
**FORMER SESSIONS HOUSE
SHEEP MARKET
SPALDING
LINCOLNSHIRE**

HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL

Work Undertaken For
Mr O Sneath



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Report prepared by
Gary Taylor BA(Hons) MA MSc

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



Contents

Introduction	1
Historical background and significance	1
Development proposals	2
Examination and appraisal	2
References	4

List of Figures

- Figure 1 First floor plan
- Figure 2 Ground floor plan

List of Plates

- Plate 1 1st Floor WC, from corridor, panel wall with borrowed light glazing
- Plate 2 1st Floor WC, panel wall with borrowed light glazing and 'beam' of cut-through wall
- Plate 3 Courtroom, general view from magistrates' dais
- Plate 4 Courtroom, general view from public gallery towards magistrates' dais
- Plate 5 Public seating area at rear of courtroom
- Plate 6 Public seating area, inserted modern benches
- Plate 7 Magistrates' dais, with desk
- Plate 8 Dock, with clerks' table immediately to right, and magistrates' dais above
- Plate 9 View into dock, showing access from cells below
- Plate 10 Courtroom from public gallery, showing benches either side of dock
- Plate 11 Decorative radiator
- Plate 12 Modern radiator
- Plate 13 Corridor with interview rooms on left. Note blocked fireplaces and 'beam' of cut-through wall
- Plate 14 Interview room 2, showing cut-through wall
- Plate 15 Interview room 2, cut-through wall and ceiling edge moulding crossed by inserted modern partition wall
- Plate 16 Corridor alongside interview rooms, showing cut-through wall and ceiling edge moulding crossed by modern inserted partition wall

- Plate 17 Library (Courts Clerks room), showing original fireplace with modern blocking, and modern light
- Plate 18 Corridor to cells, general view
- Plate 19 Cells. Note difference of painted brick in alcove to right and smooth rendered finish in alcove to left
- Plate 20 Cells 'interview room'. Note smooth rendered finish of wall around communication panel

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by GR Merchant Ltd on behalf of Mr O Sneath to undertake an appraisal of the Grade II Listed former Sessions House, Sheep Market, Spalding, Lincolnshire. The Sessions House is located on the west side of Sheep Market / The Crescent at National Grid Reference TF 24571 22584.

The site was visited on 18th August 2016. The client and architect provided details of proposals (some of them provisional) for alteration and the appraisal focussed on these areas.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Spalding Sessions House was built in 1843 by Booth and Walker, of Bramley near Leeds, to designs of the Sleaford based architect Charles Kirk (Leveritt and Elsdon 1986, 65). The previous year, Kirk had completed the Sessions House in Boston and the two are comparable in both scale and design. It was built in a Tudor Gothic style with a deeply crenelated and dramatic stone façade.

The new building accommodated the monthly Quarter Sessions for the Southern Division of the Parts of Holland as well as the Petty Sessions (every Tuesday) and the Courts of Sewers for the Elloe Wapentake. It was built adjacent to the House of Correction which lay to the north and was built in 1826 and improved in 1848 and 1851-2 (White 1856, 844).

The building was declared unfit for purpose and cases were heard in Boston Magistrates Court from 2012 (MoJ 2013).

A Grade II Listed Building, the Sessions House is described in the listing details thus:

Massive stone structure in the form of a castle. 2 crenellated side towers and recessed centre of 2 storeys, of 3 bays divided by buttresses, centre heraldic beast finials. 3 windows between buttresses with 'Perpendicular' tracery. Central 4-centred doorway. Royal Arms to centre of crenellated parapet. Side towers of 3 storeys, with oriels to 1st floor, 4-centre doorways, carved spandrels. Clock to left tower. Side elevation in pale brick. (List entry Number 1063960) (Historic England nd).

A police station was constructed in 1857 on the south side of the Sessions House. This is also a Grade II Listed Building and they have group value along with Nos. 32 and 33 The Crescent which are local interest buildings.

In summary, the significance of the Sessions House lies in:

- Architectural Interest. Skilful construction with dramatic façade with Gothic interiors. Use of high quality materials and craftsmanship.
- Its Architect. Charles Kirk was a successful architect and the firm, Kirk and Parry, have over 30 buildings on the designated list.
- Its Historical Interest. An accomplished example of a mid-19th century law court.
- Its Intactness. The plan form, fixtures and fittings have remained virtually unchanged.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS (see Figs. 1 & 2)

The provisional proposals included the following:

- 1st Floor WC - Removal of panel walling to create a larger shower room (to probably contain a shower and WC). Drainage will go into existing drains that run behind boxed skirting.
- Courtroom – Retention of the stepped courtroom space, but removal of most of the fittings, vis. benches, dock, witness box, early-modern radiators, and moveable furnishings (chairs, clerk's table, and coat of arms on wall above magistrates/judges bench)
- Interview rooms – Removal of some partition walls to create larger rooms, corridor wall to be retained.
- Library (Courts Clerks room) – Open fireplace, remove modern light fitting and heater. A wood burner may be installed in the fireplace at a later stage.
- Cells – Strip paint back off to reveal bricks. Also, possibly remove a couple of walls between cells.

EXAMINATION AND APPRAISAL

1st Floor (Fig. 1)

1st Floor WC.

This is comprised of a short corridor which provides access to two small rooms, one containing toilet facilities, the other a wash-hand basin. Panel walling separates the corridor and rooms from each other. The wall panel creating the corridor has a general early 20th century appearance, though it is surmounted by borrowed light glazing of probably the 1960s-70s (Plate 1). Parallel to the corridor panel wall, and crossing the two rooms, is a beam-type feature (Plate 2) formed from the upper remnant of a removed wall. This removed wall, when extant, would have defined the original width of the corridor. Dividing the two rooms is a panel wall which, like the corridor wall, has an early 20th century appearance. The boxed skirting of the room containing the wash-hand basin is covered with decorative metal panelling, perhaps of early-mid 20th century date.

The remnants of the cut-through wall indicate that the present panel divisions are not original to the structure but are part of probable early-mid 20th century alterations. It is considered that the alteration or removal of the existing panel walls would be of minor significance and negligible impact on the historic fabric and integrity of the Sessions House.

Courtroom.

The courtroom contains all the fixtures and fittings appropriate to its function (Plates 3 and 4). It is a large high room with arched beams above, supporting the ceiling. Original wooden panelling clads the lower third of the walls, rising a little higher at the back of the room (Plate 3), behind the public galleries (Plate 5). The lower stages of public seating is original but above these the seating is provided by several tiers of simple wooden benches supported on iron bars that are set into the concrete steps that rise to the back of the courtroom (Plate 6). These upper benches are a later insertion, perhaps from the 1960s. They stand on a stepped concrete platform that is supported on raked cast-iron beams.

At the opposite, top, end of the courtroom is the raised dais that accommodates the fixed judge's/magistrates' desk (Plate 7). Immediately below the magistrates' desk are the clerks' benches, also fitted, and a large moveable table (Plate 8). In front of the clerks' table is the dock, which has internal access from the cells on the floor below (Plate 9). The dock also has original panelling and upper level cage-work, though the latter has modern, probably 1980s or

later, glazing. To either side of the dock are tiers of original fitted benches (Plate 10), probably separate sets for witnesses and, perhaps, jury.

Around the courtroom are several sets of radiators. There are four sets of decorative cast iron radiators of probable late 19th-early 20th century (c. 1890-1910), two on the raised dais and one each on the fronts of the benches flanking the dock (Plates 7 and 11). In addition, there are sets of plain 'functional' radiators of probable 1960s-70s date along the wall behind the magistrates' bench (Plate 12) and immediately in front of the public galleries (Plate 5). There are also two modern radiators, probably of 1990s date, at the ends of the benches flanking the dock (Plate 10).

On the wall above the magistrates' bench is a large painting showing the Royal Coat of Arms of Queen Victoria (Plate 10).

The fixtures and fittings are specific to the function of the room as the courtroom and their removal (the fixtures in particular) will have a major impact on its original use, nature and appearance. However, retention of the fixtures would largely prevent any other use of this room beyond that originally designed for. The intended retention of the wall panelling and perhaps some of the perimeter benches will, however, preserve a veneer of the historic style of the courtroom. Removal of the modern radiators will improve the retained appearance of the courtroom.

The area of the upper, modern, benches in the public gallery appears to have been altered to allow their insertion. Any proposed removal of these plain benches would have a neutral or minor positive effect on the appearance of the courtroom.

Removal of the early modern radiators (Plate 12) will improve the appearance of the room. Retention of the decorative early radiators (Plate 11), although they are probably not original to the building, will help maintain the style and historic appearance of the courtroom.

Removal of the moveable fittings will have less impact on the appearance and setting of the courtroom. However, the large clerks' table, which was probably custom-made, and the coat of arms painting, are intimately associated with the function and appearance of the courtroom and their removal will have a minor-moderate impact on the visual integrity of the room.

Interview Rooms.

The Interview Rooms are located alongside the Courtroom, being separated from it by a corridor.

Blank partition walls provide the divisions between the interview rooms (including the CPS and advocates rooms), and this range of rooms and the corridor. These walls are plain and lack any architectural style. However, within the corridor is a series of blocked fireplaces (Plate 13).

In addition, crossing the corridor (Plate 13) and the adjacent interview room (Plate 14) are the remnants of a cut-through wall. Along the northeastern side of this cut-through wall stub is a surviving ceiling edge moulding (Plate 15) which shows that the two northeasterly interview rooms, and part of the next to the southwest, were, together with the adjacent section of corridor (Plate 16), once one large room. The ceiling edge moulding, wall remnant and blocked fireplaces indicate that the range of four interview rooms and flanking corridor were, originally, just two large rooms accessed directly from the Courtroom, and the corridor did not exist. The inserted panel walling is not clearly datable but is plain and functional and probably dates after World War 2, perhaps from the 1960s.

Due to them representing probable mid-20th century alterations to the original rooms, the partition walls are of negligible significance and their removal would have no-negligible impact on the historic integrity of the building.

Library (Courts Clerks room).

The fireplace blocking, light fitting and heater are all early modern (Plate 17), probably dating from the 1970s or later. They are of no to negligible significance and their removal would have a beneficial effect on the visual integrity of the room and its fireplace.

The possible future installation of a wood burner in the fireplace might have a minor negative impact of the visual integrity of the fireplace, but this would be temporary and reversible.

Ground floor (Fig. 2)

Cells.

It is likely that the walls and ceilings of the range of cells, and probably the adjacent access corridor (Plate 18), were originally exposed brick or, perhaps more probably, whitewashed. The stripping of paint to reveal the bricks would, therefore, revert the cells to their original appearance and provide a minor beneficial effect on their visual integrity.

The divisions between at least some of the cells are rendered with a smooth finish while adjacent walls are of unsmoothed brick beneath the whitewash/paint (Plates 19 and 20). It therefore seems possible that these dividing walls are inserted blocking, perhaps to create smaller, more numerous cells. They may, alternatively, have replaced divisions such as bars.

On the likelihood that some, if not all, of the cell dividing walls are inserted, their removal would return the cells to their former dimensions and be a beneficial alteration to their setting.

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White, W, 1856 *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire*

Abbreviations

MoJ Ministry of Justice

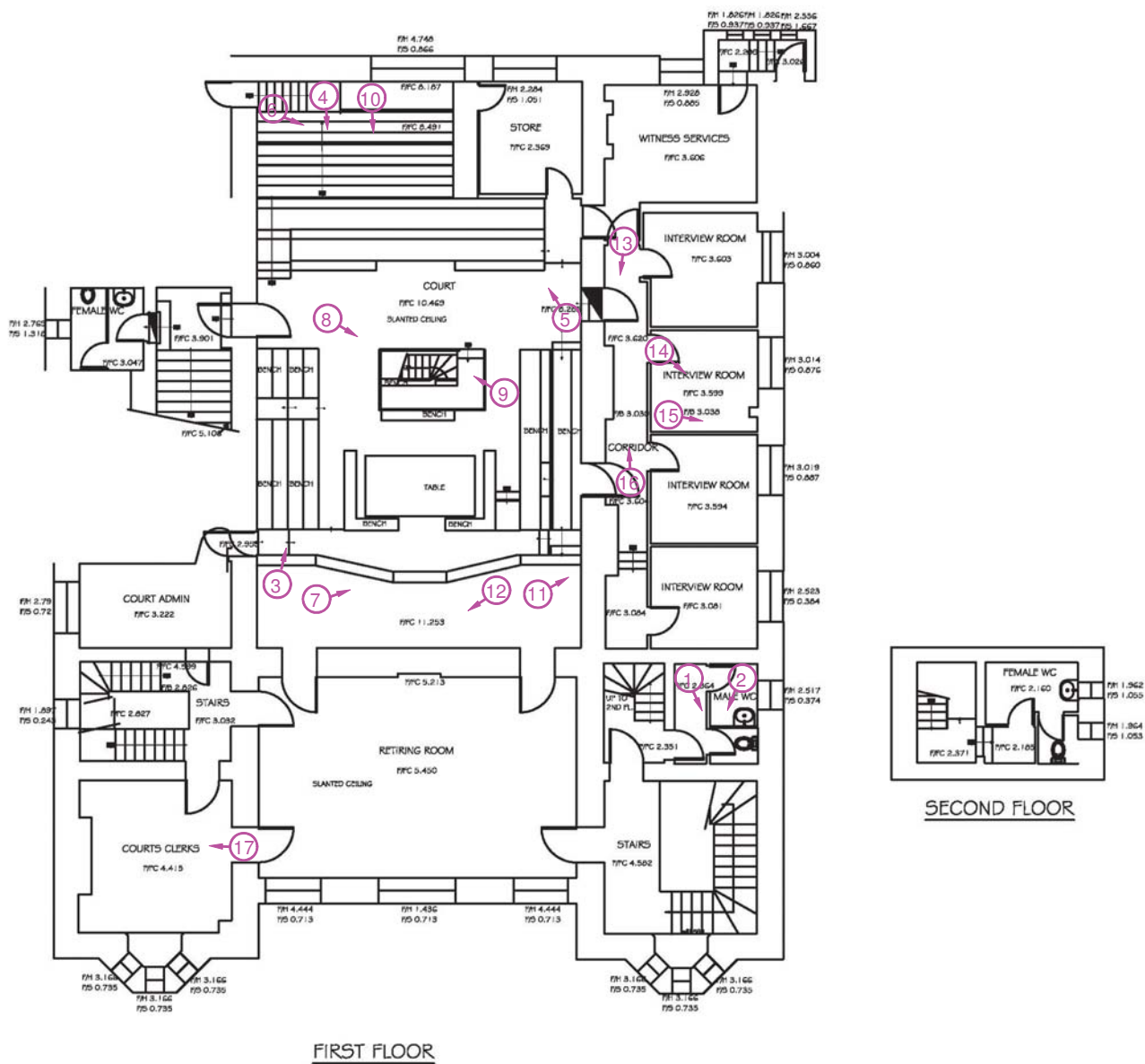


Plate number and direction of view

Plans provided by agent



Archaeological Project Services

Project Name: Spalding, Sessions House

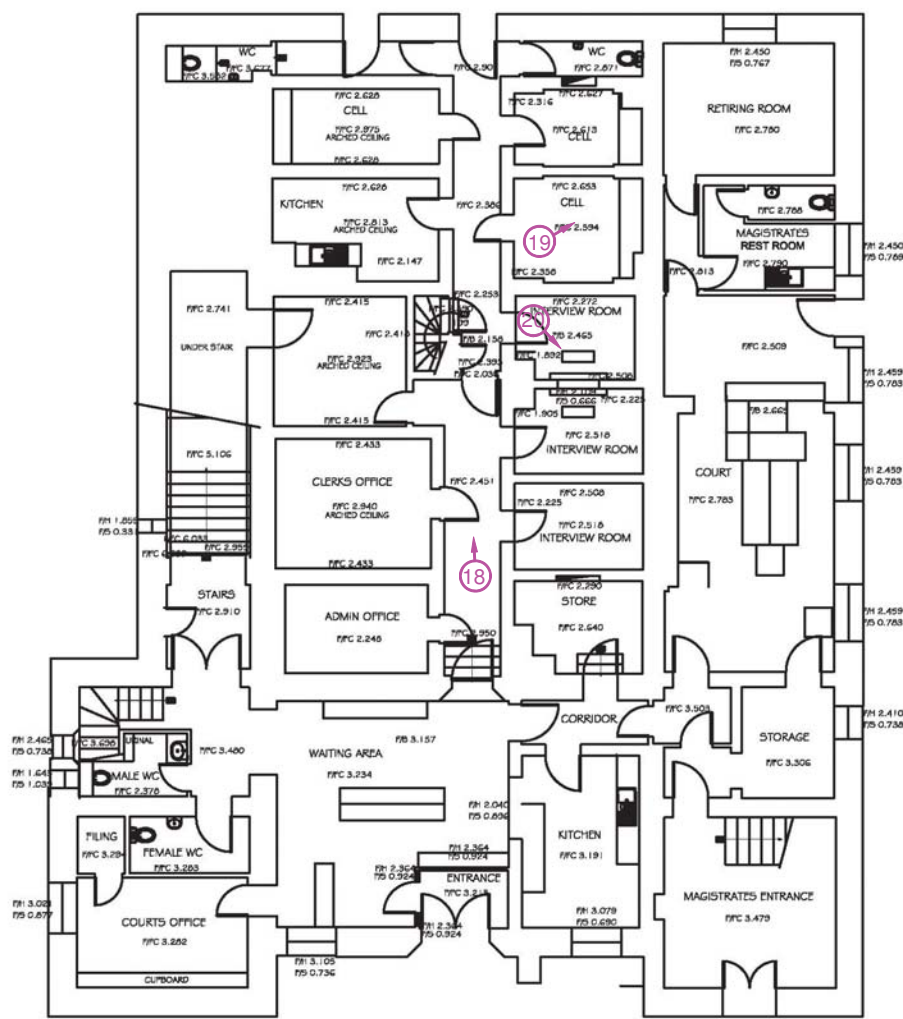
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Drawn by: GT

Report No: HS/048



Figure 1 First floor plan



GROUND FLOOR

GROUND FLOOR



Plate number and direction of view

Plans provided by agent



Archaeological Project Services

Project Name: Spalding, Sessions House

Scale c. 1200: Drawn by: GT Report No: HS/048

Figure 2 Ground floor plan



Plate 1 1st Floor WC, from corridor,
panel wall with borrowed light
glazing



Plate 2 1st Floor WC, panel wall with
borrowed light glazing and 'beam' of
cut-through wall



Plate 3 Courtroom, general view from magistrates' dais



Plate 4 Courtroom, general view from public gallery towards magistrates' dais



Plate 5 Public seating area at rear of courtroom



Plate 6 Public seating area,
inserted modern benches



Plate 7 Magistrates' dais, with desk



Plate 8 Dock, with clerks' table immediately to right, and magistrates' dais above



Plate 9 View into dock, showing access from cells below



Plate 10 Courtroom from public gallery, showing benches either side of dock (note modern radiators at ends of benches)



Plate 11 Decorative radiator



Plate 12 Modern radiator



Plate 13 Corridor with interview rooms on left. Note blocked fireplaces and 'beam' of cut-through wall (top of picture)

Plate 14 Interview room 2, showing cut-through wall





Plate 15 Interview room 2, cut-through wall and ceiling edge moulding crossed by inserted modern partition wall

Plate 16 Corridor alongside interview rooms, showing cut-through wall and ceiling edge moulding crossed by modern inserted partition wall

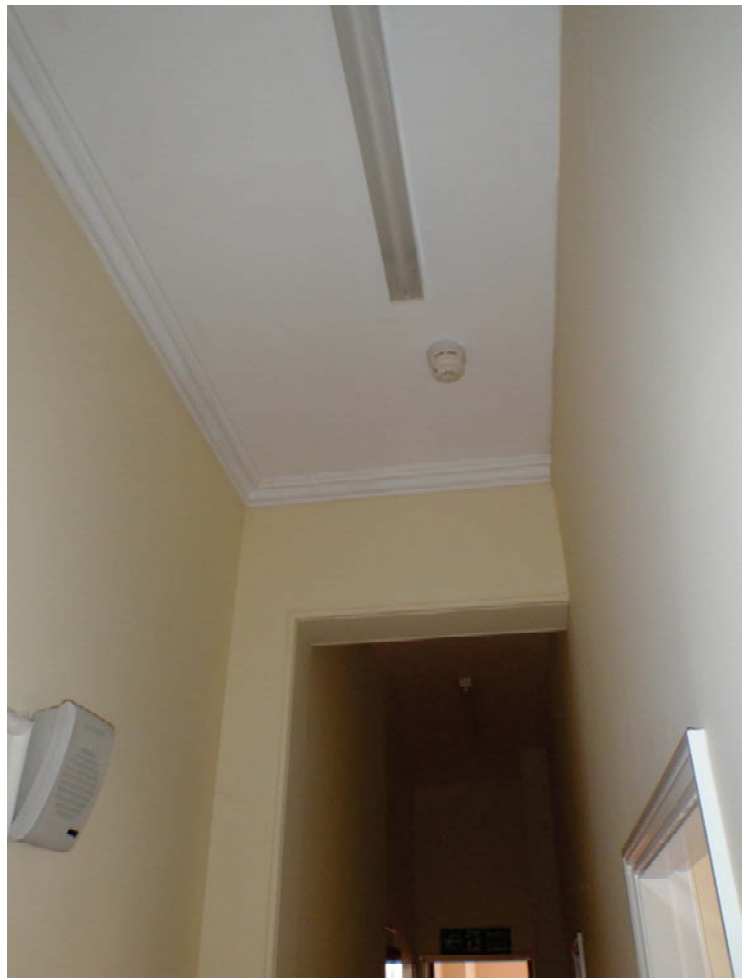




Plate 17 Library (Courts Clerks room), showing original fireplace with modern blocking, and modern light



Plate 18 Corridor to cells, general view



Plate 19 Cells. Note difference of painted brick in alcove to right and smooth rendered finish in alcove to left



Plate 20 Cells 'interview room'.
Note smooth rendered finish of
wall around communication
panel