

THE WHEATSHEAF 129 HIGH STREET OXFORD

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT
JANUARY 2021

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WORLLEDGE ASSOCIATES

Worledge Associates is an Oxford-based heritage consultancy, committed to the effective management of the historic environment. Established in 2014 by Nicholas and Alison Worledge, Nicholas came to private practice with over 35 years' experience working in heritage management for local authorities. This intimate knowledge and understanding of council processes, and planning policy and practice, helps us to work collaboratively with owners and decision-makers to manage change to the historic environment.

Our team of dedicated researchers and specialists believe in the capacity of the historic environment to contribute to society's collective economic, social, and cultural well-being. We aim to identify what is significant about places and spaces in order to support their effective management and sustain their heritage value. We have worked with a wide range of property-owners and developers including universities and colleges, museums and libraries, large country estates, manor house, farmsteads, cottages, town houses and new housing sites

INTRODUCTION

The intelligent management of change is a key principle necessary to sustain the historic environment for present and future generations to enjoy. Historic England and successive government agencies have published policy and advice that extend our understanding of the historic environment and develop our competency in making decisions about how to manage it.

Paragraphs 4-10 of Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note 2 (Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment) explains that applications (for planning permission and listed building consent) have a greater likelihood of success and better decisions will be made when applicants and local planning authorities assess and understand the particular nature of the significance of an asset, the extent of the asset's fabric to which the significance relates and the level of importance of that significance.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) provides a very similar message in paragraphs 189 and 190 expecting both applicant and local planning authority to take responsibility for understanding the significance of a heritage asset and the impact of a development proposal, seeking to avoid unacceptable conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

It has never been the intention of government to prevent change or freeze frame local communities and current policy and good practice suggests that change, if managed intelligently would not be harmful.

This report has been prepared to accompany a planning application seeking to raise a portion of the existing roof of the Wheatsheaf Public House, 128A High Street and Wheatsheaf Lane, Oxford. The Wheatsheaf PH built in 1897 is not included in the National Heritage List for England but lies within the Oxford Central (City Centre and University) Conservation Area and backs onto Kemp Hall a grade II* listed building. Accordingly an assessment is required of the impact, or not, on the character and appearance of the conservation area and setting of the listed building.

The report includes a brief history of the Wheatsheaf and description of its heritage context. A summary is provided of the relevant national and local heritage policies, guidelines and advice, and following a brief description of the proposal and assessment is provided of the potential impacts on Kemp Hall and the Conservation Area, including views of the roofscape from public vantage points, St Mary the Virgin church tower and Carfax Tower.

The report concludes that the proposal will have no visual impact on the setting of Kemp Hall, and due to the roof being obscured at ground level and in views from St Mary the Virgin Tower and Carfax Tower, it will have no impact on the special character and appearance of the Oxford Central (City Centre and University) Conservation Area.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WHEATSHEAF PUBLIC HOUSE

The www.oxfordhistory.org.uk website provides a brief history of the Wheatsheaf Public House.

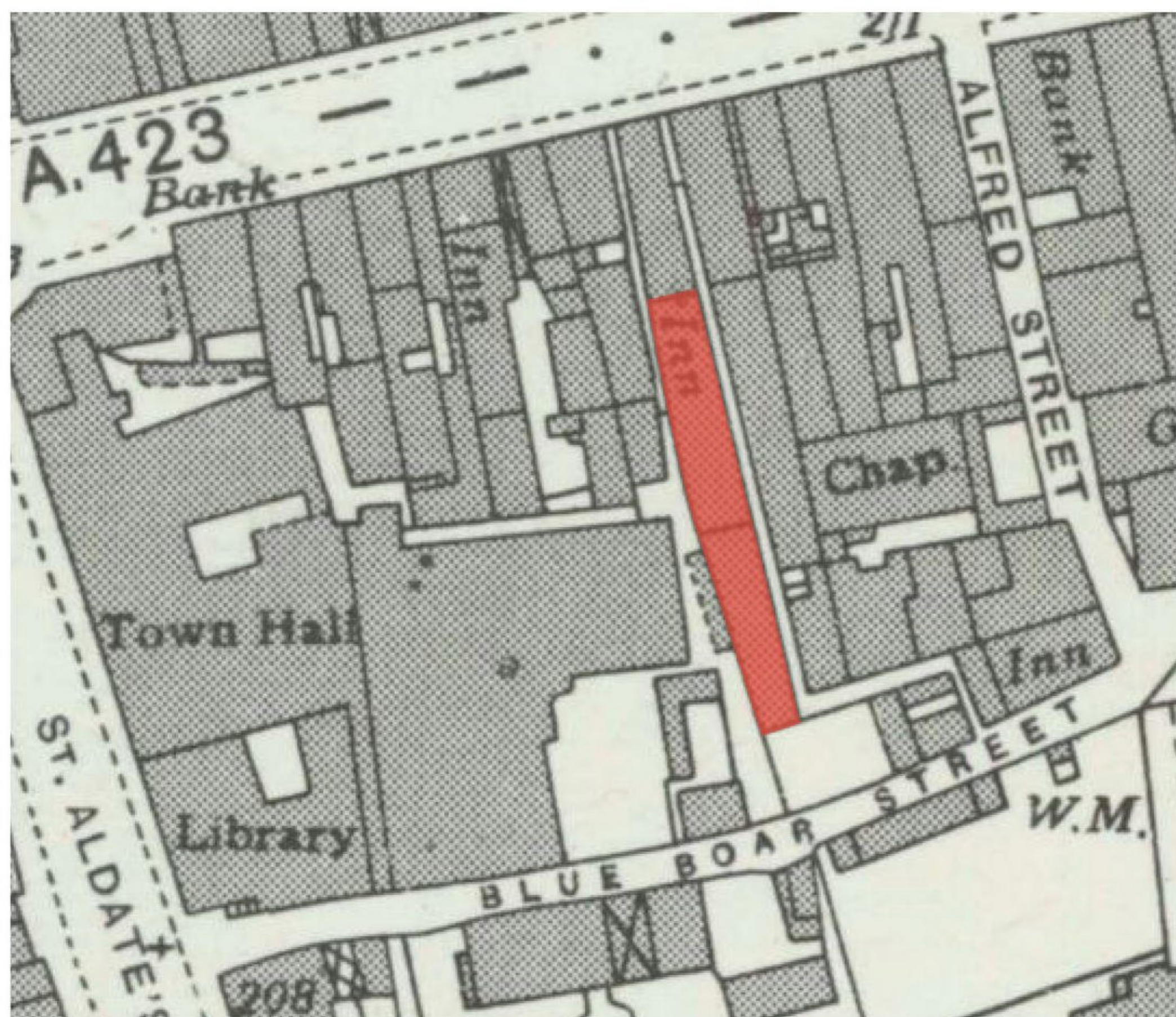
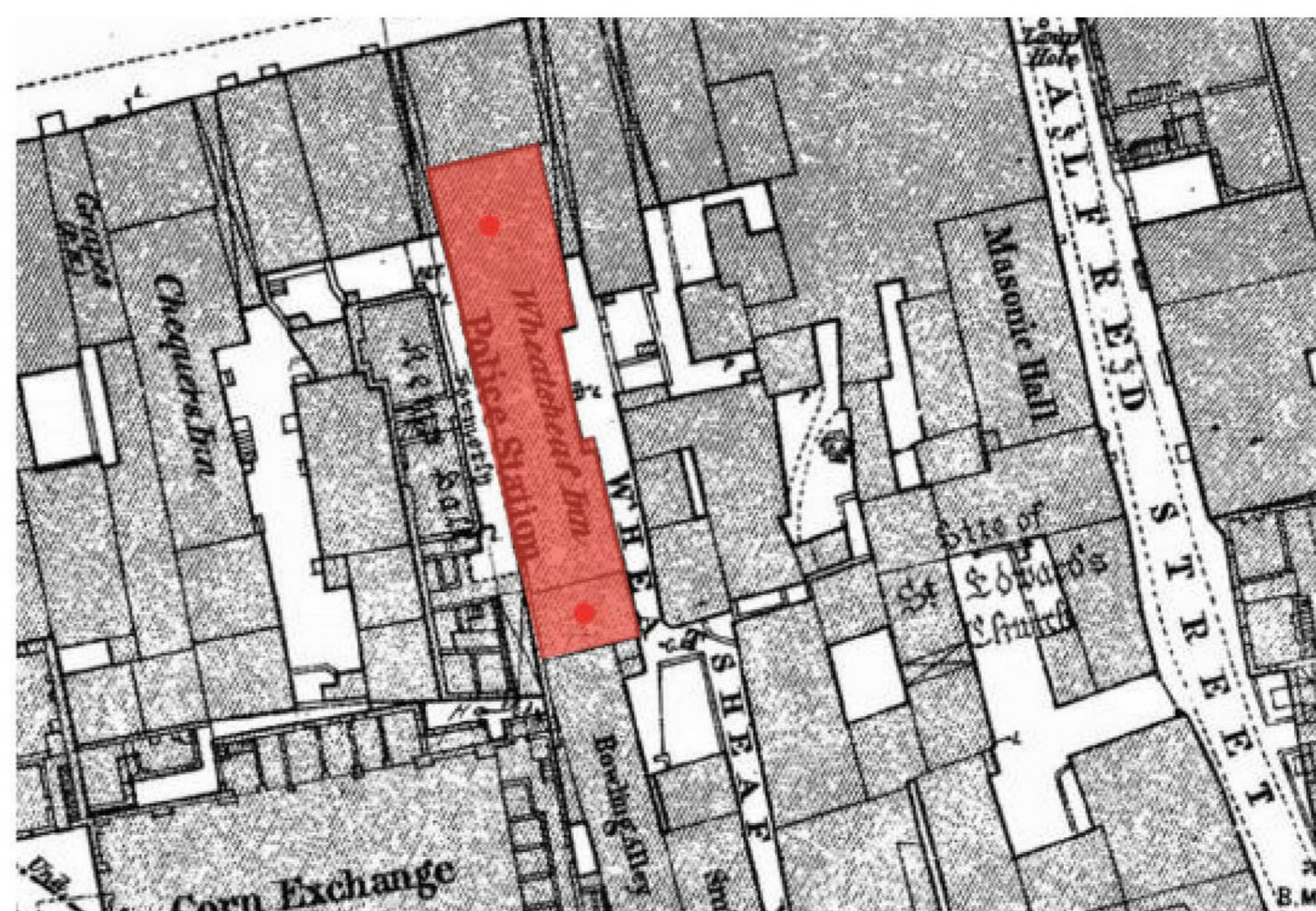
The original inn was built in 1654 and took its current name in 1761.

It was demolished in August 1896 and rebuilt

The Wheatsheaf used to be a Morrell's pub, but was then taken over by the Whitbread Brewery. Since 2000 it has been a free house. The roofscape of the Wheatsheaf and relationship to the adjoining buildings has remained relatively unaltered since the 1920s.



Location of the Wheatsheaf PH prior to demolition and rebuilding 1876



Footprint of the Wheatsheaf PH in 1939





1928 aerial image of the roof of the Wheatsheaf PH from the west and the adjoining roofscape. The yellow dot is the area of roof proposed to be raised



1937 aerial image showing the roof of the Wheatsheaf from the south-east and adjoining roofscape. The yellow dot is the area of roof proposed to be raised.



1949 aerial image from the east showing the roof of the Wheatsheaf PH and adjoining roofscape. The yellow dot is the area of roof proposed to be raised.



1949 aerial image from the south showing the roof of the Wheatsheaf PH and adjoining roofscape. The yellow dot is the area of roof proposed to be raised



HERITAGE CONTEXT

The Wheatsheaf Public House is not included in the National Heritage List for England 'NHLE' but does lie with the Central (University and City) Conservation Area. Adjacent to the west is the grade II* Kemp Hall, 130 High Street, constructed in 1637 (see Appendix 1 for entry in NHLE)

Extract from Historic England search map for NHLE places showing the Wheatsheaf PH (red) and the adjoining Kemp Hall (blue). The area of roof proposed for extending is highlighted in yellow



Image of Kemp Hall in 1896 immediately after the demolition of the former Wheatsheaf PH which is the vacant site opposite. At this date Kemp Hall was the Police HQ noted on the 1876 map

NATIONAL HERITAGE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES AND ADVICE

The Wheatsheaf Public House is not included in the National Heritage List for England but lies within the boundary of the Central (University and City) Conservation Area. Accordingly, it is a 'heritage asset' and the following policies and guidelines are relevant.

Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. With the issuing of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in Feb 2019, the Government has re-affirmed its aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

In relation to development affecting a designated heritage asset the NPPF (Feb 2019) states in paragraphs 193 and 194 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.

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.'

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (March 2014) seeks to provide further advice on assessing the impact of proposals explaining that what matters in assessing the level of harm (if any) is the degree of impact on the significance of the asset. It states:

'In determining whether works to a listed building (or its setting) constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.'

The NPPF explains in paragraphs 195 and 196 the differences between 'substantial' harm and 'less than substantial' harm, advising that any harm should be justified by the public benefit of a proposal.

In cases where there is less than substantial harm, paragraph 196 states:

'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'

The PPG also seeks to provide a clearer understanding of what constitutes 'public benefit', as it is the public benefit that flows from a development that can justify harm. In weighing the public benefits against potential harm, considerable weight and importance should be given to the desirability to preserve the setting of listed buildings.

Public benefits can flow from a variety of developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social, or environmental progress as described in the NPPF, paragraph 8. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits. It explains that public benefits can include heritage benefits, such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset;
- Securing the optimum viable use for a heritage asset.

Works of alteration, extension, or demolition need not involve any harmful impact and may be necessary to ensure a building has a viable future. Historic England explains its approach to managing the historic environment and how we experience places stating in 'Conservation Principles' (April 2008) paragraph 88:

'Very few significant places can be maintained at either public or private expense unless they are capable of some beneficial use; nor would it be desirable, even if it were practical, for most places that people value to become solely memorials of the past'.

It also points out in paragraph 92:

'Retaining the authenticity of a place is not always achieved by retaining as much of the existing fabric as is technically possible'.

It also comments in paragraph 86:

'Keeping a significant place in use is likely to require continual adaptation and change; but - provided such interventions respect the values of the place, they will tend to benefit public (heritage) as well as private interests in it. Many places now valued as part of the historic environment exist because of past patronage and private investment, and the work of successive generations often contributes to their significance. Owners and managers of significant places should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential future interest and value, provided that recognised heritage values are not eroded or compromised in the process'.

Amongst the Government's planning objectives for the historic environment is that conservation decisions are properly informed. Historic England's 'Good Practice Advice Notes 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets' (Dec 2017), paragraph 19, explains that, 'amongst the Government's planning policies for the historic environment is that conservation decisions are based on a proportionate assessment of the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset'.

It recommends the broad approach to be followed:

Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected.

Step 2: assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated.

Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it.

Step 4: explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm.

Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

From this summary of the national heritage management policy framework, it is clear that there is a complex assessment decision-making process to navigate when considering change within the historic environment. Central to any decision is the recognition that history is not a static thing and that the significance of our historic environment derives from a history of change.

S72 PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

Section 72 of the Act requires local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The policies and advice described above provide an essential framework to guide designers and decision makers. In this respect it is worth noting recent case law and the advice it offers on the application of policy and legislation as set out below.

Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northants District Council, *English Heritage and National Trust*, 18th February 2014, and *Sevenoaks District Council v The Forge Field Society*, March 2014, have brought into sharp relief the weight and importance that decision makers should give to the duty under Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

In *Jones v Mordue & Anor* [2015] EWHC 539, the Court of Appeal explains how decision makers can ensure this duty is fulfilled: a decision maker will have complied with the duty under sections 16, 66(1) and 72 by working in accordance with the terms of the NPPF paragraphs 131-134. This report follows this advice to ensure consistency with the duty to preserve or enhance.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 2016 – 2036 HERITAGE POLICIES

At full Council meeting on 8th June 2020 the City Council voted to adopt THE OXFORD LOCAL PLAN 2016 - 2036. The issues and policies in relation to Oxford's heritage are contained in Part 6. Enhancing Oxford's heritage and creating high quality new development. The policy in relation to designated heritage assets is set out under DH3:

Policy DH3: Designated heritage assets

Planning permission or listed building consent will be granted for development that respects and draws inspiration from Oxford's unique historic environment (above and below ground), responding positively to the significance character and distinctiveness of the heritage asset and locality.

In all planning decisions for planning permission or listed building consent affecting the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight will be given to the conservation of that asset and to the setting of the asset where it contributes to that significance or appreciation of that significance).

An application for planning permission for development which would or may affect the significance of any designated heritage asset, either directly or by being within its setting, should be accompanied by a heritage assessment that includes a description of the asset and its significance and an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on the asset's significance. As part of this process full regard should be given to the detailed character assessments and other relevant information set out any relevant conservation area appraisal and management plan.

The submitted heritage assessment must include information sufficient to demonstrate:

- a) an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset, including recognition of its contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits they may bring; and
- b) that the development of the proposal and its design process have been informed by an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and that harm to its significance has been avoided or minimised; and
- c) that, in cases where development would result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, the extent of harm has been properly and accurately assessed and understood, that it is justified, and that measures are incorporated into the proposal, where appropriate, that mitigate, reduce or compensate for the harm.



Where the setting of an asset is affected by a proposed development, the heritage assessment should include a description of the extent to which the setting contributes to the significance of the asset, as well as an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and its contribution to significance.

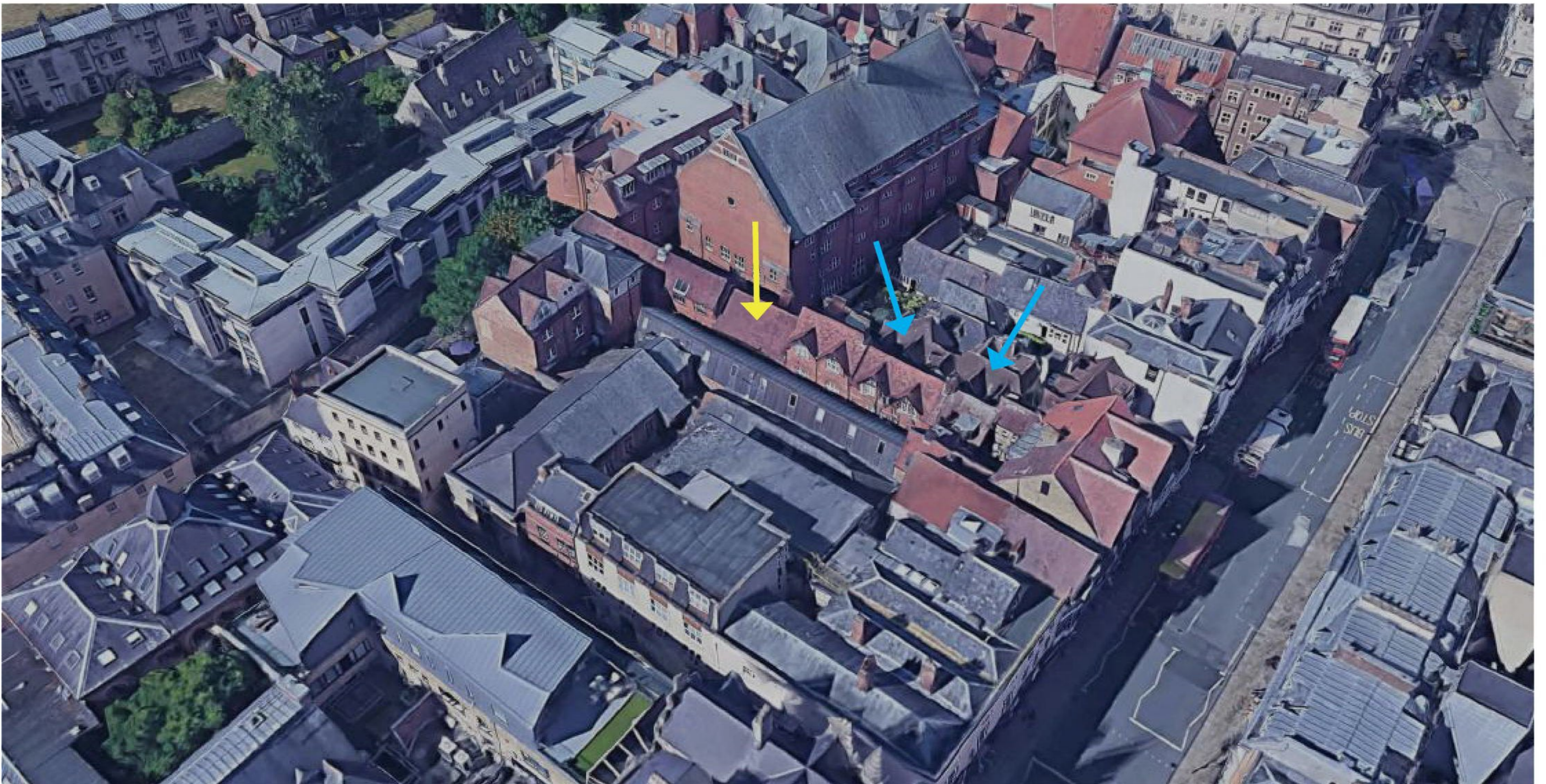
Substantial harm to or loss of Grade II listed buildings, or Grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, Grade I and II* listed buildings, Grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, should be wholly exceptional. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, planning permission or listed building consent will only be granted if:

- i. The harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss; or all of the following apply:
- ii. The nature of the asset prevents all reasonable uses of the sites; and
- iii. No viable use of the asset itself can be found in the medium term (through appropriate marketing) that will enable its conservation; and
- iv. Conservation by grant funding or similar is not possible; and
- v. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use;
- vi. A plan for recording and advancing understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost, including making this evidence publicly available, is agreed with the City Council.

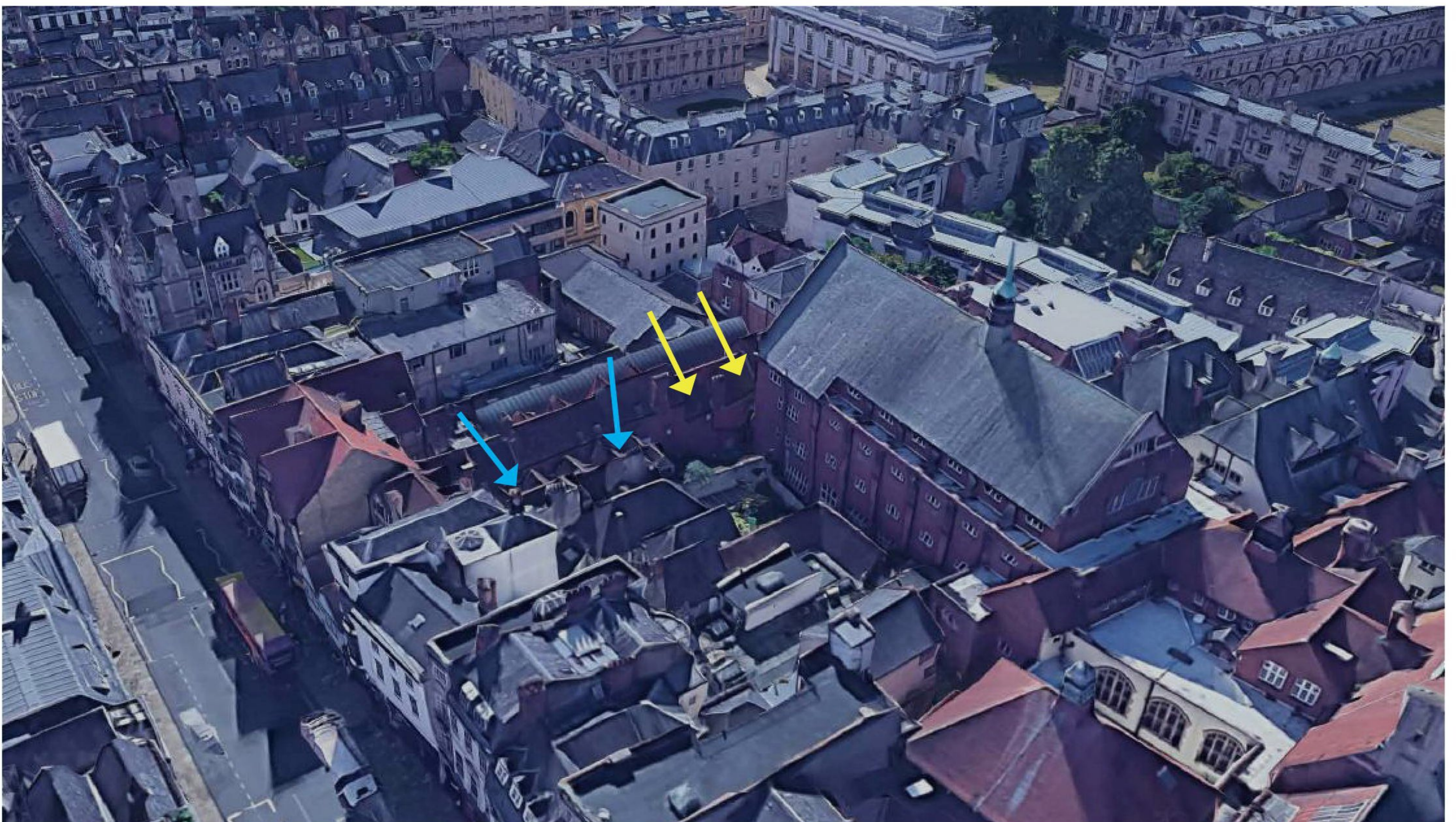
Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Clear and extensive justification for this harm should be set out in full in the heritage assessment.

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is to raise the roof of part of the building and provide additional accommodation lit by two dormers to match those adjoining to the north. It is traditional in its form and materials.



Google Maps arial view from the east showing the area of roof proposed to be raised (yellow) to the height of the roof adjoining to the north with the dormers and the roof of Kemp Hall (light blue)



Google Maps arial view from the west showing the area of roof proposed to be raised (yellow) to the height of the roof adjoining to the north with the dormers and the roof of Kemp Hall (light blue)



View of the lower area of roof proposed to be raised with dormers reflecting those adjoining from the south west



View looking along the roof from the north with the lower area of roof it is proposed to raise. Roof of Kemp Hall to the east (RHS)

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS



View of Kemp Hall from the north (High Street end) looking south

KEMP HALL

Kemp Hall lies on the west side, the back wall of the Wheatsheaf Public House lies on the east side of a narrow pedestrian and cycle access which, runs from the High Street south to Blue Boar Street.

The northern end of the alley is access through an archway spanning between 128-129 High Street such that neither building is visible from the High Street. The views up the lane from Blue Boar street, with the gable wall of the former corn exchange on the western corner and new development on the eastern corner also restricts public views of the buildings.



View of Kemp Hall (LHS) looking back towards the High Street. Blank wall on the RHS is the back wall of Wheatsheaf Public House. The area of the lower roof just visible with the southern gable wall. A projecting gable of the roof of Kemp Hall lies to the north

It is noted that Kemp Hall looks out onto the rear wall of a part of the Wheatsheaf Public House which, has a roof at the height to which it is proposed to raise the slightly lower section to the south, a relationship which has existed since 1897.

Accordingly, it is not considered that the proposed raising of the roof will have any visual impact on the setting of Kemp Hall and the reading and understanding of its historical relationship to the Wheatsheaf, High Street and Blue Boar Street.

OXFORD CENTRAL (CITY CENTRE AND UNIVERSITY) CONSERVATION AREA

The access to the Wheatsheaf Public House is from the narrow lane to the east called Wheatsheaf Yard which runs under an arch between 128 and 129, obscuring any view of the roof it is proposed to raise. Views north from Blue Boar street are also relatively obscured.



View down the lane to Kemp Hall and the rear wall of The Wheatsheaf PH from the High Street showing buildings not visible



View down the lane to the south with Kemp Hall on the east (RHS) and rear wall of The Wheatsheaf to the west (LHS) Note blue gate blocking the land



View of the entrance to the lane from Blue Boar Street down the lane providing access to the entrance to The Wheatsheaf. Buildings either side obscured by narrow width of the lane



View looking north from Blue Boar Street to rear of High Street. The Wheatsheaf to the west (LHS)



View looking south towards Blue Boar Street showing The Wheatsheaf (RHS) The area of roof proposed to be raised is the portion of projecting eaves

While the proposed raising of the roof is not going to be generally visible at street level, consideration needs to be given to potential impact on the wider roofscape viewed from a number of vantage points within the vicinity.

The importance of roofscapes and potential impacts through changes to roofscapes is recognised in the draft Oxford Central (City Centre and University) Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2018.

The appraisal analyses the history and character of the conservation area and defines what makes it special. It divides the Conservation Area into a number of character areas. The Wheatsheaf lies in the Medieval Centre zone.

Part 2 of the study provides an analysis of a number of themes within each zone of particular relevance to the current proposals is the theme of roofscapes. (p. 147)

10.4.6 ROOFSCAPE ROOFSCAPE, SKYLINE AND LANDMARKS

The roofscape of this zone reflects the two predominant building types: where post medieval town houses survive, buildings are generally three to four storeys in height with lively pitched roofs; where retail redevelopment has taken place, buildings can be up to five storeys high and the roofscape frequently less interesting, with parapets and flat roofs.

BUILDING HEIGHTS

- Pre-Victorian buildings within the zone generally range between three and four storeys in height, though some are two plus occupied roofs.
- Victorian and twentieth century retail developments in the west of the zone can be up to five storeys.
- Some of these taller more recent buildings are not in keeping with the overall character of their surroundings. Examples include the southern end of New Hall Street, and development on the western side of Castle Street, which obscure views of Oxford Prison and the historic County Hall.

ROOFSCAPE AND SKYLINE

- Lively roofscapes of pitched tiled roofs are characteristic of this zone, animated by the vertical accents of chimney stacks and the horizontal lines of parapets.
- Flat roofs on more recent development are not in keeping with the famously varied and energetic roofscape character of the conservation area.
- Within the zone, views of the skyline are limited because of the narrow and enclosed character of its streets.



View of variety of adjoining roofs looking south



View of adjoining roofs to the south west



View of adjoining roofs looking north-west towards the High Street

PUBLIC VANTAGE POINTS

There are two public vantage viewing points in the vicinity of the site, notably the tower of St Mary the Virgin, Radcliff Square, which overlooks the High Street and the Carfax Tower which lies to the north west on the corner of Queen Street and Cornmarket.



Extract from Historic England search map for Kemp Hall showing the area of roof it is proposed to raise (red) and the two viewpoints St Marys the Virgin Tower (blue) and the Carfax Tower (green)

ST MARY THE VIRGIN

The proposed roof lies close to the north-east corner of the gable of the former corn exchange building – brick gabled building with a fleche. The existing roof of the Wheatsheaf is not visible in this view being obscured by intervening roofs.



View from the base of the spire of St Mary the Virgin looking southwest

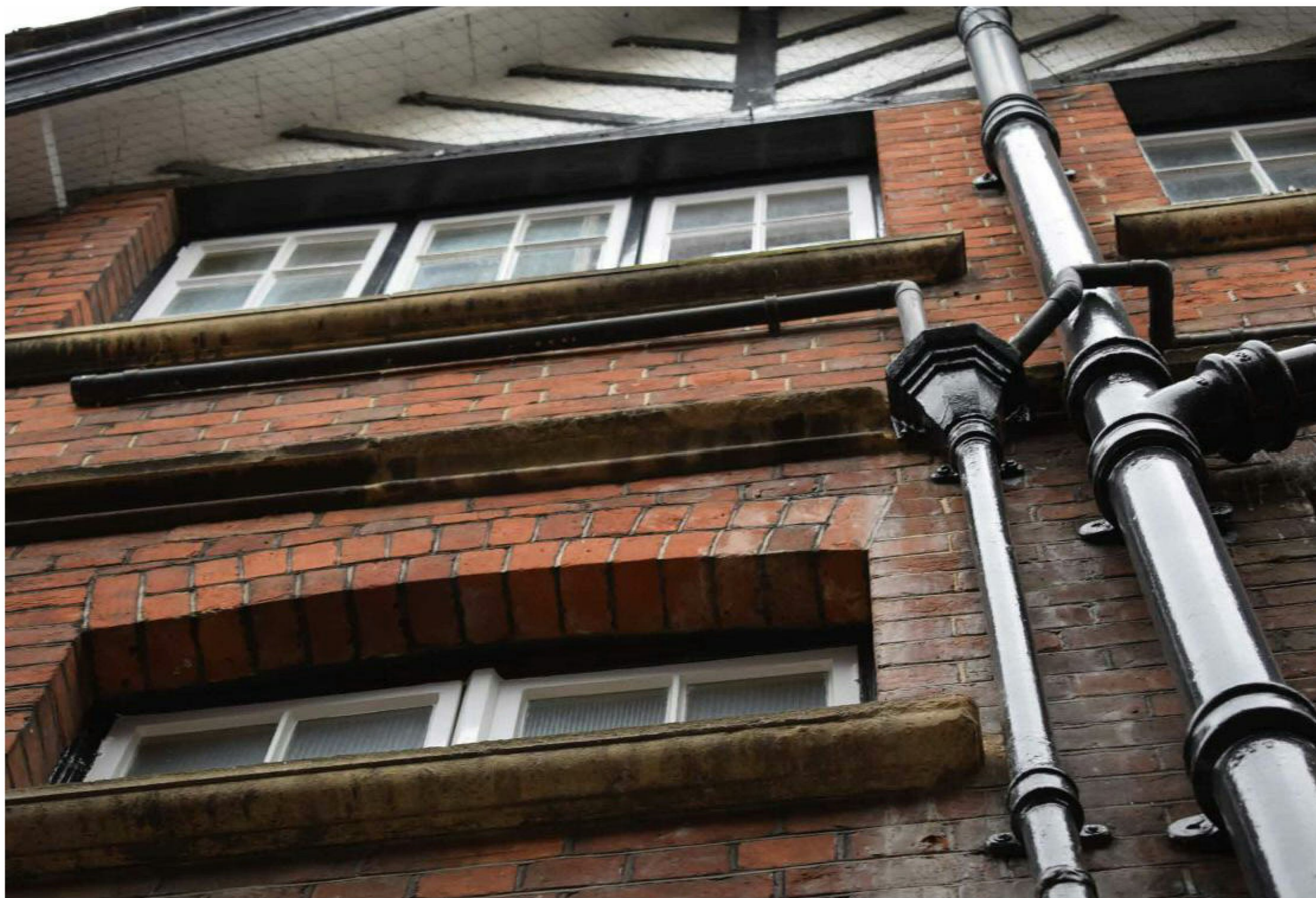
CARFAX TOWER

The part of the roof proposed to be raised lies just beyond the roof of the former corn exchange - large gabled roof building with a fleche. The existing and proposed roof not visible in this view being obscured by intervening roofs

As the proposal will not be generally visible from the surrounding streets and narrow lanes, and also not visible from two of the principal public view points within the vicinity, St Mary the Virgin Tower, and the Carfax Tower, it is considered that the proposal will have no physical of visual impact on the City Centre Conservation Area.



View from the base of the spire of St Mary the Virgin looking southwest



CONCLUSION

The Wheatsheaf Public House, constructed in 1897 on the site of a former mid-17th century public house lies south of the High Street fronting onto Wheatsheaf Lane, and backing onto a second narrow lane.

The building is not included in the National Heritage List for England but lies within the Oxford Central (City Centre and University) Conservation Area and backs onto Kemp Hall, a grade II* listed building.

Due to its access through two narrow archways, it is not visible from the High Street, and barely visible looking north from Blue Boar Street due to the narrowness of the lanes and surrounding buildings. The roofscapes of Oxford, however, are recognised as forming part of its special character, as they are visible from a number of public vantage points from within the city centre.

The proposal is to increase the height of part of the roof, towards the southern end of the long narrow building to line through with the roof to the north, inserting two gable dormers to reflect those in the adjoining northern roof.

In relation to Kemp Hall, it is noted that since 1897 it faces onto the back wall of the Wheatsheaf with this part of the building having

the roof height which, the proposal seeks to match, although some distance to the south of Kemp Hall. Due to the narrowness of the lane and this historic relationship, it is not considered the proposal will have an impact on the setting of Kemp Hall, and thus no impact on its heritage significance. The historic relationship of the two buildings and their reading within the narrow lane will not be impacted by the proposed raising of the roof.

In relation to the Oxford Central (City Centre and University) Conservation Area, it is considered that due to the location of the Wheatsheaf down two narrow lanes, access through arches off the High Street, because of the narrowness of the lanes and surrounding buildings, the proposal will be barely noticeable.

In terms of the roofscape, images taken from the two publicly accessible high view point, St Mary the Virgin to the north east and Carfax Tower to the northwest, demonstrated that the existing and proposed additional area of roof are not visible, being obscured by intervening roofs, and thus the proposal will not impact these views. Notwithstanding, the proposal is for a traditional roof form and detailing to match the existing, thus preserving the architectural character of the Wheatsheaf, without impacting on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

APPENDIX 1: ENTRY IN THE NHLE FOR KEMP HALL

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II*

List Entry Number: 1145872

Date first listed 12-Jan-1954

Statutory Address KEMP HALL, 130A, HIGH STREET

HIGH STREET (South Side)No 130A(Kemp Hall)

GII* RCHM 78. House lying to the South end at the back of No 130 High Street. Built by Alderman William Boswell in 1637 and is "one of the best preserved, least altered of the sub-medieval buildings in oxford". It received a certain restoration in 1930. It is a "passage" type of house in a long rectangular plan with axis North and South and faces East. Two-storeyed plastered timber-framing with cellars and five attic gables, corresponding to five bays, the West wall is of stone and contains the stacks and has four gables. The East elevation has a stone plinth in which are the cellar windows; in the ground floor is a wood-framed doorway with moulded jambs and a four-centred head in the spandrels of which is the date 1637; over it is an elaborate hood with moulded pendants; three original window-frames of two and three lights each remain, having moulded mullions. There is an overhang at the first and second floors. In the first floor are five scroll-bracketed oriels having moulded frames and mullions; the two oriels on the North have been altered and joined into one. In the gables are two, three and four-light mullioned windows, the one in the centre gable being boxed out. There is a tiled and Welsh slate roof. Interior. RCHM page 166. Includes original fireplaces and doorways and an original staircase. For plans, sections and elevations see Antiq. Jnl. (1947), page 131 and figure 11. History. Alderman Boswell lived in No 130 and built this house in his garden. It was once used as the Police Station in C19. All the listed buildings on the South Side from a group.