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Abbreviations:

ESA – Estates Services Archives

OS – Ordnance Survey

OUA – Oxford University Archives

NPPF - *National Planning Policy Framework, 2012*

RCHM – *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford* (London, 1939)

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1 INTRODUCTION

37 Beaumont Street was constructed as part of the 1828-37 development of Beaumont Street and St. John Street on land owned by St. John's College. This was one of the first middle-class suburban developments in Oxford, being outside the traditional boundaries of the city, though not far from the rapidly-expanding urban core. The exercise was not repeated again until Seckham's Park Town in 1853-4, leaving it as Oxford's only planned Georgian street. 37 Beaumont Street has been occupied by the Ashmolean Museum since 1954, a function retained to this day. The Georgian houses of Beaumont Street were designated Grade-II*-listed buildings in 1954.

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 37 Beaumont Street.

The purpose of this Conservation Plan is to update 37 Beaumont Street'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 37 Beaumont Street'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.



Figure 1. Map showing 37 Beaumont Street (red). The other buildings of 24-37 Beaumont Street, covered by the same listing, are highlighted in blue. The buildings of 5-23 Beaumont Street, covered by a separate listing, are highlighted in green. Orientated with North at the top of the image

1.2 Scope of the Conservation Plan

This Conservation Plan will cover the interior and the exterior of 37 Beaumont Street; a Georgian townhouse that have since been converted for University use.

This plan is not a catalogue and to facilitate its practical use will concentrate only on the most vulnerable aspects of significance, suggesting how they should be approached and conserved in the future.

1.3 Existing Information

A Conservation Plan has not previously been produced for 37 Beaumont Street; however, there are various forms of existing information available:

The listed building description (**Appendix 1**) is characteristically brief for one of its age (1954) and covers the entire group, 24-37 Beaumont Street, providing little guidance for 37 Beaumont Street itself; however, it does give a good indication of why the building was initially designated as historically significant, that being as a constituent element of the Beaumont Street group.

Various planning applications have been made throughout the building's history, providing a fragmentary indication of the changes that have occurred over time.

There are several published books and articles that discuss the development of middle-class housing in 19th-century Oxford, as well as the development of 19th-century architecture in Oxford in general. These provide a valuable resource for studying 37 Beaumont Street.

The Oxford University Archives and the Estates Services archives contain various useful documents for studying the history of 37 Beaumont Street and these have kindly been made available for the production of this document.

This 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 37 Beaumont Street 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.

1.5 Constraints

37 Beaumont Street and its environs are subject to various constraints imposed by Oxford City Council:

- HE.2 – Archaeology Area: Any planning application must incorporate sufficient information to define the character and extent of potential archaeological deposits, including the results of fieldwork evaluations.
- CP.3 – Limiting the Need to Travel: New development will be limited to accessible locations on previously developed sites.
- HE.9 – High Building Area: 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, and 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.
- HE.7 - Conservation Areas: The Central (City and University) 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.

- The City of Oxford Smoke Control Order No.1: 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.



UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

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2 UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

2.1 History of the Site and University¹

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 37 Beaumont Street is just outside the mediaeval city of Oxford; however, despite its extramural location, the area was still a focus for important construction in the Middle Ages. The Church of St. Mary Magdalen, just to the east of Beaumont Street, predates the Norman Conquest; however, it was burnt down in 1074, and was rebuilt in 1194, before being rebuilt by George Gilbert Scott in 1841-2.

Beaumont Street was the site of the 12th-century Beaumont Palace, royal hunting lodge of Henry II (1068/9-1135), and birthplace of Richard I (1157-99) and King John (1167-1216). Edward I (1239-1307) granted the palace as a private home to an Italian lawyer, Francesco Accorsi, in 1275. It was granted to the Carmelite Order for use as a monastery by Edward II (1284-1327) in 1318. The monastery (Whitefriars Priory) was dissolved and demolished during the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-41), and much of its material was reused as *spolia* in the construction of Christ Church (1546) and St. John's College (1555). The late mediaeval period saw a series of tenements extending westwards from St. Giles along what would later become Beaumont Street.

The surrounding area continued to attract high-profile buildings in the post-mediaeval period. St. John's College was founded in 1555 and occupied the former site of the Cistercian St. Bernard's College (founded in 1437 and dissolved at some point shortly after 1542, remaining a private hall until it was granted to Christ Church by Henry VIII in 1546) on the eastern side of St. Giles, immediately to the east of Beaumont Street.² Worcester College was founded at the western end of Beaumont Street in 1714. Worcester's construction began in 1720 and continued until about 1790, receiving no further major additions until the 1930s.³

This area immediately north of the city underwent development in the first half of the 19th Century. Beaumont Street was the first major suburban housing development in Oxford. It was constructed on a strip of land owned by St. John's College, and located between the college and Worcester College. The land was first advertised for lease in 1823, and the

¹ A short chronology of 37 Beaumont Street can be found in **Appendix 3**.

² Page, W., 'Houses of Cistercian Monks: The College of St. Bernard, Oxford' in Page, W. (ed.), *A History of the County of Oxford, Vol. 2* (1907) 86.

³ Pevsner, N., and Sherwood, J., *Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (Harmondsworth, 1974) 218.

construction conducted between 1828 and 1833 as leases were taken up.⁴ St. John Street, running north from Beaumont Street, was similarly developed in the 1830s and 1840s. Magdalen Street to the south was also developed during this period, and the department store Elliston and Cavell (now Debenhams) was opened there in 1835.

The increasing importance of this then-extramural district was emphasised in 1839 by the decision to site the University Galleries (the Ashmolean Museum since 1908) and the Taylor Institution at the eastern end of Beaumont Street. A young George Gilbert Scott won the competition to construct the Martyr's Memorial in the same year, and this was raised in 1841-43 at the junction of St. Giles and Magdalen Street, just southeast of the Taylor Institution. In 1845 the University Galleries were opened, but despite their large size, they had exceeded their capacity within a generation; between 1886 and 1894 large extensions were constructed to the north of the original galleries to house the Archaeological and Tradescant Collections. From its construction, the Ashmolean Museum came to dominate the history and development of Beaumont Street but for two instances: the construction of Wilkinson's grand, gothic Randolph Hotel opposite the Ashmolean Museum in 1864; and the construction of the Playhouse, on the site of 8-10 Beaumont Street, in 1938.

Throughout the 20th century, the Ashmolean expanded to the extent that it and related departments now dominate a large block between Beaumont Street and Blackfriars. This included the extension westwards onto Beaumont Street in 1939, where the outbreak of War halted construction and only four out of eleven planned bays were constructed, presumably sparing 37 Beaumont Street from demolition.

St. Giles and Beaumont Street are now some of Oxford's busiest roads. The Ashmolean Museum and Taylor Institution are the most dominant features on Beaumont Street; however, despite their monumental impact, the street retains a more complicated character, as the 19th-century townhouses (now mostly housing dentists, law firms, and University buildings) retain their Georgian-residential character, whilst the Oxford Playhouse and the Randolph Hotel reinforce the now urban character of the area. The entrance to the street is provided some impact by the contrast supplied by the clash between the classical triumphalism of the Taylor Institution and the gothic character of Wilkinson's Randolph Hotel.

In April 1971 Oxford City Council designated the majority of the city centre as part of the Central (City and University) Conservation area, this includes Beaumont Street and St. Giles' (see **Appendix 2**).

⁴ Osmond, A., 'Building on the Beaumonts: An Example of Early 19th-century Housing Development' in *Oxoniensia* XLIX (1984) 309. Tyack suggests the land was first advertised in 1820, whilst Hinchcliffe purports that the land was first advertised in 1823, having been surveyed and planned in 1822: Hinchcliffe, T., *North Oxford* (London, 1992) 19; Tyack, G., *Oxford: An Architectural Guide* (New York, 1998) 204.

2.2 History of 37 Beaumont Street

Whilst a small number of middle-class houses went up at Headington Hill in the early 1820s, the houses of Beaumont Street and St. John Street formed the first planned middle-class housing development in Oxford;⁵ an exercise not repeated for another 30 years. Worcester College had been somewhat isolated on the western edge of the city since its foundation in 1714, and St. John's College made it clear in 1804 that they were willing to allow a portion of their land between St. Giles's and Worcester College to be made available for conversion into a link road for a nominal sum.⁶ With this in mind, St. John's College ceased renewing the existing agricultural leases in this area, anticipating leasing the land along the new street for housing once the road was constructed. The college employed Henry Dixon to survey the road and the land either side in 1822 and a Winchester-based architect, William Garbett, was employed to produce plans for the houses to be built on the street.⁷

St. John's College advertised the building land in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* in April 1823 (Figure 2). 'The lease fines for the first plots taken by Mr Pinfold and Mr Chaundy were fixed at £128 and £117 respectively, with an annual ground rent of £5 each. This compares with 26 guineas [£27.6s], the fine previously paid for the whole of the Beaumonts. The development was obviously going to increase the income of the College considerably.'⁸ As further leases lapsed, St. John's College was able to make more land available for building and in 1824 they asked Dixon to survey the remaining land on Beaumont Street that had not yet been sold.

The houses were constructed along Beaumont Street between 1828 and 1837. As Hinchcliffe shows, the 1841 census reveals that the street was a middle-class enclave.⁹

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 1901.¹⁰ Traditionally the University had made little direct impact on private housing in Oxford, as a regulation of 1561, compounded by the religious restrictions of

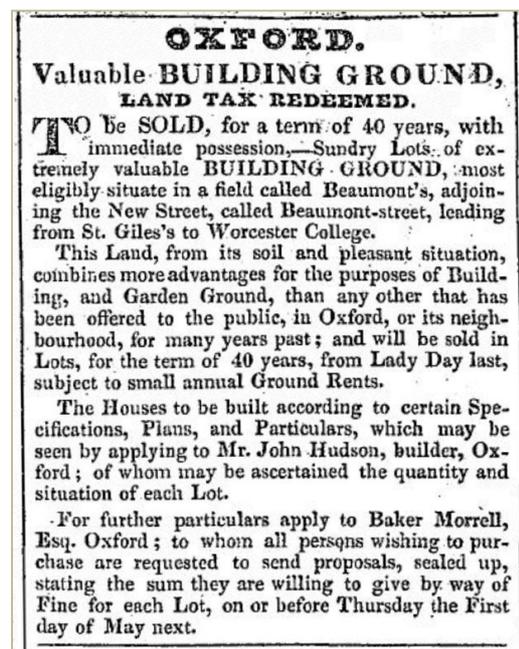


Figure 2. Advertisement from *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 26th April 1823

⁵ Tyack, G., *op. cit.*, 204.

⁶ Hinchcliffe, T., *op. cit.*, 18-19.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22; 'In Beaumont and St. John Streets the range of occupations among the heads of household suggests a promiscuous mixing of people whose incomes were derived from trade, the professions, and investment. As the century progressed, Beaumont Street filled a need by becoming the professional district of Oxford where doctors, solicitors, and architects took up residence.'

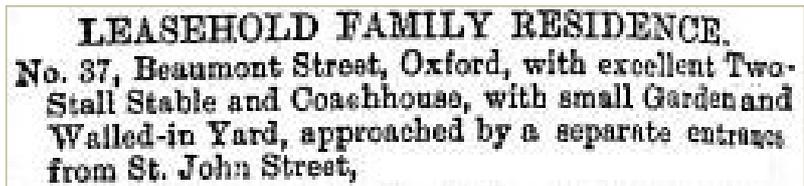
¹⁰ Tyack, G., *op. cit.*, 214.

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.

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 an increased demand for student housing within the city centre, making the suburbs increasingly attractive to the middle classes.¹¹ Developments at Park Town in 1853-55 and Norham Manor in the 1860s were the first instances of planned middle-class development in the city after Beaumont Street.

37 Beaumont Street was evidently part of this middle-class trend. The first lessee of the building was Robert Speakman, a wealthy former tailor who by this point listed his profession as a gentleman (of independent means), who took up the lease in June 1827.¹² Isaac Slater's directory for Oxfordshire lists John Godfrey, a surgeon, as the occupant of 37 Beaumont Street in 1850.¹³ One might presume he was based at the nearby Radcliffe Infirmary (as was Horatio Symonds, who occupied the nearby 35 Beaumont Street later in the century and leased 36 Beaumont Street in 1894).¹⁴

At some point after that, the lease was taken over by Sarah Speakman (presumably a relation of Robert Speakman, suggesting that Godfrey had



LEASEHOLD FAMILY RESIDENCE.
No. 37, Beaumont Street, Oxford, with excellent Two-Stall Stable and Coachhouse, with small Garden and Walled-in Yard, approached by a separate entrance from St. John Street,

Figure 3. Advertisement from Jackson's Oxford Journal, 25th April 1885

been subleasing the building from him) and George Denis Dudley. In 1866, Speakman then acquired the lease jointly with Henry Speakman Webb.¹⁵ In 1880, Isaac Grubb, a successful baker, alderman, and one-time mayor of Oxford, and his wife, Sarah, retired to 37 Beaumont Street. Sarah died in 1881 and Isaac continued to live there with three servants until his death in 1885.¹⁶ After Grubb's death, the lease for 37 Beaumont Street was advertised in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* (**Figure 3**). It is likely that the building continued in a residential function for the next 50 years and it was purchased outright by the University from St. John's College in 1931. The University leased the building on a five-year lease to a widow, Maude Drummond, in 1948. The lease stipulated that she was to use the building as a residence and, as she wished, as a boarding house for students.

¹¹ *Ibid* 215.

¹² Osmond, *op. cit.*, 303, 320; the building would have been in place by this point, as St. John's College did not confirm leases until at least the shell of the building was completed, alongside the caveat that they would be fully fitted out within 9 months.

¹³ Slater, I., *Oxfordshire* (London, 1850).

¹⁴ 34-36 *Beaumont Street: Conservation Plan* (Estates Services, May 2012).

¹⁵ St. John's College Archives.

¹⁶ http://www.headington.org.uk/oxon/mayors/1836_1962/grubb_isaac_1857.htm, accessed 24th May 2012.

It was only in 1954 that planning permission was granted to change the use of the building from residential to institutional. The University allocated the building to the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum in the same year. The Visitors then allocated it to Semitic Studies, which at that point was confined to the inadequate Griffith Institute. The Visitors viewed this as the first step towards the forming of an Oriental Institute.¹⁷ The building was converted with the principle that the building's layout would remain 'virtually unchanged' though would include '[m]inor structural alteration in the transpositioning of some door openings, removal of sundry partitions etc.'¹⁸ Alterations at this point included: essential repairs; redecoration; provision of bookshelving and fixed fittings in all room; installation of central heating from the Ashmolean's system; partial rewiring and extensions to electrical installation; and the provision of floor coverings.' The 1954 Minor Works programme provided £4,500 for the works, to be carried out by the University's direct labour organisation. The main rooms were adapted for use as libraries, seminar rooms, and studies. The department requested £489.10s. from the University for the furniture and fittings of the building. There was some argument over the request for £120 for venetian blinds on the southern windows, but it was argued that these were an essential item for the library portions of the building, being necessary to protect the books from sun damage.

The Oriental Institute was constructed to the north of the Ashmolean in 1959-61, with Semitic Studies relocating to these new premises. This allowed the Ashmolean to extend its Department of Fine Art Library (later the Western Art Library when the Department of Fine Art was split into Eastern and Western) into 37 Beaumont Street. It was connected by fire-resistant doorways at two levels to the 1940 Ashmolean extension. This allowed the extension of the Fine Art Library onto the second floor, whilst the first floor could be used as an annexe to the Print Room, as well as providing office accommodation. The ground floor was used as a Committee room and as workshops for book repair and mounting. It was intended that the basement could serve as a stack for the Fine Art Library.¹⁹ Double glazing may have been fitted to the windows at this point. The conversion of the building cost £3,229.4s.9d., with £1,200 coming from the 1961 Minor Works programme. A room at the back of the second floor was also converted into a dust-proof varnishing room in the same year, though as a separate job. In 1962, £1,540.11s. was granted by the Hebdomadal Council to be spent on furniture and equipment, including £901 for bookcases, £22 for Vent Axia fans, and £20 for fire extinguishers.

In 1966, planning permission was granted for alterations and an extension in order to form a caretaker's flat at the rear of building. This was followed, 15 years later in 1980-81, by the conversion of one of the Department of Western Art's room into a bedsit. The caretaker presumably then occupied this, as the caretaker's flat at the rear of property was subsequently converted, in 1983-85, into an office for the Assistant Keeper of Western Art and a paper conservation studio.²⁰

¹⁷ *Annual Report of the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum*, 1954.

¹⁸ Oxford University Archives, ref.: UR/S/15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Annual reports of the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum, relevant years.

In 1986, planning permission was granted for the demolition of the dilapidated stable block, described in the 1885 advertisement (**Figure 3**) as an ‘excellent Two-Stall Stable and Coachhouse.’

Public street lighting was fitted to the façades of many of the Beaumont Street buildings in 1993, including a high-level light at the cornice level of 37 Beaumont Street.

In 2011, listed building consent was granted for internal alterations related to the installation of power, data, and lighting services. These sought to rationalise service provision, which had previously been conducted in an *ad hoc* manner and had resulted in cables and containment being fitted directly to walls and joinery surfaces.

Listed building consent was also granted for various works related to fire protection in 2011. This involved the removal of a modern MDF-clad internal wall at the base of the stairwell. Electronically-controlled locks were installed within several existing doors. The exposed timber wall construction on the basement stairwell was fitted with a plasterboard covering, decorated to match existing areas. A new fire-rated door was also fitted adjacent to the basement stairwell.

37 Beaumont Street continues to be occupied by the Ashmolean Museum and serves primarily as office accommodation.



Figure 4. 37 Beaumont Street (red) orientated with north at the top of the image. The other buildings of 24-37 Beaumont Street, covered by the same listing, are highlighted in blue. The buildings of 5-23 Beaumont Street, covered by a separate listing, are highlighted in green.



3

SIGNIFICANCE

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3 SIGNIFICANCE

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 37 Beaumont Street has been publically recognised by its designation as a Grade-II*-listed building in 1954 (see **Appendix 1**); and its inclusion in Oxford City Council’s designation of its Central (City and University) Conservation Area in 1971, and in its subsequent revisions in 1974, 1981, 1985, and 1998 (see **Appendix 2**).

3.1 Significance as part of Beaumont Street and the Central (City and University) Conservation Area

Beaumont Street/St. John Street is unique as the only Georgian streetscape in Oxford. Individual buildings of the period are preserved elsewhere, but this area contains the only complete development. Beaumont Street is one of Oxford’s most interesting, encapsulating the dichotomy between the classic and the gothic at its eastern end with the conjunction of Cockerell’s Ashmolean Museum (1845) and Wilkinson’s Randolph Hotel (1864). This gives way to the Bath stone, Georgian uniformity of the Beaumont Street development, broken only by the extrusion of the Playhouse.

This long, uniform street front in turn forms something of an enclosed approach to the Grade-I-listed façade of Worcester College at its western end where it intersects with Walton Street. Pevsner describes Beaumont Street as ‘...the finest street ensemble of Oxford.’²¹

The character of Beaumont Street is complicated, combining educational institutions with urban amenities and buildings of strictly residential character, and this in itself is representative of the development of Oxford in the 19th century with its urban coexistence of the domestic, commercial, and academic. The uniform, Georgian street front has both illustrative and substantial aesthetic value. 37 Beaumont Street forms an important element of this significant group. Its iron balconies are pleasant,



Figure 5. 37 Beaumont Street

²¹ Pevsner, N., and Sherwood, J., *op. cit.*, 324.

though not as significant as the verandah-covered balconies of the adjacent 34-36 Beaumont Street. 24-37 (and separately, 11-23) Beaumont Street are listed as a group and this emphasises the importance of the Bath stone façades and their contribution to this significant street scene.

37 Beaumont Street's rusticated ground floor and slightly-lower roof level differentiate it from the adjacent contemporary buildings but it clearly operates as part of the group. Its eastern limits juxtapose the 1940 Ashmolean extension, which is constructed similarly of Bath stone on its upper storeys, but has a rusticated Clipsham base.²² The extension is relatively successful, borrowing its massing and cornice from the Ashmolean but its style and much of its palette from the Beaumont Street houses, effectively bridging the gap between the two. At this point, 37 Beaumont Street marks the eastern boundary of the northern side of the Beaumont Street group.

3.2 Architectural Significance

3.2.1 Exterior Elevations

As mentioned above, the Bath-stone-faced southern elevation is the most important aspect of the building, contributing to the significant character of Beaumont Street.

Its aesthetic appeal is substantial, but the majority of the elevation's architectural significance comes from its inclusion in the Beaumont Street group, of which it is a contributing element.



Figure 6. 6.1, left, pilaster and cornice in first-floor office. 6.2, right, first-floor office door with original architrave

²² Arkell, W.J., *Oxford Stone* (London, 1947) 97.

3.2.2 Interior Spaces

The interior spaces of the building are of some aesthetic significance. Most notable are elements of original joinery including panelled doors and carved doorcases and architraves (**Figure 6.2**). The main staircase is also an attractive piece of joinery, with carved cornices to the treads. It is typical of its age. Cornice moulding is retained in most spaces and this contributes to the character of the building. In some areas this integrates pilasters (**Figure 6.1**). Skirting in the building has historically suffered from excessive service installation but this has been improved by recent rationalisation.

3.3 Archaeological Significance

Oxford has a rich archaeological heritage and this is particularly true of Beaumont Street, with its history as the setting for both a mediaeval royal palace and a Carmelite priory. Excavations at the rear of the adjacent 34-36 Beaumont Street in 1999, prior to the construction of the Sackler Library, found Bronze Age ring ditches as well the 14th-century remains of the priory. It is understood that standing remains of the priory (itself incorporating elements of Henry I's Beaumont Palace) were demolished for the construction of the Beaumont Street development in the 1820s.

37 Beaumont Street is within Oxford City Council's Archaeology Area and it is highly probable that there is significant archaeological material with potential evidential value preserved beneath the site.

3.4 Significance as an office and research space

37 Beaumont Street has served as an office building since 1954. It has been occupied by the Ashmolean since 1961-2. It forms an important part of the museum's office space and this usage is made inevitable by the geographic proximity of the museum-proper, with the entire block of buildings from the Ashmolean in the east to 34 Beaumont Street in the west and the Cast Gallery in the north being occupied by the museum or associated institutions. The Ashmolean is a museum of international significance. It is the oldest surviving museum in the world and is widely regarded as the finest small museum in Europe.

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VULNERABILITIES

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4 VULNERABILITIES

The ability of 37 Beaumont Street to fulfil a contemporary function

37 Beaumont Street is not necessarily well suited to provide office accommodation, being designed as a domestic structure, but extensions and periodic alterations have adapted the building to a point where it is more suitable for its needs. The larger reception rooms of the original house have allowed for library/stack spaces, whilst the smaller domestic spaces (and larger subdivided spaces) on the upper storeys have found appropriate use as smaller offices. Subdivision and alteration have changed the character of some spaces; however, the areas that have retained their character and significance, notably the external façade, have done so because the building has remained in use, and has been maintained and cared for.

The location of this adjacent to the Ashmolean, the Institute of Archaeology, and the Sackler Library, in a precinct focused on the study of antiquity and archaeology, would suggest that the building should retain a related function. The 1961 Committee on the Institute of Archaeology and Allied Questions concluded that: ‘...in principle and in the long term the whole of the accommodation in 34-37 Beaumont Street ought to be allocated to the Ashmolean Museum or to bodies closely associated with it...indeed this had always been envisaged.’²³ This policy has been maintained throughout the subsequent decades.

The building forms part of an aesthetically- and historically-significant group, but is by no means a static monument. By remaining in use, the upkeep and conservation of the heritage asset is funded and its continued existence and significance ensured. Under the current usage, the significant areas are not threatened, and its listed status ensures that any further alterations operate within the constraints of an accepted understanding of the building’s significance as a heritage asset.

4.1 Accessibility

The ability of 37 Beaumont Street to be accessed and enjoyed by anyone who has a legitimate right to use the building is central to its significance. The significance of the heritage asset is lessened if any person who wishes to legitimately use and enjoy the building is hampered in doing so by inadequate access provision. Accessibility to 37 Beaumont Street is typical for a building of its age and there is no level access to any part of the building.

It is unfortunate that all users cannot enter the building through the same point and move freely throughout every floor, as determined by the original design of 37 Beaumont Street.

4.2 Maintenance

4.2.1 Exterior Elevations and Setting

The southern elevation of 37 Beaumont Street is its most significant element. It is of high aesthetic and historical value and contributes to Oxford’s only planned Georgian streetscape. The rear elevation, fair-faced red brick, lacking the ashlar facing of the southern façade, is of

²³ Oxford University Archives, ref. UR/AM/29.

less significance. There have been small-scale extensions made to the rear elevation in the past.

The ashlar Bath stone facing is a soft variety perhaps four inches thick but, whilst damaged in places, has aged well due to regular maintenance, repair, and refurbishment.²⁴ The Bath-stone buildings of a similar age in Oxford have, as a general rule, suffered during their two centuries of existence: ‘Almost every building of 1820-50 has suffered fearful damage from the rusting and swelling of the [iron] cramps, which have burst the stones. At the [Oxford University] Press [on Walton Street] all the cramps had to be cut out (1935) and the face work patched with new stones and cement.’ Whilst the southern façade is in a good condition, it remains open to weathering and erosion, potential vandalism, and pollution; damage which could detract from the significance of the heritage asset.

The major changes to heritage asset’s setting since its construction are: the construction of the Ashmolean Museum (1845, and its extension to the east of 37 Beaumont Street in 1940) and the construction of the Randolph Hotel (1864) at the eastern end of the road; the construction of the Playhouse opposite in Clipsham ashlar (1938); and the construction of the Sackler Library on St. John Street (2001). Society’s increasing propensity towards the use motorised traffic has also had a notable impact on the space. Despite these changes, the heritage asset’s setting has retained much of its charm, primarily because the 1828-37 development has remained largely intact and it is this that dictates the setting of the western end of Beaumont Street more than any other factor.

4.2.2 Interior Spaces

37 Beaumont Street contains various internal features of some aesthetic value, notably its staircase, original doorcases, and cornice moulding. Sash windows throughout the building also contribute to its character.

As the interior features are in regular use and of less permanent construction than the external structure of the building, they are vulnerable to vandalism, accidents, and general wear and tear. Some of these issues should be mitigated assuming adequate security and maintenance regimes are in place, but ultimately these significant elements will have limited lifespans. These 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.

²⁴ Arkell, W.J., *Oxford Stone* (London, 1947) 95.



37

CONSERVATION
POLICY

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5 CONSERVATION POLICY

Having established the significance of 37 Beaumont Street as a heritage asset, and having identified ways in which the significance of 37 Beaumont Street 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 and its setting.

The Conservation Plan is intended as an active tool for the regular maintenance and long-term management of 37 Beaumont Street. 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 **37 Beaumont Street's continued use in a contemporary function linked to the general goals of the Ashmolean and the study of material culture and antiquity is important to its continued significance. Permit, in line with NPPF paragraphs 131, 132, 133, and 134, alterations intended to facilitate its continued use in this way**

The continued use of 37 Beaumont Street in a contemporary function linked to the study of archaeology and antiquity is important to its continued significance. 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 37 Beaumont Street'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 'wholly 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 **In order to ensure that 37 Beaumont Street 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**, access to the building is hampered by the original design. Access will remain a major concern in any plans developed for the site; a vigorous effort should be made to improve access to the site in any future plans, with the University seeking to exceed its statutory obligations and always viewing this as part of an ongoing process.

5.2 Note that 37 Beaumont Street is a Grade II* listed building and ensure that appropriate consents are obtained for works to the interior and exterior of the building

In order to ensure the heritage asset's significance, alterations may be required in the future, 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.

5.3 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.

5.4 Refer to this Conservation Plan 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.

5.5 Any alteration or redevelopment must respect the character of 37 Beaumont Street and the surrounding area. Notably it must respect its position within the Beaumont Street group and its location adjacent to listed buildings (e.g. Worcester College, the Ashmolean Museum, and the Randolph Hotel)

37 Beaumont Street's position within the Beaumont Street group (i.e. 24-37 Beaumont Street and 5-23 Beaumont Street) is vital to its significance. Any plans for alterations should take into account the relationship between the listed buildings in this significant group.

5.6 Conservation of specific factors contributing to overall significance

37 Beaumont Street possesses various internal and external features of some significance (**Sections 3.1 and 3.3**). An effort should be made to identify and conserve original 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 lifespan and some degree of change must be permitted to keep the building safe, usable, and generally fit for function. Some materials will have a very long life expectancy if given routine maintenance; others are 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.

5.6.1 The primary (southern) elevation will remain substantially unchanged

The exterior elevation facing onto Beaumont Street is the most significant aspect of the building. Its contribution to the Beaumont Street group and the setting defines the significance of the building. Their visual character, with the ashlar Bath-stone facing and iron balconies, should be maintained. If alterations are considered these should be undertaken only in the context of this significance and in line with **Section 5.1** and **5.1.1**.

5.6.2 Any alterations to be made to the interior of the building will respect the significance of individual architectural elements and of the space as a whole

There are significant elements, notably original joinery, throughout the building. Any internal alterations planned in the future should only be undertaken with a full understanding and respect for the character of the internal spaces in line with **Section 5.1** and **5.1.1**.

5.7 In the vein of NPPF paragraph 110, efforts should be made to ensure that 37 Beaumont Street'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.'

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

This is a unique building containing collections of particular value and academic significance. It is imperative for the safety of the building and its collections that a clear and up-to-date disaster recovery plan exists.

5.9 If during any subsequent renovations or alterations any excavation work is carried out beneath 37 Beaumont Street, an archaeological assessment will be made of the potential for significant finds, and if appropriate an archaeologist will be given a watching brief as excavation takes place

It is probable that there is significant archaeological material preserved beneath 37 Beaumont Street (**Section 3.3**). Should any excavation work be carried out in this area, an assessment of the archaeological potential should be made. This should include at least a desk-based assessment, but possibly geophysics and trial trenching. A watching brief will almost certainly be required for any excavation.

5.10 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

5.10.1 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 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*.

5.10.2 The Conservation Plan will be circulated to all senior staff who work in 37 Beaumont Street and to all other members of the University who have responsibility for the building or its contents

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

5.10.3 The Conservation Plan will be made available to Oxford City Council, English Heritage, and any other party with 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.

5.11 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.



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6.6 Image Credits

- Cover and chapter covers: Estates Services photographs.
- Figure 1: Adapted from Google Maps (see **Section 6.5**).
- Figure 2: From *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 26th April 1823.
- Figure 3: From *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 25th April 1885.
- Figure 4: Adapted from Bing Maps (see **Section 6.5**).
- Figures 5 and 6: Estates Services photographs.



APPENDICES

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7 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Listed Building Descriptions

Appendix 1.1 List description for 24-37 Beaumont Street

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: No name for this Entry

List Entry Number: 1047375

Location

24-37, BEAUMONT STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Oxfordshire

District: Oxford

District Type: District Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 12-Jan-1954

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 245326

Asset Groupings

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

BEAUMONT STREET

1.

1485

(North Side)

Nos 24 to 37 (consec)

SP 5106 NW 5/134 12.1.54.

II* GV

2.

Laid out, with St John Street, as a unified terrace-type scheme in 1828-37 on the site of the ancient palace of Beaumont. 3 storeyed Bath stone fronts in brick, with cellars, a moulded cornice and a small parapet. Some have a mansard roof to an attic floor. There are 2 or 3 sash windows with glazing bars in each floor, and most have iron balconies at the 1st floor, while some have good verandah balconies. The doorways have semi-circular heads and some have stone door frames with engaged columns and split pediments (See also Nos 5 to 23 (consec)).

All the listed buildings in Beaumont Street form a group.

Listing NGR: SP5106406525

Selected Sources

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Map

National Grid Reference: SP 51064 06525

The below map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - [1047375.pdf](#)



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List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: THE PLAYHOUSE

List Entry Number: 1185150

Location

11-23, BEAUMONT STREET
5-7, BEAUMONT STREET
THE PLAYHOUSE, BEAUMONT STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Oxfordshire
District: Oxford
District Type: District Authority
Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 12-Jan-1954

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 245325

Asset Groupings

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

BEAUMONT STREET

1.

1485

(South Side)

Nos 5 to 7 (consec).

The Playhouse.

Nos 11 to 23 (consec).

SP 5106 NW 5/134 12.1.54.

SP 5106 SW 8/134

II* GV

2.

Laid out, with St John Street, as a unified terrace-type scheme in 1828-37 on the site of the ancient palace of Beaumont. 5-storeyed Bath stone fronts on brick, with cellars, a moulded cornice and a small parapet. Some have a mansard roof to an attic floor. There are 2 to 3 sash windows with glazing bars in each floor and most have iron balconies at the 1st floor while some (eg Nos 34 and 35) have good verandah balconies. The doorways, have semi-circular heads and some, mostly on the South side have stone door frames with engaged columns and split pediments. The Playhouse (on site of Nos 8, 9 and 10) was built in 1938 in harmony with the rest in Clipsham ashlar. The interiors show that the fireplaces are placed at the sidewalls, the central chimney-stack having disappeared. For plan of No 15 (a typical house), see *Antiq Jnl* XXVII (1947), p 132 and Fig 8 G. Playhouse altered 1964.

All the listed buildings in Beaumont Street form a group.

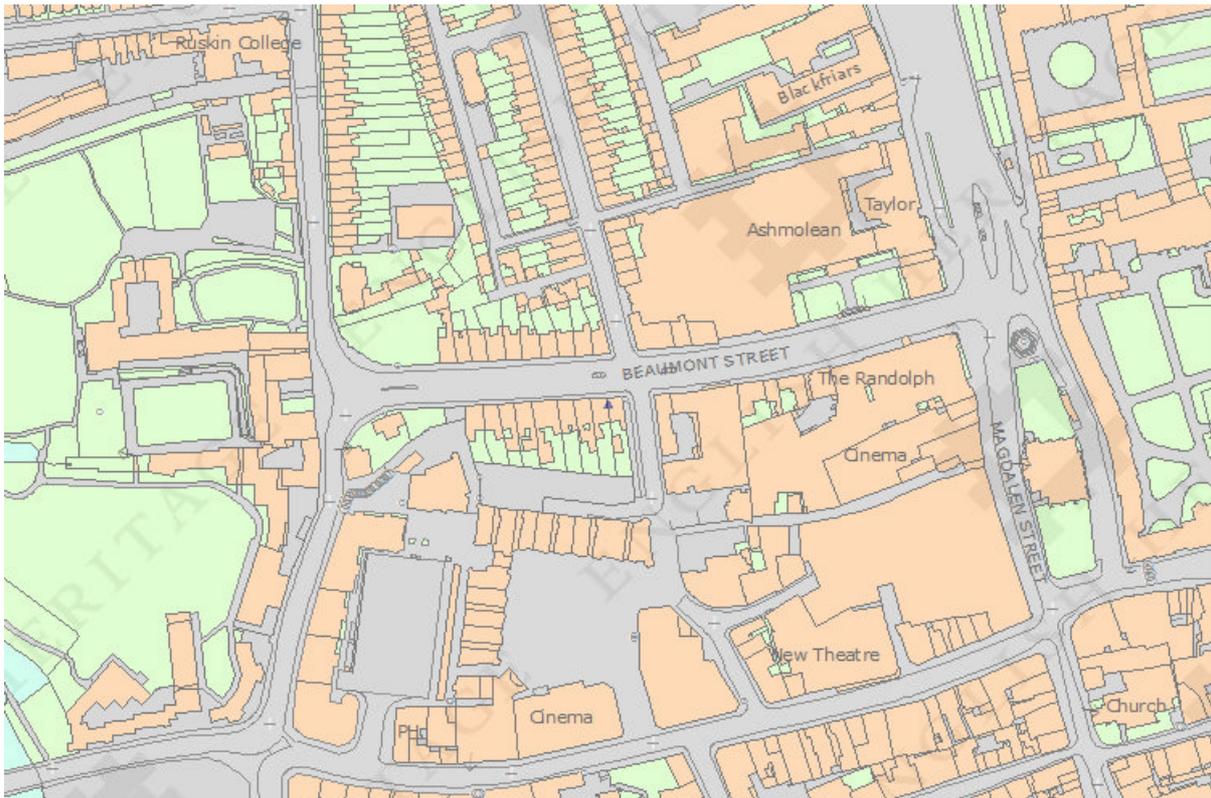
Selected Sources

1. **Article Reference** - *Date:* 1947 - *Journal Title:* Journal of the Society of Antiquaries of London - *Volume:* 27 - *Page References:* 132
-

Map

National Grid Reference: SP 51074 06499

The below map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - [1185150.pdf](#)



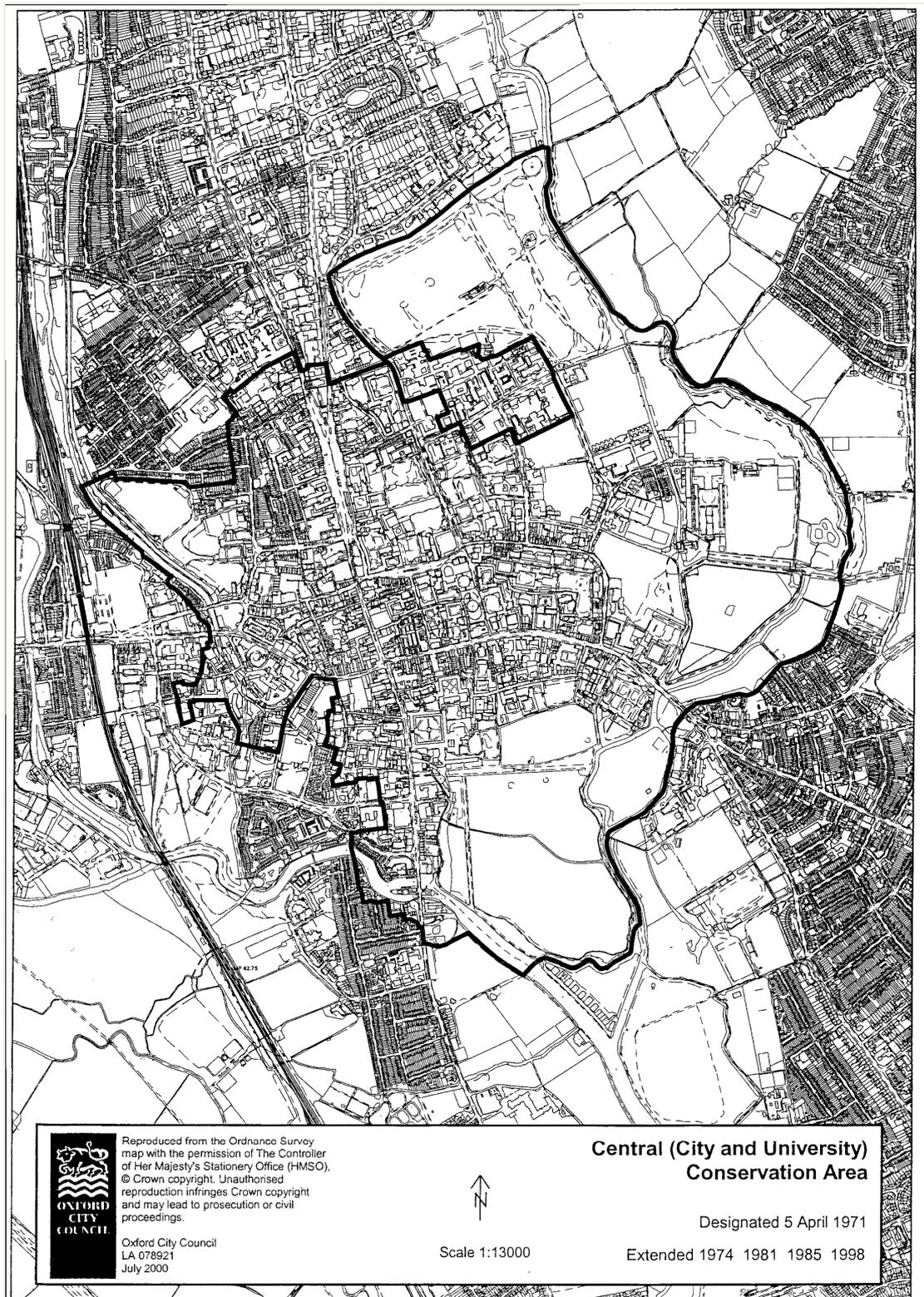
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Appendix 2 Conservation Area Description



Central Conservation Area, No. 5

The historic centre of Oxford forms one of the masterpieces of European architectural heritage. It is also a major regional commercial centre. Many of its historic buildings still function for the purpose for which they were built, and provide accommodation for the University of Oxford and its colleges.

From small beginnings as a settlement in the Saxon period, Oxford grew by the 11th century into one of the largest towns in England and a major trade centre. The Norman conquest brought the construction of the Castle and the establishment of major religious houses. The infant University arose in the 12th century and gradually grew into a major force in the city's life. The Saxons' rigid street layout and the fixed line of the 13th century defensive walls, together with the floodable river valleys, largely determined the plan of the historic centre as it is today. The gentle curve of the High Street, the great market place of St Giles and the older churches, together with the post-medieval timber-framed houses, belong to the town rather than the gown.

The University as it expanded, colonised the eastern half of the town with colleges and halls, building quadrangles of medieval and post-medieval gothic buildings, both within and without the walled town. The growth of the University's central institutions is well shown by the magnificent group of buildings situated between Broad Street and St Mary's Church. This group began in the 15th century with the building of the Divinity School and the Duke Humfrey's Library, a nucleus which expanded in the 17th century with the addition of the Schools' Quadrangle, Convocation House and Sheldonian Theatre. The group was further extended in the 18th century by the addition of the Old Clarendon Building and Radcliffe Camera to form a sequence of buildings and spaces of the highest architectural and historic interest, that today form the visual heart of the conservation area. Aspects of Oxford's 19th and 20th century change and growth may be illustrated by the considerable additions made to University and College buildings in Victorian and recent times, by the vigorous commercial and shopping centre, and by the welcome fact that the presence of the University ensures that many upper floors of buildings in the conservation area are in use for residential purposes, rather than unoccupied as in some historic towns.

Thomas Sharp, in his report to the City Council, published in 1948 as *Oxford Replanned*, set out and defined Oxford's special physical and architectural character and stressed its virtues and problems in a 20th century context. The Council, in its Review of the Development Plan, approved in 1967, approved much of the central area as an area of great historic value, and since 1962 the Council has protected the prospect of the city's unique skyline with its high buildings policy. The complementary views out of the city to its open country background have been similarly protected by the Green Belt and other policies.

The Council designated a large part of the central area as a conservation area in 1971. An extension taking in the Folly Bridge riverside was designated on 28th May 1974, a second extension covering part of Walton Street, Fisher Row and lower St

Aldate's was designated on 23rd February 1981, while a third covering Cornmarket and Queen Street was designated on 29th April 1985. On 9th December 1998, a fourth extension was made to the conservation area taking in part of the St Thomas' area, the University Observatory adjacent to University Parks and Magdalen College School playing field.

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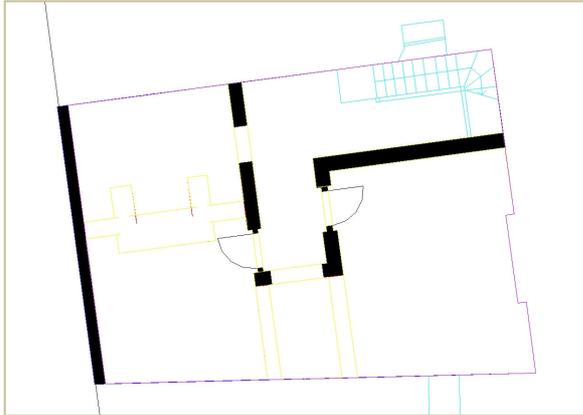
Appendix 3 Chronology of 37 Beaumont Street

| | |
|---------|--|
| 1822 | St. John's College asks Henry Dixon to survey a road from Worcester College to St. Giles's and the land either side for building leases. William Garbett is employed to produce plans for the street |
| 1823 | Advertisements for the building land appear in <i>Jackson's Oxford Journal</i> |
| 1824 | Dixon is asked to survey the land not yet let |
| 1828-37 | The Beaumont Street terraces are constructed |
| 1850 | <i>Slater's Oxfordshire Directory</i> lists John Godfrey, a surgeon, at 37 Beaumont Street |
| 1880 | Isaac Grubb, one-time mayor of Oxford, and his wife, Sarah, retire to 37 Beaumont Street. Sarah dies in 1881 and Isaac lives there alone with three servants |
| 1885 | Isaac Grubb dies and his leasehold is advertised by his executors in <i>Jackson's Oxford Journal</i> |
| 1931 | The University purchases 37 Beaumont Street from St. John's College |
| 1938 | The Playhouse is constructed on the site of 8-10 Beaumont Street, opposite 34-36 |
| 1948 | 37 Beaumont Street is leased on a 5-year lease to Maude Drummond, a widow, for use as a private residence and boarding house for students |
| 1954 | 24-37 Beaumont Street is designated a Grade-II*-listed group of buildings |
| 1954-55 | The University places 37 Beaumont Street under the administration of the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum. It is adapted and allocated to Semitic studies, with planning permission being granted for the conversion from residential to university usage. The layout remains virtually unchanged, though some doors and partitions are altered or removed. £4,500 is provided from the 1954 Minor Works programme |
| 1957-8 | The University acquires 34-36 Beaumont Street |
| 1961 | The Ashmolean's Western Art Library extends into 37 Beaumont Street. It is connected at two levels by doorways with fire-proof doors. This conversion cost £3,229.4s.9d, with £1,200 coming from the 1961 Minor Works programme |
| 1961 | A second-floor back room is converted into a dust-proof varnishing room |
| 1962 | Hebdomadal Council grants £1,541 for furniture and equipment for the 37 Beaumont Street conversion |
| 1966 | Planning permission is granted for alterations and an extension in order to form a caretaker's flat at the rear of 37 Beaumont Street |
| 1980-81 | The Department of Western Art relinquishes a room in 37 Beaumont Street for conversion into a bedsit |
| 1983-85 | A small flat behind 37 Beaumont is converted into an office for the Assistant Keeper of Western Art and a paper conservation studio |
| 1986 | Planning permission is granted for the demolition of a dilapidated stable block |
| 1993 | Street lighting is fitted to the façades of many of the Beaumont Street buildings, including 37 Beaumont Street |
| 2011 | Listed building consent is granted for internal alterations related to the installation of power, data, and lighting services. Also for various works related to fire protection |

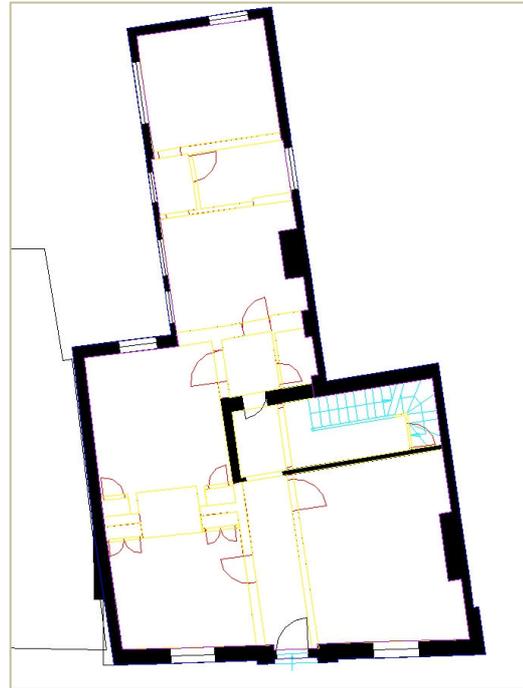
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Appendix 4 Floor plans

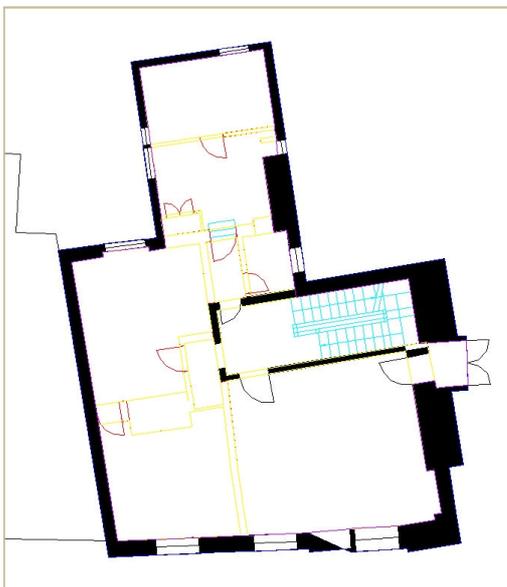
Appendix 5.1 Basement plan



Appendix 5.2 Ground-floor plan



Appendix 5.3 First-floor plan



Appendix 5.4 Second-floor plan

