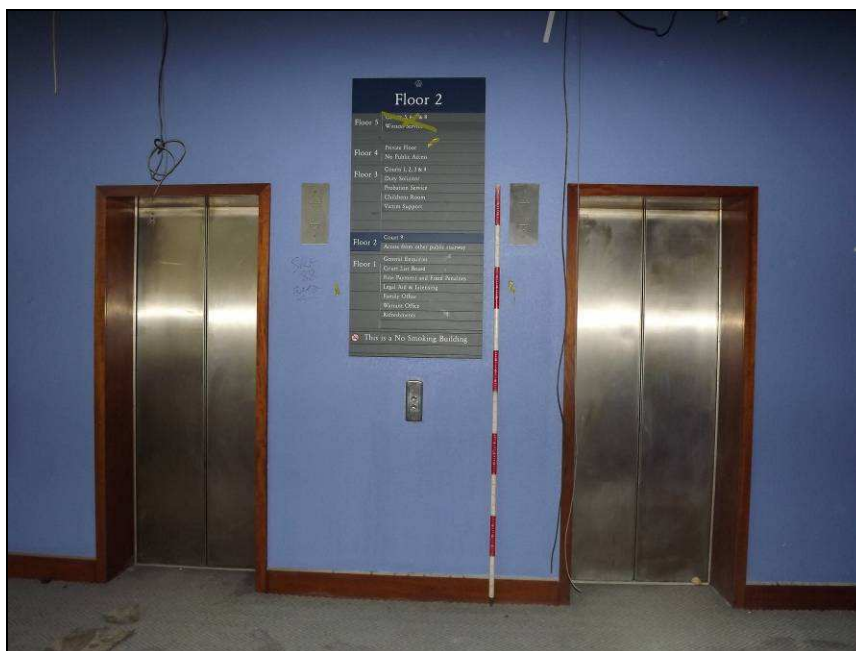




*Plate 29: Counters arranged along the north-west side of the main entrance, first floor*



*Plate 30: Detail of first floor ceiling*



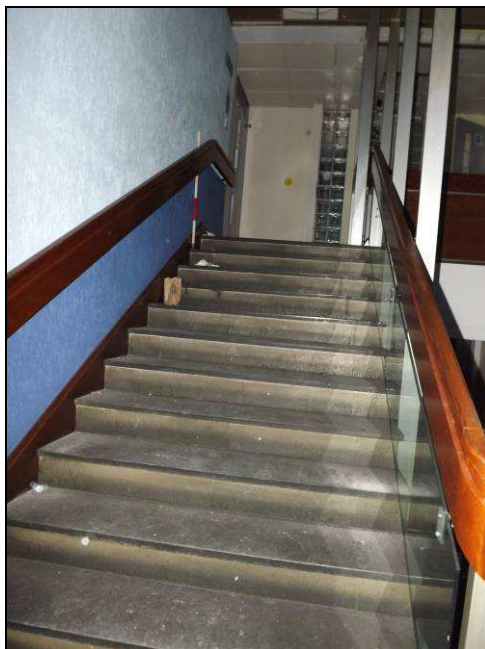
*Plate 31: Detail of two lifts, south-west end of the second floor (Scale = 2m)*



*Plate 32: Example of part of one of the public staircases*



*Plate 33: Example of the finish to one of the public staircases (Scale = 1m)*



*Plate 34: Detail of public staircase (Scale = 1m)*





*Plate 35: Example of staff staircase (Fourth Floor)*



*Plate 36: Magistrates Room, second floor*



*Plate 37: Large windows in south-east wall of Magistrates Room, second floor*



*Plate 38: Court 9, second floor*



*Plate 39: Example of a cleaners basin, second floor (Scale = 1m)*



*Plate 40: Detail of information board, Third Floor*



*Plate 41: Detail of public doorway to Court 2, Third Floor*



*Plate 42: Detail of cupboard, lobby of Court 1, Third Floor*

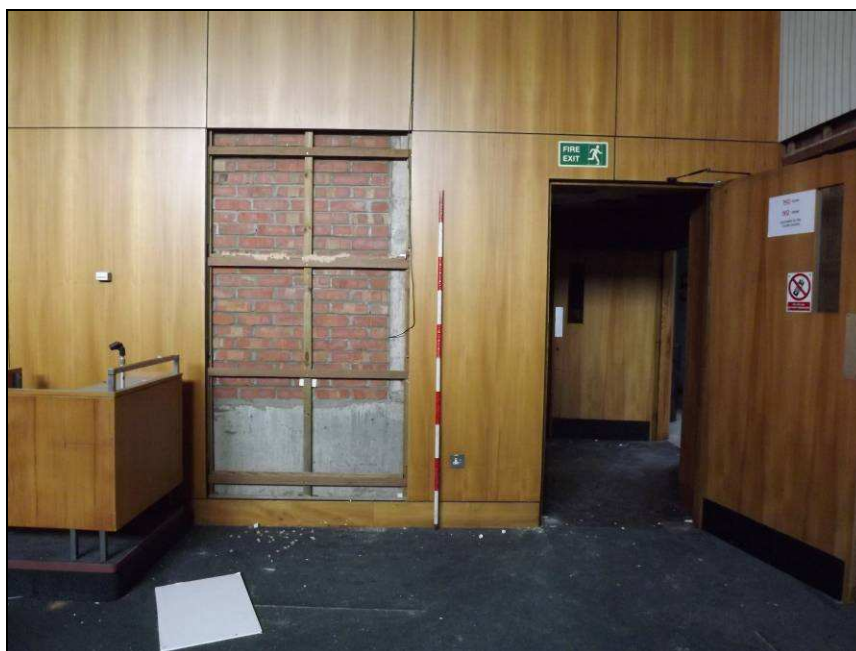




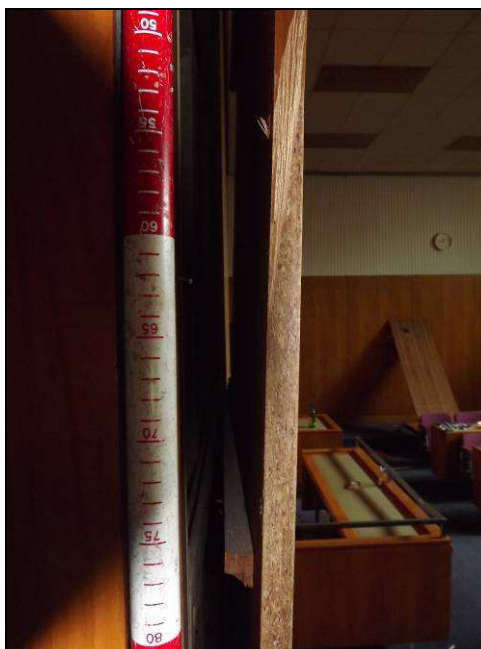
*Plate 43: Detail of the interior of Court 2, Third Floor*



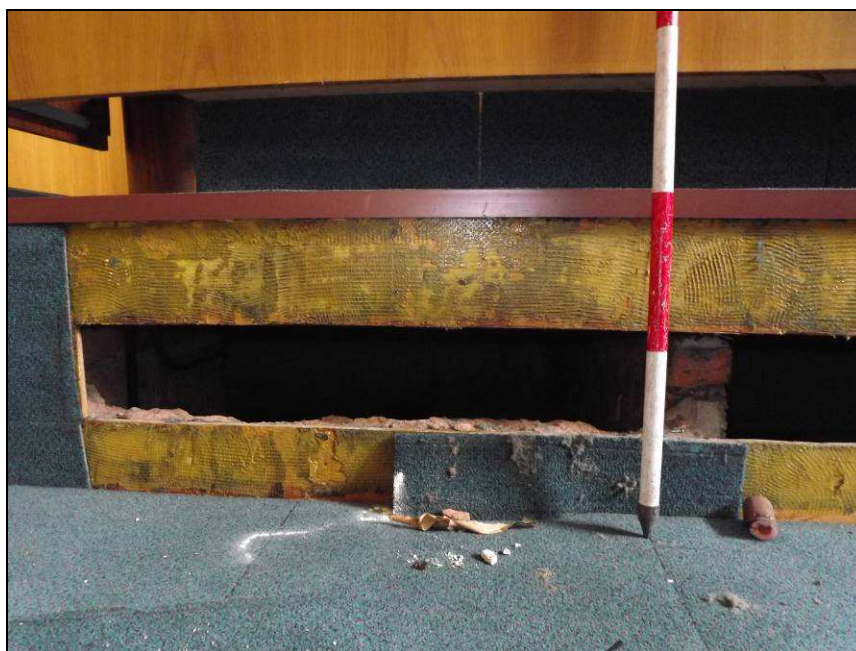
*Plate 44: Detail of magistrates doorway, north-west wall of Court 2 (Scale = 2m)*



*Plate 45: Example of removed panelling, Court 7 on the Fifth Floor (Scale = 2m)*



*Plate 46: Detail of chipboard panelling with veneer covering, Third Floor*



*Plate 47: Detail of raised platform of magistrate's bench, showing void below, Court 2 on Third Floor*



*Plate 48: Interior of Court 3, Third Floor*





*Plate 49: Interior of Court 4, Third Floor*



*Plate 50: Detail of pipework hidden within ladies toilets, Third Floor*





*Plate 51: Detail of fire hose reel storage, Third Floor*



*Plate 52: Detail of fire hose reel, Third Floor*



*Plate 53: Recess for fire extinguisher, Third Floor*



*Plate 54: Fire hydrant, Fourth Floor*



*Plate 55: Mezzanine level, Fourth Floor*



*Plate 56: Original urinals, Fourth Floor*



*Plate 57: Detail of aluminium window, Fourth Floor*



*Plate 58: Detail of electric heater, Fourth Floor*

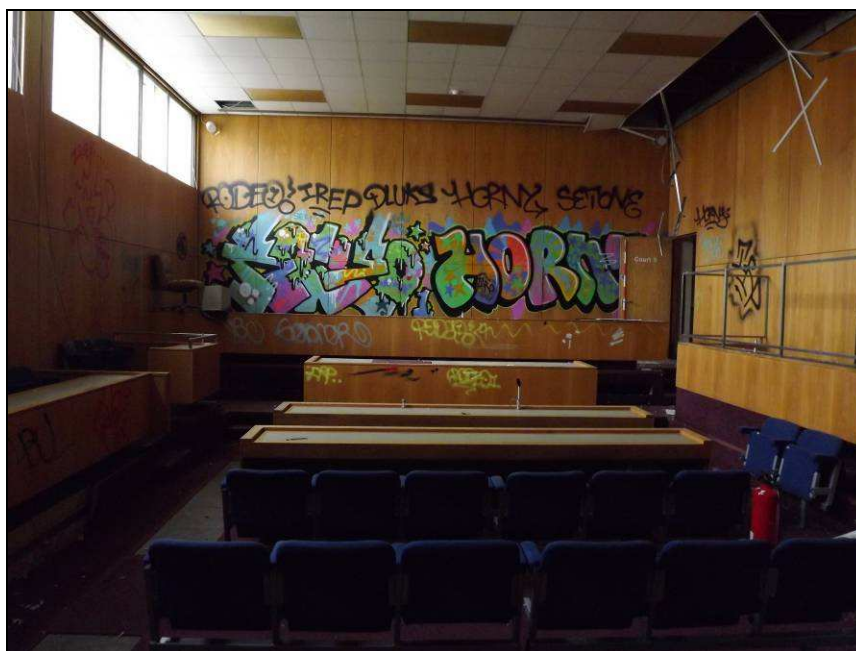


*Plate 59: Partition wall between foyer and public stairwell, Fifth Floor*



*Plate 60: Information board, Fifth Floor*





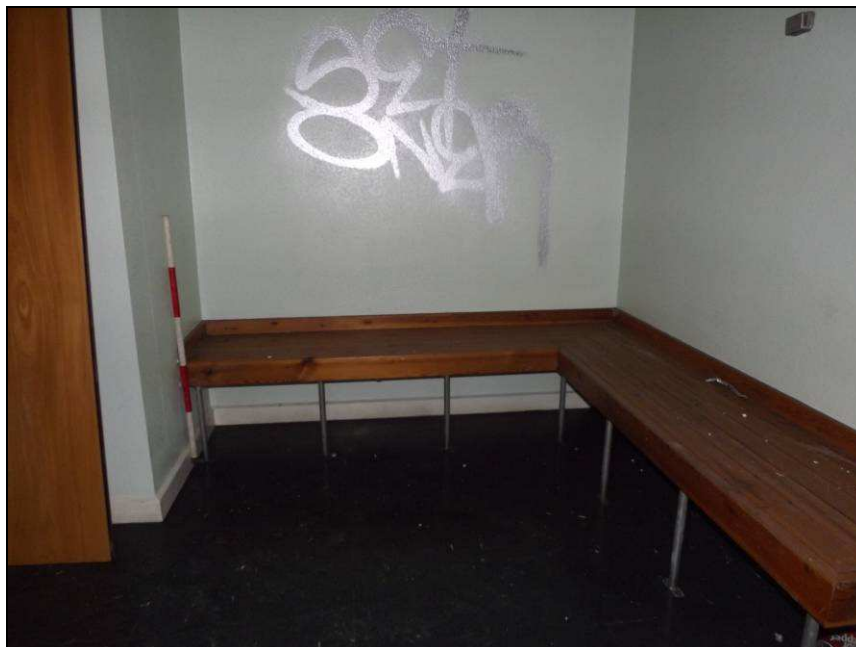
*Plate 61: Interior of Court 5, Fifth Floor*



*Plate 62: Interior of Court 7, Fifth Floor*



*Plate 63: Interior of Court 6, Fifth Floor*



*Plate 64: Prisoners bench, lobby of Court 7, Fifth Floor (Scale = 1m)*





*Plate 65: Original sink and drainage area, Fifth Floor*



*Plate 66: Roof level showing plant room for lift machinery*



*Plate 67: Detail of drainage hole, floor of roof level*



*Plate 68: View looking east from the roof level showing near contemporary buildings on Nelson Street*





*Plate 69: View looking north showing buildings (Nelson House and Froamsgate House) immediately to the east and north-east of the former Magistrates Court*



*Plate 70: View looking north-west from the roof showing modern offices (Bartholomew's Court) on Rupert Street in foreground*

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## 5 CONCLUSION

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- 5.1 The previous desk-based assessment for the site of the former Magistrates Court has identified that the site has been occupied since at least the medieval period, being located close to St John the Baptist Church and the former town walls. Cartographic sources indicate that the site continued to be occupied throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping shows the area covered in buildings (see Figures 2 to 6 in Townsend 2013). A fire in 1876 destroyed many of the buildings which occupied the site, and rebuilding has commenced by the early 1880s. By the 1950s a number of structures on the south-east side of the site had been removed, possibly as a result of air-raids during the Second World War, and in the 1960s the area was used as car parking. The construction of the Magistrates Court in the early 1970s appears to have involved the wholesale demolition of any standing buildings which existed on the site. The new building incorporated a deep basement structure and was founded on piling (Townsend 2013, 5).
- 5.2 The historic building survey has revealed that the former Magistrates Court was constructed of concrete with a steel framework, and with internal walls of brick and concrete. The building was designed to have seven levels, a basement, a ground floor which was utilised largely for car parking and the transportation in and out of prisoners, with the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Floors providing spaces for the court rooms, offices, waiting rooms, and prisoner and magistrate's areas.
- 5.3 Externally, the building is typical of its period, with concrete 'cladding' being the main architectural feature, with overhanging elements, external stairways and apsidal stair towers. It was interesting to note the lack of a dominant main entrance, as is often present in civic buildings such as this; the main doorways were noted to be present in the north-east elevation, at first floor level, although they could not be observed externally at the time of survey due to the external staircases being boarded up.
- 5.4 Internally, each of the floors appears to have continued to serve the same functions as originally planned. Public and staff areas were clearly defined particularly in the finish applied to the stairways. There was also a clear distinction between the areas utilised by the magistrate's, the public and the prisoner's; this was particularly evident by the way

- the magistrate's and prisoner's staircases were located beside each other but the access arrangements did not allow for either to cross paths.
- 5.5 There appeared to be slight differences in the court rooms, with two on the Third and Fifth Floors being larger in size than the other two on the same floor; this may indicate a difference in the types of cases that were heard in each court. The design of the building, with the overhanging elements and external mezzanines, was appreciated from within the interior as these features allowed for natural light to penetrate into the court rooms. It was also noticeable the way the service pipes and wiring were obscured from view by being located above suspended ceilings, within boxed-in areas in toilets, and within the walls of the structure; particularly interesting was the provision of fire hydrants set within internal walls.
- 5.6 Some original features survive within the building; however it has suffered from recent bouts of vandalism and temporary occupation. The panelling in the court rooms, some sanitary ware and stairwell fittings are all seemingly original to the building, and it was noticeable that in general the floor plans appear to have remained the same since construction until the property was vacated in 2007, with little in the way of obvious insertion of modern or removal of internal partition walls. This presumably is due to the fact that the building continued to serve the same functions as it was originally constructed for.
- 5.7 The exterior of the former Magistrates Court was subject to the 'See No Evil' street project, and as a consequence the street art has been photographed as part of the historic building survey in order to create a permanent record of this event.

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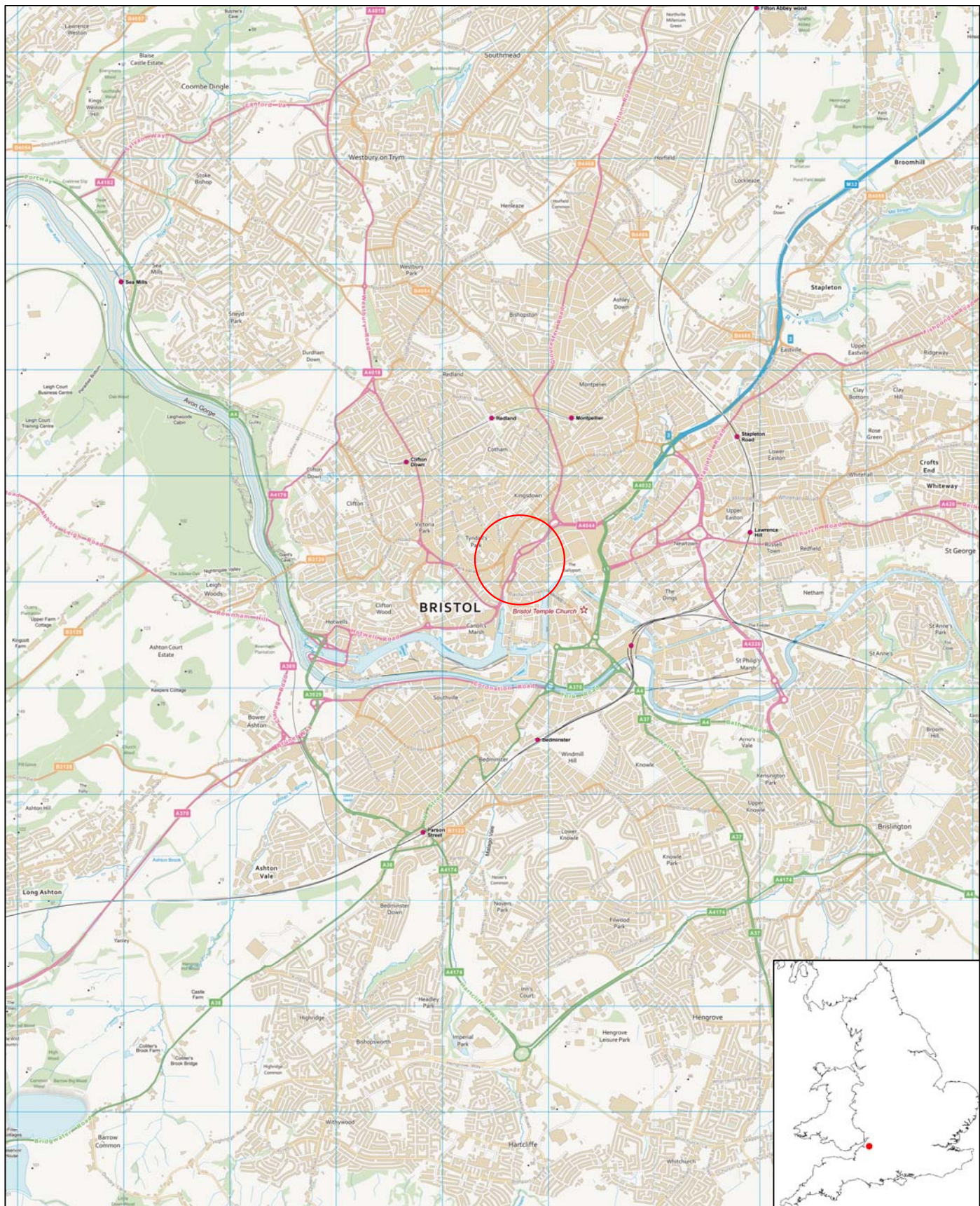
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## APPENDIX: FIGURES

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Wardell Armstrong  
Archaeology  
2013

PROJECT: Former Magistrates Court,  
Bristol  
SCALE: 1:50,000 at A4  
REPORT No: CP10561  
CLIENT: Watkin Jones Group  
DRAWN BY: AB  
DATE: May 2013  
FIGURE: 1

KEY:



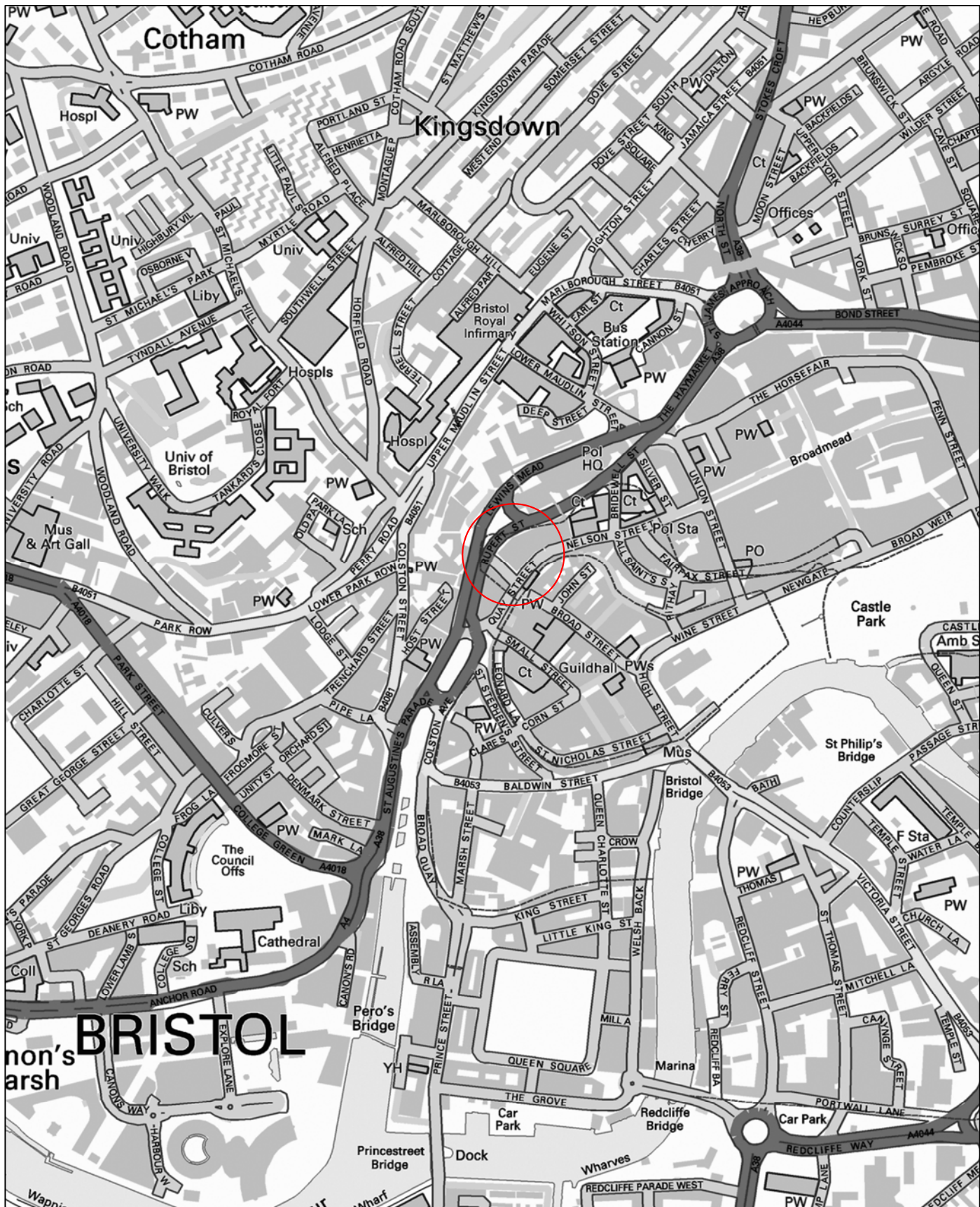
Site location



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Figure 1: Site location.








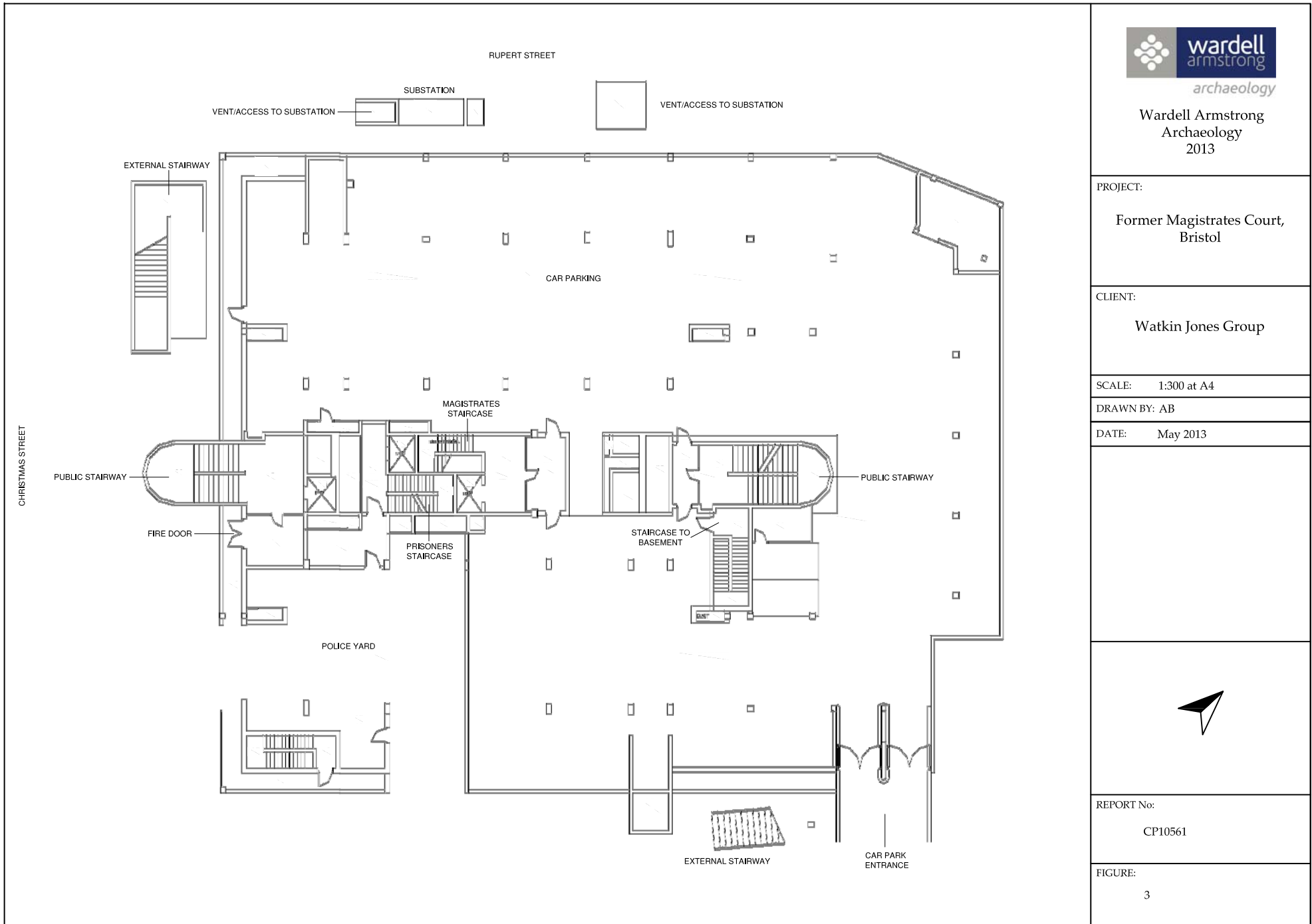
 <p>Wardell Armstrong Archaeology 2013</p>	<p>PROJECT: Former Magistrates Court, Bristol</p> <p>SCALE: 1:7,500 at A4</p> <p>REPORT No: CP10561</p> <p>CLIENT: Watkin Jones Group</p> <p>DRAWN BY: AB</p> <p>DATE: May 2013</p> <p>FIGURE: 2</p>	<p>KEY:</p>  Site location	 <p>Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019512</p>
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Figure 2: Detailed site location.



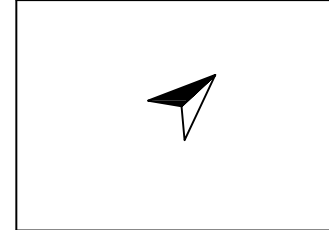
PROJECT:  
 Former Magistrates Court,  
 Bristol

CLIENT:  
 Watkin Jones Group

SCALE: 1:300 at A4

DRAWN BY: AB

DATE: May 2013



REPORT No:  
 CP10561

FIGURE:  
 3

Figure 3: Ground floor plan.







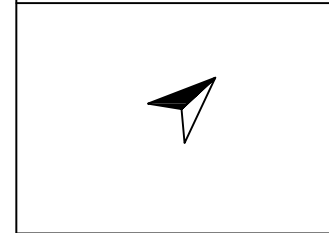
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Former Magistrates Court,  
Bristol

CLIENT:  
Watkin Jones Group

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DATE: May 2013



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CP10561

FIGURE:  
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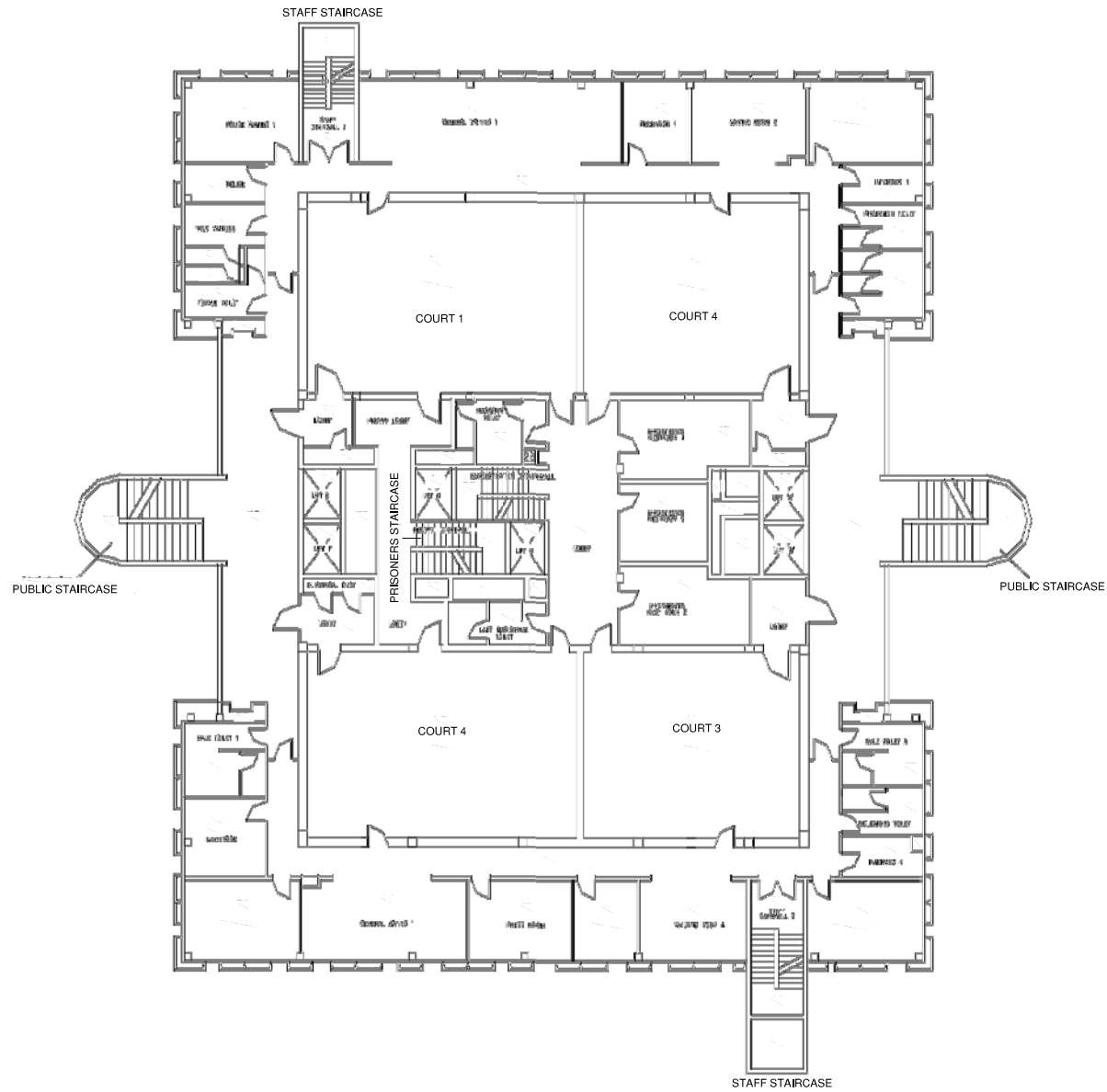


Figure 6: Third floor plan.

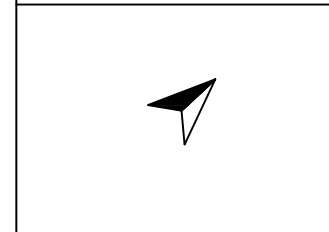
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FIGURE:  
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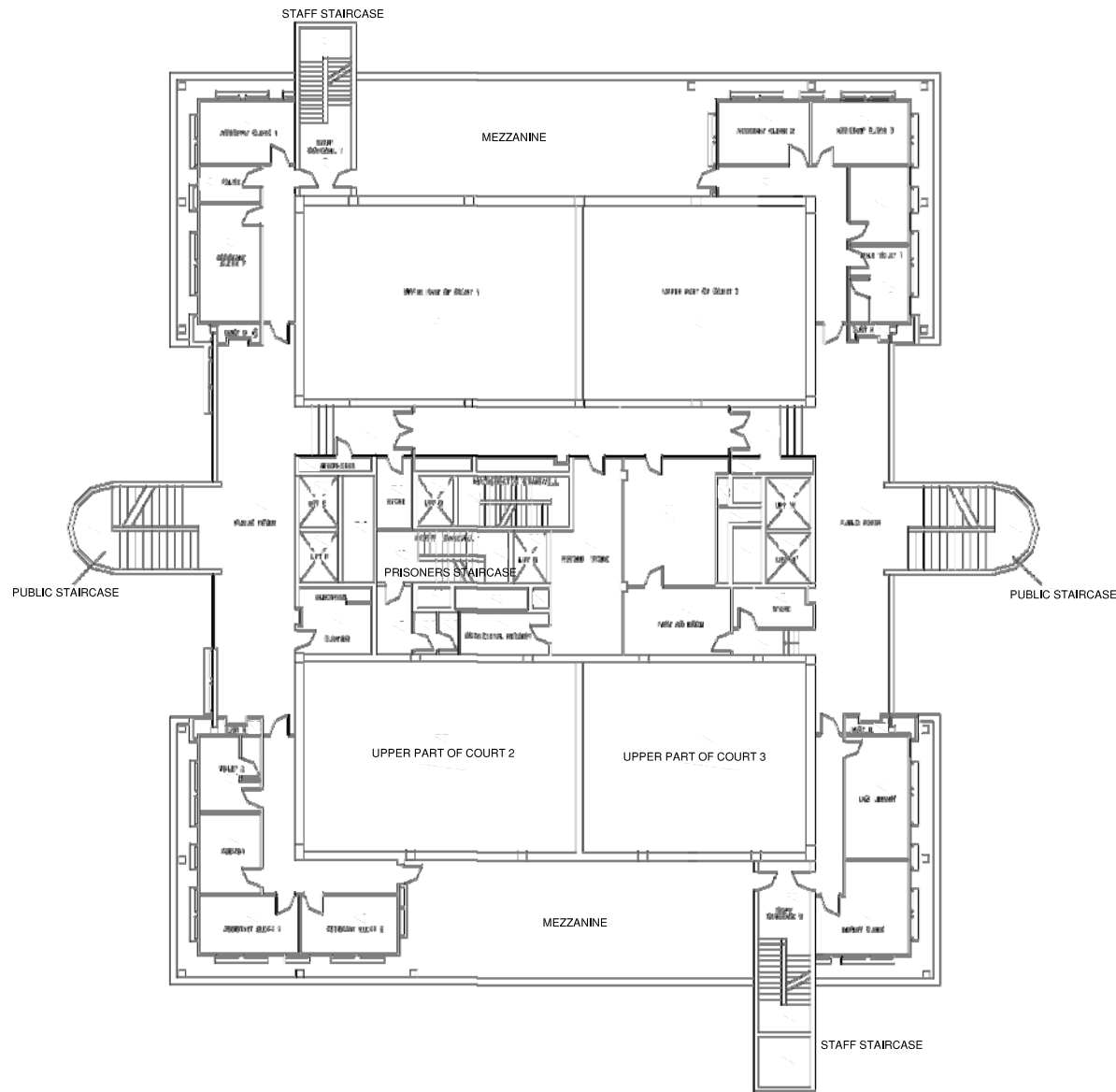


Figure 7: Fourth floor plan.

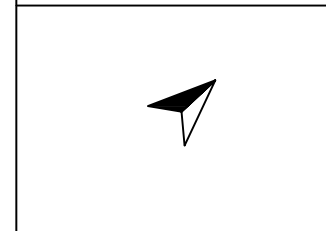
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DRAWN BY: AB

DATE: May 2013



REPORT No:  
CP10561

FIGURE:  
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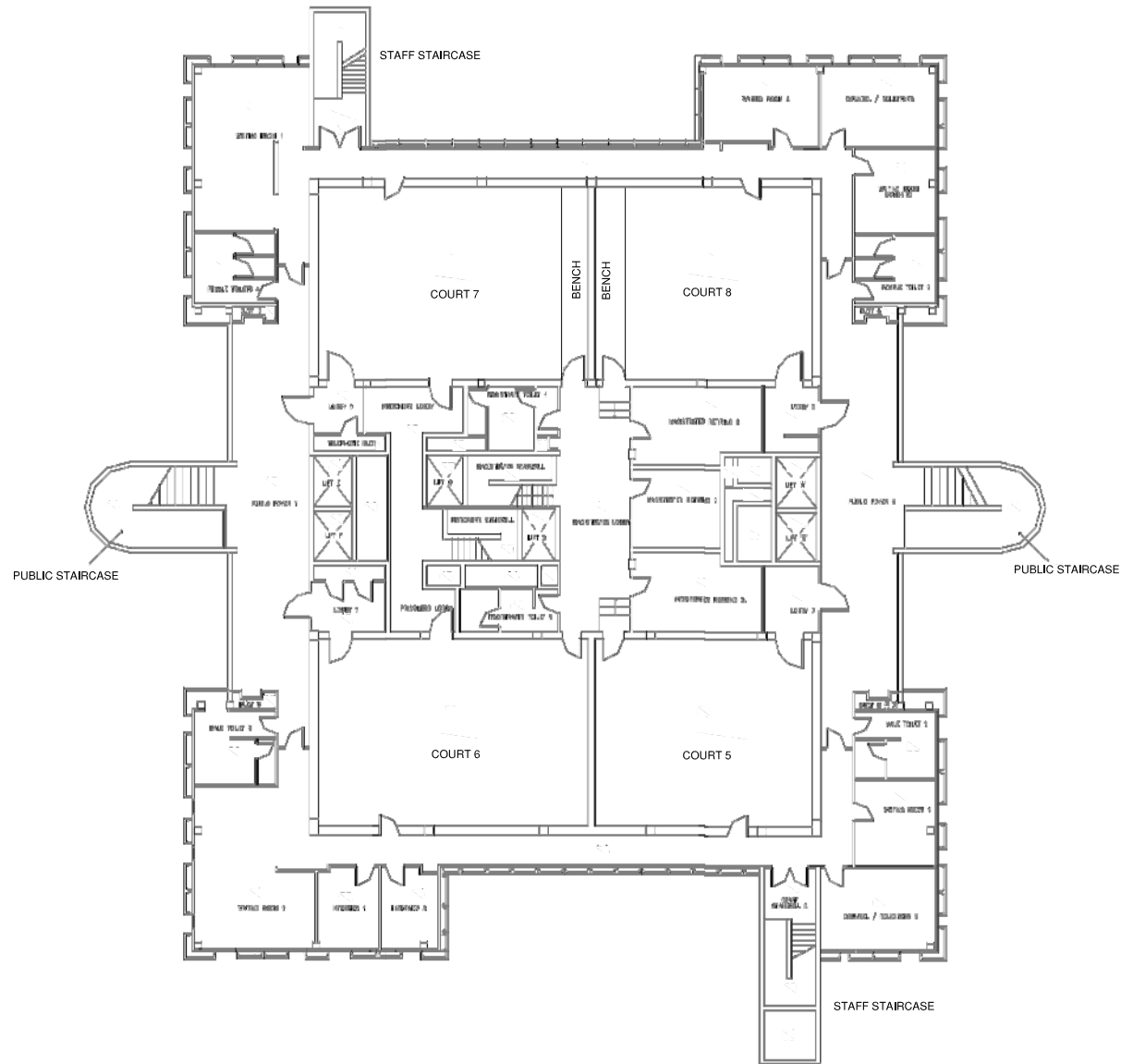


Figure 8: Fifth floor plan.