

# Design & Access Statement

Anderson Orr  
Architects

Project	Proposed Commercial & Residential Development, 78 - 81 Magdalen Road, Cowley, Oxford.
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared by Anderson Orr Architects Ltd and seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing buildings at 78 – 81 Magdalen Road, and the construction of two buildings comprising of 9no. apartments, 1 large office space all with associated landscaping and amenity spaces.

This Design and Access Statement describes the objectives, development and design solutions of the proposed scheme and discusses the conclusions reached. This statement should be read in conjunction with the drawings submitted.



Above: Aerial view and red boundary outline of site

## 2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

### 2.1 GENERAL

The site at 78 – 81 Magdalen Road is situated between Cowley Road and Iffley Road, in the heart of Oxford's urban environment.

Magdalen Road is a good mixture of commercial and residential properties with the Pegasus Theatre, several shops either side of the site and a row of residential houses opposite.

The brownfield site has a semi-detached building which is currently home to the company ORCA's, however they now need to upsize and therefore relocate. The single storey buildings on the south eastern corner of the site are currently used as a semi enclosed storage facility. The rest of the site is covered by hardstanding and is currently used as an informal carpark. The site occupies an area of approximately 0.06 ha.

This site currently holds a planning permission for office space and 2no 2-bedroom units and a 4-bedroom house. For the purposes of this document the terminology of 'approved scheme' or 'granted permission', refers to this successful planning application, granted in 2019, application ref:19/00435/FUL.

Furthermore, pre-application advice has been obtained (ref: 20/02548/PAC) and consequently the design progression of the proposed scheme is discussed in section 3.0.

### 2.2 TOPOGRAPHY, ORIENTATION, VEGETATION & VIEWS

The site is predominately flat. Evaluation of the Environment Agency flood data indicates that the site is not within an area designated as a flood risk.

As it stands the site is currently a brownfield plot where hardstanding and buildings covers the entire site. There are no trees or vegetated areas to note.

The existing buildings follow the established development pattern and has a limited aspect which faces onto Magdalen Road, following the pattern of development. Due to the existing buildings sitting on the Northern and Eastern boundaries of the site, any proposed development could result in overlooking into neighbouring gardens. Therefore, the proposed development seeks to avoid this conflict by facing all principal views towards to the South-West and onto Magdalen Road.

### 2.3 EXISTING BUILDINGS

The existing structures on site vary in form and scale. The building facing Magdalen Road follows the established architectural style of the existing terrace properties. The material palette to the front has been restricted to render with small sections of brick under concrete tiles. The buildings to rear feature corrugated roof and brick walls. The informal parking courtyard is comprised of concrete hardstanding.



Above: Picture of the site from Magdalen Road

The current buildings are of low visual and architectural quality. The existing informal parking arrangement does not meet current parking standards and does not have sufficient turning area. As a result, current users of the building are using the street parking compromising the safety of the pedestrians and the visual amenity of the street scene.

This site currently holds a planning permission for office space and 3 residential units (application ref:19/00435/FUL). The proposed scheme does not look to utilise the sites potential and therefore conform to Oxford City Councils policies of intensification of urban sites. The new proposal seeks to fully utilise the potential of the site by maximising its capacity and making efficient use of the brownfield land which currently detracts from the established street scene at Magdalen Road.

### 2.4 LOCAL ARCHITECTURE



Above: Street elevation along Magdalen Road showing terraced housing of multiple storeys

The local architecture of Magdalen Road and the interlocking streets is predominantly domestic with two and three storey terraced housing or flats mixed in with periodic commercial premises of shops, pubs, and entertainment halls/theatres and a care home. Overall, the urban fabric is extremely mixed with no overriding style.



Above: Street elevation along Magdalen Road showing 3 storey properties and balconies

The materials commonly used include mixture of brickwork, render, and timber boarding as the dominant materials with slate and interlocking tiles as the most common roof coverings.

Further south of the site is the Pegasus theatre with its modern and iconic architectural style. Similarly, a recent building in the grounds of St. Johns Care home visible from Magdalen Road and St. Marys Road features contemporary style. This architectural style is something we are keen to mimic in form to bring some consistency to the new developments found along Magdalen Road.



Above: Design precedents on Magdalen Road – the zinc roof and upstand is an elegant form that assimilates well with the existing terrace housing forms.

Within the Cowley Road area there are a number of new developments which have also inspired the high-quality architecture and material choice proposed in this scheme. Such buildings are the Ruskin School of Art on Bullingdon Road, the Dorothy Wadham Building on Iffley Road and Residential development on Percy Street. These new schemes have an elegant and respectful material palette, that contrasts well with mixed terracing housing of the area.



Above: Design precedents of new developments on Percy Street and Bullingdon Road.

### 3.0 DEVELOPMENTS FROM PRE-APPLICATION SCHEME

The proposed application has been subject to a number of design amendments following the feedback of the pre-application consultation, ref: 20/02548/PAC. This scheme has progressed into a well-considered and high-quality development that meets the concerns raised in the pre-application response. The changes made to the scheme can be summarised as follows:

- Whilst the principle of the development and intensification of the site was deemed acceptable, it was noted that the commercial/office space had been reduced from the approved application, this proposal has increased the office area to 82m<sup>2</sup> which is now larger than the approved scheme's ground floor area of 68m<sup>2</sup>.
- Privacy and louvred screens have been designed out of this scheme. Our proposal uses a combination of inset and extruding balconies all facing the same principal view direction of South-West. This new design eliminates the concerns of overlooking across the courtyard area and means that every unit has a sound level of private, outside amenity space.
- The North-East elevation has changed so that the built form is segmented in height and bulk. Furthermore, there is no first-floor terrace or clear glazed windows addressing the concerns over neighbouring garden privacy and the sense of overlooking. The design has also included more vegetation by adding a tall green wall on the back of the communal stairwell and planting ornamental trees on the boundary lines between the gardens. This increases the sites overall opportunity to gain in biodiversity, but also allows the view from neighbouring gardens to be softer and more natural in its appearance.
- Overall the bulk of the development has been reduced; taking away the overhanging element and creating simple forms and massing's that are domestic in scale and appearance for Magdalen Road.
- Car parking has been removed altogether inline with Oxford City's New Local Plan 2036 for new developments. After researching the local amenities and distances from the shops and buses to the site, it is determined that the scheme is suitable as a car-free development. Magdalen road also provides a number of short-term visitor spaces should it be needed by the occupiers of the site.
- Bicycle parking of the proposed scheme is in line with Policy M5 and over supply's bicycle parking provision by 10 spaces. This is a conscious design choice to deliver a scheme that promotes sustainable transport within the city.

## 4.0 BUILDING DESIGN

The following section will outline the design principles and concepts that have informed the proposed scheme – these can be defined in terms of the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the development.

### 4.1 AMOUNT

The proposed scheme seeks full planning consent for the demolition of the existing buildings with the construction of 9 contemporary apartments, consisting 7no 1-bedroom apartments and 2no 2-bedroom apartments. By producing high end residential accommodation, we believe this development would be attractive to first-time buyers and young professionals alike, a segment of the market that is in high demand.

Residential units are provided with a courtyard style shared amenity space, and private balconies. The refuse storage for both residential and commercial units is located to the front of the development to minimise the time needed for collection on a one-way street such as Magdalen Road. Bicycle parking provision is found on the street frontage for visitors to the commercial premises, and a secure and sheltered bicycle store is located near the communal entrance for residents. As previously mentioned before, an oversupply of bicycle parking is provided to encourage a more sustainable transport system for residents.

The existing property is unsightly and is an inefficient use of the urban landscape. The varied street-scene would benefit from a replacement building of strong architectural character which seeks to further enhance the more recent contemporary aesthetic being built in the local area, as pictured in section 2.4.

The proposed scheme incorporates the following design principles to ensure that the development is successful and that its objectives are fulfilled:

- The development should maintain and enhance the varied street scene along Magdalen Road.
- The scale of development should be appropriate to the site context.
- The internal living spaces should provide a contemporary living environment suitable for modern living standards.
- The building should be low in energy use.
- The building should positively contribute to the architectural diversity between Cowley Road (B480) and Iffley Road.

The pre-application process noted Policy H15 & H16 (quality of living accommodation). The proposed dwellings exceed the minimum gross internal floor area, amenity space and built-in storage required to satisfy Planning Technical Advice Note: 1A. The development therefore provides exceptionally high-quality living accommodation (please see accommodation schedule below).

Accommodation Schedule:

Flat No.	No. of Bed	Minimum Required gross int floor area	Proposed gross int floor area	Minimum Required built in storage	Proposed Built in storage
1	1	50 m <sup>2</sup>	82 m <sup>2</sup>	1.5 m <sup>2</sup>	4.9 m <sup>2</sup>
2	2	70 m <sup>2</sup>	98 m <sup>2</sup>	2 m <sup>2</sup>	4.6 m <sup>2</sup>
3	1	50 m <sup>2</sup>	58 m <sup>2</sup>	1.5 m <sup>2</sup>	3.2 m <sup>2</sup>
4	1	50 m <sup>2</sup>	53 m <sup>2</sup>	1.5 m <sup>2</sup>	2.8 m <sup>2</sup>
5	1	50 m <sup>2</sup>	74 m <sup>2</sup>	1.5 m <sup>2</sup>	5.5 m <sup>2</sup>
6	2	70 m <sup>2</sup>	93 m <sup>2</sup>	2 m <sup>2</sup>	3.0 m <sup>2</sup>
7	1	50 m <sup>2</sup>	77 m <sup>2</sup>	1.5 m <sup>2</sup>	4.5 m <sup>2</sup>
8	1	50 m <sup>2</sup>	51 m <sup>2</sup>	1.5 m <sup>2</sup>	3.6 m <sup>2</sup>
9	1	50 m <sup>2</sup>	69 m <sup>2</sup>	1.5 m <sup>2</sup>	4.6 m <sup>2</sup>

#### 4.2 LAYOUT

The proposed development has been carefully designed to maintain the basic building footprint of the existing site and the approved scheme, whilst consciously intensifying the sites density to maximise its potential. The site plan seeks to mitigate overlooking and to ensure privacy levels enjoyed by neighbouring properties are maintained. To that end, no glazing faces North-East, and obscured glazing is used to enhance daylight levels in the apartments without compromising on privacy.

The site's location on Magdalen Road means that following the terrace building line is important to the street scene and so the street front element of the design responds and mimics the terrace run that is currently existing. To the rear of the site the existing buildings sit on the boundary line to the North and East, however in our proposal sufficient space has been retained to the between the boundary and building to introduce new tree planting and a gravel segment. Furthermore, to make efficient use of the application site and reflect the arrangement of the approved scheme, the proposed building features two communal stairwells, whose entrances have been landscaped to create a courtyard like centre to the development. The proposed planting will give the courtyard and street frontage an attractive verdant character, provide additional external space for the apartments enjoyment and it will ensure the building is assimilated into the wider area, particularly when viewed from the Magdalen Road.

The proposed balconies and gardens provide private outdoor amenity for the individual apartments. The apartment balconies have been carefully planned to ensure there is no overlooking onto neighbouring gardens or other proposed apartments, subsequently the units have been designed with all principle living spaces look out to the South-West or onto the Magdalen Road. Despite the limited site area, the proposed development has been carefully designed ensuring all balconies surpass the minimum 1.5m x 3m area required in Policy H16 of the new Local Plan.

### 4.3 SCALE

The height of the proposed development has been carefully designed with consideration for the mass and bulk of neighbouring buildings as well as the general character of the surrounding area. The roof line has been broken as you go through the site to reduce bulk and articulate areas of subservience. The approved scheme has permission to increase the street elevations ridge height compared to the existing building; however, this scheme looks to strike a balance between the existing and the approved scheme.

To moderate the mass and bulk of the proposed building, the third floor living accommodation is set within the eaves of the pitched roof with moderate flat roof sections hidden from the eye at street level.

The form and massing has been influenced by not only the approved scheme or the more industrial buildings surrounding the south of the site, but equally by the growing number of contemporary development examples in the surrounding Cowley and Iffley area.



Above: Design precedents of nearby contemporary building the Dorothy Wadham Building, Iffley Road. Design by architects Allies and Morrison.

In summary, the mass of the building is broken up by elements of articulation, subservient features, and the use of contrasting materials.

The form of the development has been kept domestic in nature both in plan and elevation to maintain a cohesive street elevation but nonetheless, the scheme maximises the sites potential with respect to its much larger neighbouring buildings to the south.

### 4.4 LANDSCAPE

The proposed development seeks to strongly enhance the visual amenity of the site from its existing circumstance. Currently there is no vegetation on site as the ground is completely covered by hard landscaping. It is noted that Magdalen Road has a mix of trees and shrubs along the streetscape and so this proposal seeks to increase that further by replacing the informal parking areas with planting of shrubs or low-level hedging to the street front and along the brick wall southern boundary, visible from the road.

The courtyard area that serves as the communal entrances to the residential apartments will be landscaped with shrubs, grass and small ornamental trees giving privacy buffers to the ground floor windows as well as forming a communal garden that is welcoming to residents and guests alike.

Albeit a small area, there is a beneficial gain to the biodiversity of the area giving trees and hedging habitats that are currently non-existent on the site. Furthermore, tall green wall and the private gardens at the rear of the site not only adds to the verdant appearance of the development from neighbouring properties but increases biodiversity opportunities.

#### 4.5 APPEARANCE

The proposed application seeks to create a high-quality domestic apartment building that follows the contemporary uplift and progression of building appearance within the local area. The proposed development will enhance the site and sit comfortably with the mixed use and style of Magdalen road.

A restricted pallet of high-quality materials including buff brick, grey cladding and standing seam zinc are proposed. The buff brickwork has been selected for its prevalence in the local area, and in particular its use in the nearby developments on Percy Street and Bullingdon Road (as previously mentioned), and to provide the building with a robust and durable building material. The standing seam zinc roof and upstand is demonstrated to be an attractive contemporary material choice uplifting the visual appearance of what currently stands on site. Furthermore, the zinc's dark colour and ease of installation on a shallow roof pitch allows this contemporary material to simulate the roof of the connected terrace houses without using concrete tiling.

It is intended that the proposed scheme will be detailed and constructed to a very high standard. The careful combination of materials provides a clean aesthetic which compliments the building style. The size and proportion of openings respond to the growing desire to maximise, where possible, the amount of natural light entering the principal living spaces, with smaller apertures designed to provide privacy where necessary.

## 5.0 SUSTAINABILITY & SERVICES

In considering the scheme design the following methodology has been adopted in order to achieve a sustainable form of development:

### 5.1 SITE

This proposal would involve the demolition of the existing dated and inefficient buildings at 78 – 81 Magdalen Road, with the construction of a new development with a density and character consistent with new developments in the vicinity.

### 5.2 DESIGN

Where possible the design maximises the accommodation provided within the building envelope, and ensures the efficient use of the available site area while seeking to maintain a domestic looking street frontage.

The proposed design is to be built in a timber frame which is a more sustainable building material than masonry and where possible, construction will use materials derived from sustainable sources.

### 5.3 ENERGY

The detailed design of energy efficiency measures falls within the remit of other legislation; however, it is generally accepted that there is a continuing drive towards greater energy efficiency and to this end the relevant regulations are under constant review.

In brief, energy consumption across the site will be minimised by employing all or in part the following measures:

- High performance double glazing.
- Where necessary, passive flue gas heat recovery devices will be installed to all gas-fired boilers.
- High levels of insulation to floors, walls and roofs (super insulated).
- Passive solar gain via orientation and layout.
- High level of natural lighting and ventilation.
- Integrated energy management controls within individual units.
- User information within individual units, highlighting energy efficiency.

The recent and upcoming amendments to Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy) and Part F (Ventilation) of the Building Regulations are the latest step taken by the government in its commitment towards achieving zero carbon rating in new dwellings. The emphasis is towards improving the fabric of the buildings to reduce thermal loss, and as a consequence reduce the energy requirement for heating. In addition to the required improvements in 'U-Values', accredited details will be adopted that ensure a continuity of insulation, especially around the balcony junctions, window and door opening. Air leakage from the building will also be minimised by the adoptions of good detailing and responsible workmanship.

### 5.4 WATER

Besides the desire to reduce energy consumption there is also a necessity to reduce both the consumption and waste of water. The following measures will be adopted within the development that will assist in achieving this:

- Flow restrictors fitted to all taps.
- Dual flush cisterns.
- Baths with smaller profiles, requiring less water to fill.

It is proposed that a SUDS drainage scheme be designed for the site to disperse surface water within the site. This will however be dependent on suitable ground conditions being confirmed.

## 5.5 FLOODING

The site does not sit within an area prone to flooding and is not close to a watercourse. A Flood Risk Assessment is not therefore considered to be necessary.

## 6.0 ACCESS COMPONENT

The existing vehicular access serving the site from Magdalen Road is to be removed as this development looks to promote the Oxford City's policy of car-free development where feasible. Therefore, the existing access is to be made only accessible by pedestrian and cyclist.

A security gate is proposed between the residential entrances and bicycle store to give residents an extra level of security in the communal areas.

## 7.0 CONCLUSIONS

This site currently holds a planning permission for office space and 3 residential units (application ref:19/00435/FUL). Contrary to Oxford City Councils policies' the approved scheme does not utilise the sites potential. We seek to maximise the site as a revision of the approved scheme, in line with the Council's drive to make the best use of site capacity and most efficient use of land, under the terms of Policy RE2 of the new Local Plan.

The application site provides an opportunity to deliver a high-quality mixed-use development that offers a variety of much needed dwelling-types and office space within the local area.

The site is sustainably located within an established residential area. It is well served by means of transport other than the private car and is within easy reach of day-to-day amenities.

The choice of appearance and materials has been strongly influenced by the more recent new builds in the locality.

The design has developed in response to pre-app response with Oxford City Council and as result; the size, scale and form of the development have been designed to assimilate into the local context and will form good relationships with the neighbouring buildings with respect being paid to their existing amenity and privacy.

The proposed planting will give the site a verdant character as well as increasing biodiversity on the site. Overall, the proposal therefore is deemed to have a positive impact to Magdalen Road, and represents the upmost in sustainable development.