



HERITAGE STATEMENT
Including Roofscape Assessment revA

109 St Aldate's Chambers, Oxford, OX1 1DS

The purpose of this report is to accompany a planning application. A heritage statement sets out the details of the history and development of the asset using photographic, map, archival and fabric evidence. It includes an assessment of the evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value of the heritage asset and the impact of the proposed works upon that significance. In addition to desk based research a site visit was carried out as part of this assessment and a non intrusive survey took place.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Heritage Asset and its Setting:

Project Address: 109 St Aldate's Chambers, Oxford, OX1 1DS

Local Authority: Oxford City Council

Conservation Area: Central (City and University)

Listing Status: Not Listed List entry no. N/A

Building Use: Commercial

Scheduled Monument?	N
Listed Building?	N
Registered Park and Garden	N
Historic Battlefield	N
Locally Listed Heritage Asset	N
Archaeological Notification Area	Y
Other non-designated Heritage Asset	N

Project Overview:

Internal re-development of the building's four floors including new mechanical plant to be located on the roof and north elevation.



Photo 1 – View of the front of the property

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Photo 2 – View of the rear extension from a south-western elevation



Photo 3 – View of the rear extension from a north-western elevation



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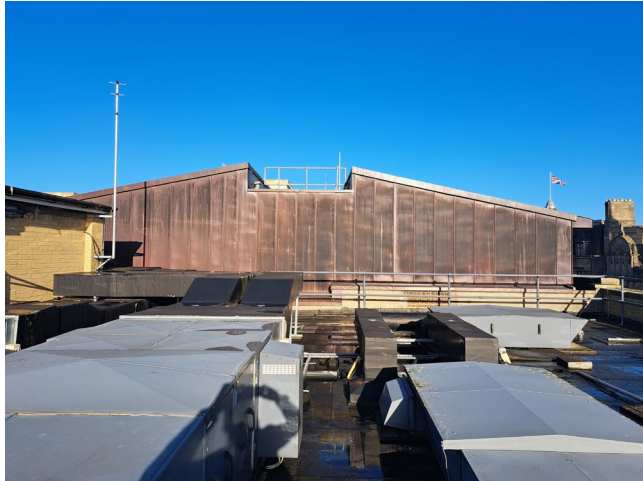


Photo 4-7 – View of the roof of the main building

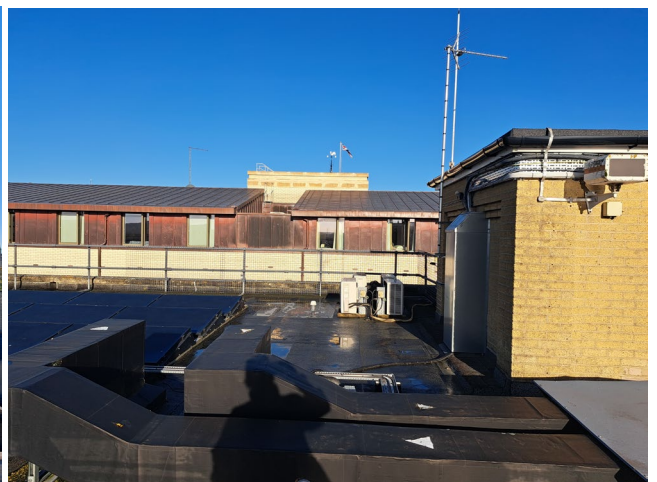


Photo 8-11 – View of the roof of the rear extension

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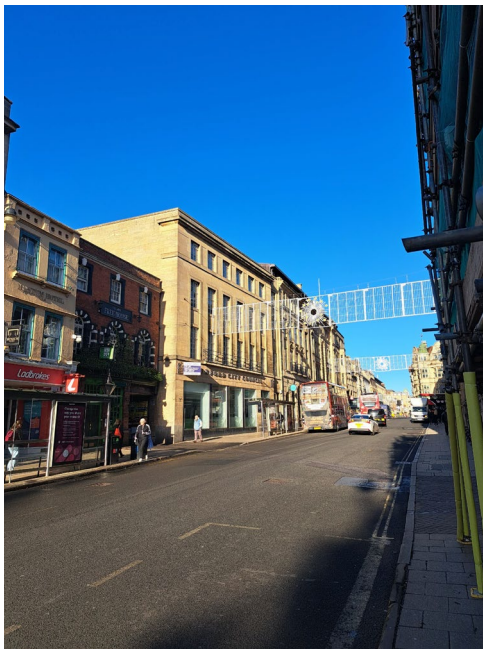
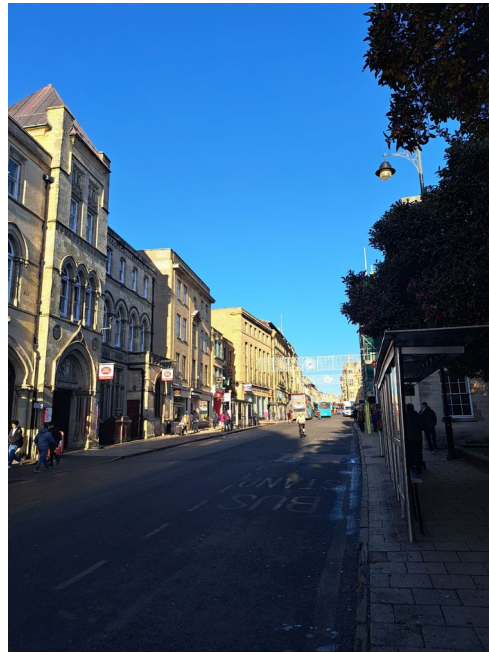


Photo 12-14 – Streetview of the property, approaching from the southeast

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Photo 15 – Streetview of the property from the northeast

Schedule of Intervention:

In order to achieve the works, the following alterations/ interventions will be required:

- Internal works to the upper floors (no external impact).
- New mechanical plant to the roof level.
- New air handling unit and ductwork at ground level on the north elevation.

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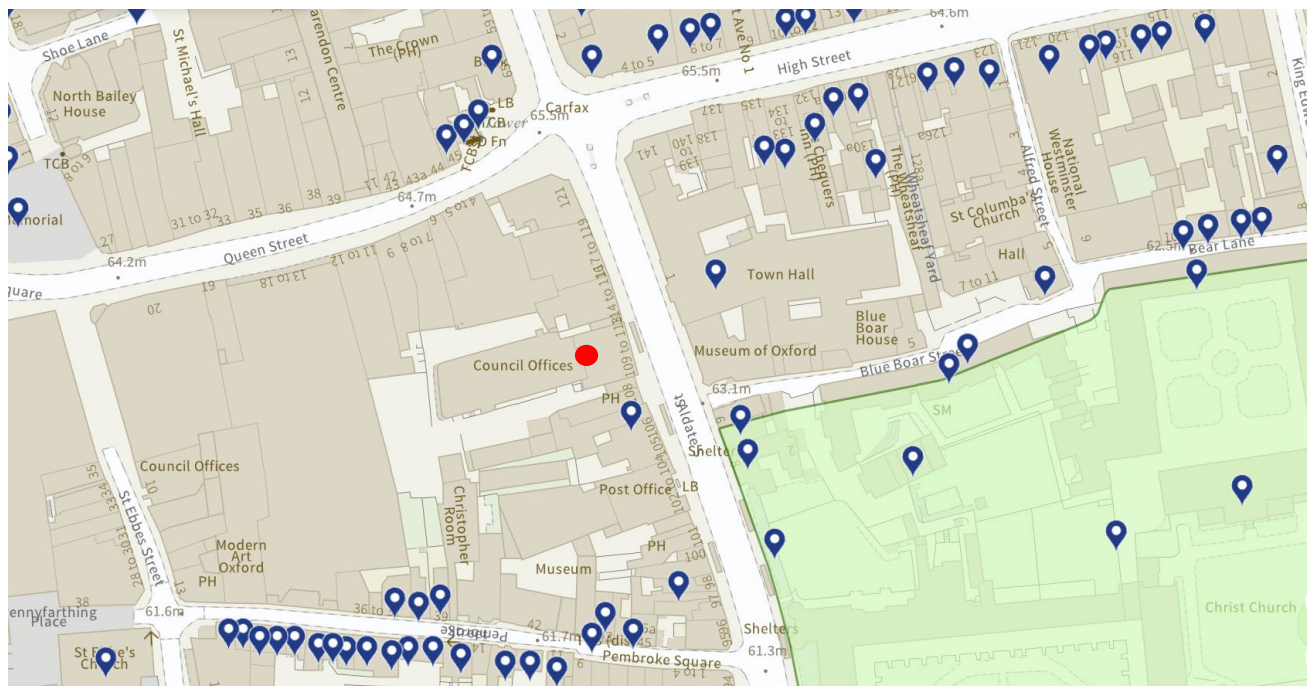
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Setting Overview:

109 St Aldates Chambers is a 1930s civic building located in the centre of the historic city of Oxford on one of the main thoroughfares from the south. It sits opposite Oxford Town Hall. It is a City Council Office Building and is 4 stories high plus a basement level. The building has a narrow classical detailed and stone faced street frontage with a 'shop front' public face to the ground floor. Its formal architectural features reflect its civic purpose. It has a deep footprint and concealed service access to the sides and rear. The sides and rear elevations are not visible from the busy street frontage and are of a lesser aesthetic yellow brick with concrete banding with modern anthracite grey large format windows.

St Aldates is a busy mixed use commercial and civic area in the southern part of the cities historic core where the building density is high and there are continuous frontages opening onto the street. St Aldates is the main north-south axial route through town. It is a reasonably wide street with pavement to each side however the building scale along the road means that the roofs are not visible.

Setting: Urban Area



Map taken from Historic England Listing Database. Property shown with a red dot.

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Impacted Heritage Assets:

The building sits within the Central (City and University) Conservation Area.

The building is not Listed.

The building is within the context of several Listed Buildings.

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1445689
Date first listed: 26-Apr-2017
List Entry Name: No 107 St Aldate's, Oxford
Statutory Address 1: 107 St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1BU

Location

Statutory Address: 107 St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1BU
County: Oxfordshire
District: Oxford (District Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SP5135406095

Summary

No 107 St Aldate's, believed to have originated as a house of 1594, with fabric surviving from that period, but much altered and extended since; the building has a mid-C19 street frontage with early-C20 shop windows. The extended western section of the building* is not of special interest and is excluded from the listing.

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1047153
Date first listed: 12-Jan-1954
List Entry Name: TOWN HALL, MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS AND LIBRARY
Statutory Address 1: TOWN HALL, MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS AND LIBRARY, ST ALDATES STREET

Location

Statutory Address: TOWN HALL, MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS AND LIBRARY, ST ALDATES STREET
County: Oxfordshire
District: Oxford (District Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SP 51379 06136

Details

612/8/450 ST ALDATES STREET 12-JAN-54 (East side) TOWN HALL, MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS AND LIBRARY
GV II* Town Hall. Design of 1891, opened 1897 (incorporating C15 undercroft); extension of 1932.

Assessment of Significance:

Heritage has cultural, social, economic and environmental values. The attributes that combine to define the significance of a historic building can relate to its physical properties or to its context. – BS 7913:2013.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance – NPPF

Archeological:

There are no proposed below ground works so this has not been assessed as part of this report.

Historic:

Oxford is a city with a rich history and has origins in Saxon times as a trading settlement. This report won't delve into the in-depth history of the city as a whole which would take up volumes however extracts below are from the Oxford Historic Urban Character Assessment, being relevant in summary to this site.

St Aldates was an early Saxon saint and the churches that bear that name have origins from this period. The character area is notable for its association with the medieval Jewish community, known to have been in residence from the late 11th century until their expulsion in 1290, with a strong concentration along St Aldates where the synagogue was located. The University then shaped the area's development in the 12th and 13th Centuries. In the 17th century economic growth driven by the University and colleges led to substantial rebuilding in the area. The area continued to be reorganized and rebuilt throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries.

The construction of the current Town Hall opposite in the 1890s resulted in the removal of several medieval and post-medieval structures and can be seen as an assertion of civic pride and authority in a town historically dominated by the University from the 14th century onwards.

The building in question, St Aldates Chambers, was built in the 1930s as a civic building by A H Jones along with several other modern commercial buildings including nos. 114-116 and 117-119.

Post-war the area dramatically changed again with the building of the Westgate centre nearby.

St Aldates Chambers was used as the council offices until 2022 when it relocated its staff to the Town Hall opposite. The building is currently empty and there is a wish to refurbish in order to bring it back into use again.

Architectural or Artistic:

The buildings' classical architectural style and detailing reflects its civic purpose with its building frontage. It reflects its 1930s time period. The rear and side elevations away from the public realm are plainer in nature and offer little in relation to architectural significance or aesthetic contribution to the Conservation Area.

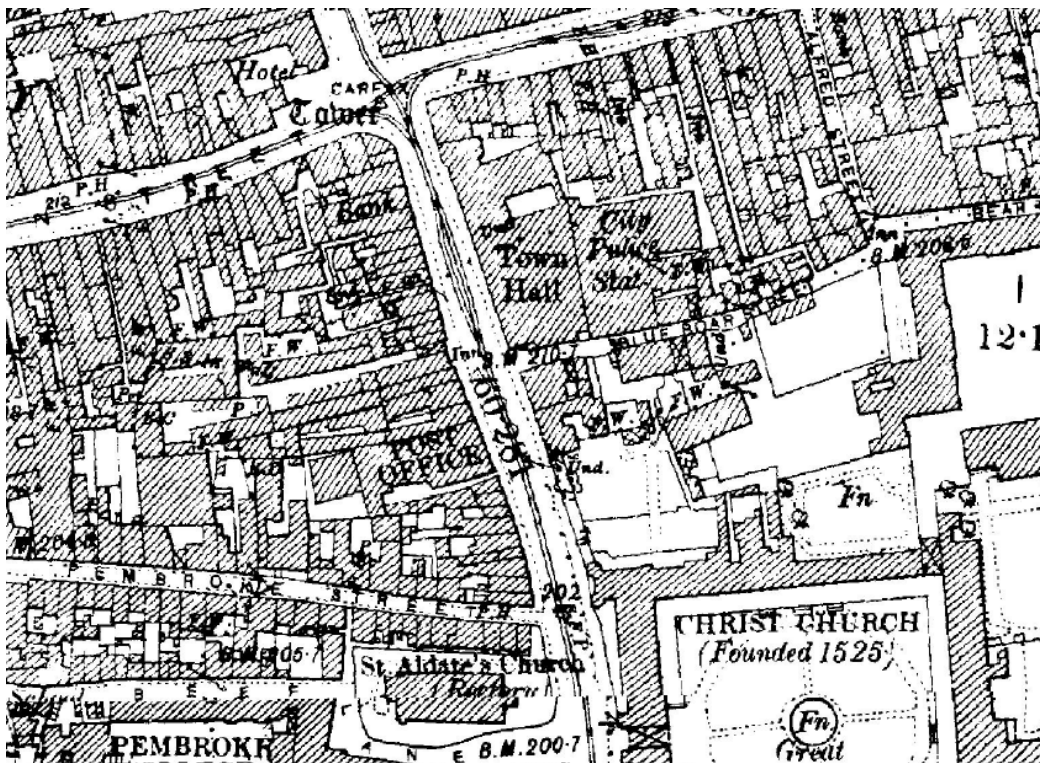
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Historic Mapping – For reference dating only, not for reproduction



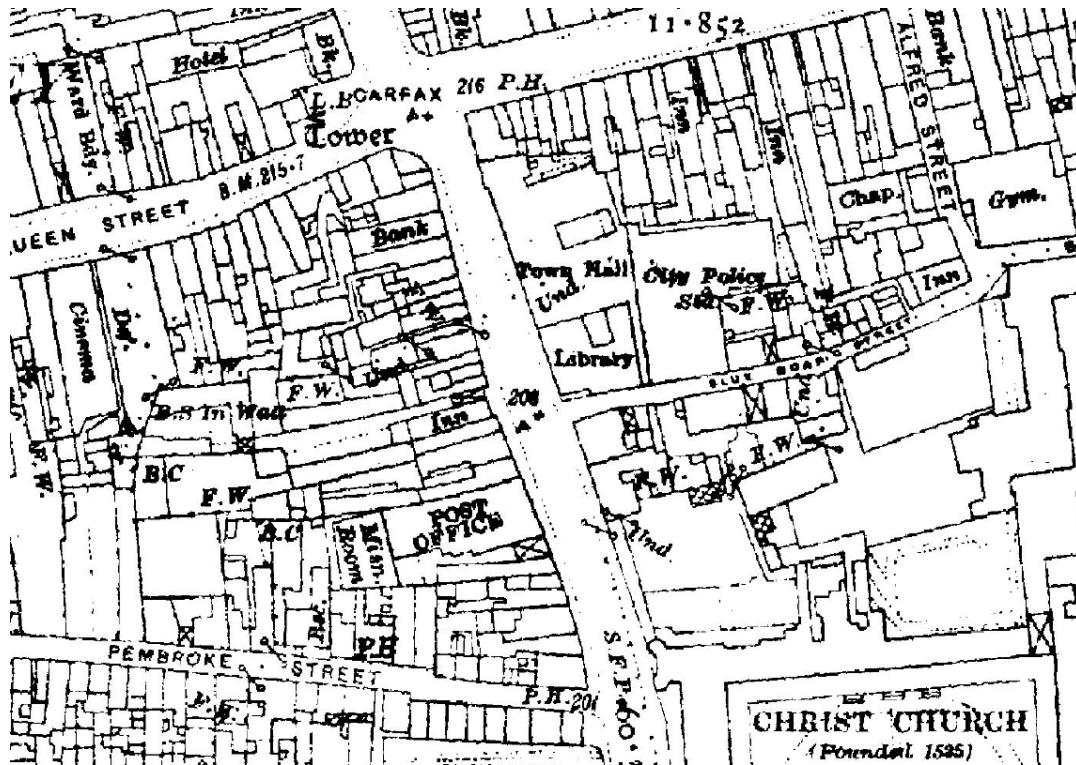
Extract from Oxford Oxfordshire XXXIII.15.22 1878



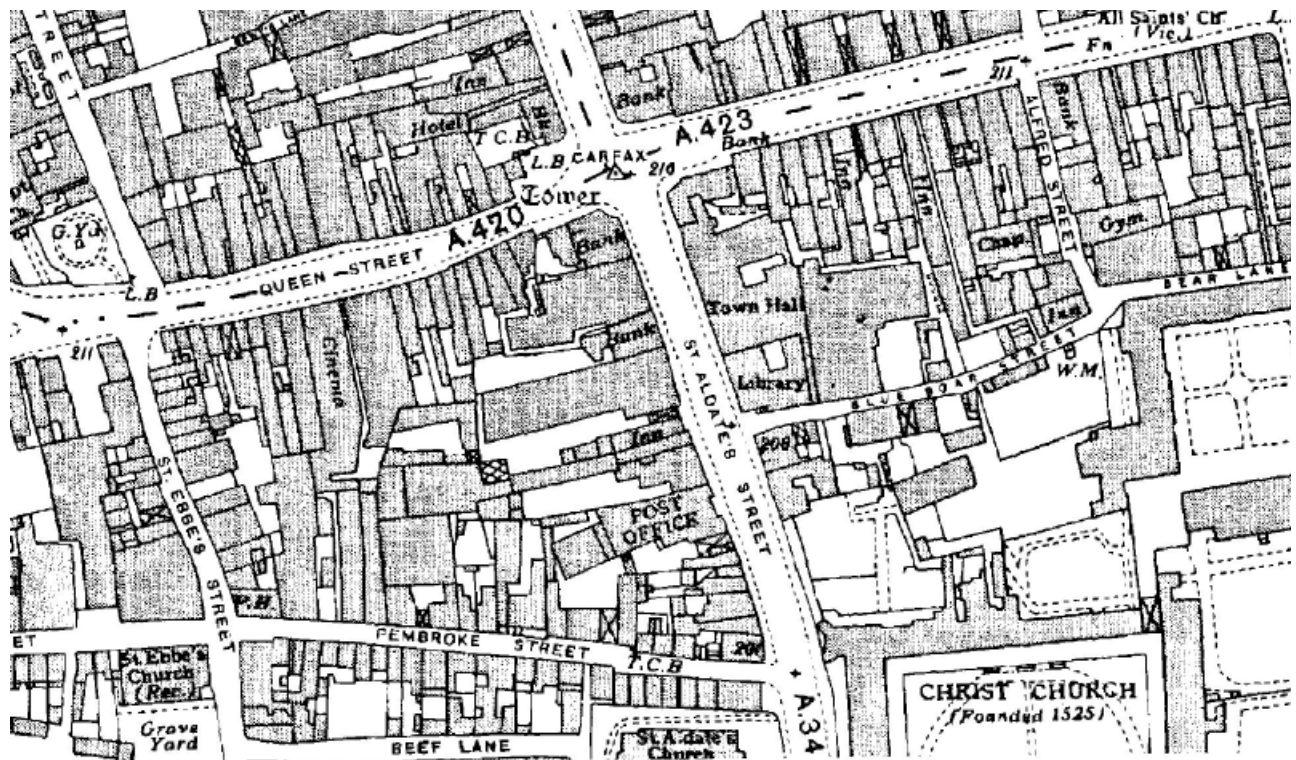
Extract from Landmark Historical Map 1900

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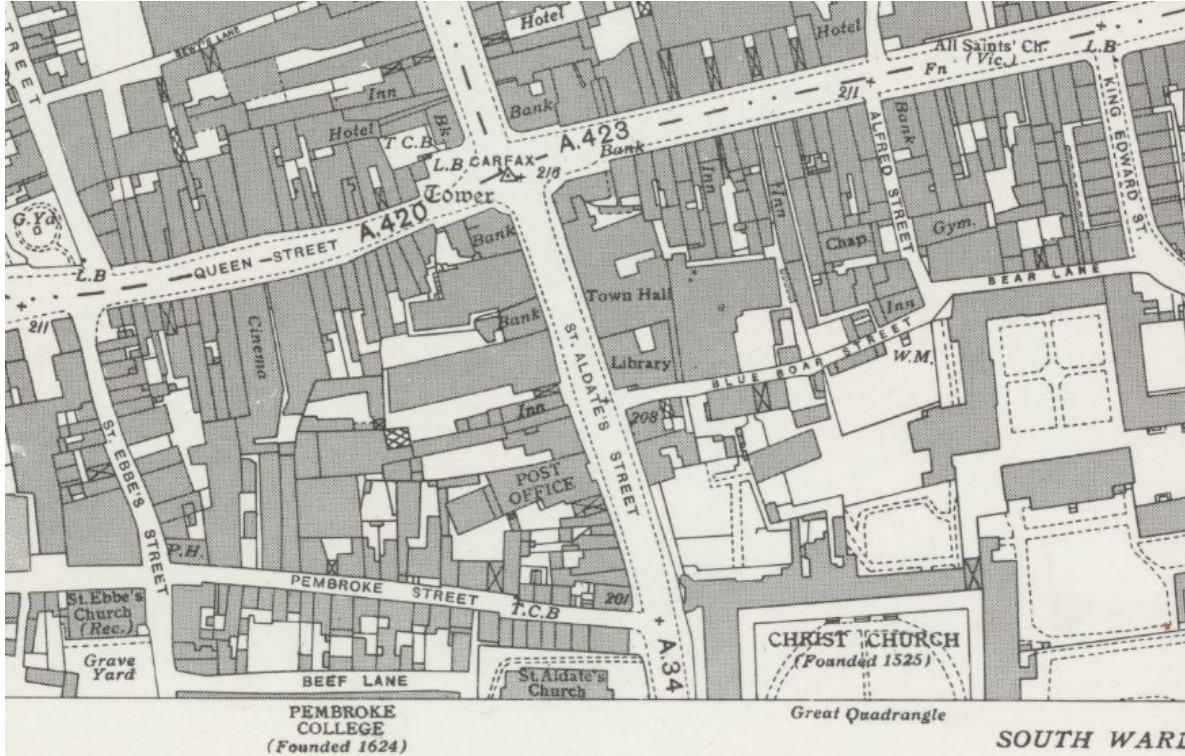


Extract from Landmark Historical Map 1921

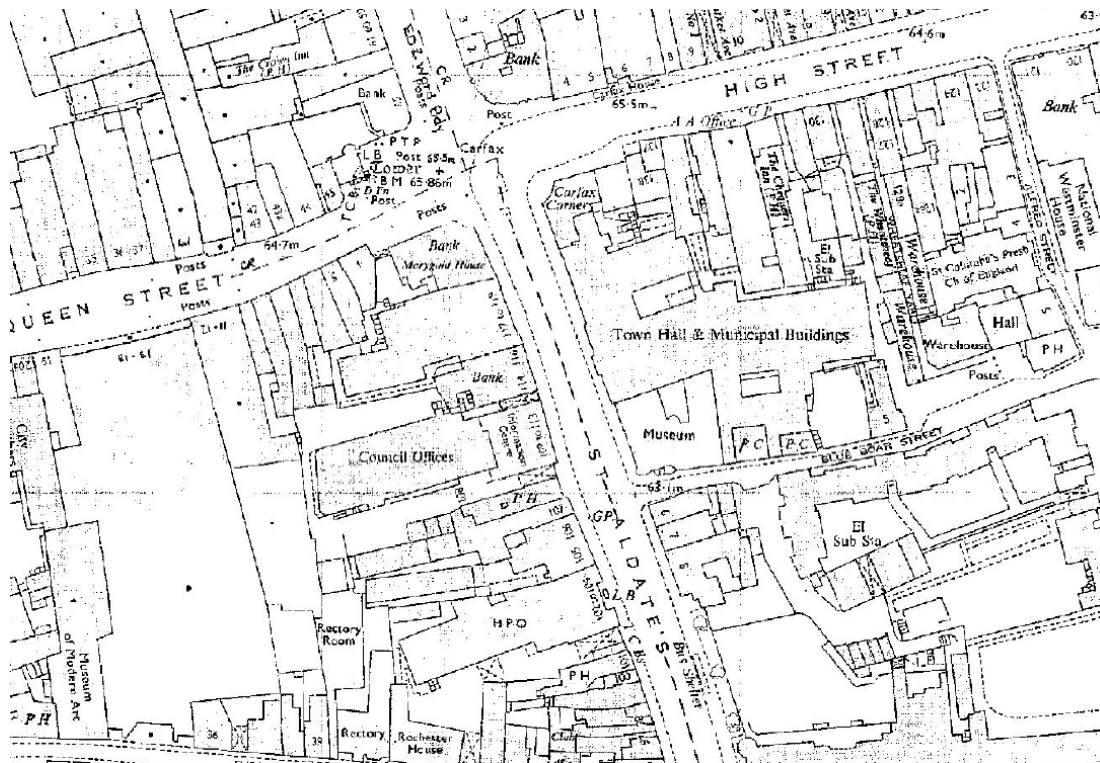


Extract from Landmark Historical Map 1939

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Extract from Oxfordshire XXXIII.15 1947



Extract from Landmark Historical Map 1977

Development Impact on the Historical Asset:

An assessment of how the proposed works will affect the significance of the heritage asset and the justification for that impact.

Proposals should and do:

- 1 - Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF.*
- 2 - Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance.*

Building Elevations and Setting:

The building is located in a central area of Oxford in a key civic and commercial area. Its frontage is heavily within the public realm and therefore any changes to the elevations and setting need to be carefully considered. The mechanical plant has however been sensitively located on the concealed rooftop and northern elevation to ensure that it will not be visible from the public realm and is not considered to cause harm to the setting or key views of the city.

There is already a considerable amount of plant on the roof level, none of which currently causes aesthetic harm to the Conservation Area or the setting of the nearby Listed buildings due to a combination of the height and density of the existing buildings, the curve in the road limiting views from afar and the width of the existing road.

Internally:

The building is not Listed and therefore internal adjustments have not been reviewed as part of this report.

Scale and Massing:

There is no change to the scale or massing of the building. The proposals are located set back on the roof top level in the location of a substantial amount of existing plant which also cant be seen from the public realm.

Further plant is proposed to be located on the concealed northern elevation, again unseen from the public realm and having no impact upon the scale or massing of the building.

Archeaology:

There are no proposed below ground works so this has not been assessed as part of this report.

Use:

The proposals are part of bringing a currently vacant building back into functional use again which is of net benefit to the overall appearance of the Conservation Area.

Roofscape Specific assessment:

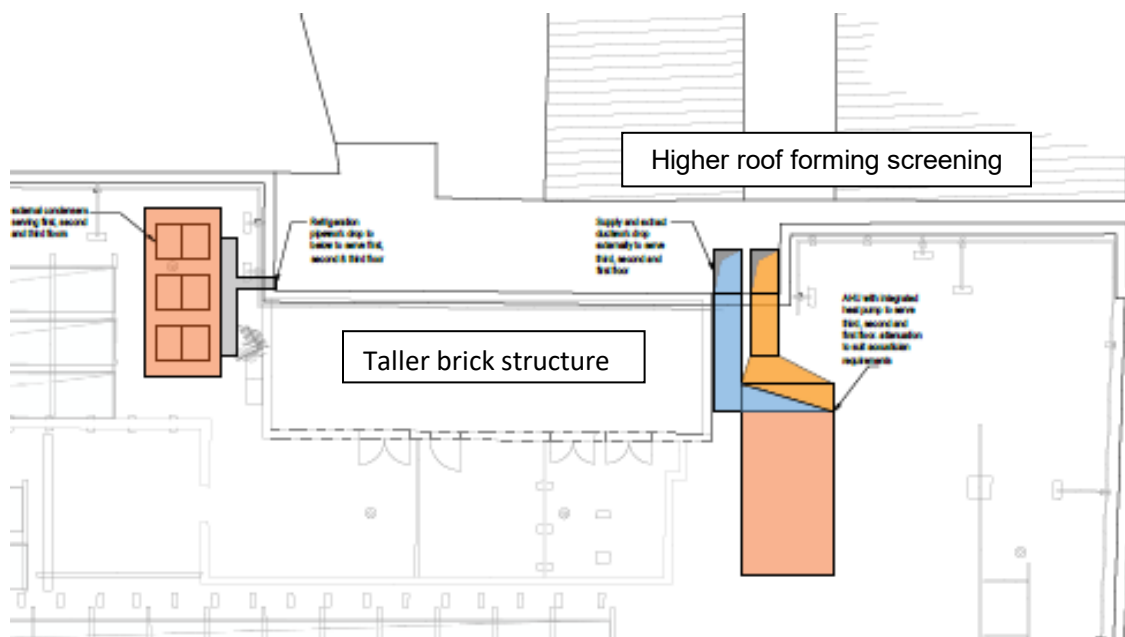
Plant and services. Visible or poorly integrated mechanical and electrical engineering plant does not contribute to this exceptional roofscape and requires careful screening or relocation. Any proposals within the Historic Core Area that may impact on the foreground of views and roofscape (including proposals where they are below the Carfax datum point, for example plant) should be designed carefully, should be based on a clear understanding of roofscape in the area, and contribute positively to it.

Oxford City Council Policy DH2 text is below;

a) design choices regarding height and massing have a clear design rationale and the impacts will be positive; and

b) any design choice to design buildings to a height that would impact on character should be fully explained, and regard should be had to the guidance on design of higher buildings set out in the High Buildings Study TAN. In particular, the impacts in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character should be explained; and

c) it should be demonstrated how proposals have been designed to have a positive impact through their massing, orientation, the relation of the building to the street, and the potential impact on important views including both in to the historic skyline and out towards Oxford's green setting.



The Four Visual Tests:

- 1- Visual Obstruction
The proposals do not obscure the view of architectural features or of important sight lines across the city.
- 2- Visual Competition / Complement
 - The proposals are set sufficiently back from the roof edge to ensure they are not visible from the street level. The roof already contains a large amount of mechanical equipment, none of which is visible from the street view of the surrounding roads nor is visual competition to Oxford's architecture.

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3- Skylining

- The proposals do not increase the height of the building. They sit below the height of the existing brick rooftop structure (also not visible from the streetscene) and therefore will have no impact upon the existing skyline.

4- Change of Character

- The new plant will be black and grey to blend in with the existing roof. The composition of the views of the building are not altered to the extent the character of the view is discernibly different to that of the existing.
- The proposals sit behind an existing roof of the adjacent property (see picture below).
- The screening from other roofs from the north and the curve in the road to the south mean that the plant will not be visible from a distance along the streetscape.
- There are no views of the building from Pembroke Square.
- The plant is sufficiently set back so not to impact upon the character of the building within the historic setting.
- The character of the view is improved by bringing a currently vacant building back into use.



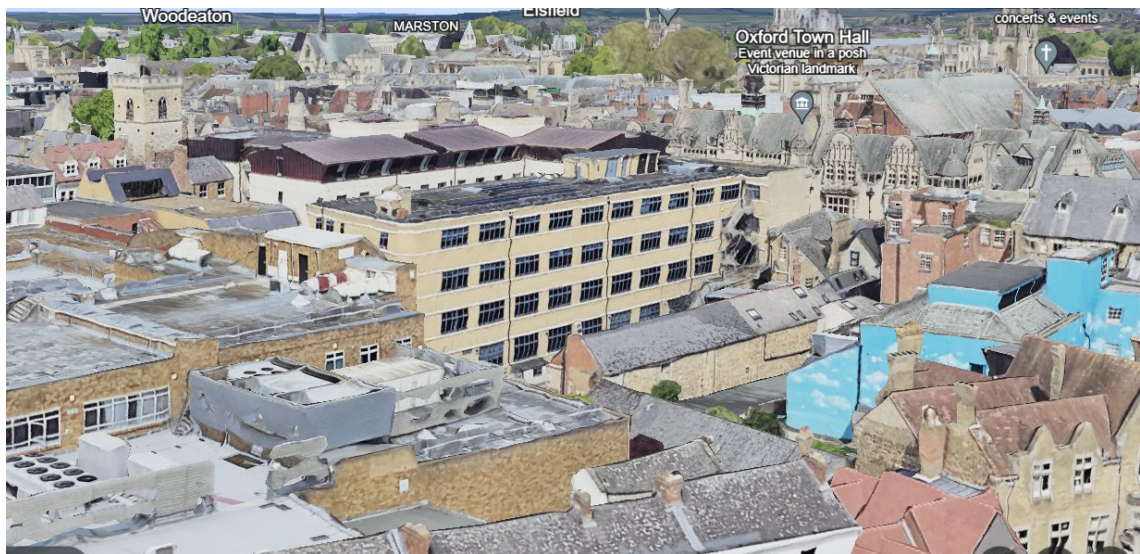
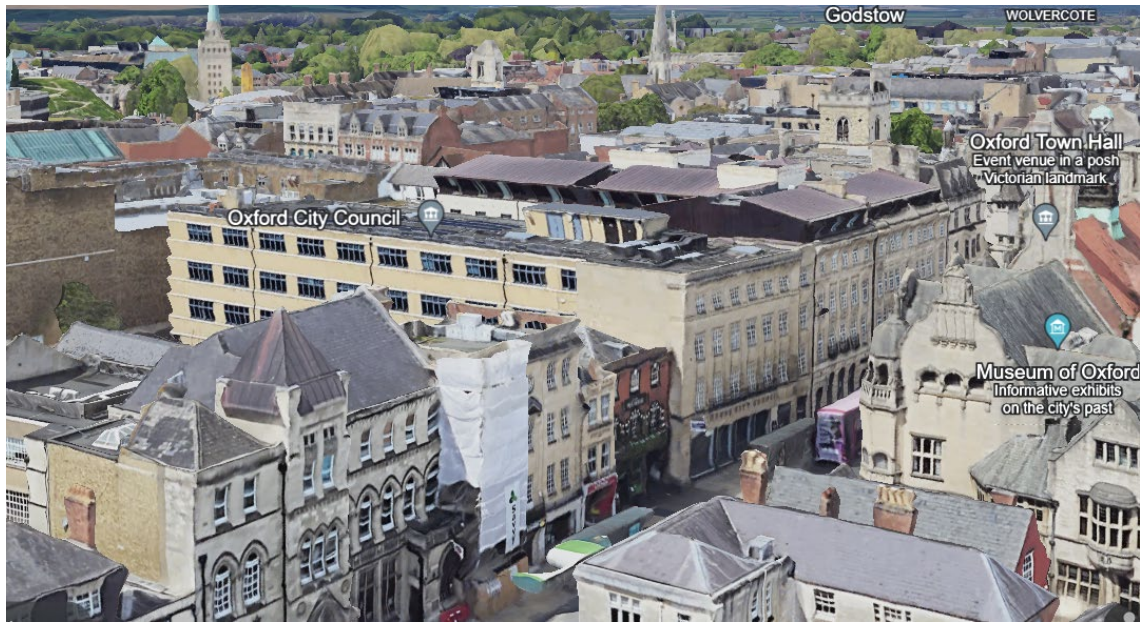
Photos illustrating screening from the north and the set back location of the proposed plant.



Photo taken from the south illustrating the screening of the roof created by the natural bend in the road.

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Extracts from Google Earth illustrating surrounding roofscapes in 3D

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Extracts from Google Earth illustrating surrounding roofscapes in 3D

Relevant Policy:

The Government has set out its planning policies for the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This was published in March 2012 and replaced in 2018, 2019 and 2021. It replaced Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment. The PPS5 Practice Guide remains valid for use alongside the NPPF. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; (b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Historic England 'Conservation Principles' deem new work or alteration to be normally acceptable where the proposals do not materially harm the value of the place. They consider the setting of the heritage asset to contribute greatly to its significance. They accept that a heritage setting changes over time.

The local authority guidance also includes policies which seek to ensure the protection of the historic environment and that development is of a high quality and seeks to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Heritage Asset, in this case the surrounding Conservation Areas.

Changes to the setting of historic buildings / Conservation Areas are to be sympathetic in terms of siting, proportion, scale, form, height, materials and detailing. All design work and procedures should follow guidance outlined in BS 7913:2013 Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings.

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Conclusion:

The alterations and additions proposed relate to the roof area and the concealed service elevations and are not readily visible from the public realm.

There is already a considerable amount of plant already on the roof level, none of which currently causes aesthetic harm to the Conservation Area or the setting of the nearby Listed buildings due to a combination of the height and density of the existing buildings, the curve in the road limiting views from afar and the width of the existing road and this addition is no different.

The flat elevations produced give a harsher view than would in reality be seen as they are set back from the roof edge meaning that the proposals do not substantially alter or harm the appearance of the building. The proposals are considered to preserve the appearance of the Central Conservation Area and bring a vacant building back into functional use which is of net benefit to the area.

The proposals pass the four visual tests set out within the Oxford City Council Technical Advice Note – Oxford High Buildings.

Assessor Details:

Surveyor: Michelle Purnell BA(hons) BArch RIBA MSc Building Conservation IHBC
Date of Site Visit: 15/11/23 Weather conditions at time of visit: Dry

Information Source Checklist:

The following information sources have been used when conducting desk based research:

Historic England List of Protected Historic Sites x

National Planning Policy Framework x

Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment x

Relevant Local Plans x

Conservation Area Character Appraisal x

Local Authority Landscape Character Assessment n/a

The Local List of Buildings and Monuments x

Local Records Office Other (please state):