

Bonn Square, Oxford, UK

Oxford is a unique place, with a strong identity based principally on its historic university colleges. With the quadrangles of these colleges providing open space for the students and staff, the city centre has developed in a manner such that public space is minimal. Although formed in piecemeal fashion, Bonn Square, therefore, is an anomaly.

Formerly composed of a number of autonomous land parcels, held under separate ownership, Bonn Square had neither a distinctive character nor a clear civic role and consequently gained a reputation for neglect and petty crime.

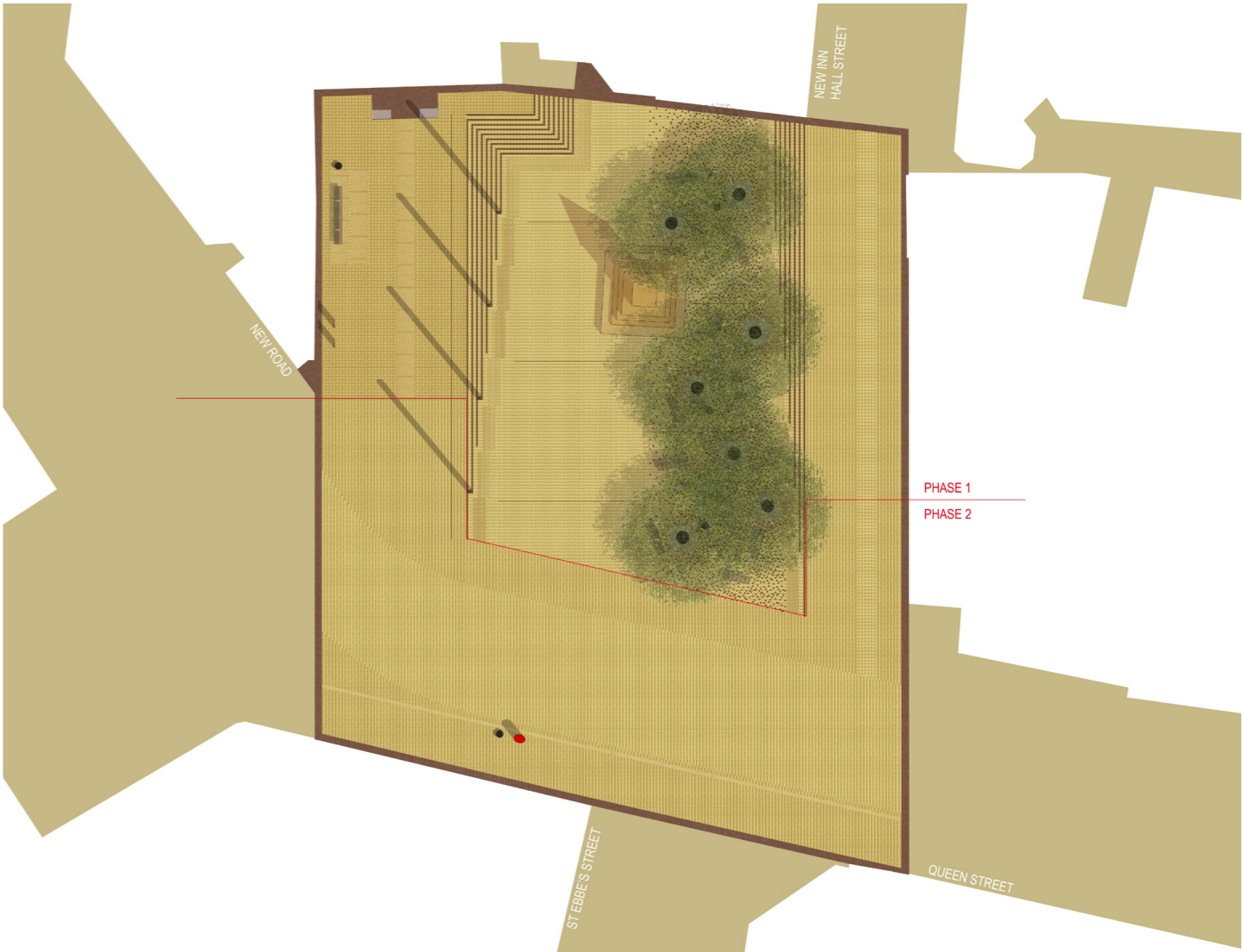
Our project, the winning proposal in a RIBA open international design competition held in 2005, has radically altered the character of Bonn Square. It is now a flexible, events space which provides a venue for both formal and informal civic events, as well as being a safe and accessible backdrop to the life of the city.

As the flagship project in the redevelopment of the Oxford’s west end, the city’s principal commercial district, and a keystone in the City Council’s Area Action Plan, Bonn Square will act as a catalyst for further local regeneration and a wider programme of public realm initiatives throughout the city.



Location Plan

Bonn Square lies at the convergence of four important shopping and commercial streets in the west-end of Oxford

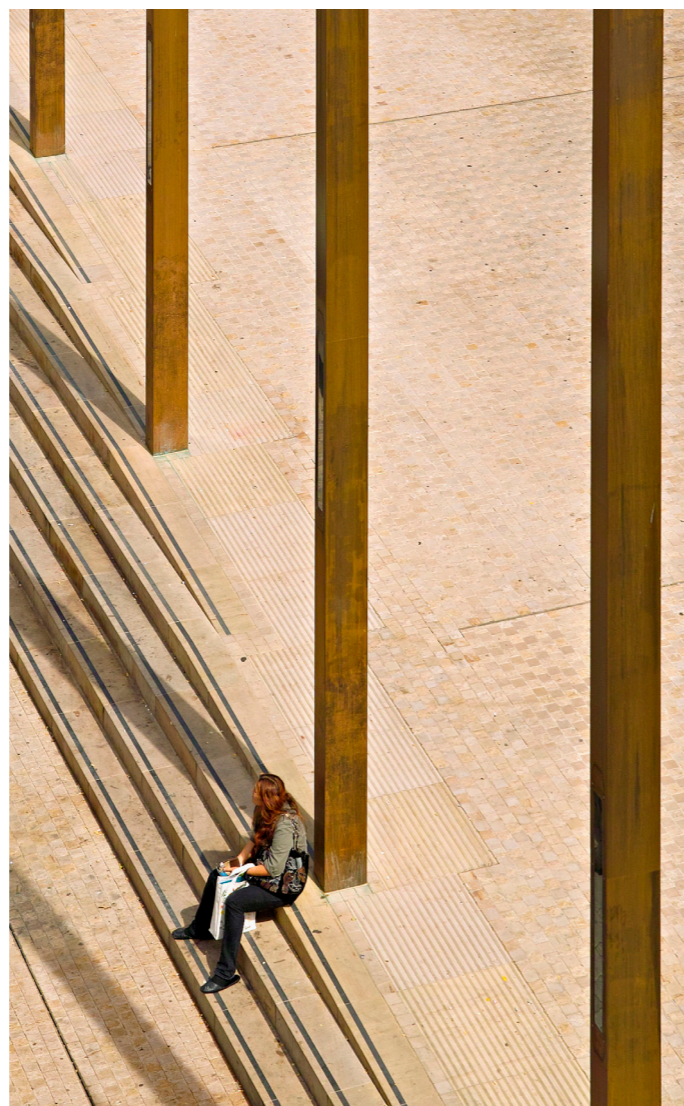


Site Plan

A variegated sandstone surface unifies the square. Sawn and split-faced sandstone setts are laid in different configurations to create multiple surface patterns that articulate both anticipated usage and historic land ownership boundaries



Phosphur bronze street furniture is loosely dispersed beneath a grove of trees.



Four 15m high phosphur bronze lighting columns facilitate the modification of the Square's character through light level and colour



Grade II listed Tirah Memorial is retained in the centre of the Square.



The sandstone surface glistens in the rain, heightening the effect of the surface variation.



The phosphur bronze street furniture will patinate and stain the sandstone surface, demonstrating the passing of time.



A programme of public art has been commissioned which will further enhance the Square. Cast bronze books by Diana Bell are distributed throughout the Square.



Sandstone is manipulated to fully accommodate all requirements of the surface, including safety markings for the visually impaired.



The Square has been designed to act as a backdrop to the daily life of the city or as venue for civic events: the Lord Mayor's Parade or a place to meet.

Oxford Folk Festival



Oxford Festival of Light



Before and after