



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD



**15-19 Banbury Road
Conservation Plan**

Building No. 108
May 2012

Oxford University

Estates Services

First Draft November 2010

This draft May 2012

15-19 BANBURY ROAD, OXFORD
CONSERVATION PLAN



CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1	Purpose of the Conservation Plan	5
1.2	Scope of the Conservation Plan	6
1.3	Existing Information	6
1.4	Methodology	7
1.5	Constraints	7
2	UNDERSTANDING THE SITE	9
2.1	History of the Site and University	9
2.2	Construction, and Subsequent History of 15-19 Banbury Road	11
3	SIGNIFICANCE OF 15-19 BANBURY ROAD	15
3.1	Significance within its setting	15
3.1.1	Significance to south of North Ward, North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area, and St. Giles'/Banbury Road	15
3.1.2	Significance as part of the "Park Villas" group (7-21 (odd) Banbury Road)	15
3.2	Significance as an IT Support, teaching, and research space	15
3.3	Historical Significance	16
3.4	Archaeological Significance	16
3.5	Architectural Significance	16
4	VULNERABILITIES	19
4.1	The ability of 15-19 Banbury Road to fulfil its current function	19
4.1.1	Fire Safety	19

4.1.2	Security	19
4.1.3	Access	19
4.2	Exterior Elevations and Setting	20
4.3	Interior Layout, Fixtures, and Fittings	21
5	CONSERVATION POLICY	23
6	BIBLIOGRAPHY	27
7	APPENDICES	29
	Appendix 1: Listed Building Description	29
	Appendix 2: Conservation Area Description	31
	Appendix 3: Summary of Planning Applications since 1950	35
	Appendix 4: Chronology of 15-19 Banbury Road	39
	Appendix 5: Checklist of Significant Features	41

1 INTRODUCTION

15-19 Banbury Road was constructed, as the initial element of the “Park Villas” group consisting of 7 to 19 (odd) Banbury Road, in 1847-48. Thomas Graham Jackson’s 21 Banbury Road was added to the group in 1879. The three houses were built as an externally-contiguous block, now forming a single building, which was Grade II listed in June 1972. It was designed as a residential space, but now houses the OUCS offices and training facilities. 15-19 is probably the least attractive of the “Park Villas” but it is certainly the most imposing structure, with its distinctive pediment making it an obvious landmark, and forming an integral part of the group of buildings that demarcates the transition from Oxford city centre to the more residential North Oxford.

1.1 Purpose of the Conservation Plan

The University has an unrivalled portfolio of historic buildings, of which it is rightly proud. It has traditionally taken a thorough, holistic approach to building conservation, seeking to understand all the varied factors that make historic buildings significant to their diverse stakeholders, and using this to inform necessary change. It has become clear that this approach is vital to the conservation culture of an institution where so many of its historic buildings that are valued for their function also have extensive historical or architectural significance. This Conservation Plan represents the continuation of this tradition of seeking to understand what makes the University’s buildings cherished assets, and of seeking ways to conserve these most important features for the enjoyment of future generations.

The success of this approach is such that it has now become codified in government policy: First in March 2010’s *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historical Environment* then in its replacement, March 2012’s *National Planning Policy Framework* (hereafter: NPPF). NPPF provides useful guidance on approaching the conservation of heritage assets, and postdates the University’s existing literature. NPPF defines a heritage asset as:

‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).’

This designation clearly applies to 15-19 Banbury Road.

The purpose of this Conservation Plan is to update 15-19 Banbury Road’s conservation policy to take into account the new guidance provided by NPPF. It will be of use both for informing responsible regular maintenance and in the preparation of future planning applications, as specified in NPPF paragraph 128.

The Conservation Plan should form the basis for 15-19 Banbury Road’s Conservation Policy and exists as part of an ongoing process. It will be renewed and updated at least every five years or following any major alterations or legislative changes.

1.2 Scope of the Conservation Plan

This Conservation Plan will cover the interior and the exterior of 15-19 Banbury Road, a single, three-storied building in north-central Oxford, which now forms a constituent element of the larger OUCS block (**Figure 1**). It will cover the historic extension to the north of 19, but not the later (c.1970-71) “Thames Suite” extension to the rear (western) elevations.

A brief list of the most significant architectural features can be found in **Appendix 5** and this should be referred to when planning any repair or alteration work.

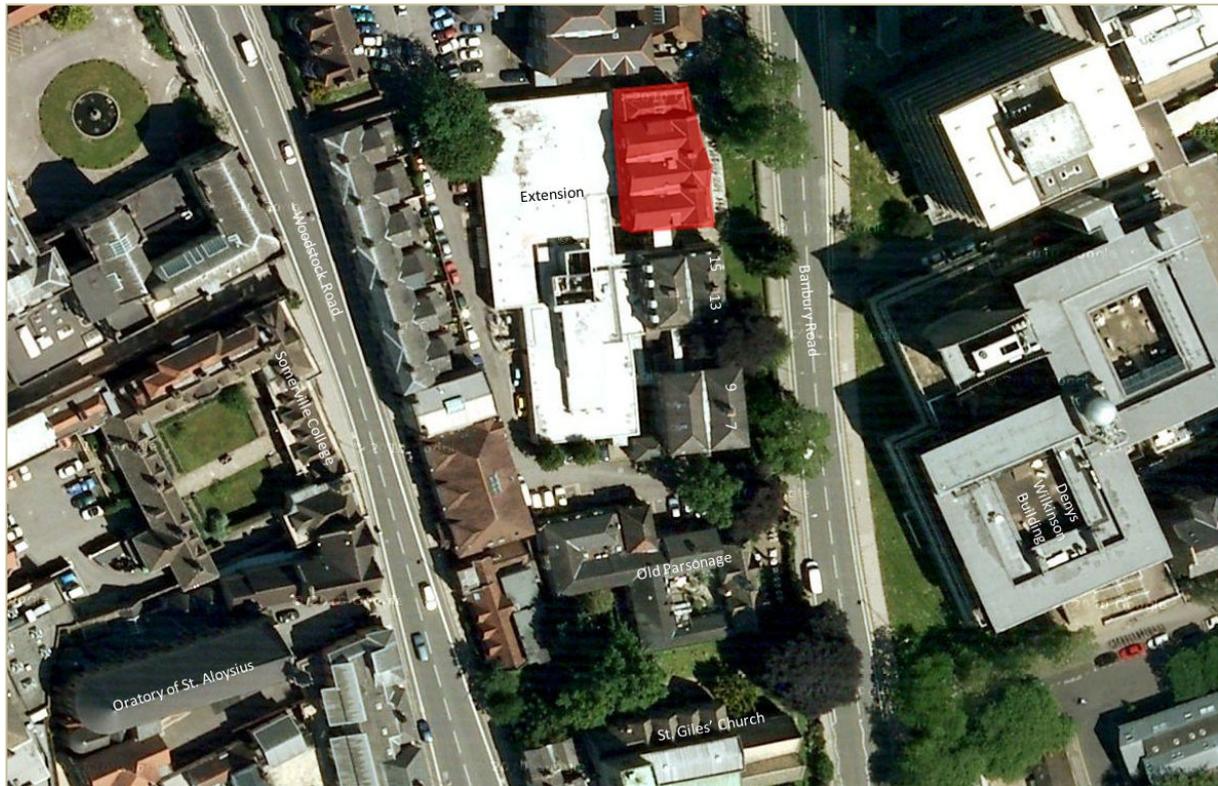


Figure 1. Satellite image of 15-19 Banbury Road (outlined in red) and the surrounding area, orientated with north at the top of the image

1.3 Existing Information

A Conservation Plan has not previously been produced for 15-19 Banbury Road; however, there are various sources of information available:

The original 1972 listed building description (**Appendix 1**) is the logical starting point for the plan, though it seems now seems possible that its identification of Samuel Lipscomb Seckham as the architect may be inaccurate (see **Section 2.2**).

Several published books, the OUCS website, and the University College Archives all provide valuable information on the building (see **Section 6** and **Appendix 3**).

The plan draws on statutory guidance from NPPF prepared by HM's Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2012.

1.4 Methodology

The Conservation Plan is a document that assesses the current and predicted conservation needs of 15-19 Banbury Road and attempts to address them with a view towards maintaining or increasing the significance of the heritage asset. Its formulation to supersede any existing literature is a response to the requirements of NPPF, and it is prepared in accordance with the policies contained therein.

11 and 13 Banbury Road was constructed as two separate dwellings within a single building, and is no longer separated internally. As it is being treated as a single heritage asset, within this plan it will be referred to in the singular.

1.5 Constraints

15-19 Banbury Road and its environs are subject to various constraints imposed by Oxford City Council:

- HE.9 – High Building Areas: Planning permission will not be granted for any development within a 1,200 metre radius of Carfax which exceeds 18.2m in height, except for minor elements of no bulk.
- TR.3, TR.11, TR.12 – Car Parking Standards: The City Council will not allow any significant increase in the overall number of car-parking spaces in the Transport Central Area or development that provides an inappropriate level of car-parking spaces. It will attempt to reduce the level of non-residential car parking.
- The City of Oxford Smoke Control Order No. 4: It is an offence to emit smoke from the chimney of a building, from a furnace, or from any fixed boiler if located in a designated smoke control area.
- HE.7 – Conservation Areas: North Oxford Victorian Suburbs Conservation Area: Planning permission will only be granted for development that preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the conservation areas or their setting. All trees in Conservation Areas with stem diameters greater than 75mm at 1.5m off the ground are protected.

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2 UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

2.1 History of the Site and University

The site of Oxford has had sporadic settlement since the Neolithic period. Bronze Age barrows have been found in the University Parks (linear barrow cemetery) and in the Science Area (double-ditched barrow). Oxford has had a continuous history of occupation since at least the 8th Century AD. The University of Oxford itself has a long-standing tradition of exceptional education: Able to trace its roots to the 11th Century, it is known to be the oldest university in the English-speaking world.

The site of 17-19 Banbury Road was located outside the mediaeval and early modern city of Oxford. A 500-acre stretch of land called St. Giles' Field, north of St. Giles' Street, was acquired by St. John's College in 1571, as it sought to establish an endowment following its foundation in 1555, and provided income to the college in the form of agricultural rents.¹ University College also held several strips of land in the locality, including the site of the OUCS buildings. St. Giles' Church (extant) was constructed in the vicinity in 1120, and there was some early development in the immediate area, for instance the Old Parsonage, directly to the south of 7 and 9 Banbury Road, was in place by the mid-17th Century (with an inscribed doorway providing a *terminus ante quem* of 1659).² Despite this, for the most part land use in the area was agricultural until the 19th-century enclosures.

Oxford's growth in the 19th Century may have been modest compared to Britain's industrial "boom" towns, but it was still historically rapid, with the city growing five-fold between 1801 and 1901.³ Traditionally the University had made little direct impact on private housing in Oxford, as a regulation of 1561, compounded by the religious restrictions of individual colleges, meant that fellows could not live outside their colleges. The main impact of the University on housing provision was in the number of middle-class professionals or tradesmen (e.g. builders, masons, doctors, solicitors, surveyors) and working-class staff (e.g. labourers, cleaners, cooks, grooms, groundskeepers) who needed to reside within the city in order to serve the needs of the colleges and their residents. It has been remarked that:

*'In the early years of the nineteenth century Oxford's social geography was the opposite of that usually found in English towns, where the working class lived in the centre while the middle classes moved to surrounding suburbs. In Oxford the suburbs that did appear around the town were inhabited by the working classes, while the middle classes, even those with a peripheral interest in the University and the colleges as members of the professions of tradesmen, preferred to remain in the centre.'*⁴

The removal of religious restrictions within the colleges following the Royal Commission of 1852 led to an opening up of Oxford education to the middle classes, resulting in a large increase in numbers of undergraduates in the second half of the 19th century. This resulted in

¹ Hinchcliffe, T., 'Landownership in the city: St. John's College, 1800-1968', in Whiting, R.C., (ed.), *Oxford: Studies in the history of a university town* (Manchester, 1993) 85.

² Pevsner, N., and Sherwood, J., *Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (Oxford, 1974) 317.

³ Tyack, G., *Oxford: An Architectural Guide* (New York, 1998) 214.

⁴ Hinchcliffe, T., 'Landownership in the city: St. John's College, 1800-1968', in Whiting, R.C., (ed.), *Oxford: Studies in the history of a university town* (Manchester, 1993) 88.

an increased demand for student housing within the city centre, making the suburbs increasingly attractive to the middle classes.⁵

In the 1850s, estate agents reported a shortage of houses with rents of £35 to £50 *per annum*, suitable for those with middle-class incomes of £500 to £1000 *per annum*.⁶ Samuel Lipscomb Seckham was employed by St. John's College in 1853-1855 to develop part of their North Oxford estate east of Banbury Road into an area of middle-class housing which would become Park Town:

*'Some of these houses were detached and semi-detached villas of an Italianate character, each of them capable of housing a normal Victorian middle-class family, complete with servants; at the centre of the development there is an oval-shaped space densely planted with trees and shrubs, overlooked by two crescents of terraced houses faced in Bath stone, with a similar crescent at the far end.'*⁷

7 to 19 Banbury Road was constructed, as "Park Villas", at a similar time to Park Town (1847-59) as part of the same trend: handsome middle-class housing immediately outside the city centre. Thomas Graham Jackson added 21 Banbury Road to the group in 1879.

The area continued to be a focus for middle-class housing throughout the later 19th and early 20th centuries, notably with the addition of William Wilkinson's Norham Manor to the northwest in the 1860s; however the expansion of the University from the latter half of the Nineteenth Century has also had a major impact on the immediate vicinity:

- Keble was constructed to the west, on Parks Road and Keble Road, from 1868.
- Lady Margaret Hall was constructed to the northwest on Norham Gardens from 1878.
- Somerville College was constructed immediately to the east on Woodstock Road, around the site of the c.1826 Walton House, from 1879.
- The Anglican Convent of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity, which would come to house St. Anthony's College, was constructed to the northeast on Woodstock Road in 1866, and was further developed after the foundation of the college in 1950.
- St. Hugh's College was constructed to the northeast between Woodstock Road and Banbury Road from 1886.
- The 19 houses that would come to hold St. Anne's College were constructed on Banbury Road, Woodstock Road, and Bevington Road in the early 19th Century. The current location of the college, constructed to the northeast between Woodstock Road and Banbury Road, was developed from 1937.

⁵ Tyack, G., *Oxford: An Architectural Guide* (New York, 1998) 215.

⁶ Howell, P., 'Samuel Lipscomb Seckham', in *Oxoniensia* XLI (1976) 339.

⁷ Tyack, G., *Oxford: An Architectural Guide* (New York, 1998) 216.

- The Denys Wilkinson Building (with its unusual tower designed to house a Van der Graaf accelerator) and the Thom Building were constructed directly opposite on Banbury Road in the 1960s.
- The Mathematical Institute was constructed on the eastern side of Banbury Road, at its southern boundary with St. Giles, in 1966.
- Green College (now Green-Templeton College) was constructed to the east, around the 18th-century Radcliffe Infirmary on Woodstock Road, from 1979.

Banbury Road is now a principal arterial road into Oxford, experiencing heavy motor traffic. The immediate area is dominated by University and collegiate buildings constructed in the late 19th or early 20th centuries, or occupying earlier buildings. The high-quality domestic architecture of 7 to 21 Banbury is distinctive in the immediate vicinity, as it is not repeated until one moves north into the Norham Manor suburb or west onto Woodstock Road.

In 1968 Oxford City Council designated Banbury Road and the majority of North Oxford as part of the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area; this was extended in 1972 to include Walton Manor (see **Appendix 2**).

2.2 Construction and Subsequent History of 11 and 13 Banbury Road

A general chronology can be found in **Appendix 4**.

As mentioned above (**Section 2.1**) University College held several strips of land in St. Giles' Parish from mediaeval times. When the parish was enclosed in 1830, the college was assigned the strip of land north of the Old Parsonage that would eventually hold the OUCS buildings. Initially the college continued to rent this as agricultural land, but decided to split it up in the 1850s.

It has previously been assumed (following Pevsner's dating) that the OUCS buildings were constructed in or around 1855, presumably because this would place them directly after the construction of Park Town; however, the original leases for the buildings, held by University College archives, reveal that 15-19 Banbury Road was in place in shell form by 1st November 1847, when Henry Cowley, the builder, obtained a forty-year lease from University College (with an initial consideration of £10, and an annual rent of £6).⁸ The houses were clearly completed by 28th September 1848, when the lease for 19 Banbury Road was transferred from the builders to Katherine Sirman Standen of Oxford as a residence.⁹ This places the date for the completion of the buildings in 1847-48.

Despite a lack of documentary evidence, the argument for "Park Villas" being constructed by Samuel Lipscomb Seckham is clear: It is indubitable that the designs 7-9 and 11-13 are similar to buildings in Park Town (for instance, the rustication on their ground floors are similar to those of the terraces at Park Crescent); however, they are equally similar to terraces at Beaumont Street constructed from the 1820s (e.g. the ground-floor rustication at 33 Beaumont Street is a similarly close parallel for 11 and 13 Banbury Road). It seems

⁸ University College Archives, reference UC:E2/9/38D/1.

⁹ University College Archives, reference UC:EB1/A/5.

especially unlikely that Seckham actually designed 15-19, as it is quite distinct from the Italianate designs of the other buildings, and bears even less resemblance to the houses of Park Town. Moreover, 15-19 Banbury Road was constructed in 1847-48; at this point Seckham was not even in Oxford, as he was working as a surveyor for Messrs. Lucas Brothers in London.¹⁰ University College archives contains a series of plans for 15-19 Banbury Road signed by the builder, Henry Cowley; these have not been available for study due to a mould infestation within the archives, but they suggest that Cowley himself may have been the architect as well as the builder, not an uncommon practice in Oxford at the time.

Following the initial construction:

- 15 Banbury Road was leased as residential property, and was occupied by Sir Robert Lowe Hall from 1933 until c.1964 (a three-year lease was signed in 1961 on Hall's behalf by Somerville College, the employer of his wife, a Somervillian Fellow, Laura Margaret Hall). In 1965 a temporary planning application was approved to transfer the space from residential use to use by the University Department of Chemical Crystallography. This was renewed in 1966 for use by Wolfson College, with permission being granted until 29th September 1969.
- 17 Banbury Road was leased by George Ward, an ironmonger, in 1864, but the lease was transferred to William Oliver, a draper, the following year. It continued to fulfil a residential function until it was leased by the University on 1st May 1941.
- 19 Banbury Road was leased as a residential property to Rev. Thomas Forster in 1864. It continued to fulfil this function until it was leased by the International Institute for Social History in March 1940. This proved to be a short-lived relationship, as the lease was taken up by the University on New Year's Eve 1941. When the lease was renewed in 1947, it was a joint lease for 17 and 19 Banbury Road. It is unclear how the University utilised the building, because in 1950 19 Banbury Road was converted into two flats (the ground and first floors were further separated at some point before 1955, creating three flats.), which were rented directly from University College by various private tenants. Plans dating from 1950 show that the northern extension was already in place by this point, and this proved vital to design of the flats, providing a shared access space for the private flats. This two-storey extension, which is distinct from but relatively sympathetic to the design of the rest of the building, effectively doubled the width of 19 Banbury Road (see **Figure 2**).

15-19 Banbury Road was purchased by the University in 1969. 17 and 19 were occupied by OUCS in 1970, and the "Thames Suite" extension was constructed to the rear (west) in the same year. This involved the demolition of the greenhouses and rear projections of 17-19 Banbury Road. 15 Banbury Road was occupied by OUCS in 1971, following a successful planning application in October 1970. In 1973 a linking corridor was constructed between 15 and 13 Banbury Road, and this was followed by a link extension between 9 and 11 Banbury Road between 1975 and 1977. These linking corridors effectively converted 7-19 Banbury Road, and their extensions, into a single interconnecting computing complex.

¹⁰ Howell, P., "Samuel Lipscomb Seckham" in *Oxoniensia* XLI (1976) 338. His presence in Oxfordshire is not attested again until the 1851 Census places him at his father's address in Kidlington.

As can be seen in **Figure 2**, the extension to 19 Banbury Road originally had two front entrances, one to the private living space of the ground-floor flat, and a second to the shared circulation space providing access to the upper flats. Following OUCS acquisition of the property, this was no longer necessary and the northernmost front door was converted into a window in 1987. At the same time, the central window on the northern elevation was converted into an entrance. The empty bay immediately to the west of this new door was converted into a window, providing light and ventilation into the teaching space within, in 2002.

In 1996 the basements of 15 and 19 Banbury Road were converted into offices, involving the construction of large lightwells at the front of the property. These offices proved unpopular with staff and were converted into a staff room and lecture spaces in 2002. The lightwells are rather conspicuous, and are protected by iron railings in front of 15 and 19 Banbury Road, and a bridge to 15 Banbury Road.

In 2005 a bicycle shelter was constructed at the rear of 17-19 Banbury, and a number of metal locking hoops were constructed in front of the entire length of the building.

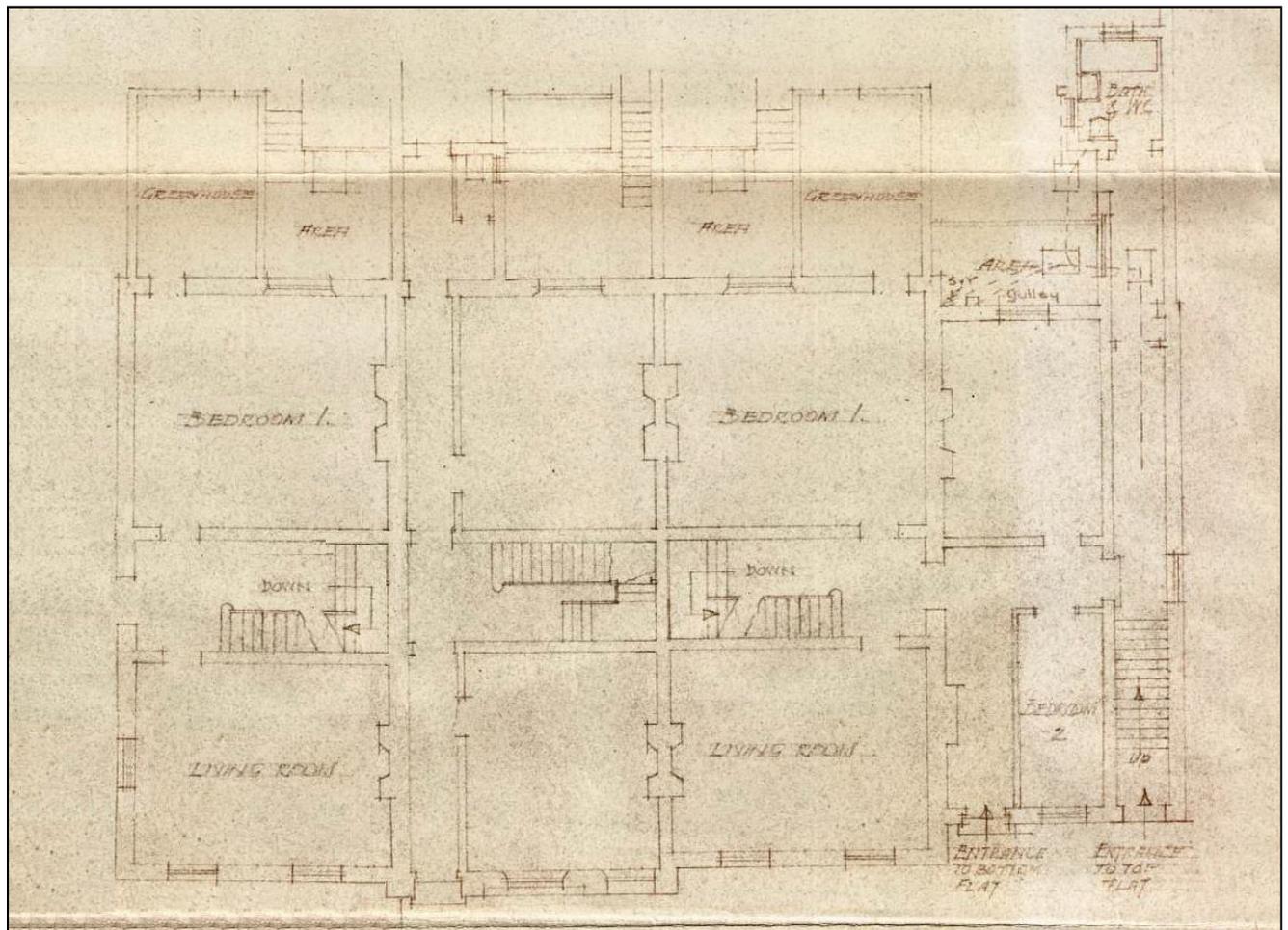


Figure 2. Ground-floor plan from 1950 showing 15-19 Banbury Road (number 15 has been projected, as it is not included in the original plan) and northern extension

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3 SIGNIFICANCE OF 15-19 BANBURY ROAD

NPPF paragraph 128 specifies that in assessing planning applications:

‘Local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of any heritage assets affected including any contribution made by their setting.’

The significance of 15-19 Banbury Road has been publically recognised by two statutory designations: It was designated a Grade II Listed building in 1972 (see **Appendix 1**); and it was included in Oxford City Council’s designation of the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area in 1968 and its revision in 1972 (see **Appendix 2**).

3.1 Significance within its setting

3.1.1 Significance to the south of North Ward, the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area, and St. Giles’ Street/Banbury Road

15-19 Banbury Road is located at the southernmost extent of North Oxford. The character of the area is that of the Victorian suburb, of extreme but publically-restrained prosperity. The Denys Wilkinson and Thom Buildings, directly opposite 15-19 Banbury Road, represent the University’s continued dominance in this area, but as one moves further north the character, even of the University and collegiate buildings, is increasingly Victorian-residential. 15-19 Banbury Road is not the “deciding factor” in the character of the area, but it is a significant contributing factor, as part of the “Park Villas” group and as one of the southernmost 19th-century houses on Banbury Road, its attractive, high-quality elevation marks the entrance to the North Oxford Victorian Suburb, effectively delineating it from the city centre.

3.1.2 Significance as part of the “Park Villas” group (7-21 (odd) Banbury Road)

15-19 Banbury Road forms part of the “Park Villas” group, a significant contributing factor to the character of the North Oxford Victorian Suburb. 15-19 Banbury Road is a well-executed design, with a symmetry that would have been striking prior to the addition of the northern extension. It is less elaborate than 7-9 and 11-13 Banbury Road, and ultimately less successful. Its exterior finish is of a lower quality than the rest of the group, and its stucco facing is in a worse condition. As a group 7-13 Banbury Road feel relatively unified, with their rusticated ground floors and semi-detached designs. 15-19 Banbury is massed differently, its linear design, exacerbated by its northern extension, betraying its original specification to house three dwellings. Its frontal (eastern) elevation is distinct from the other structures, with its two stories, prominent pediment, and plain unrusted stucco. The result is that 15-19 feels separate from the other structures, and so whilst the three buildings of 7-19 Banbury Road do form a group, it is not an entirely cohesive one.

3.2 Significance as an IT support, teaching, and research space

Oxford University Computing Services is one of the oldest and most prominent computing departments in the country, starting as part of the Computing Laboratory in 1958, before they separated in 1977.

15-19 Banbury Road is a major component of the Banbury Road OUCS complex. The computing service remains one of Oxford University's most significant departments, providing practical service to every other department and every undergraduate and postgraduate within the University, as well as undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and research of its own. Every University department and college relies upon services supplied from this building for their communications infrastructure, IT provision, and support; as a facilitator it is one of the most important elements of the modern University.

3.3 Historical Significance

15-19 Banbury Road marks the continuation of the trend towards middle-class suburban housing in Oxford that began with the Beaumont Street development in the 1820s. It subsequently occurred on a large scale with the construction of Park Town in 1853-55; and continued throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, for instance Norham Manor built between 1860 and the mid-1870s.

15-19 Banbury Road is not the most significant portion of this trend, but is one of many interesting examples of the nature of suburban development in Oxford in the late first half of the Nineteenth Century, and of the phenomenon of Victorian suburban development in general. Beyond this the heritage asset is of limited historical significance, not appearing in any documentation or historical narratives except its own leases.

3.4 Archaeological Significance

North Oxford has a rich and relatively-continuous history of occupation since the early Bronze Age. The foundations of 15-19 Banbury Road, and notably the extension at the rear, will have destroyed any later archaeological material, but fortunately post-mediaeval occupation of the site seems to have been primarily agricultural and of limited significance and, despite the relatively shallow nature of the soil in the area, the long history of occupation makes it likely that some significant archaeological material may be preserved at the lower stratigraphic layers.

3.5 Architectural Significance

Externally 15-19 Banbury Road is constructed of red brick with stucco facing on the side and front elevations (eastern, northern, and southern elevations), which is banded at the first-floor and eave levels. The building is composed of three bays, with the central bay extruding and crowned with a pediment. There are sash windows on the ground floor, with simple stucco surrounds on the wings. The wings have sash windows on the first floor, whilst the central three bays have a tripartite arched window with simple stucco surrounds (**Figure 3**). The extension to the north of 19 Banbury Road is detrimental to the symmetry of the building, and, whilst relatively sympathetic to the design of the original structure, ultimately feels detached from the rest of the structure, and is of less significance.

It is surprising the extent to which the character of the elevation is dictated by the extensive tree cover and modern hedges, which, whilst pleasant, obscure and lessen the impact of the architecture.

The eastern elevation remains significant as a well-preserved example of middle-Victorian middle-class domestic architecture.



Figure 3. Line drawing of eastern elevation of 17-19 Banbury Road and its northern extension. Note that there are now lightwells and railings in front of 15 and 19.

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4 VULNERABILITIES

4.1 The ability of 15-19 Banbury Road to fulfil its current function

15-19 Banbury Road's current function as an office space is its optimum viable use.

The initial, domestic design of the building means that most of the spaces are architecturally neutral and have been suitable for conversion into offices with little alteration required.

Whilst information technology is an ever-changing field, the necessary internal infrastructure is already in place at 15-19 Banbury Road.

Continued usage as an office space has the lowest impact on the significance of the heritage asset, now and into the future, of any possible utility. It funds the upkeep and conservation of the heritage asset and ensures its continued existence and significance. The significant areas are not threatened, and its listed status ensures that any further alterations will operate within the constraints of an accepted understanding of the building's significance as a heritage asset.

4.1.1 Fire Safety

The safety of the contents and users of the building are central to its ability to fulfil its function as a working office space. Fire safety has improved since the original design, and in general the circulation routes are legible (with most rooms opening directly onto corridors, which open onto the main staircases which lead directly to the exits), so escape can be logically planned.

4.1.2 Security

The safety of the contents and users of the building are central to its ability to fulfil its function as a work space. The building allows access to areas housing highly valuable computing equipment, which may be targeted by professional thieves, as well as office computer equipment and user's personal belongings, which may be vulnerable to opportunists.

Security is currently effective as, whilst there is extensive public access to the site, entry is via a manned reception and there is an active security detail. Private areas are clearly demarcated (accessed via key fob) and the numbers of staff working within these areas are small enough that interlopers can easily be identified.

4.1.3 Access

Ensuring that access to the building for legitimate users is as wide as possible is central to the significance of the heritage asset. Disabled access remains below the standard that should be expected of this building, and that will ensure its continued use, relevance, and significance into the future. The heritage asset's only ramp access is through 9 Banbury Road and its connecting corridors, so disabled people are not able to access the building via the same entrance as other users. Within the public spaces of the rear extension circulation is good, with internal ramps and wide, flat circulation spaces, such as the main Help Centre. Unfortunately within 15-19 Banbury Road itself the access provision is typical of a building

of its age, with narrow circulation spaces and stairways, and access to the upper floors and basements being via stairs only. Office spaces on the first and second floors are relatively inaccessible.

4.2 Exterior Elevation and Setting

The eastern elevation of 15-19 Banbury is its most significant architectural feature:

‘Stucco, with bands at 1st and eaves levels. 2 storeys, 7 bays 2:3:2. A formal composition with the three central bays projecting and crowned with a pediment, the ends of the building are also pedimented. The ground floor has arched sash windows with glazing bars. Plain sashes above, a tripartite arched window in the centre, the pediment has paired arched windows. Panelled door to No. 17. Slate roof. 2-bay extension on right, panelled door with fanlight over.’¹¹



Figure 4. Loss of stucco facing on 15-19 Banbury Road

The eastern elevation (**Cover** and **Figure 3**) is the best executed aspect of the building, and the feature appreciated by the greatest number of people, contributing the most to the character of the setting. The elevation has aged well and is in excellent condition, but it is the most exposed face of the building and is open to weathering, erosion, and potential vandalism: damage which could detract from the significance of the heritage asset.

¹¹ *Listed Building Description (Appendix 1).*

The light, sandy colour of the stucco has become darkened with age, to a much greater extent than the rest of the group, and will need periodic, sympathetic cleaning in order to just maintain its character. Some layers of stucco have been lost on the southern wing (15 Banbury Road), and the southern half of 17 Banbury Road and this should be monitored to ensure that the problem does not worsen in the future (**Figure 4**).

4.3 Interior Layout, Fixtures, and Fittings

Original plans for 15-19 Banbury Road are extant, but frustratingly are currently unavailable as University College's archives have recently suffered from a mould infestation. This means that it is unclear how much the layout has changed since the original design. However, certain additions are known to be later, such as the northern extension or the "Thames Suite" extension to the west.

The conversion of this building from residential use to an office space in 1970 resulted in a loss of the majority of the original material; however, a few significant features remain notably the internal staircases, and some interior cornice moulding.

As the interior features are in regular use and of less permanent construction than the external structure of the building, they are more vulnerable to vandalism, accidents, and general wear and tear. Some of these issues should be mitigated assuming adequate security is in place, but ultimately these significant elements will have limited lifespans. Their lives can be lengthened as much as possible through regular, adequate monitoring and maintenance.

As a Grade II listed building any alterations, or repairs made with non-original materials, will require listed building consent.

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5 CONSERVATION POLICY

Having established the significance of 15-19 Banbury Road as a heritage asset, and having identified ways in which the significance of 15-19 Banbury Road is vulnerable to harm, it is necessary to recommend policies to reduce the probability of such harm occurring and thereby conserve the significance of the site. In essence, these policies set parameters for managing the fabric of the site.

The Conservation Plan is intended as an active tool for the regular maintenance and long-term management of 15-19 Banbury Road. It needs to be reviewed regularly, and revised as appropriate to take account of additional knowledge and changing priorities. Through a process of regular review it should continue to act as a useful resource.

5.1 **15-19 Banbury Road's current use, as an office space, is its optimum viable use. Permit, in line with NPPF paragraphs 131, 132, 133, and 134, alterations intended to facilitate its continued use in this way**

The significance of 15-19 Banbury Road as an office space, supporting IT provision across Oxford University, means that its current rôle represents its optimum viable use. Limited alterations will inevitably be required to allow it to retain this significance in line with modern standards and requirements. If alteration is required in the future it should be permitted with the following provisos:

- Any alterations must be sympathetic to 15-19 Banbury Road's significance as a heritage asset and, in line with NPPF paragraph 134, any proposals that involve 'less than substantial harm to the significance' should deliver 'substantial public benefits.' In line with NPPF paragraph 132, any proposals that involve 'substantial harm or loss' should be 'exceptional.'
- Any changes should: '...preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset' (NPPF paragraph 137).

5.1.1 **Note that 15-19 Banbury Road is a Grade II listed building and ensure that appropriate consents are obtained for any alteration works to the interior or exterior of the building**

Limited changes may be required in the future, e.g. to improve accessibility, and due to the listed status of the building even minor routine repairs may need consent. Caution should be applied in order to ensure that any statutory duties are fulfilled. In cases of doubt **Estates Services should be contacted in the first instance**, and if necessary they will refer queries on to Oxford City Council.

5.1.2 **Ensure proper consultation in advance of any work to the building with the Local Authority Conservation Officer (through Estates Services) and any other interested parties**

It is important to guarantee that the best advice is obtained at an early stage of any proposal to alter any part of the building in order to ensure that the significance of the building is respected.

5.1.3 Refer to this Conservation Guide when considering repairs or alterations in any space

The Conservation Plan gives an overview of which aspects of the building are significant or vulnerable. Where original or significant material is extant, repairs should be carried out using the same materials and techniques and should not affect the significance of the asset without providing substantial public benefits in line with NPPF paragraph 134.

5.2 In order to ensure that 15-19 Banbury Road can operate to modern standards, and that its significance can be maintained by making access as wide as possible, special concern should be applied to ensuring that disabled access is adequate

Ensuring that the heritage asset can be enjoyed as widely as possible will have a major positive impact on its significance. As noted in **Section 4.1.3**, disabled access is not currently up to acceptable standards. Access will remain a major concern in any plans developed for the site, and will always be viewed as part of an ongoing process.

5.3 Any redevelopment needs to respect the character of the surrounding area and 15-19 Banbury Road's setting adjacent to listed buildings, and notably the integrity of the "Park Villas" group

It has been established that 15-19 Banbury Road is significant to the character of the North Oxford Victorian Suburb (**Section 3.1**), interacting well with both the older and newer buildings around it. Any future alteration should be sympathetic to this fact, and should not diminish its rôle there.

5.4 Conservation of specific features contributing to overall significance

The interior fixtures and fittings have been poorly recorded and for the most part it is for the most part unclear where original material is extant (see **Section 4.3**). An effort should be made to identify and conserve original interior and exterior architectural features, and keep these in use where possible, in line with **Section 5.1**. However, it is accepted that all materials have a natural life span and some degree of change must be permitted to keep the building safe, useable, and generally fit for its primary purpose as a working office space. Some materials, such as the stucco facing, should have a very long life expectancy if given minor maintenance; others such as wooden doors (it is unclear if any original doors are extant) are ultimately impermanent and may need periodic replacement. Within the framework of understanding and valuing what is present in the building a degree of ongoing change is inevitable.

5.4.1 The eastern elevation will remain substantially unchanged

As established above (**Section 3.1** and **Section 4.2**), the eastern elevation is integral to the significance of 15-19 Banbury Road. Any changes to this will significantly affect the character of the building. Allowing for necessary changes in line with **Section 5.1**, this will remain unchanged from the original design.

5.4.2 The limited remaining original interior features will be retained, conserved, and remain substantially unchanged

Many of the original interior features have been lost, but the few that remain (see **Section 4.3**) are important to the significance of the building as a heritage asset. Loss or alteration of these features would negatively affect the character of the heritage asset and they should be conserved as good examples of the original character of the interior.

5.5 In the vein of NPPF paragraph 110, efforts should be made to ensure that 15-19 Banbury Road's contribution to climate change is as minimal as is feasible for a building of its age, size, materials, and use. Any proposals for alterations should assess the feasibility of incorporating low and zero carbon technologies

Ensuring that the building is sustainable will be crucial to its long-term survival and significance. As stated in NPPF paragraph 110, development should seek to 'minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment.'

5.6 A disaster recovery plan will be prepared for the building and will be regularly reviewed to keep it up to date

This is an architecturally significant building with internal contents of particular value and academic significance. It is imperative for the safety of the building that a clear disaster recovery plan exists.

5.7 If during subsequent renovations or alterations any evacuation work is carried out beneath 15-19 Banbury Road or the surrounding area an archaeological assessment will be made of the potential for significant finds, and if appropriate an archaeologist will be given a watching brief as the excavation takes place

There is the potential for significant archaeological material across the site and should any evacuation work be carried out an assessment of the archaeological potential should be made. This should include at least a desk assessment, but possibly geophysics and trial trenching. A watching brief will almost certainly be required for any such work.

5.8 A good practice of routine recording, investigation, and maintenance will be enacted and sustained. Such an approach will minimise the need for larger repairs or other interventions and will usually represent the most economical way of retaining an asset

5.8.1 Estates Services (or its agents) will ensure that a senior member of staff has responsibility for the administration and recording of a routine maintenance programme for the building

All buildings need to be routinely maintained if they are to stay in good condition. This requires a detailed maintenance programme and, critically, someone who is responsible for ensuring that the routine operations are carried out. A proper record of the repair and maintenance work in a maintenance log is a useful management tool. Such information will be recorded in the Estates Management software package *Planon*.

5.8.2 A detailed routine maintenance programme will be prepared for the building

Maintenance is best carried out as a series of planned operations. A well-thought-out and properly-administered maintenance programme may appear to be time consuming but will result in a better-functioning building with less need for emergency repairs.

5.8.3 The Conservation Plan will be circulated to all senior staff who work 15-19 Banbury Road and to all other members of the University who have responsibility for the building or the collection

The value of the building needs to be appreciated by all the senior staff managing or working in the building. Only in this way will the heritage asset be properly treated, repaired, and maintained.

5.8.4 The Conservation Plan will be made available to Oxford City Council, English Heritage, and any other party with a legitimate interest in the building

The Conservation Plan is intended to be a useful document to inform all parties with a legitimate interest in the building.

5.9 The Conservation Plan will be reviewed and updated from time to time as work is carried out on the building or as circumstances change. The recommendations should be reviewed at least at five-yearly intervals

Policy changes, building alterations, or other changes of circumstance, will affect the conservation duties and requirements of the building. The policy recommendations in the Conservation Plan will inform the future of the building and should be a useful tool for people carrying out maintenance work or where more significant alterations are being considered. The recommendations need to be kept up to date if they are to remain relevant.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

6.1 Government Reports and Guidance

- *National Planning Policy Framework*, The Department for Communities and Local Government (March, 2012).
- *Town and Country Planning Act* 1990.
- *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act* 1990.

6.2 Planning Applications and Supporting Documents

- Listed building applications from 1950 onwards, courtesy of Estates Services archives (summarised in **Appendix 3**).

6.3 Books and Articles

- Hinchcliffe, T., *North Oxford* (London, 1992).
- Hinchcliffe, T., ‘Landownership in the city: St. John’s College, 1800-1968’, in Whiting, R.C., (ed.), *Oxford: Studies in the history of a university town* (Manchester, 1993) 85-109.
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- Pevsner, N., and Sherwood, J., *Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (Oxford, 1974).
- Saint, A., ‘Three Oxford Architects’ in *Oxoniensia* XXXV (1960) 53-103.
- Tyack, G., *Oxford: An Architectural Guide* (New York, 1998).

6.4 Other Documents

- Courtesy of Dr. Robin Darwall-Smith, archivist to University College, Oxford:
 - Original lease documents for 15-19 Banbury Road, 1847-62 and 1864-1961.
- Courtesy of Oxford University Computing Services:
 - Annual reports of the Oxford University Computing Services Committee, 1957-2009.

6.5 Websites

- English Heritage, Listed Buildings Online:
<http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk/BuildingDetailsForm.aspx?id=245293&search=y>, accessed on 5th November 2010.
- Google Maps:
<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps?hl=en&tab=w1>, accessed on 15th October 2010.
- Oxford City Council Planning Department website (ongoing and selected historical planning applications available for viewing):
<http://uniformpublicaccess.oxford.gov.uk/PublicAccess/default.aspx>, accessed on 5th November 2010.
- Oxford University Computing Services website, history of the computing service and buildings:
<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/internal/history/building-photos.xml>, accessed on 15th October 2010.

6.6 Image Credits

- Cover: Estates Services Photograph.
- Figure 1: Adapted from Google Maps (see **Section 6.5**).
- Figure 2: Adapted from *Application 50/01187/A_H: Conversion to two flats*.
- Figure 3: By author for Estates Services.
- Figure 4: Estates Services Photograph.

7 APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Listed Building Description

Building Details:

Building Name: 15-19
Parish: OXFORD
District: OXFORD
County: OXFORDSHIRE
Postcode: OX2 6NN

Details:

LBS Number: 245293
Grade: II
Date Listed: 28/06/1972
Date Delisted:
NGR: SP5113307091

Listing Text:

BANBURY ROAD

1.
1485
(West Side)
Nos 15 to 19 (odd)
SP 5107 SW 3/661
II GV
- 2.

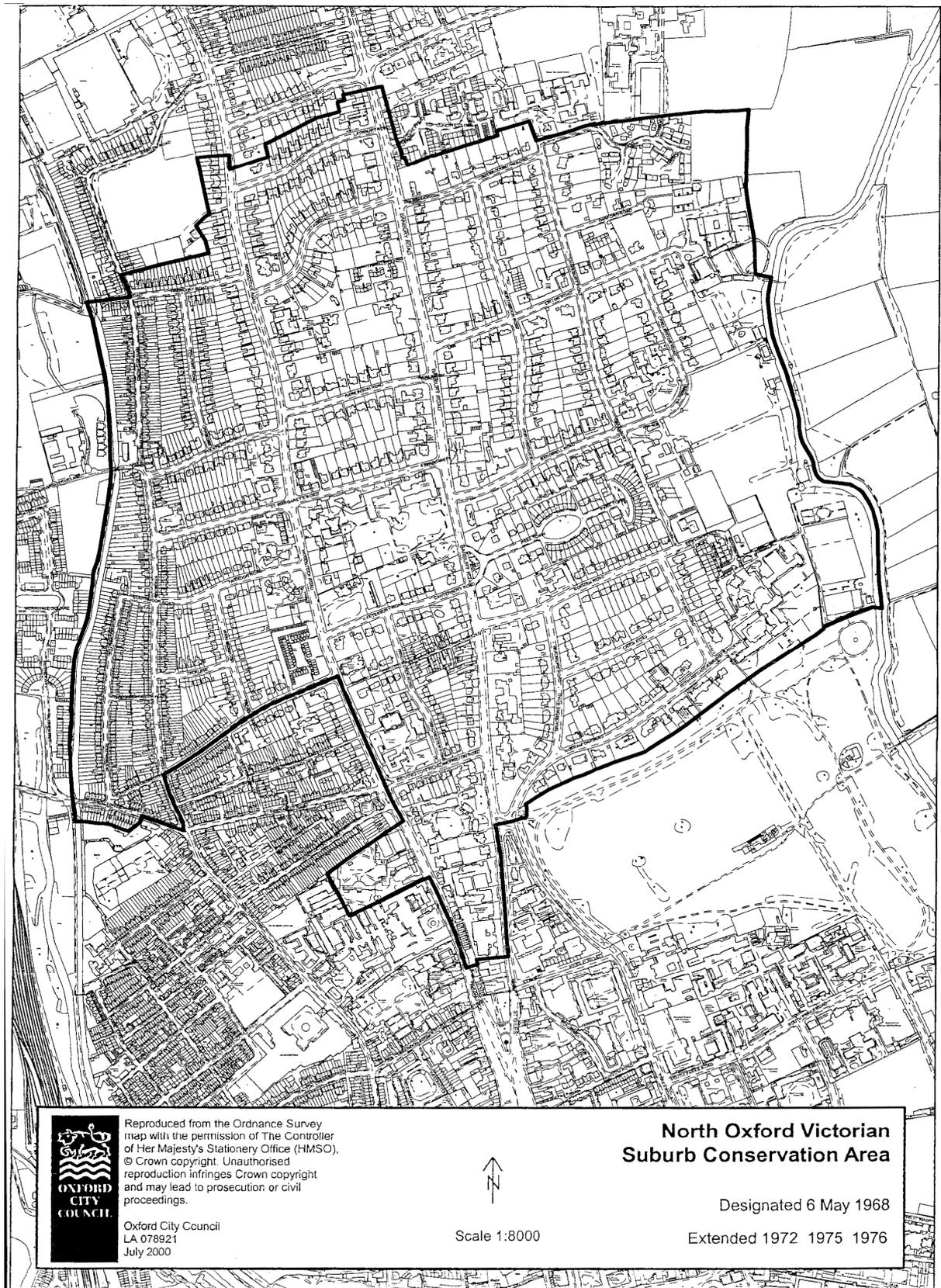
Circa 1855. By Samuel Lipscomb Seckham. Stucco, with bands at 1st and eaves levels. 2 storeys, 7 bays 2:3:2. A formal composition with the three central bays projecting and crowned with a pediment, the ends of the building are also pedimented. The ground floor has arched sash windows with glazing bars. Plain sashes above, a tripartite arched window in the centre, the pediment has paired arched windows. Panelled door to No 17. Slate roof. 2 bay extension on right, panelled door with fanlight over.

Nos 7 to 21 (odd) form a group.

Listing NGR: SP5111507066

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Appendix 2. Conservation Area Description



The North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area, No. 1

The extension and enlargement of the North Oxford conservation area, with the inclusion of the Rawlinson Road conservation area on 1 6th July 1976, resulted in the creation of the consolidated North Oxford Victorian Suburb conservation area. It stretches from St Giles in the south, to Frenchay, Staverton and Belbroughton Roads in the north; from the banks of the Oxford canal in the west, to those of the River Cherwell in the east, encompassing the "essential North Oxford".

Much of the area on which North Oxford now stands, formerly Walton Field and St Giles Field, was acquired by St John's College in the 16th century. It was developed between Walton Manor and Summertown as a residential suburb of large detached and semidetached houses beginning in the 1850s with the laying out of Park Town (1853-5). Park Town is a late example of the use of the Classical discipline of design, tempered by early Victorian picturesque as shown by the mixture of terraced crescents and detached villas. It was with the development of Norham Manor, owned by St John's College, that the distinctive pattern of Victorian North Oxford was established. After 1860, the College employed the Oxford architect, William Wilkinson (1819- 1901), to lay out and superintend work on its property. The houses built in the 1860s in Norham Manor by Wilkinson, H W Moore, Frederick Codd and others were far from Classical in inspiration. The use of plain and multicoloured bricks, stone window dressings and high tiled roofs, was combined with the very up-to-date use of early French Gothic detailing, in what has become known as the High Victorian manner.

The success of these early St John's developments lead to a continuous programme of building in North Oxford for the College between, and to each side, of the Banbury and Woodstock Roads for the next forty years. In the progress of these works, Wilkinson evolved a distinctive and much more locally inspired regional architectural style, using Tudor examples in the county west of Oxford. The assertive French Gothic massing and detailing were gradually set aside and replaced by buildings in simpler masses, with the use of plain Bath stone dressings and a sparing use of free late Gothic decoration, often above the lintels, and introduction of barge boards to the gables. At a very different scale on the eastern side of Kingston Road, terraced groups of artisan dwellings of a picturesque gothic influenced style were designed by Clapton Rolfe in 1870-3.

Stimulus for development in the 1890s resulted from important reforms in University and College life, introduced by the University of Oxford Commission from 1877. Earlier developments were built to house the clergy, prosperous town traders, heads of colleges and professors. St Margaret's Road marks the change which created the North Oxford of the married dons. The abolition of the rule of celibacy for the majority of College members began with the reforms of colleges' statutes in the late 1870s. This domestic factor provided occupants for the new leasehold housing being constructed by builders and developers, under the tight guidance of the St John's College estate and its supervising architects. The grounds of the developed area were parcelled out into individual plots let on a 99 year building lease, and building was implemented between the years 1860 and 1900.

Punctuating the residential character of North Oxford, are several colleges, such as St Anne's, St Hugh's, Lady Margaret Hall, with modern Wolfson College to the north-east by the Cherwell Meadows.

Also of great architectural importance and visual impact are the churches, including a fine example of the work of George Edmund Street, St Philip and St James (1862), declared redundant and now the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. Wilktnson's layout resulted in an environment of very high architectural and amenity standard. The plots are very large, with spacious gardens, and the roads are wide (fifteen metres between fence lines). Banbury and Woodstock Roads were developed from their original tracks across open countryside to become major traffic routes. The houses, often semi-detached, or detached, have deep front gardens, planted with trees and shrubs, many of the former having reached their prime, but all contributing a character which anticipated the Garden City ideal. Victorian love of the exotic or innovative led to the introduction of new plant species and a new building type, the conservatory, examples of which survive. While the architecture of the individual houses is not always of an exceptionally high standard, there is an overall harmony of great interest and since the houses have all been built by a handful of local architects and builders, they achieve coherence despite variety in design and materials. They are also bound together visually by their planting and boundary walls.

Need for Conservation

The needs for conservation of this area are as valid today as they were for the first designations of 1968 and 1972. Most of the original 99 year leases have run out and St John's has ceased to be the overall landowner as a result of the Leasehold Reform Act. Although residential remains as a dominant use, institutional uses have expanded, together with continuing conversion of houses to flats or outstations of colleges to secure their viability and upkeep. Some of these changes of use have occasionally resulted in the deterioration of the environment by the use of front gardens for parking, by accretions and changes in elevations not always carried out well, and by the removal of front boundary walls and piers. Trees have been lost through old age, disease and weather conditions. By designating a conservation area, the council has successfully stemmed the threat of demolition of significant buildings on corner plots for blocks of flats that occurred in the 1970s. It has promoted replacement planting for gardens and maintained the Victorian idea of building co-existing with landscape through co-operation with owners. North Oxford has weathered the demise of the derisive comments on its appearance by its 19th and 20th century critics of red brick architecture, to come into its own in the late 20th century as an attractive place of character which is as much special to Oxford as are the Colleges, University buildings and City Centre.

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Appendix 3. Summary of planning applications regarding 15-19 Banbury Road, 1950-2010

2nd May 1950

19 Banbury Road:

“Conversion to two flats.”

- Approved.
- Conversion of second floor into a self-contained flat. Internal partitions constructed of breeze blocks and plastic.
- Application on behalf of University College.

14th September 1965

15 Banbury Road:

“Change of use from residential for a temporary period for the University Dept., of Chemical Crystallography.”

- Approved temporarily until 31st October 1966.

2nd August 1966

15 Banbury Road:

“Renewal of temporary consent for change of use by Wolfson College.”

- Use approved until the 29th September 1969.

16th April 1969

17 Banbury Road:

“Erection of computer laboratory and change of use of 17 Banbury Road from residential to office.”

13th October 1970

15 Banbury Road:

“Change of use from residential to tutor's room and lecture room.”

- Application approved.

9th August 1973

13 and 15 Banbury Road:

“Link extensions between two buildings.”

- Approved.

24th March 1987

19 Banbury Road:

“Change front door to window of no.19 Banbury Road (front elevation) and change window to door on side elevation.”

- On computer, record number 78 and 79.
- Third bay from north on E elevation becomes a window.
- Central bay on north elevation becomes a door.

6th July 1995

15-19 Banbury Road:

“Insertion of 1No. doorway and 3No. windows in external wall.”

- This only affects the 1970s extension.

9th November 1995

19 Banbury Road:

“Form 2No. window openings and 1No. door opening.”

- This only affects the 1970s extension.

28th November 1995

19 Banbury Road:

“New internal WC block, with 2No. new window openings, 1No. new door opening.”

- On computer.
- Relatively sure that this alteration is within the 1970s extension.
- Includes disabled WC.

16th February 1996

15-19 Banbury Road:

“Remodelling of 1No. staircase, internal alterations, and new lightwells to basement.”

- On computer.
- Creation of basement offices.

24th July 1996

15-19 Banbury Road:

“Refurbishment of basement area, part ground floor area and forming of new lightwells to front.”

6th December 2002

19 Banbury Road:

“Proposed window to north elevation.”

- Blocked opening (one of a series, which all follow the shape of the window openings at the front of the building) has a window inserted in order to allow light and ventilation into a teaching space.

21st December 2004

15-17 Banbury Road:

“Bicycle shelter at rear and hoops at front.”

August-September 2007

13-15 Banbury Road:

“Helpdesk refurbished and realigned.”

Affects 1970s rear extension.

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Appendix 4. Chronology of 15-19 Banbury Road

April 1847	Henry Cowley produces a booklet for University College containing the specifications for 15-19 Banbury Road and a series of plans signed by him
1 st November 1847	Henry Cowley takes up a forty-year lease for the land on which he has constructed the shells of three dwellings (15-19 Banbury Road)
28 th September 1848	Katherine Sirman Standen, a widow, takes over the lease for 19 Banbury Road from its builders, Henry Cowley and Thomas Noon
15 th March 1940	The International Institute for Social History takes over the lease for 19 Banbury Road
1 st May 1941	Oxford University takes on the lease for 17 Banbury Road
31 st December 1941	Oxford University takes over the lease for 19 Banbury Road
30 th April 1947	Oxford University takes on a joint lease for 17 and 19 Banbury Road
<1950	The extension to the north of 19 Banbury Road is constructed at some point before 1950
1950	19 Banbury Road converted into two flats (subdivision creates a third at some point before 1955).
1965	The Department of Chemical Crystallography occupies 15 Banbury Road
1966	Wolfson College takes on the lease for 15 Banbury Road
19 th February 1969	Oxford University purchases 7-19 Banbury Road
1970	OUCS occupy 17-19 Banbury Road
1970	“Thames Suite” extension to rear of 17-19 Banbury Road constructed
1971	OUCS occupies 15 Banbury Road
1973	Linking corridor constructed between 15 and 13 Banbury Road
1987	Northernmost ground-floor bay on the front elevation of 19 Banbury Road’s extension converted from door into window. Window converted into entrance in central bay of northern elevation
1996	Basements at 15 and 19 Banbury Road converted into offices. This involved extensive excavation for the creation of large lightwells
2002	Basements at 15 and 19 Banbury Road converted in a staff tea room and lecture space
2002	At 19 Banbury Road, second bay from the west of northern elevation converted into a window
2005	Bicycle shelter constructed to rear of 15-19 Banbury, and bicycle-locking hoops constructed at the front

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Appendix 5. CHECKLIST OF SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

This checklist is intended for the use of those working or planning work on the building. It highlights features of architectural significance within **15-19 Banbury Road**; these may be original features or new additions that nevertheless contribute positively to the character of the building. As this is a **Grade II listed building** any repair or alteration work to factors that contribute to the significance of the building will require listed building consent in order to avoid prosecution under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. **If planned work will likely affect any of the aspects featured in the list below advice should immediately be sought from the Building Conservation Team at Estates Services.**

The checklist lists both general significant features that affect the building as a whole and which should be held in mind if working in any space, and specific features of particular significance that should receive special regard if working in these particular spaces. The Further Information column refers to the relevant page reference in the Conservation Plan proper.

15-19 Banbury Road, Building No. 108		
SIGNIFICANT FEATURE	✓	Further Information
General:		
External Elevations		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
Original brickwork		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
Original stucco		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
Visible slopes of the roof		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
Any original fixtures or fittings		p. 21, 25
Windows throughout		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
Specific Features:		
External Elevations:		
-Stucco facing where extant		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
-Banding at first-floor level and eaves		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
-Pediments at centre and ends		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
-Sash windows on ground- and first-floor levels		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
-Arched windows at first-floor and attic levels		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
-Panelled door to number 17		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
-Panelled door to northern extension		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
-Chimney stacks		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
-Visible slopes of roofs		p.15-17, 20-21, 24
Interior Features:		
-Staircases excluding balustrades		p. 21, 25
-Cornice moulding		p. 21, 25

PRIOR TO UNDERTAKING ANY REPAIRS OR ALTERATIONS ON THE ABOVE-LISTED ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES, CONTACT THE CONSERVATION TEAM AT ESTATES SERVICES ON (01865) (2)78750