

RO 127 HIGH STREET, RICKMANSWORTH
HERTFORDSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL /
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

Authors: Tansy Collins BSc	
NGR: TQ 0595 9445	Report No: 4158
District: Three Rivers	Site Code: n/a
Approved: Claire Halpin MlfA	Project No: 5013
Signed:	Date: October 2012

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>RO 127 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire</i>		
<p><i>In September 2012 Archaeological Solutions Limited carried out an historic building appraisal and impact/heritage assessment at No. 127 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire.</i></p> <p><i>Evidence suggests the original building once comprised a typical urban property of 18th century, or perhaps late 17th century, date with a street frontage and short rear range. The Victorian period saw the earlier building encased and the construction of two abutting rear ranges which have been almost entirely remodelled leaving only the outer shell surviving. An Edwardian phase of refurbishment is evident throughout the building, while heavy modern intervention is visible particularly to the rear ranges.</i></p> <p><i>Any minor features of historic note survive in the main range where no works are proposed and the degree of earlier remodelling to the rear ranges is such that the proposed development will have a negligible effect on the historic integrity of the building, mitigated by the recording which has taken place.</i></p>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	<i>26th September 2012</i>		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	<i>N</i>	Future work	<i>?</i>
P. number	<i>5013</i>	Site code	<i>N/A</i>
Type of project	<i>Historic building appraisal / heritage statement</i>		
Site status	<i>-</i>		
Current land use	<i>Shop with offices above, rear ranges empty</i>		
Planned development	<i>Demolition and redevelopment of the rear ranges</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>Early 18th century main range, much remodelled, with 19th century rear ranges</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>n/a</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Hertfordshire</i>	<i>Three Rivers</i>	<i>Rickmansworth</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Hertfordshire historic Environment Record</i>		
Post code (if known)	<i>-</i>		
Area of site			
NGR	<i>TQ 0595 9445</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>Approximately 50m AOD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Advice from HCC HEU</i>		
Project supervisor/s	<i>Tansy Collins</i>		
Funded by	<i>Hazan Smith & Partners</i>		
Full title	<i>RO 127 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. Historic Building Appraisal / Heritage Statement</i>		
Authors	<i>Collins, T.</i>		
Report no.	<i>4158</i>		
Date (of report)	<i>October 2012</i>		

RO 127 HIGH STREET, RICKMANSWORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL / HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY

In September 2012 Archaeological Solutions Limited carried out an historic building appraisal and impact/heritage assessment at No. 127 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire.

Evidence suggests the original building once comprised a typical urban property of 18th century, or perhaps late 17th century, date with a street frontage and short rear range. The Victorian period saw the earlier building encased and the construction of two abutting rear ranges which have been almost entirely remodelled leaving only the outer shell surviving. An Edwardian phase of refurbishment is evident throughout the building, while heavy modern intervention is visible particularly to the rear ranges.

Any minor features of historic note survive in the main range where no works are proposed and the degree of earlier remodelling to the rear ranges is such that the proposed development will have a negligible effect on the historic integrity of the building, mitigated by the recording which has taken place.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2012, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out historic building recording at No. 127 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire (NGR TQ 0595 9445). The Heritage Statement and Historic Building Appraisal was prepared at the request of Hazan Smith & Partners following advice given by Andy Instone of Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Unit. The planning approval for development of the site requires a programme of archaeological work (Three Rivers Council 12/0431/FUL). HCC HEU advised that a heritage assessment should be submitted in the first instance, in order for them to advise if any further archaeological work is required to fulfil the condition requirements. It's purpose is to provide further information on, and to assess the significance of, the structures and the impact of their demolition and conversion on the surrounding land- and streetscape.

1.2 The project was carried out according to a specification prepared by AS dated 14th September 2012 as well as guidelines set out in the English Heritage document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (2006)

1.3 The main objectives were to:

- appraise the existing historic structures with a photographic schedule of features of historic interest
- prepare a heritage statement setting out the impact of the proposed development on the historic environment of the buildings

Planning Context

1.4 Planning legislation relating to the built environment is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. The government's national policies are outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework issued in March 2012, which supersedes the earlier Planning Policy Statement 5 (March 2010), though much of the earlier material has been carried over and remains relevant. They follow the various European Conventions with regard to heritage, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory. Local development plans must take account of them.

1.5 The framework identifies a heritage asset as *'a building, monument, site, place area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority'* (NPPF 2012, 52).

1.6 Section 12 includes the guidelines relating to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Of particular note is Paragraph 128 which recommends that *'local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than it sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal of their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary'* (NPPF 2012, 30).

1.7 The building is not nationally or locally listed but does lie within the designated conservation area of Rickmansworth. The Conservation Area character assessment (1993) notes the streetscape of High Street as having an important building line.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The site was visited on the 26th September 2012 in order to undertake a technical analysis of the buildings and compile a photographic record. The main street frontage range was examined, in order to develop the necessary context to understand those areas under review for the proposed development. The written description and analysis was carried out by Tansy Collins. Existing and proposed plans provided by the client were used to ascertain the level of impact the proposals would have into surviving historic fabric. These plans have been included as Figs. 2-3.

2.2 The photographic recording was carried out by Tansy Collins using a Canon 1000D (10 megapixels) digital SLR camera and included all external views and general internal shots with detailed images taken where necessary. External lighting and weather conditions were good at the time of the survey. A scale was used wherever possible, and a flash was employed for internal shots.

A pictorial index of the digital photography and selected colour plates are included below together with location plots (Fig. 2).

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE (Fig. 1)

3.1 Rickmansworth is a small town located on an area of hilly ground between the rivers Chess and Colne in south-west Hertfordshire (Fig. 1). The historic part of the town is bounded to the north, south and west by the A404 and to the east by the river Chess. The Colne flows south of the A404 along with the Grand Union Canal and a series of associated lakes. To the west of the historic town is a large area of suburban housing laid out on sloping ground up to the M25 motorway. Rickmansworth is separated only by small patches of open land from the nearby hamlet of Batchworth to the south and the larger settlements of Croxley Green to the east and Chorleywood to the west, on the opposite side of the M25. The town is linked to the London Underground on the Metropolitan Line.

3.2 The historic core of Rickmansworth is centred on High Street and Church Street and these and the surrounding areas are a designated conservation area. At the far eastern end of the town High Street turns northwards before being crossed by the railway and terminating at a junction with the A404. The building under consideration lies in the centre of the town on the south side of the High Street, and comprises an east–west aligned principal frontage facing onto the street with a series of ranges extending to the south. To the rear, the area has seen substantial development which has largely removed any historic layout with the addition of a car park and other modern buildings. However, the west side of the site is enclosed with a surviving section of 19th century boundary wall.

4 THE BUILDING

4.1 As noted, the areas subject to alteration form the rear ranges of the building but the principal rooms were inspected to provide context.

4.2 The building lies on the south side of the High Street where the character and form of the structures vary. These range from fairly plain 19th century elevations of both brick and render, decorative turn of the 20th century gabled Arts and Crafts style building with some modern infill added in the 1930s – 50s. Some of these façades, however, hide earlier historic cores.

Exterior

4.3 No. 127 is now occupied by Specsavers Opticians at ground floor level with offices above and further rooms at attic level. The shop front retains a low stall riser below continuous plate glass with a modillioned fascia cornice, where both the stall riser and glass sections are curved responding to a bow-fronted oriel window at upper level, which has many panes with sidelights. This window is set within homogenous red brickwork laid in Flemish bond though now mostly repointed in cement (Plate 1).

4.4 The eaves are defined by more robust modillions, framed between corbels of stacked tiles at the corners. Above this the roof rises in a fairly steep pitch and is covered with peg-tiles. However, the eastern half continues with a lower roof pitch, this element pierced by a two-light dormer window with modern glazing. In

addition a chimney stack, set in slightly from the adjoining property to the east, is constructed of 19th century bricks with terracotta pots of square section.

4.5 Neighbouring properties Nos. 129 and 131 were briefly assessed to provide context as their similar rooflines and appearance suggests a close association with the assessment structure and may represent parts of a larger structural unity. Both Nos. 129 and 131 are constructed of red brick at upper level, here with curious crude yellow brick dressings round two small windows, though the whole façade has been foreshortened by wide fascias above a camera shop and bank at ground floor level.

4.6 The rear elevations of the buildings along this side are accretive with a number of modern extensions, a car park and other recent buildings are visible in the vicinity (Plate 2). No. 127 alone of all the properties along this side preserves the traditional layout of a main frontage with rear wings extending at right angles along the original plot lines, these latterly extended. The adjoining two properties Nos. 129 and 131 has been much altered with the truncation of the south roof pitch and the addition of various flat-roofed extensions, the sequence and development of which is not evident.

4.7 The assessment structure has a number of distinct rear ranges. To the east a short wing immediately adjoins the rear of the main range and has a peg-tiled pitched roof which is only visible where the roof line rises slightly above a second range to the south. This range is constructed of yellow stock bricks laid in Flemish bond rising to a cogged eaves course, below a similar peg-tiled pitched roof. The fenestration has been completely altered with the insertion of large casement windows set beneath concrete lintels. Two of the windows are of metal-framed Crittall style while a third is timber of 1980s or later date but replicating the pattern. Little survives apart from the outer walls, though evidence indicates that the south ground floor unit originally formed a single-storey extension, probably originally with a pent-roof and including a little attached WC which survives though altered. This has now been raised by a further storey to a flat roof, reusing old matching stock bricks but here laid in stretcher bond and lit by metal-framed windows as elsewhere.

4.8 Adjoining to the west, a further range is partially set behind No. 129. This is constructed hard against the eastern ranges and is also of two phases. Close to the main front, the range is constructed of the same yellow industrial stocks with cogged eaves course below a fairly shallow-pitched roof covered with grey slate. This was extended to the south by pushing out the range with a short red brick unit, the fabric consistent with an early 20th century date. At upper level a generous bay window of timber and mullion form has a tile-hung apron and upper area to a flat-roof, which is finished with a composite moulded eaves cornice. This range has been further extended with a short single-storey block of reused yellow stock bricks of no interest.

Interior

Ground floor

4.9 The main street frontage of the building was briefly inspected at first and second floor level as well as the rear ranges subject to conversion or replacement. The south-west range is given access from the main north range, while the south-east range is now distinct and is only given access from the

exterior on the south. The rooms have been ascribed numbers for ease of description and are shown on Fig. 2.

4.10 Of the ground floor rooms, those at the south end of the south-east range were inspected (Rooms GF01-03). Internally the rooms have been entirely modernised and remodelled, with flimsy partitions and steel joists (Plate 3), while any remaining fixtures and fittings such as the staircase and doors are all modern, apart from one small window which may be late 19th century in date. Otherwise, the windows include mid-20th century metal-framed casements as well as later timber examples.

First floor

4.11 The first floor rooms of the main range and south-west range are reached from the street frontage, while the south-east range is given access from the modern staircase at the south end. The front room at this level overlooking the street (Room FF01) spans the width of the property and is typically Edwardian with a bowed oriel window on the north retaining thick glazing bars and scrolled and twisted monkey-tail catches. On the east, a bolection-moulded chimney piece has a projecting shelf, while two doors flanking this are of panelled form. The ceiling is plain apart from a cornice of no particular age. The rear range to the south-west is occupied by a single generous room at this level (FF04). It has a fireplace on the west and an Edwardian cornice, while the large window is of the same date but with modern ironmongery.

4.12 The rooms of the south-east range (Room FF05-07) are similarly modernised (Plate 4), as those below, with metal-framed windows on the west, the northern example of no age.

4.13 From here a limited view of the roof of this range was possible through a hatch in the ceiling of Room FF06. Much of the structure appears to be typically Victorian in date with slender softwood rafters and purlins. However, on the east side, several members are visible which are clearly older, forming four or five truncated oak rafters, terminating in bird-mouthed joints or conventional tenons. These appear to represent reuse of timber from an earlier building rather than a residual component of an earlier structure in this position.

Second floor

4.14 Attic rooms occupy the roof space of the main range and here some earlier elements are visible. A winder staircase leads to a landing at the second floor level (Room SF01) where a tie-beam is visible, the staircase enclosed by a short balustrade (Plate 5). This is of late 18th century form with turned newels and plain spindles. A cupboard adjoins with a small plain four-panel door. Timber-framing is exposed on the outer walls of the staircase. The presence and pattern of wattle notches and the absence of pegging suggests reuse of timber in this area.

4.15 From the landing, a small Victorian boarded door, hung on pintles gives access to the external roof areas and doorways lead to a front and rear room. The north room (Room SF03) is lit by the dormer window visible from the exterior. The room spans the change in roof height and one or two structural elements are visible such as the principal rafters and purlins on the north side. Though limited, the evidence suggests a butt-purlin roof. To the rear of the landing is a small room containing little of interest though the south purlin is visible (Room SF02).

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 The investigation and analysis allowed for a good understanding of the surviving historic fabric in order to appreciate the impact of the proposals. Evidence suggests the assessment structure once comprises a typical urban property with a street frontage and a short south-east rear range, of which only the fragmentary outline is visible or remains *in situ*. The exposed fabric points to a remodelling and encasing of an earlier 18th century building, or perhaps late 17th century, in the Victorian period. On or two ephemeral fragments of 18th century fabric include the short section of balustrade at attic level.

5.2 The 19th century saw parallel and abutting rear ranges constructed in industrial yellow stock brick. The form of the south-east range appears to comprise two-storey rear ranges, that to the south-east with a single-storey, probably pent-roofed, end bay with attached WC which has been completely remodelled with the replacement of most original windows and the raising of the single-storey bay leaving only the outer walls surviving.

5.3 The principal surviving phase of refurbishment visible throughout the whole structure was carried out in the early years of the 20th century when it appears that the shop front was remodelled in slightly anachronistic style with much renewal of joinery elements. In addition, fine domestic accommodation was developed at first floor level, housed in the two large first floor rooms, one of generous proportions in the south-west range which overlooks the rear plot through the large bay window.

5.4 Many of the existing decorative elements survive from this Edwardian phase of work, although modern refurbishment has sterilised most of the building. The rear ranges have been reconfigured, completely denuded of any historic character and subsequently extended in mediocre recycled brick units. Typical features of this period include the 1950s – 70s Crittall-style windows, but otherwise all internal features are of a very recent date.

6 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 The proposed works are limited to the south-east range. This includes the partial demolition of the existing south-east range and construction of a rear residential range along the same footprint with the first floor turning and over-sailing an area to the south-west adjoining the western boundary wall. The proposed development plan can be seen on Fig. 3 and what follows it an assessment of the potential impact into any surviving historic fabric.

1. *Removal of the existing south-east range* – this includes the demolition of the modern accretive range and part of the 19th century shell. **Negligible impact** on the historic fabric of the building as this range has been so altered leaving no historic fabric of any merit surviving.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The building as a whole represents a typical urban property with a number of phases of development and expansion to the rear. Any minor features of historic note survive in the main front range where no development is proposed, and while the south-east range is encased in a 19th century shell the degree of earlier degradation is such as that this loss will have a negligible impact on the historic integrity of the building, mitigated further by the recording that has taken place as well as the retention of some areas of 19th century brickwork.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Limited would like to thank Hazan, Smith & Partners for commissioning the project, in particular Mr Kunal Sangwan for his assistance.

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English Heritage (EH) 2006 *Understanding Historic Buildings; a guide to good recording practice*. EH, Swindon

Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust 1993 Rickmansworth Conservation Area: appraisal and character assessment.

Websites

<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/>

APPENDIX 1 HER SUMMARY SHEET

Site name and address:	<i>RO 127 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire</i>
County: <i>Hertfordshire</i>	District: <i>Three Rivers</i>
Village/Town: <i>Rickmansworth</i>	Parish: <i>Rickmansworth</i>
Planning application reference:	-
Client name/address/tel:	Hazan, Smith & Partners
Nature of application:	<i>Demolition and redevelopment of the rear ranges</i>
Present land use:	Empty or office use to a street front building
Size of application area:	Size of area investigated:
NGR (8 figures):	TQ 0595 9445
Site Code:	n/a
Site director / organisation:	Archaeological Solutions Ltd
Type of work:	Historic building appraisal / heritage assessment
Date of work:	September 2012
Location of finds/Curating museum:	
Related SMR Nos: -	Periods represented: 18 th century to present
Relevant previous summaries/reports: -	-
Summary of fieldwork results:	<p><i>In September 2012, Archaeological Solutions Limited carried out an historic building appraisal and impact/heritage assessment at No. 127 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire.</i></p> <p><i>Evidence suggests the original building once comprised a typical urban property of 18th century, or perhaps late 17th century, date with a street frontage and short rear range. The Victorian period saw the earlier building encased and the construction of two abutting rear ranges which have been almost entirely remodelled leaving only the outer shell surviving. An Edwardian phase of refurbishment is evident throughout the building, while heavy modern intervention is visible, particularly to the rear ranges.</i></p> <p><i>Any minor features of historic note survive in the main range where no works are proposed and the degree of earlier remodelling to the rear ranges is such that the proposed development will have a negligible effect on the historic integrity of the building, mitigated by the recording which has taken place.</i></p>
Author of summary: Tansy Collins	Date of Summary: October 2012

PLATES



Plate 1 Main façade of No. 127 fronting High Street, taken from the north (DP 19)



Plate 2 View of the rear ranges of No. 127 and flanking buildings, taken from the south-west (DP 01)



Plate 3 Room GF01 showing modern remodelling of the south-east range, taken from the south-east (DP 15)



Plate 4 Room FF06 showing modern remodelling of the south-east range, taken from the east (DP 18)



Plate 5

Section of early 18th century balustrade at second floor level (Room SF01), taken from the north-east (DP 10)

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



DP 1

View of the rear ranges of No. 127 and flanking buildings, taken from the south-west



DP 2

View of the rear ranges of No. 127, taken from the south-west



DP 3

South-west range of No. 127, taken from the south



DP 4

South side of the south-east range, taken from the south



DP 5

Edwardian fireplace and flanking doors in Room FF01, taken from the west



DP 6

Detail of the fireplace in Room FF01, taken from the north-west



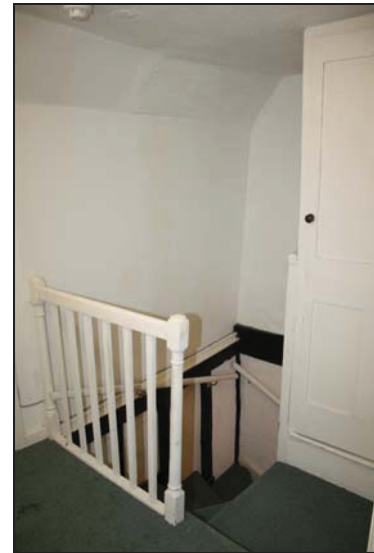
DP 7
Room SF03 showing partially exposed roof structure, taken from the east



DP 8
Detail showing junction of the two roofs over No. 127, taken from the south



DP 9
Small doorway leading to the external roof area in Room SF01, taken from the west



DP 10
Section of early 18th century balustrade at second floor level (Room SF01), taken from the north-east



DP 11
Timber-framing viewed from the second floor landing, taken from the north-east



DP 12
Section of early balustrade at second floor level, taken from the west



DP 13
Staircase at first floor level (Room FF02), taken from the east



DP 14
West side of the south-east range at upper level, taken from the west



DP 15
Room GF01 showing modern remodelling of the south-east range, taken from the south-east



DP 16
Small single-light casement to the south-east range (GF02), taken from the north-west



DP 17
Staircase in the south-east range (Room GF02), taken from the south-west



DP 18
Room FF06 showing modern remodelling of the south-east range, taken from the east



DP 19

Main façade of No. 127 fronting High Street, taken from the north



DP 20

Street façade of No. 127 at upper level, taken from the north



DP 21

Street elevation showing buildings to the west of the assessment structure, taken from the north-east



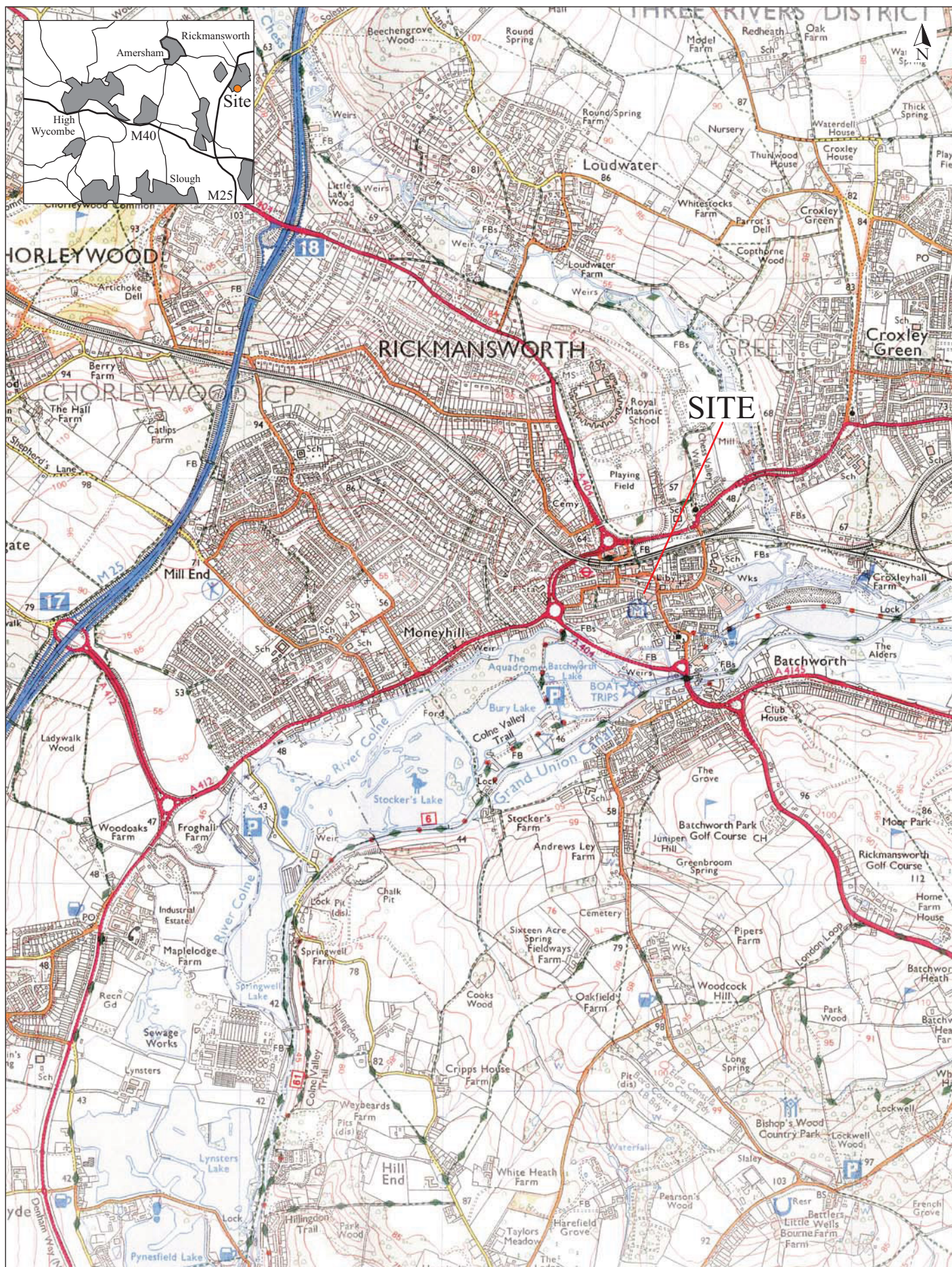
DP 22

Street elevation showing buildings to the east of the assessment structure, taken from the north-west



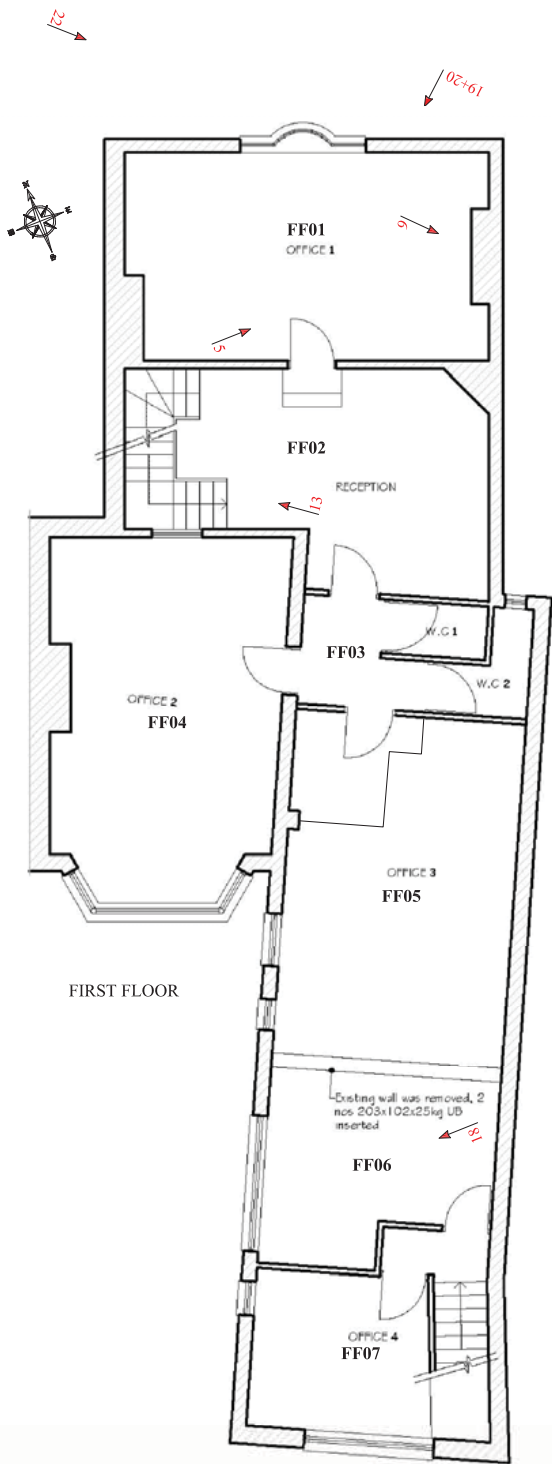
DP 23

View of the roof form of the south-east range, taken from the south

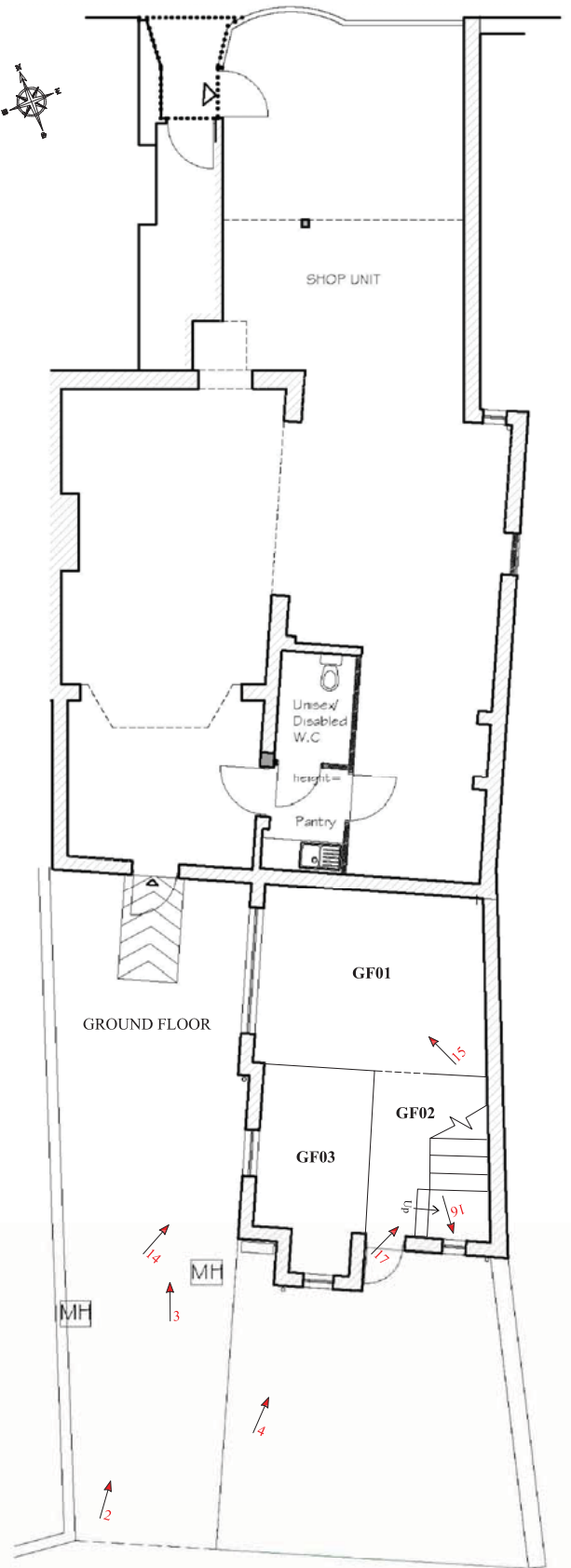


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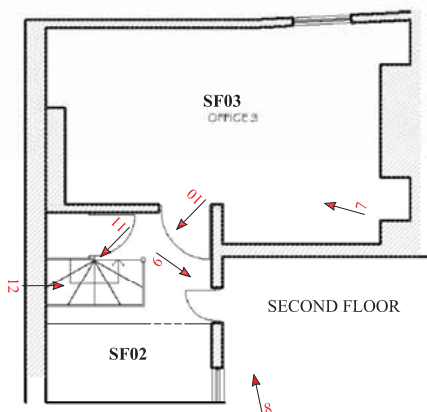
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1: 25,000 at A4



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



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 Fig. 2 Photographic locations on existing plans
 Scale 1:100 at A3

