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Planning , Heritage, Design and Access Statement

The Head of the River, Folly Bridge,
Oxford, OX1 4LB

Balcony and stairway replacements to former warehouse

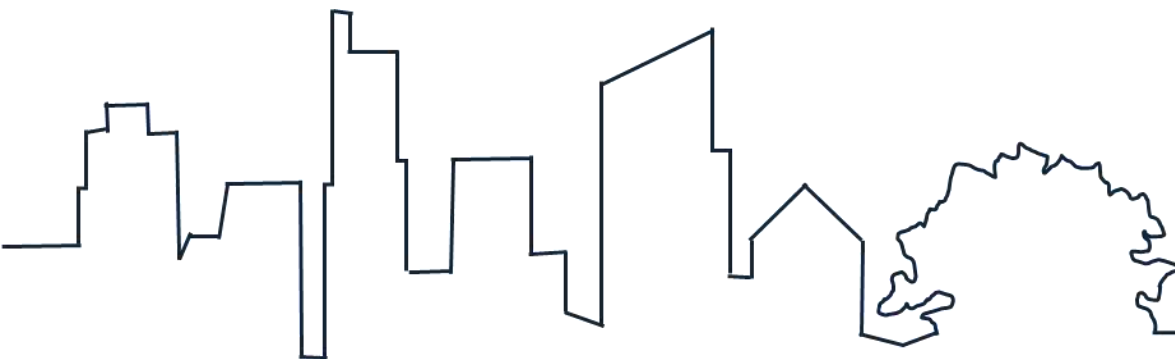
SEPTEMBER 2023

Walsingham Planning

Bourne House
Cores End Road
Bourne End
Buckinghamshire
SL8 5AR

Telephone

01628 532244



bourne.end@walsingplan.co.uk
www.walsinghamplanning.co.uk

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Walsingham Planning has been instructed by Fuller Smith and Turner PLC to submit these applications for planning permission and listed building consent at The Head of the River, Folly Bridge, St Aldates, Oxford.
- 1.2 This Planning, Heritage, Design & Access Statement is submitted in support of applications for planning permission and for listed building consent, which seek approval for the replacement of the existing balconies and external stairways on the front, side and rear elevations of the former warehouse.
- 1.3 The proposed replacement stairways and balconies will allow for the continued preservation of the former warehouse, and for this preservation to be completed in a sensitive manner appropriate to the building's significance and its curtilage listing.
- 1.4 The proposed works will also improve the functionality and viability of the premises by providing a practical and sustainable means of access to the upper floor guest bedrooms. This will assist the wider site in sustaining its use as a heritage asset, whilst preserving its significance as a heritage asset and improving its viability as visitor and guest accommodation recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.5 This statement will describe the site and surroundings, will include a review of its planning history and relevant designations, and will describe the proposed development and assess the proposals against relevant planning policy in terms of heritage impacts and planning impacts.
- 1.6 These application submissions comprise a comprehensive set of plans, together with the following supporting documents which should be read alongside this Planning, Heritage, Design & Access Statement.

Application Form

Promap Ordnance Survey Map 1:1250

Existing terrace block plan 1063-07 Rev C – The Jackdaw Company

Existing east elevation SB9220 - MBS – Survey Base Precision Digital Surveyors

Existing north elevation SB9220 – MBS - Survey Base Precision Digital Surveyors

Existing west elevation SB9220 – MBS - Survey Base Precision Digital Surveyors

Existing south 1 elevation SB9220 - MBS - Survey Base Precision Digital Surveyors
Existing south 2 elevation SB9220 – MBS - Survey Base Precision Digital Surveyors
Existing ground floor plan bedrooms 1063-09 Rev A – The Jackdaw Company
Existing first floor plan bedrooms 1063-10 Rev A – The Jackdaw Company
Existing second floor plan bedrooms 1063-11 Rev A – The Jackdaw Company
Drawing transmittal notice 01/01Rev G – BG Consulting
Proposed external timber structures work plan D01 – BG Consulting
Proposed external timber structures work west elevation D02 – BG Consulting
Proposed external timber structures work south elevation D03 – BG Consulting
Proposed external timber structures work east elevation D04 – BG Consulting
Typical steel shoe detail for timber posts 223157 SK05 Rev A 02/10/2023 – BG Consulting
Typical gallows bracket detail 223157 SK06 Rev A 02/10/2023 – BG Consulting
Structural Survey Report 223157 20th June 2023 & 15th August 2023 (including structural survey photos) – BG Consulting
CIL Form

- 1.7 It is concluded that the proposals would accord with the Development Plan such that planning permission and listed building consent, shall be granted.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site lies on the east side of St Aldates, in the built-up area of Oxford City Centre. The site is bound to the north by residential buildings and to the east by Hertford College halls of residence. The site is also located within the Oxford Central (University and City) Conservation Area.



Above – Google Earth Image of the site

- 2.2 The building of interest is the original Grade II Listed Wharf House which is located to the north of the site and is attached at first and second floor to the former warehouse. Both buildings form an L shape which runs at right angles to the river.

- 2.3 The Wharf House building is early 19th century in origin and is finished in brick ashlar with 3 storeys, and tripartite sash windows. The Historic England listing description and further assessment of significance of this building, is included in the heritage section of this report.



Above – Front and south elevation of existing buildings and adjacent crane

- 2.4 Both buildings are currently occupied by a public house and guest accommodation. The guest rooms are located on the first and second floors of the former warehouse with the public house at ground floor, and the original Wharf House building is entirely formed of guest rooms.



Above – Rear elevation of original Wharf House building and access to the public house from the private access side road which bounds the site to the north



Above – Front elevation of existing Wharf House building and existing beer garden

- 2.5 The existing beer garden is enhanced by planters which provide a visual break between the stepped levels. These planters located along the stepped level of the beer garden will be retained in the proposals which will continue to enhance the site's landscape value.

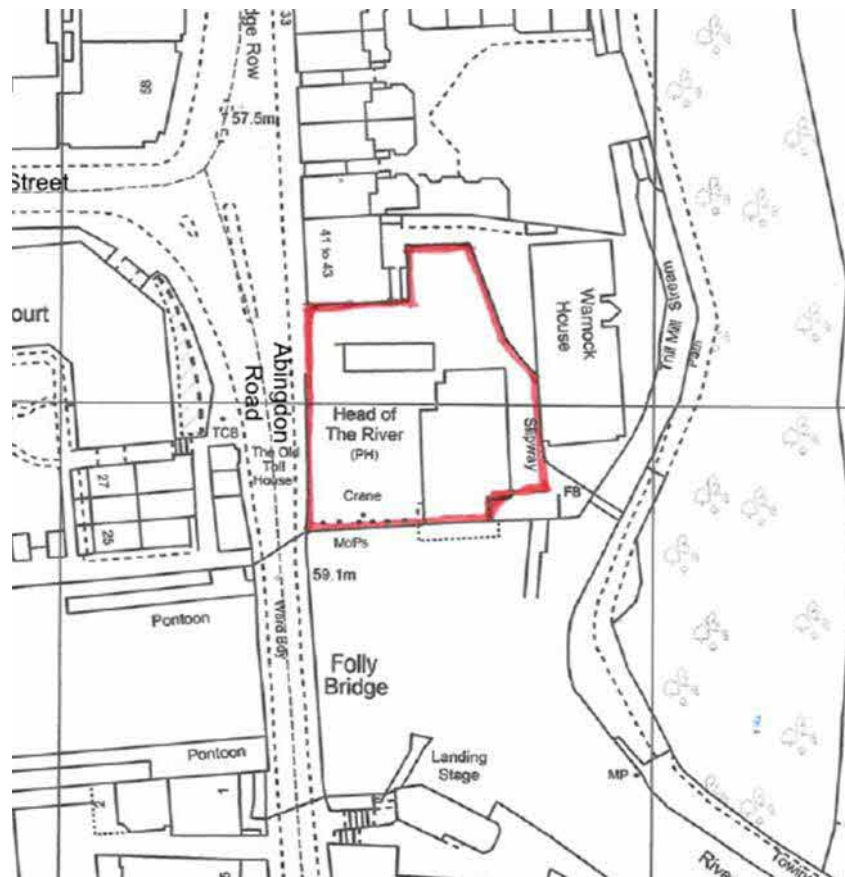


Above – Front beer garden of Head of the River public house

- 2.6 To the west of the site is the adjacent Grade II Listed Folly Bridge which runs north to south across the river.
- 2.7 To the rear of the former warehouse is a single storey extension with pitched roof which was built to accommodate the kitchen areas of the ground floor of the public house following planning permission as outlined in the planning history section of this report.



Above – Existing rear elevation of extended building and university halls of residence to left (east) of site, and original Wharf House to right (north) of site



Above – extract from Site Location Plan

Planning History

2.8 There is an extensive planning history on the Council's website relating to the site. The following planning permissions are relevant to this site:

22/02264/LBC – Listed building consent granted for internal redecoration of the toilets and bar area – 7 December 2022

20/01409/LBC – Listed building consent granted for restoration of pillar at Wharf House – 7 August 2020

16/03114/ADV – Advertisement consent partially granted for display of 2No. externally illuminated fascia signs, 1No. non-illuminated post mounted sign, 1No. externally-illuminated projecting sign, 1 non-illuminated wall mounted sign, 16No. external LED floodlights and 16No. external spotlights – 2 February 2017

16/02273 – Planning permission granted for formation of canopy to rear elevation – 21 October 2016

16/02274/LBC – Listed building consent granted for the formation of a canopy to rear elevation. Internal alterations including upgrading and reconfiguration of WC and kitchen facilities. Conversion of staff accommodation in listed building and first floor ancillary space of curtilage listed building to form additional 8No. hotel bedrooms – 21 October 2016

08/00078/ADV – Advertisement consent granted for 1x externally illuminated canopy sign; 7 x non-illuminated signs on replacement parasols; 2 x externally illuminated high level fascia signs; 2 x externally illuminated high level logo signs; 1 x externally illuminated archway entrance sign; 1 x externally illuminated 'A' board sign; 2 x non-illuminated corporate plaque signs; 1 x illuminated double-sided hanging sign – 6 March 2008

04/01239/ADV – Advertisement consent partially granted for high level non-illuminated signage.

03/00106/FUL – Planning permission granted for insertion of windows and doors to existing passageway to form extension to bar area – 18 March 2003

02/00223/FUL – Planning permission granted for part change of use of first and second floor from bar area and manager's flat to provide 9 additional guest bedroom (12 in total) – 21 March 2002

97/00719/NFH – Planning permission granted for change of use from snack bar to 2 rooms to let as visitor's accommodation – 2 July 1997

97/00718/L – Listed building consent granted for internal alterations to create 2 rooms to let – 2 July 1997

95/01813/NFH – Planning permission granted for single storey link corridor between Wharf House and Public House (Amended plans) – 22 March 1996

95/01812/L – Listed building consent granted for alteration of internal staircase to the Wharf House and single storey link corridor between Wharf House and single storey link corridor between Wharf House and public house – 22nd March 1996

95/01174/NFH – Planning permission granted for retention of kitchen extract duct and erection of timber cladding to kitchen extract duct at rear at Head of the River public house – 28 September 1995

95/00253/NFH – Planning permission granted for change of use of 2nd floor to managers flat & 3 letting rooms; alterations including new external staircase from 1st front patio & ramp to sitting out area; 1 storey extensions for kitchen at rear of Head of the River public house – 10 May 1995

89/00465/NFH – Planning permission granted for new entrance porch with balcony and railings above. Enclosure under existing canopy to form second entrance porch at Head of the River public house – 5 July 1989

85/00269/AH – Planning permission granted for signs comprising 2 No. 'Head of the River' gold letters, 2 Halls Brewer company logos on canvas awning 8 retractable canvas awnings and painted hanging sign at Head of the River public house (Amended plans) – 5 June 1985

84/00664/NFH – Planning permission granted for interior retrofit, with new balcony above entrance doors, new canopies above windows and other external alterations at Head of the River public house (Amended plans) – 15 April 1985

84/00421/L – Listed building consent granted for erection of canopy over main entrance, extraction louvre on north elevation, two timber pennants fixed to wall adjacent to entrance and advertisement on canvas canopy at Wharf House – 1 September 1983

83/00422/NFH – Planning permission granted for erection of a canopy over main entrance at Wharf House – 1 September 1983

83/00423/AH – Planning permission granted for two timber pennants fixed to wall adjacent to entrance and advertisement on canvas canopy at Wharf House – 1 September 1983

76/00363/AH – Planning permission granted for change of use and conversion from warehouse to Head of the River public house – 7 July 1976

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The proposals seek planning permission, and listed building consent for the replacement of the existing balconies and external staircases to the front, side and rear elevations of the former warehouse.
- 3.2 The proposed upgraded balconies will provide accessible and convenient use to the upper floor bedrooms in a way which sustains the significance of the building and its practicality for future guests and visitors. Furthermore, the balcony and staircase upgrades will ensure that the accommodation can regain its value and customer base and functionality as a welcoming environment for its business and leisure visitors.
- 3.3 The Head of the River public house is widely acknowledged as one of the best pubs and places to stay in Oxford. The proposed replacement balconies and staircases will retain and enhance the attraction of the public house and of the guest accommodation for the purposes of leisure and for business use and will continue to attract new and existing visitors to the renowned historic core of Oxford City.
- 3.4 The proposed replacement balconies and staircases will ensure that the venue is upgraded in a way which does not detract from the overall design of the scheme or the surrounding area and have been designed in a way which will be better integrated into development with higher quality materials which will enhance the lifespan of the development and the viability of the Head of the River public house.

4 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 This section of the statement sets out the relevant planning policies at national and local level, as well as any other documents which are material planning considerations.
- 4.2 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that “ *if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise*”. Any issue that relates to the use and development of land is capable of being a material planning consideration.

Local Development Plan

- 4.3 The Oxford Local Plan was adopted 8 June 2020 and forms the Local Plan for the area. Policies and site allocations from the previous Core Strategy have been saved in the new Local Plan which forms the most up to date plan for the city.
- 4.4 Also of relevance is the Oxford Central (City and University) Conservation Area Draft Character study.
- 4.5 The Local Plan states that the wealth of historic and architectural assets in Oxford is a significant draw for investors, visitors and those looking to locate in the city. Beyond the world renowned historic core the city is made up of a series of communities with clear and distinct identities and character which binds all those who live there.
- 4.6 Policy S1 states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition, the Council will work proactively with applicants to find solutions jointly which mean that applications for sustainable development can be approved where possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.
- 4.7 Policy DH1 states that a planning permission will only be granted for development of high-quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness. Proposals must be designed to meet the key design objectives and principles for delivering high quality development, set out in Appendix 6.1. Appendix 6.1 of the plan states that proposals should respond to local context by identifying features, opportunities and constraints of the site.

- 4.8 Policy DH3 states that planning permission will be granted for development which respects and draws inspiration from Oxford's unique historic environment (above and below ground), and which responds positively to the significant character of and distinctiveness of the heritage asset and locality. For all planning decisions for planning permission which affect the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight shall be given to the conservation of that asset where it contributes to the significance or appreciation of that significance.
- 4.9 The policy states that any application which may affect the significance of a heritage asset, either directly or indirectly where it might be within its setting, should be accompanied by a heritage assessment which describes the asset and its significance and also includes an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on that asset's significance, with full regard to the relevant conservation area appraisal and management plan where applicable. The policy goes on to confirm that the heritage assessment shall provide an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset including recognition for its contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits it may bring, ensuring that the development and design of the proposal has taken any harm to significance into account and accordingly minimised this harm, and where harm is identified this harm shall be properly and accurately assessed and understood and that measures are integrated into the proposal to minimise mitigate or reduce or compensate this harm.

Relevant Legislation

- 4.10 Of relevance is Section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which sets out the statutory duty of Local Authorities to ensure that in considering whether to grant listed building consent, regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special or architectural interest which it possesses. In addition, the Historic England Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance of Heritage Assets (2019), is of note and further explained in section 5 of this statement.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.11 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. A revised version of the NPPF was published in July 2021, and various updates have followed the latest of which was in September 2023, with minor amendments incorporated. The NPPF is

supplemented by the (ever evolving) Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), first published in March 2014.

- 4.12 Chapter 2 of the NPPF: *Achieving Sustainable Development* indicates that the “*presumption in favour of sustainable development*” is at the heart of the NPPF. It also indicates that sustainable development has three interrelated objectives, economic, social, and environmental.
- 4.13 Chapter 6 of the NPPF: Building a Strong, competitive economy states (Paragraph 81) that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.
- 4.14 Chapter 8 of the NPPF: Promoting healthy and safe communities (Paragraphs 92 and 93) state that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction including opportunities for meetings between people, and should ensure that established facilities are able to develop and modernise whilst being retained for the benefit of a community.
- 4.15 Chapter 12 of the NPPF: Achieving well-designed places (Paragraph 126) states that “The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve..” and goes on to state (Paragraph 130) that “...*planning policies should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of development...*”. The same chapter also states (Paragraph 197) that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of 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.
- 4.16 Chapter 16 of the NPPF: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (Paragraph 189), states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

- 4.17 Paragraph 194 of Chapter 16 states that local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to their setting. The paragraph also states that the level of detail included 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 199 of this chapter states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater this weight shall be. This is irrespective of whether there is any potential harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 4.18 The Framework (Paragraph 202) states that any harm to, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
- 4.19 The Framework (Paragraph 206) states that “*Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance*” and that “*Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably*”.
- 4.20 The Historic England Conservation Principles guidance note (April 2008), and the Historic England Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance of Heritage Assets (2019), states that significance is what conservation of an asset sustains, and where appropriate enhances, in managing change to a heritage asset. This guidance also states that understanding of significance must therefore stem from the interest of the asset itself, and that a description of the significance of the asset must be sufficient but no more than necessary for understanding the impact of the proposal upon this significance.

5 HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The proposals are assessed in line with both National Policies and the Oxford City Council Local Plan Policies. In accordance with these policies and with Guidance Notes provided by Historic England, this section of the report describes the significance of the asset and provides an understanding of the impacts of the proposal on this significance.

Heritage Significance

Wharf House

- 5.2 Wharf House, is thought to be of early 19th century origin, and is Grade II listed. The building's listing description from Historic England's website records is as follows.

ST ALDATE'S STREET 1. 1485 (East Side) Wharf House (North-west wing only)
SP 5105 NW 12/816 1.12.71. II 2. Early C19. Brick, ashlar fronted. 3 storeys, 5 bays, 4 windows and door, on the ground floor. 4-panelled door with semi-circular fanlight. Tripartite sash either side of the door, the rest are sashes with glazing bars. Hipped slate roof.

Above – Historic England's listing description for the main building Wharf House

- 5.3 The site was once known as St Aldates Yard, belonging to Isaac King, with origins dating back to the 17th century. In 1858 the site was taken over by Salter's Steamers, a family of boat makers and prominent citizens of Oxford.
- 5.4 The listing description for the Wharf House specifically denotes that the Grade II listing relates to the north-west wing of the building only, i.e., the building shown in the below photo.



Above – extract from the Historic England listing description photo showing the main building of historic interest and the building which is statutory listed

The former warehouse and subject of these works

- 5.5 Notwithstanding the significance of the abovementioned Wharf House as a statutory listed heritage asset in its own right, this heritage assessment also describes the significance of the former warehouse, which is considered curtilage listed, and provides an assessment of the significance of this building for completeness.
- 5.6 The former warehouse which sits to the east of the site and is attached to Wharf House at first and second floor; is constructed of brick and faced with ashlar and whilst it is not included in the listing description; is thought to have been constructed around the same period as Wharf House.
- 5.7 The former warehouse, whilst not included in the above listing description, is thought to be of evidential, historic and aesthetic significance as part of the historic use of the site. The former warehouse is faced in the same stone as the statutory listed Wharf House and its matching architectural design is an expression of the original owner's wealth, culture and ethos at the time of the building's construction. A crane is located adjacent to the riverside which was once used to lift materials from the river.

- 5.8 The site including both Wharf House and the former warehouse are thought to provide an important gateway to the city and the former warehouse due to its aesthetic and architectural value is considered, to be curtilage listed.
- 5.9 The site has been occupied by the public house since 1977 when the former boatyard was converted to the pub's landscaped beer garden. The name 'Head of the River' by which the pub goes is taken from the rowing boat which is in front at the end of each day of the four-day University 'Summer Eights' races.
- 5.10 The site is also located within the Oxford Central (University and City) Conservation Area. Oxford City Council's record for the conservation area states that the historic centre of Oxford forms one of the masterpieces of European architectural heritage, with its infant University rising in the 12th century and growing into a major force of the city's life. The record also states that The Saxon's rigid street layout and the fixed line of the 13th century defensive walls, together with the floodable river valleys, largely determined the plan of the historic centre as it is today.
- 5.11 Heritage significance as defined by the Historic England Conservation Principles guidance note (April 2008), can be separated into the following values:

Evidential –the potential for a place to yield evidence about past human activity

Historical – the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place of interest

Aesthetic – how people may draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place

And communal value - the meaning of place for those who relate to it, and for whom it figures in their experiences or memories

Heritage Principle of Development

- 5.12 The use of the site as a public house and the wider St Aldates area which is well established by virtue of its location close to the University buildings and city centre, provides a well-known draw of visitors to this part of the city which will remain. The proposals will enhance the standard of the guest accommodation for business and leisure visitors alike and will foster an improved appreciation of the historic character of this part of St Aldates.

- 5.13 The new and improved materials used in the replacement balconies and staircases will promote tourism and engagement of local communities, attracting visitors and supporting the long-term viable use of the public house. The manner in which the balconies and staircases are being replaced, has evolved through a careful design approach, detailing all intrusion into the existing external fabric of the building, and using existing apertures where possible to avoid the intrusion into any historically significance fabric.



Above – existing balconies and staircases on the front elevation facing the beer garden

- 5.14 The replacement balconies and staircases will be sited in the same position as the existing and will be finished in hardwood timber to match the existing appearance of the existing balconies and staircases, which will thereby contribute to the building's presence along this part of St Aldates by respecting the character of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings, including the setting of the former yard itself, along with the Grade II Listed Wharf House, the curtilage listed former warehouse, and the adjacent Grade II Listed Folly Bridge.
- 5.15 As such, the proposal would not harm or adversely impact upon the significance or special interest of the wider site as a heritage asset, nor the significance or special interest of the Oxford Central (City and University) Conservation Area, for the reasons outlined below.

Impact of the Proposal on Significance

- 5.16 In line with paragraph 194, and Paragraph 199 of the National Framework, it is noted that the level of detail included in this heritage assessment shall be proportionate to the assets'

importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of these assets. The National Framework also states here 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 this weight shall be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to less than substantial, or total loss of its significance.

- 5.17 The assessments above and below provide a level of detail which is proportionate to the wider site, and the former warehouse's importance, and is accordingly no more detailed than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on this significance, in line with Paragraph 194 of the NPPF.
- 5.18 The proposal involves the replacement of the balconies and staircases to the former warehouse which are described in detail below. The existing timber material used to the balconies and staircases has deteriorated over time with various repairs and defects being noted. Previous incremental upgrades and repairs to the existing balconies and staircase structures have been undertaken including proprietary steel shoes to the posts which meet the ground level, and sections of the timber stairs have been spliced and patched.
- 5.19 The structural report commissioned by our clients and included with this application details the extent of the defects of the existing balconies and staircases and provides a recommendation for replacement due to the current material meeting the end of its lifespan.
- 5.20 The balconies and staircases shall be replaced in hardwood timber to provide a more weather proofed and viable access which can retain and enhance the sustainability of the building and retain and enhance the aesthetic, evidential, historic and communal value which this building contributes to the wider site and the conservation area.

Replacement of balconies and staircases – front elevation

- 5.21 The existing timber staircase to the front elevation over the entrance to the public house will be removed and replaced with a new hardwood timber, with new hardwood balustrade posts to the sides, removal of the existing roof finish to the modern porch extension, and steel shoe posts to be inserted where the supports and stairs meet ground level. Additional detail on the steel shoe posts can be found in the supporting Drawing No 223157 SK05 Rev A.

Replacement of balconies and staircases – side river elevation

- 5.22 The existing timber joists to the side wall of the former warehouse which run at right angles to the river are being replaced with new galvanised steel beams. The position of these is as shown below and highlighted with further detail on Drawing No 223157/SK03 Rev A.



Above - Extract of proposed plan (D03 – south elevation) showing position of new galvanised supporting steel beams to replace and run along side existing timber beams horizontally

Replacement of balconies and staircases – rear elevation

- 5.23 There will be a section of the modern hipped roof extension which will be opened up to allow replacement of the gallows brackets supporting the rear staircases, however for the gallows brackets which meet with the fabric of the original former warehouse external walls, existing apertures will be used only.

Summary

- 5.24 The supporting Drawing No 223157/SK06 Rev A details the method which will be adopted to replace the supporting gallows brackets and the specifications for the event where existing brackets are in poor condition and might require new back plate connections. The method for using any required new back plate connections will ensure minimal intrusion into the existing brickwork and is detailed further in the drawings accompanying this application.
- 5.25 The proposed works will help sustain the viable use of the Head of the River public house and its ancillary guest accommodation, as an asset of tourism upgrading the existing guest accommodation for visitors to the city so that its evidential, historical, communal and aesthetic value can continue to be appreciated.

- 5.26 The proposal will also sustain the site's value by assisting the public house's ancillary accommodation and its viability and vitality during the summer months when the University 'Summer Eights' races take place. The proposed upgrade works will ensure that the guest accommodation can continue to operate and provide a favourable environment for visitors, and make a positive contribution to its long-term vitality and sustainability as a heritage asset.
- 5.27 The proposal would preserve the setting of the former warehouse and the wider site in line with Paragraphs 194, 197 and 206 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 5.28 The proposed external works will also contribute to the vitality and community of Oxford City and the wider community functions of Oxford as a town centre. The proposals will not harm the special interest of the listed building and would improve the facilities of the public house whilst preserving the special character of the building. Furthermore, the proposed works would not impact upon any areas of significance mentioned in the list description by Historic England as these comprise works to the non-statutory listed former warehouse only.
- 5.29 The proposed works and these applications meet with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, The Council's Policies contained in the Local Plan, and the Guidance provided by Historic England.

6 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The proposals are in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development, and states that plans and decisions should approve development proposals which accord with an up-to-date development plan, without delay. There are three dimensions to sustainable development, performing an economic, social and environmental role.

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The proposal will promote sustainable development by supporting the building's continued use as a public house and increasing its customer offering so that it can start to recover its customer base and offer visitors a comfortable environment to enjoy following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 6.2 The potential of the public house and guest accommodation is not currently being maximised and these improvements will assist the public house in promoting its use as a place which will continue to attract business and leisure visitors to this vibrant, renowned and historic core of the City.

Proposed Replacement Balconies and Staircases

- 6.1 These materials and finishes have been informed by the site's context and careful design so that the approach delivers a development which does not adversely impact upon the surrounding area and this part of the St Aldates street scene.
- 6.2 The size, scale and positioning of the replacement balconies and staircases will be as existing, and their hardwood timber finish will complement the colour and material of the existing timber finishes and the historic and authentic character of the wider site.
- 6.3 The replacement staircases and balconies, by reason of their siting and materials used, will respect the building line of the former warehouse and its context and will preserve and enhance the former warehouse with a higher quality material and specification.



Above – Existing staircase on the front elevation and photo taken looking south towards the river



Above – Existing balcony on the front elevation looking north towards stairway and Wharf House



Above – Existing balcony on the front elevation looking south towards the river



Above – Existing balcony on river side elevation



Walsingham Planning, Bourne House, Cores End Road, Bourne End, Buckinghamshire, SL8 5AR
B0111/23 / Planning, Heritage, Design and Access Statement/ September 2023

Above – Existing balcony on river side elevation and staircase to upper floors from rear servicing area



Above – Existing rear balcony and staircase set above existing modern hipped roof extension

- 6.4 The balconies and staircases will be replaced in like for like positions with like for like hardwood timber. As such the proposal would respect and enhance the character of the site and of the former warehouse building, providing an improved accessibility to the upper floors of the public house and a space where visitors of the guest accommodation can enjoy the views of the river with an improved practicality which will add to and enhance the offer of the Head of the River public house and guest accommodation.
- 6.5 Furthermore, the hardwood timber materials being used will enhance and sustain the stability of these balconies and staircases thereby preserving and enhancing the significance of the wider site as a heritage asset and an asset where the community meet and which attracts a large volume of visitors year on year. The proposal will therefore contribute to the long-term viability of the public house and guest accommodation and continue to preserve this part of the St Aldates street scene for future generations.

Summary

- 6.6 The proposed replacement balconies and staircases, will help the venue provide a comfortable environment for its visitors, and ensure that the venue is able to develop and modernise in a sustainable way, whilst retaining its current use for, in line with the National Framework
- 6.7 The proposals would allow the public house to continue with a use consistent with its conservation, whilst making a positive contribution to the economic vitality of the community and contributing to local character and distinctiveness in line with Paragraph 197 of the National Framework.
- 6.8 The proposals would be of high-quality design, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), the Historic England Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance of Heritage Assets (2019) and would follow the aims of the Oxford City Local Plan.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The new replacement balconies and staircases will sustain the buildings accessibility for future visitors throughout the lifetime of the development, thereby allowing the public house and ancillary guest accommodation to continue to operate in a safe and accessible manner.
- 7.2 Design and sustainability have been considered at the forefront of these proposals and accordingly in line with the National Framework there are no reasons as to why planning and listed building consent, shall not be granted, taking into account the historic significance of the building, any impact on its setting, and the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area .
- 7.3 The proposals have been carefully designed to ensure a high-quality result and would protect and enhance the character of the streetscene and the Oxford Central (University and City) Conservation Area. Furthermore, there would be no adverse impact or harm to the setting of the Grade II listed building by reason of the careful design and consideration of the wider site, and by reason of the appreciation of the former warehouse, the former boat yard, and the wider conservation area.
- 7.4 In summary, the proposal would contribute to sustainable development , seek to ensure the viability of an important community facility, and would meet with the aims of the NPPF, and the Council's Development Plan Policies and Guidance.
- 7.5 The application is therefore recommended to Oxford City Council for approval.