Heritage Impact Assessment Report

on

Proposed Housing Development at Rathellen House, Finisklin Road, Finisklin, Co. Sligo

Prepared by

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on behalf of

COADY Architects

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1. INTRODUCTION / OVERVIEW

This report has been prepared on behalf of COADY Architecture to advise on the architectural heritage impacts of a proposed development of new houses on the grounds of Rathellen House, a two-storey nineteenth century house, located on Finisklin Road approximately 1 mile north-west of the centre of Sligo. The proposed development includes for the retention and subdivision of Rathellen House into four own-door houses. The linear farm range to the immediate west of the house is to be retained and converted into two own-door houses. Rathellen House is not included on the current Record of Protected Structures for County Sligo and is not included on the published survey of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). A number of key headings are reviewed in the context of proposals to develop lands around the house as housing.

- Assessment of significance of the house, outbuildings and curtilage
- The significance of the house, outbuildings and grounds
- Condition of the house and outbuildings
- Short-term steps taken to secure the house during 2021
- Assessment of impacts of the proposed development
- Recommendations and mitigation of impacts

Inspections of the house, outbuildings and grounds was carried out on 20th January 2021 and 30th September 2021. During these inspections, the house and outbuildings were open and unsecured. I was able to walk through the ground floor of the house but could not access the upper floor, as the first-floor structure and both staircases were unsafe. The perimeter of the house was heavily overgrown with self-seeding sycamore, briars and other vegetation. I walked the perimeter of the site along the public road to the north and west of the site. No opening up work was carried out during the course of my visit. A follow-on inspection with ladder access to the first floor took place on 19th November 2021, which facilitated the identification and photography of features of architectural interest through the floor joists in a number of locations.

The interiors of Rathellen House and its outbuildings have been exposed to water ingress for several years and, as noted in this report, the condition of these structures is poor. The assessment of condition in this report is preliminary, based on visual inspection only. For this reason, the exact detail of the conservation, repair and refurbishment works, described in this report should be regarded as indicative and subject to further inspection. A clearer picture of the extent of works required to secure and refurbish the fabric will only be formed when safe access can be provided to all parts of the building.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Rathellen House was constructed at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a dower house for the Wood family of Woodville House in Ballydoogan, approximately two miles to the south. The Wood family were an established family in Sligo, having owned property in county since at least the beginning of the seventeenth century. Rathellen House is located close to Finisklin House (on the other side of Finisklin Road to the north), which was constructed as a seaside residence for the family[1]. The house was attractively located, with views of the sea and the mountains beyond, to the north-east.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1837-42 *(Fig. 1)* shows Rathellen House with a detached linear outbuilding range to the west. Both buildings survive and occupy a similar footprint to the present day. The map illustrates the close relationship between Rathellen House and Finisklin House (to the north), with the grounds of both houses represented as a continuous shaded area on the map, although the Wood estate papers show that Finisklin was periodically leased out to other families at this time[2].

[1] Entry for the Wood Estate in the Landed Estates Database, NUI Galway (http://landedestates.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/estate-show.jsp?id=66)

[2] ibid

Fig. 1 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1837-42 (not to scale), showing Rathellen House and Finisklin House, which were both built by the Wood Family

The 25" Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 2) shows the extent of the grounds and gardens immediately associated with Rathellen House at the turn of the twentieth century. The house was sold by the Wood family to Henry Lyons in 1860 and remained in the Lyons family until the 1940's. This later map shows a number of significant modifications to Rathellen House which took place during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. An enclosed yard has been established to the west of the early-nineteenth century linear outbuilding range, with new outbuildings on its north, south and west sides. A walled lane has been constructed, running from the south-west corner of this new farmyard and perpendicularly intersecting an access laneway from the public road. This appears to have served as a service entrance to the outbuildings and yard. The footprint of the house has become larger with the addition of gabled extensions to the north and south, and the introduction of a single-storey entrance porch at the north-east. The relationship between the house and the west range has been strengthen through the introduction of a connecting screen wall from the north-east corner of the outbuilding and a canted single-storey outbuilding, running from the south end of the outbuilding to the south-west corner of the house. A small gable projection has also been constructed to the north of the range. The map indicates landscaped planting and pathways around the house (shown red on Fig. 2), which differentiate the curtilage of the house from the agricultural land beyond.

Fig 2. 25" Ordnance Survey map of 1888-1913, with the immediate grounds of Rathellen House shaded in red.

The historic association between the house and FInisklin House, to the north, ended when the Wood family sold Rathellen in 1860. Finisklin was subsequently acquired by Richard St. George Robinson, a land agent, during the 1870's[3] and was renamed 'Seamount'.

The present-day Ordnance Survey map *(Fig. 3)* illustrates that the house and almost all of its outbuildings remain extant and largely unchanged since the early twentieth century. The gradual outward expansion of Sligo Town over the past thirty years can be seen in the large light industrial buildings of the Finisklin Business Park (to the south) and small pockets of housing development across the road from Rathellen House to the west. While these relatively recent developments encroach slightly, the setting of the house is still rural, and the views of the mountains and Sligo Bay remain uninterrupted.

Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey map of Rathellen House in the present day

3. DESCRIPTION OF HOUSE, OUTBUILDINGS AND CURTILAGE

Rathellen House was constructed as a detached two-storey dower house in the early-nineteenth century house. The house derives much of its architectural character from the remodelling and alterations, which took place during the mid-to-late nineteenth century following the change in ownership of 1860. There is a two-storey gabled projection on the north side of the house (facing the road), asymmetrical two-storey gabled extensions to the south façade, and a single storey bay window extension on the east gable of the house. The roof is of natural slate, with decorative tall chimneys providing a vertical emphasis to the roof profile. There are a number of dormer windows on main roof, some of which may day from the earlier, more modest, house. There is a late-nineteenth century entrance porch with hipped slate roof at the north-east corner of the house, with well-crafted Tudor-arched timber window screens, incorporating leaded glass with coloured panes, and double-leaf glazed entrance doors (*Fig. 5*). The porch interior includes high-quality joinery and intact encaustic tiles.

[3] ibid

Fig. 4 North façade of Rathellen House, with two-storey gable and single-storey porch (20/1/21)

Fig. 5 Interior of entrance porch (20/1/21)

The interior of the house is laid out with the primary reception rooms on the ground floor facing east and south, with an east-to-west corridor and ancillary rooms to the north. The kitchen is located at the west end of the house, close to a side entrance to the west yard. The main (east) staircase and (west) service staircase have partially collapsed, making access to the first floor impossible. It is unclear if the house incorporates attic rooms. Large sections of the roof covering are missing and there are no floorboards across much of the first floor. The plaster and lath ground floor ceilings have collapsed in most rooms and the interior of the house is thoroughly saturated. Nonetheless, the plan form and proportions of the house survive; and interior retains a large number of intact high-quality features of architectural interest – panelled timber doors, ceiling cornices, picture rails, chair rails, window surrounds with timber panelling and panelled timber shutters, architraves, skirting boards, sheeted timber doors (in the kitchen/service area), the open-string main staircase (without balustrade), and the closed-string timber service staircase (with part of the balustrade surviving). There are a number of unusual Tudor-arched features which add considerably to the interest of the house – a three-arched slender timber dividing screen in the large (ground floor) east reception room *(Fig. 6)*, a recessed niche in the entrance hall (opposite the staircase), and arched timber frames within a number of the window openings in the main reception rooms *(Fig. 7)*. Most of the larger fire surrounds on the ground floor have been removed. There are a number of smaller late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century fireplaces, which survive.

Fig. 6 Ground Floor, interior of east reception room with Tudor-arched dividing screen (20/1/21)

Fig. 7 Interior of reception room on ground floor, with Tudor-arched detail to window recess (20/1/21)

The outbuildings are arranged around two yards to the west of the house. The first yard, between the house and the early-nineteenth century linear outbuilding to the west, was completed by the construction of a canted single-storey outbuilding to the south and a screen wall to the north towards the end of the nineteenth century. This yard is somewhat overgrown. There are a number of octagonal chimney sections lying on the ground in this yard, which match the surviving chimneys on the roof of the main house. The early-nineteenth century linear outbuilding (Outbuilding A) is of stone rubble construction with lime harling render. The pitched roof, which has partially collapsed, includes a modern corrugated steel sheeted finish. This outbuilding had an upper floor structure, which has partially collapsed. The north gable of the outbuilding has been extended through the additional of a projecting gabled bay with ground floor squared window and upper floor roundel *(Fig. 8)*. This projecting gable, together with the connecting screen wall to the main house, visually links the main house and the linear range, which read as a single contiguous architectural composition from the public road to the north. The second (outer) yard *(Fig. 9)*, to the west of the linear outbuilding, has late-nineteenth century outbuilding of stone rubble and brick construction on its north, west and south sides (Outbuildings A, B, C, D & E). The south range (Outbuilding E) appears to have been a carriage house and comprises two storeys with a pitched roof of timber construction, which is no longer slated. The enclosing walls to the diagonal laneway, which runs south-west from the south-west corner of the yard, are extant and appear to be in good condition, although heavily overgrown.

Fig. 8 Projecting gabled bay on north gable of Outbuilding A (20/1/21)

Fig. 9 Outer yard, to west of Outbuilding A, on right (20/1/21)

The former gardens, immediately adjacent to the house, are now heavily overgrown with sycamore, bramble, and other self-seeding vegetation, but include a number of ornamental coniferous trees, which most likely date from the improvements undertaken by Henry Lyons in the late-nineteenth century and have grown to a very large size. These are a number of mature specimen trees within the open field to the north of the house and along the perimeter boundary. These trees form part of the designed landscape of Rathellen House and are likely to date from its original construction as a dower house in the early-nineteenth century. There is a stone rubble boundary wall along the road frontage to the north and west of the grounds. This wall, which is c.1.5-2 metres high along the west boundary, drops in height along the (north) frontage of Finisklin Road to allow views of the house. The main entrance from Finisklin Road comprises a carriage opening and a separate pedestrian entrance with cut limestone mid-to-late nineteenth century piers, which have been overpainted and crudely fitted with replacement galvanised gates.

4. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The omission of Rathellen House from the NIAH published survey of County Sligo should not be taken as confirmation that the building is not significant or is of limited local significance only. The NIAH survey for each county in non-exhaustive and is intended to provide *'a representative sample of the range of structures that merit protection'*[4]. It is therefore important to seek specialist advice where a structure of apparent significance is not included in the NIAH survey.

Rathellen House is of significance as a surviving early-nineteenth century dower house with associations to the Wood family, who were established property owners and constructed a number of substantial houses in the area. The modifications and improvements to the house, undertaken by Henry Lyons in the second half of the nineteenth century

[4] https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/about-us/

are of a high-quality and contribute the architectural and artistic special interest of the house. The early-nineteenth century outbuilding and the subsequent mid-to-late nineteenth century outbuildings, which are arranged around two yards, are good examples of their type and contribute to the setting of the house. The stone rubble boundary walls and the mature trees of the gardens and open landscape (to the north) contribute to the character and setting of the house. The house and grounds are prominent on Finisklin Road and help to define its character and sense of place.

Using the assessment criteria and categories of special interest set out in Chapter 2 of the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (Dept. of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, 2011), Rathellen House is of architectural, artistic, and historical interest. Using the NIAH criteria for assigning significance, Rathellen House is a building of Reginal Significance.

The NIAH defines 'Regional Significance' as applying to *'structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their region or area. They also stand in comparison with similar structures or sites in other regions or areas within Ireland'*[5]. Regional Significance is a very broad category within the NIAH survey, ranging from modest terraces or timber shopfronts that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage in their locality, to mid-size country houses, up to the grand Gothic Revival churches and cathedrals of the nineteenth century. Rathellen House sits firmly within the middle of this range. I note the key factors for assigning Regional Significance to this building as follows:

- The original dower house is one of a number of houses constructed by the Wood Family in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that collectively make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage of the locality.
- The modifications to Rathellen House, carried out by Henry Lyons post-1860, are of a high architectural quality and make a significant contribution to the architectural special interest of the house.
- The interior of the house contains examples of good craftsmanship, with fixtures and fittings such as the Tudor-arched details and the main staircase, that give the house special artistic interest[6].
- The house and outbuildings form an intact and coherent grouping in the landscape, which has not been compromised by the introduction of modern farm buildings or sheds.
- The regional rating stands in comparison to similar mid-size country houses covered by the NIAH survey in other regions and areas within Ireland.

The grounds include a number of structures and features that are directly linked the house and are of interest in their own right – including the outbuildings, boundary walls, and cut stone entrance piers. These features, together with the mature trees, contribute to the character and setting of the house. The curtilage of the house, comprising the grounds associated with its residential use, corresponds with the shaded area shown on the 25" map of 1888-1913 (shaded red on *Fig. 2* above).

5. TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RATHELLEN HOUSE IN DEVELOPMENT OF DESIGN PROPOSALS FOR THE HOUSE AND GROUNDS

While Rathellen House is not included on the RPS, the character and significance of the house, outbuildings, and other features within its curtilage, is regarded as an important consideration in the development of design proposals for the lands around the house. This Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment, which includes a conservation-led assessment of the significance of the house and outbuildings, is an important component of the application documents. The conservation strategy is to seek to identify and mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the house. The overarching objective is to ensure that the design proposals take account of the significance of the house and its outbuildings and that the overall layout, massing, and scale, of the proposed new buildings should be appropriate to the special interest of the house.

6. CONDITION OF THE HOUSE

Rathellen House has been unoccupied for many years and has experienced significant deterioration due to extensive water ingress to all parts of the interior through the roof. During my initial inspection (January 2021) there was evidence of damage as a result of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

[5] NIAH Handbook, p.21 (Dept. of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, 2011)

[6] Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Section 2.5.11, p. 27 (Dept. of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, 2011)

Approximately 50% of the slates are missing from the roofs and the interior of the building is heavily saturated. The primary roof timbers and floor joists on the upper floors are extant but are likely to be significantly weakened through rot. Most of the floorboards at first floor level appear to have been removed. The plaster and lath ceilings at both first floor and ground floor level have, for the most part, collapsed into the ground floor rooms. The timber floorboards at ground floor level are saturated and soft through rot, with gaps where the floorboards have collapsed into the floor void below. The timber staircases at both ends of the house have become structurally weakened through rot and are unsafe to use.

While the water ingress has caused considerable damage to the internal fabric and finishes, the primary structure of the house appears to be reasonably intact. The roof structure and first floor joists, although saturated, remain in place and the structural timbers have not collapsed into the interior. The structural cross walls and chimney breast are all intact and are contributing to stability of the structure. I did not identify significant cracking or settlement in the loadbearing walls. The plaster and architectural features are substantially intact on the perimeter walls of the internal rooms. Established wild sycamore trees were abutting the external facades in a number of locations in January 2021 and were subsequently cut by Sligo County Council. There is no significant vegetation growth on the interior.

Fig. 10 Missing slates from roof of south gable (20/1/21)

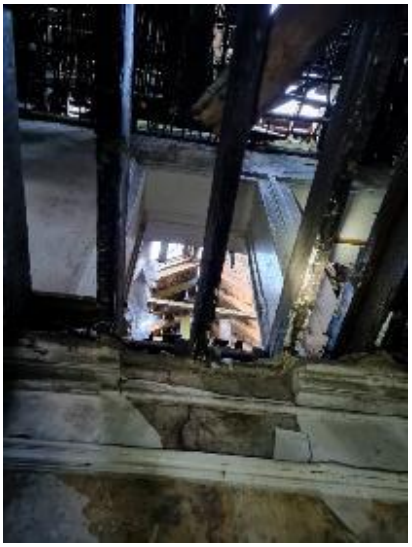


Fig. 11 Floor joists of first floor structure (20/1/21)

Fig. 12 Mature trees rooted immediately beside the south-east corner of the house (20/1/21)

From visual inspection, I estimate that the loss of the roof covering and associated heavy water ingress took place within the last five years. It is possible that a single incident such as major storm damage or the theft of lead from the roof may have accelerated this deterioration. While the damage to the building is considerable, it has not yet reached the stage where the condition of the building is irretrievable.

The condition of the outbuildings is very similar to the main house. The external walls appear to be intact and reasonably stable. The roof coverings, and in some locations the roof structure, are missing across most of these buildings and there has been prolonged water ingress. There south portion of the linear outbuilding (Outbuilding B) has a metal deck roof and is fully weathered.

The ground floor window and door openings were secured with sheet metal at some point in the past. During my January 2021 inspection, the building was open to anyone who wishes to enter. It was clear that the house is regularly accessed for drinking parties and antisocial behaviour, and I noted a large (waist-high) pile of discarded cans in one of the smaller rooms on the west side of the house. While I could see no evidence of deliberate vandalism or arson within the house or outbuildings, the lack of security posed an immediate risk – of damage to the house and of serious injury (or death) to persons entering the house. A number of short-term measures, as outlined in Section 7 below, were taken by Sligo County Council to secure the building since my initial inspection in January 2021

7. ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE JANUARY 2021 TO SECURE THE HOUSE AND OUTBUILDINGS IN THE SHORT-TO-MEDIUM TERM

The following actions took place to secure the fabric of Rathellen House and to make the building safe, on foot of recommendations following my inspection of 20th January 2021:

a) The reinstatement of lockable steel shutters on the outside of the porch door and west door and on any ground floor windows that were unprotected. This has reduced the immediate risk of arson or further vandalism. It also minimises the risk of personal injury to intruders.

b) The loose architectural features that were lying within the house, yards, outbuildings, and grounds, have been retrieved and placed in a secure, dry and well-ventilated location within one of the outbuildings. Further work is to be carried out to ensure that each item is labelled, noting the location where it was found, and photographed before being placed in storage. An inventory of these features will be compiled and retained for future reference. Intact fittings and features – such as doors, window shutters, skirting boards and architraves – will be retained in situ. It is intended that larger features – such as the staircases and the three-arched timber screen within the east – will be propped/protected and kept in place.

c) In tandem with the removal of salvageable material, any remaining debris has been removed. This will facilitate a more detailed inspection of the floor surfaces at ground floor level. The removal of water-retaining material, such as collapsed plaster and lathe ceilings, will help to dry the building out and allow better air movement throughout the building.

d) The self-seeded vegetation has been cut back from around the house and outbuildings. This has improved passive surveillance, by allowing clear lines of sight to the house.

8. OVERARCHING CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development comprises the provision of social housing on the grounds to the rear (south) of Rathellen House. From the earliest stage in the design process the special interest and significance of Rathellen House has been recognised in the development of a design strategy for the site. The house, which is currently in very poor condition, will be restored and adapted to accommodate converted into four own-door housing units as the centrepiece of the development. The detached linear farm range, connected to the main house by a curved wall to its immediate west, will be conserved to accommodate two own-door houses. The designed landscape to the north of Rathellen House, with its mature trees and stone rubble boundary wall onto Finiskiln Road, will be retained as communal open space for the development. This will ensure that the landscaped setting of Rathellen House is maintained and protected.

The proposed design has been developed through close collaboration between the project architects and the conservation architect. Key conservation decisions included:

- Alternative site layouts for the proposed new houses were reviewed, with the pros and cons of each option carefully considered. The option of locating the houses units to the north of the side, between the house and Finiskiln Road was examined. This would have allowed the retention of more of the nineteenth century outbuildings and stone rubble walls, associated with the west (outer) courtyard. It was considered that the introduction of housing on the landscaped grounds between the house and the road would have a significant and unacceptable negative impact on the historic setting and established views of Rathellen House. On balance it was considered that the location of the new housing to the sides and rear (south) of the house was the preferred option, being less impactful on its setting of Rathellen House and on the established character of Finiskiln Road.

- The proposed scheme will involve the removal of a number of outbuildings and stone walls to the west and south of the house. This is required to provide sufficient space for the required housing without encroaching on the sensitive landscape to the front (north) of the house. The retention, conservation and refurbishment (as housing) of the linear farm range to the immediate west of the house, will ensure that a representative example of the nineteenth century outbuildings survives and is incorporated into the scheme in a meaningful way.

- The stone rubble boundary wall to Finiskiln Road (to the north) and Sea Road (to the west) will be retained. This wall, which steps down to allow views of the front façade of Rathellen House, is an important feature on Finiskiln Road and makes a significant contribution to the setting of the house.

- The decision to retain, restore and re-use Rathellen House will ensure the survival of this important building, which is not currently on the Record of Protected Structures. The house, which is currently in very poor condition, will be conserved and restored in accordance with best conservation practice. The subdivision of the house into four two-storey houses, will utilise the existing north-south load-bearing internal partition walls. This will ensure that the historic plan form is retained with minimal alteration. Surviving internal features, - panelled timber doors, window shutters, recessed niches, fire surrounds, and decorative joinery – will be retained and incorporated into the housing units. The existing stair locations at the east and west end of the house will be retained, with the new staircases to incorporate and replicate salvaged joinery from the existing. On the exterior,

the natural slate roof, chimneys, decorative eaves, and historic windows will be restored following best conservation practice.

- The principle of a loose fit has been adopted in the design and layout of the new houses that will be contained within the retained house and linear outbuilding. The size and number of rooms in these new housing units was determined by the available floor area within each section of the building. The design of the proposed houses with the linear farm range utilises the existing volume of this outbuilding with minimal change - providing a one-bedroom unit in the single-storey part of the range (to the north) and a two-storey two-bedroom unit in the two-storey part of the range (to the south). A number of modest contemporary interventions are proposed – a small front porch, a single-storey rear bay window (to the rear yard), and a zinc-clad dormer window at the south end of the range. These additions have been carefully considered to avoid overpowering the composition of the farm range.

- The refurbishment of the retained nineteenth century structures will use traditional lime-based materials for the mortar, internal plasters and external renders, to ensure that the vapour permeability of the traditional masonry construction is maintained. The thermal upgrading of the fabric will utilise hygroscopic materials – such as hemp roof insulation, diathonite and calcium silicate board wall linings – to achieve a high level of energy efficiency without compromising the vapour permeability of the structural walls.

- The mature ornamental trees immediately adjacent to the house are to be retained and incorporated into the landscape.

- The vehicular entrance to the development will be via a new entrance road off Sea Road, to the south-west of the house. This avoids visual impact on the landscaped grounds to the front (north) of the house. The late-nineteenth century entrance gates onto Finiskiln Road (to the north of the house) will be retained and relocated, with the former avenue providing pedestrian and cycle access to the development. A perimeter footpath and cycleway are proposed on the inside of the stone rubble boundary wall along Finiskiln Road. This pathway has been placed close to the wall to minimise its impact on the grounds to the front of the house.

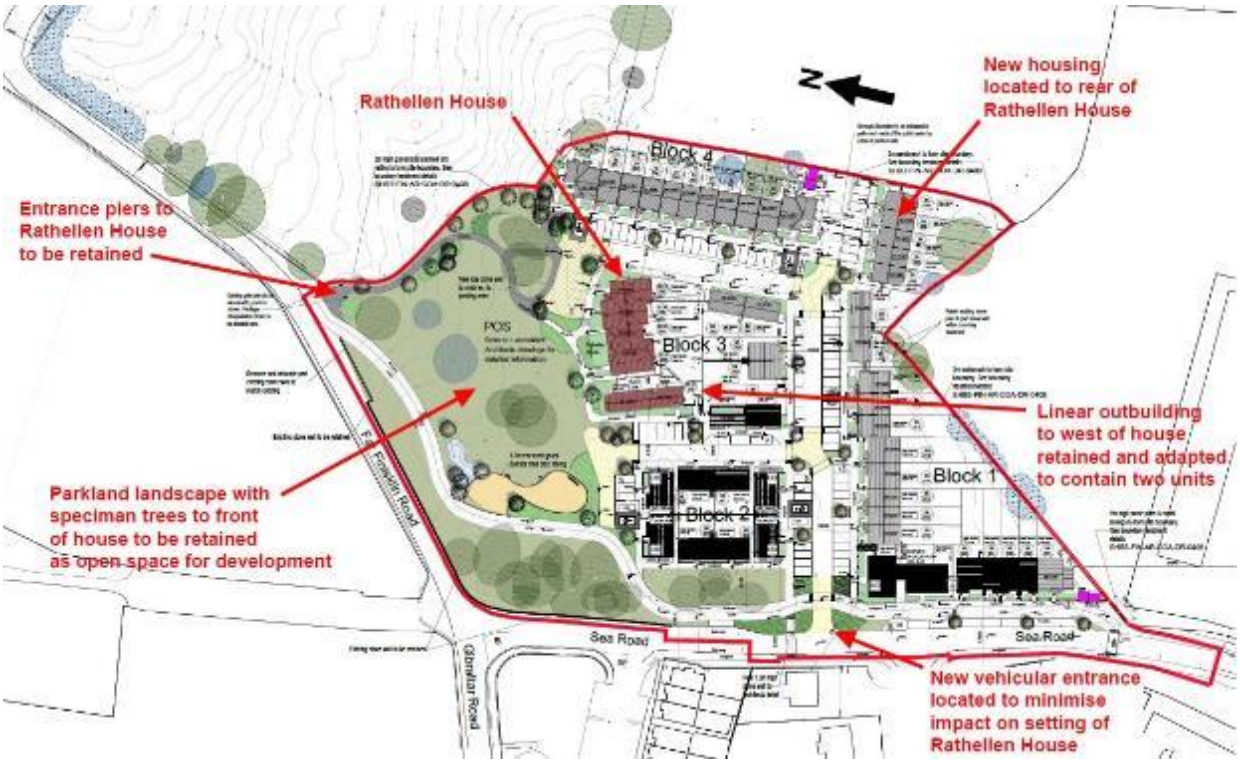


Fig. 13 Annotated extract from proposed site plan, showing the new housing located to the rear of Rathellen House. Established views of the front (north) of the house across the parkland landscape from Finiskiln Road will be maintained.

9. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT – RATHELLEN HOUSE

Rathellen House is to be conserved, restored and converted into four own-door houses. The key impacts of this proposal on Rathellen House, with recommended mitigation measures (in italics), are noted below. Room numbers, where noted, are as annotated on the COADY Architects' existing floor plans.

a) New entrance doors on front (north) façade of Rathellen House

The subdivision of the interior of Rathellen House will require the formation of three new door openings:

- The front door to Unit 2C-R(east) will be through the existing timber frame and glass porch, which will be repaired and conserved. No new external door opening is required in this location.
- An existing window opening will be converted to an entrance door, giving access to Unit 3C-R.
- An existing window opening will be converted to an entrance door, giving access to Unit 2D-R.
- An existing window opening will be converted to an entrance door, giving access to Unit 3D-R.

The creation of three new door openings represents a change to the front (north) elevational treatment of Rathellen House. The conservation and re-use of the existing entrance porch reduces the number of new door openings and will make a positive contribution to the conservation and presentation of the house. The new entrance door (to Unit 3D-R) at the west end of the façade will involve alterations to a window opening of lesser architectural significance (on the north façade of the lean-to west annex) and will involve a modest impact on the house. The creation of the proposed door openings serving Unit 3C-R and 2D-R, will involve the removal of masonry below the existing sill level and the loss of surviving and intact internal shutters. While the resulting negative physical impacts on the historic building are unavoidable, the proposed new door openings will maintain the head height of the existing opening and will incorporate a glazed overlight to carefully replicate the glazing of the existing sash windows. The spacing of the new front doors and the retention of the existing head height will minimise the visual impact on the front (north) façade and, in particular, on views of the house from Finiskiln Road.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *Subdivision of the open space to the front of the four residential units within Rathellen House will be kept to a minimum, with no walls, railings or planting above 1 metre high. This will ensure that the Rathellen House, as viewed from the north, will continue to be read as a single uninterrupted façade.*

b) Private gardens to rear (south), with new garden access doors to be formed in external wall

The gardens to the immediate south of Rathellen House will be subdivided with post and panel boundary fences. The visual impact of the new fences and the subdivided rear (south) garden on the setting of Rathellen House will be screened by the gardens and fencing of the proposed new houses to the immediate south.

Three new door openings are proposed on the south external wall, giving access from Units 3C-R, 2D-R, and 3D-R, to their individual rear gardens. A new door opening is also proposed on the east external wall, giving access from Unit 2C-R. The creation of these new door openings will result in the loss of physical fabric from the external walls of the house and will have a visual impact on the presentation of the south façade. The creation of these new external doors provide essential connectivity to the private rear gardens and are unavoidable, to facilitate the proposed new use of Rathellen House. The design and location of these new doors has been selected to avoid physical alteration to the existing windows at Units 2C-R, 3C-R, and 2D-R. The door openings, which are single-leaf width and have a lower head height, are subservient to the (larger) window openings on the south and east façade. The new entrance door (to Unit 3D-R) at the west end of the façade will involve alterations to a window opening of lesser architectural significance (on the south façade of the lean-to west annex), having a modest visual impact on the house.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *The new doors shall be of timber frame construction, painted, glazed with one panel of glass, so that they are visually different and subservient to the existing windows.*
- *The glazed side panel to the new south external door at Unit 3D-R shall be of timber frame construction, painted, and glazed with one panel of glass.*

c) Subdivision of house into four residential units

The overarching conservation objective is to secure the future of Rathellen House as the centrepiece of the new housing development within its grounds. A number of possible options for the re-use of Rathellen House were carefully considered during the initial stages of the design. While the optimum conservation solution, as with any historic building, would be to retain the building in its original use as a single dwelling, this was not feasible given the floor area of the house, the high cost of addressing the decay and dereliction of the fabric, and its location within a new housing development of much smaller dwellings. The option of subdividing the house into two (semi-detached) residential units was also considered but also resulted in excessively large houses which would not be viable within the overall scheme. The proposed subdivision of the house into four units creates units of an appropriate size to facilitate the refurbishment, repair, and re-use, of this architecturally important and highly vulnerable derelict building.

The layout of the proposed new residential units within Rathellen House follows the principle of a 'loose fit', retaining and utilising the primary internal load-bearing walls of the existing building as the party walls between the new residential units. The larger reception rooms, to the south and east at ground floor level, will form the primary reception rooms of the new residential units. These measures were identified as important objectives during initial discussions between the conservation architect and the project architects. This approach will minimise the impact of the new layout on the historic floor plan. Where new partitions are required, these will be of lightweight stud construction and can be readily removed if required in the future. Where existing openings are to be blocked up, this will be carried out in brick and lime mortar (with no cement content).

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *Existing door openings within the internal walls shall be blocked with brick and traditional lime mortar to achieve the require fire and acoustic separation, to include a 50mm recess on both sides. The existing architraves and door linings will be refurbished and incorporated into these blocked openings. The existing panelled timber doors will be fixed within the openings, in a limited number of locations as noted on the drawings. These measures will give prominence to the location of the former openings and will ensure that visual evidence of the existing layout is incorporated into the refurbished residential units.*

- *A detailed inventory of architectural features on the upper floors is to be prepared by a suitably qualified conservation professional and submitted to Sligo County Council for review. The purpose of this inventory is to highlight previously unrecorded features of significance and to facilitate review and agreement on how these might be incorporated into the refurbished building.*

The impacts of the fit-out and internal alterations of each unit are separately discussed below.

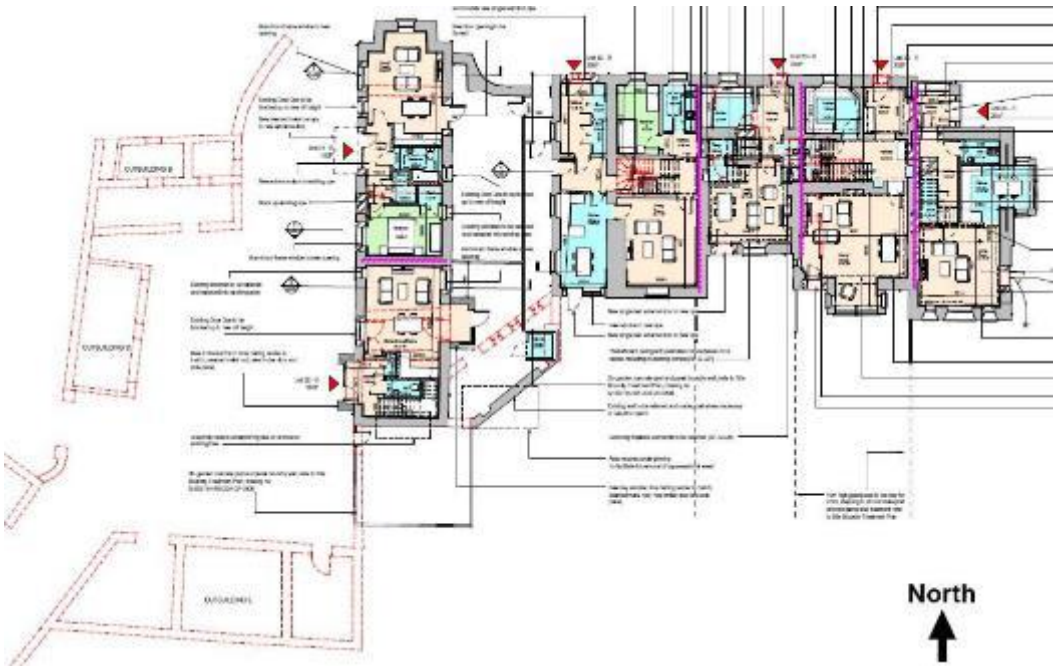


Fig. 14 Extract from proposed ground floor layout plan for Rathellen House and outbuilding. The primary load-bearing masonry walls (dotted pink) will act as the party walls between the new residential units.

d) Existing staircases

The existing staircases within the house comprise the main staircase (in Rm-004, off the main entrance) and a service staircase at the west end of the house (RM-015). Both staircases are in a state of collapse due to prolonged saturation and resulting rot. The main staircase, which leads to the first floor landing, is missing its balustrade and rails. The (west) service staircase, which serves the first floor and attic level and was historically used as servant's accommodation, retains its balustrade and is more intact.

The extent of the rot means that these existing staircases will need to be dismantled and reassembled to form new staircases in the same location, within Unit 3C-R and 3D-R. The existing staircase joinery will be carefully dismantled by a skilled conservation joiner. All intact features – including newel posts, balustrade rails, handrails, and decorative timber details – will be carefully salvaged and re-used.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *A detailed inspection is to be carried out during the disassembly of both staircases by a suitably qualified conservation professional to identify and record the extent of salvageable material. Following this inspection, a detailed inventory will be submitted to Sligo County Council, together with a detailed drawing showing how the salvaged material will be incorporated into the reconstructed staircase, for review and agreement. All material from the staircase, both rotten and intact, is to be securely retained until the detail of the proposed reconstruction has been agreed.*

Fig. 15 Main staircase (Rm-004)

Fig. 16 Service staircase (Rm-015)

e) Proposed Unit 2C-R (east end of house)

Unit 2C-R will occupy the glazed entrance porch (Rm-001) and the large east reception room (Rm-003), together with the first floor accommodation overhead (currently laid out as two large interconnecting bedrooms). Architectural features of note include:

Ground Floor:	• The timber frame glazed porch structure (Rm-001), including leaded glass, double-doors, and sheeted timber ceiling. • Polychromatic floor tiles in geometric pattern on the floor of the porch • A tripartite Tudor-arched timber screen (Rm-003), located directly below a structural beam at first floor level. • Decorative plaster ceiling cornice (Rm-003, in poor condition)

	• Panelled timber doors (Rm-003) • Projecting bay window (Rm-003), with casement windows incorporating leaded glass, and panelled timber sliding shutters. • Timber sash windows (Rm-003), with window surrounds incorporating panelled timber shutters. • Nineteenth century skirting boards, architraves, and picture rails.
First Floor:	• Decorative plaster ceiling cornice (Rm-103 & 104, in poor condition) • Timber sash windows (Rm-103 & 104), with window surrounds incorporating panelled timber shutters. • Nineteenth century skirting boards and architraves • Arched recess (Rm-103, to south of chimney breast

The above features are to be conserved and retained within the new residential unit, as indicated on the drawings. The decorative ceiling cornices, which survive in poor condition, will be cleaned of excess paint and used to make replacement replica cornices. Missing or badly damaged sections of skirting board and architrave will be replaced in replica. It is anticipated that additional features of interest will be identified once safe access is provided to the first floor. Sligo County Council will be notified of all such discoveries, as the works progress, to facilitate agreement on how they are to be incorporated into the refurbished building.

The refurbished accommodation will provide a three-bedroom, six-person, dwelling unit. A new door opening is to be formed between the front porch and the ground floor living accommodation. The existing partition, of timber stud, plaster and lath, construction, at first floor level is to be removed. Internal alterations are proposed at both ground floor and first floor level. These include, new timber and stud partitions, a new kitchen and bathroom will be introduced, and a new timber staircase (to be located on the west side of Rm-003. The room layout has been developed to optimise the presentation of the former east reception room within the refurbished accommodation. The decorative Tudor-arched screen, which is of delicate timber construction, is to be relocated so that it is immediately in front of a partition. This will protect this important architectural feature, while ensuring that it remains visible as an important feature within the living room of the new house.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *A detailed inspection is to be carried out by a suitably qualified conservation professional once safe access is available to all floor levels, to identify and record all features of architectural interest. Following this inspection, a detailed inventory, together with detailed proposals for how the identified features will be incorporated into the refurbished house, will be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement.*

f) Proposed Unit 3C-R

Unit 2C-R will occupy the entrance hall (Rm-002), main staircase (Rm-004), reception room (Rm-005, with ancillary storage rooms), and a small room to the north (Rm-008), on the ground floor, together with the first floor accommodation overhead – comprising the main landing (Rm-101), a large room to the north (Rm-102) and a large room to the south (Rm-105). Architectural features of note include:

Ground Floor:	• The main staircase (Rm-004, see 9d above) • Decorative plaster ceiling cornices (Rm-005 & Rm-008, in poor condition) • Gothic-arched timber doorcases, with leaded glass overlights (Rm-002 & Rm-003) • Gothic-arched niche recesses (Rm-004) • Panelled timber door (loose, retrieved from Rm-005) • Projecting bay window (Rm-005), with timber sash windows, panelled timber reveals with decorative Tudor-style timber arch. • Timber sash windows (Rm-002 & Rm-008), with window surrounds incorporating panelled timber shutters. • Tiled fireplace insert (Rm-005) • Small storage rooms, with fixed shelving (Rm-006 & Rm-007, off Rm-005) • Nineteenth century skirting boards, architraves, and picture rails.
First Floor:	• Decorative plaster ceiling cornice (Rm-101, 102 & 105, in poor condition) • The main staircase (Rm-004, see 9d above)

	• Timber sash windows (Rm-102 & 105), with window surrounds incorporating panelled timber shutters. • Early-twentieth century fire surround (Rm-1002) • Panelled timber doors, paired with matching panelled timber blind door, within decorative arched surround, on north and south side of landing (Rm-101) • Nineteenth century skirting boards and architraves

The small storage rooms (Rm-006 & Rm-007) are to be removed. All of the other features noted above are to be conserved and retained within the new residential unit, as indicated on the drawings. The decorative ceiling cornices, which survive in poor condition, will be cleaned of excess paint and used to make replacement replica cornices. Missing or badly damaged sections of skirting board and architrave will be replaced in replica. It is anticipated that additional features of interest will be identified once safe access is provided to the first floor. Sligo County Council will be notified of all such discoveries, as the works progress, to facilitate agreement on how they are to be incorporated into the refurbished building.

The refurbished accommodation will provide a three-bedroom, six-person, dwelling unit. Internal alterations are proposed at both ground floor and first floor level. These include, new timber and stud partitions, new kitchen and bathrooms. The room layout has been developed to optimise the presentation of the former south reception room (Rm-005) within the refurbished accommodation.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *A detailed inspection is to be carried out by a suitably qualified conservation professional once safe access is available to all floor levels, to identify and record all features of architectural interest. Following this inspection, a detailed inventory, together with detailed proposals for how the identified features will be incorporated into the refurbished house, will be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement.*

- *Detailed drawings of the proposed first floor bathroom, to demonstrate that the new partition wall will not conceal any part of the decorative arched surround to the panelled timber doors on both sides of the first floor landing (Rm-101).*

g) Proposed Unit 2D-R

Unit 2D-R will include a large reception room (Rm-012) to the south, a section of corridor (Rm-011), and two smaller rooms (Rm-009 & Rm-010) to the north, together with the first floor rooms overhead (Rm-106, Rm-107, Rm-108, Rm-109 & Rm-110). Architectural features of note include:

Ground Floor:	• Decorative plaster ceiling cornice (Rm-010, in poor condition) • Panelled timber doors (Rm-009, Rm-010, Rm-011 & Rm-012) • Timber sash windows (Rm-009, Rm-010 & Rm-012), with window surrounds incorporating panelled timber shutters. • Nineteenth century skirting boards, architraves, and picture rails.
First Floor:	• Decorative plaster ceiling cornices (Rm-108 & Rm-110, in poor condition) • Panelled timber doors (Rm-107, Rm-108, Rm-109 & Rm-110) • Timber sash windows (Rm-106, Rm-107, Rm-108 & Rm-110), with window surrounds incorporating panelled timber shutters. • Nineteenth century skirting boards, architraves, and picture rails.

The features noted above are to be conserved and retained within the new residential unit, as indicated on the drawings. The decorative ceiling cornices, which survive in poor condition, will be cleaned of excess paint and used to make replacement replica cornices. Missing or badly damaged sections of skirting board and architrave will be replaced in replica. It is anticipated that additional features of interest will be identified once safe access is provided to the first floor. Sligo County Council will be notified of all such discoveries, as the works progress, to facilitate agreement on how they are to be incorporated into the refurbished building.

The refurbished accommodation will provide a two-bedroom, three-person, dwelling unit. Internal alterations are proposed at both ground floor and first floor level. These include a new staircase, new timber and stud partitions, new kitchen and bathrooms. The room layout has been developed to optimise the presentation of the former south reception room within the refurbished accommodation.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *A detailed inspection is to be carried out by a suitably qualified conservation professional once safe access is available to all floor levels, to identify and record all features of architectural interest. Following this inspection, a detailed inventory, together with detailed proposals for how the identified features will be incorporated into the refurbished house, will be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement.*

- *Detailed designs are to be developed showing revised storage arrangements at ground floor level, based on the retention of the existing door opening (Rm-012) and the omission of storage within Rm-012. Revised drawings showing the final layout of storage within Unit 2D-R are to be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement prior to construction.*

h) Proposed Unit 3D-R (west end of house)

Unit 3D-R will include the former kitchen (Rm-016) and ancillary rooms at the west end of the house and in the west lean-to annex (Rm-013, Rm-014, Rm-015, Rm-017, Rm-018 & Rm-019), together with the first floor rooms overhead (Rm-111, Rm-112 & Rm-113). This unit includes the former service staircase at the west end of the house. Architectural features of note include:

Ground Floor:	• Former service staircase (Rm-015, see 9d above) • Timber and glass screen (Rm-013) • Terra cotta floor tiles (Rm-015) • Panelled timber doors (Rm-013, Rm-014, Rm-016 & Rm-017) • Timber sash windows (Rm-013, Rm-014, Rm-016, Rm-017 & Rm-019), with window surrounds incorporating panelled timber shutters. • Nineteenth century skirting boards, architraves, and picture rails.
First Floor:	• Former service staircase (Rm-112, see 9d above) • Decorative plaster ceiling cornice (Rm-112, in poor condition) • Panelled timber doors (Rm-107, Rm-108, Rm-109 & Rm-110) • Timber sash windows (Rm-106, Rm-107, Rm-108 & Rm-110), with window surrounds incorporating panelled timber shutters. • Nineteenth century skirting boards, architraves, and picture rails.

The features noted above are to be conserved and retained within the new residential unit, as indicated on the drawings. The decorative ceiling cornices, which survive in poor condition, will be cleaned of excess paint and used to make replacement replica cornices. Missing or badly damaged sections of skirting board and architrave will be replaced in replica. It is anticipated that additional features of interest will be identified once safe access is provided to the first floor. Sligo County Council will be notified of all such discoveries, as the works progress, to facilitate agreement on how they are to be incorporated into the refurbished building.

The refurbished accommodation will provide a three-bedroom, five-person, dwelling unit. Internal alterations are proposed at both ground floor and first floor level. These include new timber and stud partitions, new kitchen and bathrooms. The room layout has been developed to optimise the presentation of the former kitchen (Rm-016, as the main living room within the refurbished accommodation.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *A detailed inspection is to be carried out by a suitably qualified conservation professional once safe access is available to all floor levels, to identify and record all features of architectural interest. Following this inspection, a detailed inventory, together with detailed proposals for how the identified features will be incorporated into the refurbished house, will be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement.*

i) Conservation Specification for works to Rathellen House

The repair, conservation and refurbishment of the house will be carried out in accordance with the guidance contained in the architectural heritage *Advice* series, published by the Architectural Heritage Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The repair of the roofs will include for the salvage and re-use of surviving slates, with replacement slates to match, the retention and spliced repair of the structural roof timbers, and replacement cast iron rainwater goods to match the existing. The surviving timber sash and casement windows will be conserved, using spliced repairs, and draft-proofed. All cementitious render on the exterior and cementitious (or gypsum-based) plasters on the interior will be removed.

It is anticipated that the internal floor timbers will require extensive replacement and that new ceilings will be required throughout. These new ceilings will comprise plasterboard, to achieve the acoustic and fire-separation requirements of the brief and will be fitted with replica cornices in the locations noted in this report and the Part 8 planning drawings. The thermal performance of the walls will be upgraded through the introduction of hygroscopic insulation lining to the internal face of the external walls.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *The proposed works are to be carried out under the direction of an experienced conservation professional, qualified or accredited equivalent to RIAI conservation accreditation at Grade 2 (minimum) or Grade 1.*
- *Conservation works to ensure that Rathellen House is made fully weatherproof will take place in the first phase of construction of the proposed development.*
- *A detailed conservation-led specification and scope of works is to be prepared by the conservation professional once safe access is available to all floor levels and will be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement.*
- *A detailed method statement, with accompanying drawings, illustrating the proposed thermal insulation to the inner face of the external walls. This will set out the locations where the thermal insulation is to be returned on the primary (load-bearing) internal partitions for a minimum distance of 1 metre from the external walls (to avoid cold bridges) and will demonstrate that the interface between the insulation and the reinstated ceiling cornices (where applicable) will not lead to visually inappropriate steps in the cornice line. This method statement and drawings will be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement prior to works on Rathellen House commencing*

10. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT – OUTBUILDING A

The linear outbuilding to the west of Rathellen House dates from the construction of the original dower house at the beginning of the nineteenth century and is shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map. A new projecting gable, with ornamental roundel window, and a connecting screen wall to Rathellen House, were added following the acquisition of the house by the Lyons family in the 1860's. The outbuilding comprises a 2-storey section with modern metal deck roof (to the south), and a 1½-storey section with collapsed slate roof (to the north).

Fig. 17 Outbuilding A, viewed from south-west corner of west farmyard (January 2020)

The proposed development will retain this linear outbuilding, which will contain two residential units – a one-bedroom, two-person, single-storey residential unit (Unit 1A), to the north; and a two-bedroom, three-person, two-storey unit (Unit 2E) to the south. The design of these two residential units follows the principle of a 'loose fit' with the primary load-bearing wall between the north and south parts of the outbuilding serving as the party wall between the two units. The curved screen wall between the north façade of the house and the outbuilding will be repaired and retained. This is an important component of established views of Rathellen House from Finiskiln Road. The existing (east) yard, between the house and outbuilding, will be subdivided to provide courtyard gardens for proposed Unit 1A and Unit 2E. A late-nineteenth century derelict link building (Rm-020, with no roof), to the south end of the existing yard, will be demolished, with its angled south wall consolidated and retained to a height of 2 metres.

Fig. 18 Interior of derelict link building on south side of east yard (Rm-020), which is to be demolished with the south external wall (on right) retained at 2 metres high as a garden wall to Unit 2E.

The repair, conservation and refurbishment of Outbuilding A will be carried out in accordance with the guidance contained in the architectural heritage *Advice* series, published by the Architectural Heritage Unit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The existing modern metal deck roof (to the south) will be removed, and the repair of the roofs will include for the salvage and re-use of surviving slates, with replacement slates to match, the retention and spliced repair of the structural roof timbers, and replacement cast iron rainwater goods to match the existing. A number of new window and door openings are proposed. These will be fitted with powder-coated aluminium frame windows, to provide a contrast with the retained timber windows of the main house. Unit 2E will include a single storey porch (to the west) and a single-storey bay window (to the east). These extensions, together with a flat roof overhang at the front (west) door to Unit 1A, will have standing seam metal deck roofs, introducing a high-quality contemporary material to contrast with the traditional slate roofs of the retained buildings. A number of masonry partition walls are to be removed at ground floor level. Internal alterations will include new timber and stud partitions, a new staircase (to Unit 2E), new kitchen and bathrooms.

The retention of Outbuilding A and its adaptation to contain two residential units is an important component of the scheme and will make a positive visual impact on the character and setting of Rathellen House within the proposed new development. The retention of this outbuilding will also ensure that a representative example of the historic outbuildings, which integral to the day-to-day life of Rathellen House throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, is retained within the new housing development.

In addition to the above, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *The proposed works are to be carried out under the direction of an experienced conservation professional, qualified or accredited equivalent to RIAI conservation accreditation at Grade 2 (minimum) or Grade 1.*

- *Conservation works to ensure that Outbuilding A is made fully weatherproof will take place in the first phase of construction of the proposed development.*

- *A detailed conservation-led specification and scope of works is to be prepared by the conservation professional once safe access is available to all parts of Outbuilding A and will be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement. This submission will include proposals for the incorporation of significant architectural features that may be discovered during the site investigations.*

11. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT – OUTBUILDINGS TO BE DEMOLISHED

The grounds of Rathellen House contain a number of outbuildings dating from the original construction of the house at the beginning of the nineteenth century and later development following the acquisition of the house by the Lyons family in the 1860's. Outbuilding A (see Section 10 above) is the most significant surviving outbuilding, in terms of its intactness and its contribution to the setting of Rathellen House. The remaining outbuildings (B, C, D, E, F & G) are in a derelict condition. None of these buildings have roofs and many are heavily overgrown with vegetation. During an initial conservation-led assessment of masterplan options for the proposed social housing development, the importance of the parkland setting to the north of Rathellen House was identified as being of high significance. After numerous layout studies, it was determined that it would be impossible to meet the requirements of the brief while also retaining outbuildings B, C, D, E, F & G. The location, size, condition, cost of restoration, and suitability for re-use, were important considerations in this assessment. The proposed development will involve the demolition of these outbuildings, as described below:

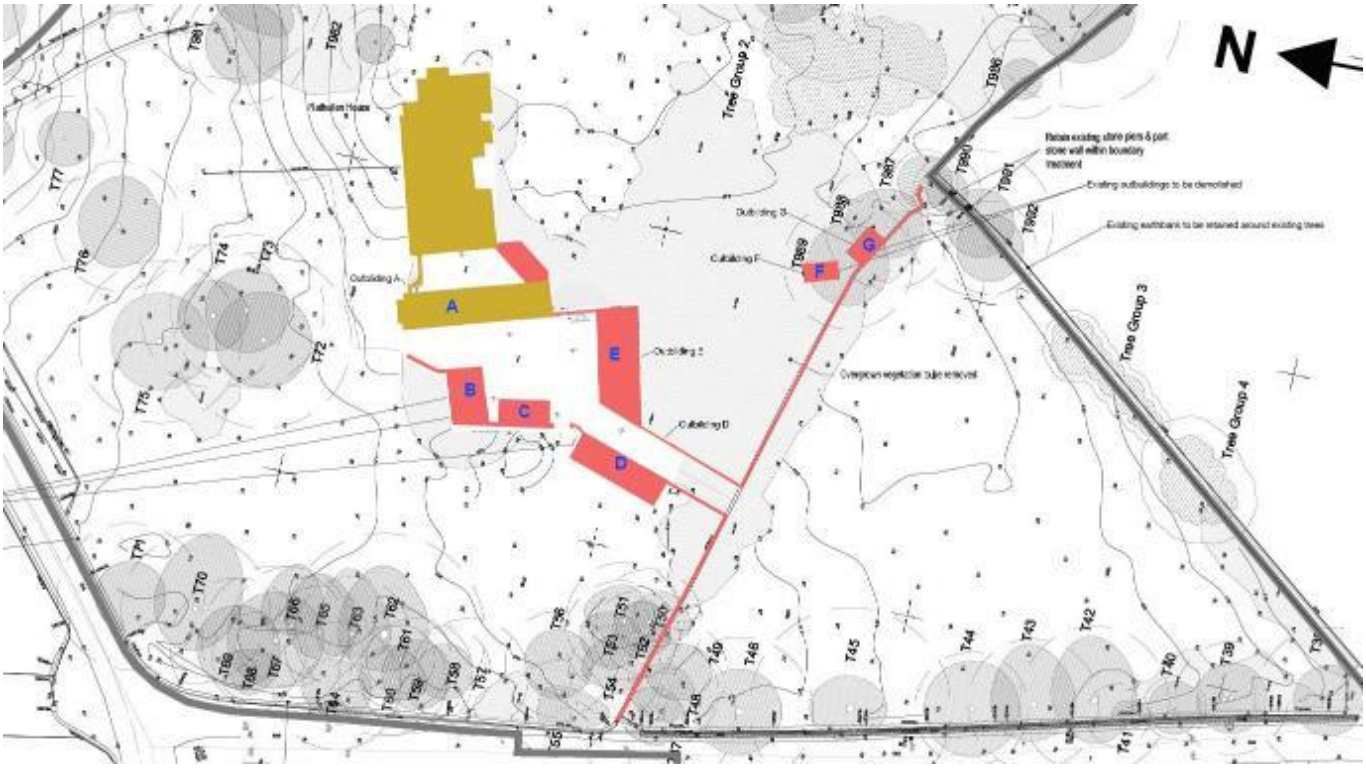


Fig. 19 Sketch site plan with the location of the outbuildings and stone rubble walls to be demolished shade red (not to scale)

<u>Outbuilding B:</u>

Derelict outbuilding of stone rubble construction, of late-nineteenth century date, with lean-to of brick construction attached to south. This building has been derelict for several decades, has no roof, and is heavily overgrown with vegetation, including self-seeding sycamore.

Fig. 20 Outbuilding B, viewed from north

Fig. 21 Ruined shell of Outbuilding B, with no roof and established mature trees growing inside; viewed from south

Outbuilding C:

Outbuilding dating from the late-nineteenth century, of stone rubble construction, incorporating cut stone corners and two brick carriage arches (on east façade). This building was constructed with a mono-pitch roof, which no longer survives. The west external wall is of brick construction, abutting an earlier stone rubble wall. This well-crafted building has been derelict for several decades, has no roof, and is heavily overgrown with vegetation, including self-seeding sycamore. There is a brick gate pier at the south-west corner.

Fig. 22 East façade of outbuilding C, viewed from yard

Fig. 23 Outbuilding C, viewed from west

Fig. 24 Monopitch gable of Outbuilding C, viewed from south.

Outbuilding D:

Ruined outbuilding of stone rubble construction; mono-pitch roof now collapsed; constructed 1860-90; located on west side of walled access lane to west yard.

Fig. 25 Ruined Outbuilding D, viewed from walled laneway (to east)

Outbuilding E:

Two-storey, late-nineteenth-century, outbuilding, of stone rubble construction, located on south side of west yard; with external steps to upper level. The roof has no slate covering and most of the roof timbers have collapsed. Sections of the timber upper floor structure survive and are severely weakened due to rot and prolonged saturation.

Fig. 26 North façade of Outbuilding D, viewed from yard.

Fig. 27 Outbuilding C, mass concrete external steps

Fig. 28 Collapsed upper floor at east end of Outbuilding C

Fig. 29 Structurally weakened upper floor at west end of Outbuilding C

Outbuilding F:

Lean-to outbuilding of stone rubble construction with brick facing; constructed 1880-1900. This building has been derelict for several decades, has no roof, and is heavily overgrown with vegetation.

Fig. 30 Outbuilding F

Outbuilding G:

Stone rubble lean-to shed, built against stone rubble wall; constructed 1880-1900. This building has been derelict for several decades, has no roof, and is heavily overgrown with vegetation.

Fig. 31 Outbuilding G

Prior to demolition taking place, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *All trees and vegetation within and surrounding these outbuildings is to be carefully cut back prior to any demolition. A full set of record drawings and photographs of each outbuilding shall be prepared, under the direction of a suitably qualified conservation professional, and shall be lodged with both Sligo County Council and the Irish Architectural Archive prior to demolition taking place.*

12. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT – GROUNDS AND SETTING OF RATHELLEN HOUSE

The road frontage of Rathellen House comprises stone rubble boundary walls onto Finiskiln Road (to the north) and Sea Road (to the south). The stone rubble wall is generally c.1.5-2 metres high along the west boundary, dropping in height along the (north) frontage of Finisklin Road to allow views of the house. The open parkland to the north of the house, which is dotted with mature native specimen trees, makes an important contribution to the setting of the house. There are a number of ornamental non-native trees to the north-east of the house, which appear to date from the late-nineteenth century and have now reached full height. The main entrance from Finisklin Road comprises a vehicular opening and a separate pedestrian entrance with cut limestone mid-to-late nineteenth century piers, which have been overpainted and crudely fitted with replacement galvanised gates. The grounds include a number of stone rubble walls, which historically provided separation between agricultural activity and the pleasure gardens of Rathellen House.

The stone rubble boundary wall along the road frontage is to be repaired and retained in situ. A section of the wall is to be dismantled and reconstructed at the same height to a new configuration to meet road engineering guidelines. A new vehicular entrance is proposed on Sea Road, as shown on the drawings.

Fig. 31 Rathellen House, with gable-fronted outbuilding (Outbuilding A) to its right, viewed across the open parkland landscape from Finiskiln Road to the north. The stone rubble boundary wall onto Finisklin Road is to be retained with some local reconstruction.

The open parkland to the north of Rathellen House is to be maintained as open space amenity associated with the development. The specimen trees associated with the parkland setting are to be retained in this area and will be protected during the works. A new pedestrian and cycle pathway is to be introduced on the inside of the front (north) boundary wall. This will be kept close to the boundary wall, to minimise its intrusion on the parkland setting. A new play area, with some playground equipment, will be introduced at the western edge of the parkland close to a mature bank of trees. This location has been selected to minimise any visual impact on the setting of Rathellen House.

The cut limestone entrance gates onto Finiskiln Road, at the north-east corner of the site, are to be retained and moved to a new location, slightly further back from the public road, framing access to the former entrance driveway, which will be retained as a pedestrian and cycle route into the proposed housing development.

Most of the internal stone rubble walls, to the south and west of Rathellen House, will need to be demolished to facilitate the proposed new housing scheme.

Prior to the start of construction, the following mitigation measures shall be adopted:

- *A detailed methodology for all works to the boundary walls and other features noted above, is to be prepared by a suitably qualified conservation professional and shall be submitted to Sligo County Council for review and agreement.*

- *All stone and brick arising from the demolition of the boundary walls, is to be salvaged and retained for use in the repair of the retained buildings and boundary walls during the course of the development.*

- *Any loose architectural features, such as chimney pots, ridge tiles, or cut stones, found during the initial site clearance are to be retained and protected to facilitate inspection and assessment by the project conservation professional.*

13. CONCLUSION

Rathellen House is an early-nineteenth century former dower house, which was substantially extended in the late-nineteenth century. The house is of architectural, artistic and historical interest, and contributes to the character and setting of Finisklin Road. There grounds contain a number of good quality nineteenth century outbuildings that are grouped around two yards to the east of the house. The stone rubble boundary walls, to the north and west add to the setting of the house. Rathellen House has been vacant for many years. Sections of the roof have collapsed. There is extensive water ingress through the roof and the interior is thoroughly saturated. While the house is in poor condition, it retains a considerable number of well-crafted features on the interior and exterior that contribute to its significance. The proposed development will salvage and secure these features and provide it with an appropriate sustainable future.

While Rathellen House is not recorded in the published NIAH survey and is not included on the current Record of Protected Structures, this should not be regarded as meaning that the house and outbuildings are not of significance. The architectural character, fabric and features of the house, together with its historical associations with the Wood family, all contribute to its interest and are comparable with similar buildings that have a NIAH Regional rating. From the outset of the design process, the significance of the house and outbuildings has been considered as an important planning consideration in respect of proposals to develop the lands surrounding the house.

The retention, adaptation and re-use of Rathellen House, together with the most intact of its larger outbuildings, is a very significant conservation gain and will enhance the quality and character of the proposed new housing development. Particular care has been taken with the landscaping design of any the proposed development within the grounds of Rathellen House to include adequate space for the appropriate presentation of the house and its retained linear farm range.

Prepared by: **Michael O'Boyle B.ARCH MUBC FRIAI**
RIAI Grade 1 Conservation Architect
MICHAEL O'BOYLE ARCHITECTURE + CONSERVATION

Date: **9th February 2022**

APPENDIX A

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF RATHELLEN HOUSE

Ground floor photographs taken 20th January 2021, 30th September 2021, and 19th November 2021. First floor photographs taken 19th November 2021. This appendix is to be read in conjunction with Appendix B, which shows the viewpoint of each photograph on ground and first floor layout plans of the house.

EXTERIOR OF RATHELLEN HOUSE

A1: Rear (south) façade of Rathellen House, viewed from south-east corner of Outbuilding A

A2: Front (north) façade, viewed from entrance avenue

A3: East gable of Rathellen House

A4: Detail of roof finish and chimney stack on east side of house

A5: Rear (south) facade

A6: Rear (south) facade

A7: Entrance porch at north-east corner of house

A8: Front façade of house, with Outbuilding A, viewed from south-west

INTERIOR – GROUND FLOOR

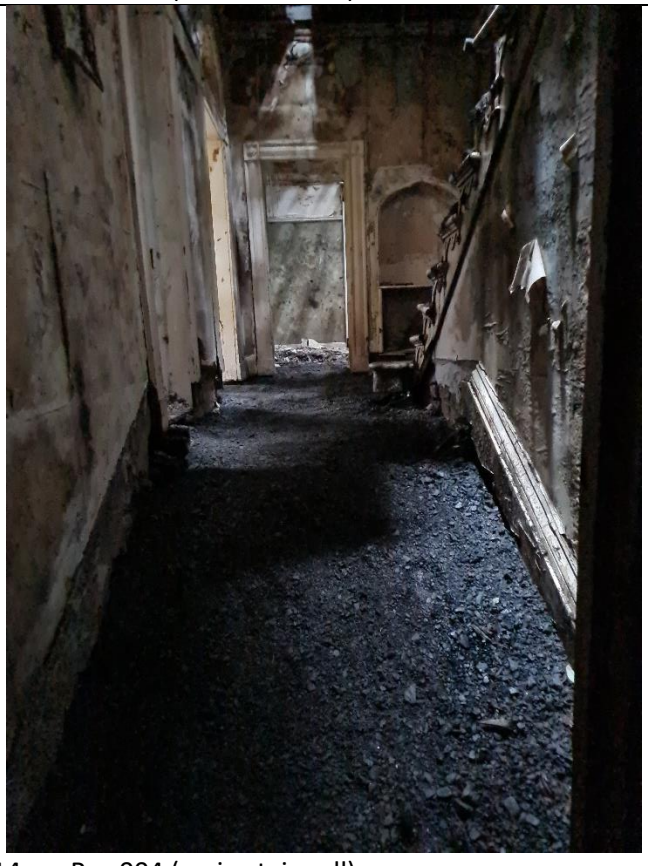
A9: Rm-001 (entrance porch)

A10: Rm-001 (entrance porch)

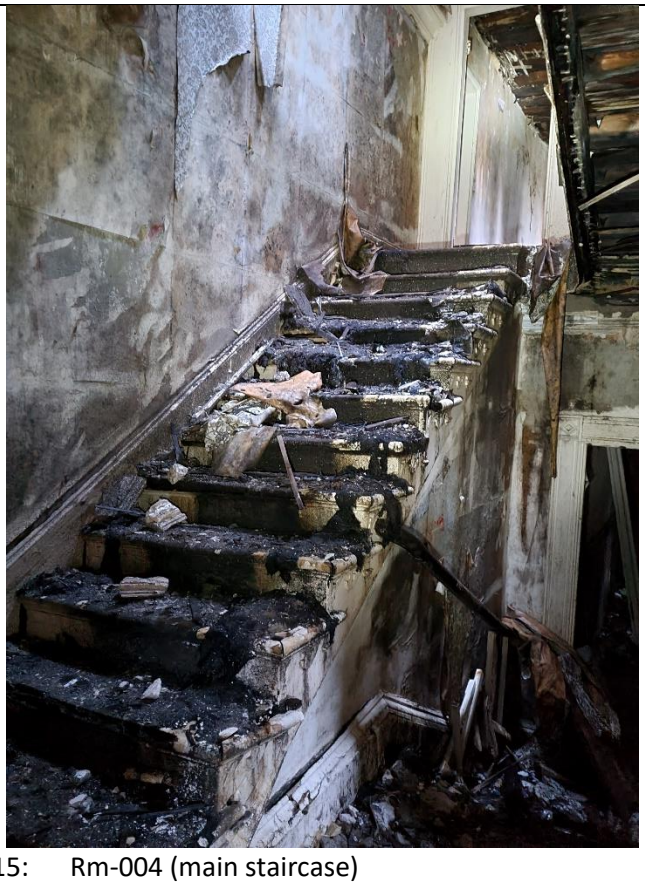
A11: Rm-002 (entrance hall)

A12: Rm-002 (entrance hall)

A13: Rm-004 (main stairwell)



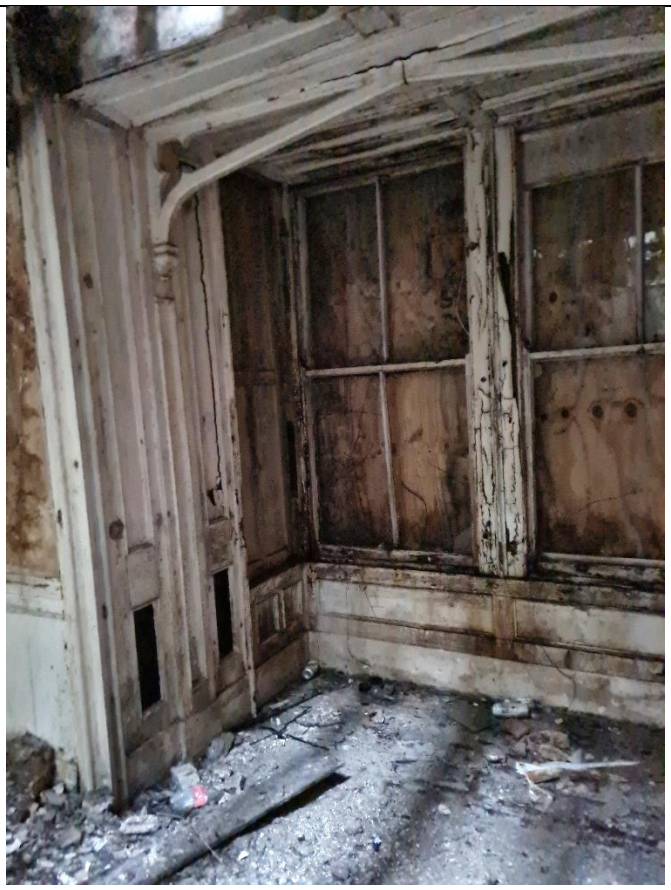
A14: Rm-004 (main stairwell)



A15: Rm-004 (main staircase)

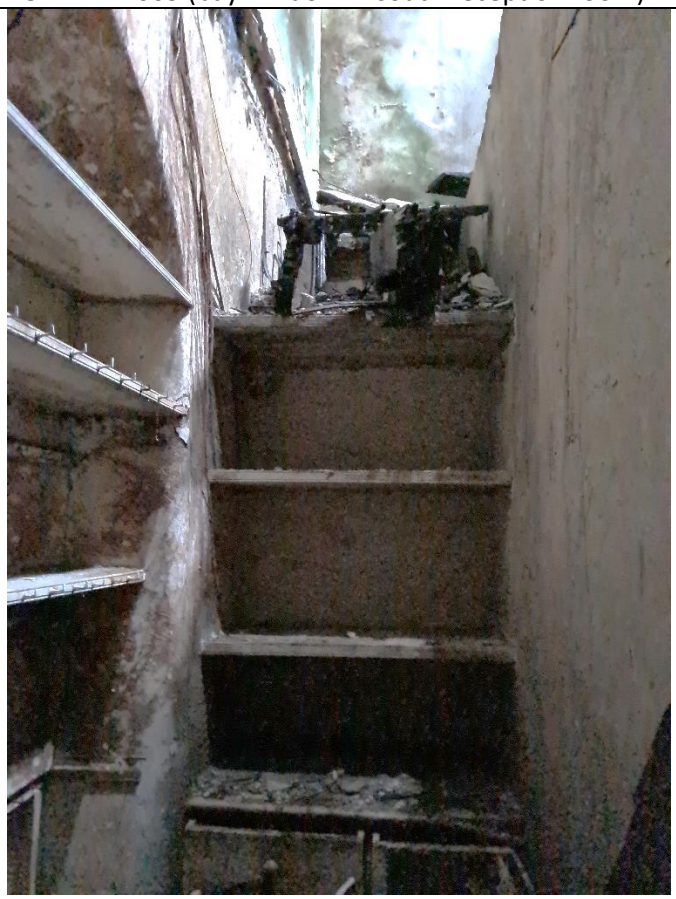
A16: Rm-004 (main stairwell)

A17: Rm-005 (south reception room)



A18: Rm-005 (bay window in south reception room)

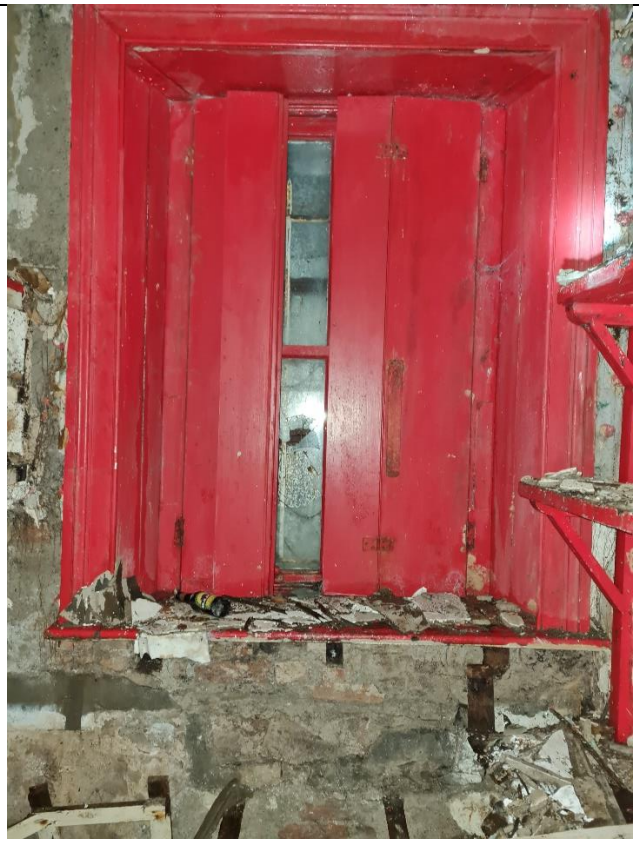
A19: Rm-005 (south reception room)



A20: Rm-006 (store room, off south reception room)

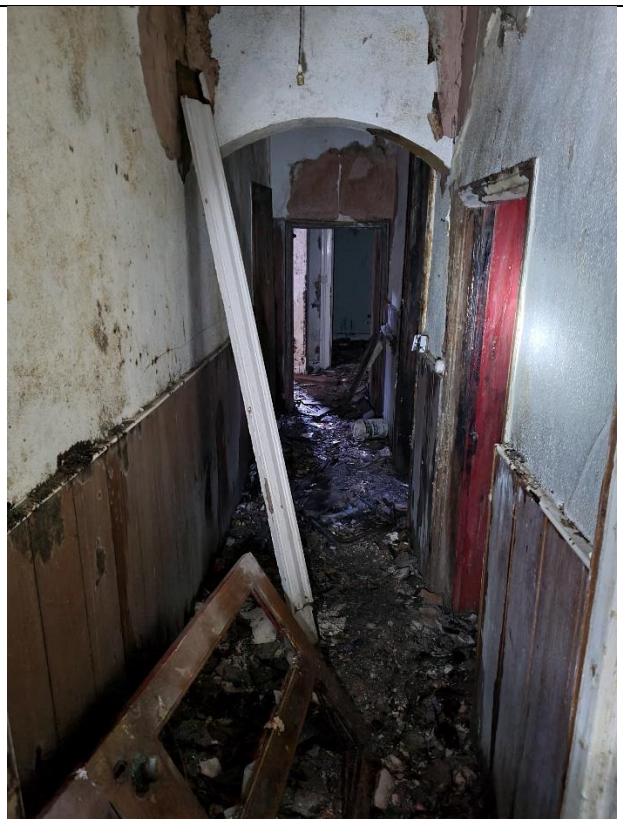
A21: Rm-008

A22: Rm-008



A23: Rm-009

A24: Rm-010

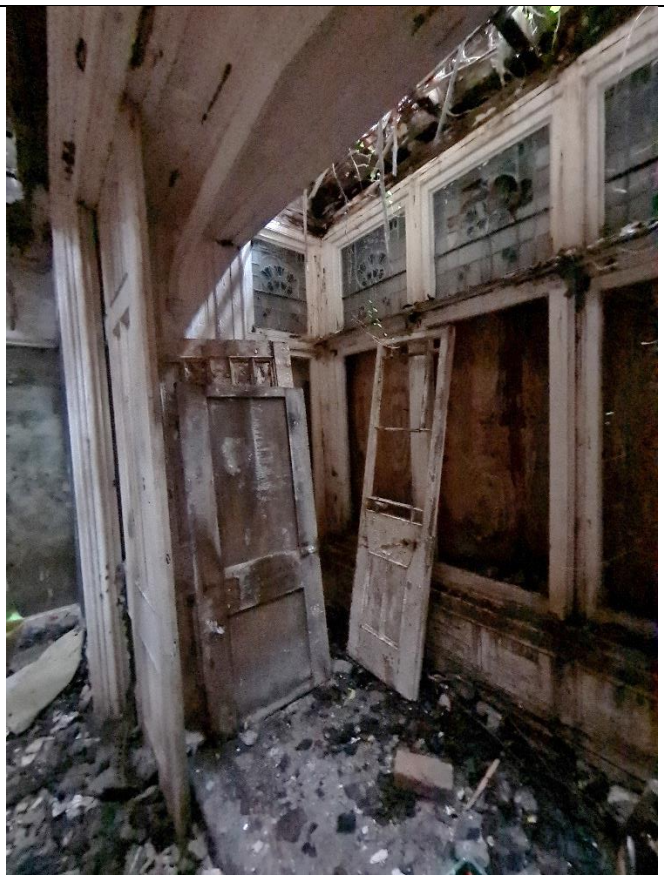


A25: Rm-011 (corridor)

A25: Rm-011

A27: Rm-003 (east reception room, with Tudor-arched screen)

A28: Rm-003 (bay window, east reception room)



A29: Rm-003 (bay window, east reception room)

A30: Rm-003

A31: Rm-003

A32: Rm-003 (east reception room)

A33: Rm-012

A34: Rm-013

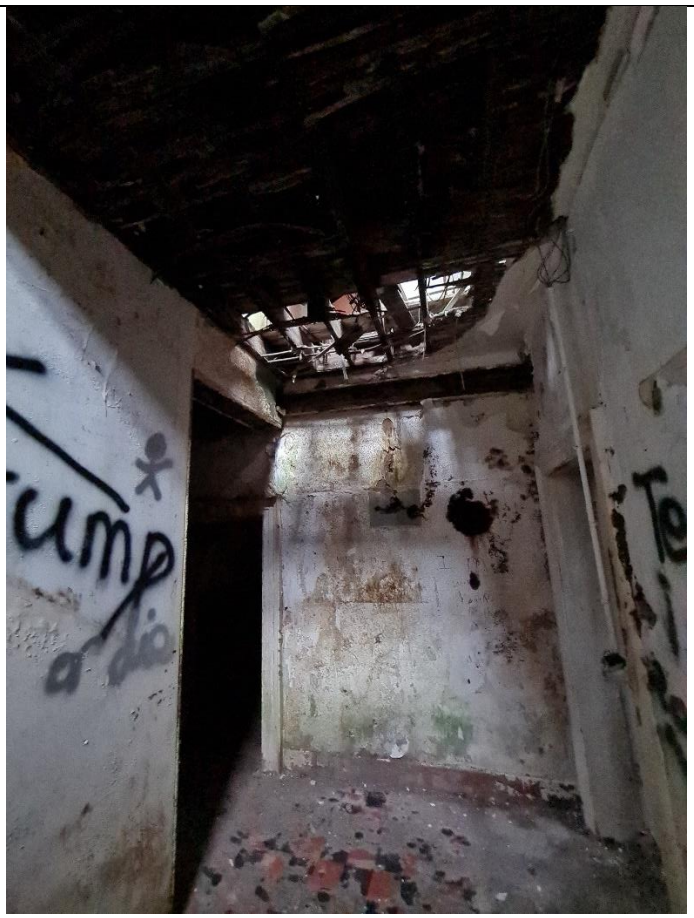
A35: Rm-013

A36: Rm-015

A37: Rm-014

A38: Rm-014

A39: Rm-015 (service staircase)



A40: Rm-015

A41: Rm-016 (former kitchen)

A42: Rm-016 (former kitchen

A43: Rm-017 (west lean-to annex)

A44: Rm-017 (west lean-to annex)

A45: Rm-018 (west lean-to annex)

A46: Rm-019 (west lean-to annex)

INTERIOR – FIRST FLOOR

A47: Rm-103

A48: Rm-103

A49: Rm-103

A50: Rm-103

A51: Rm-103

A52: Rm-104

A53: Rm-104

A54: Rm-104

A55: Rm-104

A56: Rm-105

A57: Rm-1005

A58: Rm-105

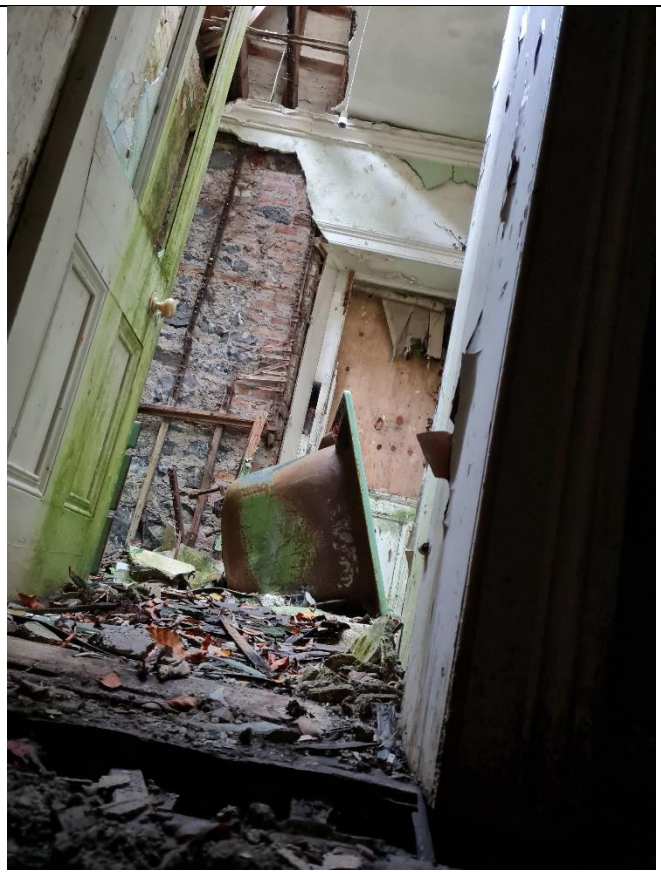
A59: Rm-105

A60: Rm-101 (first floor landing)

A61: Rm-102

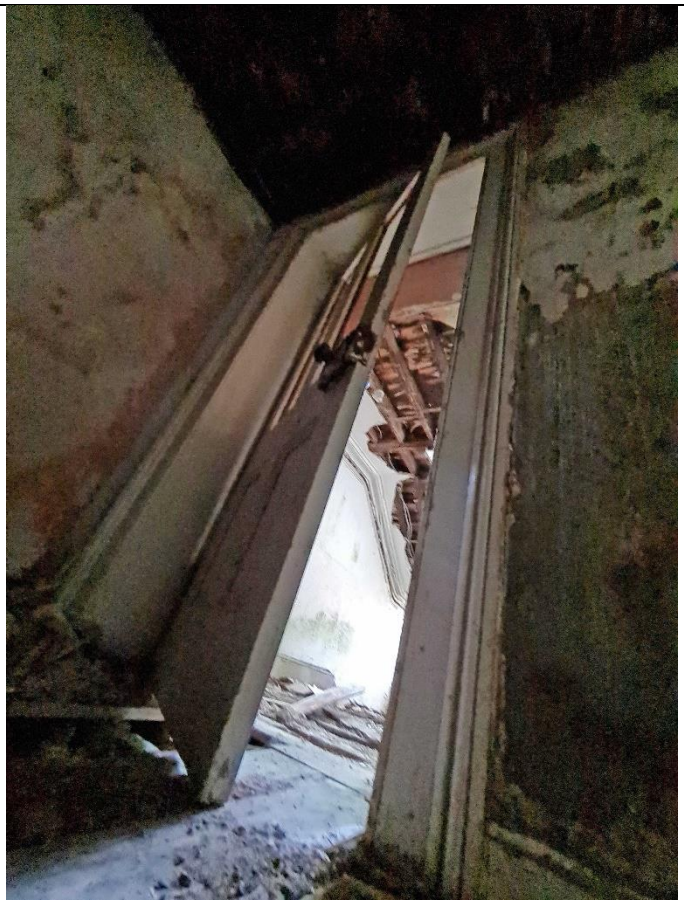
A62: Rm-102

A63: Rm-102



A64: Rm-108

A65: Rm-109 (corridor)

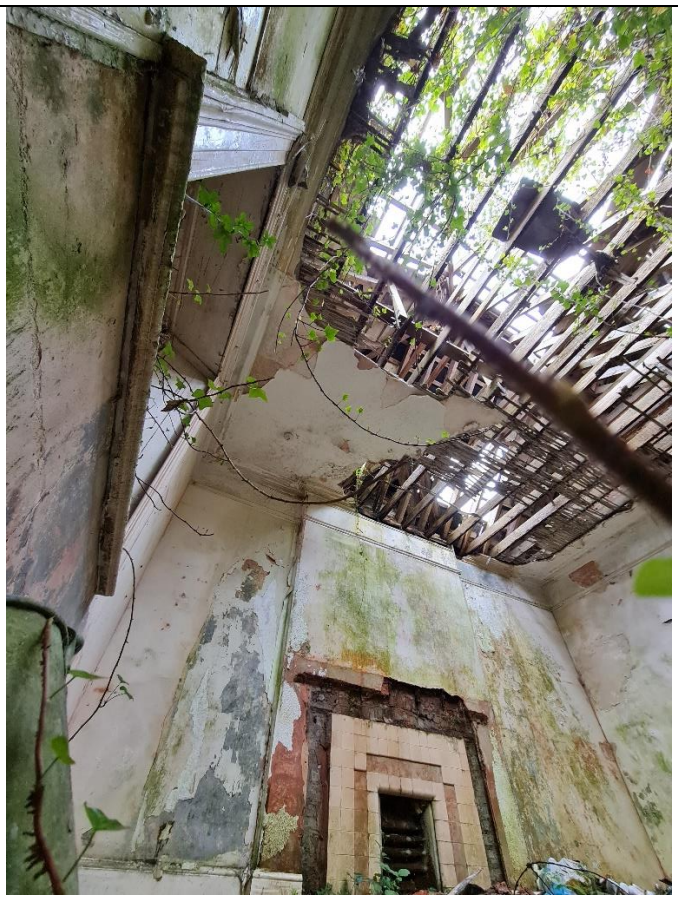


A66: Rm-109 (door to service staircase)

A67: Rm-110

A68: Rm-110

A69: Rm-113



A70: Rm-113

A71: Rm-112 (half landing, service staircase)

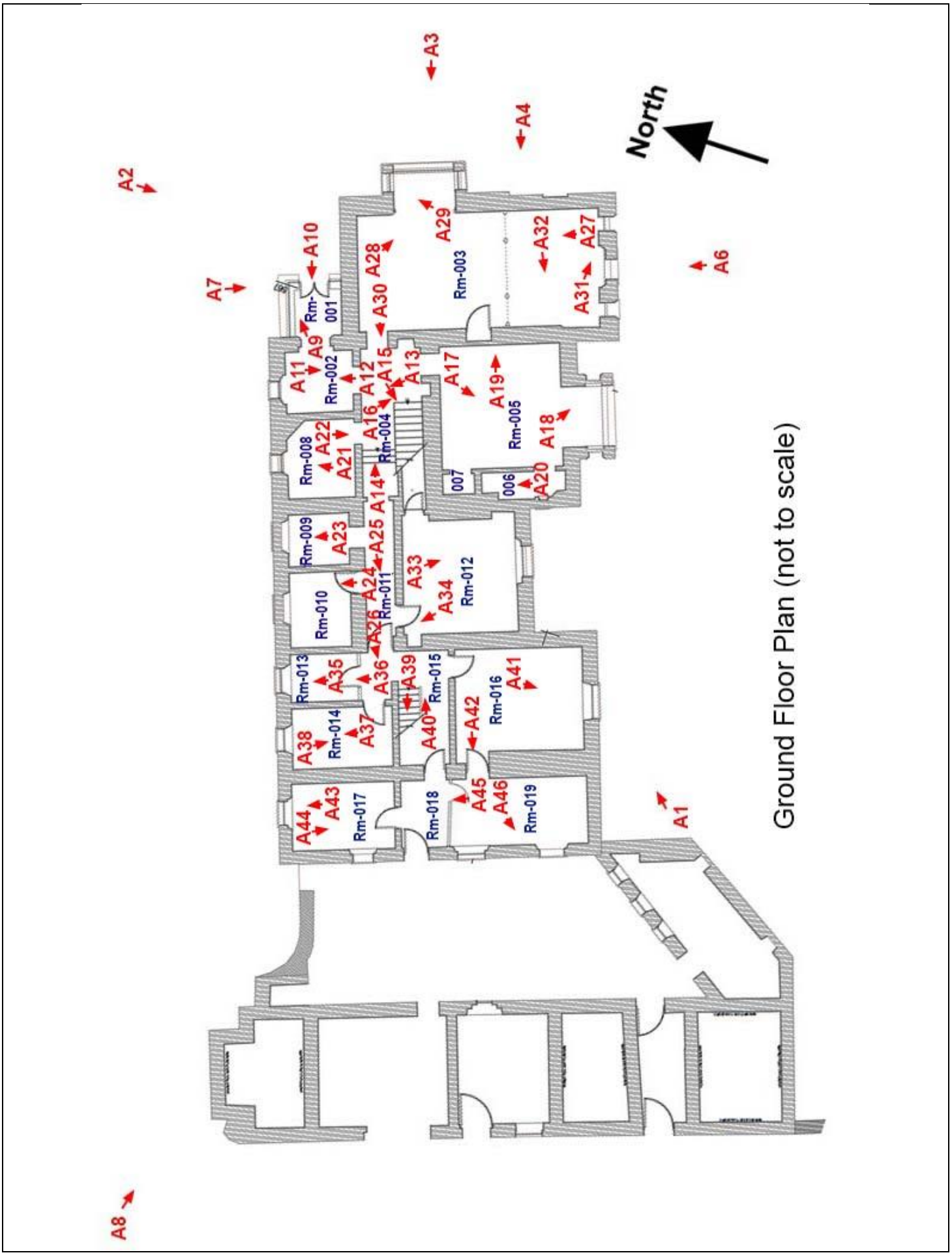
A72: Rm-112 (first floor service landing)

APPENDIX B

EXISTING FLOOR PLANS OF RATHELLEN HOUSE

Note:

The floor plans shown within this appendix are to assist in the identification of room numbers and photographic viewpoints, and are not to scale. The assigned room numbers follow those used in the existing layout plans within the planning application set and are shown in dark blue. The viewpoints of the photographs contained in Appendix A (with directional arrows) are shown in red.


North
A1
A2
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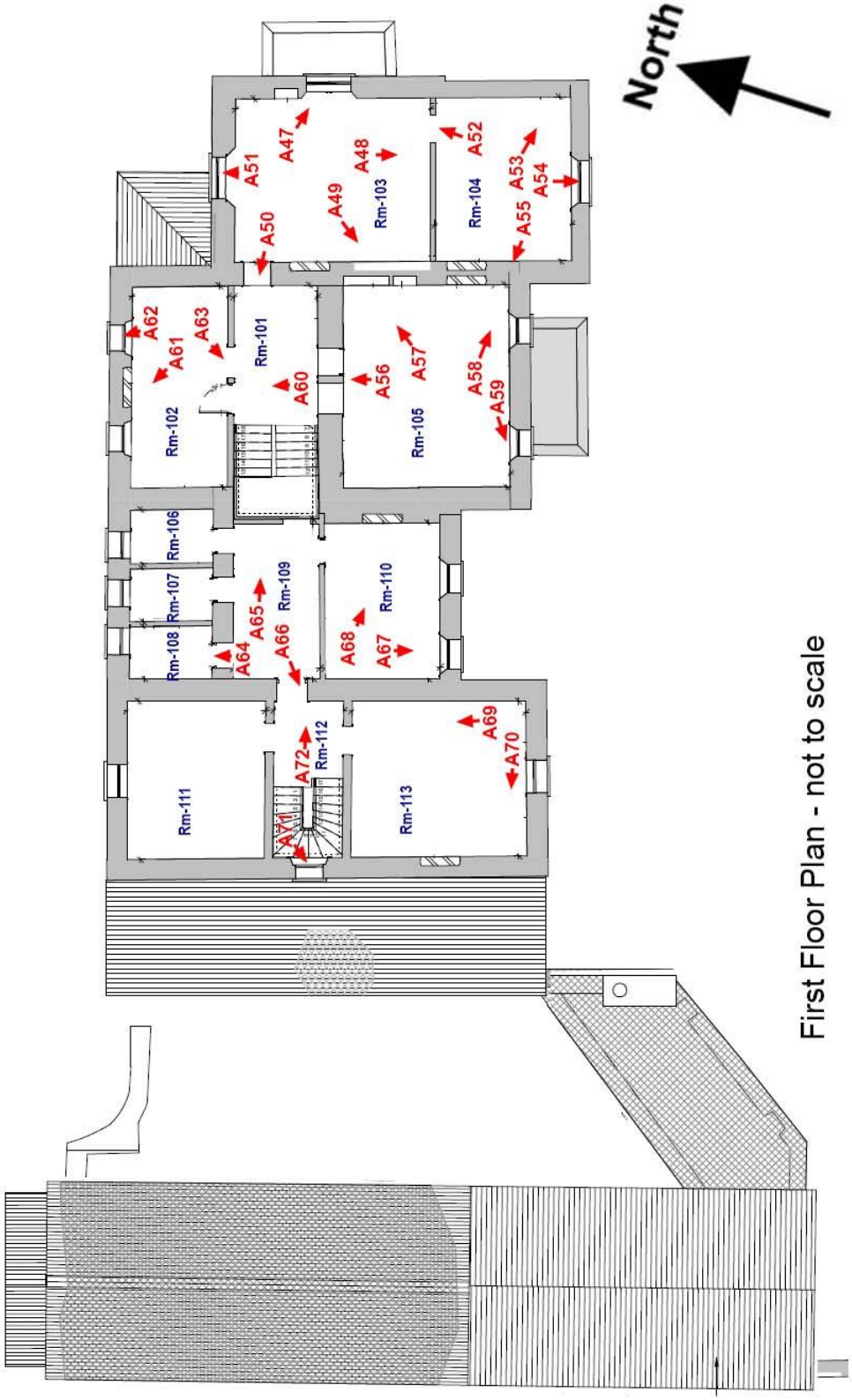
A41
A42
A43
A44
A45
A46
Rm-001
Rm-002
Rm-003
Rm-004
Rm-005
006
007
Rm-008
Rm-009
Rm-010
Rm-011
Rm-012
Rm-013
Rm-014
Rm-015
Rm-016
Rm-017
Rm-018
Rm-019
Ground Floor Plan (not to scale)



First Floor Plan - not to scale