

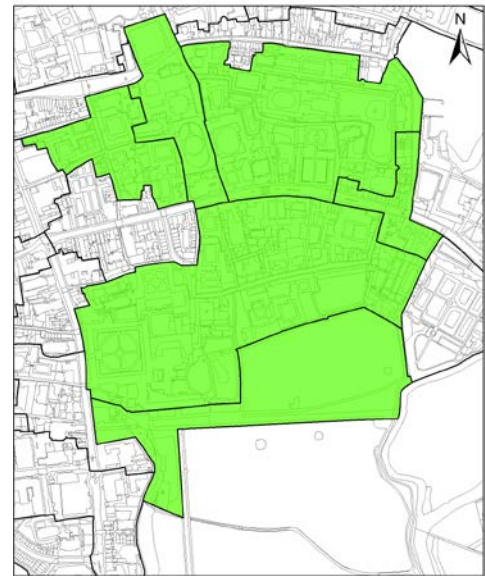
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 37:
THE EASTERN COLLEGES- NORTH OF THE HIGH STREET**

**The HUCA is located within broad character Zone K:
The eastern colleges.**

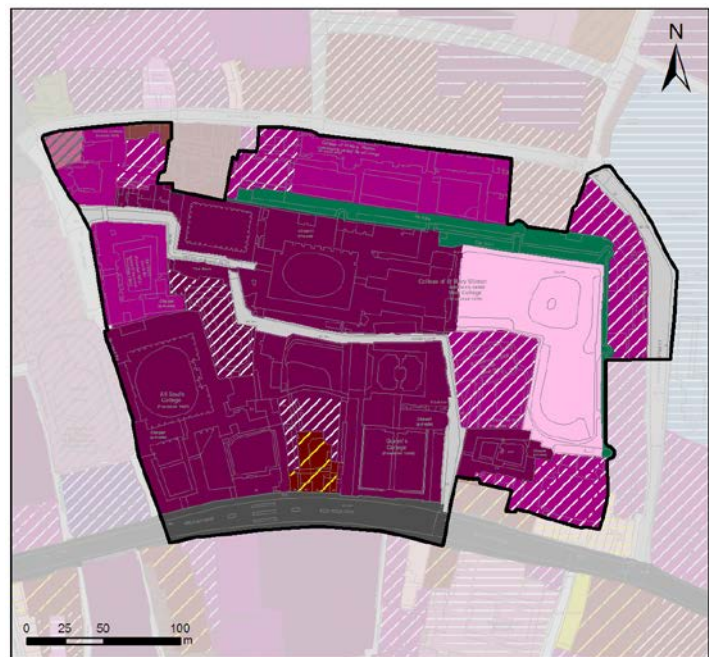
The broad character zone comprises of the eastern part of the historic city which is dominated by the enclosed quadrangles, gardens and monumental buildings of the medieval and post-medieval University and colleges.

Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: Post-medieval with medieval elements.
- Designations: Thirty-one Grade I, five Grade II*, forty-five Grade II listings. Part of the 13th century town wall, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Central Conservation Area. Grade I Registered Park and Garden.
- Archaeological Potential: High potential for Late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains. The area includes the former medieval church of St Peter in the East which may have originated as a Saxon Minster. Late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval domestic tenements, and evidence for commercial industrial activity, have been previously recorded. The area includes the best preserved section of the 13th century town wall with the earlier Saxon rampart known to be partially preserved below. The area contains exceptional medieval and post-medieval built fabric including the 14th century buildings of New College. It has been well studied and has good potential for important medieval and post-medieval college archaeology.
- Character: Medieval colleges; post-medieval colleges; 19th century colleges; 20th century colleges; University of Oxford buildings.
- Spaces: The substantial open space is largely confined to grassed quadrangles and college gardens, there is little public open space.
- Road morphology: Gently curving Late Saxon thoroughfare of High Street. Late Saxon-medieval narrow and angular side streets. A back of



The eastern colleges (Zone K)
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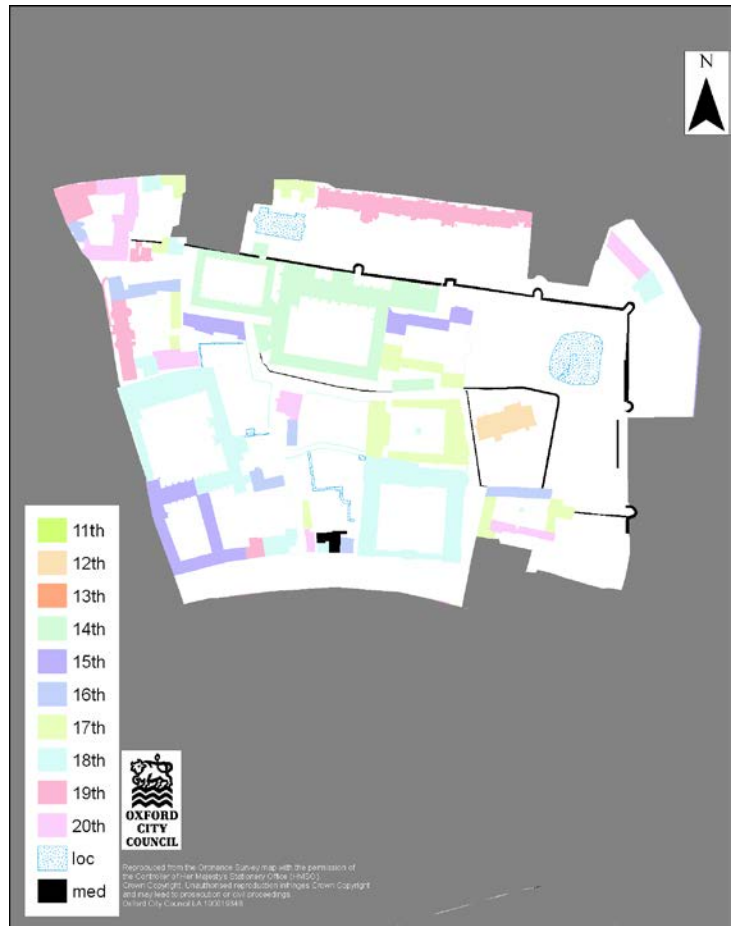
HUCA 37 OAP Characterisation

	Mixed townhouses/shops		University of Oxford Libraries
	Narrow plots		Historic Parkland
	Medieval Colleges		Town Defences Medieval
	Post Medieval Colleges		Medieval long distance route
	19th Century Colleges		Lane
	20th century Colleges		

Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

tenements walled lane survives within The Queens College. The wide flag stone pavement along the High Street is in contrast to the narrow pavements along Queens Lane and New College Lane. These later routes have tar macadam surfaces with strips of modern cobble sets either side.

- Plot morphology: Large irregular medieval and post-medieval plots associated with the colleges with small numbers of former townhouses preserving medieval tenement plots.
- The highest point of the character area lies to the north-west corner at Hertford College at a height of around 63m OD overlying the Summertown-Radley Second Terrace before gently sloping to the south-westerly corner at a height of around 60m OD on the Northmoor First Terrace.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - Small area of medieval tenement boundaries on High Street
 - Medieval and post-medieval college buildings and quadrangles.
 - Medieval town wall and bastions.
 - Remains of the concentric outer town wall survive below ground at New College with the spatial relationship with the extant inner wall preserved by the lane known as the 'Slype'.
 - Medieval Streets and back lanes.
 - Medieval Church.
 - Multiple listed buildings of medieval to modern date.
 - St Helen's Passage (Hells Passage) former tenement yard and cut through to the Turf Tavern.



Description

This character area encompasses part of the High Street frontage and several enclosed college precincts, with stone built two to four storey ranges arranged in the quadrangular design established by New College in the 14th century. The area encompasses New College, The Queen's College, St Edmunds Hall, All Souls College and Hertford College. There is a high degree of conformity in character and plan form with individual colleges each employing the enclosed quadrangle plan form, with associated hall, kitchen, library and chapel.

Located largely within the Late Saxon and medieval walled town the area is strongly defined by gothic inspired medieval, post-medieval and Victorian architecture with medieval elements including St Peters Church, a well preserved section of the 13th century town wall with walkways and bastions and the 14th century New College.

The character area is dominated by high walls and enclosed spaces with entrances and narrow lanes providing glimpsed views of college buildings and quads. The southern part of the character area includes part of the High Street frontage and a small number of late medieval to 19th century

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

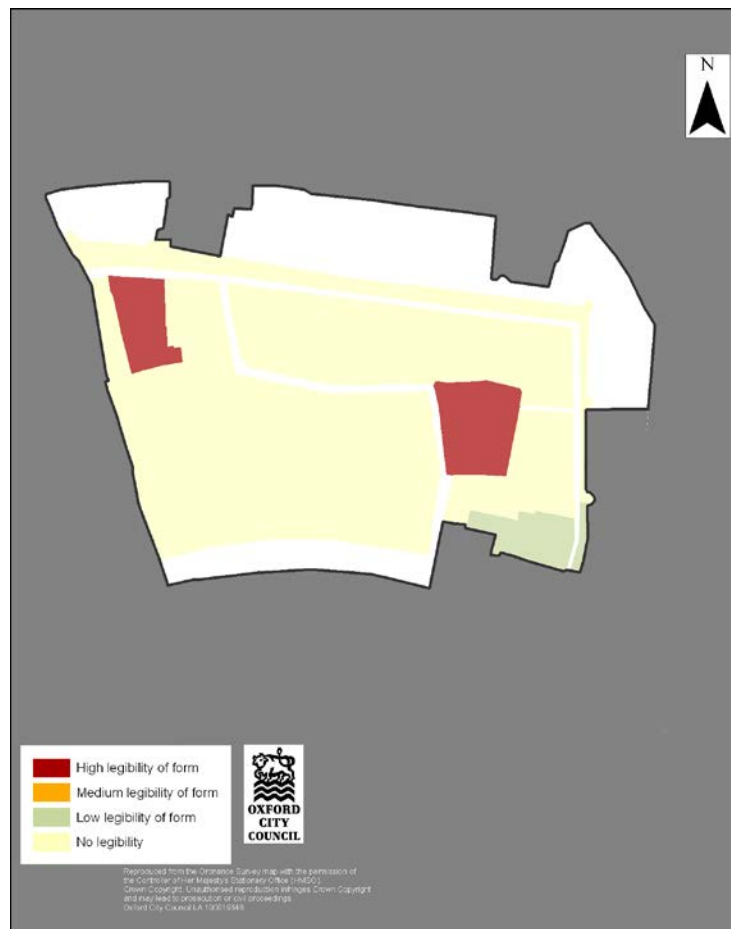
town houses. The northern part of the character consists of college and University buildings located over the in-filled medieval city ditch.

Together with the character area located south of the High Street the area represent a coherent zone in the eastern half of the city where a townscape of enclosed colleges has removed much of the medieval tenement pattern. The few remaining medieval tenement plots on the High Street are now occupied largely by stuccoed and rendered stone and timber post-medieval shop fronted townhouses. A small number of later post-medieval tenement boundaries survive north of the town wall, located over the in-filled medieval town ditch.

The sub-rectilinear Late Saxon and medieval street grid evident elsewhere in the town is different in character in the north east quarter. Here the original intra-mural road along the inside of the defences has been removed by New College and the remaining Queen's Lane-New College Lane zigzags from the High Street towards the Old Smithgate. This remains narrow and high sided being bordered by walled college precincts. Another irregular walled lane runs east-west through The Queen's College preserving a back of tenement route.

There is a high density of development along the street and lane frontages but overall there density of development is moderate with large spacious quadrangles and extensive college gardens forming numerous designed open spaces. The street frontages are generally continuous.

A notable aspect of the various walled college precincts is the absence of connecting doors or gates between institutions, reflecting the independent status of the various colleges.



Assessment of medieval tenement survival.

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

A defended burh was established at Oxford by the early 10th century. There is evidence to suggest that the initial burh was smaller than the later walled town, perhaps extending along the current High Street as far as St Mary's Church. The burh may then have been extended eastwards. This character area lies in the eastern part of the city in an area that may have been located outside the original burh and subsequently enclosed by a later extension. St Peters Church on Queens Lane, currently in use as the library for St Edmunds Hall, has



Queens Lane looking north towards St Peter in the East

been suggested as the site of a possible Late Saxon minster associated with the early settlement. In the 12th and 13th century the town expanded on the back of the cloth and leather trades and attracted new religious foundations and Royal Patronage. The decline of the cloth trade and the impact of plague added to navigation issues along the Thames led to economic decline in the late 13th and 14th century. Decline that facilitated the expansion of academic halls and subsequently more formal endowed college foundations who took advantage of declining land values away from the principle market frontages near Carfax. The 14th century saw a major wave of collegiate development with the early intra-mural colleges extending their campuses and new foundations including Hart Hall (1301, later Hertford College), Oriel College (1324) and The Queen's College (1341) and New College (1379). Many of these were initially founded around existing academic halls away from the main street frontage but subsequently expanded to incorporate adjacent tenements. New College was an unusually large foundation on land previously recorded as waste in the late 13th century. It has been estimated that the college alone absorbed over fifty abandoned tenements. The design of New College represents an evolution of the college quadrangle design established at Merton College earlier in the 14th century, this involved an innovative ordered and enclosed arrangement with a large regular quadrangle, a gate tower in the west range opposite a gateway out to the east, the chapel and hall placed on upper floors of the quadrangle which also comprised of a library and sets of rooms. In addition at New College a funeral cloister was built west of the chapel and a bell tower north of the cloister.

The 15th century saw a slower rate of college foundation in Oxford as the existing colleges began to consolidate their endowments and land holdings, limiting the availability of land for new colleges. Only Lincoln and All Souls Colleges were founded in the first part of the 15th century on small areas of land within the town centre.

Agas's 1578 map of Oxford shows the existing college buildings surrounded by large plots of orchards and informal gardens. These plots have subsequently been subsumed by college buildings, formal quads and gardens during a notable period of college expansion and enhancement in the 17th and 18th century.

The character area provides an illustration of the 13th century prosperity of the town represented by the well preserved section of town wall and bastions at New College. It is also illustrative of the development of collegiate architecture, notable the 14th century buildings of New College. The area also provides an exceptional illustration of the periodic revival of and expansion of the colleges in the 17th century, 18th and 19th century and of the dominance of the Gothic, Gothic Renewal or Revivalism style that can be contrasted with more exceptional examples of classically inspired architecture.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The character area has high potential for Late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains. The area contains a medieval and potentially Saxon minster church St Peter's in the East, the projected line of Late Saxon defences, also a long extant section of extant 13th century town wall and part of a buried outer wall. The western edge of the character area fronts onto Cattle Street which was associated with crafts associated with the book trade in the medieval period.

The area has the potential to preserve evidence for Late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval domestic and commercial and industrial activity as well as evidence for structural remains, material culture and diets relating to the medieval halls and colleges. The garden archaeology of the designed college gardens is also of interest.

The Urban Archaeological Database records one hundred and five archaeological events for this area. Previously investigations have examined the Late Saxon burh defences and the 13th century defences at New College and Late Saxon and medieval domestic occupation at The Queen's College and All Souls College. These colleges have also produced important information about college material culture and diets. The post-medieval garden feature at New College known as 'The Mound' has also been investigated.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

This character area has exceptional aesthetic qualities and contains numerous historic college buildings and designed garden features of note. The narrow twisting lanes enclosed by high college limestone stone walls create a secluded medieval ambience which has inspired numerous memoirs, novels and television dramas. The built character is distinctive, comprising of a mixture of rendered townhouses and imposing monumental limestone structures, with the Gothic style dominant but also with notable Baroque and 19th century English Renaissance structures. For example the early 18th century Italian Baroque Front Quadrangle at Queen's college represents the first classical façade to an Oxford college. In contrast the early 18th century Gothic design of the Codrington Library at All Souls reflects the dominant architectural conservatism of the colleges in the 18th and 19th century.

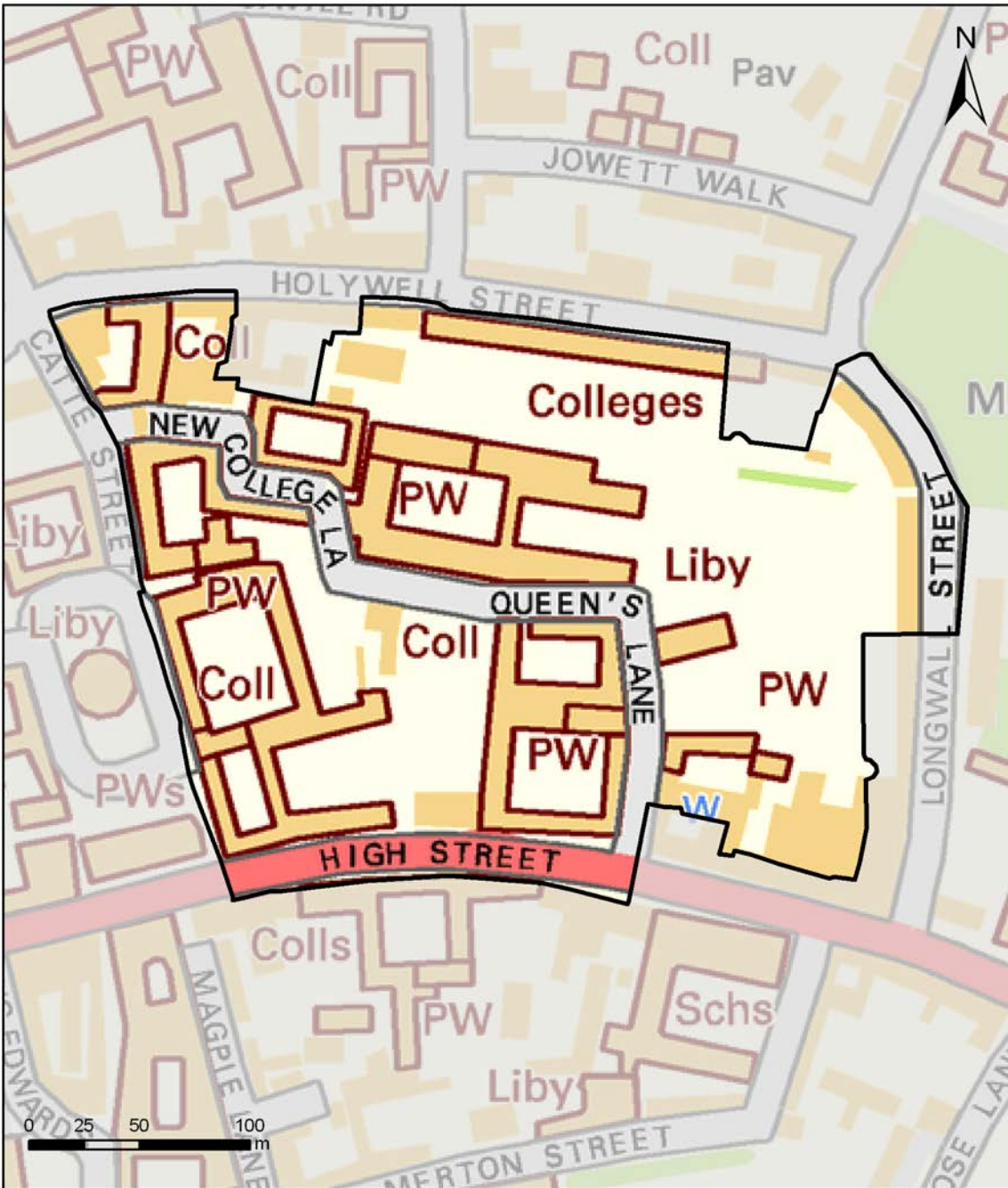
The north-west corner of the character area contains the 1885 Indian Institute designed in English Renaissance style by Basil Champneys. The architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner noted that the rounded corner cupola provides a notable viewing point for the view along Broad Street. The character area also includes part of the northern frontage of the High Street (or 'The High') which Pevsner described as 'one of the world's greatest streets'. The aesthetic quality of the character area is greatly enhanced by the preservation of the 13th century inner town wall at New College within a designed space.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The character area has strong communal value both for students, staff and visitors who experience the High Street and the back route through to Broad Street formed by The Queen's College and New College Lane. The area contains several historic colleges that form a significant component of the experience that makes Oxford a popular tourist attraction and educational centre.

The area contains many notable landmarks including; the grand classical frontage of The Queen's College; the high sided walls of New College Lane; the bridge over New College Lane built by Hertford College in 1913-14 and modelled on the 16th century Venetian Rialto Bridge and the decorated 18th century cloister screen and iron gates of All Souls College which provide a popular a viewing point into this enigmatic graduate college. The qualities of this character area have been recorded in poetry and prose, notably from the 17th century onwards. It has many associations with important religious and political movements and individuals and has notable communal value in terms of collective experience and memory.

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HUCA 37 Orientation map