



Stokes Hall Great House Development Proposal



Jamaica National Heritage Trust
 79 Duke Street
 Kingston.
 922-1287
 Website: www.jnht.com
 Email: jnht@cwjamaica.com

Prepared by:
Heritage Preservation Management Unit,
Archaeology Division

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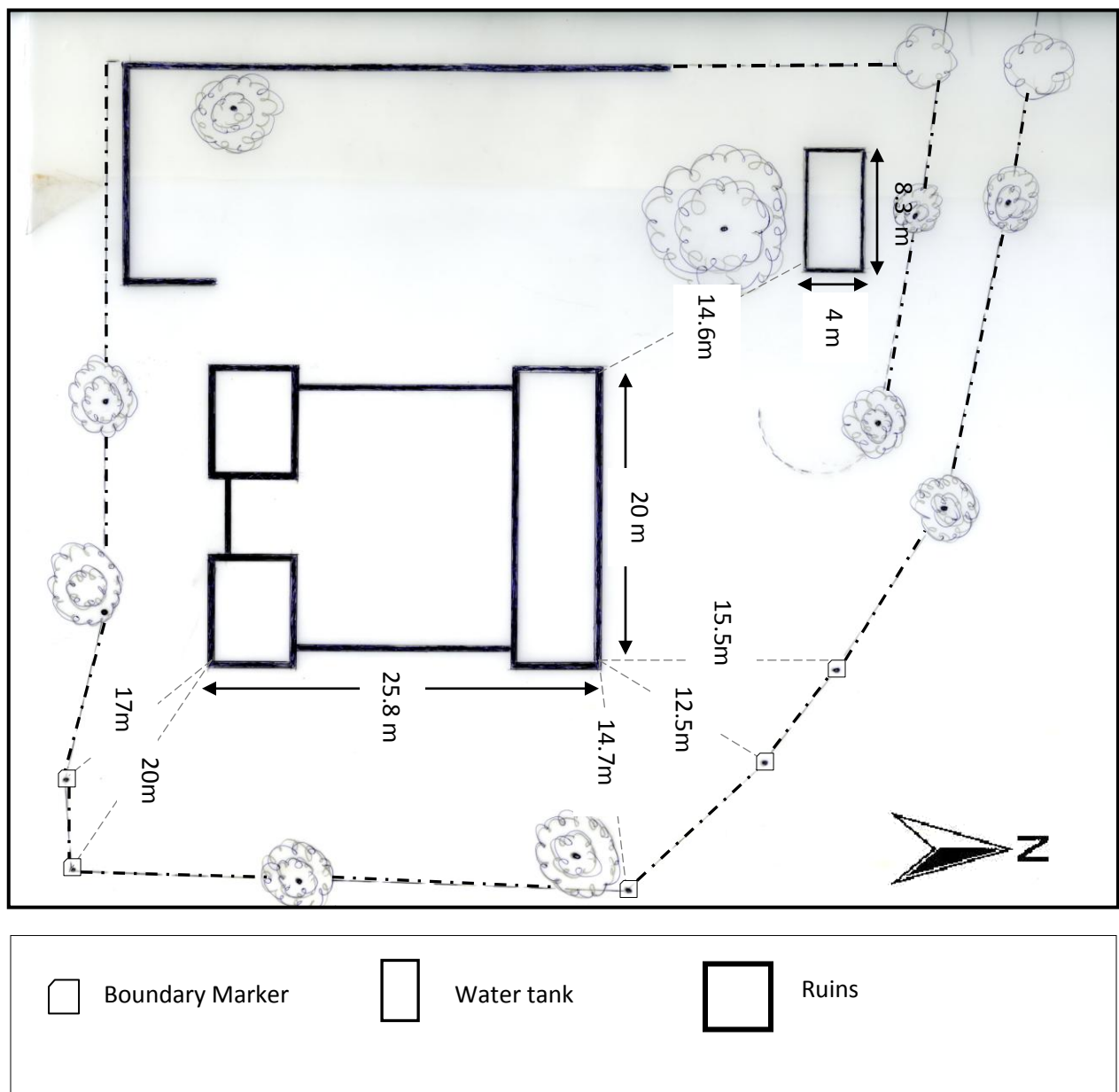
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Introduction

In March 2010, a request was made to the Heritage Preservation and Planning Unit by the Executive Director to view and make recommendations for the aesthetic development of the historical site of Stokes Hall Great House. The site was visited and surveyed on March 11, 2010 (**Plan 1**). Participants in this project are from the Archaeology Division of the JNHT and include Selvenious Walters, Debra-Kay Palmer, Jasinth Simpson, June Heath and Edward Coore.

Plan 1: Stokes hall survey plan



Background

The area was first settled by the Spanish who named the area Hato de Morante or Ranch of Morant. It was then captured by the English and taken over by Luke Stokes, the Governor of Nevis in 1656. Luke Stokes and his followers were the first set of English settlers to Jamaica. He brought 1600 English settlers, hogs and cattle. He later renamed Hato de Morante calling it Stokesfield.

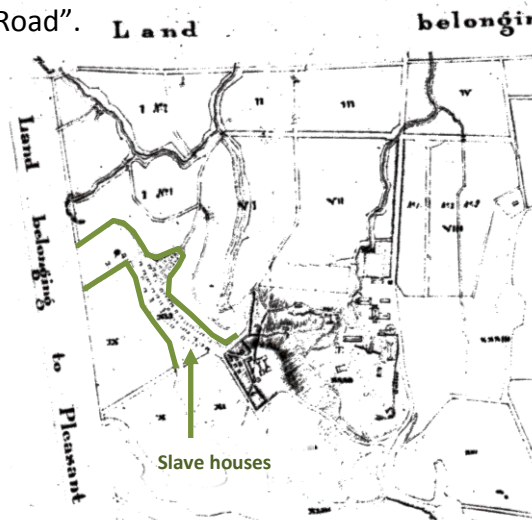
Luke Stokes, his wife and two-thirds of the settlers died a couple years after occupying the area due to an epidemic. The settlers that survived move to higher ground which they called Stokes Hall.

Stokes Hall Great House is also referred to as "*Stokes Hall Slave House*" because it was built by slaves who came to the island with Luke Stokes from Nevis. The ruins of the house is considered by some sources to be one of the oldest English structural remains in Jamaica. Map 1, by John B. Pechon shows



Plate 1. Drawing of Stokes Hall House, c.1900

the 19th century layout. It indicates the slave houses located along the road which led up the slope towards the great house. According to a part of a plan by Alexander R. Carter in 1847, the current route leading to the house was lined with the slave houses and was known as "Negro House Road".



Plan 2. Part of a plan of Stokes Hall Estate, St. Thomas, 1804, by John B. Pechon



Plan 3. Part of a plan of Stokes Hall Estate, St. Thomas, 1847, by Alexander R. Carter outlining the "Negro House Road"

Observations

On observing the Stokes Hall site, several situations that were noted. The approach to the site from Morant Bay via the great house road, it was observed that there were no signs associated with the property (**Plate 2**).



Plate 2. Showing the access road and an absence of directional signs

The absence of directional signs was noted. The entrance from the main road is currently hidden by high grass and bushes. It is difficult to see this access road approaching from both directions.

The access road to the site is narrow and in some areas difficult to negotiate especially when travelling by motor car. Further to this, some areas were observed to be grassy and very bumpy (**Plate 3 & 4**).



Plates 3 & 4. Showing status of the access road to the site



**Plate 5. Showing
No Trespassing
sign**

**Plate 6. Rear of
No Trespassing
sign showing
puncture holes
and dislodgement**



The site currently has one ‘No Trespassing’ sign which has been defaced by several holes seemingly created by a sharp object. The sign itself is anchored to the ground by a pole but this has been dislodged and is currently very shaky (Plate 5 & 6).

The grounds of the site are generally cleared and dense plant overgrowth, however, there is evidence of dried leaves on much of the area. There are grassy areas (**Plate 7**), several large breadfruit (**Plate 10**) and *Guango* trees (**Plate 9**) and some areas that are without grass and flowers (**Plate 8**). In addition, there is a cane field which is close in proximity to the boundary of the site. The nearness of the cane field (**Plate 11 & 12**) detracts from the site's beauty, especially when the cane has been burnt. There are also a few tree stumps on the property which may result in injury to visitors.



Plate 7. Showing grassy areas



Plate 8. Showing areas of site without grass or flowers



Plate 9. Showing Guango Tree



Plate 10. Showing Breadfruit Tree



Plate 11. Showing cane field



Plate 12. Showing proximity of cane field to site

The great house structure is currently in a good condition. However, there are weeds, trees and small plants with hanging roots projecting from the walls of the structure (**Plate 13**). There are some areas of the house's structure that show deterioration. This is shown in absence of support (**Plate 14**), specifically in the windows and other opened areas where the support beams have rotted (**Plate 15**), fallen out or were removed. Also observed, were large structural cracks within the walls of the structure (**Plate 16**).



Plate 13. Showing foliage growing from the structure



Plate 14. Showing window with missing support



Plate 15. Showing deteriorating wood



Plate 16. Showing structural cracks

The stone in some of these areas have fallen out or on the verge of falling out (**Plate 17 & 18**). Between the two main parts of the structure and to the left of the structure the foundations of other sections of the great house can be seen through the grass which has grown up around it (**Plate 19 & 20**).



Plate 17 &18 Showing stones breaking away



Plate 19 & 20. Showing remaining foundations

There is evidence of repairs that were done in the past, as new applications of cement on the structure were observed (**Plate 21**). A chicken was seen nesting in a hole of the structure (**Plate 22**).



Plate 21. Showing new repairs



Plate 22. Showing chicken roosting in building and new repairs

Located towards the entrance of the property is a large open stone feature which may have been used for water storage in the past. Currently, there are trees and other plants growing within this structure (Plates 23 & 24).



Plates 23 & 24. Showing water storage structure



At the back of the property there is evidence of a boundary wall, but currently it is obscured by dense plant growth. There is also evidence of foundations of what seems to be remains of columns and rooms, but are currently not exposed enough to be clearly defined (Plates 25 & 26).



Plates 25. Showing the remains of foundations at the back of the property



Plates 26. Showing the remains of foundations at the back of the property

There is a sign attached to the building indicating ‘*Property of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust*’, that is not very clear as most of the words are now rusted over (Plate 27).



Plate 27. Showing Property of JNHT sign

In addition, there is no running water or lighting associated with the site, which extends itself to an absence of bathroom facilities for visitors.

Recommendations

The general concept of the Stokes Hall site as a park and picnic area, is geared towards patrons that are seeking a venue which is not only beautiful but secure and secluded. The site would be geared towards families, wedding parties and other private and public events. The following are the recommendations for the Stokes Hall development.

Signage and Storyboards

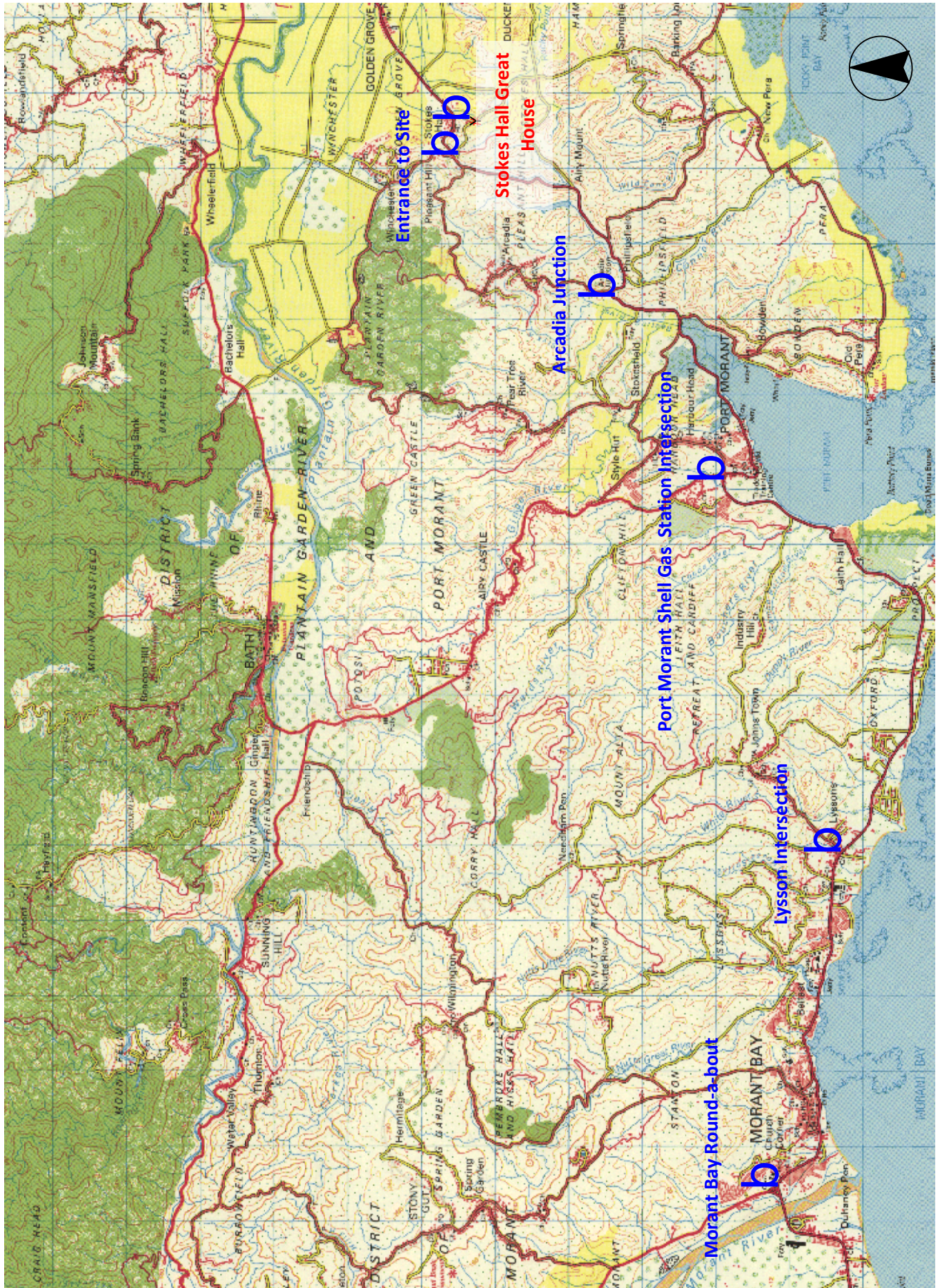
Directional signs should be placed along the St. Thomas road towards the property at the following points to allow for easy access to the site (**Map 1: Proposed Directional Signs to Stokes Hall**):

- Sign at Morant Bay round-a-bout
- Sign indicating right turn at Lysson Intersection
- Sign indicating right turn at Port Morant Shell Gas Station
- Sign indicating right turn at Arcadia Junction
- Sign indicating the Great House access road.
- Welcome sign to the property

The “No Trespassing” sign at the entrance of the property should be removed and be replaced with a Welcome sign to receive visitors to the property. The current property sign should be removed from the building and a new sign placed at the entrance of the property or the information could be included in the Welcome sign.

Story boards should be placed at the entrance of the site and at the structure itself, outlining the site’s use and history including historical drawings and maps. A sign or storyboard should also be placed along the road towards the site indicating the location of the slave houses and village area.

Map 1: Proposed Directional Signs to Stokes Hall Great House



The access road towards the property should be widened if possible, to allow for two-way vehicular traffic, as this is the only entrance and exit route to the site. Further to this, there are sections of this road especially at the beginning that makes access to site difficult and so the recommendation is that it be filled so that the road does not deteriorate further and access to the site becomes easier. Another recommendation is that a culvert be placed at the section indicated below in **(Plate 28)**, to allow the run off of water down the hilly slopes, instead of settling on the road.



Plate 28. Showing section of road that needs filling

The recommended area for parking for the site is along the access road approaching the property. However, the property west of the great house, once cleared, would also be an ideal place for secure parking. There is some uncertainty regarding the ownership of this section of land, but in the event that the property does not belong to the JNHT, perhaps a lease arrangement can be made for this purpose.

Grounds

The boundary wall of the property should be clearly defined to separate the Stokes Hall property from the neighboring sugar cane field. A concrete and iron chain fencing (Plate 29) could be used and softened with a colorful hedging such as crotons (Plate 30), interspersed with wild banana plants, in between the concrete columns.



Plate 29. Concrete and Iron fencing



Plate 30. Crotons hedging

Grass should be planted on those areas of the property where it is found lacking (Plate 31) and around the trunks of the large trees (Plate 32) to cover their buttress roots.

Plate 32.
Showing absence of grass



Plate 33. Showing *Guango* tree with large buttress roots

Small flowering plants could also be planted around the trunks of the trees (**Plate 34 & 35**) to cover the large buttress roots and prevent visitors from tripping over these and causing injury.



Plates 34 & 35 Plants around the trunks of trees

The foundations (**Plate 36 & 37**), as shown below, located in the north and southwest corners of the property need further clarification, and as a result, an archaeological evaluation is required to allow for a clearer interpretation of the site. After the evaluation, the structures should be exposed to show more of the historic foundations.



Plate 36. Showing foundation at the rear of the building

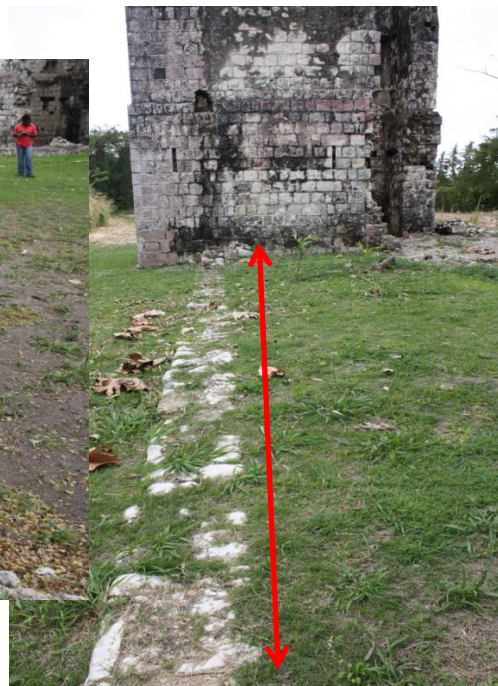


Plate 37. Showing foundation in the centre of the buildings

The water tank (**Plate 38**) located near the entrance of the property should be cleared of all undergrowth and trees. It could also be sealed off and a gazebo (**Plate 39**) constructed on it. The gazebo would be painted white to allow couples to use this area for weddings. The steps to the gazebo could be constructed from the cut stone rubble (**Plate 40**) found on the property as well as to use them to create a boundary around the flower bed near to the gazebo (**Plate 41**). A smaller gazebo could be placed at the southeast corner of the property which would have a view of the valley below (**Plate 42**).



Plate 38. Showing water tank



Plate 39. Showing an example of a gazebo



Plate 40. Cut stone rubble on the property



Plate 41. Example of cut stone used to create boundary for gardens



Plate 42. Example of smaller gazebo

Concrete benches and tables (**Plate 43**) should be placed under the trees along the property to provide seating and an area of relaxation for visitors to the site. Concrete is suggested to blend in with the site's ambiance and general condition.



Plate 43. Concrete bench, tables and stools

A grounds man should be employed from the community and stationed on the property so that the site is kept in an immaculate condition at all times (**Plate 44**). A cut stone walking path could also be placed around the property to enhance the beauty of the site as well as to reduce walking on the grassy sections of the site.



Plate 44. Dried leaves observed on the property

Building

In considering recommendations for the great house structure, the suggestions are that the weeds and small trees currently protruding from the structure should be removed with the assistance of the Conservation Unit and outside agencies that can provide assistance, such as Forestry Department.

In the case of the deteriorating, loose and absent wooden support beams in the windows and arches of the building, these beams should be replaced in the case of deteriorated and absent ones and loose beams repaired. This would not only provide support for the structural elements in the windows and arches but also prevent accidents from falling stones and wood.

The recommendation for loose stones observed on the building is that these sections be restored to prevent injury to visitors and further deterioration of the structure. This is also the case for the areas that exhibit cracks in the walls, these areas should also be restored to prevent any further deterioration of the structure.

Lighting

Along the length of the great house road there is very little lighting and therefore it is recommended that lights be placed at regular intervals along the access road. This will allow the property to be used during the night with secure parking at night as well as during the day. Lighting is also needed for the site itself and these could be placed at strategic points around the property such as at the gazebos and at the areas where benches have been placed. The lights could be historic in style (**Plate 45**) and softened by the plants, and trees around them. They could also be painted green to allow them to blend in with the scenery.

Lights could also be used to enhance the beauty of the great house ruin itself by directing them onto the structure creating a romantic ambiance for visitors to the site at night. Two gate columns should be constructed at the entrance of the

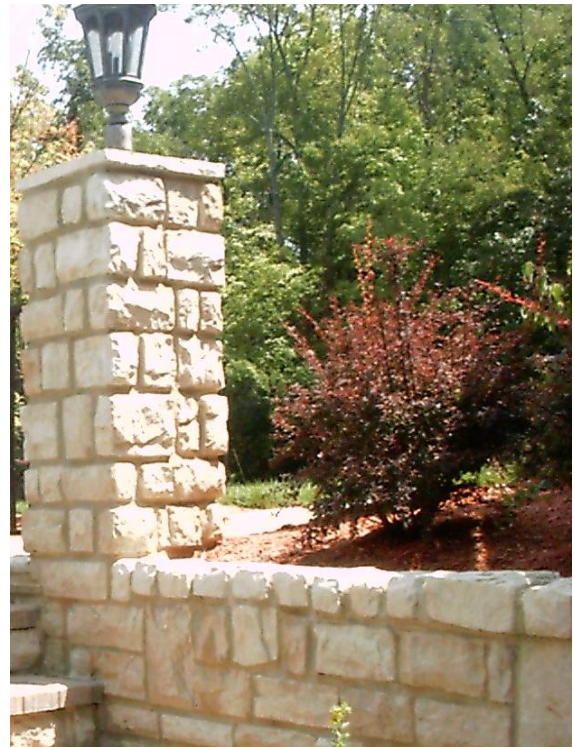
property with lights to provide lighting as well as to form a barrier to vehicular traffic (**Plate 46**). The columns can be built using the stone rubble from the ruin.



Plate 45. Examples of light posts



Plate 46. Examples of gate columns



Bathroom Facilities

Bathroom facilities must be made available for male and female visitors to the property. It is recommended that a trailer be re-conditioned and a brown shingle-like roof façade for the roof placed at the south-western side of the property. This should be surrounded by plants such as wild banana plants (**Plate 47**) to provide a softening effect for it. The trailer could be separated in two bathrooms complete with face basins for male and female.



Plate 47. Ornamental Banana plant

Piped water would have to be made available to the site and tanks provided for the purpose of water storage. In addition, an outside pipe would need to be placed on the site to provide water for the plants throughout the property and other purposes.

Conclusion

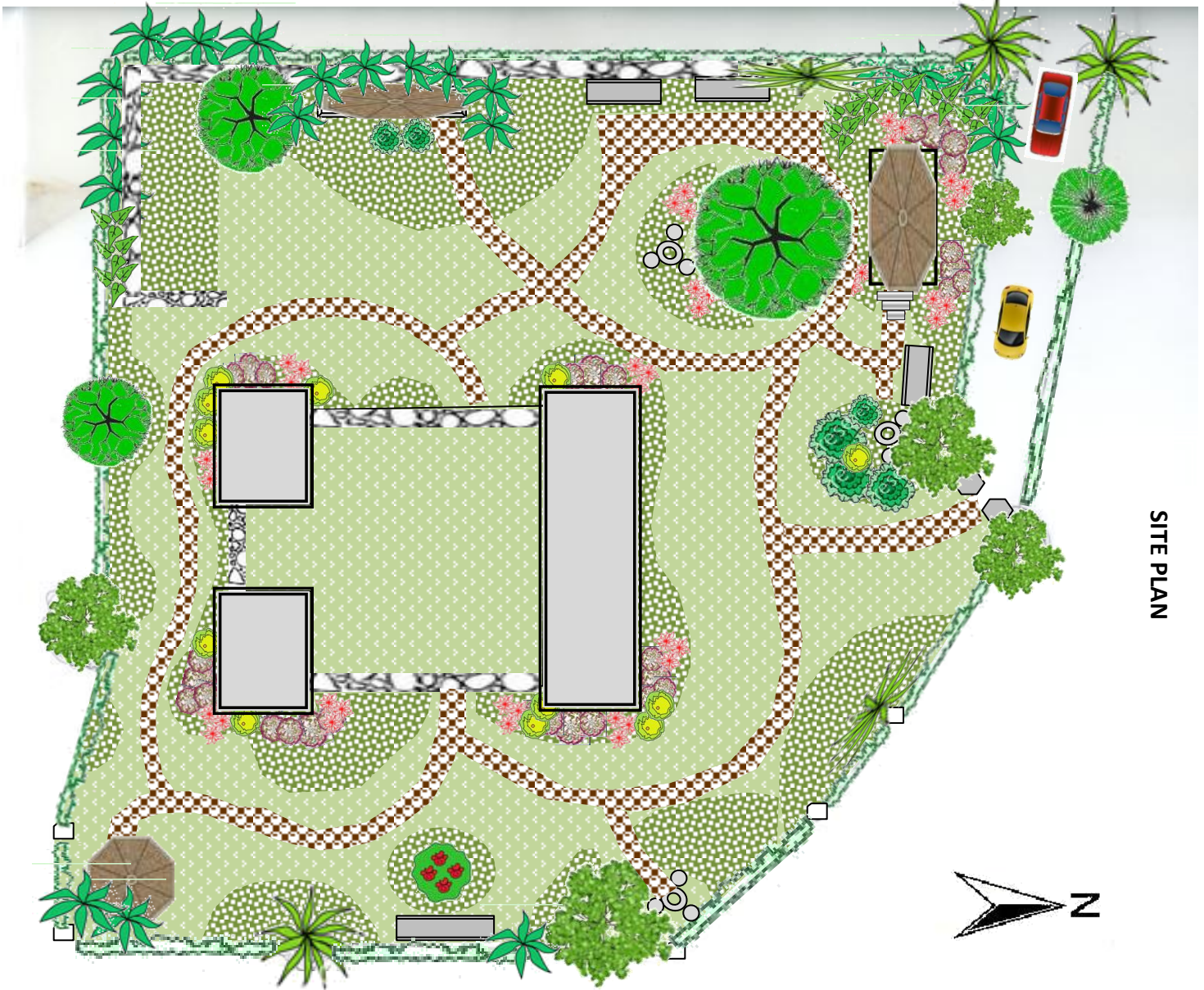
The Stokes Hall site development is an exciting prospect that has the potential to engage members of the community, visitors and other stakeholders alike.

The recommendations made regarding the complete development of the site, will result in a greater exposure of the site's aesthetic, historical and educational values. Therefore increasing its marketability and making a greater impression on the local community and visitors alike.

It is important to note that there are aspects of the site which still require archaeological investigation and so any development of the site should not ignore these facets, thereby ensuring the maintenance of the archeological integrity.

Master Plan:

Stokes Hall Great House Development Proposal



	Walkway		Breadfruit Tree		Guango Tree		Flower1		Gazebo
	Grass 1		Tree 1		Red Birch Tree		Flower2		Stone Bench
	Grass 2		Tree 2		Wild Banana Plant		Flower3		Ruins
	Coco Plant						Stone Table & Chair		
	Hedging								