

Heritage Statement

Proposed New Notice Board and Incised Frieze Inscription at
The North Gate Hall, 18 St Michael's Street, Oxford, OX1 2DU

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View from St. Michael's Street

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Introduction

This application is for Listed Building Consent for alterations to the exterior of the North Gate Hall, 18 St Michael's Street, Oxford, OX1 2DU.

These alterations are for the introduction of a new noticeboard to the west of the west entrance and for an incised inscription in the frieze to replace the existing applied red lettering.

Basic Information

Address: 18 St Michael's Street, Oxford, OX1 2DU
Local Planning Authority: Oxford City Council
Ward: Carfax Ward
Statutory Listing: Grade II (List Entry No. 1369447)
Conservation Area: Central Oxford

Recent Planning History

Work has been ongoing since 2021 to conserve, repair and restore the North Gate Hall from a restaurant back to its intended use as a chapel. The following applications have been granted in connection with these works:

22/02143/FUL & 22/02144/LBC: Granted 14th November 2022

Change of use from Restaurant (Use Class E) to Chapel and Church Hall (Use Class F1).
Removal of existing air conditioning units and removal of commercial kitchen to basement level.
Removal of partitions in front of basement windows to the north and south elevations. Removal of air extraction ductwork, steel support structure and enclosed bar area from ground floor.

23/01264/LBC: Granted 27th July 2023

Repair and renovation of existing roof, including stair access dormer doors and frames.
Replacement of existing gutters. Installation of insulation and sarking. Installation of a new catchpit and external downpipe to the south elevation, and permanent guarding to the north elevation.

23/01206/FUL & 23/01207/LBC: Granted 27th July 2023

External alterations to include re-insertion of 2no. windows to south elevation, re-insertion of 3no. windows to north elevation, replacement of existing doors on north elevation, repair of existing windows, removal of AC unit, and alterations to rainwater goods and external services.
Internal alterations to include removal of existing partitions and stairs, platform lift, raised platforms, WC's and kitchens. Structural alterations to include removal of existing mezzanine, and insertion of new first floor gallery.

23/01649/FUL: Granted 11th September 2023

Alterations to existing gutters. Installation of insulation to roof, catchpit and downpipe to south elevation. Installation of railing to north elevation and man-safe equipment.

Drawings

The proposals described below should be read in conjunction with the following drawings:

- 1456/4 Location and Block Plan
- 1456/33A Proposed Notice Board Details
- 1456/34 Frieze Inscription
- 1456/35A South Elevation as Proposed
- 1456/36 South Elevation as Existing

Proposed Notice Board

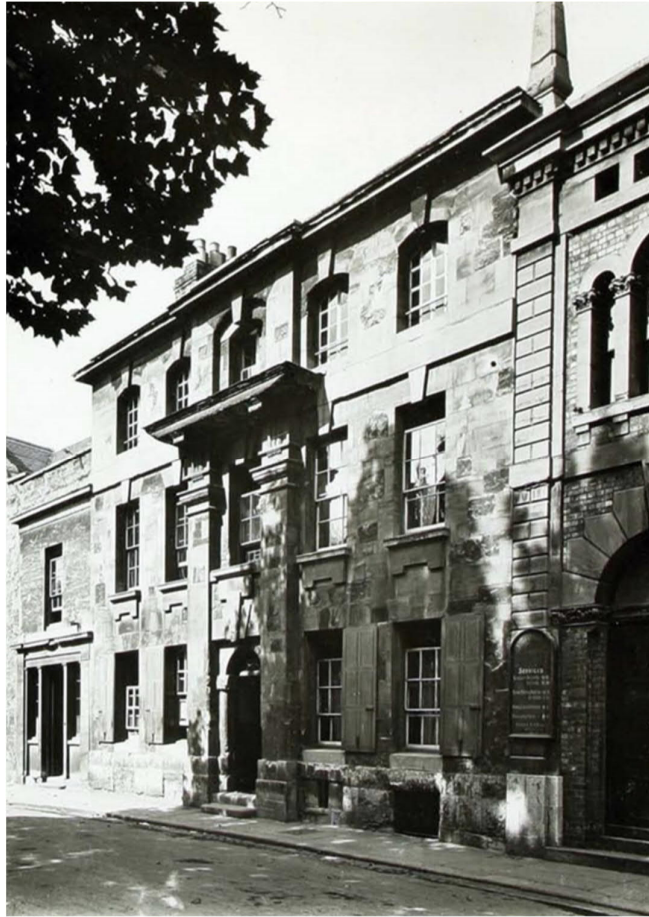
The Oxford Presbyterian Church have been holding services in The North Gate Hall since June 2023 when the works for the change of use from a restaurant to a place of worship were completed. They hold services on a Sunday as well as hosting events during the week and the building has become popular and is well used. However, there is no obvious indication that this is now the home of the church and several visitors have had difficulty finding the venue.

The proposed notice board has the name of the church clearly painted at the top of the board and provides a place to advertise events taking place inside. This will clearly identify the North Gate Hall as the home of The Oxford Presbyterian Church.

The form of the notice board, with the arched top, is based on historic photographs showing notice boards for the United Methodist Free Church either side of the entrance doors shown in photographs 1 and 2.



Photograph 1 - Looking west along St Michael's Street in 1907 showing a notice board east of the east door.



Photograph 2 – View of Vanbrugh House with the North Gate Hall on the right showing a notice board west of the west door.

The notice board is to be constructed from good quality hardwood, primed, and painted in Oxford blue with white lettering, adding colour to the street scene. It has a lockable glazed front with a pinboard behind. There is no integrated lighting. The arched top has a slight projecting drip with a copper covering making the noticeboard durable against the weather.

Proposed Incised Frieze Inscription

The building was originally constructed in 1871 as the United Methodist Free Church and this was incised into the frieze as shown in photograph 3.

The Methodist Church left the building in the 1930's and the inscription was cut out and rendered over as shown in photograph 4.



Photograph 3 – View of The North Gate Hall before alterations carried out in the 1930's showing the original incised frieze.



Photograph 4 – View of the North Gate Hall showing the original incised lettering on the frieze cut out and rendered over with applied red lettering.

It is proposed to remove the existing applied lettering and replace it with incised lettering decorated with gold leaf. This will be constructed by working back the existing stone frieze and applying a new stone face approximately 50mm thick in front. The stone will be a limestone to match the existing stone in colour and texture and fixed securely into position.

Conclusion

The noticeboard and incised lettering have been carefully designed to enhance the building and give it a greater prominence on the street in a simple, dignified way.

Eric Cartwright. March 2024.