

COWLEY CONSERVATIVE CLUB, 19 BETWEEN TOWNS ROAD, OXFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT



JPHERITAGE

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COWLEY CONSERVATIVE CLUB, OXFORD - HERITAGE ASSESSMENT**1.0 INTRODUCTION****1.1 Project background**

- 1.1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by JP Heritage on behalf of Cantay Group to inform proposals for a replacement building at Cowley Conservative Club, Oxford.
- 1.1.2 This document provides a description of the historic development and significance of Cowley Conservative Club and its contribution to the character of the area. This has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the LPA in accordance with paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Revised 2018). The report was produced using the guidance contained within the Historic England document entitled *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008).

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT**2.1 NPPF (Revised 2018)**

- 2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It advises that in determining planning applications *'local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance* (paragraph 189).
- 2.1.2 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines a Heritage Asset as being *'a building, monument, site, place area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.'* Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.1.3 In determining planning applications, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take account of (paragraph 192):
- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
 - The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.1.4 Specific guidance on the treatment of designated heritage assets (listed buildings) emphasises the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 193). It advises that *'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

- 2.1.5 Paragraph 194 continues by stating that *‘any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification’*.
- 2.1.6 Specific guidance on the treatment of non-designated heritage assets emphasises the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 197). It advises that *‘The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset’*.

2.2 Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

- 2.2.1 The relevant historic environment policies for the proposed development are as follows:
- Policy HE.3 Listed Buildings
 - Policy HE.6 Buildings of Local Interest
 - Policy HE.7 Conservation Areas

3.0 UNDERSTANDING THE HERITAGE

3.1 Heritage Designations

- 3.1.1 Cowley Conservative Club is not a listed building, is not located within a conservation area and is not included in the Oxford Heritage Asset Register. There are no listed buildings or conservation areas located in close proximity to the Cowley Conservative Club.
- 3.1.2 To the north-east lies the southern edge of Temple Cowley Conservation Area which is approximately 110m from the site. Views looking south-west from the edge of the conservation area, i.e. from Cowley Road looking along Between Towns Road, are dominated by predominantly 3-storey buildings and the recently completed 5-storey student accommodation (Between Towns Court), which is in the near setting. Although the proposed development would be visible within this view, it would be too far away to have any discernible impact on the setting of the conservation area. Indeed, with regards to the recently completed Between Towns Court (planning ref. 16/01752FUL), the Officer’s report states the following:

The proposed would be visible in the Temple Cowley Conservation Area. However, having had regard to the character, appearance and special significance of the Conservation Area, Officers consider that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.

- 3.1.3 The potential impacts of the proposed development on the setting of the Cowley Temple Conservation Area are therefore considered to be insignificant. The focus of this report is therefore to assess the significance of the Cowley Conservative Club.

3.2 Historical background

- 3.2.1 Oxford expanded as a result of the railway and improved river transport, the growth of the University and other educational establishments, and the printing and publishing industry. The 1886 edition of the Ordnance Survey map shows the two villages of Temple Cowley and

Cowley remained with a landscape of fields between. Villages such as Cowley were included in the city of Oxford through boundary extensions in 1889, 1929 and later.



Figure 1: Extract from the 1886 edition of the 6" Ordnance Survey map

3.2.2 The development of Cowley was influenced by the growth of manufacturing industries in the area. By the late 19th century a Steam Plough Works had been established at Cowley and terraced houses constructed along Between Towns Road (known as High Street in the later 19th and early 20th centuries). These details are shown on the 1900 edition of the 6" Ordnance Survey map.



Figure 2: Extract from the 1900 edition of the 6" Ordnance Survey map



Figure 3: Postcard showing Between Towns Road in 1907

3.2.3 The 3rd edition of the 25" Ordnance Survey map (1921) shows a Motor Works at Temple Cowley. The south-eastern side of Between Towns Road had started to be developed by this time with the construction of two buildings, including a Post Office.



Figure 4: Extract from the 3rd edition of the 25" Ordnance Survey map (1921)

3.2.4 During the 1920s and 1930s Cowley was substantially developed with an enlarged Motor Works and Steel Works at Temple Cowley and new housing which resulted in the coalescence of the villages of Cowley and Temple Cowley. The 1941 edition of the Ordnance Survey map (surveyed in 1937) shows the further development of Between Towns Road, including the construction of the Cowley Conservative Club. The footprint of the Cowley Conservative Club (constructed in 1924) has an irregular U-plan with the main part parallel to the road and with wings to the rear.



Figure 5: Extract from the 1941 edition of the 25" Ordnance Survey map



Figure 6: Cowley Conservative Club in 1959

- 3.2.5 A ground floor plan accompanying an application for small extensions and internal alterations shows the original layout of the Cowley Conservative Club (ref. 52/02581/AH). This provides a clear indication of how subsequent extensions and alterations have substantially altered the original floor plan of the building.
- 3.2.5 Cowley Conservative Club remained relatively unchanged until the early 1960s when a 2-storey extension was added. This housed a beer store, office, bar, lounge, kitchen and W.C.s on the ground floor and lounge, committee room and TV room on the first floor (62/12937/AH).
- 3.2.6 In 1969 permission was granted for the demolition of the existing billiard room and games room and for an extension to form a concert room, skittle alley and additional lavatory (ref. 69/21388/AA).
- 3.2.7 Cowley Conservative Club was further extended in 1976 after permission was granted for an extension to provide a new dining room area, a new lounge and skittle alley (ref. 76/00171/A).

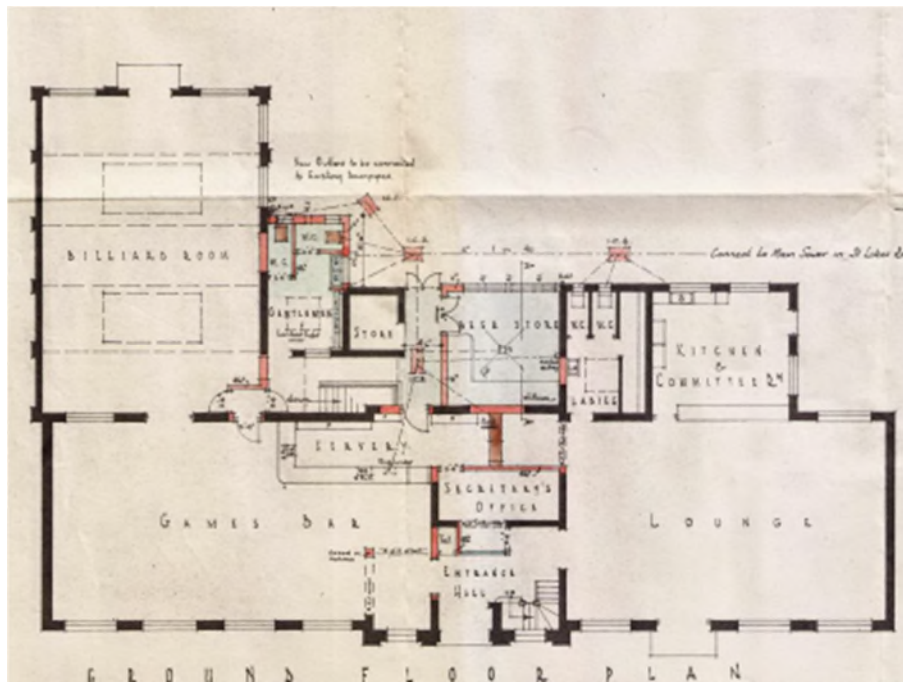


Figure 7: Ground floor plan of Cowley Conservative Club (1952)

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF COWLEY CONSERVATIVE CLUB

4.1 Phase 1

- 4.1.1 The Phase 1 building is of brick construction in English bond with stone bands. The building includes a central 2-storey block with flanking single storey wings. The roofs are hipped and finished with what appears to be synthetic slate tiles.
- 4.1.2 The arrangement of window and door openings is symmetrical and have vertical emphasis. The sills and lintels are limestone. All of the windows are modern double glazed plastic replacements. The fire escape doors are also modern.
- 4.1.3 The main entrance to the Phase 1 building was through a porch with stone dressings with an Art-Deco style stepped voussoirs. A later door and glazed frame has been inserted. The original door opening can be viewed internally and includes a wooden door frame with roundels. The overlight is leaded stained glass with the initials CCC. The double doors are later replacements.
- 4.1.4 The original rear elevation is completely masked by later extensions. The blank side wall to the left can be observed but the side elevation to the right has been concealed by a later single storey extension. The boundary wall at the front of the building is a later addition.

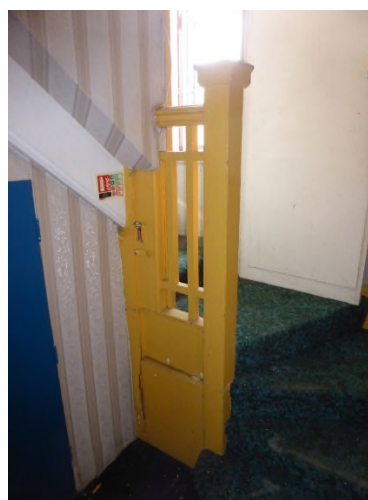


Figure 8: Front elevation of Cowley Conservative Club



Figures 9 and 10: Main entrance with stone dressings and a later door (left) and stone bands, sills, lintels and double glazed windows on the front elevation (right)

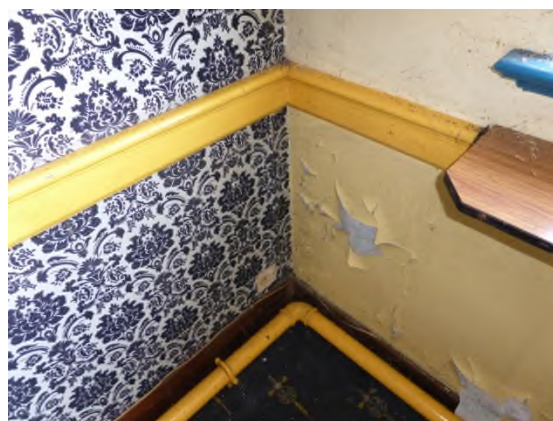
- 4.1.5 The front door provides access to an entrance lobby, or Entrance Hall. The 1952 plan of the ground floor shows that the original access to the Games Bar to the left was through a large opening off the Entrance Hall. This was partly infilled in the early 1960s and there is currently a double door width opening with modern fire doors. This door opening provides access to a large function room. This space has been substantially altered and extended and no features relating to the original building can be observed.
- 4.1.6 The Entrance Hall contains a staircase with square section newel posts and balustrade which is consistent with early 20th century design. This has been enclosed by a stud and plaster partition and so can no longer be fully appreciated from within the Entrance Hall.
- 4.1.7 There is a 3-panel door at the entrance to the former Lounge on the right hand side of the Entrance Hall. The design of this door is consistent with 1920s style. The former Lounge includes some radiators which are of Art-Deco design. The interior wall decoration is embellished with a dado rail painted yellow. Where panels of the false ceiling have been dislodged the original boarded ceiling finish can be observed.



Figures 11 and 12: Main entrance with leaded stained glass overlight (left) and part of a newel post and balustrade to a staircase leading from the Entrance Hall to a first floor service flat (right)



Figures 13 and 14: 3-panel door from the Entrance Hall to the extended Lounge (left) and Art-Deco style radiators in the extended Lounge (right)



Figures 15 and 16: Boarded skelting finish above a later false ceiling in the extended Lounge (left) and dado rail in the extended Lounge (right)

4.1.8 Unlike the ground floor, the first floor layout remains legible with a corridor providing access to four rooms. These rooms are accessed through 3-panel doors with architraves which are thought to be original. Some of the rooms include a picture rail. Fireplaces in the rooms to the rear have been removed. No other features relating to the original building were observed.



Figures 17 and 18: 3-panel door to a first floor room (left) and corridor providing access to the first floor rooms (right)

4.2 Phase 2

- 4.2.1 The Phase 2 works were undertaken in 1952 and included rear extensions and internal alterations. Due to later extensions, only the internal alterations can be traced in the fabric today. These include the creation of an enclosure for a telephone. As noted above, this reduced the size of the entrance from the Entrance Hall to the former Games Bar.



Figures 19 and 20: Reduced opening from the Entrance Hall to the former Games Room (left) and an associated telephone booth in the Entrance Hall (right)

4.3 Phase 3

- 4.3.1 The early 1960s extension included a single storey entrance to an extended Lounge and a 2-storey extension which housed W.C.s, kitchen and lounge on the ground floor and a flat and committee room on the first floor. This extension was of cavity brick construction laid in stretcher bond.
- 4.3.2 The rear wall of the Lounge on the ground floor was removed and an RSJ inserted as part of the early 1960s alterations. A 1970s glazed wooden screen occupies the position of this rear

wall. On the first floor a corridor provides access to the 1960s and 1970s rooms. None of these rooms contain any features of interest.



Figure 21: Early 1960s single storey entrance and 2-storey extension viewed from St Lukes Road (centre and left of the image)

4.4 Phase 4

4.4.1 The 1970s extensions occupies the full width of the rear of the building and is of 2-storeys. The brickwork is of a similar light brown colour to the 1960s work and has been keyed in.



Figures 22 and 23: 2-storey extension and new entrance along St Lukes Road (left) and blank walling on the north-east side of the building (right)

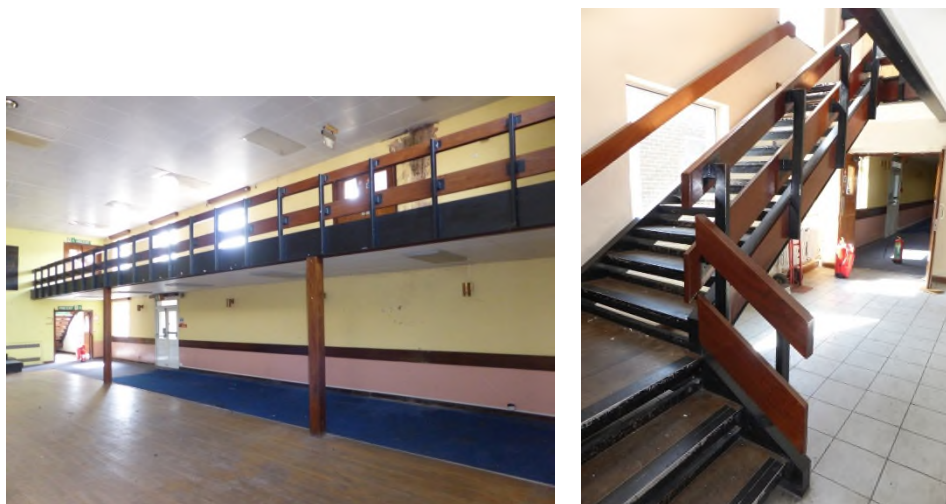


Figure 24: Rear elevation of the 1970s extensions

- 4.4.2 During the 1970s the Games Bar was reconfigured with a new bar which was aligned longitudinally rather than across the Games Bar. The wood laminate finish of the bar and the inset enamelled tile decoration is typical of 1970s style. The rear wall of the former Games Bar has been removed. A sliding screen occupies the position of this rear wall. A 1970s or later raised floor occupies the front area of the former Games Room.
- 4.4.3 The Billiard Room to the rear of the Games Room was also substantially extended and the rear wall removed to create a Concert Hall. The creation of a Concert Hall included a balcony with metal balustrade and wooden rails. Access to the balcony is from a Foyer to the rear.
- 4.4.4 The Lounge was further extended in the 1970s and the current bar relates to this phase of works. To the rear of the 1970s extension there is a skittle alley.
- 4.4.5 The upper floor of the 1970s extension is accessed by steps leading from the 'new' entrance. This provides access to a cocktail bar. The ceiling of the cocktail bar includes wooden coffering with multi-coloured painted panels with downlights.



Figures 25 and 26: Views of the former Games Bar and Billiard showing the substantial changes to the original layout



Figures 27 and 28: 1970s balcony in the ballroom and access stair to the rear



Figures 29 and 30: Glazed wooden screen in the extended Lounge (left) and bar to the extended Lounge (right)



Figures 31 and 32: Cocktail bar (left) and skittle alley in the 1970s extension

4.5 Setting

4.5.1 The setting of the Cowley Conservative Club has been substantially redeveloped during the course of the later 20th and early 21st centuries. None of the terraced houses shown at Figure 3 survive. No. 17 Between Towns Road (Betfred) appears to relate to the early 20th century development of the south-east side of Between Towns Road but has been much altered. On the opposite side of the road to the Cowley Conservative Club there is a former Hall, now a church, which is broadly contemporary with 19 Between Towns Road.



Figures 33 and 34: 17 Between Towns Road (left) and church on the opposite side of the road to the Cowley Conservative Club (right)

4.5.2 The setting along Between Towns Road is otherwise characterised by later 20th and 21st century buildings which are of a different scale and form to the earlier buildings noted above.

These include 3-storey offices on the south-west side of the St Lukes Road junction, Cowley Workers Social Club on the opposite side of Between Towns Road, the 3-storey Broadfield House and the recently built student 5-storey accommodation to the north-east of Cowley Conservative Club. Views towards Cowley Conservative Club from the south-west and north-west clearly demonstrate the changes to the form and scale of the built environment along Between Towns Road.



Figure 35: View of the Cowley Conservative Club from the south-west



Figure 36: View of the Cowley Conservative Club from the north-west

5.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

5.1.1 The significance of the building has been assessed using Historic England criterion for Local Heritage List (see table below). This shows that the building only meets a number of the criterion but only to a very minor degree. The assessment of heritage value and criterion for assessing local interest concludes that the building is of very low local interest and that this interest has been substantially eroded by later 20th century extensions and alterations to the building as well as changes to its setting.

Criterion	Comment
Age	Cowley Conservative Club was constructed in 1924. Historic England's guidance on listing states that a greater degree of selection is required for buildings dating between 1850 and 1939, with the threshold being set higher for more recent buildings. There have been substantial changes made to the property during the 1960s and 1970s which have impacted on the age and integrity of the original building. Although the age range can be adjusted to take into account distinctive local characteristics or building traditions, it is considered the Cowley Conservative Club does not reflect these attributes and therefore does not meet this criterion.
Rarity	The Cowley Conservative Club is of a rather plain design and is consistent with 1920s and 1930s architectural style. The generic forms are not particularly representative of local characteristics. There are some original fixtures and fittings that survive on the interior but these are mass produced items that are typical of the period and not of particular interest. The plan form has been substantially altered by 1960s and 1970s alterations and extensions. It is not a rare building type and does not therefore meet this criterion.
Aesthetic Interest	The use of English bond brickwork, stone dressings, particularly the Art-Deco influenced main entrance, stone bands is of some aesthetic value. However, the replacement of all of the windows with plastic double glazed units and the insertion of fire escape doors has adversely affected the character of the front elevation. The interior contains some fixtures and fittings that are associated with the original design of the building but these are to a large extent diminished by the later alterations. The original design concept has been much altered and the Cowley Conservative Club, therefore, only meets this criterion to a very minor degree.
Group Value	There are a number of structures in close proximity that are associated with the early 20 th century development of Between Towns Road, i.e. 17 Between Towns Road and the church hall opposite to the Cowley Conservative Club. These buildings are broadly contemporary with the development of Temple Cowley associated with Morris Motors Ltd. In terms of function, historic map regression demonstrates that there was a 'Club' at the junction with Cowley Road (demolished) and a 'Hall' (church hall mentioned above) which is opposite to Cowley Conservative Club. Much of the street scape associated with the early 20 th century development of Between Towns Road has been replaced by modern buildings and there is no longer a coherent street scene relating to this period. Cowley Conservative Club is therefore considered to have group value to a minor degree.

Archaeological Interest	The building has no known archaeological interest. The building does not meet this criterion.
Archival Interest	There are no known documents which specifically record the building's origins. Historic OS maps and the planning history for the site provide some detail on the original plan form and for later extensions and alterations. HE guidance states that the archival interest should be supported by a significant contemporary or historic written record. The building does not therefore meet this criterion.
Historical Associations	There are no known links to important local figures associated with the Cowley Conservative Club. Cowley Conservative Club does, however, form part of the history of Cowley as a component of Oxford's political activity and can be viewed within the wider context of the development of Cowley in the 1920s and 1930s. Cowley Conservative Club therefore has some illustrative and associative value and therefore meets this criterion to a degree.
Designed Landscape Interest	There are no designed landscapes associated with the building. The setting has been substantially altered since the construction of the Cowley Conservative Club. It therefore does not meet this criterion.
Landmark Status	HE guidance that landmark status could derive from strong communal, historical associations or from especially striking aesthetic value. The Cowley Conservative Club does not have strong historical associations and is not aesthetically striking. The building therefore does not meet this criterion.
Social and Communal Value	As noted under group value, Cowley Conservative Club is broadly contemporary with the development of the area associated with the establishment and enlargement of Morris Motors Ltd. The 1941 edition of the Ordnance Survey map shows Cowley Conservative Club, another 'Club' to the north-east and a 'Hall'. The 'Club' at the junction with Cowley Road has been replaced with a modern building but the 'Hall', a church hall, survives. These broadly contemporary buildings would have provided a social focus for the growing suburb of Cowley. Cowley Conservative Club is therefore considered to meet this criterion to a degree.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Proposals

6.1.1 The proposals are as follows:

- Demolition of the existing building;
- Replacement building.

6.2 Demolition of the existing building

6.2.1 This assessment focuses on the impact caused by the demolition of Cowley Conservative Club but also considers the merits of the replacement building. None of the buildings in immediate proximity to Cowley Conservative Club are nationally or locally designated and the Temple Cowley Conservation Area is some distance away to the north-east. As noted above, the potential impacts of the proposed development on the setting of the Cowley Temple

Conservation Area are therefore considered to be insignificant. Therefore, any potential impact on the historic environment would arise principally from the demolition of the current building, which is considered to be very low local interest.

- 6.2.2 It has been demonstrated that Cowley Conservative Club meets only some of the criteria for non-designated heritage asset status and, in each case, only to a minor degree. The original building has been much altered by works carried out during the course of the 20th century. The setting of the building has also been much altered and little remains of the early 20th century streetscape. It is therefore considered that Cowley Conservative Club is of very low local interest.
- 6.2.3 The proposed development would result in the loss of the building in its entirety and, as a result, any remaining significance embodied within the fabric of the building and its presence along Between Towns Road would be lost. Accordingly, the harm to the significance of the building would therefore be high. As set out in paragraph 197 of the NPPF, the level of harm should be weighed against the significance of the heritage asset. It is considered that the level of harm would be very low due to the very low significance of Cowley Conservative Club.
- 6.2.4 Cowley Conservative Club is a redundant building and is in a deleterious condition. While the building was still in use, the design of the 1970s extension with a flat roof had caused a number of drainage problems. This resulted in severe water damage throughout the building and continues to be an issue. Towards the end of the building's use as a club it had become apparent that the 1960s and 1970s extensions/alterations had created spaces that were no longer required by the club membership at the time. As a result the building became underused and subject to areas of neglect. The Cowley Conservative Club building would require substantial investment to bring it back into use and to meet modern requirements as a private members club. The viability of the Cowley Conservative Club as a community facility is therefore considered to be limited. This is explored further in the Planning Statement.



Figure 37: Proposed street elevations

6.3 Replacement building

- 6.3.1 The proposed replacement building has responded positively to officer comments on the previous application (ref. 19/02620/FUL). The main issues related to siting, massing and height of the proposed building. These matters have been addressed by creating projection and recession in the street elevation along Between Towns Road. The central section is set back from the road frontage and two wings break forward at each end. This has contributed towards breaking up the bulk and massing of the building.

- 6.3.2 The cascading heights of the roofs along the St Luke's Road elevation contributes to a reduction the bulk and massing of the proposed building from this aspect and provides a more sympathetic transition in scale towards the residential dwellings to the south-east.
- 6.3.3 In terms of scale, form and materials, the proposed building would complement the recently completed Between Towns Court student accommodation. The ration of wall to opening, rhythms, vertical emphasis of openings and modular appearance would contribute towards a coherent street scene that is in keeping with the dynamic development of Between Towns Road.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1.1 This Heritage Statement describes the historic development and assesses the significance of the heritage asset affected by the proposals. As such, it is considered that this Heritage Statement meets the requirements set out in paragraphs 193 and 197 of the NPPF local planning policy and provides sufficient information regarding the built heritage.
- 7.1.2 The conclusions of this assessment are that Cowley Conservative Club is of low local interest as a heritage asset. It is also concluded that, due to substantial extensions and alterations to the building and substantial changes to its original setting, Cowley Conservative Club does not contribute positively to the character and local distinctiveness of the area. Demolition of the building would therefore have a low level of impact on the historic environment.
- 7.1.3 The revised proposals for the replacement building have responded positively to officer comments. The scale, form and use of materials of the proposed building would contribute positively towards a coherent street scene at the north-eastern end of Between Towns Road.
- 7.1.4 As such, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the relevant local and National Planning Policies.

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