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MANCHESTER

1967 - 2017 50 YEARS

Historic Building Investigation

Greysfield,
Ferma Lane,
Great Barrow,
Cheshire West and
Chester

Client:
Elegant Homes NW Ltd

Planning Ref:
15/02523/FUL

Technical Report:
Lewis Stitt

Report No:
SA/2017/19



Site Location: Greysfield, Ferma Lane, Great Barrow, Chester

NGR: Centred at NGR 346733 368614

Internal Ref: SA/2017/19

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Contents

Summary	1
1. Introduction	2
2. The Setting	3
3. Historical Background	4
4. Historic Building Investigation.....	8
5. Conclusion	27
Sources	28
Archive and Acknowledgments	29
Appendix 1: Figures.....	30

Summary

Elegant Homes NW Ltd has obtained planning consent (Planning Ref 15/02523/FUL) to convert Greysfield, a former residential home on Ferma Lane in Great Barrow, Cheshire West and Chester (centred NGR 346733 368614). The development proposals allow for the conversion of the building into eight residential apartments, coupled with the erection of a new extension to the rear and associated works.

Greysfield was built between 1875 and 1883 as a large domestic villa, and was used until recently as a residential care home. It is not afforded statutory protection as a listed building, although it does lie within the Great Barrow Conservation Area, and is considered to a non-designated heritage assets of local significance. Consequently, in the light of advice provided by the district Conservation Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council attached a condition (N^o 17) to planning consent that required for an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation to be undertaken in advance of construction work.

This programme of work was undertaken by Salford Archaeology in February 2017, and comprised an historic building investigation that was commensurate with an Historic England Level I-type survey.

The historic building investigation has enabled a basic record of Greyfields and its grounds to be compiled. This work confirmed that the interior of the building was subject to comprehensive refurbishment during its conversion to a residential care home, with the resultant loss of historic fixtures and fittings, especially on the upper floor where very few features of historic interest survive *in-situ*. The ground floor was similarly subject to refurbishment, although several fireplaces that appear to be original survive in place. However, these features will be retained *in-situ* as part of the development proposals, and the overall impact of the proposed development on the historic integrity of the building is considered to be negligible.

1. Introduction

1.1 Planning Background

Elegant Homes NW Ltd has obtained planning consent (Planning Ref 15/02523/FUL) to convert Greysfield, a former villa residence on Ferma Lane in Great Barrow, Cheshire West and Chester. The development proposals allow for the conversion of the building into eight residential apartments, coupled with an extension to the rear and associated works. A new access road off Ferma Lane will also be created, together with new access onto an existing unadopted road to the east.

The site comprises a large villa that was built between 1875 and 1883, and was converted subsequently into a residential care home. The building lies within the Great Barrow Conservation Area, and is considered to be a non-designated heritage assets of local significance, although it is of insufficient architectural merit to warrant statutory protection as a listed building. Nevertheless, in order to secure archaeological interests, Cheshire West and Chester Council attached a condition (Nº 17) to planning consent that allowed for an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation to be undertaken in advance of development, in accordance with Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The wording of the condition stated:

‘Prior to the commencement of construction, full details of a programme of building and grounds recording (including an inventory of all surviving historic features in the building/within the site) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The subsequent buildings and grounds recording and analysis shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The work shall be completed in strict accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To record the setting and special architectural and historical integrity of the building.’

In order to fulfil the requirements of this planning condition, Elegant Homes NW Ltd commission Salford Archaeology to undertake the required scheme of archaeological investigation. This work comprised an historic building investigation, commensurate with an Historic England Level I-type survey, which focused on identifying any historic features, fixtures and fittings that survived within the building. The historic building investigation was carried out in February 2017.

2. The Setting

2.1 Location

The site (centred NGR 346733 368614) lies in Great Barrow, situated approximately 7km to the north-east of Chester city centre. Greysfield lies within the Great Barrow Conservation Area, and is bounded to the west and south by Ferma Lane and to the east by Barrow Lane (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Recent aerial view across the study area, showing the proposed development area boundary

2.2 Geology

Great Barrow lies on an area of geology of Chester Pebble Bed Formation (BGS). The overlaying superficial geology consists of Till, Devensian- Diamicton which was formed in the Quaternary Period.

3. Historical Background

3.1 Background to Greysfield

Greysfield lies within the historic settlement of Great Barrow, the first documented record of which occurs in a charter of Edgar, King of Mercia, in the 958 AD. At that date, Great Barrow was a village on the outskirts of Delamere Forest, then known as the Forest of Mara.

The Domesday Survey of 1086 refers to Barrow as 'waste', indicating an area of negligible agricultural value. It is likely that the first church in Barrow was a chantry, endowed for the reading of prayers and masses for the souls of its benefactors, and operated as a chapel under the supervision of Tarvin church. Around 1349 Barrow became a 'free chapel' and, in 1364, was described as the 'chapel of the manor'. In 1531 it was described as 'the parish church, free chapel or chantry of Barrow' and it became an independent church with parish and parsonage during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603). The manor passed to the Savage family of Clifton (near present day Runcorn) through the marriage of Maud de Swynnerton to Sir John Savage in 1409. The Savage family male line failed in 1714 and, after passing through female relatives, the manor and patronage passed through marriage to the Cholmondeley family in 1784, where it remained until 1919, when a large part of the Cholmondeley estate in Barrow was parcelled up and sold.

The site occupied by Greysfield lies some 375m to the north-west of the church in Great Barrow, and the historic core of the settlement, as shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (Plate 2).



Plate 2: Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1875, with arrow marking the site of Greysfield

Greysfield was built between 1875 and 1883 as a villa residence to the design of Scottish architect WH Kelly (Plate 3). The fabric of this period property comprises of a combination of sandstone and brick, with timber-framed upper storeys, imparting a strong and distinctive Cheshire character. It has been subject to some twentieth-century additions, remodelling and refurbishment as a care home, but nevertheless retains its historic layout.

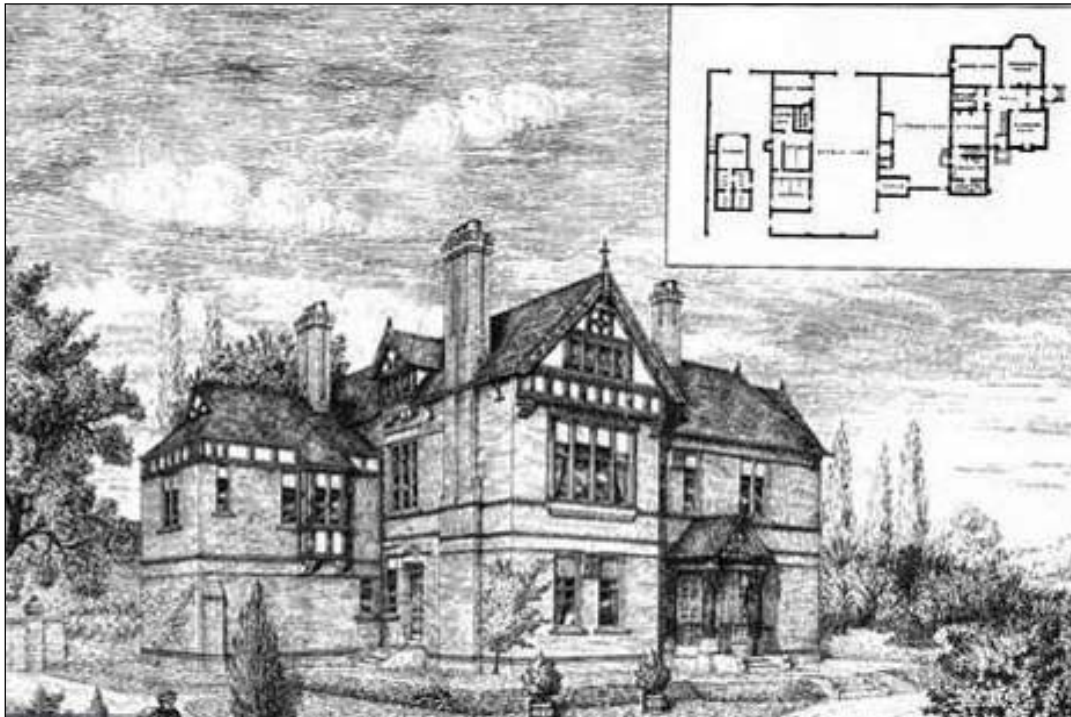


Plate 3: An illustration of Greysfield printed in 'The Architect' in March 1883

The original layout of the building is captured on the Ordnance Survey map of 1899, which provides the earliest known plan of the site as built. Annotated as 'Grayfield', this shows the main villa to have had a square-shaped plan, with a short wing attached to the north-western corner (Plate 4). Several small outbuildings are shown immediately to the north, with larger outbuildings further to the north. By 1910, several small extensions had been added to the northern elevation of Greyfields, as shown on the Ordnance Survey map published in that year (Plate 5). Further alterations, including selective demolition, was undertaken subsequently, culminating in the layout of the building captured on the Ordnance Survey map of 1965 (Plate 6).

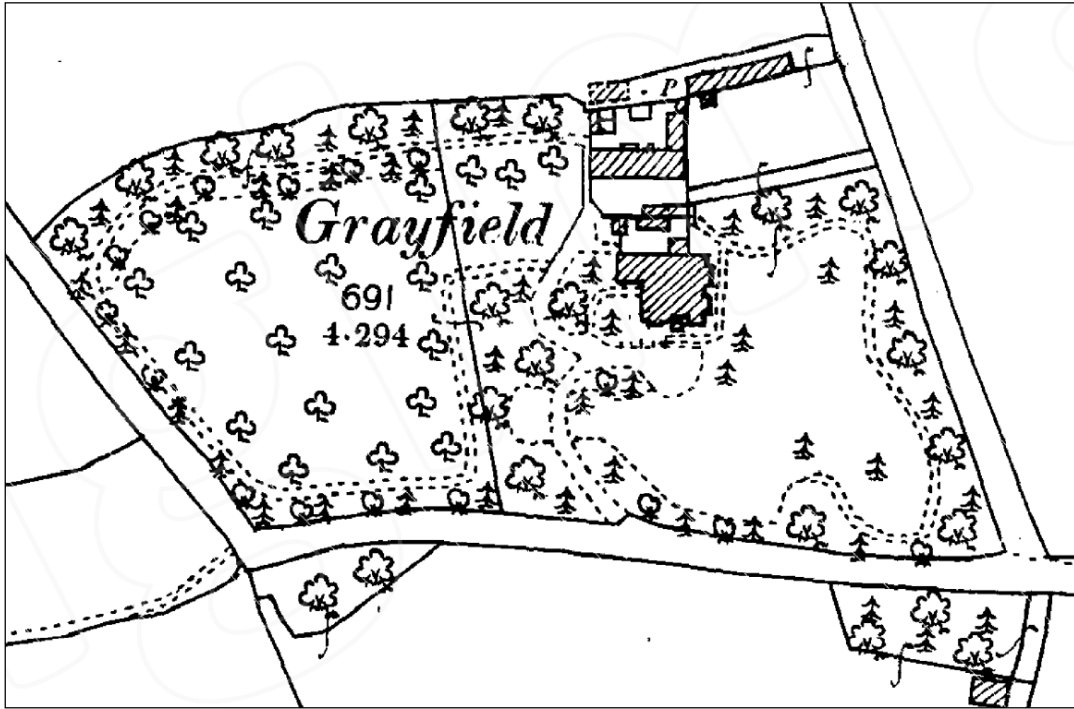


Plate 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1899

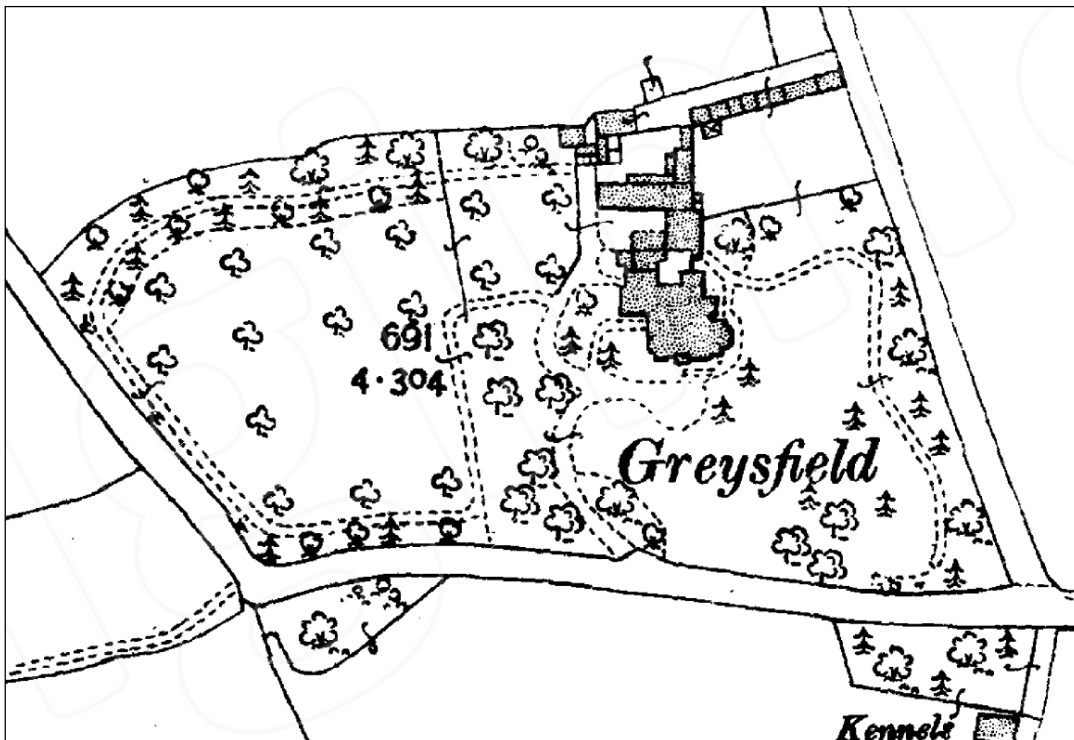


Plate 5: Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1910

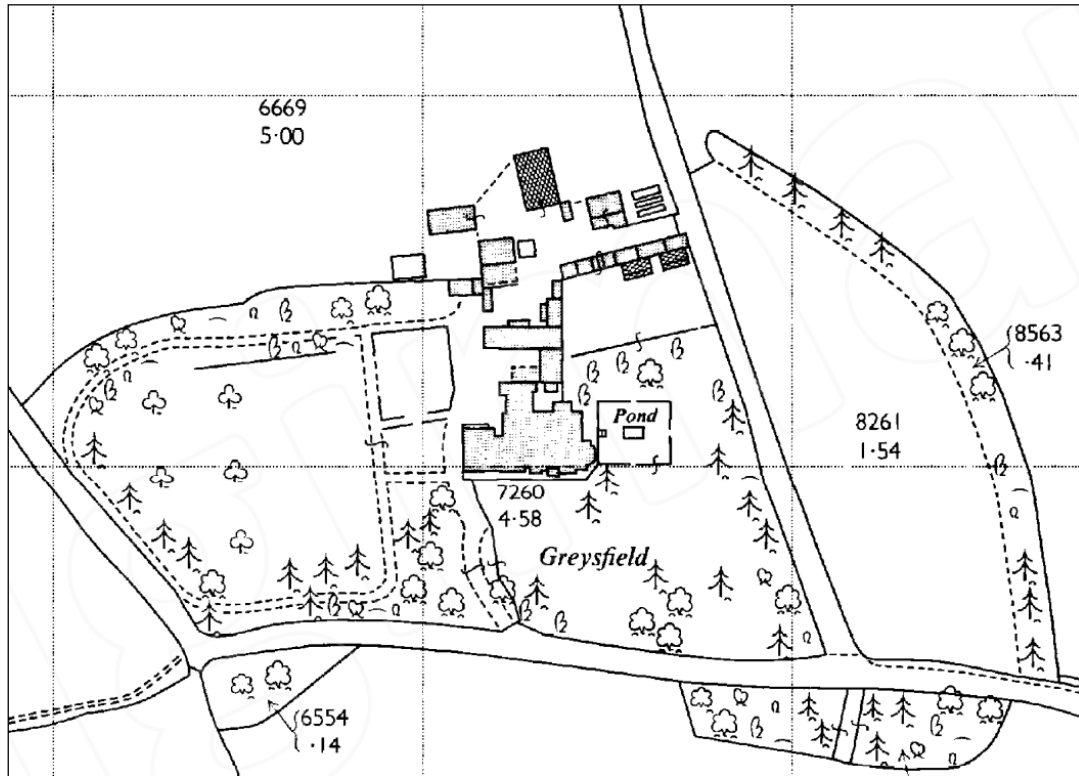


Plate 6: Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1965

4. Historic Building Investigation

4.1 Introduction

A programme of historic building investigation was carried out in order to satisfy a condition attached to planning consent for the refurbishment and conversion of Greysfields. This investigation comprised a basic level of survey, consistent with a Historic England Level I-type survey, which has provided a photographic record of the internal features, fixtures and fittings along with its setting.

4.2 Level I Survey

Greysfields was erected in the late nineteenth century as a villa residence, and is an irregular shaped, three-storey structure. The building is of brick and sandstone construction, with timber-framed upper storeys. The southern elevation forms the front of the house, and is six bays wide and three bays high. The ground floor windows are square in shape of mullion and transom design with sandstone sills and lintels. Two entrances are located within this elevation; one at the eastern end and a second at the western end.

The eastern entrance to the house is accessed via a set of sandstone steps, which are covered by a half-round porch. The porch has a flat roof and is supported by four rendered sandstone, Ionic-style columns. The door is of oak and has been hung on a sandstone doorframe, which has a false four-centred arched head with a two-light fanlight along with a splayed jamb.

The western entrance is accessed via a set of brick risers and tread steps to the west. It is covered with a brick-built porch with timber-framing, which has a pitched slate roof. This porch conceals an oak door, hung on a sandstone doorframe, which has sandstone segmental pendant. Either side of the door is a set of windows, which has a stone mullion, chamfered stone sills and lintels. The first-floor windows are a mixture of bayed and rectangular shape, which all contain single-glazed panes. Dormer windows are located on the second floor, and are single glazed timber-framed with half-round moulded beading (Plates 7-9).



Plate 7: The southern elevation of Greysfield



Plate 8: Main doorway at the eastern end of the southern elevation



Plate 9: Doorway at the western end of the southern elevation

The western elevation is again constructed from brick and sandstone with timber-framing on the first and second floors. A large bay window is located on the southern end of the ground floor. This has a sandstone seven-light by two-light mullion and transom design, with chamfered stone lintel and sill. A small uPVC window has been inserted into the northern end of the ground floor. The second floor has another bay window above the ground-floor bay. This window has a timber-frame and contains seven-light by two-light single-glazed pains. A small timber-framed rectangular-shaped window is located north of the bay and is directly above the modern uPVC window on the ground floor. On the second floor, a gabled dormer is situated above the first-floor bay at the southern end. The dormer has pain bargeboards and a slate roof. The window is timber-framed with a four-light timber mullion (Plate 10).

The eastern elevation is two-bays wide and three-bays high, and is again constructed from a mixture of brick and sandstone with timber-framing on the upper level. A bay window is located at the southern end of the ground floor. This window is of the same style as that of the western elevation bay window, with sandstone mullion and transoms housing timber-framed single-glazed glass pains. A stone mullion and transom with chamfered stone lintel and sill is situated on the northern side. On the first floor, as with the western elevation, a timber-framed bay window is located above the ground-floor bay. The window is five-lights wide and had a timber frame with single-glazed pains. The second floor of the house had no windows within the projecting roof space (Plate 11).



Plate 10: The western elevation, showing the bay windows and dormer in the roof



Plate 11: The eastern elevation, showing its setting within the gardens

The northern elevation of Greysfield comprises several extensions that include a mixture of timber-framed windows on the first and second floors, and uPVC windows on the ground floor. At the time of the site visit, two of the small later extensions had been demolished at the eastern end of the elevation.

Internally, the house had been heavily modernised throughout, although a small number of the original features survive on the ground floor; no historic fixtures or fittings remain on the upper floors.

The ground floor was separated into several different compartments, which are divided by both modern partition walls and original dividing walls. The entrance from the eastern doorway has a tiled green and white patterned floor with a plasterboard ceiling. At the northern end, a fire door provides access into the main reception hallway. This hallway has been panelled with stained oak panels, which have decorative panels at each of the four doorway leading off into other rooms. The floor had been carpeted, although at the time of the site visit the carpet had been removed. The ceiling has exposed ceiling joists and beam (Plate 12 and 13).



Plate 12: The main reception hallway



Plate 13: Panelled doorway looking into the reception room, east of the hallway

The room to the east of the main hallway has been modernised, although the original fire place survives *in-situ*. It had a fluted wooden surround with classically-inspired decoration with shallow mantel. The plaster on the chimney breast above the fireplace is moulded to surround a painting or a mirror. This type of moulding continued around the room, splitting the walls into panels.

The floor comprises tongue and groove timber boards laid in a herringbone design with a decorative border. To north of the eastern wall, a six-panelled door affords access to a room which has been heavily modernised, but retains the herringbone wooden floor (Plates 14 and 15).

Several rooms accessed from the northern wall of the hallway have all been modernised, and have been changed into a kitchen, toilet and shower rooms (Plates 16 and 17).



Plate 14: The eastern reception room



Plate 15: Detail of the fireplace in the eastern reception room



Plate 16: Modern interior of the eastern room on the ground floor



Plate 17: Modern interior of the north-eastern room on the ground floor

The doorway in the western wall of the main hallway opens out into a reception room. This room had been panelled with oak panelling, with the ceiling also panelled. An ornate fireplace on the eastern wall survives *in-situ*. It has a stone surround that has classical-inspired carvings with a wooden mantel piece. Above this is a decorative oak panel, which has carvings of birds at either end (Plates 18 and 19). At the northern end of the room two doorways are located, one on the northern wall and a second on the western wall. The northern door leads into a long narrow corridor, and the western doorway leads into long narrow hallway.



Plate 18: Interior of the second reception room, west of the entrance hallway



Plate 19: Decorative fireplace on the western wall of the second reception room

The hallway has painted white walls and a tiled floor. This hallway has a door at its northern end, leading out to a later extension, although this extension has since been demolished. On the western wall are two separate staircases, one leading to the first floor and the second lead down into the basement.

The hallway leading west from the reception room has been modernised with woodchip wallpaper walls, white painted ceiling and a carpeted floor. At the western end, a set of quarter turn stairs are located which lead up to the first floor. West of the staircase is a modern steel-framed lift, providing disabled access to all floors.

Another reception room is located at the eastern end of this hallway. This room has been clad in decorative wooden panelling around the walls with a modern carpet floor. The fireplace has been blocked with plasterboard (Plate 20).



Plate 20: Modern interior of the eastern room on the ground floor

The hallway opens out into the main entertaining room at its northern end, which had two decorative Corinthian columns in the centre. This room has been clad in decorative wooden panelling around the walls, with an ornate fireplace in the eastern wall. This fireplace has a stone surround which is set between wooden pilasters. The floor has been carpeted throughout (Plates 21-23).



Plate 21: The main entertaining room at the western end of the ground floor looking west

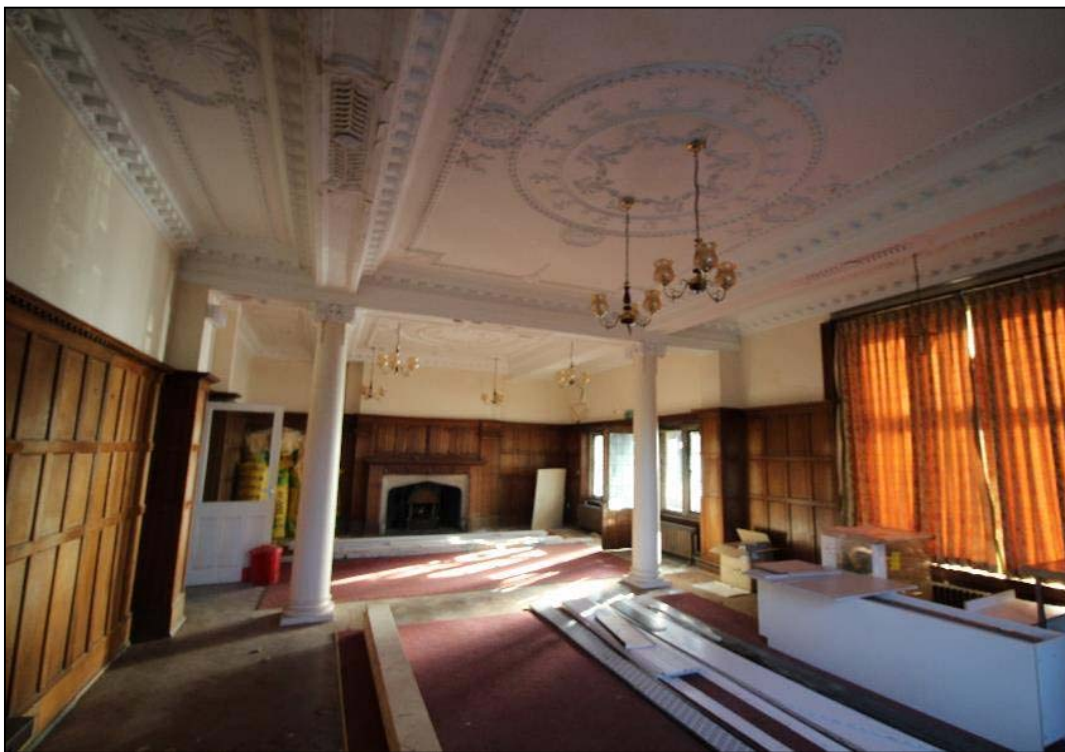


Plate 22: The main entertaining room at the western end of the ground floor looking east



Plate 23: Decorative fireplace on the eastern wall of the main entertaining room

The first floor has been heavily modernised, and separated into several different rooms. These rooms seem to have followed the original layout for the bedrooms, but several timber-framed partitions have been inserted to create toilet and shower rooms, presumably during its conversion to a residential care home (Plates 24 and 25). Some of the original tiled hearths are exposed in the floor, although the fireplace surrounds have been blocked up and small plastic vents inserted (Plates 26 and 27).



Plate 24: One of the modernised bedrooms on the first floor



Plate 25: View of one of the bedrooms on the first floor



Plate 26: View of a blocked up fireplace on the first floor



Plate 27: A modern bathroom of the first floor, which still contains its original timber-framed window

The second floor has been substantially modernised with the creation of several bedrooms and bathrooms. It seems possible that these rooms were intended originally as servants' quarters (Plates 28-31).



Plate 28: General view of one of the bedrooms on the eastern end of the second floor



Plate 29: One of the bedrooms on the western side of the second floor



Plate 30: General view of a bedroom in the centre of the second floor



Plate 31: The eastern bedroom on the second floor, looking east

The eastern room of the second floor provides access into the roof of the dormer on the eastern elevation. The roof is constructed from king post trusses (Plate 32). This is only accessible at the eastern end of the second floor. A door leads out onto the eastern projecting wing on the northern side.



Plate 32: King post truss in the dormer on the eastern elevation

The basement is accessed by a set of stone tread and brick riser stairs from one of the hallways in the ground floor (Plate 33). It has been divided into several different compartments, which have all been subject to alterations, and partitioned off with machine-made brick. The main room contains a mixture of early twentieth-century and late twentieth-century electrical units and wiring (Plate 34-36).



Plate 33: Stone stairs leading to the basement



Plate 34: The main room in the basement, showing twentieth-century electrical installation



Plate 35: Modern boiler at the northern end of the basement



Plate 36: One of the small rooms in the southern end of the basement

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

The archaeological investigation has provided a valuable opportunity to compile a basic record of a late nineteenth-century villa residence in Cheshire, and chart the broad phases in the development of the site. However, it is quite clear that the interior of the building has been subject to considerable alterations, particularly during its twentieth-century conversion to a residential care home, with the resultant loss of historic fixtures and fittings. Nevertheless, several features of historic interest do survive *in-situ*, particularly the original fireplaces. The grounds of the building have also been subject to some remodelling, and are most unlikely to reflect their late nineteenth-century layout.

The design proposals allow for the retention of the historic fireplaces, and thus refurbishment will have a negligible impact on the historic interior of Greysfields. Similarly, the impact on the historic grounds is also considered to be negligible, given the extent of remodelling that was carried out during the twentieth century.

Sources

Cartographic Sources

Ordnance Survey first edition 25": 1 mile map, 1884

Ordnance Survey second edition 25": 1 mile map, 1902

Ordnance Survey revised edition 25": 1 mile map, 1918

Ordnance Survey revised edition 6": 1 mile map, 1921

Ordnance Survey 1: 2500 map, 1957

Secondary Sources

Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*

English Heritage, 2006a *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*, London

English Heritage 2006b *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice*, London

Archive and Acknowledgements

Archive

The archive is currently held by Salford Archaeology, but will be deposited ultimately with Chester West and Chester Heritage Service. The paper and digital archive consists of annotated survey drawings, digital photographs, historic and modern mapping and electronic data; no artefacts were recovered from the archaeological works.

A copy of this report will be forwarded to the client and deposited with the Chester West and Chester Environment Record (HER), held by Chester West and Chester County Council.

As part of the archiving process, the on-line OASIS (On-line Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations) form has been completed.

Acknowledgements

Salford Archaeology would like to thank Dr Mike Salehi from Elegant Homes NW Ltd for commissioning and supporting the project.

The historic building investigation was undertaken by Lewis Stitt, who also compiled the report. The report was edited by Ian Miller, who was also responsible for project management.

Appendix 1: Figures

- Figure 1: Photograph direction plan (basement)
Figure 2: Photograph direction plan (ground floor)
Figure 3: Photograph direction plan (first floor)
Figure 4: Photograph direction plan (second floor)

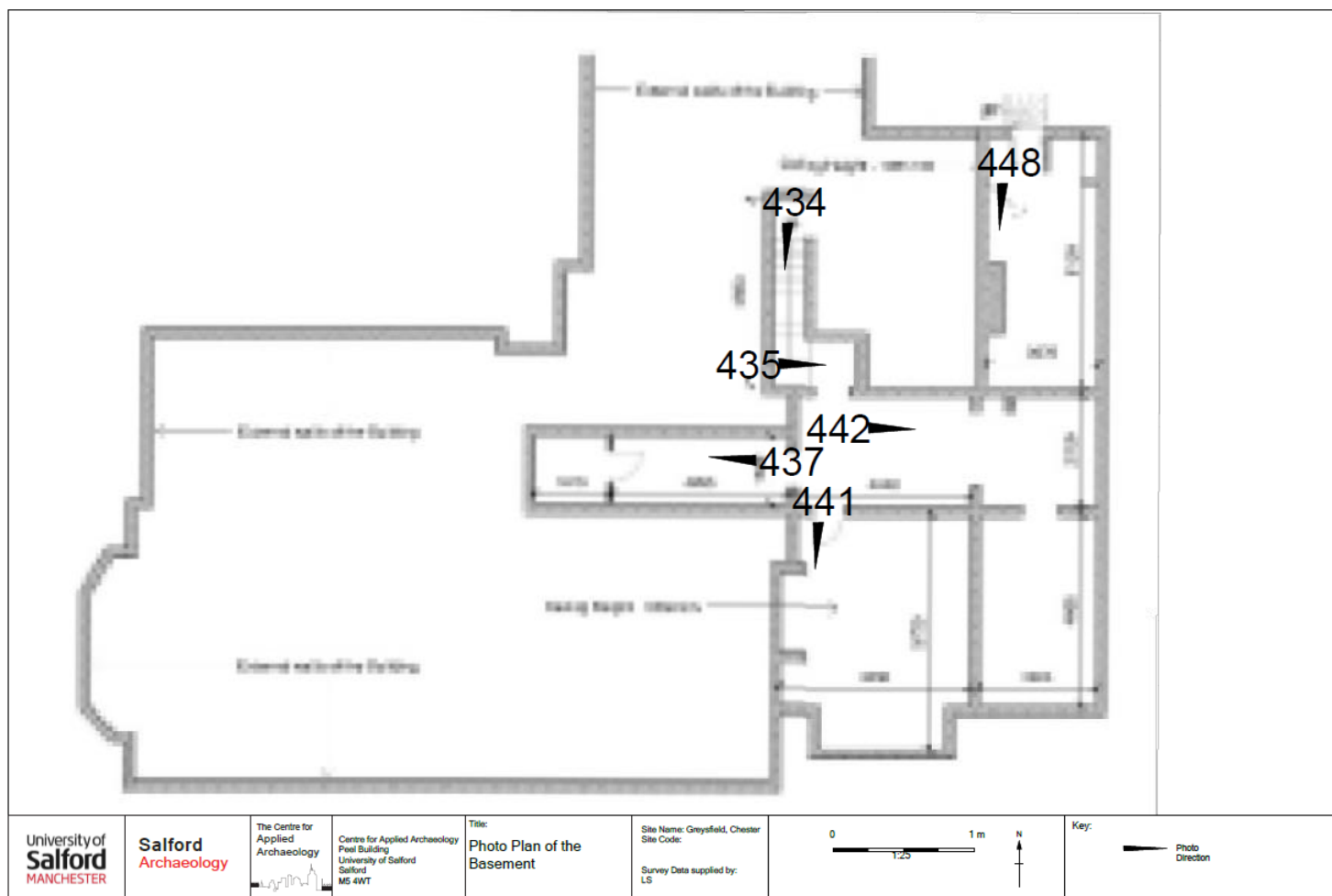


Figure 1: Photograph direction plan (basement)

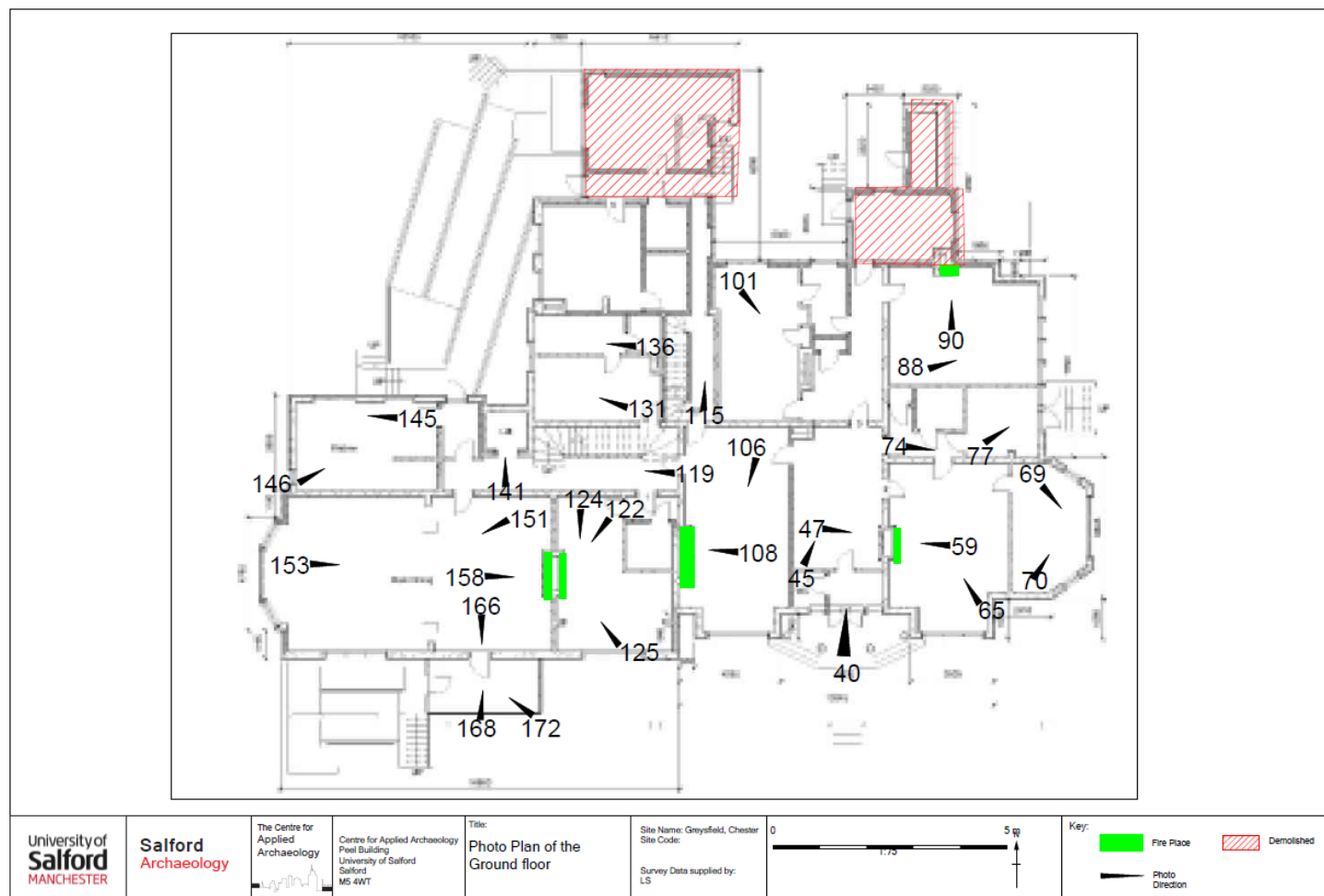


Figure 2: Photograph direction plan (ground floor)

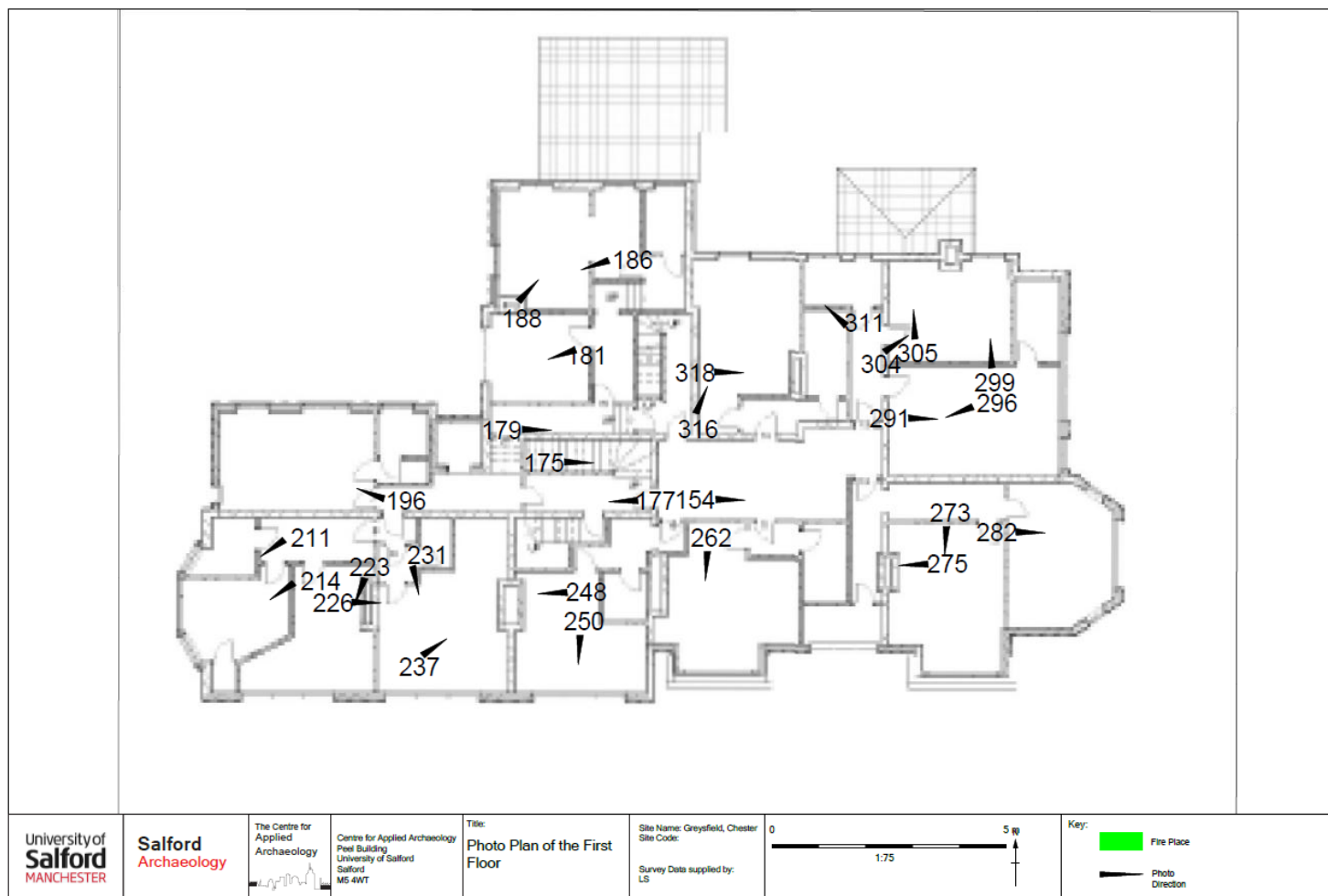


Figure 3: Photograph direction plan (first floor)

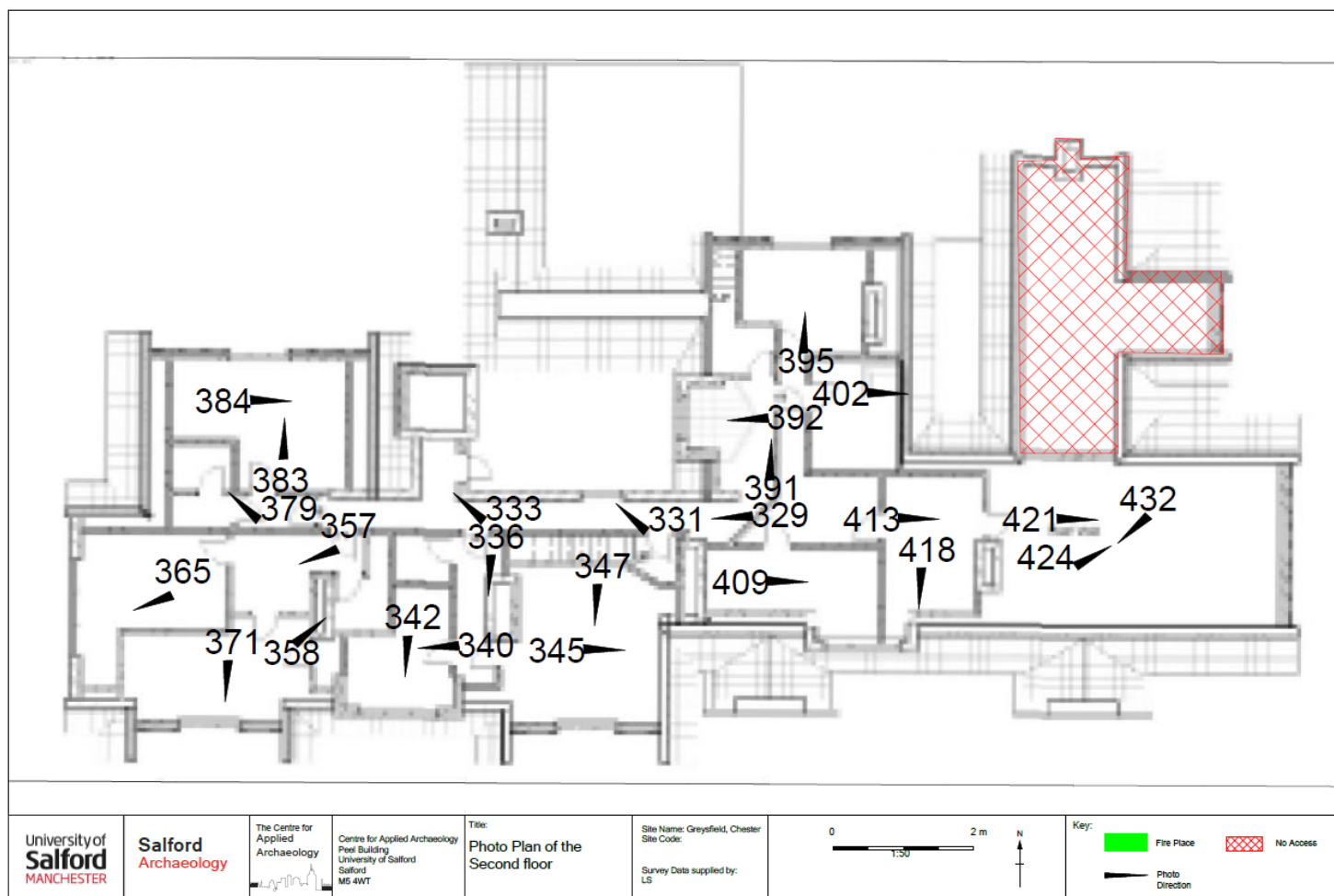
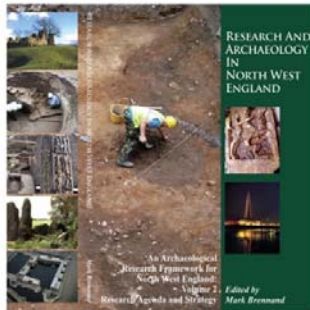


Figure 4: Photograph direction plan (second floor)

CONSULTANCY



DESK BASED ASSESMENTS



WATCHING BRIEF & EVALUATION



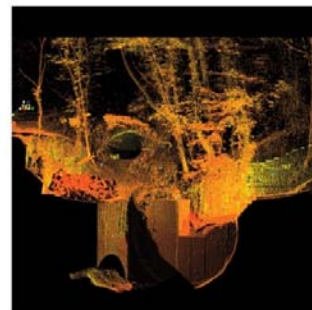
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BUILDING SURVEY



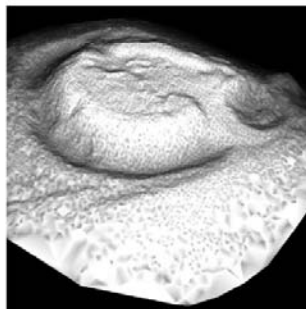
3D LASER SCANNING



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



LANDSCAPE SURVEYS



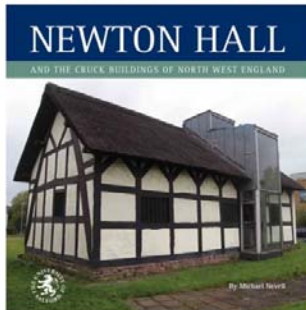
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