

Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, High Street,  
Quorn, Leicestershire: Historic Building  
Impact Assessment.

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## **Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, High Street, Quorn, Leicestershire: Historic Building Impact Assessment.**

### **1. Introduction**

A Planning Application has been submitted for the redevelopment of land adjacent to High Street, Quorn, Leicestershire. The proposed work includes the demolition of a Wesleyan Methodist chapel and the conversion of a later chapel into apartments, the construction of ten apartments, including one above a shop unit, and the building of a shop unit between 3 and 5, High Street (Planning App. No. P/05/2903/2).

University of Leicester Archaeological Services has been contracted by LMP Consultants Limited to carry out an Historic Building Impact Assessment, requested by the Senior Planning Archaeologist, Leicester County Council, in his capacity as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, in request of planning application number P/05/2903/2. The advice letter requested an Historic Building Impact Assessment of the proposed changes to buildings 1, 3, 5 and 7, High Street and the former chapel buildings. The architect has confirmed that 1 and 3 were covered by previous planning and listed building permission (P/05/1347/2 and LBC P/05/1615/2) and that buildings 5 and 7 would be unaffected by the development. Therefore this assessment only deals with the proposed changes to the Methodist Chapels.

The application area (Fig. 1), at National Grid Reference SK 561165 (site centre), is bounded by High Street and Station Road and located within a the Quorn village Conservation Area. Neither of the former chapel buildings is listed.

To simplify description, the churchyard end of the site is taken to be north, High Street, south, and Station Road east.

### **2. Aims**

The aim of the Impact Assessment is to determine to what extent the proposed alterations will affect the 'special architectural or historic interest' of the buildings and/or the 'character or appearance which it is desirable to preserve' of the Conservation Area. To achieve this it is first necessary to define those characteristics which make the buildings 'special' (Clark 2001).

Site visits to inspect the buildings were undertaken on 30/11/2005 and 2/12/2005.

### **3. Background: Architectural History**

The earliest element to the chapel is a single phase structure built for Wesleyan Methodists in 1822 that includes accommodation for a minister. It is situated behind the chapel that fronts High Street and is adjacent to the churchyard. It is a two storey rendered brick building. The gabled roof is in slate with a brick built chimney at the east end. The northern elevation has four first floor windows, the western one has been blocked, and two ground floor ones. At the eastern end is the main entrance. The western elevation was originally the front of the building. It has three surviving windows. A modern single storey extension with a flat roof obscures the original entrance and ground floor northern window. The southern elevation has one upper storey window beneath which is a single doorway. The later chapel obscures the rest of the building. None of the windows or doors appear to be original.

The interior retains some early features. On the ground floor these include the staircase to the first floor, and the chimney stack and ceiling beams in the present store room. Possible original features on the first floor comprise wall fittings including picture rails and wall paneling in the present toilet and kitchen, and an opening between the storeroom and office. The roof structure includes both king post and queen post trusses. Graffiti and carpenter's marks were noted on one truss. Affixed to them are two wooden hoists probably used to facilitate the lowering of lighting.

It remained the principal building for Wesleyan Methodism in Quorn until the early twentieth century when the new chapel building that fronts High Street was built.

In the latter part of the twentieth or early twenty first century the building was converted for use as a nursery.

Map evidence indicates that the later chapel building was constructed between 1903 and 1921 and so was also probably constructed for Wesleyan Methodists, as it was not until 1932 that the majority of the different methodist groups were united as the Methodist Church in Great Britain (Friar 1998 96). It was originally a single storey building. It is constructed of random coursed rubble with quoins of a contrasting stone. The roof is of slate. At the west of the building is the entrance that faces High Street and consists of a small porch with a semicircular arch. An identical porch that was used as the Sunday School entrance is present to the east end of the building. The four windows at the front of the chapel, the one window on the north elevation and two in the west are all identical containing tracery that is inspired by numerous medieval styles. Two similar windows, though on a smaller scale, are on the east elevation. The stained glass is original and typical of that used in Methodist chapels in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Three buttresses assist in supporting the chapel's front wall. A late twentieth century single storey toilet block extension was built to the north-east corner of the building.

The interior has lost the majority of its original fixtures and fittings though the porches retain many of their early features and the original doors are present. The roof does not appear to have had any alterations except the addition of electric lighting.

A first floor had recently been inserted as part of a scheme to convert the building to a nursery.

#### **4. Summary of the Development Proposals**

Under the current proposals the two late twentieth century extensions and the earlier chapel buildings will be demolished to make way for a new house and access stairwell to the first floor of the later chapel building. The later chapel will be converted into residential apartments. The accommodation would consist of two apartments on the ground floor, each with three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and a bathroom. In addition the west flat would have a lobby and en-suite. The first floor would also consist of two apartments, each with a living room, kitchen, bathroom and lobby. In addition the west flat will have a second bedroom and an en-suite.

The proposed changes would involve alterations to the exterior of the later chapel. In the east wall these would include a new doorway, two new ground floor windows and one upper floor window and the conversion of a ground floor doorway, currently hidden from view by the later extension, to a window. In order to provide access to the first floor apartments an outside stairwell is proposed with two new doorways being inserted into the north wall after the demolition of the early chapel building. The west doorway will be blocked. The High Street elevation will remain unchanged.

Proposed internal alterations mainly relate to the subdivision of ground and first floor spaces to create new rooms. This will involve a masonry wall being built to divide the chapel into two and numerous non-original stud partition walls being removed and new ones inserted.

The proposed changes are considered in detail below.

#### **5. Impact Assessment**

In this section the proposed alterations are identified, based on a comparison of existing and proposed plans, and the potential impact of these assessed. The results are presented building by building and floor by floor, for ease of cross-reference to the plans. The potential impact of each of the proposals is graded: *beneficial impact*, *minimal impact*, *limited adverse impact*, or *significant adverse impact*.

##### **The Early Chapel Building**

**1. Proposal:** demolish the modern single storey kitchen extension to allow for the building of a new house.

**Assessment:** beneficial impact. The modern building has no architectural merit. Its removal would return the chapel to its original form.

**2. Proposal:** demolish the modern single storey toilet block extension.

**Assessment:** beneficial impact. The modern building has no architectural merit. Its removal would enhance both chapels.

**3 Proposal:** demolish the earlier chapel building to allow for the construction of a staircase to the first floor of the later chapel building and for a new house.

**Assessment:** significant adverse impact. The proposed demolition of the earlier chapel building is the most contentious aspect of the proposed development resulting in the complete loss of the earliest structural element. In addition to the direct impact of the loss of fabric this will result in the loss of historic testimony for the origin and development of Wesleyan Methodist architecture in Quorn. This is one of only three examples in the county where early and late subsequent phases of nonconformist chapels co-exist on the same site. In an ideal scenario the early chapel building would be retained and converted as part of the development scheme.

## **The Later Chapel Building**

### **Ground floor**

**4. Proposal:** remove existing internal walls and insert new ones to form domestic rooms.

**Assessment:** minimal impact, involving the removal of modern stud partition walls and insertion of new ones. No original wall fittings will be affected.

**5. Proposal:** remove staircase.

**Assessment:** minimal impact. Non-original staircase inserted recently during the buildings conversion to a nursery. During its construction one of the stone corbels supporting the roof structure of the chapel was damaged. The detached section remains within the building and the possibility of repairing it during any future work should be explored.

**6. Proposal:** lower the first floor.

**Assessment:** impact unclear. The plans indicate that the current floor supports will be removed. The impact of this will be minimal as they were put in at the same time as the staircase. However it is unclear how the new floor structure will be supported.

**7. Proposal:** insert a north south wall dividing the chapel in two.

**Assessment:** limited adverse impact. The proposed new wall will affect the original floor of the building though it will not affect any original internal fixtures and fittings such as skirting boards or wall decoration as these have already been removed. Clarification is required over how the new dividing wall will be tied in to the existing side walls. There will also be below ground implications that need consideration.

**8. Proposal:** conversion of the north-west porch into an en-suite that will involve blocking the entrance.

**Assessment:** impact unclear. Original wall fixtures and fittings survive including skirting, door frames and doors. Some clarification is required, both here and elsewhere in the building, for the treatment of such. Ideally original doors and door frames would be retained in their original positions during re-development. If original doors and door frames are removed do building and fire regulations permit the reuse of these elsewhere, for example where new openings are formed?

**9. Proposal:** conversion of the south-west porch into a lobby.

**Assessment:** impact unclear. Some original fixtures and fittings survive. As with the north-west porch clarification is required for the treatment of these.

**10. Proposal:** block the opening for a set of sliding doors and convert the adjacent door into a window in the north wall.

**Assessment:** minimal impact. Both doors are modern. They are located within partially blocked original arches that gave access to the earlier chapel.

**11. Proposal:** convert the doorway on the east wall in the north eastern corner of the building into a window.

**Assessment:** the conversion itself is of limited impact and it has been obscured from view from the exterior by the modern toilet block extension but when combined with **Item 13** and **Item 17** it will alter the appearance of the east wall significantly.

**12. Proposal:** removal of the stairs, ornate screen and wooden platform at the east end of the building.

**Assessment:** minimal impact. These features are not in their original setting and probably not in their original form. However, they have an ecclesiastical appearance and are likely to originate from within the building. Ideally they should be re-used in some capacity as they form a large element of the surviving fixtures and fittings from the later chapel.

**13. Proposal:** form a new doorway and two new windows in the east wall.

**Assessment:** significant adverse impact. Though the new openings will not impact on any internal features and only affect uniform brickwork, they will significantly alter the appearance of the building. The careful choice of windows in a deferential style will limit the potential impact of this proposal.

## **First Floor**

**14. Proposal:** Insert a north south wall dividing the room in two.

**Assessment:** impact unclear. This is the upper section of the wall that is being built to divide the building in two (**Proposal 7**). Clarification is required in order to determine whether there will be any impact on the roof structure.

**15. Proposal:** insert partition walls to form domestic rooms.



**Assessment:** minimal impact, involving only the sub-division of an existing space using stud partition walls. No original wall fittings will be affected.

**16. Proposal:** form two new doorways in the north wall for access to the new stairwell to ground level.

**Assessment:** significant adverse impact. It will presumably be necessary to tie the new stairwell to the existing fabric of the chapel. More significant however will be the alterations to the roof structure necessary to achieve this.

**17. Proposal:** form a new window in the east wall.

**Assessment:** significant adverse impact. When combined with the ground floor alterations to the east wall (**Item 12**) this opening will radically alter the appearance of the east wall.

**18. Proposal:** providing the four domestic dwellings with services.

**Assessment:** impact unclear. Without further details of existing and proposed new service runs it is not possible to accurately assess the possible impact.

## **6. Discussion**

### **Defining Significance**

The principal significance of the chapel buildings is that they provide a notable example of how the architecture of Wesleyan Methodism evolved in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The early chapel is the second oldest surviving example of a purpose built Wesleyan Methodist chapel in Leicestershire and the later chapel is the most recently built one. The fact that they survive together is rare with only two other examples in Leicestershire where Methodist chapels of differing dates stand side by side (RCHME 1986 117-134).

The overall shape and dimensions of the early chapel are consistent with other examples of nonconformist buildings. However, there are significant differences in how the windows are spaced and where the north door is positioned which suggests that the rendering could be obscuring significant architectural details.

Though the interior of the early chapel has been subdivided and the walls covered, early elements have been identified within the building. Further intrusive investigation would undoubtedly uncover more such elements.

The external appearance of the later chapel makes a significant contribution towards the appearance of the historic village core. Compared to the earlier chapel that was set back and partially hidden from High Street by other buildings, the later one must have been a bold statement to the religious establishment with its prominent position on the road and ornate architecture. Externally the building appears to be in its

original form. It is unfortunate that the majority of the internal fixtures and fittings have been removed though the stained glass windows and ceiling are in good repair.

### **Assessing Impact**

Having explored the significance of the buildings it is possible to measure the potential impact of the proposed changes against this.

The proposed demolition of the early chapel building represents a considerable adverse impact upon the fabric of the historic building although it is accepted that the impact upon the Conservation Area will be less significant since the earlier chapel does not contribute significantly to the appearance of High Street. Ideally the building would be retained and incorporated within the development scheme. Conversion to residential use would secure the long term future of the building. If demolition of the building is approved by the planning authority they are likely to require the preparation of an historic building record in view of its significance.

The scheme of work proposed for the later chapel building will have a lesser impact upon the historic fabric of the building. Its principal elevation will remain unaltered preserving the appearance of High Street and the Conservation Area. However, an existing porch at the east of the building on the High Street elevation is illustrated on the elevation drawings but not on the proposed plans. Clarification is required as alterations to the porch would represent a significant adverse impact upon the fabric of the building and would affect the appearance of the High Street elevation and therefore the Conservation Area.

The combined effect of the proposed alteration of the east wall including the conversion of a door to a window (**Item 11**), the insertion of a doorway and two windows on the ground floor (**Item 12**), and the insertion of a window in the first floor (**Item 17**) will have a significant impact on the surviving fabric of the building and its appearance. Careful choice of sympathetic windows and their surrounds would lessen the potential impact of new openings.

The proposed alterations to the north wall, including the construction of a stairwell and insertion of two doorways (**Item 16**), will impact upon the wall and roof of the chapel. Providing internal staircase would eliminate the need to form new openings or alter the roof structure.

Most of the proposals to the interior of the building will have a limited or negligible impact upon the architectural and historic integrity of the building. The proposals appear to indicate the removal of a number of original or early fixtures and fittings. In other cases it is not clear whether such items are to be retained or not. Ideally such fixtures and fittings would be retained and incorporated within the overall design. If removal is unavoidable the possibility of re-using elsewhere within the building should be considered. The only proposals that may have a more significant impact on the building is the insertion of a wall dividing the chapel in two (**Items 7 and 14**) and the lowering of the first floor (**Item 5**). Subdivision of the interior will result in a loss of appreciation of the original space and volume of the chapel in respect of its original function. This is an issue that has been raised by English Heritage in respect of the subdivision of factory buildings. However it must be acknowledged that the number

of possible alternative uses which retain the original form are limited. A final consideration is that the insertion of any new services will undoubtedly have an impact on the building.

## **7. Sources**

Clark, K., 2001. *Informed Conservation*. English Heritage.

Kelly's *Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland* and *Directory of Leicester*. Various editions.

Friar, S., 1998. *A Companion to the English Parish Church*. Sutton Publishing Limited.

Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England., 1986 *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in Central England*. London.

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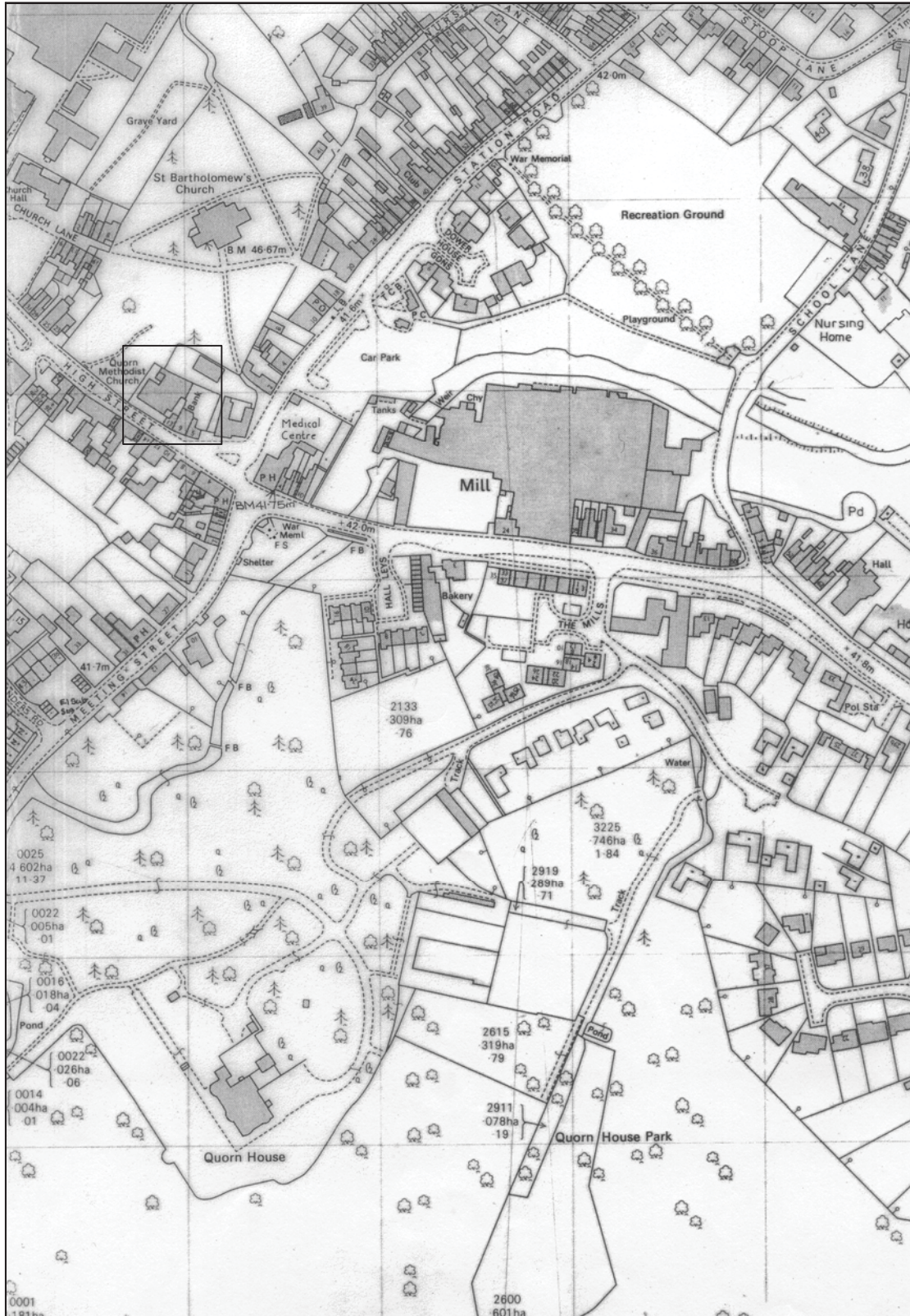


Figure 1. Location plan with the application area outlined. Not to scale.

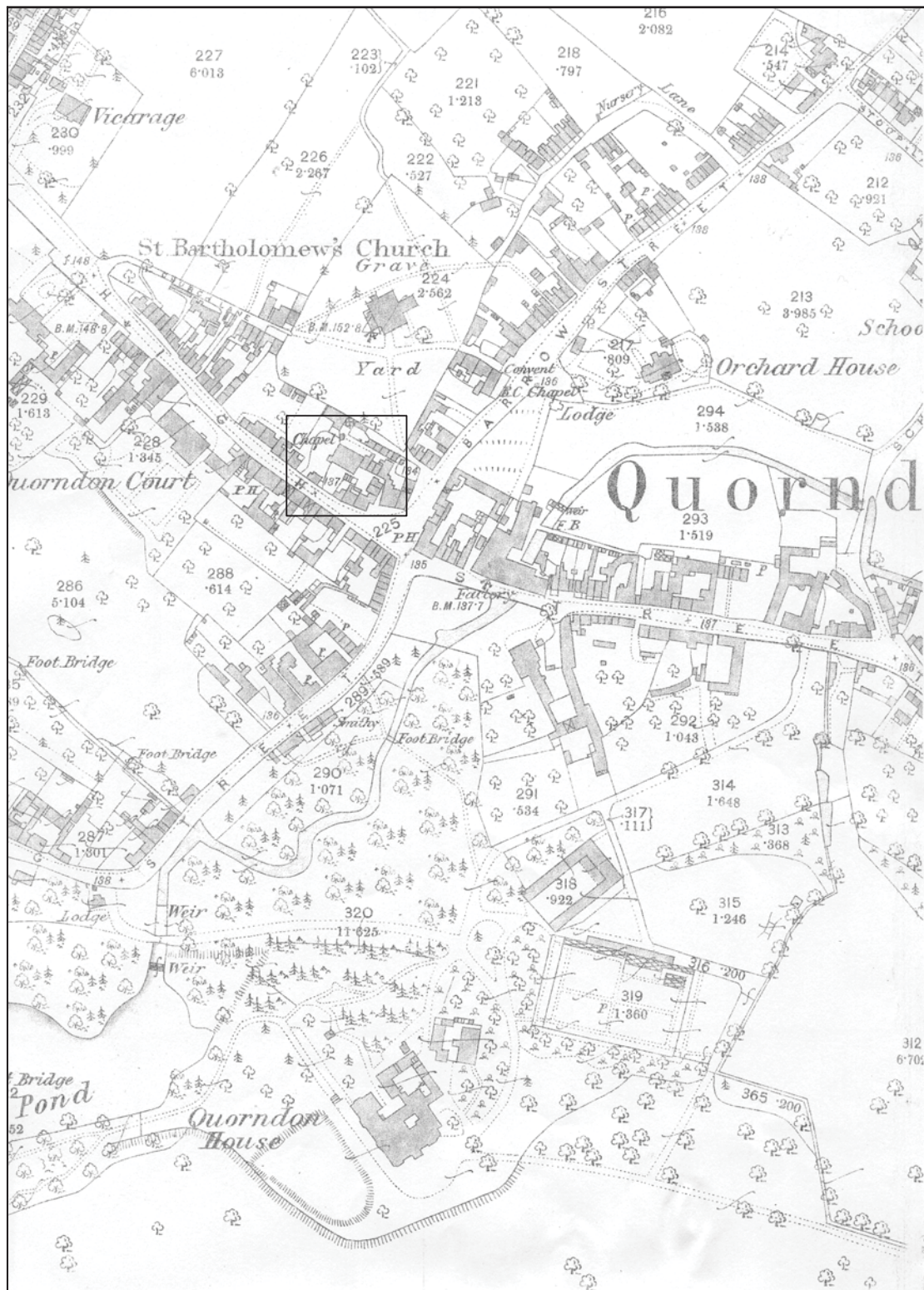


Figure 2. 1884 Ordnance Survey map of Quorndon XVIII.13 with the application area outlined. Not to scale.

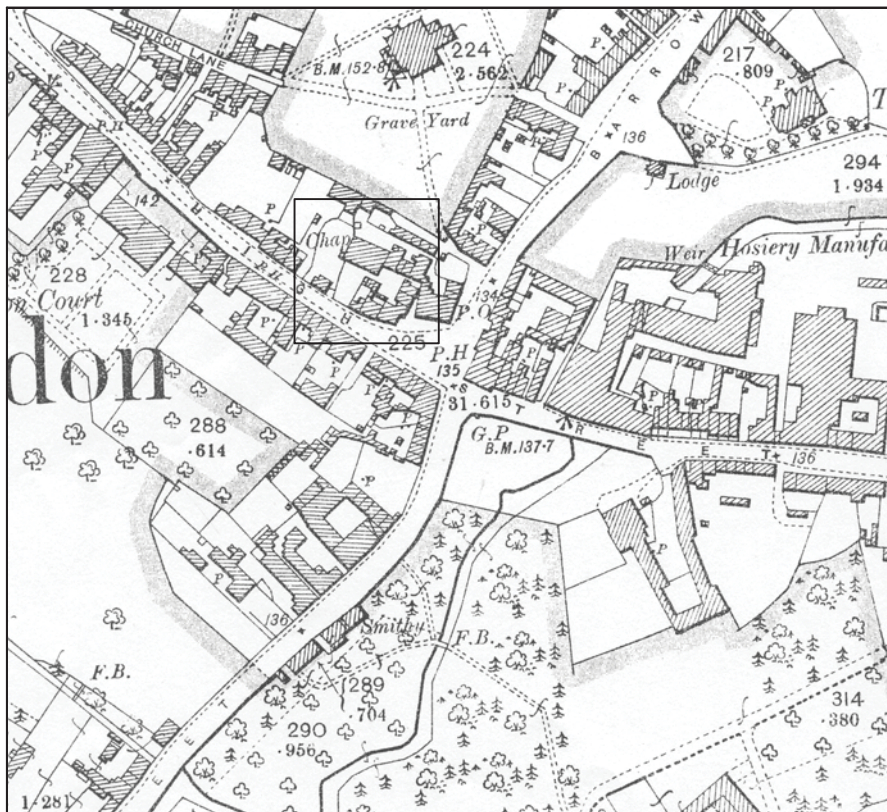


Figure 3. 1903 Ordnance Survey map of Quorndon XVIII. with the application area outlined. Not to scale.



Figure 4. 1921 Ordnance Survey map of Quorndon XVIII.13 with the application area outlined. Not to scale.

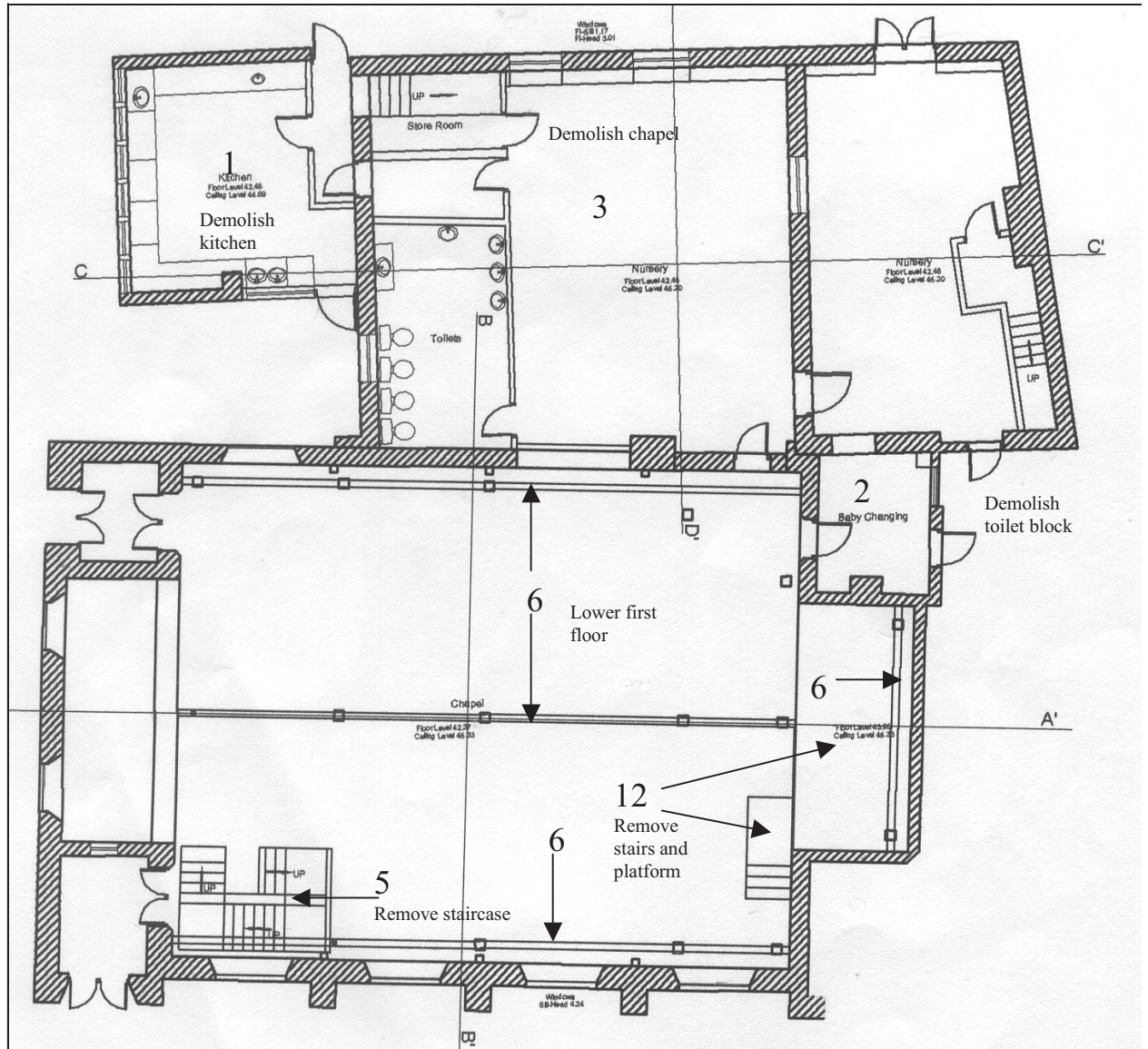


Figure 5. Existing ground floor plan.

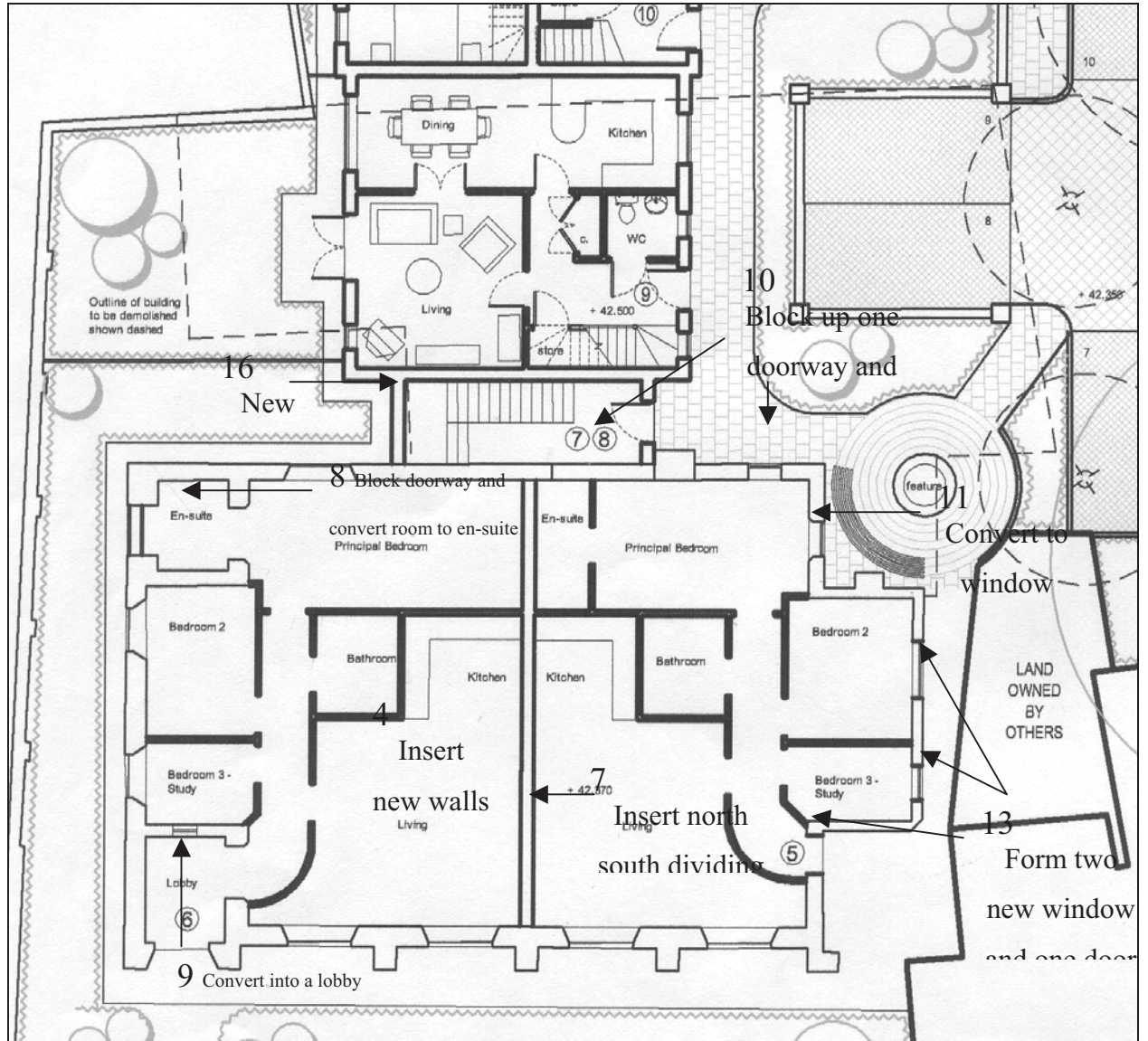


Figure 6. Proposed ground floor plan.



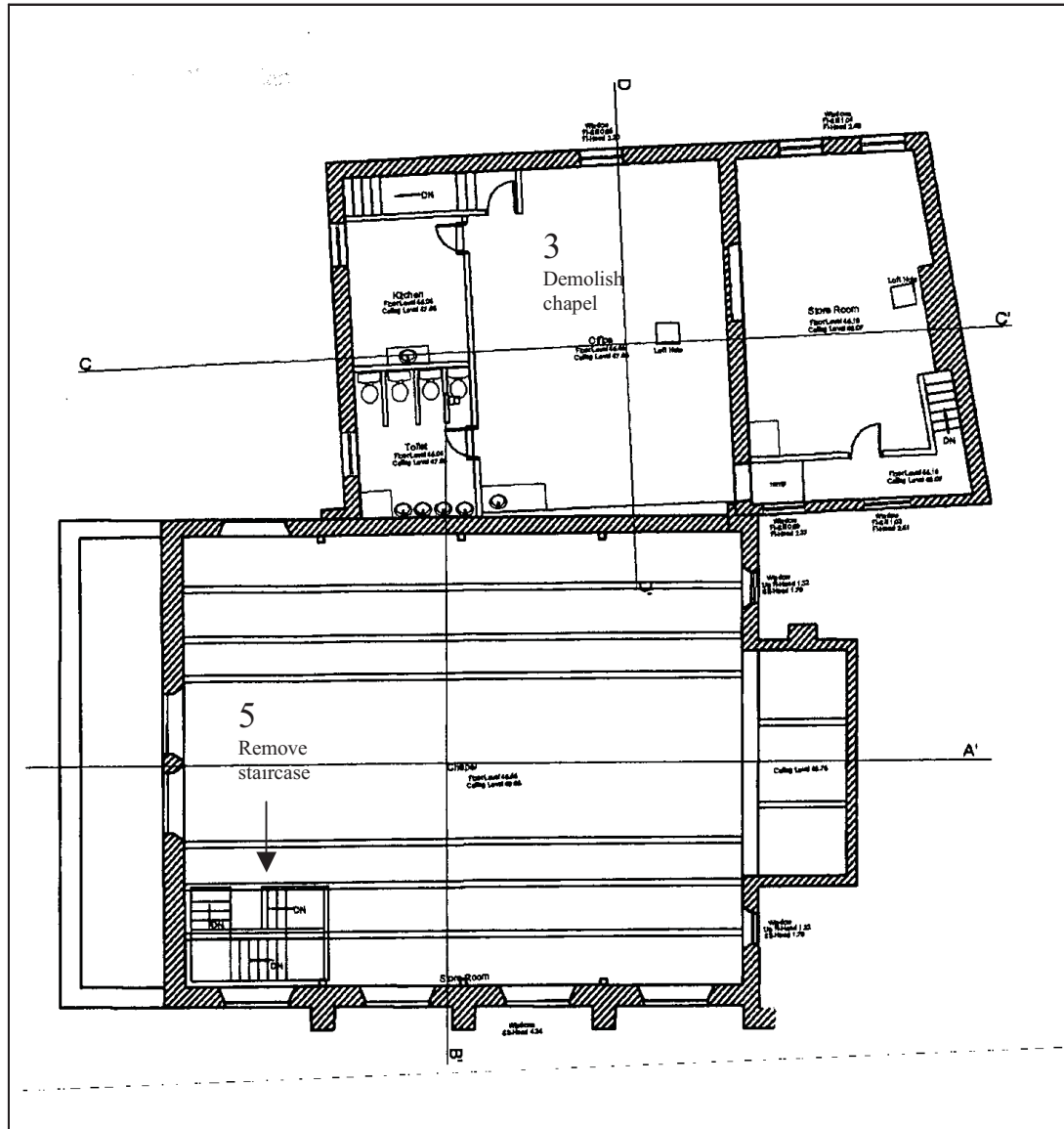


Figure 7. Existing ground floor plan.

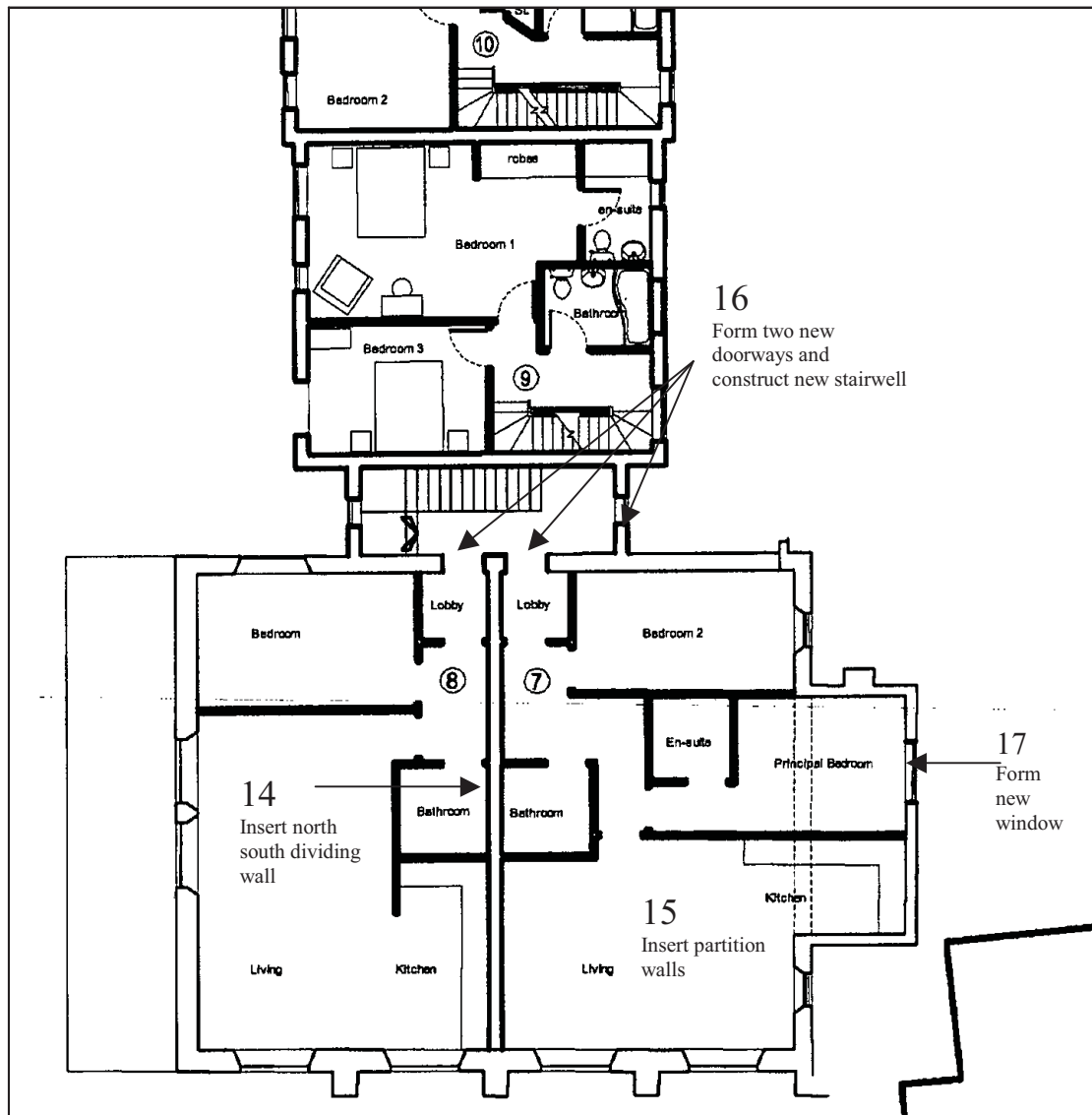


Figure 8. Proposed first floor plan.

