

West Oxford Character Statement and Heritage Assets Survey: Part 1 St Ebbe's Suburb and Osney Island



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Introduction

This study has been prepared for the Oxford Heritage Assets Register as a review of the history and character of West Oxford. This is the first stage in the process of identifying West Oxford's non-designated heritage assets by developing understanding of the valued characteristics and historic, artistic, architectural and archaeological interest of each of West Oxford's neighbourhoods. It also provides a first level of understanding of the area's character, including its positive historic character features, negative features, issues and opportunities for enhancement that can inform decisions about change.

The study was prepared by the City Council's Heritage and Specialist Services Team in 2013 following initial guidance from a steering group of local history and archaeology experts and city councillors in 2012. It has been prepared using the results of a series of community partnership focused studies including the West End Context Study, the Oxford Viewcones Assessment (2014), and the Oxford Archaeology Plan (2013) undertaken by the City Council in Partnership with Oxford Archaeology, Oxford Preservation Trust and the Oxford Community Archaeological Forum (with funding from English Heritage) and with input from many of Oxford's stakeholder organisations.

What is the Oxford Heritage Assets Register?

Heritage assets are defined by the government as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes that are "... identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of [their] heritage interest". These can include "designated heritage assets" such as listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas, which are protected by legislation, as well as "non-designated heritage assets" identified by the local planning authority. The Oxford Heritage Assets Register is being prepared by Oxford City Council as a record of those features of the historic environment that have local value as heritage that merit consideration planning.

Decisions affecting these non-designated heritage assets will be taken with regard to the government's guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework or any successor document and the City Council's Policies relating to heritage assets set out in the Local Plan. Planning proposals will be expected to demonstrate that measures have been taken to avoid or minimise harm to the significance of these assets resulting from change as well as seeking to sustain and enhance their significance and to make use of them as part of sustainable communities, contributing to the area's economic vitality. Nevertheless, there may be occasions where Heritage Assets cannot be retained, in which case proposals for new development will need to demonstrate that they make an equal or greater contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Why is Understanding Character Important?

Over 1000 years of history are written in Oxford's buildings, landscapes and archaeology, documenting a story that has propelled a small, provincial market town to the status of a city of international historic and architectural importance. The

character this provides is important to the city's inhabitants, providing continuity in their own personal stories and those of their families and communities and an environment that enriches their lives by stimulating the intellect and imagination through its interest and beauty. It makes Oxford a distinctive place to live, work or visit, which stands apart from other towns because of its beauty and history. This historic environment contributes to the identity of the city's many communities. Both the National Planning Policy Framework and the City's Local Plan include policies that require new development to respond positively to local character and to draw inspiration from the city's history and historic environment. This study aims to draw out how the historic environment of this part of West Oxford is valued within the city's wider historic environment.

This doesn't mean that everything about Oxford's environment is perfect. There are those areas where past change has not enriched the beauty and interest of the landscape, or where the evidence of stories of importance has been lost or hidden. There are also pressures that mean the city's landscape cannot remain unchanged forever. The landscape we have inherited has been created as the result of an ongoing process of change and will continue to develop in response to changing demands. By highlighting features that currently have a negative impact on character, or threaten to in future, studies such as this can guide new development to provide benefits by enhancing the character of the city and its neighbourhoods.

Why has West Oxford been chosen for this study?

West Oxford has been chosen as one of four pilot study areas for the Heritage Assets Register that will be used to develop the process of identifying and registering heritage assets. The area was chosen because of the rich historic environment that is present in one of the city's earliest suburbs and in recognition of the scale of change that is planned through the West End Area Action Plan. By identifying heritage assets of local value the study will ensure they are given consideration as part of the planning process where they would be affected by change. This is necessary to fulfil the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and to support implementation of the planning policies in the City's Local Plan.

What Area does it Cover?

This study covers the eastern part of the West Oxford suburbs, including St Ebbe's Suburb and Osney Island (defined by the courses of the Castle Mill Stream, the Sheepwash Channel and the main stream of the River Thames (isis)). A future study will consider the character and history of New Botley (West Oxford between the River Thames and the Seacourt Stream). Osney Town, including the site of Osney Abbey south of Osney Lane and west of the railway line has been assessed in detail in the Osney Town Conservation Area Appraisal and so is not considered here.



Oxford City Centre

Old Greyfriars Street

Thames Street

Castle Mill Stream

River Thames (Isis)

Oxpens Road

Hwythe Bridge Street

Park End Street

St Thomas' Street

Osney Lane

Becket Street

Cripley Road

Mill Street


Abbey Road

Osney Recreation
Grounds and Allotments

Osney Mead

New Botley

Legend

-  Study Area
-  Conservation Areas

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Methodology

Sources of information

This Character Assessment has been prepared by bringing together findings of several studies that have considered the heritage resource of the city and of West Oxford in particular in the last three years. These include the Oxford Archaeological Plan (including the Historic Urban Character Assessments for this area and relevant parts of the period based Archaeological Resource Assessment), the Oxford Viewcones Study and the West End Context Study. These projects have been promoted in partnership with community groups including Oxford Preservation Trust and Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum.

The West End Context Study, prepared in partnership by Oxford Preservation Trust, Oxford City Council and Oxford Archaeology, included workshops to undertake street surveys with representatives of Oxford Civic Society, Friends of Oxpens Meadow, West Oxford History Group, Cyclox, SENDRA (St Ebbes New Development Residents Association) and the West End Community Group. The workshops involved the use of the **Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit** to record the value of features of local character and the historic environment under the headings of spaces, buildings, views, landscape, ambience and activity. This allowed the preparation of character area assessments, which have been reviewed and augmented to provide the neighbourhood character assessments presented here.

The information has been enhanced by review of the **Historic Urban Character Assessment statements** (HUCAs) prepared for the Oxford Archaeological Plan. These provided a more historical focus, tracking the development of each area's character. They have provided additional consideration of the archaeological potential of West Oxford. Their content has been prepared in collaboration with the Oxford City and County Archaeological Forum, who are affiliated to Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society, bringing together expertise from across Oxfordshire's archaeological community. In preparing the Neighbourhood Character Statements it has been necessary to amalgamate several of the HUCA areas into larger neighbourhoods that have an historic identity.

In considering the role of this area of the city in relation to the views of Oxford from its setting, which are managed through the ten protected 'view cones', it has been possible to use the **Oxford View Cones Assessment**. This has developed an approach to the understanding of views of heritage interest that considers views in terms of the significance of the view to viewers past and present, the significance of the history of the places from which the view is seen and the significance of the features within the view that make it special. The study area lies within the mid ground of views from Boars Hill, Hinksey Hill and Harcourt Hill (collectively known as the Cumnor Hills or Western Hills) to the west of the city, as well as the open landscape of Port Meadow, in the floor of the valley to the north west. Within each of the Neighbourhood Character Statements, the contribution of the area to the significance of these views is considered.

The Neighbourhood Character Statements include a review of the present character and historic development of each neighbourhood as well as details of key valued features of the area's historic environment. These are supported by analysis of how the key historic character features are valued as heritage using the scheme of 'heritage values' set out in English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* (2008), defined as historical, evidential, aesthetic and communal value. The analysis of each neighbourhood is completed by a review of the key negative features that are considered to detract from its historic character. These are identified by considering their impact on the key positive character features and the heritage values identified, alongside the opportunities to reveal more of the area's significance through change.

Neighbourhood Assessment and Heritage Assets

Oxford's historic landscapes

At the highest level the whole landscape of Oxford is a heritage asset with a distinctive character, that tells the story of the city's eleven centuries of history and thousands of years of prehistory. This is recognised through the Council's planning policy documents. Within this character statement the history of West Oxford as part of this wider landscape is reviewed in brief to consider how a process of development has helped to create the landscape that is present today. Themes that stand out as running through the history of this landscape, which contribute to its character and identity are noted specifically. It is also possible to identify broad areas in which archaeological remains with particular characteristics are likely to be discovered, such as the remains of the prehistoric settlement, farming and ritual landscape that covered much of Oxford, the extent of the medieval city and its suburbs, or the ring of medieval abbeys and priories that grew around it.

Neighbourhoods and character areas

Within this landscape are neighbourhoods and landscape or townscape areas, representing distinct settlements or suburbs, as well as numerous archaeological landscapes that reflect periods of the area's development. Each of these might also be considered to form a landscape scale heritage asset. The Council and English Heritage have identified several areas of the city at the landscape level that stand out for their special historic and architectural, archaeological or horticultural interest, which are designated as conservation areas, scheduled monuments, a city centre area of archaeological interest and registered parks and gardens (these are collectively described as designated heritage assets). The Council also recognise the importance of the character, history and archaeology of all of the city's neighbourhoods through their planning policies. The value of these areas, including the history, thoughts, actions and people they represent is a result of the distinctive features (e.g. buildings, trees, streets, earthworks) they contain, as well as the character of the landscape as a whole, which is made up of numerous repeated minor details, which may have been intentionally designed or be the result of a fortuitous process of development.

The character statement assesses this part of West Oxford as a number of neighbourhoods or character areas, each of which has a historic identity or a recognisably distinct character. Key historic features of each area are identified, to

which new development should respond positively to comply with the City's planning policies. The significance of each area's character features is considered using English Heritage's *Heritage Values* to develop understanding of their contribution to the area as a whole. For the sake of mapping the character areas are shown as having defined boundaries. In reality their edges may be less distinct, with many characteristics continuing between areas.

Within each character area there are zones with potential for archaeological remains relating to particular activities. Examples include the extent of a medieval suburb or priory precinct or the recorded lines of the defences constructed during the civil war. These form an element of the wider archaeological landscape of their time but have been highlighted to identify where there is known potential for remains with a particular interest, or conversely where evidence is needed to confirm whether the information available from historical documents accurately reflects the story of the city. These are highlighted through the character statement, whilst more information can be found in the Oxford Archaeological Plan.

Individual heritage assets

Focusing on the finer grain of the city's streets, buildings, parks and spaces it is recognised that particular features of the landscape stand out for their contribution to the character and identity of each neighbourhood above the general contribution of positive character features. Some buildings or trees in particular may have a special value as heritage assets in their own right. These may qualify for statutory protection against English Heritage selection guidelines for listed buildings or the Department for Communities and Local Government's guidelines for selecting trees for tree preservation orders. The information in this study may be used to identify buildings and trees that should be considered for these designations.

Where the character statement includes parts of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area, buildings and other features that contribute positively to the area's special historic or architectural interest and character and appearance are noted. These buildings are considered to have one of the following characteristics:

Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?

Does it have landmark quality?

Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics?

Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of the building's in the conservation area?

Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in any other historically significant way?

Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets?

Does it contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?

Is it associated with a designed landscape e.g. a significant wall, terracing or a garden building?

Does it individually, or as part of a group, illustrate the development of the settlement in which it stands?

Does it have significant historic association with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?

Does it have historic associations with local people or past events?

Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?

Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?

(Source English Heritage, 2011, *Understanding Place: Appraisal and Management of Conservation Areas*)

There are other historic buildings and places outside conservation areas that may not meet the national selection requirements for designation but nevertheless have a special local value for their heritage interest that merits consideration in planning decisions. Oxford City Council has included policies for buildings of local interest and important parks and gardens in the local plan. For each of the neighbourhoods the character statement identifies the existing designated heritage assets and a number of potential heritage assets that the Council consider may meet the adopted criteria for the Oxford Heritage Assets Register. To be included on the heritage assets register features of the historic landscape must meet the following four criteria adopted by the Council in December 2012:

Criterion 1. They must be capable of meeting the government's definition of a heritage asset.

Criterion 2. They must possess heritage interest that can be conserved and enjoyed.

Criterion 3. They must have a value as heritage for the character and identity of the city, neighbourhood or community because of their heritage interest beyond personal or family connections, or the interest of individual property owners.

Criterion 4. They must have a level of significance that is greater than the general positive identified character of the local area.

WEST OXFORD CHARACTER STATEMENT: PART 1 ST EBBE'S & OSNEY ISLAND

Following the publication consultation on this study the Council will use this list of potential heritage assets to start drawing up the Oxford Heritage Assets Register in collaboration with owners and the wider community.

West Oxford's History

Historical Overview of West Oxford's Development

Prehistory and Roman Periods (8,000 BC – AD43)

This area formed part of the floodplain of the River Thames. It has high potential for remains of prehistoric activity connected with the development of an agricultural landscape exploiting the fertile alluvium and well-drained gravels to the east.

The area was probably crossed by an east – west route during the Roman period, which is now lost, but may have been evident until the development of St Thomas' in the 13th century.

Key themes

- Evidence of early exploitation of the River Thames floodplain and colonisation of the valley for rural settlement preceding the establishment of the city.
- The development of Oxford at the hub of regional transport network.

Early Medieval Period (AD 410 – 1066)

Osney may have been redefined as an island by the construction of the Castle Mill Stream in the Late Saxon period (c AD 850 – 1066), most probably through the creation of a new, straighter channel of the Wareham Stream by constructing the Waram or Wareham Bank. There are various interpretations of the 'Osn-' part of the island's name (including a personal name 'Osna', a description of the river as the 'Ouse', and early reference to 'Oxen', but the '-ey' is more securely understood as a reference to its island character. A bank and ditch surrounding the Saxon Burh defined what was within Oxford and what is outside and consequently considered its suburbs.

Key themes

- The management of the channels of the Thames and the development of the area as a focus of water powered industrial activities (milling).
- The establishment of a defined urban settlement in the 9th or early 10th century with areas outside used for differentiated 'suburban' activities.

Late Medieval Period (1066 – 1550)

Land outside the city was granted to religious institutions by wealthy patrons in the 12th and 13th century, leading to construction of abbeys and Oxford's development as a centre of learning. Construction of the abbeys also encouraged attendant suburban growth of housing and industries using waterpower, partly by the new institutions to raise the income derived from their property. Construction of the Botley Causeway also established West Oxford's position on an important route into the city from the west.

Key themes

- The development of Oxford as a centre for religious education.
- The influence of institutional land owners on the development of the city through planned development.
- Development of Oxford as the hub of regional transport networks.
- The management of the channels of the Thames and the development of the area as a focus of industrial activities.
- The development of suburban industries outside the limits of the city centre.

Early Modern Period (1530 – 1750)

The monastic institutions were lost in the 16th century but the suburbs remained and developed, whilst some former monasteries remained as Colleges. In West Oxford Christ Church became an important owner of the land of several older institutions. The suburbs became a focus for malting, brewing and other noxious trades including butchers and slaughterhouses. The area was crossed by the defences constructed to protect Royalist Oxford from the Parliamentarian army during the Civil War of the 17th century.

Key themes

- Dissolution of monastic institutions and consolidation of institutional/collegiate ownership.
- The defence of Oxford during the Civil War.
- The development of suburban industries outside the limits of the city centre.

Industrial Period (1750 – 1900)

The area was recognised as part of Oxford's picturesque setting in the 18th and early 19th century. The views across the floodplain of the River Thames, from both within the valley and the surrounding hills, were recorded in paintings, drawings, poetry and literature and continue to inspire local people and visitors to this day.

Development of the transport network (including turnpikes, canals, and railways) increased pressure for development of the western suburb. The results of this pressure are seen in different ways across the suburb. On Osney Island they resulted in the increase in density of population and scale of industries and an increasing role as the 'gateway to Oxford', whilst in St Ebbe's Parish the city spread south over the former flood meadows in a new grid of densely populated streets up to the Riverside wharves and industrial developments. Nevertheless, significant green open areas remained.

By the early 19th century the area had developed into an unhealthy, crowded, low-income district troubled by disease and notorious for its lodging houses. Redevelopment began in the second half of the 19th century including the construction of new model housing by Christ Church in the 1860s.

Key themes

- Views of the Oxford skyline seen across the city's green environs recognise as part of the city's identity.
- Development of Oxford as the hub of regional transport networks.
- The spread of Oxford outside its historic confines (Oxford's "base and brickish skirt").
- The development of suburban industries outside the limits of the city centre.
- The influence of institutional landowners on the development of the city.

20th century to the present

The area developed a more commercial aspect as housing development spread further west in the late 19th and early 20th century. This was reinforced by redevelopment of Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street for large-footprint commercial premises and hotels.

The overcrowded area of St Ebbe's was largely cleared of housing in the 1950s and 60s in preparation of redevelopment that was only partly realised in the late 20th century. A large area of temporary car parks remained, separating much of the new housing along the riverside from the city centre. The busy traffic route of Oxpens Road also cut across this area. It was constructed as the first section of an inner relief road for the city but resulted in creating a further obstacle for local residents and visitors to negotiate to reach the city centre.

Redevelopment of former railway land, open spaces of Rewley and the Victorian ribbon development in the north of the area has created monumental frontages to key public streets and squares and quieter residential areas behind.

Redevelopment off St Thomas' Street has maintained the grain and scale of the early modern and industrial period buildings of the suburb and the medieval street pattern creating a quiet back-street residential area.

Regeneration of the areas facing onto the Castle-Mill Stream has lost the characterful riverside areas of Upper Fisher Row, but has created an attractive ribbon of green open spaces and footpaths.

Key themes

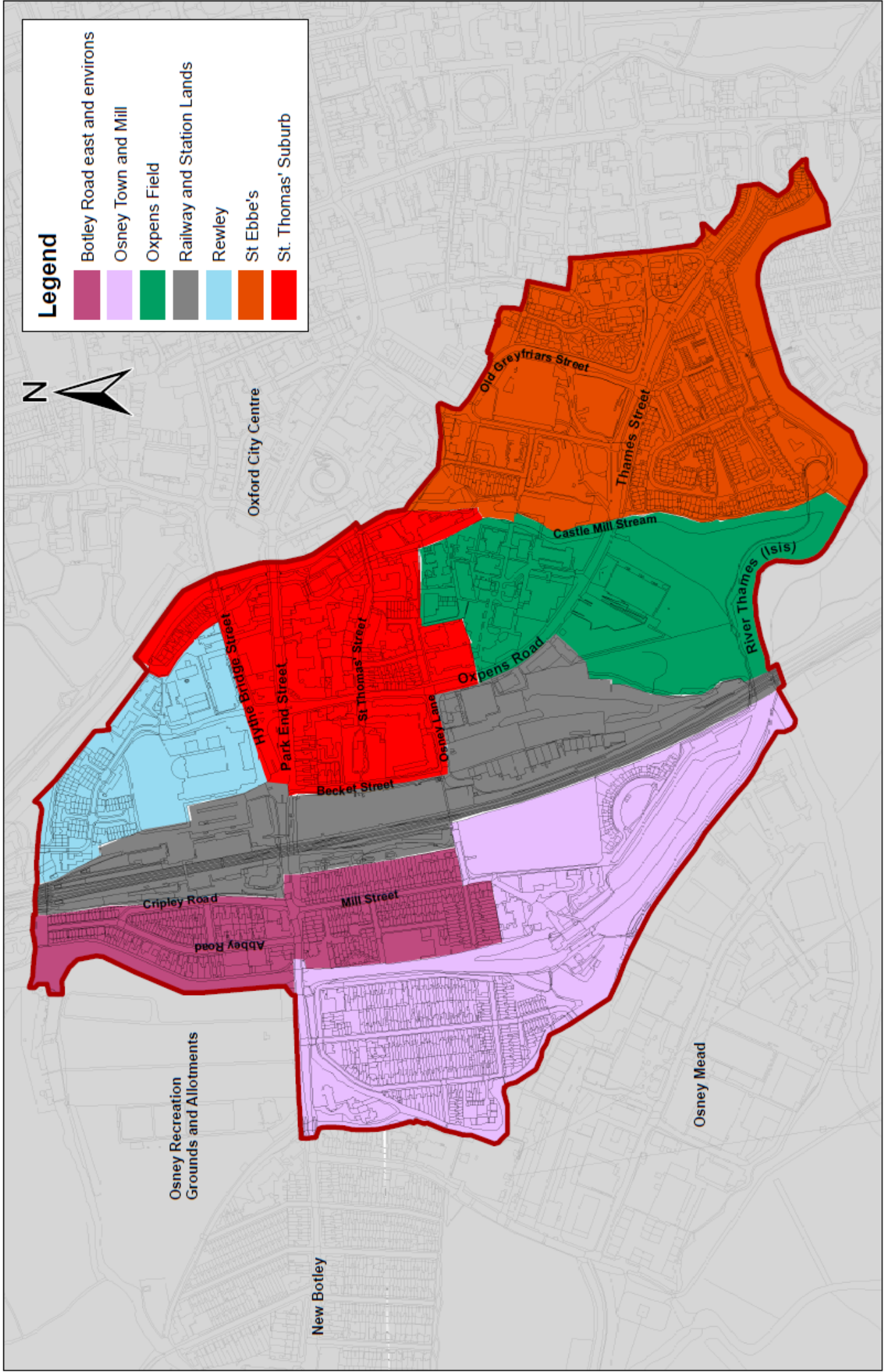
- Views of the Oxford skyline as part of the city's identity.
- Development of West Oxford as the gateway to the city.
- The spread of commercial activity outside the city centre.
- The influence of institutional land owners on the development of the city.
- Later 20th century clearance.
- The spread of institutions outside the city centre.

Character Areas in the Historic West Suburb

The study considered the eastern half of the historic western suburb defined as the zone lying west and directly south of the historic core, mostly constituting its historic suburbs and extending from the edges of Oxford City Centre at the Worcester Street Car Park, the Castle, West Gate Centre and the edges of St Aldate's with the main stream of the River Thames forming a boundary to the south and west as far north as the Sheepwash Channel. The western half of the suburb, including the area referred to as New Botley and Osney Mead remains to be considered in a later study. Osney Town and the area surrounding Osney Mill forming the Osney Town Conservation Area, have previously been considered within the City Council's conservation area appraisal. The study area has been subdivided into six separate character areas, reflecting the distinctive variations in townscape character across the area and the differences in historical development that have influenced these; including:

- St Thomas' Suburb
- Rewley
- Oxford Station and Railway Lands
- Oxpens
- St Ebbe's Suburb
- New Osney

Each of these areas is reviewed below including a description of its historic development to identify its positive character features; the heritage values of the area that these assets contribute to; the issues, negative features and opportunities for enhancement that are present; and the heritage assets the area contains, including potential additions to the Oxford Heritage Assets Register.



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West Oxford Character Statement Part 1: Neighbourhood Areas

St Thomas' Suburb

Extent:

- Fisher Row
- St Thomas' Street
- St Thomas' Church
- Hollybush Row
- Osney Lane (north side including Christ Church Old Buildings and the Hamel)
- Park End Street
- Hythe Bridge Street South and part of north side

General Description:

St Thomas's Suburb is built on medieval, early modern and industrial period streets developed over the north east quarter of Osney Abbey's land but subsequently intensively redeveloped in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and now with a strongly expressed late 19th and early 20th century 'redbrick' architectural character, which ranges from commercial streets of substantial Victorian and early 20th century buildings on main routes to the city centre, to narrow back streets with a mixture of industrial buildings (mostly related to the brewing industry) and terraced, two-storey cottages or the unusual three-storey blocks of model housing at Osney Lane,



A view of St Thomas Street across Hollybush Row

Woodbine Place and The Hamel. Twentieth century redevelopment has generally maintained the three-storey scale of the early modern and Industrial period buildings that defined streets and created the tight sense of enclosure that is recorded in late 19th century photos of streets such as Thomas Street. Within this landscape are fragments of earlier ages.

Historical development:

This is the area of the historic western suburb of Oxford, built on the 'Waram Bank' (later Fisher Row) and the street leading to St. Thomas' Church.

Osney Lane led to the gates of Osney Abbey, founded in 1129. The land of the suburb was granted to the abbey in the 1180s and a chapel erected on the site of the later church in the 1190s. The foundation of the suburb is generally considered to correspond with the foundation of the abbey, although houses may not have been constructed until the 13th century, when the church was built and, presumably, the road to it was laid out. In addition to the Castle Mill Stream further back



Castle Mill Stream and St George's Tower from Quaking Bridge

streams ran from north to south through the eastern edge of the suburb, either serving additional mills or allowing management of water and creating a number of small islands.

The west bank of the Castle Mill Stream (The Waram or Wareham Bank) appears to have been settled by the early 12th century and had become populous by the 14th. It was later known as Fisher Row, reflecting the occupation of many of its residents. Ralph Agas' map of 1578 records that development of the suburb in the late 16th century had not expanded beyond St Thomas' Street, Hollybush Row and a side

street near the modern site of the Hamel, in addition to Fisher Row. However, there may have been some expansion and contraction of the suburb in the medieval period and following the demise of the city's monasteries. To the north, Agas's map records a road on the alignment of Park End Street from Hollybush Row to the bridge over the Thames (now the south side of Frideswide Square and Botley Road



up to Osney Bridge). The map also shows Hythe Bridge Street, which had been set out from a bridge crossing the Castle Mill Stream in the 12th century. Hythe means landing place and suggests this part of Fisher Row provided wharfs in the late medieval period. Evidence of the early role of the area as an industrial suburb includes records of the origins of the Lion Brewery on St Thomas' Street by 1597. The earliest buildings identified within the complex date from around 1730.

New Road (modern Park End Street) was constructed in 1769 following the turnpiking of Botley Road (1767) and in anticipation of the arrival of the Oxford Canal at its basin and wharves (now Worcester Street Car Park). The creation of a transport connection with the industrial manufactories and coalfields of Birmingham and the West Midlands, as well as agricultural areas of Oxfordshire, added considerable advantages to Oxford's position as a county town. It also added considerably to the pressure for further development of West Oxford for both housing and industry. Four breweries (The Lion, Swan and Eagle as well as Phillip's Tower Brewery) developed in this area along with maltings just outside it at Tidmarsh Lane, Paradise Street and Beckett Street. However, the suburb was an overcrowded, unhealthy area by the early 19th century, with courts (referred to as 'yards') of cramped housing running back from the streets. Merchants and owners of industrial enterprises such as the breweries soon abandoned homes such as the town houses on Fisher Row, moving out to healthier suburbs to the north and east of the city. The area was badly affected by the cholera epidemics of the 1830s, 40s and 50s and was otherwise a location associated with prevalence of fever and disease, attributed to the poor drainage of open sewers and irregularly emptied communal cesspools in the yards.

Arrival of the railways in the mid-19th century added further pressure for development, with hotels and lodging houses developing as the area became the first point of arrival in Oxford for many. In the 1860s Christ Church (who had become the main landowner in the area after the Reformation) began a programme of

regeneration of housing in St Thomas'. This included construction of blocks of model housing, as well as terraces of workers cottages. These have given a more uniform architectural character to the streets south of St Thomas' Street. Later 20th century developments on Osney Lane have sought to emulate the Christ Church Old Buildings, which formed the centrepiece of this improved housing.

During the late 19th and early 20th century new commercial developments sought to exploit Park End Street's position on major routes into the city, including the construction of the Cantay Depository as a storage facility and warehouse for middle class residents of the city and Coopers' Marmalade factory, targeting a similar market, whilst exploiting the proximity of the goods station. During the 1930s Park End Street was targeted by newly established businesses selling or servicing motorcars, becoming Oxford's 'Street of Wheels' and acquiring an unusual mixture of art deco (Hartwell's Garage) and Neo-Georgian (King's Garage) architecture. The construction of the Royal Oxford Hotel in the same decade on Hollybush Row added further to the sense of arrival at the gateway to the city centre.

During the 1920s, the construction of Oxpens Road, as the first stage of an inner ring road, extended Hollybush Row south, cutting through the historic frontages of St Thomas' Street and Osney Lane, resulting in fragmentation of the historic streetscape and introducing heavy traffic to the narrow street. Further redevelopment of older housing or industrial sites has resulted in some attractive development along St Thomas' Street and Fisher Row, although these tend to be gated communities, restricting the public benefits of regeneration. Sensitive redevelopment has included the regeneration of the green islands between the Castle Mill Stream and Wareham Stream (creating a chain of attractive green spaces and footpaths) and the redevelopment of the former Lion (Morrells') Brewery for housing.



No. 1 Lower Fisher Row; home to the Tawneys, owners of the Lion Brewery in the 18th century. Their almshouses stand just to the right.

Key Historic Character Features:

Street plan	The narrow medieval streets create an enclosed and intimate environment that provides a link to the early development of the area. The later, Early Modern and Industrial Period streets, are broader and straighter, reflecting their development as grand approaches to the city centre without regard to earlier property boundaries.
Early Modern building scale and 'rhythm' in 20 th century redevelopment	On the residential back streets buildings the narrow frontages that have been maintained (sometimes artificially) within new development, reflect the medieval tenements laid out in the 13 th century. These provide a horizontal rhythm to frontages and vertical emphasis (the appearance of a series of tall narrow buildings joined together). The uneven scale of Early Modern and early Industrial Period buildings (varying between two and a half and three and a half storeys has been maintained by 20 th century redevelopment. Few adjacent buildings are of the same height, rooflines are uneven and the building frontage steps in and out creating variety on a long, curving streetline.
Castle Mill Stream, Wareham Stream and Back Stream	Both streams survive as evidence of the medieval water engineering for mills, possibly as early as the foundation of the Saxon town, but certainly in association with the Norman Castle and medieval abbey.
St Thomas' Churchyard	An important historic group is formed of the church and churchyard (including mature tree planting), with the parish school and other school buildings, together with the convent gate and vicarage (both designed by Clapton Crab Rolfe in the 1880s and 90s).
Lower Fisher Row	A small group of Georgian houses representing part of the historic development of Fisher Row remain on the riverside while the modest terraced houses on Upper Fisher Row are an important reminder of the once much larger riverside community.
The Lion Brewery	Many of the brewery buildings have been retained within the scheme for residential redevelopment including the Brewery Gate public house and attached forge. The brewery's chimney provides a skyline feature and landmark within West Oxford.
Frideswide Square and Park End Street Victorian/Edwardian and 1930s buildings, Oxford's "Street of	Groups of Victorian and Edwardian buildings built to a consistent scale and palette of materials create a well defined character that has been emulated by later 20 th and early 21 st century buildings. Outstanding buildings including Cooper's Marmalade Factory, the Cantay Depository and

<p>Wheels”</p>	<p>the former Castle Hotel lift the architectural standard of these streets, whilst other contemporary buildings add group value resulting in the strong sense of place. The motorcar trade buildings of Park End Street (running through to Hythe Bridge Street) add further architectural and historic interest in the street scene). The Royal Oxford Hotel provides grandeur and closure to the northern end of Frideswide Square as well as historical interest in the association of the square with travel and arrival in Oxford. Replacement of the L.M.S.</p> <p>Blocks of between two and four storeys (but generally three) with ‘active’ shop frontages and eye-catching detailing to facades and roofscape have a strong visual presence and help to define these as important public spaces.</p> <p>The frontage of the Jam Factory sets a precedent for the mass of buildings surrounding Frideswide Square, which is supported by the pavilions of the Said Business School opposite and the Royal Oxford Hotel. Around the square there is a remarkable consistency in scale unifying the space.</p>
<p>Terraced cottages at Woodbine Place, St Thomas’ Street, Osney Lane and Hollybush Row including the Chequers and Honey Pot public houses</p>	<p>An area of consistent architectural character representing a single phase of redevelopment starting in the late 19th century, which replaced earlier housing that had degenerated into slums. The houses are built of a consistent design and two-storey scale mainly in red-brown brick with bath stone dressings that match other contemporary buildings in the character area. Most have distinctive three light ground floor windows divided by mullions, whilst those at Woodbine Place have two light windows. Buildings that stand out amongst these are the two public houses, which retain early 20th century frontages, including glazed brick and stone pub frontages, retaining segmental arched hoods to doors in one case and intricate timber frames to windows in the other. The former crèche and invalid kitchen at the corner of Osney Lane and Woodbine Place stands out for its historic interest relating to the area’s social history.</p>
<p>Upper Fisher Row riverside space and Victorian housing and commercial development on Hythe Bridge Street and Upper Fisher Row</p>	<p>An enclave of Victorian character development, including later Edwardian and Inter-War semi-detached housing development with a distinctive character due to the position overlooking the Castle Mill Stream.</p>
<p>Christ Church Model</p>	<p>An outstanding example of early social housing rising to</p>

WEST OXFORD CHARACTER STATEMENT: PART 1 ST EBBE'S & OSNEY ISLAND

Housing	three storeys with distinctive open stairwells with key-stone arches above and survival of distinctive timber framed casement windows.
The Oxford Retreat	An early 20 th century public house in Jacobean Revival style that provides a gateway feature at the entrance to Hythe Bridge Street.
Historic Views of Oxford	<p>The historic west suburb is outside the principal historic centre, but features in the foreground of some views across the city from the west and south-west, including the views from Boars Hill and Raleigh Park, recorded by artists and poets. Indeed the suburb forms part of Oxford's 'base and brickish skirt' as described by the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Painters drawing masters were also inspired by the riverside views and distinctive streetscape of St Thomas' Street in the 18th and 19th centuries.</p> <p>There are also a number of notable views of historic buildings from within the area that are framed by the tightly enclosed streets. Notable amongst these is the view of St George' Tower, Oxford Castle along the Castle Mill Stream from Quaking Bridge often recorded as an image of Oxford's history in topographical and antiquarian descriptions of the city from the early 19th century to the present (see for example The Book of the Thames, 1859, 92).</p>

Historical Value:

The medieval church, churchyard and street pattern illustrates and provides connection with the suburban growth of the city into low-lying areas with the development of Oxford as a national centre of monastic institutions and education from the late 12th century. The watercourses that run through this area illustrate the development of the area for medieval water powered industries.



St. Thomas' Street retains the medieval line of the lane leading to the church, along which the suburb grew



The remains of the malting and brewing industry provide a connection with Oxford's past as a small-scale industrial centre, processing the produce of an agricultural hinterland that was able to expand rapidly with the improvements in transport of the early industrial revolution.

Old Maltings on Tidmarsh Lane seen across the Castle Mill Stream

The cluster of buildings at St Thomas' Church,

including the vicarage, parish school, and the gate of a former convent have associations with the Oxford Movement in the Church of England.

The commercial developments on Park End Street and surrounding Frideswide Square illustrate this area's role of as an important entrance to the city for middleclass travellers during the late 19th and early 20th century, latterly resulting in its development as Oxford's Street of Wheels.

The later 19th century social housing illustrates the pioneering response of Christ Church as the major landowner to the area's degeneration into a poor suburb with serious health issues.

In the north east of this area the buildings of Upper Fisher Row and the adjacent section of Hythe Bridge Street illustrates the Industrial period development of this



The imposing frontages of buildings on Park End Street were designed to make an impression on people arriving in the city from the two railway stations

route, running out to the railway stations up to three storeys. These red-brown brick buildings retain much of their historic character, including fielded panel doors, two-over-two pane sash windows (suggesting a date of construction after the 1860s) and bath stone stringcourse and lintels with distinctive vermiculated key-stones with of

Evidential Value:

There remains much potential for survival of buried elements of the past, both medieval and later (as is shown by the excavations that have taken place in St Thomas's), and also for recovery of history from documentary, graphic, and oral sources.

Previous archaeological investigations have revealed evidence of activity in this area during the Bronze Age.

There is potential for remains of the former medieval tenements of St Thomas' suburb, including remains of buildings, property boundaries and material associated with occupation and crafts that may have been practised in the area. This could provide dating material that would help inform our understanding of the suburb's development, as well as evidence of the development of industries in the area.

At least one former watercourse ran through this neighbourhood that is no longer identifiable as a surface feature. Locating and examining this watercourse could inform understanding of the area's development including the early development of water-powered industries.

The defensive ditches and bastions built to protect Oxford during the Civil War may have run through this area. de Gomme's plan of the defences suggests one bastion used St



St Thomas' Church may have played a role in the defence of Oxford as well as providing the spiritual heart of the suburb



The Wareham Stream north of St. Thomas St.

Thomas' Church as a strong point. Later maps do not confirm whether or not this section of the city defences was actually constructed. Testing points on the predicted line of the defences would inform understanding of how much of what was planned was in fact built.

Revealing evidence of early housing, including the notorious 'yards' would inform understanding of the conditions of industrial Oxford and the motivation for regeneration of the area in the later 19th and early 20th century.

Communal Value:

St Thomas's Church and churchyard provide an important role in the area as a centre for the local Church of England congregation to worship in a building that provides 800 years of continuity of use for this purpose. It helps to memorialise the community's past and as a key building in the development of the Oxford movement contributes to the identity and practices of the Anglo-Catholic community within the Church of England.

This area provides a residential enclave on the edge of the historic city with a mix of historic streets and new development of houses, apartments, and college accommodation. Older housing provides a sense of continuity with past generations of residences and contributes to the identity of the area as an historic and established residential community. As an iconic and unusual development Christ Church Model Dwellings helped revive the area, following the development of its unhealthy reputation as a revived, safe and healthy community. More recent development on St Thomas' Street has sought to emulate the older housing and industrial buildings to maintain the sense of historic continuity and character.

Historic public houses on Hollybush Row continue to provide an opportunity for local residents and workers to socialise, whilst maintaining a sense of continuity with past generations who have used these facilities.

The Jam Factory (Frank Cooper's Marmalade Factory) with its prominent chimney retains strong associations for many local families. The homogeneity of scale, style and architectural details of the buildings of Park End Street are valued as are its associations with Oxford's industrial past ('street of wheels').

Brewing, and the Morrell's Brewery in particular, has been an important feature of Oxford's identity until the later 20th century.

Aesthetic Value:

Upper and Middle Fisher Row offer a green retreat in the heart of the historic city and are part of a main north-south thoroughfare connecting to Paradise Street (OCVC and beyond) and west along Lower Fisher Row, the river and canal to Jericho and North Oxford. The area is valued for its tranquillity and green space with riverside willows hanging over the water of the streams. It offers fine views along the water, and to the castle and St George's Tower and interesting historic buildings.

St Thomas the Martyr and the cluster of other historic buildings of interest are attractive in the framed view down St Thomas' Street, which is likely to be a designed feature of the suburb's medieval planning



The Greenery of Fisher Row from Park End Street

St George's

Tower is framed in views along Tidmarsh Lane, Paradise Street and Woodins Way with the river at its feet, which, again is likely to reflect a designed feature of its presence as a defensive feature of the castle and, potentially the Anglo-Saxon burh.

The churchyard with mature trees provides a rare green space and passage to Becket Street.

Throughout the suburb the use of brick (normally red-brown but occasionally buff or yellow) with stone detailing (often as banding) is a unifying feature of buildings that creates a positive aesthetic character. Occasionally stone buildings, either in limestone rubble or Guiting Stone ashlar, provide a contrast that reflects the greater presence of stone in the buildings of the city centre to the east.

The strong sense of enclosure created by the narrow street width, curving road line and buildings rising from the rear of the pavement on St Thomas' Street does create



The tightly enclosed space of Woodbine Place, with the Christ Church Old Buildings on the right

an attractive environment as a quiet residential enclave. This falls from three storeys at the eastern edge, where it approaches the city, to two storeys in the areas of terraced housing including Woodbine Place, Osney Lane and Hollybush Row, as well as the buildings leading to and around the churchyard. The large industrial structures of the former brewery as well as the design of the former Brewery Gate

public house add detail and interest. The industrial character of the buildings is indicated by their brick arch headed windows, scale and massing, with gable ends set facing the road so the long side of buildings could be accessed from the yards off the street. The former office buildings of the brewery are indicated by their more ornate stone mullioned windows and half-timbered gables. The Christ Church Old Buildings were designed to have a strong presence in the street scene with the massive scale of the arches to the open stairwells catching the eye and adding to the rhythm of openings, and enhanced by the use of contrasting coloured brick stringcourses. Even the more humble terraced houses have decorative detailing added by stone bands running across and joining the ground floor window heads, in addition to their unusual ground floor windows. Their timber-framed sash-windows is another feature of their design that has, on the whole, survived.



The former Brewery Gate Public House, designed by H.G. W. Drinkwater. Set just outside the brewery it would have served as a flagship for the brewery's beer. The small building to the left was a farrier's forge to shoe the dray horses.

The more civic scale areas of Park End Street, Hythe Bridge Street and Frideswide Square have wider streets but nevertheless receive a strong sense of enclosure from the consistently three or even four storey scale of the buildings that rise from the rear of the pavements. The Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings were designed with a mixture of vernacular and baroque (or 'Queen Anne Revival') detailing, including opportunities for elaborate decoration including the 'swags' of oranges carved in deep relief on Cooper's Marmalade Factory and elaborate Dutch gables at the Cantay Depository, or the pyramid roof of the former Castle Hotel. The buildings lining the south side of Frideswide Square were designed to form an attractive grouping for passengers arriving from the two railway stations opposite. Later 20th century buildings, notable King Charles House, were designed to complement these buildings adding to the area's sense of place. The 1930s buildings, notably the Royal Oxford Hotel, were also conscientiously designed to have a high aesthetic quality that would attract middle class patrons. The shopfronts of many buildings on these streets retain attractive historic elements, despite much later remodelling. These streets provide channelled views into the city centre, with Nuffield College and the County Council Offices (now the County Register Office)



Park End Street in evening sunlight. The three storey buildings provide a dramatic approach to the city centre

providing a gateway feature and the spires of Nuffield Tower and St Mary's Church seen beyond.

Negative Features, Issues and Opportunities:

- The change in character of Hollybush Row has resulted in an uncomfortably mixed architectural character. The introduction of heavy traffic through the construction of the inner ring road (Oxpens Road) has made this a noisy inner city traffic route that detracts from the quiet residential enclave that it runs through.
- New buildings on Hollybush Row and its continuance as Oxpens Road are not well integrated with the low scale, small unit size of the adjacent areas of the churchyard, Osney Lane and Woodbine Place and have struggled to provide continuity from the more civic spaces of Frideswide Square and Park End Street.
- The loss of historic industries and the closure and redevelopment of the many inns that ran along St Thomas' Street has resulted in a loss of vibrancy and activity in the streets that help to build a sense of community.
- This area is traversed by many on their way to and from the city, and has added significance as the initial experience of a great historic city. There is potential to reveal and interpret the history of this medieval suburb and the more recent industrial and social history of this part of the city.

- The public realm and shop frontages of Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street could be enhanced to improve the experience of visitors to the city centre.
- Reduction in street clutter, particularly at Park End Street/Frideswide Square/Hollybush Row would help to enhance their historic character.
- Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street are now a part of Oxford's nightclub and entertainment area, making it a noisy area by night, whilst many businesses are closed during the daytime. This reduces the area's vibrancy, despite the busy traffic passing through. As a result, this area can feel like an uncomfortable break between the activity of buses and trains at Frideswide Square and the busy area of tourists and shopping in the City Centre.

Heritage Assets:

Designated Heritage Assets

- Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Fisher Row
- Cooper's Marmalade factory
- St Thomas' Vicarage
- St Thomas' Church
- St Thomas' Girls' School - The Lodge (1841) and railings
- Combe House Boy's school (built 1702) with adjacent school building of 1839

Positive Buildings within the Oxford Central (City and University) Conservation Area

- Christ Church Old Buildings with Nos. Nos 1 – 7 The Hamel
- Former St Thomas' School, Osney Lane
- Nos. 1 – 7 and 43 -53 The Lion Brewery, St Thomas' Street, with the brewery chimney
- The former Brewery Gate Public House
- Oxford University Estates Directorate Offices and Workshops, Tidmarsh Lane
- The Oxford Retreat, Hythe Bridge Street
- Quaking Bridge, Tidmarsh Lane

Areas of Archaeological Potential

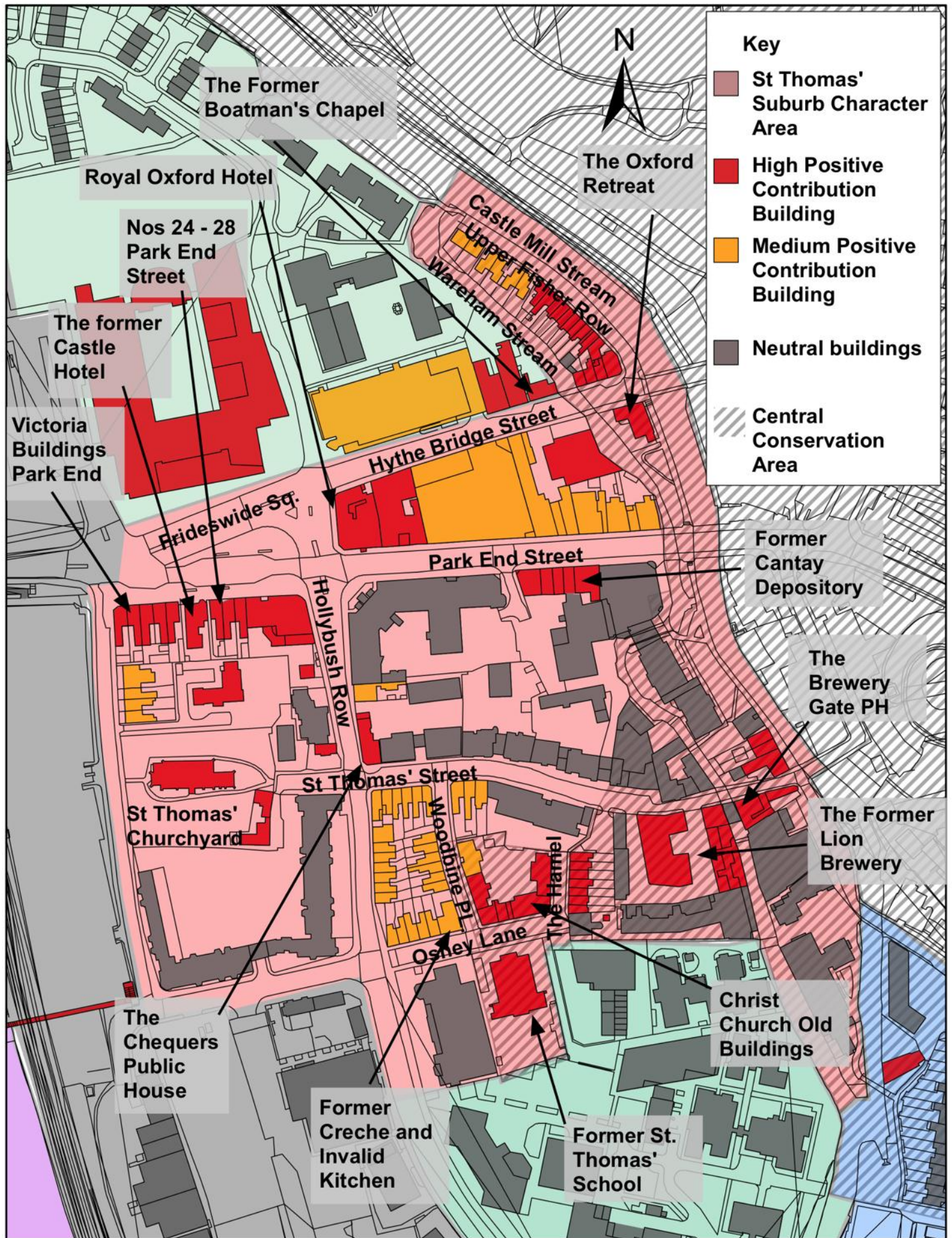
- Site of bronze age settlement and farming remains centred on The Hamel
- The Wareham Stream
- The Castle Mill Stream
- St Thomas' medieval and post-medieval suburb

Potential Non-designated Heritage Assets

- Cantay Depository, Nos. 37 – 39 Park End Street
- Victoria Buildings, Nos. 18 – 22 Park End Street (Frideswide Square Frontage)
- Former Castle Hotel, Park End Street (Frideswide Square Frontage)
- Nos. 24 - 28 Park End Street (Frideswide Square Frontage)
- The Royal Oxford Hotel, Hollybush Row
- The Chequers Public House, Hollybush Row
- Former Crèche and Invalid Kitchen, No. 1 Woodbine Place



St Thomas' Street, 1907 by Henry Taunt (© English Heritage)



St Thomas' Suburb Character Area

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Rewley

Extent:

- Hythe Bridge Street (North side)
- Rewley Road Closes
- Saïd Business School (formerly Rewley Abbey and the L.M.S. Station)

General Description:

An area of mainly modern development, mainly built in the last twenty years over former railway lands and allotments, or as redevelopment of Victorian ribbon development on Hythe Bridge Street. Fragments of earlier development survive, giving the area some older historic character that indicates its



A view of one of the closes of modern housing off Rewley Road (© SJB reproduced under Creative Commons License)

past development. This area includes monumental buildings including the Saïd Business School and Beaver House, providing a civic scale of development in highly trafficked locations. Behind these are quieter enclaves including the Fire Station and the residential courts off Rewley Road. On Hythe Bridge Street fragments of the Victorian housing (mostly now in commercial or mixed use) and the distinctive riverside residential enclave at Upper Fisher Row survive. The historic presence of the Cistercian Rewley Abbey is indicated by the wall and gate bounding the precinct to Castle Mill Stream, while there is a high potential for the survival of substantial archaeological remains of the abbey within the area.

Historical Development:

This is the north eastern part of the historic 'North Oseney' of Rewley Abbey, founded by the Earls of Cornwall as a Cistercian Abbey and place of study in the early 13th century. The Wareham Stream, which divides the Rewley Land from Upper Fisher Row to the east, was probably created in the Late Saxon or Norman Period (late 11 or 12th century) as a back stream to the Castle Mill Stream. It is better recorded in the 13th century. A Hythe Bridge was built in the Norman period and a road laid out from it in 1123, although maps of the 16th century do not record it. Hythe is an old English word recording landing places for boats next to the stream.

Fisher Row had become populated by the 12th century and appears to have been populous by the 14th, although it isn't clear if this was restricted to the lower, town, end. Rewley Road, running north from Hollybush Row in St Thomas', was probably the main approach to the abbey's lands.



Hythe Bridge Street with Beaver House (built as the headquarters of Blackwell's Mail Order Division) on the left (© Betty Longbottom reproduced under Creative Commons License)

Following the Reformation the abbey's estate was divided between the colleges of Christ

Church and Corpus Christi, and the Dutton family of Gloucestershire. Part of the abbey was retained as a farmhouse and associated agricultural buildings remained, whilst a short-lived Civil War fort ('sconce') was located to the north. The construction of Hythe Bridge Street in the 17th century provided a route into the northern part of the city, avoiding the narrow streets of St Thomas' and surrounding Oxford Castle.

Nevertheless, much of this area remained as meadowland until the coming of the railway in the 1850s, with the Buckingham (Birmingham) station of the London and North West Railway (LNWR) and the Great Western Railway (the latter located in the adjacent Railway and Station Lands character area) side by side. The LNWR Station (part of the LMS after 1922) included a passenger station to the west, fronting onto Park End Street and sidings with a goods depot to the east. The passenger station was designed by Joseph Paxton and constructed from prefabricated sections by Fox and Henderson. It was deliberately similar in appearance to the Crystal Palace by the same architect and builder and the first passenger service to leave it in 1851 was a direct service to the Great Exhibition.

By the later 19th century, terraced housing had been constructed along the north side of Hythe Bridge Street as an extension of the populous St Thomas' suburb. However, much of this was demolished in the late 20th century when Blackwell's publishing company constructed Beaver House as a national headquarters and centre for their mail-order business (built 1971-2).

British Railways closed the former LMS passenger station in 1951 although they retained the goods yard until 1988. The station was used as a tyre depot and car repairs workshop and was considered an eyesore, despite its great historic and architectural interest. Its demolition in 1999 and replacement by the Saïd Business

School was an opportunity to transform Park End Street into a civic gateway to Oxford and add to Oxford's world renowned University architecture. Nevertheless, the loss of the historic station, which was a Grade II* Listed Building, was bitterly opposed by a campaign group. The station building is now part of the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quainton. Following the closure of the Goods depot the site was redeveloped for the Rewley Road Fire Station. Further Goods Station land, as well as former allotments and land north of the Sheepwash Channel was developed for new housing in the mid 1990s (permission was granted in 1995). The last feature remaining of the LMS station is a railway swing bridge that is currently in a neglected condition.



The Saïd Business School, creates a monumental frontage on the north side of Frideswide's Square

Key Historic Character Features:

Riverside wall and gate of Rewley Abbey	A tall stone wall of medieval construction with a gothic arched gateway that defines the historic extent of the abbey's land alongside the castle mill stream. High boundary walls are a common features of historic (and modern) monastic properties providing definition of 'sacred' space and enclosure from the outside 'profane' world.
Wareham Stream	A narrow, manmade stream, probably dating from the late Saxon Period as a millstream or backstream. It runs through a series of 'hidden' spaces at the rear of houses on Upper Fisher Row and behind business on Hythe Bridge Street and Rewley Road Fire Station.
Sheepwash Channel	This short stretch of waterway divides Cripsey island from

	Osney Island and joins the River Thames with the Castle Mill Stream. It provides access for narrowboats and other craft from the Oxford Canal to navigable section of the River Thames.
The Boatman's Chapel	A small chapel and Sunday School on Hythe Bridge Street built to replace an earlier floating chapel for St Thomas's Parish for the community of boatpeople people associated with the Oxford Canal many of whom lived in Fisher Row. It is now a Thai Restaurant and has received ornamental additions relating to this use.
Upper Fisher Row	This quiet, residential street, and the adjacent section of Hythe Bridge Street provide evidence of the earlier, Victorian phase of development in their architecture, which is notable for the good state of survival of historic architectural detailing, including timber framed two-over-two pane sash windows. The three-storey scale of development on Hythe Bridge Street reflects the importance of this route as a main entrance to the city centre.
Railway Heritage	The surviving L.M.S. swing bridge provides the only visible evidence of the former station as Oxford's gateway to the Great Exhibition and the historic competition between the railway companies.
Beaver House	Blackwells Office in Hythe Bridge Street. Considered to be a good example of curtain wall construction in concrete and glass in the late 20 th century (by Oxford Architects) and reflecting the importance of publishing to Oxford economy in the last two centuries, including Blackwells as part of Oxford's identity. It provides a substantial scale to the north side of Hythe Bridge Street and includes a 'tower' that addresses Frideswide Square.
Saïd Business School	A striking monument of modern architecture. The tower and ziggurat of the building are a self-conscious reference to the historic architecture of the university and colleges and is now part of the city's world famous skyline. The symmetrical frontage, with ashlar stone faced pavilions flanking a central court and glazed hall with library above tend to reverse the traditional exclusion of the public's gaze on the activity within the city's academic business. The building frontage to Frideswide Square has a heroic scale that helps define it as a civic space. An amphitheatre and enclosed garden behind are hidden from public view but, perhaps, reference classical models of education, as well as the more traditional feature of enclosed green landscapes associated with Oxford's academic institutions.

Historical Value:

The visibility of the Castle Mill Stream and Wareham Channel provides a connection to the Late Saxon development of water management in the area, which was just the first stage of the area's development as an industrial suburb.

The association of the area with Rewley Abbey, along with its few remaining visible structures, provides a connection to the area's past and role in the development of Oxford as a monastic centre and place of learning, which contributes to the wider significance of Oxford in the development of the University system of education.

The 1851 railway buildings of the Buckingham (later L.M.S.) station were of national significance as the last remaining example of iron and timber construction by the engineers of the Crystal Palace. Their loss reduced the historic and architectural interest of the area and removed evidence of its role as the historic arrival point to the city in return for the creation of the civic space and essential transport hub of Frideswide Square and University architecture of the Saïd Business School.

The L.M.S Swingbridge is valued as the last reminder of the L.M.S. Railway in Oxford and holds important memories for many local people (also adding communal value). This scheduled ancient monument is on the well-used towpath route into the



city from Jericho and North Oxford and a project to conserve, restore and interpret this key element of local and national transport history is in process.

The former Boatman's chapel illustrates the historic character of the area as a more populous district than today with a vibrant community associated with the waterways including the



**Top: The LMS Station as rebuilt at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre
Left: LMS Locomotive 8106 reversing over the fixed span 4 May 1942: RHG Simpson; Right: The LMS Swing Bridge today**

Oxford Canal. It also provides a connection with the religious revival of the late 19th century.

Evidential Value:

The former site of the abbey retains a high potential for the survival of medieval monastic remains, which would be of great value in informing understanding of the early development of the religious communities who were responsible for the city's growth as a place of learning.

Further information could be gained about the historical residential developments along Hythe Bridge Street from archival sources.



View west along Hythe Bridge Street, including Beaver House and the corner of Fisher Row (© David Dixon, reproduced under Creative Commons License)

The course of the Royalist Civil War defences is believed to have crossed this area. Further information from archaeological investigation could help develop understanding of how far the planned defences were actually constructed.

The straight, broad course of Hythe Bridge Street suggests it was created as part of a planned, formal expansion of Oxford's road network, pre-dating other similar enhancement. Further research might enhance our understanding of the significance of this development.

Communal Value:

The heritage of Oxford's early monastic development is of significance nationally and locally as it contributes to Oxford's identity as a centre for the development of the University system of education in Medieval Europe. As such it helps to memorialise the origins of Oxford's development and status and contributes to its identity.

Hythe Bridge Street is now part of a busy arterial road network running around the outskirts of the city centre and is similar in character to Park End Street but with a more mixed development in scale on the north side including the very large Saïd Building (Frideswide Square) with prominent Ziggurat tower. These buildings contribute to the quality of the route that many local people and commuters use between the city centre and railway station as well as many travellers passing through the hub of Frideswide Square.

The former boatman's chapel was an important focus for the riverside community of the area in the late 19th and early 20th century. Modern residents of the area, including the large community of boat dwellers on the Oxford Canal may see this as an asset that has meaning for their present communal identity.

This area incorporates a mixture of new houses and apartments off Rewley Road, built on former railway land as well as the older housing Victorian and Inter-War housing at Upper Fisher Row. This is now of significance to the present residential community as a peaceful area of housing just outside the busy city centre and transport routes.

Aesthetic Value:

The simple detailing of Victorian buildings on Hythe Bridge Street and Upper Fisher Row has been well preserved and contributes to the sense of unity within the development that is a part of its character. The detailing of string courses and lintels, as well as the proportions of frontages and window and door openings was designed to add to the attractiveness of these properties.



Houses at Upper Fisher Row (© Ceridwen reproduced under Creative Commons License)

Attractive views into and within the area include the river and canal-side views of Fisher Row, which benefit from the architectural interest of the Victorian terraced houses, waterscape and greenery of the riverside. Likewise street views along Hythe Bridge Street, and the varied views within Frideswide Square benefit from the architectural detailing of the Victorian and Early 20th century buildings surrounding the space.

The small-scale Boatman's chapel is an attractive structure, dwarfed by the bigger Victorian townhouses to either side. The gothic arched door and window openings and steeply pitched roof are decorative features that are associated with its historic religious function, although these have been augmented with timber decoration that advertise the present restaurant use and add to the interest of the streetscene.

This area features in the foreground of some views across the city from the west, including the designated viewcones from Raleigh Park and Port Meadow, as well as publicly accessible views from the city centre looking out particularly from St George's Tower and Oxford Castle's motte. The stepped tower or ziggurat of the

Saïd Business School is a new addition to the skyline that was designed to make a unique but sympathetic contribution to the world famous assemblage of spires, towers and domes that rise above the lower level roofscape of the city.

The Saïd Business School development has opened Frideswide Square to form a major civic space with the canopied forecourt of the school contributing to the space, which is framed by the two 'pavilions' to either side. Views from outside the area include those towards the historic centre from Osney Bridge and along Hythe Bridge Street and Park End Street, in which the spires of Nuffield College, the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church and St Mary's Church provide notable positive features in the background.

Negative Features, Issues and Opportunities:

This area is traversed by many on their way to and from the city, and has added significance as the initial experience of a great historic city. There is considerable potential to reveal and interpret heritage features in this area, including those of Rewley Abbey and Oxford's transport history. The retention of historic shop fronts and signs, street surfaces and furniture along with the reduction in street clutter and telecommunications equipment would do much to enhance the historic character of the area (particularly at Frideswide Square and Hythe Bridge Street).

- The long frontages of Beaver House and the rear of the former Hartwells Garage, fail to provide the rhythm of frontages and active street frontages that would be hoped for in a busy city centre location making the street dull and failing to reflect the historic pattern of ribbon development that once existed here.
- Features capable of recovery: include the form of the 'moat' that once surrounded Rewley Abbey, and marking out remains (of the Abbey and Station) on the ground.
- Frideswide Square struggles to provide the high quality civic square that is expected due to the dominance of the space by heavy traffic and transport infrastructure. It lacks some closure to the south, although the views out of the square, over the railway bridge, provide an important connection to the greenery of the riverside.
- Although the front elevation of the Saïd Business School is considered to make an important aesthetic contribution to Frideswide Square, its other elevations are less successful in contributing to the appeal and vitality
- As a side street off this area with little other night-time activity, Upper Fisher Row has developed problems of anti-social behaviour associated with revellers at night.

Heritage Assets:

Designated Heritage Assets:

- Site of Rewley Abbey – Scheduled Ancient Monument

WEST OXFORD CHARACTER STATEMENT: PART 1 ST EBBE'S & OSNEY ISLAND

- Rewley Abbey Wall and Gateway – Listed Building
- Central (City and University) Conservation Area

Positive Buildings within the Central (City and University) Conservation Area

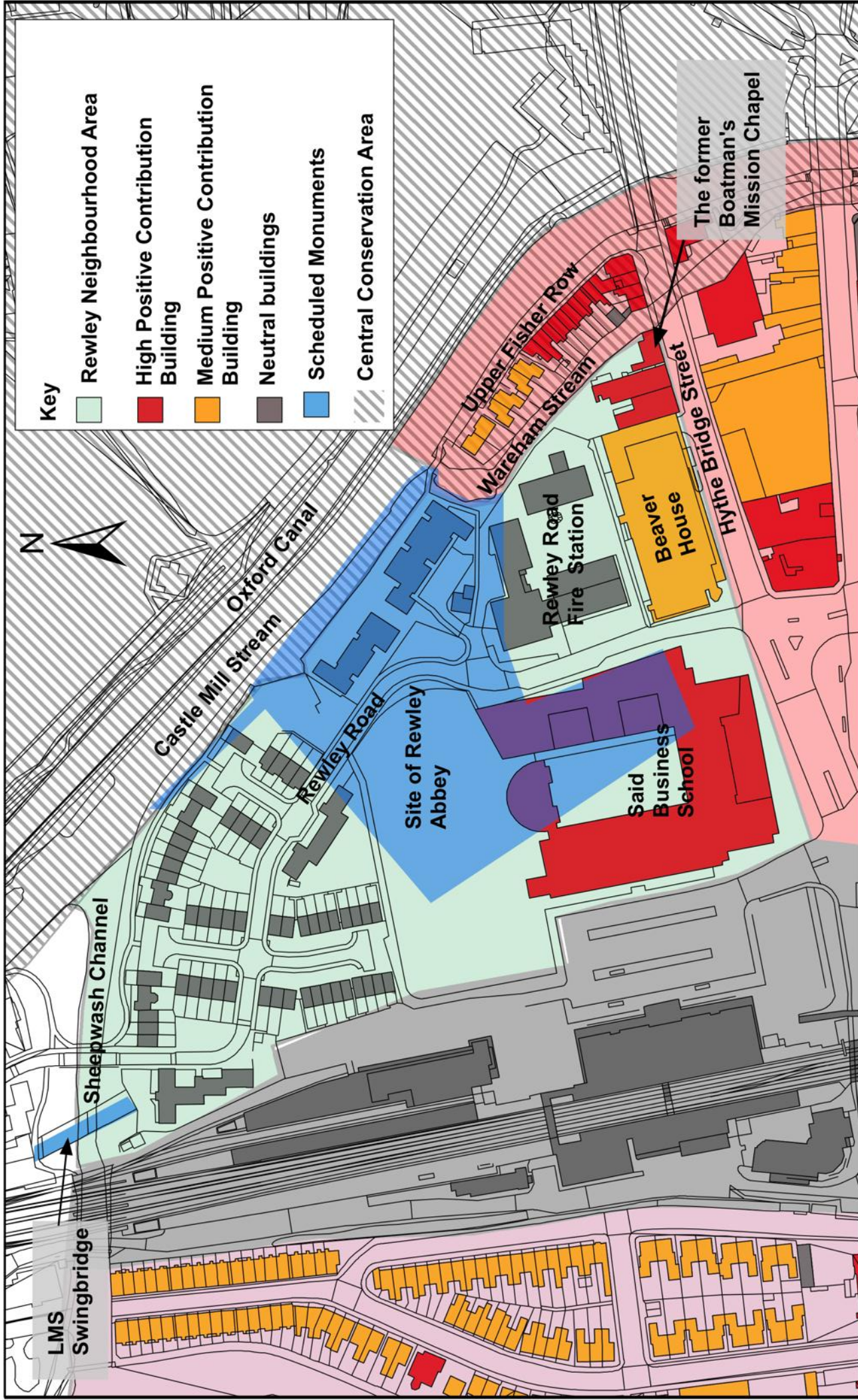
- Nos. 43 - 46 Hythe Bridge Street
- Nos. 1 – 8a Upper Fisher Row

Areas of Archaeological Potential

- Wareham Stream
- Rewley Abbey Precinct

Potential Non-designated Heritage Assets

- Former Boatman's chapel, Hythe Bridge Street
- Sheepwash Channel



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 Ordnance Survey 100019348.

Rewley Character Area

Oxford Station and Railway Lands

Extent:

- Oxford Station (formerly the G.W.R. Oxford Station)
- Station Car Park, Beckett Street (formerly Church Ground)
- Osney Lane (south side)
- Oxpens Road (west side)
- Roger Dudman Way

General Description:

The railway and its associated infrastructure dominate this area. This includes large areas of hard-surfaced open space including the large at grade car park on Beckett Street and the station forecourt off Frideswide Square, as well as 'back-end' parking areas on Roger Dudman Way and the undeveloped land of the former sidings and goods station



Oxford Station building completed in 1990 (© Robin Stones reproduced under Creative Commons License)

south of Osney Lane. The embankment of the railway line provides a green wall at the back of views but is also a barrier to movement from east to west. The railway bridge over the sunken course of Botley Road creates a sense of entry to Frideswide Square, although the space underneath is unpleasant for pedestrians and cyclists and forms a problematic bottleneck for traffic. The bridge also makes the movement of trains a feature of Frideswide Square. The station is a discrete, single storey building, set away from the civic space of Frideswide Square and screened by screens of tree planting and an extensive cycle park. A small industrial estate on former sidings south of Osney Lane is similarly discretely located.

Historical Development:

The Great Western Railway's Oxford Station was opened as a through station on the Oxford and Rugby Railway (ORR) in 1852. Construction of the ORR started in 1845, with services to Banbury from Oxford's earlier Grandpont Station available from

1850. The railway line passed from the north to south crossing the former estates of both Osney and Rewley Abbeys. There is little evidence that the railways course would have encountered buildings associated with Rewley Abbey, as the line passed west of the main monastic complex, possibly running across the former monastic fishponds. However, in the south, the railway embankment was constructed over the eastern end of Osney Abbey Church, potentially sealing the archaeological remains of the abbey. As much of Osney Abbey's complex was demolished before the first maps of Oxford were created it isn't known what other structures of the abbey lie within route of the railway line of the associated land to either side, although it is likely it was surrounded by a considerable complex of buildings including cloisters, other dwellings, workshops and agricultural buildings.

The GWR's first goods shed appears to have been located to the north on Cripsey Island, a large part of which was covered by railways (both the LNWR and GWR) and sidings, including a railway turning table on the GWR side and engine sheds with coaling towers and water tanks. A second goods shed stood parallel to the line on sidings south of Osney Lane (in the car park area of the present Oxford Business Centre) with further sidings, including a cattle dock, covering land west of Becket Street (the modern a station car park). Beckett Street appears to have been constructed to link the goods station and with Park End Street. South of Osney Lane the land east of the railway line as far as Castle Mill Stream remained as four open fields divided by drainage ditches.

The sidings south of Osney Lane were expanded eastwards over the former meadows during the early 20th century, whilst Oxpens Road was developed across the meadows as far as the bridge across the Castle Mill Stream in the early 1930s. Associated with the development of the goods station was the establishment of the Royal Mail Sorting Office on Oxpens Road.

During the mid and later 20th century use of the railway for freight decreased, reducing the need for the area of sidings in Oxford. Following the amalgamation and nationalising of the 'Big Four' railways in 1948 the stations of the former LMS were surplus to requirement for Oxford. The LMS station was closed and the former GWR station became Oxford's main passenger station. British Rail rebuilt the station in 1971, including the post office to the north of the main station building. They made further additions in 1974. The present main station building was added in 1990 along with a footbridge. Following demolition of the LMS Station in 1999 the car park was replanned, allowing the construction of the present bus interchange, taxi ranks and cycle parking.

Despite a history some 160 years the station and former sidings have seen repeated updating and renewal that has prevented features developing particular significance. A few features are noted that provide evidence of the railway's history and its influence on the surrounding area.

Key Historic Character Features:

<p>Arriving in Oxford</p>	<p>The Great Western Railway was constructed at a high level than the LNWR line and raised above the floodplain of the River Thames on an embankment. As a result the arrival into Oxford</p>
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	by train offers glimpsed views across open spaces, such as Oxpens Meadow or Frideswide Square to the famous skyline of dreaming spires.
Railway bridges over the Thames	Two metal 'girder' bridges carry the railway south over the river Thames. That to the east is a single track bridge that is referred to as the Isis Bridge and is believed to date in part to the 1850s.
Victorian Housing and Hotels	Houses on the east side of Beckett Street were built as part of the expansion of St Thomas' following development of the railways. One of these is notable for the rare survival of a painted wall sign advertising Florey's Hotel.
Osney Lane and footbridge	The footbridge retains its late 19 th or early 20 th century structure and spans both the railway line and the car park on the former sidings next to it. It helps unite the two parts of Osney Lane, the medieval route to Osney Abbey, severed by construction of the railway. It now retains features of 19 th century construction, including the cast iron supporting columns and plays an important role in connecting residents of New Osney to the city centre. The view of the city from the footbridge
Views over the Botley Road Bridge	The open space above the Botley Road bridge provide views to the skyline of Oxford City Centre from Osney Bridge to the west.
GWR Bridge over the River Thames	The first railway bridge over the Thames survives as the single track bridge – built in the 1840s. This was known as the Isis Bridge.

Historical Significance:

There was great unease about the opening of a railway line into Oxford with proposals in the 1830s resisted by the University and colleges who were concerned about the impact on the morals of their undergraduates, as well as by prominent traders



A view north of the approach to the station from the Osney Lane Footbridge to (© Steve Daniels reproduced under Creative Commons License)

among the townsmen, concerned to maintain their control of supply of the colleges. However, by the 1860s the development of mainline rail routes elsewhere had significantly affected the trade that Oxford had previously gained as a hub for coaching routes. A bid was made by the City Council to attract the workshops of the Great Western Railway in 1865, but this was resisted by the University, and the intended site at Cripsey Meadow remained as extensive railway sidings and allotments. Nevertheless, the railways were important employers in late 19th century Oxford, apparently fuelling the development of new housing at New Osney, Osney Town and New Botley to the west. As a significant physical feature of Oxford's landscape the railway line and embankment provides a connection with the mid 19th century concerns over the need for and possible effects of developing railway connections for the city.

Whilst the extensive sidings south of Botley Road have now been entirely replaced by other uses, the footbridge that carries Osney Lane over the railway and adjacent

car park illustrates their former extent.



Across Beckett Street from the station car park a row of houses includes an example of a painted sign advertising Florey's Hotel, a connection to the impact on the area as a focus of hotels related to the presence of the stations.

Early 20th century single-storey buildings between Roger Dudman Way and Cripsey Road, including a small café, provide an indication of the architecture of the station prior to its redevelopment in the 1970s.

View south along Becket Street (© Betty Longbottom reproduced under Creative Commons License)

Evidential Value:

There remains much potential in buried remains of the medieval abbey, particularly within the area of the Oxford Business Centre (the former goods station site south of Osney Lane) and for recovery of history from documentary sources. Remains of the former Goods Stations would also have some interest as evidence of Oxford's industrial and commercial past.

Communal Value:

The building of the railway was shortly followed by, and is likely to have influenced the enclosure of open fields in St Thomas' Parish in 1853 and development of New Osney, just to the west of the line, as workers' housing. The physical structure of the line and embankment may be seen as memorialising the origins of the New Osney area as a distinct enclave of Osney Island, cut off from suburb to the east. The

railway also had a significant impact on the development of similar housing to the west at Osney Town and New Botley.

Aesthetic Value:

Except for enthusiasts the railway line is unlikely to be considered an aesthetically pleasing feature of the landscape. The presence of trains arriving and departing over the Botley Road Bridge adds some interest to Frideswide Square. The footbridge at Osney Lane retains ornamented cast iron pillar supports, which add architectural interest to what is otherwise a relatively undistinguished structure.

There are limited views to the city centre from the Osney Lane and Botley Road footbridges, which benefit from the presence of the towers and spires of Oxford's skyline, whilst the Botley Road bridge lies within the view to the city centre from Osney Bridge.



The surrounding tree planting enhances the view into the station forecourt from Frideswide Square

Groups of trees have been planted outside the present station buildings to provide an attractive green environment to the forecourt. These also contribute positively to the greenery of Frideswide Square, which is otherwise only sparsely planted.

Negative Features, Issues and Opportunities:

- Features capable of recovery include the location of Osney Abbey church and cloister, and the potential for marking out remains on the ground. There is

considerable potential to reveal and interpret heritage of Osney Lane as the historic route between the medieval city and the historic abbey.

- At present arriving at Oxford Station lacks a sense of occasion. Whilst the modern station is clean and efficient, it does not provide the architectural statement that would be expected on arriving in a world-renowned historic city like Oxford. The station might, for example be brought forward to directly address the new civic space of Frideswide Square with a frontage that adds further to the architectural scale and interest of the square
- The sunken road that runs under the Botley Road Bridge creates a Gloomy cavern that is a poor entrance to the historic city of Oxford and detracts from the aesthetic quality of Frideswide Square. It provides a poor quality experience for pedestrians and motorists and a dangerous area to negotiate for cyclists.
- Much of Oxford's railway heritage has been swept away and there is potential that redevelopment could remove further evidence. Given the Western suburb's history of industrial and transport related heritage it might be appropriate for redevelopment to reference historic railway architecture in the design of new buildings. The long sweeping curves of the former sidings, parallel to the railway might also inform the layout of new streets or open spaces (see Heritage Plaza at the former GWR works Swindon as an example).
- The shallow-pitched hipped roof of the Royal Mail building on Oxpens Road intrudes into the mid ground of the designated view of Oxford City Centre from Hinksey Hill (typified by the view from Raleigh Park).

Heritage Assets:

Designated Heritage Assets

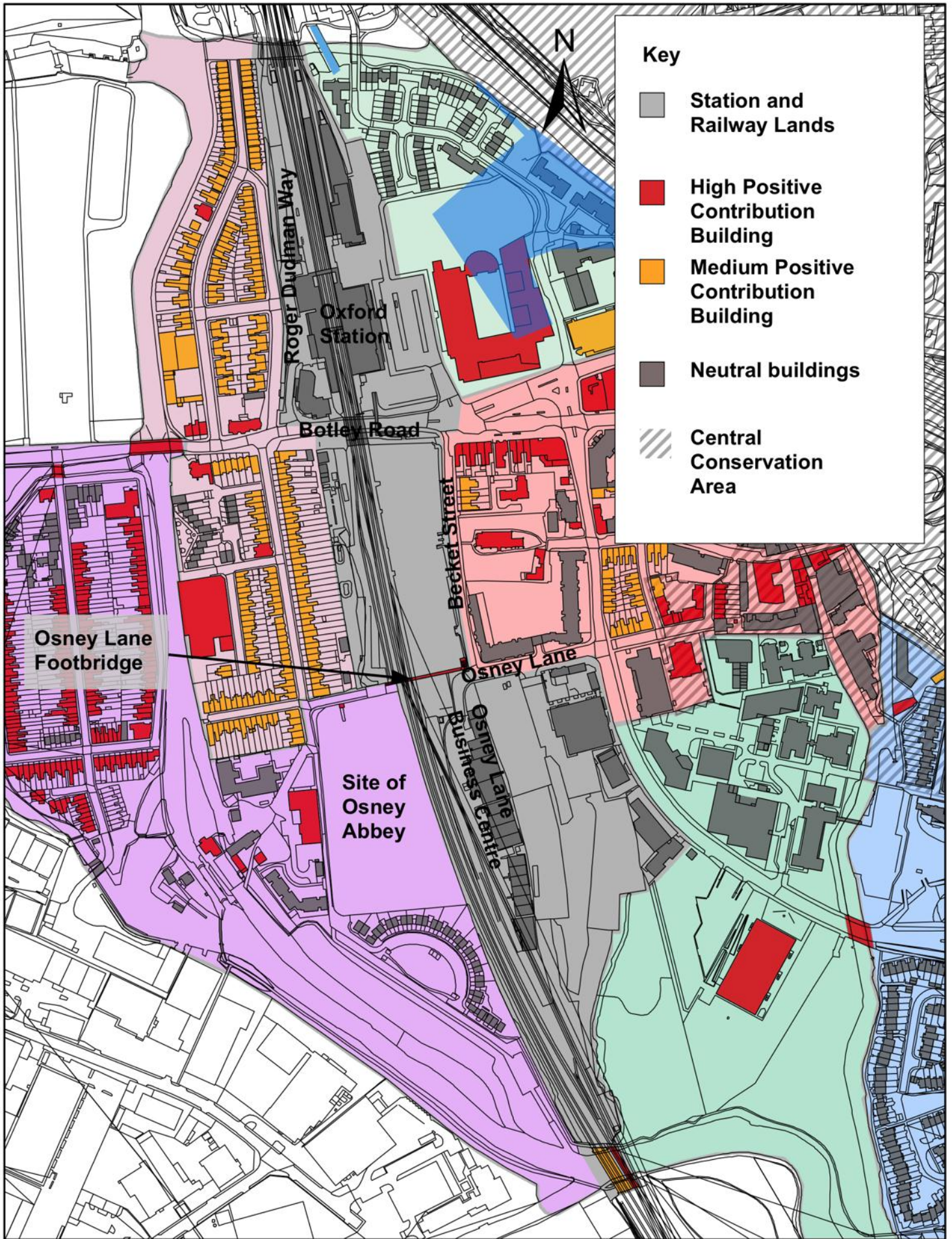
- None

Areas of Archaeological Potential

- Site of Osney Abbey Precinct
- Site of the GWR Goods Shed, Oxford Business Centre, Becket Street

Non-designated Heritage Assets

- Osney Lane Footbridge



Station and Railway Lands Character Area

Oxpens

Extent:

- Oxpens Road – including coach park and Ice Rink
- Oxford and Cherwell Valley College
- Oxpens Meadow Recreation Ground – Field in Trust

General Description:

This area is formed of the historic meadows of Osney Abbey, which were owned by Christ Church after the Reformation. The area is characterised by open space fringed by mature trees that run along historic watercourses with buildings and spaces used for a mixture of leisure and education. Oxpens Road cuts through the area and is a busy arterial road. Small-scale commercial development, including a petrol station, occupies a small area at the north end of Oxpens Road and is overshadowed by the Royal Mail building to the north.

The large, open and hard-surfaced space of the coach park offers a dismal first experience of Oxford for many visitors and is not conveniently located, requiring visitors to cross the busy Oxpens Road and walk through at grade car parks and around the outside of the West Gate Centre and its multi-storey car park to reach the city centre (probably its least attractive approach). Oxpens Meadow provides an important green open space reaching in to the city from the Thames riverside and crossed by footpaths leading to the river and to bridges crossing to adjacent areas. The institutional site of Oxford and Cherwell Valley College retains a green open character, including groups of mature trees. Much of the development on Oxpens Road is of unexceptional architectural character, and the buildings of the college fail to address the public space. Oxford Ice Rink stands out as a building of high architectural interest, as well as being a highly valued leisure resource for the city, it does address Oxpens Road, although the area at the front of the building provides an isolated area of more municipal open space.



Looking across the Thames to Oxpens Meadow

Historical Development:

From the 12th to 16th century the land south of Osney lane formed part of Osney Abbey's estate, bounded to the east by the Castle Mill Stream and by the Thames to the south and west. Thereafter it was the property of Christ Church. The buildings of the abbey appear to have lain within an enclosure to the west of this area, whilst the land of Oxpens was open farmland. An island lying between the Thames and Castle Mill Stream was called Oxpens Field and, later, is recorded as George Island. During the Civil War it was fortified to guard the river channels leading to the city.



The Castle Mill Stream running past Oxford and Cherwell Valley College (© SJB reproduced under Creative Commons License)

There was little building south of Osney Lane until the development of the GWR railway and its sidings in 1849-52. The open fields of St Thomas' Parish were inclosed by Act of Parliament in 1853. Development remained limited to land adjacent to Osney Lane in the late 19th century. From the 1880s Oxford's importance as a centre for the cattle trade grew, outcompeting other local centres at Banbury and Woodstock. In 1932 a new cattle market was established at Oxpens, next to the GWR goods station and cattle docks. That this was not an unexpected development is suggested by the establishment of a 'Hide and Skin Market' built just to the east on Osney Lane in 1928 by Underhills of Birmingham.

A school building for St Thomas' School was built on the south side of Osney Lane in 1904, to provide more accommodation for the schools that were already located near the church.

The first edition Country Series Ordnance



The former St Thomas' School building on Osney Lane

Survey maps, published in 1878, record that the channel dividing Oxpens Island from the land to the north was used as a bathing place for St Ebbe's suburb. Whilst river bathing is associated with leisure today it may well have provided an essential opportunity for hygiene for the people of the cramped suburb to the east. At least part of the remaining open land had also been used to create a recreation ground by the early 1920s, whilst the land next to the railway line was used for allotments..

Oxpens Road was laid out in the 1920s, running from Hollybush Row to a new bridge over Castle Mill Stream. The cattle Market on its north east side was expanded, whilst a group of small industrial buildings were built on leftover land between the road and railway sidings. Land east of the cattle market was used as a recreation ground. The streams or ditches that had divided this area were lost at this time, although the course of one followed the western boundary of this character area.



Oxpens Road Bridge, built in the 1920s as part of a scheme to create a bypass to the city centre (© David Dixon reproduced under Creative Commons License)

Construction of Oxford College of Further Education on the recreation ground north of Oxpens Road began in 1966 or shortly after. The last cattle market was held in 1979, after which the college expanded over its site. The building of the Ice Rink in 1983-4 made a considerable change to the townscape of Oxpens, adding a landmark building to the road route unlike anything else in the city. The College has construed to to develop with further buildings also added during the 1980s and 1990s.

Key Historic Character Features:

Oxpens Field	A large green open space representing a surviving fragment of the flood meadows that once covered the area between the city walls and the River Thames. It includes the sites of the St Ebbe's Bathing Place (created in 1846) and a Civil War fortification recorded in 1644 as 'Hart's Sconce'. The southern tip of the field was once an island, variously recorded as Oxpens Field, George's Island and
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	<p>Ham. The island became a recreation ground in the early 20th century to which the northern part of the field was added in the mid-20th century. It was registered as a Field in Trust to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 2012. This green open space makes an important contribution to the survival of a rural character to the riverside, which is enhanced by the riverside trees lining the Castle Mill Stream and the extensive nature park on the former gas works site to the south.</p>
<p>Castle Mill Stream</p>	<p>Castle Mill Stream followed a meandering course along the edge of this character until the early 20th century, suggesting it represents a natural element of a stream that was canalised to the north to provide the millstream. The watercourse, the green spaces along its banks and accompanying trees within Oxpens Field and Oxford and Cherwell Valley College Campus contribute a naturalistic character that adds to the rural qualities of this character area, despite the development of the land to either side.</p>
<p>Oxpens Road Bridge</p>	<p>A 1920s ferro-concrete road bridge. One of the few features that provides evidence of the early 20th century origins of Oxpens Road. A well designed example of its kind with some subtle decoration to the parapet.</p>
<p>Site of Oxpens Cattle Market and Underhills Hide and Skin Market</p>	<p>The Cattle Market moved to this site, near the goods station, in 1932 and remained there until 1979. Its location reflects the survival of open space on the edge of the city into the early 20th century, as well as Oxford's on going connection to its agricultural hinterland. Although the market's site was redeveloped in the later 20th century, the warehouse of Underhill's Hide and Skin Market, which accommodated activity associated with processing livestock, has survived through a number of reuses. It provides some evidence of the historic activity in this area. It has a simple, brick shed form using materials and construction common to early 20th century industrial structures providing a contrast with the residential buildings nearby on Osney Lane and Woodins Way and the later 20th century educational architecture of Oxford and Cherwell Valley College to the south.</p>
<p>Evidence of historic land divisions and streams</p>	<p>The field divisions that ran across this area, including the drainage ditches that ran into the Castle Mill Stream, have not survived above ground but may be preserved as archaeological remains. These were recorded as tree-lined field boundaries in the late 19th century and would have helped to give the area a more traditional rural character.</p>
<p>Projected course of Oxford's Civil War</p>	<p>The main line of the city's Civil War defences, including a substantial bank and ditch with bastions, is recorded by Bernard de Gomme as running across the north part of this area. A fort or redoubt named Hart's Sconce is also recorded by de Gomme in the</p>

<p>defences. Site of Hart's Sconce</p>	<p>southern tip of the area. Whilst the construction of much of the defences recorded by de Gomme has been substantiated elsewhere in the city through later map records, archaeological investigation and their survival as earthworks, the south west defences of the city are the least well understood. Despite little development in this area after the Civil War, no evidence of these defences is recorded on 18th or 19th century maps, whilst they are well recorded east of Castle Mill Stream on Davis' map of 1797 as the 'Remains of the Trenches'.</p>
<p>Views across the Thames to Grandpont Nature Park</p>	<p>The views over the river to the greenery of the Nature Park contribute to the areas' rural character.</p>
<p>Site of St Ebbe's Bathing Place</p>	<p>The bathing place was created in 1846 but was abandoned in 1938. Its area is suggested by undulations in Osney Field. The bathing places were lined with concrete banks and sets of steps leading into or out of the water. At the well-preserved example at Tumbling Bay, the water level is maintained by a pair of weirs, which also keeps the pool free of debris. The Council closed several other river bathing sites in 1990 due to concerns over safety.</p>
<p>St Thomas' School</p>	<p>Built on the south side of Osney Lane in 1904, the St Thomas School building adds architectural interest to the area through its exuberant Edwardian Flemish Renaissance style frontage.</p>
<p>Oxford and Cherwell Valley College green spaces</p>	<p>The green spaces within the college contribute to the positive character of the north side of Oxpens Road, the banks of the Castle Mill Stream, and the site in general. They host numerous tall broad-leaved trees, the crowns of which rise above the buildings, helping to soften the roofscape and intrusions into the views of the city centre over the area.</p>
<p>Oxford Ice Rink</p>	<p>This building was constructed in 1984 and designed by nationally significant architect Nicholas Grimshaw to provide a landmark building. The twin masts from which the central ridge beam is suspended are features of Oxford's skyline and give it the appearance of a ship. Unfortunately the quality of the building is not supported by the dreary surroundings of the coach park to the north or the forecourt to Oxpens Road</p>
<p>Part of the views into and out of Oxford</p>	<p>Few of the buildings in this area are currently evident in the views into Oxford from the hills to the west, allowing the eye to pass on to the historic high buildings and roofscape of the city centre beyond (although the Jericho Building of Oxford and Cherwell Valley College does intrude into these views – see below).</p> <p>The mature trees in this area make a positive contribution to the mantle of greenery that wraps around the city centre in these views.</p>

	<p>In views out from the city centre, including the public viewing place of St George's Tower, the tall trees within and surrounding Oxford and Cherwell Valley College help to soften the outline of the buildings and reduce the intrusive impact of the rectilinear forms and poor quality roofscape in the views.</p>
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Historical Value:

Oxpens Field area provides a surviving fragment of the meadowland that lay directly adjacent to the historic city centre, which was far more extensive until the development of St Ebbe's and St Thomas' suburbs. As such, Oxpens Meadow has a special local value in illustrating the historical origins of this area as open meadowland.

The rivers on the edges of the character area have the feeling of a timeless, unchanging part of the landscape. Indeed, at Oxpens Field, boaters working their way up the channel from Folly Bridge arrive for the first time at a point where both banks of the Thames are formed by green open space.

The college site has some historical interest as the former location of the cattle market that brought the countryside into the city and reflected the influence of the railway line on the development of this area. This is now illustrated by the survival of



A view to the Thames over the attractive green space of Oxpens Field, preserving part of the former Meadowland associated with Osney Abbey

the warehouse used for the Hide and Skin market – now occupied by Oxfordshire Visual Arts Development Agency.

Evidential Value:

Remains of the Civil War sconce on the former George's Island and surviving remains of siegeworks of this period could preserve evidence of the progress of the siege of Oxford during the 1640s – when the city formed the country's Royalist capital. If these are well preserved these might even rate as of national significance.

The importance of the Castle Mill Stream is less well understood than in areas to the north at Fisher Row. The stream appears to have had a more natural, sinuous line until the early 20th century suggesting that at this point it represents the course of a natural channel of the River Thames, rather than an Anglo-Saxon or Norman mill channel.

Surviving archaeological remains of the drainage ditches that crossed the meadows could provide waterlogged evidence that would help us understand how this area was managed in the past, including periods of drainage. Were these, for example, part of a network of leats designed to manage flooding of the meadows?

The remains of St Ebbe's Bathing Place would be of interest to explore in understanding the role of these public bathing places in the mid 19th century and the development of 'river bathing' as a recreational activity in Oxford.

Potential for recovery of evidence of past human activities includes information from documentary, graphic, and oral sources. The cattle market played an important role in associating Oxford with its agricultural hinterland, an association that is now less obvious, recording the experiences of past users would be of interest in understanding its past role.

The southern corner of Oxpens Meadow between the Thames and Castle Mill Stream was once an island and was fortified during the Civil War



Communal Value:

This area is sparsely populated with residential accommodation clustered in new apartments south of Woodins Way. The area contains mixed scale commercial/light industrial and educational buildings and has an air of urban fringe. Nevertheless the college's 40 years of history may now provide some communal heritage for past students that should inform decisions about changes to buildings and spaces.

The ice rink is a much-valued amenity for local people across both the city and county. In contrast Oxpens Meadow provides a large informal green space with river frontage, rare in this part of the city, and is much valued by the local community and used by tourists and college students alike for relaxation.



The Ice Rink is both an architectural landmark and a valued local facility (© David Dixon reproduced under Creative Commons License)

Aesthetic Value:

The Oxford Ice Rink building, with its boat-like masts is prominent in local views and for those arriving by train and was designed to be a landmark. Its design is unusual, making use of a two masts to suspend a central beam to provide the large open central space for the ice rink. The masts were also considered to provide a contemporary foil to the spires of the city skyline, although their thinness prevents them from imposing on the prominence of the historic buildings of the city centre.

Oxpens features in the mid-ground of views across the city from the hills to the west and south-west, which have been recognised as having a special aesthetic quality since the early 18th century. Notably, the trees that line the riverbanks and run along the northern edge of the college site provide part of band of greenery that helps define the edge of the city centre and create a margin between the city's historic core and more modern development at Osney Mead to the west. They also contribute to the aesthetic quality of the city in these views by providing a mantle of greenery above which the historic buildings of the city centre are seen to rise. The general absence of tall buildings in this area is also important, providing a gap in the roofscape between the city centre and commercial developments further to the west that helps the historic core of the city to stand apart from the mass of the city's westward expansion.



Tree planting along the road makes an important contribution to its aesthetic value (© Andrew Hackney, reproduced under Creative Commons License)

Oxpens Field provides attractive views over green space to the water and banks of the river as well as views of the ice rink in its green setting.

Although view along Oxpens Road are not considered particularly successful, there are some softer green edges of the college campus lined with semi-mature trees that do improve the overall visual amenity of the route. Views out from the area are limited but do include partial views towards the castle and historic centre.

Issues, Negative Features and Opportunities for Enhancement:

- This area is traversed by many visitors arriving in Oxford by coach. The Oxpens Car and Coach Park is a dismal gateway for visitors to the city due to its vast, featureless hard-surface landscaping and absence of planting or other features to catch the eye or help visitors to negotiate the space after disembarking. The Coach Park could be improved through additional planting and the provision of better footways and more clearly defined parking bays for coaches. The area also provides potential to enhance access to the city centre by providing pedestrian routes along the Castle Mill Stream.
- The shallow-pitched, hipped roof of Cherwell Valley College's Jericho Building is conspicuous in views of the city centre from Raleigh Park as one of several buildings that blur the definition between the historic city centre and the more mundane area of later 20th century commercial development at Osney Mead.
- Views into and within the area are mostly of mixed urban character with modern buildings of little visual interest and lacking a coherent setting. In particular, Oxpens Road provides a series of poorly connected views of incoherent spaces and poorly connected or expressed frontages that provide a poor definition of the purpose of this important route.
- The unusual early 20th century ferro-concrete bridge at Oxpens Road and the Castle Mill Stream's natural character provide an opportunity to create a

gateway area to Oxpens. Views from the bridge could be enhanced thinning foliage on the stream's banks just below the bridge, opening up the stream to more light, which can also improve its value for biodiversity. The Oxford and Cherwell Valley College, is neither very permeable nor clearly delineated. Its Castle Mill Stream frontage is little used and the access from Castle Street has a general air of neglect worsened by the delayed development of the car park to the east. Creating better access to the Castle Mill Stream frontage would help to emphasise the historic importance of these waterways to Oxford as well as emphasising the rural/urban transition that is a positive element of the area's character.

- Tree planting at Oxpens Meadow during the later 20th century appears to have provided trees that create a municipal parkland character, rather than reinforcing the area's rural qualities. Future planting in the field could help to restore some of the rural character, by making use of naturalistic planting of native species, as well as restoring some of the historic pattern of tree lined field boundaries that characterised the area in the past. Developing wild-flower rich meadow margins to the public open space could also help to contribute to the area's rural quality, as well as enhancing the park's ecological value.

Heritage Assets:

Designated Heritage Assets

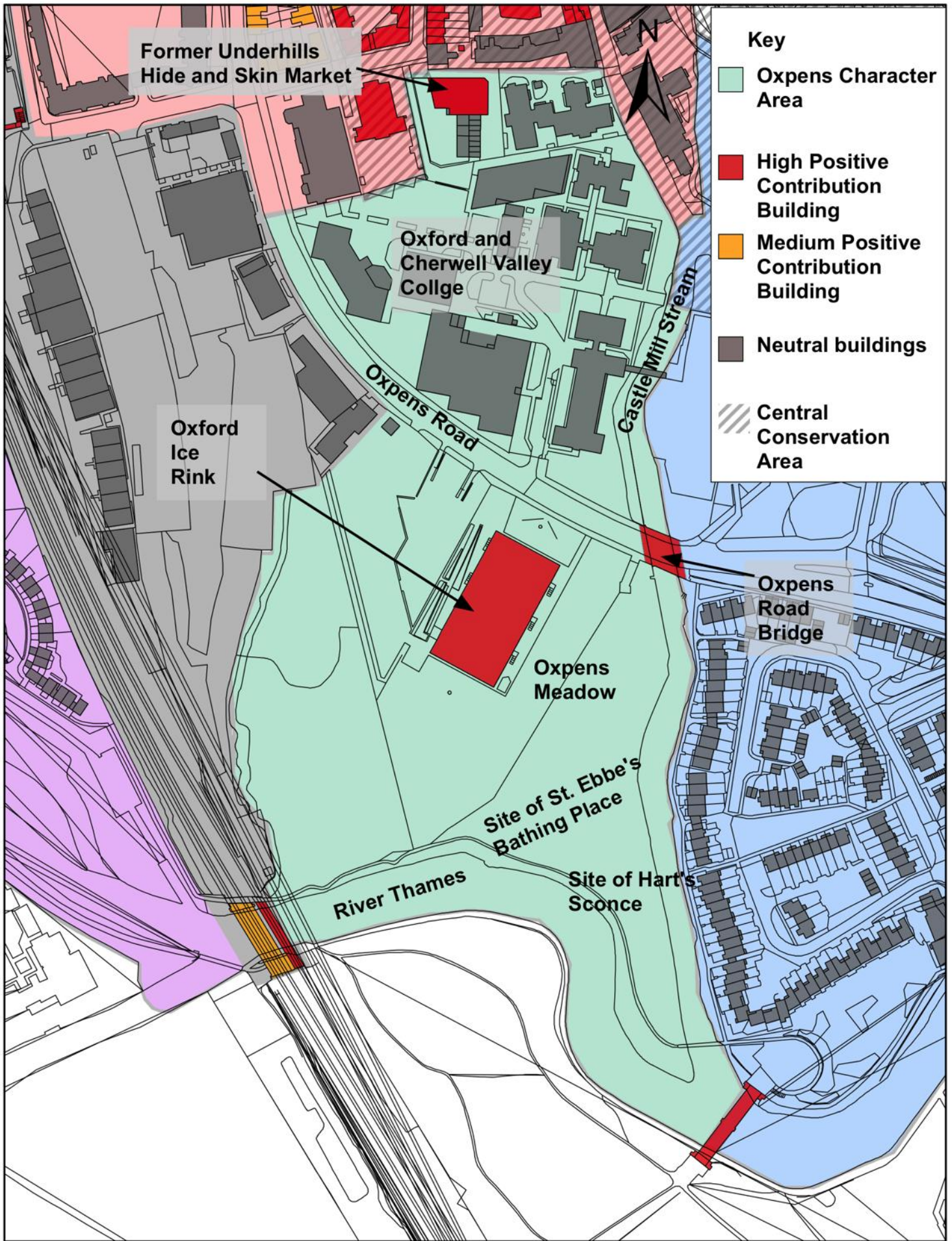
- Central (City and University Conservation Area)

Areas of Archaeological Potential

- The Castle Mill Stream
- Site of St Ebbe's Bathing Place
- Site of Hart's Sconce
- Line of the Civil War Siege Work

Potential Non-designated Heritage Assets

- Oxpens Meadow
- Former Underhills Hide and Skin Market, 14a Oxpens Lane
- Oxpens Road Bridge



Oxpens Character Area

Scale: 1:2,573

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 Ordnance Survey 100019348.

St Ebbe's Suburb

Extent:

- Paradise Square, Paradise Street, Abbey Place and Norfolk Street
- Old Greyfriars Street
- Thames Street and Speedwell Street (part of)
- Butterwyke Place
- Albion Place, Littlegate Street, Turn Again Lane, Pike Terrace, Faulkner Street
- Blackfriars Road, Friars Wharf, Trinity Street, Dale Close
- Shire Lake Close

General Description:

This area now includes several enclaves of later 20th century housing between the City Centre and River Thames. These are separated by areas of grade car parking, the West Gate Centre's multi-storey car park and busy arterial roads. The car park areas are awaiting redevelopment, breaking up attractive residential areas with unattractive areas of hard-surfaced landscaping and engineering focused highways.

Thames Street, with its northern branch at Speedwell Street, is an arterial traffic route that crosses the area, linking west Oxford via Oxpens Road to St Aldates and the

City Centre. Both are broad streets but Thames Street is only well defined by accompanying development at its eastern end. South of Thames Street, housing faces onto quieter side streets and the attractive riverside environment but turns its back to and is set down from the main road. This results in a lack of definition to Thames Street and creates a difficult context for new development to respond to.



Tom Tower seen from Thames Street looking over a long-term disused site on the edge of the Abbey Place Car Par

Roads north of Thames Street include Old Greyfriars Street and Norfolk Street, which are, again poorly defined, mainly providing bus routes and access and egress from the car parks. They offer a poor pedestrian environment with permeability restrained by extensive safety railings on Old Greyfriars Street and limited provision of pavements.

In the north west, Paradise Square and Paradise Street sustain an older pattern of narrow streets on a rectilinear grid or curving around the walls of Oxford Castle with 17th, 18th and 19th century buildings contributing to the historic character and interest of the streetscape.



The redevelopment of Littlegate Street has maintained the narrow width of the road and pattern division of tall, narrow frontages, whilst the greenery of the former Rectory garden is joined by street trees.

Mature trees contribute to this area's attractive urban townscape, spilling out from gardens into the streetscene. Other fragments of the historic street pattern are found at Turn Again Lane and Littlegate in the north east, where 17th century buildings illustrate the area's early origins. Roads between Old Greyfriars Street and Littlegate Street/Albion Place/Butterwyke Place, provide a dense pattern of narrow back streets with later 20th century houses and flats. The buildings gradually rise in scale from two-storeys, with a suburban character next to Old Greyfriars Street to four storeys reflecting the edge of the historic city centre to the east and north at Albion Place and Littlegate Street.

The 20th century housing is mainly two and two-and-a-half storeys high and was built in the late 1970s and '80s on side streets with some taller, four storey blocks of flats or maisonettes built in the 1960s and focused in the area south of Thames Street on the site of the former gas works. Houses are built with irregular frontage lines on gently curving roads and with a complex roofscape providing visual interest to the streetscene. Use of cul-de-sacs, and curving roads encourages slower traffic speeds, whilst green spaces and footways provide connections between cul-de-sacs, allowing permeability for pedestrians through these developments. Brick, both buff and dark red, provides the main building material, with a mixture of slate and red clay tile for steeply pitched roofs, which occasionally accommodate dormer windows. The scale of development builds to the east, rising to four storeys providing a gradual

transition to the scale of the city centre. The area has a suburban feel that is surprising so close to the city centre. The landscaping makes use of the riverside, including views to the bridges of the former gas works from the riverside park and footpath at Friars Wharf. The bridges provide



Suburban character housing at Pike Terrace

access across the river to green open space of the Gandpont Nature Reserve.

Historical Development:

The area south of the town walls was probably first colonised in the 13th century. This required periods of land raising and infilling of the town ditch and reclamation including the creation or diversion of river channels, including the Trill Mill Stream, to drain a previously marshy area. By the end of the 13th century Priors of the Friars of the Sack and the Franciscans (Greyfriars) occupied sites directly south of and crossing the line of the city walls, west of Littlegate and north of the Trill Mill Stream. The Friars of the Sack were suppressed in the late 13th century and their land taken



up by Greyfriars Priory resulting in development of a large enclosed

Turn Again Lane in 1912 photographed by Henry Taunt. This Road runs into the area of the former Franciscan Priory

(© English Heritage Ref. No. CC72/00907)



Paradise Street from Swan Bridge, looking towards the 17th century building of the Jolly Farmer (which forms the corner to Paradise Square) The curving street line follows the edge of Oxford Castle's moat

garden or '*paradisus*' in the north west of the area, giving the origin of the modern names Paradise Street and Paradise Square. The Dominicans or 'Black Friars' occupied a property south of Trill Mill Stream reached from the southern end of Littlegate and separated from tenements lining St Aldates by a branch of the stream. The Priors would have been substantial complexes of buildings, including chapels, cloisters, sleeping, dining and working accommodation for the Friars, as well as buildings to support the economy of these institutions. Greyfriars Priory, for example, is known to have incorporated two libraries and is thought to have been a rare 'double' cloistered priory. Subsidiary buildings may have included farm or garden buildings, mills or industrial workshops as well as housing for tenants. The area south of the Trill Mill Stream and west of the immediate curtilage of Blackfriars appears to have remained largely undeveloped meadow land, divided by further streams and ditches and forming distinct north and south islands.

The land passed into private ownership following the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century. The precincts of Greyfriars and Blackfriars were largely turned over to (or retained as) market gardens throughout the 16th and 17th century. A triangle of land between the castle, the Greyfriars gardens and the Castle Mill Stream was developed for breweries, maltings and tanneries and housing now represented by Castle Street and Paradise Street, which ran around to the western entrances to the city via Swan Bridge. Large tenements on the west side of Littlegate Street were also developed with housing running back from the main frontage to form short side streets such as Turn Again Lane, as well as yards of cramped housing. Davis's Map of 1797 suggests this pattern had changed little at the end of the 18th century. He did record the earthworks of 'the Trenches' on the island nearest the Thames, suggesting this area was heavily fortified during the Civil War, although these might equally be remains of leats for managing the flooding of meadows.

The mid-19th century saw rapid development of a dense pattern of terraced housing in this area. The streets included the enclave of Paradise Square, built north of the Trill Mill Stream, as well as roads running west from Littlegate and St Aldates. The process of development appears to have been opportunistic, creating a



Looking along the Thames from the high walls of former wharfs near Friars Wharf

complex and maze like pattern of streets as individual fields became available and land raised above the flood meadow. A gas works was built on the north bank of the Thames, providing access to water and, presumably, allowing coal to be delivered by barge. Wharves lined the bank of the Thames reaching up to Thames Street, with a large basin enclosed to the east by Folly Bridge, making this area of the river an inland port. The gasworks was expanded to the south of the Thames later in the 19th century with the construction of both a rail bridge and a foot bridge over the river, linking the two sides. The street pattern had been densely developed by the 1870s and included streets and narrow yards of housing, in addition to numerous public houses, a church and chapels, schools and industrial sites such as sawmills, and breweries. The earlier streams were either enclosed in culverts or remained as unhealthy open drains.

Widespread clearance of older housing began in the 1960s followed by reconstruction, initially maintaining elements of the earlier street pattern such as Preachers Lane and Blackfriars Road. However, later development paid less head to the earlier landscape, establishing new curving streets and cul-de-sacs. The expected regeneration of the area was not fully realised during the 20th century, with land in limbo used as car parks serving the city centre.

Key Historic Character Features:

<p>Surviving sections of 17th century street patterns at Paradise Square and Littlegate Street.</p>	<p>Despite late 20th century redevelopment significant sections of the older street pattern dating from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries have survived which help to create a natural integration with the city centre.</p> <p>Key survivals include:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paradise Street, representing part of the medieval street plan of the city as the route around the castle to the western entrance to the city at Swan Bridge. • Littlegate Street and Albion Place representing the medieval approach to Blackfriars Priory. • Paradise Square, which represents a formal scheme of 19th century speculative development, as well as providing evidence of the extent of the medieval Greyfriars precinct and post-medieval Paradise Gardens.
<p>Secluded areas of older buildings on the edge of the historic city centre</p>	<p>These illustrate the early origins of the streets, contributing to their historic and architectural interest. Within areas of mainly late 20th century redevelopment they provide an important function in identifying the antiquity of the streetscape. Notable isolated examples include the buildings of Turn Again Lane, Paradise Street, The Wharf House Public House and No. 10 Littlegate Street (a 17th century house built over and incorporating the medieval gateway to Blackfriars) and the adjacent former Baptist Chapel (No. 10b Littlegate Street).</p>
<p>Connection to the riverside, including bridges of the gas works</p>	<p>Now a part of the residential area south of Thames Street, the north bank of the river retains the appearance of a formerly industrialised river frontage with open riverbanks retained by wharf walls, providing evidence of the former use of the river as an economically important waterway.</p> <p>The bridges provide points of interest in views along the river, as well as crossing points that enhance the permeability of the area and provide connections to the city centre for residential areas to the south. Their style and materials provide evidence of past industrial activity</p>
<p>Influence of historic watercourses on modern street pattern</p>	<p>The watercourses that ran across this area in the Middle Ages and up to the mid-19th century were part of the management of water for the monastic institutions that surrounded the city. They created islands and boundaries within the landscape that subsequently influenced the alignment and extent of street and building plots in the 17th and 19th centuries, which continue to be of relevance today.</p>
<p>Position in views of the city centre</p>	<p>The area currently contributes to the generally low scale of development on the outskirts of the city that maintains the position of the historic city centre as the focus of</p>

	<p>views from the hills to the west, south west and east of the city.</p> <p>The complex roofscape of post-medieval tenements with steeply pitched roofs, echoed by much of the later 20th century development, contributes to the complex roofscape of small pitched roofs that provides the general character of the city centre in these views, above which the historic towers and spires rise as the principal landmarks.</p>
Green landscaping on Thames Street	Tree planting on both side of Thames Street and the large green bank on its south side help to soften some of the hard engineered landscape of this traffic route, representing a late 20 th century attempt to develop an attractive public realm.
Archaeological interest of Friaries and Early Modern colonization	The Priors played an important role in the development of Oxford as a medieval centre of scholarship of international importance. Previous excavations have demonstrated that well-preserved remains of the buildings of Greyfriars south of the city wall are preserved below ground level. The survival of upstanding remains of Blackfriars and the limited nature of past development in this area suggests there is also potential for survival of areas of well-preserved sub-surface archaeological remains of post-medieval activity relating to the colonisation of this area as a suburb of the city, in addition to those of the medieval institution.
Archaeological and historic interest of the city walls	A section of the city wall, as reconstructed in the 17 th century over the former Greyfriars' church, survives on the northern edge of the area. This illustrates the historic limits of the medieval city, and the measures taken to define and defend it.

Historical Value:

The medieval phase of the area's development including the sites of the priories, the city walls and the historic streams provides association with the origins and development of the city, including its role as a centre of religious institutions and learning that developed within and around the earlier Saxon town. The establishment of the Greyfriars is of particular importance for its association with the first Franciscan mission to the country and is considered to have national and even international significance for its role as the most important teaching centre ('*Studium Generale*') of the order in England in the medieval period and as one of the two most important centres in Europe in the 13th century. This includes its associations with some of the most significant scholars and scientists of the Middle Ages, including Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, who helped

to make Oxford an international centre of learning. The area south of the city walls represents the expanded Friary at a time when it had become successful in attracting patronage and scholars from across Europe. The church at this time included ten separate chapels and a highly unusual teaching or 'preaching nave'.



Now the offices of the Oxford Association for the Blind and Sight Advisory Centre, this building at the end of Littlegate trains the structure of the 13th century gate of the Blackfriars' (Dominican) Priory

Identification of graves within the area during archaeological investigations suggests that the

remains of medieval scholars may still be present. The remains of the Dominican Priory have a similar value. This order was also founded with a mission to promote the role of the church in teaching and study, whilst Oxford was the first *Studium Generale* of the order in England, moving to the Littlegate Street site just 15 years after St Dominic established them in Oxford.

The area has a particular historic association as a 'lost' suburb' due to the near total demolition and clearance of its streets of housing, shops, businesses and places of worship. The scatter of buildings surviving from before the clearances and the fragments of its historic streets help to illustrate the earlier history of the area.

Evidential Value:

The Priors of this area have been identified as areas of archaeological remains of national significance through previous investigations. These have identified surviving remains of the buildings of the Franciscan and Dominican Priors that allow reconstruction of key parts of their layout. Further study of archaeological remains includes the potential to investigate potential for waterlogged remains, which may have preserved biological materials enabling further understanding of the lives and work of the friars. The areas of ground raising near the streams surrounding the priory precincts, and the infilled town ditch beneath the Franciscan Priory provide excellent opportunities for preservation of waterlogged remains. For example, excavations of a drain at the Dominican Priory have revealed preserved remains of an assemblage of medicinal plants. Both sites also have the potential to reveal further evidence of early scientific experiments, such as the 14th century alembic fragments found at St Ebbe's in the 1960s. There is also further potential to enhance our understanding of the extent and function of different areas and buildings within each complex, including identifying evidence of the many chapels at Greyfriars or the

sites of its libraries. The retrieval of animal bones and other food remains could enhance our understanding of the medieval diet of the friars, whilst the potential survival of burials associated with the Priors could provide the opportunity to enhance our understanding of the health and lifestyles of these medieval scholars and the communities who surrounded them. Other evidence contributing to this internationally significant history would include evidence of writing and publishing at the priories.

Allied to the archaeological interest of the priories would be evidence of the raising of land outside the city walls during the late Middle Ages, early modern period and the industrial age, including the creation and/or diversion of streams, which would have local significance to inform our understanding of the date and extent of the city's growth. The historic streams are likely to provide waterlogged environments that may preserve organic remains that have the potential to provide considerable information concerning the environment of the city and activities in its suburbs during the later Middle Ages and Early Modern period, which are also of potential local or even regional significance. The remains of medieval and post-medieval suburban housing, industry and riparian activity would inform our understanding of the spread of the city over the former priories. Their significance would depend on their extent and condition but would be of, at least, local significance.

There remains potential to collect oral history evidence from former residents of the St Ebbe's suburb, as well as through documentary research, which would help inform understanding of the lives of residents of this area. This could be supplemented by recording of archaeological remains of the former streets and tenements of Victorian and early 20th century St Ebbe's to enhance understanding of the area's past.

Whether the features recorded as 'the Trenches' in the late 18th century were remains of the city's Civil War defences is still unknown. There remains some potential to explore the meaning of these features through observation of archaeological remains.

Communal Value:

The suburb prior to its redevelopment was significant in the history of many Oxford families and the social history of the modern city, providing a neighbourhood that was central to the identity of its community. Its lost schools, pubs, work



The former Baptist Chapel at No. 10a Littlegate Street was built in 1832, which continued in use until 1938

places, and shops still hold important memories and associations for many local families now living elsewhere in the city. The significance of the area is currently reduced by the delayed development and associated blight although recent redevelopment along St Ebbe's/ Littlegate Street has made a positive contribution to this streetscene.

The area is now home to a substantial residential community, for whom the quality of the residential streets, including the ability of the narrow early modern and later 20th century streets to provide a tranquil residential environment is important. Roads, car-parking, the Westgate Centre and College (OCVC) also make this a familiar area for workers and students.

Aesthetic Value:

Views into and within the area are rather lacking in historic features of note, save for old houses in Turn Again Lane, Paradise Square, Paradise Street, which retain the charm of historic timber framed buildings enclosing and leaning over the narrow street as recorded by J.C. Buckler in the early 19th century and views along the river. These views are enhanced by mature broad-leafed trees in public space or leaning over streets from private gardens including the two former vicarages.

The modern residential streets have a generally green character through the planting of front gardens and occasional spill-through of side and rear garden greenery. South of Thames Street the development has made use of the riverside to provide a attractive character for this neighbourhood within the city. The later 20th century redevelopment of St Ebbe's/Littlegate Street and Paradise Street have included attempts to reproduce the scale and vertical emphasis of the earlier developments of



Wharf House, on Thames Street, may have played a role as the manager's house and offices for the wharfs on the river before becoming a public house. IT makes an important contribution to the aesthetic value of the Thames Street frontage, as well as an indication of the former 19th character of the suburb.

these areas, contributing positively to their aesthetic character.

Views along the Castle Mill Stream to Oxford Castle or along Littlegate Street benefit from the gentle curves of these routes to provide a progression of views, which help to make the historic buildings focal features. Other important views include those

along Brewer Street, although much of the area is too low for significant views of the buildings of the historic centre.

Negative Features, Issues and Opportunities for Enhancement:

- Approached from this low-lying area, the historic city is largely hidden from view and the road system and poor signage add to the confusion and bleakness of this major gateway to the city for many visitors (with the exceptions of Paradise Street, Paradise Square and Littlegate). Parts of the area also have a past reputation for anti-social behaviour.
- For the tourist/visitor arriving via the car parks or main coach park (Oxpens), who will mostly be unaware of the heritage of the area, the initial experience of the historic city is dismal in particular the sign-posted route to the city beneath the multi-storey car park.
- This area contains several residential areas in isolated islands and split from each other by the very busy Thames Street, Speedwell Street and Old Greyfriars Street, as well as large land-unit car parks. The modern housing only occasionally bears relation to the pre-Victorian topography, whilst large-scale developments (plot size and mass) have overwhelmed remaining historic features, particularly at Speedwell Street.
- There is considerable potential to reveal and interpret heritage features in this area, from the City Wall and Greyfriars and Blackfriars Priors to semi-natural features such as the Trill Mill stream (presently culverted) and the riverside, as well as providing interpretation of its more recent lost past. There is the potential to enhance communication links between 'islands' and with the castle site and waterside walks, as well as to the River Thames to the South. Opportunities to restore elements of the historic street plan could help to reunite areas and enhance permeability.
- Castle Mill Stream is screened from Oxpens Road and has an air of neglect.

Heritage Assets:

Designated Heritage Assets

- St Ebbe's Rectory, Listed Building Grade II
- The Jolly Farmers Inn Public House, Paradise Street Listed Building Grade II
- The Swan Bridge, Listed Building Grade II
- Greyfriars, No. 21 Paradise Street, Listed Building Grade II*
- Boundary wall at the rear of Nos. 8 – 10 Charles Street (now Turn Again Lane), Listed Building Grade I)
- Oxford City Walls, Scheduled Monument
- Holy Trinity Vicarage, No. 15 Littlegate Street, Listed Building Grade II
- Garden Wall of No. 15 Littlegate Street
- No. 10 Littlegate Street, Listed Building Grade II

Positive Buildings within the Central (City and University) Conservation Area

- The Castle Public House, No. 24 Paradise Street
- Former Maltings at 19a Paradise Street
- No. 19 Paradise Street
- Nos. 8, 9 and 10 Turn Again Lane
- Former Baptist Chapel and Sunday School at 10b Littlegate Street

Areas of Archaeological Potential

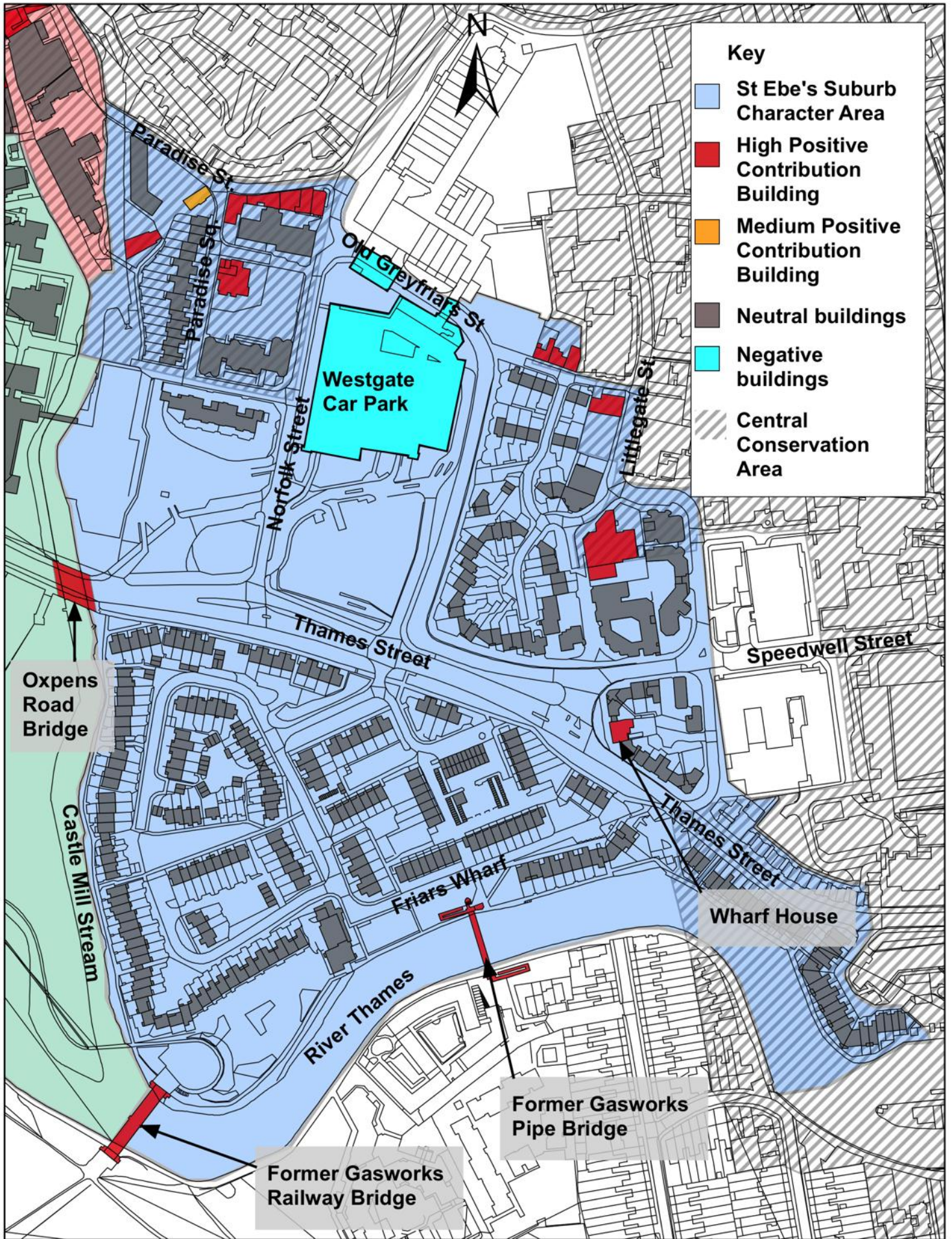
- Site of the Franciscan 'Greyfriars' Friary including the 'paradise'
- Site of the Dominican 'Blackfriars' Friary
- Site of the Trill Mill Stream
- Course of the town walls and ditch

Potential Non-designated Heritage Assets

- The Wharf House, No. 13 Butterwyke Place
- Former Gas Works Rail Bridge, Dale Close
- Former Gas Works Pipe Bridge, Marlborough Road



The former gasworks pipe bridge, now provides a footbridge linking St Ebbe's, to Grandpont to the south



St Ebbe's Suburb Character Area

New Osney

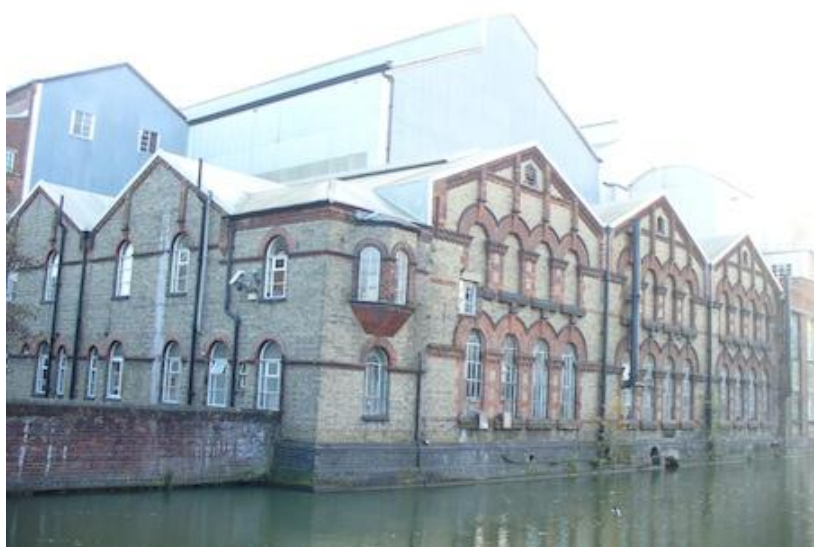
Extent:

- Botley Road (from Botley Road Rail Bridge to Osney Bridge)
- Mill Street, Osney Lane, Barrett Street, Arthur Street and Russell Street (formerly Bowling Green & Calves Close)
- Abbey Road, Cripsey Road and Cripsey Place

General Description:

This area covers the western edge of Osney Island between the line of the railway and the main stream of the River Thames (Isis) and north of the industrial land and cemetery that mark the main part of Osney Abbey's historical precinct. It is crossed by a short section of Botley Road, the only route into Oxford City Centre from the west. North and south of Botley Road two developments of 19th century housing form distinct enclaves, with strongly contrasting characters. In addition to housing, the area retains buildings associated with this area's role as a focus of transport infrastructure and of industries or trade that exploited the river as a transport route and source of power and water. These include the monumental structure of the former Oxford Electric Lighting Station at Arthur Street. The river and frontages to it are hidden from the main streets, suggesting it was not regarded as a desirable outlook at the time the houses were constructed, but it provides the foreground of views of great beauty where it is seen from Osney Bridge, the towpath and areas to the west (including Osney Town Conservation Area and the open spaces surrounding Sheepwash Channel Junction), which are appreciated by many local people, as well as

visitors on the waterways network. To the south, further former industrial sites and Osney Cemetery continue elements of the Victorian townscape but are included in the Osney Town Conservation Area in recognition of their special historic and architectural interest, which includes the archaeological interest of the remains of Osney Abbey and the industrial complex of the mill on the riverside.



The former Oxford Electric Lighting Power Station next to the River Thames heralded Oxford's entry to the age of electricity and was designed to be attractive as well as functional

Historical Development:

Osney Lane and Mill Street both have their origin as medieval roads leading to the gates of Osney Abbey from the city and river crossing respectively. The abbey was once one of the crowning jewels of Oxford, considered second-to-none in the kingdom, and would have dominated the views of Oxford across the Thames Valley from the west. When new bishoprics were created after the Reformation, the fine abbey church was the natural choice for Oxford's first cathedral, although this was moved to Christ Church when the college acquired the abbey's property. By the late 16th century, however, little survived but the ruins of the church nave and the riverside complex of the mill with a range of domestic buildings. Many of the abbey's building materials were used by Christ Church for the college buildings during the 16th and 17th centuries. The Mill continued to be an important focus of industrial activity until the 1960s and part of the site remains as a business centre.

The river that forms the western edge of Osney Island was recorded as 'Aldee' or Old River in 1184. Its course has clearly been straightened or canalised in the past, probably from the meandering course running around the west side of Osney Town. Engineering in the past is likely to have included improvement for the abbey's millrace, as well as creating a more readily navigable waterway possibly resulting in several phases of straightening and widening.

The road west from early medieval Oxford may have passed through this area but does not appear to have consisted of more than a network of tracks. Indeed the river may have been a more important and practical thoroughfare to the west for much of the past millennium. A bridge named Hythe Bridge (hythe is an old word for landing places) had been constructed by 1465 and may refer to Osney Bridge (rather than modern Hythe Bridge). The first section of a stone causeway leading westwards from the bridge had been constructed by 1467 leading as far westward as modern St Fridewide's Bridge. This extended to Ferry Hinksey by 1540. Further building by Lord Williams of Abingdon between 1530 and 1541 created a causeway that followed the present line of Botley Road. A stone three-arch bridge had been built at Osney Bridge by the early 17th century. In 1767 Botley Road became a turnpike road and was considerably improved, becoming known as Seven Bridges Road.

Although the original turnpike tollhouse was demolished for construction of the GWR line to Banbury in 1850 a new one was built just west of the entrance to the station. This was used until 1868 when it became a public house



The former White House public house, built in 1850 by the GWR to replace the 18th century turnpike tollhouse

originally known as The White House. It is still in use as a restaurant.

After the inclosure of St Thomas' Parish in 1853 Christ Church were able to promote land between the railway and the river for development as 'New Osney'. The presence of two railway stations created a demand for railway workers' housing, following the progress of Osney Town to the west. Mill Street was reformed west of its earlier course and land on either side divided into tenements of even width and with a standard building line. Russell Street and Arthur Street were laid out by Samuel Robinson in 1869 off Mill Street. One of the earliest purchasers of land in this area was Joseph Castle, a builder and brick maker from Cowley Road, who established a builders yard next to the river on Arthur Street. A timber yard occupied a site just to the south. Castle bought many plots on Mill Street and built a lot of the houses, which consequently have a high degree of uniformity. George Jones, another Oxford Builder bought the land between Botley Road and Russell Street, also setting up a builders yard next to the river. The houses on the frontages surrounding his plot are more varied, suggesting he sub-leased land to several builders.



These houses at Mill Street (built by Joseph Castle) have retained the rather austere appearance that reflects their construction for lower paid workers

As a main thoroughfare Botley Road typically attracted the most prestigious houses, which were built to a larger scale and with greater attention to providing architectural detail to attract wealthier buyers. Christ Church had initially reserved the land on the Botley Road / Mill Street corner for a large hotel but the project attracted no interest, perhaps because the site was on the wrong side of the railway lines for the city centre. The site was auctioned as ten lots in 1873. A small hotel, called Dodson's Temperance Hotel, was eventually built on part of this area. It was renamed the Railway Hotel and later the Westgate Hotel, which it remains.

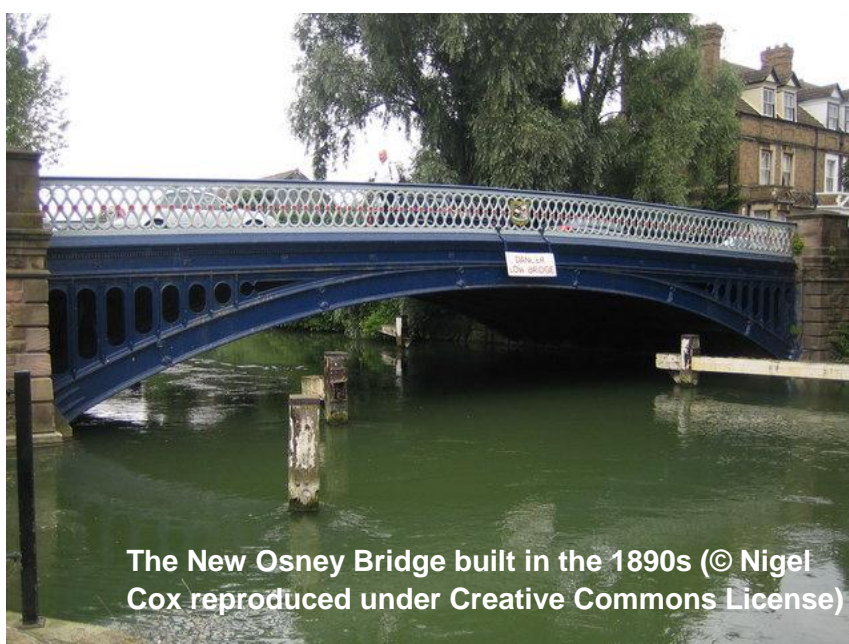
In 1877 John Galpin, a well-known Oxford speculator, agreed to build 68 semi-detached houses on Christ Church's Cripsey Meadow estate, just to the west of the railway stations and north of the Botley Road. The first houses were built at the Botley Road end and were advertised as "*capitally suited to businessmen to whom time is an all-important object, half a minute would suffice to catch a train*". These



A view up Abbey Road showing the more up-market housing built north of Botley Road by Kingerlee

houses were built to a high standard and include buildings built by the company of Thomas Henry Kingerlee, founded in 1868. Kingerlee had moved closer to the building site shortly after 1881, building his own home Bridge House on the south side of Botley Road, which is now the River Hotel. A riverside timber yard at No.1 Abbey Road was occupied by Kingerlee's building company until 1959. Barrett Street was developed over the other timber yard at the southern end of Mill Street by 1899

Part of the rebuilt Osney Bridge collapsed in December 1885, resulting in the drowning of a 12 year old girl, Rhoda Miles. A lengthy dispute between the County Council and the Oxford Local Board followed and *"both parties energetically declining to undertake the work of reconstruction"*. A new bridge with a single iron span (by engineer WH White)



The New Osney Bridge built in the 1890s (© Nigel Cox reproduced under Creative Commons License)

was eventually opened for traffic on December 31st 1888 bearing the arms of the Local Board.

By 1892 Castle's builders' yard had become obsolete with the virtual completion of the housing development. There had been a growing demand for electricity in the city for both the University and household lighting and the yard's riverside location was an ideal site for a power station with a constant supply of cooling water as well as a means of delivering coal. The works were designed by Thomas Parker of the Electric Construction Company (the foremost electrical engineer of his age, responsible for the installation of electrical supplies to many towns and cities). The architect was A. P. Brevitt, who had designed the Wolverhampton power station which stands next to Parker's own factory. In its first year the company installed 7,000 35-watt lamps and by 1895 almost all the colleges and some university buildings were electrified. Over the next ten years the generating station was expanded five times.

After the great rush of development in the late 19th century there was little further building for most of the 20th century. The power station eventually became obsolete in the 1960s when Didcot Power Station became the main source of electricity for Oxfordshire. It is now owned by Oxford University. George Jones' former builders yard off Mill Street, along with the housing on the north side of Russell Street were cleared in the 1980s for a new development of houses and flats including a terrace built to an interesting modern design, whilst a new house with a design that reflects the more industrial aesthetic of the Power Station was built to the rear of the Riverside Hotel by the local architect Adrian James in the 1990s.

A slower process of change has been the gradual loss of shops, such as small grocery or general stores, butchers and bakers, although the features of former shopfronts are still recognisable on a number of houses.

Key Historic Character Features:

<p>The Highway and turnpike road to Oxford from the west</p>	<p>Botley Road remains an important route into the city centre, reflecting its historic development from the 15th century. The structures of the causeways built in the medieval period are not readily apparent but archaeological remains may survive beneath the modern road surface. These were probably cut into by the excavation of the road under the new railway bridge in the 1850s. The turnpike tollhouse provides a fantastic reminder of the role of this area as the gateway to the city and the development of 'Seven Bridges Road' and is of architectural interest in its own right as an excellent example of a mid-19th century tollhouse. Osney Bridge has a similar role, indicating the role of the city, through the local board, in maintaining the routes into the city. The structure also has architectural interest.</p>
<p>Victorian expansion of</p>	<p>Despite variation between the different streets of housing built in this area in the late 19th century, it is notable for the consistency of its historic character, scale, positioning and</p>

<p>Oxford</p>	<p>form within each street, contributing to streets with a well defined character and strong sense of place. Modern developments have managed to retain this character through careful use of materials. Variations in material and detailing, such as use of ornamental brickwork, identify the work of different builders. Characteristic uniformity of scale, frontage line and width of plots create tightly enclosed streets with a strong rhythm of frontages, which is part of the Victorian urban character.</p> <p>Abbey Road, Cripsey Road and Cripsey Place have a higher quality of architecture. The use of architectural decoration on these buildings raises the attractiveness of the environment in general, whilst the curving road lines foreshorten views creating enclosed, tranquil areas that helped to provide quiet residential enclaves.</p>
<p>Influence of Victorian developers and architects</p>	<p>The buildings have associations with notable developers in Oxford who influenced the character of the city's suburbs, notably John Galpin and Kinglerlee. The influence of Kinglerlee in particular is seen in the consistency of architectural detail of buildings north of Botley Road.</p> <p>The former St Frideswide's curate's house at No. 29 Abbey Road is an example of the work of the local Victorian Gothic Revival architect Clapton Crabb Rolfe – one of Oxford's most original 19th century architects).</p> <p>The houses are generally well preserved including architectural detailing that provides understanding of the age and the intended status of the occupants they were built for. This includes evidence of past use of several of them as shops.</p>
<p>Pockets of greenery</p>	<p>These help to provide a suburban character; suggesting the countryside is only a street away. A notable tree line marks the former boundary of the station yard (now Roger Dudman Way) along with iron GWR railings. These help to screen the later 20th century railway buildings in views of the Victorian housing preserving the historic character of Cripsey Road.</p> <p>Other notable trees are located at in the gardens of the former tollhouse and in the large garden of The River Hotel as well as on the riverside. These contribute a greener character to Botley Road and frame views from Osney Bridge towards the city centre.</p>
<p>Views to the city centre along Botley Road –</p>	<p>Much of this area is low lying and enclosed by the buildings. However, the view towards the city centre from Osney Bridge is particularly notable, providing a first view of the dreaming</p>

	<p>spires for many entering the city from the west. The three and a half storey stone and brick fronted buildings on Botley Road frame a view over the railway bridge to the spires of St Mary's Church, the Wesley Memorial Church and Nuffield College with the dome of the Radcliffe Camera beyond.</p>
<p>Elements of the medieval street pattern of St Thomas' Suburb</p>	<p>Osney Lane and Mill Street both have their origin as routes leading to the gates of Osney Abbey and the abbey's mill. Their routes have influenced the location and form of later development.</p>
<p>Evidence of historic industries</p>	<p>The historic importance of the riverside as a focus of industry is maintained by the presence of the Old Power Station at Arthur Street and the former timber yard at Abbey Road, most recently used by a car rental company. The latter is likely to be redeveloped in the near future.</p> <p>The several phases of construction of the power station buildings are evident in the different architectural styles used. The earliest have a decorative frontage overlooking the river, including Italianate arcaded windows in red brick against the yellow brick walls with an oriel, presumably for a manager's office to overlook the wharf and river.</p>
<p>Riverside towpath</p>	<p>The towpath running north from Osney Bridge and access by paths from Abbey Road, provides an area of green footpath next to the broad waterway with attractive views to the allotments and fields west of the river. The presence of a towing path provides a reminder that this was once a working waterway, that fuelled the suburb's growth.</p>
<p>Views from the towpath</p>	<p>Very beautiful, particularly in evening light with blue skies, clouds and buildings alongside the river reflected in the smooth surface of the wide area of water at the Sheepwash Channel junction water, and the green spaces of fields at Medley and the allotments, as well as the weir and footbridge of Tumbling Bay River Bathing Place. This section of river can be viewed from many angles and with views of particular artistic interest including the rear of houses at Abbey Road and the arched bridge</p>
<p>Views over Osney Cemetery</p>	<p>The views over the cemetery makes a strong contribution to the character of this area through the presence of green open space with a formally designed landscape intended to provide an attractive and contemplative space for those visiting the resting places of relatives or walking in public green space. The cemetery is no longer in use but retains an importance for the memory of Oxford's past inhabitants and as part of the green surroundings of New Osney.</p>

<p>Stand out buildings with special detailing and quality in sympathetic materials</p>	<p>A small number of buildings stand out as a result of their architectural detailing, these include the brick fronted townhouses at Nos. 4, 6 and 8 Botley Road, The Toll House, The Kite Public House and No. 29 Abbey Road.</p>
<p>Osney Abbey archaeological remains</p>	<p>The northern edge of the abbey precinct would have extended into this area and is likely to have included the Abbey gatehouse. The realignment of Mill Street makes it difficult to identify precisely where it would have stood but it may well have been on the southern edge of this area. Other unmapped structures are likely to have lain in the northern edge of the precinct near the gate, which may survive as subsurface archaeological remains that would have the potential to add to our understanding of the abbey's plan and the function of different areas within the precinct.</p>

Historical Significance:

The Augustinian Osney Abbey was of considerable significance in the history of Oxford, as landowner and part of the monastic presence in the medieval town and university. The monastic buildings were extensive and of architectural importance, and included domestic and industrial buildings beside the church. Its later history is of interest for the continual use of buildings near the mill, and the activities of antiquaries on the site from the early 18th century. Osney Lane and Mill Street both provide a connection with the site of the abbey, which continues to influence the nature of settlement in this area four centuries after its buildings were demolished.

The area has a strong connection with the historical influence of the different transport routes into Oxford, including the canal and river, roads and railway which all meet at this point. Buildings and structures including the turnpike tollhouse, the Westgate Hotel and Osney Bridge reflect the role of this area as the gateway to Oxford's city centre, whilst archaeological remains may be able



The riverside tow path runs along the rear boundary of houses on Abbey Road, seen here in evening sunlight (© Stephen McKay Reproduced under Creative Commons)



Mill Street with the Kite Public House in the foreground. The public house was an important social facility for the new community in the past, as it is today

to illustrate the deeper history of this function. Views over the river and access to the towpath and around the junction illustrate its historic importance as an inland waterway, which resulted in its canalisation. The historic riverside power station is a reminder of the role the river played in supporting Oxford's industries. In itself, the former Oxford Electric Light power station illustrates the origins of a new technology in Oxford that was once novel but is now taken for granted. It is a good example of this type of building in itself adding to its historical interest.

The terraced housing and tightly enclosed streets illustrate the area's development as the city expanded in response to the development of transport networks and industries, as well as improving conditions for workers. The rapid growth of New Osney is illustrated by the uniform appearance of the buildings, whilst its early character as a more self-contained community is illustrated by the survival of historic shopfronts. The Kite Public house, in particular, illustrates a part of the social interaction that has characterised the area.

Evidential Value:

The demolition of Osney Abbey's buildings was largely completed before the first detailed maps of the city were made at the end of the 16th century. Whilst it is possible to draw a conjectural extent of the abbey precinct based on later landholding, the arrangement of the many buildings and different areas of activity that must have lain within the precinct is largely unknown. Examination of archaeological remains of the abbey could help to improve our knowledge of the arrangement of the abbey, as well as its early history and development. There is, for example, some potential that it may have incorporated a late Saxon manorial estate centre that was granted to St. Alban's by Archbishop Alfric in 1004, which may have provided the nucleus of the early abbey in the 12th century. The sites of the mill and lock, just to the south of this area, have also been the location for several Roman coin finds suggesting there may be a longer history of the use of this site, which could have influenced its development. As a low lying riverside location there is potential for survival of waterlogged remains, which can preserve biological material

that provides further information about the lives of past people and the environment they lived in. Given the significance of the abbey, including its frequent use as a place for meetings of national importance such as church councils, remains of the abbey are likely to be considered to have a high level of significance.

Whilst the development of the Botley Road causeway from the late 15th century is well documented the method of its construction and the presence of any earlier routes or causeways that led from Oxford westwards across the Thames floodplain is less well understood. Investigation of the causeway and any antecedents would help to inform understanding of Oxford's connection with its rural hinterland as well as its connection with other regional centres to the west.

There remains potential for collecting the evidence of oral and written history that could inform our understanding of the communities that have developed to the north and south of Botley Road.

Communal Value:

The streets of this neighbourhood provide a quiet area of homes for a residential community despite the busy and noisy Botley Road. The environment has become part of the cherished local scene for these residents whilst some elements are important to their amenity including the public open space of the cemetery, the historic routes, footpaths and bridges that connect it with the wider environment and the shops and business (including the public houses), that allow the community to come together and socialise. The streetscene is appreciated for the uniformity of the Victorian houses in terms of their style, age and integrity.

Many enjoy the riverside, including residents of the surrounding area and visitors to Oxford. The Junction of the Thames and Sheepwash Channel is a landmark of the river experienced by many boaters navigating the inland waterway . The river scene



The footbridge over Sheepwash Channel Four Streams Junction footbridge (© Mike Todd, reproduced under Creative Commons License)

here is busy with the marina just to the south and may boats moored along the west bank south of Osney Bridge and the east bank north of the bridge.

Aesthetic Value:

The views of the river from within this neighbourhood and the

surrounding footpaths are of particular aesthetic value, combining the calmness of the open water, with the movement of boats and the texture and enclosure of houses at Abbey Road. These views are experienced by many local residents as well as those using the waterway.

The Oxford Electric Light Station was built in a lively eclectic style, including Italianate detailing, with an attractive façade of structural polychrome brickwork, perhaps intended to act as an advertisement for the new industry. The former Oxford City Power station is prominent in the river scene when viewed from the Botley Road and from within the Osney Town Conservation Area.

Views along the residential side streets are enhanced by detailing of buildings, particularly at Abbey Road and Cripley Road, where houses by Kingerlee were enhanced with ornamental stone doorcases and matching stone surrounds to windows as well as decorative parapet over single-storey bay windows with a motif of roundels, creating a strong sense of unity. The matching dormer windows provide another unifying feature, whilst generally these buildings have preserved well preserved architectural detailing, including two-over-two pane sash windows and tall chimney stacks. Houses on the roads south of Botley Road and at the north end of Abbey Place are generally simpler but several do retain ornamental banding of different colour brick, as well as two-over-two pane sash windows with scroll details to their stone window lintels and sills.

The Kite Public House stands out for the attractiveness of its late Victorian public house frontage, whilst the 1902 extension to the toll house, is also notable for its additional Edwardian stone detailing. Clapton Crabb Rolfe's curate's house at Abbey Road stands out in the streetscene partly due to the use of red brick (all other houses in the street are built of yellow brick) but mainly for its Gothic revival detailing, including deeply

fluted
chimneystacks,
trefoil arched
windows heads.

It is one of a
group of
buildings that
illustrate the
architect's work
in Oxford, which
also includes his
workers'
cottages on
Kingston Road
and the Vicarage
at Becket Street

The greenery of
the area makes
an important



No. 29 Abbey Road, designed by the prominent Oxford architect C.C. Rolfe as the curate's house for St. Frideswide's Church

contribution to its suburban quality. This includes the mature trees either side of Botley Road that spill through to the frontages and frame views to the city centre, as well as the front garden greenery of Mill Street, Abbey Road and Cripsey Road. The green open space of Osney Cemetery also contributes to the greenery of the area. The tree line that marks the boundary of the former station yard (now Roger Dudman Way) and helps to screen the modern railway buildings in views of the Victorian houses on the west side of Cripsey Road, providing an attractive green foil to the brick buildings.

The view to the city centre's high buildings forms part of the experience of Oxford's central (City and University) Conservation Area and is the first view of the city for many visitors arriving from the west. Many local residents and workers see it on a daily basis as they arrive at the edge of the city centre and includes the spire of St Mary's Church and the dome of the Radcliffe Camera, marking the core of the University, as well as the spires of the Wesley Memorial Church and Nuffield College. The taller houses either side of Botley Road help to frame the view, beyond which the openness of Frideswide Square helps to provide a wider vista.

Negative Features, Issues and Opportunities to Enhance Significance:

The narrow route of Botley Road was designed for horse drawn traffic in past centuries and struggles to accommodate the present heavy load of traffic using the route to enter and the city centre. The road is often congested and this must have a serious impact on air quality, as well as detracting from the street's character. This is compounded by the unattractive low bridge for the railway line, which creates an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists, in particular, where the narrow space brings them into proximity with motor vehicles.

Heritage Assets:

Designate heritage assets

- Part of Osney Town Conservation Area

Positive Buildings within the Osney Town Conservation Area

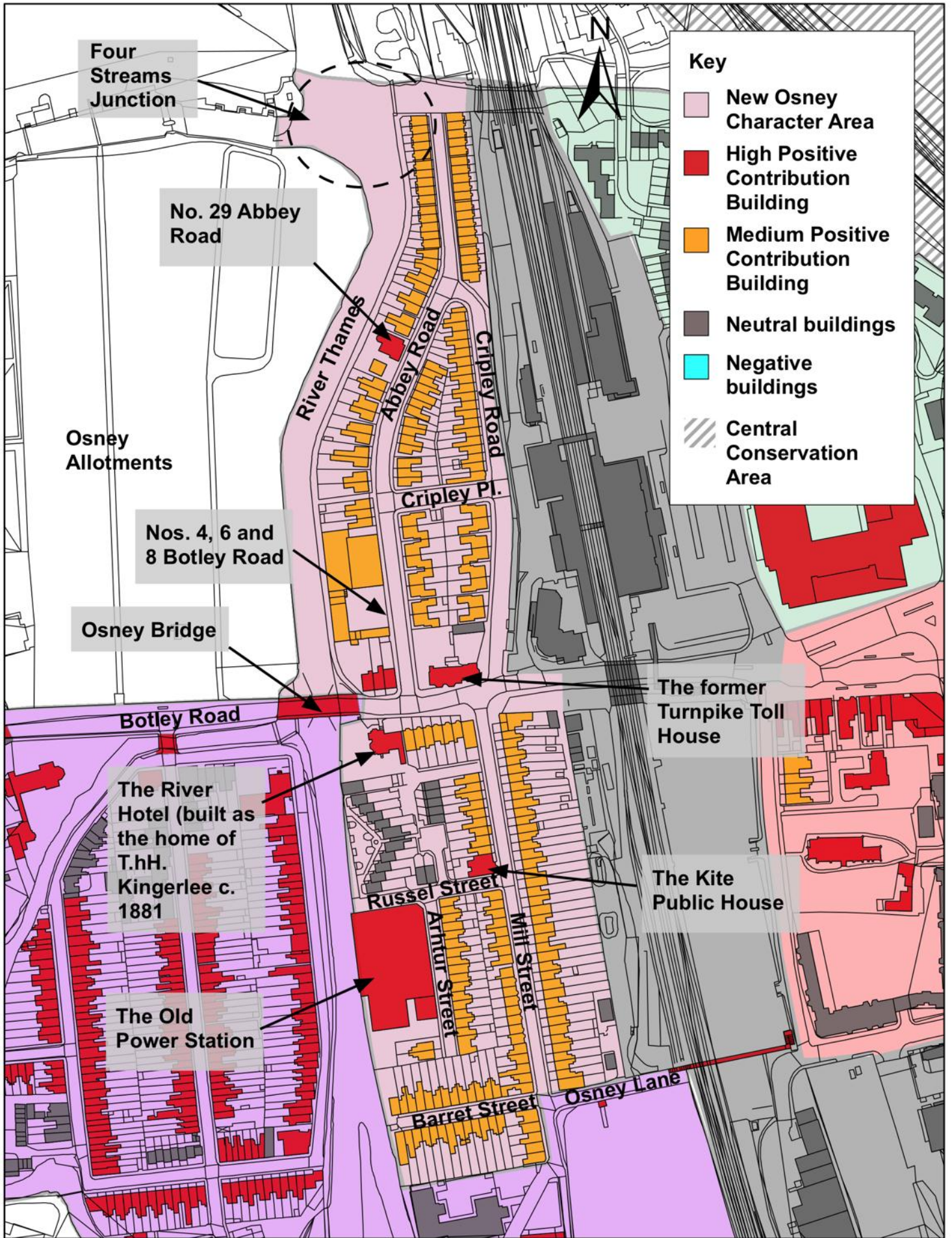
- Osney Bridge, Botley Road

Areas of Archaeological Potential

- Botley Road Causway
- Site of Osney Abbey (Osney Lane, Mill Street and Barrett Street)

Potential Non-designated Heritage Assets

- The former Oxford Electric Lighting Power Station, Arthur Street
- The River Hotel (formerly Bridge House), Botley Road
- The One (formerly the Botley Road Turnpike Tollhouse), No. 2 Botley Road
- The Kite Public House, Mill Street
- The River Thames and Towpath from Four Streams Junction to Osney Bridge



New Osney Character Area