

**50-56 New Walk,
Leicester SK 5908 0398:
A Building Assessment**

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For Leicester City Council

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1. Introduction

This document presents the results of an assessment of the building located at 50-56 New Walk, Leicester, which has been proposed for demolition in order to make way for a new structure that will house the City Gallery. Whilst the building is not listed, the site is located within a Conservation Area and shares a party wall boundary with a Grade II listed building located at Number 58-60 New Walk, representing the remains of early Victorian terraced houses which formerly lined this part of the street. The study has been undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on behalf of Leicester City Council, in order to establish the chronology of the development of the existing structures on the site and help identify any potential conservation issues.

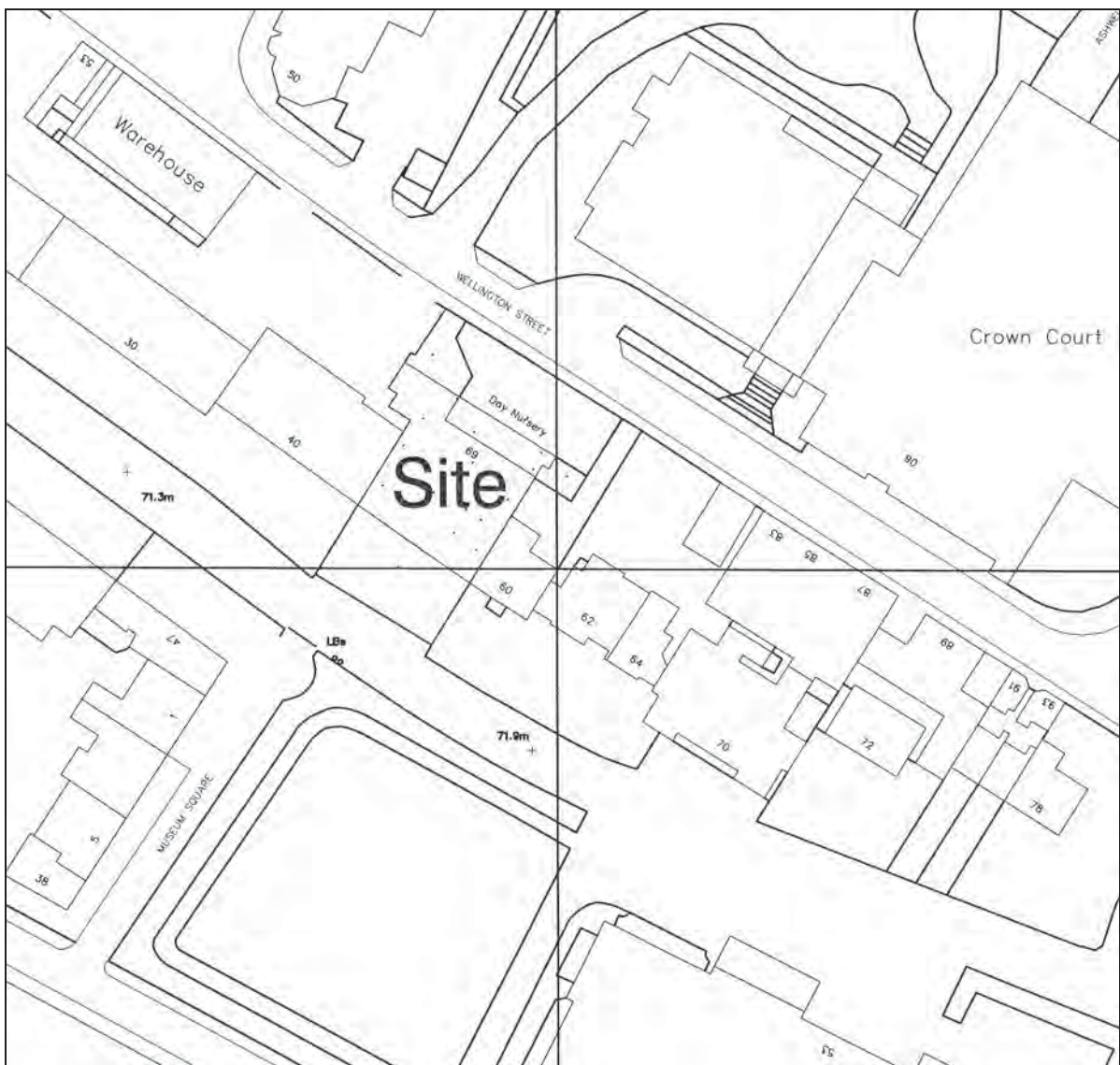


Figure 1. Site Location. Scale 1:1000

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Plate 1. 50-56 New Walk, Leicester. Looking north-east.

2. Methodology

The site inspection visit was made by Sophie Clarke of ULAS on the 2nd March 2010. The work was carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidelines *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (2006) and followed the Institution for Archaeologists' (IfA) Code of Conduct, adhering to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures*.

3. Results

3.1 Leicester Building Register Plans

From 1849 it was required that plans for all new buildings and significant alterations to existing buildings in Leicester were submitted for approval to the Borough Sanitary Authority. The plans for 1849-1957 are held by the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR) and are indexed by street name.

Plans of a service garage for Messrs Sibsons were originally submitted to the Sanitary Authority by Stockdale Harrison and Sons Architects in 1936 (LBR Plan 50669). Although these were approved, the scheme did not go ahead at this time and the plans were resubmitted, with some revisions in March 1949 (LBR Plan 72243). In May 1951 the plans were revised once more and were approved by September of the same year (LBR Plan 76644). These plans include floor plans, cross section and elevation drawings and have been reproduced below as Figures 2-5, illustrating the original form of the building as constructed.

The plans show a single-storey, open-plan structure occupying the space in between terraced houses at Numbers 48 and 58-60 New Walk, with the principal entrance leading from Wellington Street (figure 2) and a more decorative façade fronting onto New Walk (figure 3). Cross section A-A (figure 4) shows the building to be open to the steel framework roof structure. The drawings show a 4 ½ inch brickwork parapet which is carried around the structure on three sides and it is stipulated that this was to be raised at Y-Y on section A-A, to meet the verges, or the edges of the tiles projecting over the gables of the adjoining houses, presumably to reinforce the party boundaries.

On the north-eastern side of the main structure a range of single-storey buildings is shown, housing the boiler-house, fuel store and W.C.s, which are linked to an existing structure, described as dilapidated and condemned to be rebuilt (figure 5). Adjacent to this, and facing onto Wellington Street are a series of petrol pumps with below ground tanks.

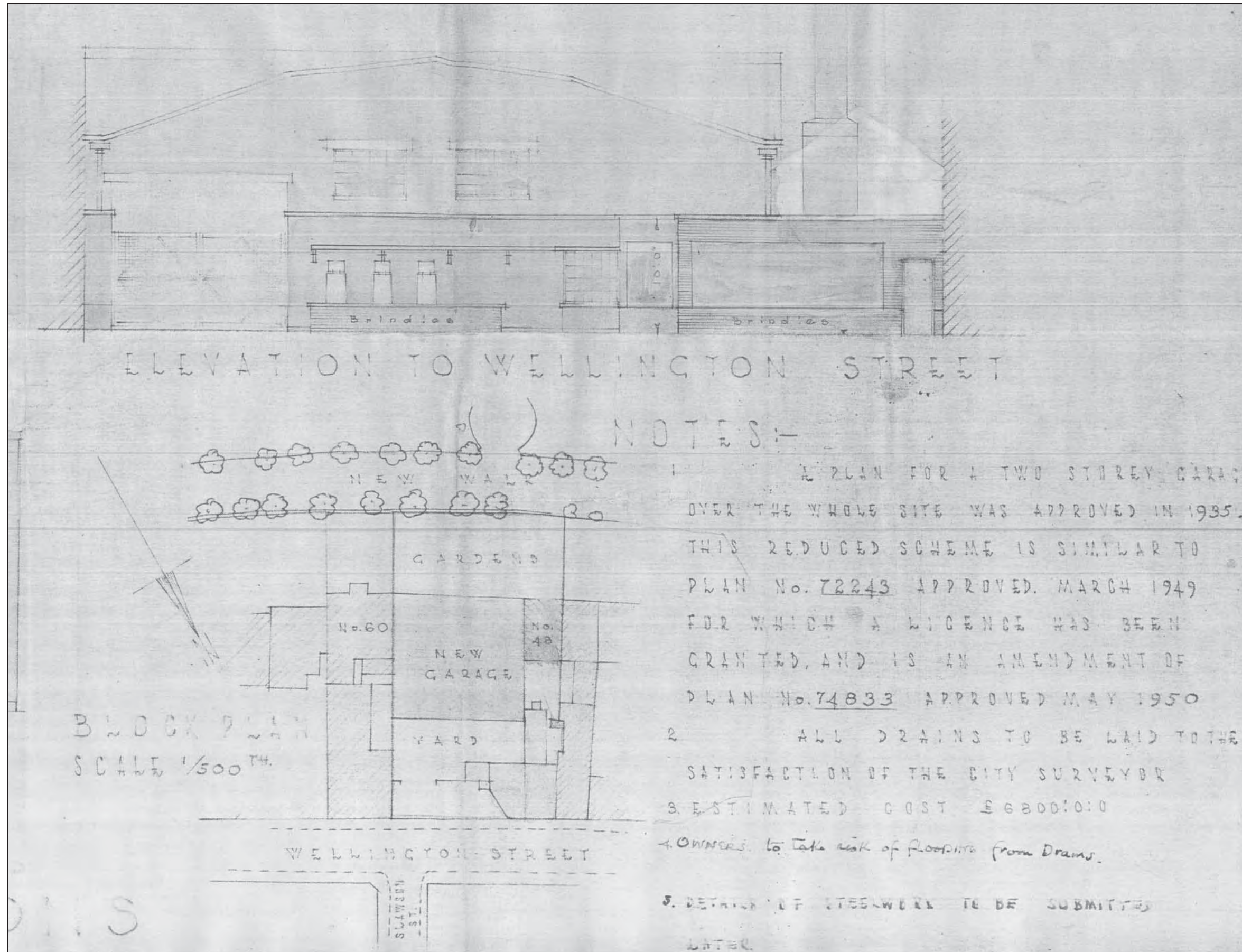


Figure 2. Wellington Street Elevation and Block Plan of Sibson's Garage (Stockdale Harrison & Sons, 1951; taken from LBR Plan 76644)

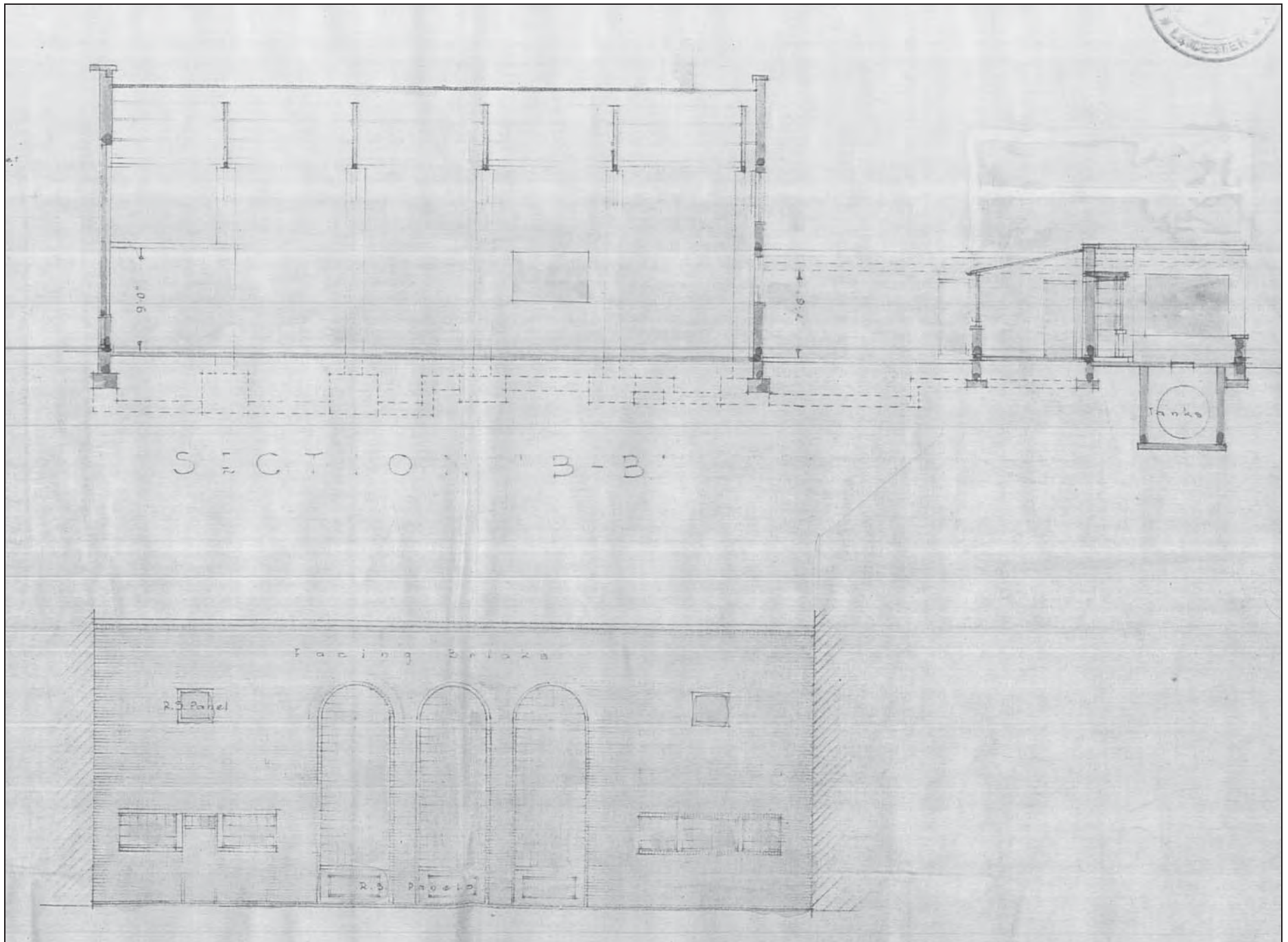


Figure 3. Cross section and New Walk Elevation of Sibson's Garage (Stockdale Harrison & Sons, 1951; taken from LBR Plan 76644)

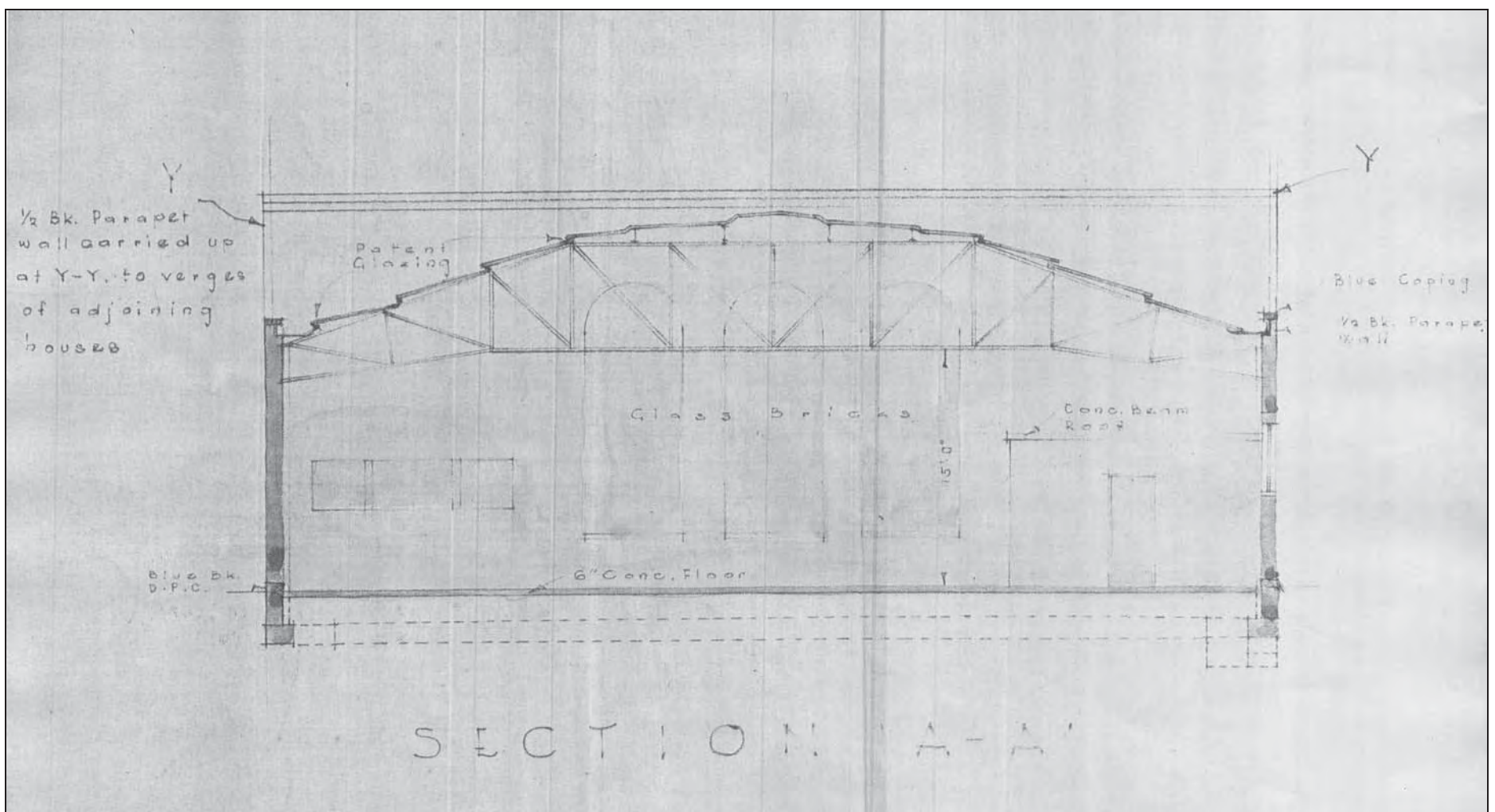


Figure 4. Cross Section A-A, showing roof structure of Sibson's Garage (Stockdale Harrison & Sons, 1951; taken from LBR Plan 76644)

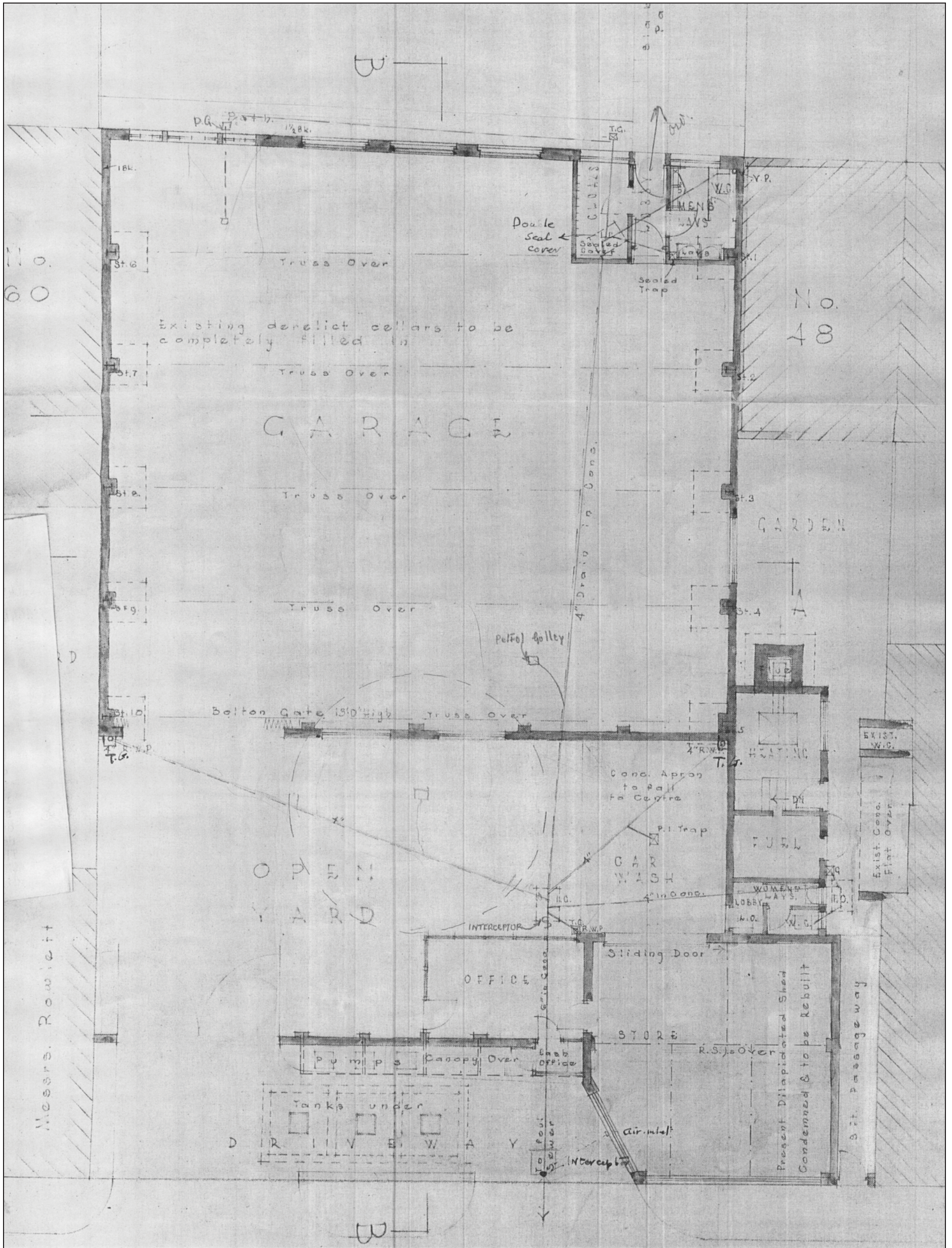


Figure 5. Floor plan of Sibson's Garage (Stockdale Harrison & Sons, 1951; taken from LBR Plan 76644)

3.2 Cartographic Evidence

From 1887-1930, Ordnance Survey maps XXXI.14 (figures 6-8) show the present site of 50-56 New Walk to be occupied by four terraced houses, part of a longer terrace lining the northern boundary of New Walk at this time. In her publication of the history of New Walk, Dr. Helen Boynton has identified these as dating to the early Victorian period and housing, from 1870-1872, a small private school owned by a Mrs Crossley (Boynton 2002, p. 25). By 1954 (OS map SK5903, figure 9) the four houses had been demolished and replaced by Sibson's Garage, with the address given as 69 Wellington Street, rather than 50-56 New Walk. The auxiliary buildings located towards the Wellington Street frontage, identified on the architects drawings as a boiler house and W.C.s, plus office and stores (figure 5), appear to straddle the earlier property boundary between numbers 48 and 50 New Walk noted on the OS map of 1930, indicating a change in ownership. The later OS map of 1966 (SK5903, figure 10) depicts no further changes on the site.



Figure 6. 1887 OS map XXXI.14.5 & XXXI.14.10, showing site of terraced houses at 50-56 New Walk. Scale 1:500.

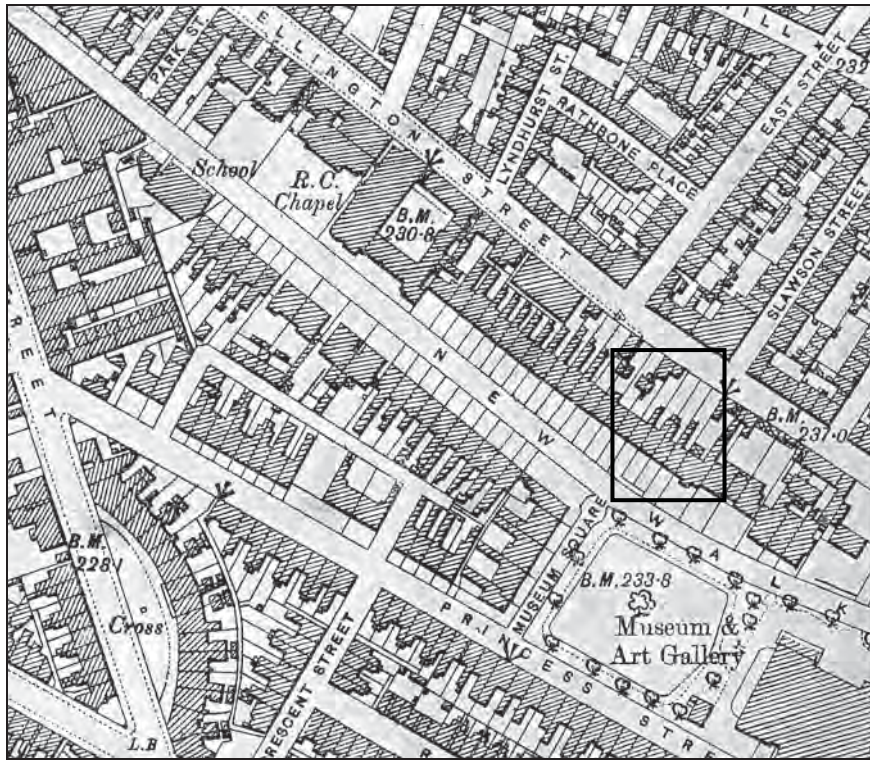


Figure 7. 1904 OS map XXXI.14 showing site of terraced houses at 50-56 New Walk. Scale 1:2500

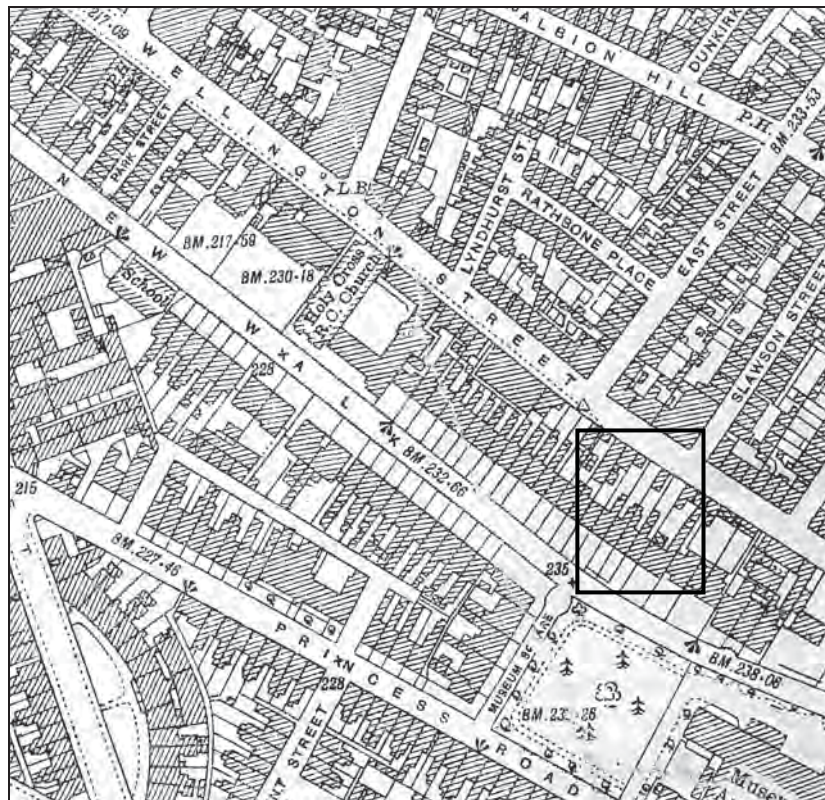


Figure 8. 1930 OS map XXXI.14 showing site of terraced houses at 50-56 New Walk. Scale 1:2500

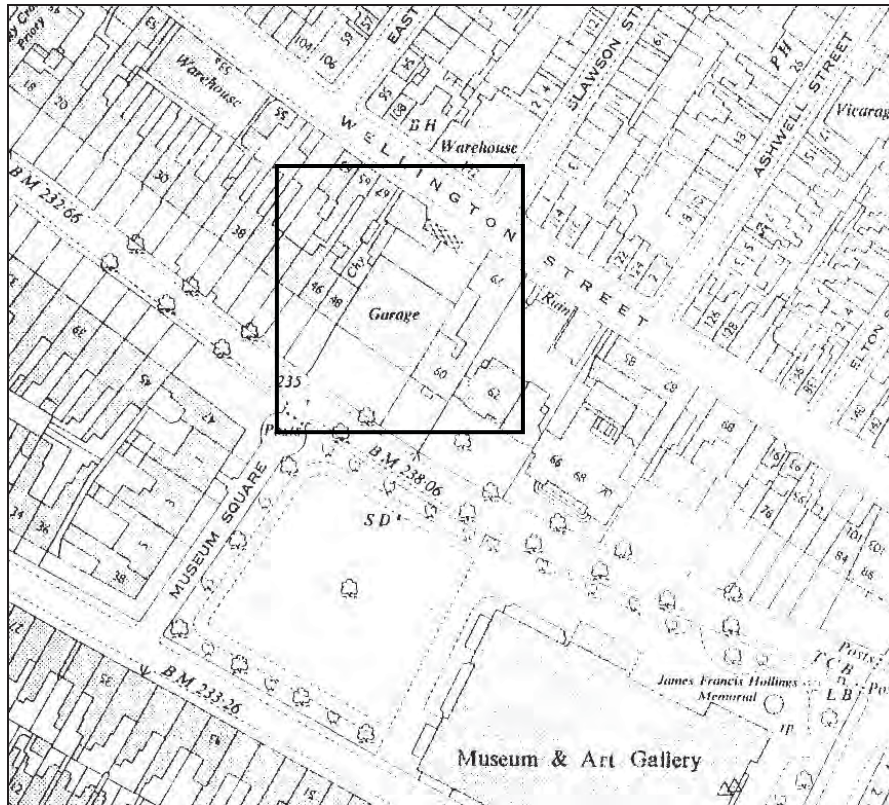


Figure 9. 1954 OS map SK5903 showing Sibson's Garage at 50-56 New Walk. Scale 1:1250

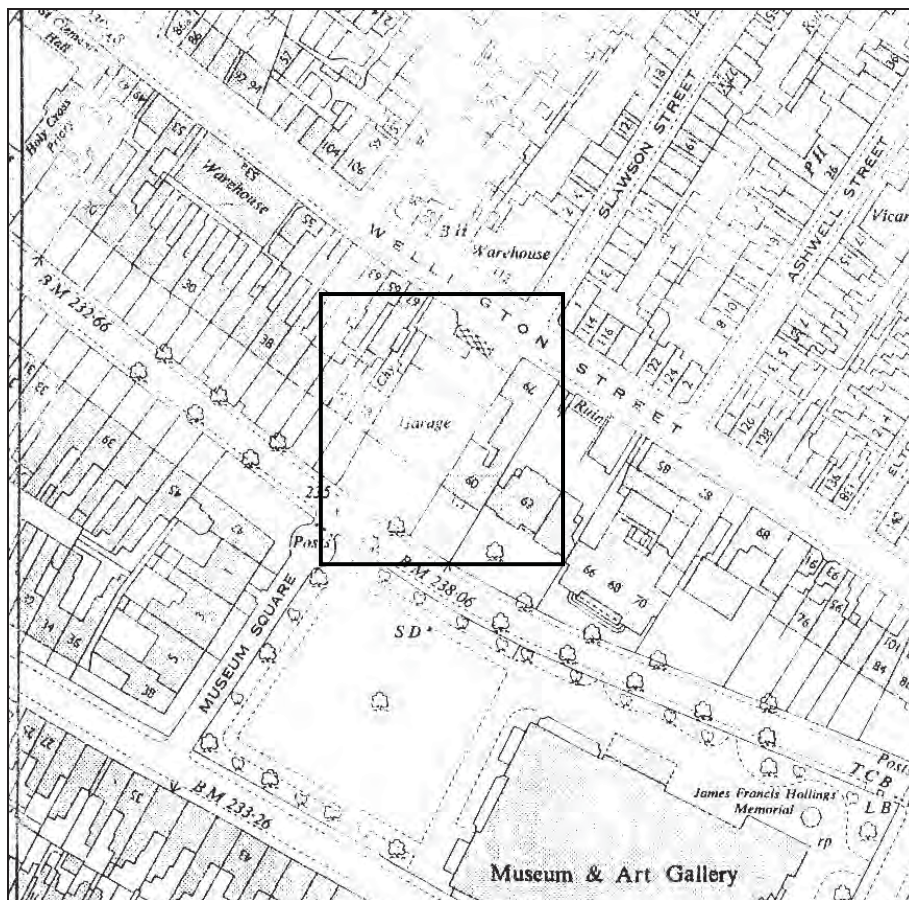


Figure 10. 1966 OS map SK 5903 Sibson's Garage at 50-56 New Walk. Scale 1:1250

3.3 *Development of Sibson's Garage*

Given that the initial application to build Sibson's Garage was submitted in 1936, it may be inferred from the evidence that the terraces at 50-56 New Walk were demolished sometime in between 1930 and 1936. The building plans give no indication of buildings on the site awaiting demolition, but refer to 'existing derelict cellars to be completely filled' (Figure 5). Following demolition of the adjoining houses, a single 4 ½ inch skin of brickwork was applied to the exposed gable of number 58-60, to reinforce and neaten the exposed party wall. In 1951, when Sibson's Garage was eventually constructed, the New Walk elevation was taken right up to the line of the property boundary with number 58-60, with the brick skin left in situ above, to form the boundary at first and second floor levels. Due to the presence of a building located at number 79 Wellington Street, occupied by Messrs Rowlett in 1951, the construction of Sibson's Garage resulted in the partial enclosure of the yard to the rear of number 58-60 New Walk. To mitigate the effects of the enclosure, the east-facing wall of the garage was constructed using white-glazed bricks and when viewed from the yard of number 58-60, it can be seen that this wall sits just inside the property boundary line of number 50-56 New Walk.

3.4 *Development of Leicester City Council Day Nursery*

In 1985 Planning Application Numbers 1985/1955 and 1985/1882 were submitted to the City Council for the partial demolition of unlisted buildings within a Conservation Area and the erection of extensions and conversion of a former garage to a children's day nursery. These plans were approved, subject to conditions and in 1986, the building re-opened as Val Jones' Workplace Nursery, catering for the children of Leicester City Council employees. No drawings for these plans were available for inspection in preparation for this report, but the present arrangement of the building clearly reflects the 1980s scheme of remodelling, which includes the insertion of partition walls at ground floor level, dividing the open space into a number of rooms and the insertion of a floor at mid-height, to form an upper storey over the north-eastern portion of the building. The New Walk elevation was altered only slightly, with some remodelling to the existing door and window openings, retaining the reconstituted stone panels on either side of the façade, with the inscribed letters 'SG', for Sibson's Garage, and the date of 1951.

The partial demolition referred to in the title of the planning application appears to have included the auxiliary buildings located to the Wellington Street frontage, plus the Wellington Street elevation of the main structure. In addition to this, the 4 ½ inch parapet walls at the party boundaries appear to have been taken down and rebuilt as 9 inch brick walls, indicated by the headers in the bond, tied into the new Wellington Street elevation (Plate 3).

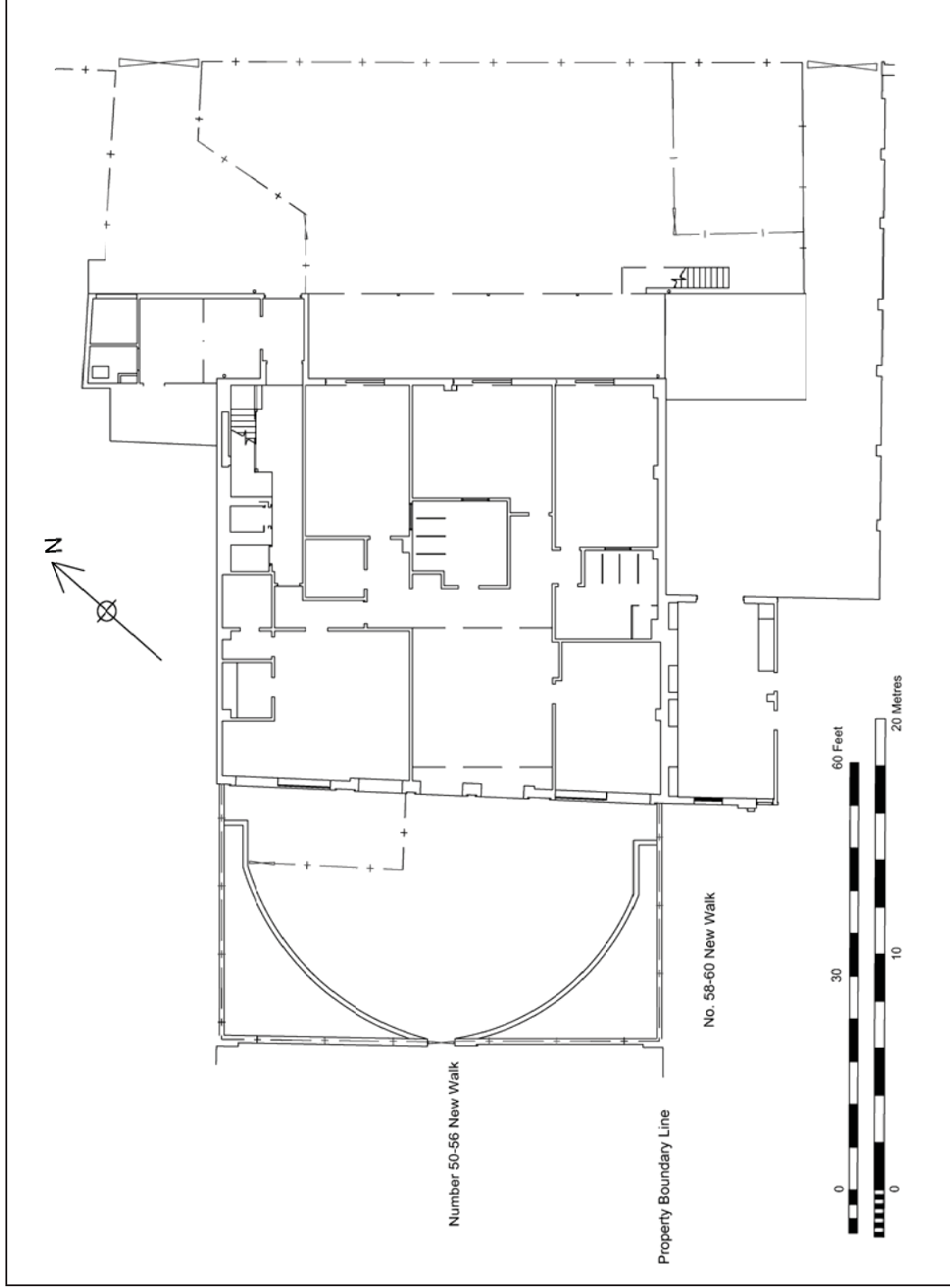


Figure 11. Existing ground floor plan of 50-56 New Walk (taken from survey drawings supplied by Greenhatch)

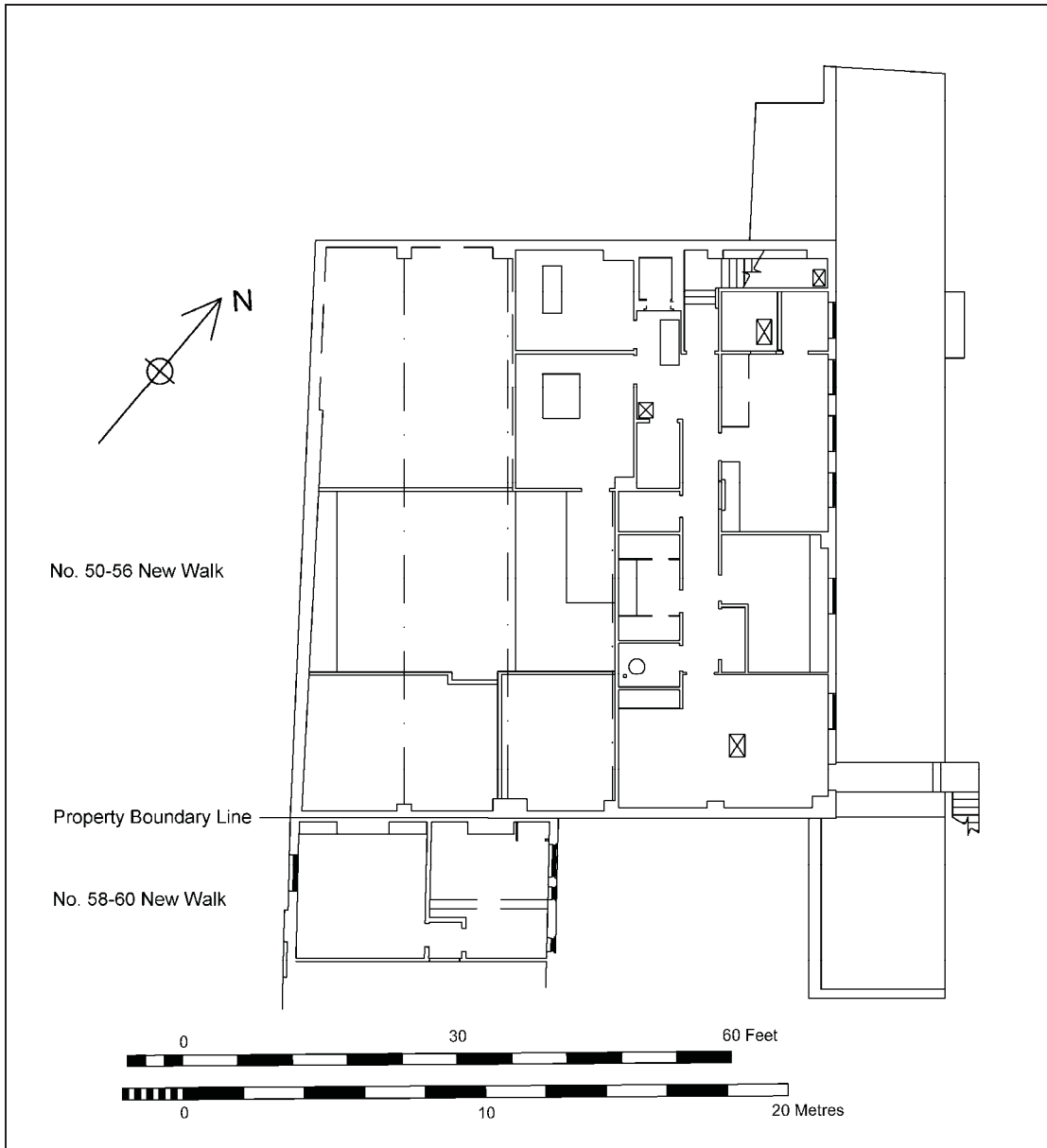


Figure 12. Existing first floor plan of 50-56 New Walk (taken from survey drawings supplied by Greenhatch)



Plate 2. 50-56 New Walk/69 Wellington Street: Wellington Street Elevation, looking south-west.



Plate 3. Party wall boundary between 50-56 and 58-60 New Walk, showing glazed brick wall, with rebuilt parapet above tied into Wellington Street façade. Looking west.



Plate 4. New Walk elevation, looking north-east, with 58-60 New Walk to eastern side.



Plate 5. Brickwork skin added to gable to 58-60 New Walk. Looking east.



Plate 6. Boundary between 50-56 and 58-60 New Walk. Looking north-east.



Plate 7. Detail of plate 6.

4. Assessment of the development impact

The building at number 50-56 New Walk/69 Wellington Street is unlisted and has undergone numerous modifications since its construction as Sibson's Garage in 1951. The building is not considered to be of any particular historic or architectural significance and its demolition will not result in the loss of any historic building fabric. However, given the location of the building within the New Walk Conservation Area, due consideration must be given to the potential visual impact of its demolition and the affect this will have on the character of the historic streetscape, which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (DoE/DNH Planning Policy Guidance note 15: *Planning and the Historic Environment*, para 4.1).

Although the glazed brick wall forms part of the structure of the former garage at 50-56 New Walk, standing wholly within the boundary of that property, the intent behind the use of the glazed bricks was designed to benefit the neighbouring Grade II listed property, at number 58-60 New Walk. As the wall forms a physical boundary between the two properties, its loss may be considered as having an adverse impact upon the setting of a listed building. If the wall cannot be retained as part of any proposed new building scheme therefore, due consideration should be given to the use of similar building materials in the reconstructed boundary wall.

6. Sources

Boynton, H. 2002 *The History of New Walk, Leicester*. Leicester, Boynton.

English Heritage 2006. *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*. London EH

ROLLR Records Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland: Ordnance Survey Maps 1887, 1904, 1930 XXXI.14; 1954, 1966 SK5903 1:2500; Leicester Building Register Plans (1936) 50669, (1949) 72243, (1951) 76644.

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