

Building recording at The Former Bean Car Offices, Sedgley Road, Coseley, Dudley



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Tim Cornah

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

Building recording was required to meet a planning condition relating to the redevelopment the former Bean Car offices, Sedgley Road, Coseley, Dudley.

The planning condition specified that the building should be recorded and to Historic England specified standards. This required photographing the exterior and interior of the building and annotating existing survey drawings. This produced an archive of the building before any changes were made.

An element of historical research and synthesis was also a condition planning approval. Digitised historic mapping and other online sources were considered.

Analysis of the building was based upon the recorded fabric and documentary research. The development of the building was reconstructed and illustrated on phased ground plans and elevations. These have been reproduced at the end of the report along with relevant photographs.

The former offices of the Bean car company remain in a largely unaltered state. The building is of concrete construction and though largely a very functional building, it retains a number of architectural details in an art deco style, as was prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. The principle spaces of the building internally were large and open plan, with one area as a possible show room, and the others probably as offices. Few changes to the building were made in the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries, though the addition of numerous small office divisions have partially obscured its character internally.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Recording of a historic building was undertaken at the former Bean Car offices, Sedgley Road, Coseley, Dudley (NGR SO 94707 92528). It was commissioned by Louise Robinson of BWB Consulting Limited, whose client intends the demolition /alteration of the building. A planning application has been submitted to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (reference number P15/1289).

The building is an undesignated heritage asset, within the terms used by the *National Planning Policy Framework*. The building is also registered with the Sights and Monuments Record (Ref 12805) and is locally listed.

The project conforms to a specification for building recording (BWB Consulting 2017), which has been approved by the curator at Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (ClfA 2014).

2 Aims

The objectives of the works are to:

- to provide a visual record of the former Bean offices prior to demolition/ alteration;
- to provide a publically accessible assessment report; and
- to produce a fully integrated archive suitable for long-term storage.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Timothy Cornah (BA (hons.), MSc) who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (hons.); MSc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- 1885 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560
- 1904 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560
- 1921 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560
- 1938 Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560
- 1951 Ordnance Survey Map 1:2500

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by BWB Consulting (BWB Consulting 2017). Fieldwork was undertaken on 3rd of May 2017.

Building recording consisted of a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the buildings, analysis of their development and annotation of existing survey drawings. All photographs were taken with photographic scales visible in each shot where possible. The photographic survey was carried out with a Sony α350 digital SLR camera. All photographs were recorded on a pro-forma Photographic Record Sheet. Annotation of existing ground plans complemented the photographic record

The project conformed to the specification for a level 2 survey as defined in the Historic England document *Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016).

A level 2 record is a descriptive record. This is a visual record supplemented by the minimum of information needed to identify the building's location, age and type. The record will produce enough information to produce conclusions about the buildings development and use.

The record will include the following elements of survey:

Photography

- General view or views of the building in its wider setting or landscape
- External appearance of the building, using oblique and right angle shots
- Overall appearance of the principal rooms and circulation areas

Drawings

- Roughly dimensioned sketched plan, section, or elevation
- Measured plans as existing
- Measured drawings recording the form or location of other significant detail (when required)
- Measured cross-sections, long sections or elevational sections illustrating the vertical relationships within the building (when required)
- Measured drawings showing the form of any architectural decoration (when required)
- Measured elevations (when required)

Written account

- A summary of the building's form, function, date and sequence of development, including builders, architects, owners or patrons names where known

3.5 Building analysis

Analysis of the building was based on the study of the photographic record and annotated drawings. It was also informed by the documentary sources listed above. This allowed plans to be drawn up showing the structural development of the building.

The building as recorded is depicted in Plates 1-38. A phase plan has been reproduced as Figure 2.

3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. This building, like all historic structures, has been subject to changes in use and form as

well as having coverings such as plaster added which obscure the original fabric. It is therefore likely that some features remained obscured.

4 Context

The building is located on the northern side of the Sedgley Road, about 1km north of the centre of Tipton and about 2km to the north of the centre of Dudley in an area of conurbation that was built in the 19th century but is largely 20th century in character.

The background to the site is given in the Design and Access Statement (Costorphine and Wright 2015). This states that prior to the 19th Century there were extensive coal workings on the site. New iron-making techniques were developed here and the introduction of canals and railways to the area created a hub in the Black Country for industries working with metals.

The site has been used for manufacturing and industry since the late 19th Century when A. Harper, Sons and Bean, which had been established in 1826 in Dudley set up a foundry there. From 1919 Harper, Sons and Bean moved into car production making Perry Bean cars, for which they are most famous.

Following poor car sales the company went into voluntary liquidation in 1931 and was largely bought up and restructured by Hadfields, being re-launched in 1933 as Beans Industries producing castings for the motor industry.

The business became profitable again, and in 1937 the company won the prestigious contract to build George Eyston's world land speed record breaking car 'Thunderbolt', a 7-ton behemoth which broke the land speed record. During World War 2 the company produced lorry engines and parts, and after the war continued to produce car parts, becoming part of British Leyland in 1960.

Beans Engineering – as it became known – never managed to relive its heyday, and the Beans Foundry, then under the name Ferrotech closed down in 2005. The foundry building was demolished in 2008.

5 The building

5.1 Building description

The building is aligned along and faces onto Sedgley Road. It currently comprises a two storey long rectangular structure with a flat roof and rectangular windows around the building on the both floors. The roadside elevation has a central doorway complete with art deco style details, with two further windows on the elevation continuing the same style. The building is constructed using concrete blocks and moulded concrete. Internally its consisted of a series of largely open plan spaces, though most of these have since been divided into smaller offices.

5.2 Historical information

The building is locally listed and is described within the SMR as follows:

Built by the Bean Manufacturing Company in the 1920's. When they closed down it was sold to the Tipton Urban District Council in 1934 as a Council House, which opened on the 7th March 1935. Eventually they sold it in 1966 during the re-organisation of local authorities to become an annex to the Dudley Technical College

A point of curiosity remains in that the building was not illustrated on the 1938 Ordnance survey map of the area. The likely explanation for this is that it was deliberately omitted for military reasons. It is first shown on the map of 1951, with a significant extension on its southern side. This no longer remained at the time of recording.

5.3 Building development

Three phases were identified during the investigation of the building which are described as follows:-

- Phase 1: 1920s to 1934
- Phase 2: Mid 20th century
- Phase 3: Late 20th and 21st century

5.4 Phase 1: 1920s to 1934

The main and earliest phase of the building is a long rectangular structure fronting onto Sedgley Road West (*Plate 1* to *Plate 4*). It is a concrete block constructed building with string courses above both the ground and first floor rectangular windows. The central doorway facing onto the road (*Plate 5*) is of an art deco style, along with the decorative details of two further flanking windows (*Plate 6*) above the central doorway is a low pediment which originally displayed the name of the Bean Company. This has been removed and the pediment extended. One piece of external railing survives (*Plate 7*) and also displays a broadly art deco cubist style.

The east and west ends of the buildings had an entrance each (*Plate 8* and *Plate 9*) with another central entrance in the north facing elevation (*Plate 10*). A further entrance also existed in the position of a later sliding door, with a block above which is likely to have had the company name or other information (*Plate 11*).

The central entrance on the south side led into an entrance vestibule with stairs leading to the first floor behind (*Plate 11* to *Plate 14*). The staircase railing maintained the art deco style. To the east of the entrance area, the building was split up into at least three rooms. One of the room divisions, plotted as a dashed line on Figure 2, was later removed, but its presence is indicated by the difference in architrave mouldings (*Plate 15* and *Plate 16*). At the east end was a former entrance area (*Plate 17*) and to the south was one further large room, later split into offices (*Plate 18* and *Plate 19*). It is likely that the southern room at this point was originally an open plan office, with the northern rooms being a publicly accessed showroom, as suggested by the architrave details which were not visible in any of the rest of the building.

In the north-west corner of the ground floor was a further large room (*Plate 20* and *Plate 21*), with three further likely office spaces to the south of this (*Plate 22* to *Plate 24*). A staircase existed in the position of the remaining kitchen and toilet, leading to the first floor (*Plate 23* and *Plate 25*).

The remaining central staircase led to a first floor landing (*Plate 26* and *Plate 27*). To the east of this was a single large room (*Plate 28* and *Plate 29*) which was originally open on the southern side of the central staircase and led to a further open plan room on its western side. This was later split into offices and a kitchen (*Plate 30* to *Plate 33*). The former staircase reached the first floor at the point of one of the remaining toilets (*Plate 34*).

5.5 Phase 2 Mid 20th century

One of the Phase 1 stair wells was removed and a new one added at the western end of the building (*Plate 35*). This led from the ground floor and accessed onto the roof. A flat roofed brick lift shaft between the first and second floors was added to the north-west corner of the building and a further external door added next to this (*Plate 36*). This was not accessed internally.

5.6 Phase 3 Late 20th and 21st century

During this phase, two further small single storey brick structures were added on the northern side of the building (*Plate 37* and *Plate 38*). Numerous light stud divisions were added, probably in the early 21st century in order to create smaller offices. False ceilings were added throughout much of the building at this time. It is likely that there were other earlier smaller divisions which were removed or obscured at this time.

6 Discussion

The building generally considered to have been built in the 1920s by the Bean Manufacturing Company though did not long remain in their ownership, having been sold to Tipton Urban District Council in 1934 and used as a Council House. After 1966 it was used as part of Dudley Technical College.

The building retained much of its original character. Whilst being distinctly functional, its decorative theme was consistent with the art deco style predominant in the 1920s and into the 1930s. Internally it was split into large rooms, with that in the north-east corner on the ground floor possibly having been a show room, and the other large rooms on both floors likely to have been used as offices. In the south-west area of the ground floor, there were further smaller rooms, with a later removed staircase to the first floor.

Few significant changes were made to the building in the second half of the 20th century, with one original internal wall removed only. The major change to the internal character of the building came with the addition of numerous small office divisions in the later 20th and early 21st centuries.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

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8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, Louise Robinson and Jim MacQueen of BWB Consulting and Jayne Pilkington of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.

9 Bibliography

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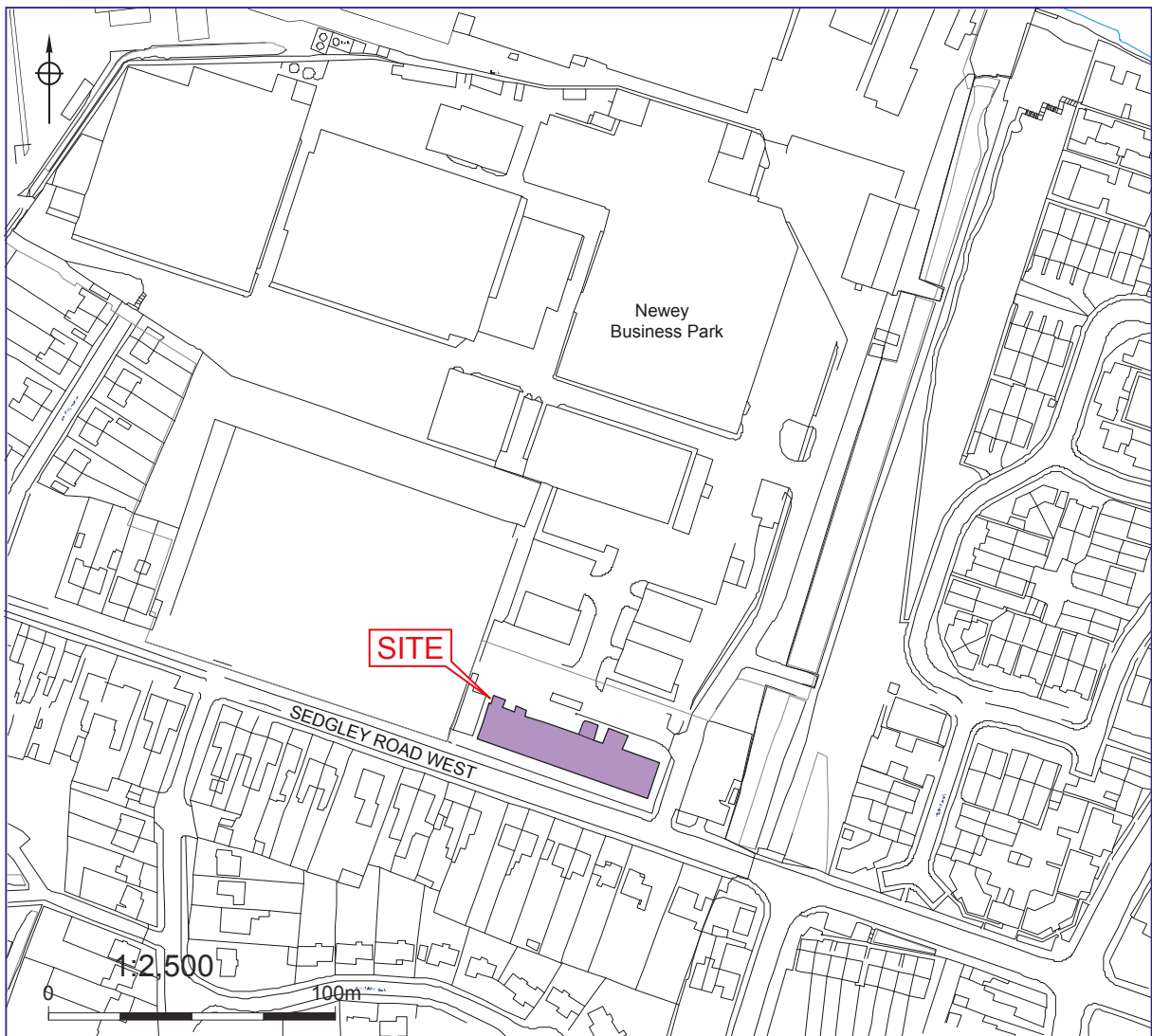
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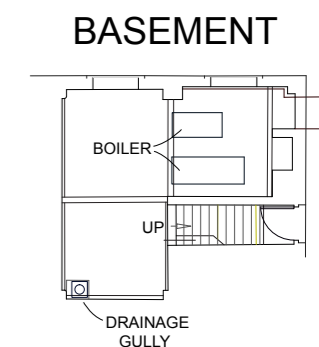
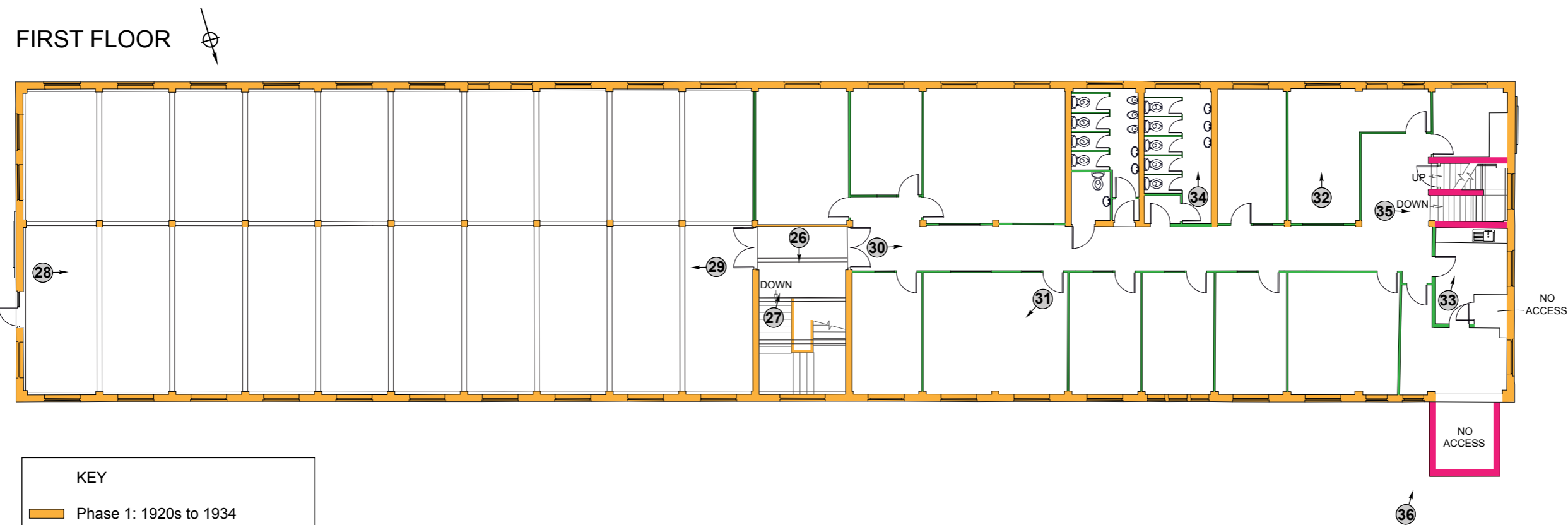
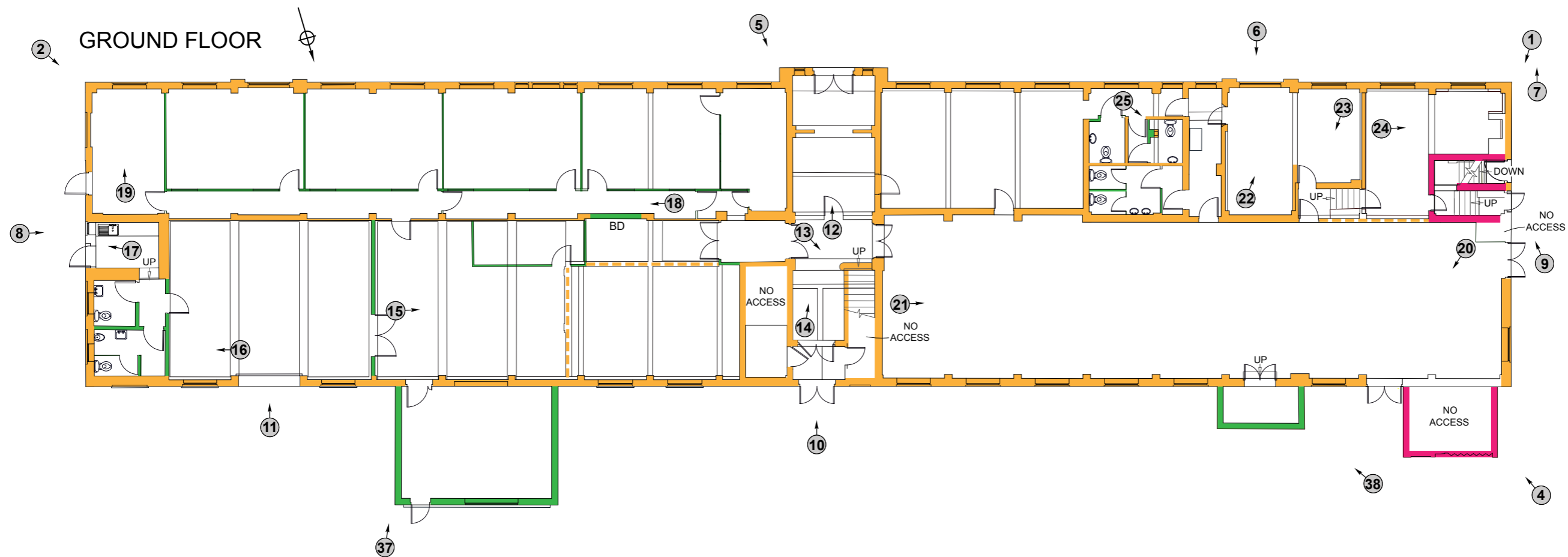
Figures



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Location of the site

Figure 1



KEY	
	Phase 1: 1920s to 1934
	Phase 2: Mid 20th century
	Phase 3: Late 20th to 21st century
BD	Blocked door



Phased Ground floor and First Floor plans with photolocations (based upon Bradley-Mason Drg No 1013268(1)-E01)

Figure 2

Plates



Plate 1 Phase 1 building, looking north-east, 2m scale



Plate 2 Phase 1 building, looking north-west, 2m scale



Plate 3 Phase 1 building, looking south-west, 2m scale



Plate 4 Phase 1 building, looking south-east, 2m scale



Plate 5 Phase 1 building, looking north, 2m scale

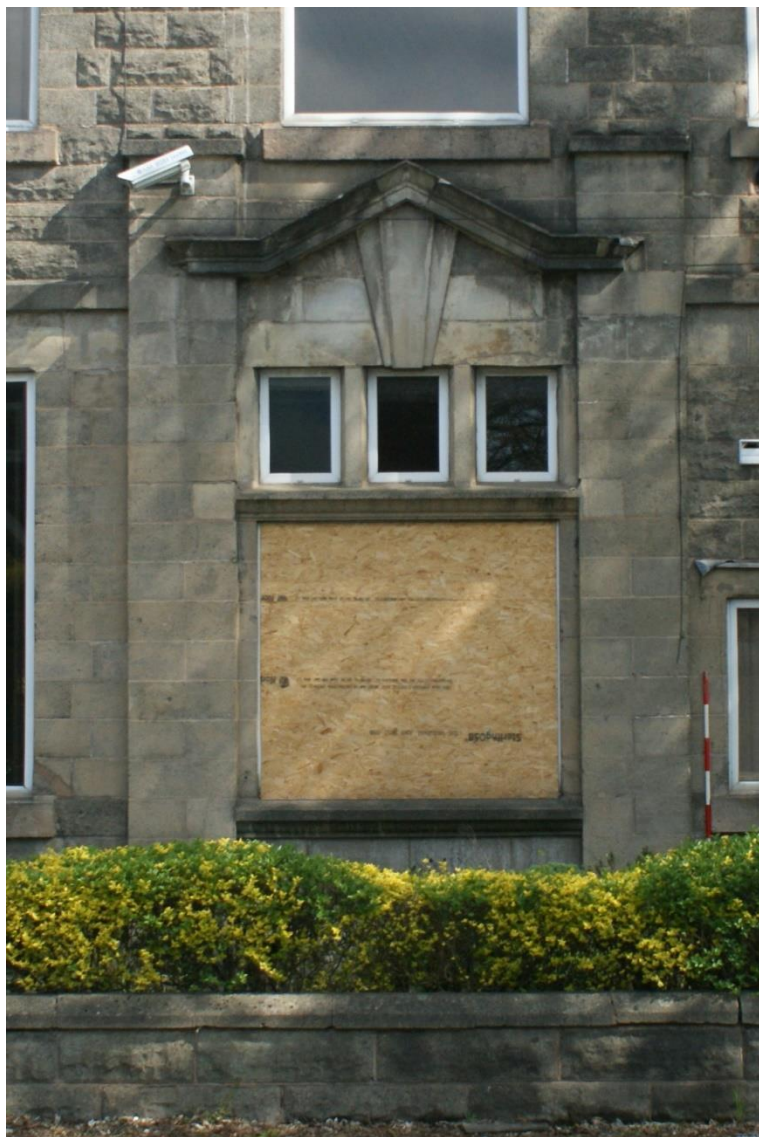


Plate 6 Phase 1 building, looking north, 2m scale



Plate 7 Phase 1 railing, looking south, 1m scale



Plate 8 Phase 1 building, looking west, 2m scale



Plate 9 Phase 1 building, looking south-east



Plate 10 Phase 1 building, looking south, 2m scale



Plate 11 Phase 1 building, looking south, 2m scale



Plate 12 Phase 1 building, looking south, 2m scale



Plate 13 Phase 1 building, looking north-west, 2m scale



Plate 14 Phase 1 building, looking south, 2m scale



Plate 15 Phase 1 building, looking west, 2m scale



Plate 16 Phase 1 building, looking east



Plate 17 Phase 1 building, looking east, 2m scale



Plate 18 Phase 1 building, looking east, 2m scale



Plate 19 Phase 1 building, looking south, 2m scale



Plate 20 Phase 1 building, looking north-east, 2m scale



Plate 21 Phase 1 building, looking west, 2m scale



Plate 22 Phase 1 building, looking south-west, 2m scale



Plate 23 Phase 1 building, looking west, 2m scale

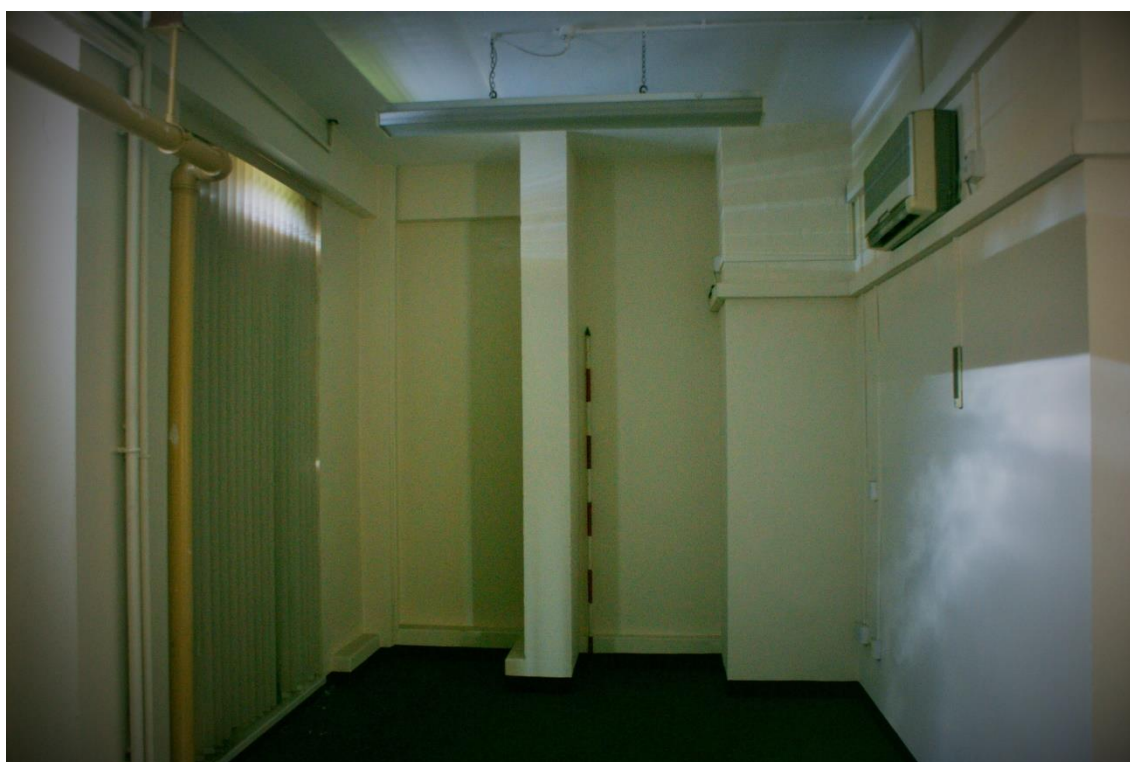


Plate 24 Phase 1 building, looking west, 2m scale



Plate 25 Phase 1 building, looking north-west, 2m scale



Plate 26 Phase 1 building, looking north, 2m scale



Plate 27 Phase 1 building, looking south-west, 2m scale



Plate 28 Phase 1 building, looking west, 2m scale



Plate 29 Phase 1 building, looking east, 2m scale



Plate 30 Phase 1 building, looking west, 2m scale



Plate 31 Phase 1 building, looking north-east, 2m scale



Plate 32 Phase 1 building, looking south, 2m scale



Plate 33 Phase 1 building, looking south-west, 2m scale



Plate 34 Phase 1 building, looking south, 2m scale

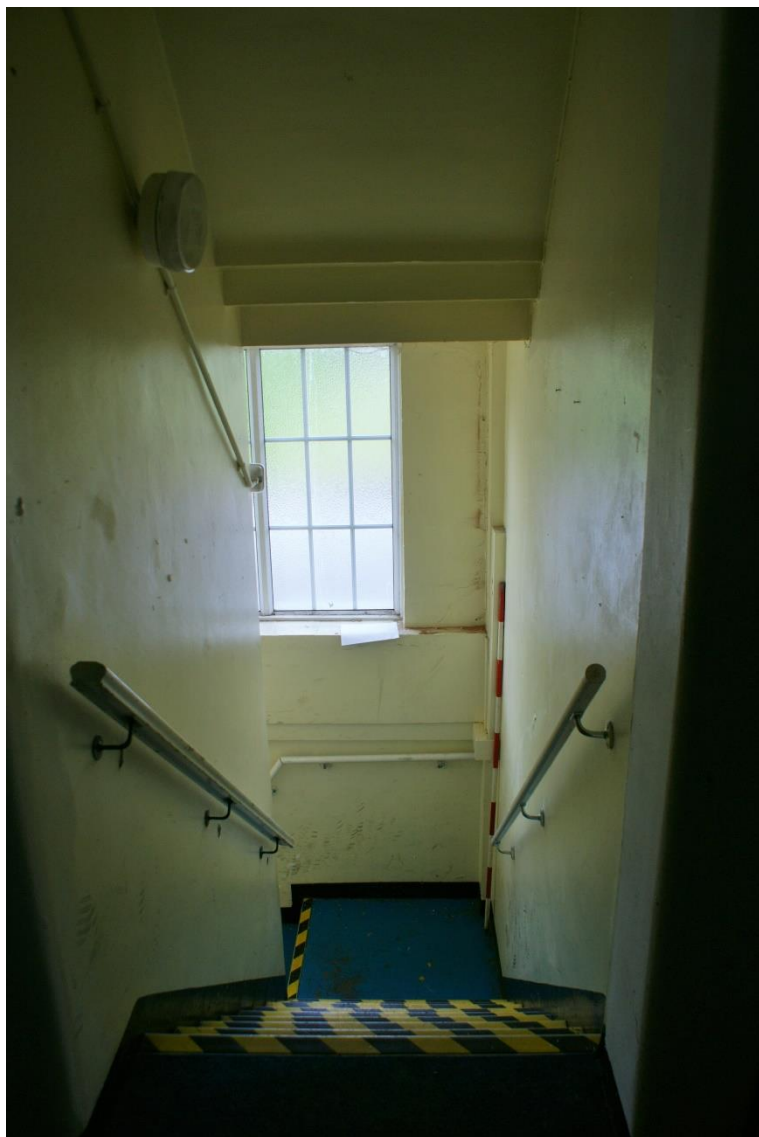


Plate 35 Phase 2 stairwell, looking west, 2m scale



Plate 36 Phase 2 lift, looking south-west, 2m scale



Plate 37 Phase 3 building, looking south-west, 2m scale



Plate 38 Phase 3 building, looking south-east, 2m scale

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
- 4 Photographic records AS3
- 286 Digital photographs
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
- 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Museum Collection Centre
25 Dollman Street
Nechells
Birmingham
B7 4RQ