

**An Historic Building Assessment of Rearsby Home Farm, Mill Lane Rearsby,
Leicestershire (NGR SK 647 144).**

Summary	1
1. Introduction	1
2. Aims and Methodology	2
3. Description of the Buildings	3
4. Conclusion	8
5. Photographic Index	9
6. Archive and Publication	9
7. Bibliography	10
8. Colour Plates	12

Building 1 from the South West
Building 2 from the East
Building 3a from the North
Building 3b from the North East
Building 4 from the South West
Building 5 from the North
Building 6 from the North East
Building 7 from the West
Building 8 from the North East
Building 9 from the South West
Building 10 from the South West
Building 11 from the South
Building 12 from the South West
Building 13 from the South East
Building 14 from the East
Building 15 from the North West
Building 16 from the North East
Building 17 from the East
Building 18 from the North
27 Mill Lane from the North East

Appendix

Listed Building Descriptions	14
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An Historic Building Assessment of Rearsby Home Farm, Mill Lane Rearsby, Leicestershire (NGR SK 647 144).

Gerwyn Richards

Summary

University of Leicester Archaeological Services were commissioned by J.S Bloor (Measham) Ltd to undertake an historic building assessment of Rearsby Home Farm, Rearsby, Leicestershire. Outline planning permission had been granted for the demolition of some of the buildings and the conversion to residential use of other buildings during the re development of the site.

Home Farm is a very fine example of a typical Midlands Farm and appears on the First Edition Ordnance Survey. Such farms are a rapidly dwindling resource. The farm is exceptional in the fact that it reflects almost 300 years of farming development within its standing buildings, two of which are Listed.

This assessment suggests that further work must be carried out prior to any of the proposed works being carried. The work should encompass all of the building and not be limited to the older red brick building.

1. Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services were commissioned by J.S Bloor (Measham) Ltd to undertake an historic building assessment of Rearsby Home Farm, Mill Lane, Rearsby, Leicestershire (SK 647 144). Outline planning permission has been granted for the partial demolition of some of the existing agricultural buildings, the retention and conversion of the locally listed buildings and the construction of 30 new residential units and associated access (Planning Application 06/2928/2).

The Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicestershire County Council, as advisor to Charnwood Borough Council advised that the proposed works would impact significantly upon historic buildings. As a result it was recommended that a historic building assessment, equivalent to an English Heritage Level 2 survey, should be carried out prior to a final planning decision being made.

All work will follow the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing buildings or Structures*. In addition, Leicestershire County Council's *Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological Work in Leicestershire* was adhered to. *Understanding Historic Buildings* (English Heritage 2006) has been used as a basis for defining levels of recording.

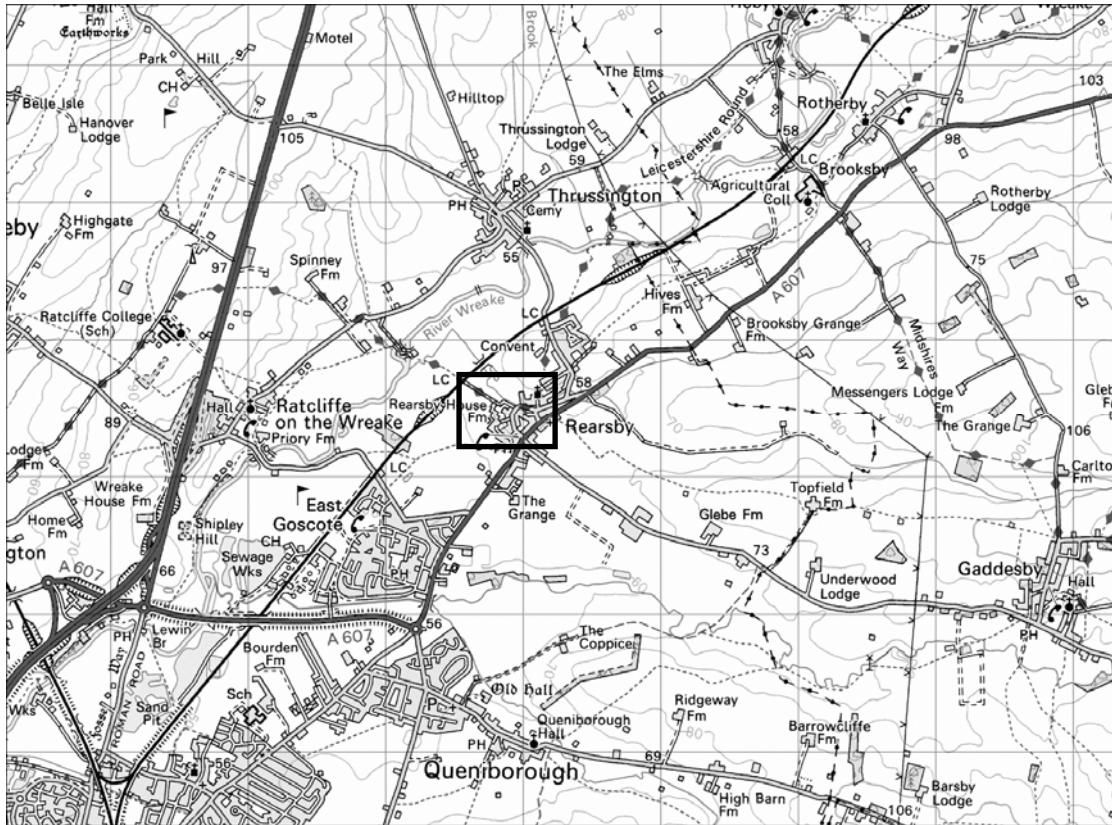


Figure. 1. Site location Scale 1:50000

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2. Aims and Methodology

The aim of the historic building assessment is to provide a descriptive record of the buildings in their current state, prior to alteration or demolition, to standards set down by English Heritage (2006) which includes photographic and limited drawn records (if necessary); the client supplied plans and elevations in .pdf format. The historic building assessment (equivalent to English Heritage Level 2 survey) will provide information from which an informed decision regarding the necessity of whether further work is necessary can be made.

The historic building assessment was undertaken by Gerwyn Richards. Photographs, in digital format recorded general exterior images of all the buildings and occasional additional details, the equivalent to items 1-6 of the English Heritage guidelines (2006, 4; Appendix 4.1.2). The site visit was carried out on October 15th 2006.

The proposed development consists of seventeen buildings, two of which are locally Listed, probably eighteenth 18th century in date, a further seven are nineteenth 19th century in date, the remainder being mid to late twentieth century agricultural buildings. Each building has been allocated a number for identification purposes, in the following notes the terms 'left', 'right', 'rear' and 'back' are used in relation to the front elevation of each building.

3. Description of the Buildings

3.1 Building 1

Building 1 is located at the far northern edge of the proposed development area. It consists of a large modern open fronted cattle stall of a steel frame construction with corrugated steel box profile cladding and roof.

3.2 Building 2

Building 2 is another open sided cattle stall, this time, however, constructed with a timber frame with quarter height breeze block walls to the rear and both gables with steel stock barriers at the front. The rear and left hand walls have been clad in 20mm plywood sheets and once again the roof is corrugated steel box profile. The building is likely to be 1980's in date.

3.3 Building 3a

Building 3a is located directly opposite building 2 and is again a large open sided building. This time steel framed with a corrugated steel sheet roof; there are half height breeze block walls on the gables along with steel cladding on the right hand gable. Being open down to ground level at the front, the building was likely to originally been a machinery shed, probably dating from the 1960's or 1970's.

3.4 Building 3b

Building 3b is attached to the rear of building 3a and is undoubtedly the earlier of the two. The building is a classic Dutch Barn of four bays constructed of RSJ (Rolled Steel Joists) frame, angle iron roof frame and corrugated steel roof. There is diamond shaped makers plate on the right hand gable, sadly too weathered to yield any information and there is no makers stamp on the RSJ columns. The building appears on the 1965 Ordnance Survey but is almost certainly earlier in date; typology suggests a manufacturing date of the 1930's.

The building is of interest as it is the beginning of mass produced farm architecture and almost symbolic of the industrialisation of farming in the twentieth 20th century. The introduction of the now ubiquitous Dutch Barn was the beginning of the end of vernacular farm architecture.

3.5 Building 4

Building 4 is identical in form to building 2, rear wall and gables, however, have been clad in weather board, leaving only the front open. In all likelihood originally constructed as a machinery shed or hay barn, probably 1980's in date. There is cartographic evidence that this building is built on a site originally occupied by farm building dating to the nineteenth century.

3.6 Building 5

Building 5 is by far the largest building within the proposed development area; it consists of a steel frame with three quarter height breeze block walls. The remainder of the wall and roof is corrugated asbestos concrete sheets. The building is currently used as a hay barn, however, the nearby slurry tank indicates that this was the original cow shed, the use of asbestos concrete cladding suggests an early 1960's date.

Again, the building is of interest as it reflects the industrialisation of livestock rearing in the later part of the twentieth century, the entire herd kept under cover with sufficient access for mechanical feeding and removal of slurry to the tank outside.

3.7 Building 6

Building 6 is a Dutch Barn identical in design to building 3b, but being only 3 bays slightly smaller.

3.8 Building 7

Building 7 is the second largest building within the proposed development area and over wise identical in design to buildings 2 and 4. It is however, open on all sides and is currently in use as a hay barn, most likely its original and intended use. The building is likely to date from the 1980's, and can be seen as another step in the evolution of the classic Dutch Barn (Buildings 3a & 6, nearby).

3.9 Building 8

Building 8 is a small breeze block and asbestos concrete roofed building. There is a substantial internal partition of steel stock barrier and a mesh feeding trough. There is a pen of same steel stock barrier to the left of the building with a built in "cattle crush". In all likelihood the building was originally a bull pen to house bulls brought in to service the dairy herd.

3.10 Building 9

Building 9 is the first of early red brick buildings within the proposed development area. It consists of a two storied red brick building with a hipped roof of local slate, originally likely to be a milking parlour with a hay/grain loft over. It probably remained a milking parlour after the construction of the large cattle shed (Building 5) which adjoins the rear of the building.

Externally there is evidence that the front of the building was originally open and supported on two brick built columns carrying timber lintels. An inscribed brick bearing the date 1845 can be seen within the right hand brick column, the building is clearly identifiable on the 1885 Ordnance Survey, the date, therefore, would seem correct. The rear of the build also bears evidence of alterations, there is the scar of a lost wing at a right angle to the rear wall of the building near the left gable, and the 1903 Ordnance Survey confirms this.

The ground floor of the building was inaccessible at the time of the site visit, the first floor, however, could be accessed via external stairs on the right of the building. The far left bay contained some modern farm equipment, probably milking equipment. The remains of a line shaft and flywheels could be seen within the right hand bay, the shaft continued through wall into the adjacent building. The roof was of a king post design with raking struts.

The survival of the shaft and flywheel are evidence for the early industrialisation farming. The shaft was inserted into an earlier building to provide drive to new machinery probably in the later part of the nineteenth century or early twentieth century with a traction engine providing the power.

3.11 Building 10

Building 10 is a small two storied red brick extension to the rear of building 11 which aligns with building 9; there is a flight of blue brick steps between building 9 and 10. With the exception of some pleasant angled brick corbelling at eaves level the building is very similar in style and construction to building 9 and may, therefore, be contemporary.

Once again the ground floor was inaccessible and the first floor devoid of any identifiable features, the line shaft observed within building 9, however, did continue. The roof structure was a queen post design. An entrance had been inserted into the rear wall building 11 providing access to timber built mezzanine floor inserted into the right hand bay of building 11.

3.12 Building 11

Building 12 is one of the earliest buildings within the proposed development area and is one of the two buildings which are locally listed (Appendix i). The building is an early eighteenth century threshing barn in locally made red brick, sat atop a rubble plinth, it has been recently re roofed with brown concrete tiles. The date 1715 is high lighted in blue brick on the front wall of the left hand bay. The gables are steeply coped brick, clearly nineteenth century rebuild at height but possibly copying what they replaced.

Internally, a timber mezzanine floor supported on lower tie beams has been inserted into the right hand bay, the remains of possibly a wheat drying kiln is within the left hand bay. The roof is, without doubt, the great feature of this building and is described in the listing document as:-

“buttresses support the tie beams of roughly shaped trusses, the tie beams are braced, the principal rafters halved and pinned, and with trenched purlins.”

Closer examination revealed surviving carpenters marks on the principal rafter within the right hand bay. It was not possible to examine other timbers during this visit, but further recording work will surely have to be done prior to any further work commencing.

3.13 Building 12

Building 12 is a single storey red brick and concrete asbestos sheet roof building; there are two double doors to the left and right and a central single door. The brick work is very mixed in appearance and the building may have originally been open fronted. Internally the building has been completely stripped, there are traces of feeding troughs on the rear wall, suggesting that it may originally been a milking parlour.

The building appears on the 1885 Ordnance Survey; however, the current building appears to be later in date, or else much altered and modernised. Nevertheless, the building remains of architectural interest.

3.13 Building 13

Building 13 is the second listed building within the proposed development area (Appendix i). The building is mainly granite rubble construction with what appears to be sand ironstone and unidentified large cobbles; there are a limited number of granite quoins at lower levels on the front of the building with a central door and an entrance high on the left hand gable. The roof is corrugated concrete asbestos sheets.

Internally there is nothing of architectural significance visible at ground floor level, the ceiling has right to left joists supported by a central axial beam. The ceiling itself appears to be a plaster and lathe construction. Access to the first floor is via a hatch in the front right hand corner, unfortunately access was not possible at the time. A limited view through the damaged hatch indicated a complicated pattern of brick work on the right hand gable. It is likely, therefore, that the first floor may be a dovecote, the entrance on the left hand gable being the flight entrance

Dating the building with a limited inspection is extremely difficult, the Listing suggests an early Eighteenth Century, it is possible, however, that it may be earlier. It is certain that further work will be required as the proposed building work will alter the building significantly.

3.14 Building 14

Building 14 is a single storey red brick stable with a corrugated concrete asbestos sheet roof abutting, but not attached to the left hand gable of building 13. The bricks appear to be late nineteenth century in date. Internally there is a brick built and arched feeding trough along the rear wall and possible tack hooks on the walls and hanging from the roof timbers, including a probable saddle tree.

3.16 Building 15

Building 15 is located opposite buildings 11 and 13, which along with buildings 12 and 16 create the first farm yard. The building is a single storied red brick with a half hipped roof of corrugated concrete asbestos sheets; the building was apparently originally open sided onto the yard, wall plate being supported on cast iron columns. This has since been filled and the columns concealed in concrete.

Internally the right hand bay originally appears to have been constructed as a cow shed with double stalls along the rear wall. The roof is a king post design.

The left hand bay has a fire place within the right hand wall and appears to be a general store. The king post within the right hand bay has been cut through to vent the chimney, suggesting that the partition, if not the entire left bay is a later addition.

3.17 Building 16

The final building within this part of the farm yard is building 16; it is an open sided steel framed building with a corrugated tin sheet roof. The rear wall is the boundary wall extended to fill the gable, the building on a whole is in a ruinous condition.

Interestingly the left hand bay has been constructed over a smaller building, leaving the roof and the cast iron columns in place as well as the rear wall in place. In all likelihood this building was identical in form to the adjacent building 15; indeed both buildings appear on the 1885 Ordnance Survey. The iron columns are cylindrical with rolled detail at the top and stamped "W RICHARDS & SON LEICESTER". In all likelihood this was identical in form to building 15 and was likely, therefore, to be a cowshed also.

3.18 Building 17

Building 17 is a medium sized steel framed building clad in box profile concrete asbestos sheets to the rear of building 12. The building is probably 1970's in date and is a good example of the late twentieth century mass produced multi purpose architecture. Due to the perceived danger of asbestos these types of buildings are being destroyed at an alarming rate with no record and do merit further recording prior to demolition.

3.19 Building 18

The final agricultural building within the proposed development area is a substantial red brick threshing barn, immediately to the rear of 27 Mill Lane. The bricks themselves are 9inch by 2 3/4inch hand made bricks and there is a partial rubble plinth to the left, the stone appears to be sand ironstone. The roof is possibly a recent replacement of Welsh Slate.

Originally being a threshing barn, internally there is little of architectural significance. The roof timbers, however, are in very good condition and are undoubtedly original and is similar in design to that seen within building 11. Brick buttresses support roughly shaped tie beams below equally roughly shaped principal rafters, further detailed recording of the roof is undoubtedly required.

3.20 27 Mill Lane

The final building within the proposed development area is 27 Mill Lane, the farm house originally associated with the Home Farm. J.S Bloor Ltd have yet to finalise their proposals for this building, but it is likely that it will not be altered considerably during the proposed re development. There is a building recorded on the 1885

Ordnance Survey, but it is unlikely what, if any of this building remains, the existing building appears to be early to mid twentieth century in date.

Internal examination was not possible due to sitting tenants, but it is likely that further work would be required should J.S Bloor Ltd decide to carry out major alterations to the building.

4. Conclusion

Rearsby Home Farm is a fine example of a typical Midlands farm, an example which due to the changes in farming practices and increased pressure from residential development is unfortunately becoming rarer and rarer. Without a doubt, however, the greatest asset of Home Farm is its visible evolution as a farm, all the aspects of development from the early the eighteenth 18th century barn and stable with dovecote to the huge modern farm buildings to the north is still visible and standing on site.

Every stage of farm development can be seen within Home Farm, the vernacular tradition of the eighteenth century being replaced by the Victorian architecture of mass produced bricks and cast iron and the beginning of mechanisation with the insertion of shafts and fly wheels within buildings 9 and 10 to take steam power from traction engines. Finally the complete industrialisation and mechanisation of farming in the twentieth century with the building of the huge modern sheds to the north and virtual abandonment into ruin of the red brick buildings.

The proposed development will impact significantly on all of the buildings within the proposed development area. It is proposed that the twentieth 20th century buildings all be demolished, some of the nineteenth 19th century buildings will also be demolished and others retained but converted to residential use. The listed eighteenth 18th century buildings will also be converted to residential use, altering their appearance considerably and destroying their agricultural origins.

It is certain, therefore, that further work should be carried out prior to the redevelopment taking place. In order to gain a full understanding of the farm this work should include the twentieth century buildings and not be limited to the earlier buildings alone.

5. Photographic Index

Digital Image	Building No	Description	Dir
001	01	General External View.	NW
002	02	General External View.	SW
003	03a	General External View.	S
004	03b	General External View.	S
005	03b	Detail of Roof Construction.	
006	03b	Detail of Roof Construction.	
007	04	General External View.	NE
008	05	General External View.	S
009	06	General External View.	SW
010	06	Original Manufacturers Plate.	
011	07	General External View.	NE
012	08	General External View.	W
013	09	General External View.	NE
014	09	Inscribed Brick, Dated 1845.	
015	11	Probable Carpenters Mark, Right Hand Rafter.	
016	11	General View of Roof Construction.	
017	11	General View of Roof Construction.	
018	10	General External View.	NE
019	10	Detail of External Corbelling.	
020	11	General View of Roof Construction.	
021	11	General External View.	NW
022	11	Date in Blue Bricks 1715.	
023	12	General External View.	NE
024	13	Internal Corbelling.	
025	13	Ceiling Joists.	
026	13	General External View.	NW
027	14	General External View.	W
028	14	General Internal View.	
029	15	Cut Out King Post.	
030	16	Makers Stamp on Iron Column, W. RICHARDS & SON LEICESTER.	
031	16	General View of Column & Roof.	
032	16	King Post Roof.	
033	16	General External View.	S
034	17	General External View.	W
035	15	General External View.	S
036	18	General External View.	S
037		27 Mill Lane, General External View.	SW

6. Archive and Publication

The site archive consists of

1 A2 permatrace sheet containing building plans

CD containing 34 digital images

1 A4 contact sheet

A4 Photo Index Sheet

CD containing *.pdf* images of plans and elevations supplied by client

Unbound Copy of This Report

The archive will be held at Leicestershire County Council Museums Service

A version of the summary (above) will be published in *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course.

7. Bibliography

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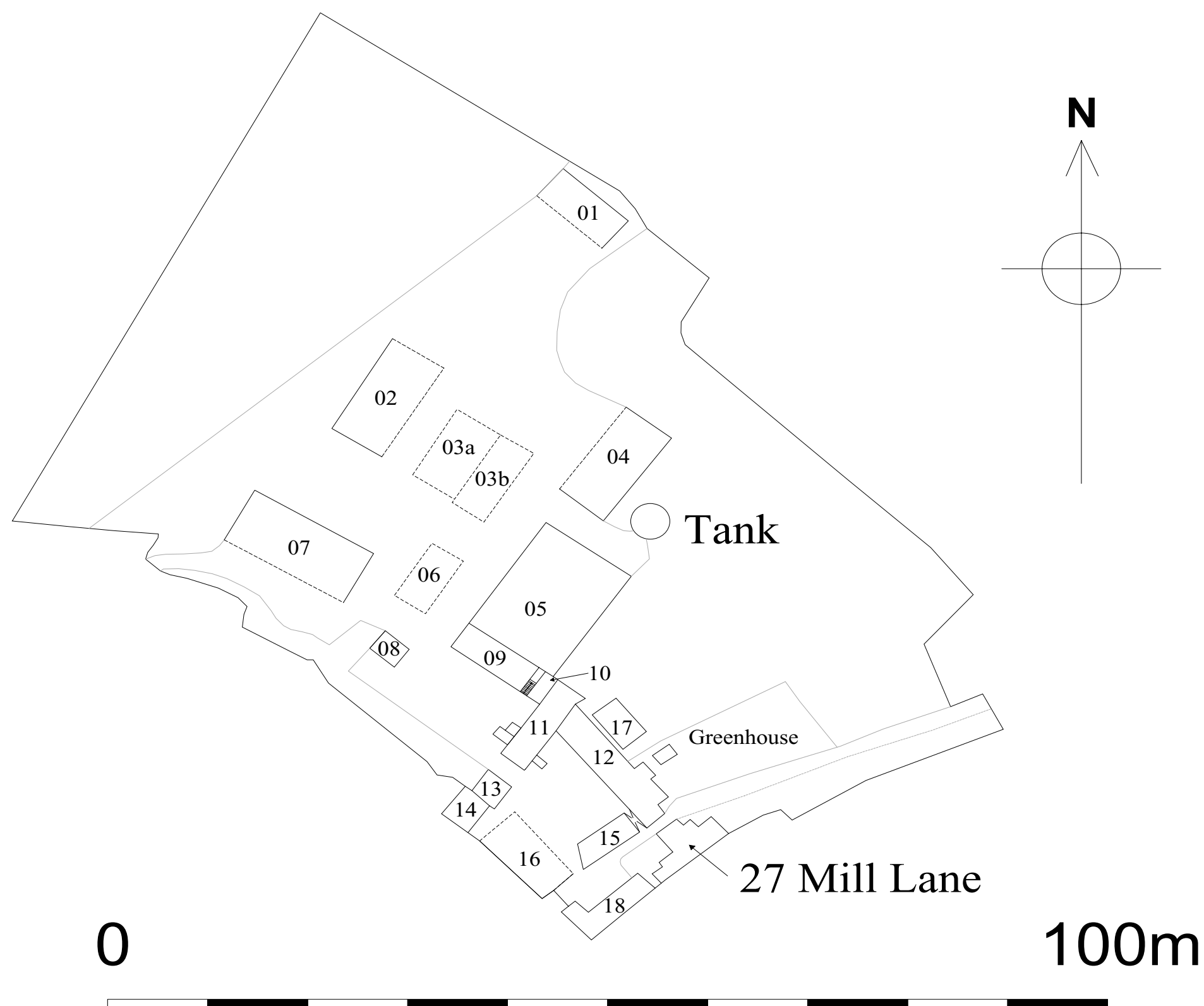


Figure 2 Building Identification.



Figure 3 Building 1 from the South West.



Figure 4 Building 2 from the East



Figure 5 Building 3a from the North



Figure 6 Building 3b from the North East



Figure 7 Building 4 from the South West



Figure 8 Building 5 from the North



Figure 9 Building 6 from the North East



Figure 10 Building 7 from the West



Figure 11 Building 8 from the North East



Figure 12 Building 9 from the South West



Figure 13 Building 10 from the South West



Figure 14 Building 11 from the South



Figure 15 Building 12 form the South West



Figure 16 Building 13 from the South East



Figure 17 Building 14 from the East



Figure 18 Building 15 from the North West



Figure 19 Building 16 from the North East



Figure 20 Building 17 from the East



Figure 21 Building 18 from the North



Figure 22 27 Mill Lane from the North East

Appendix i: Listed Buildings

The following buildings located within the proposed development area are locally listed.

Listing number: 3/86

IoE number: 189552

Date listed: 09.10.84

Date of last amendment: 12.04.85

Location: Rearsby House Farm

Grade: II

Large barn. Dated 1715. Brick with new tiled roof. Central high double doorway with steep segmental brick arched head, and pilaster buttresses to each side of it. In the left hand bay a single squared light, and the date in blue bricks. Right hand bay obscured by modern building at right angles to it. Brick steeply coped gables: the upper most a C19 rebuild, and nogged. Inside, buttresses support the tie beams of roughly shaped trusses, the tie beams are braced, the principal rafters halved and pinned, and with trenched purlins. Lower tie beams form the basis of an inserted floor.

Listing number: 3/87

IoE number: 189553

Date listed: 09.10.84

Date of last amendment: 12.04.85

Location: Rearsby House Farm

Grade: II

Former stable, now barn. Probably with early C18 core. Granite rubble with tiled roof. Tall but narrow building with single doorway now with brick chamfered arch