

# Welcome

1

We are pleased to welcome you to this event today, which is being hosted by the Department of Education to provide you with information on plans for an extension to 15 Norham Gardens.

## PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION

The purpose of this exhibition is to share the University of Oxford's early proposals for an extension to the Department of Education, and to invite feedback from the local community.

This is an opportunity for residents to learn more about the plans and contribute their thoughts on how the development could positively shape their environment. By engaging at this early stage, the design team can better understand what currently works well and identify opportunities for improvement. Community comments will be carefully considered and, where possible, reflected in the evolving design to help ensure the project delivers lasting benefits for both the Department and its neighbours.

## CONTENTS

- Welcome
- Department of Education
- The Brief
- Site Analysis
- Design Response
- Sustainability
- Landscape
- Construction
- Summary and Next Steps



## YOUR VIEWS

We welcome your feedback on these proposals.

Please submit any comments to us either in hard copy or by email to: [public.consultation@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:public.consultation@admin.ox.ac.uk) by Friday 10th October 2025.

# 15 NORHAM GARDENS





## INTRODUCTION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

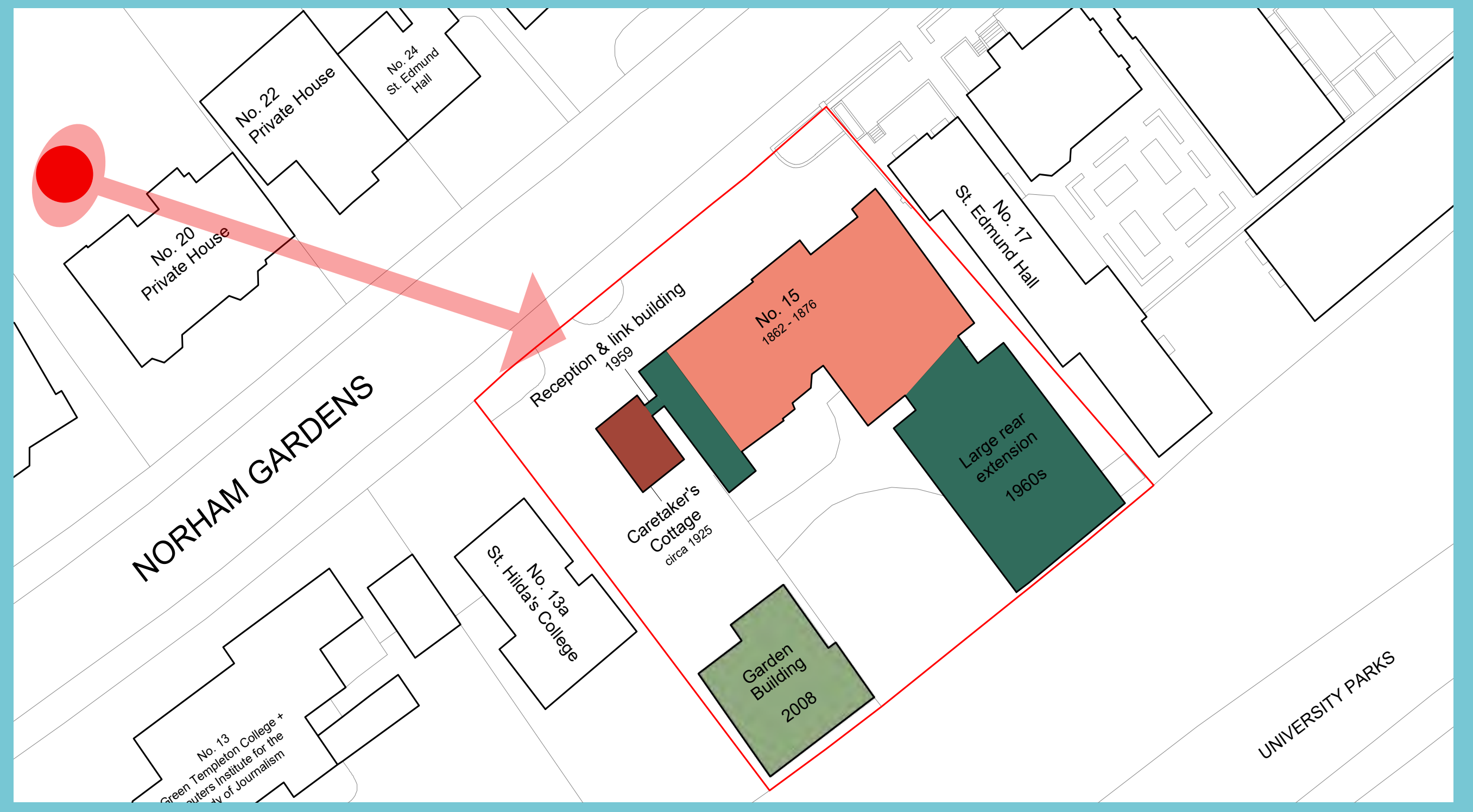
The University of Oxford's Department of Education is a leading academic institution focused on advancing research and teaching in education. The Department was founded in 1919 and currently has over 580 postgraduate students and more than 270 staff members.

The Department offers postgraduate teacher education, Masters and doctoral programmes, and is home to nine research groups and four specialist research centres. The outstanding quality and impact of the Department's research and teaching is recognised internationally, with the Department consistently ranking 3rd in the world and 1st in the UK in the Times Higher Education's World University Rankings by subject.

## 15 NORHAM GARDENS

The Department has been based at 15 Norham Gardens since the 1920s.

Over time, the site has evolved in response to the growth and changing needs of the Department. However, the Department now faces significant limitations to its operation.



 Bird's-eye view reference point

## NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT

### CAPACITY AND QUALITY OF SPACES

Growing demand for teaching and research has created a compelling need for additional space. The Department has proactively made use of external venues across Oxford and adapted its scheduling through repeated lectures and weekend sessions to accommodate the current intake. While these solutions have been effective in the short term, a purpose-built facility would provide a more long-term and efficient environment for staff and students alike.

There is a need to provide more high-quality teaching and office spaces to better reflect the Department's ambition and the high standards expected of a world-leading institution.

### ACCESSIBILITY - STEP FREE ENTRANCE

Currently, there is no step-free route from the street to the reception area, with alternative level-access routes only available through the sides of the site, into the back. Internal level changes present challenges for those with limited mobility.

The proposed upgrades offer the chance to create a more inclusive environment for all students, staff, and visitors, ensuring ease of access throughout the building.

### ARRIVAL EXPERIENCE

The arrival experience at the main entrance and reception currently differ between users, and present an opportunity for improvement.

With thoughtful redesign, it can better align with the surrounding streetscape and provide the accessible, welcoming presence that reflects the character and excellence of a distinguished educational institution.

### SUSTAINABILITY

The extension is being designed to contribute meaningfully to the University's ambitious net zero goals, while enhancing the performance and adaptability of existing spaces to support a more sustainable future across all departments.



Bird's eye view of the 15 Norham Gardens site, looking towards University Parks in the background



Many of the Department's teaching and office spaces are cramped, outdated and not fit for purpose. The brief has been developed to balance a sensitive addition to the site with addressing the key challenges faced by the Department.



## 1. A WELCOMING, INSPIRING MAIN ENTRANCE

- Enhance the quality and legibility of the front garden with improved hard and soft landscaping.
- Provide a new, easily identifiable entrance, with a well-defined, step-free route into the building signifying a clear point of arrival at one of the University of Oxford's Departmental buildings.
- Create a new, high-quality reception space which accommodates wheelchair users, to improve the arrival experience.



## 2. STEP-FREE ENTRANCE

- Create an inclusive main entrance that ensures equal access for all users, promoting dignity by allowing everyone to enter the building through the same shared point of arrival.
- An integrated step-free entrance to reception, lift, and level access to the majority of the building.
- Create accessible teaching and office spaces to reduce disparity between users.



## 3. FLEXIBLE SEMINAR SPACE

- Provide a large, high-quality teaching space that meets modern teaching standards.
- Allow for flexibility to accommodate various learning and discussion formats, from traditional lectures to group workshops and hybrid learning, with integrated Audio-Visual and IT infrastructure.
- Facilitate the Department's external engagements such as conferences and other out-of term activities.



## 4. MODERN OFFICE SPACE

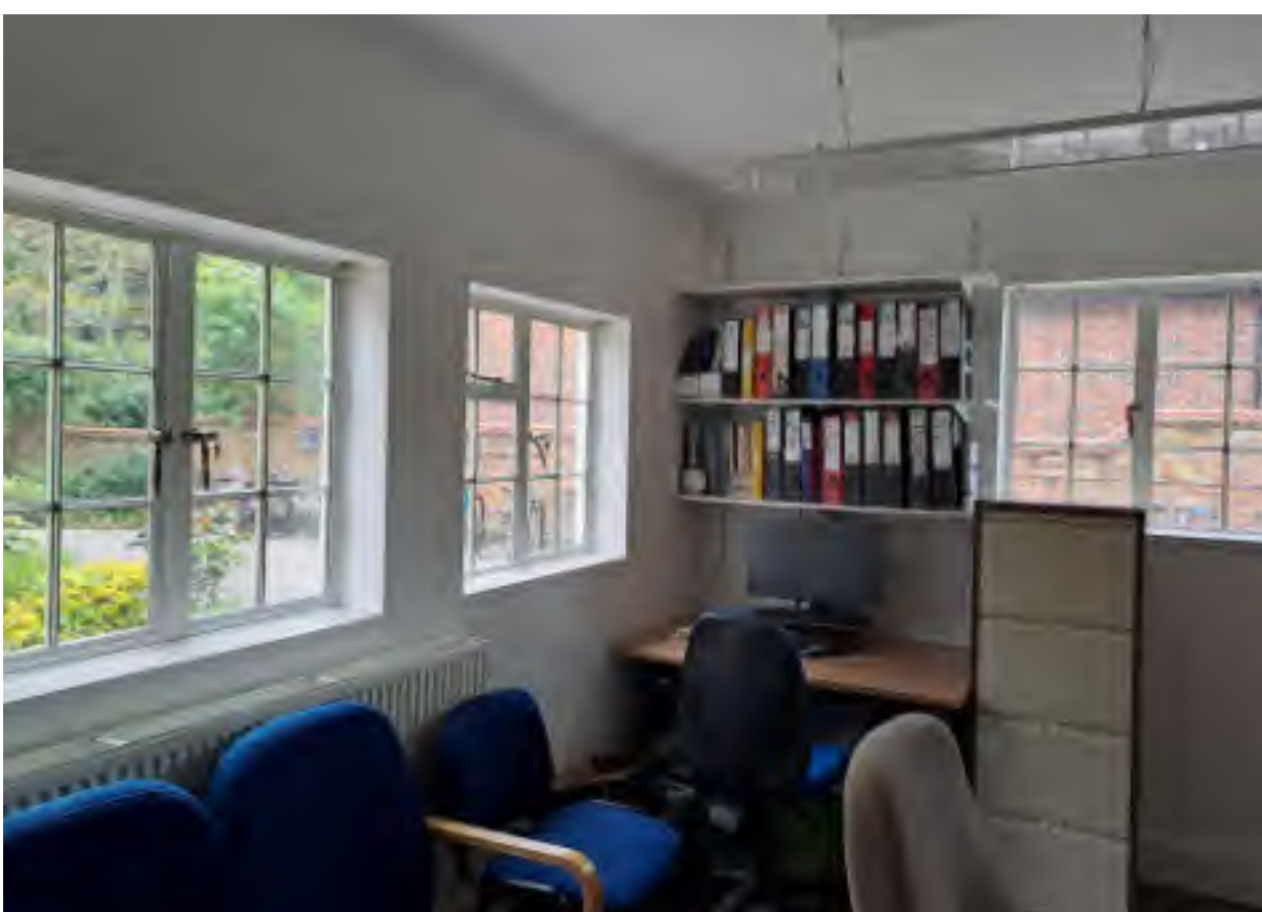
- Provide additional offices for staff in a range of capacities including a mix of shared and private rooms.
- Create modern work environments, with a range of spaces to encourage collaboration or provide privacy for focused tasks.



## 5. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Reduce carbon emissions by over 40% compared to current Building Regulations through Passivhaus principles.
- Incorporate a high performing fabric with a very low air permeability, and utilise air source heat pumps to reduce heating and cooling demands.
- Increase electricity supply to the existing building to support future decarbonisation.

### PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE EXISTING SPACES



Small office in the Caretaker's Cottage



Small office in the Caretaker's Cottage



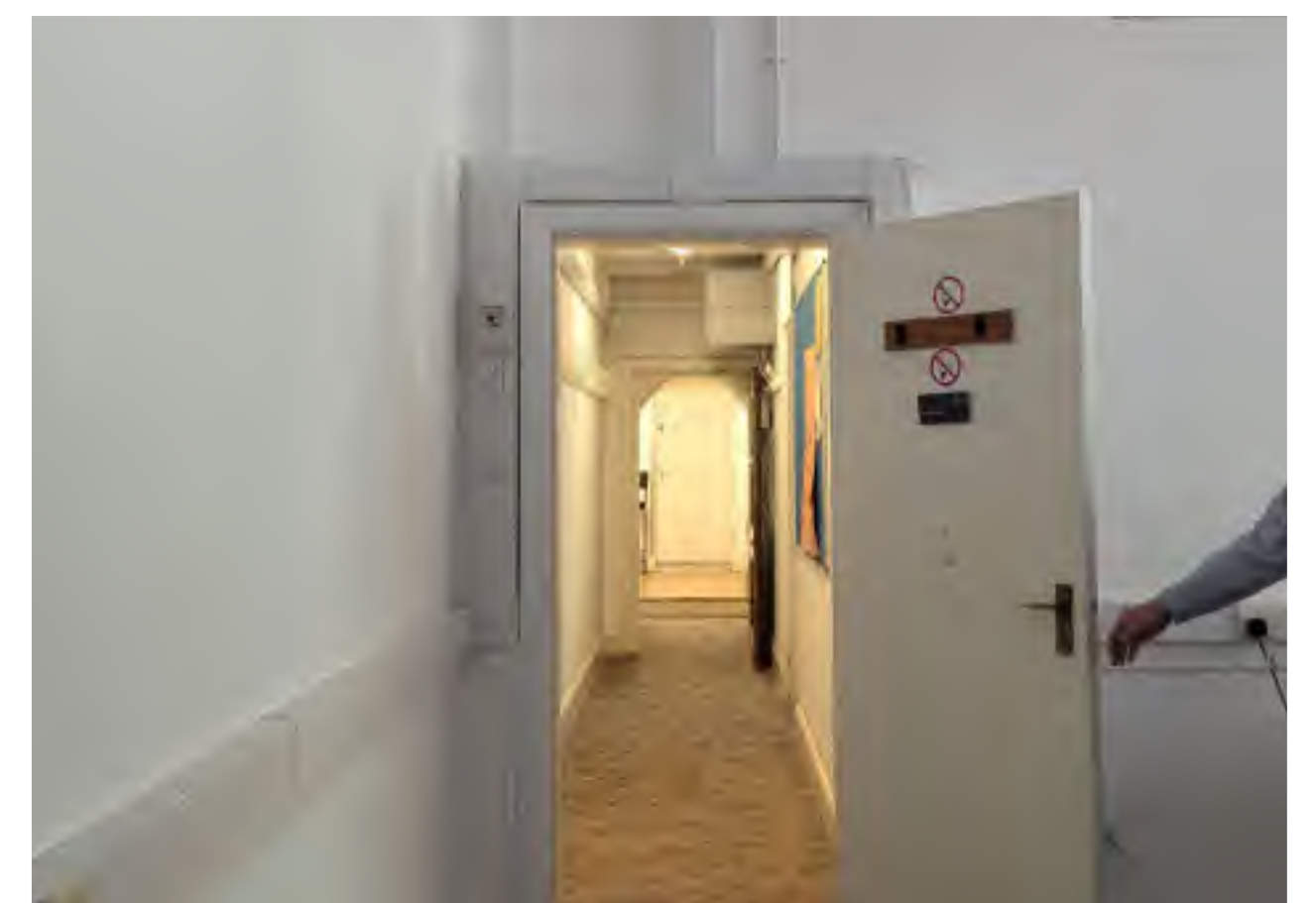
Cramped kitchen in the Caretaker's Cottage



Narrow staircase down to the ground floor in the main building



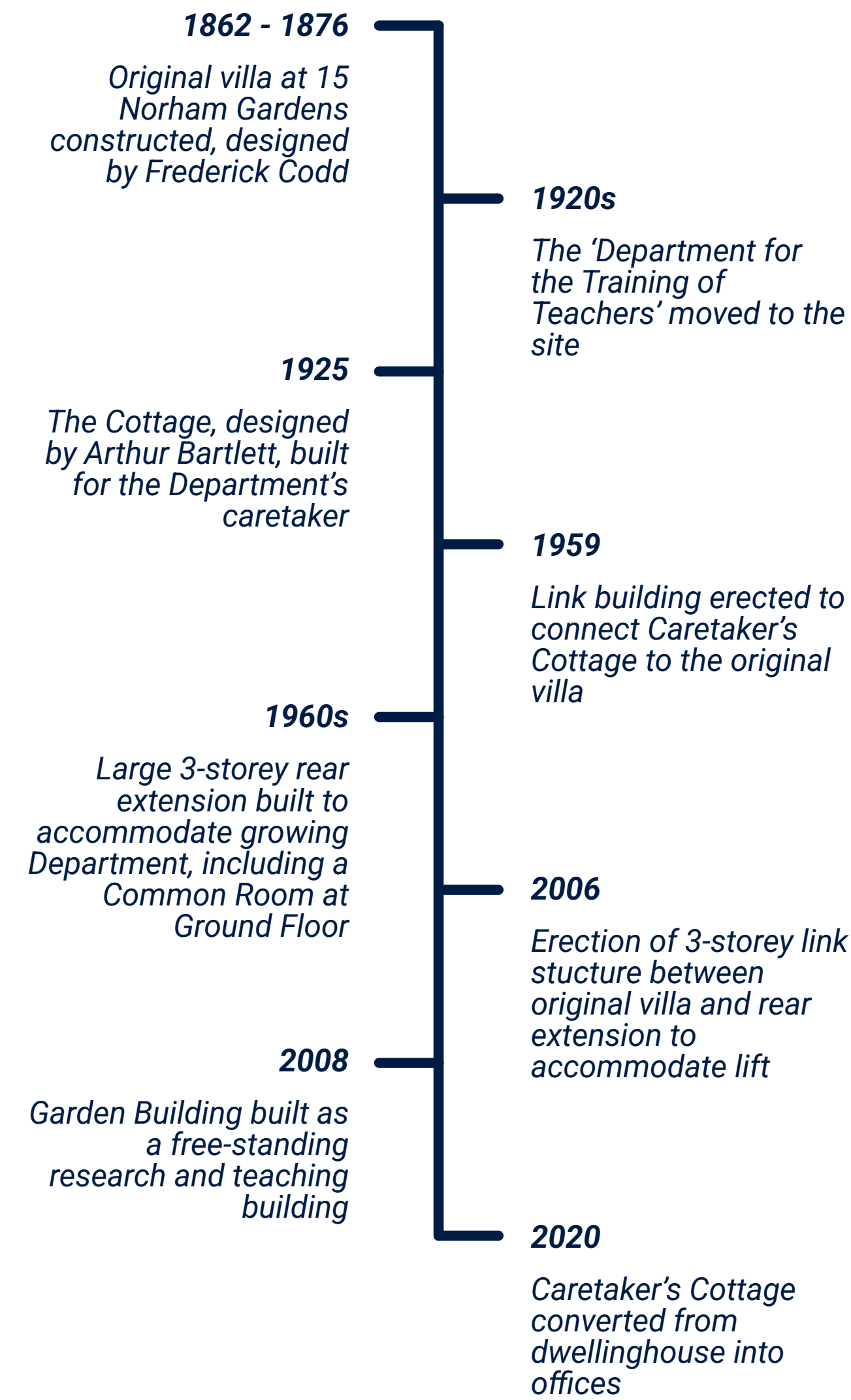
Steps inside a doorway in the Caretaker's Cottage



Narrow corridor and a level change in the main building



## SITE TIMELINE



## NORTH OXFORD VICTORIAN SUBURB

Norham Gardens is an architecturally significant street within the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area, known for its distinctive blend of architectural styles and historical character. Developed in the late 19th-century by the St John's College Estate, the area was intended to house Oxford's growing academic and professional community. The street predominantly features Victorian and Edwardian villas, characterised by their large scale, high gables, bay windows, and detailed brickwork influenced by the Gothic Revival and Arts and Crafts movements.

The buildings along Norham Gardens are generally three storeys high and incorporate elements such as pitched slate roofs, stone surrounds, and decorative ironwork, showcasing the Victorian emphasis on craftsmanship. Spacious front gardens, mature trees, and a consistent architectural palette create a unified streetscape that reflects the intended grandeur and openness of the original suburban design. The proximity to University Parks enhances the leafy character of the street, providing a green backdrop that reinforces the area's heritage value.



Garden-facing facade of no. 11 Norham Gardens, William Wilkinson, 1866



Garden-facing facade of no. 13 Norham Gardens, William Wilkinson, 1869



Garden-facing facade of no. 19 Norham Gardens, Frederick Codd, 1876

## STREET ANALYSIS



## THE CARETAKER'S COTTAGE

Attached to the main building at 15 Norham Gardens is the Caretaker's Cottage, built circa 1925.

The building was converted from a residential house in 2020 to provide 5 offices for the Department. It is accessed via a series of steps either through the link or via a side entrance. The building is not currently used efficiently for the Department's needs.



Street view of the Cottage, showing entrance through the link



Side and rear facades of the Caretaker's Cottage



## SITE CONSTRAINTS

### CHARACTERISTICS

- The site at no. 15 contains a range of building styles and ages from the mid-1800s to early 2000s.
- The unattractive tarmacked front garden is incongruent with the domestic character of the previously residential area.
- The existing rear garden offers a landscape setting with a character similar to a well-kept domestic garden.
- A range of building heights and gaps between buildings allows glimpses of trees towards the parks.

### CONSTRAINTS

- Significant tree root protection areas influence the footprint of the site which can be developed. Air spade investigations have been carried out.
- An existing substation beneath entrance steps currently takes up space in the middle of the site, and complicates future access for maintenance.
- Underground services around the site may require rerouting.
- Existing level differences restrict accessibility.



Tarmacked front garden



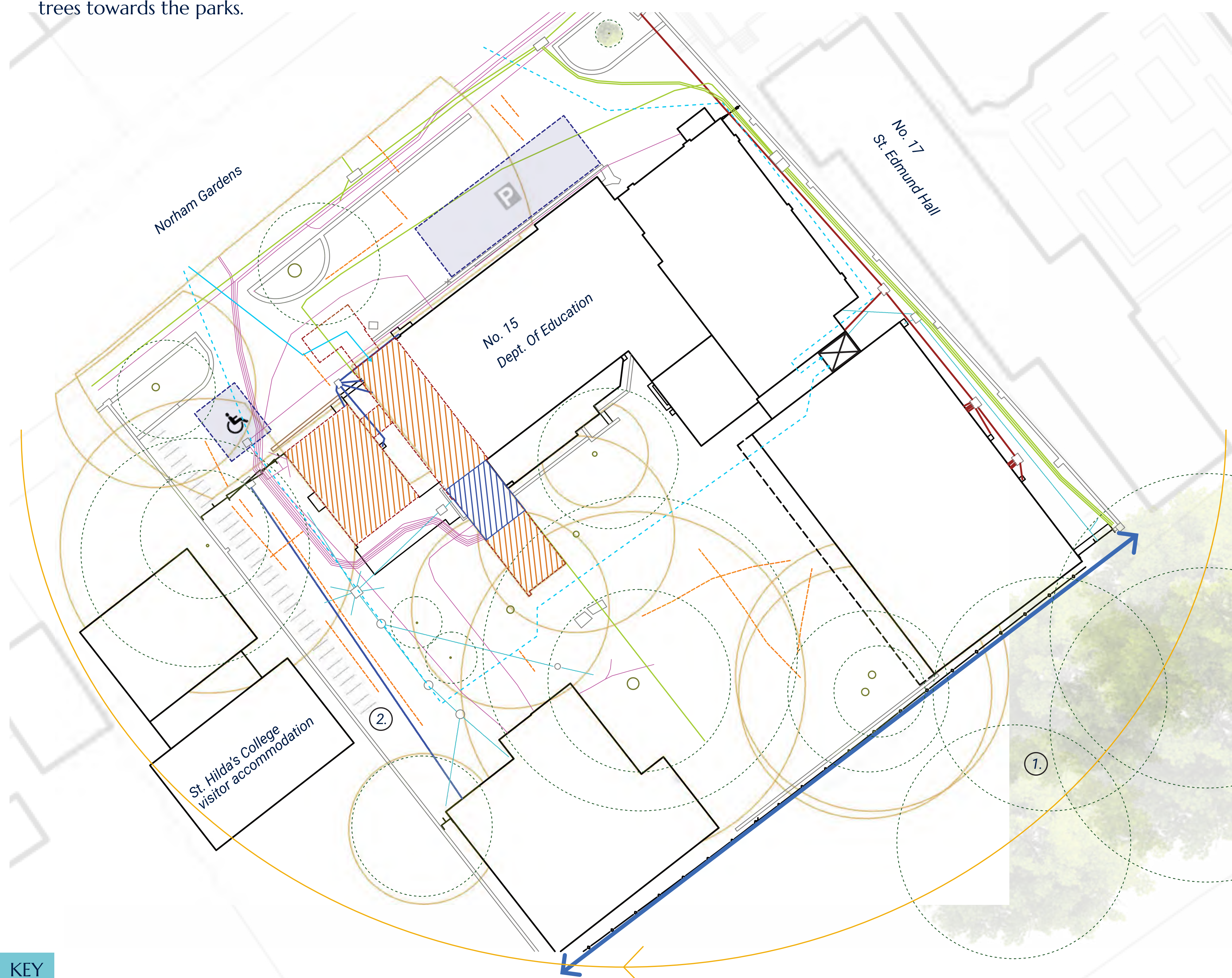
Trees and Garden Building



Staircase over substation



Garden and rear extension



### KEY

- |                               |   |   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| — Sun path                    | ○ Tree Root Protection Areas                                      | — Foul water drainage                       |
| → Primary access routes       | ○ Tree canopy spread  | — Buried services located by GPR            |
| → Secondary access routes     | ▨ Existing Caretaker's Cottage and link building to be demolished | — Combined water drainage                   |
| □ Car parking spaces          | ↔ Boundary of the conservation area with University Parks         | ① Tall trees near University Parks boundary |
| ⊠ Existing lift               | — BT cables   | ② Existing bicycle racks                    |
| ▨ Existing substation         |   |   |
| — Existing electricity cables |   |   |

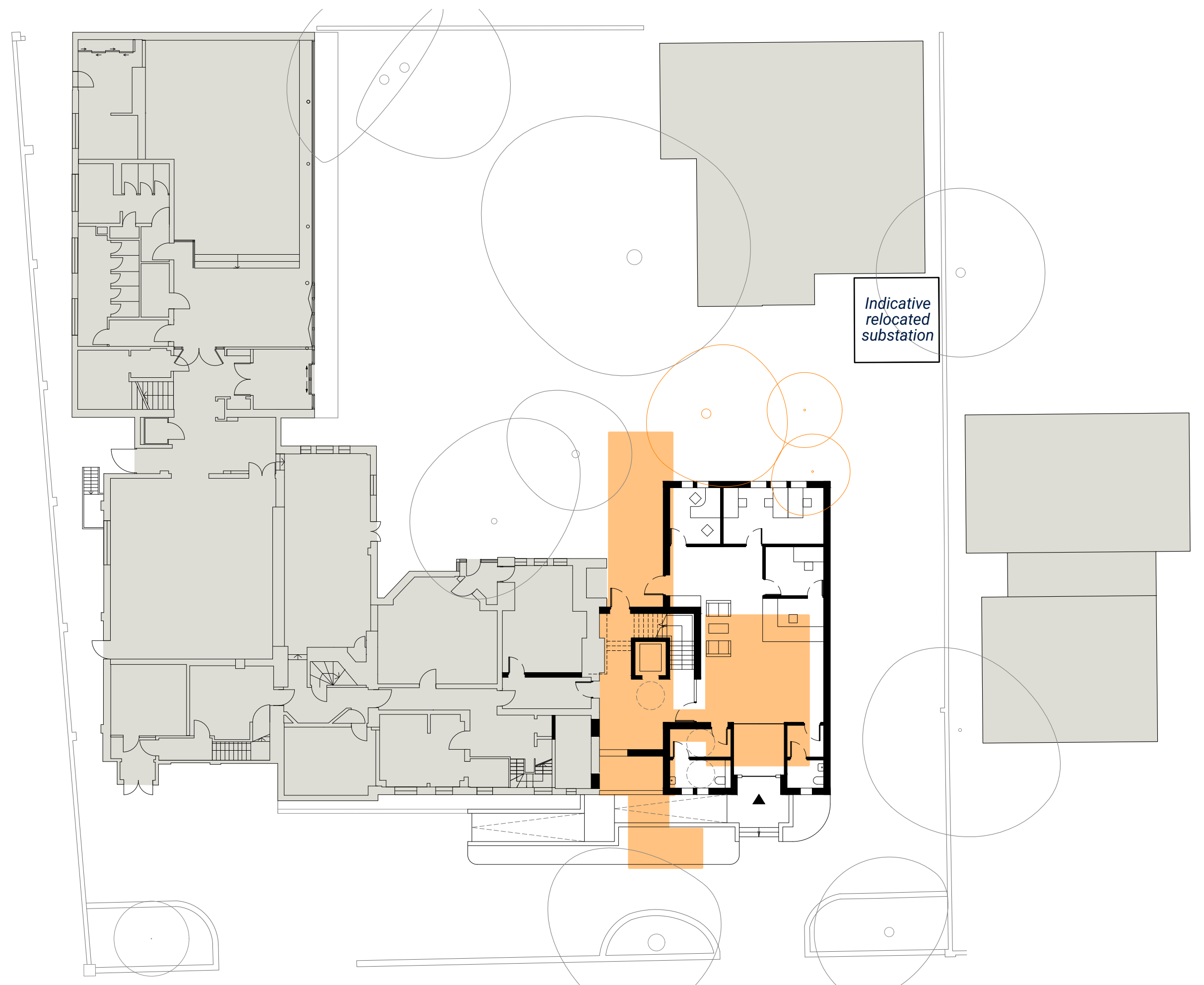


## DEMOLITION AND EXTENSION

- The proposed development comprises the replacement of the Caretaker's Cottage and existing entrance and reception with a new extension to the villa.
- The new extension will comprise of 3 storeys and connect into the existing building, improving accessibility and providing much needed space.
- The removal of the large stairs at the rear of the site creates an opportunity to redefine the rear garden and allows more space for seamless step-free access from the entrance to the garden.

### KEY

- Demolished elements
- Existing elements
- New elements



Ground floor plan showing area for demolition and extension

## DESIGN STUDIES

The design has evolved through the assessment of several options from a modern approach to a larger building, along us to evaluate the suitability and quality of the current proposal.



Current Proposal










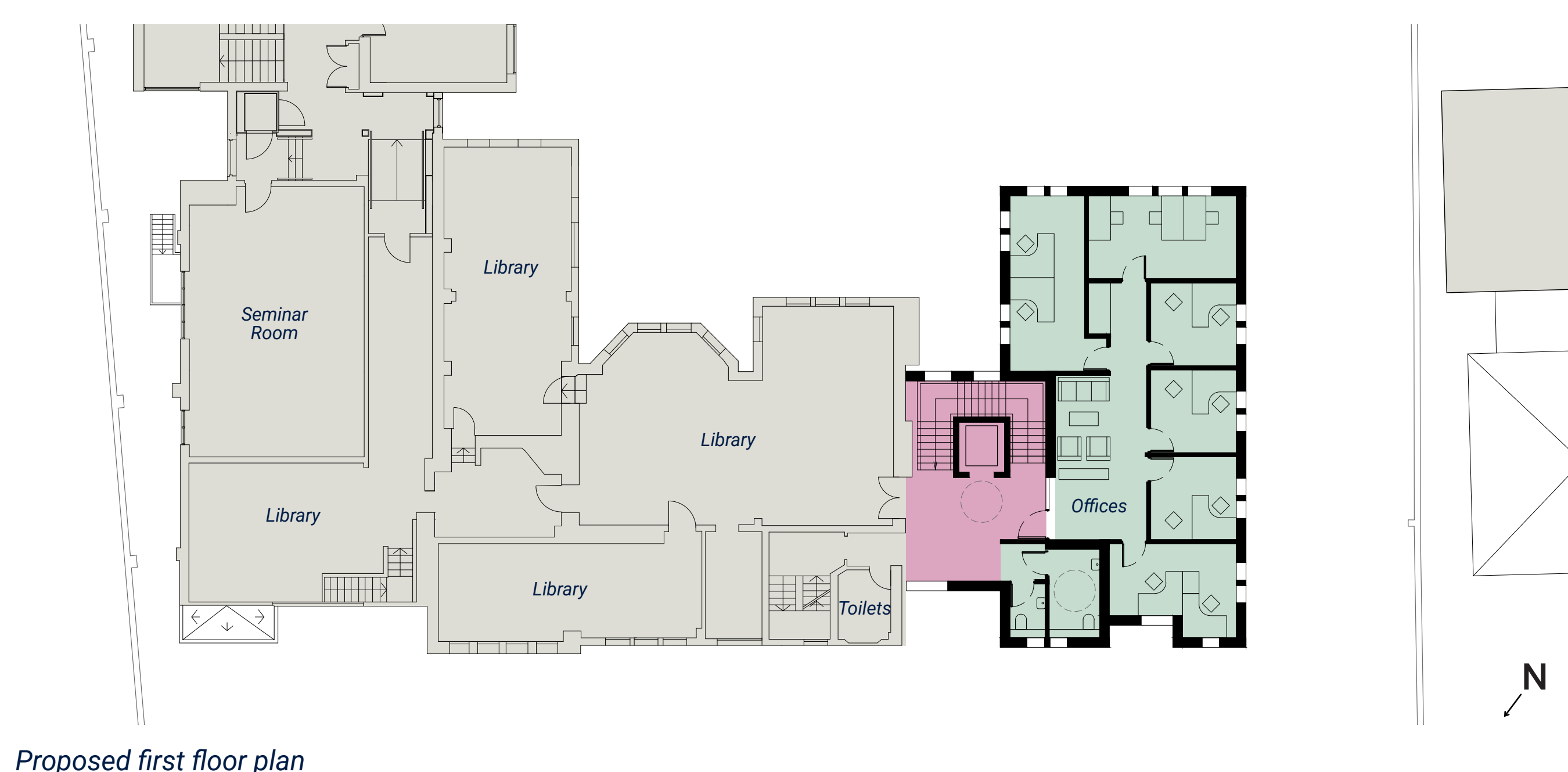
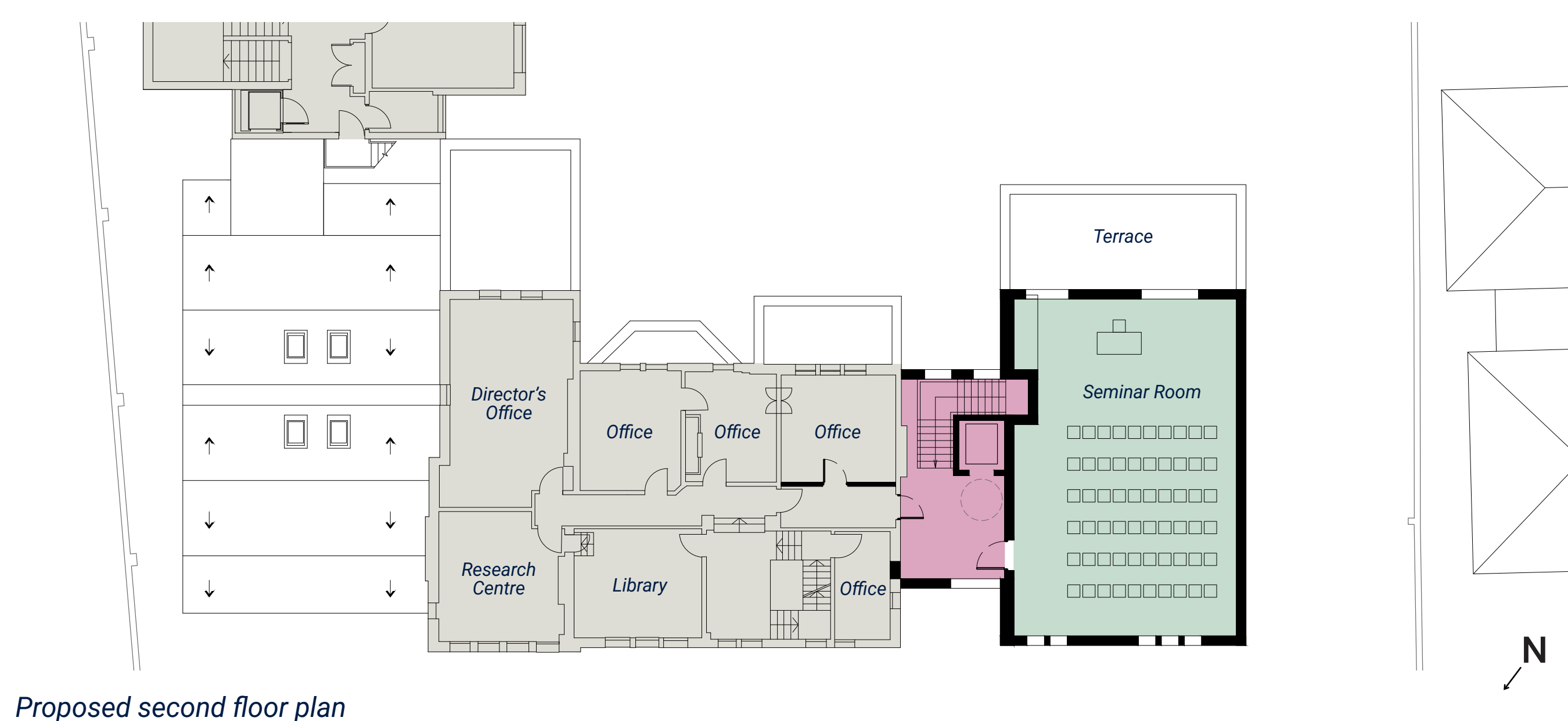
## ACCOMMODATION

The proposal will provide:

- Combined reception and foyer space
- Seminar room with a capacity of 60 people
- 4 shared offices with a total of 10 desk spaces
- 4 individual offices
- 2 informal collaboration spaces
- A building linking the main proposal with the existing building, including a lift and staircase to enhance accessibility within the floors and connectivity between the buildings.

### Key

-  Main fully accessible entrance
-  Step-free access into the garden
-  Substation relocation position
-  Existing buildings
-  Proposed extension
-  Proposed link
-  Proposed elements



## ACCESSIBILITY

Access into the building will be provided via a small set of steps or a gently sloped ramp integrated into the landscape, ensuring inclusivity for all users. This unified approach allows seamless entry into the offices, seminar room, library, and rear garden.

Positioned within view from the reception desk, the new lift further enhances accessibility, improving circulation throughout both the new building and the existing main building.





## MASSING AND FORM

The proposal's form is carefully designed to respect the heritage context, drawing inspiration from traditional architectural elements such as pitched roofs and brick gables. Other key design decisions include:

- A lowered and recessed link to provide relief and clearly separate the extension from the existing building.
- The ridge height is significantly lower than the main building to respect the character of the street and ancillary feeling.
- Gaps between buildings retain glimpsed views to University Parks beyond the extension.



*Proposed Rear Elevation*



*Scale of link and extension in street scene*



*Proposed Front Elevation*



## FAÇADE AND MATERIALITY

The proposed façade draws inspiration from the architectural language of the existing villa, reinterpreting traditional elements in a contemporary manner. Key references include:

- 1 Roof pitch
- 2 Yellow brick
- 3 Stone banding
- 4 Window grouping

The recessed link is proposed in a modern cladding, helping it blend into the background while maintaining a contrasting contemporary aesthetic.

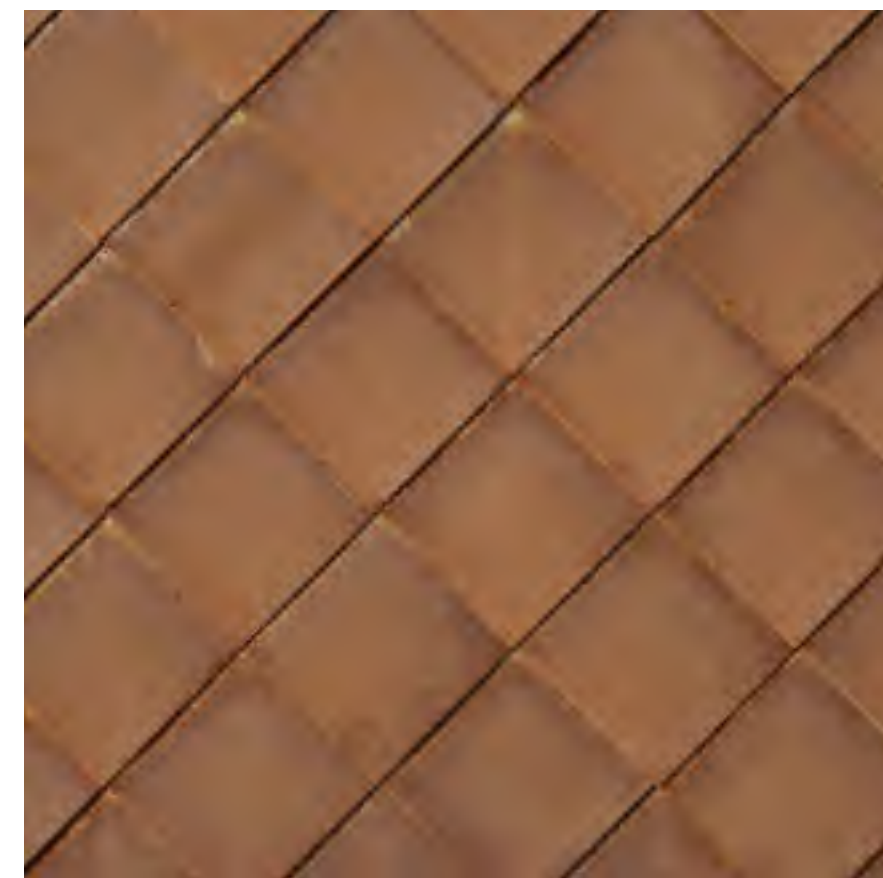
Altogether, this material palette balances tradition and modernity while supporting sustainability through durable materials that complement the Conservation Area.



Window grouping



Recessed entrance (No 26)



Aged metal panels



Yellow brick / Stone banding



The proposal takes cues from the existing building but also proposes some relief in a contrasting material



## SUSTAINABILITY

### OXFORD UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Oxford University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy sets a bold target of reaching net zero carbon by 2035. With over 200 buildings, the University must progressively upgrade its estate, including improving fabric and thermal performance, to ensure efficient operation and use of low-carbon energy.

The University's goals align with current and emerging Oxford City Council planning policy, supporting sustainable development and climate action.

The University's Estates Services Sustainability Design Guide (2024) outlines development standards for University projects, including the extension at 15 Norham Gardens. These standards exceed those of the Oxford Local Plan 2036, delivering sustainability benefits beyond policy requirements.

### SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY STRATEGY KEY PRINCIPLES

The project prioritises energy efficiency and passive design using Passivhaus Principles before adopting low and zero carbon technologies. Key elements include:

- High-performance building fabric with high insulation and low air permeability to reduce heating and cooling demand.
- Efficient LED lighting and Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems to reduce energy consumption.
- Heat pump systems to enable future grid decarbonisation and integration with University-owned heat networks.
- Heat recovery ventilation to enhance comfort year-round.
- Demand-driven ventilation systems which adjust airflow based on occupancy, especially in variable-use seminar spaces.
- Point-of-use electric water heaters to meet low hot water demand while avoiding storage losses.

This ensures a low-energy, future-ready building aligned with long-term sustainability goals.

## SUBSTATION RELOCATION

The existing substation underneath reception requires relocation to create space for the development and ensure future access for maintenance.

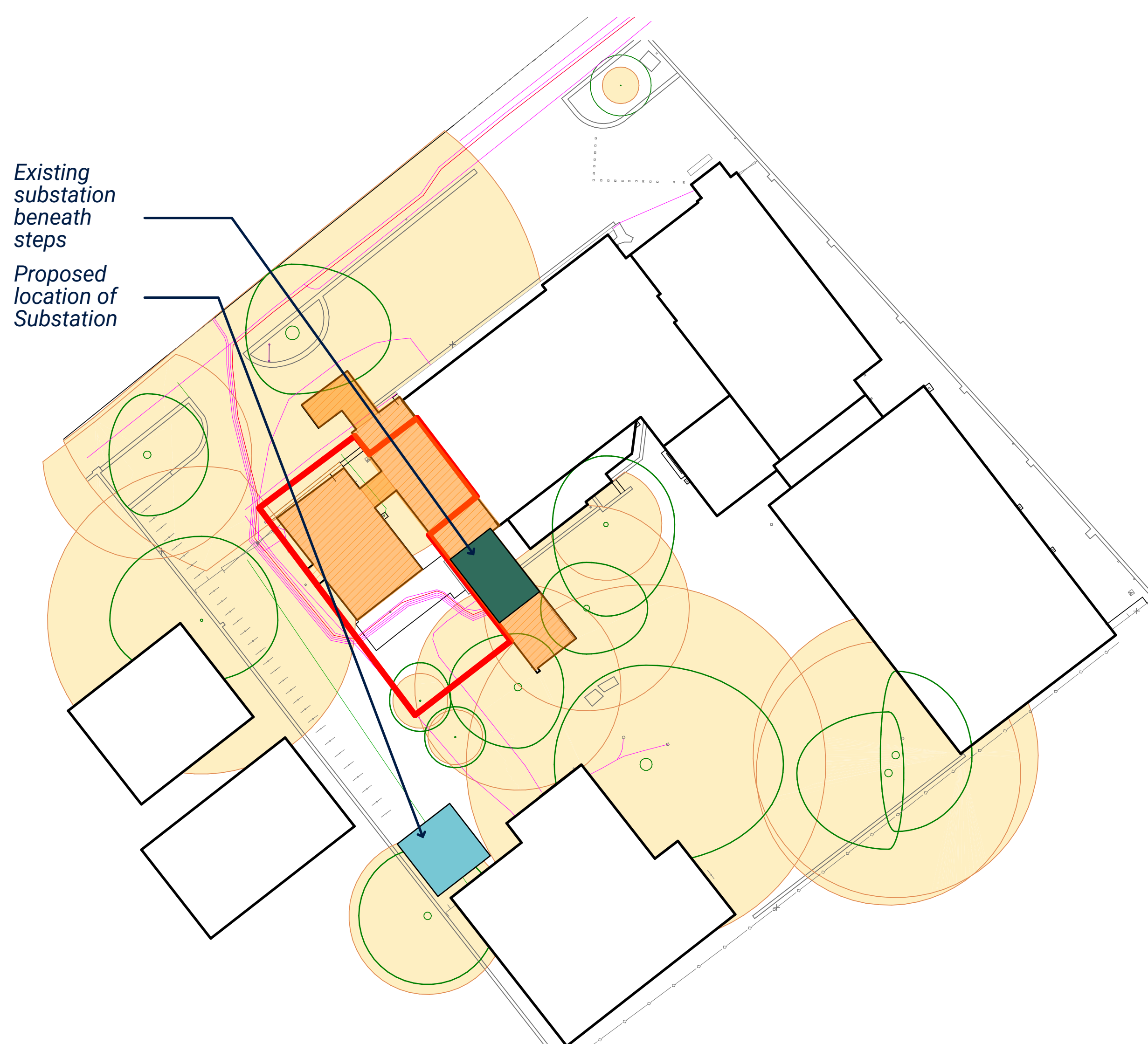
It is proposed to move the substation to a discreet location in the rear garden. This will free up space and allow an accessible entrance to be built, with a more direct route into the garden.



Substation underneath the stairs



Gridded gate with substation beyond



Parameter plan showing the existing substation and cables

### Key

- Electricity cable
- Tree
- Root protection area
- Existing buildings
- Buildings to be demolished
- Proposed building



## CAR AND CYCLE PARKING

Car parking on the site will be significantly reduced to allow more greening of the front garden. One accessible bay and one regular parking space are proposed, alongside a space for deliveries.

A range of cycle parking will be provided to enhance the existing provision and accommodate the site's capacity.

## LANDSCAPE CONCEPTS

The landscape proposal involves formalising the boundary wall from Norham Gardens and creating a lush garden beyond, reducing the amount of hardstanding and reintroducing soft landscaping, which will enhance the Conservation Area.

Biodiversity on the site will be enhanced by 10%.

## KEY PRINCIPLES INCLUDE:

- Retain mature street trees with enhanced planters.
- Use characterful, wheelchair-friendly paving.
- Provide ramped and stepped access to the entrance.
- Plant shade-tolerant native species to boost biodiversity in rear garden spill-out areas.
- Reference architectural details within the landscape.



Opportunities to reference architectural details within the landscape.

Low maintenance, native shade tolerant planting mix in a variety of textures and colours will provide a distinctive character as well as a food source for pollinators.



The Department intends to remain operational throughout the works, and are carefully considering how the construction phase can be managed to reduce disruption to both students and neighbours.

## INDICATIVE CONSTRUCTION LOGISTICS

- The team has carried out early engagement with contractors to explore options, with an aim to minimise disruption throughout the works.
- Access to the existing building needs to be maintained for continued use of the facility. Careful thought for the existing main entrance and escape routes are required.
- Access to the substation needs to be maintained for any servicing or repairs.
- The contractor and site will be registered with the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

## PHASING OF WORKS

- Substation relocation will be brought forwards as a separate package before the main works on the extension commence.

### Key

— Hoarding for substation works

---> Mean of escape during substation works

||| Temporary cycle parking

— Hoarding during main works

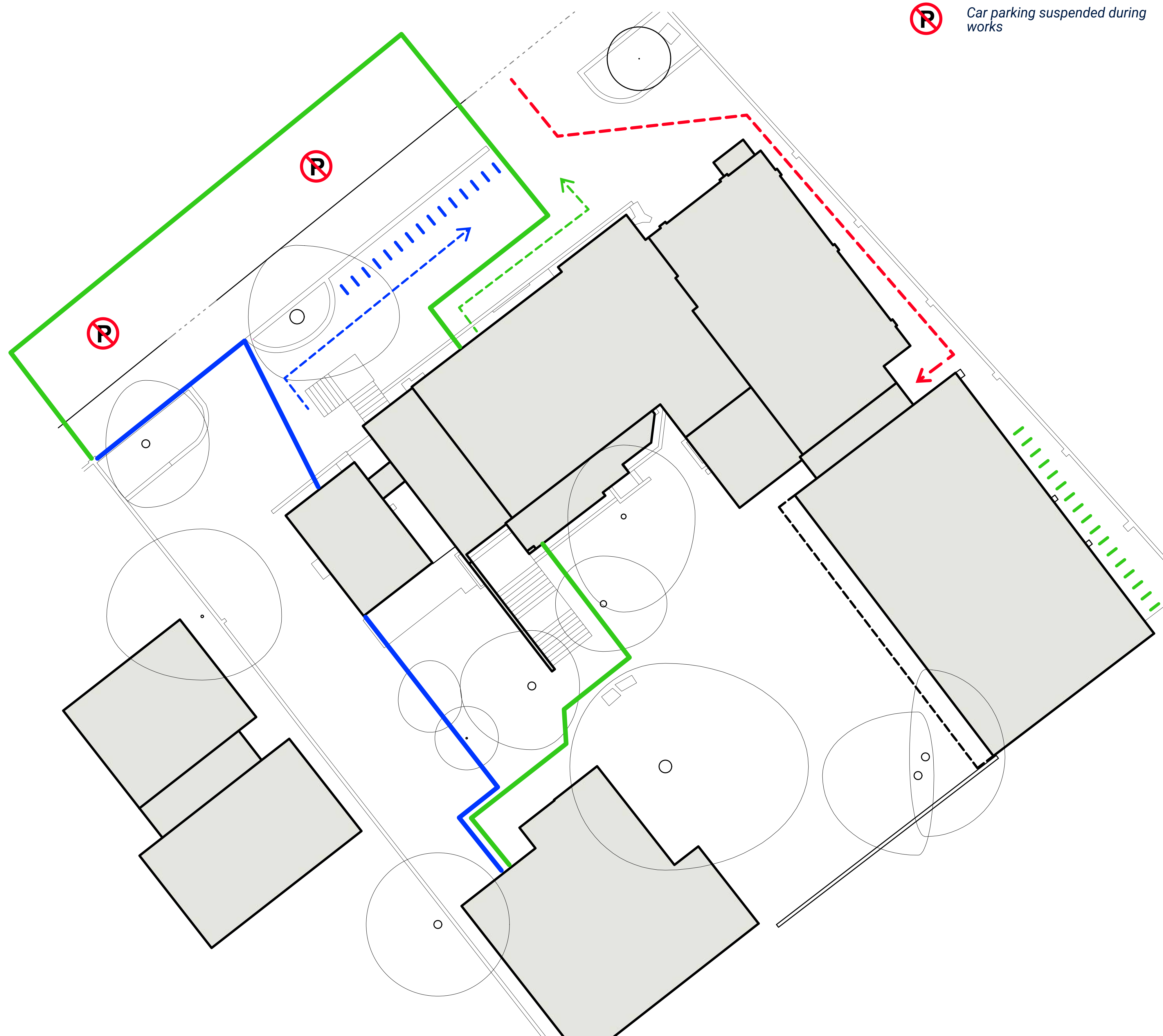
---> Mean of escape during main works

||| Temporary cycle parking

---> Main entrance and secondary mean of escape during main works



Car parking suspended during works





# Summary and Next Steps

13

15 Norham Gardens has been home to the Department of Education for over 100 years. In this time, the Department and site has undergone many changes.

The next phase of the Department's success relies on additional space which is flexible, accessible and sustainable. The proposed extension to 15 Norham Gardens will be central to supporting the important work that goes on here.



Proposed Street Elevation



Front garden landscaping - Plan View

## THANK YOU

We are looking forward to hearing your feedback to help us develop our plans further. If you have any comments, please complete a feedback form or send these via email to [public.consultation@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:public.consultation@admin.ox.ac.uk) by Friday 10th October 2025.

The information in this consultation can be found online at:

[www.ox.ac.uk/about/building-our-future/news/2025-09-25-public-consultation-event-15-norham-gardens](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/building-our-future/news/2025-09-25-public-consultation-event-15-norham-gardens)

Once this exhibition has concluded, the Department will review all of the feedback received and use it to inform the detailed designs ahead of the submission of a planning application to the Council.

## ANTICIPATED PROGRAMME

**September 2025**  
Consultation

**Early 2026**  
Full Planning Application submitted

**Autumn 2026**  
Target date for commencement of enabling works

**Early 2027**  
Target date for commencement of main works

**Early 2028**  
Target date for completion of works

15 NORHAM GARDENS

