

Brasenose Wood and Shotover Hill
Wytham Woods

Canals

- 2.22. Canals can support both diverse assemblages of marginal aquatic plant life and animals. The Oxford Canal supports a thriving population of water voles, a nationally protected species, within the boundaries of the city. It also supports a variety of birds, including reed bunting, reed and sedge warblers and kingfisher. The canal is also recognised as an important fishery, a feature that needs protection from low flows and pollution incidents. The Oxford Canal also plays an important role in the network of green corridors that cross the city, used by humans and some animals.
- 2.23. The Oxford Canal is the only canal in the county and runs for 56 km from the city centre to the county boundary and then on to a junction with the Midlands canal network. Approximately 12 km occur within the study area, representing a significant proportion of the county total.

Character Areas crossed by the Oxford Canal
9E Grandpont
2B Western Fringe
2A University Fringe
4B Jericho
4A North Oxford
10A Summertown
9A Thames (Isis – North)

Rivers and Ditches

- 2.24. Rivers and ditches support a range of aquatic habitats and associated species, including a number of priority species. Rivers and ditches within the study area are often intimately associated with other habitats including ponds, neutral grassland and farmland.
- 2.25. The Thames and Cherwell Rivers cut through the centre of Oxford and represent a key ecological resource for the city and the county. Many of the designated sites within Oxford, including those of European importance, rely upon appropriate water levels and flooding within the river system. This is being addressed through the implementation of Water Level Management Plans for wetland and wet grassland SSSI's on both the Thames and Cherwell systems.
- 2.26. In addition to the main rivers, the tributaries of the River Thames, ditches and small streams represent highly important ecological habitats as they support marginal vegetation and habitats not found on the main rivers. They are in addition, important fish spawning grounds.

Key Character Areas containing Rivers and Ditches
9A Thames (Isis - North)
9B Cherwell
9C Bayswater Brook

9D Thames (Isis – South)
9E Grandpont
4E New Osney
5J Botley
8C Botley Industrial and Retail Parks
7B Southfield Park and Hospital complex
5M Cowley Marsh
5C Florence Park

Urban Habitats (Settlements)

- 2.27. The urban areas of the city are included within the Settlements HAP, which covers all aspects of urban wildlife. Settlements have been recognised as providing important areas of wildlife habitat outside the areas specifically managed for nature conservation (e.g. designated SSSI's, SLINC's and nature reserves). The ecology of these non-designated sites, or urban greenspaces, is often under-recorded and their contribution to the ecology of an area is therefore under-valued. Crucially, these urban greenspaces often provide the main connection for many people to wildlife and nature.
- 2.28. Many areas of urban greenspace, within Oxford, are actively managed, often with amenity, recreation or landscape, as opposed to nature conservation, as the major objective. Within these urban greenspaces there are many opportunities to integrate positive management for wildlife and to encourage public support and enjoyment of the wildlife resources they support.
- 2.29. The following table sets out the major land use types of urban greenspace and the types of habitat and species they have the potential to support.

Land use type	Habitats	Key potential species	Examples within Oxford City
Churches and churchyards	Trees, including veteran trees, low fertility grassland, rough grassland and tall herbs, scrub, dead wood, mosaic habitats, buildings and walls	Bats, foxes, spotted flycatcher, song thrush, bullfinch, bees, butterflies, moths, hedgehogs, small mammals, frogs, toads, newts, reptiles.	Holywell Cemetery St Clements Churchyard St Andrews Churchyard, Headington St Frideswide Churchyard St Mary and St. Nicholas Church, Littlemore Wolvercote Cemetery
Allotments	Ephemeral and ruderal habitats, scrub, dead wood, mosaic habitats, trees, flowering plants, bare ground	Bats, foxes, spotted flycatcher, song thrush, bullfinch, bees, butterflies, moths, other invertebrates, hedgehogs, small mammals, frogs, toads, newts, reptiles.	Botley Road Allotments Boundary Brook Road Allotments Rose Hill Allotments
Private gardens	Trees including veteran trees, short grassland, rough grassland and tall herbs, scrub and garden hedgerows, dead wood, compost heaps, mosaic habitats, buildings,	Foxes, spotted flycatcher, song thrush, bullfinch, bees, butterflies, moths, hedgehogs, small mammals, reptiles.	Widespread

	flowering plants and ponds		
Parks and recreation grounds	Trees including veteran trees, short grassland, rough grassland and tall herbs, scrub and hedgerows, dead wood, mosaic habitats, flowering plants and ponds	Bats, foxes, song thrush, bullfinch, bees, butterflies, moths, other invertebrates, hedgehogs, small mammals, frogs, toads, newts, reptiles.	University Parks South Park Florence Park Rose Hill Recreation ground Bury Knowle Park Blackbird Leys Park
Private open space, e.g. school and college grounds, businesses, hospitals etc.	As above	As above	John Radcliffe Hospital Oxford Brookes University Churchill Hospital
Urban commons/wasteland	Scrub, rough grassland and tall herbs, ephemeral/arable flora, bare ground, mosaic habitats.	Bee orchid, foxes, song thrush, bullfinch, bees, butterflies, moths, other invertebrates, small mammals, reptiles.	Undeveloped areas of: Osney Mead Industrial Estate Oxford Business Park Oxford Science Park
Linear waysides, e.g. road verges, hedgerows, railways and footpaths	Scrub, trees, rough grassland and tall herbs, bare ground, ephemeral/arable flora, mosaic habitats	Bats, foxes, spotted flycatcher, song thrush, bullfinch, bees, butterflies, moths, hedgehogs, small mammals, reptiles.	Oxford mainline and industrial railways Ring Road verges
Waterways, e.g. rivers, streams, ditches and canals	Marginal emergent and floating vegetation, open water, flowing water, and bankside trees	Bats, foxes, water vole, small mammals, aquatic invertebrates, frogs, toads, newts, reptiles.	Boundary Brook Peasmoor Brook Oxford Canal Northfield Brook

Other Habitats

2.30. Oxford supports a number of other Oxfordshire BAP Priority Habitats, although to a lesser extent than those described more fully above. These habitats include:

- **Heathland**, now a very rare habitat in Oxfordshire, a small remnant of ling dominated heathland and acid grassland occurs on Shotover Hill.
- **Geological sites**, a number of nationally important sites of geological interest occur in quarries within the city, especially around Headington.
- **Industrial habitats**, particularly former industrial sites such as the former city gas works, now Grandpont Natural Park.
- **Ancient hedgerows** are uncommon within the city boundary, although with the notable exception of boundaries to meadows and farmland along the River Thames and Cherwell.
- **Ponds**, are common within the city, both in private gardens, parks and managed nature reserves, including College Pond SSSI, in Wolvercote.
- **Reedbeds** - small areas of reedbed occur within the river floodplains of the Thames and Cherwell, usually in mosaics with other wet grassland habitats.

- **Farmland**, enclosed pastures are common on the floodplains of the Thames and Cherwell valleys, with mixed and arable farming on farmed river terraces and the clay vales surrounding the settled core of the city.
- **Chalk and limestone grassland**, small areas of calcareous grassland occur within the city, both within designated sites and in mosaics with other types of grassland.
- **Fens and flushes** are very rare within the study area, with the most notable example being Lye Valley SSSI. Other small areas are found in mosaic with other wetland habitats in the Thames and Cherwell valleys.

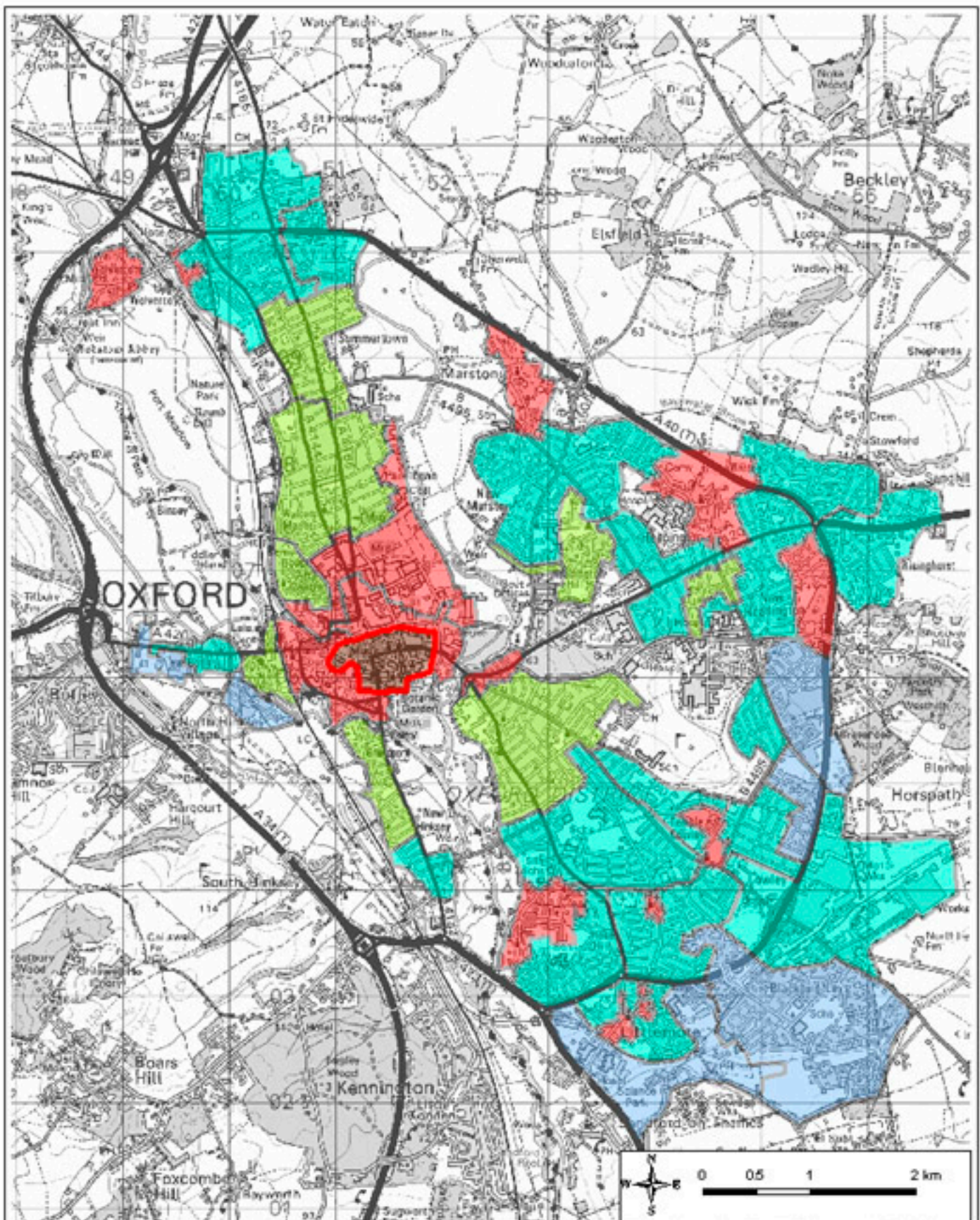
HUMAN INFLUENCES: HISTORIC EVOLUTION OF THE CITY

Introduction

- 2.31. The physical structure of the landscape has had a strong influence on patterns of human occupation and activity around Oxford. The influence of human activity, in turn, makes a major contribution to the character of the landscape or townscape. The following chapter provides a summary of the evolution of Oxford, with particular reference to the growth of the urban form in relation to the surrounding historic settlement pattern and how this has shaped the character of the city today. The development of the city since the medieval period is illustrated in *figure 1.2.5*.

Pre-Historic Oxford

- 2.32. The historic town is sited on a gravel promontory surrounded by alluvial plains, and like many sites in the upper Thames valley the ready availability of meadows and good arable land has proved conducive to settlement from earliest times. Factual evidence of settlement at Oxford comes from archaeological finds of Neolithic arrowheads and other remains in the area. Although no evidence of a settlement exists, archaeological studies on Port Meadow and at nearby Farmoor reservoir have demonstrated the exploitation of the landscape from the Neolithic period onwards.
- 2.33. Evidence of Bronze Age (2000-700BCE) barrows indicate a more permanent settlement during that period. Bronze Age people buried their dead at Port Meadow and during the Iron Age people lived on the meadow during the summer and grazed their livestock on the rich pasture. These burials and settlements are well preserved and clearly visible from the air or, in some cases, on the ground as shallow circular ditches and banks. It is perhaps not surprising that such a well-drained and easily defended site as Shotover Hill was settled by early man. The succession of prehistoric cultures was responsible for radical changes in the landscape. Gradual woodland clearance resulted in the emergence of a mixed pastoral and tilled landscape. Recent recovery of pollen data from Sidlings copse has allowed a reconstruction of the early vegetation history of the environs of the city.



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Oxford City Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1.2.5:
Evolution of the City

Key

- 1960 - present day
- 1920 - 1960
- 1800 - 1920
- Medieval - 1800
- Medieval walled town
- Medieval town walls

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Roman Oxford

- 2.34. Unlike towns such as London, Colchester and Chester, Oxford seems to have been largely ignored by the Roman conquerors and Oxford was not a centre of any importance by the time the Romans invaded Britain. Oxford in Roman times was a rural settlement with an industrial pottery manufactory in East Oxford. The Romans exploited the iron-free clays of Shotover and felled many trees for fuel and building. One Roman kiln site has been found on Shotover Hill and the remains of a Roman Road, known as Blackberry Lane, runs from Shotover south through the Cowley Motor Works and Blackbird Leys.

Saxon Oxford

- 2.35. It is in the Saxon period that Oxford began to assume an importance missing from its Roman past. It became a Saxon ecclesiastical centre with the building of a Saxon abbey, St. Frideswide, where Christ Church now stands. St. Frideswide is now the patron saint of the city of Oxford. St. Frideswide's abbey burnt to the ground in 1002 and the abbey was later rebuilt as an Augustinian priory. The cemetery of the priory has now been excavated in Christ Church Meadow.
- 2.36. Although Oxford had a mid-Saxon phase with its minster church of St Frideswide, it was the foundation of the late Saxon planned town (*burh*) for the defence of Wessex in around 900 AD that laid the foundation of urban growth with Oxford as the County town of the new shire. Oxford was positioned on a major trade route between the powerful Saxon kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex. The River Thames formed the boundary between Mercia and Wessex, and the boundary itself is of some interest, following the outermost streams on the west of the city (i.e. Seacourt Stream) and the innermost stream on the south of the city (i.e. Shire Lake).
- 2.37. Alfred the Great (King of Wessex) was responsible for the Saxon system of "burhs" and Oxford became a burh in 911, under royal protection, and its growth and importance accelerated. Oxford was, at that time, the metropolis of Mercia. In return for helping to defend the kingdom against the Danes, the Freemen of Oxford were given the 120ha of pasture next to the Thames by King Alfred. The Freemen's collective right to graze their animals free of charge was recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 and has been exercised ever since on the area now known as Port Meadow.
- 2.38. Royal Forests were established in Saxon times and forest laws are known to have existed in the time of King Canute (995AD - 1035AD)⁴. Woodstock Park was the earliest hunting ground of the Saxon Kings and formed part of the extensive belt of wood, coppice, underwood and spinney which stretched through the countryside, including the Royal Forest of Shotover. The growing importance of Oxford is indicated by the fact that Canute chose the city as the scene of his coronation in 1018.

⁴ David Steel (1984) *Shotover: The Natural History of a Royal Forest*, Pisces Publications

Medieval Oxford

- 2.39. In 1071 the Norman lord Robert D'Oily built Oxford Castle on the west side of the town, destroying many houses. The town walls were altered to integrate the castle in their circuit, but heavy fortifications were also maintained between castle and town. The Bailey was surrounded by a moat, fed from a branch of the Thames which also powered the castle mills, which later played an important part in the life of the town. Although the castle was largely destroyed in the seventeenth century there are impressive survivals, including the great motte and the defensive structure of St George's tower that formed part of a collegiate church. Robert d'Oilly is also credited with improving the southern route out of Oxford by building the great causeway called Grandpont, a long series of stone arches, of which many survive under the modern Abingdon Road.
- 2.40. A crucial development of the early Middle Ages was the establishment in Oxford of two important Augustinian monasteries, the refounded St Frideswide's in 1122 and Osney Abbey, built on an island west of the town in 1129. These medieval religious institutions were prosperous and influenced the development of the university in the late 11th or early 12th century. There is no clear date of foundation, but by 1200 there was evidently an organized *studium generale* or university. Oxford quickly acquired a reputation as a centre of legal studies and by 1221 the university was headed by a chancellor.
- 2.41. The presence of the university attracted friars to Oxford, the Dominicans settling there in 1221, the Franciscans in 1224, the Carmelites in 1256, the Augustinians in 1267 and others later. About 1280, Cistercian monks founded Rewley Abbey as a *studium* for scholars of their order, and in 1284 the Benedictines established the first of their three colleges (Gloucester)⁵.
- 2.42. By the 13th century Oxford was firmly established as an academic centre, drawing students from all across Europe. Oxford was hit hard by the Black Death (1348-1350). The colleges kept country houses where scholars could flee during periods of plague, but the residents of the city had no such recourse. The population of the city dropped heavily, and the colleges took full advantage by buying up vacant property and greatly expanding their holdings within Oxford. The town's tradesmen became increasingly dependent on the university.
- 2.43. The morphology of medieval Oxford was a walled town with suburbs outside the four main gates. The north suburb had open arable fields in St Giles, with meadows in the Cherwell valley and extensive pastures on and around Port Meadow (itself mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) as the burgesses common pasture). On the north-east was Holywell manor, a self contained village with fields and pastures, and on the north-west Wolvercote, operated as an extension of the North Oxford fields, and with a common open to Port Meadow. West Oxford included the village of Binsey, but largely consisted of meadows and pastures following the Thames floodplain round to the south of the town. The liberty of Oxford (the limits of the burgesses' special jurisdiction) was a fixed boundary marked by annual perambulations, which included all the free waters of the burgesses' fishery, but took

⁵ www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/museums/story

a irregular line through the fields of North Oxford. The difference between the city's jurisdiction (which ceased at Magdalen Bridge) and the University's (which extended to Shotover) was a source of particular discomfort in the petty squabbles between Town and Gown in the early modern period. *Figure 1.2.6* shows the pattern of medieval land uses around the medieval walled town.

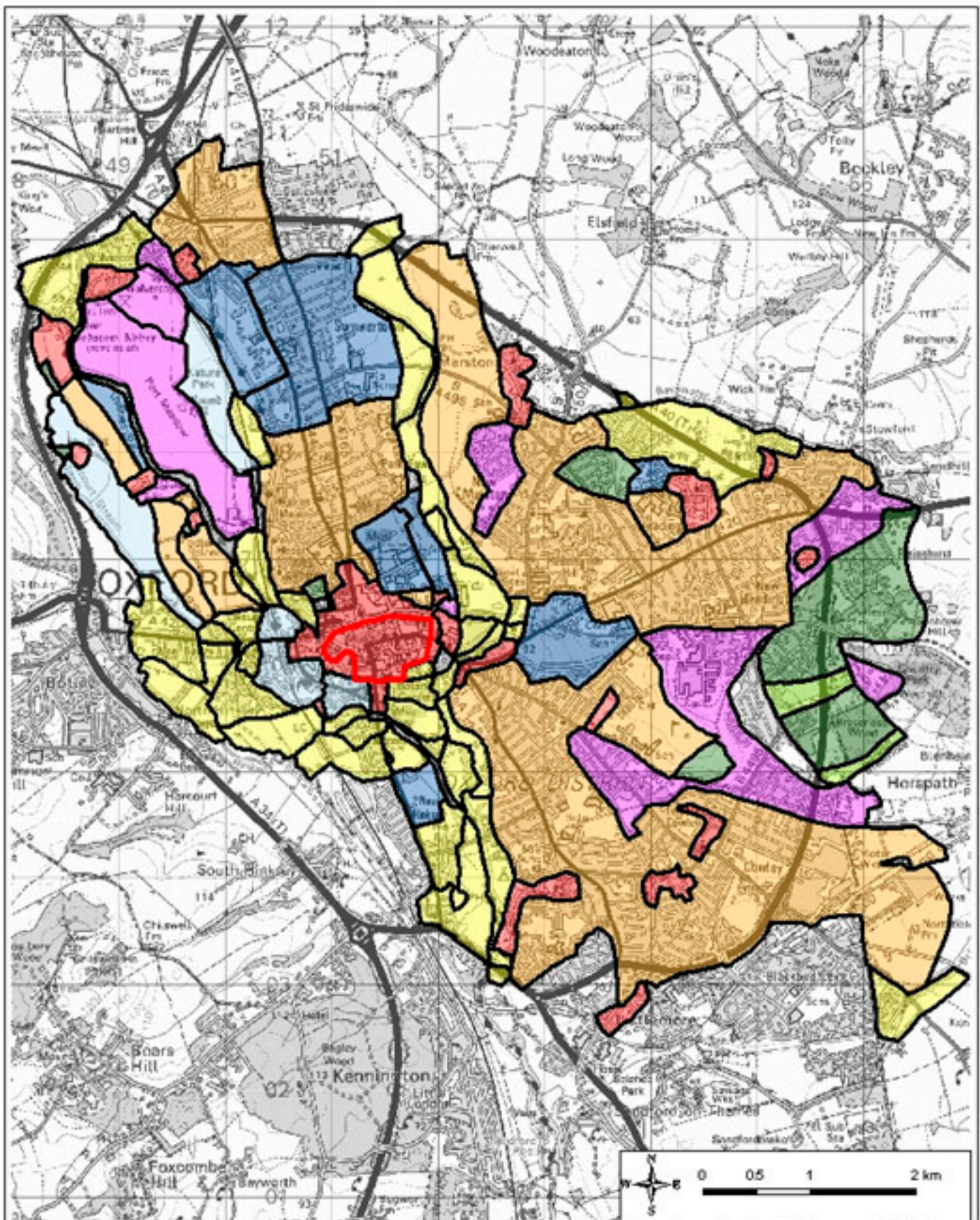
Oxford in the Middle Ages

- 2.44. William of Wykeham acquired land in the south-east of the town to build New College in 1379. Merton College acquired much of the land between Merton Street and the town wall and, in the centre of town, Queen's College, University, Oriel, All Souls, Lincoln and Exeter were built on former house sites in the later Middle Ages. The scale of college building changed as large stone buildings and high-walled enclosures became predominant. Following the example of New College, most later colleges arranged their chief buildings around spacious quadrangles. The organisation of the university began to change as colleges took over the teaching of undergraduates and by 1552 there were thirteen colleges in Oxford.
- 2.45. Oxford acquired city status in 1542 with the creation of a cathedral at Christ Church. By the 1630s the population of Oxford had trebled to around 10,000⁶. Intensive building activity resulted in the creation of Jesus College in the late 16th century and, although only two colleges, Wadham (1610) and Pembroke (1624), were founded in the seventeenth century, it was one of the greatest periods of university building.
- 2.46. In the 17th century nearly all the established colleges were greatly extended by the addition of attic storeys or the construction of large new quadrangles. At this stage University buildings began to dominate the central area with the Bodleian Library, Sheldonian Theatre (1664-9), Old Ashmolean Museum (1678-83) and the Botanic Garden (mostly dating from the 1630s). The loss of house sites to the expanding university and colleges, and the need to provide for a rapidly growing population was met by infilling, subdivision, large-scale rebuilding and the development of new sites. The central streets became lined with three- and four-storey houses, and the long plots behind street frontages were built up. Vacant areas of 'waste' belonging to the city on both sides of the city wall and ditch were developed, particularly the Holywell, Broad Street, Ship Street, St Michael's Street and George Street areas, and housing expanded into Gloucester Green.

The Civil War

- 2.47. From 1642 to 1646 Oxford was occupied by Royalist forces who built fortifications around the city. Parliamentary forces built a corresponding structure to enforce their siege of the city and the foundations of part of this can still be seen as a shallow right angled bank on the lowest part of Port Meadow. However, Oxford suffered for its support of Charles when the war was over. In 1650 Oliver Cromwell was made Chancellor of the University, and many heads of colleges were replaced with Cromwell supporters. In 1651 the military authorities ordered that the city's defences, including the castle, should be destroyed and the castle was reduced to little more than the mound, a ruined court house, and St George's tower.

⁶ www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/museums/story



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Oxford City Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1.2.6:
Medieval land use

Source: Oxford Archaeology
Drawing Number: 205702_012_fig1.2.4_historic_land_use

Key

- Common
- Historic Settlement Core
- Meadow
- Open field - arable
- Other
- Pasture (Arable and Pature)

- Pasture
- Wood Pasture
- Woodland
- Medieval town walls

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The 18th Century

- 2.48. The city of Oxford did not grow fast in the 18th century. The built-up area did not extend far beyond the city walls for many centuries, except for ribbon development towards the north. However, some of Oxford's great architectural monuments date from the 18th century and the city continued to be embellished with fine buildings such as the Clarendon Building (completed 1715), the Radcliffe Camera (1748) and the Radcliffe Observatory (1794) and Queen's College was rebuilt.
- 2.49. In 1769 New Road was built through the former castle Bailey, Folly Bridge was rebuilt and St Clement's church (which stood at what is now The Plain) demolished. Soon after the Paving Commission was set up to improve the townscape of Oxford. This resulted in the rebuilding of Magdalen Bridge and the removal of the north and east gates, and of Carfax conduit, allowing traffic easier access to the city centre and the city was newly paved, lighted and drained. The city remained undisturbed by the Industrial Revolution, even after the opening of the Oxford Canal in 1790.

The 19th Century

- 2.50. The survival of open fields until the 19th century discouraged early expansion outside the existing limits of settlement (with consequent inward expansion of housing), but following enclosure bricks and mortar gradually replaced the fields. The earliest housing in the 19th century was Beaumont Street, laid out from the 1820s. The 19th century saw considerable development northwards during the Victorian era. St John's College, who owned much land in north Oxford, controlled development and led to the creation of the exclusive estates at Park Town and Norham Manor from the 1850s. The suburb of North Oxford became home to the successful tradesman and professional, of the university professor and college head, and, after marriage was permitted in 1877, the don. At about the same time was mass provision of worker's housing in Jericho and St Ebbe's, and the builder-led infilling of East Oxford following enclosure.
- 2.51. The university society was replaced by a more modern institution during the 19th century and a sustained period of college building began. Most colleges undertook some building work and one or two, such as Balliol and Exeter, were rebuilt almost completely. New colleges were founded: Keble in 1868, Mansfield in 1886 and Manchester in 1889 and were built in the fashionable Neo-Gothic architectural style. The university built the Ashmolean Museum (opened 1845), the University Museum (1860) and the Examination Schools in High Street (1882). The teaching of science, in particular, was promoted resulting in the emergence of the Science Area. In 1878 and the first two women's colleges, Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville, opened in 1879. St Hugh's (1886) and St Hilda's (1893) followed.
- 2.52. The arrival of major industry was averted by opposition to the location of railway works (and thus diverted to Swindon) in the 19th century, but the growth of motor manufacturing in the 20th century could not be resisted, and led to the expansion of East Oxford and a consequent realignment of the city's landscape and economy.

The 20th Century

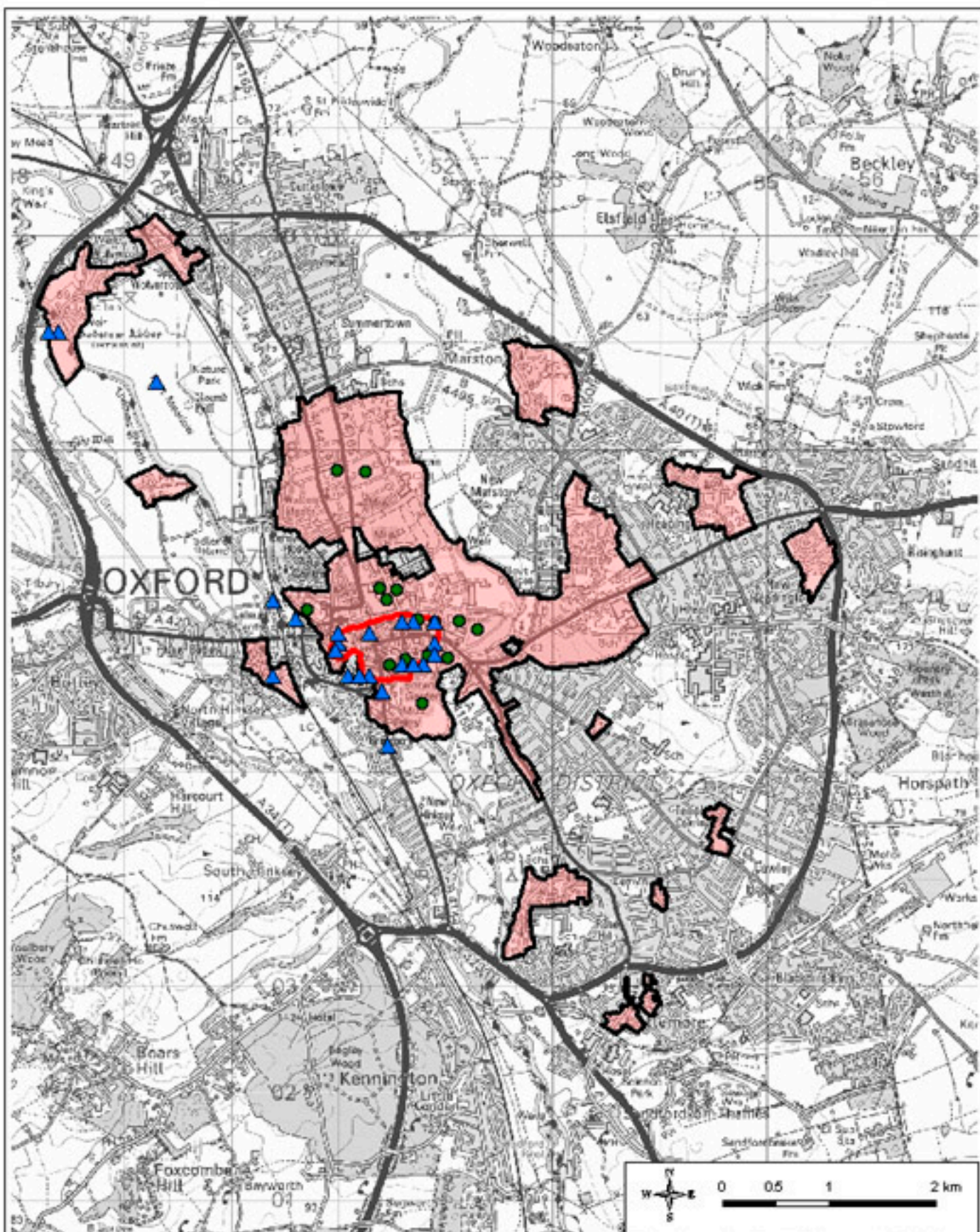
- 2.53. The move of the centre of gravity of employment in the 20th century across Magdalen Bridge from University to Industry also had an effect on the distribution of new housing, which has contributed to the mosaic effect of the map of settlement growth. Between the wars saw a 43% increase in population⁷, mainly due to the motor industry when Morris Garages began to assemble parts at Cowley. This population growth had significant consequences for the landscape - the city had grown from a small settlement at the tip of a gravel terrace to a large industrial settlement, spreading across to the east banks of the Cherwell to form the present curious shape of Oxford.
- 2.54. Pressure for improved transport infrastructure led to the building of Oxford's first section of ring-road, the northern bypass, from Headington roundabout to the Banbury Road roundabout in the mid-1930s. This resulted in severance of the close relationship between Barton village and Old Headington. Post war development continued to fill many of the remaining open spaces between existing built development and new residential and industrial estates continue to spring up on the outskirts of the city. For example in 1946 1600 council houses were built at Barton⁸.
- 2.55. A large part of St Ebbe's was cleared in the 1960s for roads and car parks, the population being rehoused on a huge new estate south of the city at Blackbird Leys. An inner relief road across Christ Church Meadow, planned to follow the clearances, was eventually abandoned and St Ebbe's has since been largely rebuilt. Conservation of Oxford's historic centre was for long limited to college and university buildings.
- 2.56. The survival of open spaces (except in the valleys where encouraged by flooding) is in part due to the actions of landowners. The Freeman of the City have jealously protected Port Meadow, colleges like Christ Church, Magdalen, and Worcester have preserved the landscape setting of their precincts, the University by its purchase of the Parks in Holywell ensured land for expansion and the preservation of open space, while the Morrell's creation of parkland around Headington Hill Hall was preserved by a conscious act of benefaction. Farming and horticulture have always continued where possible (and as a necessary part of the urban fringe), and there were numerous nursery gardens in the gaps between housing, as there are now allotments. Recreational use has been a major factor in maintaining open land, with the requirements for college sports grounds, and the provision of municipal parks. The formation of the Oxford Preservation Trust at a time when open space around Oxford was most under threat in the decades before planning control was a timely and practical event that was able to discourage or prevent (by land purchase) undesirable incursions into the green belt around the city.
- 2.57. The decline of the motor industry in the later twentieth century presented some problems for Oxford, but Oxford has become Britain's chief publishing centre outside London and the university continues to be a major influence on the city's economic life. Oxford also houses one of the largest medical research complexes in Europe and in addition attracts a large visiting tourist population every year.

⁷ E W Gilbert (1947) *The Industrialization of Oxford*

⁸ www.headington.org.uk

Conclusion

- 2.58. Oxford straddles two rivers - the Thames (known as the Isis in Oxford) flows along the west side of the city and the Cherwell flows down the east side through meadows with pleasant footpaths. The historic core of the city was developed on the river terrace at the confluence of the rivers. The tranquil meadows and pastures of the Thames and Cherwell floodplains create a contrast to the busy urban core and form a setting to the built environment. These floodplains have created barriers to development and movement, resulting in an unusual 'mosaic' city shape as development extended along the river terraces before jumping across the floodplains to outlying areas. In so doing, they have also conserve a very rural setting to the historic centre – an image much celebrated in art and literature and part of the iconography of Oxford. *Figure 1.2.7* illustrates valued historic features across the city.
- 2.59. The physical and human influences described above shape the landscape and define the character of that landscape. The presence or absence of different physical and cultural features may assist in defining areas of common landscape character.



Oxford City Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1.2.7:
Historic Designations

Source: Oxford City Council
and English Nature

Drawing Number: 205702_022_fig1.2.7_historic_land_use

Key

- Conservation Areas
- Medieval town walls
- Historic park or garden
- Scheduled Monuments

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3. CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

*Yet, O ye spires of Oxford! Domes and Towers!
Gardens and groves! Your presence overpowers
The soberness of reason....* [William Wordsworth, The River Duddon]

- 3.1. The Oxford landscape is more than its component elements of buildings, open spaces and setting. It has a cultural resonance expressed in art and literature and perpetuated in tourism promotion material. These create a symbolic 'idea' of Oxford that has national and international recognition and significance. Oxford can be described as an Iconic Landscape – it has a strong symbolic resonance in people's minds, which represents far more than its physical and tangible fabric.
- 3.2. A full analysis of these cultural perceptions of Oxford is worthy of a study in its own right and is not attempted in this report. This section aims to summarise some of the main influences on our perceptions of the city through the work of artists, philosophers and writers. *Figure 1.3.1* illustrates some of the main images of Oxford.

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE CITY

- 3.3. One of the most enduring images of Oxford is the view of the distinctive skyline of spires and domes, from the ridge of hills surrounding the city. The hills have long been a destination for excursions by local people and many footpaths lead out from the city to local viewpoints. The view to the 'dreaming spires' was immortalised by Matthew Arnold, the poet and Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1822-88), in his poem *Thyrsis*.

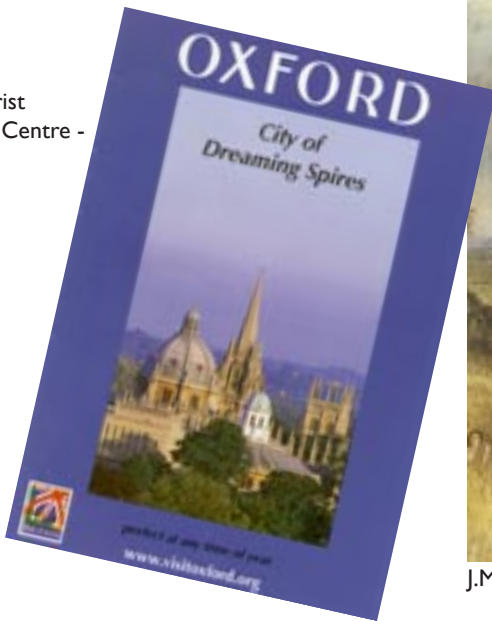
*And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening,
Lovely at all times she lies, lovely tonight!* [Matthew Arnold, Thyrsis]

- 3.4. In the poem *The Scholar Gypsy*, Arnold invented the tale of a undergraduate who was forced to live a nomadic life, wandering the hills around the city and describes in detail the rural landscape from where "the eye travels down to Oxford". The poem mentions many local places around Oxford including Wychwood, Godstow Bridge, Bagley Wood, Hinksey's 'wintery ridge' and the Cumber Hills, from where one could look down to the 'light in Christ Church Hall'.
- 3.5. During the early twentieth century Boars Hill, part of the setting for *The Scholar Gypsy*, attracted a large community of poets who took up residence on the hill. They included John Masefield, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden and Robert Bridges. Boars Hill was also a destination for literary expeditions seeking out the locations described in Arnold's poem. Today the view from Boars Hill is protected as one of several important View Cones in the Local Plan.
- 3.6. There are many visual representations of the dramatic vista of the city rising from its rural surroundings. Samuel Buck's grand prospects of *Oxford from the South West* of 1724 and *Oxford from the South East* (1731) are fine examples, showing both the floodplain setting, the built skyline and the rural backdrop of hills.



William Turner of Oxford: The City of Oxford, as viewed from South Hinksey Village (19th Century).

Oxford Tourist Information Centre - brochure



J.M.W. Turner: Oxford from North Hinksey, c. 1839



J.M.W. Turner: A view of Oxford from the South side of Heddington Hill, 1803-4



Oxford from the East, photo © Chris Donaghue. The Oxford Photo Library

Figure 1.3.1
Iconic Images of Oxford

- 3.7. The most memorable images of Oxford are by the painter J.M.W. Turner, who made a very distinctive contribution to the iconography of the city. During his lifetime, Turner made repeated visits to Oxford and there is rich legacy of sketches and paintings of the views, buildings and picturesque scenes. Some of the most famous of his 'views' of Oxford are those drawn from high points surrounding the city and in this sense they are the visual equivalent of Matthew Arnold's poetry illustrating the city rising dramatically from its rural surroundings. Among J.M.W. Turner's works these include:

A View of Oxford from the South Side of Headington Hill, 1803-4

A View from the Abingdon Road, 1811-12

Oxford from North Hinksey, c. 1839

- 3.8. The paintings show the rural surroundings, meandering rivers and the distinctive silhouette and skyline of the city.
- 3.9. Another theme in Turners paintings are views of the waterways, particularly the Thames, and the picturesque setting it creates for the buildings, as illustrated, for example in *Christ Church from the Isis, c. 1790* and *South View of Christ Church from the Meadows 1799*. These paintings present both the urban and rural scene in a unified view.
- 3.10. Although, Turner's images are among the most iconographic, there are numerous other artists associated with the city. Many tourists visited the city and the journey up the Thames to Oxford, became one of the most popular picturesque tours, recorded in sketches and watercolours. Native artist who have contributed to the iconography of the city include Malchair who recorded the destruction of the medieval city in the late eighteenth century with sketches portraying both the grand public buildings and hidden picturesque corners. William Turner of Oxford (1789-1862), a local artist also produced some memorable images of the city and its environs, including *Oxford from above Hinksey, 1810*.
- 3.11. The secret rural landscape within Oxford has also been the subject of considerable attention in art and literature, as exemplified by Turner's paintings of Christ Church. The contrast between the adjacent magnificent urban scene and the peaceful rural setting is a significant theme. In the 17th century the ideas of the philosopher, Addison, were inspired by the rural scene and water meadows around Magdalen College. The Water Walks were frequently compared to the classic haunts of the muses and were described by Addison as giving the feeling of walking in deep countryside. Today, this area remains a pleasant rural, grazed scene with walks named after Addison. It is one of the many remarkable contrasts and juxtapositions of rural and urban in the heart of the city.
- 3.12. Changes in the surrounding rural scene are lamented in Gerald Manley Hopkins' poem describing the felling of the Binsey Poplars in 1879. The walk to Binsey, across Port Meadow provided rural escape from the city and remains a popular route for walkers today.

LITERATURE

- 3.13. The city has provided the setting for many hundreds of novels. Among the best known are *Tom Brown at Oxford* by Thomas Hughes, 1861, the sequel to *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy, 1895, in which the University is renamed Christminster - the story is set largely in Jericho, with many recognisable Oxford landmarks and *Zuleika Dobson*, by Max Beerbohn, 1911 which takes the University as its setting. The magical fantasyland of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Hogwarts Hall in the Harry Potter films also take their inspiration from Oxford. The Great Hall at Christ Church was replicated in the film studios to create Hogwarts Hall and the cloisters in Christ Church, first built 1000 years ago, are the setting for Hogwarts Trophy Room. Many of Iris Murdoch's novels, such as *An Academic Man*, have a North Oxford setting and the distinctive garden landscape of this area is very aptly described in Betjeman's *May Day Song for North Oxford*:

*Belbroughton Road is bonny and pinkly burst the spray
Of prunus and forsythia across the public way.*

- 3.14. It is detective/mystery fiction, which is perhaps, being the most common genre making use of the complex cityscape with its narrow alleys, hidden corners and strong sense of history. These include Dorothy Sayer's *Gaudy Night* published in 1935, Antonia Fraser's *Oxford Blood*, 1985 and most recently popularised by television through the *Inspector Morse* series by Colin Dexter. Oxford landmarks are recognisable, worldwide, from their portrayal in the Morse films and a thriving tourist market has developed around them.

PROMOTION OF OXFORD

- 3.15. The promotion of Oxford as a tourist destination relies heavily on these iconic themes and reinforces preconceived ideas of the city. Promotional images frequently include the skyline of spires and domes, historic buildings, academic/ceremonial life, the rivers and punts, English rural arcadia, waterside meadows and the rural surroundings. The skyline set against a wooded backdrop is one of the most frequent and memorable images.

CONCLUSION

- 3.16. This chapter provides a brief summary of the perceptions of the Oxford landscape in art and literature. Through this work, there are three themes that reoccur and relate, largely, to nineteenth century perceptions of the pre-industrial city. These are:
- the dramatic vistas to Oxford from the surrounding rural heights;
 - the waterways that thread through the city providing a picturesque, pastoral and peaceful setting for the buildings; and
 - the historic buildings and architectural diversity.

3.17. Interestingly, at public consultation workshops held as part of this study in May 2001 it was these same three attributes that were repeatedly described as the most valued aspects of Oxford's landscape.

4. THE CHARACTER OF OXFORD TODAY AND MANAGING CHANGE

THE CHARACTER OF OXFORD TODAY

- 4.1. Oxford is renowned as one of England's two great university cities. The streets, houses, colleges, churches and chapels of Oxford represent different stages throughout the history of Oxford and the centre of the city has many buildings of architectural or historic interest. Today, the university is a collection of 36 colleges and 5 halls scattered around the city centre and the two universities account for over 25,000 of Oxford's 149,000 population. Many of the colleges have fine gardens and neat quadrangles, while some have quite extensive grounds. The historic university buildings are a major attraction for visitors to Oxford. The variety in form and architecture and the quality of craftsmanship are characteristic of central Oxford. It is these buildings that form the unique and distinctive skyline of Oxford, the 'dreaming spires' that are renowned across the world.
- 4.2. As one moves away from the historic core the suburbs of Oxford progressively become more recent in age. The Victorian suburbs, such as North Oxford, Jericho and East Oxford are the first signs of major expansion. Another period of expansion occurred between the wars. This was connected to industrial expansion and resulted in the coalescence of areas of the city which were previously distinct - the outlying villages such as Headington, Temple Cowley and Iffley were engulfed by the expanding city. Post war housing was built to re-house families from the slums of Jericho and St Ebbe's. This inter- and post-war growth can be traced by observing the increase in residential estates around this time.
- 4.3. Although the historic core of Oxford is internationally recognisable and typifies most people's image of Oxford, it is the diversity of townscapes and landscapes that, together, constitute the city as it is today. The variety in street and block pattern, interaction between the built environment and open space, streetscape detailing, ecological character and vitality or tranquillity, that distinguish one area from another. Each part of the city has a distinctive character as a result of differing combinations of geology, topography, vegetation, building age and land use.

MANAGING CHANGE

- 4.4. The Oxford landscape is dynamic and has evolved and changed over time in response to prevailing social and economic conditions. Historically, changes in agriculture and timber requirements, changes in the socio-economic structure of local communities and industrialisation have all had a significant impact. More recently expansion of residential areas, changing patterns of employment, demand for out of town shopping and business facilities, increased traffic levels and infrastructure development have all been dominant influences on local character. It is the cumulative effect of these past changes that has created the distinctive character of the city today and the landscape of Oxford will continue to evolve in the future.

- 4.5. This section of the report draws on observations from the field survey and on the information collated from the public consultation exercises and summarises some of the driving forces for change in and around Oxford.

Forces for change in and around Oxford

Built Development

- 4.6. Housing development represents a significant pressure for change in and around Oxford. The presence of the Oxford Green Belt has meant that the overall size of the city has not greatly increased in the last 30 years. This has resulted in the substantial growth of the smaller settlements outside Oxford and loss of a large number of urban open spaces within the city. There has been a significant increase in business and retail premises in purpose built parks on the outskirts of Oxford, notably the Oxford Science Park at Littlemore and the Oxford Business Park on part of the old Cowley Motor Works. Expansion of the academic institutions has resulted in demand for additional student accommodation and university buildings.
- 4.7. Key forces for change are:
- the need for new residential development;
 - provision of industrial and retail parks on the fringes of Oxford;
 - provision of recreational facilities in the floodplain landscapes of the Cherwell and Thames;
 - growth of academic institutions and hospitals.

Infrastructure

- 4.8. **Road development** has had a significant impact on the character of Oxford in the past, most notably the building of the Oxford ring road. The ring road cut off many outlying villages from their adjacent neighbours (for example, Barton and neighbouring Headington Village) and separated Oxford from its landscape setting. The upgrading of the A34 on the west side of Oxford, forming a major link from the coast to the Midlands, has had similar detrimental impact, not least the intrusion of traffic noise disturbing the peaceful, rural qualities of the Thames floodplain. Although it is not likely that any future infrastructure improvements would have such a dramatic effect on Oxford, increasing traffic pressure and road/junction improvements may still threaten some areas. Minor road works can also have a significant impact. The style of signing, surfacing, street furniture and engineering can all alter the character of an area. The addition of concrete kerbs and painting of white lines may completely alter the character of a rural village or historic village core. The increasing levels of traffic within the city are affecting the character of townscapes throughout Oxford. The implementation of the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) should lead to positive changes, although it has also resulted in the building of 'Park and Ride' car parks on the outskirts of Oxford.
- 4.9. **Overhead transmission lines** are especially prominent in the more open areas such as the floodplains, particularly in the Thames Floodplain south of the Botley

4.14. Climate change is a world-wide issue. The University has an Environmental Change Unit devoted to research into climate change. Increasing temperatures and decreases in summer rainfall are likely to affect the survival of particular species and summer water shortages may result in drying out of valuable wetland habitats. Air pollution is less of a problem today than it was in the past. However, the steady increase in traffic is having an impact on the air quality of the city. The council has four automatic air quality monitoring sites throughout the city.

4.15. Key forces for change are:

- poor quality surface run-off from areas of built development into adjacent areas;
- increasing temperatures associated with global warming that may affect local biodiversity;
- possible future summer water shortages;
- increases in traffic affecting air quality.

The Cumulative Effect of Small-Scale Incremental Change

4.16. Subtle changes in material, colour or texture can have a dramatic impact on overall character of a townscape. These sorts of changes may result from additional detailing, such as the 'gentrification' of residential properties, or deterioration of built materials. Whilst the fabric may undergo deterioration through time, there is often a parallel maturation of the landscape that can enhance the streetscape..

4.17. Key forces for change are:

- deterioration of original materials and details;
- home improvements such as replacement windows, doors and additions such as porches;
- replacement of streetscape/floorscape components such as paving and street furniture;
- road improvements including widening, straightening and the addition of road markings and signage;
- increases in the number of cars and competition for parking space;
- maturing trees and garden vegetation.

Agricultural Change

4.18. The dramatic changes currently being witnessed in agriculture are a topical issue. UK farming is currently in serious recession – the local impacts are well documented, for example in the recent Oxfordshire Farming Study (Oxfordshire County Council, 1999). The conservation of a rural, managed landscape within and surrounding Oxford is a key component of the unique character of the city. Where farming is in recession, there are particularly pressures on economically marginal land. In the

Road. The Oxford Preservation Society has successfully campaigned to have the power lines on the floodplain to the north of Botley Road placed underground – thus preserving the historic view from Wytham Hill. Elsewhere they can be very intrusive within the flat, open context of the floodplain landscape. **Single high communication masts** may be seen on the hills surrounding Oxford. At the moment these are not overly intrusive and may even form important landmark features. However development of further masts could lead to visual clutter along these strong skyline ridges.

4.10. Key forces for change are:

- road upgrades and junction improvements in and around Oxford;
- re-routing traffic in central Oxford affecting other parts of the city;
- increases in traffic;
- provision of new car parks, including park and ride car parks;
- the need for transmission lines and pylons;
- increasing demand for communication masts.

Increased Tourism and Recreation Demands

4.11. Oxford is a popular tourist destination with increasing number of visitors and foreign language students visiting every year. Recreational pressure is high in Oxford as a result of the number of visitors and the number of full time students. The landscape, ecological and historic resources of the river valleys are a key asset for tourism and recreation. One of the greatest challenges is how to resolve the potential conflict between tourist development and protection of resources.

4.12. Key forces for change are:

- increases in number of visitors to Oxford;
- demand for new recreational facilities, including boathouses and other buildings associated with rowing.
- the need for expansion of sporting facilities and playing fields;
- pressure for new visitor car parks and coach parks.

Adverse Changes in Water Quality, Air Pollution and Climate Change

4.13. Water quality is a significant issue in Oxford where the waterways are one of the most important features of the city. New building close to water courses inevitably results in some surface run-off into the watercourse. This is a particular issue in Headington where the heavily built-up area on the hill top is the source of poor quality run-off which feeds into the tributary valleys such as the important Lye Valley at Southfield Golf Course.

areas within and surrounding a city, there is a ready market for land and buildings - this may result in failure of farming in the hope of realising development potential, selling off of land and buildings as lifestyle or hobby units and conversion of farm buildings to residential or business uses. All of these changes can have a subtle impact on rural character and result in a more suburbanised setting. Farmers may also look to alternative land uses – the swathes of bright oilseed rape on the hills that surround Oxford – enjoyed by some and deplored by many, is just one example.

4.19. Key forces for change include:

- changes in farming practice on more marginal land;
- introduction of new crops;
- changing management of hedgerows and woodlands;
- introduction of new planting including new woodland;
- pressures for development of agricultural land and buildings.

CONCLUSION

4.20. Oxford, with its rich heritage and landscape features, is particularly sensitive. It is increasingly valued as a resource for tourism and recreation, as well as for its intrinsic historic, nature conservation and landscape interest. It is vital that changes are carefully managed to maintain the qualities that make this city special. Change, even within the most sensitive areas, is inevitable. Our objective must be to manage change so as to take opportunities to enhance as well as conserve.

4.21. Oxford City Council working with amenity groups have ensured successes in the quality of new architecture and in the restoration and conversion of old buildings. One example is the Golden Cross Yard and the former Ship Inn (a Laura Ashley shop) in Cornmarket Street.

4.22. To ensure future change enhances the distinctive character and setting of Oxford, change must be planned and managed. For example, infill is a valuable way of maximising use of urban land but it should respect the scale of the local townscape and use materials and building methods that are high in quality. Regard should be given to spatial characteristics and the quality of open space between buildings. The character based approach can help in accommodating necessary change without sacrificing local character and ensure that future change in and around Oxford leads to the enhancement of the character of the City and its setting.

4.23. The following character assessments in Part 2 of this report present a description of the different character areas found across the city and will be used to help inform Oxford's Planning Process

PART 2:

THE CHARACTER OF OXFORD AND ITS LANDSCAPE SETTING

This section comprises the main body of the report and includes:

- a landscape character assessment of Oxford's landscape setting at 1:25,000;
- a landscape/townscape character assessment of the area within the City boundary at 1:10,000.

I. INTRODUCTION TO LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

- I.1. Landscape character assessment is an established tool to assist in local planning and management. It is promoted by Government through PPG 7, which states:

'ensure development respects and enhances the distinctive character of the land and the built environment... accommodate change without sacrificing character' (2.15)

'ensure that particular features can be protected... local designations... must be based on formal and systematic assessment and soundly justified' (4.16)

- I.2. Urban characterisation is less studied and, in the absence of specific guidance for the assessment of urban areas, various approaches have been used. This study is therefore unusual in that it uses a combination of landscape and townscape character assessment to articulate:

- what makes the setting to Oxford distinctive and why; and
- what makes the landscapes and townscapes within the City of Oxford distinctive and why.

WHAT MAKES THE SETTING TO OXFORD DISTINCTIVE AND WHY

- I.3. In this study a broad landscape character assessment has been undertaken for Oxford City and its setting to identify what makes the setting to Oxford distinctive and why. The method used is that recommended in the Countryside Agency's Interim Guidance⁹. This was undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000 and identifies landscape types and landscape character areas. The purpose of this assessment was to identify:

- the characteristics that distinguish the different landscapes underlying and surrounding Oxford; and
- what contribution the landscapes make to the setting of Oxford; and
- opportunities to conserve or enhance the landscape setting.

WHAT MAKES THE LANDSCAPES WITHIN THE CITY OF OXFORD DISTINCTIVE AND WHY

- I.4. A more detailed integrated landscape/townscape assessment was then undertaken for the area that lies within Oxford City's administrative boundary to identify what makes the landscapes within the city distinctive and why. The approach to the assessment at 1:10,000 was based on the Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance, but

⁹ Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (1999) *Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance*

adapted to take into account the urban environment. Landscape/townscape types and landscape/townscape character areas were identified at 1:10,000.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE 1:25,000 AND 1:10,000 ASSESSMENTS

- I.5. The 1:25,000 assessment of landscape types reflects common combinations of geology, topography and land use. It therefore takes into account settled and open land, but does not take into account the styles of built development within the built up area of Oxford. In this way the landscape character areas can be seen to flow underneath the city where they may inform management of rural landscapes and open space within the city boundaries.
- I.6. The 1:10,000 assessment of landscape /townscape types reflects common combinations of land use, settlement form and style (age) of built development. It is interesting to note that many of the townscape types reflect the underlying landscape types. For example, most of the *Victorian Suburbs and Villages* (1:10,000 landscape/townscape type) correspond to the *Settled and Open River Terraces* (1:25,000 landscape type) while the *Open Hills (with institutions)* (1:10,000 landscape/townscape type) correspond to the *Settled Plateaux* (1:25,000 landscape type).
- I.7. Where there has been no additional influence on the landscape from land use, settlement form and style (age) of built development, the landscape types have remained the same. This is the case with the *Rivers and Pastoral Floodplains* (1:10,000 landscape/townscape type) and the *Rivers and Pastoral Floodplains* (1:25,000 landscape type).
- I.8. Part 2 of this report presents the results of these two assessments.

2. WHAT MAKES THE SETTING TO OXFORD DISTINCTIVE AND WHY

INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The Oxford landscape has evolved over thousands of years as the result of complex interactions between physical, historic, cultural and social factors as described in the previous section. Oxford and its setting is characterised by a diversity of landscapes and these variations and differences are represented in the characterisation of eight distinct **landscape types**. Each of these generic landscape types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes including geology, landform, land cover and historic environment. These landscape types vary from the pastoral floodplains of central Oxford to the prominent wooded ridges of the Midvale Ridge. **Landscape character areas** are geographically specific areas within a landscape type, each with their own individual character or 'sense of place'. The eight landscape types identified within the study area, have each been subdivided into discrete character areas.

DEFINING LANDSCAPE TYPES

- 2.2. The **Countryside Character Initiative** was the response, from Government, to the need for a new approach to landscape assessment which would look at the whole of England's countryside, rather than just specific designated areas. The aim was to provide a consistent national framework within which more detailed local landscape assessments would fit. The Countryside Agency has mapped the whole country into 159 separate, distinctive character areas. The City of Oxford and its setting is covered by two of these national character areas: 108 The Upper Thames Clay Vales and 109 The Midvale Ridge.
- 2.3. For this study draft landscape types were derived from detailed desk study, taking account of the Countryside Agency's Regional Character Areas (1999) and the Oxford County Framework of Land Description Units, or LDU's (2001). Secondary sources of information included the district assessments undertaken by the four districts adjoining the City of Oxford to ensure that the final assessment was compatible with existing work.
- 2.4. The draft landscape types were then refined through field surveys at a scale of 1:25,000. The table below (2.2.1) indicates how the landscape types fit into the Countryside Character Framework.

Table 2.2.1. Fit of Landscape Types into the Countryside Character Framework

Countryside Character Area	Landscape Type (1:25,000)
108: Upper Thames Clay Vales	1. Lowland Clay Vales
	2. Pastoral Floodplains
	3. Settled and Open River Terraces
	4. Wooded Clay Hills
109: Midvale Ridge	5. Settled Plateaux

	6. Enclosing Limestone Hills
	7. High Plains
	8. Clay Vales

2.5. The following table (2.2.2) presents a summary generic description of each landscape type, its distribution and its contribution it makes to Oxford's landscape setting.

Table 2.2.2. Landscape Type Summary Description

Landscape Type	Description	Contribution to Oxford's Landscape Setting
I08: Upper Thames Clay Vales		
1. Lowland Clay Vales	Smooth, gently undulating low-lying areas of Oxford Clay which form the footslopes and vales between areas of high ground. They are characterised by mixed agricultural fields divided by low, neatly trimmed hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Roads often have wide verges and are bordered by drains. Church towers in the stone/brick built villages and farmsteads are prominent landmarks in these flat, open landscapes.	The smooth, open vales create a dramatic contrast to the areas of high ground, enhancing the topographical setting of Oxford within a ring of hills.
2. Pastoral Floodplains	Flat, wide alluvial floodplains of the rivers which flow between the prominent hills. The tranquil pastoral scene of open meadows with cattle grazing amongst the silhouettes of mature floodplain trees contrasts with the busy urban scenes which often lie adjacent. Boathouses, locks and pubs along the river are landmarks. Historic buildings and ancient groves are features. Allotments and land uses such as playing fields and large scale business/retail parks are often found in the floodplain landscapes.	The flat, open pastoral floodplains are part of the classic image of Oxford - they have long been used for pasture and hay crops. In landscape terms, the simple open green meadows and expanses and open water provide a dramatic contrast, both in colour and form, to the built core of Oxford. Open character allows long views over them.
3. Settled and Open River Terraces	The river terraces (and their proximity to pastures) have been the prime locational factor for settlement in the Thames Valley from prehistoric times. These domed deposits of river terrace gravels overlying clay support the historic core of Oxford as well as much newer built development. The landscape type therefore tends to have a busy, urban character. Buildings are typically of limestone with red brick detailing. Roads are a feature of the landscape today. Those river terraces that remain undeveloped, typically support a rural, agricultural landscape of medium to large	Provides minor undulations in topography and separates the Thames and Cherwell floodplains. The river terraces support built development and form a contrast to the open floodplains.

	'enclosure' fields with arable and pasture. They provide a contrast with both the floodplain and adjacent urban areas.	
4. Wooded Clay Hills	Prominent, but low, rounded hills which stand out from the low lying clay vales and alluvial plains to the north of Oxford. The tranquil agricultural landscape is characterised by a mixture of arable and pasture fields divided by low, neatly clipped hedgerows and wooded ridges, creating a strong field pattern. Fields of oil seed rape stand out as bright patches in the landscape during summer. On top of the hills one has a clear sense of elevation above the surrounding clay vales. Settlement is sparse – stone farmhouses are scattered over the hillsides, and small stone villages are restricted to the footslopes.	Although relatively low, these hills are prominent as they rise out of the flat clay vales north of Oxford. Their wooded ridges and strong field patterns provide an important backdrop to the north of the city where few other landform features are present. Conversely there are views from these hills to the city.
I09: Midvale Ridge		
5. Settled Plateaux	The Settled Plateaux are lower Corallian platforms formed of sand and calcareous sandstone, incised by narrow valleys, with a steep scarp at their western edge. Reefs of Corraline limestone or 'Coral Rag' overlie the sandstone along the eastern boundary, forming the transition to the higher <i>Enclosing Limestone Hills</i> . The Coral Rag, which is quarried from these areas, is typical of the buildings in this landscape type and sandy soils result in vegetation of gorse and pine. The landscape is unique among the upland area for its high density of settlement.	Hills provide a strong topographic setting and wooded skyline is important in views from Oxford. Famous views of Oxford, as drawn by artists e.g. Turner. Conversely there are views from these hills to the city.
6. Enclosing Limestone Hills	Prominent hills with steep scarp slopes and table topped landform, surrounding Oxford. The underlying geology is a mixture of Coral Rag,(Upper Corralian formation), grey mudstones with limestone nodules (Kimmeridge Clay), and sands and limestones of the Portland Formation. They are characterised by fields of mixed farmland divided by hedgerows - the strong field patterns are a feature of this landscape type. The hills typically support large areas of deciduous woodland. Nucleated villages tend to be situated either at the foot or at the top of the scarp slope and are characterised by the use of stone as the main building	These hills provide a strong topographic setting and rural wooded backdrop to Oxford. Conversely there are views from these hills to the city.

	material. Estates are associated with stone walls and designed parkland is common. Church towers within the scarp top villages, for example at Elsfield, are prominent landmarks in the landscape. Communication masts are also prominent on the hills.	
7. High Plains	This landscape type is distinctive in its flat-topped landform and sandy soil, which caps the highest hills as at Boar's Hill and Shotover Hill. The result is isolated areas with red soils and a heathy character, supporting distinctive vegetation such as pines which stand out as distinctive skyline features. These areas tend to be fairly well settled due to the relatively flat landform on top of these hills. Housing, of all ages, is positioned to take advantage of the views. Although these hills are relatively well settled, they retain a peaceful character, remote from the city. Ornamental garden vegetation is the only clue as to the human influence when seen from a distance.	The enclosing effect of these hills is very important to the setting of Oxford. Clumps of Scots Pine growing on sandy soils are particularly important features on the ridgelines. Conversely there are views from these hills to the city.
8. Clay Vales	Smoothly undulating clay vale of large scale arable fields divided by neatly trimmed hedgerows with hedgerow trees. These vales are at a higher altitude than the lowland clay vales. Tree cover is otherwise extremely low. This is a tranquil working rural agricultural landscape with sparsely scattered red brick farmsteads and very little public access. Hedgerow trees stand out as features in this flat, open landscape.	This open agricultural belt emphasises the topography and enclosing effect of the hills beyond the vale.

DEFINING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- 2.6. **Landscape character areas** are geographically specific areas of a landscape type, which have their own individual character or 'sense of place'. They are particularly useful in planning and management terms allowing appropriate policies or actions to be applied at a local level. Within the City of Oxford and its setting there are some 23 discrete landscape character areas. These are shown on the map in *figure 2.2.1* and are described in table 2.2.3 below.

Oxford City Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 2.2.1:
Landscape Character Areas

Key

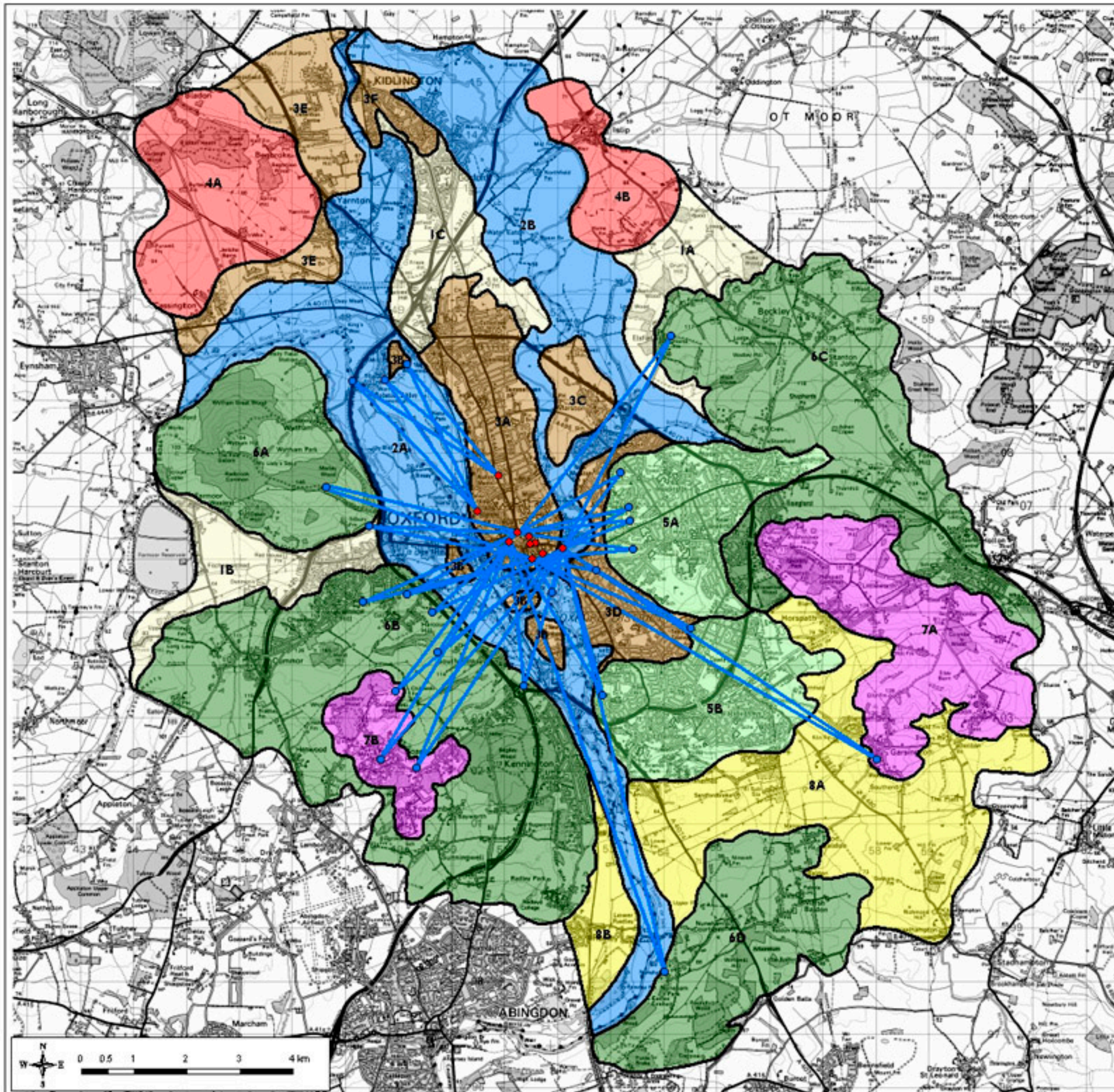
- Viewpoint
- View cone
- Spire location

Landscape Character Areas

- 1. Lowland Clay Vales
 - IA Elsfield Fringes
 - IB Botley Clay Vale
 - IC Gosford Gap
- 2. Rivers and Pastoral Floodplains
 - 2A Thames (Isis)
 - 2B Cherwell
- 3. Settled and Open River Terraces
 - 3A North Oxford River Terrace
 - 3B River Terrace Outliers
 - 3C Marston River Terrace
 - 3D East Oxford River Terrace
 - 3E Oxford Airport
 - 3F Kidlington River Terrace
- 4. Wooded Clay Hills
 - 4A Cassington - Bladon Ridge
 - 4B Islip Ridge
- 5. Settled Plateaux
 - 5A Headington
 - 5B Cowley / Blackbird Leys
- 6. Endosing Limestone Hills
 - 6A Wytham Hill
 - 6B Hinksey Heights
 - 6C East Oxford Heights
 - 6D Nuneham Courtney Ridge
- 7. High Plains
 - 7A Shotover Plain
 - 7B Boar's Hill
- 8. Clay Vales
 - 8A Sandford Vale
 - 8B Radley Vale

Drawing Number: 205702_014_fig2.2.1_landscape character areas

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I Lowland Clay Vales



Ia. Elsfield Fringes



Ib. Botley Clay Vale



Ic. Gosford Gap

2 Pastoral Floodplains

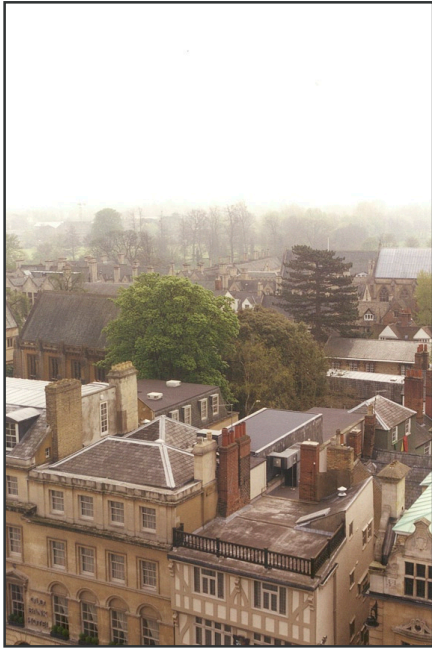


2a. Thames (Isis)



2b. Cherwell

3 Settled and Open River Terraces



3a. North Oxford River Terrace



3b. River Terrace Outliers



3c. Marston River Terrace



3d. East Oxford River Terrace



3e. Oxford Airport



3f. Kidlington River Terrace

4 Wooded Clay Hills



4a. Cassington - Bladon Ridge



4b. Islip Ridge

5 Settled Plateaux



5a. Headington



5b. Cowley/Blackbird Leys

6 Enclosing Limestone Hills



6a. Wytham Hill



6b. Hinksey Heights

6 Enclosing Limestone Hills



6c. East Oxford Heights



6d. Nuneham Courtney Ridge

7 High Plains



7a. Shotover Plain



7b. Boar's Hill

8 Clay Vales



8a. Sandford Vale



8b. Radley Vale

Table 2.2.3. Landscape Character Area – Summary Description

Landscape Character Area	Brief Description	Opportunities in Relation to the Setting of Oxford
Type 1: Lowland Clay Vales		
IA Elsfield Fringes	Peaceful clay vale of arable fields divided by low hedgerows and crossed by narrow country lanes. Divides the East Oxford Heights and Islip Ridge. Regular ditches drain from surrounding hills into Otmoor to the east and Cherwell Valley to the west. Scattered farms are only settlement.	<p>Manage hedgerows and replant hedgerow trees to conserve them as features.</p> <p>Resist development which would impinge on the rural character of the clay vale.</p> <p>Resist road widening and improvements of rural lanes.</p>
IB Botley Clay Vale	Peaceful agricultural clay vale with a dramatic sweeping landform dividing Wytham Hill and the Hinksey Heights to the west of Oxford. Distinctive red soils and scattered red brick farm buildings are features. Main roads and pylons pass along the vale, between the hills. Views over the vale are a feature of the western approach to Oxford.	<p>Conserve hedgerows which create the characteristic landscape pattern of the vale.</p> <p>Conserve rural character as setting to Oxford.</p> <p>Maintain views across the vale from approach roads into and out of Oxford.</p>
IC Gosford Gap	Low lying clay vale separating north Oxford and Kidlington. Hedgerow trees and shelter belts create a degree of enclosure. This rural area is under pressure from built development, infrastructure and other urban fringe land uses. Scattered farms are constructed from local limestone and are features of the working agricultural landscape. This rural landscape is fragmented by roads - the A34(T), A44(T), A4166, A4260 - and their associated junctions and service facilities. There are also a number of out of town superstores/garden centres and urban fringe activities such as golf courses.	<p>Maintain rural gap and ensure ribbon development does not result in merging Oxford and Kidlington.</p> <p>Maintain rural character as a setting to Oxford.</p> <p>Built development should respond to local materials and rural character - limestone and red brick are the dominant materials of rural buildings.</p> <p>Consider opportunities to enhance this area which forms a major gateway into Oxford.</p>
Type 2: Pastoral Floodplains		
2A Thames (Isis)	The Thames Floodplain is particularly notable for its historic commons and meadowlands, including Port Meadow, Pixey Mead and Wolvercote Green. The Thames National Trail runs along	<p>Maintain historic continuity of land use of the water meadows and commons.</p> <p>Promote traditional</p>

	<p>the length of the river and a number of historic sites such as Godstow Abbey and Binsey are found along its length. Historic wooded groves are also features of the Thames floodplain. The floodplain forms a setting for the historic core of Oxford, most famously at Christchurch Meadow. The industrial/retail estates of the Botley Road are built in the floodplain and obscure views across the floodplain on the western approach into Oxford. There is also encroachment by infrastructure, such as the electricity pylons south of Botley, and the A34.</p>	<p>management of meadowlands (pasture and hay cropping) and trees (pollarding of willows).</p> <p>Maintain open character and views across the floodplain.</p> <p>Maintain opportunities for public access and enjoyment of this pastoral landscape.</p> <p>Conserve and enhance wildlife resource and wetland habitats.</p> <p>Unsuitable landscape for built development.</p> <p>Opportunity to enhance western approach to Oxford.</p>
2B Cherwell	<p>A mixed agricultural landscape of pasture and arable fields divided by hedgerows. Becomes more confined in central Oxford where it forms the setting to the historic core to the west and Marston/Headington to the east. Its course through central Oxford is characterised by open sports grounds, flood meadows (for example the Angel and Greyhound Meadow) and pollarded willows. Part of the development at New Marston encroaches onto the floodplain south of Marston village.</p>	<p>Promote traditional management of meadowlands (pasture and hay cropping) and trees (pollarding of willows).</p> <p>Maintain rural, pastoral character.</p> <p>Maintain public access and enjoyment of this pastoral landscape.</p> <p>Conserve wildlife resource and wetland habitats.</p> <p>Unsuitable landscape for built development.</p>
Type 3: Settled and Open River Terraces		
3A North Oxford River Terrace	<p>Gently domed area of land formed from River terrace deposits between the Thames and Cherwell floodplains. Prime location for settlement since prehistoric times - the medieval walled town of Oxford is located at the southern tip of the terrace, overlooking the point at which the Cherwell and Thames meet. Supports dense urban development from the historic core in the south to the suburb of Cutteslowe in the north.</p>	<p>Built development should be confined to the extent of the river terrace.</p> <p>Maintain existing open spaces as a setting to the floodplains.</p>
3B River Terrace Outliers	<p>Small islands of first level river terrace deposits within the Thames floodplain.</p>	<p>Built development is typical of river terraces, but should not</p>

	Typically support settlement, including Wolvercote, Osney, Grandpont and New Hinksey - all areas vulnerable to flooding.	extend onto the floodplain beyond.
3C Marston River Terrace	Gently domed island of second river terrace deposit on clay in the Cherwell Valley. Supports the historic core of Marston Village and the agricultural fields which form a setting to the village and the floodplain. Crossed by the ring road and B4495.	Built development is typical of river terraces, but should not extend onto the floodplain beyond. Maintain a rural setting to Marston Village.
3D East Oxford River Terrace	Small second river terrace deposit on a platform of Oxford Clay which gently rises east from the Cherwell floodplain towards Cowley. Supports the large Victorian suburb of East Oxford and contains the narrow alluvial floodplain of Boundary Brook, an important landscape feature and tributary of the Thames.	Conserve and enhance the corridor of Boundary Brook as a wildlife corridor and landscape feature.
3E Oxford Airport	Second and third river terraces overlying solid geology of cornbrash and clay, resulting in an open, flat landscape. Oxford airport and large industrial parks dominate the rural landscape and straight roads cut across the plain. Hedgerows are low, allowing views across the open agricultural landscape. Historic stone buildings such as farms and pubs are present, but new development and urbanising features, such as kerbs and roadside lighting, have eroded the rural character.	Conserve setting of historic features and buildings on approach to Oxford. Minimise urbanising elements to provide a rural approach to Oxford. Management of hedgerows and re-planting of hedgerow trees will enhance landscape condition on this northerly approach to Oxford.
3F Kidlington River Terrace	Second river terrace overlying Oxford clay and cornbrash, between the Thames and Cherwell floodplains. Supports the settlement of Kidlington, the largest village in England (population over 17,000). This village has grown from an ancient village with a 13th century church, farm and a vicarage dating from the 16th century.	Maintain the separation between Kidlington village and the North Oxford River Terrace.
Type 4: Wooded Clay Hills		
4A Cassington-Bladon Ridge	Cluster of prominent rounded clay hills to the north-west of Oxford overlooking the Thames Floodplain and Oxford airport. Wooded ridgelines of Bladon Heath and Spring Hill are visible from surroundings and Bladon Heath includes the remains of a round castle. Crossed by a minor road and railway.	Maintain the wooded skylines which provide a wooded setting to the north-west of Oxford. Limit the number of communication masts on the hill tops. This is particularly

		important on these small scale hills.
4B Islip Ridge	Low, rounded clay hill to the north-east of Oxford, overlooking the Cherwell Valley. A rural, wooded ridge with small limestone villages on the footslopes. Woodeaton Manor is a feature on the hillside. The B4027 traverses the ridge, making use of the dry land between the Cherwell floodplain to the west and low lying Ot Moor to the east.	Maintain the wooded hilltops which provide a wooded setting to the north-east of Oxford. Limit the number of communication masts on the hill tops. This is particularly important on these small scale hills.
Type 5: Settled Plateaux		
5A Headington	Prominent platform of sand and calcareous sandstone to the east of the Cherwell Valley with a steep scarp slope, probably most famous at Headington Hill. The wooded character of this plateau forms a wooded backdrop to the historic core of Oxford, the sandy soil supporting Scots Pine as landmark features. The southern edge of the plateau is incised by narrow valleys, including the Lye Valley local nature reserve.	Maintain the wooded character. Scots pine are characteristic of the sandy soils, and could be included in planting schemes. Avoid high rise development on the highly visible ridgelines. Maintain views over central Oxford from Headington Hill.
5B Cowley/Blackbird Leys	Prominent platform of sand and calcareous sandstone to the south-east of the East Oxford River Terrace. This plateau is significantly lower than Headington, but forms an obvious scarp along Between Towns Road. The plateau forms a wooded backdrop to East Oxford, the sandy soil supporting Scots Pine as landmark features. The southern edge of the plateau is incised by Northfield Brook. An outcrop of Ampthill Clays from a prominent wooded hill at Rose Hill.	Maintain the wooded character of the plateau, particularly at Rose Hill. Scots pine are characteristic of the sandy soils and could be included in new planting schemes. Maintain views over central Oxford from Rose Hill and Cowley.
Type 6: Enclosing Limestone Hills		
6A Wytham Hill	Prominent rounded hill of Coral Rag on the western edge of Oxford, surrounded by the Botley clay vale and Thames floodplain. Mixture of farmland and large areas of ancient deciduous woodland, preserved as a privately owned estate and bequeathed to the University for educational purposes, resulting in a prominent wooded ridge.	Maintain the wooded rural character of the hill as a green backdrop to Oxford. Limit number of communication masts and other vertical elements which would be very visible on the ridgeline.

	Forms an important backdrop to Oxford and rich ecological resource. All settlement confined to lower slopes.	ridgeline. Maintain hedgerows which are important elements in views of the hill.
6B Hinksey Heights	Prominent ridge of Coral Rag and Kimmeridge Clay enclosing Oxford to the south-west. Mixed farmland and woodland, including the historic Bagley Wood and lower slopes of Boar's Hill, provides a rural setting to south-west Oxford. Wooded tributaries drain into the Thames floodplain. Villages, located on the lower slopes, have grown extensively in the 20th century. These include Kennington, Botley and Cumnor as well as the village of South Hinksey. Areas of city parkland at Raleigh Park and in the Chilswell Valley reflect the important visual links with the city.	Maintain the wooded rural character of the hill as a green backdrop to Oxford. Limit number of communication masts and other vertical elements which would be very visible on the ridgeline. Maintain land in rural, agricultural use. Conversion to other uses such as golf courses can be highly visible in this location, for example from the Thames floodplain. Maintain views over the Thames floodplain and across Oxford from public footpaths and viewpoints. Maintain hedgerows which are important elements of the ridge.
6C East Oxford Heights	Prominent ridge of Kimmeridge Clay and Portland limestone enclosing Oxford to the east. Mixed farmland and woodland, including parts of the Forest of Shotover, provides a rural setting to north-east Oxford. Settlement is limited to the lower slopes where it overlooks the adjacent lowlands, for example at Elsfield. The main eastern approach to Oxford (the A40 from London) passes through this rural character area before entering Headington. This area includes Shotover House and Park and forms the lower slopes of Shotover Plain.	Maintain the wooded rural character of the hill as a green backdrop to Oxford. Limit number of vertical elements which are very visible on the ridgeline. Maintain views over Oxford from public footpaths and viewpoints. Conserve hedgerows which are important features of the landscape setting. Conserve undeveloped rural approach to Oxford along the A40 – gateway to Headington.
6D Nuneham Courtney Ridge	Portland limestone ridge to the south of Oxford, beyond the Sandford Vale. The	Maintain the wooded rural character of the hill as a

	<p>Nuneham Ridge has a prominent scarp to its north, made more visible in the summer by its crop of oil seed rape. The open fields contrast with extensive areas of deciduous woodland. Electricity pylons and a road cross the ridge before descending into the vale. The variety of village landscapes is notable: parkland with new estate village (Nuneham); extended village on green (Marsh Baldon); and compact village (Toot Baldon). The landscape gardens at Nuneham Courtney were designed to incorporate the long-distance views of Oxford across the Thames.</p>	<p>green backdrop to Oxford.</p> <p>Limit number of vertical elements which are very visible on the ridgeline.</p> <p>Maintain views of Oxford from public footpaths and viewpoints.</p> <p>Conserve hedgerows which are important features of the landscape setting.</p>
Type 7: High Plains		
7A Shotover Plain	<p>Shotover Plain is a prominent table-topped hill lying to the east of Oxford. The Shotover Ironsands, which overlie the plateau, result in distinctive red sandy soils supporting heathy vegetation such as gorse and pine, which stand out as distinctive skyline features. The plateau is also valuable agricultural land as a result of its well drained soils and level landform. The windmill at Wheatley indicates its historic popularity for growing corn. The historic approach to Oxford from London ran over the top of the hill until the late 18th century. There are magnificent views over Oxford and surrounds from the edge of the plain.</p>	<p>Maintain tree cover as a backdrop to Oxford.</p> <p>Limit the number of masts which are highly visible on these ridges.</p> <p>Maintain clumps of pines as characteristic skyline features.</p> <p>Conserve vistas over Oxford and the surrounding landscape and provide public viewpoints where possible.</p>
7B Boar's Hill	<p>Steep-sided, table-topped ridge rising above the Hinksey Heights to the west of Oxford. This area was partially developed in the 20th century as a smart country retreat from Oxford and contains many private dwelling, positioned to take advantage of the views across Oxford. The gardens of these properties add a variety of colour and texture to the vegetation of this ridge, making it distinctive. The sandy soils support a large number of Scots pines which are features of this hill. Magnificent views across Oxford and the surrounding lowlands including those painted by Turner. The Jarn Mound was built specifically to allow all-round views.</p>	<p>Maintain extent and variety of tree cover as an interesting backdrop to Oxford.</p> <p>Limit the number of masts which are highly visible on these ridges.</p> <p>Maintain clumps of pines as characteristic skyline features.</p> <p>Conserve public viewpoints and manage vegetation to ensure these do not become obscured.</p>

Type 8: Clay Vales		
8A Sandford Vale	Large scale, smooth clay vale to the south of Oxford. Hedgerows create a strong field pattern and hedgerow trees stand out as features in this open landscape. Vertical elements, such as electricity pylons, are highly visible in this open vale landscape. Red brick is characteristic of the vale and red brick farms are scattered throughout. There are extensive views across the vale from surrounding high ground, for example from Garsington, and there is very little opportunity to conceal development in this open landscape.	<p>Conserve hedgerows which are important features of the landscape pattern of the vale.</p> <p>Replace hedgerow trees as they mature to conserve these landscape features.</p>
8B Radley Vale	Flat, open clay vale on the western bank of the Thames, opposite the Sandford Clay Vale. Good condition working agricultural landscape of arable fields divided by low hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees (oak), ditch-side vegetation (willows) or shelter belts (poplar) which create important skyline features. Minor rural lanes are bordered by drainage ditches, rich in wetland vegetation. Farm buildings are typically constructed of red brick and thatch. The settlements of Radley and Lower Radley contain large houses scattered at low density along narrow lanes - these are typically constructed from red brick with thatch, with some rendered and painted. Electricity pylons are prominent elements. This is a sensitive landscape due to its open, exposed character.	<p>Conserve shelter belts (poplar), hedgerow trees (oak) and wetland vegetation (willows) which create a wooded skyline.</p> <p>Maintain the open, rural character as a setting to Oxford.</p> <p>Conserve the low density of housing, which characterises this area, in contrast to the city of Oxford.</p>

- 2.7. This assessment of the city and its setting provides the context for a more detailed study (1:10,000 scale) of the urban fabric, within the city boundary. The results are presented in the following chapter.

3. WHAT MAKES THE LANDSCAPES WITHIN THE CITY OF OXFORD DISTINCTIVE AND WHY

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. The urban fabric of the city of Oxford overlies the physical landscape. The landscape/townscape character assessment of Oxford City within its city limits was undertaken at a scale of 1:10,000. This more detailed scale allowed identification of landscape/townscape types and character areas on a street by street basis on the basis of their land use, built form and green space be it agricultural land, parkland, amenity grassland or areas of semi-natural natural habitat.

DEFINING LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE TYPES

- 3.2. Characterisation has involved a two- stage classification of generic townscape types and within these the geographically unique character areas. **Landscape/townscape types** are generic areas of consistent character, predominantly defined by combinations of natural features and built features and their relationship. 11 generic landscape/townscape types have been identified in across Oxford.

DEFINING LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

- 3.3. **Landscape/townscape character areas** are geographically specific areas of a landscape/townscape type, which have their own individual character or 'sense of place'. They are particularly useful in planning and management terms allowing appropriate policies or actions to be applied at a local level. Within the City of Oxford and its setting there are some 52 discrete landscape/townscape character areas.

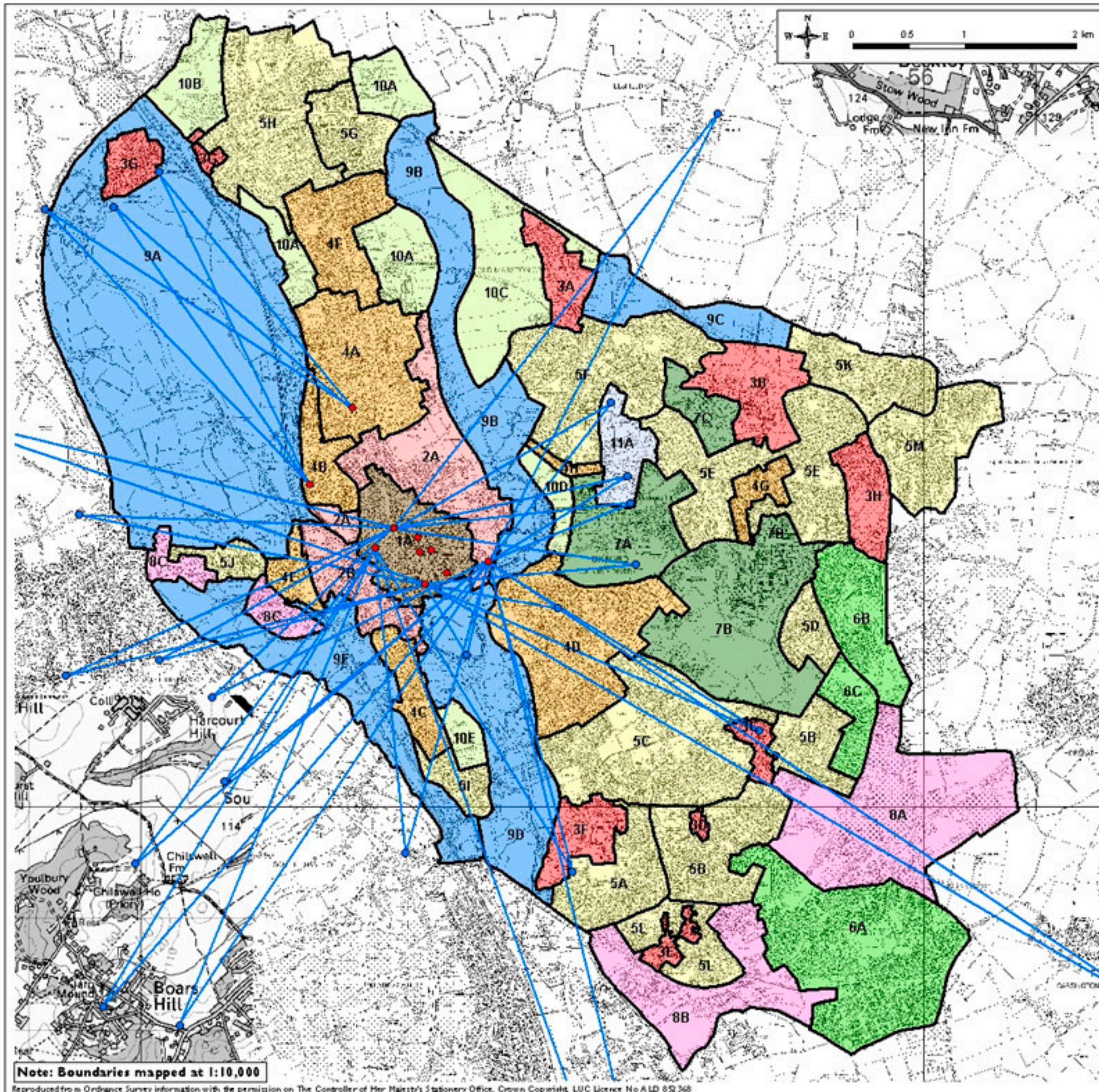
The following table presents the list of landscape/townscape types and their constituent character areas. Refer to *figure 2.3.1* for the location of these areas.

Table 2.3.1: Landscape/Townscape Classification

Townscape Type	Townscape Character Area
1. Historic Core	A Historic City Core
2. Historic Fringe	A University Fringe B Western Fringe
3. Historic Village Cores	A Old Marston Core B Old Headington Core C St Clements and The Plain D Temple Cowley E Church Cowley Core F Littlemore Village G Iffley Village H Lower Wolvercote

	I Upper Wolvercote J Headington Quarry
4. Victorian Suburbs and Villages	A North Oxford B Jericho C Grandpont D East Oxford E New Osney F Summertown G New Headington H New Marston Village
5. Inter-war/Post-war Suburbs	A Rose Hill B Cowley Residential Suburb C Florence Park and Cowley Marsh D The Slade E New Headington F New Marston G Cutteslowe/Sunnymead H North Oxford Fringes I New Hinksey J Botley Road K Barton L Littlemore M Sandhills and Risinghurst
6. Post 1960s Suburbs	A Blackbird Leys B Wood Farm C Horspath Road Area
7. Open Hills (with Institutions)	A Headington Hill B Southfield Park and Hospitals Complex C John Radcliffe Hospital
8. 20 th Century Fringe Business, Industry and Retail	A Cowley Motor Works B Littlemore Business and Science Parks C Botley Industrial and Retail Parks
9. Pastoral Floodplains	A Thames (Isis) north B Cherwell C Bayswater Brook D Thames (Isis) south E Hinksey/Bulstake Streams
10. Open River Terraces	A North Oxford Open River Terrace B Peartree Open River Terrace C Marston Open River Terrace D St Clements Open River Terrace E New Hinksey Open River Terrace
11. Garden Suburbs	A Headington Hill

Oxford City Landscape Character Assessment
Figure 2.3.1:
Townscape Character Areas



- Key**
- Spire location
 - Viewpoints
 - View cone
- Townscape Character Area**
- 1. Historic Core**
 - 1A Historic City Core
 - 2. Historic Fringe**
 - 2A University Fringe
 - 2B Western Fringe
 - 3. Historic Village Cores**
 - 3A Old Marston Core
 - 3B Old Headington Core
 - 3C Temple Cowley
 - 3D Church Cowley Core
 - 3E Littlemore Village
 - 3F Ifley Village
 - 3G Wolvercote
 - 3H Headington Quarry
 - 4. Victorian Suburbs and Villages**
 - 4A North Oxford
 - 4B Jericho
 - 4C Grandpoint
 - 4D East Oxford
 - 4E New Osney
 - 4F Summertown
 - 4G New Headington
 - 4H New Marston Village
 - 5. Inter-war / Post-war Suburbs**
 - 5A Rose Hill
 - 5B Cowley Residential Suburb
 - 5C Florence Park and Cowley Marsh
 - 5D The Slade
 - 5E New Headington
 - 5F New Marston
 - 5G Cutteslowe / Sunnymead
 - 5H North Oxford Fringes
 - 5I New Hinksey
 - 5J Botley Road
 - 5K Barton
 - 5L Littlemore
 - 5M Sandhills and Risinghurst
 - 6. Post 1960s Suburbs**
 - 6A Blackbird Leys
 - 6B Wood Farm
 - 6C Horspath Road Area
 - 7. Open Hills (with institutions)**
 - 7A Headington Hill
 - 7B Southfield Park and Hospitals Complex
 - 7C John Radcliffe Hospital
 - 8. 20th Century Fringe Business, Industry and Retail**
 - 8A Cowley Motor Works
 - 8B Littlemore Business and Science Parks
 - 8C Botley Industrial and Retail Parks
 - 9. Pastoral Floodplains**
 - 9A Thames (Isis) - North
 - 9B Cherwell Valley
 - 9C Bayswater Brook
 - 9D Thames (Isis) - South
 - 9E Hinksey / Bulstake Streams
 - 10. Open River Terraces**
 - 10A North Oxford Open River Terrace
 - 10B Peartree Open River Terrace
 - 10C Marston Open River Terrace
 - 10D St Clements Open River Terrace
 - 10E New Hinksey Open River Terrace
 - 11. Garden Suburbs**
 - 11A Headington Hill

Note: Boundaries mapped at 1:10,000

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DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION

3.4. A short generic description is provided for each landscape/townscape type. This is followed by a detailed description of each character area and consists of:

- A specific character area description;
- A checklist table for easy reference and access to specific data for each area;
- An evaluation of strength of character and perception of landscape/townscape quality;
- An analysis of past and present change and sensitivity to change;
- Suggestions for policy development and enhancement opportunities.

3.5. This format is followed for the remainder of this chapter.

I HISTORIC CITY CORE

Generic Description

The historic core of Oxford is one of the best-loved and most well known city centres in England. The core area is defined largely by the boundaries of the medieval walled town (former town walls are indicated by the red line in *figure 1.2.5*) and the historic University buildings that overlie the former medieval town walls to the north and east. The core area displays many characteristics which are generic in such historic centres, including the surviving structure of medieval streets, an eclectic mix of architectural styles and ages, and historic landmark buildings.

It is an area which is a focus of both visitor and academic activity, as well as retail, commercial and administrative functions. The issues faced in the core area include the accommodation of development needs and practical considerations such as transport and access, against a backdrop of the sensitivity of the historic environment.

The historic core evolved on the drier land of this floodplain landscape, on the *settled and open river terraces* landscape type (refer to landscape type 3 in Part 2, Chapter 2 of this report).

Key Characteristics

Key characteristics of the historic city core include:

- it is the focal point of the city for residents and visitors alike;
- the surviving medieval street pattern;
- the dense pattern of development;
- the distinctive pattern of perimeter development with private courtyards behind;
- the harmony of much of the built form and materials used, despite the variation in architectural styles;
- the historic and landmark buildings and trees ;
- the dominance of hard landscape features with limited public open space;
- the diverse mix of land uses;
- the vibrant and busy city streets.

Character Areas

IA Oxford Historic City Core