

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AGENDAS 2011

8) POST MEDIEVAL (1540-1800)

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8 Post Medieval Research Agenda

This document sets out a research agenda for Oxford covering the post medieval period (1540-1800). The document should be read in conjunction with the period resource assessment for the City (Oxford City Council 2011) and the Thames Solent Regional Research Agenda (2010).

8.1 Overview

Investigations in Oxford have played an important role in the development of field of post-medieval archaeology and the city has notable potential for the further study of urban development and cultural change during this period. It presents exceptional potential to study the post-Reformation development of nationally important college and university institutions. The city is of interest for its pattern of late 16th century economic recovery and related patterns of migration, urban and hinterland settlement and evolving patterns of land-use and vernacular architecture. The local authority area also presents opportunities to study the development of communications and trade along the Upper Thames, stone quarrying, service industries and the early development of social and civic structures such as prisons, hospitals and workhouses. The study of human remains from this period offers good potential to further understand patterns of health, wealth and lifestyle within the local population. The city was also important as the Royalist capital during the Civil War and the character and scope of the Royalist defences and Parliamentary siege works remain to be determined. The city possesses exceptional levels of documentation for this period which further enhances the potential for archaeological study.

8.2 Zones of potential

The district has been divided into five broad landscape zones based on surface geology and relief:

A The North Oxford Terrace (Summertown-Radley and Wolvercote Gravel Terrace)

B The Thames floodplain and gravel islands.

C The Cherwell Floodplain (with pockets of gravel)

D The alluviated stream valleys of the Corallian ridge

E The Corallian Ridge

Some research questions provide an assessment of potential for the zones listed above, these are referred to in terms of high potential (e.g. the zone has already demonstrated its ability to contribute to this agenda) or general potential based on comparison with similar landscapes. In addition, a simplified zone potential map for the city has been divided into several broad zones:

Intramural settlement (A; B)

Intramural colleges (C)

Extramural colleges (D; E; F)

Extramural/suburban settlement (G; H; I; J; K; L)

Defences (N; O; P; Q)

Gardens and open spaces (R; S; T; U)

8.3 Chronology

- 1 The greater standardisation of chronology for post medieval and modern archaeological evidence would be desirable, also reassessment and

synthesis of 19th and 20th century excavations to distinguish post medieval evidence from modern evidence in line with current chronologies.

- 2 The extension of Mellor's synthesis of ceramic pottery from the Saxon to early post medieval period would be desirable. In particular, more detailed work should be concentrated on ceramics as a dating base, particularly for the 15th/16th century, and on helping to establish patterns of imports.

8.4 Documentary

- 1 What can the documentary evidence tell us about the effect of the Dissolution on land ownership, how did this influence wider society?
- 2 What can documentary evidence tell us about rebuilding and infilling within the city, and the inhabitants of houses in different parts of the urban area?

8.5 Environmental

- 1 What can studies of environmental data, artefacts and structural remains tell us about variations in diet, living conditions and status within different parts of the town?
- 2 How did diets vary within and between colleges?
- 3 As with earlier periods the further study of fish bone assemblages has considerable potential to understand patterns of diet, consumption and wealth and also of supply (e.g. sourcing of fish both locally and from specific ports).

8.6 Landscape and agriculture

- 1 To what extent was the agricultural land around Oxford subject to early private enclosure? Can a cartographic study of the district help to reconstruct the medieval and post medieval agricultural landscape? i.e. patterns and directions of ridge and furrow, early enclosure, drainage, and field systems for each township?
 - o *Zone potential: A General; B High; C General; D General; E General*
- 2 Can cartographic evidence and field survey help us further understand the process of deforestation of Shotover?
 - o *Zone potential: D General; E General*
- 3 What was the character of private and market gardening within the town and suburbs? What can this tell us about levels of subsistence for seasonal labourers and patterns of food production and wealth distribution?
 - o *Zone potential: A General; E General*
- 4 How did growing demand for food from the town and university impact on the environs of the city in terms of horticulture, orchards, craft production, etc? Is there evidence for increased small-scale food production in open areas within and around the City? Can cottages constructed for workers employed in the rapidly developing market gardens be identified and studied?
 - o *Zone potential: A General; E General*

8.7 Settlement

- 1 What evidence is there for early 16th century de-population – how was intramural land utilised – orchards, the slype?
 - o *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges High; Defences High; Gardens and Open spaces High*

- 2 From a fairly small start Oxford grew dramatically from about the 1580s to the eighteenth century, largely driven by post-Reformation expansion of the University. This is clearly seen in the difference between the Agas map and the Loggan map of the city. This population growth was largely still confined within the walled town and the immediate suburbs. Can this growth be identified in terms of increased development across former open plots? Is there an increase in material domestic culture (pottery, food debris) over this period to suggest increased population?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges High; Defences High; Gardens and Open spaces High*
- 3 The population growth may almost entirely be due to immigration into the town. Is the standard of living across the town comparable with, or lower or higher, than other towns of this period and status? Does it improve across the period? What can structures and material culture tell us about this process?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges High; Defences High; Gardens and Open spaces High*
- 4 Accounts exist of 'cottages' and 'squab' houses across this period, with the University and the town accusing each other of allowing them to be built. Is this justified by the evidence? Is there an indication of poorer quality dwellings in the later sixteenth and earlier seventeenth century (alleys of tenements 'not fit for Christians to live in')?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges General; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges General; Defences High; Gardens and Open spaces High*
- 5 Is the difference in relative wealth between the centre of the town and the suburbs and between the colleges and the town identifiable in the record? What markers might be identified (e.g. quality pottery, meat consumption etc.)?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges High; Defences High; Gardens and Open spaces High*
- 6 Does the opening of the Carfax Conduit in 1617 lead to disuse of wells within the immediate or wider area?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement General; Extramural colleges General; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 7 The town suffered a disastrous fire in October 1644 whose location can be identified through documentation. Can it be identified through archaeology?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges General; Extramural settlement General; Extramural colleges General; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 8 How did the rural village cores develop during this period? Can the increasing influence of the colleges on hinterland villages be noted?
 - *Zone potential: A General; B General; C General; D General; E High*

- 9 Can archaeological investigation tell us more about civic infrastructure e.g. town halls, courtrooms, prisons, schools, and the houses of prominent doctors and apothecaries workhouses, poor houses and hospitals?
 - o *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges High; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 10 What was the pattern of the subdivision of properties in the post medieval period, how did this effect settlement within the city?
 - o *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges High; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 11 What pattern of suburban growth and redevelopment in the late post medieval period can be identified in the archaeological record?
 - o *City zone potential: Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges General; Defences High; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 12 Despite dating from Domesday Book and known to have been protected by earthworks during the Civil War, Holywell has not been subject to significant archaeological or documentary investigation so far. What would this contribute to our understanding of the settlement immediately to the north of the city? How far was the liberty of Holywell independent of the city?

8.8 Built Environment

- 1 A greater emphasis on the investigation and recording of post medieval structures within the district is required from domestic to civic to industrial structures because of the greater pressures on these structures. There is an increasing need to document in detail nationally important listed buildings as well as those structures of a more local interest. In looking at the research potential for the built environment, a number of key factors should be considered:

Domestic and commercial architecture.

- 2 Can Pantin's study of the post medieval town house be enhanced, perhaps through the production a database of surviving post medieval town houses and the extent of their adaptation?
- 3 The post medieval period saw great changes in the use of internal space with a significant shift away from the communal arrangement of the open hall with separate kitchen to the more socially constructed 18th century townhouse with highly defined areas of private and semi public space. How was this reflected in the design and growth of post medieval domestic structures?
- 4 It would be desirable to identify key elements of domestic architecture for further investigation, for example roof structures and their chronology, in order to further identify regional types. Dendro-chronological dating has much to contribute to this process.
- 5 There is considerable scope for the identification and recording of interior decor (paint, wall-paintings, and wallpaper) within structures of this period. What is the chronology of changing materials and fashions in interior décor?
- 6 The survival of many inventories (in both Diocesan and University records) is an important source for understanding the furnishing and use of buildings. Can these records of the changing fashions in room use and furnishing be related to surviving buildings?

- 7 There are no recorded survivals of pre-1800 shop fronts, however further work is needed to establish what if anything survives archaeologically or architecturally of shops, their front designs and layout, and any evidence for function or small-scale manufacturing?

Civic architecture.

- 8 A thorough survey of school buildings would be valuable, identifying and recording representative types from early to modern? (Rhodes, 2006)

Industrial architecture.

- 9 Can we identify surviving post medieval factories and warehouses? What original fabric survives, what are they used for now?
- 10 There should be an increased priority for the recording and preservation of industrial structures and utilities.
- 11 What evidence is there for late post medieval utilities introduced into the city? A waterworks at Folly Bridge was installed in the late 17th century yet it was known to be in poor condition a century later? Can its path be reconstructed?
- 12 Can the path of the Carfax Conduit from Hinksey be reconstructed on the ground, and can it be archaeologically investigated? Does anything remain?

Community Involvement in the built environment

- 13 Rhodes notes the potential to encourage building recording and documentary studies through local groups and through OU Dept of Continuing Education class and certificate students, Oxford Brookes University etc,
- 14 Volunteer projects on the built character of settlement in Oxford can be promoted through council schemes (e.g. Conservation Toolkit; Heritage Plan, Community Archaeology Projects).
- 15 There should be an emphasis on promoting greater accessibility to studies already carried out whether online (ADS, OASIS, contractor websites) or through the HER/UAD (Heritage Gateway)

8.9 The University and colleges

- 1 Detailed and comprehensive building surveys of college structures, including phased plans identifying extent of medieval and post medieval elements, are required. Inclusion of these surveys into a holistic conservation management plan enhancing the college's past would be highly desirable as would conservation plans for the Registered Parks and Gardens where not in place.
- o *City zone potential: Intramural colleges High; Extramural colleges High; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 2 What was the fate of the academic hall in the post medieval period? Where did they survive into the 16th century and how did they compare to the colleges in terms of material culture and diet?
- o *City zone potential: Intramural settlement General; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement General; Extramural colleges High; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 3 The archaeology of post medieval college gardens is an area that has been subject to only limited study. Can non intrusive surveys within the quads and gardens contribute to our understanding of the evolution of the colleges?
- o *City zone potential: Intramural colleges High; Extramural colleges High; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*

- 4 What can structural, artefactual or ecofactual evidence tell us about the lives of fellows and students? How did these differ from the other inhabitants of the town?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges High; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*

8.10 Manufacturing and trade

- 1 Can we more accurately plot and understand commercial and manufacturing areas within the town (e.g., tanning, brewing etc). What evidence remains of specialised production related to academic life (e.g. bookbinding printing and paper-making? Can information of industrial processes be identified?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges High; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 2 The location and study of workshop spaces has great potential to enhance our understanding of craft industries, the social relations of production, social practices and production techniques. Can we identify evidence for small-scale production, for example brewing or manufacturing and servicing workshops for the colleges or other large institutions?
 - *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges General; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges General; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces General*
- 3 What was the extent and character of quarrying in the post medieval period? How was the Headington stone trade affected by improvements to the roads and waterways?
 - *Zone potential: A General; B General; C General; D General; E High*

8.11 Transport and Communication

- 1 Are there 18th century accounts from the construction of new roads and bridges that can contribute to the archaeological evidence?
 - *Zone potential: A High; B General; C General; D General; E High*
- 16 Peberdy (*Oxoniensia*, 61 (1996)) argues that the late-medieval Thames ceased to be a significant supply routeway into Oxford due to the decline in the town's fortune. It follows that the demand from a rapidly growing town, with rapidly growing demands, in the late sixteenth century is likely to have led to a revival of interest in navigation. The Act which established the Oxford-Burcot Commission and led to the construction of three key pound locks was passed in 1624 and the first barges arrived in the mid-1630s. One key commodity must have been coal. The fuel requirements per head of population in this period is unlikely to have been less than at other times, and the amount of woodland able to supply it must have been fairly static. The Act of 1624 makes specific reference to coal, and by 1650 it was the principal commodity passing upriver (Philip, I. G. *Oxoniensia* ii, 1937, 160). When is coal first seen as a fuel within the town? Is its use confined to wealthier or poorer parts of the town? Does the use of coal lead to adaptations in the fireplaces and chimneys of houses of this period?
 - *Zone potential: A High; B High; C General; D General; E High*

- 17 Can we further establish the character and survival of canal and river transport infrastructure? How were waterways improved? Can the survival of wharves and related infrastructure be mapped?

○ *Zone potential: A High; B High; C General; D General; E General*

8.12 Warfare and Defence

- 1 Can the line, phasing and character of the Royalist defences and Parliamentary siege works be further established? Earthwork surveys of the extant defences would be of great value. Can geophysics tell us more about the Parliamentary siege works?

○ *Zone potential: A General; B High; C General; D General; E High*

- 2 Can we further understand the function of the possible civil war earthwork identified in the southern part of Port Meadow?

- 3 Can we further establish the character and extent of re-use and repair along the town wall and its bastions and within the Castle precinct during this period? To what extent was the City Wall and its bastions modified for housing and garden design?

○ *City zone potential: Intramural colleges High; Extramural settlement High; Defences High; Gardens and Open spaces General*

8.13 Material Culture

- 1 How is the impact of the Dissolution reflected in the material culture of the city?
- 2 Markers identifying individual manufacturers are rare and in consequence little is known about the industry in Oxford, can a detailed study of the documentary and archaeological evidence enhance our knowledge? Can areas of clay pipe manufacture be identified based on existing evidence and highlighted for future archaeological investigation?
- 3 The typology of glass bottles was established in Oxford (by E.T. Leeds) using extensive documentary records for taverns and college common rooms. Can a more detailed typological sequence of post medieval glass be developed, extending that known for bottle glass?
- 4 The further study and synthesis of floor tiles (including the use of floor tiles in secular buildings) and the review of Ashmolean collections may be productive.
- 5 Greater research into the unusual bone floors of Oxford would be useful. Why were they built, what was their primary function, and who were they for? Were they predominantly a low status suburban phenomenon, and to what extent was decoration employed in their construction?
- 6 Research into post medieval wall paintings in the city with the aim of producing a detailed database of their design, materials used, location and state of preservation would be an important contribution to build on previous studies.
- 7 The study of probate inventories (noted above) is an important complement to the archaeological record. Can the data from both sources be compared?
- 8 A new dining culture is evident in the late 16th-17th century but with some elements of continuity from the medieval period. Can this cultural shift be linked with evidence for a rise of living standards, if so what is the character and patterning of this change?

- 9 From the late 16th-17th century more glass (for windows etc) is evident in assemblages reflecting growing prosperity which is also reflected in the increasing numbers of taverns and the character of imported glassware and drinking ware. What can assemblages tell us about the character and patterning of this change?

8.14 Ceremony and religion

- 1 To what extent was Dissent and Non-conformity evident in the city? Oxford was not known as a particularly significant proponent of the non-conformist movement in England.
- 2 Further recording of parish churches in the district including detailed phased building surveys would be productive. How much can doctrinal and liturgical change be followed in surviving fabric?
- 3 Encouragement and support for recording of selected churchyards and cemeteries would be valuable (Rhodes, 2006).

8.15 Parks and Gardens

- 1 Encouragement through the Oxfordshire Gardens Trust of identification and detailed studies of significant gardens and parks, and continuing studies of the historical development of college gardens. The Trust should provide a good forum for disseminating information and encouraging synthesis (Rhodes 2006). How can archaeology contribute to a fuller understanding of the design and planting of gardens?
- 2 A review of the importance of and distribution of walled gardens and small private gardens from the post medieval period would be of value.

8.16 Sport and leisure

- 1 The archaeology of rowing, including the documentary evidence and in terms of the buildings, structures and material culture may be candidates for further studies, as for all aspects of earlier river craft and river uses, e.g. Binsey Boat (Dodd 1989). How and when were specialised river craft developed on the upper Thames?
 - o *Zone potential: B High; C General*
- 2 The post medieval period also saw a rise in purpose built structures and areas for leisure pursuits although few have been archaeologically documented in the city (e.g. cock fighting ring from Holywell). What evidence is there, both documentary and archaeological, for other leisure facilities such as real tennis courts, theatres, bowling greens etc.
 - o *City zone potential: Intramural settlement High; Intramural colleges General; Extramural settlement High; Extramural colleges General; Defences General; Gardens and Open spaces High*

Compiled by Ruth Beckley and David Radford

For full acknowledgements please see the online Oxford Archaeological Plan Introduction document.

Bibliography

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Fig 1: Simplified geology map (areas of gravel island and Amphthill Clay have been amalgamated and are not shown, please see introduction document for a detailed surface geology map).

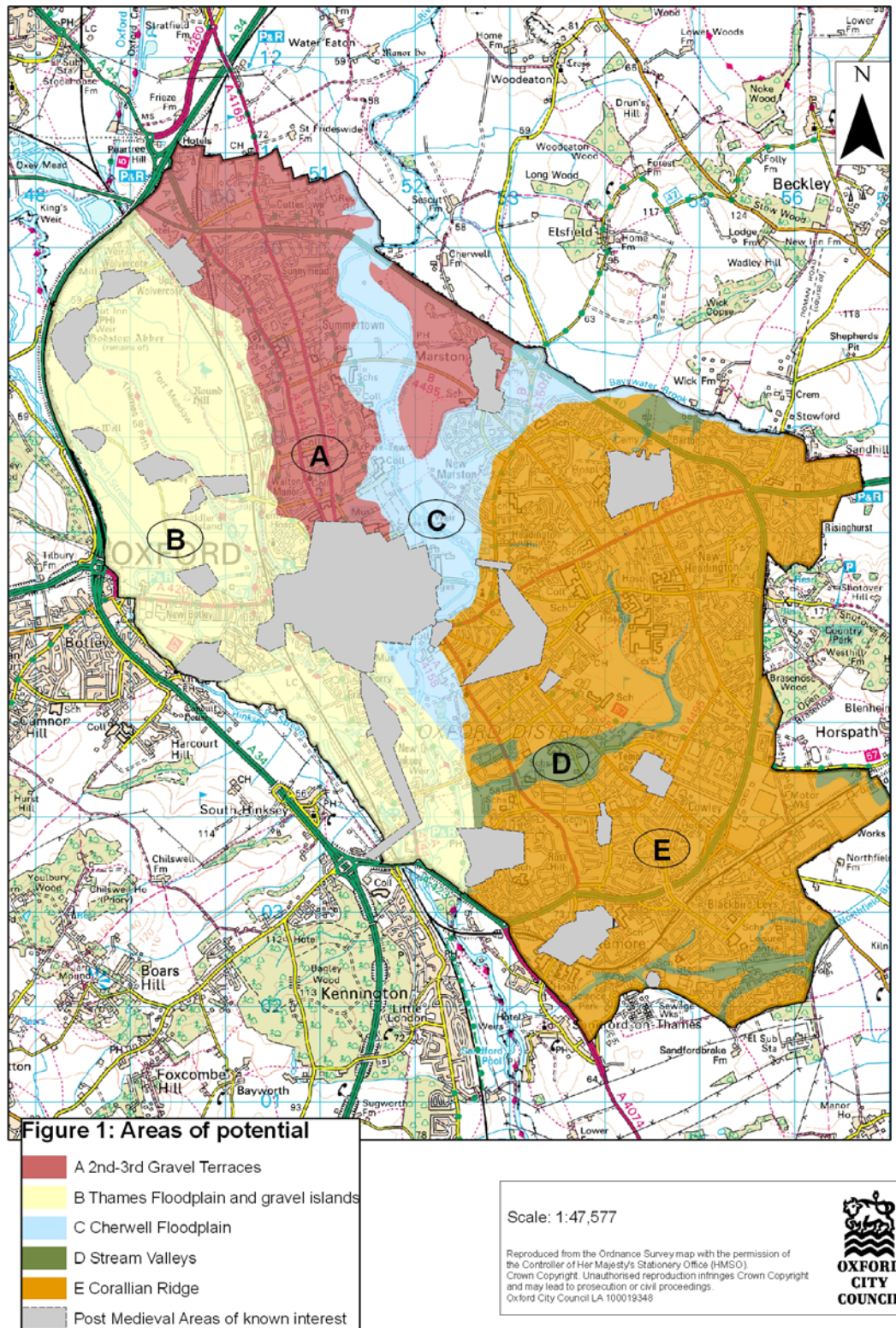


Figure 1: Areas of known potential in the Local Authority Area

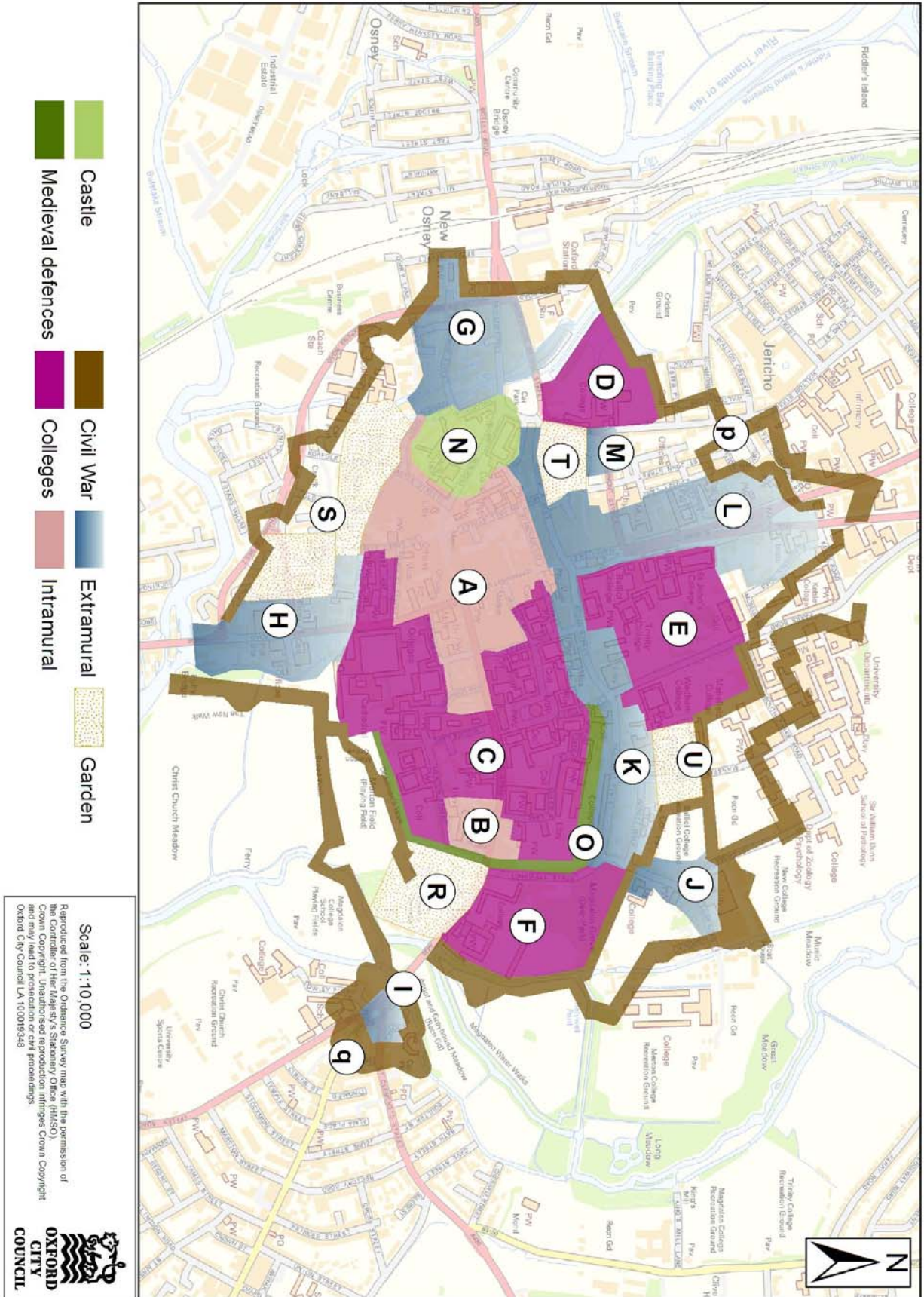


Figure 2: Areas of archaeological potential across the Post-medieval city