

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES  
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of  
County Durham and Darlington  
Fire and Rescue Service

Darlington Fire Station  
Darlington

archaeological building recording

report 5254  
February 2020

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## **1. Summary**

### **The project**

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological recording project conducted in advance of proposed demolition work at Darlington Fire Station, St Cuthbert's Way, Darlington. A photographic survey of the buildings has been carried out.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

### **The buildings**

- 1.3 The existing Darlington Fire Station was built in 1972 on recently-cleared ground away from the historic centre of the town. The brick, steel and concrete buildings on the site are typical of their time and are of minimal architectural significance. The exterior and the ground floor of the fire station have been photographed.

## 2. Project background

### Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 Darlington Fire Station is on the east side of the A167 near the centre of Darlington. The central grid reference is NZ 2923 1429. The site is irregular in plan and covers an area of approximately 0.82 ha. It lies between the A167 St Cuthbert's Way to the west and Park Place to the east; to the north is Darlington Police Station and there is a Post Office distribution centre to the south.

### Development proposal

- 2.2 It is proposed that a new fire station should be built on the site, with the eastern side of the plot to be used for future development.

### Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the project was to provide a record of the buildings in their present state.

### Specification summary

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, reference DS19.645r, provided by Archaeological Services Durham University and approved by the County Durham Archaeology Section.

### Dates

- 2.5 The fire station buildings were examined on 17th January 2020. This report was prepared for February 2020.

### Personnel

- 2.6 Research, survey and report preparation work were carried out by Richard Annis, and the graphics were prepared by Janine Watson.

### Archive/OASIS

- 2.7 The project archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the Durham County Council and the Archaeology Data Service in due course. Archaeological Services Durham University is registered with the Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS project (OASIS). The OASIS ID number for this project is **archaeol3-382813**.

### Acknowledgements

- 2.8 We are grateful to the firefighters of White Watch for their advice and assistance with this survey.

## 3. Landuse, topography and geology

### Landuse

- 3.1 When the site was examined the buildings were in use by the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).

### Topography

- 3.2 The fire station site is a level area at about 41m above sea level, beside the A167 St Cuthbert's Way. The River Skerne runs north-south just to the west of the road. The

fire station is in a built-up area with modern houses and a health centre to the east and the premises of the police and post office to north and south respectively.

### **Geology and soils**

- 3.3 The bedrock in Darlington is Permian and Triassic period mudstone of the Roxby Formation. These rocks are overlain by alluvial deposits and glacial clay, silt, sand and gravel.

## **4. Historical and archaeological development**

- 4.1 The history of the site has been set out in a desk-based assessment (Archaeological Services 2019). This concluded that there is limited evidence for prehistoric or Roman period activity in the study area, but evidence for occupation has been found during archaeological works in the surrounding area. The fire station site was a little way away from the focus of early and later medieval settlement. From the 12th century, the site was probably within the Bishop's Park. In the first half of the 19th century the western edge of the fire station site was occupied by buildings associated with a woollen mill and a farmhouse; agricultural land covered the eastern side.
- 4.2 The original Darlington Fire Station building is on Borough Road, about 250m north-east of the present site. It carries the date 1904 and has Darlington's coat of arms and the terracotta inscription "Fire Station" over the engine doors. In the mid-19th century the present fire station site was open ground beside an iron foundry. By the 1890s it was covered by terraced houses. The entire area was cleared for the construction of St Cuthbert's Way, an inner relief road begun in 1963. A police station and magistrates' court had been built just north of the study area in 1962; the fire station was built in 1972 and Royal Mail House, to the south, was added in 1981 (Cookson 2003, 145). A separate ambulance station was built at the north-east corner of the site. There has been little change to the fire station building since its construction.

## **5. The buildings**

- 5.1 The roughly rectangular site (Figure 2) has an angled access road for fire engines joining the main road, controlled by lights on either side of the southbound carriageway. Access to the site is from Park Place at the east side. Plans and elevations of the fire station are shown in Figures 3-5.
- 5.2 The building is an unequal T-shaped block near the middle of the site (Photograph 1). The large drill yard at the north-east side contains a training tower (Photograph 2). The ambulance station is at the north-east corner, with a smaller fire training building to its south (Photographs 3, 4). There is a row of garages at the middle of the east side of the site, a car park at the south-east corner (Photograph 5) and a small memorial garden at the south end of the main building. The fire station offices and other rooms are in the L-shaped south and central section of the building and the seven-bay garage forms the north arm of the T. The east-west section is the only part that has two storeys. When the fire station was examined the upper floor was inaccessible because of work to strip asbestos-containing materials. The southern section of the ambulance station, used for training by the CDDFRS, was also inaccessible.

## Exterior

- 5.3 The long west face of the building looks towards the centre of Darlington (Photograph 6). The north end has seven large doors to the garage (Photographs 7, 8); at the centre, the ground floor is brown-red brick in stretcher bond, oversailed by the upper floor (Photograph 9). This is faced with pre-cast concrete panels with a textured finish and projecting windows; it has a hipped roof with a continuous steeply-pitched skylight along its ridge. The only ground-floor projection from the long west face is the angled window of the watch office. The single-storey south end of the building has a flat roof and tall windows to offices and community rooms. The south face is dominated by the stair tower and the flue from the plant room (Photograph 10). The entrance to the former Community Safety Centre is in the east face here (Photograph 11). The flat-roofed east block contains gyms, a large locker room and changing area as well as stores and office space (Photographs 12, 13). A high sloping canopy covers the east face of the garage (Photograph 14).
- 5.4 The steel and brick drill yard tower is used for training exercises (Photograph 15). The small building adjoining the ambulance station has a section of tiled training roof and a smoke chamber for breathing apparatus work (Photograph 4).

## Interior

- 5.5 Room numbers are shown on the plan, Figure 3, and given in square brackets in the description below. The south wing is divided into four large offices [1-3, 6] (Photographs 16-21). These have folding partition walls and wrap around the entrance foyer [5] of the former Community Safety Centre. The foyer (Photograph 22) is flanked by a bar [4] and toilets [7] and has a plaque commemorating its opening by the Alan Milburn MP in May 2009 (Photograph 23). Corridor [8] links the foyer to the muster hall at the centre of the building. On the east side is the firefighters' kitchen [9] which has a hatch to the mess (Photographs 24-26). A small lounge, the chummy [10], is at the end of the corridor (Photograph 27). Double doors separate the mess [11] from the central muster hall [19] (Photograph 28). The main staircase [12] is at the west end of the muster hall (Photograph 29). Adjoining this is the main entrance [14] with a reception window into the watch office (Photograph 30). The projecting window of this room looks over the apron in front of the garage and along the exit onto the main road (Photograph 31). There are smaller rooms [16, 17] behind the watch office (Photograph 32) and a small sluice room opening off the garage. A larger square store and electrical plant room [18] forms the west end of the muster hall (Photograph 33).
- 5.6 The large central muster hall [19] has rows of cupboards for each watch member's fire kit (Photographs 34, 35). A central door on the north side of the hall leads to the garage [35] (Photograph 36). East of this are men's' toilets and a small office [21] (Photograph 37). The back entrance to the building and a second staircase [22] are at the south-east corner of the hall (Photograph 38). A corridor [23] runs from here into the east wing, which contains three bedrooms [24, 25, 27] and a gym [26] (Photographs 39-43). Most of the east end of the wing is occupied by a locker room [28] with showers and toilets [29] and a plant room [30] at the south end (Photographs 44, 45). At the north end there is another small gym [31] (Photograph 46) and two store rooms [32, 33].
- 5.7 The southernmost two bays of the garage [35] are longer than the rest (Photograph 47). Inside, the south wall contains some blocked openings to the watch office and

adjoin rooms, as well as a sluice (Photograph 48). It is a single large space (Photographs 49, 50). At the time of this survey the north end of the garage was used for storage.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The existing Darlington Fire Station was built in 1972 on recently-cleared ground away from the historic centre of the town. The brick, steel and concrete buildings on the site are typical of their time and are of minimal architectural significance. The exterior and the ground floor of the fire station have been photographed.

## **7. Sources and references**

Archaeological Services, 2018 *Darlington Fire Station, Darlington: archaeological desk-based assessment*. Unpublished report 4861, on behalf of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service. Archaeological Services Durham University.

Cookson, G, 2003 *The Townscape of Darlington*. London: Victoria County History.

Petts, D, & Gerrard, C, 2006 *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment*. Durham.



## Appendix: Catalogue of archive photographs

The pictures were taken by Richard Annis on 17th January 2020, using a Nikon D3300 DSLR camera. The photograph filenames are 01-50\_Darlington\_Fire\_Station\_5254.

No.	Subject
1	Darlington Fire Station seen from the training tower in the drill yard. St Cuthbert's Way is at the upper right. A view looking south-west
2	The drill yard and tower with the ambulance station at the left
3	The west face of the ambulance station, which was being refurbished at the time of this survey
4	Training rooms and roof at the south end of the ambulance building. Water can be seen running from the tiled roof; the ground-floor room right of centre is for smoke training
5	The fire station seen from the south-east, across the car park
6	The west front of the building. The railings at the left run along the exit onto St Cuthbert's Way
7	The garage seen from the north-west
8	The central bay of the engine garage
9	The offices, seen from the north-west. The projecting ground-floor window of the watch office gives a view of vehicles leaving the station
10	The south end of the fire station, with the former Community Safety Centre rooms at the left. The central brick tower contains the secondary staircase and boiler flues from the plant room
11	The entrance to the former Community Safety Centre, seen from the car park
12	The east wing of the building, between the drill yard and car park. Above, the long skylight runs over the central corridor and parts of the southern offices on the first floor
13	The north face of the building seen from the canopied area at the back of the garage
14	The drill yard face of the garage and the canopy. A view looking west
15	A ladder access training exercise under way in the drill yard. A view looking north-west
16	Room 1 in the former Community Safety Centre. The roller shutter at the right closes off the bar and the folding partition separates this room from another office, room 2
17	A view looking south-east from room 2 showing the bar and shuttered cupboard in room 1
18	A view looking south across room 2. Part of the memorial garden can be seen outside the windows
19	The Room 2 has moveable partitions in its north and east walls
20	Room 3 seen from the north-east corner
21	The office, room 6, with doors to the corridor 12 and the main entrance
22	The foyer in the former Community Safety Centre. A view looking north-east
23	The commemorative plaque in the foyer, room 5
24	The kitchen, room 9, seen from the west door
25	A view looking north-west in the kitchen
26	The hatch between the kitchen and the mess room 11
27	The small lounge or chummary, room 10
28	Mess room 11 and the kitchen hatch
29	The main staircase and hall, room 12. A view looking south

No.	Subject
30	Room 14, the main entrance to the fire station, with the watch office at the far side
31	The watch office 15, seen from the east end
32	Rooms 16 and 17, east of the watch office. A view looking north-west
33	Looking west into store room 18
34	The muster hall 19, seen from the north-west corner
35	Cupboards for firefighters' kit at the east end of the muster hall
36	The door from the muster hall to the garage 35, with the watch office door at the left
37	Office 21, at the north-east side of the muster hall
38	The back entrance 22 and the secondary staircase. The Offices sign directs visitors upstairs
39	Corridor 23, between the muster hall and the locker room 28. A view looking south-east
40	Looking south-west into bedroom 24
41	A view looking south-west in bedroom 25. All of these rooms, like the mess and the gym, have double doors without catches for easy access in case of a call
42	The gym, room 26
43	Looking north-east into bedroom 27
44	The locker room 28, with toilets and showers 29 beyond
45	Looking north-east along the locker room 29 towards the drill yard door
46	The small gym room 31
47	The long eastern bays of the garage, seen from the drill yard
48	The south end of the garage 35, showing blocked openings to rooms 15 and 16
49	The south end of the garage
50	A view looking north from the centre of the garage's east wall



Photograph 1: Darlington Fire Station seen from the training tower in the drill yard. St Cuthbert's Way is at the upper right. A view looking south-west



Photograph 2: The drill yard and tower with the ambulance station at the left



Photograph 3: The west face of the ambulance station, which was being refurbished at the time of this survey



Photograph 4: Training rooms and roof at the south end of the ambulance building. Water can be seen running from the tiled roof; the ground-floor room right of centre is for smoke training



Photograph 5: The fire station seen from the south-east, across the car park



Photograph 6: The west front of the building. The railings at the left run along the exit onto St Cuthbert's Way



Photograph 7: The garage seen from the north-west



Photograph 8: The central bay of the engine garage



Photograph 9: The offices, seen from the north-west. The projecting ground-floor window of the watch office gives a view of vehicles leaving the station



Photograph 10: The south end of the fire station, with the former Community Safety Centre rooms at the left. The central brick tower contains the secondary staircase and boiler flues from the plant room



Photograph 11: The entrance to the former Community Safety Centre, seen from the car park



Photograph 12: The east wing of the building, between the drill yard and car park. Above, the long skylight runs over the central corridor and parts of the southern offices on the first floor





Photograph 13: The north face of the building seen from the canopied area at the back of the garage



Photograph 14: The drill yard face of the garage and the canopy. A view looking west



Photograph 15: A ladder access training exercise under way in the drill yard. A view looking north-west



Photograph 16: Room 1 in the former Community Safety Centre. The roller shutter at the right closes off the bar and the folding partition separates this room from another office, room 2



Photograph 17: A view looking south-east from room 2 showing the bar and shuttered cupboard in room 1



Photograph 18: Looking south across room 2. Part of the memorial garden can be seen outside the windows



Photograph 19: Room 2 has moveable partitions in its north and east walls



Photograph 20: Room 3 seen from the north-east corner



Photograph 21: The office, room 6, with doors to the corridor 12 and the main entrance



Photograph 22: Entrance foyer 5 in the former Community Safety Centre. A view looking north-east



Photograph 23: The commemorative plaque in the foyer, room 5



Photograph 24: The kitchen, room 9, seen from the west door



Photograph 25: A view looking north-west in the kitchen



Photograph 26: The hatch between the kitchen and the mess room 11



Photograph 27: The small lounge or chummy, room 10



Photograph 28: Mess room 11 and the kitchen hatch





Photograph 29: The main staircase and hall, room 12. A view looking south



Photograph 30: Room 14, the main entrance to the fire station, with the watch office at the far side



Photograph 31: The watch office 15, seen from the east end



Photograph 32: Rooms 16 and 17, east of the watch office. A view looking north-west



Photograph 33: Looking west into store room 18



Photograph 34: The muster hall 19, seen from the north-west corner



Photograph 35: Cupboards for firefighters' kit at the east end of the muster hall



Photograph 36: The door from the muster hall to the garage 35, with the watch office door at the left



Photograph 37: Office 21, at the north-east side of the muster hall



Photograph 38: The back entrance 22 and the secondary staircase. The Offices sign directs visitors upstairs



Photograph 39: Corridor 23, between the muster hall and the locker room 28. A view looking south-east



Photograph 40: Looking south-west into bedroom 24



Photograph 41: A view looking south-west in bedroom 25. All of these rooms, like the mess and the gym, have double doors without catches for easy access in case of a call



Photograph 42: The gym, room 26



Photograph 43: Looking north-east into bedroom 27



Photograph 44: The locker room 28, with toilets and showers 29 beyond





Photograph 45: Looking north-east along the locker room 29 towards the drill yard door



Photograph 46: The small gym room 31



Photograph 47: The long eastern bays of the garage, seen from the drill yard



Photograph 48: The south end of the garage 35, showing blocked openings to rooms 15 and 16

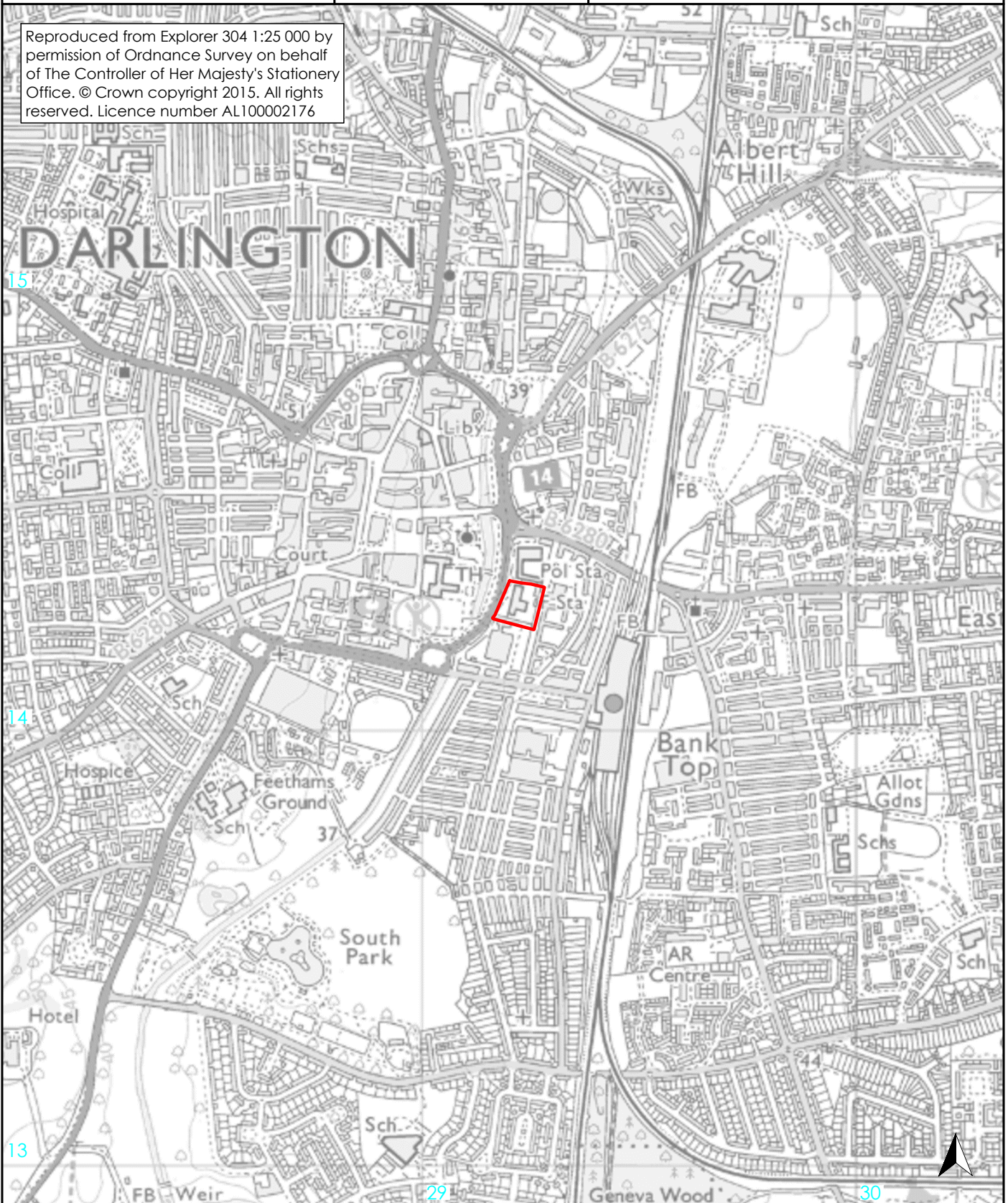



Photograph 49: The south end of the garage



Photograph 50: A view looking north from the centre of the garage's east wall

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 proposed development area

0 500m  
scale 1:12 500 for A4 plot

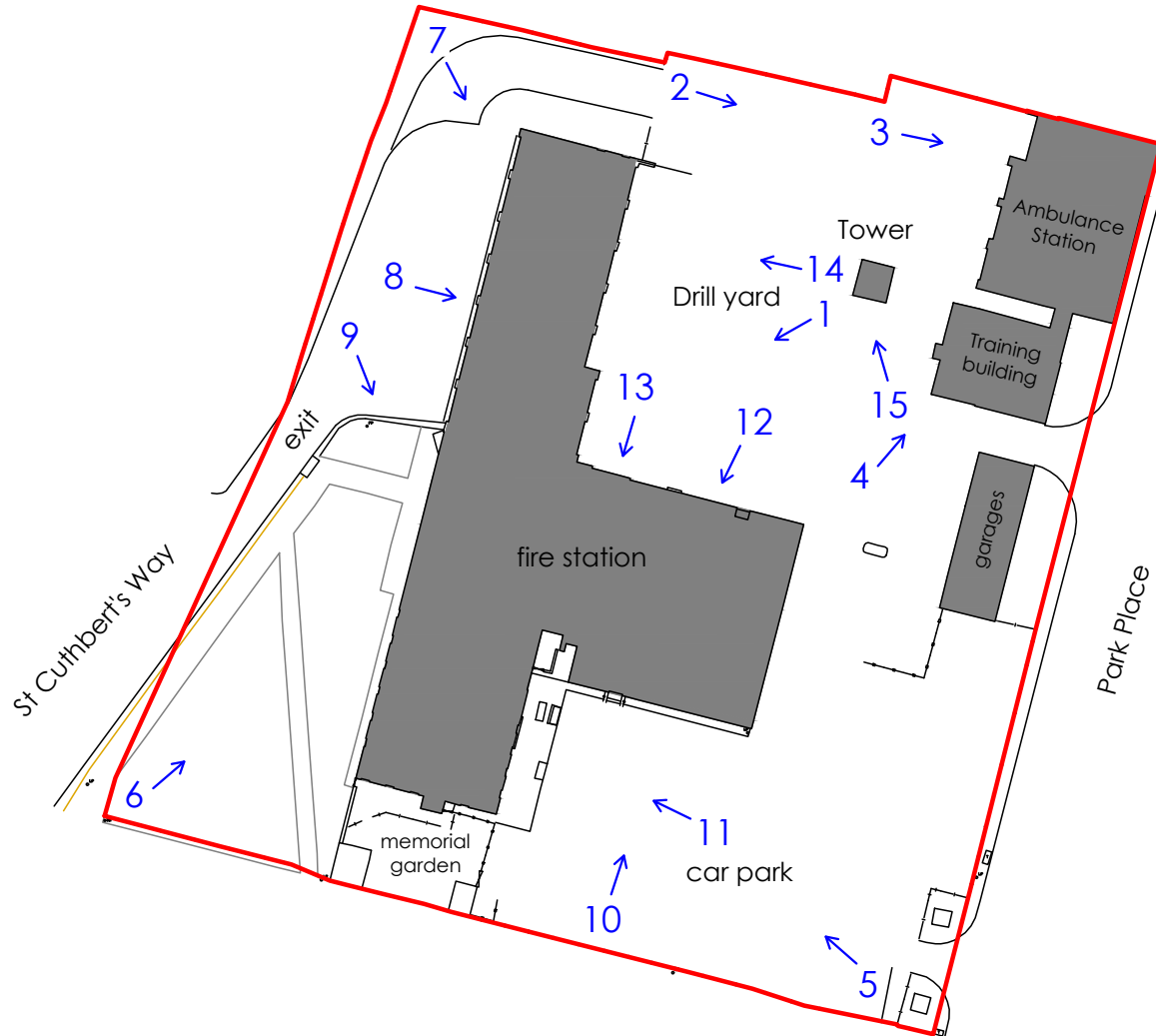
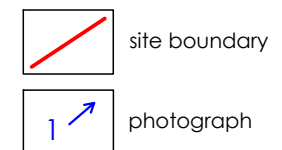
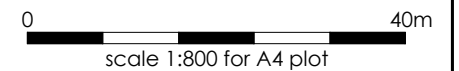
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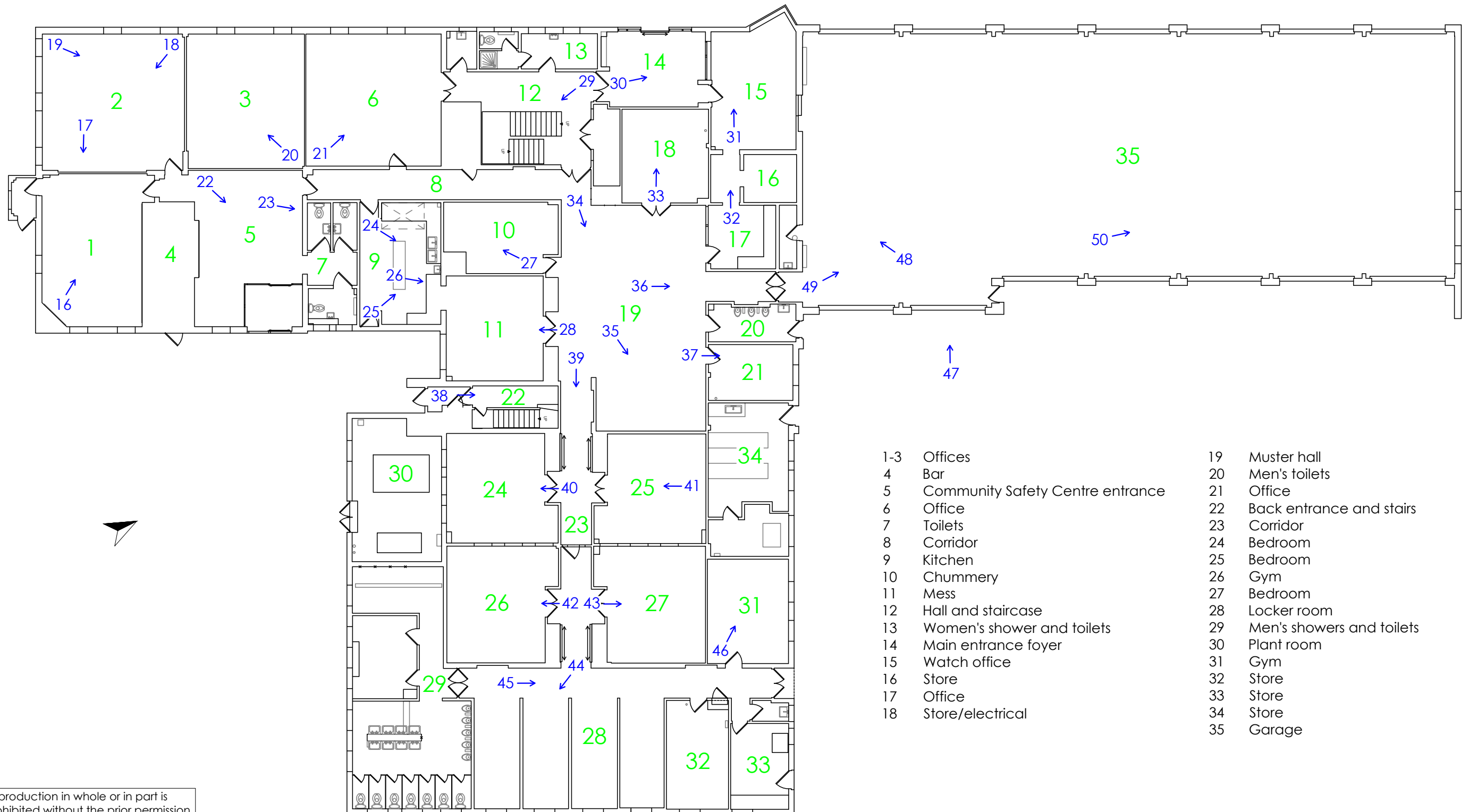
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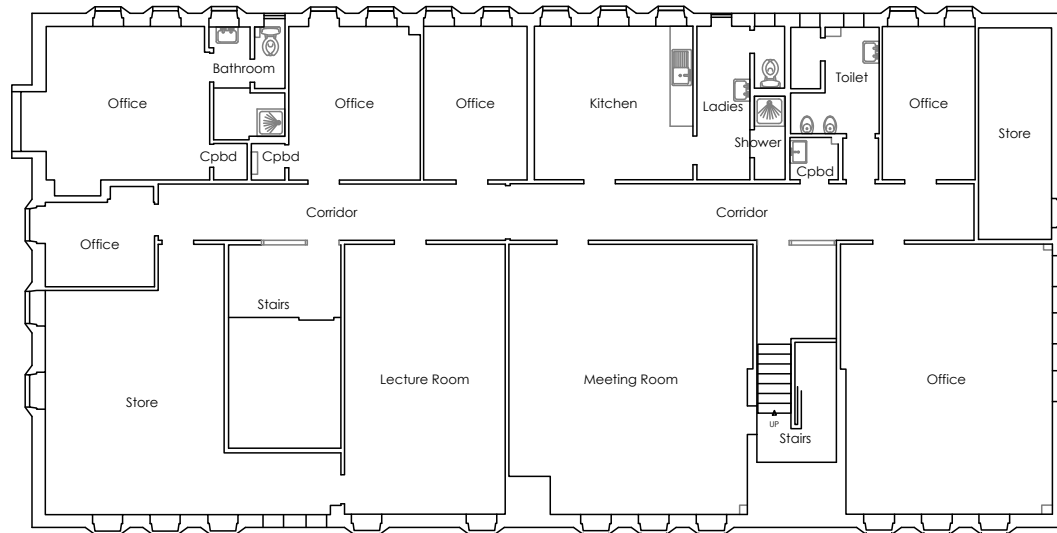
Figure 2: The site and the buildings





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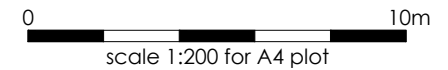
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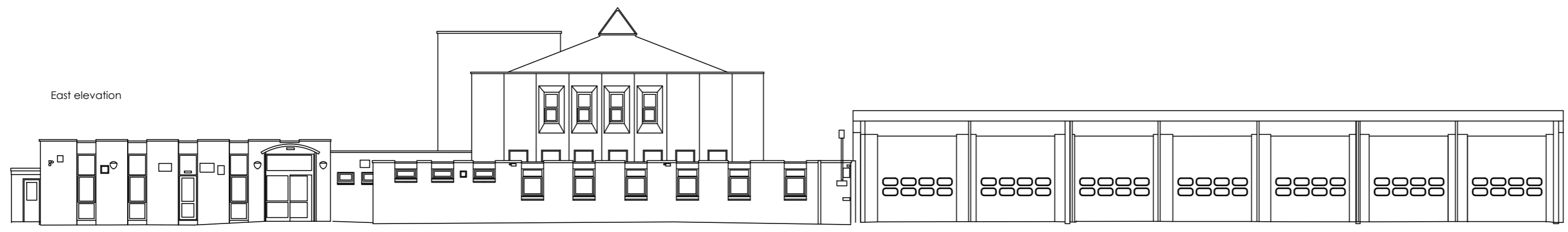
Figure 4: First floor plan



West elevation



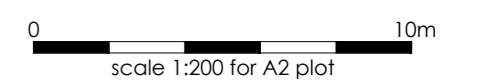
East elevation



North elevation



South elevation



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Figure 5: Elevations