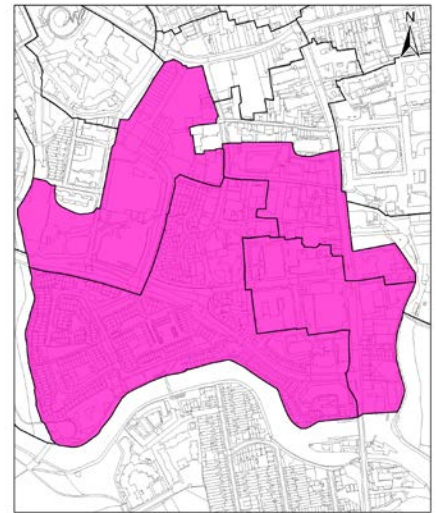


**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 8:
THAMES CROSSING AND FLOODPLAIN - THAMES WATERFRONT**

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

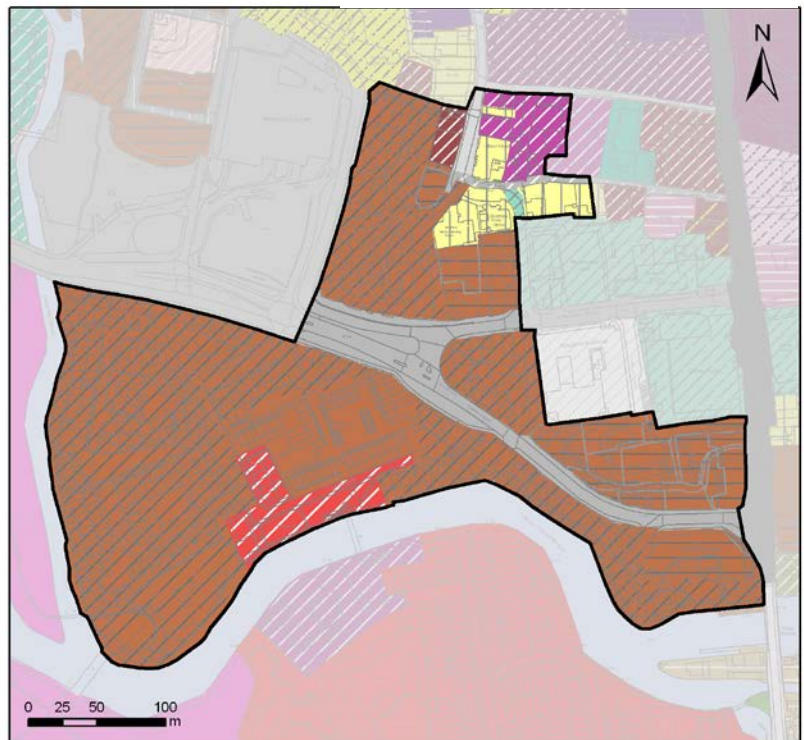
The broad character zone comprises of the southern suburb and historic route over the Thames floodplain along St Aldates combined with reclaimed floodplain land south of the medieval City walls. It includes the 1960-70s Westgate shopping centre and car park complex which occupies reclaimed floodplain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



Thames crossing and floodplain (Zone C)
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Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: 20th century.
- Designations: Four Grade II listings; Central Oxford Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Potential: The area includes land adjacent to the Saxon and later Thames crossing at St Aldates, areas of medieval and post medieval tenements on Littlegate Street and St Aldates, part of the precinct of the medieval Black Friars, the medieval Trill Mill stream and the Friars Meadow Stream. Includes parts of the post medieval and Victorian industrial suburb associated with tanning, butchery and brewing, also the sites of Victorian wharves, the former Gas Works and former Waterworks.
- Character: 20th century residential housing, offices and flats.
- Spaces: An intermittent riverside path follows the north side of the Thames where there is an area of wooded public space. The modern housing estates combine sinuous and rectilinear patterns that enclose car parking areas with areas of shared lawn and dispersed tree cover.
- Road morphology: Mostly a series of sinuous modern estate roads and cul-de-sacs orientated on the 1960s inner ring road. A small part of the medieval street system survives at Littlegate Street.
- Plot morphology: Large modern rectilinear and curvilinear blocks for planned estates and offices.



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HUCA 8 OAP Characterisation			
	Townhouses		Offices post 1945
	Blocks of Flats 1945-1980		Water feature
	Private housing 1945-1980		Medieval long distance route
	Private Housing Post 1980		Lane
	Civic		Major road scheme
	20th century Colleges		Modern Roads
	Social housing		

Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

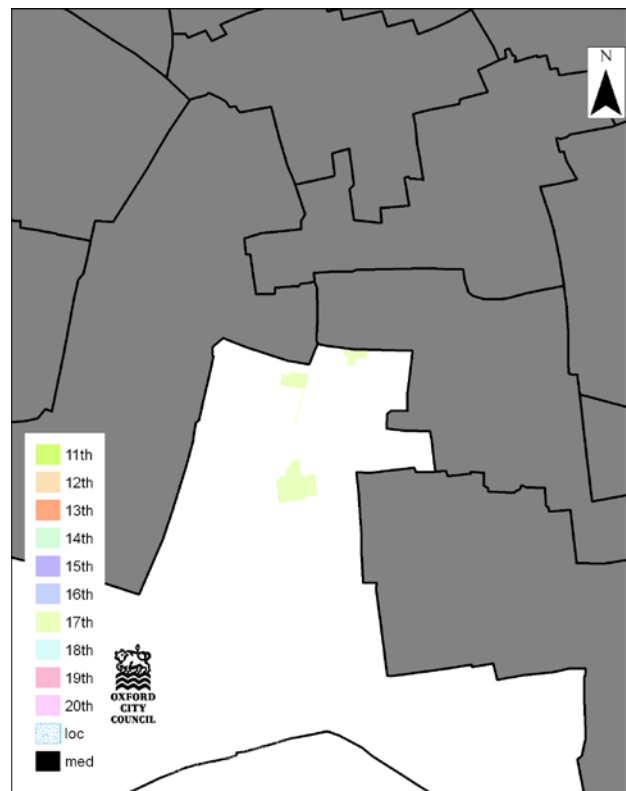
- The natural topography is low lying on the alluvial floodplain at a height of around 55m OD rising to a height of 60m OD at its most northern point where it lies on the edge of the Summertown-Radley Second Gravel Terrace.
- Survival of historic townscape elements:
 - Early modern bridges associated with the gasworks cross the Thames to the South.
 - A number of 17th century buildings survive on Brewer Street and Turn Again Lane. Also the 16th or 17th century Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre on Littlegate Street.
 - Part of the outer gateway of the medieval Black Friars is embedded in the later fabric at the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre in Albion Place.
 - A small part of Cambridge Terrace survives as a remnant of 19th century street grid.
 - The Wharf House, c1830 on Thames Street may have been the offices of the wharf officials before becoming a public house.
 - The Trill Mill Stream runs along a Victorian culvert under Rose Place.

Description

This character area is largely comprised of mixed modern residential flats, maisonettes and office buildings occupying large designed plots on the banks of the Thames, orientated on the Oxpens -Thames Street link Road. The northern part of the character area contains an element of the medieval and post medieval Street pattern at Turn Again Lane, Brewer Street and Littlegate Street. A small number of 17th century town houses survive in this area. A block of land between Rose Place and Brewer Street is currently being redeveloped as a new Quadrangle for Pembroke College.

The blocks of two to four storey modern flats and houses are mostly set back from street frontages with intermittent rectilinear or curvilinear perimeters that enclose access roads, parking areas and small areas of green space. The flats along Thames Street and historic tenements to the north of the area front directly onto the street.

A notable area of wooded open space is located on the bank of the Thames south of Dale Close.



Historical value- means of connecting with the past

The available evidence suggests that by the Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age much of St Aldates consisted of an extensive reed swamp with braided channels that stretched from Osney Island to Christ Church Meadow, creating a series of islands between the later Southgate and the Hogacre Ditch. By the Roman period the deposition of alluvial clay gradually began to infill much of this drowned landscape. Nevertheless in the medieval period significant land reclamation was required to enable the expansion of the southern suburb. Archaeological evidence indicates the presence of a middle-late Saxon causeway across the Thames Floodplain along the route of the modern St Aldates, with land reclamation and the creation of tenement plots on the floodplain dating from the 10th century. In the Norman period the

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

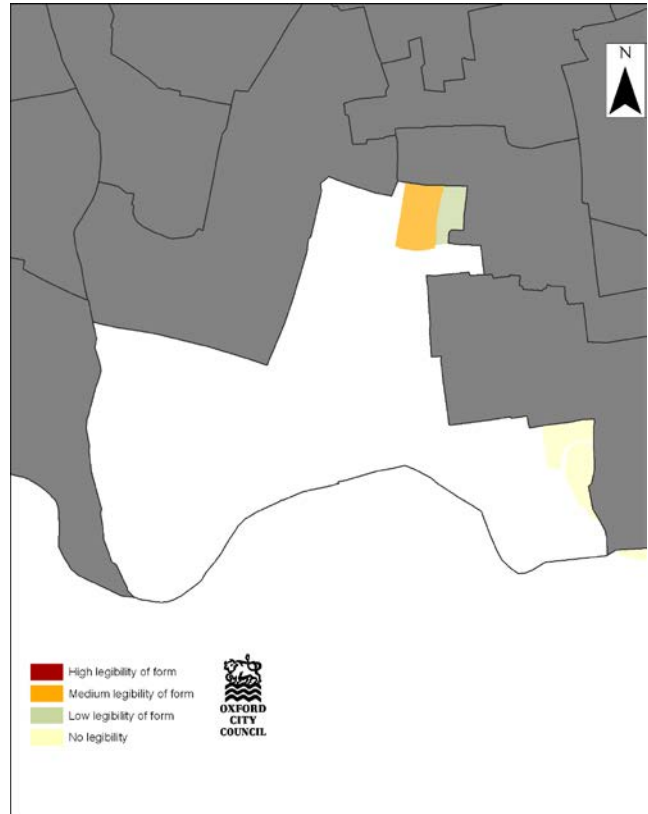
Saxon causeway was replaced by a massive stone causeway, the Grandpont, which survives beneath the road to the east of this character area.

The Dominican mendicant order, the Black Friars, arrived in Oxford in 1221 and established a precinct on reclaimed land at the bottom of Littlegate Street in the northern part of this character area. This became the largest Dominican friary outside of London. Part of the northern gateway to the precinct survives within a house of Albion Place. The Black Friars site was linked to the town via a bridge over the Trill Mill Stream leading towards Littlegate. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century the plot was acquired by William Freer who dismantled the buildings for their raw materials.

The southern line of the Royalist Civil War defensive earthworks are thought to cross the character area however there is as yet no archaeological evidence to support this.

The former precinct, enclosures and formal gardens of the Black Friars survived until the late 18th century when they are recorded on 1797 Davis' map of the city, however by the OS 1st edition map (1876) the area had been completely redeveloped with early 19th century terraced housing and a large Gas Works located on the river bank. The OS 1876 map also records three boathouses, four pubs, two schools, a chapel and a church, a builders yard, two mills, two timber yards and two stone yards, a warehouse and finally three factories. The suburb experienced some pre-war clearance, this resumed in the 1950s and in the late 1960s the area was cleared and redeveloped, establishing an entirely new street network and large areas of residential private and social housing.

The Wharf House on Thames Street, an ashlar faced house of c1830 date, may be the former offices of the wharf officials, it is one of the few remnants of the 19th century suburb to survive and is illustrative of the former character of this area.



Assessment of medieval tenement survival

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

This character area has the potential to preserve prehistoric, Saxon, medieval and post medieval remains associated with the Thames Crossing, channel edge activity and settlement associated with the medieval Black Friars the colonisation of Littlegate Street. The Victorian industrial archaeology of the area is also of interest however little is known about its character, extent and survival.

The Urban Archaeological Database records thirty-eight archaeological events in this character area. Perhaps the earliest evidence for activity in the St Aldate's area was recorded in 1991 during a watching brief at the BT Tunnel at St Aldates when evidence for an early ford comprising a channel lined with small stones was recorded. Although dating evidence was absent it is thought that it may be as early as the Bronze Age.

Previous investigations have examined structural remains and burials at Black Friars. Evidence for land reclamation from the 12th to 13th century has been noted in several archaeological investigations in the area, particularly prior to the construction of Black Friars but also along the St Aldates waterfront area. Archaeological investigations at the precinct of the Blackfriars between 1961 and 1985 revealed sufficient evidence to reconstruct the plan of the precinct and the cemetery to the north. Several burials have been recovered from the presumed chapter house, the nave and cloister. Other archaeological interventions in the area have recorded the early channel of the Trill Mill Stream and medieval and post medieval townhouses associated with brewing and tanning activity at Brewer Street. Detailed building recording has been undertaken on Bannister House, a 17th century townhouse on Brewer Street.



Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

The character area has a limited aesthetic value as an agglomeration of landscaped modern residential estates. An area with notable value is the Thames riverside path which preserves views across the river and of surviving industrial era bridges and which adjoins an area of wooded public space. The remaining green space is largely confined to private gardens or small grassed communal areas.

Oxford Gas Co Bridge from the east.

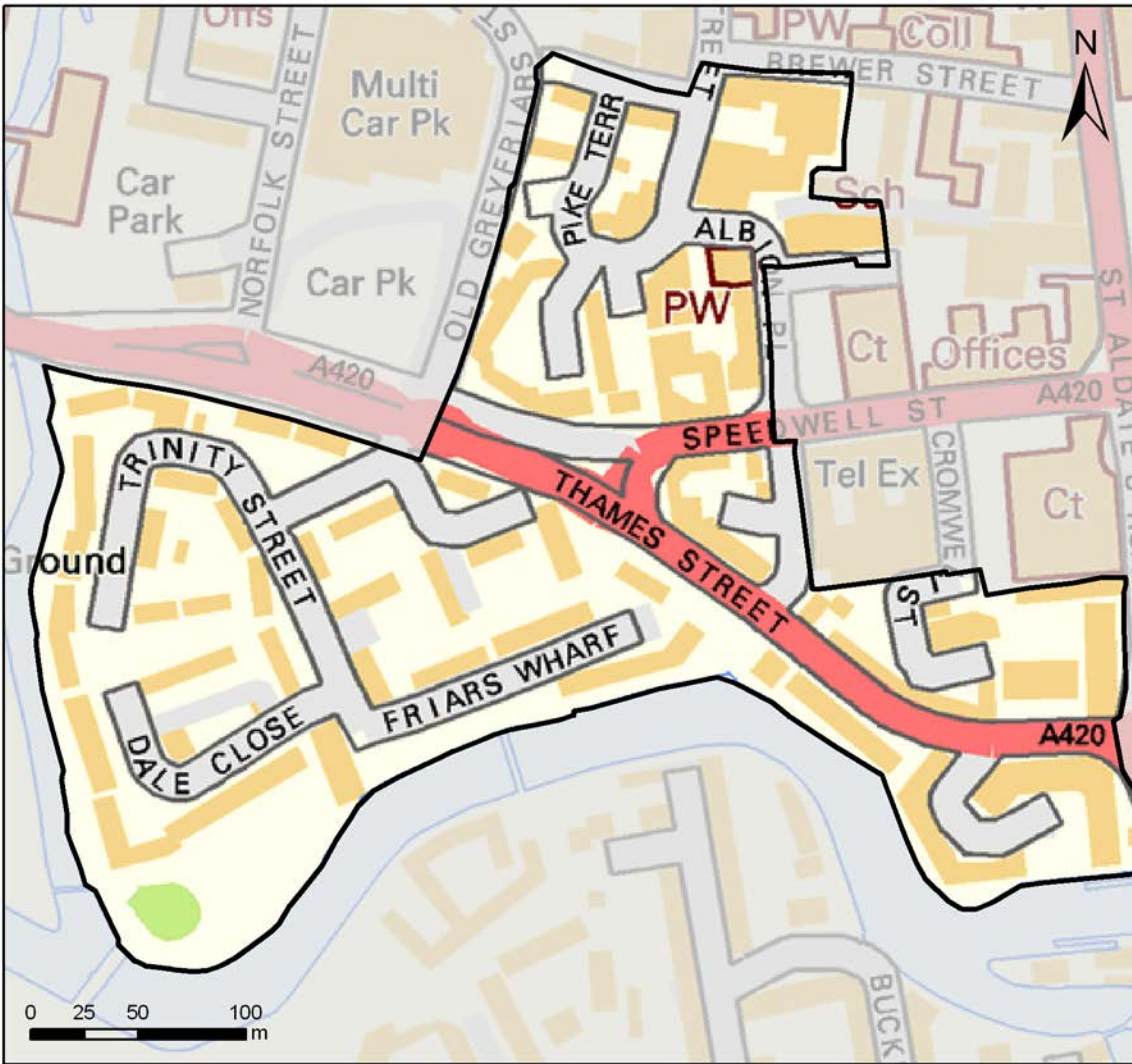
Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The area has value associated with its residential character. A school and play area are located near the banks of the river. The riverside walk includes notable landmarks include the Victorian Oxford Gas Co bridge which is a reminder of the former industrial character of this area.



Looking north from the river towards the Friars Wharf estate.

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HUCA 8 Orientation map