VOSS GARAGE AND TRANSIT SHED, MANN ISLAND, LIVERPOOL, Merseyside

Interim Fabric Survey Report

Oxford Archaeology North

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Neptune Developments Ltd, and Wardell Armstrong

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

An investigation of the Voss Garage and Transit Shed, Mann Island (SJ 3404 9005) was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) at the request of Wardell Armstrong, on behalf of Neptune Developments. The work was required to provide a mitigative record of the building in advanced of its demolition.

The area of works lies within the centre of Liverpool (Figure 1) and adjacent to the dockland area (Albert and Canning Docks) and lies within the extent of the Maritime Mercantile City of Liverpool World Heritage Site. The Maritime Mercantile City of Liverpool was granted World Heritage Site status (WHS) in 2004. Within the WHS area the buried archaeological deposits are regarded as '*a nationally significant resource*", which is "*highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction*' (LCC 2003).

This interim report sets out the results of the investigation in the form of a short document. A desk-based assessment has not been undertaken, beyond a search for architects' plans. It is, however, proposed to undertake a documentary study as part of the preparation of the full report that will be prepared in conjunction with the ongoing excavation at Mann Island. The survey work was undertaken in February / March 2007.

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During the buildings investigation, no significant archaeological features or historical evidence were discovered that would warrant further investigation in the form of more detailed building survey. It is, however, recommended that during the forthcoming demolition and subsequent excavation, that a photographic record is produced for those areas that were not accessible during the present building survey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to David Hodgkinson of Wardell Armstrong for commissioning the work on behalf of Neptune Developments.

The survey and investigation was undertaken by Marc Storey with assistance from Vix Hughes, Caroline Raynor, and Andy Lane. This interim report was compiled by Marc Storey, and the drawings were produced by Marc Storey and Anne Stewardson. The project was managed by Jamie Quartermaine, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 An investigation of the Voss Garage and Transit Shed, Mann Island (SJ 3404 9005) was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) at the request of Wardell Armstrong, on behalf of Neptune Developments. The work was required to provide a mitigative record of the building in advanced of its demolition. The work was undertaken in accordance with a project design that was formulated to meet the requirements of the Merseyside Archaeologist (Appendix 1).

1.1.3 The area of works lies within the centre of Liverpool (Figure 1) and adjacent to the dockland area (Albert and Canning Docks) and lies within the extent of the Maritime Mercantile City of Liverpool World Heritage Site. The Maritime Mercantile City of Liverpool was granted World Heritage Site status (WHS) in 2004. Within the WHS area the buried archaeological deposits are regarded as '*a nationally significant resource*", which is "*highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction*' (LCC 2003).

1.1.2 This interim report sets out the results of the investigation in the form of a short document. A desk-based assessment has not been undertaken, beyond a search for architects' plans. It is, however, proposed to undertake a documentary study as part of the preparation of the full report that will be prepared in conjunction with the ongoing excavation at Mann Island. The survey work was undertaken in February / March 2007.

1.2 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHICAL SETTING

1.2.1 The potential development involves an area of land south of Mann Island, straddling Irwell Street, and west of The Strand. It lies at *c*6.25m AOD. Much of the area consisted of either open areas of road, car park or access points, or buildings that related to the Voss Garage and Transit Shed. Along its eastern edge next to the Strand the area again comprised car parking and the disused Media House building.

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MANN ISLAND AND NOVIA SCOTIA

1.3.1 ***Early Dock Development:*** the area of Mann Island is land reclaimed from the Mersey, and was an area of expansion prompted by the commercial success of the construction of the Old Dock, which was completed in 1716. As a result of its construction Liverpool developed into a major city of commerce, particularly in the valuable commodity of tobacco, and became the second greatest seaport in the kingdom.

1.3.2 The sequence of dock development following the construction of the Old Dock was firstly a graving dock off the north side and a landing stage projecting from the south side of the entrance to the entrance basin which provided short-term berthing and safe access to the dock (Jarvis 1996). The graving dock was superseded by the construction of the Dry Dock (later Canning Dock) in 1740 (Ritchie-Noakes 1984). The success of the Old Dock and Canning Dock spawned further enclosed docks, including the South Dock in 1753 and Salterhouse Dock in 1760 (Jarvis 1996, 111). George's Dock was built under the 1761 Dock Act that commissioned a dock to be built north of Canning Dock, approximately where the Three Graces stand at present; it was begun in 1762 and completed by 1771. It was entered from both the north end via George's Basin which was arranged perpendicular to the main dock, and to the south through a small passage connecting it to the Dry Dock, which became the present Canning Dock. To the east of

the dock was a warehousing area, which included the impressive Goree Warehouses built in 1793 and rebuilt in 1810 after a fire, before being bombed in 1941.

1.3.3 ***Manchester Dock:*** the Manchester Dock was constructed and opened by 1785-9 for the purpose of harbouring the Mersey Flats, barges and lighters which were flat bottomed barges used for 'lightening' other ships loads or loading and unloading ships that could not be wharfed / docked (Jarvis 1996). The vessels were mostly transferring coal, corn and cotton between the Manchester area, via the Mersey Irwell Navigation, and international markets. By 1815 the dock was about an acre in size and could apparently contend with the loading and unloading of up to 33 vessels per day. The quayside area of the dock saw numerous sheds and warehouses built immediately adjacent, and partly overhanging, in order to house the goods during transhipment. This was particularly evident later in the nineteenth century when the North Western and Great Western Railway companies became involved, and both leased and built structures specific to their requirements for coal haulage (Anderson 1996). The gradual change in transport systems from canals, to railways to roads led to the decline in the use of Manchester Dock and it was closed in 1928 and infilled by 1936. The dock having become economically unviable it was infilled using spoil from the Mersey Tunnel excavations.

1.3.4 ***Chester Basin:*** the Chester Basin was constructed between 1785 and 1795 to meet the need for increased moorings for inland vessels with destinations in Cheshire, Lancashire and the Midlands, the latter using the Shropshire Union canal, also opened in 1795. The basin was tidal and measured approximately 2,500 square yards. However, the same shift in transport modes and the obstruction of the ferries arriving at the landing stage just north led to the closure and infilling of the basin at the same time as the Manchester Dock (Jarvis 1996).

1.3.5 ***Novia Scotia:*** the area referred to as Nova Scotia was in the vicinity of Canning Dock and was an area frequented by the maritime community. As a result, the area contained numerous shops, inns, hostelries, and workshops, which were demolished to make room for the Irwell Street warehouses in the early twentieth century. Accounts suggest that there may have been 38 dwelling houses of various sizes, accommodating 212 people at about 1770 (Wakefield 1927, 44). In 1790 records (Gore 1790) show that in Nova Scotia there were 17 houses and 15 cellars, occupied by 183 people and in Mann Island there were four houses and three cellars, occupied by 30 people. By the early nineteenth century the area was less salubrious and most of the larger houses had been converted to public houses. The name Nova Scotia is shown as referring to the area west of the southern passage into George's Dock on the map of John Eyes of 1765 and continues to be shown as such on Horwood's map of 1803, last appearing on the 1908 Ordnance Survey map and then is not shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1927, by which time significant changes in the layout of the area had taken place.

1.3.6 ***Mann Island:*** Mann Island was land reclaimed from the Mersey during the dock expansion period in the mid-eighteenth century and was first referred to as Mann Island in 1785 (Wakefield 1927). On cartographic sources, such as Chadwick's map of 1725 and Eye's map of 1753 the area is clearly shown as part of the River Mersey foreshore, although the area to become Nova Scotia is shown as enclosed by 1753. The area was shown at this date as being occupied by a variety of warehouses and were shown on all subsequent maps until their demolition in 1929 (when the present garage buildings were constructed). The origin of the name for the area is somewhat obscure. It has been attributed to a John Mann who made walking sticks in the area and had suggested that the construction of George's Dock (1762-1771) would make the area an 'island', hence Mann Island (Wakefield 1927, 44). Other accounts suggest he was an oil stone dealer

who died in 1784 and that the area was originally known as Mersey Island (Aughton 1993, 220).

1.3.7 ***Associated Buildings:*** warehouses were present in Liverpool prior to the construction of the Old Dock but flourished after its construction and the increasing amount of trade coming into the city. Warehouses in the eighteenth century were often associated with or attached to the owner's dwelling. The warehouses were often between five and ten storeys in height, with gabled fronts, and long and narrow in plan. Distinctively, they often had a central pulley below the gabled roof and the loading doors for each floor positioned below this (Giles 2004). The same form continued through the nineteenth century as well. Such features are still visible within the central area of Liverpool today and the later warehouses had further design refinements including loading doors recessed into the walls for better safety. Alongside Irwell Street exist some examples of early twentieth century warehouses; these represent a few surviving buildings of what was once a much more common form. The Transit Shed is one of these.

1.3.8 The tall brick building is the pump house for the Mersey Railway Tunnel and was designed by architects Grayson and Ould's (Sharples 2004, 112). The Mersey Railway Tunnel was begun in 1879 and the system involved two railway lines in the main tunnel and additional tunnels for ventilation and drainage; the railway was officially opened in 1886. The ventilation of the tunnel was dealt with by using four large fans, called Guibal fans in a tunnel connecting the main tunnel to the pumping and ventilation station. However, this system was found to be insufficient to deal with steam locomotives and the line was therefore electrified, making the Mersey Railway the world's first electrified under-water railway (LCC 2005, 141).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1.1 OA North produced a project design (*Appendix 1*) which was accepted by the client and were subsequently commissioned to undertake the building investigations. This was carried out over four days on the 28th February and 1st, 2nd and 5th March 2007.

2.1.2 The project consists of a Level III-type survey (English Heritage 2006), which comprises a descriptive internal and external record combined with plan and section drawings and a photographic record.

2.1.3 Due to limited access, as well as reasons of Health and Safety, the southern section of the Transit Shed and the eastern exterior of the Voss Garage and Transit Shed were not surveyed. Photographs, however, were taken from a safe distance are were used to inform the fabric survey.

2.2 BUILDING INVESTIGATION

2.2.1 ***Descriptive Record***: written records using OA North *pro forma* record sheets were made of all principal building elements, both internal and external, as well as any features of historical or architectural significance. Particular attention was also paid to the relationship between parts of the `building, especially those that would show its development and any alterations. These records are essentially descriptive, although interpretation is carried out on site as required.

2.2.2 ***Site drawings:*** an instrument survey was undertaken to create plans of both floors and cross sections (Figs 7-11). These were produced in order to show the form and location of structural features and/or features of historic interest. The hand-annotated field drawings were digitised using an industry standard CAD package to produce the final drawings.

2.2.3 ***Photographs:*** a photographic archive was produced utilising 35mm camera to produce black and white contact prints. Digital photographs were also taken and a selection is presented within this report. The archive comprises general shots of the site and its surroundings and detailed coverage of architectural features.

2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 The results of the fieldwork will form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*The Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition, 1991*) and the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IFA in that organisation's code of conduct.

2.3.2 The paper and finds archive for the archaeological work undertaken at the site will be deposited with the Liverpool Museum, in accordance with their guidelines, (under accession number Liv.2001.23) as this is the nearest museum which meets Museums' and Galleries' Commission criteria for the long term storage of archaeological material (MGC 1992). This archive can be provided in the English Heritage Centre for

Archaeology format, both as hard and digital copy. The archive will be deposited with the Liverpool Museum within six months of the completion of the fieldwork.

3. BUILDING INVESTIGATION RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 ***Transit Shed:*** the Transit Shed is a purpose built warehouse constructed in 1921, to serve Manchester Dock. The main body of the building is rectangular in plan, and was evidently originally a single open space which has since been sub-divided. The Transit Shed has a twin gabled roof with extensive steel trusses and bracing. Skylights were designed into the corrugated roof as the primary source of light.

3.1.2 ***Voss Garage:*** designed in an Art Deco style, the Voss Garage was constructed between 1927 and 1939. The most recent use of the building has been as a Mercedes dealership with three separate showrooms; sales and administration offices; staff training and welfare rooms occupy the rest of the space. A wide tarmac ramp leads from a central sliding glass door on the north face of the building up to the first floor. The majority of the first floor is occupied by the car showroom and ancillary offices have been formed by sub-division with plasterboard partitions.

3.2 THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE BUILDING

3.2.1 ***Transit Shed:*** the Transit Shed is a long single-storey rectangular structure (*c*110m by 30m) with a twin gabled, steel frame supported roof. Five large concertina type folding doors are spaced evenly along the south-western wall and there are only two doors for pedestrian access. The building is arranged approximately north-west/south east.

3.2.2 ***Voss Garage:*** Voss Garage is a two storey building and measures approximately 50m by 45m. The Garage is aligned south-west to north-east (along its long axis) and squarely abutts the Transit shed.

4.2.1 The rear and eastern elevations look over Canning Dock, the front faces onto the former offices of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, and to the west are the remnants of Irwell Street and the infilled Manchester Dock; the building is orientated roughly north-west/south-east. The following is a basic description of the structure, based on site observation.

3.3 FABRIC

3.3.1 The external walls of the buildings were constructed with red brick with English Garden Wall-style bonding; handmade brick for the Transit shed and modern rectangular brick for the Voss Garage. Most of the internal walls were of solid construction (either breeze block or brick) although some of the office spaces were plasterboard partitions. The roof was corrugated sheet metal with inset skylights and was supported on an extensive steel framework of trusses. The only windows occur in the south-west and north-west walls and in the south-east corner of the Voss Garage.

3.4 EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

3.4.1 ***Transit Shed:*** the south-east wall of the Transit Shed is dominated by the five concertina type folding doors, which were evidently replacements for large sliding doors that fitted into tracks, still extant against the base of the wall. With the exception of some minor repairs and the addition of vents and utility access, this wall has not been subject too

much alteration. Guttering, probably aluminium, runs the length of the south-east wall of the Transit Shed with the downflow pipes located at the south end of the building.

3.4.2 ***Voss Garage:*** the ground floor of the west wall of the Voss Garage contains two doors and three windows, the northernmost of which is a four light floor-to-ceiling window. Five further windows were incorporated into the first floor of the same elevation. A parapet runs the length of this elevation to the straight joint with the Transit Shed.

3.4.3 The north-west corner of the buildings has a long straight joint where the finer bricks and bond used for the north-east facade have been tied into the more course brick of the south-east wall. A round window, or possible clock housing, has been blocked at the first floor.

3.4.4 The northern elevation of the Voss Garage exhibits several Art Deco features. The building is five bays wide, with bays two and four protruding by a single course of brick at the first floor level. A large arched window dominates each of these two bays and was decorated with pronounced mullions and an exaggerated keystone. A parapet, with architrave and cornice, runs the length of the north-west wall and is higher over bays two and four where it is designed in a classical style, with architrave and ionic volutes. The ground floor of the north-west wall has floor-to-ceiling segmented rectangular windows in bays two and four. Sliding glass doors were fitted into bays one, three and five and were designed so as to allow vehicles access into the garage/showrooms.

3.4.5 The eastern elevation of the Transit Shed (Plate 5) is largely obscured by the large wooden sliding doors. Internally the wall is a later breeze block constructed wall set against the large sliding doors, which therefore became redundant. These doors slide along inset rails at the base of the wall and a horizontal rail fixed to the top of the external wall. Three windows (from Rooms **13** and **14**) are recent additions. The north-eastern elevation of the Voss Garage has no features beyond a modern fire door at the most northern point.

3.4.6 The southern wall of the Transit Shed was largely inaccessible at the time of this survey; however, it was possible to obtain photographs from across Canning Dock. This shows that it had a brink constructed extension with door (possibly wooden slat).

3.5 INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

3.5.1 ***Transit Shed*:** the floor plan of the Transit Shed consisted of a single large open working floor, now sub-divided into three distinct areas (Rooms **1**, **10**, and the unsurveyed room at the south of the Transit Shed). Office space and staff welfare facilities have been added to the floor plan (Plate 7). The building was ostensibly constructed in one phase, with internal partitioning coming later and reflected a change of use. The floor throughout the Transit Shed was of poured concrete. After the change of use from warehouse to automotive garage, two vehicle inspection pits were set into the floor of Room **1** and various partitioned rooms were constructed. Two caged areas (Rooms **8** and **9**) were built expressly to house hazardous substances. The covered hallway, to the east of Room **10** and Rooms **13-16** (and possible Room **12**), were constructed at the same time as doors were introduced between the two buildings. The ceiling above the Transit Shed is of corrugated steel with a twin gabled design, supported by a framework of steel trusses (Plate 8). The trusses were supported by the eastern and western elevations and centrally supported by a line of concrete columns.

3.5.2 ***Voss Garage*:** the internal floor plan of the Voss Garage has been extensively altered since its construction. On the ground floor two large showrooms (Rooms **32** and **41**) occupy the majority of the space, and within these two areas, the floor is tiled in white

ceramic and both rooms have an elevated platform (likely to serve the twin purpose of raising those parts of the rooms to street level, and to better display the automobiles). Various offices and staff room line the southern extent of the ground floor. Judging by the construction and layout, it is likely that Rooms **18-29** were the original offices and welfare rooms for customers and staff; Rooms **36** (later partitioned into Rooms **37** and **38**) and **39** were constructed at a later phase. The four glass-fronted offices (Rooms **30**, **31**, **33** and **40**) are the most recent internal partitions. Separating Rooms **32** and **41** is an internal car ramp that led to the first floor (Plate 12), and the largely open plan first floor is dominated by the car showroom (Room **44**). The ceiling, similar to Room **1** above the Transit Shed, is a corrugated sheet metal construction, and is twin gabled and hipped at the north and south ends (Plate 11). Partitioned offices (Rooms **45**, **48** and **49**) line the western wall and staff training rooms (Rooms **51** and **52**) abut the northern interior wall.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Inspection of the Transit Shed and Voss Garage and analysis of its fabric, form and construction together with examination of the available documentary and cartographic sources indicates that the buildings had clearly been developed from the early Twentieth Century onwards. The building has undergone various phases of minor changes and amendments over the years. The phasing of the building is outlined below together with the evidence on which these are based.

4.2 PHASING

4.2.1 ***Phase 1*:** this is the primary construction phase of the Transit Shed (1921) which represents Rooms **1, 10**, and includes the bay beyond the southern partition which could not be surveyed. The western elevation had wooden sliding doors similar to those extant on the external eastern wall and Irwell Street and there was a functional road surface for the transport of goods to and from the warehouse.

4.2.2 ***Phase 2*:** this phase comprised the construction of the Voss Garage (1927-1939) and potentially the construction of the partition south of Room **1.**

4.2.3 ***Phase 3*:** this phase comprises the modification of the layout of some of the rooms, mainly within the Transit Shed. It is likely that most of the breeze block constructed rooms (Rooms **2-5, 13-16** and **53-55**) were built in this phase. It is also probable that the party wall was knocked through to construct the two doors at the north end of the Transit Shed. The eastern doors of the Transit Shed were walled up, reflecting a change of use, and the concertina doors replaced the sliding doors on the western elevation.

4.2.4 ***Phase 4:*** this phase comprises the addition of the plasterboard-partitioned office suites within the Transit Shed (Rooms **2** and **4**) and Voss Garage (Rooms **17, 37, 38** and **45 - 49**).

4.3 CONCLUSION

4.3.1 ***Transit Shed:*** the Transit Shed is an example of an early Twentieth Century warehouse serving the Liverpool docks (Canning and Manchester Docks) and the expanding urban centre. The building has been modified but only in so far as the original doors were walled up along the north-eastern wall (but retaining the original external sliding doors) and sliding doors were replaced by steel concertina doors on the south-western wall. The internal partitioning and later office space, which was not keyed into the warehouse walls, has not overly compromised the integrity of the original structure.

4.3.2 ***Voss Garage:*** the Voss Garage is a purpose built structure reflecting the Art Deco and Art Nouveau influences of the 1920s and 30s. Externally, the fabric of the building has not been greatly modified, beyond perhaps the installation of new windows and glass casings for the doors of the ground level of the north elevation. However, many of the internal office spaces were later additions, although the precise phasing of these internal partitions is difficult to establish given that they have been subsequently altered using modern materials. It is also difficult to ascertain when the doors between the two buildings were constructed, and when many of the offices were constructed.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.4.1 During the buildings investigation, no significant archaeological features or historical evidence was discovered which warrant further investigation in the form of more detailed building survey. However, it is recommended that, during the demolition of the Transit Shed, a photographic record is maintained of those areas that were not accessible during the building survey.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: Western elevation (southern part) of the Transit Shed

Plate 2: Western elevation (northern part) of the Transit Shed and Voss Garage

Plate 3: Northern elevation of the Voss Garage

Plate 4: Southern and eastern elevations of the Transit Shed from across Canning Dock

Plate 5: Eastern elevation of the Transit Shed looking south

Plate 6: Eastern elevation of the Transit Shed

Plate 7: Central bay of the Transit Shed looking north

Plate 8: Truss detail of the Transit Shed roof

Plate 9: Transit Shed Central Bay looking north

Plate 10: Later internal office buildings within the Transit Shed

Plate 11: Steel roof structure in the Voss Garage

Plate 12: Car ramp inside the Voss Garage leading to the first floor

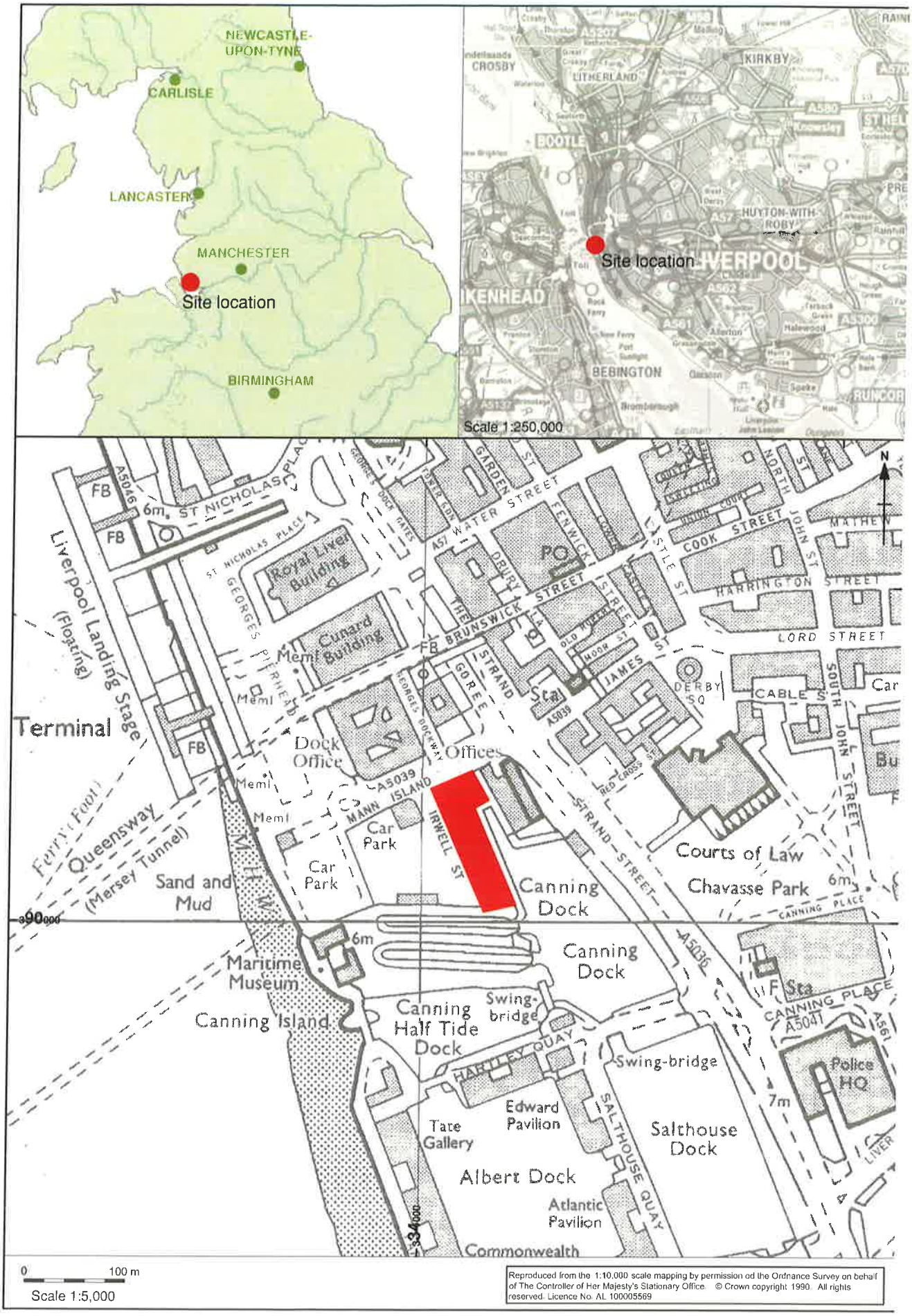

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Ground floor plan

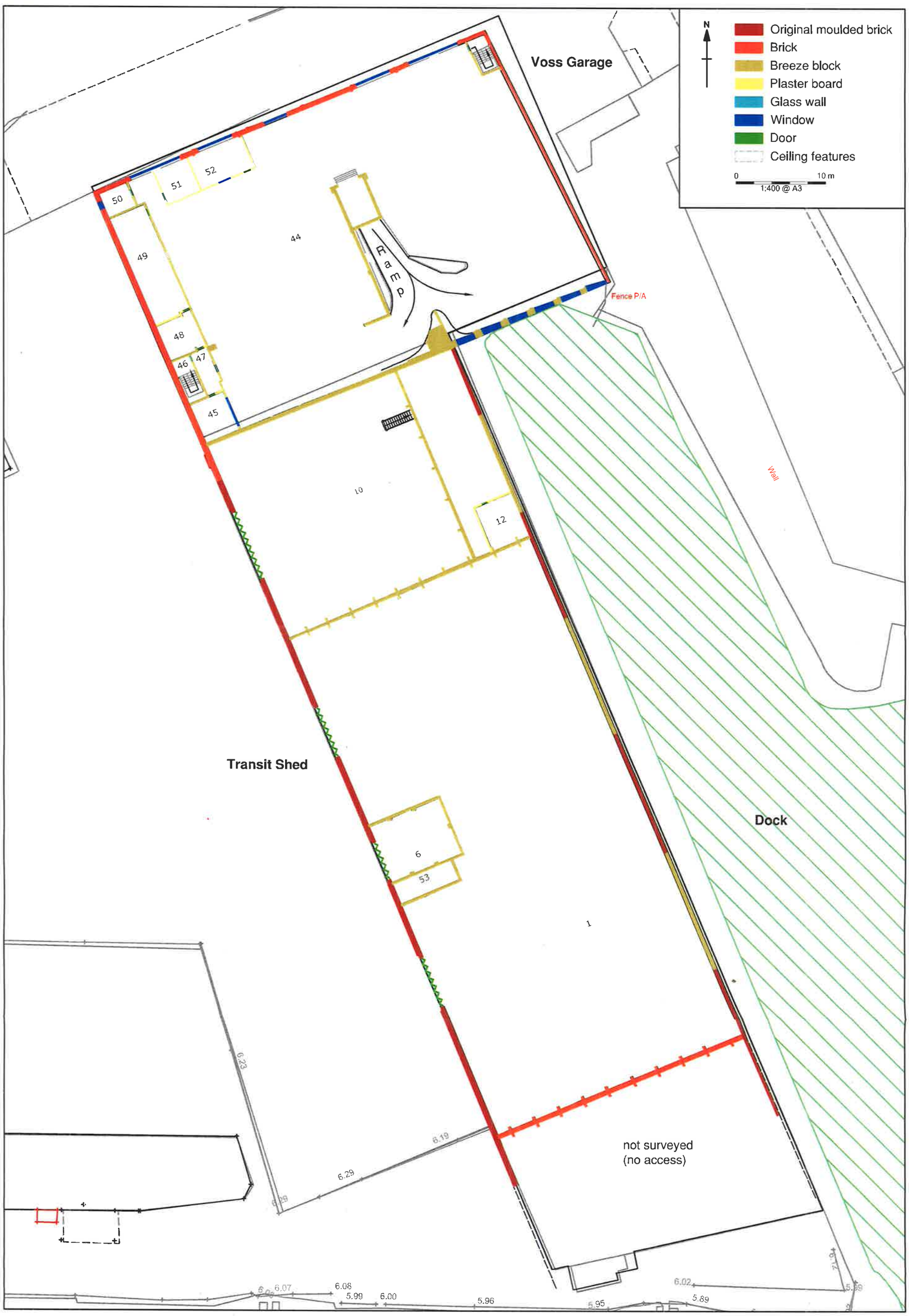

Figure 3: First floor