

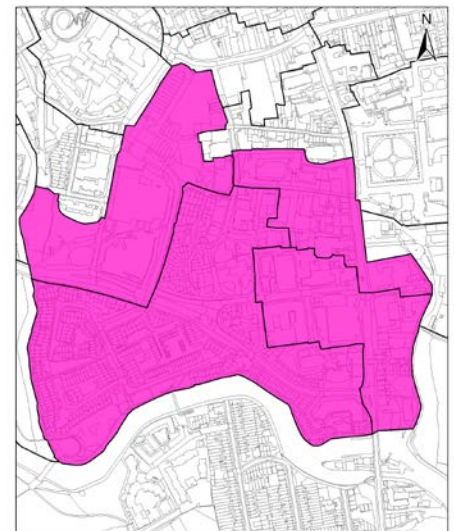
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 11:
THAMES CROSSING AND FLOODPLAIN- WESTGATE CENTRE**

The HUCA is located within broad character Zone C: Thames crossing and floodplain.

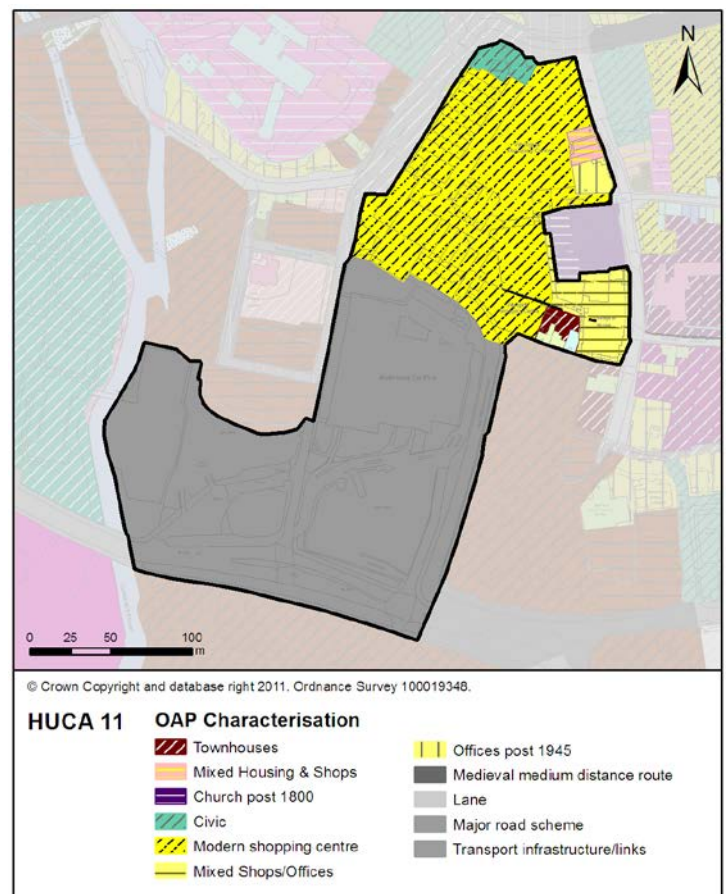
The broad character zone comprises of the southern suburb and the historic route over the Thames floodplain along St Aldates, combined with reclaimed floodplain land south of the medieval town walls. It includes the 1960-70s Westgate shopping centre and car park complex which occupies reclaimed floodplain and encompasses parts of the now largely redeveloped intramural and extra mural parish of St Ebbes.

Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: 20th century.
- Designations: A section of the Franciscan friary church is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There are two Grade I and three Grade II listings. A small part of the character area lies within the Central Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Interest: There is potential for remains relating to the multi-period Trill Mill Stream, related channel management activity and the precinct of the medieval Greyfriars (Franciscan Friary).
- Character: Modern commercial shopping centre, modern transport infrastructure. Brick and concrete shopping centre, concrete and tarmac car parks. 17th-18th townhouses on Turn Again Lane.
- Spaces: The current Westgate multi-storey and surface car parks are provided with landscaped grass edging populated with semi mature trees. Provision of tree cover used to good effect within the car parks. The townhouses on Turn Again lane retain small enclosed gardens.
- Road morphology: Modern multi lane link roads and car park access roads. Turn Again Lane is a remnant of the post medieval-Victorian Street pattern of St Ebbes parish.
- Plot morphology: Large modern plots for commercial development and multi-storey and open car parks. Small area of post-medieval tenement plots on Turn Again Lane.
- The natural topography of the area is fairly flat low lying alluvial floodplain at a height of around 57m OD before gradually rising to a height of 63m OD over the Northmoor First Gravel Terrace. The boundary



Thames crossing and floodplain (Zone C)
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Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

between the Northmoor Terrace and the higher Summertown-Radley gravel terrace runs through the centre of the Westgate complex (located approximately along the southern line of Brewer Street to the east).

- Survival of historic townscape elements:
 - Turn Again Lane is a remnant of the St Ebbes Parish Street layout which was subject to wholesale redevelopment in the late 1960s.
 - A scheduled section of the Franciscan Friary Church is located in a concrete basement within the Westgate Sainsbury's Store.
 - Listed sections of a wall on the line of the town wall are located to the rear of 8-10 Turn Again Lane.
 - A stone pier is located in the Westgate lorry park.
 - A metal plaque to Roger Bacon is located on the south front of the Westgate Centre.
 - A brick built rank of late Victorian shops (built 1900) survives on west side of St Ebbes surrounded by the Westgate Centre.

Description

This character area is comprised of a coherent block of modern development formed by the Westgate shopping centre, multi-storey and ground level car parks and link roads. This area of late 1960s and early 1970s development is located over part of the historic intramural parish of St Ebbes and the site of a medieval Franciscan Friary. The character area represents an area of intrusive and massive brick and concrete architecture that punctures the Central Conservation Area. The character area also includes a small number of post-medieval and Victorian townhouses and shops along St Ebbes Street and Turn Again Lane.

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

The character area lies partly within the projected extent of the Late Saxon burh and encompasses the line of the later 13th century town wall. The southern part of the area occupies land reclaimed from the floodplain in the medieval period and contains the routes of early Thames channels and the Trill Mill Stream.

The Franciscan Grey Friars had established their first site here by 1224 eventually gaining land as far as the River Thames. The friary played an important role in the development of teaching at Oxford and beyond and is associated with a number of notable Franciscans including Roger Bacon, William of Ockham and Bishop Roger Grosseteste the first Chancellor of Oxford



Listed buildings by date of earliest identified fabric (based on listing description)



Westgate Car Park designed by the City Architects Department (looking south).

University. The addition of a new, larger church in around 1225 necessitated the removal and rebuilding of the town wall south of Church Street with the new wall forming the northern edge of the church.

At the Dissolution the friars were disbanded and their lands passed into private hands. The Greyfriars site was held by Richard Andrews of Hale who dismantled the buildings but maintained the gardens until the 19th century. In the early 19th century St Ebbes expanded as an area of poor housing, the area was mostly laid out on grid street pattern but encompassed the medieval Church Street and St Ebbes Street. Slum clearance and redevelopment occurred in the 1960s when the residents of St Ebbes were transferred to new estates located to the south of the city.

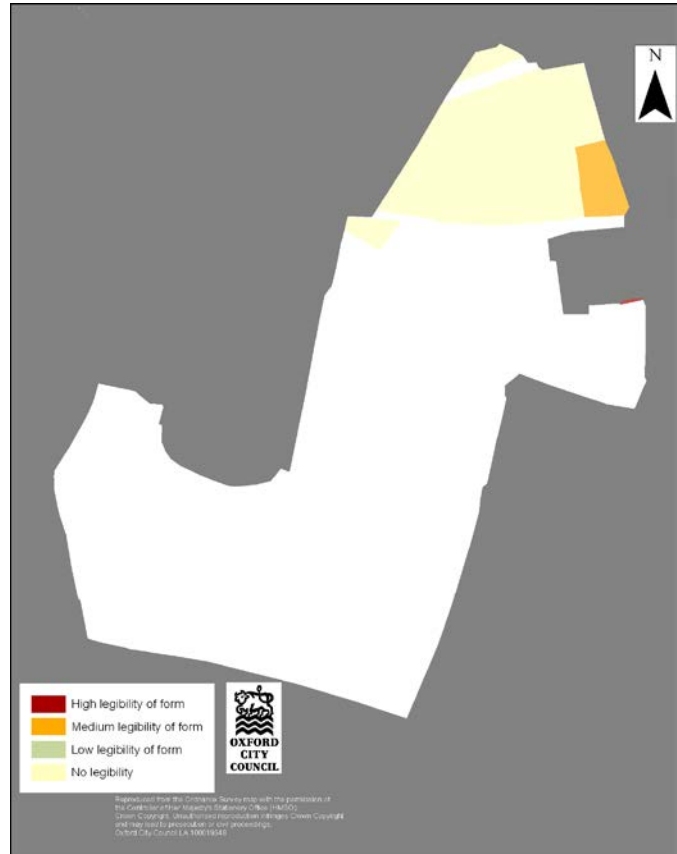
Part of the church of the Greyfriars survives as a consolidated stretch of wall in basement under the Westgate Centre Sainsbury's store. This is an important visible link to the important Franciscan friary, although there is no public access. A small number of post-medieval townhouses and Victorian shops of Turn Again Lane and St Ebbes are illustrative of the former character of St Ebbes Parish.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The character area has the potential to preserve prehistoric, Saxon, medieval, post-medieval and Victorian remains relating to early settlement of the town, channel management, milling, the town defences, the medieval friary and domestic and manufacturing activity in St Ebbes parish. The Urban Archaeological Database records thirty archaeological events within the character area. The Westgate site was subject to extensive archaeological investigation in the 1960s and early 1970s which recorded evidence for a Middle Saxon defensive ditch, medieval and post-medieval settlement and the remains of the Greyfriars. Despite the character and scale of the subsequent Westgate development further evaluation within the Westgate car parks has demonstrated the survival of significant remains relating to the Trill Mill stream and the friary. The Trill Mill stream has been demonstrated to be a re-cut of an earlier Devensian channel. The character area also contains a small number of post-medieval listed buildings.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

This character area is generally considered to have poor aesthetic qualities, with the exception of the rendered post medieval and modern buildings fronting onto Turn Again Lane. The visual character is dominated by the 1970s brick



Assessment of medieval tenement survival



Turn Again Lane looking west.

and concrete multi-storey shopping centre and car park, although some screening is provided by trees from the inner ring road. A plaque to Roger Bacon on the South Side of the Shopping Centre has a low profile.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The Westgate Centre and car parks have communal value as a focal point for many peoples experience for historic central Oxford. The Westgate Centre also houses the central library which is an important communal space. The offices of the Oxford Preservation Trust are located on Turn Again Lane.

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