

# ALLEE BLEÚE SIMONDIUM PAARL HERITAGE MOTIVATION: MAINTENANCE, REPAIR WORK AND DEMOLITION OF OUTBUILDING

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The owner of the 152 ha Allee Bleúe Farm has embarked upon a process to convert and develop ~~ment~~ parts of the farm into a conference facility. They are also establishing agricultural ventures including herb and lavender production in addition to the established vineyards and orchards. This process is partly complete, although work still needs to be undertaken on the conversion and adaptive re-use of the historic buildings forming part of the historic werf as well as adjacent sites.

Allee Bleúe formerly called Meerrust Farm 1475; lies in the Dwars River Valley and is part of the provisionally designated Grade 1 (National Site). It applied in 2003 for rezoning from Agriculture Zone 1 to Agriculture Zone 11 to allow for agricultural processing. In addition it applied for rezoning from Agriculture Zone 1 to Residential Zone V to allow for the conversion of the outbuildings for guestrooms and suites and the building of a conference centre.

Henry Aikman Associates undertook an HIA; as part of an EIA by Doug Jeffery Environmental Consultants. The relevant authorities approved the EIA, together with the HIA; and the rezoning application was approved.

The conference centre and agricultural processing buildings are fully operational.

Allee Bleúe (Pty) Ltd has focused on the production of fruit, vineyards and the production of lavender. In addition it has identified a niche market for weddings and facilities for wedding guests. This has proved highly successful and enabled the owners to retain agricultural production while at the same time obtaining a return from the scenic beauty of the Valley. It has also ensured that the footprint and the impact of the Valley is minimal as there are no sub-divisional and fragmentation of the agricultural and cultural landscape of the valley through a large number of substantial residential buildings.

As a result, the cultural and scenic landscape qualities of the site remain intact.

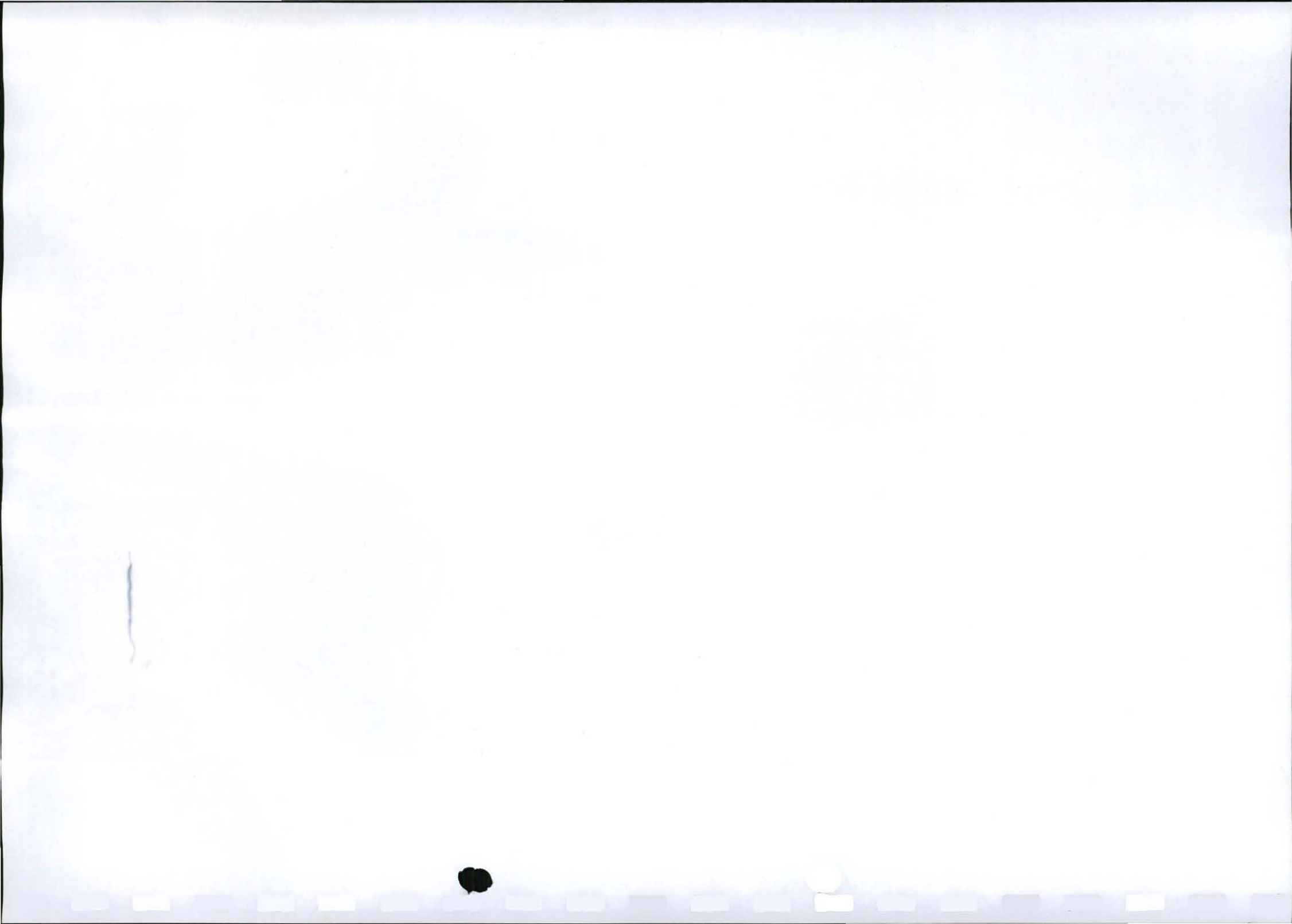
At present Allee Bleúe (Pty) Ltd has begun the re-assessment of the proposals for the site; and intend to undertake the conversion, restoration and development necessary for the implementation of the remaining objectives affecting the rezoning and the re-use of the buildings for residential use shortly.

Apart from the conference facility, the remaining historic buildings currently remain under-utilized and a few are empty. This is particularly true of the Cellar building, the "longhouse", the "millhouse" and the Baker building. As a result of the under-utilization of the structures their condition has deteriorated to the point where maintenance intervention has become urgent; and will need to be undertaken before the onset of winter.

This report identifies what maintenance work is necessary, and identifies a number of key conservation issues that will need to be addressed by the conservation architect as the project progresses.

The application in terms of Section 29 of the NHRA is for a permit to undertaken two objectives: -

1. Undertake structural maintenance work; and



1. Demolish an existing outbuilding. (Approval in principle has been granted for this work) See SAHRA 9/2/084/0181) and the owner wishes to proceed with this action.

## 2. BRIEF AND PURPOSE OF THE SUBMISSION

The brief and purpose of this submission has been to review the necessary maintenance changes necessary to ensure the improved condition of the historic buildings in light of their conservation significance and make recommendations where necessary.

The purpose is to support the application of a permit to undertake the work in terms of Section 29 (10) of the NHRA.

The work is necessary to ensure that the historic buildings are not damaged by water ingress during the winter months and their structure damaged as a result.

In addition the application is also for a permit to demolish an existing later outbuilding close to the Manor House.

## 3. LOCATION



*Figure 1 Aerial photographs of Allee Bleúe showing werf layout and agricultural context.*

Allee Bleúe is situated approximately 12 kms south of Paarl. Access to the farm is off the R45, which links Paarl and Franschhoek. The site is strategically placed close to the R45 and the



R310 from Stellenbosch, and forms a significant intersection with a number of farms and structures of historic, architectural and cultural landscape value.

Access to the homestead from the R45 is via a long treed avenue. This connects the werf with the entrance. At present ~~it~~ the drive turns left before the manor house, skirts the property and leads to the parking area for the conference centre.

#### 4. HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

A historical and developmental history of the site and the farm werf has been undertaken by Aikman Associates as part of the HIA submitted in 2003. This work was based on research material submitted by Dr Antonia Malan and Dr Hennie Vos.

This material is part of the public record and it is not considered necessary to repeat the findings in any detail. The following is a summary of relevant points and observations.

Allee Bleúe is beautifully set within orchards and vineyards and against a scenic mountain backdrop. The linear and scenic qualities of its werf remain largely intact.

It was part of a very early series of land grants made in the Dwars River Valley. The buildings forming the werf were likely to have been constructed in the mid eighteenth century. They have received many changes and alterations since then. The Manor House was extensively remodeled in the Georgian Period and later in the early twentieth century by architects working the Arts and Crafts Cape Revival style for the farm owner, H Pickstone who established the fruit farming industry in the region at that time. The house, because of its close resemblance to Welgelegen in Rondebosch, remodeled by Baker, together with Baker's strong association with Rhodes and Pickstone, has been attributed to Baker, but no documentary evidence of this has been found. The Gate Piers are also similar to those at Welgelegen

The Cellar building is considered to date from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century with alteration being made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is evidence of rebuilding after a fire. The buildings have 20<sup>th</sup> century steel framed windows of a type and shape that are inappropriate to a building of this age.

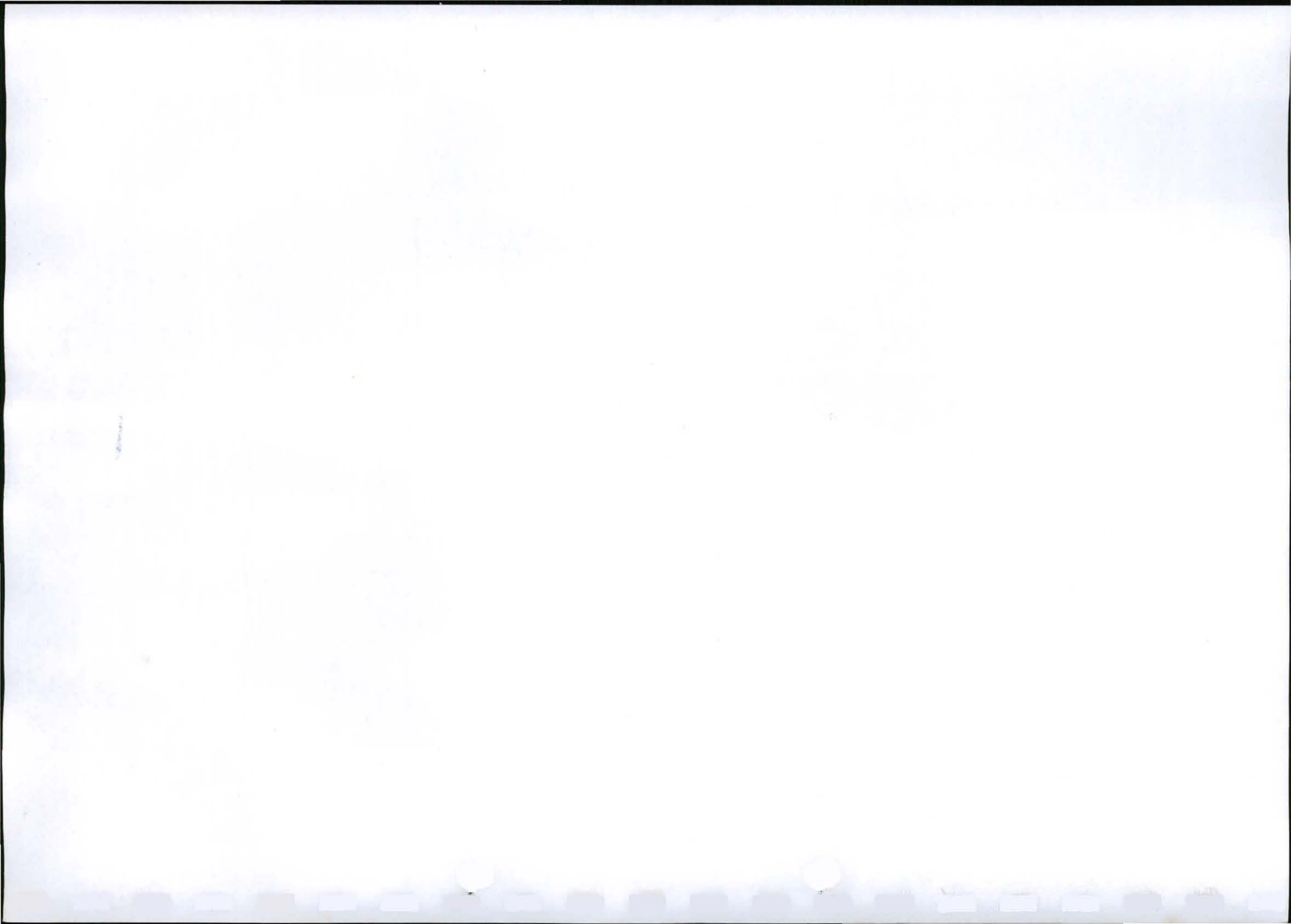
F Kendall designed the "Baker" cottage in the 1920's. Plans have been found for the building and they show that Kendall extended an existing older structure with the additional of two wings. The wall that surrounds the buildings cuts into the linear nature of the werf.

The Mill House on a watercourse which is no longer visible and its current appearance and position as a result is somewhat arbitrary. The building can be dated by the thickness of its walls to the later 18<sup>th</sup> century

The outbuilding adjacent to the Manor house appears to date from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has been in a process of continuous alteration and change and the current structure is considered to have "little or no integrity". This structure is proposed for demolition.

The werf of Allee Bleúe itself is a linear one; probably with a road through the werf and cutting past the Manor House. The linear nature has been adversely affected by the extension of the Administration building into the Conference Centre, which has created blockage to the linear nature of the site, and as a result an abnormally long closed werf. The site itself is beautifully situated amongst mature trees some of considerable age.

#### 5. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK



In 2003 Aikman Associates undertook a Heritage Impact Assessment with recommendations. This HIA was triggered by Section 38(8) of the National Heritage Resources Act. This was as a result of a rezoning application to convert agricultural outbuildings to residential use.

This meant that the HIA was a specialist study attached to the Environmental Impact Assessment required in terms of the Regulations attached to the Environmental Conservation. The HIA findings were endorsed by Heritage Western Cape's BELCOM on 14 October 2003. The heritage related conditions were included in the EIA submission to the Department of Environment Affairs and Development Planning (DEADP). Both the rezoning application and the EIA were approved by the Municipality of Stellenbosch and DEADP respectively.

In June 2005 the Dwars and Berg River Valley was provisionally designated as a National Heritage or a Grade One Site. As a result, authority for decisions affecting the development of such heritage sites as Allee Bleue shifted from HWC to the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) in terms of Section 29 of the NHRA.

This application is therefore submitted to SAHRA in terms of Section 29(10) of the NHRA, which requires a permit from SAHRA to alter a Grade 1 site.

Munnik Visser Architects submitted a revised application concerning affecting the Manor House and outbuilding to SAHRA in August 2005. (See Annexure 3). The proposals were approved in principle with conditions relating to landscaping, social history and regular heritage inspections *inter alia*.

Not all the approvals outlined are relevant to this application however and only those relevant to the current application are listed below.

These approvals in principle has been granted by SAHRA for the following:<sup>1</sup>

- The repair of the Manor House windows and doors
- The plaster that was to be removed would be replaced with plaster and paint that would be sympathetic to the old soft bricks; and
- The outbuilding was to be demolished and replaced by a new building. (SAHRA 9/2/084/0181/30/08/2005)

## 6. METHODOLOGY

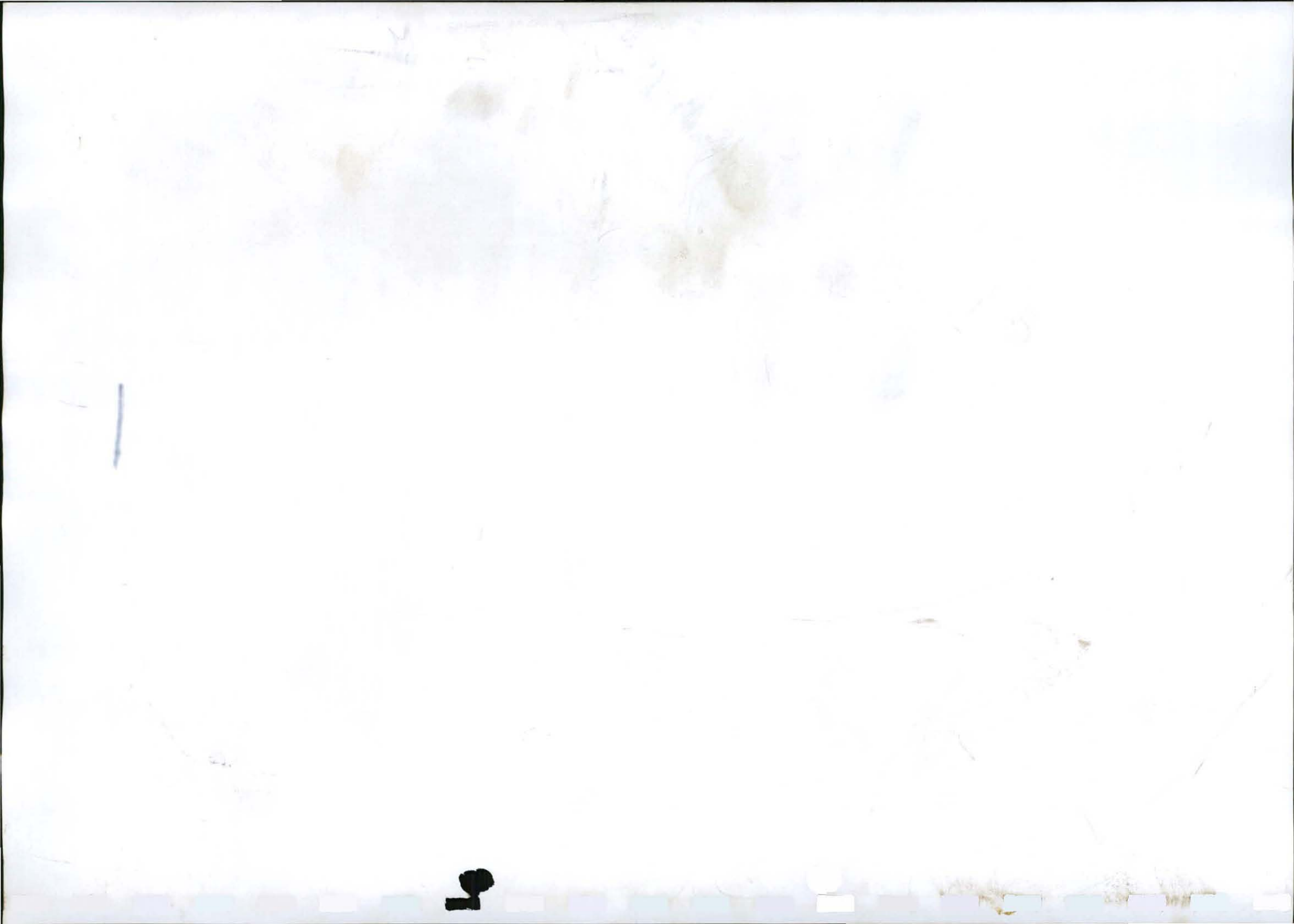
The methodology for reviewing the maintenance proposals has involved the submission of basic minimal repairs by the project team and the review of the proposals by the heritage specialist. This has been done by means of a number of site visits in which the problem areas were reviewed and analysed; and a review of the available documentation. A number of basic repairs have been proposed. It must be stressed that these interventions are considered preliminary in nature and aimed at arresting the general deterioration of the buildings over the winter period.

In addition, a number of general observations have been made, regarding previous interventions in the fabric of the buildings and the werf.

The interventions have been kept in line with the requirements of the Burra Charter as referred to by Aikman Associates in the HIA of 2003. These include a basic requirement of

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<sup>1</sup> The approval in principle affected a number of internal alterations, which will be undertaken during the restoration and development process.





minimal intervention in remaining historic fabric; and the use of appropriate materials and technologies for historic fabric.

### 7. SCOPE OF REPAIR WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN

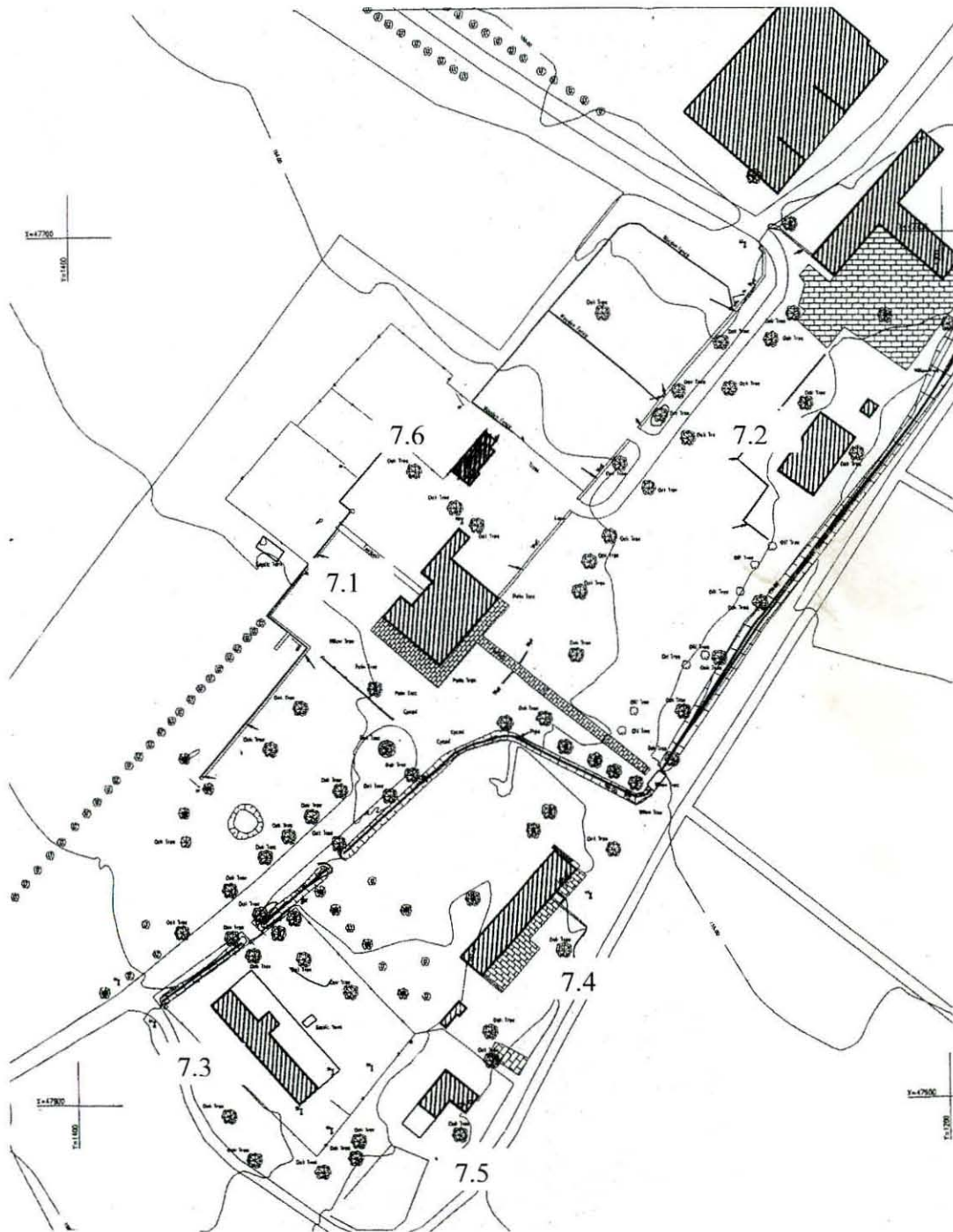
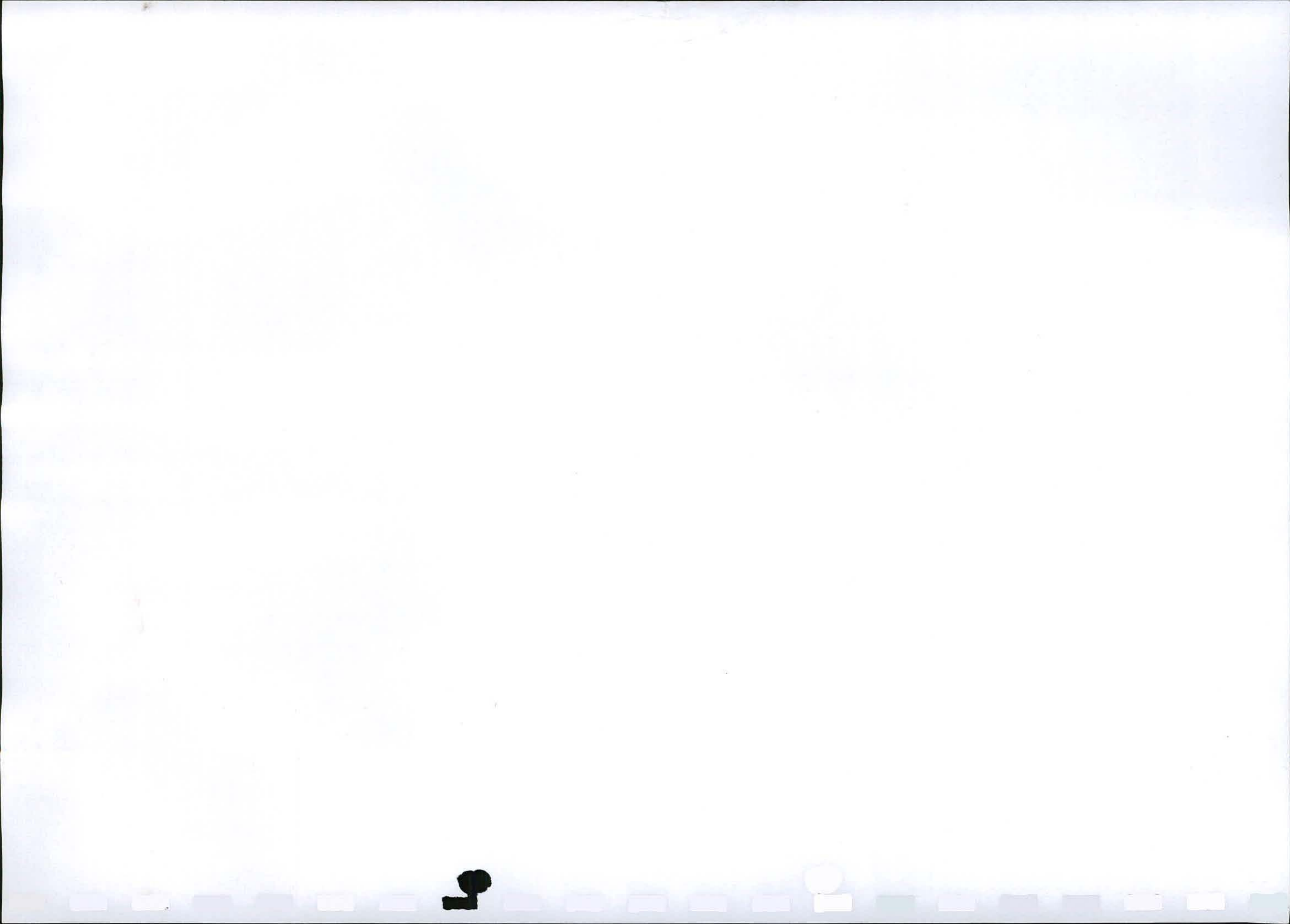


Figure 2: Plan showing buildings requiring maintenance work. The numbers refer to the buildings mentioned and the relevant text below

The following work needs to be undertaken. (See figure 2).



### 7.1. The Manor House

The Manor House displays problems to the plasterwork as a result of unsealed or damaged fenestration and other woodwork. Panes of the upper windows are missing and this has resulted in water ingress and damage. Vegetation has damaged plasterwork. Plaster cracks arising out of unsealed areas has spread and damaged the plaster. Some repairs have been undertaken using plaster and paint, which has not allowed the movement and evaporation of moisture and as a result the moisture has been trapped and the soft brick walls further damaged. A recurring problem has been the high level of surrounding ground and the shallow ground gutters and channels, which do not allow for an efficient water removal system. As a result the following is proposed:

- Putty replaced in all windows and windows made watertight, repainted where necessary
- Missing panes to be replaced. Care to be exercised in the retention of the remaining Georgian glass panes
- Frames of shutters to be repaired
- Paving in front and back of the house to be made good. At present due to settlement the front paving is uneven. Historic tiles need to be retained, re-laid and supplemented where necessary with a tile of similar dimensions ~~of~~ materials.
- Plasterwork needs to be repaired, replaced where necessary. (See general comments below regarding use of appropriate plasterwork and a lime-based paint.
- Wooden door at side entrance has lifted due to water damage. To be removed repaired and refitted.
- Review and rebuilding of the storm-water system to create a more efficient water disposal system around the buildings to prevent further ingress of water (see general comments Section 8 below).
- Vegetation to be cleared from gutters and channels. Vegetation damaging plasterwork to be removed.

what material?

### 7.2. The "Baker House".

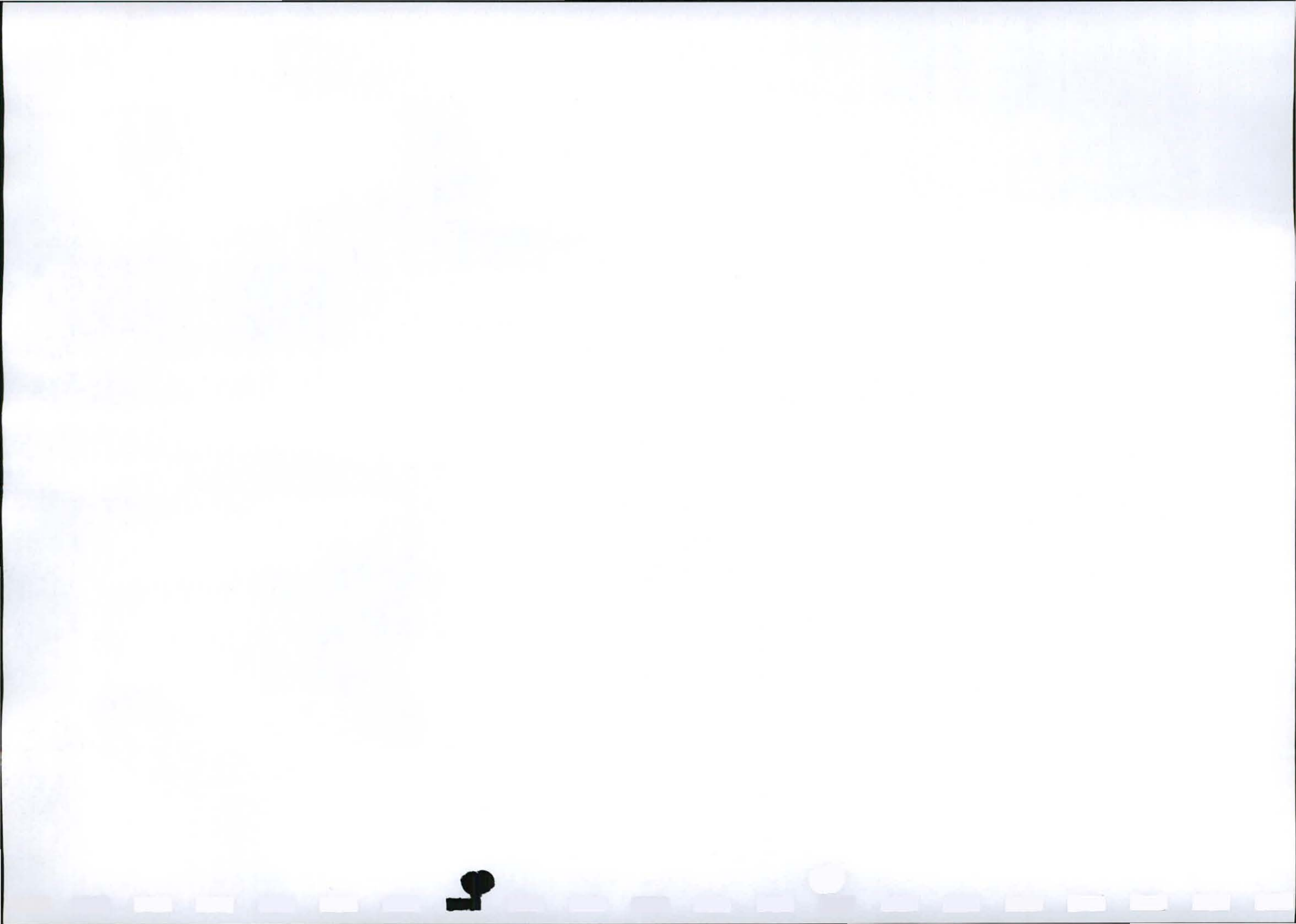
Wooden casement windows in the "Baker" house, have been damaged and as a result have allowed water ingress and plaster damage as a result. Some casements particularly in the two projecting wings have deteriorated to the point where they will need to be replaced.

Some ground movement and possibly changes in ground levels have caused severe masonry cracks.

- Severely damaged wood frames to be replaced as per original. Central frames may be repaired and retained if their condition is considered good enough. Windows are casement windows constructed in the 1920's by the firm of Francis Kendall.
- Buildings to be repainted and plasterwork repair undertaken where necessary.
- Improvement to storm water drainage system on northern elevation to be undertaken in order to prevent further water ingress.

### 7.3. The Entrance (Longhouse) building

The entrance building, which is a pivotal building in the approach to the farm, suffers from rising and falling damp. The rising damp may be the result of shallow and vegetated water disposal systems; and the falling damp the result of water penetration through the damaged roof, the broken gutters and unsealed woodwork.



The window frames are damaged and consideration will need to be given to ~~your~~ replacement. The central door is not significant but the fanlight is unique and will need to be conserved. As a result the following interventions are proposed:

- Repair to damaged plasterwork where necessary.
- Severely damaged frames and shutters to be replaced as per original. Care should be exercised to retain and conserve the fanlight of exceptional significance.
- Missing windows to be replaced with windows of similar design
- Fascias and gutters need to be replaced.
- Corrugated iron roof to be extensively repaired and/or sheets replaced.

#### *7.4 Cellar building*

Historical research identifies this building as one of the oldest in the werf. It has however been extensively altered over a period of time. Much of the fenestration are metal-framed windows. Strong paint and possibly masonry repairs may have caused moisture retention within the walls. The inner werf wall shows a slight "bulge". This will require further analysis in the future by the conservation architect. As a result the following is proposed.

- Repair to damaged plasterwork where necessary.
- Severely damaged frames and shutters to be replaced. As per original.
- Missing windows to be replaced with windows of similar design
- Fascias and gutters ~~need~~ to be replaced.
- Corrugated iron roof to be extensively repaired and sheets replaced
- Building to be repainted with appropriate paint.

#### *7.5. The Old Mill House.*

This building is almost derelict and is at present open to the elements. The roof was not inspected but the interior ceilings are sagging which may suggest severe water damage. Fenestration is damaged by water ingress and consideration must be given to their replacement. There may have been a change in the ground levels around the Mill house and as a result the ground is very damp. The following is proposed.

- Building surfaces to be repaired and repainted
- Windows and doors, currently of little historic value to be replaced with similar
- Gutters replaced
- Storm water system reviewed to prevent further water ingress.

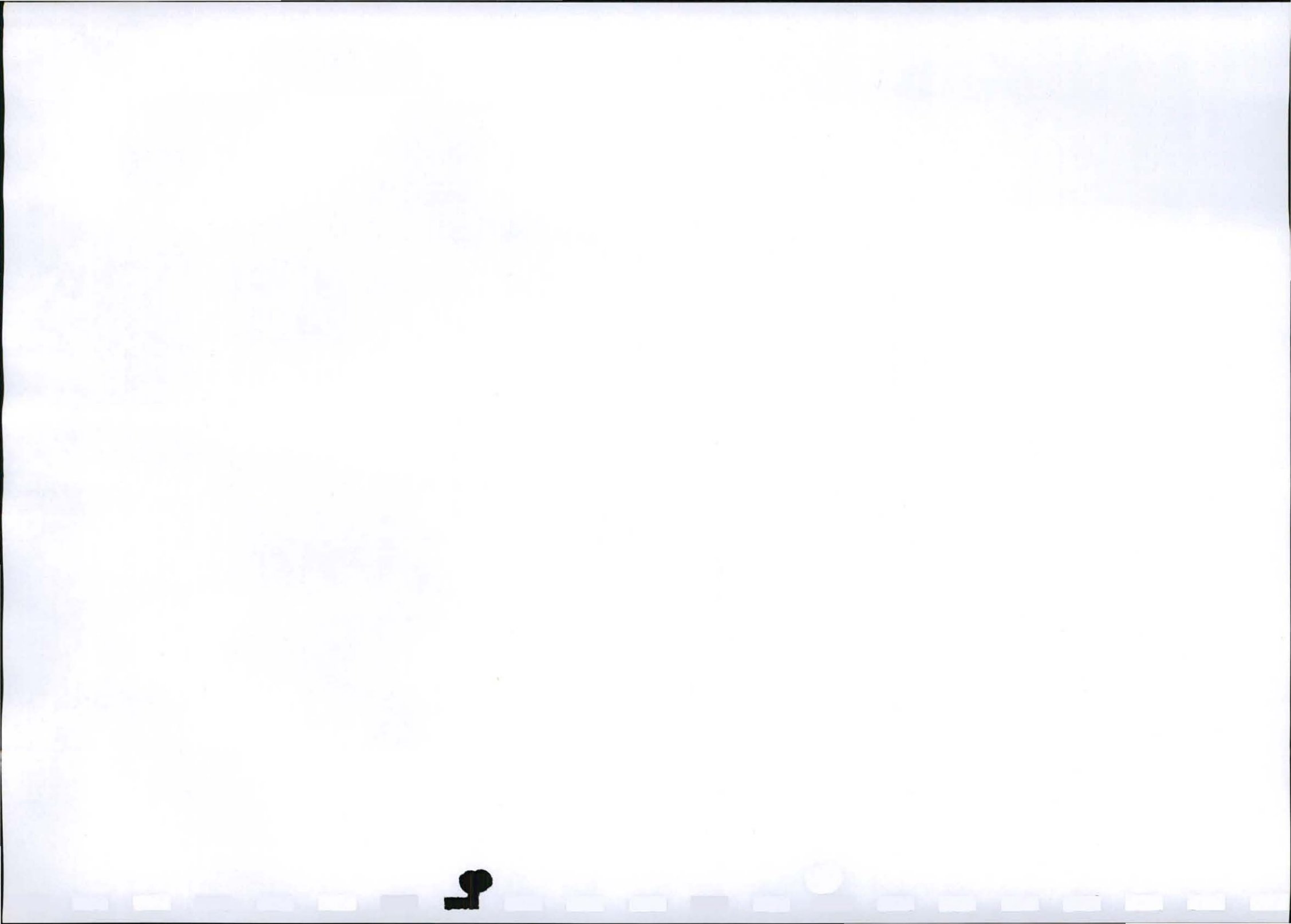
#### *7.6. The outbuilding adjacent to the Manor House.*

Formal permission is sought for the demolition of this building. Approval in principle has already been granted (SAHRA 9/2/084/0181, See Annexure 3).

The outbuilding is small and architecturally unremarkable.

The HIA undertaken by Aikman Associates has found the building built in the pre World War 2 period, to have no intrinsic merit and recommends its demolition. It has also been substantially changed over a period of time.

The placement of the building is ad hoc with convenience in being close to the Manor House the major requirement. As a result the views from the Herb Garden towards the Manor house are not as impressive as they might be as a result of the position and architecture of the outbuilding.



## 8. GENERAL HERITAGE COMMENT

The examination of the site by a heritage consultant revealed a number of issues and concerns.

8.1. The first issue related to <sup>the</sup> fact that the level of the ground within the werf particularly near the homestead or manor house seems to have been raised. The ground level around the Mill House also must have been altered historically as the incline necessary to run a millrace is not there. This has happened as a result of two interventions.

The first is the development of a luxuriant lawn, which may have, through the addition of topsoil, over a long period of time resulted in the raise in the ground level. This has caused problems with drainage and the ingress of water near doors, as well as uneven settlement at the front stoep. The stoep appears to have been re-laid on a cement base, which does not allow water penetration into the ground for drainage purposes.

The second involves the redirection of the sloop across the werf. The sloop would (this does however need to be verified by research) originally have skirted the werf and been routed via the mill house to turn the mill wheel. At present the slope necessary to run a mill-race is not present.

Currently the sloop has been faced with river stone and runs across the werf at an oblique angle. The upper level of the sloop close to the manor may have been raised to prevent the sloop from flooding the grounds.

It is therefore possible that issues around water ingress and settlement may have occurred as a result of changes to the werf levels.

8.2. The second issue concerns the treatment over a period of time of the plaster surfaces. These appear to have been treated in certain places with paints and plaster repairs that do not allow water evaporation and movement.

A number of repairs have been undertaken to the exterior of the wall in this manner and in some cases the interior walls appear to have been replastered and painted with a PVA.

This has cause walls to bulge slightly in parts for example at the cellar building.

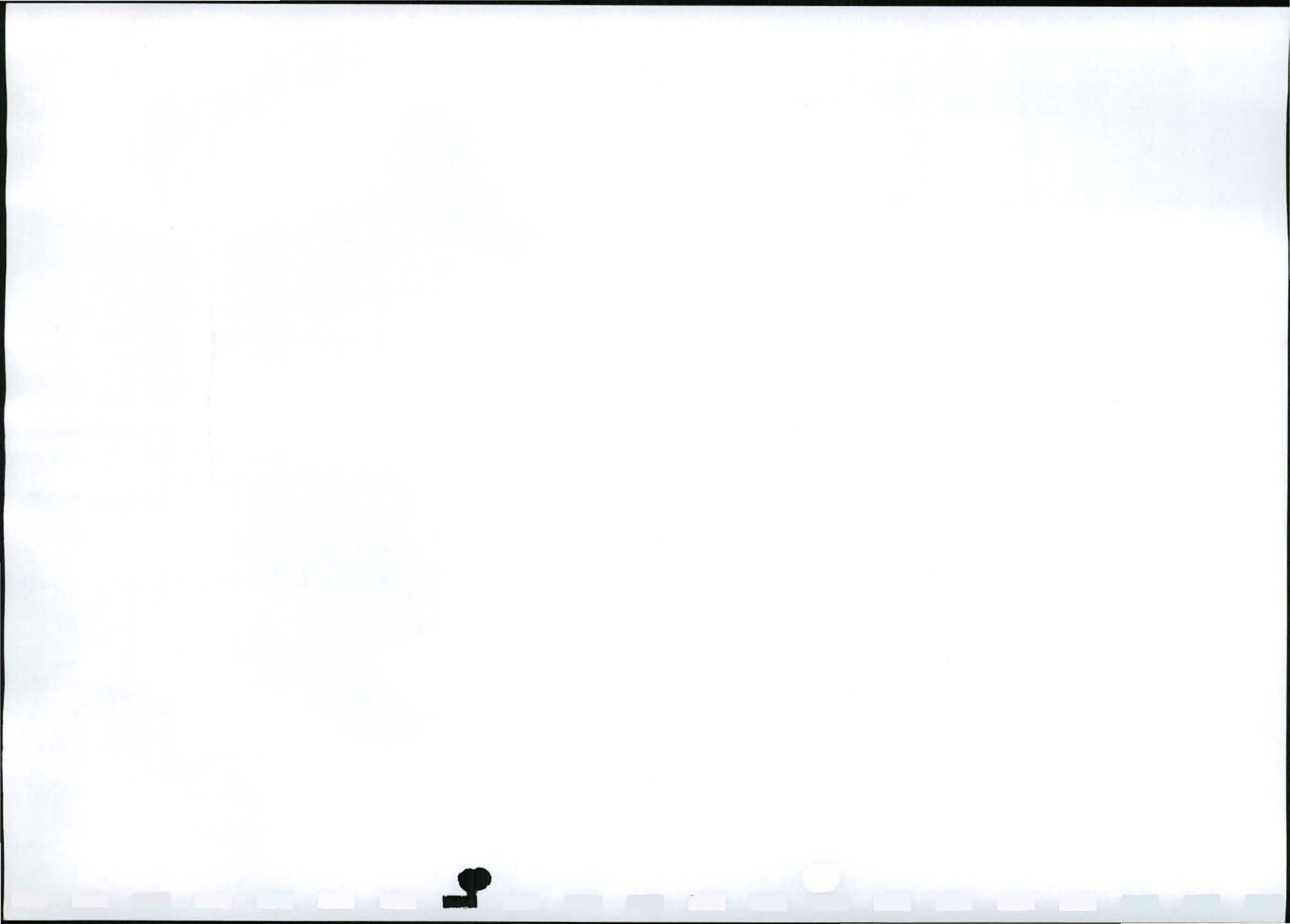
8.3. The third issue concerns the maintenance of the wood frames and other woodwork such as exposed beams. Irregular maintenance has allowed water ingress in the plastered walls via the woodwork. Every effort will be made to retain the existing fenestration and to ensure such fenestration is sealed against further water ingress. Certain window frames, particularly on the longhouse, are badly damaged and they may need to be replaced.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends that the approval be given for the immediate repairs as outlined in Section 7. This is preliminary work intended to prevent further damage to the historic structures.

Further conservation work will be undertaken when the designs for the proposals are underway.

As required by the conditions attached to the HIA, a conservation architect will be appointed to analyse the building fabric and make recommendations regarding appropriate materials and technology. In this work the conditions attached to the HIA will be adhered to.





Further research will be undertaken regarding the layout of the werf attention focused on the water system.

#### 9. SOURCES CONSULTED

Doug Jeffery Environmental Consultant: Proposal for the Change in Land Use for a portion of the remainder of Farm 1475 Paarl, for the development of an Agricultural Precinct and the Restoration and Development of the Werf Precinct, Prepared for Meerrust Estate (Pty) Ltd May 2003

Aikman Associates Meerrust Estate, Simondium Heritage Impact Assessment March 2003

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, RoD, The Change in Land Use from Agriculture for the Establishment of a Winery and a Resort on a Portion of the Remainder of Erf 1475 Paarl.

The NHRA Act 29 of 1999

SAHRA files on Meerust/Allee Bleúe

#### 10. ANNEXURES

1. Section 29 Application
2. Photographic record
3. SAHRA letter to Mr Henk Stutterheim 30 August 2005