

Shakespeare North Substation Roof Screen

Design & Access Statement/ Heritage Statement

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

RIBA Stage 3 - Planning

Austin-Smith:Lord



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ASL Job Number:	123023
Document Number:	123023-ASL-XX-XX-RP-A-0001
Suitability Code:	S3
Revision Number:	P.2
Issue Date:	12 March 2024
Author / Check:	RH / PM
Revision Notes:	First Issue

01 Overview

01 Overview

This Design & Access Statement has been produced to support the planning application for the addition of a new roof screen at Shakespeare North Playhouse. The new roof screen will be limited to the area of the existing substation only.

Currently the plant roof has been used by some members of the public as a place to climb on to, presenting the minor possibility of them falling from the roof and injuring themselves. It is deemed that raising the height of the substation slightly will be a sufficient preventative measure. As this area is visible from the main approach to the building a sympathetic approach is required. It presents an opportunity to address this safety feature as an aesthetic addition to the building.

The following will hopefully highlight our reasoning for the addition and why this enhancement is key for the ongoing safe use of the public realm, as well as adding a low impact addition to the facade of the building.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROJECT AND CLIENT'S CRITERIA

The client's main driver for this proposal is that of improving safety of the public realm - whilst being sympathetic to original design and material palette. The free use of this area of public realm is important to maintain, however gentle prevention of the wrong kinds of activities - such as parkour - are required. The substation and the public realm around, is visible from the main front approach to the building and this small intervention could add to this area.



External Views of Shakespeare North - from substation side (East)

02 Site Context

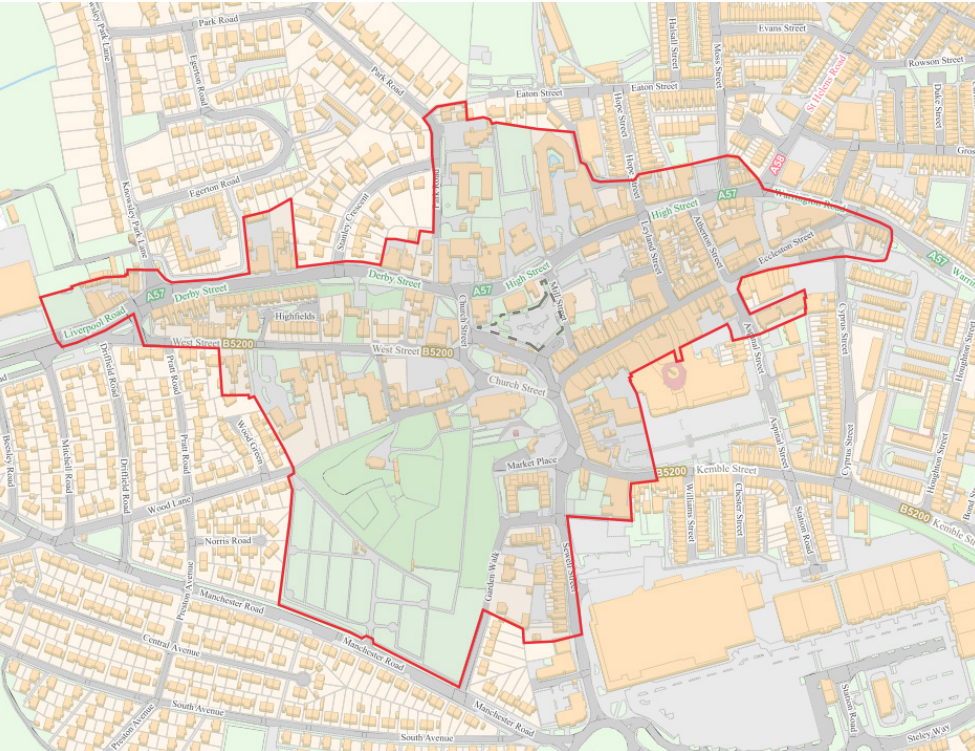
02 Site Context

Designed by Nick Helm and Austin-Smith: Lord, Shakespeare North was completed and opened to the public in 2022. The form is composed of two parts - a ‘Theatre Box’ surrounded by the ‘Wraparound Building’. The ‘Theatre Box’ is tucked towards the back of the site, with the 'Wraparound building' creating a strong elevation along Prospero Place.

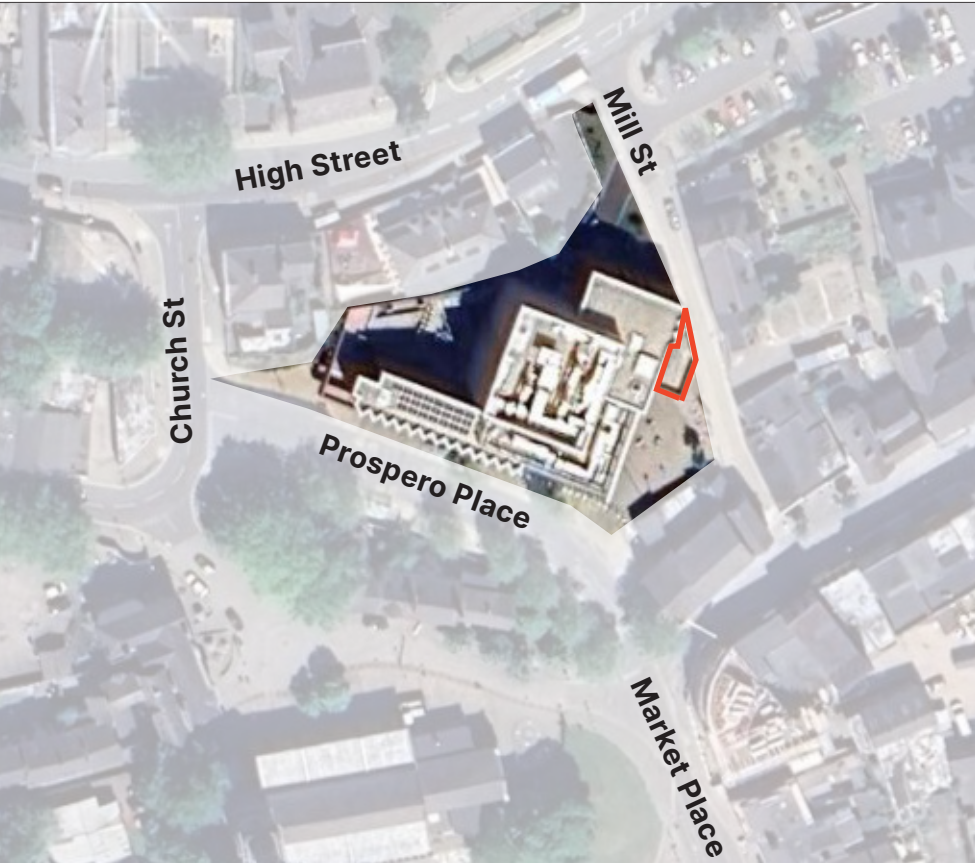
The building sits in a roughly triangular block with rear access on to Mill Street as well as a main access from Prospero Place. A public route flows through the site from Mill Street, down steps alongside the substation, across the piazza, and on to Prospero Place. There is a single-storey level change across site, from the top of Mill Street down to Prospero Place.

The site is located at the western side of Prescot town centre. Towards the east the town is mostly commercial in use, towards the west, largely residential. Immediately surrounding the site there are two churches, as well as more civic uses such as the museum and register office.

Shakespeare North sits in the centre of the Prescot Conservation Area. The area is of note because of the town centre streets which retain echoes of their medieval layout, as well as the local history of clock, watch and tool-making. In the immediate vicinity of the site there are two listed buildings – St. Mary’s church opposite which is Grade I listed and the Grade II former Parr’s Bank behind. There are also a number of listed buildings and monuments nearby and throughout Prescot town centre. The character of the local area is largely of Georgian and Victorian terraces, mostly towards the east of the site, and 18th and 19th century detached and semi-detached houses to the west, several of which are listed.



Prescot Conservation Area
source: <https://localplanmaps.knowsley.gov.uk/>



Current Development Plan - 2024

02 Site Context (local views)



Front elevation at night



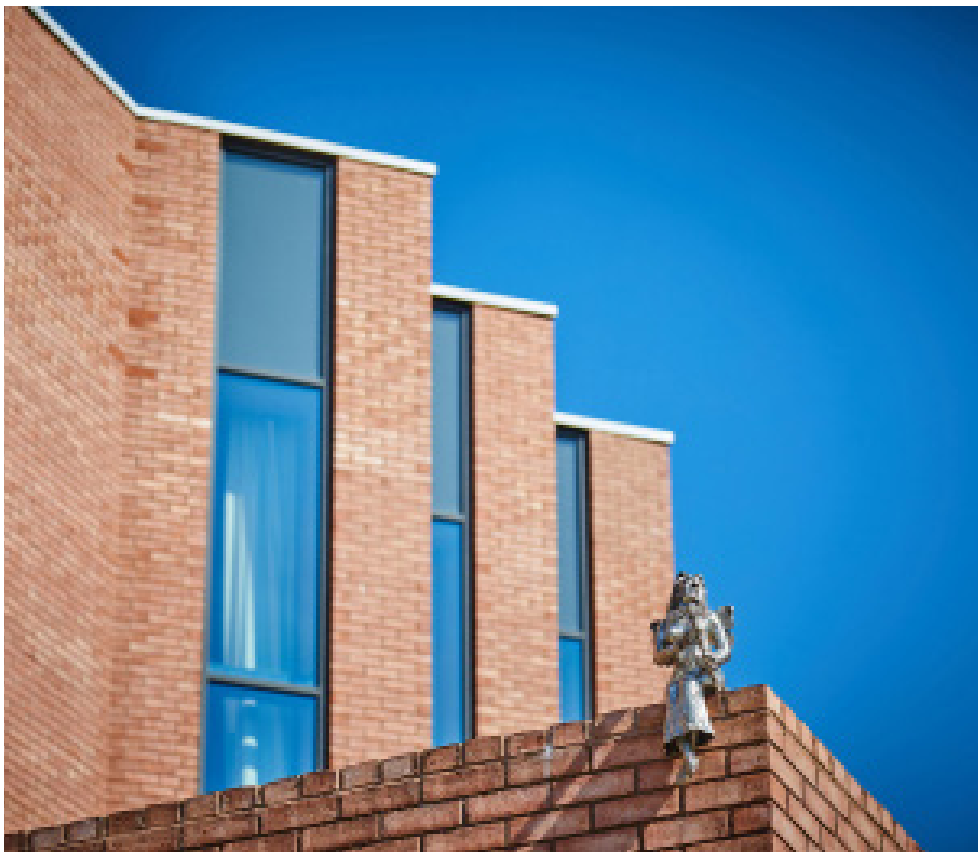
The substation seen from Prospero Place



The substation seen from Mill Street



South-east and south-west elevations in the evening showing the substation on the far right



The edge of the substation roof with small sculpture

03 Use, Amount, Layout & Scale

03 Use, Amount, Layout & Scale

Use & Amount

The use & amount will not change as part of the proposals, these factors are to be kept as existing.

Layout

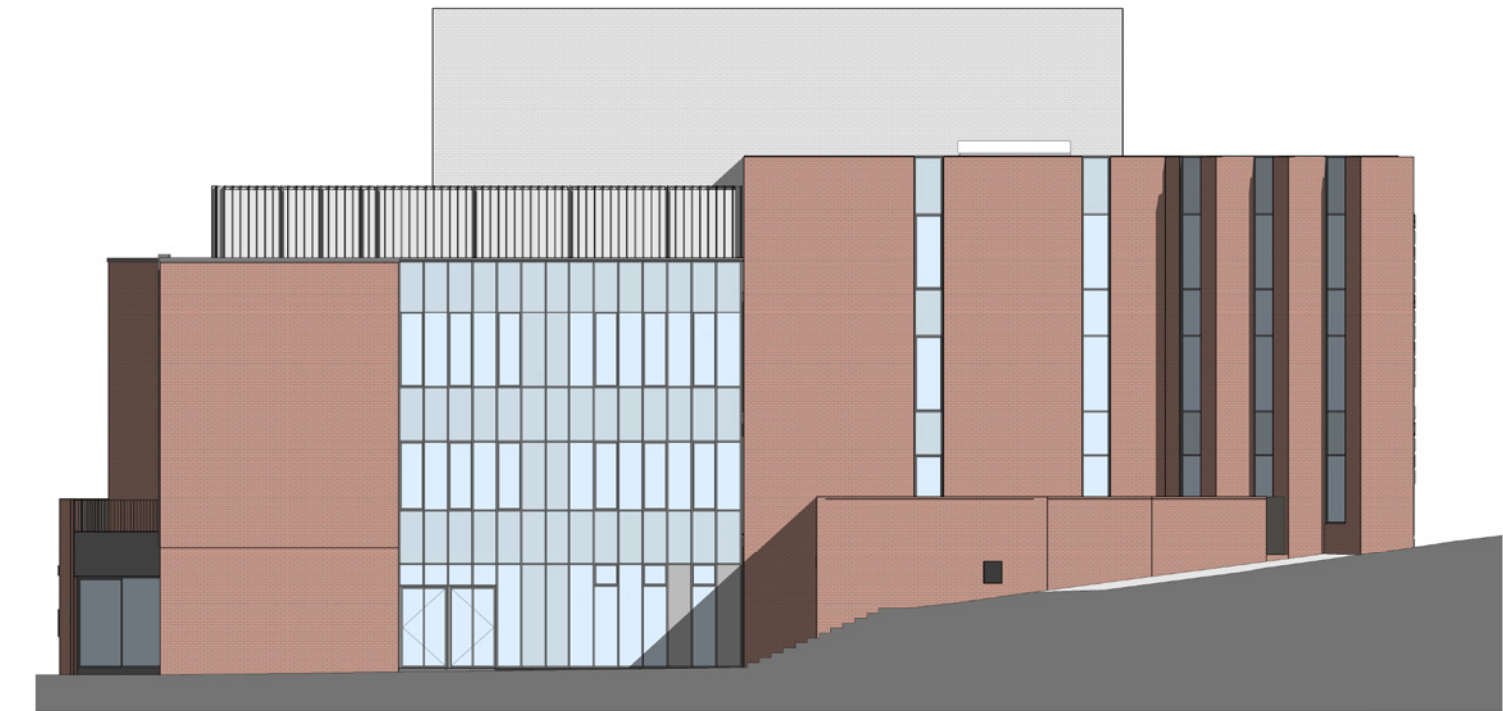
The building layout will not change as part of the proposals, and is to remain as existing. All entrances and exits are to remain in the same location.

Approach to the building and local landscape elements will also not change.

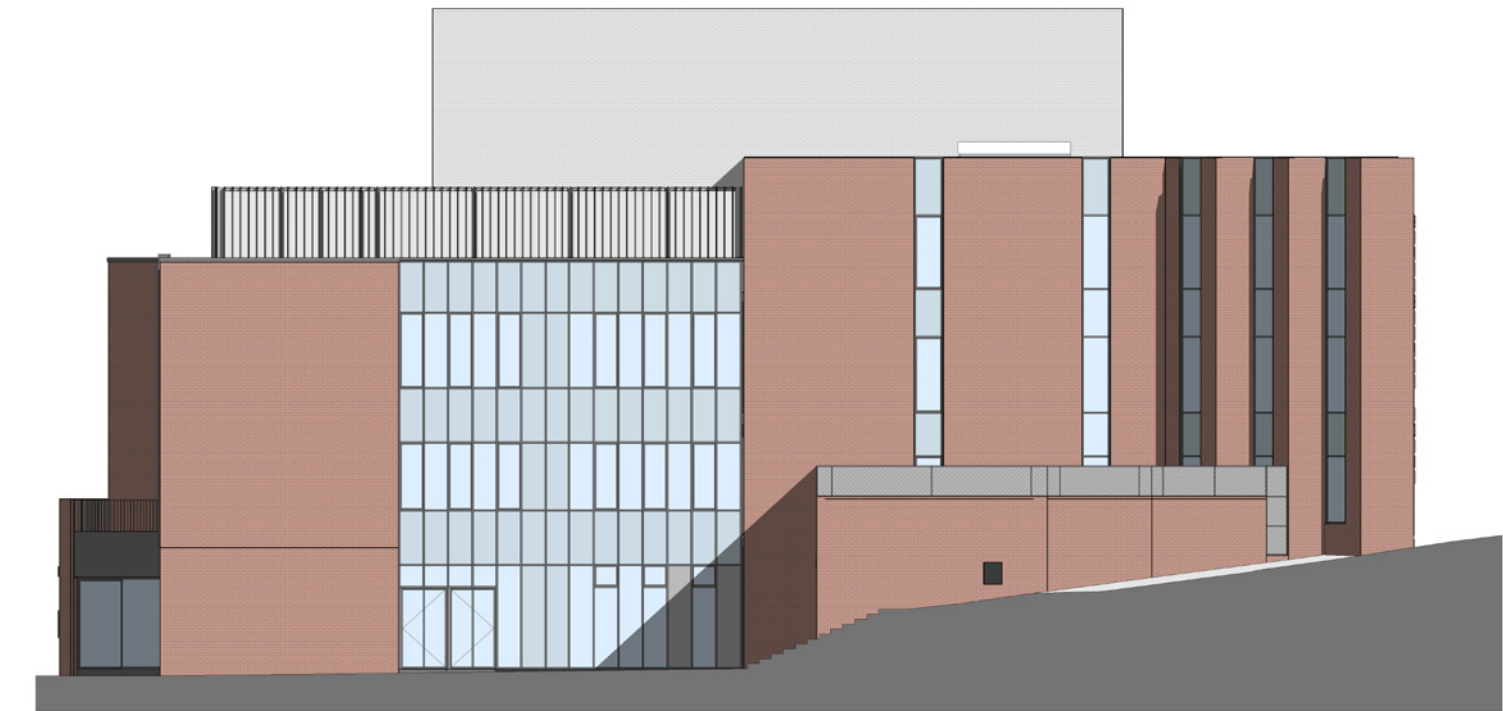
Scale

The only change to scale will be the addition of the new screen above the substation, which increase the height of the substation by **950mm** The overall scale of the project will not be altered.

See adjacent elevations.



1 South-East elevation as existing
1 : 100



2 South-East elevation - Proposed Substation Roof
1 : 100

South-East Elevation - Existing & Proposed - (refer to main planning drawings for further detail)

04 Appearance

04 Appearance

As mentioned earlier, the form of Shakespeare North is that of a 'Theatre Box' surrounded by a 'Wraparound Building'. The 'Theatre Box' core is constructed of a white/grey brick. The 'wraparound' building is constructed of a red/pink brick in a variety of bonds. With areas of zigzag protrusions on the south-east and south-west elevations, areas of floor to ceiling glass, and tall, grey, aluminium fins. The 'Wraparound' building is the form that creates the strong elevation along Prospero Place.

PROPOSED APPEARANCE

The change in appearance is isolated solely to the area of the roof of the sub-station, no change to the appearance of the building is proposed.

The new screen will be perforated, powder coated aluminium panels with galvanised powder coated steel posts. The proposal is to incorporate a sympathetic design into the perforation of the panels. Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council are developing this with a local group. To be confirmed at a later date. See section 5 for samples of materials.

The finish and colour of the aluminium will match that of the existing curtain walling and fins on the adjacent south-east elevation behind and the south-west elevation.

ARTWORK

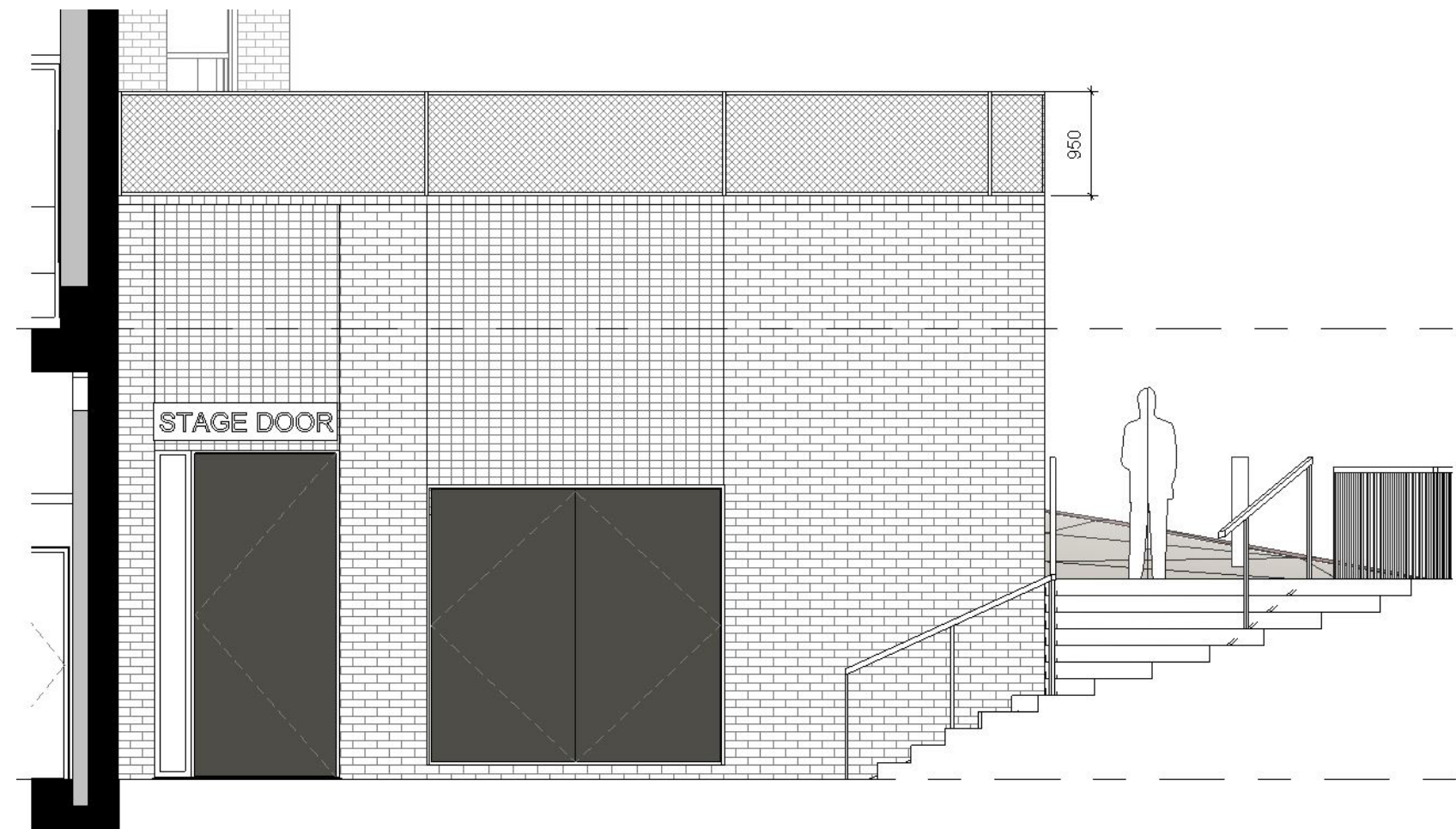
The artwork would be developed with Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, allowing for a creative interpretation within a set brief.

The brief will suggest design intent; such as the piece should make reference to the surrounding historical context of the building and site.

It is likely the design will be graphic only, not including any text, for clarity. The design will be created by perforating the aluminium sheet with holes of different sizes which create detail and depth with their placement. This also maintains a level of permeability, meaning the screen is not a solid element and thus does not block light or views.

This design process will allow an opportunity for members of the public to have their own impact on the outside of Shakespeare North.

Refer to main planning drawings for further information on appearance & the following section on Materials for examples of refurbishment proposals.

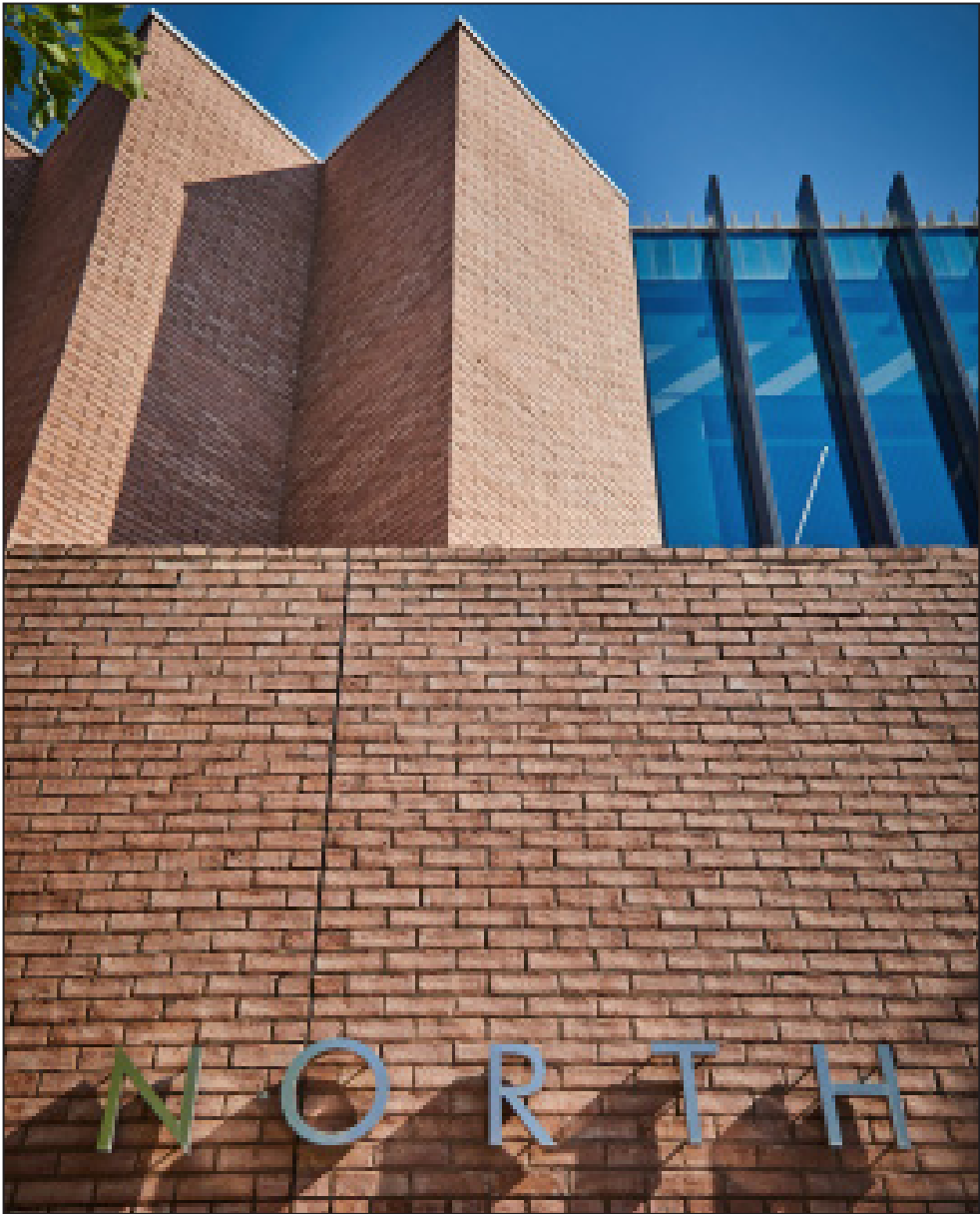


Proposed South-west elevation

05 Materials

05 Materials

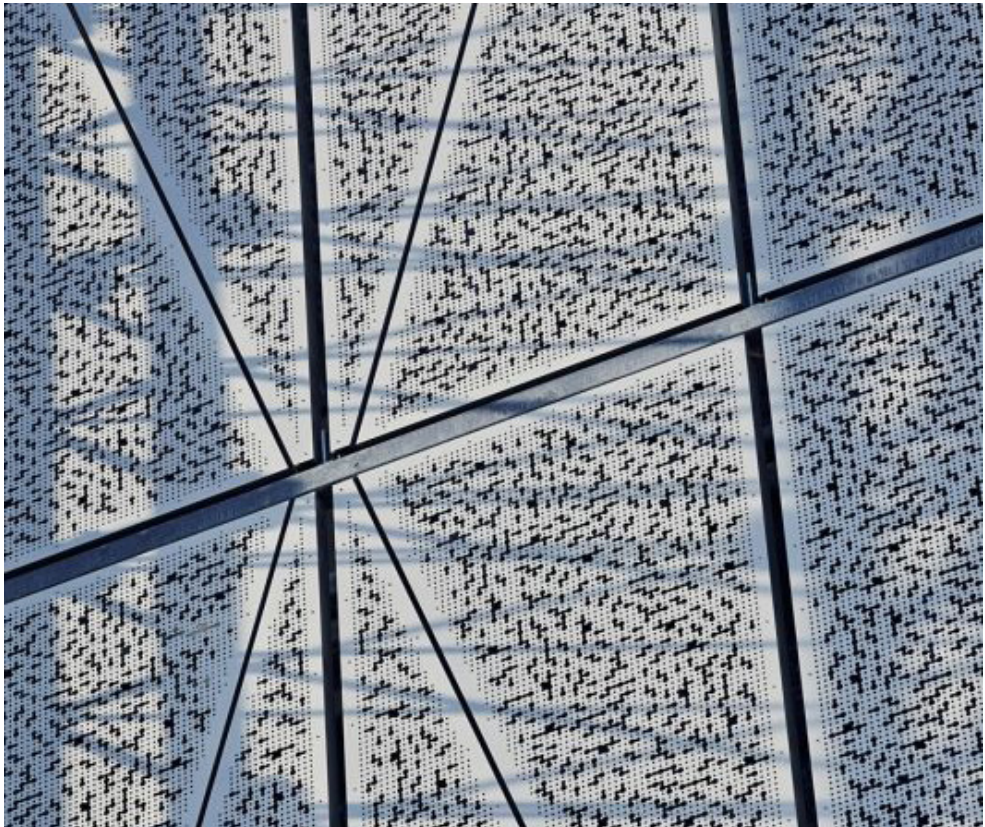
The following examples highlight the materials indicated in the appearance section of this document and the appended elevation drawings of the main planning application - cross reference for further detail. Also shown are examples of similar aluminium materials used as a base for art work/ designs which give an indication of how this roof screen will look once artwork designs are confirmed.



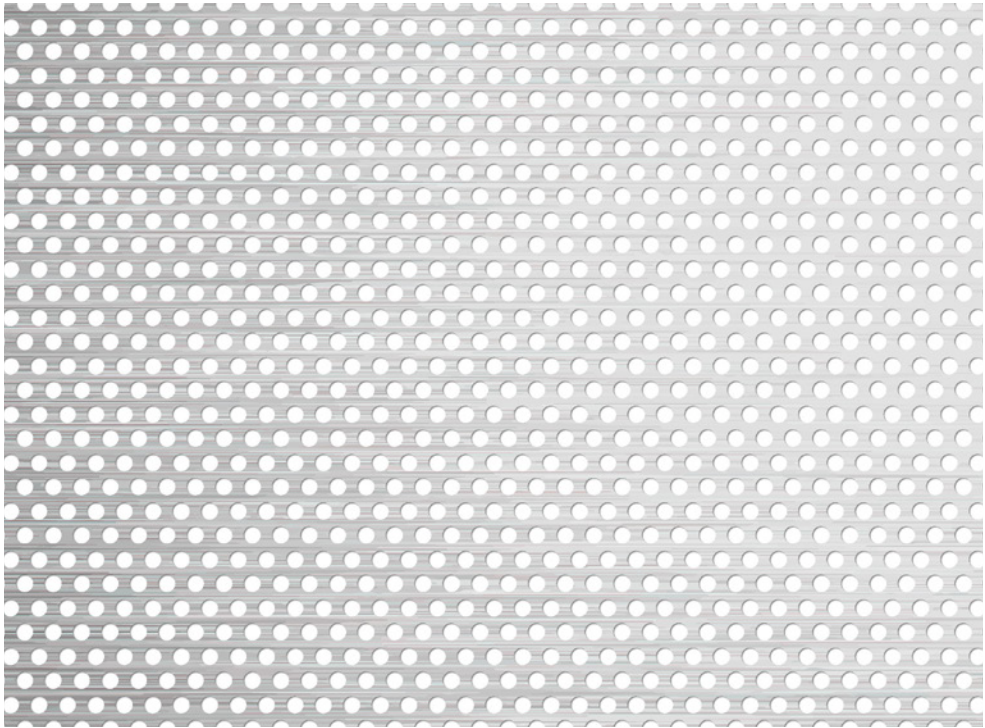
Materials Palette - existing materials at Shakespeare North



Example of design on perforated aluminium - with tree image



Example of design on perforated aluminium - with an irregular design



Perforated powder coated aluminium with no design

06 Heritage

06 Heritage Statement

The intervention in question directly sits atop a new building, and therefore does not directly touch on any heritage assets. Shakespeare North does not have any formal heritage designations – being as it is opened within the last decade. The area however is an area of heritage significance. Which will be expanded upon below.

The original Shakespeare North project sought to promote and lift the existing town centre and public spaces. Careful material choices allowed the project to create a modern flagship project which also reflected the heritage assets around it – the pink brick of the wraparound building references the warm stone of St. Mary's Church.

Methodologies were developed to ensure that the Shakespeare North form created a strong formal presence, whilst also being sympathetic to the surroundings, in scale, massing, material and details. The scale of the project was chosen to ensure that the church spire remains a dominant feature in Prescott

PRESCOT TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA

Shakespeare North sits in the middle of the Prescott Town Centre Conservation Area. This area is denoted as worthy of conservation due to a number of factors. One key one is that the town centre shopping area still reflects the form of the medieval streets – defined at the boundaries by Eccleston Street and High Street and including the small alleyways between.

Another factor for conservation status is the town's history of watch, clock and tool-making. Prescott was a centre of this industry in the late 18th century and through the 19th, making Lancashire world-famous. At its prominence the majority of houses had small workshops attached at the rear, producing a range of crafts, chiefly watchmaking. Some of these workshops still exist as well as evidence of locations they may have been. Still standing include: the Grade II workshop at the rear of 9 Market Place, Grade II listed no. 17 Atherton Street and 74 Eccleston

Street (which is unlisted). As well as some further workshops outside the conservation area boundary.

There are also a number of residential properties to the west which are listed comprising a mix of detached and semi-detached large properties from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Some of the materials in use in the conservation area; include brick (often rendered or painted), stone (again often rendered or painted), Sandstone and grey slate roofs.

The existing façade nods to this material palette through the soft pink bricks of the main façade, which reference the brick and sandstone, the white-grey bricks which reflect the stone on site. The warm-grey aluminium sits nicely amongst these two different colours, and in turn nods towards the metal work on the Church and street furniture around. We believe that the proposed works are in keeping with the current approach on site to the surrounding heritage assets, and will in no way be detrimental or adversely affect the heritage area or the listed buildings in the vicinity.

Furthermore, the opportunity for decorating the screen may be a way of even further highlighting the heritage on site – the design could reflect the heritage of Shakespeare, but also could depict Prescott's clock, watch and tool-making industries.

As part of our research into the historic character of the area, we searched the Historic Environment Records (HER) and Historic England's information about the character of the area, our notes and findings are included in the next section of this Heritage Statement to make this meet National Planning Policy Framework minimum standards.

It should also be noted that this small element of development at Shakespeare North Playhouse is in keep and aligned with the heritage and design philosophy of the original approved application.



06 Heritage Statement

In development of this heritage statement, relevant Historic Environment Records have been consulted (as directed by section 200 of the NPPF) to ensure sympathetic development is proposed.

As previously mentioned, Shakespeare North Playhouse sits within an historic area, amongst a number of listed buildings. The closest listed buildings, which are all visible from Shakespeare North Playhouse are Cockpit House, St. Mary's Church and Number 9 Market Street.

Cockpit House is situated to the rear of the Playhouse; originally a town house, it has also been used as a bank, a museum, and is now undergoing renovation. The building is listed Grade II under the name 'Former town house and Parr's Bank'. The listing describes the building as such – "Former town house, subsequently a bank, built between 1774 and 1776, with C19 and C20 alterations". Materials are noted as brick with stone dressings and a slate roof, and wooden sash windows.

The reasons for designation are noted as :

"Architectural interest:

- as a type of C18 brick-built townhouse which is characteristic of later-C18 and early-C19 domestic architecture in this area;
- as a high-quality town house, adapted to late-C19 bank premises, with an impressive but restrained outward appearance symbolising reliability and security;
- for the retention of decorative fixtures and fittings which show its former phases of spatial configuration, including the decorated late-C19 banking ceilings, substantial strong rooms, late-C18 moulded door architraves and panelled doors and window panelling with internal hinged window shutters.

Historic interest: for its former association with Parr's Banking Company after its conversion to a joint stock bank, the emerging dominant banking system in the C19.

Group value: the building benefits from a spatial group value with the listed Church of St Mary and 9 Market Place."

As noted in the listing for Cockpit House, there is recognition of the value of the grouping of this building with the surrounding St Mary's Church and 9 Market Street. Shakespeare North Playhouse sits on the edge of this group.

St Mary's is Grade I listed and is described in the listing as such:

"Church. C14 lean-to vestry to south of chancel; nave and chapel, 1610 (dated on plaques); tower dated 1729; aisles, 1818-19. Tower has base with cyma moulding; west entrance has Tudor head with roll moulded surround with 3 pointed overlights, hollow-chamfered square-headed architrave with label mould. Round-headed west window has 3 round-headed lights and 2 roundels, roundel above has torus surround and top mask. Frieze inscribed "CONDITUM ANO DOMNI 1729" and cornice. Bell stage has Doric flat pilasters and entablature, 2-light round-headed bell openings, louvred lights and clock faces, that to east has angel key. Parapet with balustrading and 3 finials to each angle. Spire has 3 tiers of lucarnes and sill courses. Aisles have cornices and embattled parapets, 3-light windows with intersecting tracery. Clerestory has 3-light square-headed windows Chancel has south windows as above; east window of 4 lights with uncusped Perpendicular tracery. Vestry to south of 1900, north vestry has square-headed windows. ... South aisle east window, 1879, by Morris and Co., grisaille flower quarries and 3 small figures. East window of 1840, classically draped figures under gothic canopies, removed after damage, 1985."

Further information can be found in Merseyside HER - "By 1600 the lack of consistent upkeep meant that the church had deteriorated too badly for repair... The rebuilding work undertaken in 1610, was drastic... the chancel and nave were demolished and rebuilt, in red sandstone, as one of the last examples of the architectural style known as late perpendicular. It is likely that the 14th century tower together with the chancery chapel survived the rebuilding programme." The red sandstone mentioned here is the same sandstone used as inspiration in the selection of the pink bricks used in the Playhouse.

Completing the previously mentioned group is the Grade II listed 9 Market Street – 'Number 9 with Former Workshop to Rear' described in its listing as:

"House with shop, and former workshop to rear. The house fronting Market Place early C19, the workshop possibly C17 in part. Rendered brick, slate roof; the workshop random rubble. Double-depth house with rear wing; 3 storeys, regular 2 window range. Parapet raised and shaped to centre, with moulded cornice. Hornless sash windows, 9-pane to 2nd, 15-pane to 1st floors, stucco pilasters. Mid to late C19 shop front with central doorway (under rectangular overlight), and renewed brick plinth. House doorway to left, the door panelled. Large brick stack to front shape of roof to left. To the rear a structure understood to be the earliest free-standing tool and watchmaker's workshop in Prescott (which was one of the national centres of watch making in England); plain rectangular plan, single-storey, much patched (with brick in part), flag floor; various openings altered."



07 Conclusion

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We believe that this small addition to the Shakespeare North Playhouse is not only vital for the continued safe use of the public realm but also a great opportunity to add a modest piece of community artwork to the exterior of this significant building.

Shakespeare North has received recognition both locally and nationally for its cultural significance, and its importance as a catalyst for Prescott. A part of this is the rich public realm developing, and this intervention ensures that the public realm will continue to be used freely; however will mitigate against the more daring locals who have been using the substation as a parkour springboard.

It is considered that the design proposal will significantly improve upon the safety of the existing building, as well as adding a small addition to the quality of the existing building and local surroundings. We feel the proposal is not contentious and will be compliant with local and national planning policy in promoting good design. The nature of the proposal is sympathetic and appropriate to the original buildings scale and form - within the current urban setting - whilst improving and enhancing the existing facilities, which in turn offer the enhanced safety currently required.



Proposed - Roof screen 3D view

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