

Nominate a Heritage Asset

The Old Power Station, Arthur Street



1. WHAT IS IT? Is it one of the following?	Tick
a building or group of buildings	y
a monument or site (an area of archaeological remains or a structure other than a building)	
a place (e.g. a street, park, garden or natural space)	
a landscape (an area defined by visual features or character, e.g. a city centre, village, suburb or field system)	

2. WHY IS IT INTERESTING? Is it interesting in any of the following ways?	Tick / Rank
Historic interest – a well documented association with a person, event, episode of history, or local industry	y
Archaeological interest – firm evidence of potential to reveal more about the human past through further study	
Architectural interest – an example of an architectural style, a building of particular use, a technique of building, or use of materials	y
Artistic interest – It includes artistic endeavour to communicate meaning or use of design (including landscape design) to enhance appearance	

What is it about the asset that provides this interest?

Historic interest: The power station was built at Cannon Wharf in 1892 for the Oxford Electric Company Ltd. They were designed by Thomas Parker (of Elwell and Parker and later the Electric Construction Company Ltd.), a renowned electrical engineer of the late Victorian period. The system of transporting electricity across the city devised by Parker became known as the 'Oxford System'. Whilst the river would have provided a convenient location for transportation of coal for the power station, its position would also have been important for the supply of water for cooling. The same relationship is seen at Parker's earlier power station at Commercial Road Wolverhampton (a Grade II listed building), built in 1884, next to the Birmingham Canal. By 1895 all the colleges had converted to using electric lighting, along with many university buildings and businesses, with 7,000 electric lamps installed in the first year of the station's operation. The

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power station continued in operation as the city's main source of electricity until 1969. For local people the station was a cause for complaint, including the smuts emitted from the chimney falling on washing! However the station also provided benefits including warm water for swimming, whilst spilled coal supplemented many domestic fuel supplies. Whilst power stations might be thought of as rather utilitarian buildings today, in the late 19th century this would have been an exciting building representing the introduction of the latest achievement in science and technology in Oxford and heralding a cleaner and safer source of light (in addition to its other uses) than the more dangerous town gas.

Architectural interest: The buildings were designed by the architect A. Brevitt, who also designed the Wolverhampton Power Station with Parker. On its river frontage it is an attractive building with polychrome brickwork forming false arcading with an Italianate character. The Oriel window in the left hand bay appears to mark a manager's office, presumably allowing views of the barges along the river to allow management of the wharf. Above this the building is constructed of plainer material, whilst the elevation facing the yard at Arthur street also has a plainer industrial character with tall steel-framed windows framed by engaged pilasters rising to a deep, stepped cornice. The windows in the southernmost range retain semi-circular arched heads

3. WHY IS IT LOCALLY VALUED? Is the interest of the asset valued locally for any of the following reasons?	Tick / Rank
Association: It connects us to people and events that shaped the identity or character of the area	y
Illustration: It illustrates an aspect of the area's past that makes an important contribution to its identity or character	y
Evidence: It is an important resource for understanding and learning about the area's history	
Aesthetics: It makes an important contribution to the positive look of the area either by design or fortuitously	y
Communal: It is important to the identity, cohesion, spiritual life or memory of all or part of the community	
How is the asset locally valued as heritage?	
<p>Illustration: The building illustrates the development of West Oxford as an industrial suburb with large industrial building set amongst the narrow streets of housing that continued to be built up to the end of the 19th century. IT also illustrates the development of new technologies on Oxford and the introduction of electricity as part of the development of modernity in Oxford, whilst the buildings architecture reveals how the builders of industrial works in the city continued to maintain a commitment to achieving a positive aesthetic impact alongside achieving the utilitarian function of their buildings.</p> <p>Association: The building has an important association with the historical development of the rivers as transport routes that have influenced the development of industrial landuses in West Oxford.</p> <p>Aesthetic value: The retention of the ornamental architectural detailing of the building, contributes to the attractiveness of the riverside, whilst the building's industrial character has its own aesthetic quality that provides a foil to the lower scale housing development around it that maintains the Victorian character of the area but provides variety and drama in the streetscene.</p>	

4. WHAT MAKES ITS LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE SPECIAL? Do any of the following features make the heritage significance of the asset stand out above the surrounding environment?	Tick
Age ... Is it particularly old, or of a date that is significant to the local area?	y
Rarity ... Is it unusual in the area or a rare survival of something that was once common?	y
Integrity ... Is it largely complete or in a near to original condition?	y
Group value ... Is it part of a group that have a close historic, aesthetic or communal association?	
Oxford's identity ... Is it important to the identity or character of the city or a particular part of it?	

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Other ... Is there another way you think it has special local value?	
How does this contribute to its value?	
Age: The building is an early structure relating to the introduction of electricity as a power source for the city and as such represents a period when this was still viewed as an exciting and cutting edge technology. It also relates to a period when the river continued to act as an industrial waterway and when West Oxford's industries were still developing as an important part of its character. As such it dates from an important phase in the area's development.	
Rarity: This is a unique asset within the city.	
Integrity: The building survives to a high level of integrity and is recognisable for its former industrial function, whilst it also retains part of the internal fixtures and fittings that illustrate its historic use.	