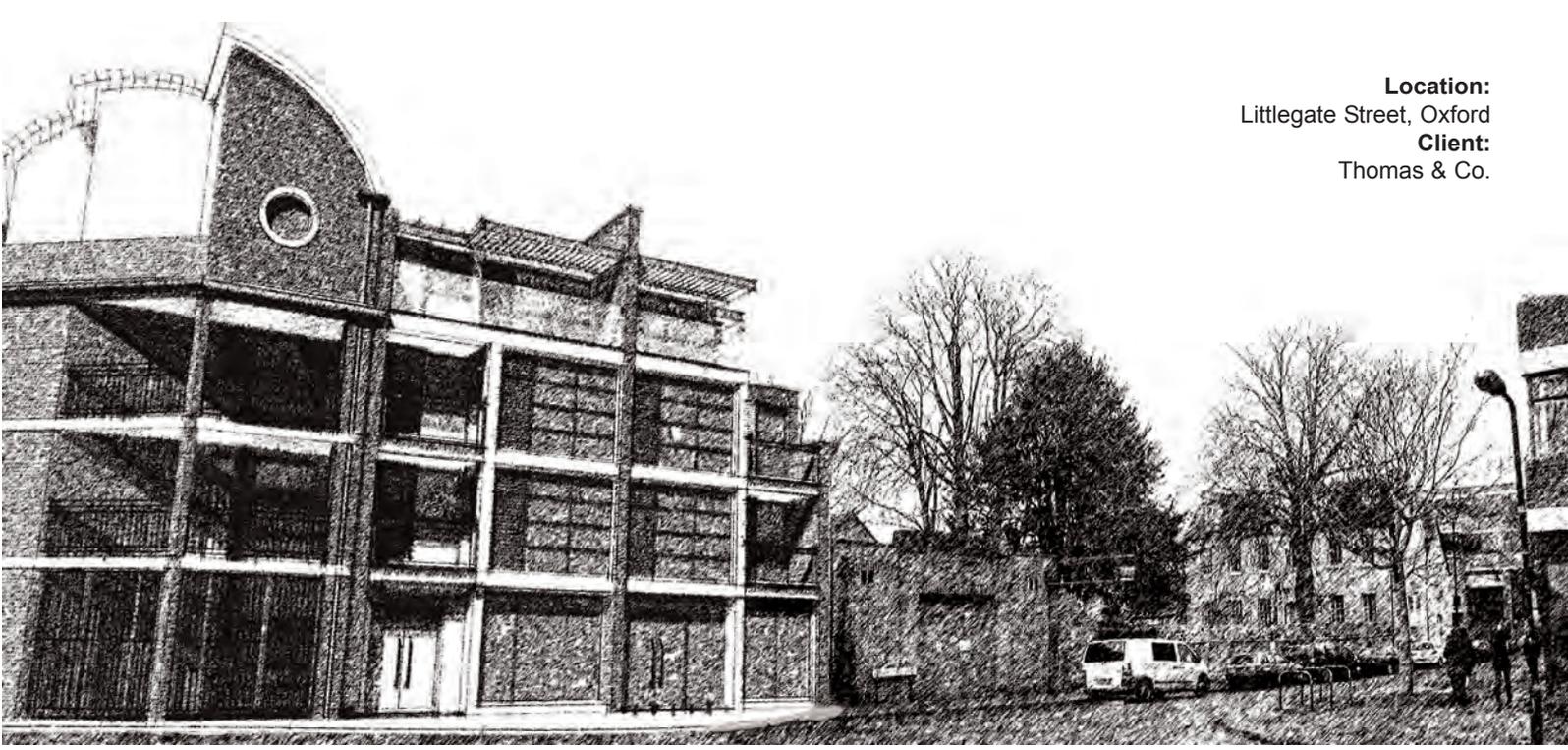


Location:
 Littlegate Street, Oxford
Client:
 Thomas & Co.



COMMUNITY RENAISSANCE

Mixed use redevelopment of derelict former youth facility in the centre of Oxford

The project proposes the redevelopment of a modest yet prominent site in the city's Southwest quarter, currently occupied by a former youth centre which has remained derelict for over twenty years. A restrictive covenant stipulating community use on the site has resulted in several unsuccessful applications for redevelopment in the past.

Situated at the junction of Littlegate Street and Albion place, the site lies at the edge of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area. To the north of the site, screened by an established garden of tall trees, is the 17th Century Grade II listed Vicarage of St Aldates church.

Opposite and to the south lies a mixture of large scale commercial and residential properties, including a 5-storey apartment

block adjacent to the proposal site on its southern boundary.

In contrast, to the west of the site lies a development of family homes of a distinctly suburban scale and appearance.

Proposed is the replacement of the existing structure with a new, mixed use building consisting two floors of community centre halls, topped by eleven one-bedroom apartments over three floors.

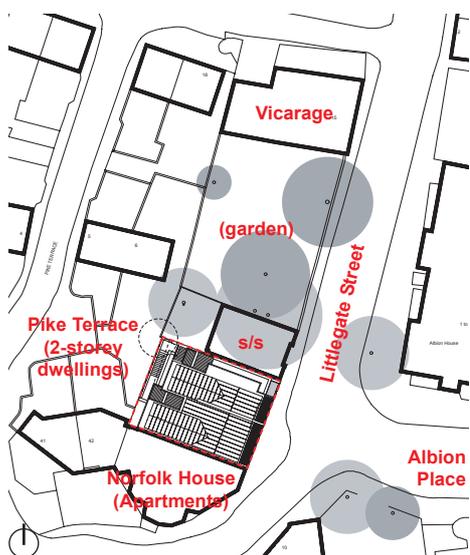
The design process commenced with a detailed historical investigation and contextual analysis of the surrounding area: its routes, principle views and the existing building fabric.

In exploring the potential of the site through initial sketch studies, various considerations became apparent, and their

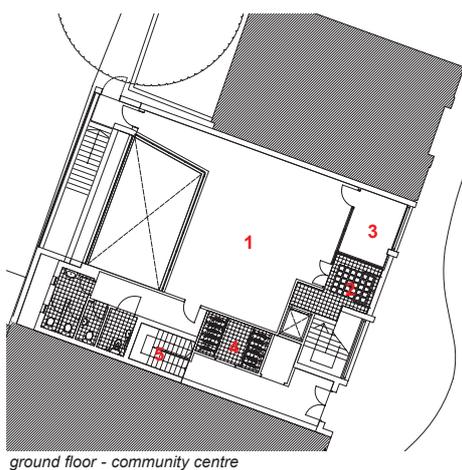
resolution would inform the development toward the final design:

A marked urban/suburban contrast exists between the front and rear of the site. The massing of the proposal was carefully arranged so as to resolve this contrast while showing appropriate deference to the Vicarage and its gardens to the north. In addition, the presence of a strong urban form of the adjacent apartment block required a neighbour which would not compete, but instead integrate with it while offering an active face onto Albion Place and the public realm to the east.

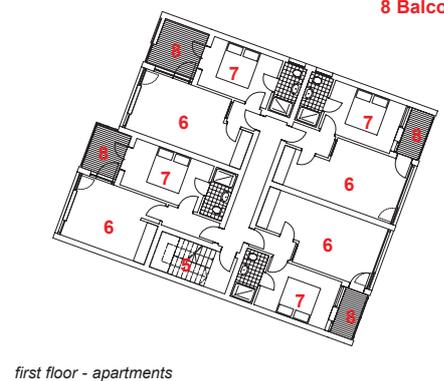
More technical issues remained including bringing daylight into the deep plan and low level of the community halls and ensuring that overlooking of the two-storey dwellings to the west was avoided.



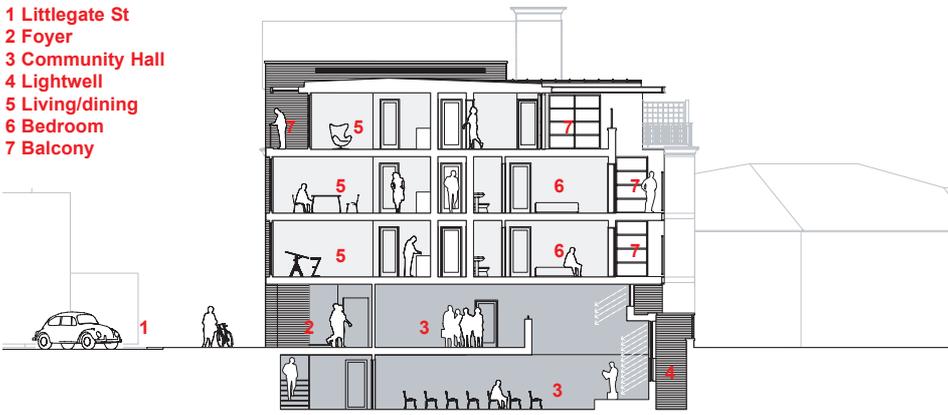
Top View from Littlegate Street/Albion Place junction.
 Left Site plan.
 Below, Right Floor plans.



- 1 Community Hall
- 2 Foyer
- 3 Office
- 4 Cycles
- 5 Stairs
- 6 Living/dining
- 7 Bedroom
- 8 Balcony



- 1 Littlegate St
- 2 Foyer
- 3 Community Hall
- 4 Lightwell
- 5 Living/dining
- 6 Bedroom
- 7 Balcony



The community centre is arranged over ground and basement levels, following the footprint of the building it replaces.

Service spaces are located on the south boundary, offering the potential to extend the facilities north to the site of the adjacent electrical substation in a future phase. To the rear (west), a strip of land is removed to provide a discreet escape route from the lower level, which at the same time - and more dramatically - forms a lightwell to the translucent glazed wall of the meeting hall inside.

A transparent frontage at pavement level encourages a sense of openness and welcome and enlivens the pavement outside, while allowing daylight to penetrate into the main hall through glazed partitions. Once inside, an open foyer space leads to a lift and stairway set against the glazed facade.

Above, the larger living spaces are differentiated from the more private bedroom spaces, which are recessed behind glazed guardings of open balconies which further animate the public face.

A brick 'fin' separates the dwellings at each level and continues to pavement level to anchor the composition, and, together with the brick 'bookends' to the

North and South, continue the vertical rhythm of its neighbour.

By contrast, the west of the building is staggered in plan and section, with projecting bays and recessed balconies producing an elevation of a more humane scale, which appears as a collection of buildings rather than a single massive block.

This approach both respects the scale of the nearby properties and addresses the issue of overlooking to the west, by offering principle views to the north.

In addition, west facing bays are treated so that the three functions of the traditional window are separated: Daylight penetrates obscured glazing below eye level; ventilation is provided by opening shutters behind louvered panels, and high level glazing allows clear skyward views. In this way overlooking is restricted despite a high proportion of glazing, producing bright interiors and a lively, animated elevation

In providing new community facilities and bright, modern apartments, the final proposal offers continuity with its neighbour and reinforces the urban grain, while responding sympathetically to the suburban scale of the smaller houses to the west and the setting of the Listed Vicarage.

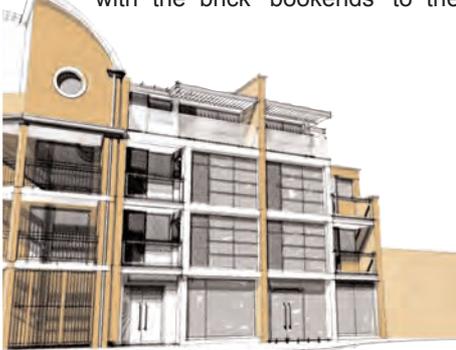
Top left Cross section through proposal.

Above Street elevation (east).

Below Interior view of typical living space

Below External study of staggered plan and balcony treatment.

Bottom Sketch perspectives



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