

# The Covered Market High Street Oxford

## HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

June 2013



Oxford City Council

Heritage and Specialist Services Team

St Aldates Chambers

Oxford

OX1 1DS

**Contents Page:**

---

Summary	4
Site	5
History of site	7
History of Building	10
Description:	
External	15
Interior	17
Heritage Significance	30
Treats/Vulnerabilities/Opportunities	32
National Planning Policy Framework	33
Bibliography	35

## List of figures:

---

<b>Figure</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.	Ordnance Survey map showing the Covered Market, 2013. Oxfordshire County Council	5
2.	Views of the roofs of the Covered Market from the top of Carfax Tower looking NE	6
3.	Agas Map of Oxford 1578	8
4.	Faden Map of Oxford 1789	8
5.	Nos 13-14 High Street	10
6.	John Gwynn's plan and elevation of the Market 1774	11
7.	1 <sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance survey map for Oxford 1872	12
8.	2 <sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Map for Oxford 1898-1900	13
9.	Photograph of the interior of the Covered Market. Henry Taunt 1909	13
10.	Clerk of the Market weighing butter	14
11.	View of High Street elevation	15
12.	Image of cartouche fronting Market Street	16
13.	View of the Market Street elevation	16
14.	Plan of Interior of Covered Market dated 1979	18
15.	View of cast iron roof in the Covered Market	19
16.	Image of inscription above avenue 1	19
17.	View of late 1830s shopfront at west end of Central Avenue	20
18.	View of metal bars above the shopfront of Nos 61-64	21
19.	View of concealed window above south entrance in avenue 1	21
20.	Plan of Covered Market dated 2011	22
21.	View of king post roof along avenue 1 looking north	23
22.	View of spayed doorway	24
23.	View of terracotta floor tile under the shop front of No 98	25
24.	View of queen post roof with braces	25
25.	View of horizontal timber louvers along the east wall of avenue 4	26
26.	View of large timber sash with horns	26
27.	View of 6 in sized panelled door in avenue 4	27
28.	View of hanging lanterns above avenues 1-4	28
29.	View of the basement tunnel running north/south	29
30.	View of earlier cellar door	29

## Summary

---

Oxford's Covered Market was begun in 1772-4 to the designs of John Gwynn as a market for meat, fish, poultry, vegetables and herbs to replace the street markets in Fish Street (St Aldates) and Butchers Row (Queen Street). It was rebuilt and enlarged in 1834-40 by Thomas Wyatt the younger. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century additional roofs were constructed and new avenues built. In 1880s and the 1890s extensive reconstruction was undertaken. .

It was listed grade II in March 2000 and is situated in the Central and City Conservation Area. It holds architectural interest for its composition of lofty arcades of several phases of building and reconstruction from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards and shopfronts which are characteristic of the Market's function and contributory to its appearance. The construction of a Covered Market is of historic interest as evidence of the evolution of the contemporary sensibilities towards public health and helps understanding of the commercial development of Oxford, which was particularly active in the C18th and C19th centuries.

It has rarity value as a covered market which has been in continual use and is still in use as such, primarily by local businesses.

This report describes the history of the development of the market, assesses its heritage significance and provides a summary of the policy framework and national advice on heritage management, to inform decisions about the building's future.

## Site:

---

The Covered Market is bordered by the High Street (to the south), Market Street (to the North), Cornmarket (to the west) and Turl Street (to the east).

It is located behind Nos 12-16 High Street to the south and flanked by the Golden Cross, a small, semi-covered walkway between Cornmarket to the west and the market.

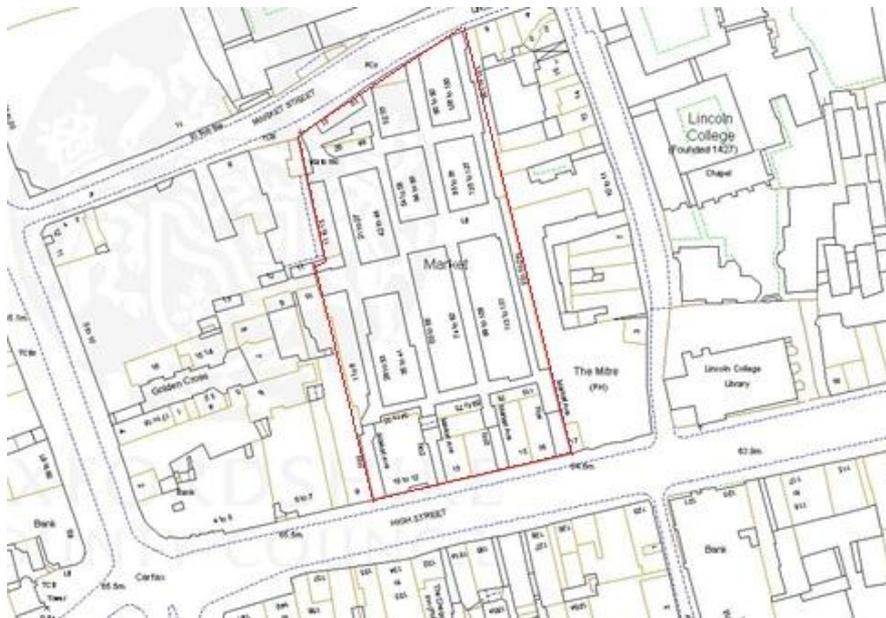


Fig 1: Ordnance Survey map showing the Covered Market, 2013. Oxfordshire County Council.

There are three avenue entrances from Market Street and four from High Street. There is a further western western entrance to the Covered Market from the Golden Cross.

Opposite the Covered Market in Market Street is the grade I listed, three storeyed 17<sup>th</sup> century South Range of Jesus College, which provides a strong sense of enclosure to Market Street and is part of a cluster of college buildings - including Exeter and Lincoln Colleges. On the south side of Market Street are specialist shops and a restaurant.

The streets surrounding the Covered Market are well used by pedestrians, cyclists as a through route to the main shopping streets in the City and by service vehicles for deliveries, Glimpsed views to the interior of the Market are possible through the avenue entrances from High Street. Views out to High Street and Market Street are also possible once inside the Market though the various entrances.

Much of the covered market is hidden from view behind other buildings, with the avenue entrances being the only indication of its existence. However in Market Street there is a public presence with the stone façade of what was the fish market and the timber framed roof structure of Avenue 4.

From high viewing points, mainly Carfax Tower the roofs of the Market can be seen and its location within the city block understood.



**Fig 2: Views of the roofs of the Covered Market from the top of Carfax Tower looking NE.**

## History of Site

---

Central Oxford lies within an extensive and dispersed complex of prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments dating from the Middle Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age, located on the Summertown-Radley Gravel terrace between the Cherwell and Thames rivers.

The Covered Market plot occupies a central location on the spur of the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace on which Oxford developed. In the Middle Neolithic-Early Bronze Age the terrace attracted an extensive landscape of ritual and funerary monuments (including a possible mortuary enclosure, henge and round barrows), the nearest recorded examples being likely barrows at Logic Lane 350m to the east and at St Michael's Street 200m to the north-west of the Site. The full extent of this extensive monumental complex remains unknown and there is general potential for remains of this period under central and northern parts of the historic city. By the Middle Iron Age this 'sacred' landscape was no longer respected and a pattern of dispersed farmsteads, fields and enclosures had been established across parts of the terrace, a pattern of activity that continued through the Roman and early Saxon periods. The Site can therefore be assessed as having a moderate potential for prehistoric and Roman remains.

Oxford may have originated as a Minster and/or trading settlement located close to the Thames river crossing at St Aldates in the middle Saxon period. In the 9th or early 10th century a burh (fortified town) was laid out on a grid centred on the Carfax crossroads. The burh may have been subsequently extended to the east and perhaps to the west, with the primary burh originally extending as far east along the High Street as St Mary's Church. The Site is located within this primary burh and previous archaeological investigations have recovered Late Saxon remains along Cornmarket to the west, the High Street frontage to the south and to the east at Lincoln College and All Saints Church. Late Saxon structures have been recorded during investigations directly south of the market at 13 High Street in 1972 (UAD Monument No 939). Furthermore well preserved Late Saxon remains have recently been identified nearby in the basement of Nos 6-7 High Street, where the excavation of a lift pit led to the recovery of charred plant remains from a wood lined feature. A grain of barley from this pit produced an 8th-9th century radio-carbon date (Boothroyd and Leech 2012). The Site can therefore be assessed as having high potential for Late Saxon remains.

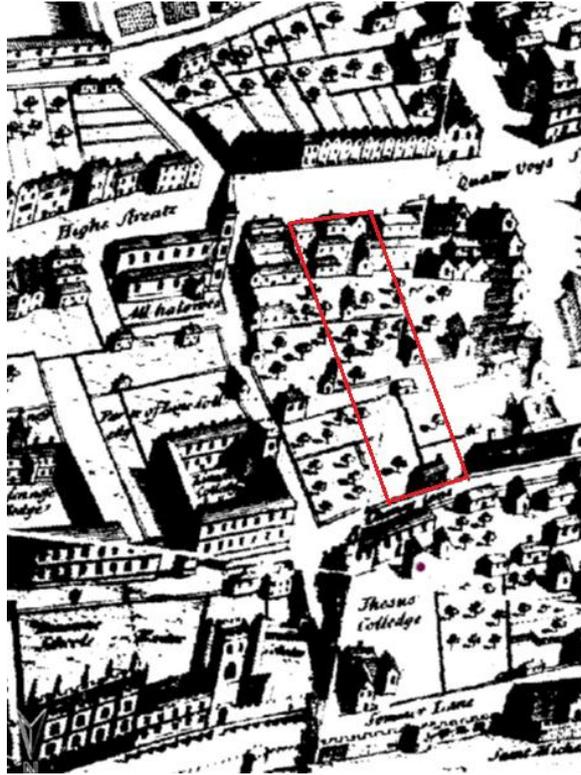


Fig 3: Agas Map of Oxford 1578. Approximate location for Covered Market. Crown Copyright database 2011. Ordnance Survey 100019348. Oxford City Council Archaeology database.

The Site occupies a number of former medieval tenements that fronted onto High Street and Market Street. The exact date of Market Street has not been confirmed, however it is likely to have formed part of the Late Saxon street grid. The remains of cellars belonging to medieval and post-medieval buildings can be anticipated along these street frontages.



Fig 4: Faden Map of Oxford 1789 showing construction of Covered Market and Market Inspectors House to the west.

On the Market Street frontage the north-east part of the Site is located over the former plots of Mildred Hall (UAD MON No 869) and Pury Hall (UAD MON No 879), both former academic halls associated with the medieval University. On the High Street frontage of the market notable former buildings included the Kings Head (UAD MON No 504) and Croxford's Inn (UAD MON No 531). The name King's Head was given to several establishments, first appearing in 1451 when a license was granted for a baker's oven. The King's Inn at 10-12 High Street was opened in 1696 and closed in 1752. Croxford's Inn was in existence by 1357. The Site can therefore be assessed as having high potential for medieval and post-medieval remains.

Little archaeological work has taken place within the market itself. In 1991 a watching brief by Oxford Archaeological Unit during underpinning at Richard's Butchers Shop recorded stone footings were found along the east, west and north sides of the shop. These were interpreted as the foundations of the original market unit, not a pre-existing building (UAD Event No 599).

## History of Building:

---

The Market was officially opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1774.

Work on the foundations of the Covered Market (MON68) began in May 1772 to replace the proliferation of market stalls that impeded access along the main streets. The Market was designed by John Gwynn, architect of Magdalen Bridge. Although very little of Gwynn's 18<sup>th</sup> century construction remains, the layout and stone foundations remain to this day.

Street markets by this point still retained their medieval patterns with certain trades based in certain streets such as in Fish Street (St Aldates) and Butcher Row (Queen Street and formerly High Street). In 1771, the Oxford Mileways Act was passed in order to declutter the main city roads and improve them for traffic movements.

The Act was primarily concerned with making the City's main roads 'more safe and commodious for traffic'<sup>1</sup>. The commissioners in charge of bringing this about set about creating a new market space but they also demolished the remaining city gates, widened existing roads and on occasion created new roads.

Properties on the High Street frontage (Nos 12-16), above the avenue entrances, a part of Gwynn's 1774 design were sold to raise money for the construction.



Fig 5: This image Nos 13-14 High Street, designed by Gwynn was taken by Henry Taunt in 1905. One of the four covered walkways into the Market from the High Street is also visible to the left of No 13.

---

<sup>1</sup>.Malcolm Graham, 'The Building of Oxford Covered Market, Oxoniensia, XLIV, 1979, p81.

The building work was split between Oxford carpenters Tawney and Roberts, who built the first 20 butchers shops and William Green, a carpenter for Waterstock, who built the remaining 20 butchers. The first part of the market to operate contained butcher's shops, while other types of stall were introduced gradually.

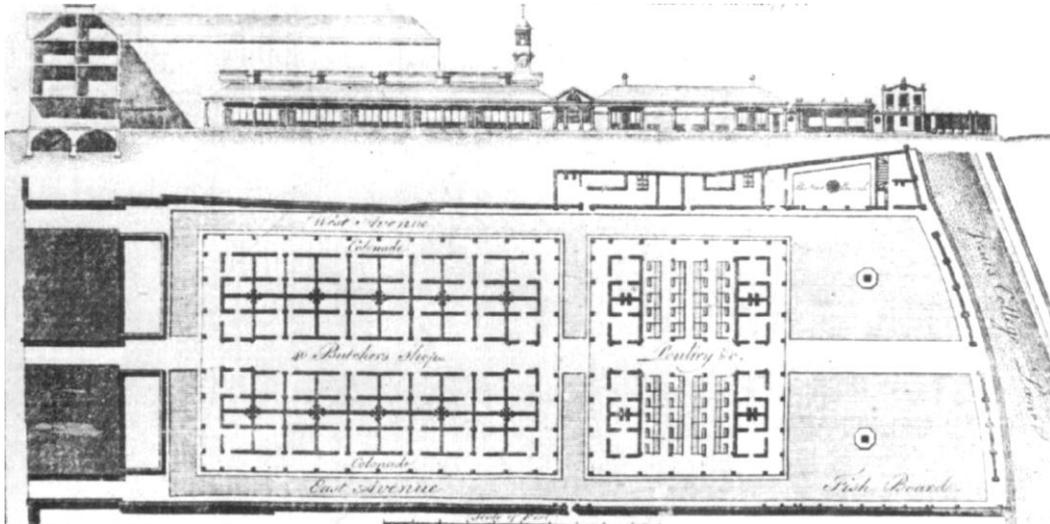


Fig 6: John Gwynn's plan and elevation of the Market 1774. Malcolm Graham, 'The Building of Oxford Covered Market, Oxoniensia, XLIV, 1979, p91.

By 1775, there were 28 shops and 40 butcher's shops which were divided into blocks by wide avenues. The shops were constructed on stone foundations and were timber-framed with lath and plaster walls with Stonesfield slate roofs and surrounding stone colonnades. At the north end of the Market there was an open area for fisherman, gardeners and other goods. There were three entrances to the Market along Jesus College Lane (Market Street). In 1789 a house was constructed for the Market Inspector in the NW corner of the site.

The Market House to the north-west was built for the supervisory beadle (Market Inspector) in 1789.

The Market underwent various phases of alteration and enlargement during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 1838, Thomas Wyatt Junior was appointed to extend the Market to the west. Wyatt insisted upon an iron roof and stone piers, which were cast by Dewer's foundry, London in 1839.

New imposing entrances to Market Street designed by H J Underwood were commissioned between 1842-49.



Fig 7: 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance survey map for Oxford 1872. Oxfordshire County Council.

The 1st edition of the Ordnance Map for Oxford dated 1872 shows only three avenues into the Market from High Street and open stalls at the north end of the Market fronting Market Street.

A new avenue constructed in 1881 on the western side of the Market was designed by Oxford architect Fredrick Codd and obliterated the surviving remnants of Gwynn's original market stall layout. Other works carried out including the rebuilding of the central portion of avenue 4, following a fire, by Oxford architect E.G Bruton, which was extended north to Market Street in 1898. The south portion of Avenue 4 was rebuilt in 1892 and the southern area of avenue 3 was rebuilt in 1894.



Fig 8: 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Map for Oxford 1898-1900.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Map for Oxford shows the new 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue entrance off the High Street. It also shows that the open areas to the north and east of the site had been covered over by 1900.



Fig 9: Photograph of the interior of the Covered Market. Henry Taunt 1909. Oxfordshire Local Studies Centre. HT11025.

The photograph above taken in 1909 shows several butcher shops advertising their goods in the foreground. There is also sawdust covering the floor.



**Fig 10: Clerk of the Market weighing butter. D261534a. 1944. Oxfordshire Studies Library.**

The Covered Market remained open during the Second World War and was a vital resource for the City. This image above shows butter being weighed out during rationing.

The current extent of the Covered Market from High Street to Market Street was complete by 1894.

## Description

---

### External:

The Market fronts on to both Market Street and the High Street. The High Street elevation, which is three storeys, is composed of a formal classical C18th façade with wide central pediment, sash windows on both first and second floor – the first floor windows being taller, and with three, pedimented tripartite sashes spaced at regular intervals along the façade. The High Street façade (which has retail uses on the ground floor with the first floors in separate occupation and ownership) is part of a street that exhibits considerable variety in architectural form.



Fig 11: View of High Street elevation.

Market Street has a different character and a sense of being a medieval lane. This elevation of the market is more varied, in part a limestone ashlar façade with blind arcading and an off centre main entrance and further along the white timber framed skeletal structure that supports the extended roof of the market. The stone facade has three gabled bays to the right with ball finials. On the ground there is a blind arcade which is purely decorative with imposts which the arch springs from and keystones above the gateway on the left and centre. Above the gated entrances on the first floor are Venetian windows with 6 lights. The end bay on the right has a pilastered carriageway entrance with a small cartouche above depicting the City's coat of arms and date of 1897.



**Fig 12: Image of cartouche fronting Market Street**

On the left the timber roof is hipped with cantilever brackets built in to support the roof canopies, which projects out over glazed timber and open ends to aisles. At the eastern end there is a large timber louvered hipped roof ventilator. The 4 metal entrance gates are probably 19<sup>th</sup> century with decorative arrowhead tops.



**Fig 13: View of the Market Street elevation**

In between is a more recent, flat roofed public toilet block, which fortunately is mostly obscured in long views up and down the street.

The stone façade has been repaired and redecorated recently and new signage fixed to the Market Street elevation.

## Description

---

### Interior:

The Covered Market is two storey plus basement. The Market has four avenues running north/south between entrances from Market Street and covered walkways to High Street, crossed by three transverse avenues running east/west in a grid pattern with ranges of shops, all covered by iron and timber roofs of different phases and constructions. A new entrance at the west side of Central Avenue through the Golden Cross was formed in 1986.

Two storey market stalls are grouped back-to back in between the avenues and along the flanking walls. Behind the external walls are design elements such as timber panelling and close boarded floorboards and narrow timber staircases leading to the first floor which are characteristic of the Market's function, and are contributory to its appearance. The majority of units have retail use on the ground floor with storage and office space above, although a minority of units have also converted the upper floor into retail or commercial use.

There is a vast array of goods and services on offer in the Market including food and drink, electronics, home and furnishings, hair and beauty, gifts, fashion, newsagents and pets.

The structure is comprised of several phases of building and reconstruction from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This plan of the Covered Market from 1979 shows how the Market has evolved from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

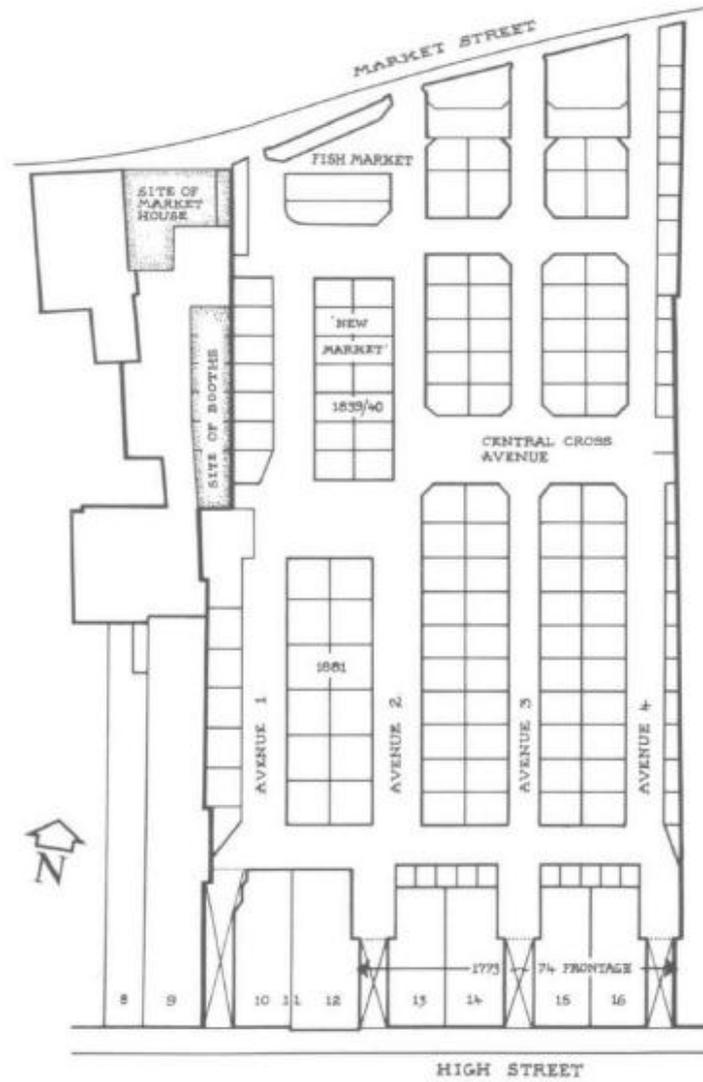


Fig 14: Plan of Interior of Covered Market dated 1979. Taken from Malcolm Graham, 'The Building of Oxford Covered Market, Oxoniensia, XLIV, 1979, p83.

As shown on plan the earliest surviving roof structure is in the north west corner of the Market. Also known as the 'New Market', unlike the rest of the Market the roof here is constructed of cast iron and is made up of a series of trusses and tie beams held together with tie rods set on pyramidal capped brick rendered columns.



**Fig 15: View of cast iron roof in the Covered Market.**

The cast iron roof projects over the northern end of avenues 1 & 2 with a pitched slate roof tiles. There is a large metal glazed lantern with a pitched slate roof above the western side of the Central Avenue. The Central Avenue runs west/east and steps northward's along avenue 2. At the north gable end of the roof are decorative spandrels with foliage motif.

The ironwork has been painted white to reflect the light. Visible on one of the tie beams is an inscription for 'Dewer London 1839'. Little is known of the work of the Dewer Foundry in London, although they did cast iron Dragons, designed by London Architect, J. B. Bunning, that marked the boundaries of the City of London.



**Fig 16: Image of inscription above avenue 1.**

Below the roof trusses and in between the capped pilasters are vertically framed clerestory windows.

To the left of the Golden Cross signage is an attractive sign in the shape of a boot depicting goods sold within. The Market clock is also fixed below the iron roof in the Central Avenue. The back to back stalls labelled 'New Market' on the 1979 plan are contemporary with the roof with mostly 20<sup>th</sup> shopfronts that have been built out below the fascia into Avenues 1 & 2. The shopfronts which flank the western wall are 20<sup>th</sup> century with projecting bow windows at first floor level.

On the south side of the Central Avenue part of the 1830s shopfront has survived complete with moulded cornice, fascia board and pilasters.



**Fig 17: View of late 1830s shopfront at west end of Central Avenue.**

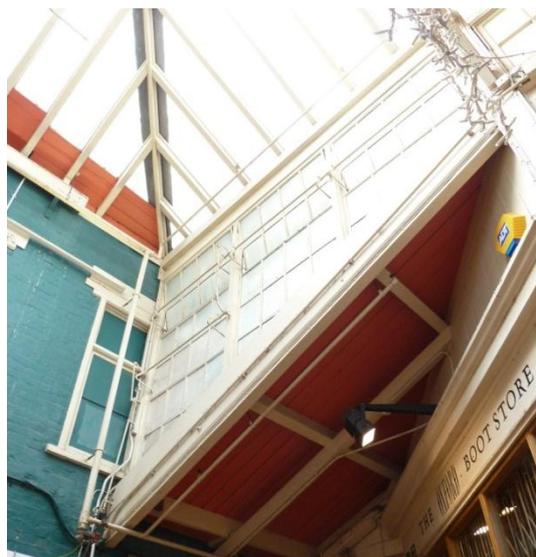
Above the shopfront at the northern end of avenue 2 facing east the 19<sup>th</sup> century iron bars remain above the cornice. These projecting metal bars were used to hang the meat on the outside of the shop.



**Fig 18: View of metal bars above the shopfront of Nos 61-64.**

Further examples of these projecting metal bars can be found above shopfronts along Avenue 2 and 3 and in the Central Avenue and continue to operate as butchers shops. In some instances the ironwork has been used to fix new sign boards and external lighting, which in some instance is clumsy and conceal views of glazed gallery and timberwork above. A number of air conditioning units have also been fixed behind ironwork or above the fascia board which obscures views of the roof construction.

The southern end of Avenue 1 was added in 1881 with a new 4<sup>th</sup> covered gated entrance constructed leading to the High Street.



**Fig 19: View of concealed window above south entrance in avenue 1.**

The glazed timber roof above partially conceals the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century 3 light mullioned and transom casement window at the rear of No 10 High Street.

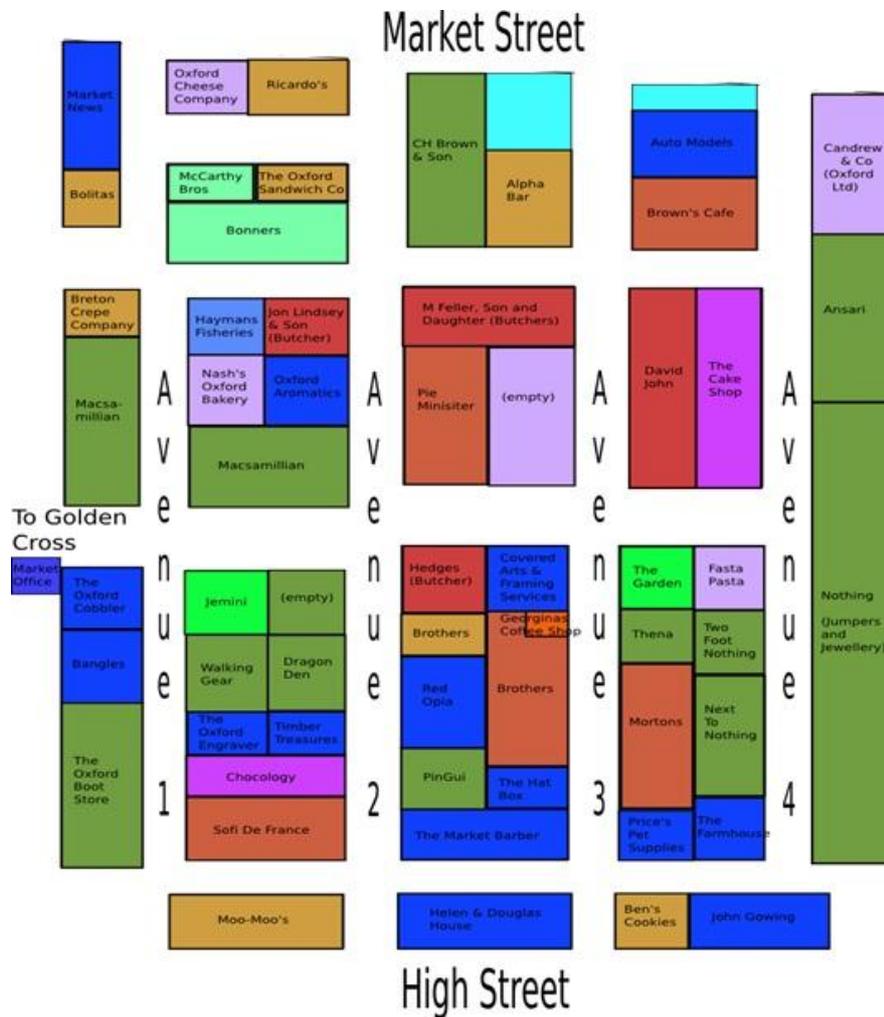


Fig 20: Plan of Covered Market dated 2011. [www.gagruarr.org/misc](http://www.gagruarr.org/misc)

This more up to date plan of the interior of the Market shows how many of the back to back units have been merged to form larger units.

The roof construction along avenues 1 & 2, including the cross aisle at the southern end of the Market is timber framed with King-post roof trusses.



**Fig 21: View of king post roof along avenue 1 looking north**

The roof is higher than the earlier cast iron roof with an internal glazed gallery above the shopfronts and open clerestory above. Some of the clerestory has been partially enclosed with corrugated iron and plastic horizontal boarding,. The majority of windows in the internal glazed gallery are 6 light top opening casement windows with lamb tongue mouldings that light the upper floor of the shop units.

The back to back stalls, dated 1881 on the above 1979 plan, are contemporary with the 1881 roof. Although many of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfronts have been replaced many achieve good proportions in shop front design, with components such as cornice, fascia board, division of window glass and stallriser well related to each other. Elsewhere some of the shop fronts have been replaced and have been built outwards below the fascia into the aisles. This encroachment of shopfronts, including the windows, obscure views of the traditional shop front designs and impede views along the avenues.

The single storey stalls along the south wall of the south aisle are also 20<sup>th</sup> century timber shopfronts and project into the aisle.

The northern half of Avenue 2, 3 and the majority of Avenue 4 shown on the 1979 plan above were rebuilt in the in the late 1880s. The timber roof has King-post trusses with braces and struts with internal glazed gallery above the shopfronts and open clerestory above.

One of the most distinctive features of the historic back to back stalls in this part of the Market are the splayed doorways which survive in part at each corner block.



Fig 22: View of splayed doorway.

Many of the shop front doors have glazed upper panels and solid panels in the bottom half. Above the doorways is a rectangular fascia board with framing to mounted signage. Elsewhere along the Avenues central doorways are used to access shop units. Some of these central doorways have now been blocked and only the beaded architraves or over lights are visible in the shopfront design.

Where timber shopfronts remain, internal roof trusses are pegged into the frame. The pegs are visible externally. A fragment of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century terracotta floor clay tiling, with drainage channel is partially visible in front of No 98 at the northern end of Avenue 3. The existing floor tiles are 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Fig 23: View of terracotta floor tile under the shop front of No 98.**

The eastern half of the Central cross avenue is covered by radial King post trusses with braces and struts. The shops fronting the south side of the Central Avenue have splayed doorways to match those to the north. Between units 61 and 81 are two low level windows with Crown glass in the left hand window. The right window glass has been painted.

The northern section of avenue 4 is covered by a Queen post roof with arch braces.



**Fig 24: View of queen post roof with braces**

This section of the Market was rebuilt in 1888 following a fire in 1886 and extended north to Market Street in 1898. Along the eastern wall at high level formed by the braces are large timber arches with horizontal timber louvers.



**Fig 25: View of horizontal timber louvers along the east wall of avenue 4.**

Above the louvers are clerestory windows with mullions and vertical timber louvers. At the northern end of Avenue 4 next to Market Street is the best preserved 19<sup>th</sup> century shop front complete with vertical boarded stall riser and large 19th century top opening sliding sash with horns. The window has 4 large panes on the lower sash with beading. The upper sash is 8 over 8 with 6 glazed panels remaining.



**Fig 26: View of large timber sash with horns**

Opposite the window on the western side of Avenue 4 is a 19<sup>th</sup> century timber six panelled door with beaded architrave.



**Fig 27: View of 6 in sized panelled door in avenue 4.**

The southern half of Avenue 4 was rebuilt in 1892 and the roof is much lower than neighbouring Avenues with king-post trusses with braces and struts. 4 paned clerestory windows are positioned below the roof trusses. The units are single storey on both sides of the Avenue. Projecting square timber signs are fixed above the fascia board and compete for prominence in the Avenue. The series of smaller shop units which flank the eastern wall have a continuous projecting green and yellow canvas canopy with external lighting which conceals a timber roof underneath. Above the canopy about half way along Avenue 4 is a distinctive oval shaped board on metal chain hung from one of the timber braces. Most projecting signs above shopfronts have simple, compact brackets with simple circular or rectangular timber boards no lower than the lower edge of the shop fascia.

The southern half of Avenue 3 was rebuilt in 1894 to match Avenue 2 with an internal glazed gallery above the shopfronts and open clerestory above.

The former fish market at the north end of Avenues 1 & 2 was rebuilt in 1897 and extended north fronting Market Street. Along the north wall of the building are late 19<sup>th</sup> century white glazed tiles up to the eaves.

Elsewhere the majority of the walls are painted white or cream. The timber roofs are painted salmon pink to contrast with the walls. The colours of shopfronts vary. The majority of shopfronts are painted in subtle muted colours in traditional shades.

Lighting varies throughout the Market.



**Fig 28: View of hanging lanterns above avenues 1-4**

Discrete uplighters fixed above cornices provide architectural lighting at high level. Metal octagonal lanterns hung from chains from the roof illuminate the avenues and shopfronts. Most shops also have additional external or internal lighting to illuminate shop windows and signage.

The cellar is located under the western part of the Covered Market and is accessed by steps located off the Central Avenue.



**Fig 29: View of the basement tunnel running north/south**

The cellar is a series of tunnels running north/south and east/west with stone walls and brick barrel vaulting. The tunnels running west/east are now blocked. Along the tunnel are small vaulted chambers set behind locked metal doors. There is graffiti etched into the wall which has been painted over.



**Fig 30: View of earlier cellar door.**

In front of one of the doors is an earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century planked and battened door with strap hinges.

## Heritage Significance:

---

- Many covered markets have been demolished or converted to other uses. Oxford's covered market has rarity value remaining in use as a covered market, occupied predominantly by local traders and in public ownership..
- It provides physical evidence of C18th and C19th challenges and solutions in the planning and management of Oxford's transport network and commercial trades. The site holds evidential value with the potential to reveal information about the early origins of this part of Oxford, as well as the earlier form of the covered market and its various phases of change.
- The covered market provides a valuable range of services, within the heart of the historic city. This experience provides understanding of the city's past, and experience of it in the present. Some of the stalls are located in their 'original' places and help understanding of the way trade was carried out with distinct parts for fish, meat and grocers. This holds historic interest and communal interest where some of the traders have been established for a long time.
- The layout of the covered market in a grid pattern, with long avenues allows stunning views of the roof structure. The skeletal timber construction has architectural and aesthetic appeal.
- Despite later alterations and additions some elements of the original market stalls are still visible – parts of original shopfront, piers, fascias. Where they survive these hold historic and architectural interest, and generally are of good quality, exhibiting good craftsmanship. The floor scape is part of this interest and there is still evidence of this in parts – where they survive, e.g original patterns, gullies and drains these help to explain the earlier form and uses.
- Construction of the covered market and its subsequent extension was implemented using a variety of local professions and trades – architects, carpenters, foundries. This history contributes to the story of Oxford more generally and also provides a information and a history on the fortunes of individual trades. This collective information holds historic interest.

- An experience of many markets that is still in operation here and abroad is the visual delight in external displays of stall produce. This still survives to some degree here, with the grocers, fishmongers, butchers and jewellery stalls. Where these stalls can be experienced – in longer views with the roof structure also in view the sense of an historic market and the visual delight of its construction and use can be fully experienced. This experience also changes with the seasons, particularly at Christmas time when the butchers display their game and bird.
- Similarly the smells, to some sometimes unpleasant (e.g. fish and cheese stalls) resonate with the qualities of a covered market. More recent trends – coffee shops add a new range of smells that contribute to the whole experience.
- Externally the presence of the market is very discreet. Whilst this may be a challenge for traders it nevertheless heightens the experience for those prepared to explore deeper and are met with a whole inside world that is very unexpected. The irony of this is that it is the fulfilment of what the C18th and C19th authorities wanted to achieve and thus holds historic interest, but it is also now one of the challenges to the continuing success and viability of the market.
- Similarly of historic interest, and an indicator of the success of the market is the absence of other groceries, butchers or fishmongers elsewhere in the city centre. (it is accepted that supermarket retailing trends may also play a part in this).

## Threats & Vulnerabilities & Opportunities

---

- Continual erosion of historic shopfronts, illuminated modern signage, lighting, air conditioning units.
- Potential to reveal more and gain better understanding of earlier fabric
- Balance between marketing individual traders and sustaining heritage significance
- A regular programme of maintenance
- improved lighting and way signing
- Potential to remove late 20<sup>th</sup> Century interventions to shopfronts and interiors. A more integrated approach to further alterations without undermining individuality.
- Traditional colour pallet that is neutral and provides a calming background for the mechanise.
- Exploiting the contribution stall displays can have.

## National Planning Policy Framework

---

Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. With the issuing of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March last year the Government has re-affirmed its aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

The Government sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of this. The NPPF sets out twelve core planning principles that should underpin decision making (paragraph 17.). Amongst those are:

- *not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;*
- *proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs;*
- *conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generation.*

The NPPF is supported by a Practice Guide that gives advice on the application of the historic environment policies.

Paragraph 78 of the guide explains the expected outcomes:

*There are a number of potential heritage benefits that could weigh in favour of a proposed scheme:*

1. *It sustains or enhances the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting.*
2. *It reduces or removes risks to a heritage asset.*
3. *It secures the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.*
4. *It makes a positive contribution to economic vitality and sustainable communities.*
5. *It is an appropriate design for its context and makes a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.*
6. *It better reveals the significance of a heritage asset and therefore enhances our enjoyment of it and the sense of place.*

The site is a listed building and also within a conservation area and is thus defined as a designated heritage asset. In relation to development affecting a designated heritage asset the NPPF states that:

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.*

The NPPF goes on to explain the differences between 'substantial' harm and 'less than substantial' harm, advising that any harm should be justified by the public benefit of a proposal. An important part of the assessment is to understand what the significance of the designated heritage asset is (derived from the sum of the archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic values a place holds). This is necessary to understand the nature of any impacts and is dependent on any special qualities the asset originally possessed and how those special qualities survive today. This is a complex assessment that considers all the heritage values a building holds. It does not solely rest on an existing state or relationship and is not about preserving everything that currently exists. Change is often an important element of significance.

The Practice Guide to the NPPF continues that harm represents "a *loss of value to society*" (paragraph 87). This suggests that consideration of impact should be assessed with this concept in mind. As already explained, the value relates to the heritage significance and therefore a proposal that involves *loss* of fabric, alteration of, or extension of that fabric need not automatically cause loss of value to society. If understanding and appreciation of the building's significance is not compromised and the important fabric that contributes to that significance is not compromised, then opportunity for society to benefit from the heritage asset is not affected.

What is clear in this advice is that change needs to be managed with an understanding of a site's history and significance. It is described as the intelligent management of change. There is no presumption that change should not take place. The advice is that change can happen and that if appropriately considered and justified the impacts on significance can be accepted. It explains what may be considered harmful impacts, but does not conclude that this means they could not be accepted.

This is a clear indication that resisting change to protect the status quo is no longer desirable or acceptable and that there is a place for new development to add to the quality and interest of the historic environment.

The Ministerial Forward sets out this new direction, explaining that intelligently managed change (sustainable development) should be embraced as a positive measure to protect and enhance our historic environment. Greg Clarke states:

*Sustainable development is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment.....Our historic environment – buildings, landscapes, towns and villages – can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers.*

The Practice Guide provides further practical advice on works of repair, restoration, alteration and addition.

**Repairs:** good conservation is founded on appropriate routine management and maintenance. It explains that care is needed to maintain the integrity of a place (historic, architectural and structural) and should be carried out only where necessary and in a timely fashion

**Restoration:** this may include small scale works to reinstate missing elements to larger projects such as removing modern additions and extensions or reinstating missing wings. Restoration works should seek to reveal or recover something of significance that has been eroded or lost with the purpose of enhancing the value and significance of the asset as a whole. For large assets, or groups of buildings this may involve recreating a street pattern, paving pattern, or reintroducing features that were a theme common to a group of buildings (e.g lighting, shopfronts)

**Addition and Alteration:** adapting a building to accommodate new uses, changing needs or upgrading services may require alterations or additions. Fabric is almost always an important part of a building and minimising loss should be a primary objective. New work should be introduced taking into account simple principles of proportion, height, massing and bulk, materials and relationship to adjoining structures, so that the new work does not dominate or overshadow the existing. Internal plan forms and internal spaces will be important characteristics of a heritage asset, holding historic, architectural and aesthetic interest. Change should be introduced in a way that does not erode these aspects of special interest. For some building types – commercial, industrial and agricultural, colour and finish and any surviving machinery or fixed implements may be of interest

English heritage has produced guidance for local authorities on the management of their own heritage assets, published in 2003 (*Managing Local Authority Assets*) it explains the need for a Local Authority to know what it has and encourages an overarching strategy for how it will manage all its heritage assets and retain them in use. It discusses the opportunities for making the most of heritage assets, keeping them in beneficial use and the need as a public authority to set a good example, championing best practice and good quality.

## **Bibliography:**

---

### **Books:**

1. Malcolm Graham, *The Building of Oxford Covered Market*, Oxoniensia Volume XLIV 1979
2. Christopher Hibbert Edit, *Encyclopaedia of Oxford*, MacMillan 1988
3. Victoria County History, Volume 4, City of Oxford, Alan Crossley, C R Elrington (Editors), Eleanor Chance, Christina Colvin, Janet Cooper, C J Day, T G Hassall, Mary Jessup, Nesta Selwyn, 1979, pp305-312.

### **Other resources**

4. University Archaeological Database, Oxford City Council
5. Oxford City Council – Planning and Photographic archive
6. [www.gagrauarr.org.uk/misc](http://www.gagrauarr.org.uk/misc)
7. English Heritage – List description – 9 March 2000, 612/8/10064.
8. [www.oxford-coveredmarket.co.uk](http://www.oxford-coveredmarket.co.uk)