

**Fairmile Fencing,
Gower Street, St Georges,
Telford, Shropshire:**

**An Archaeological Building
Record, 2004**

Project No. 1204

Fairmile Fencing, Gower Street, St Georges, Telford, Shropshire:

An Archaeological Building Record, 2004

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Summary

Archaeological recording of the standing structures at Fair mile Fencing, Gower Street, St Georges, Telford, Shropshire (centred on NGR SJ 705 114) was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology. The work was commissioned by Morris Homes and was carried out in advance of demolition of the buildings and redevelopment of the site. The standing structures were just one part of a wider industrial landscape. The recording and analysis revealed the building to have four main phases of construction dating from the mid-19th century onwards. The development of the standing structure was principally associated with increased necessity for office space.

1.0 Introduction

In June 2004 Birmingham Archaeology undertook the archaeological recording of a range of 19th century buildings at Fairmile Fencing, Gower Street, St Georges, Telford, Shropshire. The work was commissioned by Morris Homes and was a condition of the planning permission for demolition and redevelopment of the site. The specific purpose of the project was to record the structure, and, in so doing, gain a full understanding of the building fabric that was to be demolished, within the context of the building as a whole. This report outlines the architectural development of the building as recorded.

2.0 Site Location

The site was located on the west side of Gower Street, Telford, Shropshire (NGR SJ 705 114) on the corner opposite the turn for The Timbers (Fig. 1 & 2). It was formerly the office location for Fairmile Fencing Limited who also owned the works located to the west of the buildings involved in the survey. The land sloped gently south-north down Gower Street.

3.0 Objective

The objective of the archaeological recording was to provide a permanent record of the upstanding architecture. These enabled investigation and interpretation of the building fabric, in order to establish the structural development of the property.

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4.0 Methods

A measured phased plan of the building was produced at a scale of 1:100. This was supplemented by elevations recorded by use of Reflectorless EDM.

In addition to the drawing record, a referenced photographic survey was produced using digital, monochrome and colour transparencies. Interpretation of the building was assisted by written notes detailing the evolution of the structure into its final form.

The record included the external walls and roofs, noting the fabrics used and the forms of main architectural features such as doors and windows.

5.0 Description

The standing structure consisted of a main north-south range that ran parallel to the line of Gower Street. Extending to the rear and west was a two-storey range that continued into a long hanger-roofed two-storey wing located outside of the survey area. It was one of a series of associated industrial buildings still surviving on the west side of Gower Street. To the north another mid-late 19th century range of industrial buildings ran north-south parallel to Gower Street. To the rear of this was a number of large open works buildings late-19th to early-20th century in date associated presently with Fairmile Fencing. The area between these works consisted of a large open yard with a weighbridge office. The area to the south and east has already been extensively redeveloped and consists of modern industrial units and housing estates.

Exterior (Figures 3, 4, 5, & 6)

The single-storey front façade (Elevation 2, Figure 4, Plate 1) was built in machine-cut red-brick laid in Flemish bond. It consisted of eleven bays, five wide bays either side of a narrow central bay. These were semi-circular arched with brick heads each containing either wide semi-circular arched sash windows or narrower semi-circular arched casement windows. At the northern end of the front façade three ground-level windows provided light for the basement. The entrance was located on the southern façade (Elevation 1, Figure 3) by means of a late 20th century addition bay porch. Adjacent to this was a semi-circular arched bay. The northern façade contained three rectangular sash windows with flat heads and cement sills (Elevation 3, Figure 5, Plate 3). A central subterranean doorway with steps leading down to it was flanked by four segmental arched ground-level windows. The slate roof was pitched and hipped at either end.

The two-storey range (Elevation 1, Figure 3, Plate 2) located to the rear (west) consisted of four bays of pier and panel construction. This was a two phase construction, the ground floor was constructed of dark-red clamped brick in English Garden Wall bond.

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The first floor was of machine-cut bricks in English Garden Wall bond. Each bay contained a segmental-arched window at first floor level with replacement double-glazed frames. At ground floor four later rectangular casement windows had been added.

The pattern appeared to be mimicked on the northern façade (Elevation 3, Figure 5, Plate 4) but only two bays were visible the rest having been obscured by the extension of the main range to the rear.

The northern half of the main range (Elevation 4, Figure 6) was extended at the rear by the construction of a flat-roofed mid-to-late 20th century one-and-a-half storey structure. Its west-facing façade was plain with six evenly spaced rectangular casement windows placed high at ground floor level. Steps led down to a basement entrance to the structure at the southern end.

Interior (Figures 7 & 8)

The interior of the structure consisted of a main north-south range with a central corridor and office rooms located either side. A basement floor existed at the northern end likewise with a central corridor and rooms either side. Access was from the central corridor by a straight stairwell and the exterior through the doorway located in the northern façade. A second basement was accessed from the rear and the ground floor of the rear range. It consisted of a wide corridor with a safe-room to the north.

The rear range consisted of two-stories with mezzanine floors each with a central east-west corridor and rooms either side. It was connected to the main range by means of an open stairwell.

Phase 1 (Mid 19th Century)

Phase 1 consisted of surviving structural elements located within the ground floor of the rear range. It consisted of pier and panel construction with considerable later alteration where casement windows had been added. The interior plan appeared to retain elements of a narrow corridor B(xii) with a large open room to the south B(i). The remainder appeared to have been altered contemporary with the re-build of Phase 3.

The whole of the rear wing, including the extensive range located further to the west, appeared to retain the earlier structural elements at ground floor level.

Phase 2 (Mid-to-Late 19th Century)

The main north-south range that ran parallel to Gower Street was of a single construction phase. It consisted of a corridor that ran to the rear of the building with a series of seven offices facing the street. The block appeared to have an L-shape plan at this time period with a single room extending to the west at the northern end. The northern basement was contemporary with this phase of construction.

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Phase 3 (Late 19th Century)

The rear east-west range was extensively re-modelled at this time period. A second floor was added to the entirety of the range including the parts outside of the survey area. Further to the west the first floor was hanger-roofed but the four bays located within the survey area had a pitched roof.

The interior mezzanine floor plan was adopted in this construction phase. The first floor had a more open corridor plan with offices to either side. The open well staircase and open lobby plan of room G(xviii) were constructed within this phase allowing access to both upper and lower floors of the east-west range.

The addition of the access through the second area of cellaring was probably contemporary with this phase of construction.

The slate roof over the Phase 2 north-south range was identical to the east-west and it would appear the entire roof was replaced at this period.

Phase 4 (20th Century)

The latest phase of renovation related to the rear of the main-range. A one-and-a-half storey flat-roofed extension was constructed to the rear and west of the main range creating a symmetrical plan to the office block with a central corridor and offices either side. Three cellar rooms (B(x), B(xi) and B(xiv)) were added as part of this construction phase. A sloped passage with low entrance access to the rear within B(xi) suggested these were storage rooms. The access was later bricked-up. Surviving earth floor levels in the cellars suggested that the yard area to the rear of the street had been built-up by c.0.5m.

The strong room, B(xiv), located within the southern half of the cellar was constructed at this time period.

Minor later alteration occurred to the standing structure including the addition of further windows within the ground floor of the east-west range that suggested a change of use from storage to offices and latrines. The walls of the latrines were extensively covered with moulded tiles (B(ii), B(iii) and B(v)) and these appeared to be an early feature of the interior of the buildings. Identical tiles were located in two other cellar rooms B(vii) and B(viii). The northernmost office room was made more open plan but this was probably a very late development.

Several of the offices had been wood-paneled (G(iv), G(xi) & G(xii)) with false fireplaces containing marble panels. The grates had been removed. The interior of G(ix) and B(ix) had been sub-divided using glass panelled walls allowing light to penetrate the room whilst still providing privacy.

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6.0 Discussion

The standing structures formed part of a localised industrial landscape located on the western side of Gower Street. Their original function appeared to relate to administrative offices for the complex as a whole. The landscape to the rear of the buildings appeared to have been an industrial yard with a southern range of industrial units, to the north and west the works and the office buildings recorded in this survey enclosing the yard to the east. The ground levels had been altered as part of the industrial development of the area and the natural slope of the land had been removed.

The standing structures had a four phase development. Initially a long single-storey east-west range ran perpendicular to Gower Street. The second phase involved the addition of a single-storey office block that ran along the line of Gower Street. It is unclear whether this replaced earlier structures in the same location. The third phase of construction involved the whole-scale alteration of the east-west range. It was converted to two stories along the whole range, hanger-roofed at the western end and the part that constituted the office had a pitched roof. Phase four was a relatively late alteration to the north-south range involving an extension to the rear of the block creating a symmetrical plan with offices either side of a central corridor. Each phase of development appeared to have been associated with an increased provision of office space, presumably necessitated by the increased economic activity of the complex as a whole.

The buildings were of limited architectural interest. However, they represented a remnant of the industrial landscape that previously dominated the localised area.

7.0 Acknowledgements

This report was written by Chris Hewitson and edited by Malcolm Hislop who also managed the project. Chris Hewitson and Ioannis Altsizogolou carried out the site-based recording. The illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds.

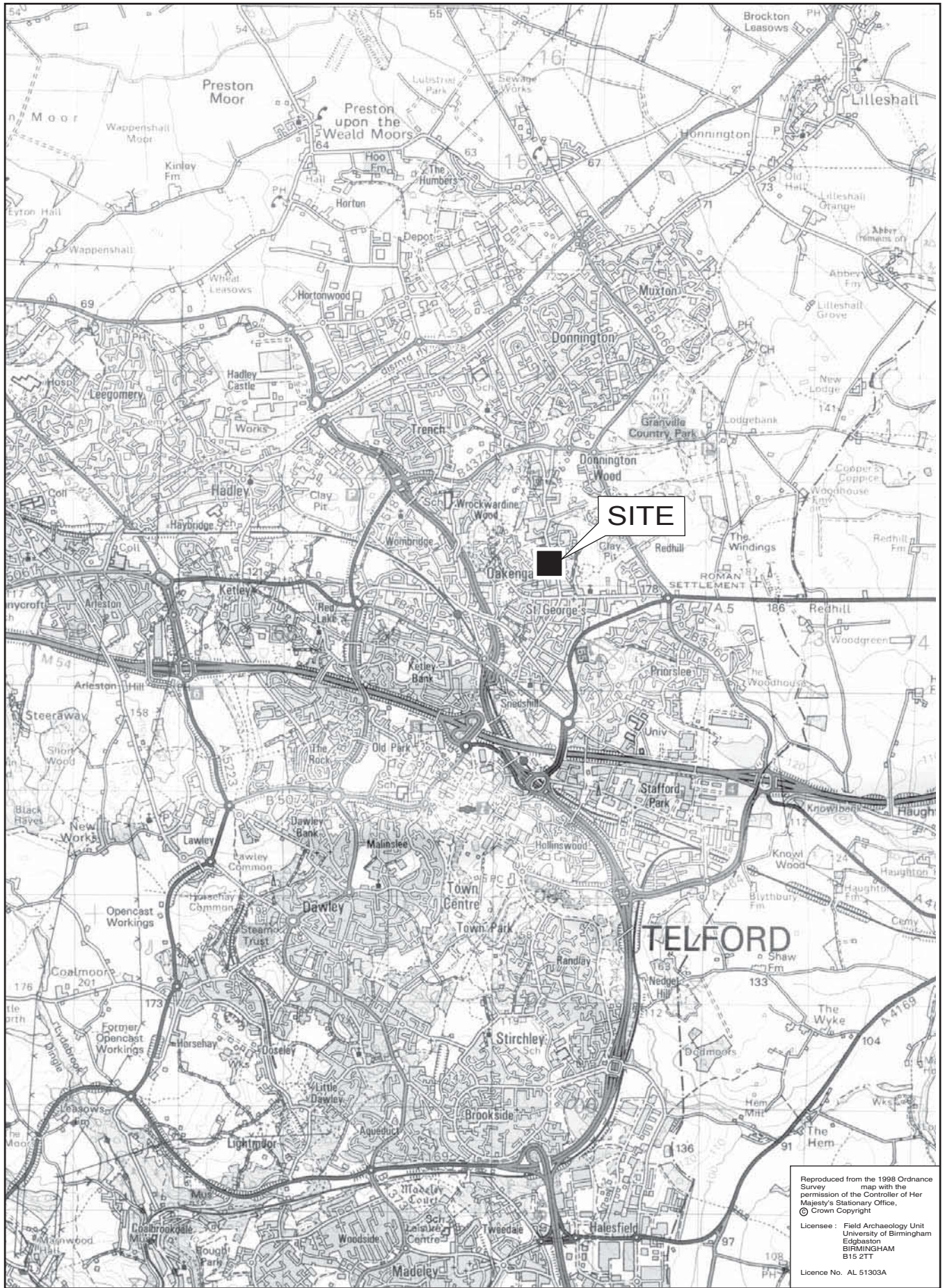


Fig.1

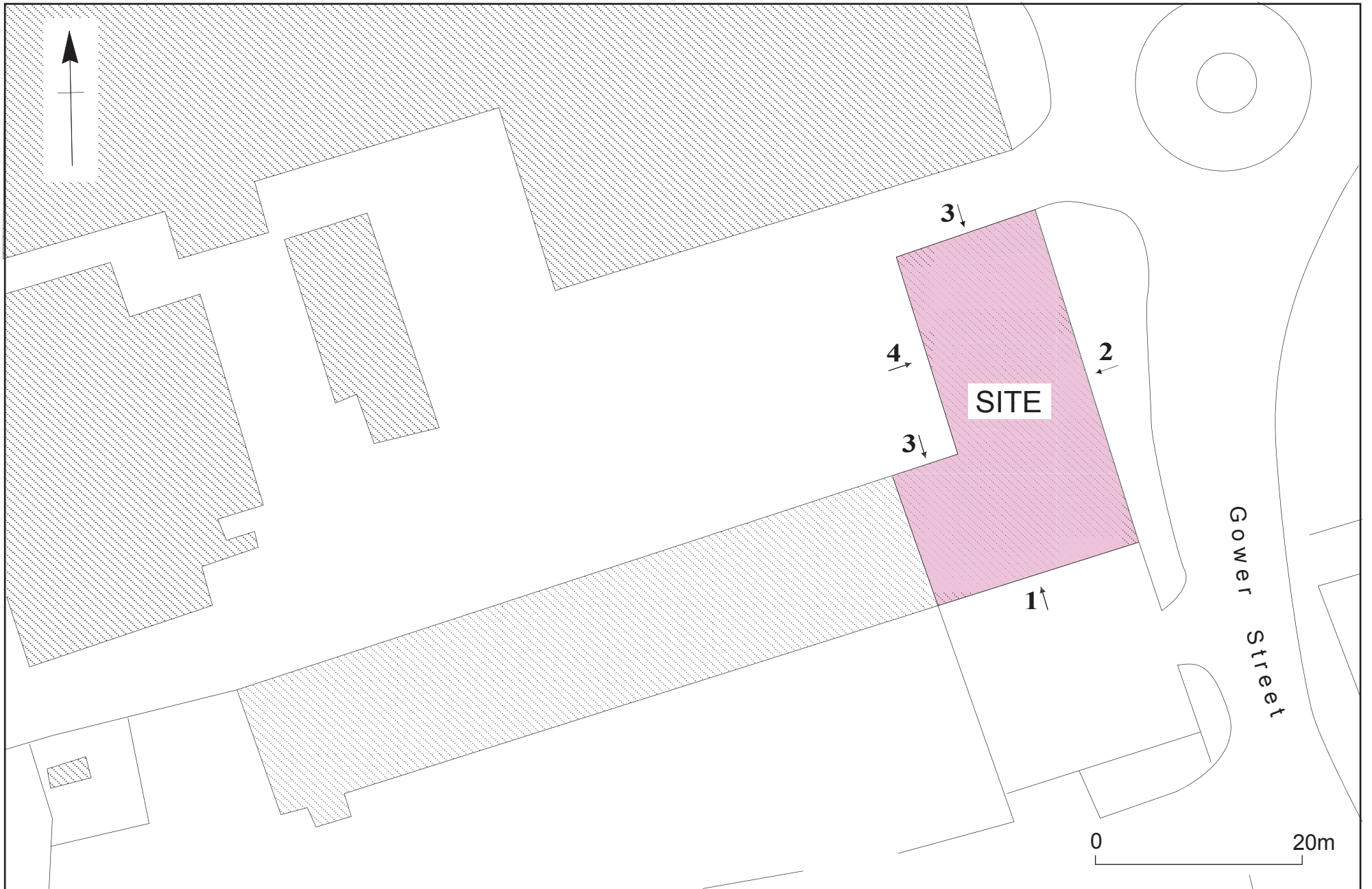


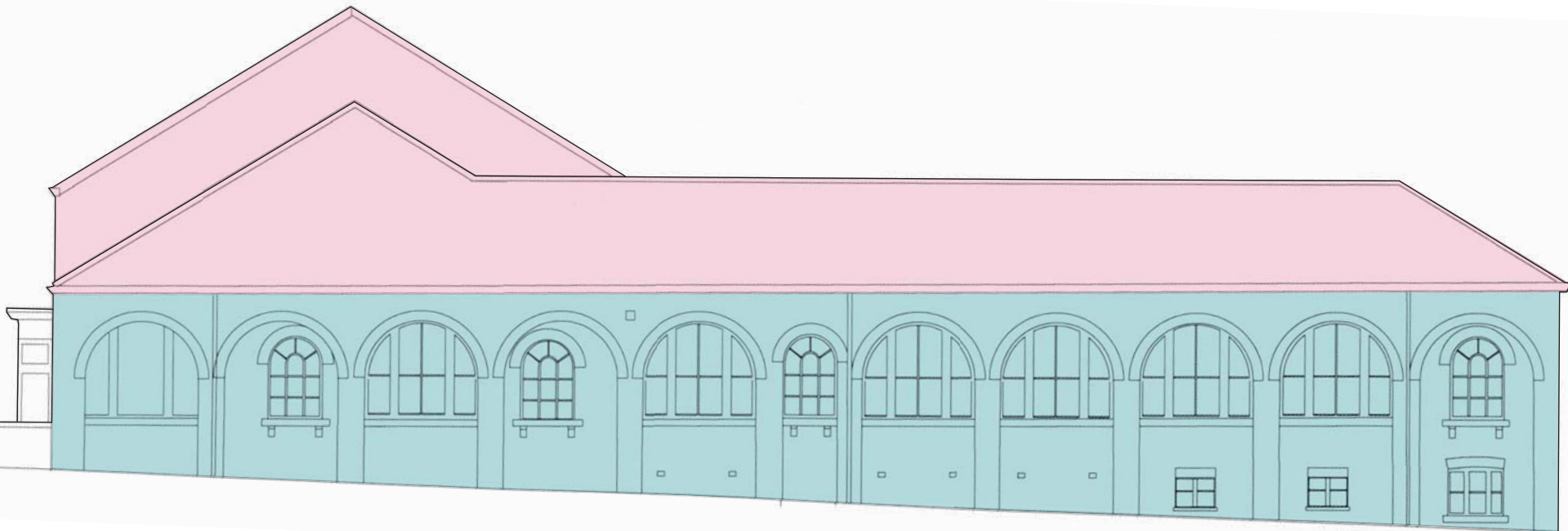
Fig.2

Elevation 1



Fig.3

Elevation 2



Phase 2

Phase 3

0 10m

Fig.4

Elevation 3



Phase 1



Phase 3



Phase 2



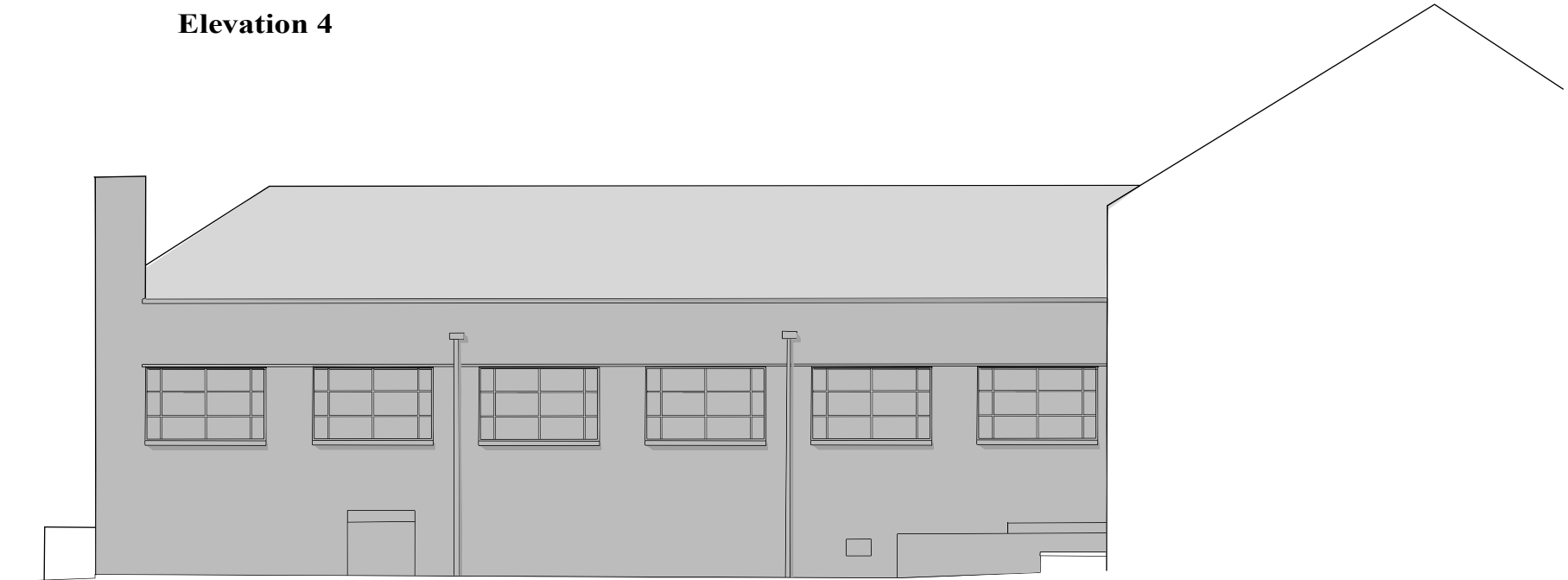
Phase 4

0

10m

Fig.5

Elevation 4



0 10m

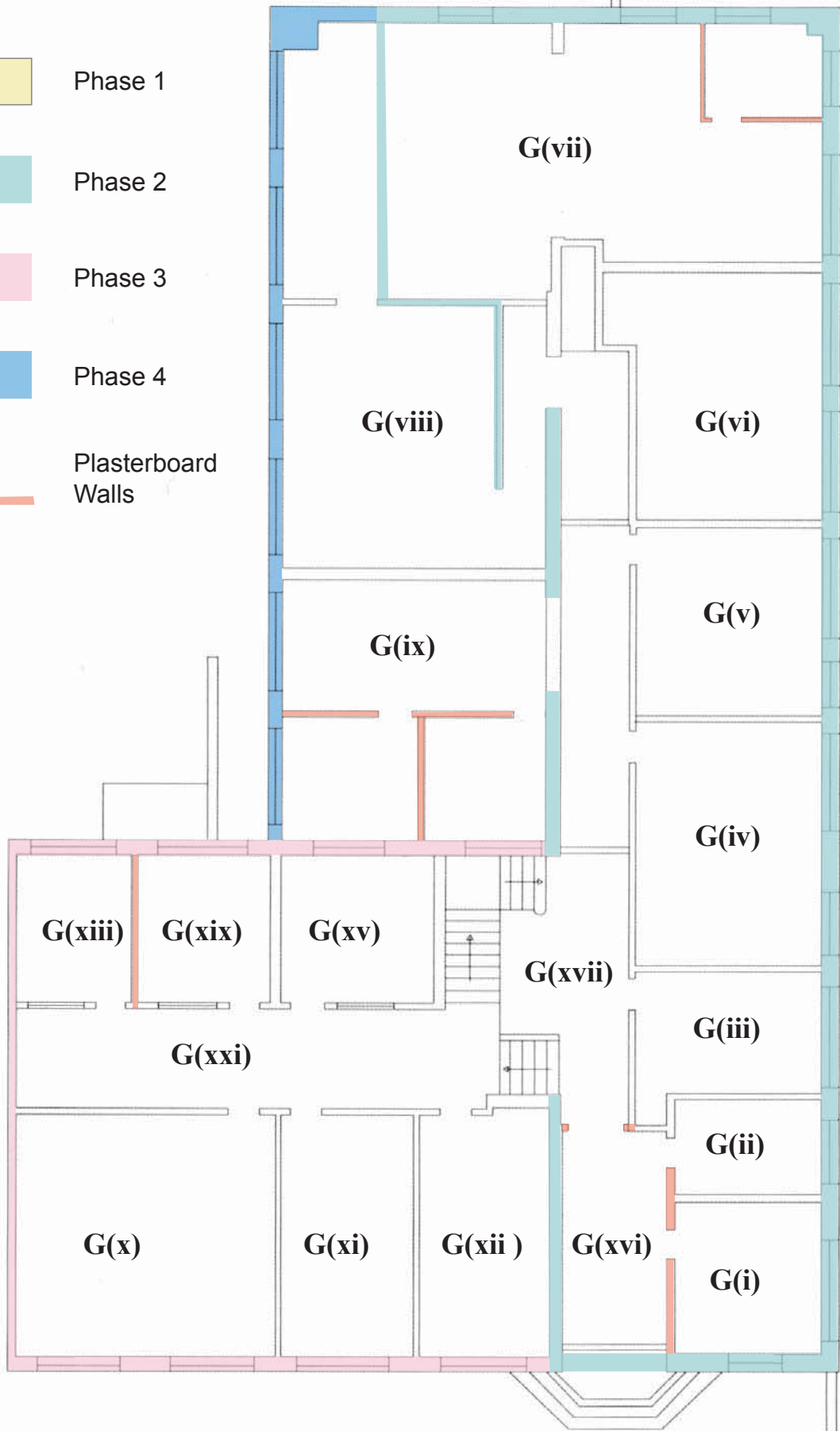
Phase 3

Phase 4

Fig.6

Ground Floor Plan

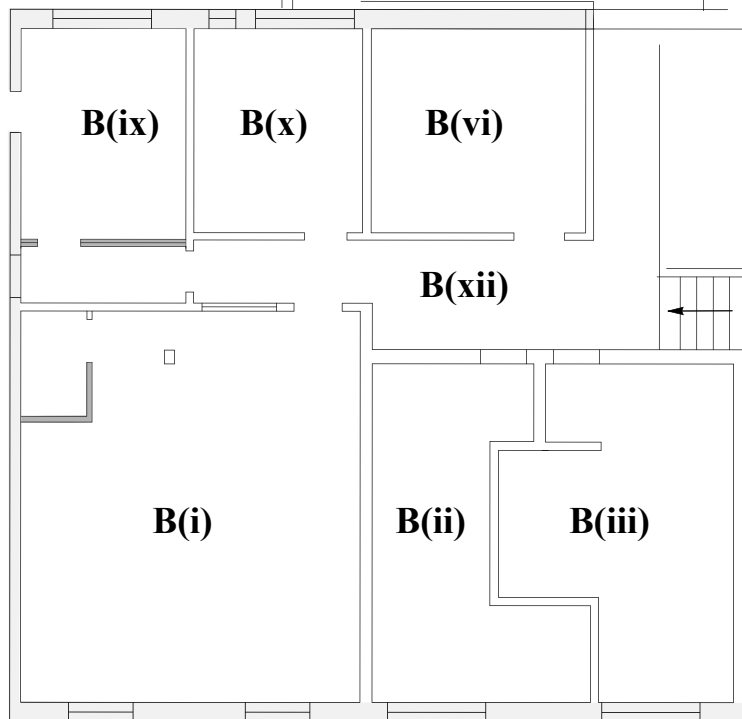
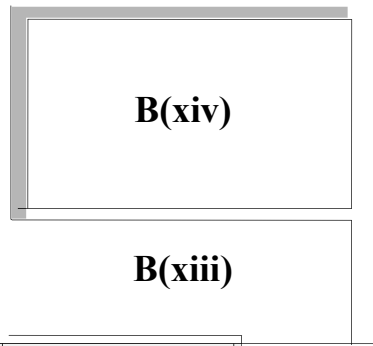
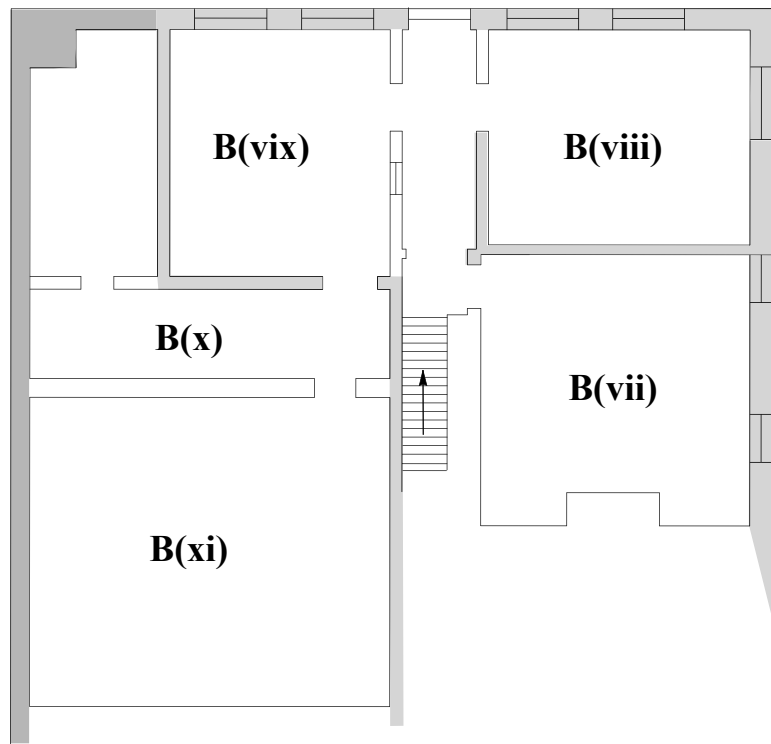
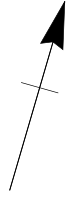
- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3
- Phase 4
- Plasterboard Walls







0 10m

Fig.7

Basement Plan



-  Phase 1
-  Phase 2
-  Phase 3
-  Plasterboard Walls

0 10m

Fig.8



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4