



Client: Netherhall Educational Association  
Date: 28.03.24  
GP(RP)A01

# GRANDPONT HOUSE

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

studio  
stassano





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1. DESIGN TEAM

The design proposals contained in this Design & Access Statement have been developed in conjunction with the following consultants:

Planning Consultant	Bidwells
Heritage Consultant	Donald Insall Associates
Structural Engineer	TZG Partnership
Services Engineering	Inhabit Group
Landscape Designer	TerraBuild
Tree Consultant	Barrell Tree Consultancy
Archeological Consultant	Oxford Archaeology
Building Conservation Specialists	Hutton and Rostron
Flood Risk Consultant	WaterEnvironment
Ecology Consultant	Urban Edge Environmental Consulting
Architect	Studio Stassano

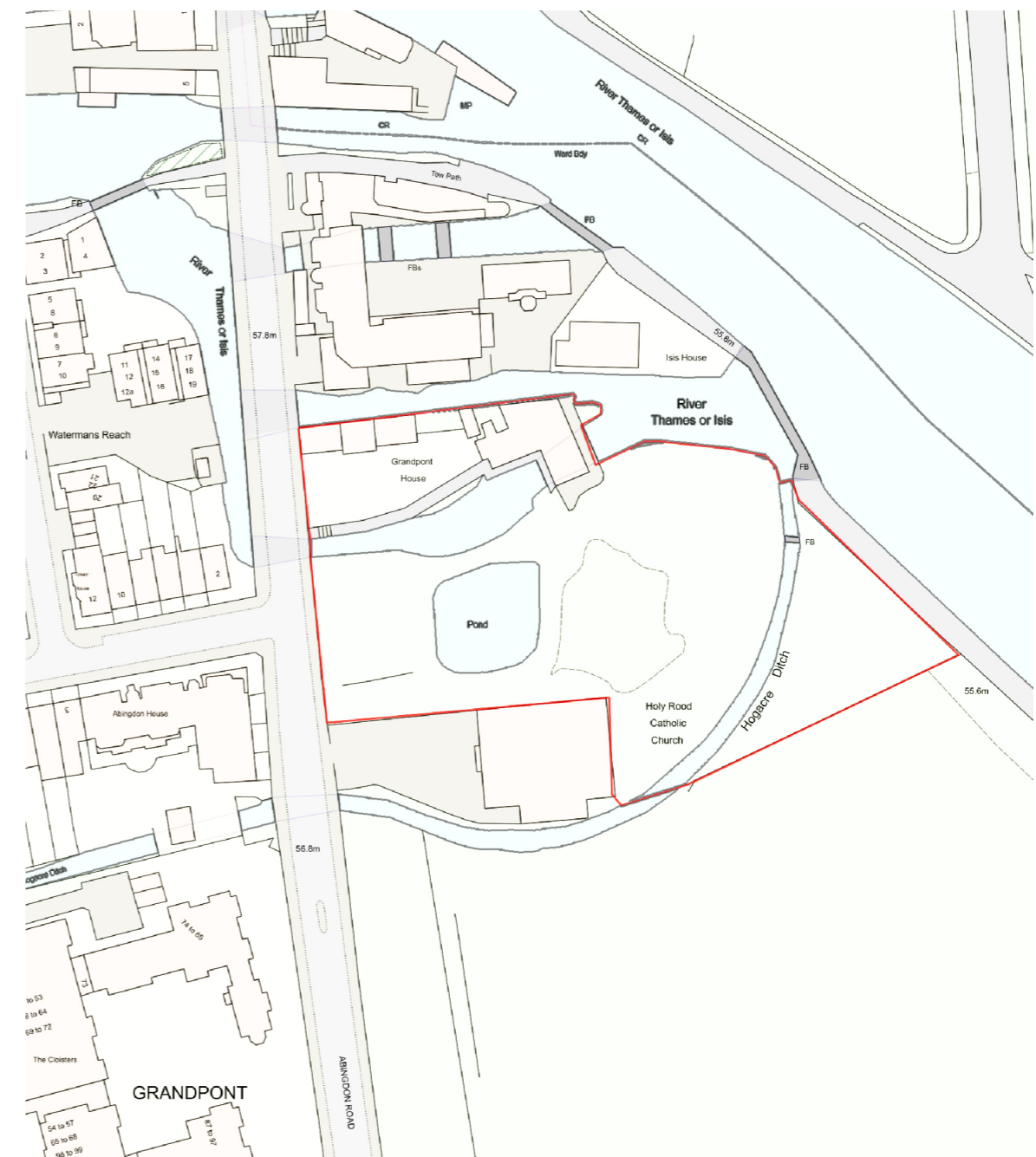


Image 1: Site Plan

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement has been provided in support of a Planning and Listed Building consent application for design proposals relating to the alteration and extension of a Grade II\* listed property at Grandpont House, Oxford.

Following a pre-planning consultation with the Planning Department at Oxford City Council, and including constructive feedback from Historic England, a conservation-led approach proposed for the development of the site was discussed and agreed in principle. The design proposals provide a shift in focus from the previous planning application, which consisted of a new build located in the western portion of the gardens, to the reuse and re-adaptation of the existing outbuildings located in the carriage yard. A boat house is proposed in the former garden area; however, it is much smaller in size and dedicated to supporting water activities. The gardens will continue to benefit from improvements to their biodiversity along with minor landscaping enhancements. The proposals have been developed with heritage input from Donald Insall Associates, providing a design rationale informed by an understanding of the historical significance and development of the property.

The design proposals resolve a number of shortcomings of the site and satisfy the much-needed student accommodation and accessible facilities required by the client brief. As a result, the proposals help to safeguard the building's long-term viable use while offering significant heritage and public benefits that outweigh any harm caused to the listed building.

The following are key heritage and public benefits provided as a result of the proposals:

- Improved accessibility to Grandpont House for its guests and the wider Oxford academic community.
- Reinstatement of missing gable to the stables outbuilding.
- Restoration of the first-floor south principal room, following the removal of the chapel.
- Restoration of lost chimney features to the interiors.
- Repair of the external fabric of the principal house facades.
- Removal of unsightly modern pipework from the exterior and interior of the building.
- Improved energy performance and reduction of CO2 footprint, including

the production of renewable energy through PV panels located on the roof of the main house.

- Improved garden setting and biodiversity.

The proposed works require alterations and extensions that will mostly affect the outbuildings and carriage yard, providing a limited impact on the principal house. The reuse of existing buildings and structures is prioritized through the re-adaptation of the stables, coach house, and ruined servants' cottage, which will provide additional student accommodation within a new mansard roof construction. Where required, precarious structures will be carefully rebuilt, and the 20th-century extensions demolished to allow relocating the chapel function outside the principal house and forming a new accessible entrance located in the carriage yard.

The designs presented for the principal house offer to sensitively refurbish the existing room volumes, reinstate any original lost features, and sympathetically repair the degraded external fabric. The only alterations proposed are the subdivision of the second-floor rear rooms to provide additional accommodation and minor alterations to the ground floor plan layout of the west wing to provide an improved accessible entrance to the building.

The proposed alterations include structural and services engineering solutions that have been specifically developed to safeguard the integrity of the existing building fabric, structure, and garden setting, while providing improved standards of accommodation and energy performance.

The services strategies provide a minimal approach to the site maintaining the same level of servicing, supported by better-performing equipment and passive strategies, which include natural ventilation, improved thermal fabric, and passive cooling through air extract.

Structural proposals for the new extensions and the re-adaptation of the existing outbuildings will have no bearing on the existing masonry structures and foundations. This is achieved through the use of independent structures supported by lightweight screw-pile foundations.



Image 2: Aerial view of Grandpont House

This submission has been prepared following a pre-planning advice request submitted in April 2023, and subsequent supporting feedback received from the Planning Department at Oxford Council. Refer to Planning statement for further detail on the engagement.

The following key improvements have been incorporated in the design proposals following the pre-planning process with the Oxford Planning Department:

- Removal of proposed dormer window and reduced mansard slope to the western end of the stables block to soften the mansard form and minimize the impact on the character of Abingdon Road.
- New raised brick parapet, by two brick courses, to the stables and coach house to reduce the bulk of the new mansard roof and reduce the negative impact on the character of Abingdon Road and the listed site.
- Improvements to the ground floor of the west wing by reducing the proposed enlargement of the existing door openings located in the corridor of the western end of the wing. The existing lining boards and architraves of the historic doorway adjacent to the chimney breast will be reused and reinstated where missing.
- Improvements of the west wing by omitting the proposed director room to restore part of the original room volume and provide a clear reading of the existing chimney breast and 18th-century chimney piece cornice.
- Reduced zinc fascia height and design to the proposed entrance building to provide a less dominant form and design.
- Design for the new extension buildings and boat house developed with consideration to a construction method statement and construction management plan that demonstrates a limited impact on the site and garden setting.
- Repair of historic fabric to the listed building informed by historic building specialists appointed to survey and advise on repairs to the building. Their initial reports have been submitted as part of this application, and their appointment will continue into construction.
- Reduction to the size to the proposed plan of the boat house.

The following is an additional improvement which did not form part of the pre-planning application process but has been incorporated in the present submission:

- Addition of 2 small pitched dormers to the rebuilt servants' cottage mansard roof to improve cross-ventilation, sunlight, and aspect to the new bedroom accommodation.

The design proposals have been developed alongside Oxford Archaeology, which has assessed the impact of the proposals on the archaeology of the site. Their report has been submitted alongside this application. Due to the proposed main sewer connection to serve the boat house sanitary facilities, Scheduled Monument Consent forms part of this application.

The proposed site is primarily located in Flood Zone 2 and sits north of the watercourse crossing of the site, protected from flooding by surrounding high land and structures.

The proposed development maintains the existing levels dictated by the west wing and does not propose any alteration to its surrounding structure or high land.

The development does not carry the risk of flooding. However, as recommended by the Flood Risk Assessment by Water Environment, submitted alongside this application, the ground floor of the proposed development will be protected by flood-resilient finishes and flood-proof doors and windows. The design proposals have also been presented to Historic England, which has supported the scheme.

The accompanying Planning and Heritage Statements explains the history of the property and reviews the applicable policy considerations. As the Planning and the Heritage Statements explains the context and policies, those matters are not stated in this document.

This statement is to be read in conjunction with the above-stated reports and the drawings listed in drawing schedule GH(IS)A01.



Image 3: Satellite image of Grandpont House



### 3. SITE & CONTEXT

Grandpont House is a Grade II\* building located on the east side of Abingdon Road on the south bank of the River Thames at the southern end of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area in the city of Oxford. The building is a large detached Georgian house with gardens dating from the late 18th century (c.1785). When it was built, it was located at the edge of Georgian Oxford, on a floodplain of the Thames, over made ground of a former mill.

The property is remarkable and contains significant natural and historic beauty. The house partly sits on raised, wedge-shaped land, in-between two branches of the River Thames and partly over masonry arches, which bridge across to the gardens occupying the southern portion of the site.

The northern part of the site is bounded by a masonry river wall, which forms part of the historic outbuildings. The stables, coach house, and former servant's cottage extend along the wedge-shaped carriage yard towards the western portion of the site, to the current entrance of the property. The carriage yard is enclosed on the southern side by a boundary wall, built along the north banks of the stream that crosses the site, and forms the pedestrian access linking the rear of the house to Abingdon Road.

The western portion of the site is defined by a boundary wall that extends south along Abingdon Road and forms part of the Grandpont Causeway. The southwest portion, formerly the main coach entrance from Abingdon Road, is now annexed to the Holy Rood church and forms the southern boundary of the site.

The eastern part of the property is predominantly occupied by gardens and is defined by the curving of the Thames that marks the eastern boundary of the site. A public footpath partly runs along the gardens and reaches a pedestrian bridge over the Thames, where the principal façade and former main entrance to the house can be seen bridged above a stream.



Image 4: Grandpont House main entrance door of the east wing bridging over the stream

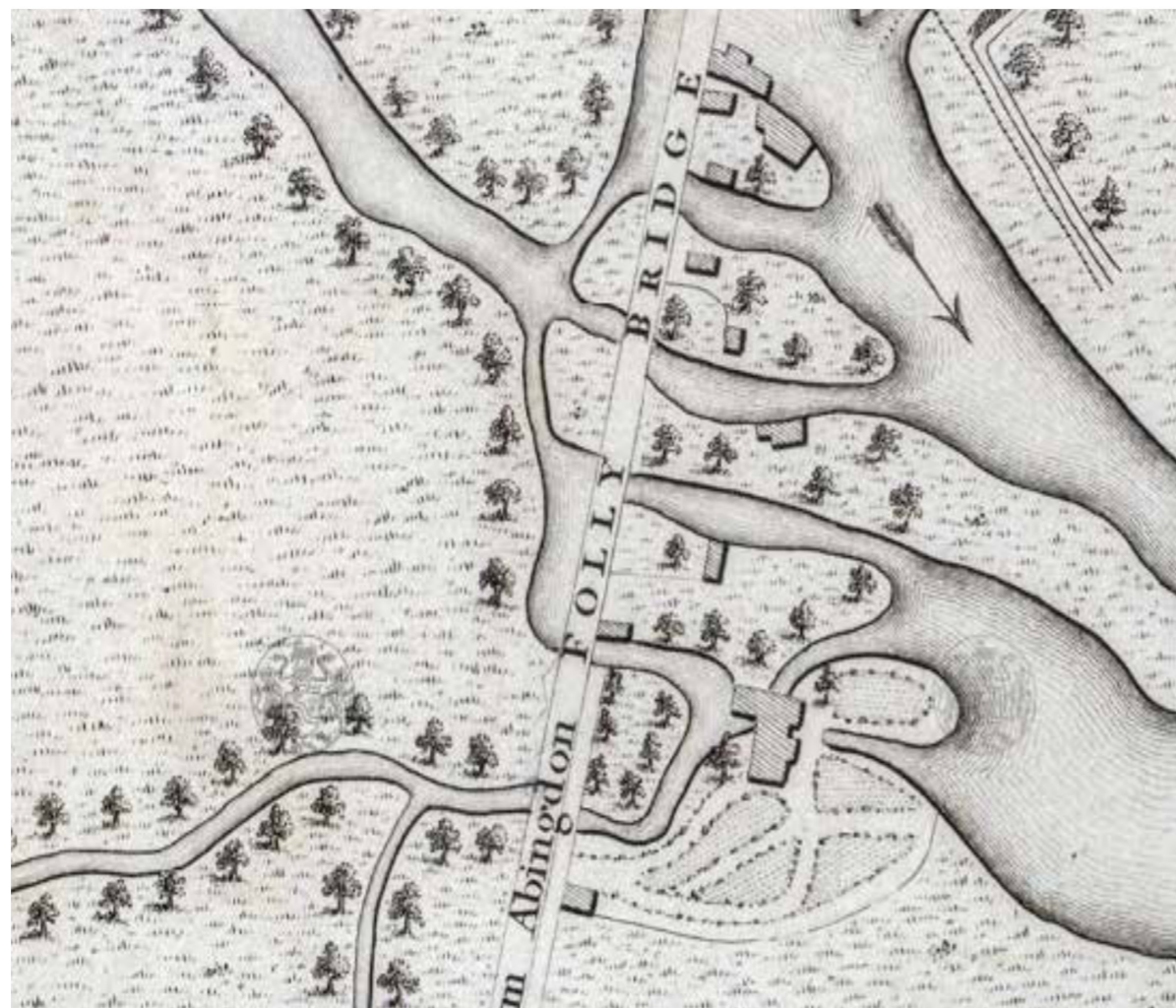


Image 5: Map of 1793-4, showing Grandpont House and its garden

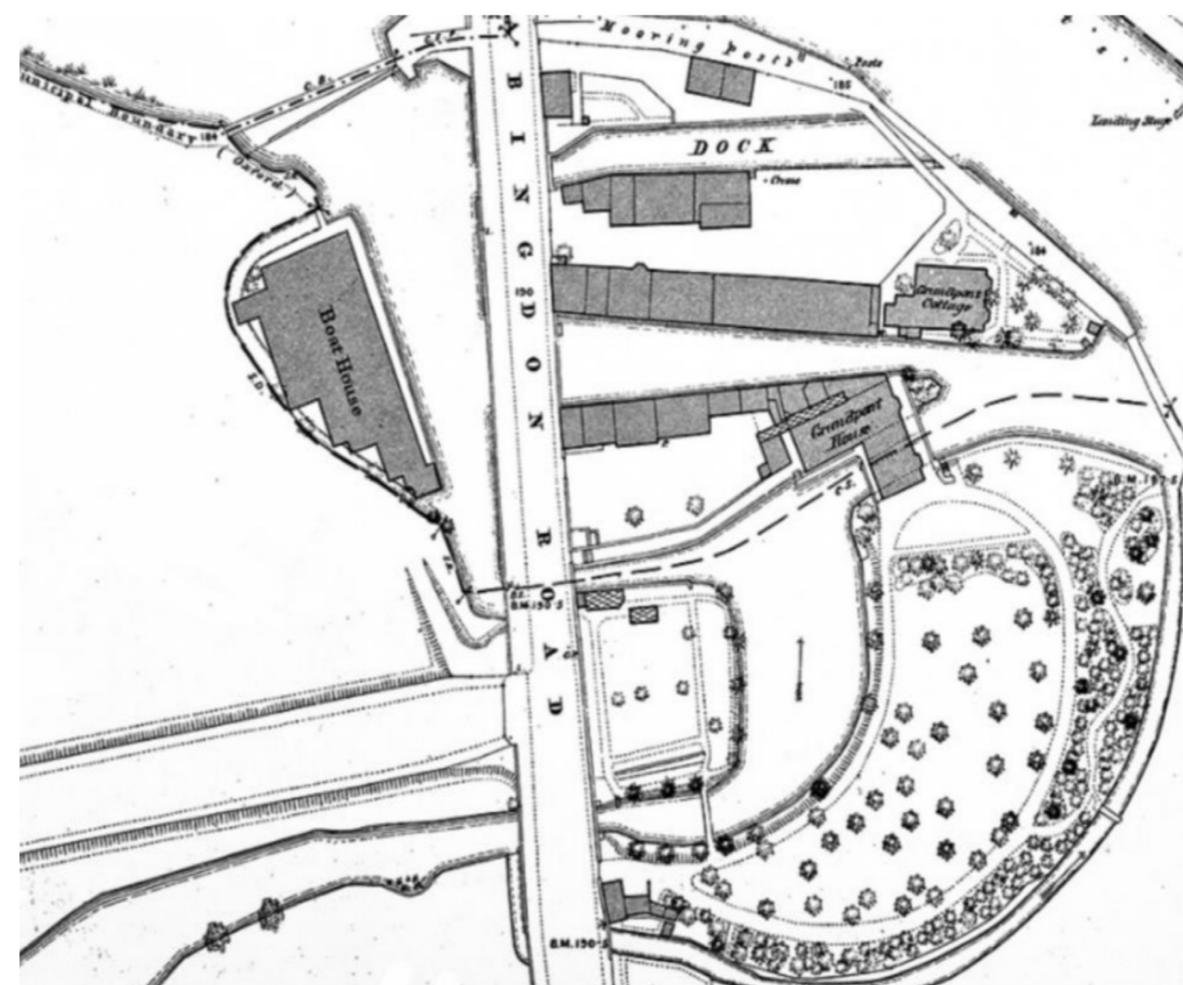


Image 6: Map of 1876 showing Grandpont House, and former gardens

## 4. THE BUILDING

Grandpont House is a rare survival of a Georgian urban villa with large gardens, stables, and a coach house. The principal building is L-shaped and comprises two main wings. The east wing is of three stories with a small basement and contains the principal entrance and larger rooms benefiting from taller ceilings and river views, while the rear, west, service wing is also of three stories but is lower than the east wing and has shorter ceiling heights.

The main facade faces East towards the Thames, and the rear of the building faces West towards the carriage yard and Abingdon Road. The east and west wings date to different periods. Historical evidence suggests that the west wing predates 1785 and was formerly a utilitarian building, extended with the addition of the east wing to form a higher status house.

The structural composition of the two wings is significantly different in nature. The east wing is partly built over a stone bed, which is supported by a masonry bridge over a stream. In order to reduce the loads of the main front and rear facades over these arches, the walls were built with timber studs and finished with lime render on timber laths. The north and south facades, including those of the west wing, are built on more stable, made ground. As a result, these facades are composed of solid masonry construction finished in lime render, with the exception of the north facades which are lime washed. The west wing masonry walls are built with different thicknesses, some in excess of standard practice, suggesting the remains of an even older building, which was possibly a mill.

### 4.1 APPROACH AND APPEARANCE

The appearance of the building against its immediate setting varies depending on the approach to the house. This has changed significantly with the annexing of the coach entrance to the Holy Rood church, resulting in relocating the entrance of the property to the carriage yard, north of the site.

The former coach entrance provided an approach through the setting of the landscaped gardens and presented a grander east-facing Georgian facade, rendered with an ashlar bond pattern. The east facade design is symmetrical in composition, with a central arched entrance at ground floor level, a Serlian window at the first floor, and a square sash window with sidelights at the second floor. On either side are a pair of canted bays, three stories high, with three opening sash windows on each bay.



Image 7: East facade of the principal building



Image 8: South facade of the West wing



Image 9: South-east corner of the east wing facades



Image 10: View of entrance to Grandpont House seen from Abingdon Road